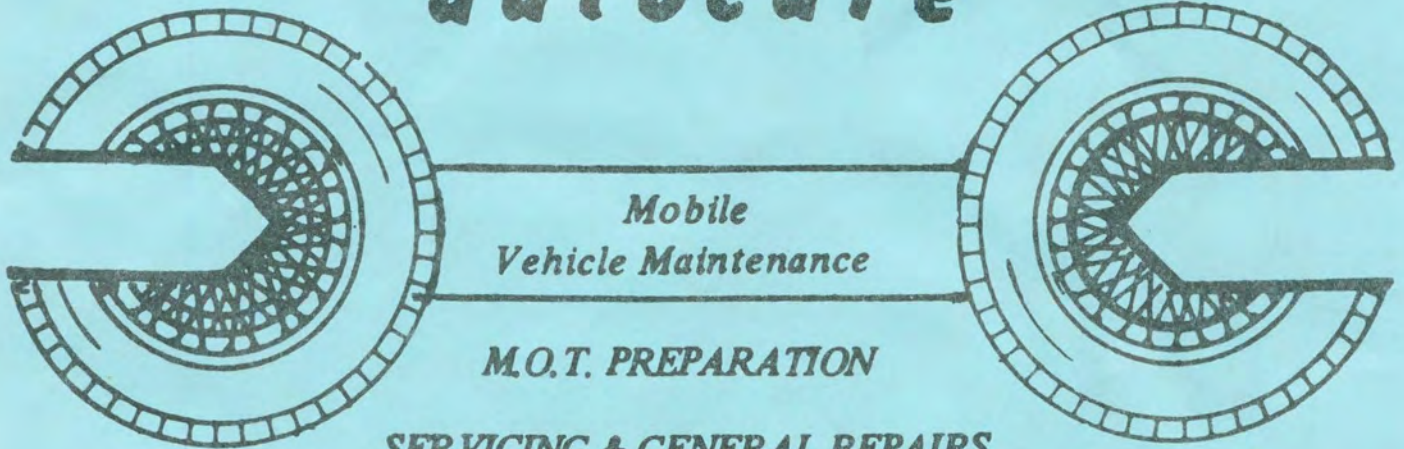


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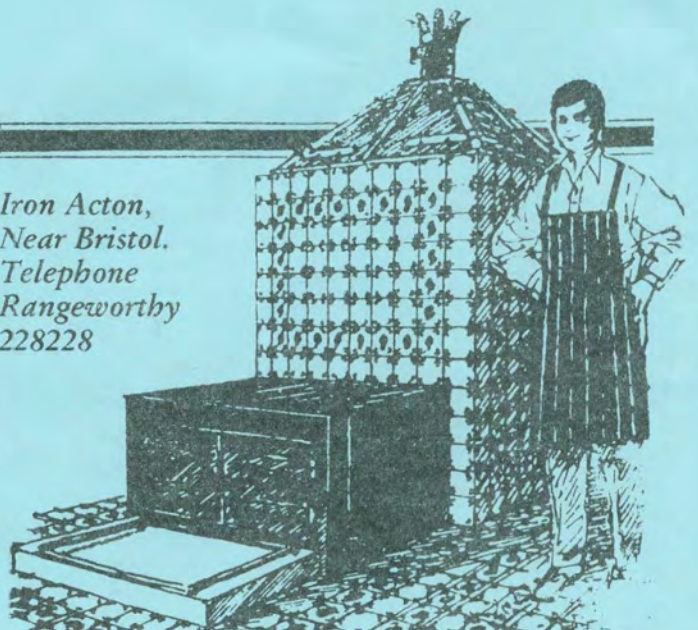
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# SPRING '94

## 'FOCAL POYNTZ'

Having lived all my early years at Frampton End, moving then to Keynsham, on to Stoke Gifford (when it was still a Village), eventually to Iron Acton some years ago, I feel I have almost completed a full circle.

Indeed one of the pleasures of my teenage years was to wander along the lanes with my friends after the Sunday evening service to visit the 'Clove Hitch' and treat ourselves to ice cream, sweets or soft drinks.

I'm sure we all thought of Iron Acton as a small, very pleasant quiet Village.

But since moving here I now realise what a thriving active community it is. Much bigger in area than first considered, reaching to Yate, Latteridge, Rangeworthy and Frampton Cotterell, with activities to cover almost every age group and need. The reports in this edition of Focal Poyntz give an indication of the range of interests available.

Indeed if there are other clubs or groups or activities who do not normally contribute a report but wish to do so, they would be most welcome.

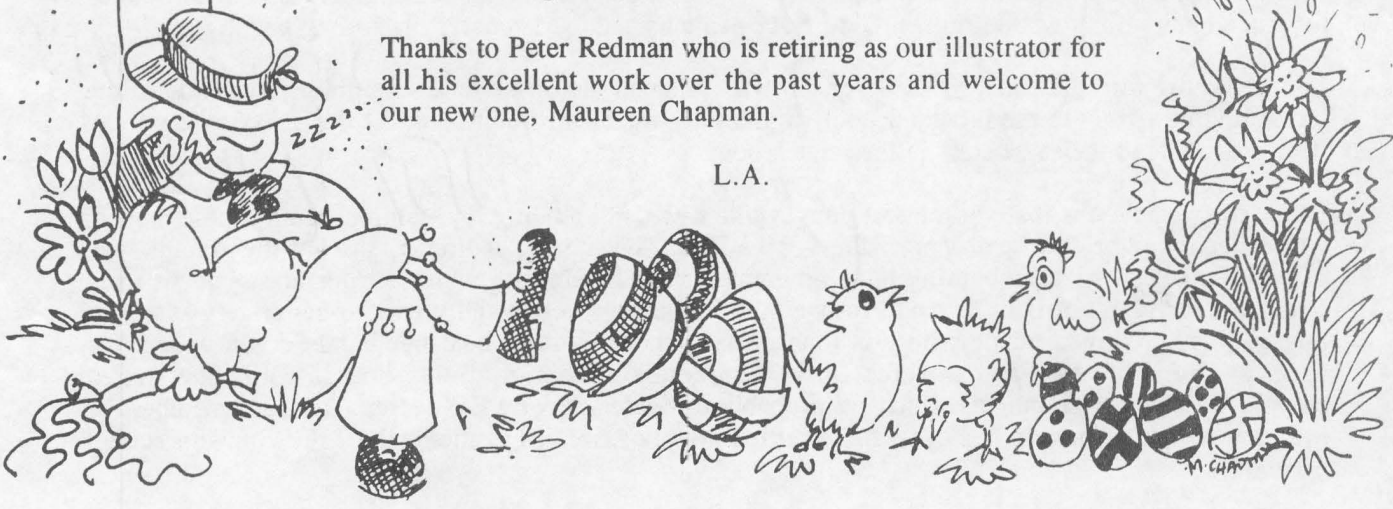
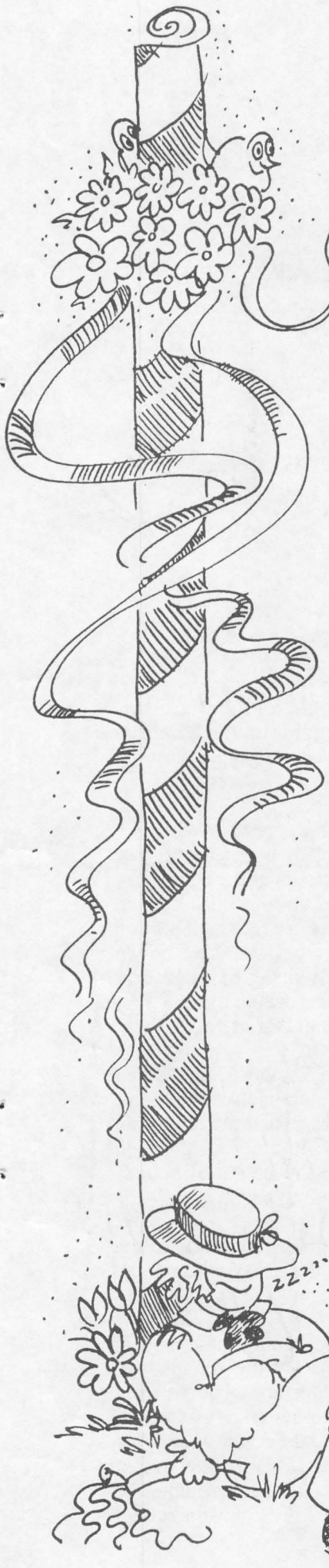
Sure, there are concerns about what is happening to and around our parish, some important, some less so. Concerns such as the volume and speed of traffic on our roads: encroachment of Industry on our boundaries, provision of dog litter bins and possible ban on dogs in the Parish Meadows, and the provision of seats on the Village Green.

But as was said to me by a stranger whom I met when walking across the fields and stopping to admire the view,

"It's worth a great deal to live around here."

Thanks to Peter Redman who is retiring as our illustrator for all his excellent work over the past years and welcome to our new one, Maureen Chapman.

L.A.



## THE CONKERER



When we first met, we were both seven. I was a fattish kid with the kind of straight hair that great aunties tutted over. You didn't have styles in those days. You just had hair, either longish in plaits or bunches, or shortish with a brown bakerlite hair slide at the side. You washed it once a fortnight in Eve powder shampoo, if you were poor, and Drene liquid, if you were from the nicer sort of family. Friday night being Amami night was still a concept undreamed of in those years when your mother, if you were lucky and she didn't have a day job like my mother, went down to the greengrocer's and queued two hours for a couple of oranges.

I don't remember whether Jennifer's mother went to Camberwell Green queuing for oranges. She was a quiet, kind but tired looking lady, always in a wrap around overall, always in the kitchen cooking something on toast for Jennifer, eggs or beans, even on crumpets sometimes.



In my house where there were five of us, you waited till eight o'clock at night and the fare was intellectual. That is what mother or elder sister had copied from Grandma Buggins on the wireless; whale meat, minced, wrapped in a vine leaf substitute: cabbage leaves or sometimes curly kale, nestling on a bed of Bisto gravy with a sprinkling of soya flour on the top for extra colour and interest.

"I'll throw this conker at you." Those were her first words to me, that day in September when we were both seven. Not, you notice, "If you don't go away, I'll throw" etc. But totally uncompromising. She intended to throw a conker at me. And that's what she's been like ever since. Forget negotiation, forget manners, protocol, fear of retaliation. A conker would be thrown. And at me. I think, even then, I had no doubt she would aim true. I have a shameful feeling that I sported a green doll's pram that day and this may have goaded her. Even then, she had very obvious blue eyes. I had these brown things stuck like currant buttons in the middle of a pastry face. She had long bunches of dark curly hair. That night inhaling deeply from the fissures of the Ideal boiler, the only heat we had in our first post war house, I told my mother I would be growing my hair into bunches as from that night.

My mother read books from the Left Book Club and had just joined the Fabian Society. She walked around in bare feet and threw plates of fish through the window if things were going badly. She didn't veto the bunches; I doubt if she even noticed the change of hair style. It was just a matter of me excavating two half perished elastic bands from the back of a drawer in my grandfather's forbidden dark oak bureau. He had died at the onset of hostilities but the bureau continued to be out of bounds for years later. But a wonderful source of rusty pen nibs and used squares of blotting paper.

I do not know why the conker was never thrown. A small act of mercy in the unforgiving tide of the impending new term in the Infants School. I know we established quite quickly that the very next day we were to attend the same class in the same school.

Later, she was the one that got the real pony, while I was still tending my stable of clothes pole mounts with baler twine bridles behind my father's bike shed. Later still, at fifteen, she got the Adonis who played Hamlet in the neighbouring boys' grammar school production which all our class bought front row seats for (I got Yorrick). And yes, we both had other friends and went our separate ways in so many things. I loved music, she was tone deaf. School work, I beat her hands down except for science. But I hovered and shivered for half an hour on the high diving boards while she soared effortlessly down from heights which are probably forbidden now by EC decree. And I remember the little triumphant gleam in her eye when she tied my plait ribbons to the back of the chair on school prize day.

So why am I telling you all this? The nostalgia I suppose that comes from a recent week spent with her in her holiday home in Florida. Both our husbands gone, one peripherally, one permanently, five children between us, reared and disappeared although her two sons agreed to do a chauffeuring body guarding job, Florida being what Florida appears to be at present. We had both always been in touch, Christmas cards and phone calls and keeping up with births and deaths, but that was our first actual meeting for years.

And so I turned around from the phone booth in Tampa airport and there she was. Not exactly curly bunches, but still the long dark hair flopping over her shoulders. Still the bright blue eyes. And by some amazing coincidence, and because a week before my nice young hairdresser was telling me about his panic attacks instead of concentrating on my hair, I just happened to have the cropped straight style of the nineteen forties. I know we both had a lot of extra added colour though. So there she was, fifty years older, short in stature, loud in voice and huge in real estate so I believe.

People who know me say I've changed. I know of no one who had changed so little as my old friend. The friendship and the sparring started that very night. It began with a visit to her Jacuzzi, and then into the plunge pool, to cool and relax after one of those endless daylight flights. My neat little Tesco's polka dot swimming costume clad body was analysed scrupulously and I gained points for being on the trimmer side! I enjoyed the touch of chagrin in her voice, so early in our new acquaintance. She, however, had the better tan, and a wretchedly opulent looking gentleman (early retired but with all parts working it seemed) from the Midwest who drooled at her from the verandah. I scored in being able to name four kinds from the myriad beautiful flocks of sea birds which dived and swam and scratched on the shore line. (Not sure I was entirely happy at being able to achieve in this rather Adrian Mole area).

Shopping was a delight. She was as she always had been. Bargain hunting, scrutinising every fabric, every cut, third degreeing assistants as if they were on suspicion of large sale company fraud. I was not allowed to buy a thing in my usual haphazard way. She made me try on everything. Her approval echoed like theatre applause through the shopping malls of Clearwater Bay. Her loud doubts, brought a chill to the cheeks of the immaculately pansticked sales assistants. I could not blush. It was too funny and too much fun.

Waiting while she made up her mind about some curtain hooks, the years rolled further back as I remembered, watching her rooting round at the Horse of the Year Show or the Ideal Home Exhibition, comparing, bartering, arguing, at times infuriating the sales staff in her quest for minuscule free samples of patent saddle cleaning liquids or potato peeling gadgets. Always carrying back triumphantly to her parents a bag full of bargains which somehow you knew would find their way to the back of the cleaning cupboard by Christmas.

She fought furiously my insistence on sampling at least one real American ice cream. I won. Well worth it too (and anyway I could afford to gain in the girth a little more than she). She rounded on me over the size of my gin and tonic contribution to the pre dinner one night, (it seemed to me to be a modest little Iron Acton creation of the sort taken with a sugar biscuit at ten thirty on a Sunday morning,) but herself made these stinging Margaritas as if they were giant glasses of pop at a kid's party, and left me executing bossa nova steps I didn't know existed, and dives in the midnight pool best left to porpoises and the unhinged.

There were the sad bits too, the things that had gone wrong in our lives, or the high drama of giving birth and handling Thatcherite adolescent children, of losing parents, and the confession of things we had done in rasher moments which gave rise to gasps of horrified laughter and approval on both sides. And in spite of all the events, the odd feeling that we were just about the same people we had been the day she decided not to throw the conker.



Jo Voss

## Friends of Iron Acton School.

At the end of November, a good number of people came to a Flower Arranging Demonstration in the School Hall. We raised about £100 and are very grateful to Nadine Peters of 'Nadine's' flower shop in Chipping Sodbury for sharing her skills with us.

Early in February we held a very enjoyable 'Family Disco' in the Village Hall at which we raised £112.

During March we will have had a '50/50 Sale' in the School Hall and another skittles evening.

The Friends have recently become a registered charity. Our Annual General Meeting will be on 23rd March at 7.45 p.m. in the School Hall. If anyone would like to find out how we have raised and spent the money, they would be very welcome.

Finally, we have set a date for our Summer Fayre, 2nd July. We hope to see many of you then, enjoying yourselves in the summer sunshine.

**Ann Bradley (228559)**

\* \* \* \* \*

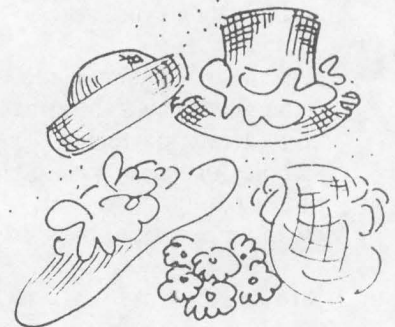
## NORTH ROAD LADIES CLUB

At the Ladies Club first meeting of the New Year Eleanor Bartlett told us about the Charity she had helped to set up, Eleanor Childrens Charitable Trust, to take aid to Rumania. After our meeting she was off to Great Ormond Street Hospital to see a small boy whom she had brought back from Rumania for life-saving heart surgery. The operation was very successful and after a few weeks convalescence he was able to return to Rumania.

Cheques were presented to Mrs Bartlett and B.U.S.T.

For our February meeting Tyna Thompson talked about the history of hats and how she started her hat hire business. Tyna had brought a large selection of hats with her and we were allowed to try them on visualising where we might wear them; a wedding, Christening, Ascot Garden Party etc.

Jeff Goundrill of H.M.P. Leyhill gave us a talk with slides in March on Chelsea Flower Show. This involved a great deal of organisation behind the scenes and excitement when the day of the Show arrived.



Our Ladies are also looking forward to a trip to see 'Joseph' at the Hippodrome. In April we are visiting Cloverleaf's factory at Swindon to view their range of kitchenware.

At our May meeting Supt. Allinson will be telling us about Police Aviation.

On June 6th we have our annual Barbecue when we are keeping our fingers crossed for fine weather. We extend an invitation to anyone who would like to come to this. Later that same week we are going to see 'Me & My Girl', but of course the main event of the year is our annual outing which this year is to Penhow Castle Wales's oldest lived-in Castle.

Wishing you all a happy Easter.

\* \* \* \* \*

A cavary officer was bawling out a young recruit on a horse.

"Trooper Botting, you've only got one spur on."

"I know that, sir," replied Trooper Botting, "but I reckon if I get one side of the horse to go, the other will probably go as well."

## ACTON AID REPORT.



Since the last report our events have included the German Evening held at the Village Hall in November. This was a complete sell out and anyone who left it late to get tickets found them hard to come by. This must be one of the most enjoyable events put on by Acton Aid and is a very good fundraiser, the monies from which will enable us to provide and support other activities during the coming year.

This was followed by the Acton Aid Christmas Party in December which is purely a social activity, not fund raising, but at least breaking even.

The following day the Children's Christmas Party was held with about 70 children from the Parish enjoying the entertainment put on by Brian the Magician, and excellent party tea and a visit from Father Christmas. This event was organised by Robert and Fiona Bourns and helpers and our thanks to them.

**Parcels for the Elderly.** The events put on this year have been successful in many ways, both socially and financially, and have seen our resources improve sufficiently so that for Christmas '93 we were able to distribute to the Senior Citizens of the Parish a box of hand-made biscuits. We were certainly pleased to provide these gifts and after some years of being unable to provide something at Christmas this was a step in the right direction. Reports showed they were well received.

The Annual General Meeting was held in February with a reasonable number of members attending after receiving the current Chairman's report for the past year, a new team of officers were elected.

Chairman	Christopher Wiggins
Vice Chairman	Robert Taylor
Secretary	Robert Bourns
Treasurer	Patrick Murphy
Services	Richard May
Public Relations	
Officer	John Percy
Village Hall	
Representative	Gerry Millward

The new Chairman and his team outlined their thoughts for fund raising, and presented a possible programme for the coming year which if well supported will provide Acton Aid with the funds to continue to give the support to the Parish and its people.

Following the A.G.M. the monthly meeting took place in the Rose and Crown, where Acton Aid holds its meeting on the first Thursday of every month. All potential members welcome.

\* \* \* \* \*

## ELIZABETHAN CLUB

Our club is still progressing and having enjoyable meetings. We enjoyed our Christmas Dinner despite it being very wet on the evening, but a good meal and good entertainment was enjoyed by all. We had a trip to Leyhill in January for their Pantomime; a trip to see Danny LaRue in Bath and a trip to Thornbury Operatic Society' Pantomime on February 17th. We held a successful Whist Drive in aid of club funds on 28th February.

Future events will be another Whist Drive on 28th March; an outing to Merryhill, Birmingham on 24th April, and an outing to Tenby on 28th May.

We are still hoping for new members and if you are over 60, you can contact me on 228566 and I will introduce you to the club.

Elsie Blanchard

## ALFRED STRANGE'S DIARY

November 1933

- 2nd .. round to Elson's. To Bristol with Reg in Jack's car. He was taking his girl friend and her sister to the Prince's Theatre. Reg and I did not go to evening class .. we went to the Coliseum where there was a fruit trade exhibition.
- 4th. Sat. Football North Rd. Sports 0 Hanham Corries 4. V Gwatkins missed a penalty - Powell played in goal. I played outside-left and had only about ½ doz. kicks. A. Sheppard played at c-forward.  
Evening. Round to Goosegreen with R. Elson and L. Wookey. There was a large bonfire there and over 200 people.  
Gordon Richards rides his 246th winner this season to equal the record set by F. Archer 48 years ago.
- 5th. Sun. Walked up to Stover with H. Wiggins and paid club money at Dyer's. Had a brief ring on the bells for evening service.  
Walked over to North Rd. met A. Webb who told me he wanted to play for North Rd.
- 6th. Board Day at Council Offices. I typed out Capt. Henderson's report.  
Letter sent to Mr Beake of Latteridge.  
Evening...caught up with R.E. at Mays Hill on way to Gregg's College.
- 7th. ... evening over to North Rd. with D. Gibbons and R. Canvin. We watched B. Holbrook beat A. Mainstone for the whisky in the clubroom.
- 8th. Bell ringing practice. Present Messrs. Curtis, Elson, More, Wiggins, Holcombe and Durbin. Younger ones D. Gibbons, V. Cater and myself.  
Mr Holcombe's friend and Charlie Wiggins came up.
- 9th. Tom Brown (Bristol Rugby Club) expelled from Rugby Union through meddling with Rugby League (northern) terms.
- 10th. Bought carbide for my bicycle lamp from Geo. Hobbs.
- 11th. The Duke of Beaufort had complained re the slippery surface of some of the local roads had affected the local hunt. Shire Hall (Gloucester) demanding an immediate report on the matter!  
Football. Bristol Gas Co. 4 North Rd. 2 (Powell, A. Strange).  
Iron Acton 5 Butlers 3 - Southmead 0 Rangeworthy 1 - Frys Nomads 1 Yate Y.M.C.A. 2 (Frys had unbeaten record).
- 12th. 11 a.m. service. The rector ordered S. Curtis over to the other side of the church during the service.  
Evening service. All the mourners in church for Mr J. Powell and Mr. Allsop.  
Afterwards up to Yate with D.G. and R.E. They had hoped to meet Miss S. off the train at Yate but she had left them in the lurch. Walked back to North Rd. with C. Powell, C. Watkins and D. Janes.
- 14th. Typed out British Legion notices for Mr. G. and delivered them. He gave me 6d.  
Team to play Rangeworthy on Saturday: - Hillier, F. Greenaway, A. Mainstone, F. Dickson, D. Canvin, C. Prentergast, R. Elson, B. Dyer, A. Powell, R. Wilcox, A. Strange, res. L. Wookey.  
Choir Practice .. Don Elson has joined the choir.
- 16th. Evening.. to Greggs College with R.E. We called at Woolworths and Marks & Spencers in Castle St. I bought a shorthand notebook and an electric bike lamp.
- 17th. Typed out whole correspondence concerning the taking over of roads at Filton. B.Dyer beat me in the bagatelles tournament 200 - 65.



- 18th. Football .. Rangeworthy 2 North Rd. 4. Hillier (goaly) played well for us. Rangeworthy's team .. R. Powell, Ivor Marklove, Henry Marklove, M. Potter, R. White, P. Pick, E. Clark, A. Webb, N. Dyer, C. Woodall, Idris Marklove.
- 20th. evening .. I cycled into Greggs College. R.E. skidded and came off his motorcycle along Newfoundland Rd.
- 21st. M. Roberts of Latteridge called to say my uncle C's beasts had got out of the field. He waited for my uncle to arrive home and took him over to Latteridge in his car. I got M. Pinnell to ride me down to Acton .. then I used his bike to go to Latteridge. G. Kingscote came with me. We were out in the field in the dark with only the light from a cycle lamp mending the hedge.  
My uncle L. has lost our dog 'Trixie' somewhere in Chaingate Lane.
- 23rd. I typed out letter for Mr.G. for the Dursley Gazette re the 'slippery roads' problem. Finished typing out estimates for next year. They came to £16,000 instead of £18,000.
- 24th. Miss S's Invitation Dance this evening at North Rd. School.
- 25th. Football .. Horfield Sports 6 North Rd. 3 (R. Elson. C. Prentergast and o.g.) A. Mainstone, D. Dickson and Hillier did not play. Bill Alway played in goal wearing his pants (!! ) H. Washbourne played in long trousers. R.E. drove us up onto the pavement on the way home. Iron Acton 3 Yate Brickworks 0.
- 26th Sun. Served at H. Communion with F. Fortune. Freddy Fays Concert Party at the Lamb Clubroom this week.
- 27th. .. to Greggs College in evening .. bit of an accident at Winterbourne. Mrs Prior's sister Eileen Harmer ran into the back of a cart on her motor cycle. J. Pinnell and G. Clark cycled with me as far as Winterbourne. R.E. rode his motor cycle to evening class. I stopped at Winterbourne to talk to R. Richardson (old C.S.G.S. boy).
- 28th. .. institute .. I played bagetelle with J. Mackney.

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### THE WINE DRINKERS' SOFT DRINK

Most soft drinks seem to be much too sweet and geared to childrens' taste more than adults, so when the hedges are bursting with elderflowers help yourself to something free and make this delicious cordial.

Dissolve 2½lbs sugar in 3 pts water and simmer for 5 mins.  
Pour into a deep bowl and add 2 oz. citric acid, stirring to dissolve  
Add 2 lemons and 2 oranges, roughly chopped, and about 20 large fresh elderflower heads  
Stir well, cover with a cloth and leave for 4 days in a cold place, stirring night and morning  
Strain, put into sterilised bottles and keep in a cool dark cupboard. (Though I don't think you'll keep it very long!)

Diluted with your favourite mineral water, flat or carbonated, this makes a very refreshing hot weather drink.

Be sure to use freshly opened flowers, as they get old they develop too much tannin and spoil the flavour. I find screw top bottles are the easiest, and shall start saving suitable ones now, sterilising them in the same way as jam jars.

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## ACTONIANS - SPRING NEWS.

Although it seems well in the past, thank you for supporting 'Ali Baba and the Forty Thieves' (or was it four?) last December. Hope you enjoyed the pantomime as much as the cast and crew who were all thoroughly shattered in time for Christmas. The raffle held during the interval of each performance raised £109.00 for Barnardos Wales & West - thanks to all for generosity.

### 'The Pity of War' - Wilfred Owen - arranged by Penny Percy.

One-Act Drama Festivals are held annually each Spring. This year the Actonians are again entering the Avon & Malmesbury Festivals. 1994's one-act play entry is, 'The Pity of War' arranged by Penny Percy and directed by Tim Pratt. It tells the story of the young soldier-poet Wilfred Owen as told by his poetry and letters from 1914-1918. The very demanding part of Wilfred Owen is played with great feeling by Jonathan Jones. A very special thanks to Christopher Townsend, Liz Sellick, Richard Lee, Geoff Dickes, Jim Sinkinson & Cyril Luton who offered to be in the play. It is very much hoped they will join the group again for future productions. A Supper Evening and Performance of 'The Pity of War' will take place in the Village Hall on Wednesday evening, March 9th. It is sure to be a very enjoyable evening.

P.S. The Pity of War won the Peter English Award as overall Runner-up, and the Richard Brayshaw Cup, the Technical Award, at the Avon Festival, and will now go forward to represent Avon in the Central Divisional Final in Frome on 23rd April. Congratulations to all concerned, especially Tim Pratt, and best of luck for Frome. (ed)

The Junior Actonians have also been busy with their one-act play entry, 'Naughty Girls' by Rony Robinson. The play is set in Miss Grindle's classroom where the 'very important' school inspectors arrival sparks off a new imaginative approach by the teacher and headmaster as they try to impress him. Unfortunately things, with the help of the girls, go wrong ...

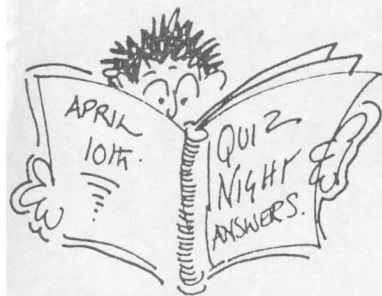
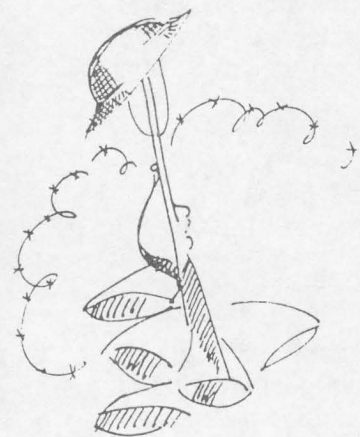
The play has a large cast involving the whole group and was chosen by the 'Juniors' themselves. It comes from a collection of short plays which use humour to explore themes that are important to young people. The playwright Rony Robinson is morning disc jockey on BBC Radio Sheffield. He wrote 'Naughty Girls' completely in a day for radio broadcasting. He is delighted that the Junior Actonians are performing one of his plays, and hopes they will have lots of fun, and do what they want with it, and make it theirs. He very kindly didn't want Royalties paid but would like if possible, a copy of the programme for his scrapbook.

The play is being directed by Jenny Pratt & Joyce Richards. A performance will be held in the Village Hall on the evening of March 20th. Please see posters for details.

'The Crucible' by Arthur Miller this powerful, haunting play depicts the Salem witch hunts in 18th century America. Rehearsals are well underway under the directorship of Bob Allen. Performance dates are Thursday, June 9th - Saturday, June 11th. Please come. See posters soon for ticket information.

'Brains are Required. A Quiz Night is being organised for the evening of Sunday April 10th to be held in the Village Hall. If anyone is interested in joining a team, or would like to organise a group of 8 or 20 to form a team - please contact:-

Anne Chenery 0272 - 566404  
or Mike Wills 0272 - 564177



Finally, thank you for your combined support by coming along to see the plays. The Actonians always welcome new members (the usual meeting night is Wednesday in the Village Hall at 8 p.m.) If you are interested please contact - Chairman Mike Wills 0272 564177  
or Secretary Gerry Millward 228704

The Junior Actonians (7-16 years) have full membership at present, but if you are interested in future membership please contact:- Jenny Pratt 0454 317945

They will all be very pleased to hear from you.

**Gaynor Clark**

\* \* \* \* \*

### IRON ACTON C of E SCHOOL

The School worked very hard towards the Christmas festivities putting together 2 separate performances of the Nativity and the Wind in the Willows. The Infants class under Mrs Hatt's and Mrs Howat's direction told the Christmas story in an exquisite fashion. The costumes were beautiful and made the performance extremely polished.

The Juniors told the tale of Toad adapted from the classic novel by Grahame Green. The children in both performances did themselves and their school proud.

As well as the two performance sessions, in the last week of term the children sang to the Elizabethans group and after their school party, met Father Christmas.

The Spring term tends to be one of work - preparing for many things. This year will see the start of the development of the School House as we now have completed its purchase for the school's use. We have made plans for the development of the school garden and this has been approved by Northavon District Council so that the school may obtain some financial assistance towards these. Primarily the aim is to return the garden to a well kept state which would be an asset to the School both in terms of educational opportunities for the pupils and also for the aesthetic and practical use of the local community.

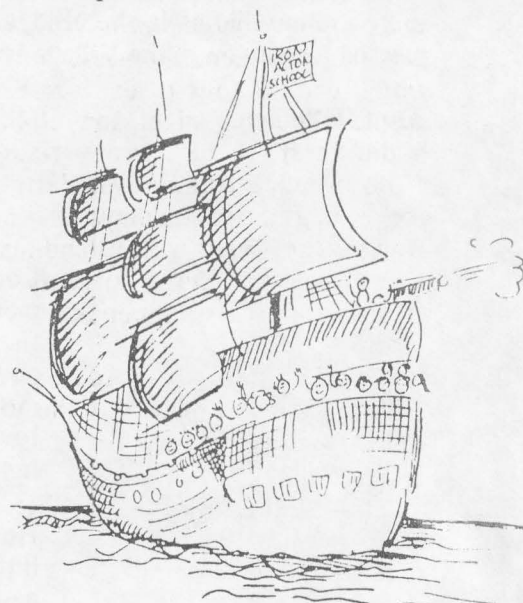
The children are now looking forward to the more summery events in the School calendar. The Upper Juniors are looking forward to the Field Studies trip to the Isle of Wight in June. Here, the children will be treated to powerful educational exhibits such as the 'Mary Rose' and 'H.M.S. Victory' in Portsmouth and whilst on the island they will visit Alum Bay, Osbourne House and Carisbrooke Castle which will bring much of the National Curriculum alive. However, it will not be all work. Much research will be undertaken both before and after their week away at the beginning of June.

Before this, however is the Mayday activities where the children will be participating in the Maypole dancing for which preparations are already underway.

To follow that is the annual Netball and Football tournaments, the area Sports and the School Fete, where last year the children gave a gymnastic display.

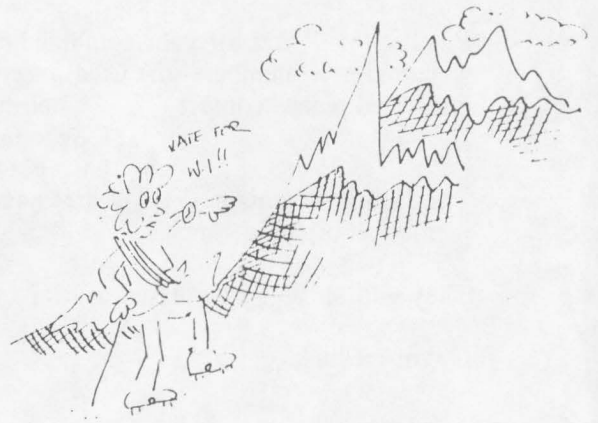
Not all the dates for these events have been set. However, the major event, the school fete is on Saturday 2nd July 1994.

\* \* \* \* \*



## W.I. NEWS.

When Lynne informed me recently that I was to take over from her as W.I. 'Press Officer' she handed me a useful little leaflet explaining what was expected of me, I must present the W.I. to the public - encourage new members. I was urged to tell of our own members latest achievements e.g. climbing the Himalayas, getting an Open University degree at sixty and fronting a campaign to clean up a local black spot!



To date none of us have actually climbed the Himalayas or obtained an Open University degree at forty, fifty or sixty - but we are working on the idea.

For the moment however, I can report that at our A.G.M. in December Pauline Hill was elected President, Maureen Bull Vice-President, Jean Kethro Treasurer and Lynne Blanchard Secretary.

We are very pleased to see that Vivienne Parker is recovering well from her recent injuries after being knocked down, near her home.

We started the new year well with an excellent talk by Mr Jeff Gowndrill on 'Leyhill Prisons Farms and Gardens.' Apparently the prison is almost completely self sufficient and provides home grown produce, vegetables, fruit and eggs to other prisons in the area. We were also shown slides of the prison's entry in the 'Chelsea Flower Show.' Next July we plan to visit Leyhills Farms and Gardens.

Unfortunately, our February speaker who was to have talked to us about 'Harrods in Edwardian Times' was snowed in at Backwell on the night, so was unable to reach us. We were able however, to fill in the spare hour with coffee and cakes and discussions on various topics.

Our talk in March will be by Mr Bryan Hildick-Smith on 'Rowes Veterinary Practice' so if there are any ladies in the village - new or not so new who would like to join us, we shall be very pleased to see you in the Village Hall at 7.30 p.m. on Monday March 14th.

Anna Tillotson

\* \* \* \* \*

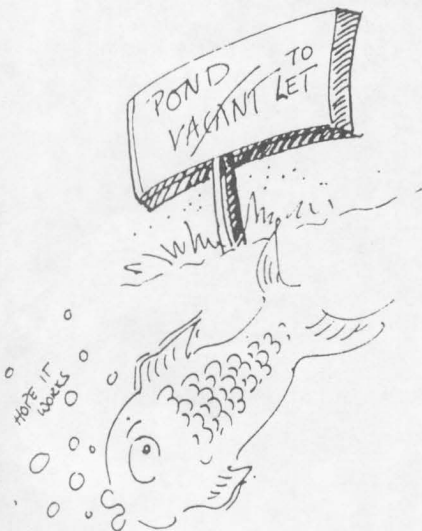
### **GOLDFISH BEWARE!**

Looking out of the kitchen window one dark and dreary January morning, I was surprised to see a kingfisher sitting on the edge of the fish pond. I knew he had been seen along the stream but didn't think he would come within fifteen feet of the house.

I was able to take photographs through the window, and although the light was so bad they came out reasonably well.

He paid us one or two more visits but when he had polished off the little goldfish in the top pond we didn't see him again, though I know he made similar raids on other nearby ponds.

So it seems we have a new menace to our goldfish, but a much more welcome one than the heron!



## PARISH COUNCIL

The very wet winter has held up outdoor work, but trees and hedging have now been planted in the Parish Meadows and daffodils should soon be making a good splash of colour.

There is still too much vandalism in the Meadows, which means constant costly repairs, mainly to rebuild walls. The money which the Parish Council has, comes from the Council Tax which you pay, so we are having to spend some of your money on these repairs! So wouldn't it make sense if ALL adults, (not only parents) made sure that children behaved themselves when playing there

As fencing the play area would be very costly we decided to provide more dog bins instead, but if these are not used when in position there is a strong chance that an addition will be made to the Byelaws banning dogs from the Meadows. The District Council have made a Byelaw concerning dogs fouling pavements which will come into effect on April 1st and the dog wardens seem to be very active so you have been warned!

Seats on the green and in the High Street should be in position soon, perhaps by the time you read this.

The Avon Branch of the International Herpetological Society (what a mouthful - it means they study reptiles) contacted us with an offer to clean up and maintain the Coach Pool at Dyers Lane. They say there are great crested newts as well as many frogs and toads. They are spending their first day at the pool on March 5th and then we shall know if there are signs of any more interesting creatures.

National Spring Clean Week this year is April 15th - 24th. If you know of any spots in the parish that need particular attention and if you can volunteer to help clean up, please give your name to the Clerk.

We have been looking into the possibility of starting a neighbourhood watch, so if you think this would be a good idea or could offer your services, come to the open Parish Meeting in April (watch notice boards for date) when this will be discussed.

Chairman	Bob Sheppard, 200 North Road
Vice Chairman	Sue Gawler, Shale Cottage, Wotton Road
Councillors	E. Blanchard, B. Cook, R. Curtis, F. Davis, D. Hancock, C. Heal, D. White
Clerk	N. Carter, 9, Chilwood Close.

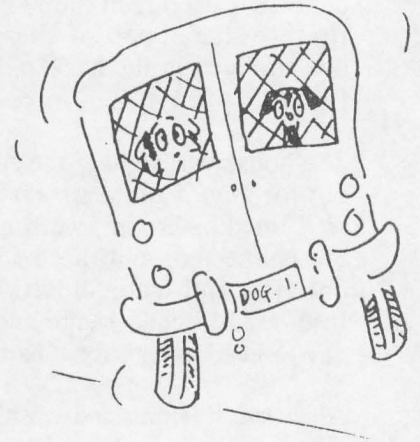
\* \* \* \* \*

The Village Hall Committee, as part of the Village Hall fund raising effort are holding a "**BRING AND BUY**" stall, as well as their usual tombola.

To make this a success, and at the same time make some cash for you, they will sell unwanted items on a 50/50 basis - you deciding the selling price and receiving half of the proceeds, - the remainder going to the Hall funds.

Please bring goods for sale to the Village Hall marquee on the Green by 10.00 a.m. on Village Day - May 2nd - or telephone Tony Townsend on 228429 (or any committee member) if you want items collected. It is regretted that furniture with foam filled upholstery, electrical appliances or clothing cannot be accepted, nor boxes of jumble.

\* \* \* \* \*



## SWIFT CURRENT

For about eighteen months we lived in the small Canadian town of Swift Current, in the prairie province of Saskatchewan. At first we shared part of a large house with another couple; the owners lived in the back and two Air Force couples shared the front.



The house was right at the edge of the town and was just too far out for any of the main services. So that, although we had a well fitted bathroom, we couldn't use it because the drains were not connected, and there was no way to heat the water. All cooking and water heating had to be done on a very old-fashioned kitchen range and it would have taken most of the day to heat enough for a bath.

All waste washing and washing-up water had to be taken down to the end of the garden and thrown in the river, or "creek" as it was called. I lost a few teaspoons that way. The lavatory was in the usual little hut in the garden, and yes, the Eaton catalogue really was cut into pieces and hanging on a string! The door didn't close properly, so you had to sing, and as winter came on the seat was frequently covered in snow.

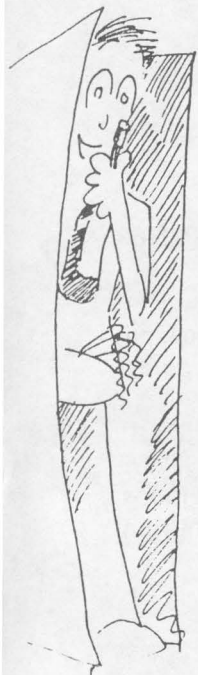
All water had to be fetched from a pump in the next door garden, and if you forgot to save a jug full to prime the pump you really were in trouble. And of course the water had to be boiling if the pump was frozen.

After a few weeks we managed to find accommodation in a hotel next to the station, and just before we left, the owners of the house sawed off the back where they were living and by putting it on rollers moved it along the street to where they had prepared another foundation. The house, of course, was of typical Canadian construction, double wooden walls with a cavity.

Our new abode consisted of two rooms and tiny kitchen, with use of bathroom, and there were three Air Force couples with similar flats. The cooker was the weirdest I have ever used. It ran on Kerosene and had to be pumped up. The oven was just a metal box which you stood over one of the burners. We had a certain day when we could use the washing machines and drying room in the basement.

When some friends were leaving a flat in a modern building we managed to persuade the owner to let us take it over. (and I remember walking round to say goodbye to them in a temperature of 37 degrees below zero Fahrenheit).

This was a super flat, one really huge room and a bathroom. The kitchen, (sink, cooker, fridge and cupboards) folded behind doors in one corner, and the bed swung up and folded into a wardrobe across the opposite end of the room. Laundry facilities, as usual in Canada, were in the basement. Many were the parties held in that room, often quite impromptu when friends would come knocking at the door (always carrying a bottle) after we had gone to bed, and we had to get up and quickly stow the bed away.



All liquor was very strictly rationed then (4 bottles of beer a day, 1 bottle of wine and spirits a month) so everyone took their own drink to parties and took home any that was left. That might sound an odd thing to do, but it certainly never put a damper on any party.

Altogether we had a great time in Swift Current, we made friends with many local people and of course there was always something going on at the RAF station.

The town had indoor and outdoor skating rinks, and we managed a few trips to Banff, in the Rockies, for skiing. Summer was very hot, we swam in the creek and had marvellous picnics, but somehow the winters hold more memories.

All this was a good many years ago and I expect Swift Current has grown and changed like most other towns. I do hope all the houses are now connected to main services!

B.C.

\* \* \* \* \*

### NORTH ROAD BAPTIST CHURCH

The Pastor and congregation of North Road Baptist Chapel send Christian greetings to all readers of Focal Poyntz.

Recently we have dedicated to the Glory of God and the memory of John and Grace Parker a new set of Mission Praise Hymn Books. Also we accepted with gratitude a new clock kindly presented by Mr and Mrs Worsley.

Later this year we will be celebrating the 125th Anniversary of the Church - more details of these celebrations next time.

In the meantime - on Good Friday we shall again welcome the Whiteshill Male Voice Choir and friends from Whiteshill Church, Winterbourne at 7 p.m. - on Sunday 12th June at 6.30 p.m. our service will be conducted by the Weston Gospel Male Voice Choir whose members come from Weston-super-Mare and the surrounding districts and one of whom is the former neighbour of our church Mr Royall who served many of you from his grocery shop for many years. We look forward to meeting him and his wife again - why not come and join us and after the two services enjoy a cup of tea and light refreshments and reminisce with old friends.

Apart from these two special services we meet every Sunday at 6 p.m. and would welcome warmly any reader who would care to come and share fellowship with us.

We send our thanks to all contributors for keeping us abreast of all the happenings in Iron Acton and for their amusing reflections of events ancient and modern.

We also all much appreciate all the hard work of the Focal Poyntz Committee without whose unstinting efforts this magazine would not pop through our letter boxes.



\* \* \* \* \*

An Aberdeen couple were shipwrecked on a desert island. After a week, their clothes were torn to shreds, their provisions had run out and they were exhausted. "Oh Jock," said the wife, "things just couldn't be worse."

"They could that," said Jock. "We might have bought return tickets."

## THE PREACHING CROSS

I am endlessly fascinated by the 'treasures' which can still be found in the most unlikely places. Browsing amongst books in the antique market which is held each Saturday in what was the old cattle market in Bath, I came across a most interesting book - Notes on the Old Crosses in Gloucestershire by Charles Pooley, published by Longmans, Green & Co., London, in 1868. What was particularly interesting were the notes about the Preaching Cross in Iron Acton, and the references to its architectural importance. One hundred and twenty six years after the publication of this book, it is good to know that the Cross is still in remarkably good condition, especially when one reads of the sad fate of so many other Crosses in the County.

I hope the following notes from the book will be of interest to **Focal Poyntz** readers:

Iron Acton lies about three miles west of Sodbury and twenty-three south of Gloucester. It is said to owe its name to a bed of iron ore, worked from time immemorial, in the neighbourhood; and to a forest of oaks which flourished on the same spot - Ac: Sax., signifying an oak tree. Instead of this derivation, it is not improbable the manor took its title from the family of the Actons or Actunes, into whose possession it came soon after the Norman Conquest. John de Acton was seized of this manor in the beginning of the reign of Henry III, and it appears by record of 15th Ed.I. that he and his ancestors enjoyed this, time out of mind. A lineal descendant of John de Acton, Sir John de Acton, died seized of this manor 17th Ed. III, but he it remarked, left no issue.

The Cross is situated in the churchyard, on the north side of the church. Lysons, who has etched it, concludes it to be of the time of Henry VI. Bigland (created Garter Principal King of Arms, A.D.1780) connects the date of the Cross with that of the church, which he also refers to the fifteenth century. He describes it thus:- 'The Cross has four sides, on each side two shields, one or two of which are plain, two or three seem to have mechanical instruments, such as hatchets, &c., carved on them, but those which had arms are obliterated.' This, however, is inaccurate, since, with the exception of being somewhat weather worn, and materially differing from Garter's description of them, the devices on all the shields are exceedingly well preserved and are as capable of being interpreted now as ever.

The building is composed of two tiers, or stages, raised on a platform of three octagonal steps. The plan throughout is square, the four buttresses at the angles of the lower stage being connected by groining-ribs, ornamented with sculptured bosses, some of which represent oak-leaves and acorns, to the capital, still pendant from the roof, of which was once an eight sided central shaft, a portion of whose pedestal still remains inserted in the floor. The arched spaces on three sides of this stage are divided by a transom, the upper division being completed by an elliptical arch of very graceful proportions, and the lower by pairs of five-centred arches, with bold mouldings and perfectly plain cusplings. The perpendiculars between these arches are destroyed, but the foot of each is left projecting from the sill. On the south side the whole of the arched space is open, nor is there the slightest trace of any division ever having been made. The outer ogee line of each arch is crocketed, and terminates in a finial. The spandrel place thus formed between the outer and inner mouldings is filled in by a well executed carving of oak-leaves in trefoil. It is evident, from the general design, that the outer buttresses once terminated in pinnacles.

The second stage is formed by a square block of masonry, resting on the crown of the vault, into which is inserted a four-sided shaft, niched on its facings, and crowned by elaborately carved three-arched canopies, with mouldings and finials; the pedestals to these niches, in the form of brackets, project from each side of the square. Two or three circular drill-holes in the pillar lead to the inference that sculptured figures were formerly placed there. This basement of the second stage is ornamented on its sides by eight shields, each shield being encompassed by a pair of long drooping wings, which originally sprang, as may be seen in the only one that is perfect, from the shoulders of a figure like that of a priest, attired in an alb, whose hands clasp and support the shield. This symbolic representation of the priesthood, wherein the priest is exalted to the divine character of a 'ministering spirit', is so unusual in this style of sculpture, that it may be doubted if angels are not meant instead, especially as in some old sculptures the alb is worn by them. The outline, and figure generally, and particularly the remains of a tonsure, are so well marked, however, that I believe I am not incorrect in supposing it to be that of a priest. Into the top of the shaft, and finished by broaches, is inserted the base of an octagonal column, which might have been some six or eight feet higher, and this again surmounted by a finial and iron cross, to complete the harmony of proportion of the whole. The total height of the original building to the summit of the iron cross would thus be about 30 ft.



Of the shields already alluded to, one on the north side and one on the south are armorial, and have their devices incised. The insignia on the others do not consist of 'mechanical instruments, such as hatchets' &c., as Garter erroneously supposed, but are simply the very significant and Catholic Emblems of the Passion, beautifully carved in relief. Two of the shields are blank, never having been touched by the chisel. Although neither armorial nor truly heraldic, the four shields containing the Emblems of the Passion admit of being described in heraldic terms. As they are not depicted in colours, taste alone can guide us in this respect. It seems proper that the field should in all these cases be Gules, in allusion to the outpouring of the Blood, and the Emblems Gold, in allusion to the Golden Fruits of the Lord's Passion. The relative position of the shields on the Cross, and their respective emblazonments, would then be as follows:-

**EAST SIDE** - two shields. One shield blank; the other charged. On the dexter side a Ladder erect, and on the sinister, a Man's Vest in chief, and three Dice (two and one) in base.

**WEST SIDE** - two shields. One shield blank; the other charged with: A Passion Cross, surmounted at its centre by a Crown of Thorns; above it an Escroll, and at each extremity of the transverse beam, and at the foot, a Passion Nail.

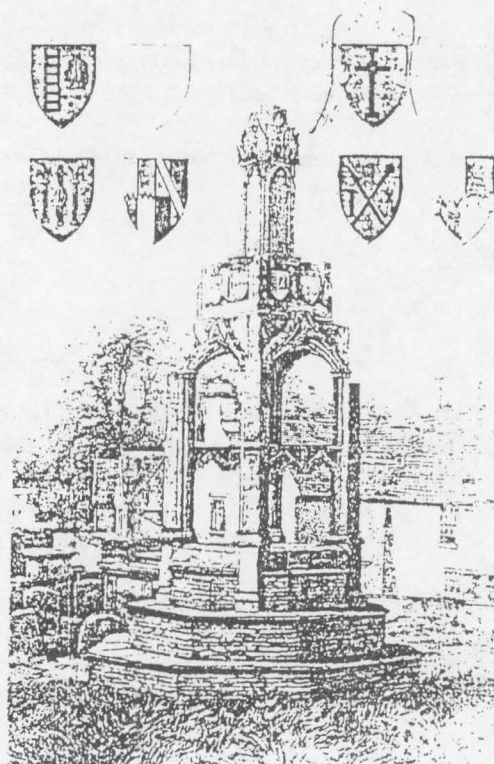
**NORTH SIDE** - two shields. One bearing a Coat of Arms; the other having:- In the centre a Pillar in the form of a Cross, between two knotted Scourges with handles erect.

**SOUTH SIDE** - two shields. One bearing a Coat of Arms; the other charged with: A Spear, and Staff tipped with a Sponge in saltire, between on the dexter side, a Hammer, and on the sinister, a Pair of Pincers.

The Emblems of the Passion thus depicted, though not uncommon in this country, are frequently met with in partibus transmarinis. As to the two incised shields with armorial bearings, which Garter affirmed were obliterated, it is plain they consist respectively of a Coat of Arms, and the same coat and another empaled. It will be remembered that the first Lords of the Manor were the Actons, and at the decease of Sir John de Acton, 17 Edw.III (A.D.1344), the line of the Actons became extinct. This date would not only be too early for the Cross, but there is no marriage in the Acton family to answer for the empaled coat.

On the extinction of the direct line of the Actons, the manor afterwards descended to Sir John Poyntz, son of Nicholas Poyntz, who married Maud, next of kin and heiress of Sir John de Acton. Sir John Poyntz, who was heir of the last of the Actons, lived till the 50th Edw. III (A.D. 1377) and then died, leaving his son, Robert Poyntz, his heir, who lived till the 15th June, 17 Hen. VI (1439), having married as his second wife, Catharine, daughter and co-heiress of Sir Thomas Fitz-Nichol, by whom he had a son and heir. These are clearly the two individuals to whom the shields refer.

The arms of the Actons are, Quarterly per fesse dancetté, Argent and Gules. Those of Fitz-Nichol: Quarterly Gules and Or, a bend Argent. And these arms exactly correspond to those on the shields. Thus one shield bears the arms of Acton only, or, more correctly, of Poyntz, as the Lord of the Manor of Iron Acton; and the other shield carries the same arms, empaling those of Fitz-Nichol. Using the arms of his grandmother Acton, through whom he inherited the manor of Iron Acton, instead of his paternal coat of Poyntz, would be a very probable thing for Robert Poyntz to do, for such a purpose, and in such a situation, even if he did not adopt the Acton arms altogether, which he very likely may have done. There can be no doubt, then, in the conclusion, that these incised shields are for the Lord of the Manor and his wife, as above stated, at the period of the erection of the Cross, which date closely corresponds to that assigned to it by Lysons and Bigland, and is also verified by the style of architecture.



The name of Acton as we have seen, was associated with the manor at a very remote date, and it is more than likely, in accordance with ancient usage, the manor took its name from the family, and not the family from the manor. As no crest is recorded for Acton of Iron Acton the male line having become extinct so early, it probably passed into oblivion with the last male Acton. Still, considering the fact that oak-leaves are conspicuously carved in the spandrel spaces of the arches of the Cross, and in the bosses of the groining-ribs - (I found them also enriching the spandrels of an old gateway leading to the quadrangle of Acton Court, where an oak branch with acorns supported a shield, too defaced to admit of any device being distinguished on it) - I am inclined to the opinion that the crest of the Actons was an oak, which would exemplify the name, and be thus perpetuated in the manor.

As to the Cross itself, there is no discordant line or debasing style in it, and its proportions and ornamentation are singularly harmonious. As a specimen of the early 'Preaching Crosses' it is unique. A fine effect must have been produced by a fervid ecclesiastic exhorting a multitude from such a pulpit.

Acknowledgment to Notes of the Old Cross of Gloucestershire, Charles Pooley, (Longmans, Green & Co.) 1868.

\* \* \* \* \*

### A New Village Hall for Iron Acton?

Do you realise that in five years time, our Village Hall will be 50 years old? Although it has been much extended and improved over the years, at its heart is the original second hand war-time Ministry of Works Standard Hut, obtained by the original trustees in 1949 and erected for the sum of £1,780.00. The Planning Permission granted was for a "Temporary Village Hall" and ran out on the 30th June 1958. (Was it ever renewed?) Isn't it time we had a new Village Hall?

In recent years, Pucklechurch, Horton, Old Sodbury, Hawkesbury Upton, not to mention rich parishes such as Almondsbury and Chipping Sodbury, have all built new halls, with modern facilities, but meanwhile, our Hall Committee soldier valiantly on, repairing and extending an inadequate building, which will always be too low, too badly insulated, and too expensive to maintain.

It will be a big task in these straightened times to raise enough money for a new hall, but grants are available, and if we all work together we should be able to do it.

The first stage is to decide what we want. Acton Aid has started the ball rolling by calling together representatives of the Village Organisations to see what they would like to see. What that cannot do is find out what organisations might come into being if there were suitable facilities. For example, would there be a Badminton Club if the hall is high enough to play Badminton?

If you have ideas or ambitions for facilities which you would like to see in the hall please let us know.

Let us try to make sure that by the 50th Anniversary for the setting up of the Village Hall, we have a nice new Hall for the celebrations.

\* \* \* \* \*

VILLAGE OUTING TO

### HAMPTON COURT FLOWER SHOW

Sunday 10th July 1994

Leaving Iron Acton 9 - 9.30 am. Back home 8 - 8.30 pm.

Coach Fare and Entry to Flower Show      £18.00

Coach Fare only      £6.00

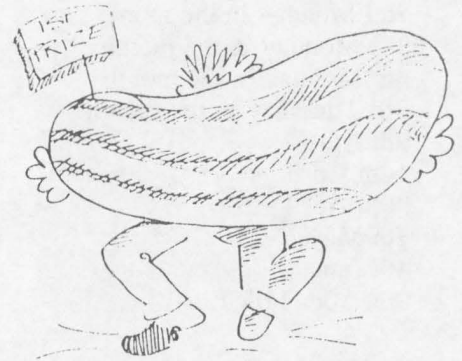
Further details from Lynne Blanchard 228566. Seats/tickets on a first-come basis

## From the Village Hall Diary

Following the success of the Blitz Evening and the Wild West Supper Show, by popular request, The Village Hall Committee and the Actonians are combining again to present a fun filled, action packed, Entertainment Evening. \*\*\* Not to be missed, Highly Recommended, put the date in your diary now - **Saturday 30th July**. The theme will be announced later.

"Sumer is icumen in,  
Lhude sing cuccu,  
Groweth sed and bloweth med,  
And springth the wude nu."

In other words, now is the moment to start planning your entry for the Iron Acton Horticultural Show. For your convenience, early release of the date, 10th September is given, so that your home grown flowers and vegetables can be coaxed, wheedled, shouted at, to achieve new heights of perfection. Try talking to your plants this year, its recommended by royalty!



\* \* \* \* \*

## MAY DAY, MAY DAY!

Preparations are going ahead for the usual celebrations for May Day, which will be on May 2nd this year. Dancers are practising and all organisations are getting ready to man their stalls. Other entertainments are booked so all we need is a fine day and YOU. So roll up and have an enjoyable day - look out for posters to give times and details.

And of course we need some girls for May Queen and attendants. The usual two rules

- 1 The entrant must be of primary school age
- 2 The entrant must live in the parish of Iron Acton

---

ENTRY FORM FOR MAY QUEEN COMPETITION. RETURN TO BETTY COOK, NEKSDOR, HIGH STREET, OR BOB SHEPPARD, 200, NORTH ROAD, BY FRIDAY 9th APRIL

NAME.....  
ADDRESS.....  
TELEPHONE.....

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**FOCAL POYNTZ** is produced three times a year, usually at the end of March, July and November and is distributed to every house in the Parish. Contributions for publication are always welcome and can be sent to Mr John Percy, Primrose Cottage, High Street, Iron Acton. Advice will be given if required. Items ought to be submitted about four weeks before date of issue.

Advertisers wishing to take space in **FOCAL POYNTZ** should contact either Mrs B Cook (228202) or Mr L Alsop (228400)

## DIARY OF FORTHCOMING EVENTS

### On the Green

Monday 2nd May

### In the Village hall

Every Monday, Thursday  
Every Wednesday

2nd Monday in the month  
3rd Monday in the month  
4th Monday in the month  
3rd Thursday in the month  
9th April  
10th April  
30th April  
7th May  
4th June  
9th, 10th 11th June

### At Iron Acton School

24th March  
25th March  
11th April  
30th May - 3rd June  
2nd July  
22nd July  
5th September

### At the Rose and Crown

1st Thursday in the month

### At Algars Manor and Algars Mill

3rd, 4th, 17th April  
22nd, 23rd May

### In the Parish Church

27th March  
31st March  
1st April  
3rd April

23rd  
1st May

Services  
18th June

### **VILLAGE DAY**

Nursery School	9.00 am
Elizabethans	2.00 pm
Junior Actonians	6.00 pm
Actonians	7.30 pm
Womens Institute	7.30 pm
Parish Council	7.30 pm
Whist Drive	7.30 pm
Knitting Group	1.30 pm
Northavon Auctions	
Actonians Quiz Evening	
Village Hall Barn Dance (Provisional)	
Northavon Auctions	
Northavon Auctions	
Actonians "The Crucible"	

Spring Term Ends  
Teachers In-Service Day  
Summer Term Commences  
Half Term  
Summer Fayre  
Summer Term Ends  
Autumn Term Commences


Acton Aid	8.00 pm
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Open Gardens	2 - 6 pm
All Proceeds to Charities	

Palm Sunday	See Parish
Maundy Thursday	Magazine or
Good Friday	Church Notice
Easter Day	Board for
	service times
Plant Sale in Rectory Garden	2.30-5pm
Patronal Festival	Normal
	Sunday

Summer Fayre in Rectory Garden 3 pm

This issue of  
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207**



# HOLLY HILL FARM

SPRING 1994 – PRICE LIST



## PET FOOD

### DOG FOOD

20 Kg Valu-Mix £11.15

### CAT FOOD

2 Kg Cat – Omega £2.45

### RABBIT FOOD

20 Kg Dry Rabbit £6.00

*Other sizes available*

*Prices on Request*

*Available Soon*

Bedding Plants  
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Troughs, etc.

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Fresh Fruit & Vegetables

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Also  
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Grow Bags 99p each  
Peat From 75p per Bag  
Top Soil P. O.A.  
Potting Compost from £1.95 per Bag

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Holly Hill Farm

Iron Acton

Tel. 0454 228289

