

PLANNING.

You will probably recall that approval of the two applications in the 'Oliver Plan' on the 5 July was subject to the attainment of a time-phased agreement with the developers. In the event, this has not proved possible and it is understood that the Chief Planning Officer will be reporting to the Development and Planning Committee on the 26 September, when he will suggest an alternative arrangement. In the meantime Mr Quinn has withdrawn the Appeal regarding his earlier Application while Messrs Frys' remains to be heard on the 23 October.

Following a request from the C.P.R.E. (to which the Trust belongs), a 13 page account of the Thorncombe Planning Saga has been compiled and passed to the Dorset Group, which is greatly concerned about a number of planning decisions in the West Dorset area.

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UNDER LYME BAY.

Dr Glanville spoke to us on Wednesday 12 September. Diving with Scuba gear in Lyme Bay and off Cornwall and Scotland, Dr Glanville assembled many excellent photographs, fully up to professional standard, of coral, seaweeds, squirts, worms, anemones, crabs, fish and scores of other creatures. Few of us knew what variety of forms and what colours there are beneath the waves. British forms are smaller than tropical ones, but yeild nothing in their rich colours. Can we think the same as we did about scollops, now that we have seen their amazingly blue eyes? Underwater photography can be difficult: to catch a burrowing worm with its feeding array displayed above its living-tube calls for great stealth, otherwise the worms whip into their tubes. For the second part of his talk Dr Glanville used two projectors, fading one slide into the next very smoothly. The shots of jewel anemones will have stayed with those lucky enough to see and hear the fruits of Dr Glanville's patience, knowledge and skill.

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DID YOU SEE.....?

As this note is written, we are enjoying yet another instalment of a superb summer, which began in April and has been interrupted only by a cool, damp June plus an occasional downpour since. The rainfall in this area at least has been sufficient to prevent the extreme effects of the drought we knew in 1976, though pasture, silage and hay crops have been severely limited. The effect on the bird population has been mixed, here at least it was noticeable that the majority of birds that nested in March, April and May failed to rear their young for one reason or another. Later nests have been more successful and, judging by the large flocks of swallows and martins that have assembled for migration, they also have done well. The late summer passage of other migrants has so far been disappointing, an exception being the hobby which was seen over the Eastern half of the parish several times during July. Don't forget to look out for siskins and black-redstarts in October!

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VILLAGE WALK.

Derrick Comley is organising a walk on Sunday 21 October 1990. We will meet at 2.15pm where the cars are to park on the wide verge of Back Lane (back lane to Holditch). We will walk for 1½ - 2 hours on field paths towards Hawkchurch. A map will be provided on the day.

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COFFEE MORNING.

The Trust is sharing a Coffee Morning with the Dorset Trust for Nature Conservation in the Community Room on Saturday 3 November at 10.00am - 12.00noon. The D.T.N.C. will have a stall with Christmas goods, including cards. Offers of cakes, jams, fruits, vegetables etc will be most welcome. Cakes etc for freezing can be left at either the Village Stores (many thanks to Rosemary and Brian) or at The Royal Oak.

Even earlier deeds name other Thorncombe people having some connection with the property, not necessarily as landlords of the inn. The buildings and their uses may have changed. There were the Pinsons: William, 1603; George, 1653; and Elizabeth, 1658; Bernard Pinney and Edward Bragge, 1623; John Ganden and Richard Loveridge, 1649, when Sir Henry Rossewel was at Forde; Joseph Follett in 1769 and John Jeffery in 1772. We would be glad to learn that William Wordsworth called in for a drink on his walks from Racedown in the mid 1790's, but so far we have not found a poem written to pay for ale.

The 1851 census shows Ann Clark, a gardener, and Thomas Ousley, parish clerk and letter carrier, as heads of separate households living in the Royal Oak Yard. Did they live in parts of the hay loft in the barn or stables? Or were there small cottages in the yard? And where was Laurel Cottage, where John Marsh the curate lived?

Many people living in Thorncombe remember The Royal Oak as a pub. The Golden Lion was often called the 'Top Pub', the Royal Oak 'Middle way' (to perdition? Or just half way house?) and the Crown 'Bottom Pub'. From the War Memorial end in the early 1920's under Mr Jeffery the rooms were, a private sitting room, kitchen, cross-passage, bar, and cellar at ground level, with another door to Fore Street for the barrels from local brewers. Mr Down recalls two bars, one each side of the cross-passage, both from the earlier time of Walter Paull and from times after Mr Jeffery's. Behind the inn was a skittle alley where the brewhouse had been. Footballers changed there too. When the landlords did butchery, carcasses would hang in the alley doorway for a while. Hot takeaway food was sold from the inn in living memory: tripe and onions on some days, faggots on some others. The extension now behind the house is half of what at one time was the Ladies' Snug.

The churchyard wall still carries brackets which once held a rope to help patrons uphill and homewards. A merry customer drove an Austin 7 down that path to the back door. But he couldn't back it up again when less merry. Neighbours tell of floods from surface water coming down the back path. We trust in the new village drain now laid under it, but keep the phone number of the flood team. The inn and later the house was thatched until at least 1965. We do not know if it had escaped all the Thorncombe thatch fires.

We have dug up a George III farthing - good for a half-pint - most of a cider quart, bearing a tree pattern which we are assured was made using spittle; and a clutch of clay pipes. The inn was still selling clay pipes in the 1920's. Tradition offers more riches: it says that monks working in the flax fields were called for their meals from the windows which now look on the War Memorial. It is also said that Monks lived on the site during the last Abbot's rebuilding at Forde Abbey. That was in the 1530's, so if the R.C.H.M. date of 1600 is right for the two north-east windows, the monks would have been in earlier buildings. But it would have made some sense to house them by the church.

After Mr Jarvis's landlordship the house was run as a boys' home by two ladies. Mrs Farley senior recalls some of them at the top of the church tower at night, hammering away. From 1965 Mr and Mrs Humfress had a pottery with two kilns in the house and barn, and some of their pieces are around the village. In 1970 Mr and Mrs Strouts came to live; they kept a dog cart in the barn.

A last happy moment from 1945; it is said that on VE night a village resident, still happily with us, danced on the pub's piano. Looking at the height of the ceilings, and the height of the people, we think it must have been the piano which was legless.

P. & R.M.

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BI-MONTHLY MEETING.

The next bi-monthly meeting will be on 14 November, The Rev. A Holt will be talking on 'Somerset Folk Lore and Stories of Somerset' and will be in the Village Hall at 8.00pm.