

## Bournemouth and Beyond Discovery Group

### Annual General Meeting December 3<sup>rd</sup> 2019

#### Secretary's Report 2019

Good Evening everyone. This is my fifth annual report as Secretary.

It is a pleasure to report on another successful year for the Group. Members were able to enjoy very varied Spring and Autumn speaker programmes. If that was not enough excitement, members were also treated to a wide range of visits, between April and July. I must at the outset express many thanks to the programme organisers, John, Val, Ann and Audrey for the Spring programme and Ros, for the Autumn programme. Also to each leaders of the visits, John, Ros, Val, Ann and Richard.

Now, just sit back and relax, as I take you on a journey and refresh your memory of the events throughout the year!!

**Spring programme.** The spring programme began on the 22<sup>nd</sup> of January with a talk from Paul Sturgess, entitled "Dorset of Old". Paul was a dairy farmer for many years before pursuing his interest of photography. He has amassed many photographs, depicting rural scenes and local towns and villages, in which many buildings still remain today. His was a most interesting talk, showing us Dorset between 1880 and 1930, through a series of photographs and postcards.

The following week, our very own Eileen presented a talk on women of science, politics and art. She introduced us to three Bournemouth women, Bessy Bicknell, Doris Maud Odium and Rena Gardener. Bessy Bicknell did much for Bournemouth during her years as a Borough Councillor, Justice of the Peace and worked tirelessly for disadvantaged children. She was the first women Mayor for Bournemouth, was awarded the OBE in 1980 and prior to her death in 1990 was given the Freedom of the Borough. Doris Odium was born in 1890 to parents who managed the Metropol Hotel and Savoy Hotel. She was proficient in many fields and advanced the cause for women's rights. Doris was a member of the Women's Voluntary Reserve Core, became a Doctor in Medicine in 1924 and worked in the mental health field. Although her application to become a Consultant was denied, as she was a woman, she went on in 1937 to chair the British Medical Profession, became President of many organisations, campaigned for mental health to become part of the NHS and was instrumental in the Suicide Act 1965, where previously, suicide was a criminal act and prohibited burial in any churchyard. The third women of Eileen's talk, was Rena Gardner who was born in 1929. She attended London Art College gaining painting and printing skills. She was an art teacher at Bournemouth School for Girls, where a 30 foot mural she painted, still remains. She eventually moved to Cornwall, where she concentrated on painting, printing and publishing books and where she died aged 70.

**February** started with a talk about the history of Bournemouth Symphony Orchestra. Andrew Burn explained how Don Godfrey was invited by Bournemouth Council, at the tender age of 25, to form an orchestra. They performed for some 35 years at the old Winter Gardens, the "glass house" as it was referred to locally, with the musicians in formal uniforms and caps. In 1905, to boost audience numbers, jugglers and comedians performed during intervals. Later a choir was also formed, which has gone from strength to strength. The founder was knighted in 1922 and when the BBC was launched, used radio to reach much larger audiences. Although renowned as an orchestra and voted "the world's favourite orchestra" in 2014, it has experienced several hard times. It is now an independent company with a turnover of £6 million, but has to rely on Arts Council funding, as Local Authority support has reduced. The speaker inter-mingled his talk with orchestral musical extracts, including some exciting "Wiz Bang" music from 1930.

For the next talk we stayed in Poole as Mike Brook introduced us to Alfred Russel Wallace. Mike spoke of him as one of the greats, but not recognised. Although born outside Dorset in 1823, he moved to a property "Corfe View" in Parkstone in 1889 and then in 1902 moved to Broadstone, number 57 York Road and then Old Orchard, off Wallace Road, until his death in 1913. Having left school at age 14 and training as a land surveyor, he had an interest in plants. Although a non-academic, he followed his interest, travelling to the Amazon and Malaysia studying plants and animals. It was here, in his 20's that he discovered the "theory of evolution", prior to Darwin. Whilst Darwin was rewarded with the discovery, Wallace was not concerned, as he did not seek any recognition. He established the "Wallace Line" in Indonesia, where he found different species either side of this line. He went on to become a leading social and political commentator, publishing many papers ranging from human selection, rape of natural resources as well as votes for women. Really a man before his time!!

Colin van Geffen then visually took us to Calshot and gave us a fascinating history lesson, based on the castle, built on the spit by Henry VIII in 1539. The castle has proved to be an ideal defence over many centuries, then as a coastguard lookout against pirates and smuggling and occupied from 1925 by the RAF, with extensive building and development during the war years. Amongst the many activities, this was the training base for flying boat crew. Colin also spoke about Luttrells Tower, now owned by the Landmark Trust and offering self-catering accommodation at some £2,300 per week. Reference was also made to the adjacent property known as Eaglehurst (currently up for sale), but once used by Marconi for his broadcasting experiments, transmitting to his boat anchored at sea. The castle is now owned by English Heritage, has been restored and is open to the public. Calshot has changed once more and is now an activity centre, which includes an artificial snow slope, climbing wall and velodrome.

February concluded with a Social evening for members. Margaret had prepared a quiz, which was excellent and engaged members' brains for some time. Although Michael Williams, this year's winner of the Jack Parsons Memorial Prize, was unable to attend, the Secretary read out a letter from Michael, which summarised his research and also expressed his gratitude and honour at receiving the award. After refreshments, the Chairman gave a short summary of the outings planned for this year.

In early March, Brian Jackson gave an illustrated and sometimes humorous talk on Bournemouth's Paddle Steamers. In 1861, coal-fired paddle steamers operated between Boscombe, Bournemouth and Swanage piers, moving stone from the quarries. A passenger service later extended to the Isle of Wight, to Yarmouth and Alum Bay piers. Brian made many references to the local operator Cosens and to the "Lord Elgin", a well-known local paddle steamer which remained in service until 1955. In 1884 "The Bournemouth" was launched, which ran a passenger service from Bournemouth to Torquay in Devon. However it did not last long, as it ran aground on rocks and was wrecked. The railway company also operated paddle steamers and provided exciting excursions. After the war, paddle steamers changed to oil-fired, however the railway company still used coal, as it remained of course the fuel for railway locomotives. The last paddle steamers for Bournemouth operated in the 1960 season, the Monarch, Consul and Embassy. However on occasions we still see the "Waverley", as it visits the south coast during the summer months.

March continued with Bonnie Sartin, who took us through the musical heritage of Thomas Hardy and how this influenced his writing. His Grandfather and Father were fiddle players in a band, who performed at Stinford Church, at weddings and other gatherings. Thomas started playing the Melodian at age four although his mother did not approve of music. However she did allow Thomas, aged twelve, to play alone for dances, provided that he did not ask for payment. Bonnie read to us various amusing extracts from Thomas's books and sang several folk songs and ditties.

The following talk was from Peter Stanier and entitled, Dorset Watermills. He showed us many examples of watermills, most disused, some ruins and a few still in commercial use. Peter has written and published several books and some regarding watermills. He explained that there had been over 400 within Dorset along the various rivers and tributaries, although his talk centered on the upper section of the Stour valley. The very early mills were identified and valued in the Domesday Book of 1086 when the wheels were made of wood. In the 19<sup>th</sup> century iron foundries were established and this saw wheels made from iron, such as the 60 foot diameter wheel at Bourton Mill. In later years steam engines were added to drive some mills. His talk concluded appropriately with a photograph of a miller's grave, where a millstone had been used as the headstone.

Unfortunately the next two programmed speakers both pulled out, but thanks to Val's prompt actions, these were replaced at short notice by two excellent speakers.

The first replacement was Janet Seal with a very interesting title for her talk, "Researching Quirky Dorset". Janet had researched many historic facts and then built them into stories that brought them to life. She referred to the 1830's and hardship in the local workhouse, with fourteen hour workdays and where children were totally separated from their mothers at five years of age. We also heard about the mummified cat in the Coventry Alms, the altar frontal at Wool Church, which came from the Abbot's vestments smuggled out of Binden Abbey, when the King decreed the Abbey should be closed. The final story concerned the Wimborne Priest House, where separate houses were built in the garden to house his mistress and child, so the priest could appear celibate, to comply with the Queen's orders.

All too soon the last of the talks was upon us. Hattie Miles, a former photo-journalist from the Bournemouth Echo, gave us a very amusing evening, sharing with us extracts of her working life. She trained and spent eight years as a primary school teacher, taking "quirky" photographs as a hobby. Some published photographs led to her employment on a new weekly newspaper, the Poole Express and she entered a man's domain. 1985 saw the first colour photographs in a national and the local Express was the first provincial to use colour in 1986. On the strength of her work, a year later she was "poached" by the Bournemouth Echo. There were many interesting photographs, some world-wide scoops such as the local teacher who was also a male stripper, carefully photographed nudes on Studland

Beach and the work that all her male colleagues refused, to fly in a small aircraft taking photographs when performing loop-the-loop!! A jolly good talk to end the Spring programme!

During the period from April to July, a number of coach outings and half day visits were arranged. These were quite varied and offered something for everyone! In this Report I hope you find my summary will provide some happy memories for those who attended!

April started with a visit to Bournemouth School for Girls, to view the mural painted by Rena Gardiner. You will recall that Rena was one of the local women of note that Eileen spoke about last January. The mural is vast, covering one wall and extending over the main stairs. There are so many elements and figures that every time you looked, there was another new detail to find and explore. The visit was well worth the effort, with refreshments provided.

This was followed by a visit to the Shelley Theatre Boscombe. We enjoyed a guided tour of the theatre, which was built in 1870 and formed part of Boscombe Manor, the home of Sir Percy Florence Shelley from 1851. The restoration has added many benefits for the theatre, including the ability to host a wide number of events. However it was good to see that many original features are being kept, including the wall coverings and much of the original decoration.

Whilst I was unable to attend, I understand that members also enjoyed two most interesting visits In May. John Jones took members on a walk to the Purbeck Quarry at Acton, just west of Langton Matravers. Acton was originally a community of quarrymen's cottages, with wonderful views over Swanage. Members visited Normans Quarry, a small underground quarry restored by the National Trust. Afterwards members were rewarded with a visit to the Kings Arms in Langton Matravers for lunch.

John also led the second visit, this time to Smedmore house, Kimmeridge. Members had a conducted tour of the house and garden. The original Manor House was built by the Clavell family in 1620 and was extensively augmented in 1760. A later member of the family built the Clavell Tower on the cliff-edge, which features in the introduction to the BBC Local News. As is our custom, members enjoyed a cup of tea and cake before returning home.

The first coach trip was also in May and took us to the Weald & Downland Living Museum, near Chichester and north of Emsworth. On the way we stopped for coffee (and some even had cake!) at Stansted Park, near Rowlands Castle. This was a lovely stop, with a modern tea room, farm shop and garden centre and most sat outside, enjoying the glorious weather. The Weald & Downland Living Museum covers many acres, where a wide range of Medieval, Tudor and Victorian buildings have been transported from their original locations and rebuilt. You can see former crafts and industries in action. After much walking, there was a very welcome restaurant, where you can rest your weary legs and recover with a range of food and drink. At the end of a lovely day, members enjoyed a well-earned rest and peaceful drive back to Bournemouth.

At the end of May we visited Mompesson House within the Cathedral Close at Salisbury. We were given an introduction to the property and learnt that the house was built in 1701 by Charles Mompesson, the MP for Old Sarum, with a total electorate of only 10. He married Elizabeth Longueville and she outlived her husband, living in the house until her death in 1751. Later occupants were the Hayters, Portmans and Townsend families and following a short period of lease to the Bishop of Salisbury. The house was finally brought in 1952 by Denis Martineau, an architect, as his weekend retreat from London. He stipulated that upon his death the property would be given to the National Trust. The property consists of a lovely garden and house, mostly decorated and furnished as it would have been in the 18<sup>th</sup> century. After viewing the house and garden, members enjoyed afternoon tea and some were even persuaded to spend in the shop!!

June started with a coach outing to Hesterconbe House and Gardens, Taunton, Somerset. The house dates back to 1280 and the gardens cover some 50 acres. Unfortunately the weather turned wet soon after arriving, so we did not see all the gardens, but the rain did eventually ease. The Edwardian Formal Gardens and Victorian terrace were very interesting. The house has many original features, but for a number of years had been used by the Fire Brigade, as a control room, so much remains to be restored. Whilst in the house, we visited a modern visual art exhibition, which took much thought to understand and I am not sure if even now I fully understood much of the display!! In the afternoon, after a short drive, we visited Taunton Castle Museum. All the displays were most interesting and we saw many rooms. However our young guide was very knowledgeable and enthusiastic and we were unsure if the guided tour would ever end. However the café did remain open, so we were able to have a refreshing cup of tea and even a slice of cake, before returning home.

June should have started with a visit to Boveridge College near Cranborne. However this was cancelled on the day due to very heavy rain.

However on the following Monday afternoon we visited Eling Tide Mill, near Totton. We were split into two groups, with a guided tour of the Mill and the Visitor Centre near-by. The mill was interesting and the guide explained all the workings. This is one of only two tide mills in the country, reliant on the tides as opposed to sail and wind power. As we moved up the mill the headroom got lower and lower. Of course it was no problem for those shorter members! The Visitor centre explained the history of the local area and the mill. A mill in this location was mentioned in the Domesday Book in 1086. In 1418 a Thomas Mydlington made an agreement with Winchester College to rebuild the mill and bridge. However, the mill we see today was built by John Chandler, some 200 years ago. Having exerted ourselves, we retired for a refreshing tea, including a wide variety of cakes, indeed so many that we were encouraged to take some home!

The last visit in June was a local one, a guided walk around Poole Old Town. As leader I was very aware of the weather forecasts and indeed the day dawned with rain and my heart sank. However late morning the rain stopped and nine members enjoyed a most pleasant walk in warm weather. John Herbert, our guide from the Museum was very knowledgeable and at every stop gave us many historic and some humorous local facts or beliefs. There was however some dispute as to whether or not Ann Sidney, a former Miss World, posed for the crest and topless figure above the Museum. We heard about BOAC and the flying boat operation in Poole harbour, the 11<sup>th</sup> century Antelope Hotel and the first Charter granted to Poole by William Longsbury in exchange for money to pay his troops. John also told us about the Battle of Poole, in 1405, when Poole was invaded. At the church of St James we heard that rector Joliffe, held the post for 70 years. Finally John explained the strong links to Newfoundland, when in 1713 Poole was granted sole rights to fish for cod in their waters. At that time Poole traders became very wealthy, with the Lester family living at the "Mansion House" and other traders nearby. The tour was a circular one, finishing some 90 minutes later back at the Museum, where we stopped on the roof terrace for some welcome refreshment in the sunshine.

July started with a coach trip to both the Killerton and Cadhay estates in Devon. It was a very full day and a tight timetable. Unfortunately we arrived late, as the driver followed his satnav into a party completed housing development and then we took a 10 foot wide track, having to back-up to pass cars we met and just managed to negotiate a very narrow and low bridge arch. However the Killerton guide was accommodating and excellent. We enjoyed a tour of the house before spending time exploring the gardens and finding time for lunch. Then it was onto Cadhay house which we approached down the original tree lined drive. This house was appreciated by all, as it was a comfortable family home with well-proportioned rooms. Again the guides were excellent and after exploring the grounds we finished with a lovely cream tea in the garden. After the refreshments, it was back to the coach, for the journey home. Everybody enjoyed this full day, that is, apart from the two members who were unfortunately ill during the day.

The following week we visited Kingston Maurward College Gardens and Animal Park, on the outskirts of Dorchester. The Head Gardener met us at the animal park and took us on a very extensive walk through all the formal gardens, up and down many steps, down by the lake and then around the walled garden. There were some lovely gardens and we found very large blooms and a wall of sweet peas in the walled garden. It was a lovely walking tour but unfortunately some members understandably found the steps and/or the long distance beyond them. However we all met up at the end and enjoyed yet another cream tea in the sunshine. However we did note that the tearoom was closed and the staff departed long before we left for our separate journeys home.

To conclude our visits, in early August 30 members went by coach to London, Westminster, to visit Parliament and some members also visited the Churchill War Rooms. In spite of the poor weather forecast, the day was fine and members were able to enjoy a picnic in Victoria Tower Gardens or venture further, through the crowds, for lunch. The extensive audio tour was very good and took you through many rooms and through the two houses, the Commons and the very ornate Lords chamber. Now, when you see the various interviews on television from the Houses of Parliament, you will be able to picture where the interview is taking place! At 5pm members re-joined the coach, took the weight off their feet, sat back or indeed just drifted off and let the driver battle the traffic, as we journeyed back to Bournemouth.

Well, sad to say that concluded our programme of visits for 2019. What a programme, another one that has provided some surprises, interesting information and leaves many memories. Very many thanks to Ros, Val, John and Ann for making all the arrangements and I must not forget the assistance of my wife, Patricia with our own visits. All the visits were well planned and from the many comments made to me, enjoyed by all.

#### Autumn Programme.

The Autumn programme started on the 1<sup>st</sup> October, with an illustrated talk by Duncan Green and Felicity Woodhead, entitled "The Isles of Scilly, A Subtropical Haven". They are members of the Wildlife Trust and their talk covered a botanical holiday they had spent in the Isles of Scilly. Felicity explained that the temperature remained above 5

degrees C and so many plants found there were native to South Africa, such as the “Jelly Bean” plant. We had a colourful tour of plants within Tresco Abbey Gardens and the ship figureheads, which were recovered from the many shipwrecks around the Isles.

The following week we were at Wimbledon, as Julie Freeman spoke of her twenty five years as an umpire, both at Wimbledon and world-wide. Julie explained that the umpires have to grade the linesmen on performance, so gradually they can progress from the outside to the show courts. She brought in some of her uniforms, but explained that the most expensive were not always the most practical. Julie was an excellent speaker and entertained us with some amusing tales of encounters with the tennis “stars”.

We then remained with the natural world, as Bryan Pinchen gave us more strange, bizarre and true tales. He is an entomologist and showed us slides mainly from the insect world. Amazingly we all seemed to have seen large spider webs that morning and some members had more admiration for those creatures after the talk!

Still in October, Penny and Damien Buckley (a real double act!!) took us on a pilgrimage, across France and into Spain, all the way to Santiago de Compostela. Their pilgrimage was by cycle, some 1276 miles in 35 days, not bad for two people in their 70's! Certainly some of the accommodation on the way looked extremely basic, so I was surprised that Penny was still smiling! To cap it all, Santiago greeted them with a storm and deep floods, not the ideal finish, but at least they received their certificate.

The last talk in October was from Dave McCormack who has worked as a tour guide in Germany for a number of years and his talk was entitled, “Cold War Berlin 1945-61”. He gave us a whistle stop tour into the events from WW2 to the building of the Berlin Wall. Dave also told us some stories about his time as a guide and meeting men who had fought in the war.

November started on a much happier note, as 29 members, former members and friends enjoyed the Annual Lunch at the Mayfair Hotel on Bath Road, Bournemouth. This was an opportunity to renew acquaintances and enjoy a relaxing lunch in good company. Having spoken to many of those who attended, they were pleased with the menu and service and in particular, the opportunity to chat. If members support the venture, we will repeat the experience next year!

The following week, James Feaver spoke to us about magic Mushrooms, well not quite, as his talk was entitled, “the magic of mushrooms”, quite a different subject! However it was a most interesting talk as we learnt all about the fungi kingdom, with over 100,000 types found world-wide and 12,000 types found in the UK. As for their method of fertilisation, we learnt that there were “shooters” and “droppers”. As for their uses, apart from the obvious eating, they are used in dyes, found in food (such as bread, beer, chocolate, cheese, fizzy drinks and fruit juices), also in medicines (such as statins and antibiotics).

We then travelled back in time with Mike Gallagher, as he showed us life in Victorian London. Mike explained that he was a photographer and had obtained a collection of slides taken by a J H Jennings from 1894 to 1908, These showed the poorer areas of London, the residents with their living and working conditions. All of the slides were in poor condition when he obtained them and after much work and touching up, have now been restored. He started with an old slide which exclaimed that “Loud talking and whistling was not allowed”. The slides certainly captured the poor living conditions at home, with very poorly paid home working and the workhouses, where many families ended up and where they were separated, even the children.

Far too soon we came to the last talk. However Mike Webber gave us an amazing tour of Andalusia. We visited several locations, including Granada, Cordoba and Seville. It was interesting to see the influence of the various rulers on the style of building and how each had been adapted as new rulers settled. We saw some magnificent cathedrals and towers including one with a lady, one ton in weight! One cathedral contains the remains on Columbus, or does it? Finally we met Uncle Pepe and the factory where the “tio pepe” sherry is produced, but unfortunately no samples!!

To conclude this report I must mention the Management Committee. As a Group we are fortunate to have an active Committee to oversee the whole operation, with individuals performing all the essential tasks. First of all a thank you to John and Ros for their joint chairmanship of meetings, even if John's counting for refreshments is often only a rough estimate! In addition to the management and control of meetings, member of the Committee investigate, contact and arrange interesting programmes of weekly talks, not an easy task. As for the autumn programme, Ros produces this on her own!! Furthermore, they also seek out, investigate, contact the operators, arrange the coach and half day visits and then lead the visit and deal with all payments, hopefully to the satisfaction of the Treasurer!.

I must also add a special thank you to Tina and her helpers for ensuring that every week we have tea and coffee and biscuits on demand.

Last, but not least, a thank you to John, for arranging the hall, liaising with the Caretaker and for kindly hosting committee meetings at his home.

I hope my report has stirred some memories, hopefully good memories of past talks and/or visits. It is amazing how we can be transported around the world, or be amazed by pictures and new discoveries, whilst in this hall on a Tuesday evening. Long may it continue and so I look forward to seeing you all in 2020 for even more discoveries.

As always, I like to finish on a lighter note:

I like this quote from Guy Browning, a British humourist – “Men love women because women are the loveliest things on God’s earth. Women love men because chocolate cannot mow the lawn”

Thank you.

**Dave , Secretary.**