



LANGTON MATRAVERS LOCAL HISTORY AND
PRESERVATION SOCIETY

NEWSLETTER

SEPTEMBER 2018

First, some news about Reg Saville for those of you who live beyond Wareham! So much of what the Society has achieved, particularly with regard to the Museum, derives from the knowledge, enthusiasm, and energy with which Reg translated his love of Langton Matravers and the surrounding area into what we have today, and we owe it to him to keep it all going as best we can on his behalf!

Back in April we said in the Newsletter that Reg was hoping to return to live in Barton in the near future but sadly that did not happen. He took the view that he no longer felt that he wanted the day-to-day struggle of living on his own and, with his family, decided that he would move into a room in Wordsworth House where he has been now for some four months.

His brother, David, told me today [25 August] that Reg is happy in his new home but being a rather private man he does not always welcome too constant a stream of visitors. However, for anyone who may wish to 'drop him a line' his address is Wordsworth House, 2 Belle Vue Rd, Swanage BH19 2HR...but you would be too late to greet him for his birthday this year because it has just gone: he was ninety-six on 30 June!

Name this building



Yes, it's just a bit of a teasing reminder for those of our members who live miles away and rarely if ever visit Langton these days but whose support is nevertheless greatly welcomed!

Of course its proper name is **The Coach House but we know it as 'our' **Purbeck Stone Museum** and **The Langton Matravers Village Museum!****

It takes a lot of time and energy to keep it going but we are particularly proud this season of the interior improvements that have been made with re-decoration, new lighting, and a modest amount of moving things around.

A shame we don't have more custodians...and visitors for that matter!

In mediaeval times the Rectors of Langton Matravers were also farmers who obtained their living from the Glebe Farm. Part of that farm was the area now known as The Hyde which in the last eighty years or so has become an established road of some thirty or forty houses. There were also odd fields elsewhere, but the centre of the farm was immediately to the north and west of The Rectory House next to the Church. Some parts of the original rectory still remain to the right of the front door of The Old Rectory [now a Care Home].

On the site of The Coach House there was once a tythe barn belonging to the Rectory Farm. When the Rectory House was enlarged in the late Eighteenth and early Nineteenth centuries, and the Rectors were wealthy enough to own a carriage and horses, the present building was erected using the footings of the old barn. It contained a Coach House on the north end [now devoted to The Purbeck Stone Museum] and a stable for four horses at the south end next to the Church [which is now used as the 'foyer' and Langton Matravers Museum].

When we obtained a lease of The Coach House in 1980 [from the PCC of St George's Church] 'the Society' had to build a wall where the great doors of the former Coach House had been; clear out an abundance of horse manure; build two inside cross-walls; cement over the cobbled floor of the former stable; and add ceilings. All this was achieved by the voluntary labour of those who had the vision and foresight to create what many visitors regard as a historical gem!

More about the museum

It's not something to go on about *ad nauseam* but in spite of all the physical improvements we have on occasions struggled to keep the museum going this season, largely because we have 'lost' some of our custodians and found it difficult to find replacements. There have been times when at short notice the door has remained firmly closed and that is rather a shame because it calls into question our reliability.

However, huge thanks **are** due both to our regularly committed custodians and the occasional reserves on whom we depend. As things stand, with about four weeks to go until the museum is closed for the winter, visitor numbers are about the same and the takings from donations are about £150 up on the same time last year but £100 down on the previous record year...so make of that what you will! By August Bank Holiday we had had 760 visitors and their donations totalled £1650 [or £2.17 each!]. Remember Benjamin Disraeli's words of wisdom: *'There are three kinds of lies...lies, damned lies, and statistics.* Seriously though, it would be supercalifragilisticexpialidocious if we could find more custodians for next year! Check the spelling. It's correct! But is it a real word? Try...*extraordinarily good... wonderful...*as synonyms and then agree with the writer...who is currently enjoying a gin and tonic [in an effort to keep going!].

By the way, we have just agreed the renewal of the lease for another year but with a modest increase in rent...so thanks to the Parochial Church Council for its support!

A confession about the website and moving into the digital age

We had a very strong expression of interest from a member who lives far from Langton after suggesting in the April newsletter that we need to update our approach to new technology, with the full and enthusiastic approval of Philip Wyatt who has looked after this side of the Society's affairs for many years.

Watch this space! And why an apology? Well, someone who shall remain anonymous but whose initials are DFS has failed to move things forward! Mea culpa!

So...MK of Cornwall...who wrote *'I am responding to your amusing and clever plea for distant volunteers to help LMLHPS in some way. I should be able to assist in the maintenance of the website, if that is what you require, and I might possibly be able to help to update the presentation too'*...please do not give up on us!

DFS promises to be in touch with MK **before** you get this newsletter and, if we haven't got something good to report in the next newsletter he also promises to resign!!!

Business matters from the AGM...always our most exciting meeting of the year!

The Annual General Meeting was held back in April as a result of which it is important that we thank Rosemary Stevens for her work as Honorary Secretary of LMLHPS. She decided that it was time for her to resign and we are delighted that Mary Haysom has taken over the role...though so far Mary's main contribution has been 'What do I have to do?'. Things will soon change!

Among other news it was reported that...

- There was a surplus of £772.89 in 2017-2018 and at the end of the Financial Year the Society had £5792.56 in the bank.
- Expenditure was more or less in line with previous years: the cost of electricity had fallen because of a switch to a new supplier [Utility Warehouse]; considerable expense had been incurred in getting the museum ready for 2018, including new lighting; the Society benefited from a considerable increase in HMRC Charity Relief because the Treasurer had taken advantage of a new Gift Aid Small Donations Scheme [GASDS] as well as the usual Gift Aid.
- Income from the Museum was £1723.09 for admission and £330.90 from sales. Talks were mostly well attended and generated £756 including the raffle.

The Society has a current membership of 118 across all categories, the details of which are...

Life Members	26	
Family Members	50	
Single Members	25	
Unpaid	17	[Those members who have not yet paid will still get this newsletter in the hope that they will wish to renew their membership due on 1 September 2018].

The new curator, Richard Cottrell, outlined his hopes for the museum in 2018. He stated that the museum is now much more welcoming thanks to the internal redecoration undertaken free of charge by Katie Francis, The Lady Decorator, and the greatly improved lighting. Thanks were expressed to those responsible for getting the museum ready for the new season...but there is still a shortage of custodians! [There still is!!!].

A worthwhile but rather dangerous passion! A contribution from Oz Black



Oz Black from Poole and his friend **Tig** from Devon are remarkably enthusiastic about exploring and revealing what lies beneath the surface when we walk the fields in many parts of Langton Matravers. The photo is of a Freestone Vein lane near Acton, and many local underground quarries extend for hundreds of metres with branches to the left and right! Truly dangerous places to work in days gone by...and we are grateful to the likes of Oz and Tig for keeping us in touch with our heritage!

When I first began exploring the network of underground lanes below Swanage in 1985 the history of who sank the shafts or last worked them soon became as fascinating as the exploration itself. Yet there was no 'directory of quarrs' with co-ordinates to locate shafts and handy tables detailing dates worked and by whom; no list to say one grassy pit in the ground was once a deep shaft on three levels, and another a mere ridden-hole.

Back then, I had to be content with creating my own rough underground maps and finding open shafts by accident or rumour. One ambition had been to reach that elusive deep 'third level' [the New Vein] but it seemed as out of reach as going back in time to when you could simply walk down numerous sets of steps to reach it!

Since 2012, however, computerisation, geology, cartography, the knowledge of local quarrymen and historians, old graffiti, knocking on doors and crawling into brambles has finally enabled my colleague Tony [Tig] and I to create a directory of quarrs after all...together with photographs, videos and underground maps.

Two months ago, while exploring a once inaccessible third level, and after crawling flat through the common between old Cap and Feather lanes, we discovered old candle wax dripped down the wall left behind over a century ago. The last people to have entered there would have been quarrymen in the early 1900s. This sort of thing, including old chisels, candles, tins, paddles, cart remnants etc., often invisible at first glance, creates a sense of time travel. A pristine lane with bits of tools in cracks in the walls still seems a place of past activity, but as if the quarrymen left only a few years ago.

There are over five hundred entrances into Purbeck quarrs...most are closed and the details on many will remain lost to history, but twenty-seven remain open. Hopefully, some people lucky enough to have one in their back garden will be bold enough to reverse the trend of recent decades by digging it open!

Oz and Tig have presented some really fascinating drawings to the museum which derive from their underground surveys and they are well worth a visit!

Geoff Hooper, the Langton Poet, had something to say about life in the quarrs!

Underground

Deep shafts that never saw the sun
beneath the fields of Purbeck run.

Forgotten quarrymen long dead,
deaf to the lark's song overhead,
worked there by flickering
candlelight:

While up above the day was bright.

And many a stained glass
window's frame
from those dark silent caverns
came.

And Purbeck mullions straight and
tall
in many an ancient mellow wall
of manors, churches, towers and
spires
the length and breadth of our
green shires.

Sometimes a probing, blind
machine
breaks through where those old
men have been.

And people say 'That's quite a
find;
did they leave anything
behind?'

I always answer loud and clear
'Yes. Quite a lot. But nothing
here!'

Programme of talks [September 2018-March 2019]

All are welcome to our talks which take place at 7.30pm in the Village Hall opposite the Church. Admission is £2.50 for members and £3.50 for non-members.

The programme has not yet been fully finalised but any changes will be published in The Dubber and on our local posters. If you are travelling some distance for a specific talk please contact David Selman [01929 421 481] if you want to make sure before you set out!

Thursday 27 September Philip Browne The Wreck of The Haleswell

In 1786 one of the most dramatic shipwreck disasters ever to occur on the coast of England shocked the nation. It happened just a short distance from Langton and Worth when the *Halsewell* perished on the Purbeck rocks! Thanks to the bravery of local residents some of the passengers and crew were rescued, but most were drowned...including the captain's daughters!

Thursday 25 October Richard Cottrell Nineteenth Century Public Health and the Swanage Connection

Richard is the Curator of our museum and his talk will give us a fascinating insight into something about which very few of us know anything!

Thursday 22 November Ben Buxton Wareham and Poole Harbour through time

Ben Buxton is the Curator of Wareham Museum and the author of a number of books with historical themes. His talk will focus on aspects of the history of Wareham and Poole Harbour: the formation of the harbour, and sites and industries from prehistoric up to recent times including 19th century settlements and passage houses around the harbour.

Wednesday 19 December To be confirmed!

Thursday 24 January Angela Bell Thomas Hardy's Wessex Locations

Angela is very well known to us as Editor of The Dubber. What may not be known so well is that she is also a Thomas Hardy expert who lectures widely on the novelist and poet who is arguably Darzet's greatest...but our dear President, Reg Saville, would no doubt disagree and favour William Barnes instead! Angela has led many residential weekends for Hardy-buffs at the Kingcombe Centre in Toller Porcorum near Dorchester...what a wonderful name for a village!

Thursday 28 February David Haysom A Walk through Swanage

David is well-known to members of LMLHPS and is often seen walking the streets of Swanage talking to groups of interested visitors about the splendid old buildings of the town. But don't worry that you won't have enough energy on 28 February to walk the streets yourself! You will be able to remain seated in the Village Hall!

Thursday 28 March Ilay Cooper The Story of Dunshay Manor and the Spencer Watsons

Ilay is well-known in Purbeck [and India] and has lived for many years in a caravan adjacent to Dunshay Manor off Haycraft's Lane. He will talk first about the manor and move on to talk about Three Artists: The Spencer-Watsons at Dunshay and Studland 1913-2006. Most of you will recognise Mary Spencer-Watson as the sculptor of The Quarryman in St George's churchyard which was on the cover of our last newsletter.

Thursday 25 April Tom Cobley Annual General Meeting

Please think about sponsoring one of our talks!

It's surprising how much it costs to mount a talk when all the expenses are taken into consideration. The committee feels that the talks do in fact provide an interesting and worthwhile service for the village and visitors in the winter months but if for whatever reason the audience falls below around thirty to forty we often tend to make a loss and have to rely on The Grand Judy and Ashley Raffle to make ends meet!

In the last season two of our members each sponsored a meeting to the tune of £100 and that was a fantastic gesture of support...so many thanks to Sue ...[?] and Andy ...[?]. If anyone else would like [or is desperate] to do the same in the coming series of talks then I think you know who to contact...call 01929 421 481 and ask for DFS! No, you won't get a free sofa but we will stretch to free admission for your own sponsored talk! Now there's generous!

FOOTNOTE! SUBSCRIPTIONS FOR 2018-2019 BECAME DUE ON 1 SEPTEMBER 2018. NOW IS THE TIME!