



## **THORNCOMBE VILLAGE TRUST NEWS**

Spring 2004

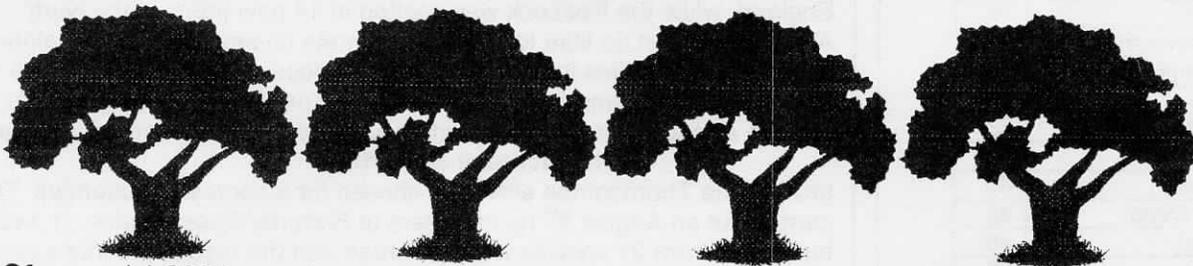
Number 30

### **Leave the Dead Wood!**

According to an expert from English Nature 'Dead wood is the richest habitat within a healthy forest, supporting a huge variety of wood-boring invertebrates and an array of fungi'.

A fifth of the invertebrates living in Britain depend on dead wood for their survival, so a forest that has plenty of dead timber provides a wealth of food for a huge range of insect-eating birds, including nuthatches, warblers and woodpeckers. Bats, jackdaws and tawny owls use the holes in rotten trees for breeding.

The problem is that Britain's forests contain few dead trees – in managed woodlands trees are felled before they mature. In most other forests, branches or entire trees blown down by winter gales are carted away for reasons of public safety, for firewood or simply to keep the place 'tidy'. As a result, our forests are deprived of their normal quotient of veteran trees, and dead wood rotting on the forest floor, slowly returning nutrients to the soil, has become a rarity.



Of around 1,800 invertebrate species in the UK dependent for at least part of their life cycle on dead wood, nearly 330 are Red Data Book-listed (by the World Conservation Union) because they are rare, vulnerable or endangered. An example is the violet click beetle which lives under jackdaw nests in very old beech and ash trees, and is now confined to Windsor Great Park and a single wood in Worcestershire.

We need to recognise the importance of leaving dead wood, both in standing limbs of ageing trees and in branches and whole trees fallen to the ground.

Fortunately, attitudes are starting to change. The Forestry Commission is now advising its forest managers of the importance of leaving some trees to grow old, and is encouraging private forest owners to do the same.

Those of us who don't own a forest can do our bit by leaving piles of wood to decay naturally in wild corners of our gardens.

If you have any comments, queries or suggestions for items for this newsletter, please contact the editor Rachael Whitbread 30525

### Footpath Leaflets

Newcomers to the area, holiday-makers, and even residents are often unfamiliar with local walks, or unsure about where a footpath will take them. In response to this need, the TVT has produced a series of five leaflets. Each one will describe a local walk, pointing out notable features, and giving information on distance and terrain. The leaflets will be available individually at minimal cost, and will, we hope, encourage more people to explore our local footpaths.

We aim to add to the range of walks with further leaflets, and welcome suggestions from members. Committee member Tony Smith has designed these leaflets, phone him on 30551 for more information.

### A Car Club for Thorncombe?

Car Clubs offer an environmentally-friendly way of enjoying the use of a car without having to own one. They offer affordable, flexible and convenient access to vehicles tailored to meet local needs.

How do they work? The car is leased; members of the car club generally pay a joining fee and annual membership, which typically comes to £150 – less than a tax disc! Then it is pay as you drive. The vehicle(s) can be hired for short trips (generally minimum ½ hour) or longer – even a weekend. The vehicle is kept at a designated point and bookings are made by phone or, increasingly, online. It has been found that members of a car club pay lower costs per mile than car owners, because of the special deals that can be negotiated for insurance and servicing.

There are now over a dozen schemes operating in the UK. Although the idea started in urban areas as a way of reducing congestion, there are now clubs operating in the Yorkshire Dales and in Devon. They are attracting increasing interest from statutory authorities as a way of reducing rural exclusion; Peter Headicar, Reader in Transport Planning at Oxford Brookes University, says: "A more potentially attractive measure I have yet to see. It ought to be one of our highest priorities"

If you are interested in finding out more, contact TVT Committee member Ruth Jacobson: 30353 or [rjthorncombe@aol.com](mailto:rjthorncombe@aol.com)

### UK top 15 most common butterflies

% of gardens with each butterfly 2002

Large White	87
Small White	83
Red Admiral	81
Peacock	75
Small Tortoiseshell	73
Painted Lady	53
Holly Blue	53
Meadow Brown	53
Comma	51
Gatekeeper	49
Speckled Wood	48
Orange-Tip	40
Brimstone	36
Green-Veined White	30
Common Blue	24

### Which butterflies do you see in your garden?

*Butterfly Conservation*, has carried out an extensive survey of 33,000 British gardens. (see left). The results show an alarming decline of many butterfly species, with many numbers diminishing in the south of England as a result of habitat loss and changing weather patterns.

The Speckled Wood butterfly has been seen in County Durham gardens for the first time since the early 19<sup>th</sup> century, as well as in 19 other areas in northern England, while the Peacock was spotted in 14 new areas in the North.

Although we can do little to affect the climate change, we can certainly encourage butterflies into our gardens by choosing plants that provide nectar, such as buddleia, and food plants, including nettles, for the larvae. We can also provide a range of habitats, including wild areas that are left to grow naturally.

#### Thorncombe Butterflies

In 2003 the Thorncombe area was chosen for a survey of butterflies. This was carried out on August 5<sup>th</sup> by members of Butterfly Conservation. 1,140 butterflies from 21 species were recorded and the results are interesting to compare with those on the left:

*'The Gatekeeper was the most abundant.. with 228 counted. Given that the season for Small Skippers and Ringlets was drawing to a close, & that Brimstones tend to be scarcer in West Dorset the results are not surprising. High points of the day were single sightings of Small Heath and Silver-washed Fritillary ...near Hewood Bottom, and Dark Green Fritillary near New House Farm...the first time either had been recorded in this area since 1970. The most prolific areas, each with 12 species noted, were Saddle Street and Yew Tree Farms (78 butterflies), Little Park (54), Knacker's Hole (43) & Gashay Farm (28).'* (From the Butterfly Conservation Dorset Branch Newsletter)

The TVT and in particular Joan Lovegrove were thanked for all the hard work put in to arrange the survey, which may be repeated this year.

Contact Rachael Whitbread 30525 for a detailed list of species counted.

Contact Butterfly Conservation at :Manor Yard, East Lulworth, Dorset BH20 5QP, or [www.butterfly-conservation.org](http://www.butterfly-conservation.org)

**National Moth Night** on 22<sup>nd</sup> May this year will be also held during the day to include diurnal moths. Contact address on right for details of how you can take part in this exciting survey!

**Don't forget!**  
**Plant Sale and Coffee Morning - this year with Thorncombe Garden Club**  
**Saturday May 15<sup>th</sup> 10am at the Villae Hall.**