



Focal Point



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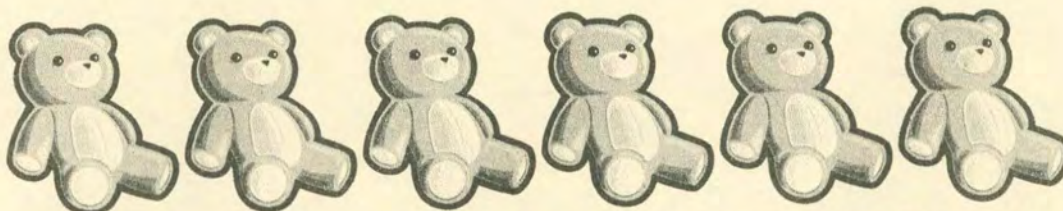
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The Kathryn Hurley Dance Academy

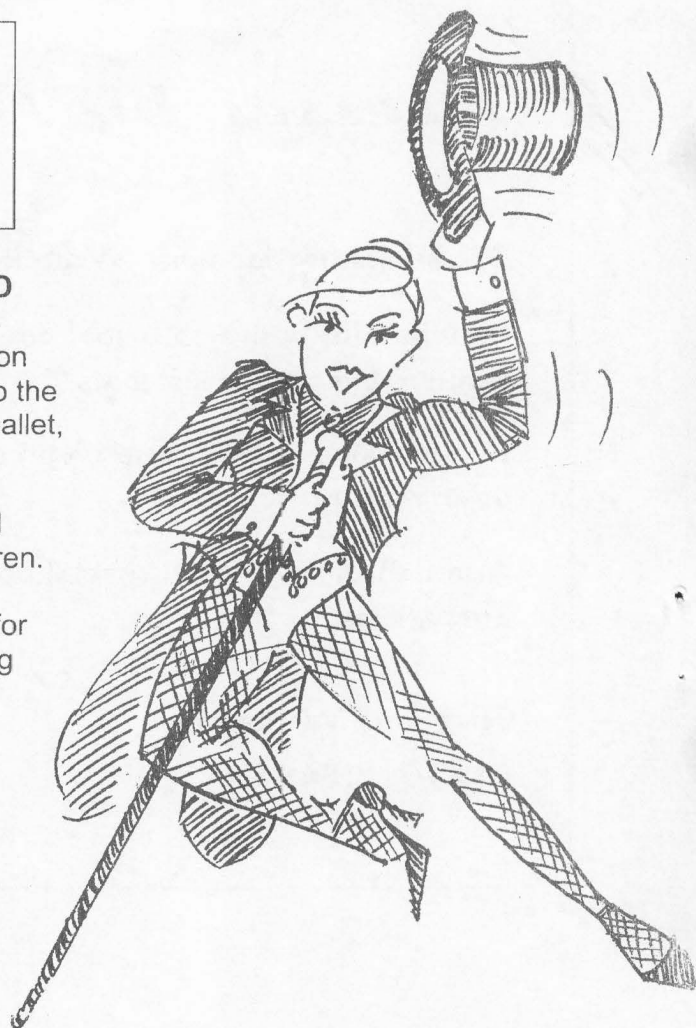
Principal: Miss Kathryn Hurley BA (Hons) AISTD

After a successful start to the Dance Academy in Iron Acton I am pleased to announce the addition of 3 new classes to the September timetable to compliment the existing popular ballet, modern and tap classes.

- 1 **Mini Tap and Modern:** a class to explore tap and modern for younger children.
- 2 **Street Dancing:** a non-examination class for children who enjoy moving to up-tempo music.
- 3 **Adult Jazz**

Enrolling Now!

If you would like further information regarding any classes please call Kathryn on 07968 378995



ALL OCCASIONS

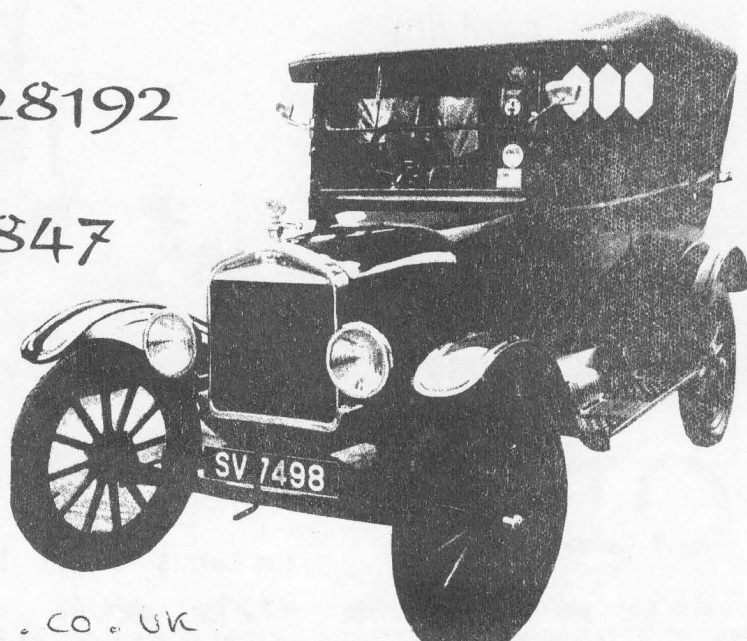
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337 North Road

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WWW.all-occasions-home.co.uk

Winter

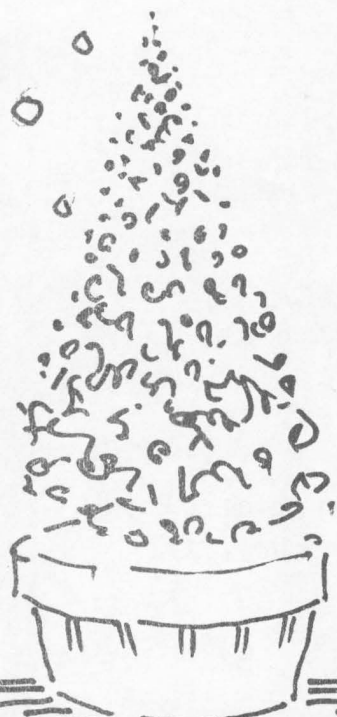
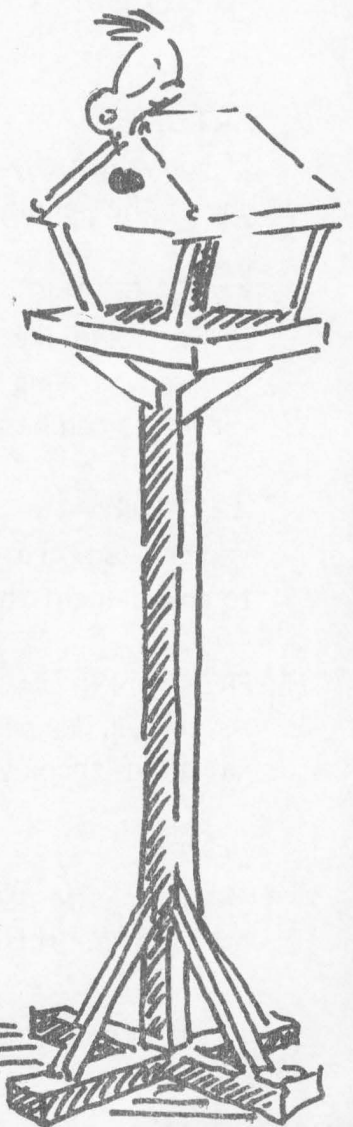
ISSUE

72

Summer 2006 has been memorable for its long sunny days and above average temperature. While most people enjoyed the unusual heat our keen gardeners and allotment holders found the lack of rain a matter for concern as they struggled to keep their plants watered and the grass looking green. Thankfully we were not subject to the stringent rules imposed on many parts of the country and the hard work was rewarded by an excellent collection of exhibits at our very successful Horticultural Show in September.

October has been exceptionally warm and the trees are displaying glorious autumn colours. However the fact that the clocks have been put back signalling the long dark nights reminds us that winter is on its way and it is once again time to publish the last edition of Focal Poyntz for the year. For 24 years Focal Poyntz has provided the people of the parish with news, views and information about local events and activities in spring, summer and winter. Those responsible are a small dedicated band who get together from time to time to plan each edition and cajole our contributors into providing the copy. Putting together the magazine is always an entertaining experience but I am reliably informed that most of the team are now getting a bit long in the tooth and **would really welcome** some help. We know there is a lot of talent out there and would be so pleased to have you on board. It would be very sad if Focal Poyntz were to disappear but this may well be a possibility if we do not find some volunteers soon. Please do get in touch If you can help.

The Focal Poyntz team wishes all of our readers a very happy Christmas and a healthy and prosperous New Year



FOCAL POYNTZ INFORMATION

Your Focal Poyntz Team is:

Lynne Blanchard
228566

Maureen Blake

Hazel Dron
228509

Paula Evans
228419

Stella Taylor
228417

Barrie & Rona Wright
228247

Deliveries are ably carried out by:

Sheila Alsop
Lynne Blanchard
The Bradley Family
Hazel Dron
Elizabeth Edwards
Andrew Gowen
John Griffin
Chris Heal

Roy Hubbard
Ashley Mee
Sue Shepherd
The Smith Family
The Walters Family
Pete Wedgewood
Mike Wheeler
Barrie and Rona Wright

ARTICLES:

If you've got any news or articles that you think we'd like to receive please contact any of the people on the numbers given above. We would love to hear from you!

ADVERTISING:

If you would like to place an advert in future issues please contact Barrie Wright (228247)
- our advertising "whiz" (£20 for a full page and £10 for a half page
- invoices can be provided).

ARTWORK:

We are very grateful to Maureen Blake for some more of her very special drawings to complement the articles.

PRINTING:

As always, our printing has been undertaken by Oldbury Deckers Youth Club and we say a big "thank you" to them.

COVER:

Our thanks to a young lady called Claire who, way back in 2001, was at Iron Acton School but we think this is a lovely cover for the winter edition and have used it again!



WE NEED YOUR OLD SPECTACLES FOR GAMBIAN CLINICS

Richard & Christine Hunter are the Hunter Gatherers team taking part in the 2007 Plymouth Banjul Challenge – setting off just after Christmas.

This involves driving a left hand drive "banger" from the UK to Banjul in Gambia, loosely following the route of the famous Paris Dakar rally. We have acquired an ex Belgian post office van – just like Postman Pat's!

When we arrive in Banjul - a journey of over 3,700 miles, we will give our vehicle away to the organisers who will auction it to raise money for Gambian charities. We will also be giving away a lot of equipment and other goodies that we hope to gather.

We want to make a **SPECTACLE** of ourselves and have set a target of taking 1000 pairs of glasses to give away to clinics in Gambia. Any other medical equipment or First Aid items would also be welcomed.

If you have any spare glasses – prescription or reading, please give them to one of our authorised Glasses Monitors.....

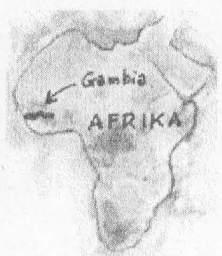
Lamb Inn, Iron Acton or
North Road Post Office

We are also seeking sponsorship and can advertise local companies on the van. Please see our web site <http://www.geocities.com/huntergatherers3> for contact details



THE
**PLYMOUTH
BANJUL**
Challenge 2007

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POPPY CONCERT

On Friday, 3 November a concert of "Music from the War Years" was held at the Shireway Community Centre in Yate in aid of the Poppy Appeal. The music was provided by the Radio Bristol Returners' Orchestra and the soloist was Stella Jennison. The Hall had been decorated with national flags and wartime posters and created an atmosphere of reflective festivity, whilst the audience, some of whom were in costumes of the time, all waved Union Jacks at the more patriotic times.

The programme began with Mars from the Planet Suite by Gustav Holst which very vividly conveyed the menace and horror that war brings. This was followed by music from a variety of composers and then good old singing of such favourites as "It's a long way to Tipperary", "A nightingale sang in Berkeley Square" and many other evocative songs led by Stella with full audience participation. The first half ended with a rousing tribute to the 3 services and a very successful raffle was drawn in the interval.

The second half followed the same pattern with music both thoughtful and stirring, more communal singing and finished with a rousing rendition of Rule Britannia, leaving not a dry eye in the house.

Such events take enormous time and effort to organise. On this occasion this was supplied by David and Rose White who had the idea, formed the programme and saw it through to fruition - both of them playing in the orchestra on top of all this.

A vote of thanks was given by Colonel Tim Merritt OBE which pointed out the necessity of the work undertaken by the British Legion and how very valuable and enjoyable their effort had been.

David McCoy

Post Script: Dave and Rose would like to thank David McCoy who compered the evening and ably sustained the flow of the concert with a touch of humour. Our thanks also to Breen Yallet who was of considerable help to us in the organisation and also not forgetting all those who helped with various jobs on the evening.

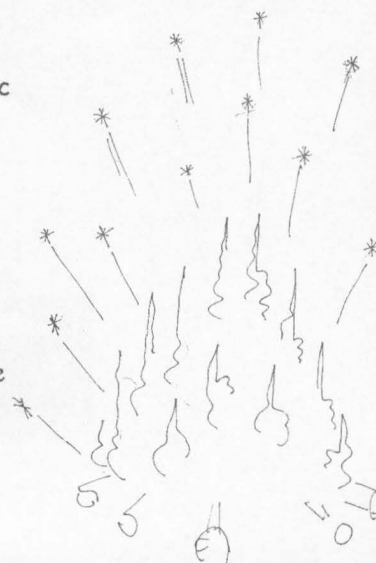
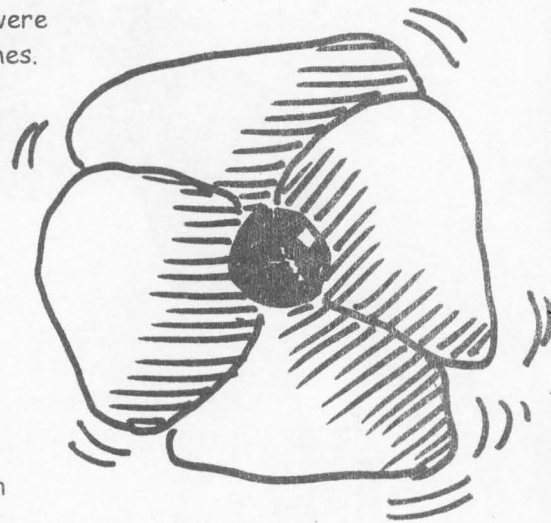
The event raised £800 for the Poppy Appeal.

ACTON AID

By the time Focal Poyntz drops through your letter box the Parish should be reflecting on a successful bonfire night and firework display in the Parish Meadow, which will round off another busy year of events for Acton Aid.

During the year we held our 3rd Summer Proms in the Meadows, which has become the major fundraising event for Acton Aid and supported charities. This year the fantastic sum of £2,500 was raised for St Peter's Hospice. Plans are already being hatched for the 2007 Proms so look out for more details in the spring issue.

Members and wives also had a busy May Day, breaking all records on the burger bar and, as somewhat of a contrast, enjoyed a first class Chairman's Dinner at the Parish Hall thanks to exquisite catering by the Conrad at Jameson's team. In June Tim and Jane Spare let us loose in their lovely garden where we spent a balmy summer evening feasting on seafood and being entertained by Martyn Johnson's band Baktrax. A raffle raised £300 towards Maggi and John Dawson's forthcoming VSO placement in Ghana.



Our on-going programme of talks continued with Dr Danny Rogers entertaining us with his experiences of the Colney Hatch Asylum and some of its residents. The retiring collection was gratefully received by the Palliative Care Unit at Frenchay. This was followed in April by David McCoy's recollection of the Battle of Trafalgar in which he clarified some of the misconceptions surrounding the battle and put the event into a broader political context. SSAFA was David's elected beneficiary for the evening. Future dates will be advertised on fliers posted around the village and generously delivered with your newspapers by Dave and Pat Taylor. If anyone is interested in giving a talk they are most welcome to contact the Secretary.

Any parishioner who wants to find out more about Acton Aid is invited to contact one of the officers or call in and join us at the Lamb at 8.00 pm on the first Thursday of each month. Meetings have the minimum of formality with fundraising events and the distribution of resources discussed and planned over a pint or two,

Finally if readers are aware of any parishioner who would benefit from the support of Acton Aid they are welcome to contact, in confidence, our Chairman, Mike Sutton on 228551, or Secretary, Ashley Mee on 228540.

Ashley Mee - Secretary / 228540

IRON ACTON PRIMARY SCHOOL

The Reception children have just completed their first full week and seem to be settling in well. We hope they will all be very happy at the school.

Over the summer the school was a hive of activity and our wonderful caretaker, Pat Taylor, was kept busy opening the school for an endless stream of workmen. The hall and key stage 2 classroom were treated to a long overdue repair and decoration and another part of the roof has been repaired. However, the most exciting project was our kitchen regeneration, which allows us to cook all our meals on site. The difference in the quality and presentation of the food is amazing.

In my last newsletter I wrote about our mummies' play and dance days with other local small schools. Last week we had another joint project when our Class 2 pupils made tree sculptures out of discarded wood. Over the day piles of old coat hangers, stair spindles and skirting boards were transformed into 4 tall tree sculptures.

The children are busy getting ready for Harvest with a variety of poems, songs and paintings. After this is our ever popular auction. This is a noisy, fun activity - a unique opportunity to donate some produce and buy it back at 3 times the price! It raises a considerable amount of money for charity and the pupil council will soon be deciding which lucky charities will benefit from the money raised. Tracey and Brendan from the Lamb Inn kindly lent us a giant pumpkin and a group of Year 6 pupils have organized a guess the weight of the pumpkin competition. I can't wait to discover the actual weight as I have no idea what it could be.

You may remember a year ago, we bought a lollipop bay tree in Val Pitman's memory. I am delighted to say that the tree has grown well and recently each pupil took home a bay leaf to remind them of the difference Val made to the school through her road crossing and lunch-time duties. As a final tribute we are grateful to Mrs Jo Wright who worked with groups of children to fill 3 planters with flowers and shrubs.

Jill Bendeaux - Headteacher



IRON ACTON CRICKET CLUB

Following on (a term we cricketers like to use) from my article in the last issue of Focal Poyntz, the main highlight of the season was undoubtedly the 10th anniversary celebration held in September.

The cricketing aspect of the celebration was an "Ancients versus Moderns" match; not a reference to age but to how long ago people joined the club. The founders were clearly the "ancients" and the most recent recruits the "moderns". As any IACC team selector will know it is not an easy task to get 11 people (preferably with some aptitude for the game) to devote their Sunday afternoon and evening to a game of cricket so attempting to get 2 full teams could have been said to be optimistic. In the event, with the enthusiasm particularly of those who hadn't played for a while and those who had moved away from the area and had returned especially for the event, it even looked at one stage like we might have enough for a third team. Perhaps this wasn't quite so surprising as I found 71 names who had actually played for the club at some time in these last 10 years.

On the day, 24 current and ex players took to the field and, despite both sides being keen to gain a victory, both captains ensured an enjoyable game with everyone playing a part. The result was a narrow victory for the "moderns" in the last over - though questions have been raised regarding the number of overseas players (from Bradley Stoke) in their team!

The cricket was followed by an excellent BBQ at the Lamb Inn where more current and past players and family members turned up to recall, and possibly embellish, their favourite IACC cricketing memories.

The winter indoor season is now in full swing. We conclusively won our first match against Tortworth and we had an exciting finish against Oldbury when the scores finished level. I look forward to being able to report some more good news in the next issue!



THE ACTONIANS

40th Anniversary Dinner Dance

Next year the Actonians will be celebrating their 40th anniversary and we are inviting any supporters and previous Actonians to join us for our Anniversary Dinner at the Cross Hands Hotel at Old Sodbury on Friday, 8 June 2007 - the cost will be approx. £35.

Please contact Angie Croome on 324204 for further details or to submit your name (a £10 deposit will need to be sent to her at 16 Lancaster Road, Yate, BS37 5SU to secure your place).

Our Next Production

One Flew Over the Cuckoo's Nest is being performed on Thursday, 30 November, Friday, 1 December and Saturday, 2 December. Performances start at 7.30 pm and tickets, priced at £6, are available from 228243 or 0117 985 3631.

"One Flew Over the Cuckoo's Nest" is a powerful drama set in a state mental hospital somewhere in America and tells of the struggle between an insubordinate prison inmate, Randle P McMurphy, who has been sent to the hospital for evaluation and the nurse in charge. His character is full of humour and quips and he has a total disregard for authority and bureaucracy. This reflects back on the inmates who are captivated and energized by him.

McMurphy's conflict with Nurse Ratched, whom he calls "Ratshit", forges a chemistry between them and a struggle for power which culminates in you must come and see the play to find out!!

Rehearsals are well underway with an intensive schedule. The actors are working hard at learning their lines and establishing their characters. The cast includes some unknown actors as well as familiar faces, with 14 men and 4 women taking part.

Our director, Andy Fisher, has asked us to point out that this production contains strong language and is not suitable for children.



Supper Evening with Entertainment

One of our popular Supper Evenings with Entertainment is planned for Friday, 12 and Saturday, 13 January 2007.

A good, hot supper with rich and spicy entertainment thrown in for good measure.

Keep this date in your diary and await further details!

Ann Aplin / 228243

FRIENDS OF NORTH ROAD SCHOOL

The Friends of North Road School would like to say well done and congratulations to Heather Tillotson, Helen Blakeley, Paula Frost and Claire Witts who ran the Bristol Half Marathon on Sunday, 17 September. All of the runners did really well with very respectable times! They were sponsored to raise money for the school so thanks very much to you all.

The main focus for the Friends' fundraising this year will be towards buying a new stage for the main hall. The old one is certainly old, getting a bit rusty and is very difficult to store. We think that as the Friends have recently paid for the hall to be redecorated and for new furniture that a new stage would really finish things off nicely.



The School will be holding its annual Christmas Fair on Friday, 1 December, starting at 2.00 pm.

There will be lots of stalls run by both adults and children and, of course, Father Christmas will be there too. This year there will be some stunning Christmas table decorations for sale, along with many other items. All are welcome to come along and enjoy the afternoon.

If you would like details about the Friends of North Road School or any further information about any of our events please feel free to contact me on 850210 or the school office on 867788.

Julie Robinson - Secretary / 850210

NORTH ROAD POST OFFICE AND STORES

Throughout 2006 further reports about Post Office closures have proliferated, leading to campaigns to stop further closures by the Telegraph, Mail and Western Daily Press.

Within our own parish we have an absolute jewel in North Road. Can we please ask all the inhabitants of Iron Acton to remember that we have our very own post office and stores that needs to be protected at all costs and can we please, please, please use it - especially in the run up to Christmas - to purchase all of our stamps and to send parcels and cards via its mail box.

Opening Hours	Post Office	Stores
Monday	9.00 am to 5.30 pm	6.00 am to 5.30 pm
Tuesday	9.00 am to 5.30 pm	6.00 am to 5.30 pm
Wednesday	9.00 am to 5.30 pm	6.00 am to 6.00 pm
Thursday	9.00 am to 5.30 pm	6.00 am to 5.30 pm
Friday	9.00 am to 5.30 pm	6.00 am to 5.30 pm
Saturday	9.00 am to 12.30 pm	6.00 am to 6.00 pm

The Post Office Counter is closed between 1.00 pm and 2.00 pm each day.

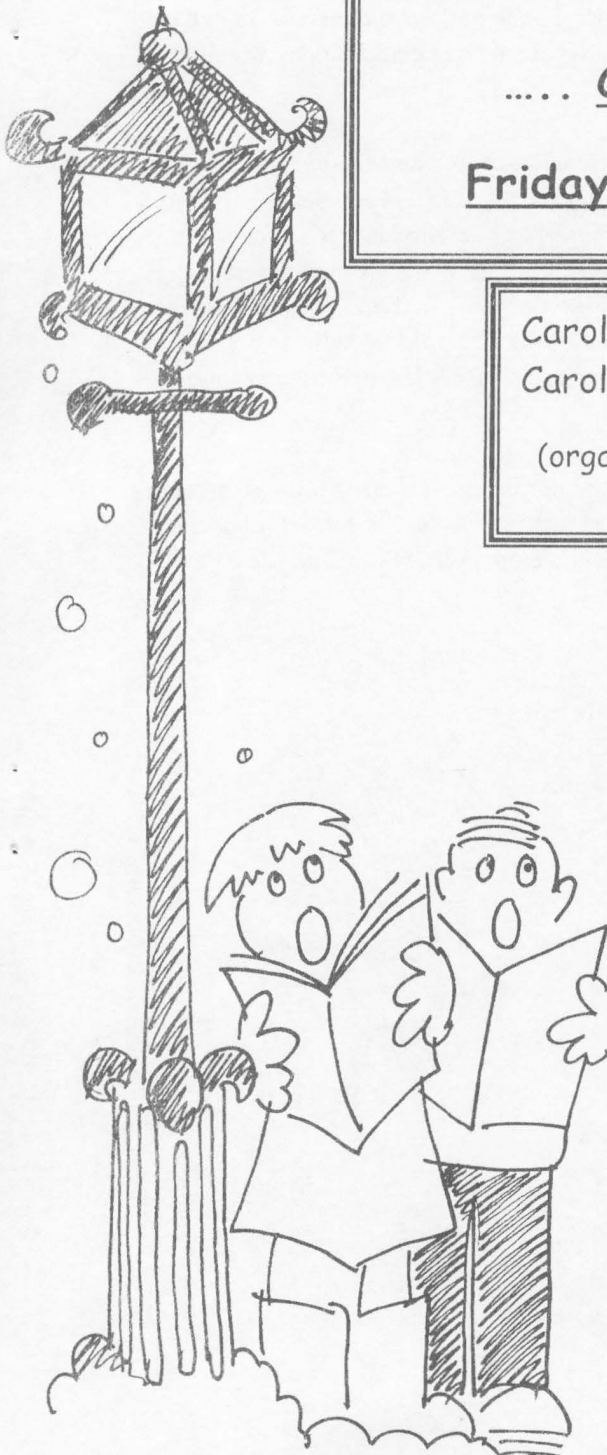
If you're new to Iron Acton and live the Bristol rather than the Yate side and are unsure where to find the PO, head towards Yate, at the roundabout past the Texaco garage turn left, at the first set of traffic lights also turn left - you're now in North Road. The PO is along on your right hand side gently (and suitably) nestled between the Cross Keys and North Road School.

Why not tear out this slip and pin it onto your notice board?

IRON ACTON BOOK GROUP

The Iron Acton Book Group has now enjoyed another year. The group consists of 10 members, at present all women, who meet every 2 months in alternating members' homes. The ethos of the group is reading for pleasure and there is no pressure to attend every meeting or to read the entire book. We enjoy lively discussion where members feel able to express differing views and aim to select a cross section of books including contemporary literature, a classic and biographies. We are always open to new members. Interested in finding out more? Then please ring Jill Bradshaw (228626) or Jane Spare (228257) for further information.

* * * * *



Carols Around the Village
meets
..... Carols on the Green
Friday, 22 December 2006

Carols around the Village: 6 pm Holly Hill
Carols on the Green: 7 pm The Green

(organised by, amongst others, Pete Bellis (228065)
and Alison Lovell (228100))

Carols around the Village is exactly that - meet at Holly Hill at 6.00 pm and join a group of people singing carols at various locations; including Holly Hill, Chilwood Close and the High Street.

This will be run by Iron Acton School's Parents' Forum and more details will be given out via in leaflet in Iron Acton school bags or hand delivered.

The last stop will be Iron Acton Village Green for Carols on the Green is at 7.00 pm - music provided by the White Family Allstars (Dave, Rose, Charlotte, Andy & Pete) and with the usual attractions (including mulled wine and mince pies courtesy of the Friends of Iron Acton School, a blazing brazier to warm your hands and a Christmas tree so you don't have to look at the band too much!!!).

A "GOOD NEWS STORY"

After many attempts asking South Gloucestershire Council and Morrison's to review the routes that their lorries take, especially in the middle of the night, and getting nowhere I thought "I know, I'll ask 'Ellie off the Telly' to have a go so I did and she said "yes". The date was set for Wednesday, 25 October at 8.00 pm!

Much dusting and polishing went on at home, after all I didn't want to look as if I lived in muck did I? I asked my neighbour, Pete Bellis, to pop round and have a word with Ellie, mostly to give her a rational view in his role as a parish councillor rather than my very emotional take on the situation.

Thank heavens Pete was there as what followed well, you couldn't make it up! Knowing that my house is difficult to find I told Ellie to phone me if she couldn't find the place and just before 8.00 pm I got the call. "I don't know where I am" said Ellie, I am down a lane and can see a white house and have gone over a railway line and turned round by a triangle of grass". Mmm, not much to go on, after all that could be anywhere in Iron Acton.

I asked Pete to hang around and keep an eye on the fire whilst I went to look for her and Steve, the cameraman. "I won't be long, have a glass of sherry and I'll see you in a minute". Off I went down Latteridge Road, over the railway line, past the duck pond and thought I could see lights down the lane next to Heal's place and where there's a bit of grass by the road ... anyway I carried on to the A38 but couldn't see anyone who looked as if they didn't know where they were and so I headed back to the bend by Heal's, went up one of the lanes but saw no sight of them. "They have to be here somewhere" I told myself, so I tried the next lane along but I could see that I was just going into someone's driveway so I decided to turn around and head for home.

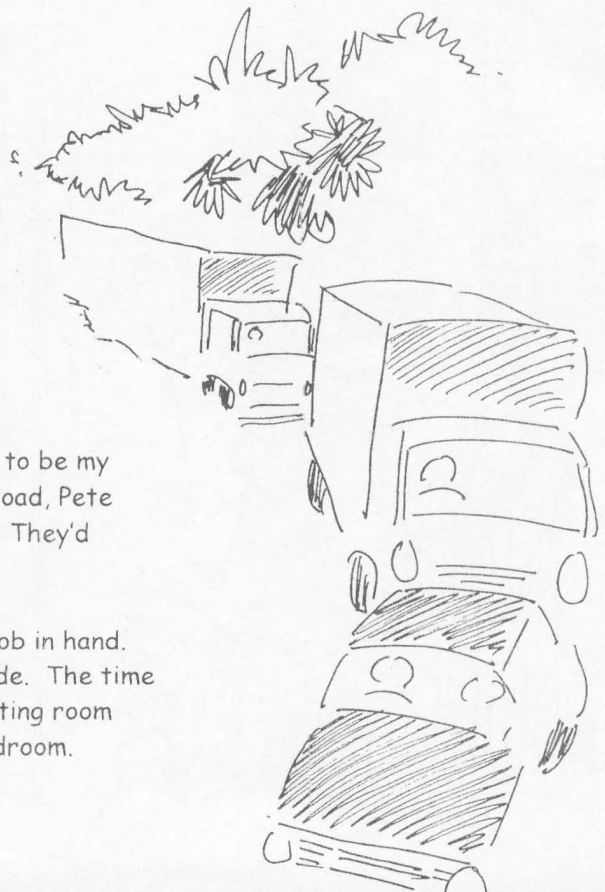
Oh dear! Not wanting to be had up for trespassing, I started turning my car around went onto some grass and that's where I stayed for the next hour! The more I tried to get out the more I got stuck in and as I'd only popped out for a minute I didn't have my mobile and only had sandals on my feet I needed help!

I stepped out of the car and, up to my shins in mud and water, I squelched my way and knocked on a door. Now, I didn't know who was behind that door and they didn't know who I was either, but I definitely knocked on the right door because it was Colin and Denise Smith's home! I told them my sorry story and they pulled out all the stops (and their carpet!) to get me out of the mud. After much pushing and pulling and placing of carpet under the tyres I escaped from the quagmire! I didn't help them much, in fact I'm sure I made things worse, by revving the engine too much and therefore getting myself in deeper!

Denise and Colin - Thank you!

It is now 9.00 pm and I am filthy and flapping. After all this was to be my 15 minutes of fame! I arrived home to find Steve filming in the road, Pete keeping the home fires burning and Ellie had gone to look for me! They'd been outside Jackie and Paul Tucker's when they'd phoned!

Eventually we all ended up in the same place and got on with the job in hand. Pete and I gave Ellie the story and Steve carried on filming outside. The time came then for filming indoors. "Fine", I thought, "at least the sitting room is shining and tidy" but, no, they wanted to film upstairs in my bedroom.



It must've been about 10.30 pm by this time and I had forgotten about the muck and mud all up my legs, anyway it had dried to a crust but, horror of horrors, I was about to be filmed in my bed and I hadn't changed the sheets! I protested greatly but they won and, anyway, I'd had a couple more sherries by this time and I was at that "what the hell" stage. So, I got in with all my clothes on, had to do a lot of tossing and turning, pretend to be asleep and try my very best not to laugh! By this stage I was near to hysteria! When I got out of the bed the sheets were filthy and clods of mud were everywhere so definitely not the sort of image one would like to project!

The whole thing was "wrapped up" (yes, I got to know the lingo) at midnight. What an evening that was - definitely a night to remember. I just hope that all our efforts are worth it and something will be done about the damned lorries.

Having seen myself on the telly, I think my next project **has** to be on Extreme Makeovers!

Sue Johnson

CHRISTMAS SERVICES AT ST JAMES THE LESS

Sunday 10th December

9.00 am Family Communion and Dedication
of new Children's Area in church.

Sunday, 17th December

6.00 pm Christmas Carol Service

Christmas Eve, Sunday, 24th December

5.30 pm Crib Service
11.30 pm Midnight Mass

Christmas Day, Monday, 25th December

8.00 am Holy Communion at St. Peter's, (FC)
9.00 am Family Service - informal and short
- for the whole family



The Angel Gabriel brought good news to Mary, a young virgin of Nazareth in Galilee. "You have been chosen by God to be the Mother of His Son ..." and so the immortal story begins - how God sent Jesus to be our Saviour, to live on earth among us and teach us how much our Father God in Heaven loves us.

At your Parish Church of St James the Less this Christmas time, we shall tell that story again and celebrate its meaning for us today with great joy. Would you like to join us over Christmas and share in the joy?

FRIENDS OF IRON ACTON SCHOOL

I know the summer seems a long time ago but I couldn't not mention the School Summer Fair which was in July. It was a football themed event and unfortunately England had just been knocked out of the World Cup - which was very inconvenient of them! However, despite this, it went on to become a great success as a relaxed warm summer's evening was suddenly filled with noise. Lots of faces full of excitement and anticipation (and not just the children's) could be seen peering into the school field as a police car and fire engine arrived and then a police helicopter landed on their school field too! The most excitement that Iron Acton has seen in a while and thank goodness we didn't need an ambulance to complete the emergency services! Many, many thanks go to parents at the school who were able to organise this special evening.

Did you come to the Barn Dance and Hog Roast in September? A fun and energetic night was had by all. Thanks to everyone who came and supported us, £700 was raised which will go towards a revamp and makeover of Class Three. The classroom hasn't had a makeover for some years so this should make it a more organised and brighter environment for the children to work in.

The children have just finished term 1 and for some little people in Iron Acton this has been their first term at school. As I write this, they are now on their autumn break. They have all donned their wellies and raincoats this term and as well as hunting for conkers in the Largest Conker competition the children have been busy fund-raising themselves by carrying out the yearly sponsored wellie walk. They have also been guessing the weight of the giant pumpkin and, for those of you who have previously seen it in the Lamb, it certainly is a rival to the infamous enormous turnip! How they got it up the school hill is a miracle but thanks go to the Lamb who organised it.

The term ended with a lovely harvest service and auction. This raised £358 - which will go to charities chosen by the children's school council.

No sooner than the last firework is lit then the children will already have moved onto Christmas! This year the Friends' Christmas Fair will be on Saturday, 2 December. Please come along, have a mince pie and meet Father Christmas.



On behalf of all the children and Friends of Iron Acton School I would like to thank you for all your support at our events this year. We wish you all a very happy Christmas and a happy and healthy 2007.

PS I have an apology to make to Thomas Evans as, in my last entry, I mistakenly said his brother Michael was leaving to move onto secondary school when of course I should have said Thomas. Sorry Thomas and I hope you are enjoying your new school.!

Tracey Lynton-Jenkins - Secretary

NEXT EDITION OF FOCAL POYNTZ

We're still working on the schedule for 2007, but our current aim is to have the spring edition of our magazine distributed to all houses in the parish by the weekend of 24/25 March 2007. A full schedule will wing its way to our contributors and distributors by the end of January.

'Look deep into nature,
and then you will
understand everything
better.'

Albert Einstein



Nature Notes

by Joanna Wright



A country spotters diary

Dates to remember

Winter Solstice, the shortest day is on 22nd December 2006

Plough Monday is on 8th January 2007. This festival celebrates the beginning of the agricultural year

National nestbox week starts on 14th February 2007

Vernal equinox is on 21st March 2007. On this day the length of day and night are equal

British Summertime begins on 25th March 2007

Events

Decorate a tree on tree Dressing Day, held the weekend of 1st-3rd December 2006. See Common Ground website for more information

See the Ramblers' Association website for information on the Festival of winter Walks Dec/Jan 2006/7

If you want to protect your apple trees try 'Wassailing' an old English custom which takes place on Old Twelfth Night-17th January 2007

National honey week takes place 13th-19th February 2007

December

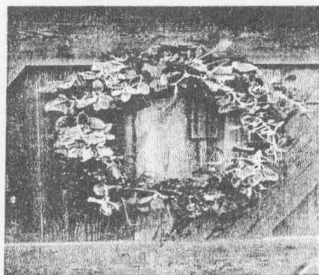
Listen out for foxes eerie screams and yelps as they start to form pairs.

In wetlands you may spot a Bewick's swan or kingfisher as it moves down river to an estuary.

Severe Winter weather in Europe may bring wax wings (look for their pink crests) to our shores to feed on berries.

If the winter is mild, bats may briefly interrupt dormancy to take a meal.

Holly and mistletoe are among the most noticeable plants of this season, although look out for the humble mature ivy berry.



March

The animal kingdom is waking up - look out for animals emerging from hibernation, hungry and dazed. The first insects will be hatching and some butterflies and bees will be seen on warm days. The queen bumble bee will be looking for a nesting place



WILDLIFE

January

Among wildfowl overwintering here in England, look for redshanks, redwings, blacktailed godwits and field fares as well as geese, ducks and swans.

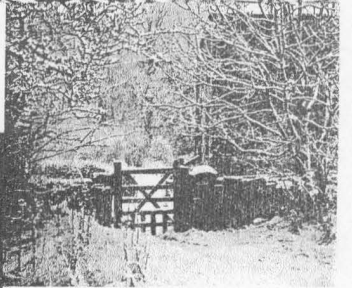
Robins, wrens, rooks and hedge sparrows are starting to form pairs.

In mild years, newts can be seen heading for their breeding sites, while frogs spawn may be found in ponds. The occasional small tortoiseshell butterfly may emerge.

Winter aconite and snowdrop are the first flowers to appear.

in the undergrowth. This is the time to see boxing hares, mating ducks, the arrival of the willow warbler and mute swans starting to build nests.

Drifts of daffodils, wood anemone, celandine and primrose carpet the countryside

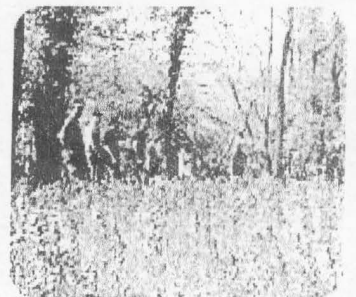


February

Herons busy themselves with mating rituals in the treetops.

Blue tits look for places to nest. If you are fortunate, you may witness the courtship of the great crested grebe, or you may hear a great spotted woodpecker drilling into a tree trunk.

Hazel catkins and pussy willows appear in profusion.



LAST POSTING DATES FOR CHRISTMAS 2006



Great Britain Mail

Standard parcels and mail order return parcels	Wednesday,	13 December
Second class mail	Saturday,	16 December
First class mail	Tuesday,	19 December
Special delivery	Thursday,	21 December
Special delivery with Saturday guarantee	Friday,	22 December

International Air Mail

South and Central America, Caribbean, Africa, Middle East, Asia, Far East (except Japan), New Zealand and Australia.	Friday,	8 December
USA, Canada, Japan, Eastern Europe.	Monday,	11 December
Western Europe	Wednesday,	13 December

International Surface Mail

All international surface mail to any part of the world, should have been posted in October! You're too late!

NORTH ROAD COMMUNITY PRIMARY SCHOOL

Just a few weeks into term and it's already full steam ahead with lots going on. All of our 100 children had benefited from the summer break, recharged their batteries and returned to school bright eyed and bushy tailed. Quite a number had been away or had participated in the many local summer schools or activity days, whilst others had enjoyed using the time for free play or, dare I say it, for relaxation. I managed a week away in Menorca. Whether or not my son will ever be able to relive his childhood holiday in later life seems debatable as I read an article recently saying that Mediterranean holidays could be a thing of the past in 30 years time with global warming making the temperatures too hot to handle.

Well, there is much to report. We were very proud to win first prize in the Yate Town Council Annual Gardening Competition. A number of our children were recently presented with a certificate and £50 worth of B&Q vouchers by the Mayor of Yate, Councillor Margaret Marshall. Virtually all the tilling, planting and maintaining is done by the children too.

Our Year 5 children have already been away on camp for 2 days, in the second week of term, to Abergavenny. They had a fabulous time and were full of exciting tales of their experiences and I know such a trip works wonders to help develop personal confidence, self esteem and social skills, as well as promoting a positive attitude to challenge and adventure. This week we have our presentation evening for parents of our Year 6 children in preparation for their week's residential visit in June to Barton Hall in Torquay - a PGL adventure and study centre.

The Friends of the School have been very active, organising our first car boot sale which was held on the playground last Sunday morning and raised almost £200 for school funds. We were blessed with fine weather and we had lots of people selling, with a whole array of absolute bargains to be had! My son has a few more playstation games now (although I'm not exactly sure if that's a good thing or not) after selling quite a few of his old (but new) football boots. The Friends also kindly laid on teas, coffees and breakfast. Please look out for the date of our next one - probably in the spring term. The Friends have also begun to plan and prepare for our Christmas Fayre, which will be held on Friday 1 December with a 2 pm start, and the Christmas Disco promises to be another fun event for the children. Four of our parents ran the Bristol Half-Marathon recently, they didn't have me to slow them down this year, and we are very grateful to them for raising money for school funds through their sponsorship.



It is very encouraging to see the number of children attending football and netball clubs. We will be playing our first friendly football match against St Mary's School next week and then Hambrook School provide the opposition for our first round match of the Small Schools Football Tournament. Le Club Francais continue with their lunchtime club (which is a real boost for the children attending as French is now the Modern Foreign Language we are teaching throughout the school). The Mad Science Club will be starting again in October. All of our Class 3 children have been learning to play the recorder and we still have the specialist brass, violin and harmonica tuition. A number of our brass players played in the concert at Iron Acton on 19 October. We aim to provide guitar tuition soon - following a number of requests from the children.

Thirty of our children are taking part in a natural wood sculpture workshop all day on Monday, following a visit from a group of the children to Dyrham Park, to explore a range of designs using natural wood materials.

As part of our Healthy Schools Project we are holding a bike breakfast and a group of our Year 6 children have been awarded their road safety awards, following their bikeability training. We are having new water fountains installed in school this week and all the children have a water bottle each in school as we want the children to keep well hydrated throughout the day. We have dedicated one week in October to encourage the children to walk to school as part of National Walk to School Month.

Finally, our Harvest Festival Service is just around the corner and I will be visiting Sztum, near Gdansk in Poland, with 2 colleagues in mid October as part of our Comenius project. On the itinerary will be visits to our host's school and to a Second World War concentration camp - which should both be very insightful and memorable experiences.

Mark Handley - Headteacher

HORTICULTURAL SHOW

Well, yet again it seemed that the whole parish pulled out the stops to support the Horticultural Show this year.

I and my fellow committee members thought that the long, dry summer would mean that the green fingered gardeners wouldn't be able to grow very much and that there wouldn't be too much on display. However, to our great surprise and delight, the fruit and vegetable section was very well entered with some marvellous specimens on display.



The Homecraft Section was somewhat down on last year and we were a little troubled to see that there was only one entry in the gentleman's class for a Victoria Sponge. So, come on chaps, don't be shy as from what we hear around the patch there are some very good sponge cooks amongst you!

The Children's and Photography Sections were very well entered and an absolute delight to see. There were some fabulous junk models and paintings and the judges had a very difficult time trying to pick the winners.

The Horticultural Show Committee will be meeting shortly to discuss next year's classes so if you have any suggestions they will be gratefully received. Additionally, any willing pairs of hands to help out on the day would be most welcome.

Finally I would like to say a big thank you to everyone who participated in any way.

Paula Evans



ST JAMES PARENT AND TODDLER GROUP

It was with sadness that we said goodbye to Lisa Hatherell and Caroline Haselhan and their children at the end of the summer and we would all like to thank them for handing over such a thriving toddler group to us.

The group is an important part of many new parents' lives and lots of close friendships are made - which inevitably lead to important evening "discussions" at the local public house!

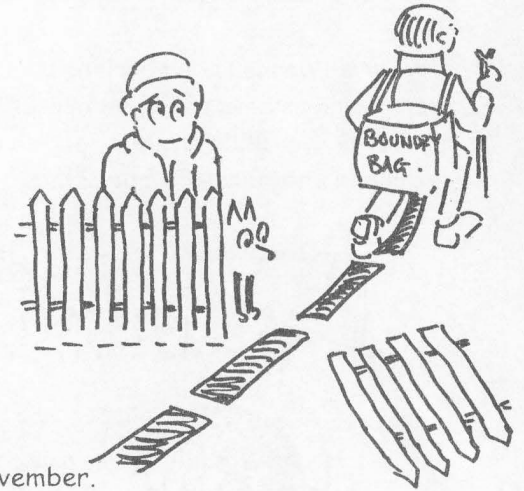
We have had lots of new members join over the summer months and would welcome them all. Our Friday morning meetings are a very lively affair - though the mums still manage to have a coffee and a chat over all the noise!

On 17 November, Children in Need Day, we opened our doors and held a fundraising coffee morning. We hope all those who dropped in for a coffee also enjoyed the children's entertainment (and their fancy dress costumes).

If you are interested in joining our friendly group please do not hesitate to call either me (Amanda Scott) on 228301 or Mel on 228701. We meet at 10.00 am on Fridays and tend to begin with a craft activity for the children (though the parents get quite competitive!!), followed by drinks and fruit or biscuits before we finish at 11.30 am with a song or two!

Over the past 2 years members of South Gloucestershire Council, both officers and councillors, have been dealing with the Boundary Committee for England to review the boundaries for the 35 Wards in South Gloucestershire.

This has become necessary because of the rise in population - particularly for the Emersons Green area - that has put the average ward size out of balance. In theory, all 70 councillors should look after the same number of electors and so, every few years, changes have to be made to keep the balance correct. This time around some fairly drastic changes will occur and will take effect from 1 January 2007 ready for the elections in May 2007. The final details will not be confirmed until the end of November.



At the present time the Ladden Brook Ward consists of the 3 parishes of Iron Acton, Rangeworthy and Wickwar in their entirety.

Under the proposed scheme the Village Ward (West Ward) of Iron Acton will move into the Frampton Cotterell Ward. The East Ward would still remain within the Ladden Brook Ward.

This means that electors in Wotton Road as far as the Rangeworthy boundary will be voting for Frampton Cotterell councillors. I have protested vigorously to the Boundary Committee about this as I firmly believe it is nonsensical and have therefore tried to get all Wotton Road electors, together with those on the north side of the bypass, transferred to the East Ward. This is a total of 68 electors and would still leave both wards with acceptable figures. The boundary would then be the bypass, apart from Latteridge Road and Latteridge, joining Frampton Cotterell.

In order to balance this loss Ladden Brook is to have Tytherington added to Rangeworthy, Wickwar and Iron Acton East.

If the Committee approves their draft report without any changes it will mean that the Parish Council may have to deal with all 3 councillors (Frampton Cotterell has 2 and Ladden Brook has 1) depending on which part of the Parish they are discussing. It is all added work - especially for the Parish Clerk.

I await their final report with some hope and considerable trepidation.

Howard Gawler - South Gloucestershire Councillor for Ladden Brook Ward

Eye halve a spelling chequer

For lovers of Microsoft everywhere



Eye halve a spelling chequer
It came with my pea sea
It plainly marques four my revue
Miss steaks eye kin knot sea.

Eye have run this poem threw it
I am shore your pleased two no
Its letter perfect in it's weigh
My chequer tolled me sew.

- Sauce unknown

IRON ACTON PARISH COUNCIL

The Parish Council is embarking on a period of consultation with the children in the village to ascertain their requirements for some new play equipment in the Parish Meadow. Some enterprising children have already canvassed a group of parish councillors who happened to be having a drink outside the Lamb one evening in the summer. The school's Youth Council will also have some input into the process.



A goal post for the older children has been erected in the Parish Meadow. The Parish Council would like to thank Chris Heal for his involvement in this. A basketball hoop has already been purchased and will be erected as soon as is practicable.

It is the intention of the Parish Council to carry out some improvements to the tennis courts. Those within the parish who use the tennis courts will already be aware of the need for new nets and posts.

The vacancy for a parish councillor has now been filled by Howard Gawler. Howard is a very welcome member to the council as he already makes a huge input to the parish in his role as South Gloucestershire Councillor.

At our request, South Gloucestershire Council placed flashing speed limit signs in North Road and Wotton Road. The resulting statistics have proven how effective those signs are in reducing speeds.

The Parish Council hopes that it will be able to work closely with Iron Acton C of E Primary School in supporting them with their traffic plan which they intend to put before South Gloucestershire Council. Part of their plan will involve securing a safe route for children between the village of Iron Acton and Brimsham Green School.

Rachel Weldrake - Clerk / 228674

USED CHRISTMAS CARDS

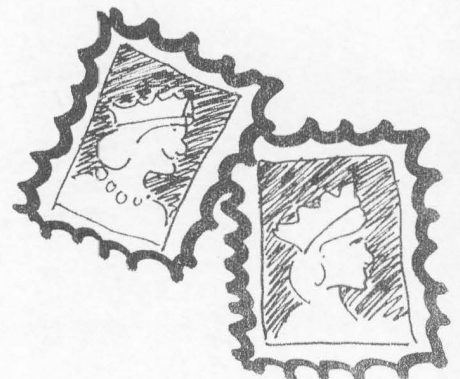
During the month of January both Tesco and W H Smith will be collecting used Christmas cards on behalf of the Woodland Trust (last year they were large, green, cardboard containers - both Yate and Thornbury stores had them).

Since 2001 the Trust has recycled the staggering number of 294 million, 396 thousand and 418 cards ... placed end to end these would go from London to New York 10 times over!

USED STAMPS

The annual reminder that if anyone wants to give used postage stamps to Lynne Blanchard (Rose Cottage, Latteridge Road, Iron Acton, 228566) she is happy to forward them to Oxfam or you can alternatively take them to either of this organisation's shops in Yate or Thornbury.

Can you just remember that you need to cut around the stamps leaving at least half an inch of envelope around the edge of the stamp.



IRON ACTON WI

We "finish off" our year with our Birthday Party in November - when we descend upon the Codrington Arms in North Road and then we have our AGM in December - which is always accompanied by warming mulled wine and Christmassy type edibles and so ends another year!

As, for the first time in many years, I've actually managed to get the programme for next year finished before the winter edition of Focal Poyntz hits your door mat, I thought I would take this opportunity to look forward and ask if there are any intrepid ladies out there who are looking to join a friendly bunch of ladies who meet just once a month for meetings but, because we are linked into both county and national federations, gives the opportunity to join in many, many extra events - as little or as often as you want.

On a local/village level we try to book a very diverse group of speakers to allow everyone at least some meetings that they positively look forward to. Next year we have speakers talking to us about:

- * The Hawk and Owl Trust
- * A Chinese cookery demonstration.
- * The history of teddy bears
- * Slimbridge Soaps (and an opportunity to buy just in time for Christmas)
- * History and superstition in Thomas Hardy
- * Preparing for Christmas - a chance to make wired bows, ribbon roses, a hanging ivy wreath and parcel tags.

We then move up to county level and the joy is that Avon Federation can organise a whole host of events that isn't possible for individual WIs. Each month a walk to a different part of the county is advertised and trips further afield (in 2006 to the US to see the spectacular autumn sights in New England and in 2007 it's back to Europe). For those with a competitive edge, quizzes, darts and skittles competitions are there for the taking and a whole host of crafty events - from cookery through to quilling or something called a "taster day" where you can join in with 4 different craft activities to see if you want to progress to a more proficient level in any of them. Opportunities to try something even more adventurous have also been offered with wind surfing at Burnham, abseiling, gliding and hot air ballooning plus the more sedate croquet or golf!

At national level, which is where our involvement with national events and topics comes in (we can be political but not party political), we have often been encouraged to lobby our local MP or government. Throughout the history of the WI we have been successful in numerous campaigns and the latest has been to try to improve the amount of money per pint paid to the dairy farmer - rather than to the dairy processor or supermarket - we'll have to wait and see how successful we are.

So, are you feeling intrepid? Looking for that New Year resolution that won't be too arduous or onerous? the WI's waiting for you We meet on the second Monday of each month, at 7.30 pm in the Parish Hall ... just pop along and try us out for several months if you want Or ring for further details if you prefer either way, there's a crazy bunch of ladies just waiting for some new recruits!

We wish you all a very happy Christmas and a healthy and happy New Year.

Lynne Blanchard - President / 228566



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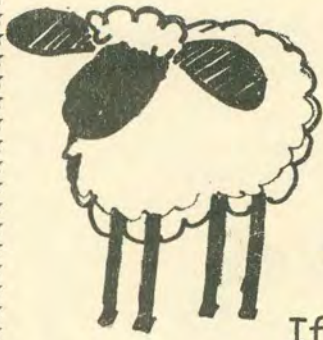
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