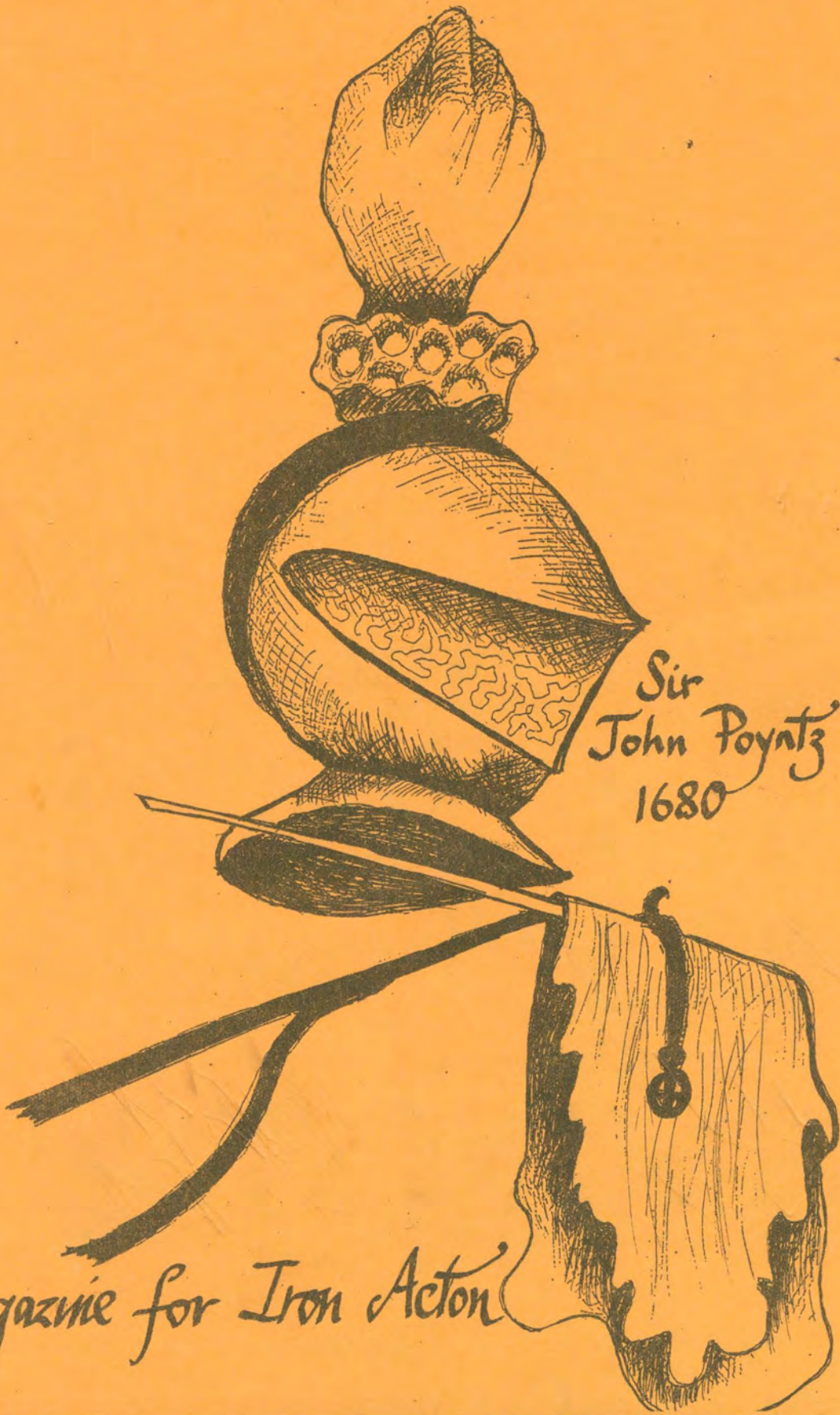


2001 55

# FOCAL POYNTIZ



Sir  
John Poyntz  
1680

A magazine for Iron Acton

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# SPRING

ISSUE NO. 55

As we prepare this edition of Focal Poyntz the first evidence of Spring about to break is beginning to show in our gardens. The snowdrops and crocuses are well advanced and, in sheltered spots, daffodils are beginning to flower. Last weekend we visited the Rococco Gardens in Painswick to see the display of snowdrops and they were truly magnificent with many different varieties.

With this gardening theme in mind, it has been suggested that we have a gardening page in Focal Poyntz - particularly as there are so many gardeners in the parish. Perhaps a logical extension of this could be the forming of a gardening club or horticultural society? The only problem is that the page and possible extension needs someone who is keen enough and with enough time to write the former and organise the latter. Any volunteers out there???

Our cover picture, this issue, features the helmet, leather gauntlet and spur that belonged to Sir John Poyntz and has been drawn by Eileen Hughes (who has also written the very thoroughly researched article to be found later in this issue).

PS If we could find someone to take on a gardening section for FP then perhaps we could move to 4 issues a year to cover the seasons more accurately??

Lionel Alsop  
228400

Lynne Blanchard  
228566

Maureen Blake  
294381

Sue Cowley  
228323

Hazel Dron  
228509

Roy Hubbard  
228356

Eileen Hughes  
228439

Barrie Wright  
228247

Rona Wright  
228247



## THIS ISSUE'S COVER

The cover sketch depicts the helmet, leather gauntlet and spur worn by Sir John Poyntz, who died in 1680, the last of the line of Iron Acton Poyntz's. You can find these objects high up on the east wall of the Lady Chapel in Iron Acton Church. The history of Iron Acton was much influenced by the Poyntz family who were Lords of the Manor here for more than 350 years.

In 1666 Sir John Poyntz, aged 24, married Anne, aged 18, the daughter of Robart Caesar of Williams in Kent. They were married for 14 years but had no children. Anne sold the estate and moved to Watford in Hertfordshire where she died on 23<sup>rd</sup> June 1729. She was buried at St Katherine's Church, Regents Park, London. Her monument bears the following inscription:

Here lyeth the Lady Anne, widow of Sir John Poyntz of Iron Acton in the County of Gloucester, who died 23<sup>rd</sup> June 1729. Her Great Grandfather was Sir Charles Caesar of Bennington Place in the County of Hertfordshire, Knight, Master of the Rolls to King Charles 1, whose father was Sir Julius Caesar Master of Requests, and judge of the Admiralty to Queen Elizabeth, Chancellor and Under Treasurer of the Exchequer, and Master likewise of the Rolls and one of the Privy Council to King James 1 and King Charles 1 of which ancestors she was truly worthy.

The table next adjoining shows  
How much her sisters death she mourned,  
And this how faithfully her love  
Is by that sister's son returned.

Adjoining is a monument to Johanna, the wife of John Rampayne, Anne's sister who died in childbirth on 15<sup>th</sup> December 1694. The epitaph was written by Lady Anne Poyntz.

Passenger, stay! This richest grave  
A small delay may justly crave -  
Virtue adorn'd with wit and beauty,  
Religious love, Conjugal duty,  
In this small cabinet lyes enshrined  
While glory gilds her purer mind.  
Both her parents near her lye,  
And bear her relicts company,  
Kind death which used Friends to part  
Joined, these, who living, had one heart.  
Renoun'd Sir Julius Caesar lent  
Unto them all noble Descent -  
Dying she did a son bequeath  
In whom she lives in spite of Death -  
Thus when th'old Phoenix sweetly dyes,  
The new does from her ashes rise.  
Her Husbands love this monument rears  
Her sister writes these lines with tears.

\* \* \* \* \*

## AN APOLOGY FROM LYNNE

In the last edition of Focal Poyntz, I omitted Pat Taylor's name from the list of Poppy Appeal collectors when I typed the copy and I'd like to say "Sorry Pat" - it really was a genuine mistake.

## MAY DAY IN IRON ACTON

For the last 10 years or so the highlight in the social calendar of the village and the surrounding area has been the annual May Day bash on the Village Green. Originally the brain child of Betty Cook and John Percy as a focal and fund raising event, it has extended out to embrace many of the key village organisations so fundamental to the social infrastructure of Iron Acton.

The hub of the day itself is based around the Village Green with it's distinctive red and white striped maypole where for hours before the big day you can watch the children of Iron Acton Primary School practising their maypole dancing, probably much the same as children were doing hundreds of years before, getting into all sorts of tangles but thoroughly entering into the spirit.

The big day begins at about 7.30 am with the various show people arriving with their carousels, helter skelters, rifle ranges, swing boats and all manner of amusements for young and old. The competition for the best pitches is intense and usually a headache for the committee member allocated to this task.

A frantic 3 hours or so follows with all the various village organisations setting up tea tents, stalls, hay bales around the maypole, tannoy system, etc, and with the official start time of 11 am approaching the Village Green is beginning to fill in anticipation of the arrival of the May Queen and subsequent maypole dancing opens the fun day proceedings which then carry on until around 4 pm.

Some of the attractions on the day include:

Maypole Dancers	Morris Men	Dog Training	Country Dancing
Marching Band	Tai Kwando	Falcons	Tug of War
Art Exhibition	Steam Train	Pony Rides	Fortune Telling
	Face Painting	Bouncy Castle	

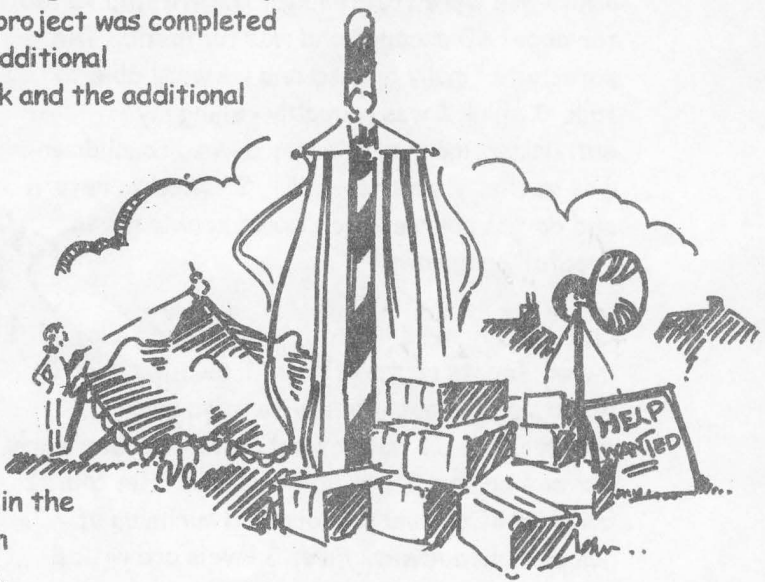
And a host of other activities including a licensed bar and food.

The object of the day is to have fun and to raise money for village organisations. In it's early days fund raising from the event went to the individual village organisations involved and to Focal Poyntz. However, in the past 6 years the majority of funds raised has gone towards Project 2000, the extension and refurbishment of the Parish Hall. Although the project was completed in December 1999 there is still a need to cover additional expenditure incurred on new seating, the car park and the additional cost of the new heating system.

Also a day of this magnitude which attracts 2000-2500 visitors and raises £4500-£5000 requires a great deal of effort to organise.

**WE NEED HELP:**    Before the Day  
                                 On the Day

If you feel that you could devote a few hours of your time or volunteer to sponsor with an advert in the programme please call Marion or Roger Hughes on (home) 01454 228562 or (office) 0117 923 6789.



**REMEMBER - YOUR VILLAGE NEEDS YOU - TO HELP AND TO HAVE FUN ON MAY DAY  
- MONDAY, 7<sup>TH</sup> MAY 2001**

## THE FRIENDS OF IRON ACTON SCHOOL

To help Iron Acton School raise funds for replenishing their library, Acton Aid is holding a dance in the Parish Hall. It will be a great evening of Rock 'n Roll, dancing to the well known local group Chantilly Lace.

The venue is the Parish Hall, Iron Acton and the date is Saturday, 24<sup>th</sup> March 2001, starting at 8 pm and going on 'til we drop. Tickets, at £7.50 each can be obtained over the bar at The Lamb Inn or by telephoning 01454 227227.

Please help the School by helping Acton Aid make it a successful evening - you will not be disappointed.

Tracey Byrne / Secretary

## FREE FALL PARACHUTE JUMP

In July of last year I did a "Tandem Parachute Jump". I went to a place called Deland, about one hour from Orlando. They are an extremely professional outfit who are the innovators of the art of tandem jumping and they also design and build parachutes.

Naturally, I was somewhat nervous. A 30 minute briefing was followed by walking out to the aircraft with all sorts of people doing various jumps. The aircraft was a twin engined thing which climbed to 13,000 feet. Most people jumped out at different altitudes and appeared to me to be totally crazy.

It then came to our turn. I had this very muscular chap strapped to my back, but appeared to be unconcerned as we walked to the rear of the aircraft where the door was wide open. I did as I had been instructed and let him take my weight, tucking my lower legs back, and through his. I looked out from the door where there were some clouds beneath us. That was frightening .... but, before I could gather my senses, he had jumped.

He did a somersault and I saw the aircraft flying away. We were freefalling. The freefall lasted for about 40 seconds and was fantastic. The parachute finally opened and we were able to talk. I think I was probably yelling my enthusiasm most of the way down. Touchdown was gentle. I was hooked!!!! I vowed to return and do the course which would enable me to freefall on my own.

Our church, here in Iron Acton, needs a lot of money for its restoration so I decided that I would use the opportunity to raise some sponsorship. It was not until late October/early November that I was able to do it. The course consists of ground school and a minimum of 7 jumps, called levels. First 3 levels are with 2 instructors, next 3 levels with one instructor and the final jump is solo.



Day One was spent mainly in the classroom and, believe me, they are very thorough. It was not until late afternoon that we set off to do Level 1. I had 2 wonderful and extremely experienced instructors who tried their best to calm me. I was terrified!! Eventually the aircraft reached 13,000 feet and it was time to go. I moved to the door, both instructors holding on to me, I did the exit procedure and out we went. Unlike the tandem jump I was not able to enjoy the view. There were tasks to perform and I had to concentrate. The most important thing is to get into and maintain the "stable position". Not an easy task.

About 50 seconds later, with the tasks performed, we reached 6,000 feet where the "pull sequence" starts. Once the parachute deploys you are on your own but I did not have a problem with that being a pilot. You have to manoeuvre yourself to the landing area, make a circuit and land into wind. There is a chap, on the ground, who talks to you via a radio. I am a bit deaf and was unable to hear his instructions. It did not bother me because I could sort the last bit out myself, it was the initial bits that were the problem and we laughed about that later.

Levels 2 and 3 require more tasks. It is extremely important that you can retain the "stable position" and then the instructors let go of you and you have to make turns. I was having a problem with my left leg as it was not symmetrical with my right. The problem it caused was that, when alone, I kept turning left. It needed correcting. I had to repeat Level 3. Did that ..... got it right and went on to Level 4.

Level 4 is with 1 instructor only. More tasks during freefall to perform. More terror. More excitement. Level 4 was okay but still having problems with that wretched left leg.

Had to repeat Level 5. Serious problems by now. The rig I had been wearing was not made to measure!! I am not very big so each time I jumped I was getting more and more bruised around my thighs and upper arms. I was very sore and made the decision that this would be the decider.

It was always my intention to raise money for our church, but even so, David was not pleased with me. I had a lot of people praying for me and I promised a video.

Repeating Level 5 was the decider for me. I paid for, and had the video chap film me. Not a good scene as far as I was concerned as I was extremely nervous. Anyway, it worked out well and the video shows how I conquered that left leg of mine and did the required tasks.

Level 6 was fantastic ..... it required a backward somersault, some turns and tracking forward. I did it all and was very sore but very happy. The whole point of the exercise was to get unstable and then recover. GREAT. Next jump ..... SOLO!!!! Gosh was I ever scared! Off we went. 13,000 feet again, petrified.

My turn to jump. Don't think I can do this, Move to door. Look out. Oh my God, I hesitate. Aircraft moving away from jump zone. Got to go. Hesitate again. Think "someone's" going to push me. Deep breath, I'm out there alone!!!! Freefalling on my own. No one holding me. Got to get it right. Did it. 6,000 feet ... pull rip-cord. It works ... fantastic. The view ... the visibility ... the tranquillity ... the world ... the peace ... the realisation of our vulnerability ... God, thank you ... I landed very safely ... no bones broken ... no ankles twisted ... not going to get into trouble from Company or David.

I raised £1,000 for the Church Restoration Fund. It was fantastic. I have the video and at some convenient time and place will show it to all who may be interested. There will be a small charge, however, which will be donated to the church funds.

Pam McCoy

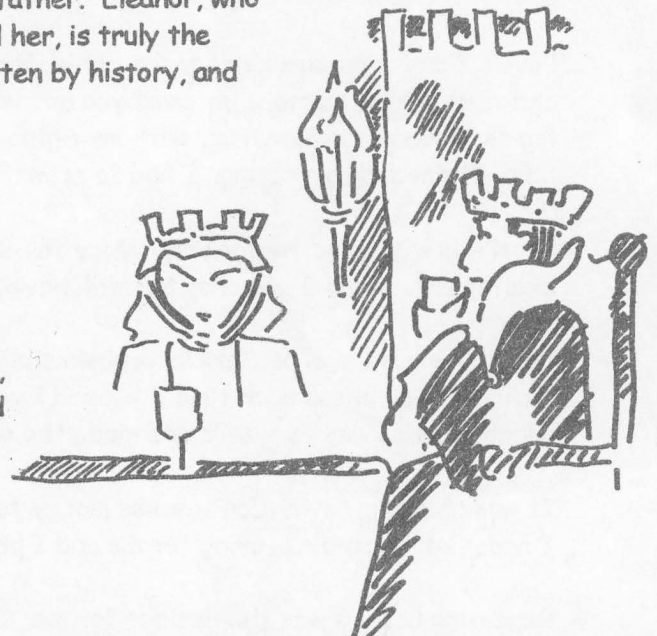
## THE ACTONIANS

The Actonians are, as usual, up to our eyes in it at the time of writing. The festival plays "The Orchestra" for the Seniors and "No Entry" for the Juniors will be on stage in a fortnight's time and "The Lion in Winter" has just got under way. This will be performed in the Parish Hall on 17<sup>th</sup>, 18<sup>th</sup> and 19<sup>th</sup> May and tickets can be obtained from the Secretary, Ann Aplin, on 228243. New members are always welcome - we meet in the Parish Hall, following the Junior Actonians who meet there from 6.30 pm to 8.00 pm. Please contact Jenny Warner on 317945 for further details.

The following is the Director, Bob Allen's, resume of The Lion in Winter:

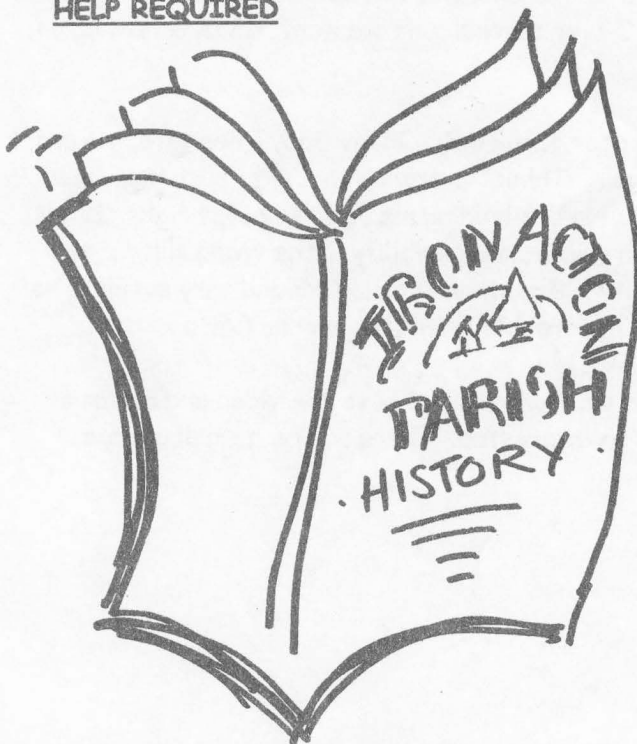
It's a change to find an historically correct drama written in a modern form that is easy on the ear and eye. The play follows the trials and tribulations of King Henry, his estranged wife, Eleanor, and their three sons. Richard, the eldest, we know as the Lionheart, went on to become King and this play goes some way to describe the relationship he had with his father. Eleanor, who Henry married for the dowry of land that accompanied her, is truly the scheming matriarch. The other sons, Geoffrey, forgotten by history, and John, of Robin Hood fame, are evil characters in their own right. All the sons are in competition for the crown, which Henry is loath to pass to Richard merely on the right of succession.

We meet them all over a Christmas gathering. Henry has released Eleanor from her prison confinement for the festivities, even though he flirts with his mistress, Alais, under her nose. The sons have been commanded to appear and immediately begin scheming against their father. The situation boils and bubbles under the surface until Philip, the King of France, arrives and lifts the lid off this cauldron. What transpires with the family? ... Well you will have to come and see for yourself. Just a story of a normal dysfunctional family but set back in our history!



... CHER UP DEAR ITS CHRISTMAS!

## HELP REQUIRED



Patricia Alcock, a local historian, is compiling a short parish history of Iron Acton for the Parish Council. She really wants to hear any tales or anecdotes, facts about cottages, houses or people and is especially interested in photographs that people would prepared to loan to her for use in the history. Very great care will be taken of any items that people are kind enough to loan her. Any information that you can give her will be gratefully received.

Can you help? If so, please ring Patricia on 313541 (evenings only)



## IRON ACTON CEVC PRIMARY SCHOOL

The year has begun well for Iron Acton. The children have been studying a number of interesting subjects, including Britain since the 1940's, how Muslims live and looking at the development of parks.

We have been focusing on making the school really safe for the children. A new intercom system in the main entrance means that no unauthorised visitors can gain entry into the building. We have also had CCTV fitted around the school so that every angle and entrance is monitored.

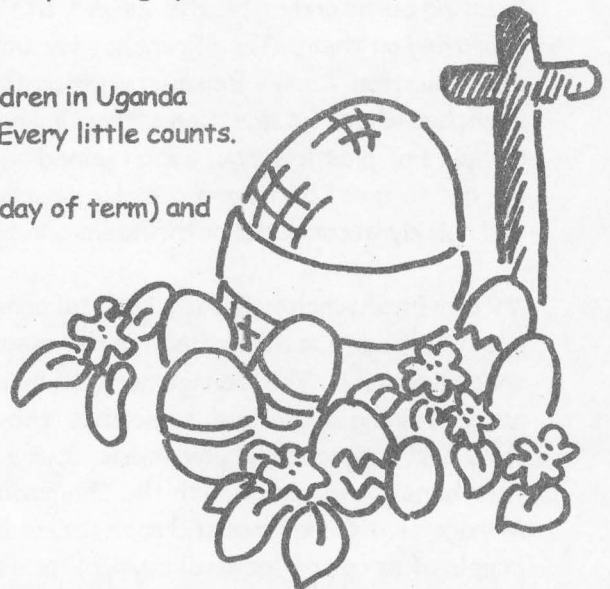
The children are looking forward to joining with Rangeworthy Primary to watch a Tudor play. We have football matches against Silverhill and St Mary's in Thornbury coming up and, of course, preparation will begin for May Day.

We have been supporting UNICEF and their work for children in Uganda and Romania. We had a non-uniform day to raise money. Every little counts.

Our Easter service will be in School on 5<sup>th</sup> April (the last day of term) and anybody is welcome to attend.

Remember summer will be here before we know it!

Karl Joyce / Head Teacher



## NORTH ROAD LADIES CLUB

The North Road Ladies Club's Charity for the year 2000 was to collect specific items most needed by the children in an orphanage in Russia. Over the last 8 months our members have donated a large quantity of knitted garments, toiletries, etc, and, at our January meeting, members were informed that these items were now being passed to Mrs Jean Preece to give to the children when she visits the orphanage this Spring.

The speaker at our January meeting was Mrs Swoboda who gave a most informative and interesting talk on The Woodland Trust.

Our programme for meetings until June 2001 is as follows:

Monday, 5<sup>th</sup> January: The Spying Game - talk and slides by Mr M Ellis

Monday, 5<sup>th</sup> March: Three Moors Walk with Dave and Janet Fulman

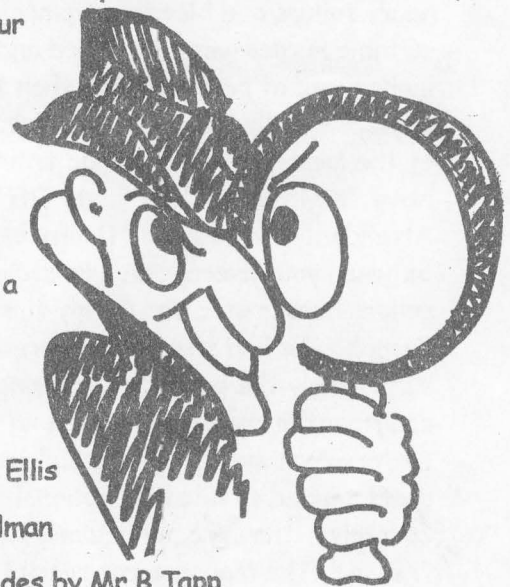
Monday, 2<sup>nd</sup> April: The Land of the Midnight Sun - talk and slides by Mr B Tapp

Monday, 14<sup>th</sup> May: Flower Arranging Demonstration by Mrs Jean Ellaway

Monday, 4<sup>th</sup> June: An Evening Excursion to Whatley Vineyard and Herb Garden, Watley, Frome

Our meetings are held in North Road Primary School, commencing at 7.30 pm. Visitors or new members are always most welcome to join us at any of our meetings.

June Rycroft / Secretary



## SOME MEMORIES OF OUR LOCAL HOSPITAL

Now that Frenchay and Southmead hospitals have been swallowed by the monstrous entity of North Bristol Health Trust for which vacancies for *clinical governance and audit officers* are currently being advertised, it is time to look back on the past.

Few people remember that Frenchay Hospital was built in a hurry during the early years of the Second World War to take the casualties expected after a possible obliteration of central Bristol by German bombs. The grey austerity buildings then lay unused until after the Americans entered the war and needed accommodation for several of their mobile army hospitals. The matter became urgent prior to and during the Normandy landings; and many young American surgeons had their first experience of treating burns and of plastic surgery at Frenchay, taking their skills back home with them and vastly improving on them. Then Frenchay lay empty again until the NHS loomed on the horizon. A charismatic chest surgeon, Ronnie Belsey, returned from temporary accommodation at Weston and set up shop at Frenchay where he was soon attracting ambitious young surgeons from all over the world. Two Bristol pioneers of plastic surgery soon joined the hospital and, making the best of unsuitable buildings, they set out to treat burns and facial injuries and deformities in exciting new ways. Neurosurgeons followed and quickly became the pathfinders and pioneers of their craft.

My own involvement with the hospital arose out of the great difficulty in attracting trained nurses to these specialist units. The Management decided to set up a nurse training school and, to do that, they needed non-specialist surgeons and physicians. I was hooked by a telephone conversation with the Chairman of the Management Committee and soon reeled in to run a couple of wards of "general medical" patients. There were plenty of them - people with pneumonia, anaemia, heart failure and bleeding stomachs. Somehow a few suitable nurses were recruited and they carried a far higher load of responsibility than those of today. Not all were equally suitable. The first one put in charge of the male medical ward had trained in the Royal Navy, leaving as a Chief Petty Officer Sick Berth Attendant. He found difficulty in distinguishing between your average sick Bristolian and the young sailors he was used to. On my first ward round at



Frenchay he had the floor scoured and the patients lined up at attention beside their beds. Not surprisingly the patients complained. So did I. The tactful Matron moved him to be in charge of equipment in one of the operating theatres - where he was a great success. Our Matron was a canny Scotswoman who had great diplomatic skills as well as a salty sense of humour. The resident medical staff tended to be multi-national and often included men who were later to achieve fame in many countries. During a particularly hot spell they took to bathing in a static water tank left in place after the war. The Management promptly had it drained on the pretext that it was breeding mosquitoes, but everyone knew that the real reason was that the Matron in her nearby cottage didn't like the cavortings and splashings of the young doctors. The Matron later acquired an unruly spaniel puppy which often followed her down the corridors on her rounds. A friendly pat on his head was liable to be met ungratefully by a painful nip. Eventually, as protests mounted, the Management brought in an all-embracing rule to prevent resident staff from keeping any pets at all, even goldfish! One nursing sister had to dispose of her horse.

We didn't realise it at the time but hospital services were changing very quickly. Within a decade tuberculosis was abolished and pneumonia in the young became a rarity. Acute rheumatic heart disease and diphtheria which had been such great despoilers of young lives had vanished like ghosts. Instead, our wards filled up with very elderly patients who had lost their mobility or their wits, often both. Car and motorcycle accidents made us all into impassioned advocates of seat-belts and motorcycle helmets. Other self-inflicted diseases from drugs and smoking gave us new perspectives on the way our society was developing, while life-support machines and services presented us with new ethical dilemmas when confronted with permanently brain-damaged and dependent members of previously happy families. Frenchay Hospital, I think, responded better than many institutions to these changing conditions. We had always had good relations with the family doctors in the eastern sector of Bristol, and we sought to involve them more and more in the running of the hospital, and in continuous medical education. Whether this made us more sensitive to the family doctors' problems and needs only time will tell but I believe it made the staff of Frenchay more outward-looking than many so-called "centres of excellence" in metropolitan areas. Staff, whether medical, nursing, technical or domestic are what really makes a hospital; and Frenchay proved it. For 40 years we lived and worked in cheap, grey and austerity wards and yet the spirit remained good, with excellent staff relations and - hopefully - a few grateful patients and families.

John Naish

### GARDEN TRAIL 2001

After our very successful Open Gardens day last year there has been considerable interest in a repeat performance this year and the time is fast approaching when we have to make some firm plans if we are to go ahead. We learned a lot last year and we hope, as a result, to make this year's event even more fun without losing the appeal of a truly village affair. Who can forget the wonderful atmosphere after all the hard work was over and the visitors had departed as people poured out of their homes and, glass in hand, paid spontaneous visits to all the gardens they had been unable to see while playing host in their own homes? It was certainly a day to remember.

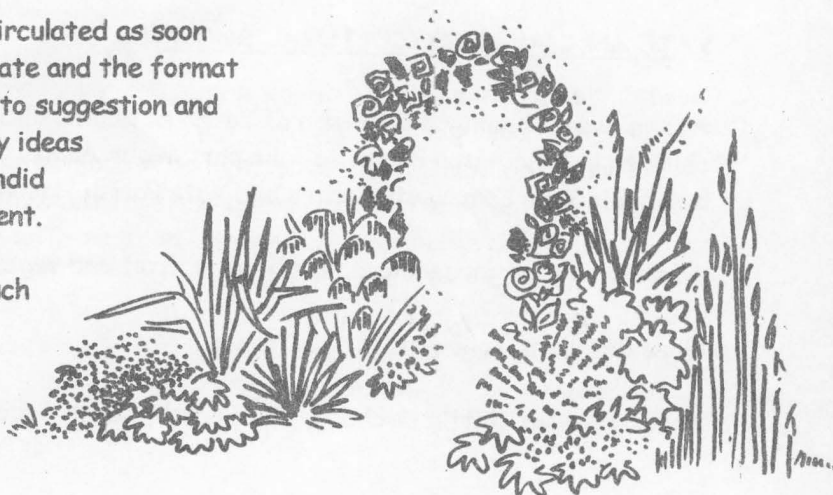
Our gardens will soon be waking up after the long wet winter so please think about joining this year's garden trail as you begin to work on the soil and plan your summer display. We hope that we shall be able to offer an even bigger selection of gardens large and small to our visitors this year.

The proposed date for this year's opening is Sunday, 24<sup>th</sup> June which also happens to be Midsummer's Day so perhaps the weather will be kind to us again.

More information regarding plans will be circulated as soon as a firm decision is taken regarding the date and the format of the day. In the meantime, we are open to suggestion and advice so please let us know if you have any ideas for improving what we hope will be as splendid and enjoyable an occasion as last year's event.

Your help before and on the day will be much appreciated.

**CONTACT:** HAZEL DRON 228509  
JUNE RYCROFT 228668  
MIKE WHEELER 228544



## IRON ACTON CRICKET CLUB

At this time of year, with the weather we've been having, cricket is the last thing any of us has been thinking of. The England Team may be sweating it out in Sri Lanka, but for those of us here in the rain-soaked UK, photos of last season are the closest we can get to the real thing. However, even now, the members of the Cricket Club are busy making preparations for the coming season.

After last season we are looking forward to re-acquainting ourselves with the pitch at Yate Outdoor Sports Centre (behind Brimsham Green School) which, we have been told, will be ready for use by the time the season starts and, as a result of the drainage installed last year, will be able to cope with any weather!

The plans to erect some practice nets next to the tennis courts on the Parish Meadow are well advanced and we hope to start work on them by the end of March so that they will be ready for the beginning of the season. This facility is for anyone in the village to use and, in recognition of this, Acton Aid has kindly donated £300 towards the cost of building them.

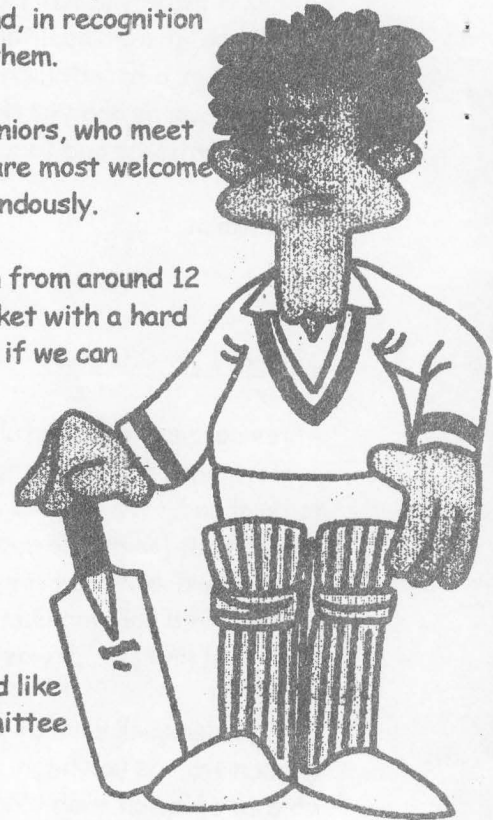
Chris Bradley has kindly agreed to continue his excellent work with the juniors, who meet once a week on Iron Acton School playing field. Any children from age 7 are most welcome and, if the numbers attending are any guide, they enjoy themselves tremendously.

One of my aims for the Club this year is to do more for the older children from around 12 who have outgrown Chris' coaching and are ready to start playing real cricket with a hard ball. I hope the nets will provide the ideal location for some practice, and if we can establish a sufficiently dedicated group, we can arrange youth matches against other clubs.

As always, we are on the lookout for the cricketing talent that lurks beneath the surface of a quiet village like Iron Acton, and if anyone would like to participate in some very friendly local games, please either contact our team manager, Chris Perry (228798) or myself.

Supporters are always welcome at home or away games and if anyone would like a fixture card for their diary they will be available shortly from any Committee Member or on May Day.

Simon Cross / Chairman (228291)



## YATE ANNUAL HORTICULTURAL SHOW

As the newly appointed Chairman of Yate Horticultural Society, I would like to invite any adults and children in Iron Acton Parish to take part in our Annual Show on Saturday, 8 September 2001. This will be held in Yate Community Centre and Yate Parish Hall in Station Road, Yate.

So show us your gardening skills (flowers, fruit and vegetables) and domestic and handicraft skills.

More details to follow in the next issue.

Andrew Gowen (Little Orchard, The British, North Road) - telephone 228125

## "A Great Rock & Roll Experience"

At: The Parish Hall, Iron Acton  
On: Saturday, 24 March 2001  
From: 8.00 pm till late  
Tickets: £7.50

All profits will be donated to  
Replenish the library at Iron Acton School

Tickets from 01454 227227 or The Lamb Inn



### IT'S A DOG'S LIFE

Hi, folks. It's Lucy again, bringing you the latest news from our place in the country.

This morning, I was so cosy and snug in the doggy bed I share with my sister, Trixie, that when the doorbell rang I couldn't be bothered to get up and find out who was disturbing our peace. Trixie is much more nosey than me, and out she jumped to find out what was going on.

When I heard our mistress say "Good Morning" and a man say, "Sign here please!" I knew it must be someone delivering a parcel so I just snuggled down and went back to sleep. When I woke up again, I heard our mistress calling for Trixie and decided I'd better help find her as I know most of her favourite spots in the house (like someone's bed or the most comfortable chair). We couldn't find her anywhere, not even in Nan's rooms where Trixie often tries to hide under the chairs. Nan says Trixie must think she's an ostrich 'cos she usually leaves the rear part of her anatomy sticking out!

Anyway, I was sent outside to search all our hidey-holes in the stables and barns but she was nowhere to be found. Going back indoors, the telephone rang and I heard mistress say, "Yes, we do seem to have mislaid a dog. Oh, thank goodness she's safe. You'll bring her back, will you? Thank you so much, I'll be waiting." So, back to bed I went. Well, there was nothing more I could do, now was there?

Some time later my slumbers were disturbed when the doorbell rang and I heard a man's voice say "Special delivery, ma'am. Please sign here." And in walked my naughty little sister. A great big luggage label tied to her collar. She looked so please with herself and no doubt expected everyone to make a fuss of her. I think she deserves to have her bottom smacked for being so naughty and stealing a ride in that parcel van, but then I'm prejudiced - I missed out on sharing her adventure!



Love from Lucv

## SICILY - EARLY SUMMER OF 1999

I had taken a bus up from Palermo to the small town of Monreale, lured by the description in *The Rough Guide* of the medieval cathedral and its stunning mosaic walls. But having strolled the aisles, gaped, gasped and read the history, I needed a burst of Italian sun on my face again and a big espresso coffee. It was early summer and early in the day. I turned left and walked down the middle of a broad, deserted pathway like a female version of Gary Cooper, wondering if a hundred pairs of eyes were peering at me from behind the shutters.

"Signora, buon giorno!" A young man, twentyish probably, was waving at me from the corner of a tree lined piazza. He was sitting at a table shaded by a red and white umbrella. I did what the English always do, averted my eyes, walked a little faster and concentrated hard on a shop window full of rakes and yard brushes.

No, of course I didn't really. He was far too good looking. He beckoned and I went straight over, partly because of his white teeth and gentle Sicilian eyes and the shock of shiny black curls which he'd no doubt inherited from some Etruscan warrior way back in his ancestry, but partly, I have to admit, because he was holding out a plate full of something and it so happened I'd missed breakfast. I sat on the wall in the sun, nibbling at delicious bruschetta with toppings of olive and oregano, capers, garlic, tomato and basil, all nurtured in the Sicilian sunshine, while he gave me the spiel. He spoke no English, which was fine with me, because as a long time student of Italian, it was a change to go beyond the routine of ordering meals and asking the way. He told me he and his father made the toppings on their hillside farm beyond Trapani and he showed me rows of little jars full behind him.

He did conjuring tricks too. He suddenly produced from under a white cloth, a jug of vino locale and two glasses, and my Italian seemed to go up two grades. I heard about his education (hardly any), his life on an olive farm (peaceful but poor), and his aspirations (unlimited). He told me he would come one day to England to sell his little jars to the yearning British public. His optimism was appealing but a touch naïve. I'd sat there half an hour without a single passer-by even glancing in his direction. But, yes, of course, I bought several jars to take home. Good value I thought, especially considering I'd had the best Italian conversation lesson in my life.

## Harrods, London - Late Autumn of 2000

I was struggling up the Egyptian staircase, laden with bulging green and gold carriers - no, you guessed it: Laden with nothing but a Boots bag which contained a pack of chick peas, when I heard someone running and shouting behind me.

"Signora, signora, come stall!" I turned, my mind on Christmas puddings and avoiding the 6 o'clock sardine train from Paddington. I stared at the young man in the dark suit. Then suddenly there was the dropping of bags and the shaking of hands and the cries of astonishment. It was my young man from Monreale but now he'd acquired a blue striped shirt; the curls had been snipped and tamed and gelled and, I'm a little sorry to say, he was speaking quite passable English.

Breathless, he told me he'd got a big order for his bruschetta toppings from a famous shop (not a million miles from Piccadilly Circus, it turned out). And more in Paris. And yes, he was on his way to a promising interview with a buyer here.



But yes, he was missing Sicily too, and tomorrow he'd fly back to Papa and the olive farm. There were so many plans to expand now. Still reeling with astonishment, I wished him luck and watched him running up the stairs with his shoulder bag full of samples and thought what an amazing world it is that we live in, where a young Sicilian without much money but with a lot of flair, and, let's face it, a certain Mediterranean allure, can crack the sophisticated food markets of London and Paris.

I was sorry about the passing of the Etruscan warrior hair though.

Jo Voss

### ACTON AID

The Annual General Meeting of Acton Aid was held in The Lamb Inn on Thursday, 1<sup>st</sup> February. It saw the culmination of another successful year and, although only a couple of formal fundraising occasions were undertaken during the year, Acton Aid was able to support several Village activities and groups, including May Day and delivering Christmas parcels to our Senior Citizens.

Since the last edition of Focal Poyntz, Acton Aid members have continued to meet regularly at The Lamb and held the annual Chairman's Dinner on Friday, 17<sup>th</sup> February.

The members have also been industrious in the organisation of an evening's entertainment, featuring Chantilly Lace, to be held in the Parish Hall on Saturday, 24<sup>th</sup> March. Tickets are now available and include a light snack. Proceeds from this event will help towards "refreshing" the stock of books in Iron Acton School library.

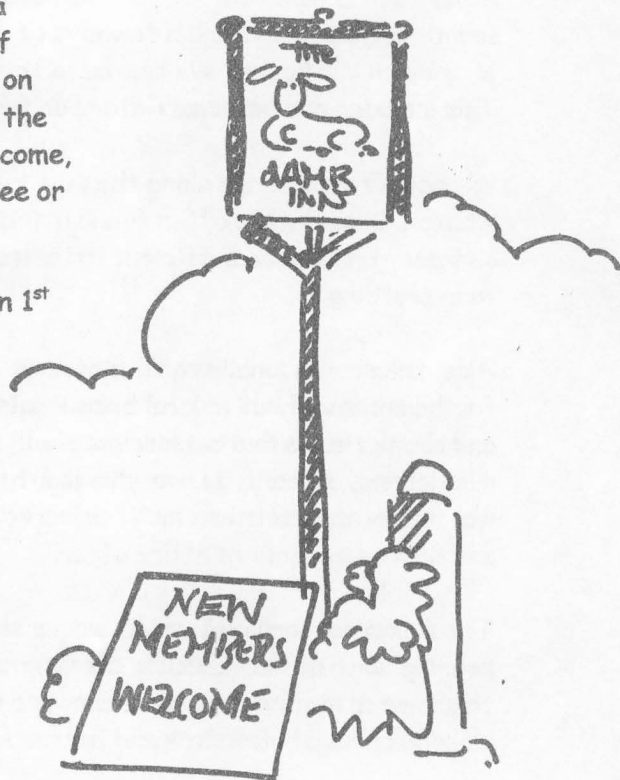
There is also another evening garden event planned for a weekend in July, more details in due course.

The aim of Acton Aid as a registered charity is to assist in the improvement of village life. To achieve this we meet on the first Thursday of the month, at 8 pm in The Lamb. Discussion of ways of furthering our aim are undertaken, over a beer or two, in a light-hearted yet occasionally vigorous manner. The ability of Acton Aid to support village activities is dependent primarily on the enthusiastic efforts of the active members in organising the successful fund-raising events. New members are always welcome, if you would like to join us please contact one of the Committee or just turn up at one of the meetings.

The following members were elected to Office at the AGM on 1<sup>st</sup> February and make up the current Committee:

Chairman	Tony Cowley
Vice Chairman	Ashley Mee
Secretary	Colin Smith
Treasurer	Patrick Murphy
Services	David McCoy
Parish Hall	David Hatherall
Social/Fund Raising	Chris Wiggins and Rob Taylor

Colin Smith



## SANDANG RIVER BLUES

Anyone who knows Jakarta has probably heard of, at least, the region of town called Block M; a seething morass of people, buses, taxis, pavement stalls and hawkers, beggars, and the like, and to go with it, a cacophony of noise and the heavy haze of pollution. Nestling as if in the eye of a storm is a small street comprising a few art galleries, antiques and curios and, importantly, a few expat bars and, more specifically, one called the "Top Gun". The TG, as the cognoscenti referred to it, harboured a couple of bars, a pool table, restaurant and, in the old days, "a good selection of music".

I was in Jakarta on behalf of a Texas based exploration company and had been given the task of turning up some likely new ventures for oil exploration in the remote region of Eastern Indonesia. I chose to concentrate on the crescent of Islands surrounding the Banda Sea and among others the Spice Islands for our initial reconnaissance. It was while I was undertaking this work that, over a few beers in the TG, I was invited to join the Sadang River Expedition. The TG was conducive to such discussions and the local beer "Bintang" (star) proved the catalyst and prompted many deal-making handshakes that were probably regretted the following morning. Nevertheless, duly impressed with my co-venturers gung ho attitude and CV's, we planned to set out for the island of Sulawesi (or the Celebes as it used to be called) across the Makasser Straits from Borneo in the coming wet season. The Sadang river system had remained little explored by Westerners to this date and we presumed a white water "first".

Aerial photography and satellite imagery analysis provided a map and gave some clues to the rugged terrain, ravines, river canyons, innumerable rapids and rain forest that lay before us. There were 20 of us that set out on this expedition manning 3 inflatables and sundry other flotation devises. We had flown in to Ujung Pandang on Garuda from Jakarta and set out with several landrovers northwards. As is always the case, eventually the roads and tracks petered out and we had to manhandle the boats over some treacherous and exhausting obstacles before, with great ceremony and huge relief in consideration of our aches and pains, we were able to let the river take over and say goodbye to our army of local helpers who waved us on our way from the relative safety of the river bank.

Days swept by as we sped on our journey through this exotic wilderness. Sometimes we were on the water, often in it and occasionally under it as we were catapulted out of the boats crossing serious white water. We camped out on river banks, lying simply on tarpaulins, wrapped in our sarongs and, lulled by the sounds of the forest and a few nips of scotch, sought a few hours sleep. We carried everything for our journey on our backs. We restricted ourselves to a single "day pack" apiece - no excess baggage allowed. This included our personal water purifiers and sundry medical packs and the odd bottle of whisky.

We had a few mishaps along the way, but thankfully nothing serious. Leeches (envision here the movie African Queen) were often found attached to us when we awoke, fungal rot and other distractions such as insect bites were sufficient irritants as well. However, we had become battle hardened and impervious to everything.

Alas, the scotch finally ran out after a few days, however, and villagers along the river were sometimes forthcoming with their local brew - palm wine. We had eked out the scotch by injecting it into coconuts and drank the contents from the shell, shaken not stirred - referring to it as a Celebes Colada - and had a mid-journey shindig. It was this night that we were treated to a series of shooting stars, one of which was memorable as it was multi-coloured, made a loud noise in the distance and appeared low. It was an excellent spectacle to retire after.

The following morning I awoke with a shock. As I opened my eyes I looked up into a circle of native faces peering down at me. I slowly sat up and looked around to see that my colleagues were receiving the same attention. We were unaware if they meant us harm or not. We moved around and began talking amongst ourselves and heard the rumour that the celestial visitor from the previous night could



have been the harbinger of bad tidings to the local people and that, coincidentally, we had arrived on their land at the same time.

We were invited into the village to attend the local chief at the Long House. We were treated with hospitality and awaited news of what would happen next. We milled around on the wooden patios around the house and, as evening approached, were invited inside. The chief was surrounded by his extended family and village elders sitting on a raised platform at the far end of the house. We sat on our haunches (check) in front. The local people talked amongst themselves. While this was going on, I noticed a guitar propped up against the wall behind the dais, this was observed and I was promptly handed the guitar and told "to play". The poor instrument had 3 or 4 strings and the neck was a bit warped. I looked helplessly at my colleagues, whose collective look said "play, dammit!" So I did. We provided a version of Cocaine Blues which, after a few moments, got everyone banging their feet on the wooden floor and behaving as though such an event was routine and they were all, in fact, dyed in the wool Eric Clapton fans.



We subsequently learned that a white fellow had passed through the region in the 1940's and, for some reason, had left them the guitar. The party went on into the night with copious quantities of the local brew imbibed. In the early hours, as my colleagues were invited to leave and find lodgings in the village, I (as the star performer) was given the honour to retire in the Long House with the chief and his family. All talk of "bad news" had been swept aside.

The next morning was beautiful. I was invited to take a shower at the back of the house before leaving. The "shower" was, in fact, a mountain stream, diverted from the lush hillside on trestles of split bamboo. A finer shower could not exist anywhere. A few giggles were heard behind the concealing undergrowth as I produced my toothbrush and then, fully clothed, I was off to find the others. Their lodgings were further down the hillside and it was amusing to note that the chief's bath water was diverted further down the hillside for secondary use.

The remainder of to manpower and wind power as we strung up our sarongs as makeshift sails.

It was a magical trip and words cannot do justice to the country and it's people. We came down to earth with a bang, however, on reaching "civilisation" as we were bumped off our return flight to Jakarta by local military police brandishing automatics to make room for political VIP's.

In the months following, we drank many a beer back in the TG reminiscing about our experience in the Long House and the merit of playing guitar. It was around this time that I bumped into Lorne Blair (BBC, Ring of Fire fame) who said he was interested in mounting an expedition to locate the Giant Squid that some believe exists in the Weber Deep .....

(Names withheld to protect the innocent)

#### A THANK YOU FROM THE FOCAL POYNTZ TEAM

To Andrew Gowen and Laura Walters who responded to our plea in the last edition and will be helping out with the deliveries of Focal Poyntz . We are very grateful for their kindness.

## ST JAMES THE LESS PARENT AND TODDLER GROUP

Our group continues apace, ever changing and developing, as is the habit of children, but it retains its informal, flexible nature.

We were so pleased to see so many and such a variety of villagers and associates joining in our Carols on the Green evening. There's definitely something special and timeless about celebrating the real meaning of Christmas with friends, refreshments, lights and (thanks to God) no rain! Thanks to all who helped.

We enjoyed the extra space and facilities of the Parish Hall for our Christmas party because everybody comes, including special guests Rev Sue Rushton and, of course, Father Christmas (or was it Barrie Wright)!

Here's looking forward to more happy mornings chatting, playing, drinking coffee, singing, eating biscuits, making, .....

If you are interested in joining in, please speak either to Lisa on 228725 or Chris on 228065 first as there may be a waiting list! Thank you.



### LEMON DRIZZLE CAKE

Preparation time: 15 minutes

Cooking time: 1 hour

Oven temp: 350 °f /180 °c / gas mark 4

#### Cake:

4 ozs (100g)	butter
3½ ozs (90g)	caster sugar
2	eggs
1	lemon - grated rind of
5 ozs (150g)	self raising flour
2 tbsp	lemon curd

#### Topping:

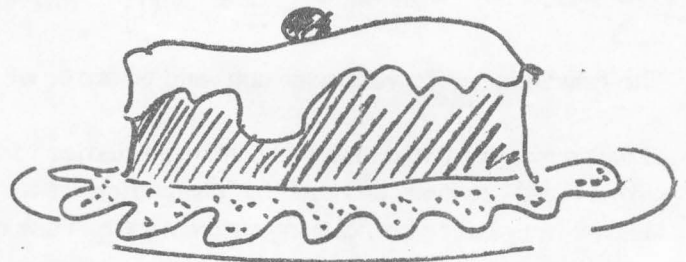
1	lemon - juice of
2 tbsp	granulated sugar

Cream butter and sugar.

Add the eggs, lemon rind, sieved flour and lemon curd.

Pour into a 2lb (1kg) loaf tin and bake for one hour. When cooked, remove from oven but leave in tin.

Mix together the lemon juice and granulated sugar and pour over the hot cake. Leave to cool.



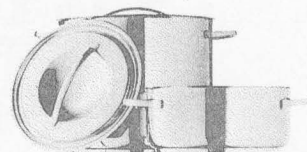
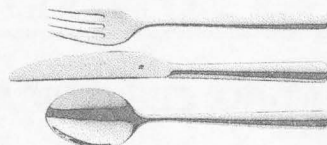
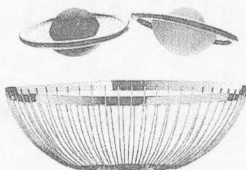
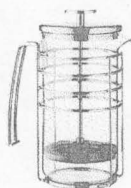
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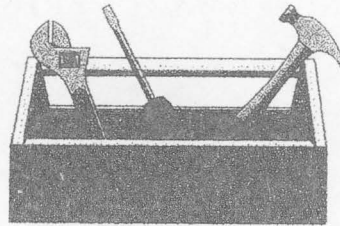
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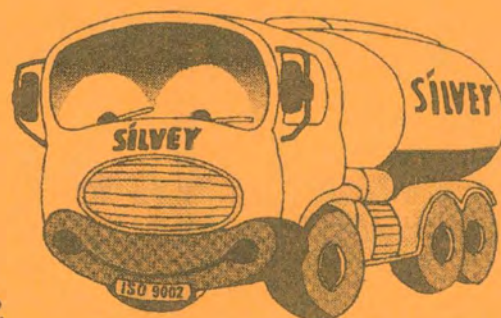
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## Stop Press

Despite the new Iron Acton Parish Hall being largely complete **SILVEY** are pleased to confirm that for every litre of heating oil purchased from them for delivery into the Parish of Iron Acton they will continue to donate 0.2 pence to Hall funds for the provision of new facilities - that's £2.40 on an average delivery of 1200 litres and to date has totalled nearly

**£1100.00!** Thankyou for the support.