



THE SOCIETY OF DORSET MEN



NEWSLETTER - AUTUMN - 2024

FROM THE CHAIRMAN - A MOMENTOUS MONTH

The 4th of **July 2024** heralded a month in which much took place that may well affect our lives for years to come, regarding both the nation and the Society. On the 4th the most generous hosting of the President's Evening at West Stafford easily outshone the General Election that was taking place on the same day. Both contained a harbinger of change.



About ninety members and their ladies gathered in the grounds of Stafford House at the invitation of our President and Lady Emma to enjoy drinks and canapés and the jolly camaraderie that typifies our functions. The weather was kind so members were able to enjoy the sunshine in the lovely, tranquil gardens, but addressing the multitude later in the marquee, Julian delivered his bombshell - he would be standing down as our President at the forthcoming AGM on 20th October. Julian has been in office for thirteen years and, with advancing age, felt now was the time to step aside. A full tribute will appear in the Year Book later in the year.

The General Election delivered a change of Government and that, too, will no doubt bring changes to our lives.



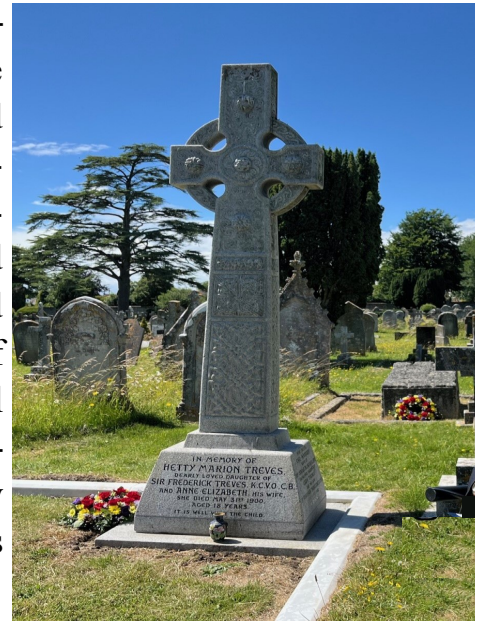
The 4th of **August 2024** kept up the momentum for change when, at a Special General Meeting held in Wimborne, the resolution "That membership of the Society be open to all regardless of gender" was passed by the requisite two-thirds majority. The committee will be addressing the necessary actions that need to be taken to implement that decision and will present them to the AGM, after which ladies will be able to become members.

The committee are also pursuing the matter of a new President and, although determined not to rush the appointment, hope to have Julian's successor in place without too much delay.

All of the above makes the **AGM on Sunday 20th October 2024** a most important one to attend, so put the date in your diary and make every effort to attend. Full details will be circulated in due course.

EVENTS PAST

Over the years, the annual **Founders' Day** commemoration of Sir Frederick Treves and William Watkins, who lie close together in Dorchester Cemetery, has been attended by a diminishing number of stalwarts, led by the indomitable John Travell. This year, a happy coincidence of circumstances led to a memorable celebration, for 2024 marked the 120th anniversary of the founding of the Society and also the 100th anniversary of the interment of the ashes of Sir Frederick Treves. Added to that, a campaign was in full swing by various bodies in Dorchester to renovate and re-letter the Treves Memorial. Furthermore, the ceremony was held on Sunday 7th July, the exact day of the Society's founding.



The restored Treves memorial with the grave of William Watkins beyond

Two dozen people, representing the Society and other parties that had been instrumental in raising the money for the project of renovation, gathered at the gravesides, where John Travell led a short service, which included a reading of the poem 'In the Evening', written in tribute to Sir Frederick by Thomas Hardy and read at the interment in 1924. Wreaths were laid and a short silence observed.

Special mention should be made of Messrs Grassby and Sons, who carried out the work in a timely fashion and whose price reflected a most generous contribution to the project.

The party then repaired to the Boys' Brigade Hall where a cream tea was enjoyed and short presentations given on Sir Frederick and William Watkins, together with an address by Ian Gosling, chair of the Dorchester Civic Society which had been instrumental in promoting the renovation of the memorial.

Sunday 24th June saw upwards of twenty-five members gather at Howards Lane car park for a **Walking History Tour of Wareham**. The weather was fitting for Midsummer's Day and our guide, Hilary Goodinge, sister-in-law of Chris, led us on a most enjoyable and instructive tour of the town. As with our Gillingham walks, it was good to get off the main road along which we usually speed on our quest to reach B, having left A a short time before,



and learn much of the hidden ways and history of the place. The site of the great fire of 1792, the Manor House (pictured) and the Black Bear received early attention, each brought to life by Hilary's informative commentary. Lady St Mary Church, the Pound and the Town Walls were all visited and the walk finished at St Martin's Church with its well-known effigy of T E Lawrence. The almost inevitable cream tea followed, bringing to an end a most enjoyable event.

ODDS and SodMS

Member **Paul Simpson** has an almost complete set of Year Books from 1953 to 1975 for which he is seeking a good home. They were collected by his late father, Mr H T Simpson, a member of the Society and a contributor to the Year Book. If anyone is interested, they are available free, and you should contact Paul direct on paulnewlands@hotmail.com.

Members are reminded that the new **Society Ties** are now available and can be purchased from the Secretary, Steve Newman (steveplo@yahoo.co.uk), at a cost of £12.50 to include postage.

The **Annual General Meeting** is on 20th October and advanced notice, together with details of the meal, are enclosed with this Newsletter. Please note that your choice of courses should be sent to the Secretary and paid for IN ADVANCE.

Reminder - The **Christmas Lunch** is at the Crown Hotel on Sunday 1st December and full details will be circulated in due course.

The trip on the **Waverley Paddle Steamer** takes place on 2nd September and forty-two intrepid members have booked for the event. We wish them a calm sea and prosperous voyage. (Hands up all those who recognise that quote as the title of a work by Mendelssohn, quoted in Elgar's Enigma Variations!)



President's Evening - 4th July, 2024

COMMITTEE NEWS

The Committee met on Tuesday 27th August and discussed a full agenda. **Paul Bompas** and **John Beashell** were co-opted and Paul attended his first meeting. This brings the committee up to nine members, one short of full strength.

Matters discussed included the outcome of the Special General Meeting of 4th August, the forthcoming AGM and the Christmas Lunch. Details will be published in due course. The Treasurer reported his satisfaction with the accounts, a fact welcomed by the rest of the committee. The next meeting will be on 29th October, 2024.

FOUNDERS' DAY

The poem reproduced below was written by Thomas Hardy and read by him at the graveside when the ashes of Sir Frederick Treves were interred in the family grave. They were read again at the 100th anniversary ceremony reported earlier in the Newsletter. It is a moving tribute from one of our greatest sons to another and must resonate with us all as we reflect on our own association with this fine county.

IN THE EVENING.

In Memoriam Frederick Treves, 1853—1923.
(DORCHESTER CEMETERY . 2 JAN . , 1924) .

BY THOMAS HARDY .



In the evening, when the world knew he was dead,
He lay amid the dust and hoar
Of ages; and to a spirit attending said:
"This chalky bed?—
I surely seem to have been here before?"

"O yes. You have been here. You knew the place,
Substanced as you, long ere your call;
And if you cared to do so you might trace
In this gray space
Your being, and the being of men all."

Thereto said he: "Then why was I called away?
I knew no trouble or discontent:
Why did I not prolong my ancient stay
Herein for aye?"
The spirit shook its head. "None knows: you went.

"And though, perhaps, Time did not show to you
Your need to go, dream-vision sees
How Aesculapius' phantom hither flew,
With Galen's, too,
And his of Cos—plague-proof Hippocrates,

And touched you forth, whose skill had read as theirs,
Maybe, had Science chanced to excel
In their day, with its scope to stem despairs
That mankind bears!
Enough. You have returned. And all is well."



A NOTE ON THE PS WAVERLEY

PS *Waverley* is named after Sir Walter Scott's first novel. She was built for the London and North Eastern Railway (LNER) to replace a PS *Waverley* that was sunk in 1940 while helping to evacuate troops from Dunkirk and is the last surviving seagoing passenger carrying paddle steamer in the world. Bought by the Paddle Steamer Preservation Society (PSPS), she has been restored to her 1947 appearance and now operates passenger excursions around the British coast and often operates cruises off the Dorset coast (see photo). She has a tonnage of 693 gross registered tons, is 239 ft 11 in (73.13 m) in length, has a beam of 57 ft 3 in (17.45 m) and a draught of 6 ft 3 in (1.91 m). She is registered to carry 925 passengers.



PS Waverley off Swanage