



PLANNING.

Despite the optimism of our comments on the Chief Planning Officer's latest review of policy for Thorncombe, the fact remains that the Structure Plan categorisation of 'Priority Village' still stands, carrying with it the threat of possible large-scale expansion. The Committee is by no means confident that, despite the Chief Planning Officer's clear admission of Thorncombe's unsuitability for such expansion, other factors could lead nevertheless to its being authorised. Persistent controversy involving permanent officers, South West Water and councillors has led to long delay in decisions on applications by Messrs. Fry. Quinn and P J Atyeo and we believe all have lodged appeals on the grounds of non-determination. These appeals will be conducted in writing and the Committee has already forwarded its views on two of the applications. It is to be hoped that the complex history behind the handling of these applications will lead both to a thorough investigation by the Department of the Environment inspectors and, ultimately, to fair decisions.

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THORNCOMBE IN 1841.

Tony Smith's talk on the 17 January was his third on the historical aspect of village life. 1841 was a turning point for the community which then numbered 1425, probably its peak. With the onset of the industrial revolution and the expanding network of railways, means of livelihood were beginning to change. Families of 6 or 7 children were commonplace and the life-span 50 - 55 years. With no mains services of any kind and all but the larger houses cold, damp and dark, life was very hard, with long hours of ill-paid and irregular work mainly on the land and in weaving. The Bragg family, Forde Abbey and the Trenchards were significant landowners and employers. Communications were very poor and few people knew anywhere more than 20 miles away; however, as work declined, people left the parish to seek a livelihood elsewhere, some by emigrating to India and America. Tony Smith illustrated his talk with recordings of contemporary music and slides not only of buildings typical of the period but also of scenes in India and Canada reflecting what emigrants would have found. He added to the enjoyment of the evening by showing a collection of contemporary plans and documents.

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FOOTPATHS.

Following the example set by the "Mosterton Rambling Club" it is proposed to produce a small booklet giving details of walks in the Thorncombe area. The booklet would contain a map and details of some 6 -8 walks, which would range in length from 3 to 7 miles.

TREES.

Thanks to the most welcome co-operation of the landowners, sites have been agreed for about two dozen roadside trees on Venn Hill and Causeway. By the year 2000, these trees with proper care will be making not only a useful contribution to local wild life but also a noteworthy enhancement of a landscape almost devoid of young trees.

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BI-MONTHLY MEETINGS.

The December newsletter included a cut-out slip on which it was hoped members would indicate their preferred days for our regular programme of talks. Although 220 copies were circulated, only one completed slip had been returned by the deadline, the 11 December. The Committee strives hard to pursue the aims of the Trust and it is to be hoped that future attempts to seek the help of members will receive a better response. In the meantime, the meetings will in general be held as previously on the 2nd Wednesday of alternate months. Lectures etc. arranged so far are:-

MARCH.

Antiques Roadshow in the Village Hall on **29 March**. Bonhams of London will be sending two experts, a specialist and a general valuer. Photographs of large items too bulky/heavy to bring are most important - verbal descriptions are not of much use.

MAY.

A.G.M. followed by Mr R Machin of Bristol University who will speak on 'Traditional Buildings of West Dorset' Village Hall on **9 May**.

JULY.

Mr Ron Bowers will come and show slides and talk on 'Bird Distribution' in the Village Hall on **11 July**.

SEPTEMBER.

Dr Glanvill will talk and show slides on 'Marine Life of the South West Coast' on **12 September**.

NOVEMBER.

Rev. Alan Holt will talk on 'Folklore and related topics' on **14 November** in the Village Hall. He is the author of several books, a contributor to 'Somerset & West' a monthly paper and on numerous occasions has been heard on Radio Bristol and Televisions Points West. Royalties from his books accrue to St. Margaret's Somerset Hospice to which he has given £8,000 to date.

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DID YOU SEE.....?

Our tip in the last newsletter was probably too late for many readers as the large flocks of assorted thrushes had cleared nearly all ripe berries by early December. The mainly mild weather since has meant easy living conditions for other wintering birds and, so far, few rarities appear to have reached West Dorset. One day in December, a woodcock suddenly rose from our vegetable patch, its wings sounding as Coward says "...like the sharp ripping of stiff paper..."; its downward-pointing 3" beak made identification an easy matter as it dodged away. The woodcock breeds in small numbers throughout the UK and the residents are joined in winter by large numbers of continental birds forced away from their northern breeding grounds by hard weather. The birds usually hide in undergrowth by day and find their main diet - worms - in marshes and soft ground by night. Another unusual sighting in December was a cormorant heading upstream near Clapton. Essentially a bird of the sea coast and estuaries, it nests inland in only two sites in the UK but in winter sometimes moves inland to fish in rivers and lakes.

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STOP PRESS!PLANNING UPDATE.

It has emerged that West Dorset District Council is preparing a major new plan for the development of the village and that, when this plan is ready early in February, it will be presented at a Public Meeting. It is hoped that members will attend in force to demonstrate their concern and interest.