



THORNCOMBE VILLAGE TRUST NEWS

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THORNCOMBE VILLAGE TRUST

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PILSDEN PEN

At the north end of the Marshwood Vale on the way to Beaminster you will find Pilsden Pen. At 277 meters (909 feet), Pilsden is the second highest hill in Dorset and the site of an ancient hill fort.

In the 1960s at the request of Michael Pinney, excavations were carried out by Peter Gelling of the University of Birmingham, and the remains of 14 roundhouses were uncovered near the centre of the hill fort. Pilsden Pen was bequeathed to the National Trust by the Pinney family in 1982.

Pilsden Pen has a long history of being occupied. Flint tools found dating from Neolithic times and two Late Neolithic to Bronze Age burial mounds show the site was used long before the Iron Age hill fort still visible today.

In 1066 when the Normans invaded they brought with them the delicacy of eating rabbits. These were reared in fenced areas called warrens. Both nearby Coney's Castle and Pilsden Pen could have had rabbit warrens. In the early 17th century documentary evidence suggests a lodge on top of the fort was a local landmark. Earth mounds in the centre could have been constructed as rabbit warrens and the lodge used by the keeper. There is no sign of a lodge today but it was probably near the site of the concrete triangulation point. During 1803 Pilsden Pen was listed as a Beacon site designed to provide advance warning of the arrival of Napoleon's fleet.

You can explore the hillfort on foot and it is well worth a short detour off the trail. The summit of the hill is easily reached by foot – a steep 10 minute climb from a car park on Pilsden Lane. From the top there are magnificent views of Marshwood Vale, Golden Cap and the sea to the south, Hardy's Monument to the east, Exmoor and the Quantocks to the west and Polden and Mendip Hills to the north. You can also see several other hillforts including Lewesdon Hill, Lambert's Castle and Coney's Castle.

According to Wordsworth who rented a house nearby at the end of the 18th century the view from the top is the finest view in all England.

TVT WEBSITE GOES FROM STRENGTH TO STRENGTH

Since the TVT website was relaunched in November 2012, a great amount of information and photos have been added. Please have a look at the history and local walk pages in particular.

We have now added a "nature diary" to the website, and we need your help and input to make this a success. Please would you email (or pass to a committee member) any interesting sightings and photographs of birds, animals or plants preferably in the Thorncombe Parish area.

We would be happy to receive input from any TVT members or visitors to the website. Please don't be shy to share, you might get to see your tips, sightings and photos on our website.

A QUICK REMINDER ABOUT OUR PLANT SALE ON SATURDAY 18TH MAY AT 10.00am. PLEASE COME ALONG AND ANY DONATIONS OF PLANTS, CAKES OR BRIC A BRAC WOULD BE VERY WELCOME.

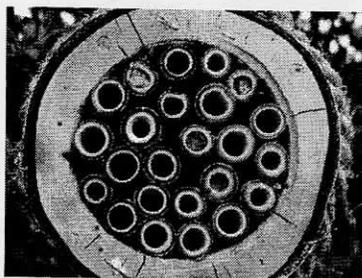
MAKING A BEE HOTEL

There are over 250 species of bee in Britain and over 90% of them are solitary bees. They are so named because, unlike honeybees and bumblebees, they do not live in colonies.

Some solitary bees use beetle holes in dead wood as nest sites. They are excellent pollinators and can be encouraged in gardens by providing suitable nest sites. "Bee hotels" are available to buy, but can be expensive, and they are not difficult to make.

Nest tunnels can be made simply by drilling a few centimetres into logs or fence posts. Or, hollow plant stems such as bamboos or stems of herbaceous plants can be bundled together and placed inside plant pots, old pipes or plastic drinks bottles from which the top and bottom has been cut off. Bamboo nodes are solid, so cut canes so that the nodes are at one end. Packets of cardboard nest tubes 7mm across can be bought from garden centres. This size can attract the red mason bee in spring and leafcutter bees later in the year.

Solitary bees and wasps like sunny spots, so it is best to place nest sites in south or west facing situations. Attach them to fences, or place under the eaves of sheds or garages for shelter. Then just wait for the bees to make them home.



WHEN GOING TO MARKET

The saying "The cat's out of the bag" originates in medieval England when piglets were sold in the marketplace. The seller usually kept the pig in a bag, so it would be easier for the buyer to take home. But some dishonourable sellers would try and trick their customers by putting a large cat in the bag instead. However, if a shrewd buyer looked in the bag – then the cat was literally out of the bag. This good advice was first recorded around the mid 1500's: "When ye proffer the pigge open the poke". The bag was called a poke, which is where the saying "a pig in a poke" comes from. This means to buy something, which you cannot see or don't want.

The stone, as a measure of weight has varied from 4 to 32 pounds for various items over time. Originally any good-sized rock was chosen as a local standard and the stone came to be widely used as a unit of weight in trade. For example when weighing wool a stone was 16 pounds, but for a butcher or fishmonger the stone was 8 pounds. In the 14th century England's exportation of raw wool to Florence necessitated a fixed standard. In 1389 a royal statute fixed the stone of wool at 14 pounds and the sack of wool at 26 stones. It was only standardised at 14 pounds in 1824 when the English imperial system was introduced.

It's widely believed that the phrase "A Baker's Dozen" originated from the practice of medieval English bakers giving an extra loaf when selling a dozen in order to avoid being penalized for selling short weight. When the bakers sold bread, regardless of the quantity, they added something extra to make sure the total weight wasn't short. The addition was called the 'in-bread' or 'vantage loaf'. When selling in quantity to middlemen or wholesalers they would add an extra loaf or two. When selling single loaves to individuals they would offer a small extra piece of bread.

"She's no spring chicken" - This saying is thought to have originated when farmers discovered that chickens born in the spring were far more desirable at market than older chickens that had lived through the winter. Sometimes a farmer would try to pass off a winter chicken as a young chicken, to which the buyer would respond "that's no spring chicken".

"Cheap at half the price" was typical of the street cries of barrow boys. Many of these sayings made no strict sense but attempted to mislead or at least distract the public and draw their attention away from whatever mild scam the traders might be engaged in. In the hustle and bustle of a street market it sounded as though the customer was getting a bargain, although on reflection it was clear that no promise of value for money was actually made.

Ring True, Ring of Truth - In the past coins were actually made of gold, silver or other precious metals. Their value depended on the amount of gold or silver they contained. Some people would make counterfeit coins by mixing gold or silver with a cheaper metal. However you could check if a coin was genuine by dropping it. If it was made of the proper metal it would 'ring true' or have the 'ring of truth'.