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DISCOVERING LOST DORSET

A PERSONAL VIEW THROUGH MAGIC LANTERN PHOTOGRAPHS AND OTHER IMAGES OF THE COUNTY IN THE AUTHOR'S UNIQUE COLLECTION

Rodney Legg

Long before he started the predecessor of *Dorset Life* magazine, in 1968, author and editor Rodney Legg was hoarding the photographs of family and friends as well as taking his own pictures. Distant relations included Leggs around Puddletown and the Wareham branch of the Hardys. Retired land-agent Charles Stride of Portland Villa, Shillingstone, contributed material from Sturminster Newton and the Blackmore Vale.

Rodney Legg's father, Winton cobbler Ted Legg, was given lantern slides by retired Bournemouth solicitor Edwin Dodshon. Through Church Knowle writer and campaigner Monica Hutchings he obtained an old album of the Bond family from Tyneham House.

Many snapshots are delightfully homely but there are occasional professional gems by Walter Pouncy from Dorchester and Helen Muspratt at Swanage. Two of them were blown out of her studio window by a German bomb and picked up in the street.

This unique archive comes into its own in the Isle of Purbeck. It evokes another Dorset that was eliminated by the expansion of the Lulworth tank gunnery ranges, six days before Christmas in 1943, and even the hills that remained in civilian ownership are seen in another age. From horse-drawn reapers through to stone mining they did things differently there. Into the twentieth century, boulders were still being lowered from derricks at Dancing Ledge into offshore boats, as pleasure seekers climbed and bathed nearby. On St Alban's Head, men of the Coastguard service hauled their ropes from a shed to the cliffs, and fired them with rockets in a training exercise.

The combination of work and leisure is punctuated by episodes of severe weather that are also from bygone times. This selection of 350 key shots concentrates without apology on the nostalgic. Mostly they are previously unpublished. Faces abound and many people will see themselves or their forbears.

Born in Bournemouth, in 1947, from the age of ten **Rodney Legg** adopted the Isle of Purbeck for cycling trips and cliff climbing. By 1967 he was a regular trespasser across the Lulworth Ranges, and founded Tyneham Action Group the following year, beginning a campaign which succeeded in restoring public access to 7 miles of spectacular coastal scenery in 1975.

In 1968 he also established *Dorset – the country magazine* and continues to write for its *Dorset Life* successor. Since 1972 he has concentrated on book production, this being the 99th title to his name, with most of the output being inspired by the Dorset and Somerset countryside. Other subjects have ranged from archaeology to military history. He is a veteran walker and photographer and the chairman nationally of the Open Spaces Society.

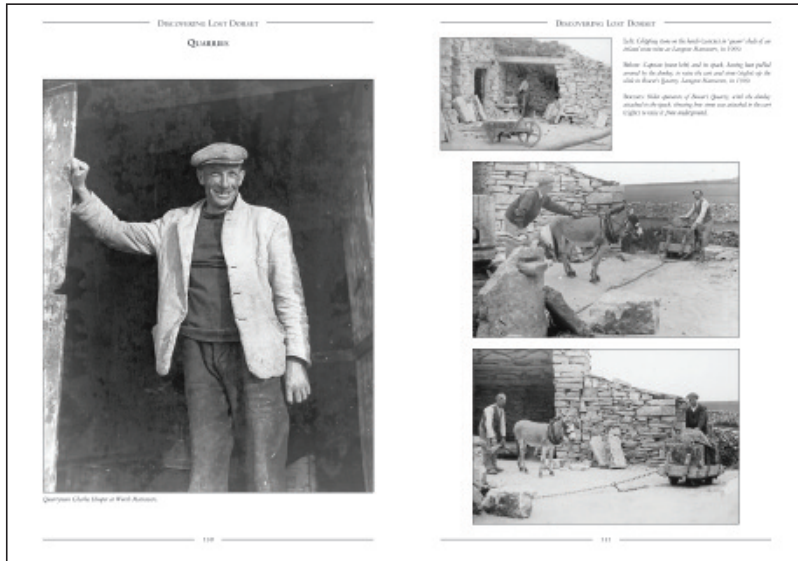


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Example of a double page spread.



'Sociable' tricycle and riders from Christchurch, at the finger-post on Balmer Lawn – 7 miles from Beaulieu – in the 1880s.



Soldier and Baby Jumbo collecting for the Daily Mirror Christmas pudding appeal, on Bournemouth beach, in 1912.



Above: Sheep shearing at Upwey in 1909.

Left: Puddletown shoe-maker Robert Rowland in 1891.



George III's bathing machine, on Weymouth sands, in 1909 which was the year when John A. Glover-Kinde wrote his famous song: 'I do like to be beside the seaside.'