

## Purview over Purbeck

Members once again had a day out being instructed in the extraction industries of Purbeck and its special clays. Our guide Brian Langdown took us all round the car park and showed where the clay quarrying had left lakes and ponds. The tour included a trip to the railway (Swanage Railway Trust is celebrating its 35<sup>th</sup> anniversary this year) and the Purbeck Mineral and Mining Museum. . Nigel wasn't always paying attention and fell asleep at one point, quickly snapped by Gill Vickery, below.



Liz had her own share of railway action:



This handsome red engine which Liz steering is a Quarry Hunslet engine, built in Leeds in 1893 and worked at Dinorwic Slate Quarry in Llanberis. It is named after the Grand National winner of that year. Although it belongs to the Bursledon Brickworks industrial museum, it was brought to Norden for re-tubing the boiler and seems to have stayed.



Cloister was to come second in two Nationals before he was to win in 1893, a lot of intrigue followed this horse on his running and even more on the years he did not run.

The horse on his first attempt at the race carrying 11st.7lbs, stayed with the leaders with much of the race and when the leaders went for home he was there up with them. As the great race often does, it came down to the run-in to sort out which of the two best horses was to win and that day he was behind but, going slightly better than the eventual winner Come Away, his

jockey decided to go for a gap between the winner and the rails at a crucial point on the run in and Come Away's jockey 'closed the door and would not let him up the inside'. After an objection by Cloisters jockey, the placing's remained unaltered. The following year's race saw

Cloister carrying 12st.3lbs. He was to try and front run but due to the weight he gave to the other horses, he was to become 20 lengths adrift and was the runner-up again. However he put all this behind him when winning the following year in a great style. When the horses jumped off at the start there was the usual charge for this first fence but by the time the field reached the second Cloister was ahead and just kept on going putting more and more distance between him and the rest of the field and he went on to eventually win by a massive 40 lengths, the biggest winning margin ever.

Below you can see the Ruston engine which has just dragged Cloister out of the engine shed. Ruston was built at Boutham Works, Lincoln in 1949 and worked originally at a gravel quarry near Canterbury. It has been restored to working use and is a valuable asset to the Railway's collection.



There were two main companies who operated concessions to extract clay from Purbeck: Fayle & Co who worked at Norden and Pike Brothers whose quarries were at Furzebrook, now known as Blue Pool. Fayle & Co supplied Josiah Wedgwood in the late C18. The two companies merged in 1949 and were then taken over by English China Clays which is now

owned by Imerys who donated the present building to the museum. There was a Randall mine at one point, although its location is now unknown.



*Brian Langdown on the left: with the background of Corfe Castle, talking to SSARG visitors, while the rest of us indulged in some train spotting.*

The clay extracted is known as 'ball clay' owing to its properties and is used as an addition to more ordinary clays even now, to enhance their quality. Both open cast and underground mines were opened; the latter only finally closing in 1999 but open cast mining still continues. Initially the clay was moved to the coast on horseback but later, tramways were built initially (Pike Bros

built their own tramway in 1840) horse drawn, but later steam engines were introduced. From barges at the quays at Goathorn in the shallow waters of Poole harbour, the clay was loaded onto ships for export around the world.



In the mid-nineteenth century, much of Corfe worked in the clay mines and as the railways became mechanised, different trades were adopted and employment locally became more varied. The railway was also used to take children to school and for days out. As no carriages were provided, the passengers had to travel in small wooden trucks, hardly the last word in comfort or weather resilience. As the mines closed, the area became depopulated.



comfortable was this lively specimen in the car park.

SSARG were visiting the Purbeck Mining and Mineral museum courtesy of our Research Director Clare Randall, but sadly she was unable to join us. The museum was small and Clare has been working to develop its exhibition space. Quite a challenge for her! It's part of the Swanage Railway Trust and is based in a loading shed for sumping the clays into transport wagons for taking to the harbour.

As we haven't provided pictures of the museum itself, we can add this: also viewed in the vicinity and rather more

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