

Report on the

Dorset History Forum  
PUBLISHING LOCAL HISTORY DAY SCHOOL  
Held at the Dorset History Centre, Bridport Road, Dorset  
On 7<sup>th</sup> November 2009



After a welcome and introduction by Martin Ayres of the Dorset History Forum (DHF) Events Group, the first speaker was **Ian Messer, former editor of the DHF Digest and of the Christchurch Local History Society (CLHS) Journal**, and publisher of various CLHS books. He produces all these publications in A5 28-page format with a card cover, mostly black and white but some have colour picture covers. He went through Content, Production, Printing and Sales.

The Digest and Journal contain articles, mostly from members but often augmented by himself eg by items from the "Christchurch Times" (1855-1983), the Society's news, future programme information, adverts, copyright details and acknowledgements. The Digest/Journal covers have the logo on the outside and a list of the committee members on the inside.

The content of a book comes, of course, from the author but again copyright details are added.

Ian produces the books using Microsoft Publisher: a bit unstable, eg pictures will sometimes "disappear", but he overcomes this problem. The cover is a separate four A5-page file and both this and the contents are saved to a memory stick to take to the printer.

As he requires short print runs (300 Digest/Journal; 100 or even 50 copies of books) he uses a copy shop, Colourcopier in Highcliffe, which has the appropriate equipment and design expertise to give ideas on how to improve his publication. The costs are reasonable: £1 per copy for the Digest and CLHS Journal (a little of which is offset by adverts), and 64p to £1.60 for each book depending on the number of pages and whether or not they have colour content. Members get the Digest/Journal free, but non-members buy them for £1 each. The books sell for £1.60 to £3.60. Sometimes CHLS produces a larger book, which is properly bound and printed, eg "Old Town Halls of Christchurch" which retails at £12.95. The Society receives royalties on sales.

For potential sales outlets he targets local book shops, newsagents, museums, Tourist Information Centres, hospital bookshops, local societies, society members and the CHLS web site.

**Ray and Sue Penn, authors of "Long Street, Sherborne"** and volunteers at the Sherborne Museum were the next speakers. For 13 years they collected information on the buildings in Long Street. Before starting to write the book, Ray found a publisher and signed a contract, thus both parties knew at the outset what the format and content of the book were going to be. The publisher wanted camera-ready copy. Again the book was properly bound and published.

Halsgrove Press, who published "**The Book of Stinsford**" **co-authored by the next speaker, Kay Kearsley**, took a different approach. This is a 160-page hardback book conforming to the publisher's house style. Before they would even agree to publish, however, they required 250 copies to be sold and paid for at £19.99 each<sup>1</sup>

To assist with these advance sales, Halsgrove produced a four-page A5 flyer, which included a picture identical to that which would appear on the yet-to-be-produced book. The authors delivered the flyer to everyone who had been contacted during the information gathering process (a note of these people had been kept by the authors), and Halsgrove used the Royal Mail to deliver one to each DT29 address. If 250 copies had not been pre-sold, publication would not have gone ahead.

Kay and her team had to save the book to three files, namely the text; the pictures; and the captions for the pictures. The pictures were each numbered and each number was inserted by the relevant caption and in the margin of the section text relating to it. Halsgrove did the desktop publishing.

In addition to the publisher's costs, fees had to be paid to reproduce paintings, maps, etc, sometimes as much as £70 each and some just a donation. Permission had to be gained for the publication of all the images whether or not a fee was payable.

Adverts were placed in the Parish Magazine and the Hardy Society Journal; flyers put in the Museum and the History Centre; and an article with images was published in the Echo.

<sup>1</sup> Self-publishing would not have been cheaper as printing 250 copies would have cost £6,000.

There was also a book signing and launch. Royalties were paid to the authors only after 1,000 copies had been sold.

The final speakers before lunch were **Katherine Barker, Editor of the Dorset Natural History & Archaeological Society Proceedings and Chairman of DHF, and Judith Ford, Dorset Editor of Somerset & Dorset Notes and Queries.** Both encouraged people to submit articles, first contacting the respective editor for "Notes to Contributors" in the case of DNHAS, and style sheet for S&D N&Q. For the latter Queries are 100-200 words long, Notes 400-600 words and Articles 2,000-2,500 words. Contributions for DNHAS are up to 7,000 words and each article is vetted by one of their experts.

The afternoon speaker was **John Chandler, local history author and proprietor of Hobknob Press Publications.** He helpfully combined his session with a discussion/surgery with all the speakers, splitting his talk into sections, taking questions between each which he and/or other speakers answered.

Copyright was one issue: 70 years after the end of the year in which the author died or, if already dead, 70 years after publication. It is permissible to quote short passages but the author and publication should always be acknowledged. Copyright on images is 70 years after death. In the case of a museum, John gives them copies of books to sell in lieu of copyright fee.

The book needs an ISBN. A copy of the book has to be sent to the British Library and six copies to the Agent of the Copyright Library. The book title should be registered on the Nielsen Book database, used by bookshops when ordering from the wholesaler (an independent bookseller will take copies with an invoice, but keep contacting them to see if they have sold out). The commission is usually 40% but it may be possible to negotiate. If sold via a wholesaler, the publisher gets less than half the cover price. Another marketing opportunity is to give a lecture then sell the book at a discounted price at the end.

There are various ways of funding publication. The Halsgrove method above is one; another is 50/50 sharing with the author both costs and proceeds: the publisher and author sell copies, a reconciliation taking place every six months; yet another is the publisher doing the typesetting free of charge but the author pays for the printing. A less common method is to obtain a grant.

The publisher deals with the ISBN, etc, and selling to the trade and the author sells to the village/locale, ie the subject of his book.

As well as publishing in paper form, John has started producing downloadable e-books, and books for the new Print On Demand: the printing equipment is located in the bookshop and when you request a book they print it and bind it there and then, thus no storage required, the book is always in print and it can be updated as long as the master is not lost.

This is one of the best day schools I have ever attended and the time passed so quickly. Congratulations to all involved in organising it and to the contributors.

Joanna Booth

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Forthcoming events:

| <u>Date</u>     | <u>Event</u>                                                                          | <u>Host/Venue</u>                                   |
|-----------------|---------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|-----------------------------------------------------|
| March 2010      | Stories behind the headstones - Cemeteries as a source for stories of life and death  | Swanage                                             |
| Saturday, 8 May | Saturday Forum - Bridport                                                             | Bridport History Society at Salway Ash Village Hall |
| July 2010       | Discovering Dorset's Past - Part 2 of a workshop on sources for the history of Dorset | Dorset History Centre                               |

More detailed information of these events will be posted on the website, [www.dorsethistoryforum.org](http://www.dorsethistoryforum.org), as they become available.