

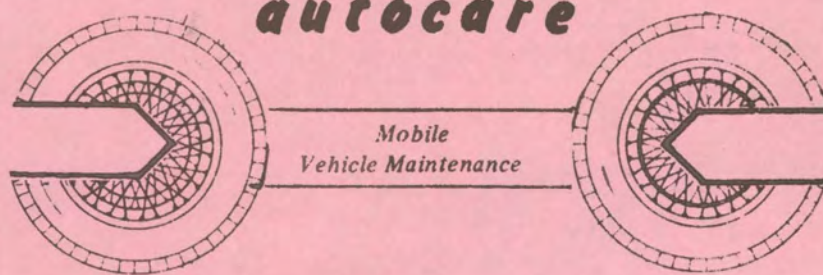
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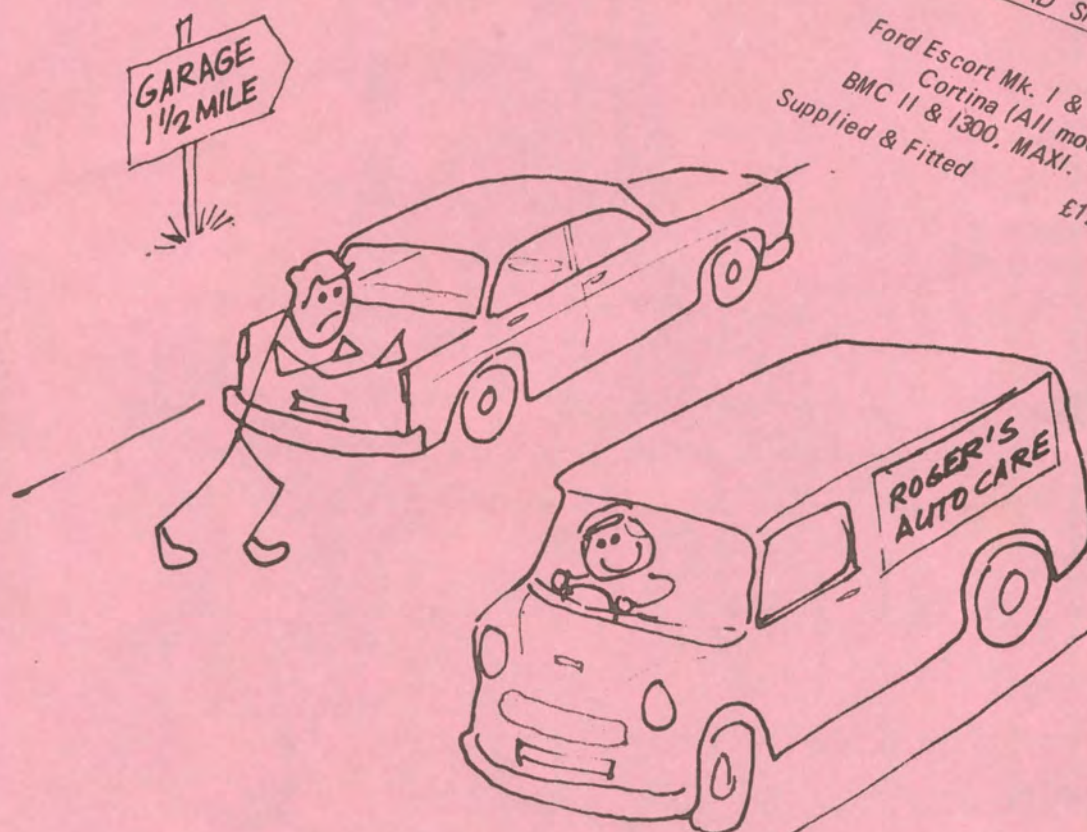
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# NO. 13

# CHRISTMAS '86

EDITORIAL

Here we are at the end of our fourth year of Focus, and still keeping our heads above water, thanks to our advertisers and the many people who have contributed to our funds.

We usually manage to thank our donors personally, but would like to take this opportunity to thank "appreciative North roader" who popped a very generous donation through the letter-box ---- also the anonymous contributor of a poem (printed in this issue) which arrived the same way.

Any contributions to our magazine are always welcome, whether cash, prose or verse. If you can write a page or two on any subject --- holidays, your job, hobbies, amusing experiences, or anything else you feel would be of interest (no politics please!) don't be shy, you needn't even put your name to it if you prefer to hide your light under a bushel. ( Hands up all those who remember what a bushel is.)

As we write Christmas looms ever nearer, so may we wish you all a very happy one and all you wish yourselves in the New Year.

\*\*\*\*\*

We were saddened by the recent sudden death of Pip Voss, a member of the Focus team from the beginning. We shall miss him greatly both as a colleague and a friend.

\*\*\*\*\*

Betty Cook      Charles Wilkins      Jo Voss      John Percy  
Neksdore      Hillside      Dean Lodge Primrose Cottage  
East

\*\*\*\*\*

Thanks again to Mrs. P. Ashmead for her help with typing.



# ACTON AID

An Organisation to aid the Parish of Iron Acton and its People

It is with very great regret that we have to record the passing of two of our stalwart supporters over many years. Rodney Smith who, without much publicity, organised our raffle and draw; and Pip Voss, our secretary, a great personality who provided us with many pithy comments. We shall miss them both very much.

On the 6th November we had an open evening talk by John Naish on 'Sea Marks'. It is quite an accomplishment to have a world expert on a nautical subject in our village.

We would like to give advance warning of three functions:-

Saturday 20th December, Christmas Social Party  
Sunday 21st December, Acton Aid Childrens Party  
Friday 20th February 1987, Acton Aid Annual Dinner at  
Chipping Sodbury Town Hall.  
The new organiser of the Weekly Draw is Brian Burgess.

Paul Townsend.

\* \* \* \* \*

## BEST KEPT VILLAGE COMPETITION

### Cup Winners' Shield

Well done, Iron Acton! This was a great effort by a lot of people, who by their individual example spurred the rest of us on. To see people quite voluntarily picking up rubbish left lying around the streets, and the efforts made by the organisations through one or two dedicated individuals is to realise the real personal response which this competition has called forth.

Normally I would not mention any particular person, save as a prize winner, but I cannot help thinking that the great change in the appearance of the Rose and Crown, and the great care taken as always by our DIY builders to keep things tidy even around their necessary skips in the road, made a good first impression on the judges so that the overall effect of the village was pleasant to the eye. Those were of course individual efforts. Also very worthy of mention, were the childrens' posters. The standard was certainly the highest ever and were deservedly displayed around the village, obviously to great effect.

The Shield is on display in the Post Office window, and we are all very grateful to Christine Colquhoun for allowing this display in what is the ideal position for this trophy to be seen by the maximum number of people.

Still no street cleaner has been found.  
Is there no-one there?

Howard Aplin.

\* \* \* \* \*

Suspended judgement.

A READER tells me that some years ago the vicar of her local church at Cheltenham announced during service: "The preachers for the next four Sundays will be found hanging in the porch."

## A VERSE FOR THOSE OVER THIRTY

Remember when HIPPIE meant big in the hips,  
and a TRIP involved travel in cars, planes or ships?  
When POT was a vessel for cooking in  
and HOOKED is what grandmother's rugs might have been?  
When FIX was a verb meaning mend or repair?  
And BE IN meant simply existing somewhere?  
When NEAT meant well-organised, tidy and clean  
and GRASS was a ground cover, usually green?  
When light not people were TURNED ON and off  
and the PILL was intended to help cure a cough?  
When GROOVY meant furrowed, with channels and hollows  
and BIRDS were winged creatures, like robins and swallows?  
When FUZZ was a substance, all fluffy like lint  
and BREAD came from bakeries, not from the Mint?  
When a Roll was a bun and a Rock was a stone  
and a HANG-UP was something you did to telephone?  
When CHICKEN meant poultry, and BAG was a sack  
and JUNK was just cast-offs and old brick-a-brac?  
When CAT was feline, a kitten grown up  
and TEA was a liquid you drank from a cup?  
When SWINGER was someone who swung-on a swing  
and PAD was a sort of cushiony thing?  
When WAY-OUT meant distant and far far away  
and a man couldn't sue for calling him "GAY"?  
Words once so sensible, sober and serious  
and making the scene, man, like psychodelerious.  
It's groovy, dad, groovy - but English it's not,  
Methinks that the language is going to pot.

\* \* \* \* \*

### Guides

Numbers have now dropped drastically. We would be happy to welcome any girl between the ages of 10 and 14 who is interested in coming along.

We have a varied programme, this term including decorating candles, making popcorn, a night hike and a challenge evening.

We meet in the village hall on Tuesday evenings during term time between 7.30 and 9 p.m.

\* \* \* \* \*

### Youth Club

The Youth Club continues to flourish. The numbers remaining steady at about 30 members per week.

Among recent activities include: an evening beach barbeque at Weston-Super-Mare, a trip to Alton Towers (which was greatly enjoyed) and a Halloween Disco.

At the present time we are in search of a new Youth Leader to run the club.

\* \* \* \* \*



IRON ACTON W.I.

Since the last edition of 'Focus' appeared hot off the press the W.I. have gone well and truly down the river - well, the Kennet and Avon Canal to be precise. In July we travelled by coach to Bradford-on-Avon, had an enjoyable 2 hour meander along the canal and then returned to a riverside hostelry to put an end to the dehydration from which we, surprisingly, appeared to be suffering.

August saw us taking a well earned rest. In September we had a guided tour around Oldbury Power Station. Everyone who participated found it extremely interesting, even if your's truly felt an irresistible urge to have a meddle with some of the banks of dials and buttons that we kept passing, needless to say I refrained, stopped only by thoughts of the headlines in the Gazette should a W.I. secretary be arrested.

November will see us wending our way to The Windbound for our annual Birthday Party. You will be pleased to hear that we've organised a coach - so you won't have to negotiate 30 wayward women, all in cars, trying to find their way out of the High Street!

In December we hold our Annual General Meeting. The 'medicine' is trying to find officers for the following year; the 'sugar' is the mince pie and glass of sherry we have once the hard work is over.

INVITATION No. 1.

On Sunday 14th December at 3.00 p.m. a Carol Service will be held in the Church. W.I. members and their families will be gathering from the 7 Institutes in our group and everyone else will be welcome as well.

INVITATION No. 2.

We have organised a coach for the 20th January to go to the pantomime at the Theatre Royal, Bath starring Danny La Rue (I think it's Mother Goose but you could be confused if you see it as something else in the papers - therefore follow the press). The seats are in the first 4 rows of the Grand Circle. Tickets will be somewhere between £5.50 and £6.00 (inclusive of theatre ticket and coach fare) - quite good value we thought. W.I. members have first chance at the tickets but we are certain to have some left over - if you're interested just let me know.

Lynne Blanchard - Secretary

\* \* \* \* \*

Repeat performance

I AM distressed to learn from the village newsletter of Kingston Bagpuize in Oxfordshire that the Christmas dinner eaten by members of the Drama Club is "to be brought up at the next committee meeting."

\* \* \* \* \*

## Village Hall

The Horticultural Show went smoothly on 6th September thanks to organisers, judges, supporters and all. There were more entries than in 1985 but income from auction and raffle was down. Profit on the day was £165 compared with £210 last year. There is still a need to generate more interest and involvement next year and the primary objective must be in this direction. The schedules were revised this year and already suggestions have been received for further changes and improvements. These have been noted and will be incorporated where possible next time. Prize money has been held at a level which can now be regarded as nominal or derisory depending on ones viewpoint and can no longer be claimed as an incentive to entry. There might be a case for dispensing with prize money except in the childrens sections where it could be increased to more realistic present day values.

24 Stacking chairs, 8 stacking tables and 2 gas heaters have been purchased during the last quarter. Towel dispensers have been ordered for the lavatories and should be fixed early in November. In the kitchen 100 new cups and saucers have been bought and a new first aid box provided.

The hall continues to be used and is heavily booked for a wide range of activities. The pantomime will provide a major attraction in the run up to Christmas and the committee has decided therefore to defer organisation of any entertainment until early 1987.

Hire charges for 1987 are under review and decisions on change (if any) will be taken soon. Information will be available from Valerie Evans the Booking Secretary.

John Smailey - Chairman.

P.S. We have just received a £50 grant from the Avon Rural Initiatives Fund towards the cost of equipment. This fund is part of the Avon Community Council, which also runs the Best Kept Village Hall Competition which we entered for the first time this year.

\* \* \* \* \*

### Church Notice:

The Vicar is pleased to confirm that an additional font is to be installed at the east end of the Church, so that babies will, in future, be able to be Baptised at both ends.

\* \* \* \* \*

The feminist lobby which, as I reported yesterday, has taken against university freshmen and instead prefers "freshpeople" seems to be spreading its wings. A reader reports from Hlythe that an ottoman for sale in a furniture shop window there is described as an "otto-person."

\* \* \* \* \*

## COOKERY CORNER

If you find the usual fruit mixture too rich, but still want a special cake for Christmas, this MARSALA CAKE might fill the bill.

8 oz. castor sugar	8 oz. butter	Pinch of salt
10 oz. self-raising flour	4 eggs lightly beaten	
4 oz. ground almonds	6 tablespoons Marsala	

Cream together the butter and sugar until really light and fluffy. Beat in the eggs a little at a time, adding a little of the flour if the mixture begins to separate. Gently fold in the sieved flour, salt, almonds and Marsala. Turn into a greased and lined tin and bake at 325F, 170C or Gas 3 for 45 minutes then turn off the oven, cover the cake with foil and leave in the oven for a further 45 minutes.

When cool turn out the cake and prick over with a fine skewer then sprinkle with a few more spoons of Marsala. (If you have no Marsala try it with sweet sherry, and change the name of the cake).

This cake can be made up to two weeks before Christmas (and improves greatly!) if you keep it in a tin and remember to sprinkle on a little more Marsala every two or three days. Though rich tasting it is easily digestible and is usually popular with the older members of the family.

The above quantities will fill an 8 in. square tin, and if halved, a 1 lb loaf tin.

\* \* \* \* \*

## GARDENERS PATCH

Well, another disappointing summer has come and gone, and who knows what's in store this winter? Hopefully not as cold as last year! In spite of the poor weather vegetables grew well, though somewhat late due to the long cold spring. Entries in the Horticultural Show were higher and the quality was very good.

With the lovely sunny September bedding plants continued to flower and no-one seemed to want to take them out, so that planting of wall-flowers and bulbs has been delayed. Now that the weather has changed we shall all be trying to catch up on that little job! Autumn colour has been wonderful, and at the time of writing it looks as if the most pressing task for the next week or so will be leaf-sweeping. Never mind, if the leaves are stacked in a corner they rot down into very useful compost.

Seed catalogues will soon be rolling in and many happy hours will be spent poring over them when the weather is too bad to be outdoors. Be adventurous this year and try a few new varieties - if you stick to the same old kind every time you could be missing something good! I can thoroughly recommend Sugar Snap peas, and Grenadier are the best flavoured tomatoes I have ever tasted, though they really need a cold greenhouse. Strangely, I have seldom seen them recommended by any of the gardening magazines. Whatever you choose, the Focus team wish you the best gardening year you have ever had.

\* \* \* \* \*

A report in the THORNBURY GAZETTE about a local hospital's campaign to persuade former patients to return N.H.S. crutches states that "there is not yet a crippling shortage."



RANGEWORTHY PLAY GROUP

Playgroup had a very varied and enjoyable summer term, with the increase in numbers of children making it financially viable to open again for three mornings a week.

In June the Fire Brigade paid us a visit and the children were able to inspect a fire engine at close quarters. It is hoped that visits by the Ambulance Service and Dental Hygiene can be arranged during this year.

In July the annual outing was to the City Farm in Bristol, with an enthusiastic hour also spent in the farm's Rumpus Room.

The end of term saw the children celebrating the Royal Wedding. The autumn term is now well under way with Christmas approaching fast. The children will perform their Nativity Play on Friday 19th December, and any interested spectators are welcome.

The numbers are already good for 1986/87 and after the autumn half-term we are again able to open three mornings a week. If the attendance figures continue on this level the committee will be able to consider appointing a paid assistant to help Mrs Mary Morley.

It is helpful for forward planning to have some idea of what our attendance numbers may be in the future. If any parents have children who may wish to attend playgroup in the year 1987/88 then we would like to know.

Informal visits to playgroup by interested parents are always welcome so do drop in, or phone Mary (259), Liz (318) or Jill(626). Help with any transport problems can be arranged.

Jill Bradshaw, Sec.

\* \* \* \* \*

"ITS QUICKER BY RAIL"

Readers may remember that in our Issue No. 5 Spring 1984, we gave an account of the building of the railway through Iron Acton, until the passenger service was discontinued in June 1944.

The last last train actually ran on June 18th, (just after "D" Day), but a reader has sent us a copy of the Bradshaw Timetable issued in 1938, showing three 'up' trains and three 'down' trains most week days.

Iron Acton	0802	1046	1446*	1705
Yate	0807	1051	1451*	1710
Iron Acton	1007	1536	1903*	2004 s.o.
Thornbury	1020	1551	1916*	2017

\* 2nd Wednesday in the month only.

Five minutes to Yate!

Thirteen minutes to Thornbury!

We wish we knew what the fares were.

## GUIDE & BROWNIE SUPPORTERS GROUP

Our Jumble Sale in September made an excellent profit of £88, and we are very grateful to all those who supported us.

We had hoped to have a Coffee and Gateaux evening in November, but did not manage to fit it in. It will now be on the Tuesday evening of the Spring half term week - watch out for posters giving the exact date nearer the time. After our Brown Owl left at very short notice in July we were worried that our Brownie pack might not be able to continue, but fortunately Mrs Wendy Lockyer stepped in and saved the day. Luckily also, she was able to return to Tuesday evenings, which suits everyone much better. Brownie meetings began again after the summer break, and we are very grateful to Wendy for taking over.

Both Sharon (Guides) and Wendy (Brownies) would be glad to see more members.

\* \* \* \* \*

## CHANGING SCHOOLS

The last thing I can really remember of the Junior School was when they did the alterations. It made the school look better and a lot more modern.

I was quite nervous when I had to leave and go to the Ridings. The first day I started at the Ridings I was quite surprised how big it was compared to the Junior School, and there were so many children and teachers.

The work was quite hard so I was put in a special group so that I could learn the work. It was a lot different routine than Iron Acton school.

I was very nervous when it came time to start because plenty of people had told me lots of different stories about the school. When I first of all started I was the only girl so I went around with the two boys from Iron Acton until I found a friend called Nicola. Now she is my best friend. My favourite subjects are English, Science and Swimming. We have four lessons a day and I am now getting on at school very well.

Sally-Ann Hall.

\* \* \* \* \*

## THE ELIZABETHAN CLUB

Members enjoyed an outing to Paignton in late September. In October, Mr Bill Pullin from Chipping Sodbury gave us a film show on Australia, and he will be returning in January to show one on Norway.

During November we have a film on Bermuda given by Mr and Mrs. Burgess of Winterbourne, and also the Christmas Sale. The Christmas Whist Drive will be on Monday December 1st. As this will be the last issue of Focus this year, the Club would like to wish members of the Focus team and all our friends a Happy Christmas.

D.Elson, Sec.





The Lamb. Inn Folk Club has many super guests line up for the next few months:-

Dec	5th	Bread and Roses	Four part ladies harmony
"	12th	John Alderslade	An evening of singing and magic?
"	19th	Xmas Party	
"	26th	Boxing Day	CLOSED
"	31st	New Year's Eve	Barn Dance at Iron Acton Village Hall
Jan	9th	John Betmead	One for the ladies!
"	16th	Betty & Norman McDonald	Popular local duo
"	30th	Anne Wiseman	Solo performance by ex Dead Sea Surfer
Feb	13th	Rosemary Hardman	"Mighty songs from a mighty lady"
"	27th	Johnny Coppin	Excellent singer songwriter
Mar	20th	Allan Taylor	Not to be missed!

An invitation is extended to all village folk who are looking for somewhere to go on New Year's Eve, to come along to the Barn Dance. If you haven't been before you will enjoy the party atmosphere. The price of a ticket is £2. There will be no bar so bring your own drinks and supper. Reserve your ticket early as numbers are limited - telephone Gerry on Winterbourne 776356.

We are always looking for new members! Please come along and support the Club. You will be most welcome!

Gerry Aitchison.

\* \* \* \* \*

#### BROWNIE NEWS

Lots of exciting things happening in the Pack at the moment. We have recently been to a fancy dress Halloween Party by the Frampton Cotterell Brownies which was great fun and a Night Hike with the guides is planned for the middle of November with Hot dogs supplied by the Supporters Group to come back to. As well as working for two badges at the moment we are also planning our Christmas trip.

If there are any girls between the ages of 7 and 10 in Iron Acton or Rangeworthy who would like to join us why not give me a ring on Winterbourne 776575. We meet at the Village Hall in Iron Acton on Tuesday evenings from 6 p.m. - 7.15 p.m. and would love to see some new faces.

BROWN OWL (Wendy Lockyer).

## YOUNG COMMUNICANTS

Christina has written this account of her recent visit to the Gambia for us.

We thank her and wish her well in her further studies at Birmingham Polytechnic. These wishes are extended to all the young people who are similarly away from the Parish and we look forward to seeing them whenever they are on vacation or visiting their homes.

Barbara Sambels.

"On July the 25th the dream of myself and 19 other people finally became a reality. Destined for the Gambia, West Africa, the next three weeks of our lives were to be a vivid mixture of new experiences in a country which had so many contrasts from our own and so many within itself.

There were five main objectives for the expedition:-

1. To increase awareness of educational, cultural and economic issues in a third world country.
2. To establish and foster a supportive link between Yate and a village in Gambia.
3. To extend knowledge of the charity group Action Aid, their philosophy and practice in the Gambia.
4. To create and distribute a systematic report of the expedition and its studies and findings.
5. To provide a challenging experience to expedition members, as well as developing an ethos of teamwork practice that will last into the community link long after the expedition has ended.

Our three week stay was dedicated to achieving these objectives, and the group went on two trips within the whole expedition.

The first excursion took us on a tour of villages which Action Aid work in. We stayed for five nights in an odd collection, of travellers rests, boarding schools and seedy hotels. During the day we visited numerous village gardens, schools, donkey tractions, causeways and onion stores. All of these were Action Aid financed, and we learnt a lot despite the amazing heat which left many of us uncomfortable at best and at worst dehydrated and ill.

The second of our excursions meant that the group had to split into two. I went to Minteh Kunda for five nights, with eight others. Here we lived in the actual village. During the day we visited neighboring villages sampling the traditional foods of the various tribes watching their dancing, listening to their music and talking. We also did many questionnaires, finding out about the energy consumption and distribution of each of the compounds in the village.

By the end of our stay at Minteh Kunda a very good spirit had been developed between ourselves and the villagers. Games of football had been played (Gambia 1 : England 1) photographs had been posed for and our little group, left feeling sad, jubilant and more than anything exhausted, but all knowing that not a minute would ever be forgotten."

Christina Wheeler.





## IRON ACTON

The above picture of the church is not dated, but was probably about 1780. As you can see the original rectory was still in existence, and the building on the left was the old schoolroom, the foundations of which are still visible in the grass to the east of the church.

Something is wrong with the clock - was it artistic licence or has the clock really been moved?

The raised footpath was only a grassy bank and the road probably just a muddy track. I have often wondered why this raised path is known locally as the "Cassy" and when the name was first used, so one day I decided to see if I could find any clues in the dictionary. My English and Latin dictionaries were no help at all, but the French seemed more hopeful. I found "la caisse", (a cash desk) and then a phrase "casser aux gages" (to pay off). Since this is the spot where traditionally, the gates are tied and the bridegroom not allowed through until he has thrown all the change in his pockets to the waiting children, could this be the origin of the name?

But I am still wondering - do other places which have this tradition have a "Cassy" too? - how long has this tradition existed? - and when did the use of this name begin?

I wish someone would tell me!

Betty Cook.

A CAUTIONARY TALE

Jack Bolton and I had been good mates for a long time and for ten years or more had lived only a few doors from each other. On a Saturday night we usually took a drink or two together, never a lot you understand, but even so we always left the cars at home and walked back at the end of the evening.

It was one night early in November that this weekly walk took a surprising turn. We'd gone only a few yards when we saw the figure of a man in the road, some distance off and outlined darkly against the light from a street lamp. It was not so much that the man was there that surprised us but the fact that he was jumping up and down on the spot - up down, up down, up down. At the same time he was lifting and dropping his arms by his sides in time with his jumping, like a small boy doing PT at school - up down, up down, up down.

Jack and I exchanged a glance and walked on towards him. As we got nearer we could hear him chanting. At first we couldn't make out the words, but as we got nearer we heard him quite clearly - "thirty-two, thirty-two, thirty-two". Over and over again, "thirty-two, thirty-two, thirty-two" in time with his jumping.

It was not until we were almost up to him that we saw the manhole - some four feet out from the side of the road. And it was precisely on the centre of the manhole cover that the man was jumping - up and down, up and down, - and chanting in his thin, wailing voice "thirty-two, thirty-two, thirty-two - - -".

There was a wild look in his eyes that matched his mad antics and yet was strangely rivetting, mesmeric. That didn't worry Jack though. "What are you doing?" he demanded. "Do you want to know? Do you really want to know? Are you curious?" the man asked, jumping all the time. We nodded "Have a look, then" he said "Have a look down here then" And with a speed and strength I could hardly credit, he stooped down and slid back the heavy manhole cover. We peered into the hole, at first seeing nothing but blackness. Then we saw the ladder, an old iron vertical ladder dark with wet rust and reaching down into the darkness below.

The man became suddenly more excited, slyly skirting behind us and urging us forward with his outstretched arms. "Go on" he said "Go on. Go down and take a look".

Jack was the first to move, impelled forward by curiosity and the man's infectious excitement. Within a moment he had eased his bulk into the manhole and disappeared down the ladder. Not to be outdone, I followed. After perhaps nine or ten rungs I found myself standing on a narrow ledge, no more than a foot wide. I sensed, more than saw, Jack beside me for it was pitch-black except, high above us, for the disc of pale light where the manhole cover was open to the sky. The first chill fingers of fear groped at my insides. "We'd best get back up," said Jack. But even as he spoke there was a loud grating sound that seared and echoed round our ears, and the disc of light above us was blotted out. The manhole cover had been pushed back into place and was now quite closed. I leapt up the first four rungs of the ladder and pushed with all my might against the cover. It would not budge. For a moment we froze. "Listen" said Jack. And then we heard it. Faintly and hesitantly at first, above our heads. Then stronger and more clearly as it settled into its rhythm - "Thirty-four, thirty-four, thirty-four - - -"

Eric Kinder.

\* \* \* \* \*

Rolls Stolen.

A trailer with 51,000 toilet rolls on board, worth £12,000 was stolen this week from British Tissues in the Stover Trading Estate, Yate.

A police spokesman said: "The worst part of a theft like this is the paperwork involved."

\* \* \* \* \*



75 YEARS AGO

We have received from a resident in the Village an old pocket diary of her father, written in pencil and entitled "Memo of the Life of Frank - of Winterbourne", who was at that time, we think, about sixteen years of age; and which commences:-

December 24th 1911. I received by post a very nice present of 3 ties and a Xmas card from my little sweetheart May, also a Xmas card from Olive my sister.

25th Xmas Day. I received a nice present from Margaret of 3 handkerchiefs and a nice tie. That was all that happened. The weather was dull and cold not at all like Xmas weather, I did not enjoy myself very much.

31st Sunday. Got out of bed at 12.30 today - lazy devil. I went to Church and was very nearly late but arrived on time. I stayed up all night and walked about the village till 12 p.m. about that time I came down home and stepped inside Mrs Cook's house and Mrs Richardson's, I also kissed Lillie Jones and Beatie Cook. The first this year.

We continue to give a few selected extracts from his diary, but most days he records only the weather, a search for work and doing odd jobs for local farmers.

January 3rd 1912. I have been digging all day over at Hambrook and got very stiff also I got a very nasty cold from somewhere in my napper but it will get better sometime I suppose.

7th. Went to church tonight. Ethel Jones tried to pal on to me but I wasn't having any.

January 15th. Still no work. I went to Bristol and tried the Tramway Company but it did not come off. I went for a walk with Beatrice again tonight. I enjoyed myself immensely she is very fond of kissing.

He continues to go for walks with 'Beatie' regularly until she goes away to service in Bristol, so, on:-

January 28th. I go for a walk with Margie  
Feb. 11th. Was introduced to Miss S Bignell  
Feb. 18th. Met Miss Bessie Rogers  
Feb. 25th. Went out with Miss Price  
March 7th. I went to a meeting in the St. Michaels Room but the Magic Lantern would not work.  
March 12th. I rode to Avonmouth with Tom. We saw the liners Royal George and Royal Edward which latter was in dry dock.  
April 13th. I took two cart colts down to Iron Acton Fair.  
April 17th. Eclipse of the sun. I saw it grand.

After several more agricultural jobs, and several more girls, he at last gets regular work with the Great Western Railway.

Nov. 4th. Started to work on the line at a place called Monkton Combe, only one porter. Had a rotten job and a rotten Station Master. Am still writing to Miss Price but do not intend to have her for good.

May 19th 1913. Left Monkton Combe today for Limpley Stoke a lot better job. Poor W. Perry, my mate, was killed by an express train. Had a new chap come in his place called T. Davies but should be called tell-tale-tit. The biggest and worst liar and sneak I have ever met.

I have now met the sweetest little girl of the lot so far and hope to make her more than a friend some day. I call her my Little Bluebell.

May 19th 1914. Had to go to Bristol today to get a fresh job, and was sent to Weymouth for the summer. Had to do the first week in the parcels office but was mightly glad to get out on the platform. Had 7/- first week on the platform in tips. Not so bad for a start, but hope to do better than that. Had a good weeks money this week £1 0-4d wages, 7/7 tips £1-7-11d altogether.

His diary ends here, but, on May 15th 1915 he joined the army at Bristol as Private W.A. - No. 36858 No. 2 Platoon, A Company, 1st Gloucesters - and went away to war . . . but that is another story.

\* \* \* \* \*

### THE ACTONIANS

Pantomania is once again upon us. As Aladdin rubs his magic lamp, our resident genie, Maureen Chapman will again produce the magic goods. This year it is to run for 6 nights (4 in one week and 2 in the next) which will give everyone from the age of 0 onwards the opportunity of coming. The size and enthusiasm of the audiences is vital to the success of this and indeed all productions and once again the Actonians, drama, can rely on the Actonians, residents, to make the panto a success.

After Panto comes the reckoning. The one-act festivals are early next year and thinking time is already upon us. No choice has yet been made but soon will be. These festivals demand high technical skills from actors and stage crews as the stages all differ in size and available back stage space from our own well known and cosy place.

One of our much worked, and at times over worked, members, Colin Chivers, is moving from Yate to Easton-in-Gordano. We hope that the rigours of the motorway will not deprive Iron Acton audiences of his many varied performances.

The wardrobe, which is extensive for such a group thanks to the generosity of members and their families and friends, has now completed its move from the Clove Hitch across the road to Street Farm, Maureen Chapman's, and is there available as before.

Newcomers and old timers are welcome. Please seek out any member of the committee amongst whom are Pete Lawry (Chairman), Liz Birch (Secretary) Fiona Manning (Treasurer), Steve Birch (who is also Hall Steward), Penny Percy, Ann and Liz Aplin, Maureen Chapman.



IRON ACTON C.E.V.C. PRIMARY SCHOOL

One of the duties of a Head Teacher is to make entries in the official school 'Log Book'. As such it can be a fascinating historical document, especially in a village school. Iron Acton school has three log books. The oldest one is a rather forbidding book, complete with lock on the front cover. The inscription on the first page reads:-

IRON ACTON NATIONAL SCHOOL. JANUARY 1874

This is followed by...."Jan 12th. The Iron Acton National School opened under James Charles Heddow (Certificated-Master) and Elizabeth Heddow (Uncertificated Infant and Sewing Mistress)".

By the end of the week the number on register was 82. What did Mr. Heddow make of his new school?

"As there has never been a public elementary school in the place before, the attainments of the children are remarkably low."

He divided the school into 'four classes the lowest being infants' and a month later the number of pupils had risen to 120.

"A paid monitor entered upon her duties (Feb 16th) followed by Fanny Lyddington who entered as a pupil teacher on March 4th."

During the first year the school had three days holiday at Easter, one-and-a-half days at Whit week, three weeks summer holiday and two weeks at Christmas. If this sounds rather short by modern standards, Mr. Heddow also recorded....

"Holiday given owing to the Fair? (April 12th)

"This week school has been poorly attended; parents requiring their children in their gardenigg operations" (May 1st)

"School poorly attended owing to Mowing Match." (June 16th)

"Owing to the September Cattle Fair the school closed" (Sept 14th)

The weather seems to have affected school attendance on several occasions in Sept/Oct 1874 -

"Weather being very stormy this week, school poorly attended." (Sept 18th)

"Today the weather has been so stormy that the children are few." (Oct 20th)

Obviously the weather had cleared up by Oct 30th -

"A number of children away this week assisting parents in their gardens."

The entry for November 10th simply records 'Government Inspection'. Mr. Heddow's heart must have beat rather faster that day for this was a major event for all schools - a written report is entered into the log and, depending on the results of the tests, the size of grant for the next year determined. The report for 1874 begins -

"This handsome new school is likely to be of very great value in a parish where, judging from the present low attainments of the children presented, there must have been very great ignorance. The school results at present are but moderate, but the master seems to have the children fairly well in hand, has established good order, and teaches with success."

and with a recommendation that the boys and girls toilets (or offices as they were coyly named) should have separate entrances, the Inspector signed off for another year.

-----  
Further excerpts from the log in future issues.

The junior schoolchildren from the Village School have been writing about and drawing Iron Acton Church as part of the 'God's Acre' Project. We print two of their poems.

"God's Acre"

I was in the dark mysterious churchyard  
With the birds singing and swooping  
Gliding, quarrelling, chattering  
Flying round me  
Birds on the Church  
The long upright trees  
The short green grass,  
The leaves darting  
Crinkly, crunchy, crispy  
Floating tumbling turning

Rolling dancing golden leaves  
See how they fall in slow motion  
The trees waving  
Swishing in the wind  
The Church looking over me  
The graves with green moss  
The sloping grey-spotted graves  
All under the unmoving sky.

Paul Woollard - aged 10

One day as I sat in the abandoned churchyard  
It looked like the tall tower of Church  
Was watching over me  
As if I was something precious  
And the Church was guarding me  
The birds were busy fighting over something  
Because they were chirping so loudly  
And they were all lining up  
On the top of the tower

The leaves were fluttering down  
Off the swaying trees  
Dancing down to the floor  
Then just rotting away  
Next to the still silent stones  
of the tombs.

Sarah Thorne - aged 9

\* \* \* \* \*

FOR AN AGEING PARENT

Don't mind me now  
If I sit and stare  
For hours on end.  
My head is full of yesteryear.  
If my faded eyes  
Don't seem to see  
Anything of today  
Don't mind.

Don't mind me.  
I've had my joys and sorrows,  
My fill of Life.  
(Such memories I have!)

My thoughts I cannot communicate  
But they are inside me,  
So don't mind.

Don't mind me please,  
If I am difficult at times  
And tire or anger you.  
Be patient  
Try to understand  
And mind me.

Don't mind me  
If I do not seem to hear and  
If I do not answer you  
Smile at me  
And hold me tightly now and then  
To show you care  
Please mind me.

Don't mind me as I am today;  
Remember me as I was once.  
Sit a while with me if you have time.  
Soothe my anxious brow,  
Brush my greying hair  
And don't mind.

Don't mind  
My mishapen hands;  
Hold them in yours.  
Often my heart is full of fear  
And I need to know your love is there  
And you don't mind.

Don't mind me  
If friends come round.  
Or do I embarrass you?  
I do not wish it so  
And I do mind  
That now you have to care for me  
Like the child  
You were once of mine.

ANON.

\* \* \* \* \*



## The Recent History of the Frome Valley in Iron Acton

Although Focus was born to keep us informed about the village affairs, it is not improbable that one day some student compiling a history of Iron Acton in the late twentieth century, will refer to its pages; for even Focus must be, to a certain extent, a journal of record. With this in mind I thought it would be useful to tell the story of the Iron Acton Frome in the last 36 years. Even though on the fringes of the Parish, this little valley has been for generations a much loved feature of the village.

John Naish.

The Frome arises from Dodington Park Lane, which is fed from vast underground aquifers beneath the Cotswold ridge, and its waters start their journey to the sea as pure and as trout-nourishing as any chalk stream, but the little town of Chipping Sodbury, and the much bigger urban sprawl of Yate, have always contributed their quota of waste to this quiet but often angry little river. Thirty-five years ago it was most frequently oil which some forgetful factory or garage owner had allowed to leak from his tanks. Once, disastrously in 1972 it was the sewage output of Yate which overflowed out of a sewer manhole near Westerleigh as a result of some happy vandals having crammed a pram, several old bicycles and a mattress down the shaft. This took the Council workers about three days to clear - a pleasant job - during which time all the fish in the river died. Here in Iron Acton, when the water cleared the whole bed of the stream was covered with dead fish mostly about 2" long. In some ways it was encouraging to realise that the river had supported so many fish before the big pollution, and the Water Authority was confident that they would soon re-establish themselves. Having just spent £20 on trout fingerlings which I had dumped in the river a month previously, I was sad to see them die so soon. With faith in the future, William Mills and I bought some more, and their descendants are still around today.

If anyone doubts the presence of abundant fish in the river, let them take an early morning stroll on the footpath beside the river and they will almost certainly see a Kingfisher or a Heron at work. Nowadays, the waste of Yate takes the form mainly of polystyrene blocks, broken buckets, polythene sacks, beer cans and coke bottles. The only reason we have not seen supermarket trolleys down here is that they don't float, but I have seen most other household objects on the river at one time or another. Twenty years ago the water authorities were granted new powers to ascertain the source of pollution and to obtain compensation from those responsible. I find them prompt to take action in cases of oil spillage and silage pollution, with the result that water purity has undoubtedly improved over the last ten years.

It was just over twenty years ago that the Avon Water Board came up with a scheme to improve the land drainage of about 2,000 acres upstream of Chill Wood. This was undertaken immediately after the Frome Valley Trunk Sewer had been installed all the way down the valley. For nearly three years we had contractor's vehicles, diggers, drillers and blasters at work, but at last the river ran in a new and deeper bed, the twists and bends and overhanging bushes all gone, and a new weir appeared just west of Chill Wood. The flow through the old Mill Stream was reduced and the level dropped by half a meter, making it impossible for the turbine in the Mill to produce any useful power. Riparian owners can do nothing to prevent such schemes and the best course seems to be to co-operate with the water authorities, whom I have always found to be very understanding, considerate and genuinely interested in conservation.

One result of the 1964 river-deepening scheme was that the old footpath between millstream and river had to be re-routed south of the new river bed. This gave walkers a wider footpath through a grove of poplar trees (*Populus Serotina Robusta*) which I had planted in 1955. I planted another sixty trees south of the weir on a piece of ground which the various digging contractors had used as a spoil dump. Unfortunately, the human tendency to snap off young growing trees caused me much heartache and I must have replanted about forty trees before the sight of a family playing football all amongst the young saplings convinced me that I would have to spend money on fencing if I was ever going to get the trees to grow. At this stage, about 1970, I was not sure whether nettles, bindweed or humans were the worst enemies of growing trees. At any rate I spent £200 on posts and chain-link fencing and, though I got a lot of sour looks from some of the older villagers, the end result - a grove of clean-trunked trees - must give as much pleasure to others as it gives to me.

The problem of vandalism in the valley is not new. I recorded the first instance of fence-smashing, notice-destruction and deliberate blockage of the river by having stones and logs, as far back as 1960, but it would be foolish to pretend that it has not got worse in the last decade. Since the flood-prevention dam went up in 1982, the Wessex Water Authority have had to bear the main costs of this senseless destruction of property. Wooden fence rails have been replaced several times, even metal grills put there to prevent children from drowning themselves have been wrenched out and the lifebelts have had to be replaced on many occasions. Even the lifebelt retainer post was burnt down last summer. Those who blame such things on urban deprivation and poverty should examine their own family standards to see whether they are missing something. One can hardly call the Frome valley in Iron Acton an urban wasteland.

Thankfully, the greatest number of people who come to enjoy the valley's quiet and very English beauty, do appreciate that it represents the natural background in which our ancestors lived their lives, that it is a place where the heron, the mallard, the kingfisher, the grey wag-tail, the badger and the fox can live and feed and rear their young just as they were doing a thousand years ago. It has been my privilege for thirty-six years to act as its guardian, helped in the last seven by the Northavon District Council. If we sometimes have to do unpopular things like stopping cyclists or horsemen careering down the footpath, I hope that the villagers of Iron Acton will realise that it is all in aid of preserving this little island of peace, so that our grandchildren and great-grandchildren can enjoy it also. We hear so much nowadays about conservation; well, the Frome valley is an example here on our doorstep.

\* \* \* \* \*

WE HAVE BEEN ASKED TO PRINT THE FOLLOWING LETTER:-

Dear Friends,

Once again it gives me great pleasure to let you know the proceeds from the Whist Drive held at the Village Hall on Monday October 27th in aid of St. Peter's Hospice. It raised the wonderful amount of £132.50. My thanks to friends who donated prizes and those who helped behind the scenes to make this amount possible,

Yours sincerely,

A.G. Pitt.

\* \* \* \*



THE PARISH CHURCH

of

St JAMES THE LESS

Christmass Services.

The Christmass Services at St James the Less will follow the usual pattern:

December 24th. Christmass Eve

6.30 p.m. The Crib Service. The Gifts you bring to the Crib this year will be sent to Dr. Barnardo's. Please remember to put a label on the Gift saying the age range for which it is suitable, and whether it is for a girl or boy.

11.15 p.m. Mattins of Christmass

12.00 p.m. Midnight Mass and Holy Communion

December 25th. Christmass Day

8.00 a.m. Holy Communion

9.30 a.m. Sung Eucharist. This is a family service for all members of the family from the youngest to the oldest. At it we join with the Holy Family of Bethlehem, and with the shepherds to rejoice at the Birth of Jesus.

4.00 p.m. Evensong (said)

After this service the church is locked.

December 26th. St Stephen's Day (Boxing Day)

8.00 and 10.30 a.m. Holy Communion

December 28th. Sunday

6.30 p.m. The Carol Service

-----  
HAND BELL RINGING

The Hand Bell Ringers hope to go round the Parish again at Christmass time. We go for three reasons:-

1. to give pleasure
  2. because we enjoy doing it
  3. to collect for Cancer Research and for the Church.
- Over the last four years we have sent more than £650 to Cancer Research. Please help us to keep up this good work.

This year we have been asked to ring at the Women's Institute Group Carol Service on December 14th. After that we hope to be able to ring at Latteridge on the 18th., ringing every night after that until we finish on Christmass Eve.

If you would like us to call on you at a special time on a certain evening, we will do our best, but as we try to keep our calls as close together as possible each evening, to save spending too much time on travelling, we might not be able to do it. So if you do want us at a special time, do make sure we know at the Rectory as soon as possible, so that we can plan ahead.

DIARY OF FORTHCOMING EVENTS

At the Village Hall

Every Tuesday	Brownies	6.00 p.m.
	Girl Guides	7.00 p.m.
Wednesday	Elizabethans	2.00 p.m.
	Fencing Club	7.30 p.m.
Thursday	Youth Club	7.00 p.m.
2nd Monday in month	Womens' Institute	7.30 p.m.
3rd Monday in month	Parish Council	7.30 p.m.
December 5-6th	Actonians Pantomime "Aladdin"	
6th	Church Christmass Fayre	3.00 p.m.
20th	Acton Aid Christmas Social	
21st	Acton Aid Childrens Party	
31st	Folk Club Barn Dance	

At the Rose & Crown

Every 1st Thursday	Acton Aid	8.00 p.m.
Alternate Mondays	Ladies Darts Team	

At the Lamb Inn

Every Friday	Folk Club	7.30 p.m.
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At Rangeworthy Hall

Monday & Friday a.m.	Childrens Play Group (During term time)
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At St James the Less

December 14th	Womens' Institute Carol Service 3.00 p.m.
Christmass Week	For services see Parish Magazine or Church Porch., (See page 19)

At Theatre Royal, Bath

Women's Institute trip to  
"Mother Goose". January 20th 1987

At Chipping Sodbury Town Hall

Acton Aid Annual Dinner  
February 20th 1987

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The winners of the garden competition in connection with the Best Kept Village were:---

Most colourful garden ---- Mr. & Mrs. Jouxson, & Mrs. Leppard  
30 Nibley Lane.

Best hanging basket ----- Mr. Albert Davis, Hadera, High St.

Best Container ---- Mr. & Mrs. Woodward, 15 Algars Dr.





It has been such a mild autumn with so many berries that I hadn't thought of feeding the birds until the tits started to perch on the kitchen sill and peer in the window, and the robin sat hopefully on the birdtable. Then I realised it was time to put out the peanuts, crumbs and wild bird seed. I have been feeding the garden birds for many years, and enjoy them even more since we moved house. Now my birdtable is only six feet from my kitchen sink, and just a few yards away there is a patch of wild garden with about twenty trees so work at the sink is never boring.

Greenfinch, blue-tits, great-tits, coal-tits, sparrows and starlings squabble over the peanuts all day, and many other birds are busy among the trees.

For the last two winters one of the regulars has been a blue-tit with a very overgrown beak, but he hasn't appeared yet so I wonder if he has survived.

Many household scraps are suitable bird food ---- baked potato skins, stale bread and cake, grated cheese, bits of raw pastry and pieces of suet. When we have a bone left from a joint I hang it in a tree and the spotted woodpeckers love it. They will also come to the birdtable for suet, but they are very shy, the least movement in the kitchen and they are gone in a flash.

Since we came to Iron Acton I have counted 67 different birds in or over the garden. Many of them are resident or regular summer visitors, others are more rare, some have only been seen once or twice.

The kingfisher rarely visits us now as all the live things in the stream were killed by pollution a few years ago. The water beetles and shrimps have been building up again each year since then and this year we have a few minnows again so perhaps we shall see him return.

Build yourself a birdtable, it's more entertaining than television! But remember if you start to feed the birds you must do it regularly because they grow to depend on you. And don't forget the water, especially when the weather is freezing.

B.C.

#####

Copy date for the next issue is February 18th.  
Contributions to any member of the committee please.

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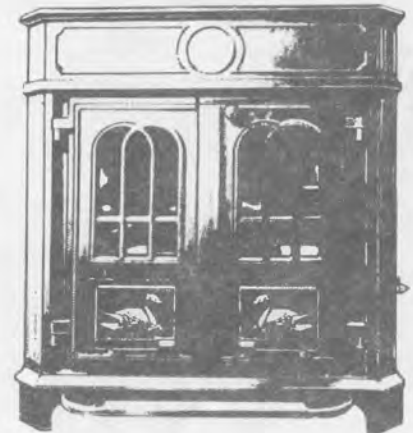
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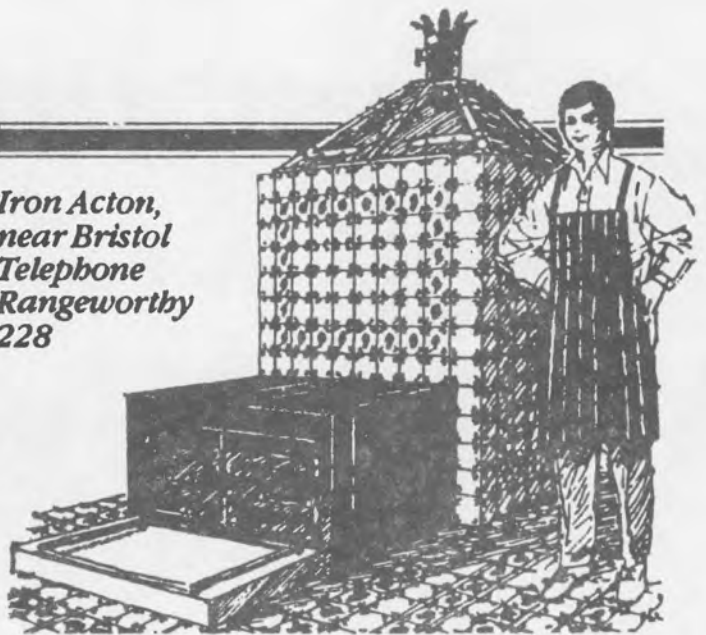
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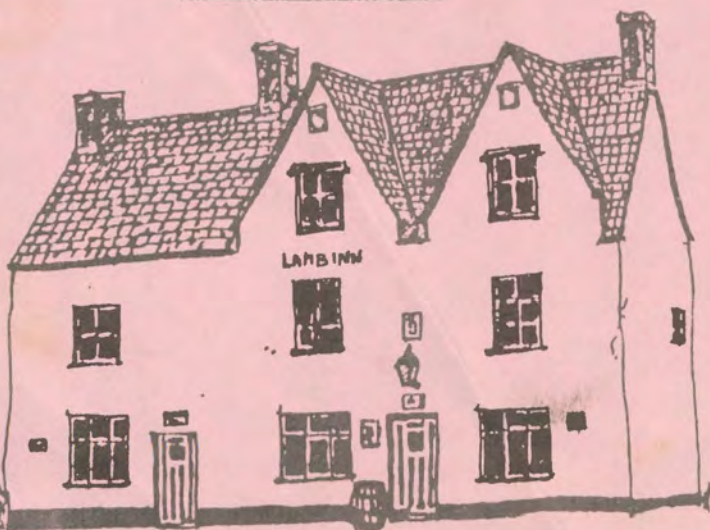
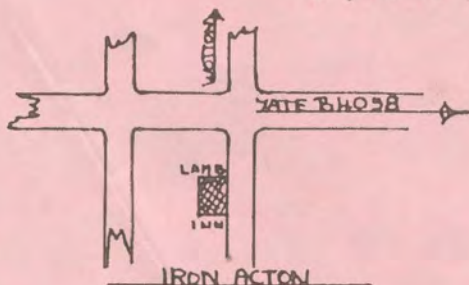
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