

"We're going to stay for tea - and dinner. We may even stay the night!" He finally got the message and was crestfallen. Then, of course, you feel guilty, particularly when you remember that if he'd stayed our rickshaw driver from morning till night, including all the waits, it would still only have cost us about £3 altogether.

Next day we'd booked a coach trip to the Amber Fort, so we neatly avoided Babu and Sabu, but thought we caught a slightly reproachful gaze as we swept past their rickshaw just outside the hotel gates. There was only one thing wrong with the coach tour; we couldn't understand a word the guide was saying, even though it was in English. So at the Amber Fort we slid away, the 3 of us, and did our own guided tour, with a booklet. We wandered round for hours, entranced by the flower painted walls and the mirror work and the towers and the vistas. Once or twice we saw our group, trailing along looking baffled and we got a nasty glower from the guide, but the afternoon was too golden to care.

Have you ever been on one of those coaches where 2 or 3 stragglers don't come back at the appointed time, and there you all are, sighing and checking your watches and the coach driver wakes up now and again to give the hooter another blast or two? Eventually back they clamber, chewing unperturbed on Juicy Pops, shopping bags full of souvenirs. Of course you have. Coaches always wait till the right number of heads can be counted don't they?

Not in India - when we got back the coach had gone. Worse still, my book and sunhat were still on board. We were getting hungry, too, and a sacred cow had just come along and snatched our bananas. I'd always thought sacred things were meant to behave well but we didn't dare say anything not sacred to it. Still, in India you feel fate takes a closer interest in your affairs than in England. At that moment, along came a battered green bus packed to the roof with people, so we piled in and for 3 rupees and some very interesting conversations (it's essential, wherever you go, for everyone to know who you are and where you come from) we were soon back in Jaipur and, as we got off the bus, there, down the road, stuck in a rickshaw jam, was our coach. I sprinted after it, but like a mirage, it was always that little bit ahead and at last it disappeared in a mist of traffic fumes.

"Good heavens, mother. I had no idea you were such an athlete!" Said Julia when I got back and she saw that I wasn't even out of breath. India does strange things to you. Follow that Coach!" I commanded the nearest rickshaw man. (I've always wanted to say that.) In fact the coach had long ago disappeared and the poor man only had a bicycle rickshaw, but he pedalled me vigorously up the main road among all the other pedallers, passengers, cars and lorries. The sun was setting and the buildings in Jaipur turn deep red in the evening and I managed to give several geography lessons to fellow travellers on the whereabouts of Iron Acton and where I was going now. "To find my book and hat!" seemed to be a perfectly acceptable explanation to them.

But now we were a very long way from town. Bits of countryside kept emerging. So we had a shouting match about who knew the way best, him or me. Neither of us won and eventually we stopped to ask the way to the coach depot. Renta crowd, the only really guaranteed, efficient phenomenon in India gathered immediately. This time it was mainly young men in dark glasses and gold chains and Raymond Chandler hats, obviously the Jaipur mafia. I wondered if I ought to be feeling nervous. But they were full of confident directions, so back we went to town again, and promptly got lost once more. Irritation set in. It was getting dark and the hotel where the other two had gone to order up drinks for us was miles away, and anyway, I wanted my book.

Suddenly, the crowd parted and up strode this bold, young figure, athletic in brown combat jacket and warrior's headband. There he was, Sabu, the Boy Wonder! I won't say I actually fell on his neck, but we did shake hands rather warmly. In a trice he'd dispersed the crowd, directed me to the coach station where I retrieved my book and hat, paid off my rickshaw man and gone to fetch his auto rickshaw to take me back to the hotel where I was soon drinking a healing Kingfisher beer with my friends. How he suddenly materialised I'll never know, except, as I say, Fate does seem to take a firmer hand in India. And yes, he did become our personalised rickshaw driver after that. Guilt and gratitude and a bit of entrepreneurial skill work almost as effectively as fate probably.

Jo Voss

Comedian Yakov Smirnoff writes "Coming from the Soviet Union I was not prepared for the incredible variety of products available in supermarkets. While on my first shopping trip I saw powdered milk - you just add water and you get milk. Then I saw powdered orange juice - you just add water and you get orange juice. Then I saw baby powder - and I thought to myself what a country!"

WERE THEY REALLY THE GOOD OLD DAYS?

The past is all around us, and looking at what is now a lovely, old, ivy-clad building situated in Station Road at Yate, it's hard to believe that this was once the much dreaded Workhouse - or 'The Spike' as its inmates called it. On researching into its rather interesting past I found there is certainly a story to be told.

Built as a direct result of the Poor Law Amendment Act of 1834 it was designed to house over 100 paupers. The Architects were George Gilbert Scott (later 'Sir George') and William Bonytham Moffatt. We have Scott to thank for the most attractive exterior which is in Tudor Gothic Style.

Over 20 Parishes joined forces to buy the piece of land from the Alway Family on which to site the new Union Workhouse. One of these Parishes was Iron Acton, who had previously supported its own village poorhouse, and although there is mention of the Poorhouse in Iron Acton no-one seems to know which cottage was used for this purpose (if anyone has knowledge of this I'd be very pleased to hear from them).

The Chipping Sodbury Union Workhouse, as it was called, even though it was situated in the Parish of Yate, was one of the better rural workhouses. It was run by a Master and Matron who were usually a married couple, very Victorian and strict, and who lived on the premises. They were answerable to the Board of Guardians who, in turn, had to report back to the Poor Law Commissioners in London.

The way of life at the Workhouse had to be lower than that of the lowest labouring classes so as to stop layabouts from entering it for an easy life! Life was certainly anything but easy in our Workhouse, with families being split up as soon as they entered it. The men were housed in one part, the women in another, and the children in yet another. Husbands and wives were only allowed to see each other with the Master or Matron present which meant that they seldom met (officially that is, as there seems to be some evidence of secret meetings taking place)!

It was considered a privilege to be elected to the Board of Guardians, who met each fortnight to discuss such things as staff difficulties and vacancies, punishments for inmates, ordering food and equipment, etc. Again there is evidence that our Workhouse treated its inmates quite well and some of the Board of Guardians gave the men tobacco and the old ladies eggs on occasions as presents. Punishments seemed mainly to involve being shut up in a cell with only bread and water to eat for a number of hours - the time a pauper was confined depended on what he or she had done (swearing at the Master and Matron was quite often the crime).

The men had to spend their waking hours breaking rocks from the local quarry whilst the women worked from dawn to dusk in the wash-house doing all the laundry, or helping with the easier work in the larger gardens where fresh vegetables and fruit were grown. The children had a small amount of schooling but were sent to work as soon as they were big enough to be useful.

Rambling round the old buildings you cannot help but get a feeling of the past. However, Ridgewood (as it is now known), has come a long way since the days of the Workhouse. Nowadays the buildings are put to good use housing our local Adult Education Centre, the County of Avon Social Services and a thriving Dance Studio, as well as providing a home for many other useful clubs and organisations.

If any readers have information or memories they would be prepared to share I would be most interested to hear them and can be contacted through Jo Voss. I find that hearing the stories of the last century make me glad that I was born in this century and they weren't all the "Good Old Days".

Patricia Alcock

* * * * *

SAUSAGES, SAUSAGES, SAUSAGES, SAUSAGES, SAUSAGES Following the successful Blitz Evenings people have expressed an interest in the source of the sausages! We can exclusively reveal they were the handywork of Ray, Shirley and Jeff Price along on the Bristol Road at Frampton-Cotterell. Home produced and with high meat content they really are good value. However, don't expect to find a supermarket production type set-up. This is old fashioned shopping at its best where they will take time to make sure you leave with exactly what you want. Why not give them a try ???

IRON ACTON VILLAGE DAY 1992

The third Iron Acton Village Day (for Focus funds - an incredibly wonderful cause!!!) takes place on the first Bank Holiday Monday in May - **Monday, 4 May 1992.**

It will start from Chilwood Close at 11.00 am with a procession led by the Yate and Sodbury Dragoon Marching Band and featuring the May Queen, May King and Attendants and any entrants in the Fancy Dress Competition who are brave enough to process through the streets in Iron Acton. Once they get to the Village Green the May King/Queen Party will be crowned and the judging of the Fancy Dress Competition takes place then all of the stalls will be open for business and the other entertainment begins!

A variety of entertainment, including Country and Maypole Dancing by the Schools, the Walcot Rapper Side, the Yate and Sodbury Dragoon Marching Band and a Mummers Play will keep people amusec, or they can let others "take the strain" and watch the Tug of War competition.

By this time I'm sure you'll all be itching to spend some money and, once again, many Village organisations and individuals are going to help us by providing stalls which will tempt you to buy Cakes, Plants, Books or Sweets, or perhaps you're more of a gambler and will try your luck with the Tombola, Teddy Bear Game or Welly Wanging. The smaller ones amongst us can get rid of their energy on the Bouncy Castle or have fun on the Miniature Train and then, finally, when exhaustion and hunger take over why not enjoy some wonderful Refreshments?

Also, on Monday, 27 April the Elizabethan's are donating the proceeds from one of their Whist Drives to Focus. Could you help by providing a raffle prize? Please ring me (228566) and I'll collect it and get it to them.

MAY QUEEN, MAY KING AND 2 ATTENDANTS

Come on Iron Acton Parish!! We need at least 4 returned slips from the bottom of this page. **Last year out of the whole Parish we only had 3 completed forms.** We've decided that the fairest way to decide who's who is to draw the names out of a hat. There are only 2 rules for entry:

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

It's not that difficult is it? and we've got a wonderful vintage car for them to ride in and we shall make sure that they also receive a framed photograph to remind them of their day.

FANCY DRESS COMPETITION

No entry fee!! No entry form!! Just turn up!! 4 different classes and you can either join the Parade at Chilwood Close, at any point on its route or wait until it gets on the Village Green (where judging will take place). The 4 classes are:

- | | | | |
|---|--------------------|---|-------------------|
| 1 | Pre School Age | 3 | Senior School Age |
| 2 | Primary School Age | 4 | Adult |

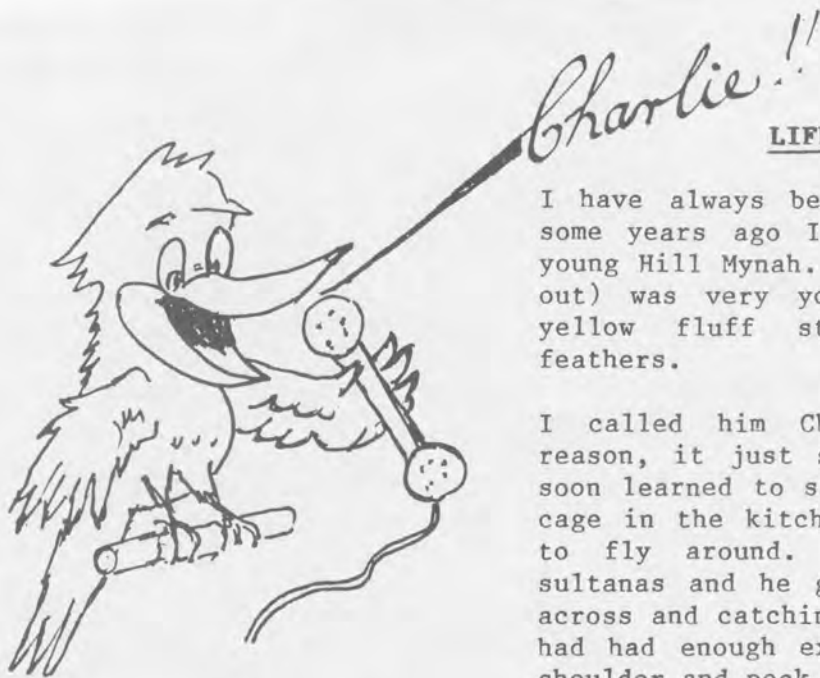
PLEASE HELP US TO RAISE FUNDS AND KEEP GOING FOR ANOTHER YEAR!!!!

ENTRY FORM FOR MAY KING/QUEEN COMPETITON TO BE COMPLETED AND RECEIVED BY BETTY COOK (NEKSDORE/HIGH STREET) OR LYNNE BLANCHARD (ROSE COTTAGE/LATTERIDGE ROAD) BY GOOD FRIDAY (17 APRIL)

NAME _____

ADDRESS _____

TELEPHONE _____



LIFE WITH CHARLIE

I have always been interested in birds and some years ago I fell for the charms of a young Hill Mynah. He (or she, I never found out) was very young when I got him, with yellow fluff still showing through his feathers.

I called him Charlie, for no particular reason, it just seemed to suit him, and he soon learned to say his name. He lived in a cage in the kitchen and loved to be let out to fly around. His favourite food was sultanas and he grew very adept at swooping across and catching them in mid-air. When he had had enough exercise he would sit on my shoulder and peck my ears and pull my hair.

His vocabulary grew, and he spoke in several different tones as he copied us all. He also copied many sounds, like laughter, telephone, lawnmower and squeaky wheelbarrow.

After the first few times the dogs learned to ignore him when he whistled and called them, but he was so lifelike I don't know how they told the difference. In the summer we put him out in an aviary near the kitchen door which he loved. When the garden was open he was a great attraction, showing off to an admiring audience. For a few years we parked him with family or friends when we went on holiday, but you have to be a real bird-freak to share your home with a Mynah and we didn't get many second offers. So we used to take him with us and he became well-travelled for a bird. He spent holidays in Dorset, Cornwall and Devon, and many times in the Lake District. He also had several boating weeks on the Thames or canals. We used to put his cage on deck during the day and it was quite funny to see him duck like the rest of us when we went under a low bridge.

Strangers found it very disconcerting when they stopped to look at him, only to be greeted with "Hello stupid!" He lived for eleven years, which I believe is a good age for a Mynah, and eventually succumbed to a cold during a bad winter. Life was much quieter without him, but for a long time I missed his cheerful "Morning!" every time I went into the kitchen.

A few years later a group of peacocks took my fancy, but that's a different story.

B.C.



DIARY OF FORTHCOMING EVENTS

In the Village Hall:

Every Tuesday	Brownies	6.00 p.m.
Wednesday	Elizabethans	2.00
	Junior Actonians	6.00
	Actonians	7.30
2nd Monday in the month	Women's Institute	7.30
3rd Monday in the month	Parish Council	7.30
4th Monday in the month	Whist Drive	7.30
3rd Thursday in the month	Chip. Sod. Knitting Group	1.30
April 9th.	General Election Polling Booth	
11th.	Acton Aid Social Evening	
25th.	Northavon Auctions	
27th.	Whist Drive	
28th.	ANNUAL PARISH MEETING	
May 4th.	May Day Celebrations	
7, 8, 9th.	Actonians present "BLYTHE SPIRIT"	
25th.	Whist Drive	
June 6th.	Northavon Auctions	
20th.	ST. JAMES THE LESS SUMMER FAIR	
July 11th.	Northavon Auctions	

On the Village Green:

May 4th.	MAY DAY FAIR	Noon
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In the Parish Church:

April 12th to 19th.	EASTER SERVICES
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At the Rose & Crown:

1st Thursday in the month	Acton Aid	8.00 p.m.
Alternate Mondays	Darts Clubs	

FOCUS ON IRON ACTON is produced three times a year, usually at the end of March, July and November, and is distributed to every house in the Parish. Contributions for publication are always welcome and should be given to anyone of the names shown on the Editorial page, who will always be ready to help or advise if needed. Items ought to be submitted about four weeks before date of issue.

Advertisers wishing to take space in FOCUS should contact either Mrs Cook (228202) or Charles Wilkins (228254).

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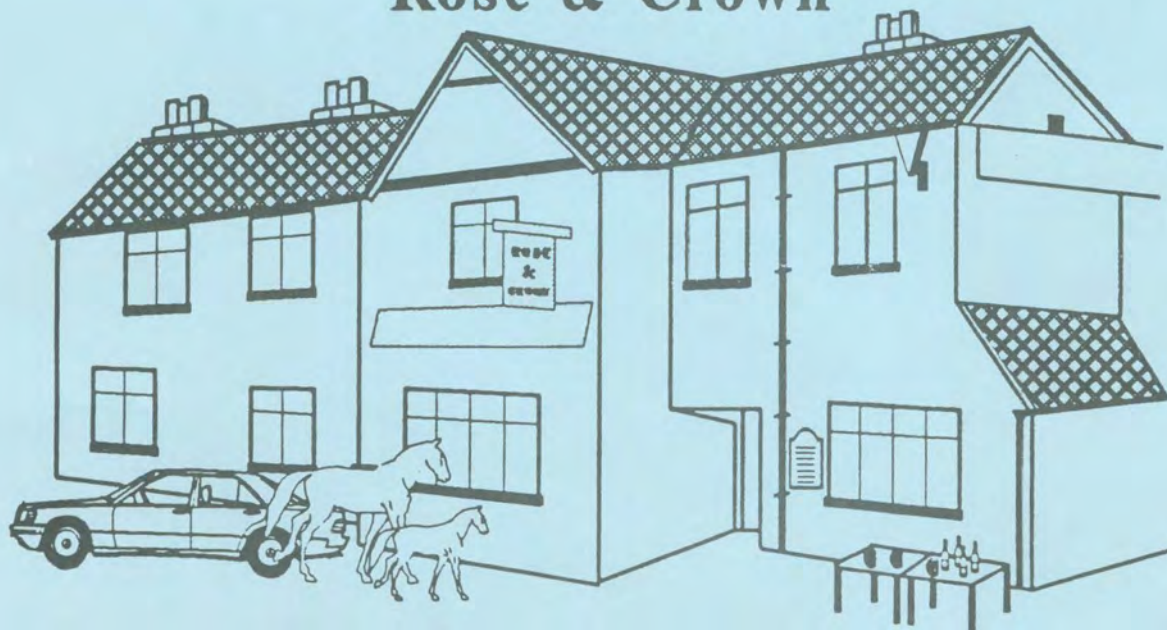
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HOLLY HILL FARM
IRON ACTON

228 289



Rose & Crown



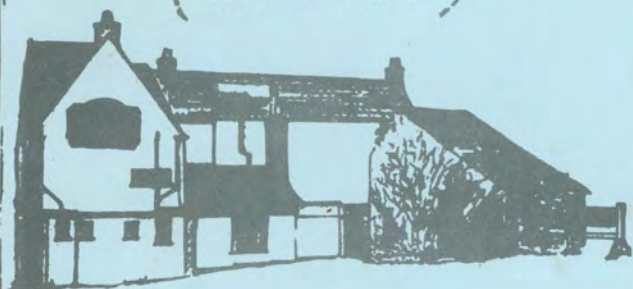
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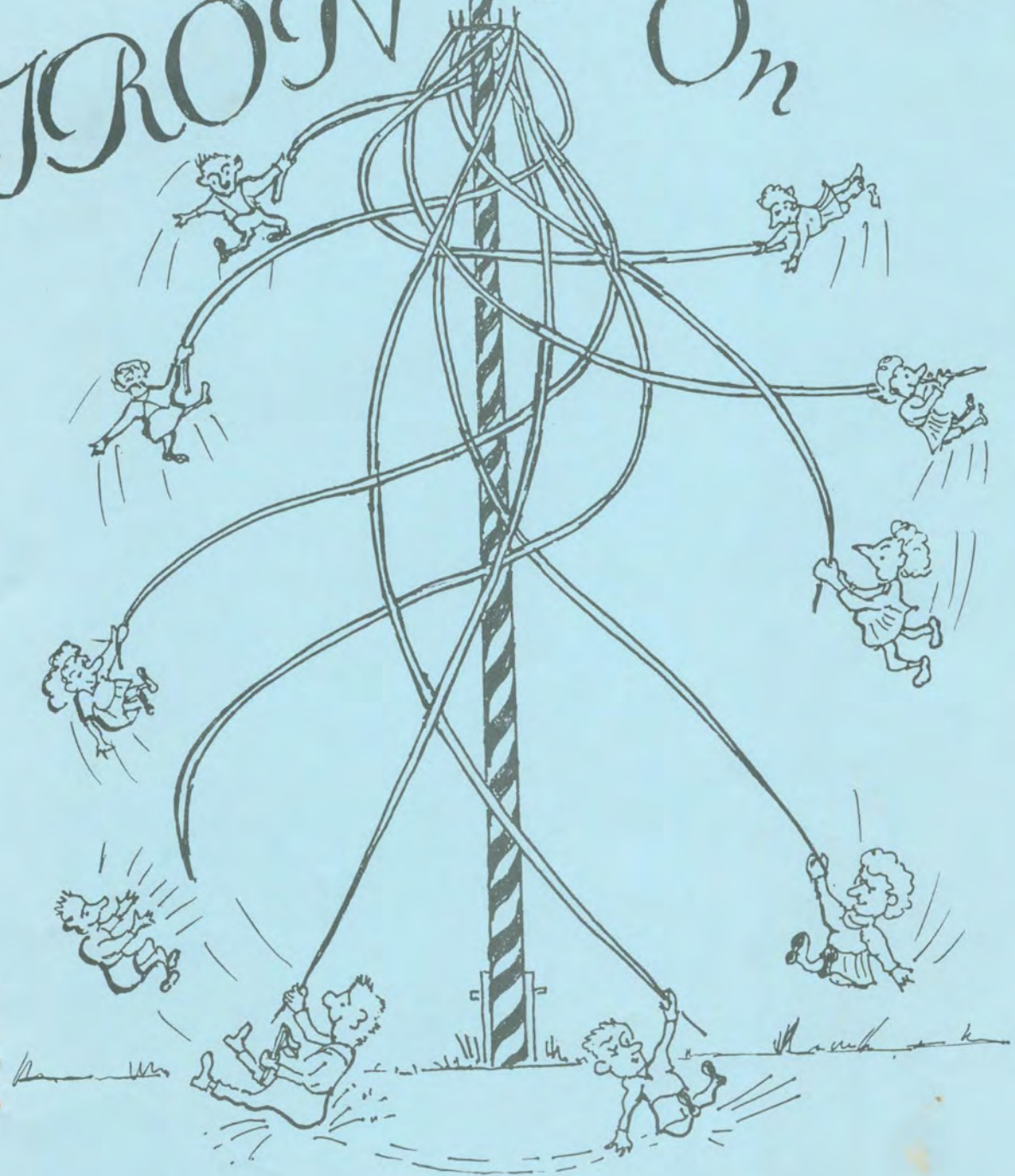
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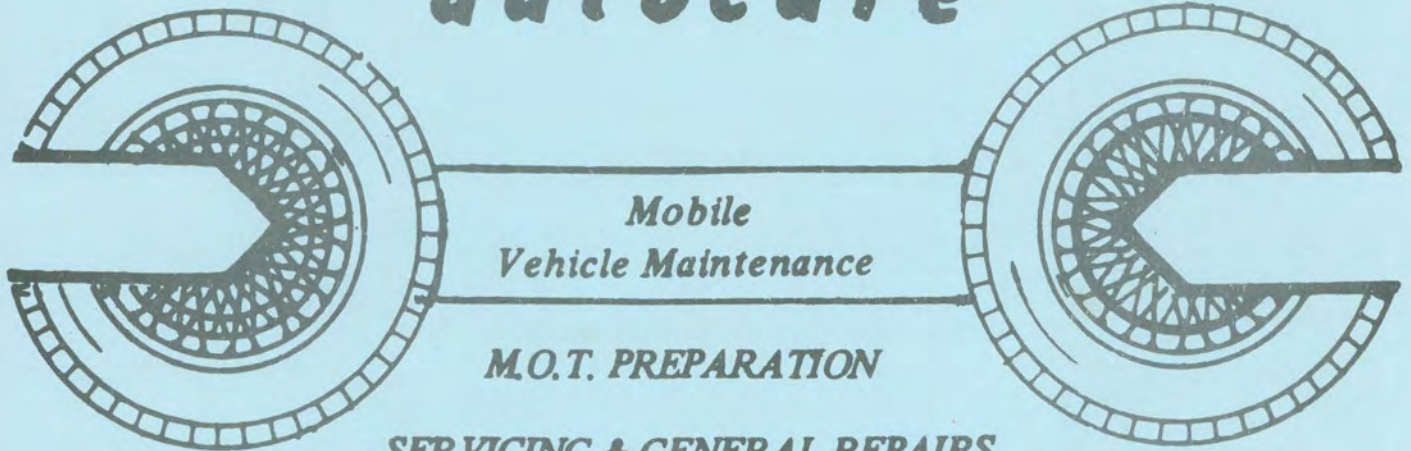


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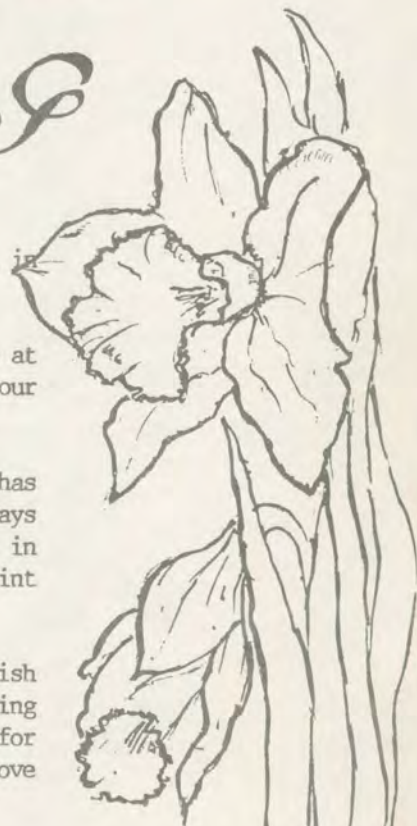
SPRING 1992

The cover gives the clue! Yes folks, once again the Focus team present, in conjunction with a cast of thousands, the mighty May Day celebration.

Venue, the Green, Day: 4th May, more details inside. Your contributions at this event have meant that we can continue to bring Focus free to your door, so we look forward to seeing everyone there.

Ron Luffman, of Ron's Print, has printed Focus since the beginning. He has now retired and we'd like to say thank you for all his work, for always offering us such a competitive price and especially for his interest in Focus. We are pleased to say that Gerry Mitchell has taken over the print shop and we hope will continue to print Focus for us.

We'd like to wish Ron a very happy and fulfilling retirement. We wish everyone a very happy Easter, whether it's travelling, DIY ing, gardening or just eating Easter eggs. To anyone who's always wanting to write for Focus but never had the courage to ask - don't ask, just write. We'd love to print it.



Charles Wilkins
228 254

Betty Cook
228 202

Jo Voss
228 674

John Percy
228 339

Lynne Blanchard
228 566

Peter Redman
228 395



no
28



Friends of Iron Acton School.

The winter months are our quiet time as far as fund raising is concerned with everyone busy preparing for Christmas and the School Concert. The Friends held a 60's Disco in the Village Hall in October which raised £118. We were very grateful to the Hall Committee for allowing us to hold the event free of charge to boost funds. In November we held a Coffee Afternoon 50/50 Sale at School which was extremely well supported and raised £150.

For Christmas the Friends produced a Tea Towel. All the children drew a picture of themselves and these were printed onto the Tea Towels. They made excellent Christmas presents and proved to be very popular. If anyone would like one we still have a few left, price £2.50. Our thanks to Fiona Bourns who acted as co-ordinator.

By the time Focus reaches you we will have held another Skittles evening at the ARC Special Club (Saturday 14th March). These evenings have proved very successful in the past, the last raising in excess of £150.

Our next major event will be our annual Grand National Jumble Sale on Saturday 4th April starting at 2.30 p.m. It is a good opportunity to clear out your wardrobes - all donations will be gratefully received. We also need your support on the day so please come along - there is always a large selection of delicious home made cakes as well as toys, books, white elephant. Jumble and of course a chance to have a flutter on the horses.

Funds raised by the Friends are currently being used to increase the reading books in Mrs Hatt's class and to replace and update the musical instruments. These include a Bass Xylophone and an Alto Metallophone as well as many smaller items.

Your support is always very much appreciated and once again we thank you. Without your continued support we would be unable to purchase the new equipment needed to implement the National Curriculum.

A date for your diary - Saturday 4th July our Annual Summer Fayre. For more information watch the School Notice Board.

* * * * *

The Brownies

On Tuesday 18th February at 7 o'clock we had a Coffee and Gateaux Evening, which was a great success. I would just like to thank everyone who contributed in any way to make it an enjoyable evening, especially all the helpers, the mums and friends who made gateaux and donated raffle prizes; also, Liz Edmonds who printed all the posters and letters that were sent out, and not forgetting all those who came to indulge themselves and put on a few extra pounds. We made a grand total of £166.84, which will pay for our capitation for this year.

On Sunday 23rd February we celebrated our Thinking Day Service at Frenchay Church. It would have been nice to have seen a few more Brownies there - perhaps next year?

* * * * *

GOODBYE - HELLO!

Friends and neighbours were sorry to say goodbye to Ron and Joyce Fisher when they moved from Springfield (up the lane, back of the church) in January. Sorry we can't say we wish them well in their new home, because they never really left their old one! but they took on the bungalow when brother Fred Fisher died, turned a wild garden into a flowery one and for a time considered moving in permanently. However, good friends (and several cats we hear) in Southville proved too strong a bond, so they've moved back to Bristol permanently. We'd like to say thanks to Joyce and Ron for their support of Focus, both financial and verbal and wish them continued happiness back home. They hope to keep in touch with the village.

We welcome to the village the new owners of Springfield June and Mike Schofield with Hanna and Natalie.

PARISH COUNCIL

After many months of asking, lights have at last been erected along the whole of the by-pass. This will eliminate the dark patch and should make the road much safer - providing people drive sensibly!

Motor cycle scrambles have again been cutting up the paths in Chilwood, and the police have been asked to keep a check on them, so we hope they can put a stop to the problem. Fortunately the travellers have left us alone recently, so ploughing the edge of the verges seemed to work.

We hope you have noticed that the village has been looking tidier lately. Trees in the Parish Meadows and the cemetery have been cut back and made safe, and the stream has been cleared of rubbish and weeds so that it runs well and helps to avoid flooding. The high Street has been swept and tidied too, thanks to Barry and Malcolm.

If only everyone would take care to keep their front paths weed-free and not to drop litter about, how much more pleasant the place would be.

The Annual Parish Meeting will be in the village hall at 8 p.m. on Tuesday, April 28th. This is open to everyone aged 18 and over, so take the chance to come along and tell us what you think of all our efforts - but politely, please!

Councillors are:- Bob Sheppard (Chairman), Betty Cook (Vice-Chairman), Elsie Blanchard, Roy Curtis, Frank Davies, Don Elson, Geoff Gale, Sue Gawler, Chris Heal. Clerk - Norman Carter, 9, Chilwood Close.

* * * * *

North Road Ladies.

We meet in North Road School on the first Monday in every month at 7.30 p.m. and anyone is welcome to join us.

We have a varied programme and there are about 20-30 of us so there is plenty of room for many more.

Among our topics this year we have had a very interesting talk and slides entitled 'Inside Bristol City Wall' which was so good that we hope to actually do some walking and see the places we saw on the slides. Then we have talks on 'Hedgehogs' and 'Glass Engraving'. But this year is special as it is our 25th year and we hope to have a special evening on Monday 2nd November. Quite a few of our members have belonged to the Club since the beginning; so it doesn't take a mathematician to work out that we could do with some new young blood!!

So if you would like to come along with someone, please get in touch with one of the following:-

- June Broome 228597
- Jo Powell 228009
- or Ann Johnson 228507

* * * * *

A merchant on his death bed sent for a clergyman and said: "If I give £10,000 to the church do you think my soul will be saved?"

"Well," answered the clergyman, "I couldn't promise you that, but I think its worth trying."

IRON ACTON WI

Our AGM back in December saw a change of Officers for 1992. Dusty Taylor became President, Jean Kethro - Treasurer, and your's truly - Secretary. Jean's the one you might not know! A lovely lady from Cromhall who just happened to call into the Garden Centre, got invited to a meeting and the rest, as they say, is history (Viv Parker's powers of persuasion being legendary). Pauline Hill who had been our President for the preceding 4 years has kindly agreed to stay on our Committee, for which we are grateful, and we also express our thanks for the hard work (always carried out with good humour) that she undertook during her long term as President.

December also saw our last social outing of 1991 when we went to the Bristol Old Vic to see their production of Hiawatha. If you went expecting a pantomime a la Little and Large and Frank Bruno you would have torn your hair out, but I thoroughly enjoyed myself and the Bristol Old Vic maintained, in my eyes, its innovative reputation. It really was a well thought out production with imaginative use of stage and lighting and multi-racial cast whilst keeping true to Longfellow's epic poem.

January brought a talk, together with some beautiful slides, on the work of the Avon Wildlife Trust. This organisation undertakes a lot of sterling work and offer many fascinating talks and trips - so keep an eye open for details in the local press, libraries, etc.

February saw Mr Lane hammering on our door to give a brief history of Bristol and Gloucestershire's cartology. I'm glad I wasn't a mapmaker back in the Early 19th Century. Imaging a copper plate 8 times the size of this page and being instructed to engrave a map of Gloucestershire on it. So what, you might say but just imagine that every place name and mark would need to be BACK TO FRONT, ie mirror writing, so that the map would appear the right way around when printed.

Our March meeting brings a welcome return to Mr Hudson who's going to teach us how to make "Savouries for Easter". He's previously explained the intricacies of Continental Chocolate and Sugar Stranding and Coating thus becoming a firm favourite and, because we're such an unselfish lot, anyone can come and listen to him for the incredible price of £1 (which includes coffee and gateau).

We entered an intrepid team in the County Darts Competition, winning 2 out of 3 round robin matches. We didn't get any further but it did provide me with a lovely story.

One of the teams we played contained one, not terribly young, lady who found it very difficult to find the dart board. Her darts bounced off the floor, the walls, the ceiling (in fact, anywhere but the board). Fearing for everyone's safety, Geraldine Whittle quietly suggested that the lady was perhaps a liability and perhaps they shouldn't have included her and then couldn't understand why we collapsed in giggles and the opposition looked totally stunned. What no-one had explained was that the aforementioned "liability" was none other than Avon WI's County Federation Chairman. Nice one Geraldine!

Remember the Jars of Grace scheme I screamed about in the last edition? About 15 WI members agreed to help and consequently £65.57 will join the money raised by the Church. My grateful thanks to all participants for their unselfish generosity.

In forthcoming months we have talks on Diabetes (13 April), Herbs (8 June) and the Antiques Roadshow (13 July). We've got at least one outing in the offing (in July and probably with a watery bias) and 2 fund raisers in the form of a barbeque (courtesy of Viv Parker in June) and a good old fashioned Garden Party (courtesy of Ann Tillotson in August). Further details next time.

Lynne Blanchard/Secretary

DID YOU KNOW

The Village Hall now has a pay phone. The telephone number is **228024**. We think it's a great idea as it now means that if you want to contact someone in the Hall you can dial straight there, no more trying to find a friendly person who you can ring and ask them to run up/down/across to the Hall with messages.

IRON ACTON YOUTH CLUB

A momentous new Youth Club year began in January, bringing with it a change in leadership. Following the resignations of the Leader and Assistant the Management Committee were faced with 2 options: close the Club until a new leader could be found OR keep the Club open, manned by volunteers, until we found our leader.

There wasn't a choice to be made! The Youth Club is the only organisation where Village youngsters, regardless of sex, background or religion, meet together and, let's face it, there isn't an awful lot for them to do that meets with approval from the adults!

We are currently advertising for a leader to develop activities and resources. However, in the meantime, your's truly (together with a wonderfully willing army of volunteers) will be holding the fort.

During this period of upheaval we've worked closely with, and taken advice from, the Avon Community Leisure Department and in particular Dave Hall (Rural Youth Work Development Officer) and Lynne Harris (the Senior Area Youth Professional), as well as picking the "officialdom" brain of Pauline Sails. They have given an enormous amount of practical help and I don't know what I would have done without them.

The other saving grace has been the youngsters! They really are a wonderfully colourful lot and our first priority was to listen to what they wanted (unfortunately we couldn't fulfil one request, the swimming pool was out of the question)!

Out of these discussions came the awareness that the older ones didn't want to be "organised". They wanted to be separate from the younger ones and it would be great if they could watch videos. Miraculously a contact for a TV and a Video at a maximum cost of £200 appeared. We needed a loan quickly. A plea to the Parish Council brought a lovely surprise - a donation of £50 and a loan of £150. We all think they're better than sliced bread!

During the last year we've received £3.50 for 46 weeks from Avon towards Village Hall hiring costs. This will stop on 1 April we shall have to review our finances. Until April we shall continue to charge 25p per night but then I suspect that charges will increase to around 30p for younger members and possibly 40-50p for older ones as we have to cover the cost of videos. Time will tell - and Norman Lamont thinks he's got problems!

The Youth Club opens at 7 pm. We hope the younger ones will have left for home by 9 pm, leaving the older ones in peace and quiet until 9.45 pm, when we finish the tidying up process.

We still operate the Snack Bar and take "advice" on what's needed (did you know that if something's "wicked" it means it's good - not like that in my day you know) and I've been promised lessons in who's who in the pop world as I had to admit that the only people I'd heard of at the "Brits" awards were Queen and Lisa Stansfield!

The other nice thing is that the adults are popping in to say hello and see what we're up to when they deliver or collect their charges. It's lovely to see them and we hope they'll continue to do this as it means more links are being forged all the time.

Lynne Blanchard/General Dogsboddy but enjoying every minute!

A TIGHT FIT - SOME MORE OF THOSE LOVELY LITTLE BITS FROM THE FOCUS TEAM!

- * We each buy 23 pairs of tights a year in Britain - and most of these are 10 denier in black.
- * It takes about 2 minutes to make a pair of tights - a shame when you can ruin them in less than a second.
- * There are more than 4 miles of thread and more than 3 million stitches in the average pair of tights.
- * If you put all the tights that are sold each year end to end, they'd stretch for a million miles.

HELP - ACTON AID - HELP

Back one evening in 1973 Brian Burgess, the previous headmaster of Iron Acton School, got together a group of local parishioners who showed a similar interest in forming an organisation to help others.

The idea being that any individual member of the Parish or any group within it could receive help in a way that perhaps other existing organisations could not offer. And so the major function of Acton Aid became one of giving and caring for the Parish and its People.

Other groups already existed to help themselves, but for the first time a new body was formed solely to help others without the restrictions of self-interest.

Acton Aid has, over the years, provided assistance in many ways:

- * Snow clearing
- * Fire watching
- * Provision of a hospital taxi service for those who couldn't get there under their own steam
- * Gardening
- * Building
- * Painting
- * And many more which have cost time, not money

However, it has also raised many thousands of pounds which have been converted into:

- * Holiday sponsorships
- * Coach outings
- * Theatre trips
- * Donations to the Church
- * Donations to the School
- * Donations to Senior Citizens
- * Donations to Brownies
- * Donations to Guides
- * Donations to the Youth Club

We hope that we have served you well in the past and we hope to do the same with improvements in the future. But, like many organisations, Acton Aid is always open to fresh ideas and new support. Sometimes we ask ourselves if there is any better way of helping people? Are we supporting the right cause? And where can we look for new members to share the load whilst having fun?

Acton Aid does not wish to be known only as a fund raising society but more as a group of people who have joined together for a common cause - that of helping others and raising a few bob at the same time.

So why not come along to the **Village Hall** on **Tuesday, 7 April** at **7.30 pm** where we shall be holding an informal meeting to answer any of your questions. By the end of the evening perhaps some of you would even like to become members of our humble band!!

John Tillotson
Chairman

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The Lady who passed this report to the Focus Team suggested that we might like to put a footnote to the report reminding people that, at least for the present, Acton Aid enjoys a men only membership as she didn't want any disappointed ladies to turn up at the meeting on 7th April.

Alfred Strange's Diary

In the last issue of Focus, Alfred Strange had obtained a job at last. We are in 1933.

May 21st.

Sunday . Went to 8 o'clock service and served at 11 a.m. Communion with D. Clarke for the last time. He leaves for Switzerland this week. Afternoon .. walked down to King's elm trees with M. Pinnell. We sat there whilst I practised some shorthand. Then we walked across the fields to Yate. Jack Ellis, J. Lane and Doug Gibbons came back as far as Stover. I stayed a while listening to the wireless in Haines' shop. Home with B. Aldon and K. Prout..

22nd. North Rd. football meeting this evening.

23rd. Bell ringing. D. Gibbons broke stay on No. 1 bell.

27th. Raining torrents .. called at Mr Gould's at Goosegreen with money for McEnnery who had met with accident. Off to Downend with B. Dyer. Spotted Mr Stone and Mr Kear (trainees at the Highway Surveyor's Office) with two girls at Staple Hill. We saw 'Love of Mike' and 'Red Week-end' at the 'Vandyke'. Jolly good. Home 10.15.

28th. Served at H. Communion with H. White for the first time.

29th. Deadlock in Danzig election. Nazis 36 Opposition 36.

30th. Walked up to Sodbury market with Mr Powell in lunch-hour. Mr Kendall (Deputy Clerk) gave me my first salary cheque £2.4.2d. (slightly more than one months pay!) Took my shoes over to Tytherington in the evening for repairs.

31st. Typed out electoral changes for Wapley for Mr Gould. (probably Parochial Church Council). Came home early and planted three rows of potatoes and weeded 20 rows of onions. Bell ringing with Messrs Curtis, Elson, Morse and Wiggins. The clappers were untied for the first time. I was on No. 2 not too bad!

1 June Cashed my salary cheque. Result of Derby .. 1st Hypernion Owner - Lord Derby. Trainer D. Lambton Jockey T. Weston. 2nd. King Solomon 3rd Statesman 4th Scarlet Tiger.

2nd. I had to call at Acton School with a letter for Mr Kendall (Chairman of Managers ?) Bell ringing .. Mr Durbin came up.

3rd. Cricket .. Rangeworthy lose to Old Sodbury.

4th Whit Sunday. To 8 a.m. service with Doug Gibbons and Fred Fortune. I watched the men ringing for the 11 a.m. service. I had a turn. In afternoon went to Tortworth Park with H. White .. sweltering heat. Later walked round to North Road, with Reg Elson .. we watched Mr Haines putting bees in the hives. I arranged to go to Weston tomorrow with Bert Dyer.

5th. Whit Monday. I left with Bert at 7.30 and we arrived at Weston at 9.45 a.m. We met Archie Mainstone whilst we were there .. Bert went into the swimming bath. We left about 5.15 and were home at 7.30 p.m.

6th. Mervyn Pinnell helped me plant potatoes by the damson tree and do some weeding. I took some gooseberries to my uncle and aunt's at Yate. I was told that my cousin J. (Townsend) had passed the scholarship exam. After having a glass of home made wine I set off for the Zoo about 5.30 .. arrive 6.30 ... had a look around and arrived home 9 o'clock.

9th. Evening .. played cricket in the field by Wyman's. D. Cowles scored 45 runs. I scored 17 not out.

- 10th. Afternoon .. over to Coalpit Heath to watch the cricket. I saw Wotton under Edge score 135 (one batsman scored 73). Gilbert Allsop had a hat-trick. In the evening I went for a cycle ride around Hawkesbury, Wickwar and Cronhall.
- 14th. I had the afternoon off to attend the Grammar School Sports where I met some of my old friends.
- 16th. Took food to the fields in Colbourn's lane for my uncle who was haymaking. Over to North Rd. with A. Sheppard for the football meeting .. Nothing settled. Cricket ... Northants all out for 27 runs against Yorks at Kettering.
- 17th. I spoke to Percy Lomas at his home, Mission Lane (council lorry driver) about taking the tar gang to Marshfield.
In afternoon I mounded up 28 rows of potatoes and dug over new plot. It began to rain when I was about to take some cider down to my uncle who was haymaking. Later .. I went to Yate to the Hospital Fete but there was not much there.
- 18th. Sun. Served at H. Communion with H. White who has just finished working for the Rector.
- 21st. After tea I went back to the Council Offices to attend a meeting of N.A.L.G.O but then decided not to go in. Returned home and cut some sticks for the kidney beans (This almost certainly the first or inaugural meeting of the local branch of N.A.L.G.O. Mr Turner of the Clerk's Dept. had arranged the meeting)
- 22nd. Cricket. Rangeworthy 190 (M. Potter 59 .. retired)
Chipping Sodbury Grammar School 50.
- The Grammar School girls easily beat the Rangeworthy Ladies Tennis Club.
- 23rd. Choir practice .. and then to football meeting at North Rd. (Codrington Arms). We had been elected to the 4th. Div. of the Bristol & District League.
- 24th. I bought a pad for painting at the Post Office. Worked with my uncle in the garden. Then we went down to Norman Lane (Colbourn's) and I called at Fursman's to pay his rent.
- 25th. Raining. I walked to church. In the afternoon Vivian Crossey came with me to the field by Northern Barn where I did a sketch of the church, etc. but I did not get on with it very well. Evening. It rained torrents whilst we were in church. Afterwards I walked over to North Road with Verdun Water and we called in at Holbrook's shop.
- 26th. Bought a bicycle bell at Mr Hobbs. 1s. 4d. Hard ride into Bristol to Gregg's College against the wind.
- 28th. I lent my bike to Mr Tiley and I then went across the field where I did a painting of the Rectory.
- 29th. To Greggs College. I met Arthur Seymour on the way. Along Wee Lane I met a chap from the Co-op at Coalpit Heath. Charabancs from Rangeworthy, Yate, Tytherington and Thornbury all went to Weston today. Mrs Pinnell and family went.
- 30th. Ethel Hendy of North Road has died she was 18 years old.

(My uncle mentioned in the diary was Cecil Smith who died on 4th. March at Yate. He had reached the age of ninety-five on Christmas Eve last.)

Alfred Strange has also written to us about two other matters, the first of which we hope will provoke some further contributions from our older readers.

Iron Acton Fair

I think that this must have started hundreds of years ago when the monarch of that time granted to the Lord of the Manor a charter to hold a fair (or two) at Iron Acton. This was usually in response to services rendered to the King by the Lord of the Manor. I have never come across any reference to this as far as Iron Acton is concerned but I have no doubt at some time or other the right to hold a fair was granted to the Poyntz family who were very close to the royal family (even related at one time). The earliest mention of the fair at Iron Acton was around 1710 when two fairs were held, one I think for sheep, in March and the other in Sept. for horses.

I cannot remember when the last horse fair was held. I have a memory of a fair in the 1920s when there were roundabouts, chair a planes etc. I think the last must have been about 1926 when the only person to turn up was a chap named Belcher with his pony and icecream cart. I think I went down to the Green with some of the other lads during school lunchtime. I am sure there must still be a few older people in the village who can remember back to their childhood before the first world war! I know that my grandfather, Enoch Smith (died 1900) and his father Thomas Smith of Cromhall and Tytherington used to be horsedealers (something similar to secondhand car dealers I suppose!) I have heard that the boys in the family were often off school and used to ride the horses at local fairs so I suppose they would have attended Iron Acton Fair. I have been told by my uncle Cecil (recently deceased) that Enoch Smith worked in partnership with Gabriel Amos, who kept a shop at Rangeworthy, and Tom Bedggood who had a blacksmith's forge in Wickwar Road, Rangeworthy.

Acton Court

One other point, I seem to remember that in a recent number of Focus it was mentioned that King Henry VIII and Ann Boleyn visited Acton Court. I don't think that is true. They were at Thornbury Castle and they intended visiting Bristol and then on to Iron Acton but their currier who went to Bristol in advance found that the plague was raging there. He came to Iron Acton and found that the Poyntz family were affected too so the King gave Iron Acton a miss and went to Little Sodbury where he and his mistress stayed with the Walshe family. The Lord of the Manor at Iron Acton died in November that year so presumably he succumbed to the plague. This was in the summer of 1535.

Certainly Henry's father, Henry VII and his Queen, Elizabeth Woodville visited Acton Court in 1486. Dame Margaret Pointz was the illegitimate daughter of Earl Rivers, brother to the Queen. So the wife of the Lord of the Manor of Iron Acton was a 'natural' cousin to the Queen. Hope I have got it right! I don't suppose it matters who came to Acton Court or when they came by this date!!

* * * * *

A GARDENER'S PRAYER

O Lord, grant that it may rain every day, say from about midnight until three o'clock in the morning; grant that at the same time it would not rain on those which you in your infinite wisdom know are drought-loving plants - I will write their names on a bit of paper if you like - and grant that the sun may shine the whole day long, but not everywhere (not for instance on the rhododendron) and not too much; that there may be enough worms, no greenfly and that once a week thin liquid manure may fall from heaven.

Amen.

* * * * *

THE ELIZABETHAN CLUB

The year started with mild weather and no meetings had to be cancelled due to bad weather. In January members and friends went to Bath to see the Pantomime and it was an enjoyable afternoon. Several of our members also went to the Bristol Hippodrome and Thornbury to see their Pantomimes and, all being well, we are looking forward to our first Day Trip of the year on 14 April when we shall be going to the New Forest for lunch and Salisbury for tea!

We are still waiting for the decision by Northavon District Council as to whether Senior Citizens will be issued with tokens or bus passes this year, but it has been thought that there may be a choice. We will just have to wait and see.

Arthur Pitt will be running a Whist Drive in aid of the Youth Club on Monday, 30 March and also one on Monday, 27 April for Focus on Iron Acton. Both will be held in the Village Hall, starting at 7.30 pm and if anyone would like to donate prizes these can be given either to Arthur or to any other Club member. We usually enjoy ourselves and if anyone would like to come along they would be more than welcome.

Next year will be the Elizabethans' 40th Birthday! I have it on good authority that our name came about because we were formed in the same year that Queen Elizabeth was crowned.

We meet on Wednesday afternoons at 2.30 pm in the Village Hall and if any Senior Citizens in Iron Acton would like to join us they can be assured of a very warm welcome.

A very happy Easter to all Focus readers.

Susannah Russell

FIRST IRON ACTON BROWNIES

On Tuesday, 18 February at 7 pm we had a Coffee and Gateaux Evening which was a great success. I would just like to thank everyone who contributed in any way to make it such an enjoyable evening; especially all the helpers, the mums and friends who made the gateaux and donated raffle prizes, to Liz Edmunds who printed all the posters and letter that were sent out, and not forgetting all those who came to indulge themselves and put on a few extra pounds (while helping us to make a few extra pounds!). We made a grand total of £166.94 which will pay for our Capitation Fees for this year.

On Sunday, 23 February we celebrated Thinking Day with a Service at Frenchay Church. It would have been nice to have seen a few more Brownies there perhaps next year??

Jenny Cheese
Brown Owl

Perhaps Lynne Blanchard can throw some light onto why so few Brownies attended Thinking Day as she heard of a child telling a Bishop that you really had to be brave to go to Church these days. Astonished, the Bishop asked "Why do you say that?". "Well" said Emily "I heard my uncle tell my aunt last Sunday that there was a cannon in the pulpit, the choir murdered the hymn and the organist drowned the choir!!!"

Police who patrol the M20 have recently had their patrol car speedometer tested after a 25 year old gentleman was clocked doing 94 mph in his Robin Reliant Three Wheeler. The gentleman, who was banned from driving for 21 days and fined £150 for speeding on the M20, said he must have reached that speed because he was going downhill! Viva la Skoda! Story taken from The Independant on Tuesday, 25 February.