



T.V.T. NEWSLETTER.

This will be the last bi-monthly Trust Newsletter going out to everyone who takes the Parish Magazine. We are introducing some changes on a years trial. There will be an article about the Trust's activities actually included as an item in the Parish Magazine every month. This will reach all readers of the Parish Magazine. Every quarter we will be producing a Trust Magazine with articles of interest on Thorncombe and the surrounding area. These will include articles on local history, nature, birdlife, trees and hedges, old houses and conservation in general. We hope to produce the first magazine by June 30th. This quarterly magazine will, of course, only be distributed to members of the Trust.

* * * * *

DID YOU SEE.....?

The long cold spell in February drove many birds to bird tables and other sources of nourishment. Some species were obviously hard hit, among them goldcrests which normally find in the foliage of conifers their insect diet which is destroyed by prolonged frost. Following the note in our last newsletter, a female blackcap - with chocolate 'cap' - has taken possession of a bird table at Childhay and is managing very well on a diet of fat, nuts, oats and other delicacies (You will of course have noted the printers' error as regards the 'chaffinch' which should have read 'chiff-chaff'!) The first visiting chiff-chaffs should be here by the end of March, possibly preceded by sandmartins on the western edge of the Parish. They are unlikely to be delayed by the conditions which have made many wild flowers, the dawn chorus etc. a month later than last year.

* * * * *

COFFEE MORNING.

A Coffee Morning and Bring & Buy will be held at June Ede's (2, Church View Cottage) on Saturday April 27th. 10.30 am to 12.00 noon. Do please help and bring cakes, jams, plants, seedlings etc..

* * * * *

NEXT BI-MONTHLY MEETING and A.G.M.

This will be held on Thursday 9 May 1991 in the Village Hall. After the A.G.M., Mr H Poole from Bridport will give a talk on **OLD FARM MACHINERY** and it will be illustrated by slides.

One family has occupied the house on Chard Street for five generations. Mr Alfred Down's uncle, Alfred Gibbs, was the son of Tom Gibbs, and Tom's father was Robert Gibbs. These three members of the Gibbs family were all blacksmiths. The Gibbs family came from Crewkerne in the early nineteenth century. The Old Forge was conveyed together with Papan, which Richard Holt wrote about earlier in this series, in 1784. The house has changed little in the twentieth century.

In the early part of this century there were two busy forges in the village. Little Orchard Forge on High Street is marked now only by some brickwork. That forge belonged earlier to Sadborow estate; the Mr Bonfield who was Mr Wilfred Potter's grandfather rented the forge and later bought it. Sadborow work went to Little Orchard, and the Forde Abbey work to the forge in Chard Street. Alfred Gibbs often walked to Forde with his tools for shoeing.

Alfred Gibbs lived from the late 1860's to the early 1930's. Behind the heavy studded double doors there were two forges, each worked by a blacksmith and mate. Work included shoeing horses, mending farm machinery and making domestic ironwork. When the weathervane was transferred from the old church, the forge made the new stays. It also made the large candle-holders which later held oil lamps, then electric bulbs, before being replaced by electric fittings.

Mr Down remembers holding the work while his uncle fitted new blades on farm mowing machines, and the hiss of steam when hot iron wheel rims were cooled tight onto the wooden wheels. His uncle drank lots of cold milkless tea during the hot work. The iron frame of the old church clock had been taken down, and Alfred Gibbs wanted to buy the frame from Canon Bragge to put a grinding wheel into it. He had to wait to buy it until Canon Bragge died. The garden benefited when shavings and raspings from hooves made fertiliser.

A surviving day-book shows some prices between the wars. In April and May 1923, Canon Bragge paid 1s 3d (6.25p) for a turf cutter, 7s 6d for 4 shoes, and 2s 6d for handles and irons for scythes. In January 1931 Mr H Quick paid 1s 3d for two shoes for a donkey, and 2s 6d for nails, hooks, bolts and gate repair. After Alfred Gibbs died, Reg Hallett from Wambrook rented the Chard Street forge. It closed in 1938, with war clouds gathering and with working horses giving way to tractors. The work must have been hard if the smiths couldn't walk as far as the Royal Oak for a drink; a photograph shows them seated with refreshment at a table set up by the inn's coach house.

* * * * *

THE NATIONAL RIVERS AUTHORITY.

On 14 March 1991, Carol Denning spoke in the Community Room about the NRA in the South West, for which she is a pollution inspector. First we watched a video on the wide variety of the Authority's work. It safeguards and improves the natural waters of the region, not only the rivers but also the estuaries and coastal waters. It is concerned with improving the quality of water, with control of pollution and of flooding, and with planning water resources. The NRA's 400 staff in the South West have strong legal powers and since 1989 separate from S.W. Water. The video showed staff rescuing fish from pollution by damming, pumping in oxygen, and removing the electrically stunned fish until the water improved. There is a 24-hour telephone hotline, with confidence respected, for reporting pollution such as chlorine from swimming pools or oil from factories. The NRA's work also includes improving sea defences in collaboration with other authorities, upgrading culverts, checking water extraction during drought, running fish hatcheries for restocking, building fish-passes up to spawning grounds, and fighting poachers. Unlike so many corporate videos; this one gave us information without being grandiose.

During questions on this part, Carol Denning stressed that more pollution inspectors are in post and that polluters are heavily fined.

In the second half we saw slides of the daily work against pollution. Silage effluent, one of the strongest pollutants, can raise the oxygen demand by the tens of thousands. Sewage fungus clogs the gravel beds, smothering invertebrates and breaking the food chain. Silt in runoff from building sites or bare ground clogs the gills of fish. The battle rages.

Welcome news for Thorncombe is that in August 1991 the NRA consent for S.W. Water's sewage discharge into the Stonelake Brook will impose tighter conditions on quality.