

**The Purbeck Society**  
**Minutes of the Annual General Meeting**  
**Held at The Mowlem Theatre on Friday 8<sup>th</sup> March 2024**

The meeting commenced at 2.35 pm. Twenty two members were in attendance.

**Apologies:** Jan Walters and Pam Smith, Eddie & Joan Noades

**Chair's Report:**

Our chair, Peter Bowyer has asked me to write this report under my own name. As you may know, Peter has not been well for much of this year and has only been able to attend one or two meetings of the committee.

I am pleased to report that while there were only four active members of the committee at the time of our last AGM, we now have five new members.

Frances Thackway led the way by volunteering to join at the last AGM, quickly followed by David Churchill. Born in Corfe Castle, he has skills with computer technology and manages many local websites, including that of the Purbeck Society. Thanks to him, we now have a considerable presence on-line and can reach a greater audience through social media. Pam Smith joined the committee in January and came with experience of local organisations such as the Piers Trust. Recently we have been joined by Allie Hyett and Chris Greenhough who have moved to Swanage and are keen to involved in local matters.

We would be delighted to hear from anyone present if they would like to join the committee.

Our Autumn/Winter talks continue to be well attended and absorbing, kicking off with a talk by Mary Sparks on Local Tithes. Brian Woodman spoke about the new 5G Network masts proposed for Swanage and Corfe Castle which prompted a lively debate. Ian Flemming gave a talk on Local Footpaths in April.

The Spring/Summer programme included visits to the Veterans Forge with Will Spicer and a talk by Robert Field at his Honey processing plant at Rempston. In September, thirty of us piled onto a tractor trailer and trundled around Hartland Moor to hear about the re-wilding programme on the heath and to admire the free ranging cattle.

Talks resumed in October with a presentation by Nick Read about Swanage's Two Piers and John Lejeune discussed the history of Poole Pottery and the Local Clay Industry. The Christmas party took place in the lovely surroundings of Newton Manor with excellent entertainment from the local Ukelele Band.

In the New Year Creech Barrow was the subject of a fascinating talk attended by fifty people and Owain Masters from Amphibian and Reptile Conservation recently made a presentation about Purbeck's unique habitat for such creatures. We are looking forward to the next meeting when Derek Pitman will report on the recent Time Team Dig near Corfe Castle.

Karen is also preparing a list of events for the Summer and our thanks go to her for organising such a diverse and interesting programme. Thanks too to Sylvia and Geoff for serving tea and biscuits and all who help to set up and clear away.

Early this year we also attended a meeting with the Friends of Durlston at which we described the work of the Society. The Society also contributed to a stall at the Planet Purbeck Festival. We have had some banners made for such an occasion and are in the process of producing an introductory leaflet describing the work of the society and inviting members to join. We hope that this, combined with improved on-line publicity, will lead to increased membership.

The Community Room at the Mowlem is about to be refurbished and we look forward to a much-improved venue with a ceiling-hung audio-visual system, so hopefully, no more anxious moments rushing out to buy computer links and such like before talks start. The scheme also includes new flooring, improved black out curtains, new chairs and even air conditioning!

The Society continues to examine and comment on **Planning Matters**. Our main concern is the forthcoming application for the Harrow House site. The developer's original plan, presented over a year ago' included demolition of all buildings, to be replaced by 88 dwellings including a Georgian style town square and several square blocks of flats. The Society commented saying among other things, that the old school building was a prominent landmark and could be saved and converted into flats. The developers have had a subsequent meeting with Swanage Town Council at which they undertook not to demolish the school, but it still included 88 dwellings. Their application may be paused, in the hope that they could also acquire the former Forres School site. This could greatly enhance the scope for further housing and better access and would be a very significant development. We are certain to be on to this as soon as an application is submitted.

Another prominent building was the subject of controversy. An application was made for the red house at 23 De Moulham Road, to demolish the house and replace it with a block of 11 flats. The Swanage Local Plan identified this area as "of high townscape value, characterised by predominantly detached houses set in generous plots" and the application was refused as was a second application for a row of five houses which we also opposed. A further application for four houses, designed to appear as two, has finally received permission. While this cannot be called a triumph, it will certainly be more acceptable than a large block of holiday homes on a prominent site in the town.

We also commented with dismay on the former Hayman's Bakery art-deco shopfront being replaced without Planning Permission in a Conservation Area.

Finally, the Society has commented on the alternative plans for the Swanage Green Seafront.

We felt that there is insufficient information about both proposals, particularly regarding the engineering works for the second scheme, which involve removing two meters of soil on Sandpit Field and the insertion of giant nails to consolidate the land, which would probably lead to loss of the few mature trees around the edges. We suggested that the old stone walls, paths seats and steps could be reinstated as a conservation project and support the planting of more trees. We agreed that better access was needed for wheelchairs. I hope that you will agree that whatever scheme is chosen needs to be integrated with plans for a more pedestrian friendly Shore Road. We look forward to receiving more details.

You will remember that, a few years ago, Karen, David Gerry and I were asked by the Purbeck Council Conservation Officer, to carry out a survey of Non-Designated Heritage Assets in the town. Because of this work, both Karen and I were invited by Swanage Town Council, to participate in the preparation of the latest Swanage Neighbourhood Plan and much of our work will be incorporated in the Plan which has a section on Townscape Character. Karen is on the team dealing with Development and I sit on the Environment Team, dealing with Townscape Character and Green Spaces.

All this activity has enhanced the reputation of the Purbeck Society which continues, after nearly 170 years, to play an important role in Purbeck Life. Many thanks for being a part of this.

Jessica Sutcliffe on behalf of Peter Bowyer.

### **Treasurer's Report:**

A copy of the accounts was issued with the agenda for the meeting.

The total income for the year was £1040.88, which included a donation of £40 from Friends of Durlston and interest from the savings account of £134.88

The expenses totalled £951.67. Including subscription payments of £36 to CPRE (The Campaign for Rural England) and £120 to Civic Voice, plus a donation of £100.

We purchased a banner for taking out to events to promote the society, the cost was £59.

Therefore overall, there was a small surplus for the year of £89.21

Funds carried forward at 31.12.23 were £5642.50, which included £4194.59 in the Bath Building Society and £1428.79 in the Lloyds current account, plus cash in hand and creditors.

### **Membership Secretary Report:**

At 31.12.23 The Purbeck Society had a total of 86 paid up and honorary members.

Similar to last year, we had 23 new members join during the year. However, there was overall drop in numbers from last year of 7

We would love to see the numbers grow to the level they were in the past and encourage previous members to re-join, as we look to get our numbers back to over 100

Membership fees remain at £10 per year, payable on the 1<sup>st</sup> January. According to the Constitution, membership is deemed to have lapsed if not renewed by 1<sup>st</sup> April.

Thank you to all who have renewed their membership and a warm welcome to our new members, we look forward to seeing you all at our future talks and events.

### **Election of Officers & Members of the Committee:**

Existing Officers:

**Chair** - Peter Bowyer

**Secretary** – Jessica Sutcliffe

**Membership Secretary & Treasurer** – Linda Hernandez

**Events Secretary** – Karen Delahay

**Co-opted Members** –

David Churchill, Francis Thackway, Pam Smith, Allie Hyett and Chris Greenhough

Jessica reported that the Committee had met earlier in the week to discuss Committee roles. Linda had volunteered as Secretary, Karen in addition to Events Secretary offered to take care of the archives, David volunteered as Membership Secretary and Jessica had offered to stand for election as Vice Chair or Chair, if Peter is not willing to stand.

Karen reported on sub-committees to deal with specific items; A year book, particularly useful for members who cannot attend our meetings. The production of a leaflet for

promotion of the society. Boxes of archive records to be sorting and collated at The Swanage Museum. Offers of help welcomed.

The Committee, as a whole stood, down.

In the absence of any new nominations from the members, Ben Buxton proposed and Phillipa Sherbourne proposed the election of the Officers as follows:-

**Chair – Jessica Sutcliffe**

**Secretary & Treasurer– Linda Hernandez**

**Membership Secretary – David Churchill**

**Events Secretary & Archives – Karen Delahay**

**Committee Members – Peter Bowyer, Francis Thackway, Pam Smith, Allie Hyett and Chris Greenhough**

On a show of hands, all agreed to the elections and the Committee was duly elected.

Francis offered to be a link between CPRE (Campaign to Protect Rural England).

Member Sandra Brown was invited to give a report on the proposal to create a new National Park in Dorset. A renewed application had been put into action. Ministers signalled interest in a new approach. E.g. a marine park and forest park. The park would include the Jurassic Coast and could extend offshore. Many organisations are involved, including National England.

In closing the meeting Jessica recorded grateful thanks for Peter for all he had done for the society and wished him well.

The formal business of the meeting ended at 3.10 pm.