

Speaking the Voice of the Stones in the “Powder” times

What you hear around the tower are the busy, busy sounds of a working dock but what the stones have to say has a deep, longer lasting resonance like a very, very low vibration. You have to stay still and listen carefully to hear the hum.

This sound has moved through millenia from the time when these stones were shells lying at the bottom of lakes and rivers many degrees of latitude south from here. This sound then moved ,by unimaginable forces, through the hemisphere on the journey northwards. Squeeze your eyes and imagine....These hard and solid stones were once bi-valves: 2 hinged shells which were squished and squashed into sediments sunk beneath the freshwater in warm lands. These sediments became horizontal layers, layer upon layer as they consolidated and drifted ever northwards. Until such time as the layers were pushed upwards with the collision of the European and North African plates. The low vibration getting stronger until it was a mighty roar. These forces pushed up the majestic mountains of the Pyrenees sending ripples through the plates the length of France and forming what we can view from Southampton: the downlands of the Isle of Wight and it is there that the once bivalve softness settled as the Limestones, Sandstones and the Featherstones. The roar dies down and the echoing vibrations calmed its volume and deepened its sound.

These stones, after being quarried and cut, standing proud in a tower poised to defend the town. These stones, casting shadows indoors and shadows outdoors.

These stones, always with the hum, the real sound of the stones.

Speaking the Voice of the Stones in the days of “Prisoners”

On our journey, these stones have stayed strong. We've come by sea and taken a battering until we now lay still and surround the people who don't want to be inside our sanctuary. Take this man who has been close to me. He takes comfort in my smooth sturdy presence. He strokes me between stroking his beard and his long, unkempt hair. He finds strength in my walls while his mind goes away from the smell and the noise day and night.

He dreams of the wind on his cheeks, the take away feeling on your breath when the wind catches the sail just so – yes, we're away, we'll make a good few knots on this tack. Hold the tiller just so...

And then brought back to earth by the clang of the buckets and the evil sounds of the gaoler's sniping. Keep that ship in full sail, keep that picture in your head, hold on and let's tell the wall. Chip, chip quietly away and capture my ship. I'll start with the mast.....