



# THORNCOMBE VILLAGE TRUST NEWS

Autumn 2003

Number 29

## THORNCOMBE VILLAGE TRUST

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Editors	Rachael Whitbread Ruth Jacobson

### Local Walks

Following suggestions made by TVT members, plans are afoot to develop a guide to local footpaths.

Our autumn walks are always popular, providing a pleasant way to meet other residents of the area, and also a gentle introduction to the footpaths and bridle paths of the parish.

We want to build on this, by producing a series of easily accessible leaflets describing some of the most interesting walks, so that newcomers to the area, - or indeed to walking - will find something to appeal to them.

The first of these leaflets is in production and will be available soon....

### Dark Skies?

The Campaign to Protect Rural England has published the results of research showing a notable worsening of light pollution in Great Britain. According to their figures\* 16% of Dorset, 18% of Devon and 24% of Somerset have become brighter between 1993 and 2000.

CPRE supports the British Astronomical Association whose Campaign for Dark Skies has worked since 1989 against light pollution. They claim that not only does light pollution ruin our view of the night sky but it also wastes energy, producing more carbon dioxide in the atmosphere by the burning of fossil fuels. They emphasise that they are not *opposed* to exterior lighting, only to its inconsiderate and wasteful use.

We can all do our bit to cut down on unnecessary light, for example by making sure outside lights are angled downwards, shielded to cut down on light spill and minimum wattage bulbs are used.

*'Darkness at night is one of the things that defines countryside and makes it so different from towns and cities. A moonlit rural landscape or the bare branches of a big, ancient tree silhouetted against a star filled sky are precious and now endangered things.'*  
(CPRE information leaflet 2003)

For more information contact CPRE, 128 Southwark St. London SE1 0SW. ( [www.cpre.org.uk](http://www.cpre.org.uk) )

\* supplied by the National Geophysical Data Center of the National Oceanographic & Atmospheric Administration,

## NEW MEMBERS

Since the last magazine the following people/families have joined (or re-joined) the Trust:

*In High Street:*

Ken & Nicky Passant  
Mr and Mrs Collins

*In Fore Street:*

Paul Murphy  
Sarah Stacey

*In Tansee Hill:*

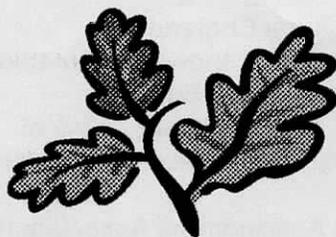
Julia Snellock

*At Synderford:*

Anna Young

*In Crewkerne:*

Guy & Anya Martin



## Trust membership

As with any village organisation our membership fluctuates as people move away and new families join the village. The numbers for this year are as follows:

137 households comprising 204 individual adult members. Actual numbers are probably more than this as family membership includes entire families with adult children, grandparents etc.

The great majority of members live in the parish, but we do have a few members from further afield.

## Finding the last elm trees

The Natural History Museum is asking amateur naturalists to help gather data on surviving elm trees. Since the Dutch elm disease in the '60's and '70's, a population of tens of millions of these magnificent trees has been reduced to only a few thousand naturally resistant specimens.

Of the three types of elm – English, wych and smooth-leaved – the first was the most affected, and very few reached maturity. The NHM hopes that rambles will start bringing in valuable information on the location of any surviving trees. They are particularly interested in the ancient trees because they support the greatest number of species.

Ancient elms are ecosystems in their own right, supporting about 200 species of lichen, as well as providing the habitat of choice for oyster mushrooms. The caterpillars of the white-letter hairstreak butterfly exclusively eat the leaves and buds of elms and some 30 moth species use it as their main host plant.

For further details: [www.ramblers.org.uk/elms](http://www.ramblers.org.uk/elms) or phone the Ramblers' Association on 020-73398500

## A V and A for Thorncombe?

Over the years Thorncombe Village Trust & some local researchers have collected together information, in different forms, that gives us glimpses into the making of the Thorncombe landscape and the communities that have inhabited it. Records, accounts, reports and memoirs have been put together in different forms and for different purposes. It can be a time consuming task to search out and sift through these for individual bits of information. However, such detective work helps us build up a picture of what life was like for those who lived and worked in the parish in years gone by. This kind of knowledge and understanding enables us to make informed judgments about changes that need to be made and those that must be resisted.

The Village Trust has begun to build up an Archive of local material that can be easily accessed by those with an interest in such things. Some records are already accessible in public record offices; others are in the possession of local land and homeowners etc. The Trust would like to know about any records, documents, pictures, or maps that local people would be prepared to make accessible to researchers in this area. If individuals feel they would like items to have a safe home then the Trust could provide that on the understanding that they can make them available to interested parties. It is equally important to know about the documents people have and wish to keep, but would be willing to let others inspect in the course of their studies.

### Life in Thorncombe in 1841

1841 seems to have been a year for compiling information on life in rural England. We can say exactly who lived in what house, how old they were, what they did for a living, what was being grown in every field, what a pound of butter cost and how much people were paid for a days hedging or weaving. The Village Archive could add to what we already have. In 2004 we aim to put together and make available locally 'Thorncombe Profiles', short accounts of what life was like in 1841 for particular groups or individuals.

So we would like to hear from you.

Do you have any items that may be of interest in this way? Would you be prepared to let others see them or would you like a home found for them?

If you would like to know more about a VA (Village Archive) for Thorncombe or have anything to offer contact Tony Smith at Maudlin Cottage, 30551 or [Tonymsmith5840@supanet.co.uk](mailto:Tonymsmith5840@supanet.co.uk)

**Don't forget the talk on "Ships and Sealing Wax" on January 8<sup>th</sup>. Happy New Year!**