The Society of Dorset Men

NEWSLETTER – AUTUMN - 2026

From the Chairman



When I was approached a few years ago to stand as Chairman of the Committee, I was at first reluctant, but in the face of continued requests I finally agreed and was elected in spite of a school of thought that I was too old. I hope I have laid that particular myth to rest. However, I stated quite firmly that, if elected, I would stay in office for only three years. Those three years have now passed, in the twinkling of an eye, and so at the coming Annual General Meeting I am not seeking re-election.

My tenure of office has been made easy by the existence of the fine body of men who form the committee. I cannot thank them enough for the help and support they have given me and the Society should be grateful to them for their commitment. For myself, I hope I leave the Society in good shape and certainly better than I found it.

I am writing this piece on my eighty-seventh birthday and, as I look back over that long existence, I can think of little that has given me so much pleasure and accorded me so great an honour as has acting as chairman of this Society. Editing the Year Book, producing Newsletters, attending gatherings and events has put me in close touch to the fabric and fellowship of what I always describe as ‘the best of English counties’ and everything I have seen has been a delight.

I came late to Dorset, and although my family farmed in Verwood for several generations, my father moved away in pursuit of a career. I moved here in my late thirties, but it was always ‘coming home’. I will not be leaving it – ever!

I have proposed Steve Newman, the current Honorary Secretary as Chairman in my place. Recently retired, Steve has shown himself to be an able organiser with a strong knowledge of the Society and a great love of Dorset. I commend him to you. I am standing for the committee in order to retain my interest in all that the Society does and to pass on such experience that I may have to its benefit.

In the summer newsletter I wrote ‘How welcome it would be for a lady to stand for election.’ I am delighted to report that Justine McGuiness has answered the call. It is a natural progression from the decision to admit ladies to the Society. Justine comes with a great deal of experience in a role of this nature and I am pleased to nominate her for election.

Finally, my heartfelt thanks to you all.

ODDS & SoDMS

It was with much regret that we had to cancel the trip to Highclere Castle (Downton Abbey) this year, but it is planned to try again in 2027. Part of the problem was getting timely response from members. If you wish to join future trips and activities you are asked to respond as promptly and positively as possible.

We are seeking a guest speaker for the 2027 County Dinner and if any member has contacts with, or suggestions for, a suitable person to be invited, they should contact the Hon. Secretary steveplov@yahoo.co.uk as soon as possible. Such invitations need to be made well in advance as diaries fill up early.

Chris Goodinge and Alan Holley manned a stall at the Gillingham and Shaftesbury show and extolled the virtues of the Society and the benefits of membership. We await response to their efforts.

Members are reminded that we hold a supply of Society ties, lapel badges and cufflinks. These may be purchased by application to the Hon Secretary, prices on application steveplov@yahoo.co.uk

Dates for your Diary

Annual General Meeting
Dorset Golf and Country Club
Bere Regis BH20 7NT
Sunday 25th October, 2026
Lunch 12.15 for 12.45pm - Meeting 1.45pm

Christmas Lunch
Dorset Golf and Country Club
Bere Regis BH20 7NT
Sunday 6th December, 2026
12.15 for 12.45pm
(Details are enclosed for the above two events)

County Dinner,
Saturday 15th May, 2027
Details to be announced in the New Year



CHARITABLE GIVING

The Society allocated £3,500 for charitable donations in 2026 and this has all now been presented to the chosen Charities.

A donation of £250 to Beaminster Museum to help with the restoration the early 19th century stained-glass windows at the front of the building was handed over by Douglas Beazer.

Beaminster Museum was established 1995 and is run entirely by volunteers who present a wonderful selection of exhibits and various collections, mainly of local interest to the visiting public. The Museum is housed in a former Congregational church which is a listed building. As a result, any necessary repairs must comply with the appropriate building regulations. This adds to the cost of restoration work, and financial help from individuals or other sources is therefore always greatly appreciated.



The Society's generous donation will help with this particular project and with the Museum's activities generally. The photograph shows Douglas and Museum Chairman, Richard Smith, together with some of the Museum volunteers. (Report – Douglas Beazer)

After the Society's £500 donation to The Dorset and Somerset Air Ambulance, we received an invitation to visit their base, meet the team and learn how the operation is run.



Our chairman, Hayne Russell, Alan Holley and Chris Goodinge made their way to Henstridge Airfield on 12th September to spend a most interesting and informative morning talking with and listening to the members of this essential service.

We learnt that all the expenses of running this 24-hour service are funded entirely by charitable donations. A sobering thought when the new second helicopter cost £10,000,000.

After a fascinating morning, as we were leaving the team received a " Shout " and we were able to see Air Ambulance swing into action. This is a charity that definitely deserves our support. You can donate at www.dsairambulance.org.uk
(Report – Chris Goodinge)



The Allendale Community Centre in Wimborne run the Allendale Food Supply, who serve over one hundred people a week. Here committee member Martyn Underhill presents the Society's cheque for £250 to Brian Harries, the Chair of the Centre and himself a Society member.

Nominations for Dorset based Charities to receive donations in the year 2026/27 are welcome from members. You should please email the Charity Organiser, Alan Holley at alanholley302@gmail.com

In Committee

The committee met on 15th September with the Chairman and five members present.

The 2027 Year Book had been completed and was in the process of being prepared for printing. It was reported that 'sale or return' sales had been time consuming and generally unsuccessful. It was felt that for the future, only the established book shops should be used and it was so resolved.

The Hon. Treasurer presented a draft Balance Sheet for the year which showed the Society to be in a good financial position. The Hon Treasurer reminded the Committee that at past AGM's it had been suggested that the Society should start spending its reserves and the Committee had been asked to give some consideration to this proposal.

The Committee felt strongly that there should be no spending from the Society's reserves on subsidising events and the such like, unless it was for one off payments for goods and services that would improve the running of Society to the benefit of all its members.

The reasons for this were as follows:-

- Reducing the reserve would reduce the Society's investment income year on year.
- Apart from investment income the only other income stream was from subscriptions and this was reducing year on year and this trend was unlikely to change.
- If both investment and subscription income was to reduce it would be necessary to increase subscription charges.
- Unless a new Year Book Editor could be found revenue spending might need to increase to fund the production of the Year Book.
- The ability to give charitable grants would be reduced.

The Membership Secretary reported that there were 641 fully paid-up members with a further 58 being reviewed as to their current status. Five new members were confirmed, five were reported to have died and there were two resignations.

The 2026 events programme had gone well. It was regretful that the Highclere visit had to be cancelled but it was hoped to run this event in 2027.

It was reported that all charity grants had now been paid. (See full report on previous page)

It was hoped to have the Society represented at both the Shaftesbury & Gillingham show and the Melplash show in 2027.

The next meeting of the Committee to be held on Tuesday 12 January 2027.

Melplash Show

The Society has the opportunity to be represented at the Melplash Show and is looking for four volunteers to man the stand from 8 am to 5pm. Free entry to the Show is included. It is a good opportunity to visit a first class show and help the Society. If you would like to help, please email douglas.beazer@btopenworld.com