

An Ode to the Palmerston Forts Society at Christmas

On Hilsea Lines, where spirits rise higher than the ramparts...

Oh gather ye fort-friends, it's that time of year,
To raise up a toast and deliver good cheer!
For through ditches, o'er drawbridges we've marched with delight,
Exploring old bastions from dawn until night.

But first a warning: I don't wish to alarm,
Please pardon this poet - rhymes sometimes do harm!
Historical accuracy is close to our heart,
But occasional, bending just a little helps with the art.

Another fine year with our fort-loving friends,
Where knowledge was shared and the fun never ends.
We wandered through casemates, traversed the odd moat,
And occasionally wished we'd worn a warmer coat.

With friendships well-forged, most in nice, sunny weather,
We've strengthened our community, all in this together.
And now with a strategy boldly deployed,
*"Celebrating our fortified heritage:
Preserved, understood and enjoyed!"*

A motto so proud it deserves its own flag,
Perhaps Duncan can stitch one to go in his bag?
Ah yes dear Treasurer Duncan: calm, clever, assured,
Who keeps our accounts neat, precise and secured.
But more than a number-man, sage-like and bright,
Ask Duncan a question and he'll know it *just right*.

And Lewis, our Secretary, online and in motion,
Posting fort facts daily, with great flair and devotion.
If gossip were grapeshot, he'd load up the feed,
And fire off updates at lightning-fast speed!
Next Sarah, membership marvel supreme,
Enthusiastic and friendly, the smile of the team.
She welcomes new faces with warmth by the ton,
If cheer were artillery, she'd be the biggest gun.

Then Tracy and Darrel of the brave P.A.V.,
Re-enactors resplendent for all folks to see.
In uniform shining from button to braid,
They bring history to life whenever on parade.

Archivist Graham guards the past with great pride,
With documents stacked in a mountainous tide.
If you need a fact that's really quite old,
He'll find it for you before tea can go cold.

And Jo, our Vice Chair from across the Solent sea,
Who sails in with ideas as fresh as can be.
With Steve from the island - our coastal envoy,
Together they add Isle of Wight-flavoured joy.

And raise up a cheer for Paul and for Barrie,
Ordinary members? No! extraordinary!!
Always ready to help, join a tour, share a tale,
Or rescue a lost member stuck on a trail.

And cheers for our members, too many to list,
Who'd be first on parade and the last to be missed.
They write up great articles, so clear and so sharp,
Keep watch on fort changes from terreplein to counter-scarp.
They labour, they lobby, they clean, mend and guide,
True guardians all, with great passion and pride.
For without their devotion, steadfast and sincere,
Our fortified heritage wouldn't shine half as clear.

And finally, our Chairman, oh wait, that's me,
Quite hard to miss, I think you'll all agree.
With a passion—near *obsession*—I'll proudly confess,
For volunteer practice batteries... I'll own it, no less!
Spotting platforms and embrasures in maps from the past,
With 300 to find it's a game that will last.
Thank you, dear friends, for indulging this trait,
Your patience (and humour) continue to be great!

So today here at Hilsea, let laughter ring out,
Let's celebrate success both large ones and stout.
For forts may be built out of stone, brick and slate,
But we are the mortar that makes this group great.

Merry Christmas, dear fort friends, for one and for all!
May your ditches stay dry and your spirits stand tall.
Here's to friendships, adventures, and stories yet spun,
And a fortified New Year that's second to none!