

# CORFE REMEMBERED

Corfe Castle is one of the most popular tourist destinations in Britain. Although a ruin, the remains of its once mighty keep are visible from Poole Quay – 6 miles distant, as the crow flies. Images of it appear frequently in newspapers and magazines. On a misty day, or when silhouetted against the sky, there is an air of magic and mystery about it. The castle was a favourite of the infamous King John, and Lady Banks defended it nobly for the Royalists during the English Civil War.

The village of Corfe is also of interest, with its seventeenth-century town hall – said to be the smallest in England – and which today houses a museum. There is also a model village and a railway, which offers the opportunity of a ride on a steam train. Quaint cottages and a peaceful common, where ponies abide, are also an attraction. Famous visitors include John Wesley, Thomas Hardy, and Kaiser Wilhelm II.

Over the centuries, many different sounds have echoed in and around Corfe and its castle: the war cries of Viking raiders; the moans of French knights as they starved to death in the castle's oubliette; the tap, tap, tap of medieval masons, as they fashioned pillars and effigies of Purbeck marble with their wooden mallets and iron chisels; the first steam train giving a hoot as it arrived at Corfe Station in 1885.

Finally, not so long ago, this was a world of horse and plough, performing bear, scissor and knife grinder, and muffin man. All this and more features in this fascinating new guide to the story of Corfe, one of the greatest glories of glorious Dorset.

## ABOUT THE AUTHOR

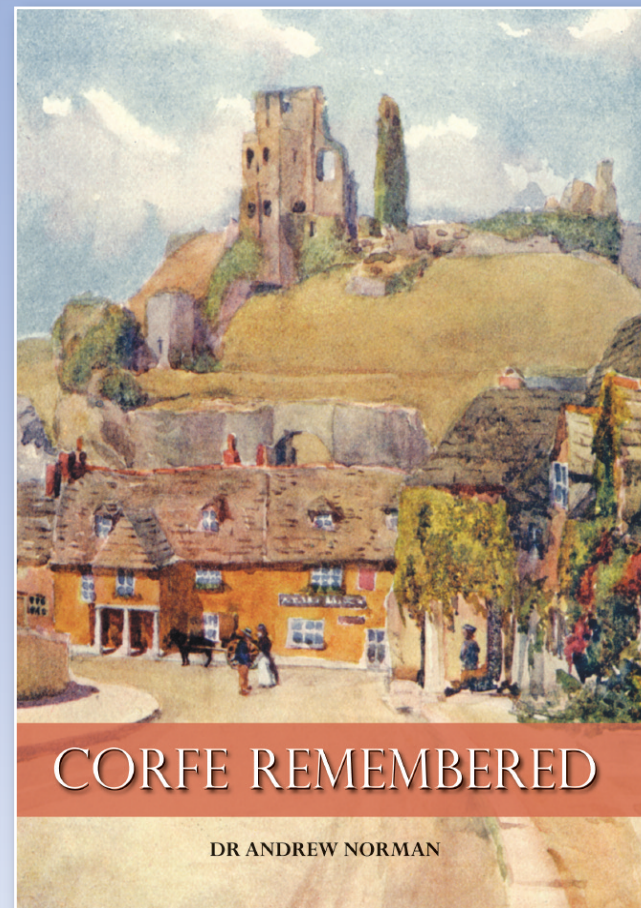
Andrew Norman was born in Newbury, Berkshire, UK in 1943. Having been educated at Thornhill High School, Gwelo, Southern Rhodesia (now Zimbabwe), Midsomer Norton Grammar School, and St Edmund Hall, Oxford, he qualified in medicine at the Radcliffe Infirmary. He has two children Bridget and Thomas, by his first wife.

From 1972-83, Andrew worked as a general practitioner in Poole, Dorset, before a spinal injury cut short his medical career. He is now an established writer whose published works include biographies of Charles Darwin, Winston Churchill, Thomas Hardy, T.E. Lawrence, Adolf Hitler, Agatha Christie, Enid Blyton, Beatrix Potter, Sir Arthur Conan Doyle, and Robert Mugabe. Andrew married his second wife Rachel, in 2005.

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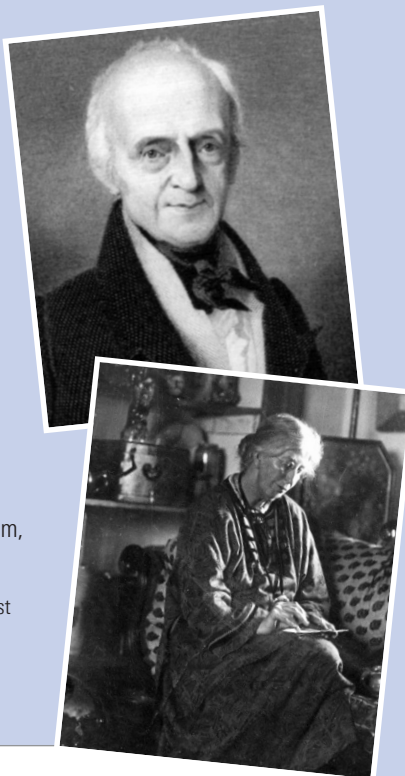


Above: The Ship Inn – later The Bankes Arms – and adjacent cottage/museum, demolished in 1883/1884 to make way for Station Road. Photo: Bob Richards

Top right: William Morton Pitt, engraving after C. W. Day. Courtesy National Trust

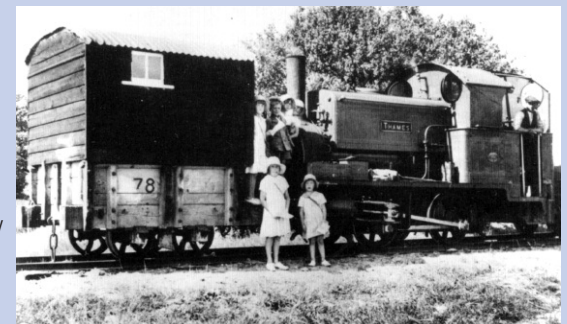
Right: Jessie Newbery at Corfe in 1930. *Photograph by Helen Muspratt.*  
Photo: Jessica Sutcliffe

Example of a double-page spread.



Above: Corfe's Cricket Team, circa 1910, Captain, Dr Dru Drury (2nd row, 3rd from left).  
Photo: Jim Fooks

Right: The Newton to Arfleet 'School Train', 3 May 1934, photographed by S. P. W. Corbett. Sisters June Surface (on left) and Joyce Surface (on right), standing beside the track. Already aboard (left to right) Elsie Surface, boy pupil Fennel, Pamela Foot, and Eileen Surface.



Below: Relaxing on 'The Halves'.  
Photo: Bob Richards



## Seventeen WORKING FOLK

For forty years, Editha Langtree had a dressmaking business. She also embroidered scenes of Corfe and of flowers, which she sold to Beales department store in Bournemouth. However, when a law was introduced stating that apprentices – hers included – had to be paid, she was obliged to raise the price of her dresses, 'which upset some of the clients'. She therefore dispensed with the apprentices 'and did every stitch myself, which was more satisfactory than having to stop my work to show them how to do the job, and then having to pick out what had been done'.

Whereas there were once eight bakers in the village and the bread was delivered; now there was only one, said Editha. Furthermore, when bread deliveries ceased, 'we have to fetch what we need, which is bad for old people'.

Editha described how various premises in Corfe had changed over the years. A 'good draper's' had now become an antique shop, of which there were now five in the village.

*What was the saddler's shop is now a drug store, and what is now about to become a cake shop was two cottages. Yet you cannot buy little useful things, except in Wareham and Swanage.*

As for the curatage, this had been turned into flats.

*In my childhood, there lived an old scissor grinder, Joey Stanley and his wife Lovely. He was the only one to have the royal coat of arms on his machine. Joey was born in a chalk pit, and died in one. We used to get him to recite*

*The world is round. It runs upon wheels  
And death is a sting that every one feels.  
Now if death was a thing that money could buy  
The rich would live and the poor die,  
But God in his Providence ordered it so,  
That the rich as well as the poor must go.*

In her youth, said Ada

*Haymaking was totally different than today. There was more goodwill and kindness in olden days and [folk] would give a hand whenever wanted.*



Above: Joey Stanley, scissor and knife grinder and his wife Lovely, circa 1890.  
Photo: Trish Sherwood



Right: Sheep wash at West Mill.  
Photo: Dennis Smale

Below: West Mill. Photo: Bob Richards

