



THORNCOMBE VILLAGE TRUST NEWS

Autumn 2004

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THORNCOMBE VILLAGE TRUST

PRESIDENT	Peter Moreland	Chairman	Joan Lovegrove
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Philip and Tina Smith bought the 10-acre field opposite their house in Thorncombe last year. Here is Philip's account of their progress so far with returning the land to an environmentally rich habitat.

The Crowpeckles

After deciding to name the field across the other side of the Stonelake brook The Crowpeckles, I was informed that certain persons in the village used to call this field The Parks! Whatever you wish to call it is up to you. However, the intention is to give the flora and fauna of the area an advantage in order to proliferate.

The principle benefactors are hoped to be butterflies and wild flowers. To help keep the field in a condition suitable for this objective, a controlled and light grazing is necessary. Currently a slightly higher level of grazing is required in areas that are too densely populated with rye grass. Highland cattle are regarded as one of the best grazers for conservation, - we shall see!

Already this year has seen an increase in the existing species of butterfly. Common Blues notably were in greater numbers with the second brood, so too were Small Coppers. Patches of Common and Greater Bird's Foot Trefoil are to be found over most of the rough ground and slopes. However the most exciting sighting was on the 5th July of a White Admiral, apparently not recorded in West Dorset before! So Thorncombe should be on the updated Millennium Atlas of Butterflies 2005.

On the slopes there is a reasonable quantity of gorse and a small amount of broom, which are food plants of the Green Hairstreak. Hopefully with careful regeneration of gorse the butterfly may be attracted to the vicinity or perhaps be introduced.

There are currently two groups of badger setts, several rabbit warrens and one old fox living on the slopes. Roe deer also spend considerable time foraging in the wooded area and amongst the gorse and brambles. Of the plant life I found two Common Spotted Orchids one of which flowered until it was bitten off by some creature. Also Devil's Bit Scabious, marsh violets, dog violets, primroses, bluebells, a white variety of Self-Heal, Common Centaury plus many more.

One day a stranger to the village asked if I would like to plant some wild daffodils in the hedge, I agreed and about a dozen bulbs were planted. Hopefully they will multiply.

Conservation of land is not easy, and the outcome not predictable, but with care and attention the results should be of a more positive nature than would otherwise be with intensive farming.

Ancient Tree Survey

The Ancient Tree Forum and The Woodland Trust are carrying out a nationwide survey of ancient trees. Everyone is asked to contribute to the map they are compiling. The total number of ancient trees recorded nationwide so far is 1211. Look at the website on www.woodland-trust.org.uk and go to 'ancient tree forum' for fascinating information on these wonderful trees, or contact TVT members with information on trees you would like to suggest for inclusion.

Thorncombe Butterfly Survey

A butterfly survey carried out on 14 May 2004 in 18 different areas of Thorncombe Parish showed that the total number of butterflies spotted was 123 and the total species was 11. By far the most common was the Green Veined White (38 seen), closely followed by the Orange Tip (31). Others noted were the Speckled Wood (19) and the Small Tortoiseshell (12). A detailed record of all butterflies recorded on this day can be seen on application to the editor. Maybe next year it will be possible to add Philip Smith's White Admiral to the list!

NEW MEMBERS

During the previous year the following people have joined (or re-joined) the Trust:

In Horseshoe Lane
The Hibbard Family

In Chard St:
Susan Quick
Jim & Philippa Walker & family

In Tansee Hill:
Sheila Ullman

At Synderford:
R G Courtney

In Hawkchurch:
Imogen & John Groves

In Holditch:
Mr & Mrs Cunningham
Nick & Janet Rex

In Forton:
Bronwen Coe

In South Chard:
Pat & John Cook

In Winsham:
Sue Goodlet

In Uplyme:
Alan & Di Kennard

You don't have to live in Thorncombe to be a member of the Trust. The majority of our members do live in the parish or immediate area, but, as can be seen from the list on the left, we have supporters from further afield. Often visitors to the village, relatives of inhabitants, or people who have moved away feel that they want to be members.

The membership subscriptions are mainly used for paying for speakers at our bi-monthly talks and for planting and maintaining trees in the parish. We are at present carrying out a detailed study of all the trees that we have planted, and carrying out repair work/pruning as required.

Wild Daffodils

200 small 'wild' daffodil bulbs are being planted this month on green triangles around the village, - at Venn Chapel, & the bottom of Horseshoe Lane, amongst other places. Jasmine Casey and Lisa Curry offered to do the job as part of their Duke of Edinburgh Awards. Well done girls! We'll look forward to seeing the results in the spring.

Tree Grants

We are in the position of being able to offer small grants for tree planting in the parish. Certain criteria need to be met. For further details and an application form contact Joan Lovegrove 01460 30313.

Bats

Following the very interesting talk in July from the Bat Conservation Group, we will be organising an evening 'bat walk' in conjunction with Dorset Bat Group in summer 2005, and there will also be demonstrations of the most suitable types of bat detectors. These are electronic devices that pick up the high frequencies emitted by bats and make it possible for us to identify the species. The Trust is looking into the possibility of buying one of these detectors for members to hire out. So you will be able to identify which bats flit around your house on a summer's evening!

Worldwide, there are almost 1,000 different sorts of bats, including some very large ones, but Britain has only 16 species, all of which can be found in Dorset.

With the clearing of Britain's woodland, bats have had to adapt to living in buildings. Since female bats of most species only have a single young each year, their populations are particularly under threat from loss of habitat and landscapes, destruction of their roost sites, the use of wood treatment chemicals and, more recently, unfavourable climatic factors. If you have a bat roost in your house, you are therefore contributing significantly to their conservation.

English Nature (Dorset team): Slepe Farm, Arne, Wareham BH20 5BN: 01929 557450: dorset@english-nature.org.uk

**Don't forget the talk on Horse-drawn Caravans on January 13th.
Happy New Year!**