

# DURLSTON PLEASURE GROUNDS

## 'PARKS FOR PEOPLE' PROJECT



The 'Durlston Pleasure Grounds' Project is a partnership, led by Dorset County Council to enhance the Victorian landscape at Durlston for nature, history and people.

Volunteers will work with Rangers, artists and specialists to create a landscape which is welcoming, accessible, inspiring, educational, surprising, playable and sustainable.

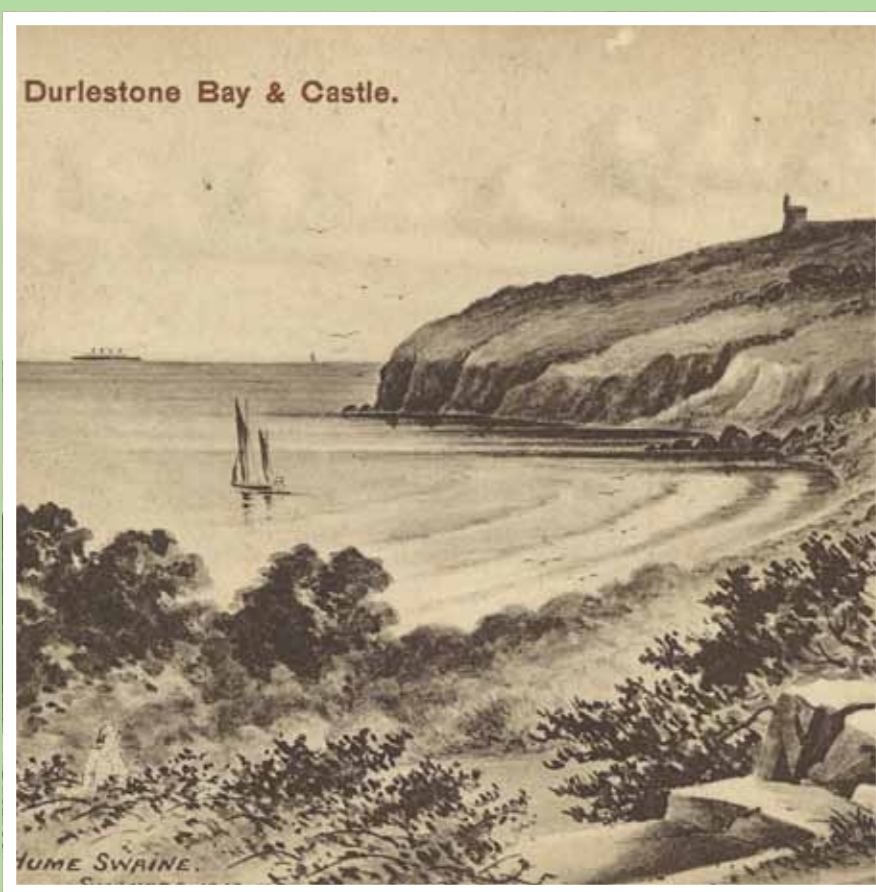
The Victorian landscape and features will be enhanced to realise George Burt's vision for people to 'Look round and read great nature's open book'.

Habitats will be managed for wildlife and the tranquillity of the area will be maintained.

Opportunities for play, discovery and creativity will be enhanced, along with a base for training, volunteering and community events.

The project will help Durlston become the best place in Dorset for people with disabilities and reduced mobility to enjoy wildlife and the countryside.

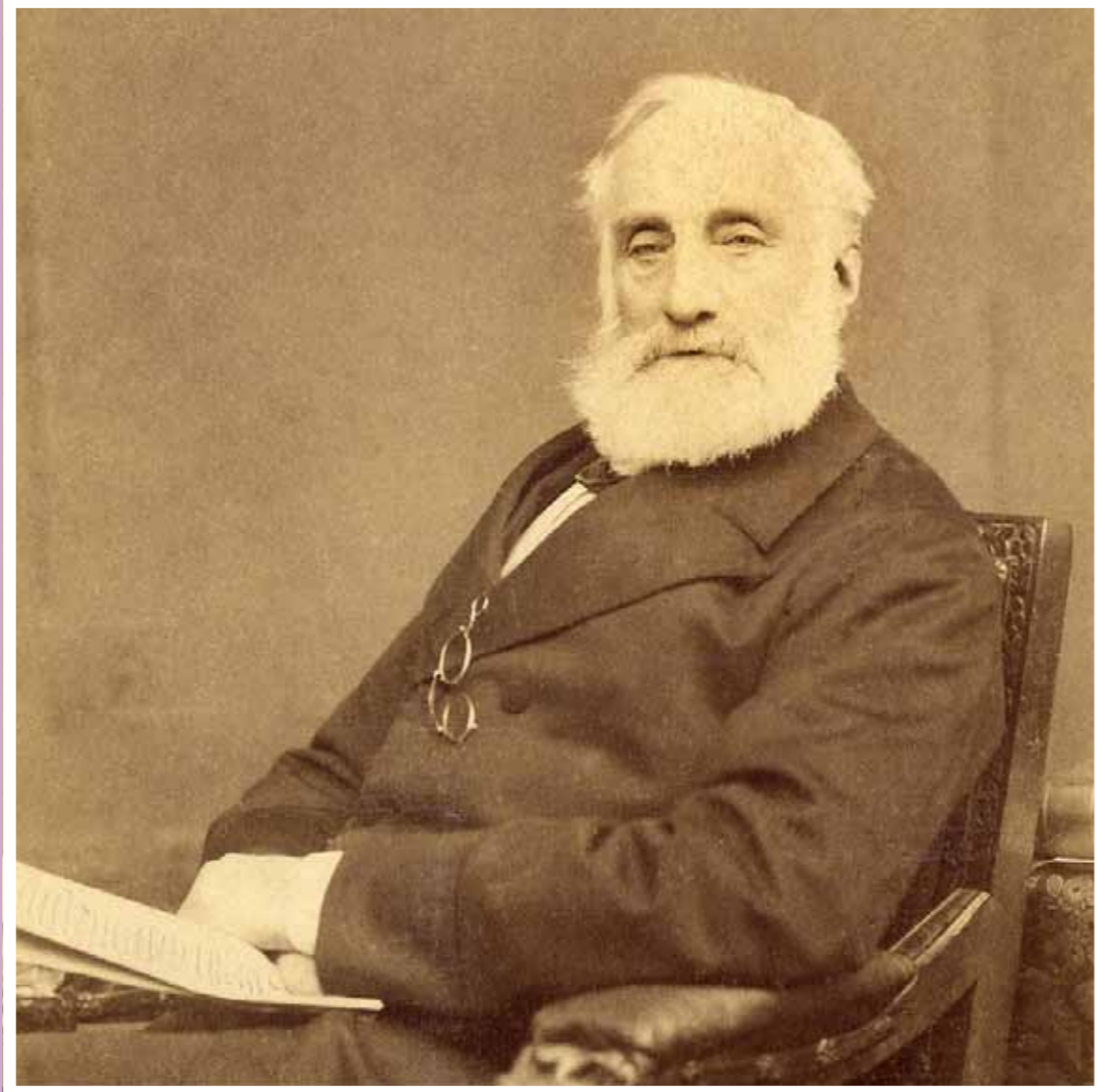
The legacy will include a skilled and expanded staff and volunteer group supporting the management of the area, creating a landscape which can evolve to meet the needs of visitors and local people.



*'Look round and read great nature's open book.'*



# A VICTORIAN LEGACY



Durlston Park Estate was developed in the late 19th century by George Burt "in whose nature, eccentricity and business capacity, the instincts of the pedagogue, the philanthropist and the money-maker seem to have been strangely mixed".

The Pleasure Grounds are a Grade II Historic Park and Garden - the listing describes them as:

'A late Victorian composition whose walks, shrubberies, tree planting, features and inscriptions were laid out as part of a grand scheme for residential development and to be accessible to the public. It is a sublime landscape and a moral one, reflected in the literary quotes inscribed on stone tablets and elements such as the Globe and Chart.'

Throughout the 20th Century, the Pleasure Grounds have seen a variety of attempts to develop the area as an attraction for tourists. For many years there were kiosks where visitors would pay to walk up through the woods, to see the Globe or to enter Tilly Whim. (We won't be restoring these!) At one point, the Aviary Glade even featured a small zoo!

## VISITORS to SWANAGE

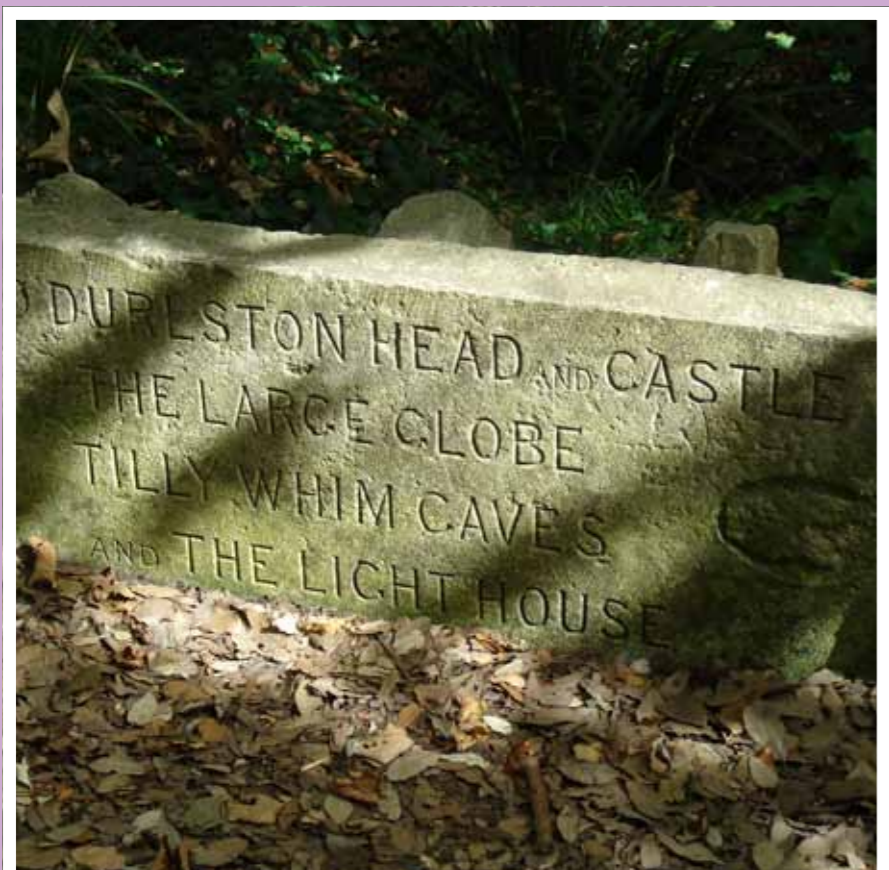
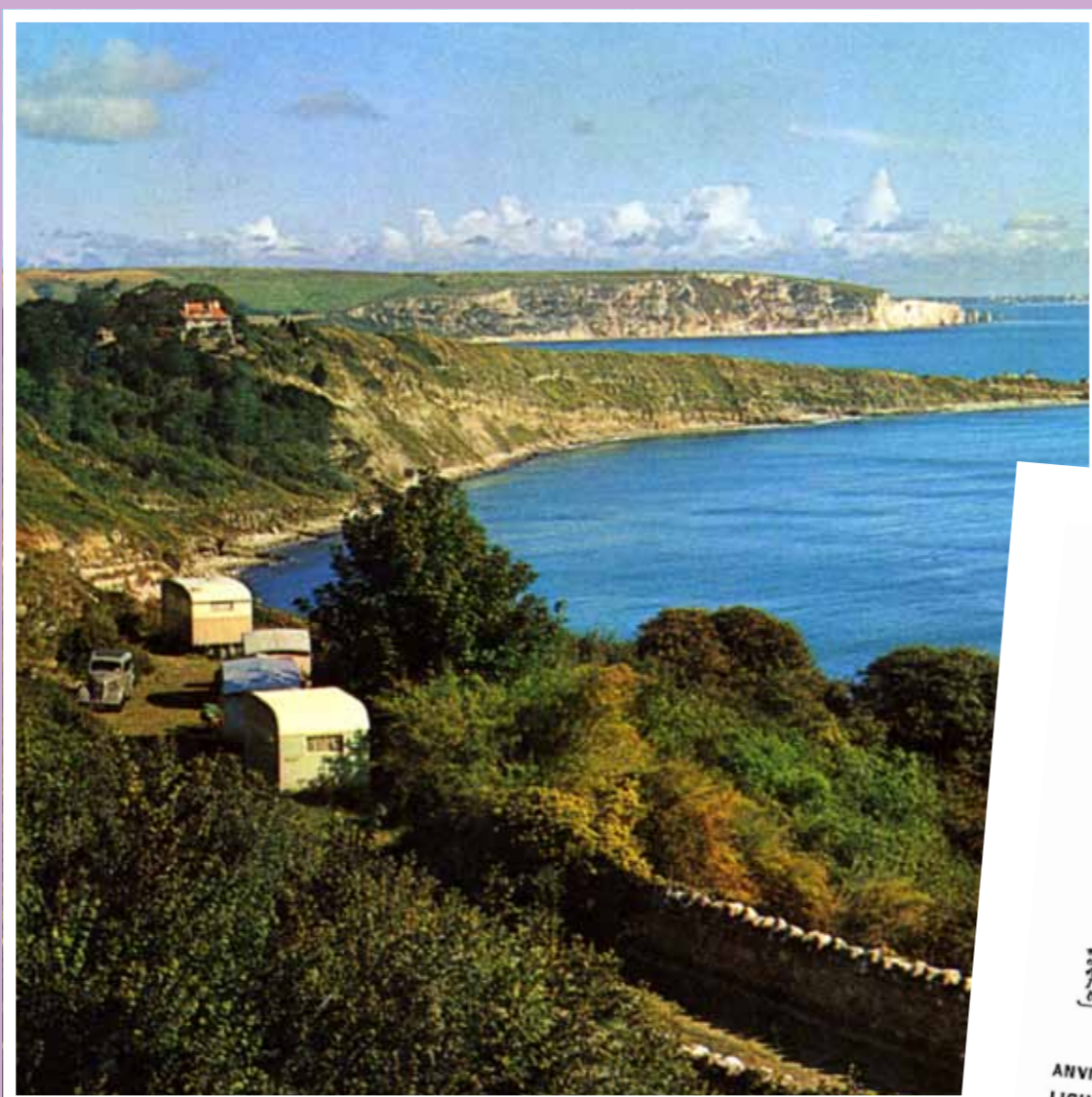
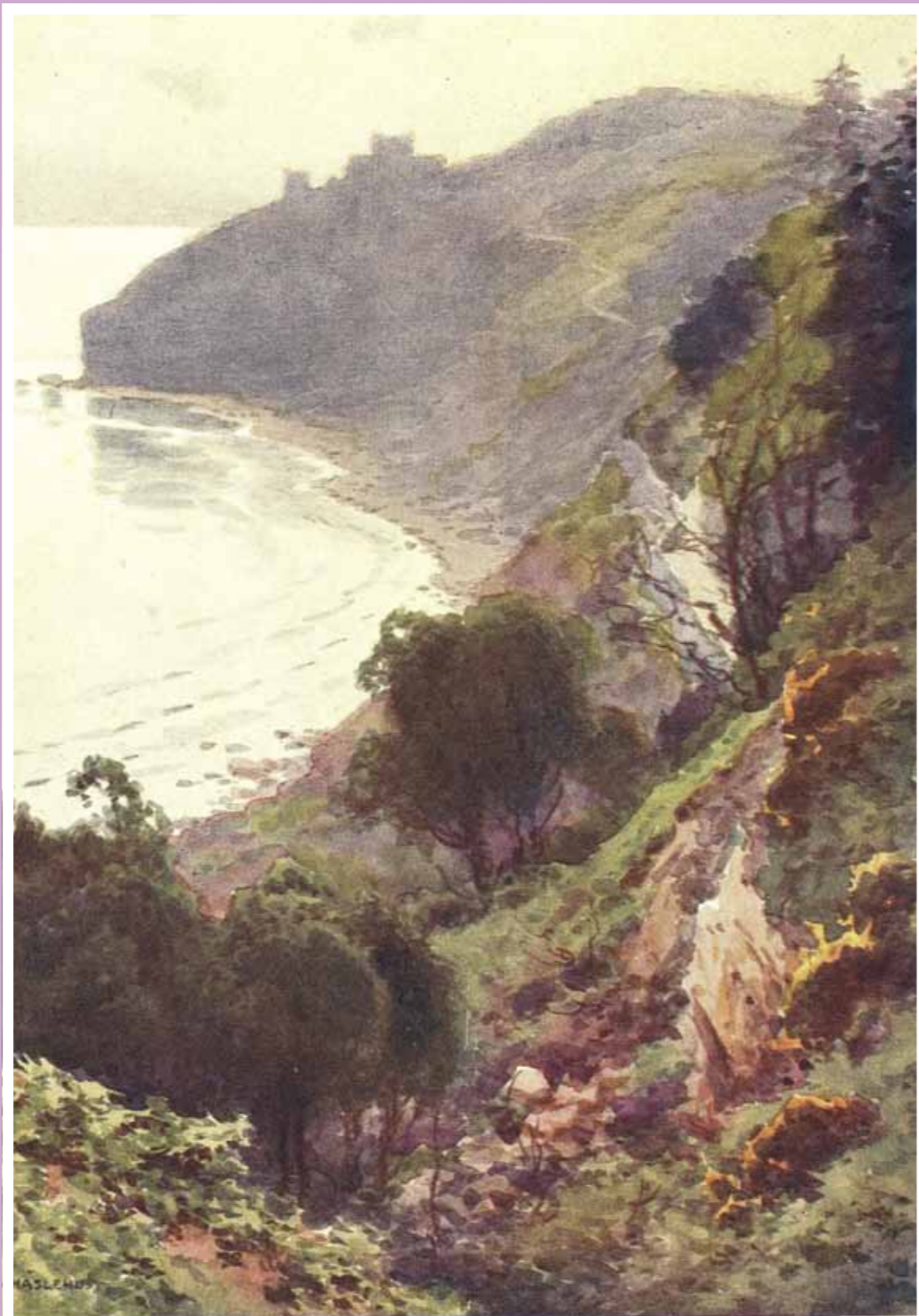
To see the most beautiful part of the Dorset Coast you must visit the well-known beauty spot of Swanage - - THE

## Pine Cliff Walk

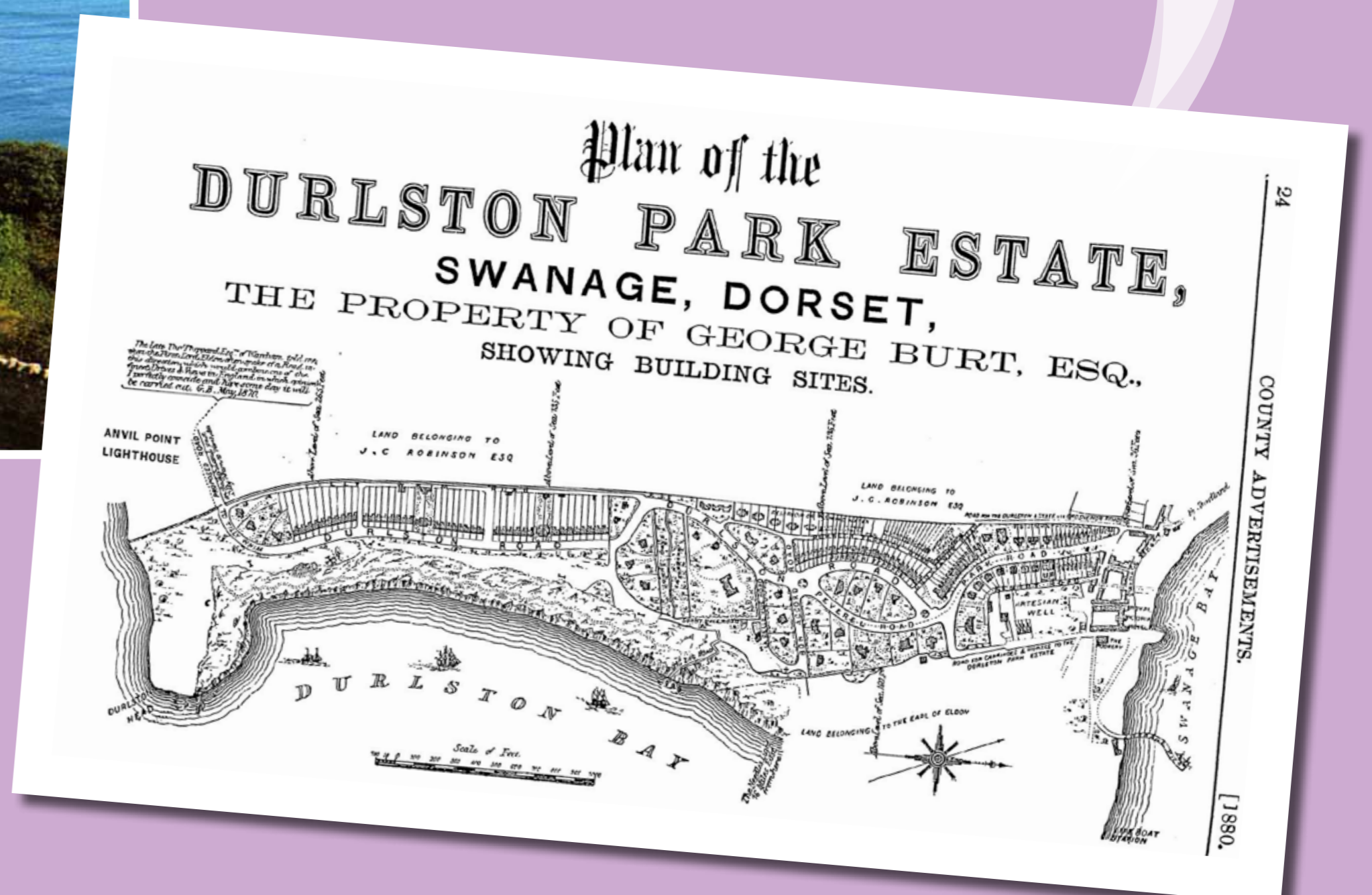
overlooking Durlston Bay leading to the

## Sunnydale Aviaries

with its collection of ornamental Pheasants and other exotic birds



*'The Pleasure Grounds are a Grade II Historic Park and Garden.'*





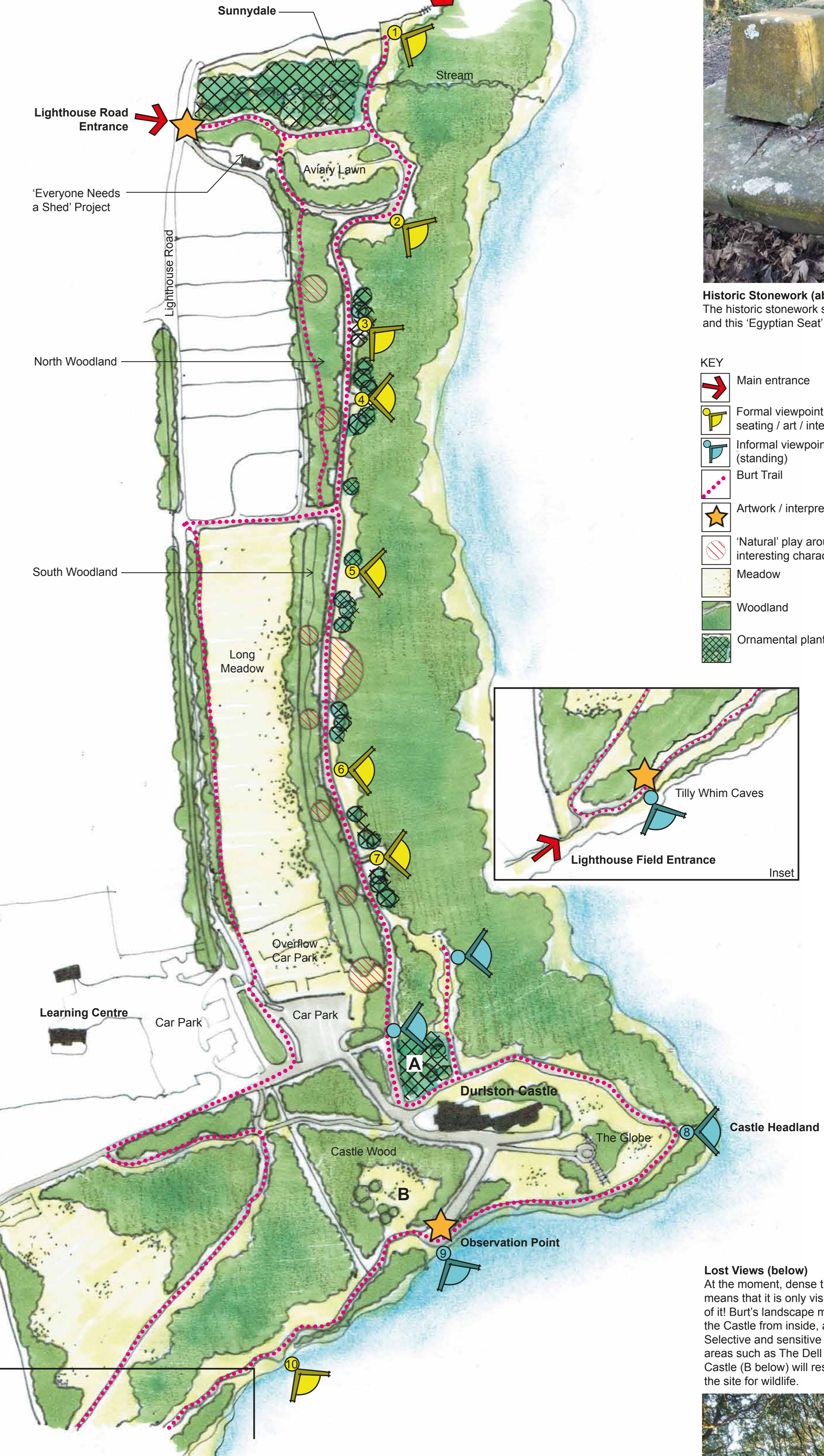
**Lighthouse Road Entrance (left)**  
This is now the main entrance to the site for those coming from Swanage and as such needs to be more formal and have more of a 'presence' in the landscape



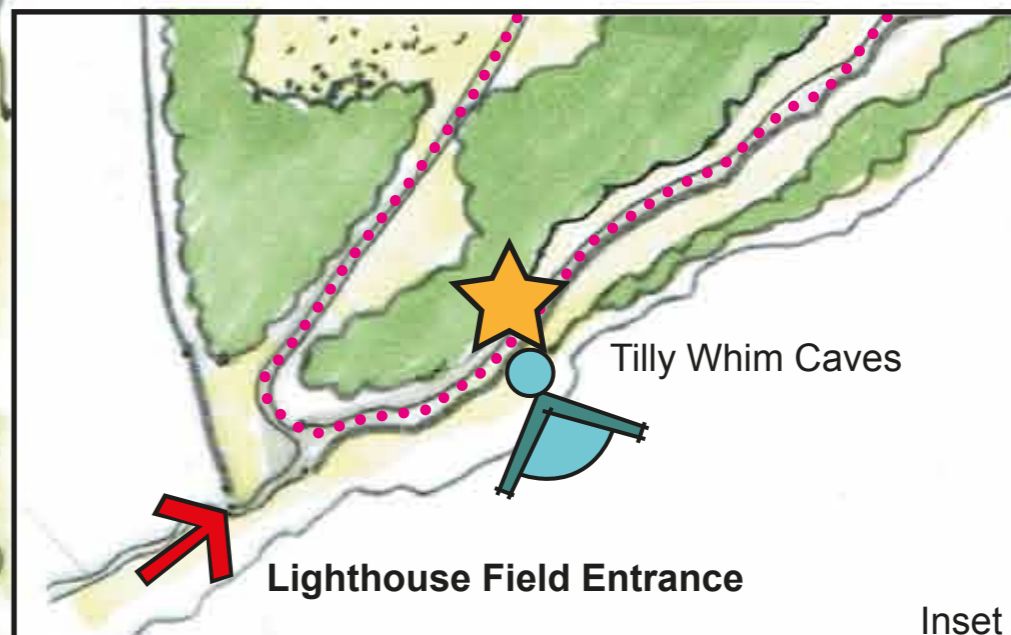
**Play**  
We plan to make the woodland more playable with the addition of low-key features which complement the natural landscape



**Artwork**  
Lettering and artworks could be used at key locations, including viewpoints to help interpret the landscape for visitors



**Historic Stonework (above)**  
The historic stonework such as the lettered tablets and this 'Egyptian Seat' all need to be restored



**Lost Views (below)**  
At the moment, dense tree cover around the Castle means that it is only visible to those standing in front of it! Burt's landscape made the most of views onto the Castle from inside, and even outside, the site. Selective and sensitive tree clearance in selected areas such as The Dell (A below) and west of the Castle (B below) will restore lost views and improve the site for wildlife.

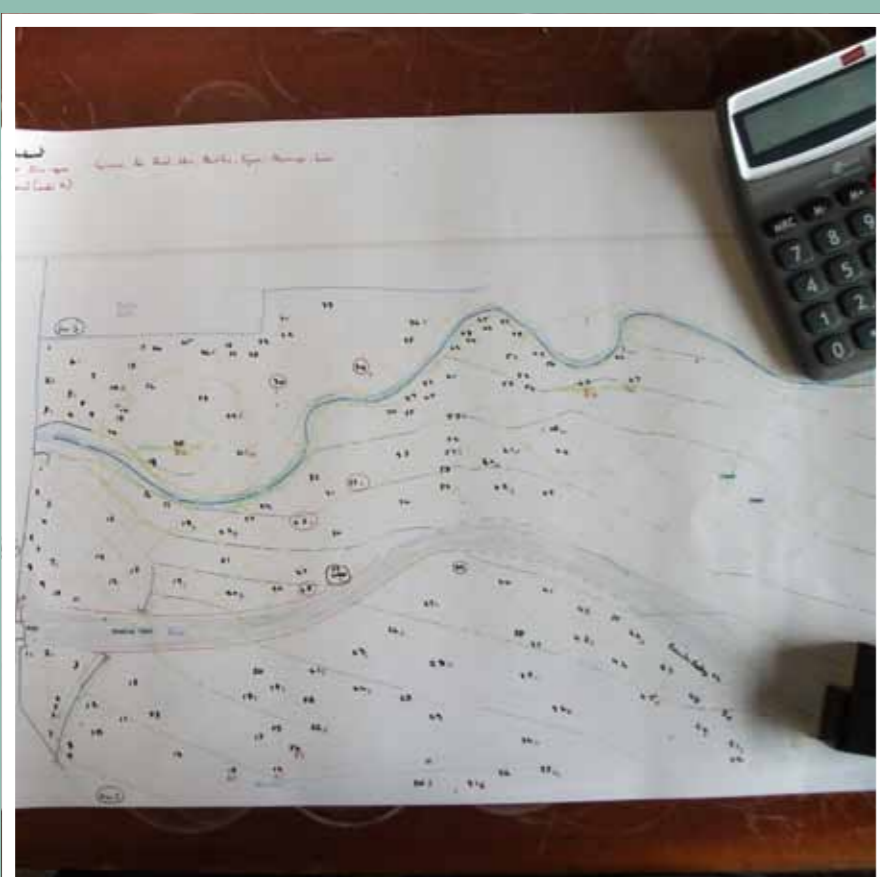


**Wooded Areas (below)**  
There are many wooded areas dominated by Holm Oak which casts dense shade and prevents any other vegetation from growing. Localised selective clearance would allow for new tree planting and clumps of bramble which are good for wildlife. Greater species and age diversity are essential if the woodland is to have a future.



**Paths (right)**  
Path surfaces are generally satisfactory but in localised areas such as this, extra drainage needs to be installed to prevent surface water eroding the surface and exposing the rock beneath

# LOOKING AFTER THE LANDSCAPE



Over the years, much of Burt's landscape has been lost or hidden: the project will restore this, providing an improved setting for the Castle. Rangers, volunteers and local experts have worked with Aileen Shackell Landscape Design.

Woodland requires careful, constant management, however in recent years it has become neglected. Selected trees will be pruned or removed to restore important views envisaged by Burt, allowing in extra light and benefitting wildflowers, shrubs and butterflies.

Improving the woodland for wildlife is essential: many areas of 'untidy' woodland will be enhanced with habitat piles, dead wood and dense undergrowth for nesting birds and invertebrates.

Victorian trees and shrubs remain, but are often hidden or overgrown. Species such as Bamboo, Corsican Pine and Monterey Cypress will be revealed and pruned. Planting will restore the character of areas such as the 'Dell' and Isle of Wight Road.

Viewpoints will be enhanced with long-lasting, easy to use seating, some designed by artists. Victorian benches and stone tablets, obscured by trees, or weathered and unreadable will be restored. Paths and entrances will be easier to use.

The 'Dell', alongside the Castle is overgrown with Bramble and Sycamore. It will be replanted with flowering shrubs, creating an attractive, low-maintenance area, improving views to the bridge.

*'Viewpoints will be enhanced with long-lasting, easy to use seating...'*

# PLEASURE GROUNDS FOR PEOPLE

## IMPROVING ACCESS

The woodland offers shelter and less muddy, gentle routes for walking in wet weather, with spectacular clifftop views. However paths in places are uneven and slippery, while viewpoints are overgrown or rough underfoot.

Paths will be resurfaced with local stone to improve access for less mobile visitors or those with pushchairs.

Tree pruning along sections of the coastal path will reduce leaf litter, making it less slippery in the winter. New benches will allow visitors to 'rest and admire' the views.

## TRANSPORT

A lift-sharing scheme will help people get around Swanage and Durlston, while allowing new friendships to develop. Mini-buses will help groups with specific needs get to Durlston.

## INTERPRETATION

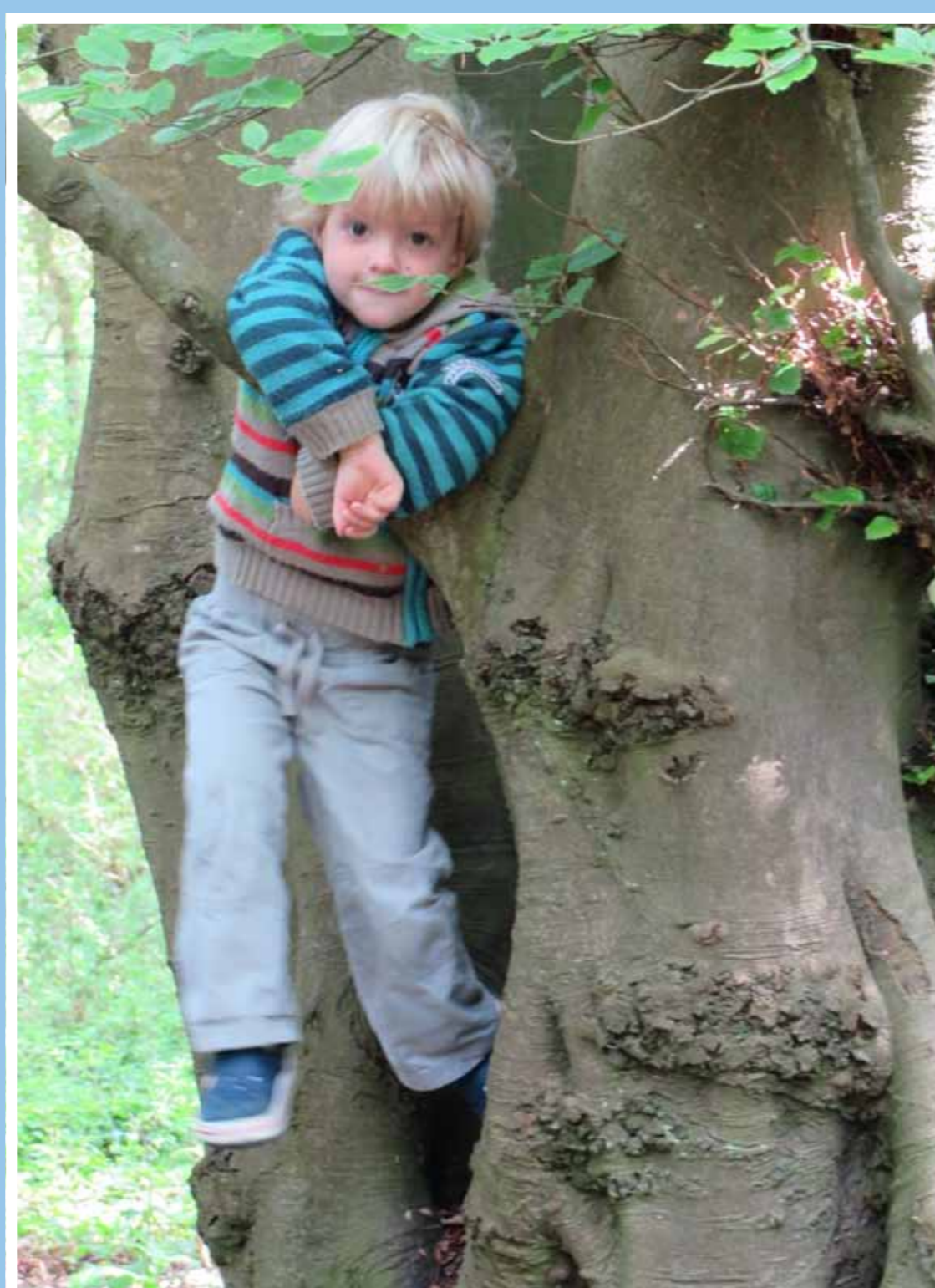
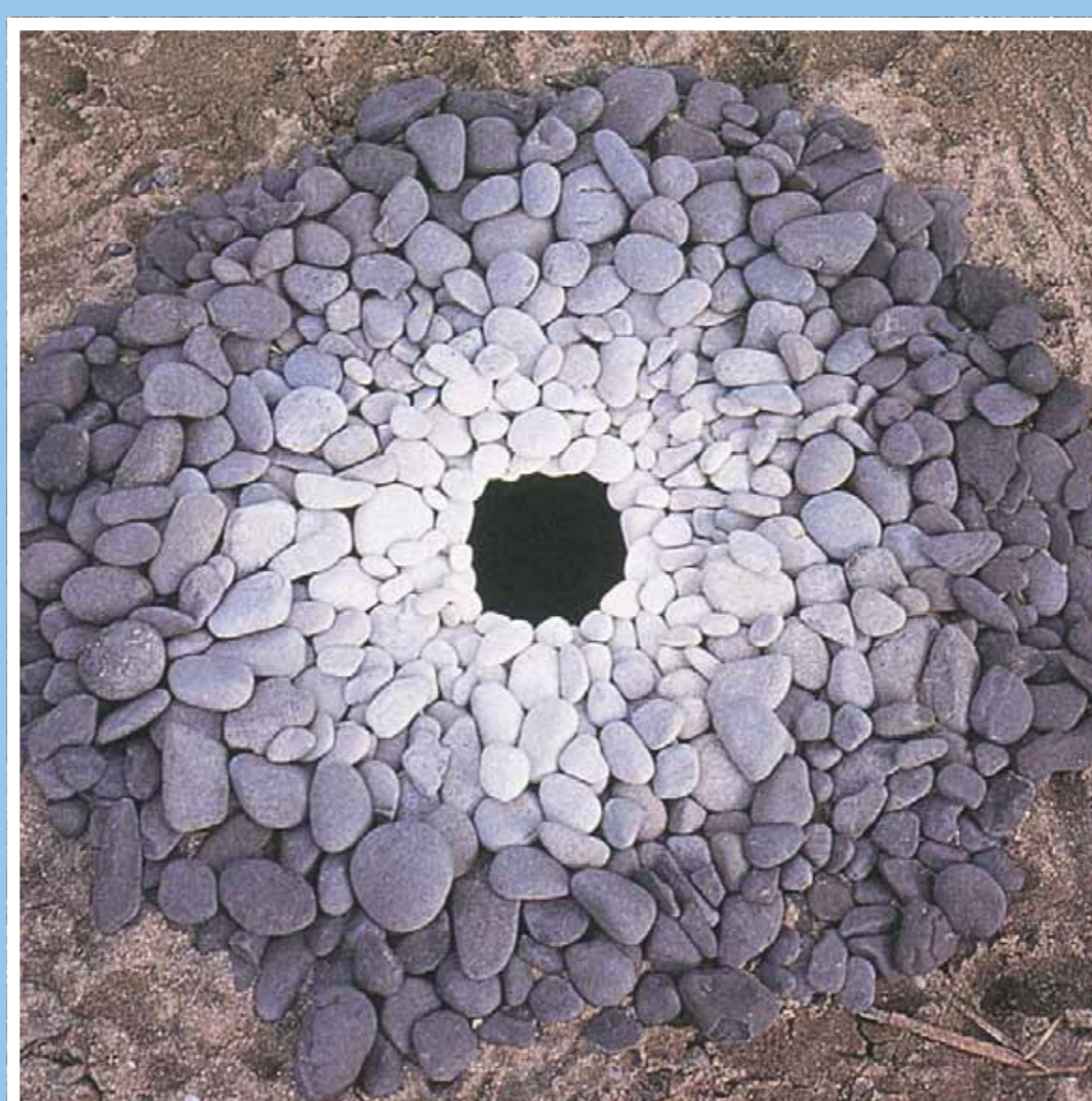
Contributions from artists and craftspeople, as well as a new variety of events will bring the landscape to life.

## TRAINING

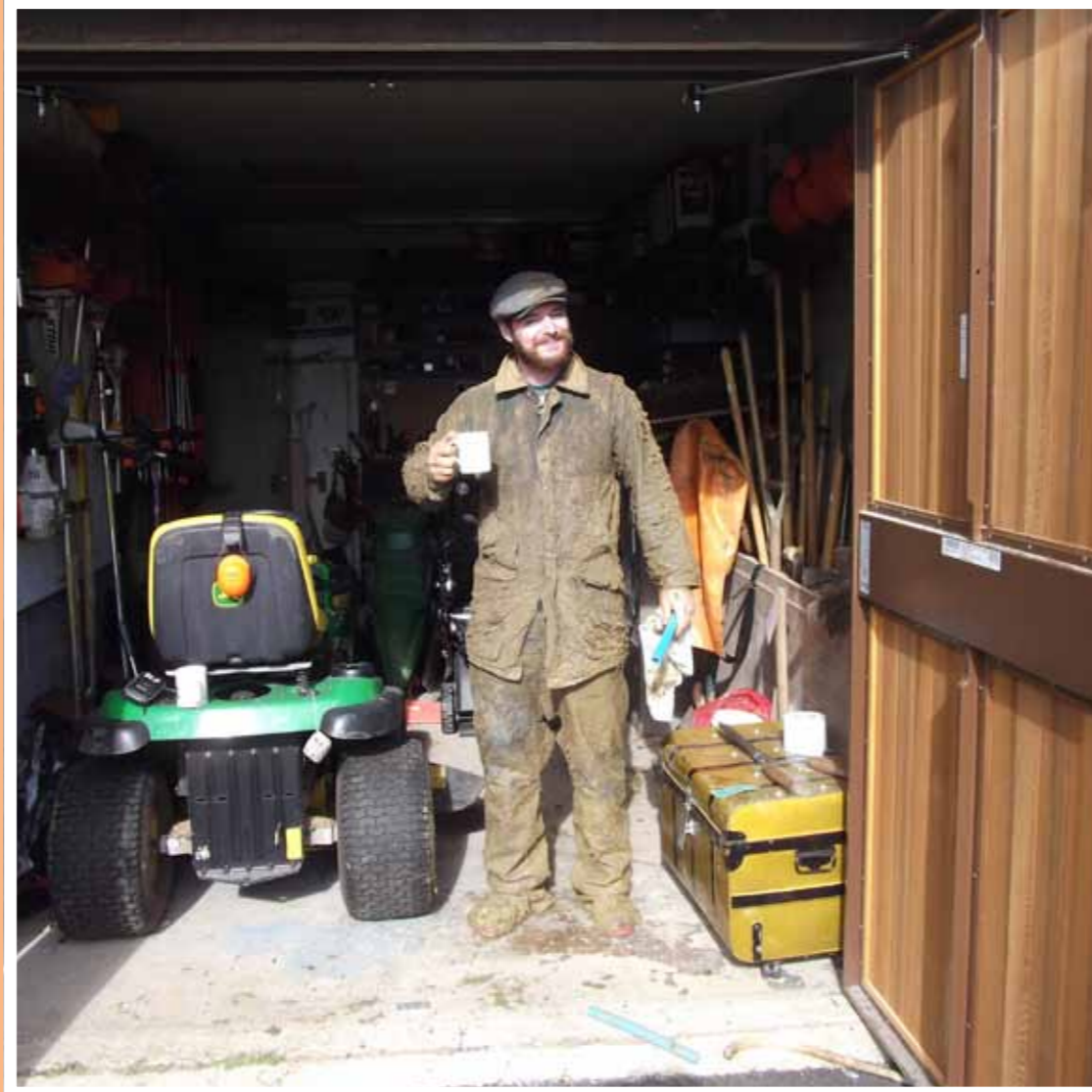
The project will provide training for volunteers, staff, and local people to support the management of the area. Courses will include dry-stone walling, DIY, gardening, storytelling, play, wildlife, dementia awareness and more...

## PLAY

A passion for wildlife and conservation for many people starts in childhood. The project will create opportunities for people of all ages to explore the Pleasure Grounds in a playful way, with things to hunt for, creating natural artworks or dens and natural play features, like logs to balance on, or trees to climb.



# 'EVERYONE NEEDS A SHED!'



A volunteer work area will replace the derelict shed near the Aviary Glade. A simple, timber-clad single storey structure, on the same footprint as the existing shed will provide a base for the project.

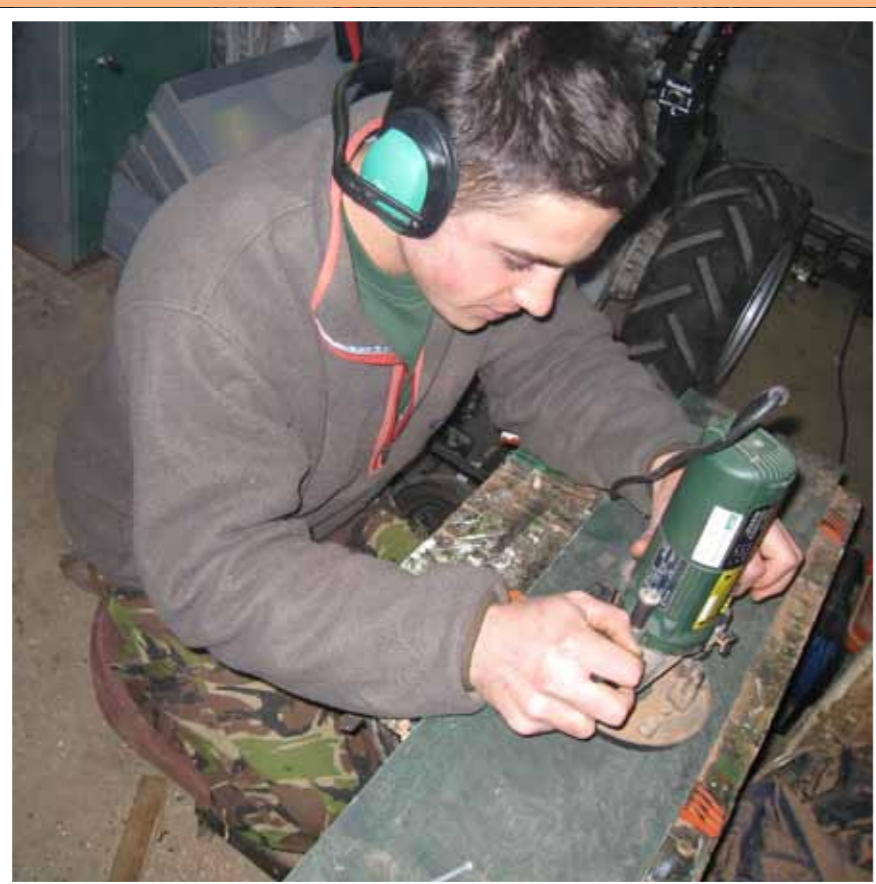
A group of volunteers interested in carrying out gentle practical work such as building bird boxes, creating or repairing signs, pole-lathing or gardening will be established.

This will offer a way to socialise and make new friends. Less physically demanding work will allow people with dementia, disabilities and older people who are less physically fit to volunteer. It will also enable people of different ages to share skills and come together through volunteering.

A relaxed style of working will allow people to come and go, as suits, alongside regular group tasks.

The 'Shed' will provide space to work indoors in colder weather, store tools and equipment, socialise and importantly, make tea!

Outside, a tree nursery, potting area and workshop equipment will support the management of the woodland and introduction of skills in horticulture and woodland management.



*'A relaxed style of working will allow people to come and go.'*

# A DAY IN THE LIFE OF THE PLEASURE GROUNDS



Tues 27 October 2020

9am:

Bill comes in to the 'Shed', lights the stove and puts the kettle on. He checks if the bird boxes he and the Purbeck Centre group painted yesterday are dry.

10am:

Duke of Edinburgh Award group arrive – this time Bill and Sue teach them how to make hurdles, to screen the outdoor work area.

11am:

Volunteer Hazel comes in to try some ideas for kids to make outdoor art from leaves and twigs.

12pm:

Joe isn't feeling up to volunteering, but has come up with the lift-share scheme to bring cake for everyone!

1pm:

'Pleasure Grounds' Ranger Jane and Apprentice Stuart pop down for a lunchtime catch-up with the shed group. A new volunteer, Dave, has just arrived, as his GP recommended the group to help him make new friends after the loss of his wife.

1.30pm:

Guided Walk from the Dorset Gardens Trust.

2.30pm:

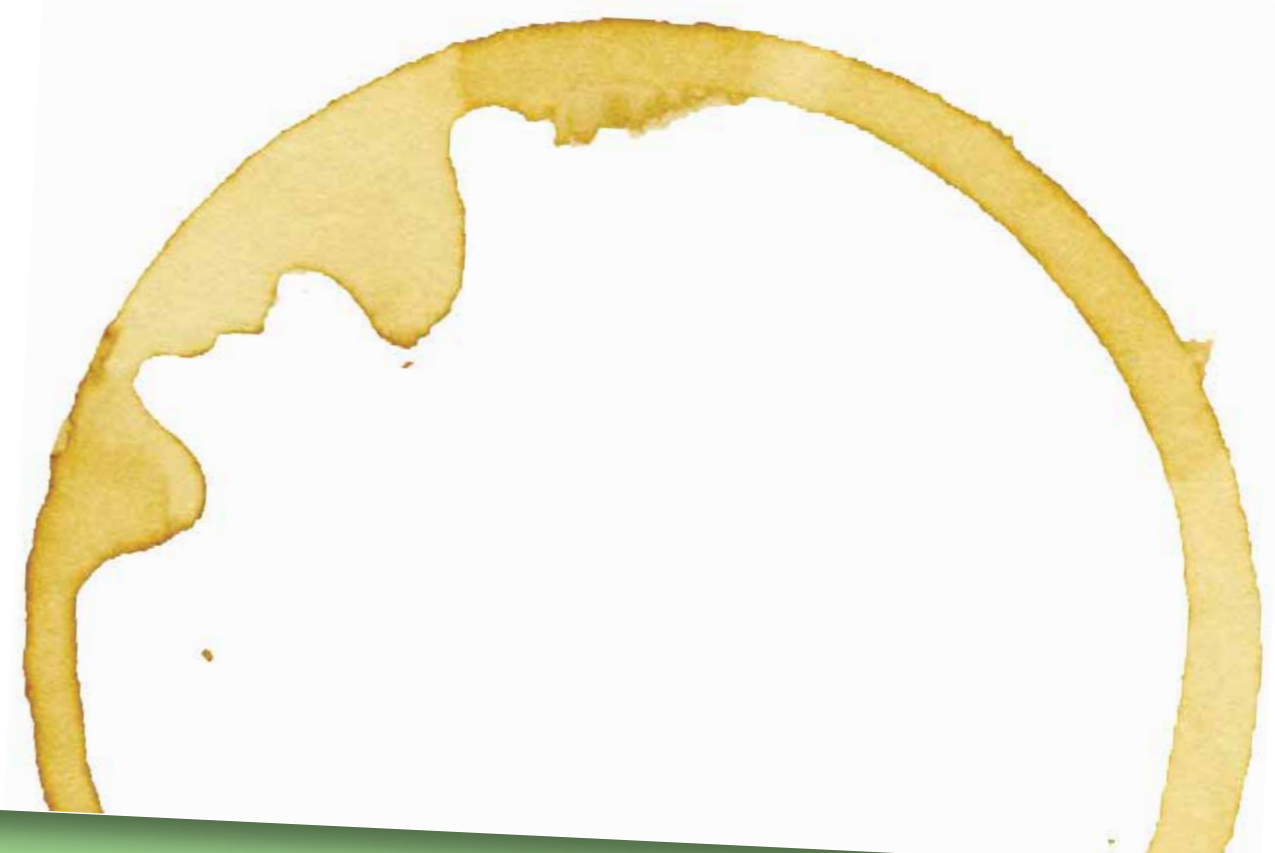
Gardening and DIY tasks with the Memory Café. The Ranger, Sue and Mary run the session. Some carers have joined a Mindfulness walk.

4pm:

Young volunteers from Swanage School arrive. They finish potting young hawthorns in the tree nursery.

5pm:

Volunteer Steve arrives to lead a storytelling walk for a group of cubs.



# WHAT HAPPENS NEXT? HOW CAN YOU HELP?

## HIGHLIGHTS OF PROJECT TIMELINE

AUTUMN/  
WINTER  
2018

- Join our new 'Pleasure Grounds' **volunteer group** as work gets underway
- **Pruning and clearing** some smaller trees with help from a traditional heavy horse!
- Volunteers will start restoring some of the miles of **dry-stone walls**
- Volunteers and staff will **clear** over 40 years of accumulated 'stuff' from the Aviary Shed and Yard!
- Our base for gentle volunteering - '**Everyone Needs a Shed**' - will be delivered and staff and volunteers will be busy fitting it out and building planters, raised beds and pole lathes

SPRING  
2019

- Our **lift-sharing scheme** starts, to help people without cars to get to Durlston – sign up to give or receive lifts...
- Work starts on **improving paths** around the woodland and clifftop, making it easier for everyone to enjoy
- 'Everyone needs a Shed!' – take part in gardening, greenwood crafts, DIY or just pop in for a cuppa and a chat – **all welcome**, especially if you are a bit 'handy' or a gardener!
- Check out our **new events programme** for 'Prambles', mindfulness walks, dementia-friendly events and more...

SUMMER  
2019

- Work starts on new viewpoints and **restoration** of Victorian benches and signs (paths may be closed at some points while work is underway)
- Our new **play trail**, '**outdoor library**' and **outdoor art area** will be created
- Join the 'sheddiess' for **sociable volunteering** – just pop in and lend a hand!

AUTUMN  
2019

- Work starts to enhance some of the **larger trees** to help them look their best and to open up important views
- Beautiful **new hand-crafted benches** will be installed around the woodland and clifftop
- Volunteers and staff will carry out **planting** of the 'Dell' next to the Castle to re-create historic plantings and landscaping
- The **winding stream** near Sunnydale will be enhanced with footbridges, paths and new plantings

WINTER  
2019 -  
SUMMER  
2021

- Come and join us as we **plant new shrubs** and trees to improve the woodland for wildlife
- **Interpretation** will include peepholes into the past, new guides telling the story of the Pleasure Grounds and audio guides for visitors with visual impairments
- **Pruning and coppicing** of trees continues, with our 'sheddiess' using the products to make hurdles and turn on the pole lathe
- A whole range of **training courses** will be on offer, for local people, including people with disabilities, to develop their skills
- You may bump into some Victorian characters as you walk through the Pleasure Grounds, as our **costumed volunteers** and '**Roaming Rangers**' will be out and about to help you discover more
- A series of **outdoor art exhibitions** will help showcase the woodland, with help from emerging young artists
- **New play facilities** will be available to help people of all ages interact with and enjoy the landscape