

Focal Point



A Magazine for Iron Acton

DIARY OF FORTHCOMING EVENTS

On the Village Green

Monday 4 May Village Day

In the Village Hall

Every Weekday	Nursery School	9.00am
Every Tuesday	War Hammer Club (War Games)	7.30pm
Wednesdays (fortnightly)	Elizabethans Club	2.30pm
Every Wednesday	Junior Actonians	6.00pm
	Actonians	7.30pm
Every Thursday	Line Dancing	7.30pm
Second Monday in month	Women's Institute	7.30pm
Third Monday in month	Parish Council	7.30pm
18 th April, 9 th May, 13 th June	Northavon Auctions	
24 th April	Parish Council A.G.M.	
13 th , 14 th , 15 th , 16 th May	Actonians Presentation	

At the Rose and Crown

First Thursday in month Acton Aid 8.00pm

In the Parish Church

16 th April	Annual meeting for election of Church Warden and P.C.C. (Marshall Room)	8.00pm
15 th June	Licencing of Rev. Susan Rushton as Priest in Charge of Iron Acton Parish by Bishop of Bristol	7.30pm

At Algars Manor and Mill

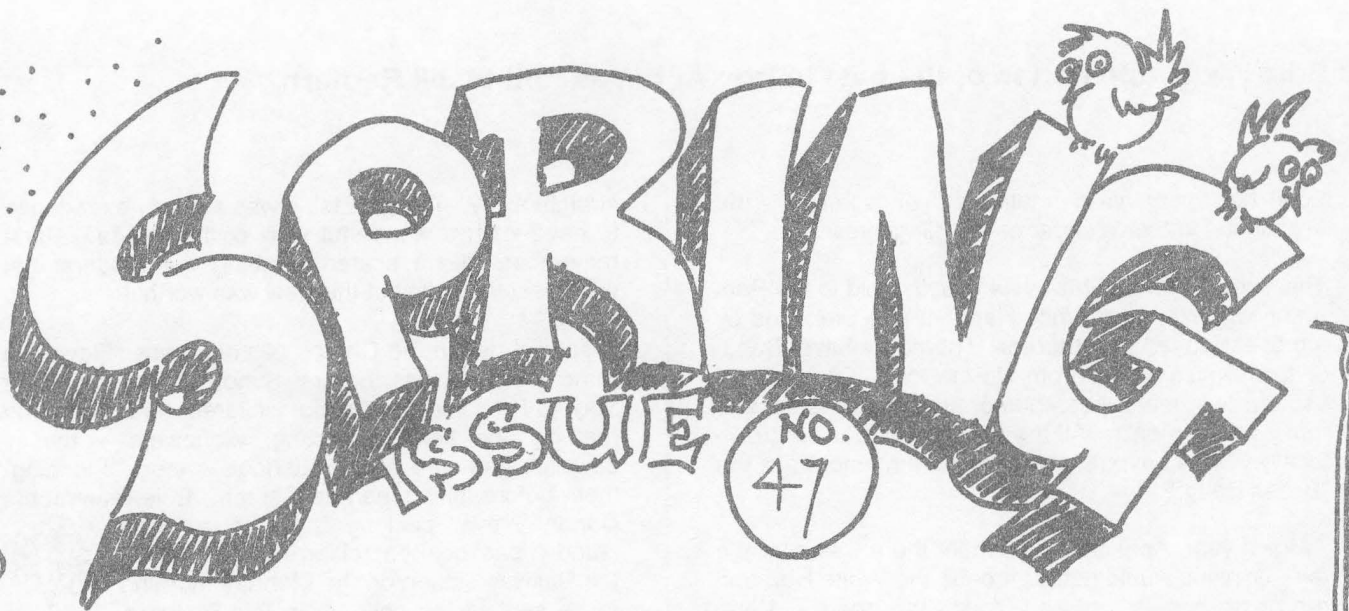
Easter, 12 th and 13 th April	Gardens Open	2.30pm
17 th May	Gardens Open	2.30pm

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 Penny Percy at Primrose Cottage, High Street, Iron Acton. Advice will be given if required. Items ought to be submitted about four weeks before the date of issue.

Advertisers wishing to take space in **FOCAL POYNTZ** should contact Lionel Alsop (228400)

SPRING

ISSUE NO. 47



Apart from the deep personal sadness felt by all of us on the Focal Poyntz committee at the death of John Percy, we also acknowledge with gratitude the huge and unstinting contribution he made in the organisation and production of the magazine. Without him we are bereft indeed.

We are delighted though that several people have volunteered to join us: Penny Percy, Rona and Barrie Wright and Gill Thompson.

Serious doubts have been raised about whether we can continue with Focal Poyntz. It is free and we wish to keep it that way; we also give free publicity to village organisations and events. But costs are high and we have no income other than donations, so we need your help if we are to continue to deliver to you what we hope is an interesting and entertaining paper.

If you can make a donation, please contact any one of the editorial committee, as shown below. Contributions large or small would be most appreciated.

Meanwhile, we wish all our readers a very happy Easter

Jo Voss
☎ 228674

Lionel Alsop
☎ 228400

Jean Dickes
☎ 228609

Penny Percy
☎ 228339

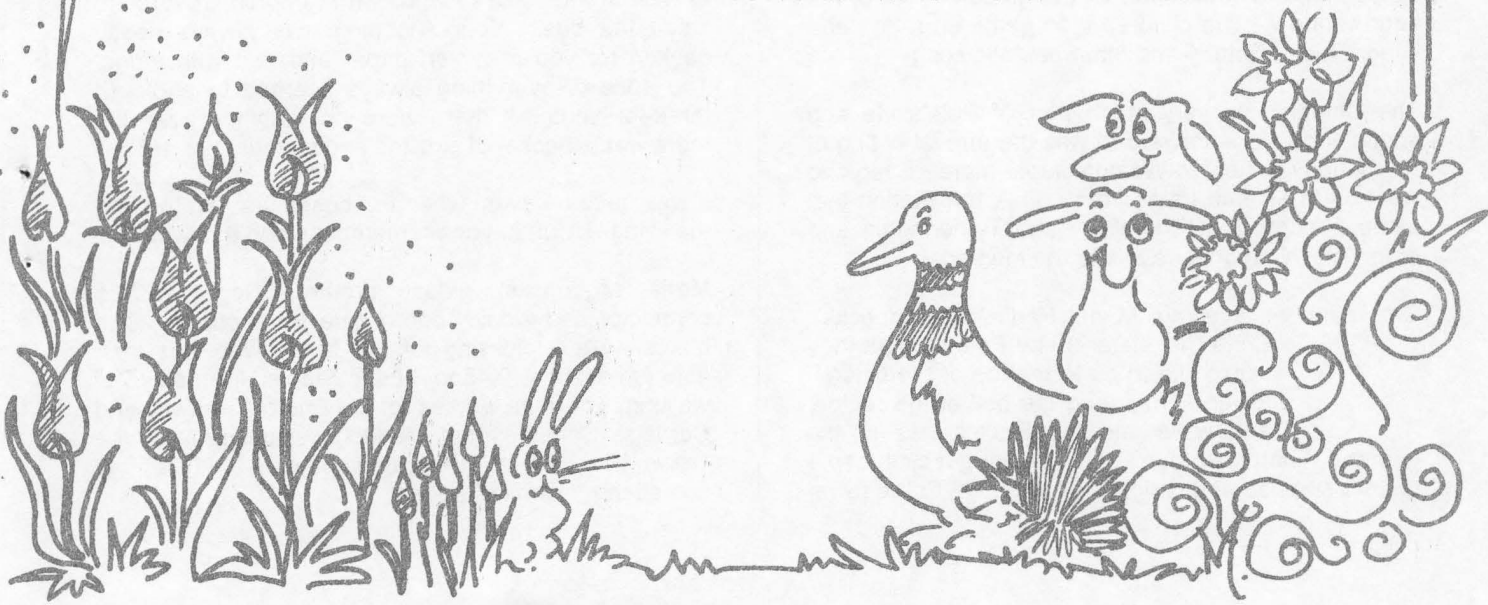
Hazel Dron
☎ 228509

Lynne Blanchard
☎ 228566

Maureen Blake
☎ 294381

Gill Thompson
☎ 228954

Rona and Barrie Wright
☎ 228247



Edie Watts' memories of the past in Iron Acton as told to Jill Redfern

Edie has very vivid memories of some of the "highlights" in the calendar of the village year.

The Annual Flower Show was usually held in the Park (the field next to the White Hart). It was preceded by a procession led by either the "Thornbury Silver Band" or the "British Band" from North Road. There were usually two marquees, numerous roundabouts and many amusements. All the produce had to be grown locally. Does anyone have any more memories of the "British Band"?

Twice a year, April and September there was a village fair. Gypsies would gather around the White Hart and run their ponies up and down the road. Marie Maddocks, who lived by the White Hart, remembers best the "scraps" between the gypsies. Every child wanted to visit Marie at this time and look over the garden wall – "a ring side seat!"

The most attractive stall for Edie was the "sweetmakers" stall. Here you could watch them making black and white humbugs by twisting and pulling sugar fondant on huge hooks until it hardened. There were also Cheapjack stalls – any idea what they sold? In the middle of the Green, where the maypole is now, was a conker tree and next to the cottage with the cartwheels was a large shady sycamore tree. This was the patch of the ice-cream man who came with his ice creams on a pony and trap, from Downend. Edie well recalls how his brass shone and how brilliantly white the cloth on his arm was. This was the only time the village children had ice cream!

Edie's father was on the Parish Council and responsible for collecting the 1/- parking fee, which was charged for parking on the green overnight. He was also responsible for clearing Petticoat Lane of nettles etc – the footpath from the green to the avenue.

Empire Day was 24th May and the school day would start with Mr Short the Headmaster (in situ approximately 1920!?) hoisting the Union Jack on the school flagpole which was on the grass in front of the large window. The children then gathered round and sang "Flag of Britain" and other patriotic songs.

The Church was very much part of Edie's life and something to look forward to was the annual outing of the Sunday School to Weston-Super-Mare. Everyone went on the steam trains from Iron Acton Station that came through from Thornbury and Tytherington and onto Yate. Can anyone add to the memory?

One summer evening Marie Padfield (Maddocks), Edna (her sister?) and Edie thought they would like to go to the top of the Church tower. They rang the bell at the rectory and were told the Rector was in the garden. When they found him – wearing a cloth cap – to their surprise and delight he took them to the tower



straight away. The girls felt it was a lovely experience to have such a wonderful view of the village. Marie remembers being scared climbing the ladders that went past the bells but the view was worth it!

A special day in the Church calendar was "Flowering Sunday". This was the first Sunday in the month of May. The Sunday School children had great fun roaming the fields collecting wildflowers – mostly cowslips gathered from Latteridge – then "bunching" them before taking them to Church. Edie remembers Canon Brown packing them in a large laundry basket then taking them down to the Railway station on the Monday morning to be sent to the children in the St Judes area of Bristol.



"Cowslipping" was quite an event and the "bunching" was very important indeed!

Canon Brown, on his bicycle, would go to North Road to take Sunday School in a hut in Mission Lane. There would be a joint Christmas party in Iron Acton School and everyone put together to purchase the tree, trimmings and presents.

Once a month the children went to the Church and Maria Maddocks recalls that the "Mission Kids" would join them.

Edie remembers when Rector Handover came to the village to replace Canon Brown who had died. He brought with him two maids and they always attended Church and sat in the front pews.

Every Friday morning there was a service in the School Hall. For some reason, probably talking, one girl, Christine Fox, was called to the front. The children sat on forms and Rector Handover had carefully placed his mortar-board on one. Christine was told to sit and the class dissolved in giggles when she promptly sat on the precious mortar-board.

Iron Acton had numerous shops but if you wanted to go shopping in Bristol there was the train or you had to walk to the "Cross Hands" at Frampton Cotterell to catch the bus. Your shopping was always neatly packed for you in brown paper and tied with string. The price of everything always seemed to end with three-farthings. If there were no farthings available there was a packet of pins instead of your change!

It was quite an event when the buses first ran through the village. Can anyone remember when this was?

Marie Maddocks' eldest brother, Reg, was a conductor and would "pop" home for a cuppa. The buses were a blessing for her father who was then able to catch the 9.45pm bus to Staple Hill, instead of walking, where he worked for the Bristol Tramway and Carriage Co Ltd. Mrs Maddock would provide the crews with tea in the cold weather – with a little something "warming" added!

JOHN PERCY

Much the best way of describing a friend of some longstanding is to get into his mind and try to live a little bit of him

This has proved to be somewhat difficult as the man was quite simplistic in many ways, but on the other hand very complex in others

I once read an article by Neville Cardus, the great writer of cricketing prose, of a description of the wonderful Kent and England batsman – Frank Woolley – it went so:

"Frank Woolley was easy to watch, difficult to bowl to, and impossible to write about. When you bowled to him there weren't enough fielders, when you wrote about him there weren't enough words. In describing a great innings by Woolley, and few of them not great in artistry, you had to go carefully with your adjectives and stack them in little rows, like pats of butter or razor blades. In the first over of his innings, perhaps there had been an exquisite off-drive, followed by a perfect cut, then an effortless leg glide. In the second over the same sort of thing happened, and your superlatives had already gone. The best thing to do was to assume that your readers knew how Frank Woolley batted and use no adjectives at all".

This I found to be a perfect passage from which to gauge the man we both knew and loved. Substitute easy to listen to, difficult to argue with and impossible to write about, and you are halfway to understanding John's philosophy on life.

I knew little of his real being, but as an avid observer would stand in awe of his unflappable approach to problem solving, his dedication to detail and the true Christian spirit, which he exuded.

It was medicine to the soul, an example of realism many sought to achieve, but a rare few, able to emulate and sustain. However, I always thought that even a little of that was better than none at all.

The completeness of John to my mind, was his love of mixed company, his enjoyment of male friendship, his love of sport, music and the doing of good things for all others. He could converse on most subject matter offered, a trifle short on the history of West Walian scrum halves, but that apart, a mine of information on most things.

When and wherever possible he would join in all fun and fund raising activities, his endless donkey work for horse-shows, barn dances, the Church, Round Table, the Faculty of Building and various other institutes was a personal joy.

He amassed committee offices like small boys used to collect postage stamps; if anybody wanted a job done well they would look around for the busiest person and find John. Certainly he was the exception to the modern concept of the "yes man". John always said yes, but meant it.

Right to the end there was no hint of complaint, it was not his way. I remember once hearing the story which exemplified the fact, for when a group of Iron Acton men went sea fishing one day they were all issued with their rods and reels in the usual manner. Everyone who got a bite would slowly wind in their catch against the ratchet of a fairly large reel, not so John, he got left with the mini version and had to whiz his wrist around at a hundred miles an hour just to stand still. Nothing was said except for the comparison of the prize or the size of the one that got away. One could go on, but I thought a few words might gently feather out his passing, till we all meet again.

His final innings was a brief but traumatic affair, one against all odds, not many runs, but worth an ovationary walk back to the pavilion, a fitting tribute rarely seen on the playing fields of Acton.

RLH



Shopping in the High Street (Ancient and Modern)

Everybody in Iron Acton misses the passing of the Post Office. It used to offer a high personal service, which just isn't the same elsewhere. Lost drivers trying to sort out the mystery of strange addresses in Iron Acton, knew they could be certain of clear succinct advice from Mai or Chrissie. The Post Office used to be a focal point in the village which not only dispensed stamps, family allowances and pensions but also put people in touch with local activities and the welfare of their neighbours.

One important feature of Iron Acton Post Office was that Mai and Chrissie were totally professional, they never gossiped or betrayed confidences. One young lady living in the village found herself suddenly expecting a baby and hoping to avoid embarrassing explanations decided the best way to spread the word around was to tell the Postmistress. Two months later she realised that no one was aware of her news. Mai hadn't even told Chrissie about it!

It was a lucky accident that brought the Dillon family to Iron Acton. In 1922 Patrick Dillon, recently disbanded from the Royal Irish Constabulary, decided to start a new life in England. I'm not sure how he came to Street Farm in Iron Acton but we were certainly blessed by his decision to settle here.

Patrick's dream of becoming a successful farmer were shattered, when he became crippled by arthritis. He decided instead to run a lock up shop (so called because the proprietors did not live on the premises). When his health deteriorated further, Mrs Dillon, with help from Mai and later Chrissie, ran the Post Office and General Stores. Mai's reaction as a young girl, when asked to help in the shop, was "goodie more sweets!!"

Chrissie finally closed the shop and

Post Office in May last year.

So far no one has come forward to provide this much-needed service for the village. However there are moves afoot to bring new life to the High Street. Jane Giddings is starting a new enterprise in the rooms formerly used by Mr Fursman's shop. It will be called "Just Jane's Beauty Rooms"

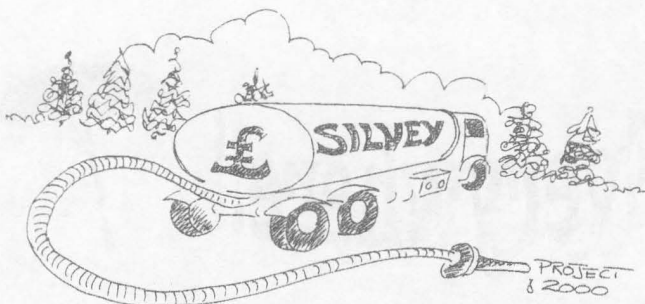
Jane is a full member of the Guild of Complementary Medicine and the Federation of Holistic Therapists. She will offer a full range of treatments that will not only encourage physical beauty but will also face up to the stress and anxiety which stops so many people living full and active lives. I can thoroughly recommend the Indian Head Massage, as a relaxing and life enhancing form of therapy!

For further information, please refer to the advertisement section of this magazine. We wish Jane good luck in her undertaking and look forward to enlarging our knowledge of holistic medicine and therapy

P.P



! We are dependent on voluntary contributions to run this magazine. If you would like to make a donation, please contact Barrie or Rona Wright at Eynsford Cottage, Wotton Road, Iron Acton. Telephone: 01454 228247. Cheques payable to Focal Poyntz please




year we've raised over £200 for Project 2000 which is all situation!"

Project 2000 Chairman, Chris Wiggins, who received the cheque was delighted. "When Silveys came to us with this idea we didn't dream such a small amount per litre could ever add up to anything as worthwhile as this. If more oil users in the Parish bought from Silveys we could double or even treble the amount next year".

For further information contact David Hatherell on

☎ 0117 9414160 or ☎ 0374 738093

 B J Wright

On May 21st 1997 an ambitious personal way to mark the Millennium was launched:

TREES OF TIME AND PLACE

Trees of Time and Place are very special personal trees. By gathering seeds from trees which are close to our homes and close to our hearts, helping them to germinate and grow, and then planting them back into their original landscapes, anyone can make a living link between this Millennium and the next – a natural bridge from the past to the future.

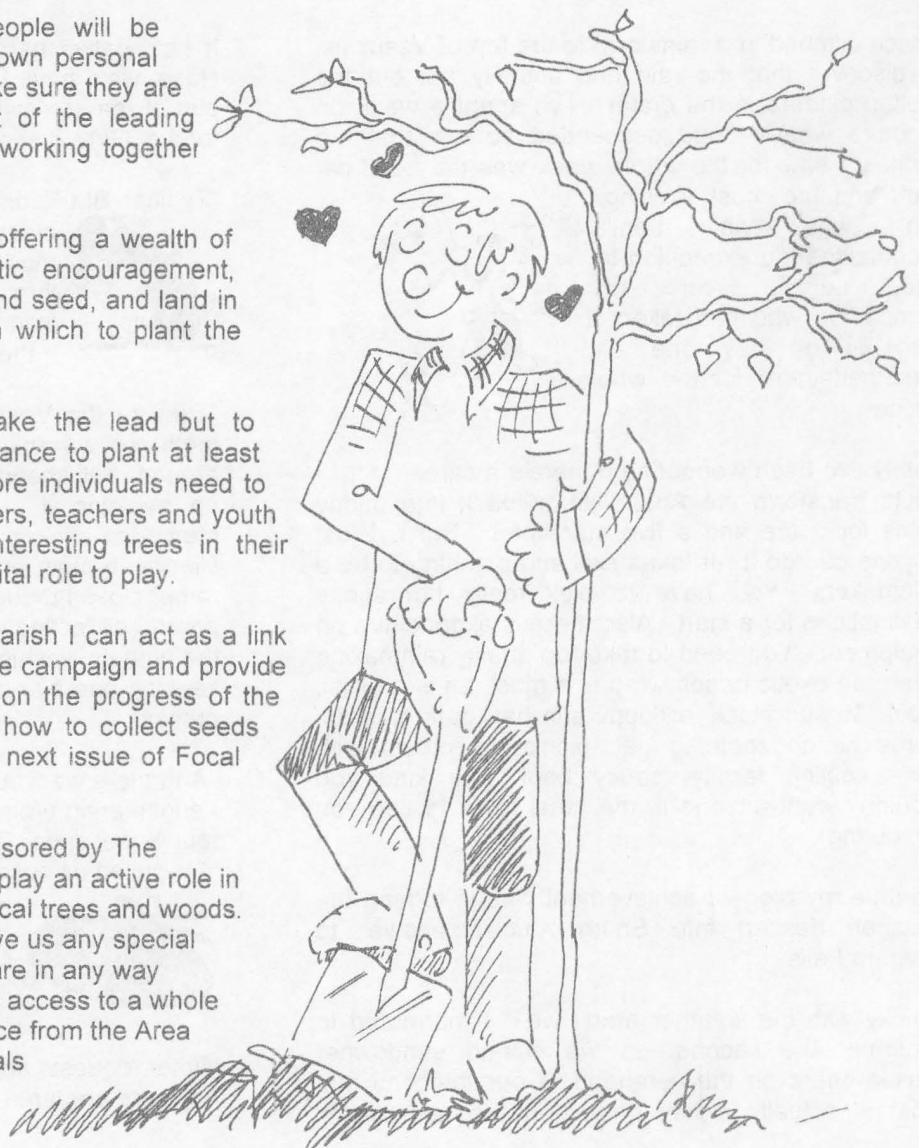
It is hoped that millions of people will be inspired to grow and plant their own personal Trees of Time and Place. To make sure they are as successful as possible most of the leading environmental organisations are working together in a new and exciting partnership.

Between them the partners are offering a wealth of technical advice and enthusiastic encouragement, access to significant local trees and seed, and land in towns and in the countryside on which to plant the woodlands of the future.

This unique partnership may take the lead but to ensure that everyone has the chance to plant at least one truly personal tree, many more individuals need to add their support. Local gardeners, teachers and youth leaders, farmers, people with interesting trees in their gardens and many more have a vital role to play.

As Tree Warden for Iron Acton Parish I can act as a link for anyone interested in joining the campaign and provide further information. I will report on the progress of the scheme and pass on advice on how to collect seeds and set up a tree nursery in the next issue of Focal Poyntz in time for the Autumn.

The Tree Warden scheme is sponsored by The National Grid to enable people to play an active role in conserving and enhancing their local trees and woods. Being a Tree Warden does not give us any special powers nor does it imply that we are in any way experts. However, it does give us access to a whole range of information and assistance from the Area Tree Officer and other professionals





Water, Water Everywhere!!



There is a club to which only a certain select few of us belong. We have secret powers known only to the odd witch doctor in the darkest and most primitive jungles. We make it rain. Not in lovely muddy Britain, you understand, anyone can do that, but in the most sun drenched holiday spots of the world. If it hasn't rained for thirty years, it will, oh it will when I get there, in unremitting container loads and for weeks on end. The desert will not only bloom. It will turn into a flood plain, complete with tadpoles and green algae.

I usually spot the first wisps of ominous cloud, low on the blue horizon as I come out of Customs. By the time we've turned out of the airport the taxi driver has switched on his wipers muttering that this is the first rain since the World Cup. By the time I reach the hotel the Turkish waiter is already frantically sweeping at five inches of rain which has flooded the terrace restaurant.

I once climbed in a rainstorm to the top of Vesuvius, to discover that the rain had actually put out the molten cinders in the crater. I've spent a week on Madeira where cloud descended so low that the furthest I saw for the whole week was the hotel car park and the most exciting trip was an uphill mountaineering expedition to find Lemsip for my companion who had taken ill with flu on day one and remained there for the whole holiday.



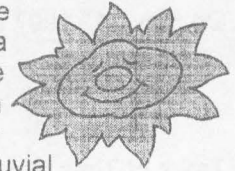
Lately I've been wondering if there's a career in it. I could transform the Australian outback into paddy fields for a fee and a five star hotel. But not just anyone can do it. It takes skill and planning to be a rainmaker. You have to pick really hot sunny destinations for a start. Also there is expenditure on equipment. You need to take top quality rainmaking gear: an exotic beach wrap is a must, as is a bikini, factor 30 sun block, a floppy sun hat, dark glasses, après beach soothing gel, picnic equipment with wine cooling facility, saucy book (the kind you wouldn't want anyone in the hotel foyer to see you devouring).

To date my biggest achievement was in turning the Kalahari dessert into South Africa's answer to Niagara Falls.

"Lucky with the weather aren't we?" I murmured to daughter the second, as we sipped sundowner Castle beers on the verandah of our thatched hut. That is actually a key phrase in the rainmakers'

handbook. A bolt of electricity zig zagged through the clear indigo sky. A herd of Wildebeest stampeded. Within seconds our barbecue had been extinguished in the deluge.

But the morning was sunny so we set off through the desert again hoping the wildlife hadn't decided on a lie-in after the night's storms. It was beautiful, deep red sand refreshed by the rain. Carpets of yellow flowers had suddenly bloomed. At a junction in the track a man in a car going the other way stopped us. He was a middle aged Afrikaner, face like scarred leather and built like a brick out house. His brand new BMW was a rich shade of alluvial mud.



"Don't go down there, girly". He jerked a thumb behind him. "It's flooded for miles".

If he'd called her Mate, or Darling or even Broken Nose, we'd have turned back and brewed up a nice cup of tea somewhere. Daughter the second is not fond of Girly, it seems.

"Typical BMW driver." She scoffed as we revved away, wheels already spinning in the mud. She accelerated and we hurtled through the ever lengthening puddles, muddy water cascading over the windows. We were amphibious.



"Take to the Veldt". She muttered through gritted teeth, so we swung off the track and onto higher ground, but ahead was another lake and there was no avoiding it. Slowly the seventeen year old Mercedes sank in mud up to its ankles. There was silence, broken only by the sound of a lion roaring, rather close I thought. I did helpful things like wading around collecting pieces of brushwood to put under the wheels, wishing I knew more about snakes and keeping one eye up in the trees in case of pounding pumas.

And there we would have stayed, but for two hunky engineering project workers who happened by in a four wheel drive. They were, they told us after they'd pulled us out an hour later, (tow rope only broke twice) searching for new water sources in the desert. They found one -



ME!

Writer requests anonymity since so few people these days are prepared to risk a holiday with her. Ed.

ST JAMES THE LESS IRON ACTON - NOTICE OF ANNUAL MEETINGS

THURSDAY, 16 APRIL 1998 AT 8.00 PM IN THE MARSHALL ROOM

This is an important event in the life of our church in any year, but perhaps it has even more significance this year and so the PCC (Parochial Church Council) is making an even greater effort to tell as many people as possible and to warmly extend an invitation to come along. So what happens at these meetings?


Two meetings are held on the same night although, in effect, one runs on from the other without anyone really noticing! Both will be chaired by the Rural Dean, the Revd David Sutch (who is also the Rector of St Mary's Church at Yate).

The first is called the **Annual Parish Meeting**. This elects the 2 Churchwardens. **Anyone can attend** but the people who vote must either live within the ecclesiastical parish of Iron Acton or be on the Church Electoral Roll - this is not the same as the register used for voting at local or national elections. If you want to check if you are on the church one please call Howard Aplin on 228243.

This is immediately followed by the **Annual Parochial Church Meeting**. This elects the PCC members and auditor for the church accounts. **Again, anyone can attend this meeting** but only those on the Church Electoral Roll can vote.

This is your opportunity to hear what's been happening through a variety of concise reports and where you have an opportunity to ask any relevant questions about YOUR church.

For those of you who have expressed an interest in what's going on why not come along? We promise that no-one will be pressured into going on to a committee or to do something that they really don't want to do but you will hear first hand what's happened in the last 12 months and a little about the future.

 Lynne Blanchard
PCC Secretary

Arrivals and Departures



Since the last edition of Focal Poyntz, we have had the following "Arrivals and Departures" in our Village and we would like to take this opportunity to extend "A Very Warm Welcome" to all newcomers and a "Fond Farewell" to all old friends.

FAREWELL

Maureen and Brian Bull
Inglewood Cottage, Wotton Road

Who are moving to Pembroke in the
middle of March

WELCOME

Mr and Mrs Carin
Canary Cottage, Wotton Road

Melanie Newman and Andy Cowell
Vine Cottage, Wotton Road

Laurence and Mark Thompson
The Hollies, High Street

*If you know of anyone moving in or out of the Village or
you have any special family event you would like
mentioned in the magazine, please let Rona Wright know*

In 1592 young William Shakespeare, an unemployed actor aged 27, is living in the house of a very young but rich aristocrat in Southampton House north of the Strand in London. He is expected to entertain his master by poems, mimicry and good talk. He starts to write sonnets in which his devotion to his benefactor is mixed with the stories of many tribulations. Sonnets 33 – 35, published 17 years after they were written, tell the "hidden story of a falling-out with his young master. Those sonnets are here reproduced with their probable explanation in modern "Essex English".



Sonnet 33

*Full many a glorious morning have I seen
Flatter the mountain tops with sovereign eye,
Kissing with golden face the meadows green,
Gilding pale streams with heavenly alchemy;
Anon permit the basest clouds to ride
With ugly rack on his celestial face,
And from the forlorn world his visage hide,
Stealing unseen to west with this disgrace:
Even so my sun one early morn did shine,
With all triumphant splendour on my brow;
But out, alack! He was but one hour mine,
The region cloud hath mask'd him from me now
Yet him for this my love no whit disdaineth
Suns of the world may stain, when heaven's sun staineth*

Explanation: You gave my day such a wonderful kick-start first thing in the morning but you soon spoilt it and cast a shadow over me by giving all your attention to others (including her!) and cutting me right out. I can hardly blame you, as you are such a big shot and I'm nothing

Sonnet 34

*Why didst thou promise such a beautiful day,
And make me travel forth without my cloak,
To let base clouds o'er-take me in my way
Hiding thy bravery in their rotten smoke?
'Tis not enough that through the clouds thou break,
To dry the rain on my storm-beaten face,
For no man well of such a salve can speak,
That heals the wound, and cures not the disgrace:
Nor can thy shame give physic to my grief;
Though thou repent, yet I have still the loss:
The offender's sorrow lends but weak relief
To him that bears the strong offence's cross.
Ah! but those tears are pearl, which thy love sheds,
And they are rich, and ransom all ill deeds*


Explanation: It was a shame that you started the day so great, then kicked me in the teeth by chatting up my girl; so its no bloody use saying "sorry" as the damage is done and can't be healed by your apologies. Anyway, you're stinking rich and can do anything you like with underlings like me.

Sonnet 35

*No more be grieved at that which thou hast done:
Roses have thorns, and silver fountains mud;
Clouds and eclipses stain both moon and sun,
And loathsome canker dwells in sweetest bud.
All men make faults, and even I in this,
Authorizing thy trespass with compare;
Myself corrupting, salving thy amiss,
Excusing thy sins more than thy sins are:
For to thy sensual fault I bring in sense
(Thy adverse party is thy advocate,)
And 'gainst myself a lawful plea commence:
Such civil war is in my love and hate
That I an accessory needs must be
To that sweet thief, which sourly robs from me*

Explanation: Quit moaning about how bad you feel over our spat! Everything in the world has got its shady side, you included. I can see that I am partly to blame for introducing that girl you pinched from me and who was the real cause of our falling out.

Moral: Great poets can write great poetry, even if it has a sting in the tail.

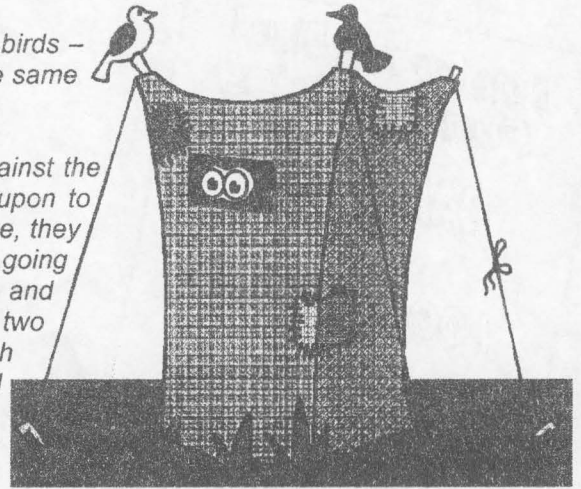
 John Naish

BLACKBIRD HAS SPOKEN – Episode Two

I wouldn't like you to think we spend **all** our time watching the birds – but those daft blackbirds are here again – alright, maybe not the same ones, but perhaps their progeny.

They have begun nesting in a pyracantha bush (so prickly) against the garage wall but so far this season we have not been called upon to rescue them from cats or magpies or other marauders. This time, they need saving from themselves. There is a great territorial battle going on around our garden – on the walls, on the roof, on the lawn and borders. Each morning we look through the windows to see two male blackbirds fighting it out – such posturings, such aggression, such belligerence, such chargings with lowered heads at one another (like jousting without the lances).

The female bird ignores all these goings-on (as do all the other birds hanging on the nut and sunflower seed nets) and gets on with her breakfast – sensible bird – before retiring to sit on the nest. This nest, incidentally, is in a very “public” place as far as we are concerned. We pass within inches of it several times a day – to the wheelie bin, to the garden shed, etc., etc. – but they've obviously decided we are harmless. Unfortunately, however, it is not an entirely safe place for nesting. A few years previously we were very distressed when watching three bullfinches feeding on the berries to see the “cat from next door” creep over the wall and like lightning make off with one of these beautiful birds. We were very fond of this cat but thereafter regarded it with different eyes!



Doubtless in the coming weeks the blackbirds will go through all the hullabaloo of last year with many alarms and noisy anxiety each time danger threatens – and our nerves will again be on edge on their behalf. Doubtless, however, they will manage perfectly well without our assistance.

Who said living in the country was peaceful?

JAD

ONE OF OUR READERS – BETTY REES – SENDS US SOME TITBITS FROM NEW ZEALAND

GRANDMA'S WASH DAY

Years ago, when my mother was a bride, my grandmother gave her this routine for washing day. This treasured bit of writing now hangs above my gleaming automatic washer as a grateful reminder of today's mechanical blessings:

1. Build fire in back yard to heat kettle of rain water
2. Set tubs so smoke won't blow in eyes if wind is sharp
3. Shave one whole cake of lye soap in boiling water
4. Sort things. Make three piles: one pile white, one pile coloured, one pile work britches and rags
5. Stir flour in cold water 'til smooth, then thin down with boiling water for starching
6. Rub dirty spots on board, scrub hard, boil. Rub coloureds but don't boil, just rise and starch
7. Take white things out of kettle with broomstick handle, then rinse, blue and starch
8. Spread tea towels on grass
9. Hang old rags on fence
10. Pour rinse water on flower beds
11. Scrub porch with soapy water
12. Go put on clean dress, smooth hair with side-combs, brew cup of tea, sit and rest and rock a spell, and count blessings

Callers Give Al A Blast For El Nino

NIPOMO, California – El Nino's been taking the blame for a lot of ugly weather. So has Al Nino.

Californian Alfonso Nino, who's listed in the phone book as Al Nino, has fielded calls from people who for some reason think a weather phenomenon would have a telephone.

Mr Nino, 74, was awakened at 2am recently by an enraged, foul-mouthed woman complaining about the weather. Nino, a retired navy man, replied in suitable nautical language and hung up.

"It's happened at least a half-dozen times – all phone calls," Mr Nino said.

"It's always something like, 'Why are you doing this?' And I say, 'Well I didn't really have nothing else to do. I thought maybe it would be kind of fun' I usually joke around with them a bit."

- REUTER (7/3/98)

Note For Your Diary!
Fund-Raising

**BARBECUE
For
FOCAL POYNTZ**

11 July 1998
at
Barrie & Rona Wright's
Eynsford Cottage,
Wotton Road




THE ELIZABETHAN CLUB

Members and visitors thoroughly enjoyed their Christmas Dinner at the Rose and Crown at Rangeworthy. It was a great success.

We hope to begin our 1998 series of coach trips with a trip to Cardiff on 15 April and this will be followed by a visit to the Elan Valley on 13 May.



We were recently very pleased to welcome some new members and would welcome more! Could anyone who's interested please contact me on 228175.

 Ivy Worsley

ACTONIANS

Our next production will be on May 14th, 15th and 16th in the Village Hall.

This is a departure for the Actonians as we're staging a new play with an all-woman cast; it'll be of particular interest to those of you who would like to know more about the history of drama and the first female actors. "Playhouse Creatures" by April De Angelis is set in 1669 in the playhouses of London and shows the difficult and rather sordid life of the very first actress, Mary Betterton (played by Pat Stimson) and other women who now took the female roles which had previously been played by young men.

In this moving and often comic play, Nell Gwyn (played by Sarah McMahon) makes her stage debut and after a hesitant start makes a name for herself both in the theatre and in the royal history books.

So do come along and witness the West Country premiere of this new play, directed by Ann Aplin. (We must point out that "Playhouse Creatures" contains strong language).

Tickets are available from Donna Worrall, Tel: 228458 and cost £4. Curtain Up is at 8pm

If you're studying English, History or Drama then please let your tutor know about this opportunity to see a brand-new play; we can arrange a discount for group bookings.

The Actonians do have a social life apart from rehearsals and if you'd like to come along to one of our events we'd love to meet you. We're planning a race night in June, a barbecue in July and a Quiz Night in September, all of which are a great chance to make new friends, meet neighbours and have a good time without having to wear make-up and a costume. Call Donna on 228458 for further details.

In the next edition of Focal Poyntz you can hear how our epic version of "The Tempest" is coming along. This has been a long time in the planning and promises a spectacular set and outrageous costumes. Due to be staged in November, you can call Bob Allen on 0117 976 1976 for further details or if you'd like to lend a hand.



Penny, Harry and Felicity would like to thank everyone who was so helpful when John was ill and after his death. The cards and letters were very much appreciated, as were the lifts and the marvellous food sent to the Village Hall for the party after the funeral. If we haven't said "Thank You" to you personally, please accept our apologies.

Donations given in John's memory were as follows:-

St James the Less Church: £550.00

Acton Aid: £800.00

IRON ACTON WI

Our 1998 programme got off to an hilarious start with the exploits of a pair of backpacking grannies. I'd worked with one of the ladies and hearing her stories in the confines of a personnel office made me realise what the world was missing! Marie and Maureen take off, leaving their families (and their cars) behind, and travel to a variety of destinations. Fun loving and with an impish sense of humour we thought that Italy and Poland were probably still recovering from their visits. The talk and question and answer section ran through into refreshment time when, being January and so very, very cold (!), we warmed ourselves through with rather large glasses of mulled wine



February saw us getting a little more serious when we received a talk on "women and their tax affairs" and we were left with some literature on self certification - sounds quite painful. The March meeting veered into the path of alternative therapy when a lady from Aromapot arrived with masses of oil samples, explained the history of aromatherapy and allowed us to sniff the wonderful fragrances available to us mere mortals to send us into spirals of oblivion (I've just had a glass of Safeway's lemon squash in case you're wondering what I've been drinking).


The April meeting should encourage us to put our walking boots on (pigs may also be seen in the sky around Iron Acton) when Dave and Janet Fullman shows us slides and tell us of their exploits and discoveries on their three cathedrals walk.



Between all of this we have visits arranged to look behind the scenes at Tesco's in Thornbury (I'm not too happy with all these stories I'm hearing about genetically modified foods and that we have no idea which products are affected so I'm hoping we get an opportunity to ask questions and to also get some decent answers) and we've also got an evening talk and visit planned to Lockyer's fuchsias (if I've spelt that correctly it will be a minor miracle, it's been wrong in a previous FP report, on the WI programme and on the outline 1998 plan that was drawn up for members to agree - all spelt differently!).

I was interested to hear that Radio 4's Food Programme had run a feature about Marks and Spencer's cake selectors buying up cakes from WI markets in search of inspiration for their Homestyle range of "traditional" cakes and even more amused to read that, following this revelation, some WI ladies had bought several of the M&S efforts to put them through a WI judging procedure! They described the quality of the cakes as "indifferent" but felt that M&S had done as well as they could. They felt that a cake left to sit on a supermarket shelf could never taste as good as a cake fresh from the oven (how true!) and their advice is to keep on visiting WI markets to get the best results. The nearest to us are in Thornbury and Winterbourne.

Anyway, that's about it. The WI would welcome any new members, just turn up at the Village Hall on Monday, 6 April (usual date is Easter Monday hence the change) or on any second Monday after this. Our meetings begin at 7.30pm.

 Lynne Blanchard

ACTON AID

Acton Aid is pleased to report that it was able to support a variety of good causes throughout the Parish during 1997. Amongst those who benefited were the Anthony Waker Fund, the Village Church, Iron Acton School, which received a cup to be awarded annually to the 'Best Camper', the OAP's who received a Christmas gift and Project 2000.

Funds were raised through various social events including a BBQ on Village day (which was so successful we ran out of food!), a Calypso Night in April, complete with steel band, and the German Night in November - always a popular event. Unfortunately the outdoor performance of 'As You Like It' scheduled for June had to be cancelled. The unseasonably bad weather was certainly not as you like it - a great disappointment to everyone.

1998 started with the AGM when a new committee was elected. Rob Taylor becomes Chairman and David Hatherell Vice Chairman. Andy Garside, Patrick Murphy and David McCoy continue as Secretary, Treasurer and Services Representative respectively.

The main fund raising event this year will be a Garden Party in John and Marilyn Wright's beautiful gardens on 27 June - put a note in your diary now. This will be the fourth garden party organised by Acton Aid and promises to be better than ever. So come along and enjoy an elegant and entertaining evening.

Our members work hard to ensure the success of these events. It is only due to the enthusiasm of many villagers and their willingness to help that they take place at all. Our thanks go to those who attend and enjoy the variety of functions, enabling us to continue supporting village organisations.

We are very sorry to have lost John Percy earlier this year. John was a long-standing and valued member of Acton Aid and he will be greatly missed.

Acton Aid is a registered charity. Meetings are open to all men in the Parish and are held on the first Thursday of each month in the Rose and Crown at 8pm. Why not come and join us for a pint or two?

 AG

Iron Acton CEVC Primary School

Since the last report to Focal Poyntz, the school has had a successful Christmas. The two Christmas Concerts were full to bursting and the end of term Carol Service was also well attended.

More recently the school has become part of the first phase introduction of the new Top Play/Top Sport scheme into South Gloucestershire. Along with other schools in the local Cluster, we have taken delivery of two bags of sporting equipment, one specifically designed for general PE lessons, the other for teaching basketball. The children and staff are looking forward to using this equipment soon – following initial teacher training sessions.



The school has been closed for In-service Training in which the classroom staff were working on the delivery of Art. We all returned to school with new varied ideas, a number of which have already been used in the classroom.

The school will be attending Church at the end of this term for an Easter celebration incorporating the children's work and presided over by the Rev. David Sutch. We look forward to welcoming you there on Friday 3rd April at 2.00pm. Further visits for worship and topic work will be undertaken next term.

The Friends of Iron Acton School continue their wonderful support – organising events to raise money to assist the school to purchase luxuries, which would be difficult to fund otherwise. From the sale of Webb Ivory Christmas merchandise they are able to annually support the purchase of library books to expand the range of books available to the children. Now the school has a realistic loan system and with thanks to parental support, the children have much enthusiasm for its use.

The Committee has recently held a family disco at the school; the first time in seven years. This was a great success. Many thanks to all who had a part in the organisation.

Continuing on the theme of libraries and books, this year is the Year of Reading. We have arranged our Book Fair this year to coincide with the commencement of this initiative. All the children at school will receive a book voucher to the value of £1, which may be spent in support of purchases, made from the Book Fair. The Book Fair will be held in the school hall from 3.00pm onwards on Monday 20 April 1998 to Friday 26 April 1998. It is open to the whole community, so please feel free to come and support the event. The school receives nearly half the amount of books sold again for the class and school libraries.

The school will be involved with work in and around the village. Some of this work will be offered for exhibition along with work from schools all over Europe. Our school has a partner school in Sweden and we hope to arrange something special between the two schools in the forthcoming year.

Friends of Iron Acton School

As we approach the AGM and wonder where the year went, it seems a good time to explain what we have done with all the money that has been raised over the past 12 months.


£113 was spent on expanding the LASY Class Construction Kit; this will enable another 8 children to be active at one time. Webb Ivory was a tremendous success and as in previous years the commission (this year a grand total of £203) went to new Library Books. A guillotine, musical instruments, lunch box trolleys and helping with the cost of school outings – including the Field Studies trip to the Isle of Wight, have all come from funds raised by the "Friends".



February was brightened up by the Annual School Disco. This year, due to the increased amount of space, we held this event in the School Hall, and it was thoroughly enjoyed by all.

Our Summer Fayre this year will be held on Saturday 4th July at 12 o' clock, we look forward to seeing you there and hope that the sun will shine.

On a final note, may I say, on behalf of the "Friends", a big thank you to Mrs Hatt who is retiring from Iron Acton School after 25 years of teaching. She has always been of great support to our fund-raising events, her cakes and the running of the Tombola stall will be hard to replace. We wish her well and hope she enjoys a well-deserved rest.

 Isobel Wilson-Tancock
(Chairman of the "Friends of Iron Acton School")

Coffee Cake/Dessert

This is basically a cake recipe that can be adapted to make a delicious dessert; it's somewhat boozy so drivers may have to be aware (and slimmers!).

Ingredients:

- 6oz Butter
- 6oz Caster Sugar
- 6oz Self-Raising Flour
- 3 Eggs
- Pinch of Salt
- Half-pint of Strong Black Coffee with Sugar, Rum or Brandy (to taste)
- Half-pint Whipped Cream
- 1-2 drops Vanilla Essence
- 1 Large Tin of Black Pitted Cherries (or other fruit as available)

Oven setting: 190°C (375°F), Gas Mark 5

Method:

Soften the butter in a bowl. Add sugar and cream together until light and fluffy. Beat in the eggs a little at a time. Then fold in the sifted flour and salt. Turn the mixture into an 'O' shaped mould which will produce a circular sponge with a well in the centre. Bake for approximately 25 minutes.

When cooked, set aside to cool. With a skewer make tiny holes at regular intervals all round the cake and then soak it with the coffee/sugar/rum or brandy mixture. Fill the well in the centre with the chosen fruit. Finally, coat the cake with the cream to which the Vanilla Essence has been added



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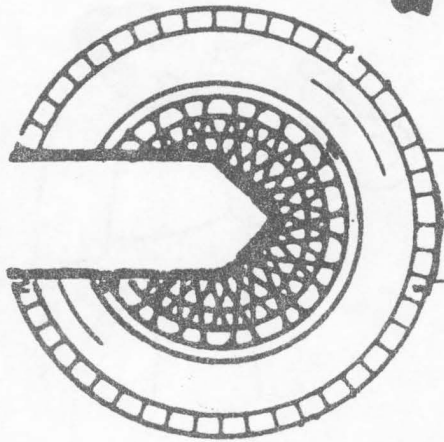
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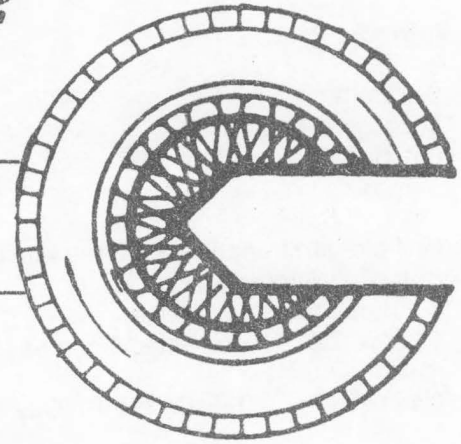


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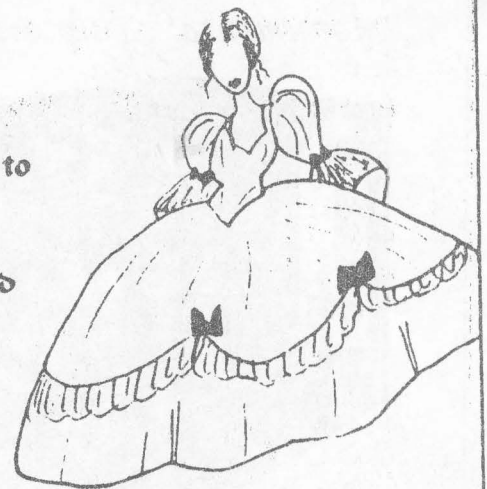
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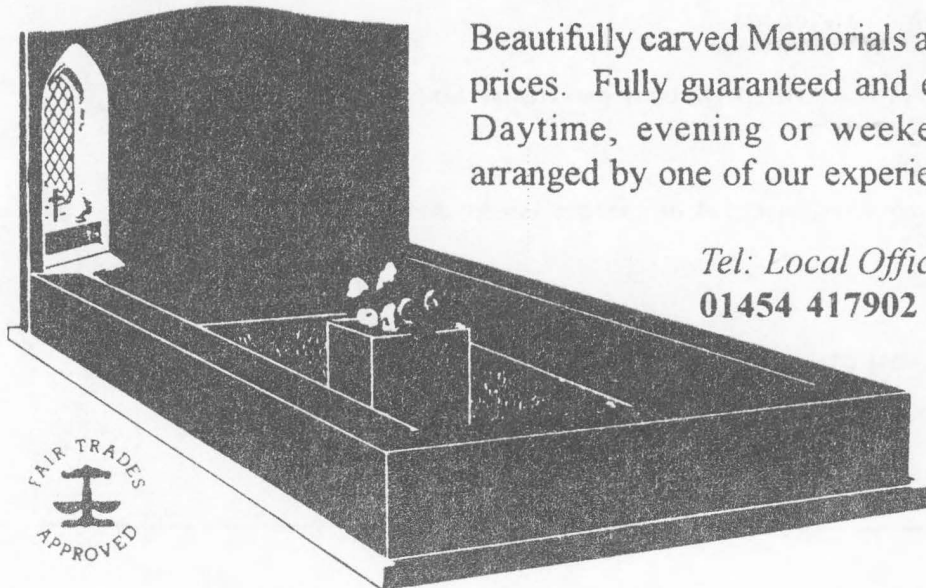
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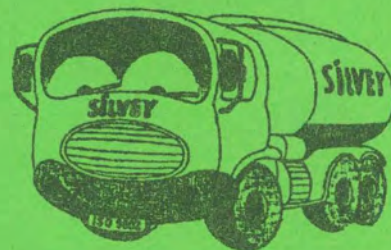


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