

# Sutton Poyntz Society

## Committee report, April 2019

### Introduction and committee members

At the AGM last year we thanked the out-going Chairman (Mike Blee) and planned to find a replacement, plus more volunteers to join the committee. Well that didn't quite happen as well as we hoped. Throughout this last 12 months we have struggled along with a small committee and we've had to share the jobs around. Bill Egerton has continued as **Secretary** and the part of the job writing the **minutes** of the monthly meetings has been taken on by Chris Hubbard. Chris also continues to inform and entertain us as Newsletter and Newsbite **editor**. We have also had to find a new **Treasurer**. Many thanks to Terry Pegrum who did a fine job. Fortunately we have found a replacement and the Treasurer role has been handed on to Andy Hohne. Recently however we have gathered a few more members for the **Committee** and I think it's safe to say that we now have a full team of workers, however we've not yet found a new **Chairman** and meetings have been chaired by a different volunteer each time – thanks to all the committee members who have taken a turn.

We will also have to cope with further changes as Bill Egerton is standing down as Secretary – Andy has stepped up to take this on too! It makes the nomination of a new Chairman even more Important.

Thankfully Bill has said that he will continue to look after the village website – but he'd still like some help!

### Jobs the Society Committee has organised on behalf of the village

These are some of the things from the last 12 months:

Social events to bring the village together: Last summer we helped the Mission Hall Trust with their **Al Fresco lunch**, which they kindly let us use to celebrate the **Society's 50th Anniversary**. The weather was perfect and the special birthday cake was an added bonus! A little later we held the annual **Vegetable Show** - we hope in 2019 we'll be able to bring back the **Scarecrow** competition too! From October to March we ran the winter **Coffee Mornings** with a warm welcome for all - and another piece of cake! In November we got together to light the **beacon** – joining thousands of others around the country remembering the end of hostilities 100 years ago. In February we thought it would be good to have some sort of event to get us together on a winter Saturday evening so we held the **Race Night**. A fun evening enjoyed by all, with lovely grub from Stracey's Fish-and-Chip shop!

Communications: We continue to issue several **Newsletters** each year, generously printed for us by Goadsby and delivered by a team of volunteers - who will also be collecting your 2019 subscriptions if you haven't paid tonight! Chris also emails numerous **Newsbites** to keep us informed of village events and news, and Bill works tirelessly to keep the village **website** updated.

Improvement projects: Thanks to a grant from the Weymouth and Portland Borough Council we have been able to do significant work around the **pond**. This has included repairing the long-time-missing third bench at the pond which has been reinstated, the repair and re-siting of the history/geology board, and the recently-completed tree maintenance, wall repairs, and new drainage at the top of the pond. The annual pond clean-up was a resounding success, involving more than two dozen volunteers.

We've also successfully applied to Wessex Water for a grant to replace the bench at the **beacon**. It's been ordered and should be delivered in the next couple of weeks – the usual volunteers will install it! And the good-old BT **phone-box** is finally under our ownership, it's been cleaned and painted, has a working light inside, and a pretty planter and sign. It's now fully operational as a community library, info point, lost-property, umbrella-loan-point - and who knows what else in future!

National Park: On the National Park proposal (presented at last year's AGM) we can report that Weymouth and Dorset Councils are closely involved, and Natural England will be conducting a further study. There is also a national review being conducted of the whole National Park and AONB structure (the Glover Review), and this may delay work on a Dorset National Park.

And finally, the SPS acts as an umbrella organisation for the Biodiversity and History groups and Neighbourhood Planning:

**Biodiversity** – led by Dave Emery, John Newbould and Colin Marsh

Wessex Water work parties: A regular group of six volunteers have been busy continuing with land management on behalf of Wessex Water. Work started in October in the Top Wood with small-scale coppicing, hedge-laying and dead-hedge construction and in recent weeks efforts have concentrated on repairing the dams, clearing overgrown vegetation and

improving safe access in the fen area. The latter is particularly important in order to control the bramble and encourage the development of water reed, which benefit birds and small mammals. Work will be completed for this season by the end of March. New volunteers are always welcome.

On-going activities: The monthly garden **bird watch** (always looking for new contributors), the monthly Biodiversity **newsletter**, and Wildlife monitoring of **small mammals**, **Bat roost** exit surveys, **Moth Trapping**, and **Butterfly** observations all continue.

New community projects: The group are pursuing a number of contacts with regard to educational projects and are always open to ideas and prepared to offer guidance to residents and others.

### **History group** – led by Bill Egerton and Caroline Crisp

The History Group continues to run one or two History Evenings a year. They have recently completed work for a new information panel for the top of the pond with some village history (addressing the last 1000 years, not the last few million like the geology panel!) There was also a very interesting Heritage walkabout in May, led by the AONB. And a new History Walk leaflet is in preparation to guide visitors around the highlights of the village core.

All these projects and events rely heavily on volunteers and we would like to record our appreciation of their efforts.

### **Neighbourhood Planning** – led by Peter Dye

The Plan has now been submitted to the Local Authority and we now wait for their assessment. Historic England reviewed the plan and wrote: *[We are] impressed with the progress made in the preparation of the Plan over what, in our experience of these exercises, is quite a short period of time ... and by the degree to which your community has sought to understand and value the distinctive qualities of the Plan area.* We'd like to take this opportunity to thank all those who have been involved and particularly Katrina Blee, Peter Dye and Colin Marsh who have taken on huge jobs on behalf of the village.

### The Sutton Poyntz Society and Planning

Following a lively debate at the last AGM on policies and rules, the May 2018 meeting of the SPS Committee discussed how it should evolve to operate alongside the forthcoming Neighbourhood Plan. The following position was published:

*'Conservation' being the original raison d'être of the Society, Committee members have tried to apply the Society's Planning Policy to planning applications in as fair and objective a way as they possibly can, but over the last few years have come under increasing personal pressure from villagers of all persuasions. It has increasingly appeared to the Committee members that the Society's planning role divides the village rather than brings people together.*

*As the future Neighbourhood Plan should make case-by-case planning reviews unnecessary, it was proposed that the Committee's role in reviewing planning applications be de-emphasised.*

*The Committee voted unanimously that starting with the May meeting it would not discuss or carry out any planning related activities for a period, presently undefined, possibly up to the emergence of the Neighbourhood Forum Plan. Comments on new applications should only be made by concerned individuals.*

After the May Committee meeting we met with Michael Pressly a couple of times, and he agreed (albeit reluctantly) that there was no point for the time being in calling the Special General Meeting that had been promised to debate changes to the Society's Planning Policy.

### Future structure

It is now becoming clear that, once agreed and in-place, the Neighbourhood Plan will require a 'management and monitoring' function. Peter Dye met with the Town Clerk and their proposal is to set up a Monitoring Group. This will be run by the Town Council, with a mix of councillors, unitary authority representatives and local volunteers. (Other places with Neighbourhood Plans have already adopted this way of working.) The tasks suggested for the Monitoring Group would be essentially to monitor progress on Community Actions in the Plan, to check that the Plan's policies are being applied and to ensure that the Plan's policies and actions continue to be valid and proper. It would seem to be appropriate for the Society to seek the right to nominate one or more volunteers.