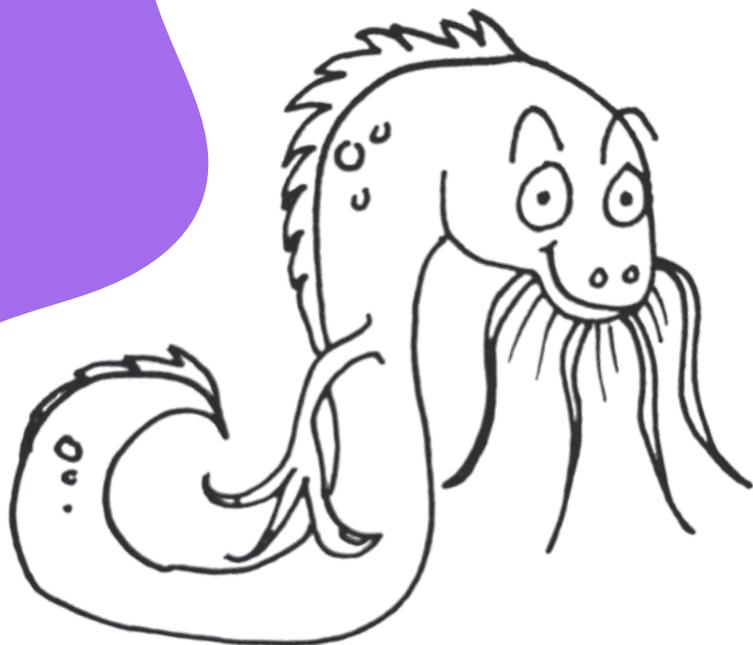


22MIDNIGHT
22MIDNIGHT



ONCE UPON A
GOSPORT



MUSHY AND THE MAN WHO MYSTERIOUSLY BREATHED UNDERWATER





ONCE UPON A GOSPORT

Step into a magical world where Gosport's stories spring to life, where the past isn't something you read about, but something you meet. Here, heroes and heroines, sailors and scientists, inventors and dreamers transcend time, space, and history to share their adventures with you.

Every page is a doorway into Gosport's spirit of curiosity, courage, and imagination.

Once Upon a Gosport has been lovingly created by Annelies James of 22Midnight, bringing together local tales and timeless lessons for new generations to enjoy.

This enchanting project is funded by the Gosport Heritage Grant, the National Lottery Heritage Fund, Hampshire Cultural Trust, and Gosport Borough Council, each helping to ensure our heritage continues to inspire wonder for years to come.





With Thanks...

Special thanks to Richard Oakes the fantastic Gosport based artist and illustrator.

Thanks also to Charlie Fletcher, Hannah Boyd and the 'GHG Girls' Claire Hargreaves, Charli Street and Lu Mellors. Big thanks to my people, Ian Richardson and Phyllis Sheldon.

Projects are only ever as good as their community and we have welcomed an amazing community of creatives, supporters and volunteers to make this project happen.

For more thanks and resources visit the website.





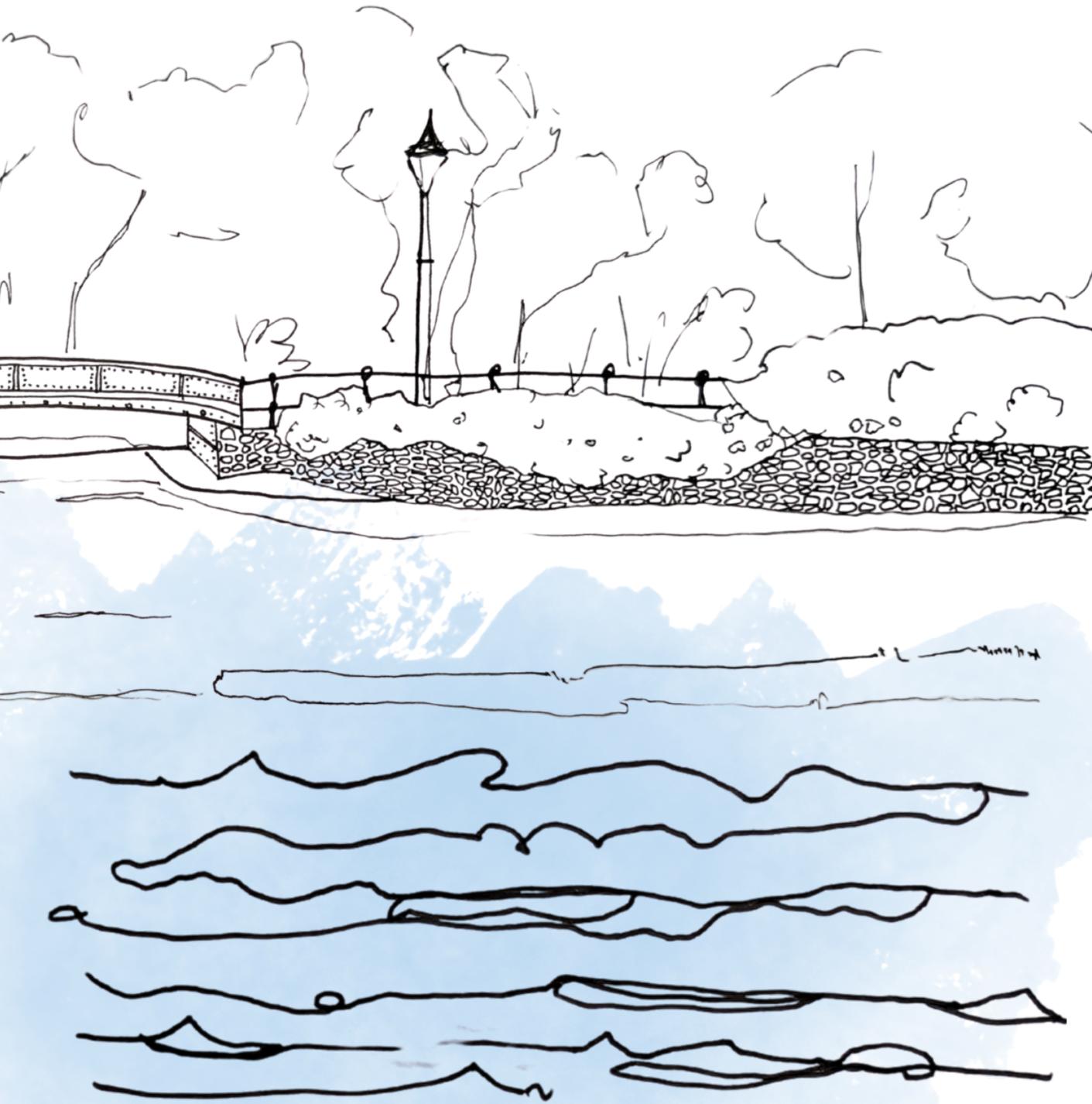
Long ago, when ships with tall masts still filled the harbour and the air smelled of seaweed and salt, a man in a heavy diving suit stood by the edge of Monckton Creek.

His name was John Deane, and he was an inventor.

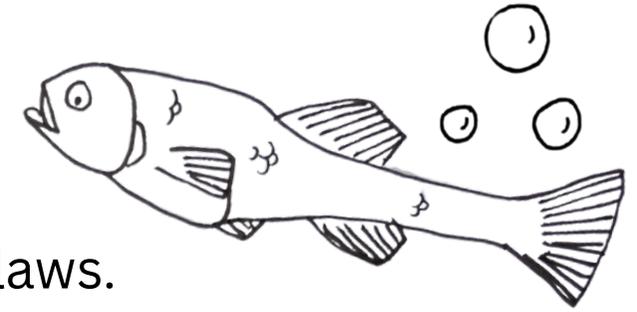
In his hands he held a shining copper helmet with three round glass windows and a long air hose. It was his greatest invention, the very first diving helmet.

“Let’s see what wonders lie beneath,” he said, and with a careful step, splash!

He disappeared into the green, rippling water.



Down in the creek, the world was different.



Silver fish darted between weeds. A crab clacked its claws. Shafts of sunlight danced on the sand.

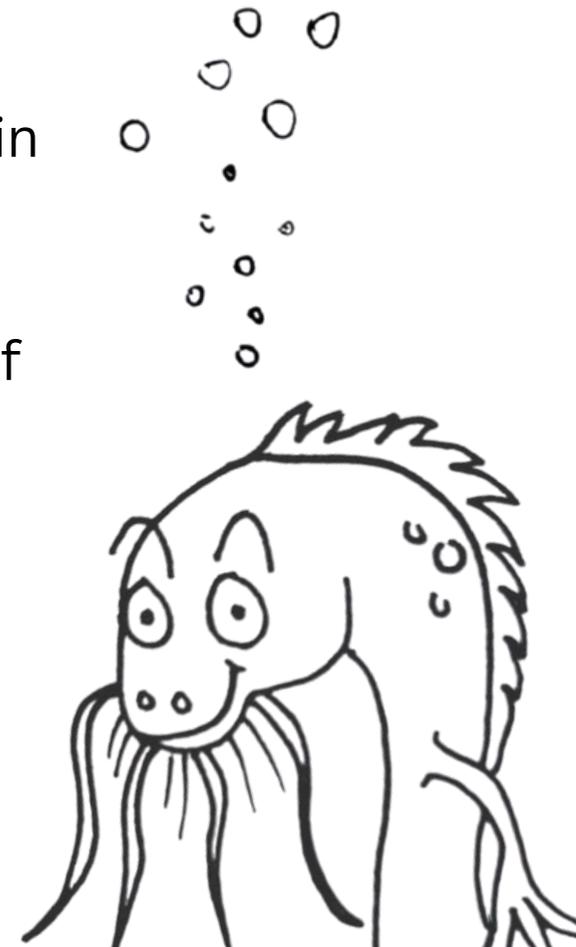
John grinned inside his helmet. “It works! I can breathe and see everything!”

Then the water seemed to darken. Something large moved in the distance, long and curling, like a ribbon of smoke.

Two enormous eyes blinked. Whiskers rippled. A necklace of shells glinted in the light.

John froze. “Steady now... steady...”

The creature peeked from behind a rock. **Then, in a puff of bubbles, it darted away.**





John stepped forward to follow, but his air hose snagged on an old anchor!

He tugged and twisted, but the hose held fast. His air began to thin.
“Oh no...” he gasped.

Then, swish! the shadow returned.

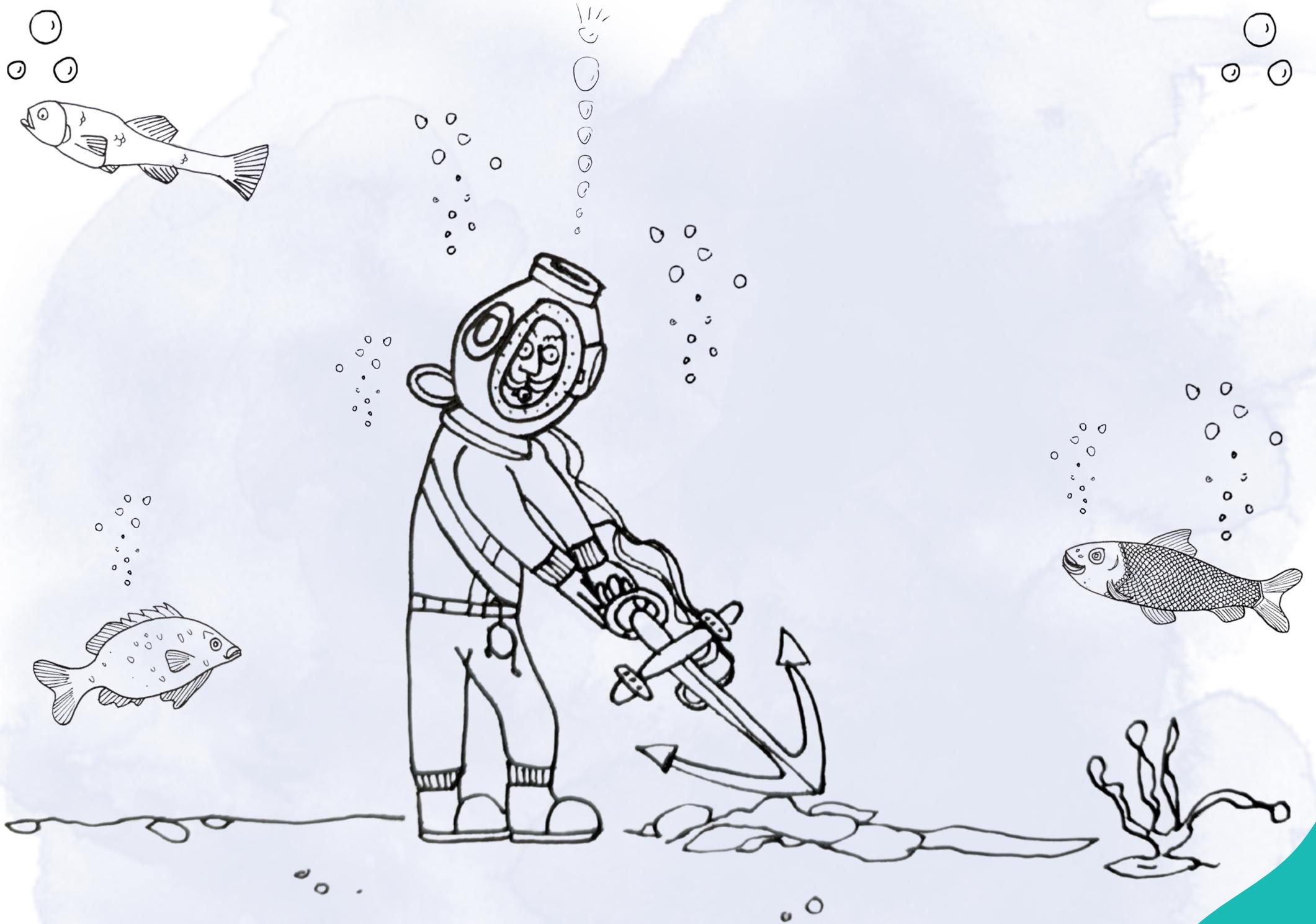
The long creature circled him, whiskers twitching. It bit gently at the rope, tugged once, twice, SNAP!

The hose came free. Air rushed back in.

John waved gratefully. “You saved me!”

The creature blinked, shyly.

“M-Mushy,” it bubbled. “I’m Mushy.”



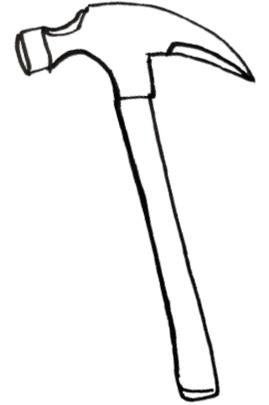
Mushy lived in the quiet corners of the creek, where the reeds whispered and boats rarely came. He spent his days tidying seaweed, polishing shells, and watching people from below the waves.

He loved the world above, the laughter, the music, the smells of bread and rope and rain, but he never dared show himself.

“People are frightened of me,” he told John sadly. “They see whiskers and scales, not a friend.”

John smiled kindly. “They just don’t know you yet, Mushy. You’re not frightening, you’re fascinating!”

He tapped his copper helmet thoughtfully. **“Hmm... I have an idea.”**





That night, by lantern light, John worked in his little workshop.

He hammered, polished, riveted, and tested.

At dawn, when Mushy poked his head above the ripples, John held up something gleaming.

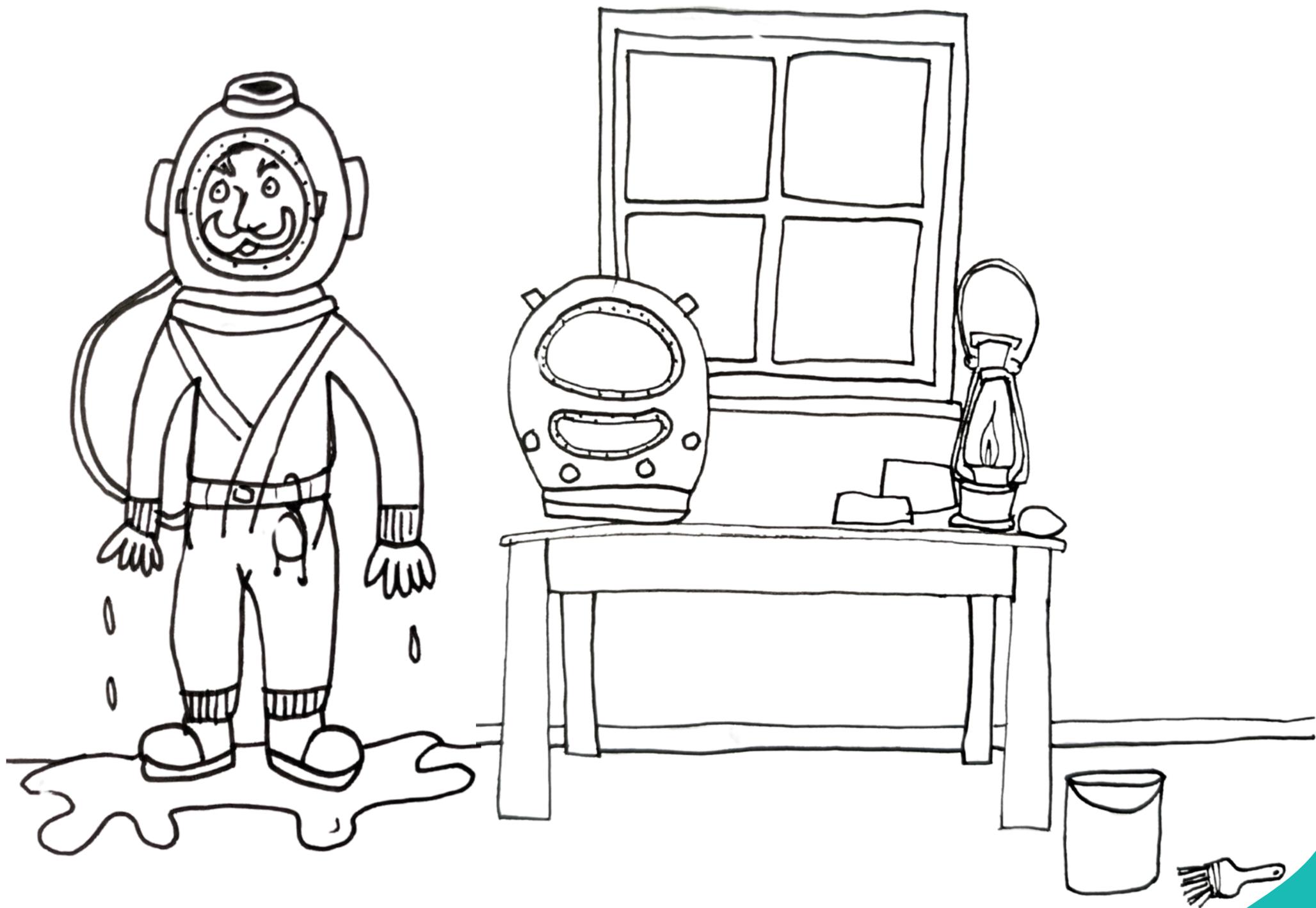
“A helmet!” Mushy gasped.

“A reverse diving helmet!” said John proudly. “You can wear it to lift your head above the water and breathe the air, safely!”

Mushy wriggled with excitement as John helped him fit it on. The air bubbled, the valves hissed, and Mushy’s whiskers poked through little holes.

He looked quite splendid.





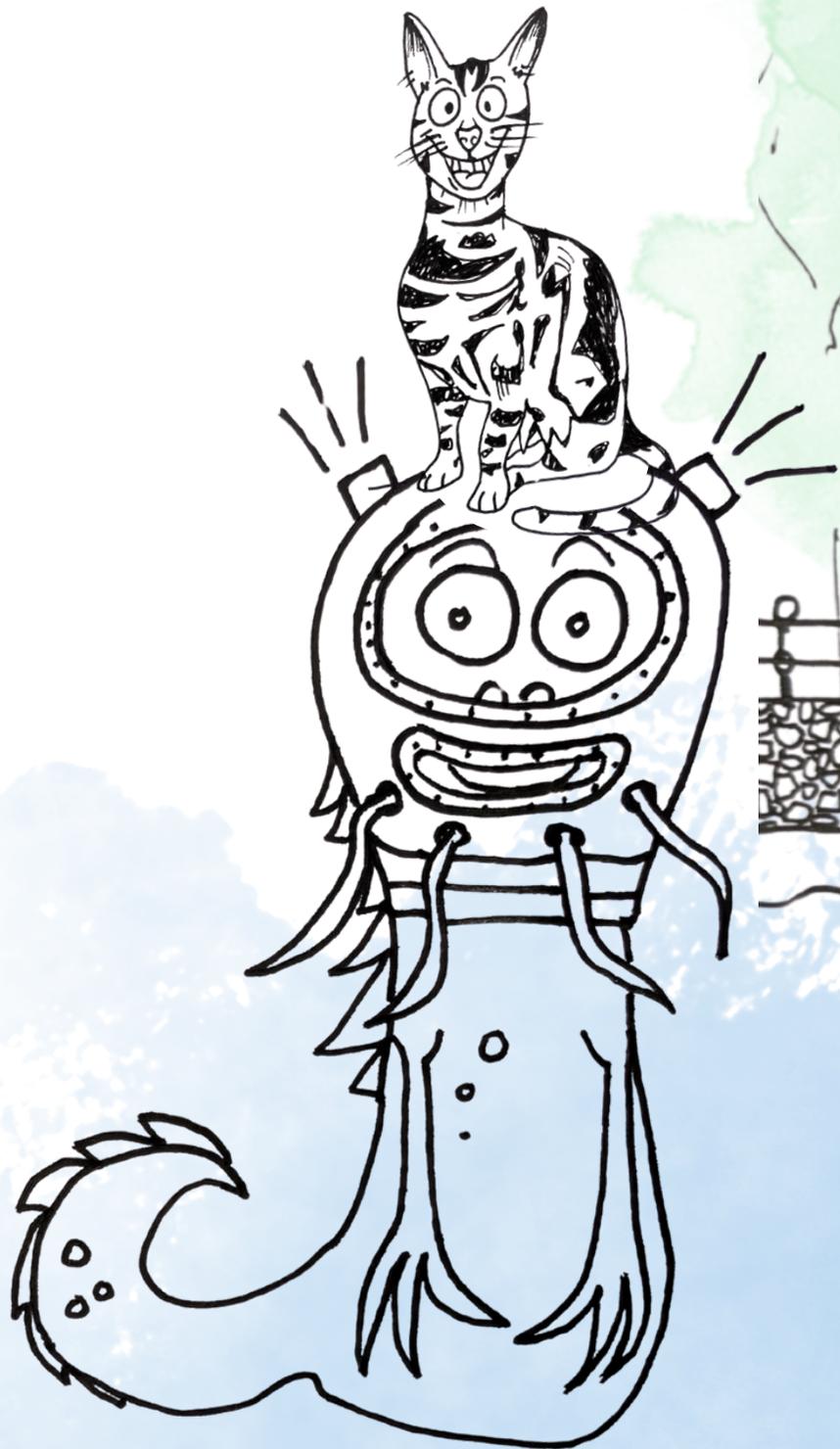
That morning, as the tide came in, a bright-eyed cat padded along the pier. Her name was Tilly, the Adventure Cat of Gosport, and she was ready to find her adventure of the day.. Today a new friend!

“By my whiskers!” said Tilly. “You’re a big fishy fellow, aren’t you?”

Mushy’s whiskers quivered. “Not fishy! I’m Mushy!”

Tilly purred. “Welcome to Gosport, Mushy. Any friend of John’s is a friend of mine.” She leapt onto his helmet and **perched there like a tiny captain.**





V13



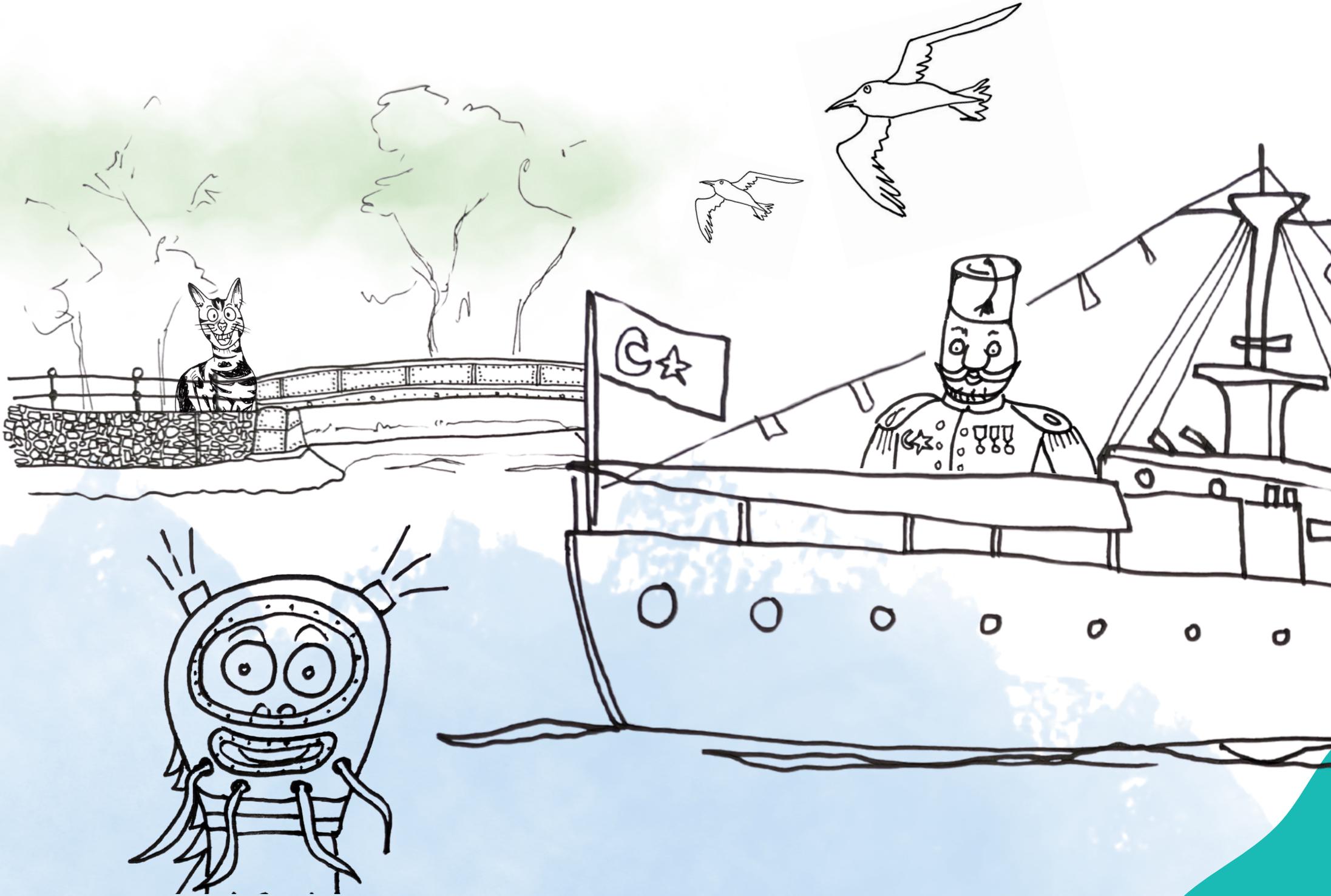
Just then, a deep voice called from a ship moored nearby.

It was Captain Mustafa, a Turkish sailor preparing to set sail for faraway lands. His ship, The Sea Swan, gleamed in the sunlight.

“Ho there!” the captain boomed, stroking his fine moustache. “Is that a monster with a helmet?”

“Not a monster!” cried Tilly. “A new friend!”

Mustafa laughed heartily. “Then let the new friend have bread and honey before I go!” He threw down a basket, **and Mushy’s eyes widened in delight.**





Soon, word spread through Gosport: there was no monster in the creek, only Mushy, the kind-hearted guardian of the waters.

He helped untangle nets, collected lost oars, and made children giggle by blowing perfect bubble rings.

And when night came, he returned to his quiet home beneath the rippling water, watching the stars dance on the surface.

John visited often, bringing ideas and tools.

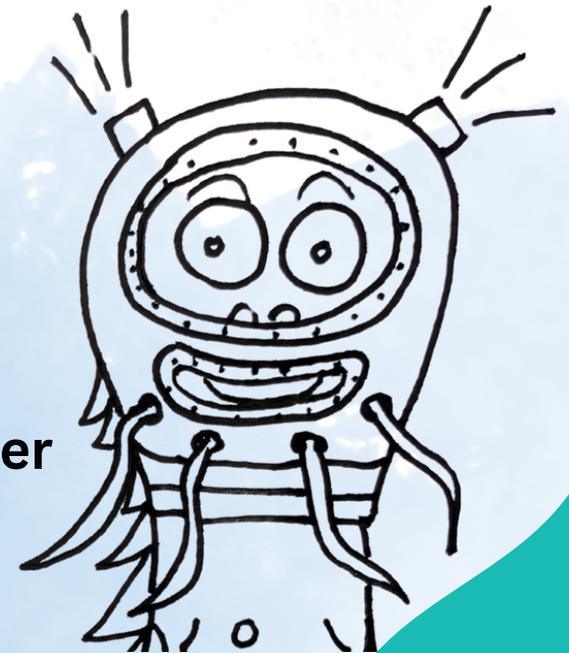
“Together, we make things better,” said John.

Mushy nodded. “You dive to explore the world below. I rise to meet the world above. **We’re two sides of the same tide.**”



In the town of Gosport, people still tell the story of John Deane, the brave inventor, and Mushy the Monckton Monster, the shy creature who just wanted to belong.

Their friendship reminds everyone that innovation and kindness can help us see past what's strange, **and discover what's wonderful.**



22MIDNIGHT)
22MIDNIGHT)

Visit the website for all the resources and to book
the Once Upon a Gosport Heritage Crate...

www.OnceUponAGosport.com

