



Drystone walls separate the fields on Purbeck's exposed and windswept limestone plateau. Where flint tools handled by our Neolithic ancestors lay buried for five thousand years.

Worth Matravers an enclosure known in Anglo Saxon times as a "wearth" has mediaeval strip lynchets on East and West man above Winspit. At St.Aldhelm's head, next to the chapel, the coastguard station looks out on the race and to the east cliffs pitted with redundant quarry workings, the building blocks for harbour walls and villages. Their school registers and churchyard headstones baring the names Bower, Harris, Harden, Keates, Bugler, Norman, Bonfield and Lander. Local families some of whom have been associated with the extraction and shaping of Purbeck stone for as long as records exist.

In the 1920's quarry manager Titus Lander gave the young Mary Spencer Watson the use of a banker and the loan of a mallet and chisels. A gesture leading to a life-times work carving figurative sculptures in her studio at Dunshay Manor.

Blessed with an abundance of two valuable ingredients, stone from the nearby quarries and the special quality of coastal light. Ideal conditions for professional sculptors like Mike Bizley at Spyway Farm on Priest's Way, Jonathan Sells, Val Quinn, Angelika Seik and Alan Davis.

In his workshop below the Castle in Corfe, near Nigel Dragon's bakery that sells doughnuts to die for, Tony Viney is surrounded by chippings and off-cuts of Spangle, Grub and Cap producing fine polished plates and vessels turned from stone that is rich with tiny fossilized shells.

Reg Prior and Alan Lander a fourth-generation fisherman set and haul their lobster pots off Chapmans Pool. Collector Raymond Newman, landlord of the Square & Compass, now in the hands of his son Charles their finds of ancient coins and fossils are neatly displayed in the pub's museum. Where pumpkin, cider and beer Festivals and a Fossil Fair are celebrated each year with live music. 2008

Three books researched and written by Ilay Cooper encapsulate the lot.

*Purbeck Revealed* a personal account with secrets, tales and gossip. *The Spencer Watsons at Dunshay Manor* and *The Square & Compass - A Newman Century*, a watering hole barely a stone's throw from where those Neolithic flints were excavated and today's stone industry that first exploited the iconic and beautifully decorative Purbeck marble nearly two thousand years ago continues to operate. Its story told in Trev Haysom's authoritative book *Purbeck Stone*, published in 2022.