

New gateway to borough will provide mouthwatering tropical taster

City welcome uses cliffs of local stone

By HUW GRIFFITH

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PINEAPPLES one metre high are to welcome visitors to Weymouth and Portland.

The tropical fruit will sit atop three-metre rectangular plinths made of Portland stone on either side of the Ridgeway.

The plinths will bear the message "Welcome to Weymouth and Portland" alongside a carving of the Rotary wheel and the names of borough mayor Doug Hollings and Rotary president Mervyn Stekewsbury.

The sculptures will replace the existing metal signs marking the entrance to the resort, and have been carved in stone donated by Hanson, Bath and Portland.

Designer Alan Wolsley co-ordinator of the masonry department at Weymouth College, said the pineapple denotes wealth and hospitality.

He said: "Once upon a time you had acorns for this kind of thing, but they are plentiful, then you had stone balls, but I thought something different would be good and I think a pineapple is a far better interpretation."

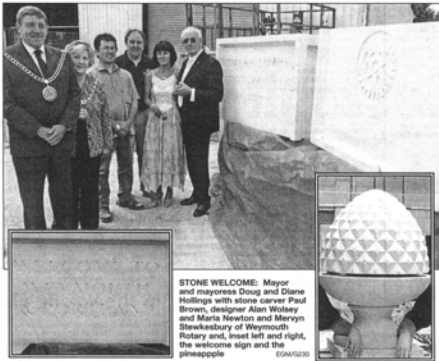
Council Holdings said huge stone carvings would be a good symbol for the borough.

He said: "This is a project which represents real pride in the borough. When people come in across the Ridgeway they will see these and realise that the people who live here are proud of being here."

Council director of corporate services Richard Burgess said the council was grateful to Weymouth Rotary club for the donation, which has allowed the resort to get a new gateway at no cost to the tax payer.

He said: "We were approached by the Rotary, which asked if there was something they could do that the borough didn't offer."

"It's long been a personal view of



STONE WELCOME: Mayor and mayoress Doug and Diane Hollings with stone carver Paul Brown, designer Alan Wolsley and Maria Newton and Mervyn Stekewsbury of Weymouth Rotary and, inset left and right, the welcome sign and the pineapple

EGM/0230

mine that the signs on the Ridgeway say much about the borough and to have something of real quality in good Portland stone is fantastic."

Outgoing Rotary president Mervyn Stekewsbury said: "I just wanted in my year to do something special for Weymouth and in conjunction with Richard Burgess we came up with several

ideas and this was the one we liked the most.

"I believe first impressions count. If, as a visitor coming into Weymouth, you see something so elaborate, you're going to be impressed."

Mr Stekewsbury said that while a pineapple may seem like an unorthodox choice, he was sure that it was the

right one, adding: "The pineapple struck me as unusual."

"When the idea was first mooted we were dead against it, but Alan Wolsley, the designer, persuaded us of its merits and I'm glad he did."

The stone carvings are not expected to be ready until October, and could be installed during half term.

major operation yesterday after receiving a 999 call from the pair who were cut off by rising water underneath Blackbridge on the east side of the island.

Cliff rescue team members, the police helicopter and Weymouth Lifesave joined in the operation to pull the men clear of danger.

The pair, said by rescuers to be in their early twenties, were believed to have made their way to the foot of the cliffs from Chesil Beach.

Coastguards asked the police helicopter, which was in the area at the time, to help pinpoint the stranded pair.

Police said their officers spotted the men four minutes later.

Weymouth Lifesave was launched to assist by off shore, while Portland coastguards sent in their rescue team to the spot.

A rescuer was lowered to the casualties using a rope and the men were pulled back up to the cliff top.

Coastguards said the pair were safe and well after their ordeal.

Search on after boat is found

A RESCUE operation began today after an 80-year-old yacht was washed up on the Dorset coast.

Coastguards said eight lifeboats and two helicopters - including Portland's rescue aircraft - were searching for the boat's single occupant.

The yacht, a 40-year-old from Christchurch, was last seen by a fishing boat sailing across Poole Bay at 10.30pm last night.

Coastguards said his yacht was found abandoned on Hengistbury Head five hours later.

Veggie thefts

THIEVES dug up vegetables and snatched fruit from a Dorchester allotment.

Police say the produce was stolen from the allotment in Froese Terrace before winter two days.

A police spokesman said: "They left footprints and tools at the scene."

Dorset Diary

The Wanderer, who compiles the Echo's Dorset Diary, is away at the moment. Dorset Diary will return in the near future.

Summer concert for singers

PORTLAND Singers will be holding their summer concert at St Andrew's Church in Weymouth on Friday at 7.30pm. The programme will feature sounds of summer from the stage and screen and cornet player Ceri Dickinson will be the guest artist.

Musical director Bert Davies said: "Ceri is an accomplished musician whose playing will complement the fine voices of the choir."

Admission at the door costs £4, with concessions £3, and all proceeds will go towards Leukaemia Research.

Cable reel fire

at former depot

A BURNING cable reel in Weymouth had to be put out by firefighters yesterday.

The blaze happened at the old Southern Electric depot on Westport Road.

Award-winning garden to open

AN AWARD-WINNING Weymouth garden is to open to the public under The national Gardens Scheme in aid of charities. Julie Aston's beautiful plot won the Weymouth in Bloom Best Decoration of a House Garden West of the River Wey in 2002 and she was runner-up in 2003.

Now her garden at 101 Lansdowne Rocks Road is to open every Thursday from 10am until 5pm and every Sunday from 11am until 5pm until August 1.

There will be home-made teas available and a selection of plants for sale. Entry is only £1 for adults and children are free, but no dogs are allowed.