



FALLEN TREES.

The gales this late winter and early spring have wrought much havoc among the trees around Thorncombe. Dorset has suffered badly, together with Cornwall, Avon, Somerset and Wiltshire. The Forestry Commission estimate that around three million trees have been felled, though many of them will have been plantation grown conifers.

Individual trees are a vital component of the countryside. The trees growing in hedges are particularly precious, because modern farming practice allows so few saplings to grow up through the hedges to replace old and dying trees. But it is also easy to underestimate their value as a wildlife habitat. A fallen tree does at least provide you with an unprecedented opportunity to have a close look at those parts of it which are normally out of reach.

We are fortunate to have a relatively unpolluted atmosphere and so many tree trunks are encrusted with lichens. Lichens come in many shapes and sizes, and have started to return to city trees in the last few years as air pollution levels fall. In the cleavage of a couple of large branches you might come across a clump of ferns. If you do, it is probably Common Polypody, able to survive and even flourish from the nutrients in the rain and anything washed off the tree bark. You might even find a woodpecker hole, squirrel dray or some old birds' nests. You might even see wingless moths on the bark. The Winter Moth is the most common. The cream and brown male is about 35mm across its wings, but the black wingless female looks more like a cross between a spider and a beetle and is hardly 10mm in length.

One last point is that whatever searching you do, take great care. Fallen trees can be very dangerous. Also, don't forget to get permission to be on the land if the fallen tree you wish to examine is off the lanes or footpaths.

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CHARMOUTH COAST WALK.

A walk, guided by Richard Edmonds, to include fossil hunting along the beach and base of cliffs, has been arranged for Saturday 26th. May 1990. Please gather at the Heritage Coast Path Centre, Charmouth, at 2.00 pm. The walk will last approx. 2½ hours and it is recommended that you wear strong shoes, boots or wellingtons. The suggested donation is 80p per person.

PLANNING.

Since the last Newsletter the 'Oliver Plan' has burst upon the village and aroused probably unprecedented controversy with its suggested wholesale replanning of the village and large increase in housing and, hence, of population.

Members of the Committee discussed the proposals with the Chief Planning Officer and County Architect some days prior to the public presentation of the plans in the village. Nevertheless, none of the safeguards and assurances sought then were forthcoming and your Committee's written reactions after the meeting were not favourable. It would be contrary to the Trust's aims to give support to a scheme which, whatever its motives, would breach important policy decisions following two local planning appraisals, the County Surveyors' condemnation on traffic grounds and the W.D.D.C's own opposition to large-scale population increase voiced at the Higher Farm Inquiry.

The Committee nevertheless praised the Chief Planning Officer's intentions that future development in West Dorset Villages should be carefully planned to harmonise with their surroundings and looks to the adoption and firm enforcement of such a policy.

As we go to press, neither Messrs Fry or Quinn have withdrawn their appeals, though there has been some modification of the 'Oliver Plan' to meet local objections. It is also known that the Inquiry into the Fry application, if held, will be in public and will begin in the Village Hall on the 23 October 1990.

Members who attended the Special Meeting of the Parish Council on the 21 February witnessed the resignation of the Chairman at this critical juncture in planning matters. Following the debacle over the Structure Plan, David Barrow had striven throughout his chairmanship to earn credibility for the Parish Councils' planning opinions, and the Trust Committee regrets that his leadership should no longer be available.

In 1991, the Parish Council elections will be held and Trust members are now probably more aware than formerly that they should cast their votes prudently and with a particular regard to the importance of the planning role which now, and in the future, will form the most vital part of their duties to the Parish. It is hoped also that members will use their influence to encourage fresh candidates, particularly those under 40 who can add vigour and a fresh viewpoint to the Council's deliberations.

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DID YOU SEE

This second 'Greenhouse' winter like last years seems to have reduced the variety of birds, for whom the soft conditions have made food easy to find. Siskins first visited our nut-cage on the 19th. February, three weeks later than in 1989. These attractive little finches, like small and more highly coloured greenfinches, have always strayed into Southern England from the Continent during winter but, in the past 20 years, have also tended to breed in small numbers. In the north, they are regarded as resident, especially where there are pine forests. In recent times, another small finch - the serin - more yellow than the siskin, has started to breed in Devon.

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TRADITIONAL BUILDINGS OF WEST DORSET.

A Slide Show and Talk entitled 'Traditional Buildings of West Dorset' will follow the Thorncombe Village Trust's AGM on WEDNESDAY 9 MAY 1990 in the Village Hall, Thorncombe. The talk will start at approx 8.15 pm and will be by Mr R Machin of Bristol University. We hope as many of you as possible will come along to what promises to be a most interesting evening.

ADMISSION 25p. TRUST MEMBERS FREE (Membership renewal is due at this meeting).
BRING & BUY - RAFFLE - REFRESHMENTS.

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COFFEE MORNING AND BRING AND BUY SALE.

A Coffee Morning and Bring and Buy Sale will take place at June Ede's house, 2 Church View Cottages, Chard Street, on Saturday 12th. May at 10.30 - 12.30am. All donations of cakes, jams, marmalade, plants, seedlings, paperback books etc would be most welcome. Donated goods to either June Ede or Peggy Montague, The Royal Oak, Fore Street. All support is gratefully received. The funds need boosting!