

Thorncombe Village Trust **NEWS**

AUGUST 1990.

DID YOU SEE.....?

It was interesting to note how the 'greenhouse' Spring might affect the migrants from Africa. A Chiff-chaff on the 17th March was the earliest I have noted locally by 10 days but the first cuckoo was heard on the 19th April, the same date as thrice previously in the past six years. Spotted flycatchers did not appear until the 5th June, a late recording. The fact that unusually few of the Spring warblers etc have remained to breed probably indicates a further fall in their numbers and many members may have learned from the media with disgust that about 120,000,000 migrant birds are being slaughtered annually by so called "Sportsmen" in Southern Europe and the Mediterranean Isles, an appalling toll which the "Stop the Massacre" campaign is designed to halt.

In rural France in June, we visited a small pottery, the workshop and store of which was sited in a room like the community Room; however the ceiling was not plastered and swallows have found the joists to be an ideal nesting site. M. and Mme. Eve have removed a pane of glass from a window for access and no less than ten pairs were nesting in a small area, special perches being provided to limit the nuisance caused. The birds flew quite unconcerned about our heads and, with two broods each summer, probably add about 100 swallows to the European population annually. It is sad indeed to realise that many may fall victim to the "Sportsmen" who plague their migratory routes.

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PLANNING.

As you may have learned, the 'Oliver Plan' was resoundingly rejected by the Western Area Sub-Committee in Bridport on the 20 June; any consequent satisfaction was sharply terminated on the 5 July when the senior Committee in Dorchester - which has only a minority of members from the Western Area - approved the scheme subject to a phasing agreement, the chief Planning Officer's intention being that building might be spread over 10 years. While the scheme as a whole has its merits (especially if phased) the Council in approving it have breached those restraints both in their own policies and the Structure Plan which are intended to ensure harmonious and appropriate development. The Committee are consequently concerned that additional development can now occur, particularly on what was previously inaccessible backland but will henceforth be regarded as available for in-filling. This will further increase the size of the village and change its character.

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HON. TREASURER.

We are very grateful to Terence Freeman of 1, Fore Street who has now taken over as Hon. Treasurer. Many thanks to Douglas Battle, our retiring Treasurer, for all his hard work over the past years.

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BIRD DISTRIBUTION.

At the Trust Meeting on Wednesday, 11 July the talk was given by Ron Bowers. He is a leading light of the Devon Birdwatching and Preservation Society and comes from Stockland. He described, in detail, how the Society surveyed, over five years, the distribution of breeding birds over the whole of the County of Devon. The British Trust for Ornithology has produced a national survey done in 10 km squares. The Devon Society felt these were too big, and so conducted their own survey in squares with sides of 2 km (called a tetrad). Each tetrad was covered for 3 years for acceptable averages and totals. A pilot study was carried on from 1976 - 77 and the full study started in 1978. There was an average of 46 species per tetrad and a total of 247 species of breeding birds in the County. Mr Bowers did 56 tetrads over a five year period, while one keen ornithologist managed 231 tetrads in one season! Finally, a Tetrad Atlas of the Birds of Devon was produced. Mr Bowers told some humorous anecdotes about his bird watching outings. The talk was illustrated with many of his own very accomplished slides of the breeding birds of Devon and also included some of the recent migrants, such as the hoopoe.

The first thing that struck us about The Royal Oak in 1987 was the welcoming atmosphere, which we soon learned extended through the whole village. Perhaps old hospitality echoes on. We are certainly grateful to neighbours for their information gladly given, especially Mrs Farley senior, Mr Farley, Mr Down and Mr Masters. The earliest reference we have found to The Royal Oak Inn is in a deed of 1794, but its walls are older. The end wall by the War Memorial, to the top of the windows, is from about 1600, according to the Royal Commission for Historical Monuments. Lovers carved hearts and initials on the wall long ago. Inside the house, the Ham stone work above these windows is reddened, so there was probably fire and collapse. The other walls are from later in the seventeenth century. Inside, there is little original work, although in the eighteenth century someone cut an arch into the top of a Tudor fireplace, perhaps to warm himself above the knees. At some time before 1790 the Inn had been two properties. This may explain why a branch of the village sewer runs under the cross-passage. The name 'The Royal Oak', or on some Ordnance maps 'Oak Royal', is not likely to be earlier than the Restoration of 1660. But we don't know when the present name was given, nor whether there was an earlier inn on the site under another name.

The Dorset Record Office has names of landlords of the Inn from 1851. Some dates may be for mid-career. 1851, George Jeffery; 1875, George Gibbs; 1885, Charles Stoodley; 1890, Joseph Hallett; 1895, John Hook; 1903, Henry Hammand; 1911, Walter Paull; 1920, Fowkes Steirn; 1923, Frederick Jeffery (Mrs Farley senior's father); 1927, William Slade; 1931, Arthur Paull; 1935, John Stevens; 1939, Geoffrey Jones, followed after his death by Mrs Jones; and Leo Jarvis in the 1950's. So far we haven't met any ghosts, but if we do we hope they will offer us a drink - or charge only pre-war prices. What would they have thought of alcohol-free lager?

We cannot be sure if owners mentioned in earlier deeds were also the Inn landlords. (Some landlords in the DRO list were not owners). In 1834, Beed, Berry, Phillips, Fowler, Bagg and Judge all signed a complex deal including both the inn and some land and cottages at Hewood. Three wives also signed, and had to appear under a recent Act before perpetual Commissioners for Somerset, who certified that Mesdammes Berry, Phillips and Fowler were "of full age and competent understanding, and that they were each of them examined by us apart from their husbands touching their knowledge of the contents of the said deeds and that each of them freely and voluntarily consented to the same". Incidentally Hewood appears then and in 1772 as Heywood, in 1603 as Hewerwood and in 1658 as Hewood. In 1794, when George Berry sold the Inn to Joseph Shepherd, Berry had made part of his living as a fuller. He would have cleansed and thickened cloth by beating and washing, using fuller's earth - a silicate of aluminium, now used for cat litter. By 1829, a George Berry (maybe the one from 1794, or his son) was a clothier, making or selling woollen cloth, and owning the property. He then sold to William Bagg, a carpenter. Maybe inn keepers here often had a second job, although Thorncombe had more people then. Mrs Farley senior's father, Frederick Jeffery, was also a carpenter. He made water wheels for West Forde Mill. Arthur Paull broke stones for highways.

To be continued:

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MARINE LIFE OFF THE WEST DORSET COAST.

Dr Glanville will come and give a talk and slide show at our next bi-monthly meeting on Wednesday 12 September in the Village Hall. His subject will be the 'Marine Life off the West Dorset Coast' (Lyme Bay). The talk will start at 8.00pm.

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CHARMOUTH COAST FOSSIL WALK.

On Saturday 26 May some 40 members gathered at the Heritage Coast Centre at Charmouth. Richard Edmonds, the coast path warden, gave an interesting talk at the centre. After this we walked along the beach to the base of the landslip or mudslide which came down earlier this year. Much rock was broken open and numerous small fossils were found. The sum of £25.00 was donated by members to the Coast Path Centre and our thanks go to Derrick Comley who organised this most enjoyable outing for Trust members.