

MR R D J HAWKES.

The Trust lost one of its guiding spirits and founder members when Ron Hawkes died on 22 September 1990, aged 77. He instigated and supported the Trust's activities with great wisdom and perseverance, both during and after his time as its first Chairman.

Ron Hawkes was born in London in 1913, but moved to Somerton when very young. He went to school in Somerton, then went to London for his higher education. In 1931 he began his career in aeronautical engineering as a draughtsman with Hawker Aviation in Kingston-on-Thames, and moved to Auto Gyro in London in 1933. In 1938 he moved to Faireys at Stockport as a project and test engineer, and in the same year he was married. Throughout the war he did valuable work at Faireys, doubling as an intelligence officer in the Home Guard. In 1950 he moved to de Havilland at Hatfield as Chief Installation Engineer and Project Design Engineer. In 1960 he bought the Old Crown in Thorncombe, and in 1961 he took up his last job, as research director with Experimental Packing and Research Co at Sittingbourne.

Members will already know of Ron's sterling work as Parish Clerk for nearly five years. Some of his devotion to the village and the Trust comes out in this paragraph of his inaugural address in May 1986:

"We have a wonderfully interesting parish here at Thorncombe, which cries out to be studied and recorded, so let us band together and do a really good job and leave a record of our efforts to posterity, gather whilst we may the information that is still available. Each year something is destroyed, whether it be the written word, hedgerows, flora and fauna, the death of an old inhabitant, the collapse of a building or the burning of a few old postcards and photographs. Let us grasp time by the forelock and shake some information out of it whilst we can,"

Our sympathy goes to his widow Addie, son Clive, daughter-in-law, and grandson in their loss. There will be trees planted to his memory.

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COFFEE MORNING.

This autumn the Trust shared it's Coffee Morning with the Dorset Trust for Nature Conservation. This joint venture was held in the Community Room on 3 November and it was judged most successful and profitable. The Trust, after expenses etc made about £90.00 while the DTNC took over £200.00. We will make a donation to the DTNC of £15.00 from our profit. Our grateful thanks go to all the helpers and to people who baked, made jams and chutney and gave plants.

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PARISH WALK.

On Sunday 21 October an intrepid band of enthusiasts gathered along Back Lane in readiness for a cross country trek towards Hawkchurch via Tuckmill Farm. About 25 people of all ages and sizes together with dogs spent a most exhilarating two hours in the fresh air. A smattering of local history, particularly relating to the ruins of a tower at Holditch Court, added extra interest. The weather graced the scene to the extent that 'Wellies' were not vital to survival. The walk was organised by Derrick Comely who must be congratulated not only for planning the walk but for his research which added to the education of many of us, particularly those to whom the area covered was virgin country. Where to next Derrick we wonder!

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DORSET FARMHOUSES AND COTTAGES.

The Historical Study of Minor Domestic Architecture by Mr R Machin MA. 6 weekly meetings on Thursdays from 7.30 - 9.00pm starting on 17 January 1991 at St.Mary's C of E School, Thorncombe. This very interesting course is run by the Department of Continuing Education, Bristol University. The fee is £13.20.

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FOLK LORE AND STORIES OF SOMERSET.

On Wednesday 14 November 1990 the Rev. Alan Holt spoke to an audience of nearly 40 in the Community Room. He is well known as the author of several books on Somerset, and gave a dramatic and witty talk. He chose eight places in East Somerset this time, mostly with a paranormal and sometimes grim story. For example, there was Stella the haunted housemaid, at Puriton near Bridgwater. Alone in the manor house long ago, she heard a knocking but no-one was at the door. Then came a scream. Turning, she found a window left unshuttered. Down the window dragged a dreadful hand, its thumb pointing downwards. Stella managed to close the shutters before fainting. Now the manor house had been a priory, and it was said that Glastonbury Monks had walled up an errant heiress there. The next day Stella saw the fingermarks still on the window - in blood. Sixty years later, drainage work uncovered a skeleton: was this what the ghostly thumb had pointed down to? The bones were interred, and there were no more screams.

Mr Holt knew to perfection how to tell each story intensely, and how to relieve his hearers with a joke afterwards. All this without slides and projectors. Mr Holt departed, warmly applauded, into the dark and mysterious night. As we go to press, we have not heard whether he was stopped on the way home by a headless horseman

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THE LIVING WOODLAND.

At our next bi-monthly meeting on **Wednesday 16 January 1991** Mr Colin Varndell will give a talk and slide show entitled 'The Living Woodland'. The meeting will start at 8.00pm in the Community Room.

IMPORTANT CHANGE OF DAYS FOR MEETINGS. Wednesday evenings have proved busy nights and so, after the January meeting 1991 we will be having our talks on the second Thursday in the month.

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LOGO.

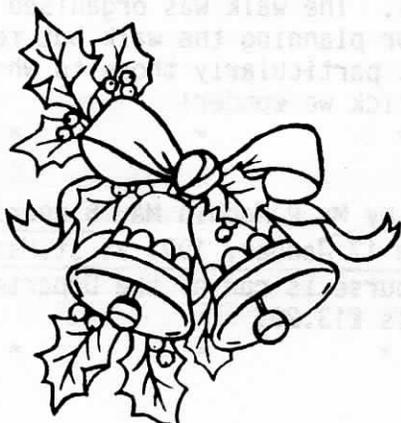
Do you think the Trust needs a Logo? If so, could you please draw one for us and send it to the Royal Oak.

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DID YOU SEE

In our last Newsletter, it was suggested that October might bring siskins and black redstarts to the parish; if it did not, there were other even more unusual avian visitors. On the 10 October a party of 16 crossbills spent about 10 minutes in a nearby beech tree, the first I have seen in England for many decades. The party included ruddy males, greenfinch-like females and greyish miniatures; normally they would have been dismantling fircones to eat the seed, a reported shortage of such seed in their main breeding areas in Scandinavia probably accounting for their presence here, although small numbers do breed in coniferous forests in parts of the UK. Another 'crop failure' in Scandinavia, in this case of berries, is thought to be the cause of an invasion of waxwings; these glamorous birds of starling size will probably reach Dorset later in winter - look out for them, they are tame and the first I saw were in a churchyard in the middle of Newcastle! The first fieldfares were here on the 9 October, redwings on the 13th; a week later - during the Parish Walk - some of us saw two late housemartins. All these dates are on the early side and are held by some to portend a hard winter.

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*Bells are ringing Children singing-
Their carols fill the air
Happy greetings, friendly meetings
The Christmas spirit's everywhere*