

A relic under threat

AN ecologically important "relic" hedgerow could be lost if large-scale development proposals go ahead in Thorncombe.

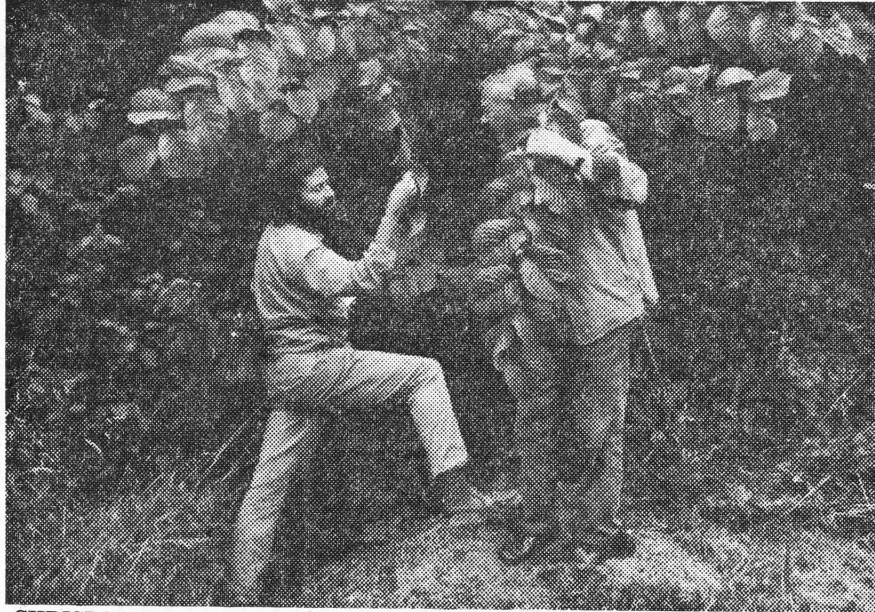
Parish council-appointed appraisal coordinator Ron Frampton and ecology group Friends of the Earth have warned that necessary road widening could have catastrophic effects on a roadside hedge from Thorncombe Thorn to Birdsmoor Gate.

FE conservation officer Linda Bradley said future generations would regard any failure to preserve the hedge as a foolish betrayal.

A survey of 12½ miles of the hedge showed 147 plant species, giving it a more diverse ecology than the average modern 200-acre farm. Wildlife figures are now being surveyed, but look as rich.

Existing planning proposals for large developments have been frozen by West Dorset District Council chief planning officer Mr Desmond Derrien while highway, land and water tests are carried out.

Yesterday (Thursday) Mr Frampton revealed an architect will be appointed to advise on the means of building a smaller development of low-cost starter homes in the village.



CHRISTOPHER Cornell (left) and Arthur Brook with an example of the "relic".

Approaches are to be made to housing associations, and a submission for outline planning permission is expected in the near future.

This week Mr Frampton sent the second part of his appraisal to parish councillors, the county council and Mr Derrien.

He notes that the 100-dwelling village is not capable of accommodating more than 20 houses in its natural confines — the structure plan allows for 50 to 150 houses to be

built in the next decade. Covering transport, environment and water problems, the report concludes: "It now appears

that Thorncombe must be the most difficult village in the whole of Dorset to develop on a large scale basis."