

Newsletter of the

April 2025

Issue 138

# Golden Cap Association



(West Dorset)



in support of **National  
Trust**



Chairman: Margaret McClellan  
Treasurer: Valerie Gierth Secretary: Mary Rogers  
A Voluntary Association of National Trust Members  
& Volunteers.

Founded in 1978 to promote & prosper the work of  
the National Trust.

[www.goldencapnt.org.uk](http://www.goldencapnt.org.uk)

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you've  
renewed  
your  
membership

# From the Chairman ...

I took over as Chairman from Mike Nicks at the beginning of January and this is the first report I have written for the Newsletter.

I am pleased to tell you that Valerie Gierth has now taken over as Treasurer thus releasing Mike from all the work he was doing as Chair and Treasurer over the last few years and as Treasurer for many years before. At the recent AGM I was able to present him with a gift voucher from the members as a token of our appreciation of this effort. New to the Committee is Alison Ridgeway who has taken over from Valerie heading up our social activities. Her input will be very welcome.

So far this year there have been two talks, one by Charlie Wheeler about the Swannery and another from Alan Jenkins about a Royal Visit that went wrong. At the AGM we heard from Hannah Jefferson about some projects that have been undertaken over the last year in this region. In April, which is the last talk of the winter season, Andy Williams will be talking about the Bankes family and Kingston Lacey. Sarah Nicks has more interesting talks arranged for the remainder of the year.

Earlier this month the Spring Lunch was held at Lyme Regis Golf Club. Unfortunately the outing to Mottisfont, arranged by Mary Rogers and Janet Carey has been cancelled due to insufficient members taking up the places. This has happened before when there is a fair bit of walking involved but the outings that include cruising on waterways are still popular. Mary is currently looking into running another one during the summer/autumn.

There has been one Committee meeting so far this year and much of the time was spent discussing the future of our Association.

At the Extraordinary General Meeting which was held on 31<sup>st</sup> March 2025 there was a great deal of discussion about the future of the Golden Cap Association and the various committee vacancies that will be occurring in the next 12 months. A resolution was put to the assembled members to dissolve the Association at the end of 2025. The resolution failed as the necessary 2/3 majority of those present was not reached.

Now the membership must decide what they want to do about this. The committee will look again at the way forward for our Association in order to keep it going. You will be receiving an email or letter (for those not on email) from me outlining the committee roles that will become vacant during the next 12 months. If the role of Chairman is not filled the Association can not continue. There are eleven "jobs" on the committee of which one, Publicity Officer, has been vacant for several years. If the other roles are not filled then the activities on offer may



be severely affected. At the moment of those eleven roles there are five committee members that have indicated that some time in the next twelve months they will be stepping down. They are Chair, Outings Organiser, Talks Organiser, General Committee member, Newsletter and Website Editor. Plus the Publicity Officer. I hope that those of you who voted against the motion to close at the end of this year will be coming forward to take up the roles on the committee in order to keep it going.

On a happier note, we still have much to look forward to in the coming months, interesting speakers, Fish and Chip Lunch with Quiz, and probably a meal in the Autumn. I look forward to seeing you at those.

Margaret McClellan

## Christopher Walliker

It is with great sadness the Committee of the Golden Cap Association announce the death of our President, Christopher Walliker.

Chris has been the President since 2010, and in that time he helped guide and support the various committees and members. Prior to this he was an active volunteer on the committee, holding the position of Vice-Chairman, as well as long term Organiser and Chairman of the Outings Committee. Since 2004, Chris organised and led 46 outings to many varied venues. These included National Trust properties and venues such as, Osborne House on the Isle of Wight, Salisbury and Edward Heath's House, Dartmouth Steam Railway and River Dart Cruise, Swindon GWR Railway Museum, Portsmouth and the Mary Rose, Dunster and the West Somerset Steam Railway plus 2 visits to the Dartmouth Royal Naval College and many others. His organisation of outings was first class, and the planning always involved visiting each venue prior to the actual outing with his lovely wife, Sue, so he could research, clarify timings, search for food and drink outlets and any other relevant details, which would enable the members to have enjoyable, educational, rewarding and trouble-free visits.

Chris was a true gentleman and hugely respected by all who met him, his experience, empathy, common sense approach and knowledge of the Golden Cap Association has been invaluable, both directly and indirectly, always keeping the Association on an even keel. He was committed and dedicated to volunteering and many people in Chideock, Bridport and surrounding areas have benefited from, and should be grateful for, his hard work, wisdom, kindness and immaculate organisation. Chris will be missed by so many.



## Membership: 2025 – 2026 Subscriptions

*(Continuing membership of the National Trust or being an accredited volunteer is an essential condition for Association membership)*

To those who have already paid their 2025-2026 subscription your Membership Card is enclosed with this Newsletter, thank you

To those who have not already paid their subscription, this is a gentle reminder that is was due on 1<sup>st</sup> April. I would be grateful if you would let me have asap your cheque along with a completed subscription form which is on page 5, along with a Stamped Addressed Envelope for your card. **If you do not include an SAE your card will be sent to you with the September newsletter.**

If you have decided not to renew your membership, it would be very helpful if you could let me know so that our records may be updated accordingly.

If no membership card is enclosed that means I have not received your subscription for this year and, therefore, you are no longer an Association member.

If you pay by Standing Order but do not have a membership card please contact me asap as I am unable to identify the source of several payments shown on the Bank Statement.

Your current (2025-2026) Golden Cap membership number must be quoted when applying for any of the Association's activities.

If you added a donation to your subscription, please accept our thanks. Your generosity is greatly appreciated.

Should you have any queries regarding subscription payment or your membership, please contact me.

Diana Coleridge - Membership Secretary  
dianacoleridge@gmail.com  
01308 424431

### Welcome to the following new members since January:

Richard Gillingham - Bridport  
Pippa Johannsen - Bridport  
George Teideman - Bridport

## Golden Cap Association (West Dorset) Renewal of Annual Subscription 2025/2026

Title(s) \_\_\_\_\_ (BLOCK CAPITALS PLEASE)

Name(s) \_\_\_\_\_

Address \_\_\_\_\_

Postcode \_\_\_\_\_ Tel No \_\_\_\_\_

Email address \_\_\_\_\_

NT Membership No. \_\_\_\_\_

I enclose £ \_\_\_\_\_ (subscription)

Please make your cheque payable to 'Golden Cap Association' and send by post to:  
Mrs D Coleridge, 115 Victoria Grove, Bridport DT6 3AE

If you wish to pay by Bank Transfer:

HSBC Bank, Sort Code **40-13-28**

The sum of **£6 / £9**

To the credit of **Golden Cap Association**

Account number **21428284**

Quote your **Surname and Golden Cap membership number**

I consent to the above data being used for communication purposes only by the Golden Cap Association. To allow us to communicate with you the box **MUST** be ticked and **SIGNED** (below).

Subscriptions were due on 1st April - £6.00 for one person and £9.00 for two at the same address.

Please enclose/send a Stamped Addressed Envelope to:

Mrs D Coleridge, 115 Victoria Grove, Bridport DT6 3AE  
for your Membership Card.

If you do not provide a SAE your card will be sent to you with the September newsletter.

**The National Trust Golden Cap Association  
(West Dorset)  
Extraordinary General Meeting  
held on Monday 31 March 2025  
in the Bridport United Church Main Hall,  
East Street, Bridport**

**Present:** 59 members 3 visitors

**Chairman's Introduction**

The Chairman, Margaret McClellan, opened the meeting by thanking everyone for coming and explaining the reason for the EGM.

She explained that for some time now it had been difficult to attract members to come on to the committee, and that we were very fortunate that Alison Ridgeway has accepted the challenge! There have been many requests over the years for more members to come onto the committee, but with little effect. The outing to Mottisfont has not attracted sufficient numbers to make it viable. No longer are members keen to visit NT houses and gardens where there is an amount of walking to undertake. Still popular are cruises on waterways where very little walking is required. But there are only so many rivers, canals and coastal routes to do and we have enjoyed most of them!

Although there have been many offers of help, that is not what is really needed. There is help in the afternoons as several members help with making, serving and clearing up the refreshments. There are those who help put out and clear up the chairs but more of that help is needed. In the past there have been individuals who have organised outings. The late David Smith and his group of volunteers used to run 5-6 well subscribed outings in the summer months. Now our Secretary, Mary Rogers is doing that with Janet Carey doing the admin side of things.

Four years ago Mike Nicks added being Chair to his duties as Treasurer in order to keep this organisation going. It cannot go on any longer.

What is needed are members who will commit to spending 2-3 years on the committee. People who have good computing skills are now essential. It is not just attending three or four committee meetings a year and attending various social events. Committee members also need to be prepared to spend some time working at home. Each role requires a different approach and comes in various forms.

Most people on the committee have been there for many years and they have enjoyed doing it but now some think it is really time for others to take their turn.

Four committee members have indicated that if the GCA does not close at the end of the year they will be retiring at the next AGM. Veronica Smith, who worked with her late husband David running many very successful outings and currently organises the raffles at the talks; Chris Senior, who produces the Newsletter and manages the Website; Sarah Nicks who organises our speakers' programme; and Margaret McClellan the Chair.

Recruitment of new members is needed and this has not happened, at least not in sufficient numbers. The role of Publicity Officer has been vacant since 2020. That person would now have to be familiar with all the ways of recruitment that the internet has to offer – Social Media Platforms e.g. Facebook.

In order to replace Chris Senior someone must be adept at Desk Top Publishing and Web site management.

The end of this year was chosen for closure as December is the end of our financial year and all loose ends could then be tidied up. At the recent committee meeting it was decided that one last attempt to fill the upcoming vacancies would be made by not invoking the motion until the end of September. Since then it has been realised that the deadline must be brought forward to the end of July to allow for the publication of the Newsletter in September and to prepare the programme of events for the next few months.

Many of our colleagues in similar associations in Dorset have already closed for the same reasons and GCA is one of the last to consider this action. GCA has a lot to celebrate during its 47 years.

**A discussion** then took place when it was stressed that it would be a tragedy if GCA closed and that if we voted for the Resolution that would be the end with no going back.

A suggestion was made that meetings could be held in the evening to encourage younger members who work. Attendance at meetings had fallen from 80/90 people before Covid to 50ish now.

It was pointed out that we were unable to recruit new members via the National Trust because, under General Data Protection Regulations, they were unable to supply us with the details of new members in our area.

It was also mentioned that there had been seven National Trust Associations in Dorset but there were now only three.

Hannah Jefferson highlighted the fact that as NT volunteers all committee members were invited to events and received the twice monthly Dorset Minute.

As 80% of the membership are on email it was agreed that a mailing would be sent out detailing the roles that needed to be filled on the Committee with a letter being sent to those not on email.

**Voting then took place on the Resolution**

**To dissolve the Golden Cap Association  
of the National Trust  
on 31 December 2025**

Proposed by Margaret McClellan, Chair of the GCA on behalf of the committee and seconded by Chris Clark.

Votes were

23 for the Resolution

19 against the Resolution

As two thirds of those present and voting was required to pass the Resolution, it was not carried.

## Mike Nicks

Those not at the AGM may not realise that Mike Nicks has retired from being Chairman as well as Treasurer. He became Treasurer in April 2011 succeeding Penny Bigg. As an ex-maths teacher we knew we were in safe hands as far as the accuracy of the accounts were concerned. Mike successfully did this job for 13 years retiring at the 2025 AGM.

He became Chairman in June 2021 in response to our urgent need at a difficult time, retiring 3½ years later on 31st December 2024.

Mike is a consummate people person who has worked hard to support the committee in the intervening period with good humour and dedication especially during the latter period of the Covid restrictions. He particularly went out of his way to support and encourage members of the committee and other helpers and always expressed his appreciation of their efforts.

His larger than life presence will be greatly missed at committee meetings and association events.



## Why do we Lay Hedges?

Hedge laying is normally a restorative practice. When a hedge has not been trimmed or cut for a number of years it can lead to gaps in the canopy and ultimately leads to the hedge doing its level best to turn into a line of trees. This, of course, is not necessarily as bad as you might think but if we want to rejuvenate the hedge and turn it back into a dense, scrubby corridor then hedgelaying is a very effective way of doing so. This has multiple benefits, from cover for small rodents to deadwood creation within the base of the hedge for invertebrates. It also liberates the ground flora on the bank in the same way that coppicing a wood does, so often you see hedge-bank plants flowering in the second year after laying due to the light that has been let in on the hedge bank.

The hedge above Filcombe had not been laid for over 20 years, the willow had become extremely leggy and collapsing into the fields on each side. We needed to re-work the ditch too. So, the primary motivation for laying this hedge is to get access to the ditch but it is also a good excuse to lay the hedge and reset things, rather than simply lopping things off and doing the bare minimum.

We only actively manage a fraction of the hedges over Golden Cap, more active management in the form of cutting or flailing takes places along boundaries/ roads/ access tracks. We don't currently have the labour to do more than this.

There are wildlife benefits to hedgerow management but there are no doubt benefits to not managing for some species. Species composition makes a big difference as to how long a hedge will go without intervention. A thorn hedge will grow slower and remain thicker for longer. Normally after 10 years or so a willow hedge, if not flailed will be starting to open out and collapse. This can, in some circumstances, be to the detriment of the earth bank. There is also an opportunity when laying to select hedgerow saplings to become trees of the future. Laying lets light into the hedge and makes sapling recruitment/selection possible.

Rangers Jon Sibthorp & Adam Woolcott



Filcombe Hedge



Tools of the trade

## News from North & West Dorset National Trust

### Flagstones at Max Gate older than Stonehenge

Rachael White

A recent paper from the University of Exeter has revealed that the stone circle under Max Gate (called 'Flagstones') dates to 3200 BC, approximately two centuries earlier than previously thought. This makes it the earliest known large circular enclosure in Britain and suggests it may have been a prototype for Stonehenge. Flagstones has been dated using radiocarbon analysis of finds from excavations.

*"The chronology of Flagstones is essential for understanding the changing sequence of ceremonial and funeral monuments in Britain," said Dr Greaney. "The 'sister' monument to Flagstones is Stonehenge, whose first phase is almost identical, but it dates to around 2,900 BC. Could Stonehenge have been a copy of Flagstones? Or do these findings suggest our current dating of Stonehenge might need revision?"*

"Beginning of the circle? Revised chronologies for Flagstones and Alington Avenue, Dorchester, Dorset" is published in *Antiquity*, by Cambridge University Press.



### New look for Max Gate visitor WC

The visitor WC at Max Gate has had a refresh. The old tenant's shower cubicle has been removed, and the room has been redecorated including repainting of the walls and woodwork, and a new vinyl floor laid.

This is phase one in the refurbishment project of the WC as long term we look in increase our toilet provision, including an accessible WC facility somewhere in the building.

The original Thomas Hardy mirror that was hanging above the sink is in the process of being relocated to its original position in the Bathroom on the First Floor. A modern mirror in a similar style to the historic one will be added to the visitor WC.



### A new Residence for Owls



A nice new Barn Owl box made with the help of volunteers and families will be placed on the Golden Cap Estate. (It looks like it is already occupied but we hope that the real residents will be a bit more lively!)

## Young Reporters dig deep at Hive Beach

In early March we were delighted to welcome to Hive Beach a group of young reporters from The Vault. The Vault is a place for writers to meet and devise their own quarterly newspaper, it is then professionally printed and widely distributed. The young people are aged between 10 and 15 and take it in turns to be the editor. They meet in Bridport once a week after school.

On this occasion at Hive Beach the reporters spent nearly an hour interviewing Countryside Manager Leo Henley Lock, about the issues of erosion at Hive Beach, focusing on the double impact to the site from both the sea and the rainwater, which runs off the land after heavy downpours.

Seeing first-hand how the cliffs, which have fallen into the sea, and the extent of the erosion happening one person asked 'Is England actually getting smaller' and another questioned the impact this has on the wildlife.

Nick Goldsmith who facilitates the sessions at The Vault said "It was great to hear our reporters digging deep with their questions for Leo" and we couldn't agree more. It was fabulous chatting to such an interesting group of young reporters, and we can't wait to read the feature in the next edition.



## Fixing things in West Dorset

The Burton Bradstock Volunteers have been busy fixing fencing in Hive Beach car park, clearing scrub and widening a path on the Hive butterfly survey route. They have also created a stile on a new footpath being created so that we can divert people away from the crumbly cliffs.

The Wednesday Volunteers have been out at Coneys Castle clearing bramble off the ramparts so the bluebells can be looking at their best. They have also re-installed a stile at the entrance.

They also had a different kind of task, they were channelling their inner beaver and created 'leaky dams' in the stream through Filcombe wood.

Leaky dams do what they say on the tin – they leak! The idea behind them is to slow the flow of the stream, creating pools of stiller water which is good habitat for amphibians and invertebrates, but will still allow the water to flow. They're often used as part of Natural Flood Management as they will slow the peak flow of a river and can help prevent flooding downstream. We're less worried about that benefit, but are keen to see what sort habitats they will create. In the photo you can see that within minutes of being put together water is held back upstream but some water is still flowing through gaps in the logs.

It was a fun activity splashing around in the stream, and interesting to be able to put into place a technique they'd seen when, along with the Ecology Volunteers, they visited DWT's Wild Woodbury a few weeks previously.



The new stile for the coast path



A leaky dam

West Dorset Ranger  
- Adam Woolcott

## Open Days at Portland House 24 Belle Vue Rd, Weymouth DT4 8RZ

**Fri to Sun 2-4 May 2025**

Furniture Restorer, Paul Dean will be present on Friday 2nd May

**Fri to Sun 19-21 September 2025**

**10-4pm with last entry at 3pm**



This stunning Art-Deco inspired style villa on the Dorset coast lounges elegantly at the top of a slope overlooking the harbour at Portland. This extraordinary house, surrounded by a huge garden and terraces, invokes the sophistication and luxury of old-school Hollywood, with its palm-fringed drive, pacific-blue Crittal windows and the house itself dazzlingly white against the blue of the sea beyond.

Entry is free and there will be a small catering unit selling hot drinks and refreshments (both cash and card will be accepted). Also available are the collectable pin badges which can be purchased with cash only.

### Privacy Statement

Golden Cap Association (West Dorset) keeps names, addresses and other contact data exclusively for the purposes of maintaining membership records and contacting members via newsletters and individual correspondence to advise on events and activities.

This information is never divulged to any other individual or organisation, nor is additional information on any member obtained from any other source. On cessation of a membership, all personal data is removed from our records.

Any member has the legal right to see, alter or remove personal data kept by Golden Cap Association (West Dorset) by submitting a formal request (including his/her name and address) to the Chairman. A response must be provided within one month of the request being received.

## Illustrated Talks

in the United Church Main Hall, East Street, Bridport  
at 2:30pm

Mon  
29th  
Sept



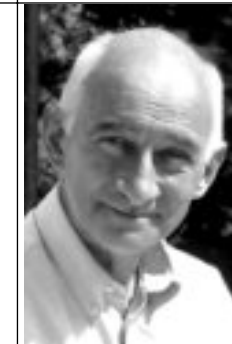
**The Shetlands** by Peter Watson  
During Peter's career in the oil industry he managed to visit many locations across the world. One of the most interesting was spent in the Shetlands where he was for eight years. The talk will highlight life in the Shetlands with his family and it shows how the islands have changed since he left.

Mon  
27th  
Oct



**Versailles and the English** by Philip Mansell  
Philip is an eminent Historian and author with awards and honours in the UK and France. He will talk about the relationship between England and France from Louis XIV to Queen Victoria. How the court and palace at Versailles influenced English taste, including art, architecture and gardens.

Mon  
24th  
Nov



**Arts and Crafts, Houses and Gardens** by Paul Atterbury  
Between the 1880's and 1930's domestic architecture, interior design and small gardens were radically changed by the Arts and Crafts ideas, styles and philosophies. It started with William Morris, and was then carried forward by Lutyens, Voysey and Gertrude Jekyll. Paul will show us how these changes laid the foundation for the way we live today.

### Advance Notice

Mon 26 Jan 2026 **The German Occupation of the Channel Islands in WWII**  
by Lt Col James Porter

Mon 23rd Feb 2026 **Mapperton House, Gardens and the Montague Family**  
by Peter Rand



# Officers & Committee Members

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