

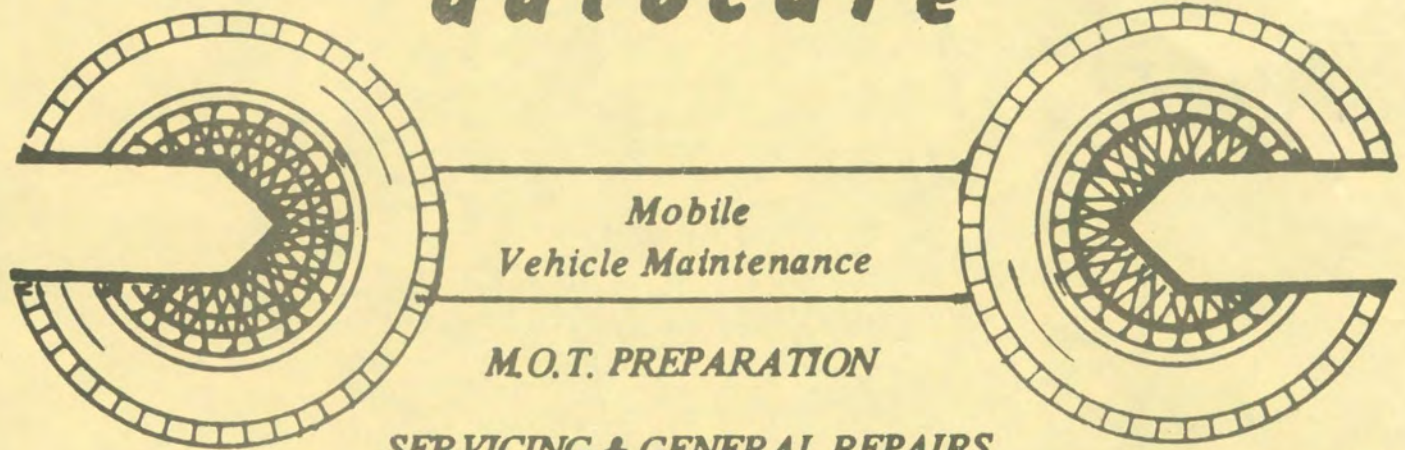


H. CHAPMAN, '75.

**FOCUS**  
 on  
**IRON ACTON**

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Rangeworthy  
228*





EDITORIAL

It has been a particularly beautiful autumn. Our spirits have been lifted by the magnificence of Chilwood whose splendid beech trees are a riot of colour at the moment, brilliant orange and burnished copper.

On a sadder note, a vast congregation recently assembled in the village Church to say farewell to Peter Hughes who died tragically in a road traffic accident on 9th September. Those of us who watched Peter grow up, were always gladdened by his exuberant high spirits and his friendly and caring personality. Our hearts now go out to his family who have had to endure the trauma of nursing Peter back to health from two separate climbing accidents.

Peter's life was short, but he will not be soon forgotten.

We have now been producing Focus for ten years. We would like to think that it has become part of village life. Your support of our Village Day ensures that we had adequate funds to continue to produce Focus, but we don't want to go on doing the same old thing issue after issue. We would welcome new ideas, new articles etc. What about a cartoonist or photographer? Should we be campaigning for changes in the village rather than just reporting them? How about a page of reader's letters?

We wish all our readers a Happy Christmas and we hope that 1993 will be more prosperous than 1992!

Charles Wilkins  
228 254

Betty Cook  
228 202

Jean Dickes  
228 609

John Percy  
228 339

Lynne Blanchard  
228 566

Peter Redman  
228 395

Lionel Alsop  
228 400



## HANELLORE'S HARVEST

Hannelore the spider stretched 4 of her legs and heaved a sigh of relief. It was Saturday and she had 2 whole days without that horrible Mrs Taylor! Mrs Taylor was the school cleaner and she didn't know the meaning of the word dirt. There wasn't one place in the whole building that her brush or duster didn't penetrate. It made Hannelore's life hell!

At the first footstep Hannelore's eyelids sprung open. Perhaps she'd been mistaken? No, there was a key turning in the lock. Rapidly she scurried away and hid under the computer keyboard. What was going on? She soon found out. Rustling of paper, mixing of paint, snatches of conversation and a stream of people confirmed her worst fears. The School was being used for a Harvest Workshop.

At 10.30 am all was ready and the happy sound of laughter mixed with concentration filled the air. Hands were being drawn around and leaf prints were piling up on the table, newspaper pictures showing the famine in Africa were being cut out, harvest flower arrangements were rising like a phoenix from a mixture of harvest material someone called Hazel Dron had collected and some of the older girls were composing something called 'intercessions'. Hannelore was impressed and wanted to know more.

At 11.45 some of the grown ups decided it was time to arrange things in Church. "What was a Church?" Hannelore wondered, before realising that if she wanted to find out she'd have to get a move on. She quickly crawled into a basket loaded with produce. Ooh, they were going outside. "Oh well" thought Hannelore "I'll just have to sit tight" and she crossed her feet for luck (all 8 of them).

'Church' turned out to be the home of someone called 'God' and although it was a bit old fashioned it was quite comfortable. Hannelore wondered why God needed his home brightened. Perhaps he'd been ill? One Claire was putting up photographs taken by a man called Howard and another Claire and a Camilla were doing famously arranging vegetables until a Lynne decided to help and everything fell over. The little ones were busily putting the cut out hands over the pews and together with all of the beautiful flower arrangements the ladies had done the Church was beginning to look wonderful. Hannelore thought that God should be happy and proud ..... but she was a little puzzled because she hadn't seen him.

Hannelore woke up. It was dark and she seemed to be in a flattened out bubble with seats. A dark shape appeared weighed down with parcels. The shape turned out to be the one they called Lynne. She sat in the bubble, fiddled with some knobs and Hannelore realised she was on the move. When the bubble thing stopped she saw a sign saying 'Village Hall' (she was a very educated spider). There was going to be a party! She crawled into Lynne's handbag - she wasn't going to miss out on all the fun!

Inside the Hall everyone seemed to be in good spirits. The food covered 2 trestle tables, the wine was flowing and Hannelore thoroughly enjoyed the play put on by some of the youngsters and which Ann Aplin and Penny Percy had so expertly produced and also thought the 2 folk singers played and sang beautifully. She couldn't get over the happy atmosphere and she loved listening to all the gossip and goings on. Judy Park had done so well to lose so much weight, Mike Wheeler was proudly showing pictures of his grandchild and David Waker was wolfing down a HUGE piece of Daphne's apple pie. Hannelore was beginning to enjoy this thing called Harvest and couldn't wait for the next day, so back into Lynne's handbag she crawled.

Sunday morning dawned. Lynne didn't seem to be too happy as she couldn't find the shoehorn that was needed to prise her from her bed. Hannelore wondered what these z's were that she wanted to stay and make. Consequently it was twenty past nine before they got to Church. Lynne's mum was not happy! Still, Lynne cheered up when all the children took up their harvest gifts. For some reason she likes to see the Rector juggle with potatoes and apples and John Park buried under a mountain of produce. Hannelore decided there was no accounting for taste. Then a man in a black dress told a story about a daisy and how our nearness to God can be likened to the nearness of the daisy's petals to its centre. Hannelore was mesmerised. She wished she could join in the songs and wondered when the would be singing a hers - all they seemed to sing about was hims.

Hannelore had already begun to think that Harvest was over when Lynne and the handbag went on the move again. This time to a place called a pub where the Harvest Sale was to take place. Hannelore was perplexed. The room was full to bursting point with people but the aim seemed to be to say that you wanted to buy something in the hope that you weren't successful. Darryl's girlfriend was quite happy though because he kept losing and she ended up with more flowers than she'd had in all their years together!

Finally it was all over. Everyone was pleased because so much had been achieved and such fun had been had. Lynne was heard muttering "never again". But, as someone said, there's a long time before next year and persuasive tactics can be employed! Hannelore sincerely hoped so. She slowly walked back up to the School enjoying the fresh air. Her narrow little world had been expanded beyond belief and she couldn't wait to be involved in the next workshop ..... but what on earth is a christingle? ..... There was only one way to find out.

(The above article mysteriously appeared and so the Focus Team can't really put a name to it. Can you?)

### IRON ACTON WI

It's only when you begin to write about your activities (or at least the ones that can be committed to paper) that you realise just how much you've been involved with and that is certainly the case with this WI report. Initially I'd thought an hour would see it written, edited and finished. I'm having to think again!

Our speakers continued in wonderfully diverse style - Remedial Massage in September and The Poisons in your Pantry in October. The gentleman at this latter meeting was talking about the effect that additives (the dreaded 'E' numbers) had had on his life. We were told about a huge catalogue of misery that this poor gentleman had endured - from itching haemorrhoids to skin complaints. Then he said the word "phantom" and I found I had to control the desire to giggle cos the only word I could think of to follow phantom was pregnancy. Surely not? Was Iron Acton WI going to have a claim on medical history? Unfortunately not. This poor man was now laying claim to phantom vomiting (lovely topic!). This was a new one to me!

July saw us gathering at Woodlands East at Marshfield for a guided walk. We learnt a lot, saw lots of beautiful things and ended up gazing at St Catherine's Court from across the valley. Enjoyable company, good weather and winding up for a relaxing drink in a local hostelry made it a wonderfully relaxing evening.

We also entered 2 teams in Avon Federation's Misermile Competition. The aim being to squeeze as many miles from a gallon of petrol as possible and to obtain sponsorship. The money is then distributed to the Hospices in Avon. All teams followed the same route, with departure times several minutes apart. Our little lot got 50 MPG and raised £72 - not a bad effort.

In August we held a small but successful tea party at Anna and John Tillotson's. It was a lovely afternoon and our grateful thanks go to Anna and John - without their help it wouldn't have been possible. August also saw the AGM for the Village Hall Committee - at long last I've escaped and the WI's representative for the current year will be Anna (and after doing all she did with the tea party - we're a horrible lot!)

Autumn drew in incredibly quickly and on a freezing and horribly wet early October evening a hardy gang of WI members gathered at the Hall where approx 25 kgs of spring daffodils and narcissi were planted along the bank and extremities of the grass. We hope that everyone will enjoy their beauty next year and will also think of Molly Smalley and Barbara Shortman in who's honour they are planted whenever you pass by.

I've always said that we're not a very crafty lot. Oh how wrong can you be! Liz Leonard, Elizabeth Edwards and Dusty Taylor have just designed and made the most beautiful sampler which has been submitted to Oxfam as part of their 50th Anniversary Celebrations. Our thanks to Lionel Alsop who was press ganged into framing it (and did a superb job) and it has now been taken to the Oxfam Shop in Swindon where it, and all the others that people have made, will be on display until late October. They will then be auctioned and the proceeds will benefit Oxfam.

Past and present have been dealt with. What about the future? We've got a skittles match against Frenchay WI in the Avon Federation Cup, a Birthday Party at the Live and Let Live, a visit to Penhow Castle in Gwent in November and the Avon Carol Service in Bristol Cathedral in December. We also have our AGM in December when we decide who's doing what in 1993.

Our 1993 programme is well on its way to completion. Talks on topics as diverse as hedgehogs, cake icing and origami, and visits to a herb garden and to watch Bristol blue glass being made will happily mingle with numerous social events. How about joining us? The second Monday of every month in the Village Hall at 7.30. Why not talk to one of our WI ladies or give any of us a ring. We would love to see you.

Lynne Blanchard / Secretary

## Alfred Strange's Diary

1933

August.

- 1st. Office - bought Insurance Stamps. 121 for 1/6d and 1/8d. 18 at 9d. and 10d (these for council highways employees). At Sodbury I met Bert Dyer who was about to get his gun licence. Later I fetched rifles from Mrs Cleavers for Mr. Gould. Arrived home to find my auntie from Yate there. Her son Jim had gone to the Tidworth Tattoo. Weather very hot.
- 2nd. I typed out two notices for Mr. Gould about British Legion outing to Tidworth Tattoo. Evening - over to Coalpit Heath with L. Wookey and later watched chaps playing cricket on the Green.
- 4th. To football meeting at North Road. Decided to arrange a fancy dress football match. At home I found my Uncle L. had arrived home from the Navy (he had completed his service). Uncle C. brought a dog home with him.  
Accident at Coalpit Heath. Mr Read (Chipping Sodbury) killed and his wife injured. Mark Dyer (New Engine) seriously injured.
- 5th. Uncle L. gave my sister £6 to buy a new bike. Sid Coles and Lilian Ponting married at Iron Acton today. Miss Gardiner married at Rangeworthy.  
Cricket - Rangeworthy 59 Charfield 62.  
Nazis making forbidden weapons.
- 6.Sun. Mark Dyer dies from injuries in road accident.
- 7th. Bank Holiday - I met L. Wookey in Chaingage Lane. We went to watch the Glos. v Somerset cricket match at Ashley Down with V. Cater. Very hot and very large crowd there. We watched the end of Glos. innings. Somerset scoring very slowly all the afternoon.  
We planned to go to the Vandyke Cinema at Downend but L.W. and V.C. went the wrong way. Watched cricket at the Downend ground and later played cricket on the Green. Glos. had scored 367 1st. innings Charlie Barnett scored 111.
- 8th. Holiday - took apples and cucumbers to my aunt at Yate. My uncle came with me to the 'Prod' (Yate Produce Sale). Afternoon to Coalpit Heath with Elwyn Morgan. We watched Coalpit Heath 201 for 8 and Knowle 130 for 6.
- 9th. Down round the mill stream with the two Burridge lads. We saw some of the chaps talking to girls from Frampton. I went round to Fortune's (Patch Elm Lane). Fred was making a hut for his ferret.
- 10th. Met Joe Batten at Yate. Cricket on the green and round to F. Fortune's. Mark Dyer buried at Yate today.
- 11th. Drew poster for the fancy dress football match. Ireland D. Valera to stop all trains to prevent blueshirts (fascists) attending Sunday's meeting.
- 12.Sat Office - Mr Powell going to Iron Acton Station to meet Capt. Henderson returning from his holiday at Woolacombe. (He lived at Winterbourne Down). Haircut at Hobbs'. Paid first lot of club money at Dyer's.
- 13 Sun Miss T not at church again today! I went round to the rectory garden with V. Cater - had a game of clock golf.
- 14th. Evening to Greggs Collage - only Miss James and self in typing room. Baton charges to quell Blueshirts in Dublin.
- 15th. Cabinet plans 100 new fighter planes.
- 16th. Office - Mr Powell commencing course in surveying with Bennet College.

- 17th. Office - letter for Mr Gould (church warden) about mishap to bell at Yate Church. Skidded and fell off my bike going round corner by Nelson's (Engine Common.) Spoke to Tom Tily (ex grammar school lad) now attending school of architecture at Cheltenham. To Greggs College - called at General P. Office (Small St.) to send off a cable to China for my Uncle L.  
315 prisoners massacred in Iraq - they were shot.
- 18th. Picked plums. To North Rd. for Fancy Dress match. Fancy Dress team 3 team 0. Collection £2.3.5d.
- 19.Sat Took plums to my auntie at Yate. To Rangeworthy but found the Fete had finished. The 'Black Gang' from Barn Hill Quarry had won the Tug-o-War.
- 20th. Fetched bottle of port from the Rose & Crown (Rangeworthy) for Uncle L. Not enough ringers for the big bells for evening service. Went for walk to Frampton with D. Gibbons, V. Cater and R. Elson. We called in at Mimmie Wadley's shop.  
Jimmy Hull gave me a lift in his car from Morse's. D. Gibbons was with him.
- 21st. W. Hammond scored 264 against the West Indies at Bristol.
- 22nd. I had to wait outside the office as Capt. Henderson was having private conversation (phone). Capt. told us of an accident that morning in White's Hill. (Hambrook). Albert Mainstone who worked for Fursmans later died from his injuries. He was riding a motor cycle. Evening - attended football meeting. Archie Mainstone elected captain. I am vice-captain. Came home with Dick Carvin of Dolls Lane.
- 23rd. Typed letter to Bakers (Berks.) re new water cart for steamroller. Albert Mainstone (The Green) dies from his injuries. Picked plums and dug six rows of potatoes. Took ladder back to Mr. Perry. To North Rd. rode 'Jugger' Aldom home on my bike.
- 26.Sat Mr Gould brought some of his onions to the office. They were for the shows at Hawkesbury and Westerleigh that afternoon. Helped put up the nets for the match. North Rd. 0 Horfield Spts 3. Their c.forward broke his leg after 5 mins. R.E. didn't have a very good match. S. Watkins missed penalty. Bert Dyer, Velt Gwatkins, Archie Mainstone and Griffin Smith all gone on Ridings Quarry outing to Blackpool. Bristol City 0 Bristol Rovers 3 (McCambridge 3).
- 27th. Evening service - a lot of people there. Mourners for Albert Mainstone who was buried yesterday. Walked to Yate with R. Elson, V. Cater and D. Gibbons. Back to Elson's where we were invited in - we had a sing-song, M. Turner came in with Reg's girl friend. Lent D.G. my bike to ride home.
- 28th. To evening class. On way home I saw Cyril Amos in Downend selling blackberries. He was out of work. Evening helped to pick football team. A. Strange, A. Mainstone, R. Carvin, D. Dickson, L. Wookey, G. Smith, B. Baker, R. Elson, B. Dyer, C. Prentergas, C. May.
- 30th. I had to go to Acton to meet Capt. Henderson at the Coach Pool which the council men are cleaning out.
- 31st. Letter to C.C. Nott of Nottingham for spare parts for F.W.D. Lorry (driven by Percy Lomas of Mission Lane).  
Sent card to Basil Jupp, scoutmaster at Pilning about football fixtures.

\* \* \* \* \*

The night porter in a Welsh hotel saw to his surprise one of the guests coming down stairs in his pyjamas at four o'clock in the morning. Tapping him on the shoulder he asked "What are you doing down here at this time?" The man started, and looking hazily at the porter replied: "I'm a sonnambulist." "I don't care what chapel you belong to", said the porter, "You can't go wandering round the hotel like this."

In Wales the Methodists are divided into two groups, the galvanised methodists and the wee sly ones.

Sign outside a cafe in Rhyl. "Fish and chips 40p. Children 20p.

## STILL REMINISCING

It was some years ago now that 5 of us decided that a week or so shooting in Ireland would be a more than beneficial change from the "Rat Race". We had received plenty of assistance in reaching this decision as two of the party were medics brought up in that country. We were positively assured by them that permits were quite unnecessary to take our shotguns into Eire.

We duly arrived at Dublin airport to be informed by the authorities that under no circumstances were we to be allowed to take our guns into their domain without necessary permits. Subsequent somewhat lengthy negotiations were left entirely with the "natives" of our party. The upshot being that we were allowed to keep our armoury provided we went straight to the Ministry concerned with such matters in the City and endeavoured to obtain the required permits. Having arrived at the splendid and imposing building we were informed the Minister had received a call from the airport and would see one of us who would act as spokesman. I must have lost my presence of mind at this stage because not only was I nominated but in a mental lapse accepted - I didn't even speak the language.

I found myself in a large imposing office seated before the Minister. I duly explained the situation and apologised profusely for any infringement. The Minister then proceeded to hand me 5 application forms, each one comprising 4 pages with at least 30-40 questions regarding the 5 guns - manufacturer, serial number, date and place of purchase, etc. I proceeded to pick up the forms and made to leave the office only to be asked where I thought I was going. I replied that I was going to get the necessary information from my friends. I was informed that if I put a bracket around all the questions and just put "12 bore" that this would suffice. I duly completed this operation on all the forms and made to leave, gathering up the forms. Again I was asked where I thought I was going. I replied that my friends' signatures were needed. The Minister then said "Ah now, you know the names surely?" I duly signed their respective names at the end of each form and departed very soon after with the necessary permits!!!! This unusual but refreshing attitude to regulations, etc, was experienced a number of times during our stay together with emphasis on the fact that time was not of great importance.

One of our party had arranged to say "hello" to his brother whilst passing through Dublin and we all went with him on the definite basis that it would only take a few minutes and we would be away on our journey to the West Coast. Some 6 hours later the locals ran out of excuses as to why it was better to have another noggin than leave and so we set forth in two hire cars. My co-driver was determined to make up for as much of the lost time as he was able (we were due at the hotel for dinner) but he failed miserably to convince me that he was as good as any Brands Hatch winner. To my surprise we eventually arrived at our hotel about midnight.

Our Hotel was quite interesting. A castle built by the Guinness Family and beautifully situated where Loch Corrib and Loch Mask virtually meet and surrounded by a moat. The bedrooms were absolutely vast with no reasonable heating - this was compensated by the incredible salmon and trout fishing.

However, I now discovered that in his efforts to impress me with his cornering my colleague had managed, en route, to lose our luggage from the roof rack and it was now lying somewhere on the side of the road between there and Dublin. We set off back at a somewhat more sedate speed to try and find it. I managed to persuade my companion after some hours of fruitless search that he was placing a great strain on any friendship that had previously existed and finally crawled (and that is a very accurate description) into bed with Dawn (no, not a girl but the thing that breaks every day).

On our first day I shot a hen pheasant - to be informed by the Ghillie that hen pheasants were never taken in season in Ireland. Perfectly true at that time but quite unknown to me. However, the Ghillie solved my dilemma immediately. "I'll tell you what we'll do Sur, we'll call it a duck". It disappeared immediately into his bag and that was the last we saw of it.

Apparently the local priest and a ghillie had been great friends for many years and over a long period had enjoyed a glass of whisky together every Sunday after mass without fail. Eventually the priest lay dying, with the ghillie at his bedside. As a last request Father asked Patrick if, for old times sake, he would visit his grave on Sundays after Mass and pour a drop of the good stuff over his grave. Patrick, a careful man, replied "Father, sure I'll do that for yer, but you don't mind if I pass it through my kidneys first." Such is friendship.



In the middle of the week I managed to fall into an Irish bog right up to my chest. It was some considerable time before my (so called) friends came to my assistance. I suppose there was some excuse - they were all physically helpless with laughter.

Some of our sorties meant leaving the hotel before dawn and I remember on one occasion we had breakfast with a local farmer who all his adult life had 2 glasses of the illicit "Poteen" with this meal. He said he thought he was going to have to give up this habit as he didn't think it was of any benefit - he was aged 85!

On our way home after a very pleasant week full of fun and humour we were invited to a party in Dublin and eventually I found myself sitting on the floor next to a very talkative chap from Cork who spent a long time raising all sorts of controversial subjects. Having spent such a delightful week in his country I thought it only right not to contradict him. Eventually he stated that they should have had Free Rule long before they did. I replied that I couldn't agree more, to which he said "and another thing I cannot stand is a bloody Englishman who agrees with everything I say". He then left me, presumably in an endeavour to find someone with a molecule of intelligence or intellect. You can't win 'em all!

AND SO, BACK TO THE RAT RACE, FEELING FIT AND HEALTHY - WELL!!!!!!

### NORTH ROAD BAPTIST CHAPEL

Since the last issue of Focus we have had much enjoyable and spiritually profitable fellowship.

Our Harvest Festival Service was led by Mr Jim Pullin who has, for many years, been connected with Muller Homes and who, besides preaching, joined his wife singing duets. The goods supplied for display were sent to The Manor House so that they could share in our Thanksgiving. My wife and I had much pleasure in entertaining the members of the congregation to Harvest Supper.

We have also had the pleasure of a visit from Sodbury Baptist Music Group leading the singing at an Evening Service. We are making good use of the platform which formed part of our renovations.

We were also pleased to visit the Beaufort House in Cranleigh Court Road to share in a Harvest Service. We enjoyed the friendship and the refreshments they provided.

It has been my good fortune to complete 16 years as the Pastor for this Chapel. My wife and I have been particularly impressed at the courage and the steadfast faith of so many of the congregation in times of adversity, it has been a great inspiration.

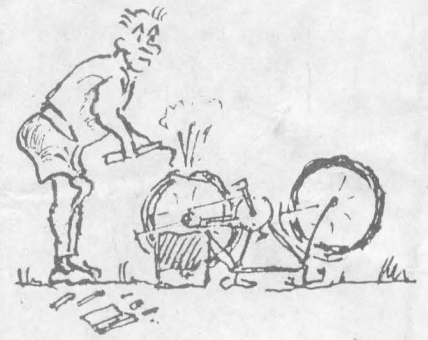
An example of this is that shown by Don and Phyllis Dyer, both of whom have been in regular attendance despite suffering the effects of a motor accident and in Don's case a serious operation and in Phyllis' case almost continuous pain but whose faith and commitment have never wavered.

Looking forward to Christmas, the Carol Service on Sunday 20 December at 6 pm will be conducted by Mr Chris Moody and on 27 December the Sunday evening service will be another Carol Service during which nearly every member of the congregation will be taking part.

Looking even further forward to Easter we shall again be having a Musical Evening with Whiteshill Male Voice Choir on Good Friday evening.

We would be pleased to see anyone who would like to come to any of our Services. We have been fortunate to share fellowship and the experience of 2 nurses from Austria and with Betty Willey's Sister and Brother-in-Law from Australia.

Mr Merrick  
344 North Road, Iron Acton - Telephone 228587



## ~CYCLING FOR SOFTIES~

It must have been at least four years ago when we saw, amongst the holiday adverts, the eye catching headline 'CYCLING FOR SOFTIES'. It really did appeal to us so we wrote off for a brochure. This duly arrived and I must say we were quite taken with what it contained.

The small family run company organises a wide variety of cycling holidays in France from Provence in the South to Brittany in the North. The holidays are graded by ease of terrain, distances covered and length of stay. The hotels are booked and bikes provided but working out the route is left to the holiday maker.

As we had not done any cycling since our distant youth it took us until this year to pluck up enough courage to have a go, although I must admit, we did borrow a couple of bikes for a trial run, before finally taking the plunge. We chose a twelve day gentle terrain holiday entitled 'Chateaux of the Loire' having carefully studied the options and attended an evening presentation held in Bristol.

We eagerly awaited our information pack which contained our itinerary, maps, and other general information and settled down to some preliminary route planning - this proved to be invaluable although some on-the-spot changes were necessary to avoid main roads.

Our base hotel was in Chinon. Here we spent our first two nights and met the company representative who introduced us to our bicycles and gave us a refresher course on how to mend a puncture, assuring us that the chances of getting a puncture were pretty remote - more of that later!!

We found Chinon to be a very interesting place and spent our time there exploring the medieval part of the town and visiting the Chateau where we had an enthusiastic guide who gave us an enthralling history lesson centred on Joan of Arc. We also took the opportunity to try out our bikes by cycling along the banks of the river Vienne and visiting the Rabelais museum - a gentle 20 miles in all.

The next morning saw us preparing for our first real challenge. We had to pack enough clothes for the next 9 days into our three panniers! It is amazing what you can get into three Tesco shopping bags - for that was just about the carrying capacity of the panniers. Having overcome this first hurdle we set off. We were full of confidence until we came upon some roadworks and had to make a diversion. This involved quite a strenuous hill climb which gave us the chance to walk a little way - highly recommended - as it helps relieve discomfort in the 'nether regions', one of the hazards of taking up cycling after a very long lay off. Some adjustments to our pre-planned route were necessary when we came to a fast road. Although the French drivers are very considerate we felt it was not for us so made a big detour before reaching our lunch stop. Here we took time out to visit a lovely Chateau set in the middle of the river Indre.



Pressing on we finally reached the farmhouse where we were to spend the next two nights. We had done about 30 miles in all so were looking forward to a shower and our evening meal. The hospitality here was first class - we all dined together at one long table - 14 of us in all, including the host and hostess.

The next day was spent exploring the local area - we spoilt ourselves and only cycled about 8 miles as the next day was to be our longest in the saddle. The ride to Montsoreau along the banks of the Loire was about 35 miles. We did however stop to visit a couple of Chateaux along the way. The one at Usse is said to have inspired the story of the Sleeping Beauty.



CHATEAU USSE.  
"SLEEPING BEAUTY"

Our day at Montsoreau was spent wandering through the Sunday Market before setting off to ride through the local vineyards and indulging in our first wine tasting - we bought a bottle for the next day's picnic - there is a section on the pannier designed to hold this holiday essential!

The next morning provided us with our only wet ride of the holiday - just a couple of hours of gentle rain as we made our way through more vineyards to Saumur. The Chateau here is very impressive and houses a museum dedicated to the horse. The home of the famous Cadre Noir is just down the road. After our picnic, it had stopped raining and we set off for our next hotel.

Following our normal pattern the next day was spent exploring the local area where we came upon a working windmill. Whilst gazing up the long drive at this ancient wonder the owner appeared in his Renault, stopped, said he would be out for half an hour and if we were prepared to wait he would gladly show us around on his return. We sat in the sun for the half hour - a very worthwhile wait, as it was fascinating to see the mill grinding away, albeit only to provide supplies for a few farm animals. Apparently too uneconomic for mass production - something to do with kilogrammes per hour.



A visit to troglodyte dwellings was the highlight of the next days journey, apart that was from the picnic by the roadside with local wine, sausage and patisserie. It was hard to imagine that this maze of underground dwellings were in use 60 years ago.

Our next day's cycling was local to our hotel. We had planned a circular tour taking in some local villages and the occasional vineyard. It was after our picnic lunch in the quiet square of the first village that I discovered the PUNCTURE (an unlikely occurrence you will recall). If this had happened earlier in the holiday I would have been a trifle agitated to say the least but after many days of picnics, wine and superb evening meals the puncture presented no problems and was duly mended with the kit provided.

Our next hotel was at Fontevraud, about a morning's ride. This suited us as we wanted to spend some time at the Abbey where Henry II and Richard The Lionheart are buried. This vast abbey is undergoing its third restoration and it was in the old refectory that we came across a choir practising for a forthcoming concert - quite a moving experience.

Our holiday was coming to an end as we returned to Chinon along the banks of the river Vienne for our last night before catching the Air France flight from Nantes to Gatwick.

'Cycling for Softies' turned out to be a very apt description of a very enjoyable twelve days in lovely countryside, with interesting places to visit, extremely hospitable people and very easy cycling.

Just for the record we estimated that we had covered something over 200 miles averaging about 20 miles a day.

P.W.W.

## IRON ACTON C OF E SCHOOL

Our first Half Term of the new school year seems to have flown by. As Acting Head for this term I would like to take this opportunity to thank the staff, parents, governors and friends of the school for their welcome and their continued support.

Mrs Marje Baxter is the new part-time teacher for the Junior Class, which contains 5 new children who have transferred to us from other schools. The Reception Class numbers 8 new arrivals, all of whom have settled in well. Mrs Hatt is attending a maths course one day per fortnight - she says she finds it inspiring and refreshing!

In October we held a Harvest Service and Auction of gifts and produce, which was generously supported by parents and friends. At the Service the Infants performed "The Big Green Bean" in which a giant bean and monster beetroot they had made played a prominent part! The Juniors had written their own harvest play, following the life story of a loaf of bread and ending with the loaf being shared. "Sharing" has been the theme of some of our assemblies this term. Hymns and prayers, led by the Rector, completed the programme.

During the afternoon the Auction took place, with Mr Den Wheeler as our guest auctioneer. We are most grateful to him and to all those who contributed to the £130 which was raised. £90 of this has been sent to Save the Children to continue our sponsorship of Goriparthi Rao, an Indian schoolboy. The remainder was donated to CLIC.

We have taken delivery of our new Numbus computer with a colour printer. The latter was paid for by The Friends - for which we thank them. On the 'money front' plans are afoot to purchase some more non-fiction books, particularly resources for history and geography to help our implementation of the National Curriculum.

At the time of writing, we are planning a trip for Class I to Bath Industrial Heritage Centre as part of the topic on Victorian Times. A fascinating 'museum' has been set up in the Classroom with numerous Victorian books and artifacts brought in by the children.

The Centre is a reconstruction of the works and offices of a small engineering and bottling factory which existed in the 19th Century and from which little was thrown away! Children will have a tour with an opportunity to handle various items and a talk from 'The Manager' about his life and times. There will also be a magic lantern show.

We have also arranged dates for Christmas events.

Arrangements for the appointment of the new Head Teacher are in hand and it is hoped he/she will take up the appointment from 1 January 1993.

In the meantime, thank you for making my time here a happy one. All at the School send their best wishes for Christmas and the New Year.

Christine Bateman / Acting Head Teacher

## NEWS FROM THE PEWS

**HARVEST:** We did it!! Up to now the figure raised for Crisis in Africa is lurching towards £600. Everyone who helped, in any way, should feel absolutely chuffed to bits. I really cannot thank everyone enough. Do you realise that just our tiny effort can be used to keep 1200 CHILDREN ALIVE FOR TWO MONTHS (data courtesy of Pete Purnell). Not only was it a financial success but a social success as well - many people came who'd been arm twisted into turning up and then found they actually enjoyed themselves! The biggest surprise had to be arriving at the Harvest Sale at 8 pm (thanks to Allan and Gail for all the help and support they gave us) only to find that I couldn't get through the lounge bar door - it was already packed to overflowing.

**SING IN:** The following weekend Pat Bashford single handedly organised a Sing In at the Church. You'd have thought that Iron Acton and surroundings would have used up all its available cash the week before. Not a bit of it! A further £500 was raised. This money will be going to the Tower Fund (you've seen the scaffolding? There's a fuller explanation later). Yet again our grateful thanks to all concerned and, yes, we hope to do another one, so all those who missed out 'cos Acton Aid had sold you a Barn Dance ticket before I could get to you watch out for next year's event!

**PINNACLES:** No, It's not an early Anglo Saxon swear word! These are the things on the top of the Tower that have got the scaffolding around them. In the last Quinquennial Report (posh church term for architect's report that has to be done every 5 years) their repair was regarded as urgent. Thank heaven for recessions is all I can say. Back in 1987 we were told that the work would cost £40,000 (I jest not), the same work which is currently in hand will cost between £7-8,000 - it's one hell of a difference and I thank God that we didn't have the cash available 5 years ago - I'd be spitting blood by now!!

**FLOWERS AND DUSTERS:** We now have a thriving group of about 30 MEN and ladies who help with cleaning and decorating the church. Next year we aim to organise a trip to the Hampton Court Flower Show and to also put on some social events in and around the village. If anyone else would love to dabble with a dahlia or a tin of pledge give me a ring - all elbow grease and floral talent gratefully received.

**CHRISTINGLE:** This service will take place on Sunday, 6 December at 6 pm. THIS YEAR WE REALLY DO HAVE AN EXTRA SPECIAL VISITOR - so don't miss out. It's a service for all ages and is great fun. There will also be a workshop at 10.30 pm on the previous day - Saturday, 5 December - so come on, diaries open and mark the date. It's a great way to start off the Christmas Season

**CHRISTMAS:** This, as usual, will take place in December. Seriously though, grab hold of a December copy of the Church Magazine for all the news on services, hand bell ringers, etc. Recipients of money/ goods will be: Christingle - Children's Society, Handbell Ringers - 50% to Cancer Research and 50% to Church, Crib Service - Barnardo's, Carol Service - Headway House and collections from Midnight Mass, Christmas Day and Boxing Day will be shared between Sightsavers (blind charity working both in UK and Abroad) and Shelter (for work with the homeless). Deciding who we would give our money to this year was probably a harder decision to make than it's ever been before. The social problems affecting both the UK and overseas have escalated beyond belief and I have to admit that it's at times like this that I wish someone would give me a magic wand and that all the world's sufferings could be alleviated.

Lynne Blanchard / Churchwarden

### GOING NUTS!!!

In early summer I thought we were going to have a record crop of walnuts, every twig seemed to be laden with fruit - that was before the squirrels found them, and it's amazing what damage 3 little squirrels can do! It isn't the amount they eat that you kind but the sheer destruction they cause. For weeks the grass was littered with unripe and half eaten nuts. In the end we managed to save a few for ourselves and now there are none left on the tree! Now the little wretches are coming back to dig up the buried treasure. When I replanted some pots I found many nuts buried among the busy lizzies and then a few days later I found some pansies had been scratched right out of the ground. Fortunately they seem to have given up for the moment but I expect they will soon be back after the birds' peanuts.

Fortunately not all garden visitors are such pests. We have had many beautiful butterflies; including a Comma this year - but still no Painted Lady. In July I spent an hour following a Humming Bird Hawk Moth trying to photograph it but it managed to escape me.

Then a few days ago I was near the stream when there was a loud call and a Kingfisher flashed past. He perched for a few moments on a Gunnera stem and then flew off. What is it about the sight of a Kingfisher that gives you such a lift?

Betty Cook

## LIFE AS A BOY IN IRON ACTON

We continue Mr Cater's reminiscences of his childhood.

About 1926 there was great labour unrest in Great Britain resulting in the General Strike. This was indeed a dreadful time for families, my father being a railway worker and union man had to stop work and the only pay we had was a few shillings from the railways union. My father was fortunate in the fact that my mother was a launderess and was able to do washing for many of the local so-called gentry and so the little she got supplemented the weekly wage. I recall my dad bringing home from the railway rabbits which my mother cooked in various ways which was very welcome. I remember being sent down to farmer Ted Cobb, our milkman, to bring home a jug of skimmed milk with which my mother would make lovely rice puddings. I believe a jug of that milk cost about 1½ or 2 pence. At this time lots of men left the railway to work in the quarries around the area but this didn't always turn out so well and very often it would seem they had jumped from the pan into the fire.

During all this time I was still a choir boy and I well remember how at Christmas time the Rector's house-keeper would put a dinner on for all the choir and how we looked forward to this special occasion and especially when she brought in the large Xmas Pudding and we all ate it looking all the while for the threepence bits which we knew were there.

On some summer evenings after Evensong, the Rector would let us younger boys go to the rectory and play croquet on the lawn. It was very pleasant there and of course we had to behave ourselves or else he would not let us have the privilege again. The organist at the time was a Mr Holcombe, who also ran the railway station. He was not the station master but I suppose acting station master. He was quite a character, apart from playing the organ at the Church he played football for Iron Acton. I also remember he made our first crystal wireless set, so I suppose he was a very clever man.

In about 1927/28 a terrible storm came with very high winds and on our way to school we found many huge Elm Trees which had lined the drive from High Street to the farm where Mr Thomas lived had all been uprooted, indeed everywhere was disaster. It wasn't very long before we began to see Mr Blakney of the timber yard at Yate arrive with his timber wagon pulled by five large horses to cut up and take the huge trunks away to Yate and we spent many hours watching the horses pull these huge trunks up on to the timber carriage and away. I also had the job which my father gave me of coming home from school every day and picking up the small logs lying around the big roots and as a result of which by the time the trees were all cleared away we had quite a nice pile of timber which my father sawed up for the fire, but being green my mother complained it needed lots of small coal to get the logs burning.

Among the many school chums were George Rowlands, his brother Mervyn, Buller Wiggins, Ronald Strange, Albert Sheppard, Evan Morgan, Joe Batten and many others. I am sad to say many of the above are no longer with us.

The High Street at this time, although not traffic free, was the place where we boys played football and the girls whip tops, the road being the ideal place. The people who owned cars at this time were very few, Dr Kent of Home Ray, Mr Spencer, Dean Lodge, Mr Chamberlain of the Gables, Mr Harrison, his sister Miss Harrison, The Rector, Mr Fugill and Mr Young who kept the White Hart, so you will see at this time it wasn't the age of car ownership. I remember my father saying to me, upon seeing Mr Young ex Police Inspector pass by in his Morris Cowley car, "There goes Mr Young with his gold watch and chain prominent, that's what he gets through selling beer etc." My father did not attend the public houses as did many of the men in the village, although my mother was a very good wine maker, making many hundred of gallons throughout the years she lived. Many was the time I was awoken by loud bangs downstairs, which my mother said was a bung being blown out of the many casks she had under the stairs.

In the winter my mother and father made rag rugs from off cuts from clothes etc. they were very good at this job and even made patterns in the rugs. These rugs were used on our floors in various places, a far cry from the fitted carpets of today.

We had, I recall, about four shops in the village, the largest being Mr Fursman who also ran a shop at Stapleton run by a Mr Higgins, son of Mr Higgins our local butcher who lived and also had his shop in the High Street. There were Mr and Mrs Wollen who kept the shop on the corner of High Street going around to the school. Mr Wollen was also our sexton at the Church. Opposite the old village hall was a little

lock up shop selling sweets and cigarettes etc ran by two sisters, daughters of a Mr Nichols of North Road. We also had another sweet shop on the green run by a Miss Barrett.

Every Monday morning, just before leaving for school, we would hear the squealing of a pig and we knew that Mr Fursman and his men were killing their weekly bacon pig and many was the time I would on my way to school climb up on to the top of the double doors to see them pulling the pig now dead off the bench to the fire which burnt off all the bristle etc.

As boys our favourite play area was around the woods. We played all the games of boys at that time, Robin Hood and other games, including the climbing of many large trees to carve our names high upon the trunk. I often wonder if they are still there today. At around this time I was now in Gaffer Short's class and with the older boys, every Wednesday in the season were allowed to work a small piece of garden as a lesson and Gaffer Short took this opportunity of drinking tea whilst we boys enjoyed the garden. At the end we proudly took the vegetables we had grown home. I recall that Mr Clapworthy who lived in the house where Mr Wilkins lives now, ran a market garden and was very much disliked by all the boys because when playing ball in our playground if the ball went over into his fowl pen, upon asking for it back he would chop it up and throw it over. During one of our garden lessons, Ron Strange who was next to our plot remarked that Mr Clapworthy was walking along the top of his field carrying a basket on his shoulders; we were digging potatoes so Ron Strange picked up one and threw it and knocked Mr Clapworthy's bowler hat which he wore right off. He was very angry and came over the wall shouting at us, whilst doing so Mr Short came out and there was a verbal battle which ended by Gaffer Short telling Mr Clapworthy to get off the school premises.

#### ELIZABETHAN CLUB

Since the last edition of Focus several new officers have had to be elected by the Elizabethan Club. The new details are as follows:

Chairman	Mrs Sue Russell
Vice Chairman	Mrs Ivy Taylor
Treasurer	Mr Charles Worsley
Asst Treasurer	Mrs Betty Hall
Secretary	Mrs Elsie Blanchard
Outings Secretary	Mrs Ivy Worsley

The Club has also lost another of its members, Mr Ron Cutts, and we would like to express our sympathy to his family.

Two more successful Whist Drives have been held at the Village Hall; we raised £101 for Dr Sherriff's Surgery Appeal and £110 for Bristol Eye Hospital. The next one will take place on 23 November and proceeds from the evening will go towards Elizabethan Club funds - this will also be our "Christmas Whist Drive" (we know it's early but many people seem to have other commitments closer to the festive season).

Three outings have also been organised; to Paignton, to Dartmouth and to Swansea and the Gower Coast (well, it should have been the Gower Coast but there was a slight hiccup and we ended up with a mystery trip - even the driver didn't know where we were going! Never mind, it all ended up well).

On 16 November we shall be going to watch the Carnival at Weston and our Christmas Dinner will take place on Monday, 7 December in the Village Hall when numerous friends will also join us for a meal prepared and served by Mrs Gawler and helpers.

The Christmas Season then continues with a visit by some of our members to the Salvation Army Carol Service in the Colston Hall on 13 December and we finish our festivities on 27 January with a visit to the Pantomime at the Bristol Hippodrome.

All of us would like to wish the readers of Focus a happy and healthy Christmas and New Year.

Elsie Blanchard / Secretary

## ACTONIANS AUTUMN NEWS

As we approach all too quickly the winter and Christmas, we have behind us the first production of our Jubilee Year - the 2 one-act farces from the Alan Ayckbourn "Confusions" collection, produced by Mike Wills. These lighthearted productions with an excellent supper master-minded by Liz Aplin, are proving to be a popular format with our audiences and a much-needed fund raiser towards our main 3-act productions.

This brings us to the word on everyones' lips: **O L I V E R**

- our Winter production and the highlight of our Jubilee Year. Produced by Janet Lewis, the Show is already in full rehearsal. By the time you read this copy of Focus it will only be a matter of days before the first night. I hope you've managed to get a ticket since, at the time of writing, they are selling like hot cakes. If you missed out, give me a ring on 228704 to see if there are any cancellations or room at the Senior Citizens' Matinee on Saturday afternoon, 5 December. Incidentally, if you wish to help with scenery, costumes, props, bar or administration - give me a ring.

We are, of course, always keen to welcome actors or actresses into our Group - and even budding directors or producers! So, if you have a burning desire to see your favourite play performed in Iron Acton Village Hall submit it to the Committee!

You may also like to note that as from the Oliver production we will be starting a computerised information and ticket booking service (courtesy of that famous software company CTS) for all future Actonians productions. If you wish to avail yourself of this service (information on forthcoming productions and telephone/mail ticket booking) add your name and address to the list provided in the entrance hall at Oliver, or give me a ring on 228704.

On a final note to those who simply come along and support our productions. THANK YOU and please continue to do so since without an audience a drama group has no existence. Don't be shy - tell us what you think. We want to put on what you enjoy. See you at the OLIVEnt of 1992.

Gerry Millward / Chairman

## NORTH ROAD LADIES CLUB

At our September meeting Mr Ainslie gave a slide show on Glass Engraving, showing different methods of engraving and stippling glass. Some of the slides showed ones he had been commissioned to make for presentation at events.

October saw Maureen Kimber of Boots with her model, demonstrating the use of their No 7 range of cosmetics and how to apply them correctly. Several members had make-overs; the results were extremely pleasing.

This year is our 25th Birthday and in November we celebrate with a meal at the Restaurant at Gaunts Earthcott, sampling the range of dishes available and during the evening listening to music played by the resident organist.

December's meeting combines our Annual General Meeting with an American Supper, playing games and singing carols.

Club meetings are held on the first Monday of the month at 7.30 pm at North Road School. So why not come along and join us - new members are always most welcome. Many interesting events are lined up for 1993.

Wishing you all a Happy New Year.

Dorothy Denning



## 25 years of the Actonians.

The Actonians drama group started 25 years ago as the brain child of Gerald & Margaret Green. It is now an institution - almost a way of life ...

During 25 years the group has developed an extensive and electric repertoire which has included comedy, farce, pantomime, musicals and poetic drama by Dylan Thomas, T.S. Eliot & Christopher Fry. A thriving group of Junior Actonians expertly looked after by Jenny Pratt promises our survival into the future. Our eldest member, Kitty Wathen, gave a stirring performance in her nineties.

Standards and skills have greatly improved, and we have been the proud winners of awards in local competitions. The chief gain however, has been the tremendous fellowship and the development of creative skills in the community.

Was there some masochistic, Keep-fit idea behind it? Gerald devised a complicated wooden structure which took two hours to assemble, two hours to take apart again and required the labours of half a dozen stalwart dedicated men. Its purpose was to allow those seated at the back of the hall to get a good view. Thanks to a better stage, this procedure is now unnecessary, but the keep-fit tradition is still maintained.

A well rehearsed routine called shifting the Percy's piano is still practised by Actonians. It can be observed by favoured customers from the local hostelry. It requires six strong men who are prepared to venture out in cold and wet conditions at unsociable times of the day and night in order to test their traffic sense, team spirit and dedication to musical entertainment.

Stoical supporters of the group have also learned to dread the arrival of the hit squad. Their presence/wardrobe/office/garden is required to be sacrificed to the current production. There are sitting rooms in the village whose furniture bears the scars of dramatic skirmishes.

Thank you Gerald & Margaret for a great idea!

Penny Percy.

\* \* \* \* \*

### ACTON AID

Before we know where we are it's Autumn again - after an extremely successful and enjoyable Barn Dance - thanks to Philip King for the loan of what turned out to be an ideal venue - which not only gave us an evening of traditional bucolic entertainment but also raised a few hundred pounds for village charitable causes. (What do you mean it was cold ??? - only if you weren't dancing; if you were, wasn't it HOT in that barn!). A vote of thanks also to Eddie Moore and Family for running an excellent bar - despite the yukky but essential plastic glasses. Quite interesting that Bedminster Beer, what! Sorry there was no zoider - next time there will be.

The next function on our agenda was going to be an Old Tyme Music Hall at the end of October. Unfortunately the temporary loss of the Village Hall Theatre Licence following an unfavourable environmental/fire inspection has caused us to postpone this event - it will probably now take place next Spring.

This brings us up to the Christmas festivities and the next Acton Aid functions. Watch out kids for the traditional Christmas Party with Brian the Magician in the Village Hall on the afternoon of 20 December. While, this year, all the Senior Citizens will enjoy a special free matinee showing of Lionel Bart's "Oliver" by the Actonians on Saturday, 5 December at 2.00 pm in the Village Hall complete with a free Christmas tea in the interval provided by Acton Aid. Transport will also be provided by Acton Aid members. Lionel also will have circulated a booking form via your Acton Aid contacts by the time you read this issue of Focus. If, for any reason, you didn't receive one ring Lionel on 228400.

For those Acton Aid members who are unfortunate enough to miss out on our topical, contraversial, stimulating and exciting monthly meetings in the Rose and Crown (8 pm on the First Thursday of every month - new members - male and resident in the Parish - always welcome) accompanied by calming pints of Bass, please note that the Annual Dinner is planned for March next year (couldn't get February) in the same excellent venue we enjoyed last time - The Grange at Northwoods.

## ANOTHER KIND OF BOXING DAY

Extract from a diary - 26.12.91. Andhra Pradesh, India.

Up late - nearly nine o'clock, although rumour had it that a fisherman would be coming on a motor bike to escort us all on a fishing trip to the sea. But you quickly learn in India that appointments are immensely flexible. Several examples may follow!

I forgot whether the fisherman on the motor bike actually came to the village but we set off at about 10 a.m. to walk to the town to catch a bus. Bapatla was its usual teeming self. I have never seen it anything but thronging with people, except once at a ghostly 3 a.m. when I first arrived when, being carted up the hill by a stalwart bicycle rickshaw man, it looked completely derelict. Today, everyone was buying or selling, shouting, laughing, quarrelling, lounging or staring at us. We, or at any rate I, am highly freakish here. I don't know whether it's the straw hat or the frizzy perm, or simply that I am highly freakish!

We probably did look an odd lot. A group of Indians, some in dhotis and some in trousers and shirts. There was, too, this pleasant Jewish man, whose name I haven't yet mastered - Kazeek? - in green shorts and shirt and flowing biblical black curls and thick lensed glasses; then a Frenchman, Christian, the epitome of France, with an a la plage set of blue shorts and T shirt and a neat little white matelot hat. He didn't actually have a bottle of vin rouge or a baguette poking out of his bag, but that wasn't his fault. Then there was Jacky, very neat and very English (although she's lived and worked in India for years) a lady of impeccable good behaviour and organisation, with neat chignon and dirndl skirt. And of course there was Julia and me, carrying our little Barker's of Kensington carrier bag (courtesy of Charlie) with my Marks and Spencer swimming costume. Incidentally, to those who have always wondered what happened to Spencer, we found him last week in Madras. His rather seedy department store is soon to be transferred to a spanking new but soulless building next door, so watch out, Sieffs!

Then the fisherman on the motorbike, who kept appearing from nowhere all that day, like a genie in a lamp, (only he always disappeared in a cloud of dust and exhaust fumes) advised that we would be unwise to take a bus (mainly because there weren't any) but suggested bicycle rickshaws instead, as far as the canal, where a fishing boat would await us to take us to the sea. So after long discussions with the rickshaw men we set off again through the bazaars and out into the country. A lovely straight road opened out in front of us, bordered with acres of rice fields, dotted with tall dark palm trees. We had young, rather racy rickshaw drivers, who seemed to enjoy overtaking one another, egged on, I'm ashamed to say, by one or two hooligan passengers, so the thing developed into a chariot race, until energy began to flag.

Arriving at the canal (we won by a short bicycle spoke) we were met again by the motorbike fisherman. Well, it seemed that the fishing boat was not quite ready, so please would we rest at his uncle's house while he went away to organise it. Some of us, petulant at this slowing down of our erstwhile rather flashy pace, asked why we couldn't just walk to the sea, but Jacky explained that the trip had been promised for months and we must not offend him. So we waited on a huge bed thing, outside uncle's wattle and banana leaf house, amongst foraging chickens and tiny fish lying drying in the sun. Never did see uncle though.

So another hour went by and we waited some more, and drank coconut milk from a green coconut, through a pink straw. Back at the bridge, the vista was immense and for the whole length of the canal there was not a boat in sight. The sun was getting very hot and the coast seemed a long way off. Then someone spotted a dot on the horizon. I couldn't even see it myself, but after about half an hour it did seem as if a slight moving mirage object shimmered a thousand miles away downstream. and then, at last, it really was our boat and all at once the two hour wait seemed worth it. It was large, tarred black, creaky and ancient to the point of fossilisation and half the little boy population of some downstream village had come along for the ride, dressed in nothing at all but a little string thing to cover the most vulnerable parts. They all fell about in hysterics when they saw us and popped off their perches and into the abundant bilgewater. The boat had a permanent and full time bailer-out. So reassured, we clambered aboard, while all the little boys crammed themselves up at one end with the helmsman and the motor juddered into life and the bailer bailed a lot more energetically and off we set on that idyllic journey to the sea. It was a paradise for birdwatchers, cranes, buzzards and waders and huge blue kingfishers. There were children cutting sugar cane, staring in disbelief at the motley voyagers in a big leaky boat.

And then we saw the rollers of the Bay of Bengal and the fishing village between the river and the sea. Some mothers seemed to be shouting angrily at the naughty boys so they all dived off the boat and swam away, the open sea apparently being preferable to the wrath of their parents.

All the Indians in our party said how cold the sea was, and went away to organise a warming game of rounders played with a piece of sugar cane found on the beach. But as I swam I thought, compared with Lyme Regis in August, it was pretty good, for a Boxing day. Then we found we had forgotten half the picnic, the Indian half, so Julia and I had the remains of the chicken and stuffing, but the vegetarians had to make do with slices of Christmas pudding and apples. Later there were mince pies and Double Gloucester cheese, all the way from Safeways, Yate. It seemed a good combination taken on the beach on the Bay of Bengal, in the sun, where there was not another soul in sight but our little party, and where the beach apparently stretches on endlessly towards Madras, hundreds of miles away.

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#### VOCATIONAL SERVICE AWARD

The Rotary Club of Chipping Sodbury are again looking out for individuals who have made a major contribution to the local community life.

For the last two years, the Club have presented vocational awards which recognise and hopefully encourage vocational excellence and high ethical standards.

The Club is now searching for this years' candidate and is looking for people who serve the Sodbury Vale community through their work, whether with young children, the elderly, the handicapped or in any other appropriate way.

"We know that there are lots of people who every day give outstanding service to the community through their occupations, we would like the change of recognising at least one of these people each year" says Committee Chairman Bill Bennett.

The Rotary Club of Chipping Sodbury are keen to hear from anybody who may wish to nominate someone with whom they work or who may like to apply themselves. Professionals and volunteers alike are encouraged to come forward.

Terms and conditions of the award are not restrictive except that nominees must be at least 18 years old and be resident within the Northavon area. Further information or nominations should be sent to Bill Bennett, C/o, Bill Bennett Engineering Ltd., Horton, Chipping Sodbury, Bristol BS17 6QH (Tel: 0454 321707).

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#### BROWNIES

Does anyone have any talents they would like to share with us, anything that you think the brownies will enjoy doing. We are planning to have a disco on December 15th 6 - 7.15. Is there anyone who could provide the music for us.

We are holding a Christmas bazaar on December 8th, 6 - 9 o'clock. If anyone could put up a poster for us please contact me, also if anyone has any nearly new clothes and books they would be gratefully received. Please bring them along on any Tuesday or phone me and I would be glad to come and collect them.

Also in the new year we are planning a pantomime, so I hope you'll come along and support us.

Admission to bazaar is free. Father Christmas is 60p.

Coffee, tea, squash and biscuits will be available.

Brown Owl (Sue 0272 373071)

## PARISH COUNCIL

During the last few months councillors have been walking the footpaths to clear obstructions and check that all are passable. New stiles and also signposts are being erected. Now that people are taking more interest in walking and the countryside these paths should be kept open and we hope that walkers will report any blocked or overgrown paths. Footpath maps should be available by the time you read this.

We are sorry that Don Elson has had to retire from the council due to ill-health and we wish him and Edna happiness in their new home in Thornbury. He has been a councillor for many years and has always been very keen to look after the North Road area. This leaves a vacancy in the East Ward and will mean a bi-election - if ten parishioners ask for it.

Barry and Malcolm (aka Starsky and Hutch) are still doing great work around the Village and will continue for as long as the weather permits. Much upkeep is always needed in the Parish Meadows - some of it unfortunately due to vandalism. It would help so much if people would report any damage they see taking place. We were sorry to hear that a little girl received a serious leg injury when a boy was pulling stones off the wall. Many of the walls are being deliberately damaged making them a danger to other people and constantly incurring costs to repair them.

Tennis courts are still free to children, but adults are asked to pay a small fee for their game - and this money will then be used to provide a fund for repairs, etc. Please see or phone Mr Carter at 9 Chilwood Close (Rangeworthy 228563). We hope to have the white lines repainted before long!

Primroses have been planted at the Village Hall (in addition to the bulbs planted by the WI) and foxgloves and more primroses will be planted in the Parish Meadow. We are also planning to plant daffodils on some of the verges in North Road and on the By-Pass verges.

Betty Cook

## NORTH ROAD SCHOOL

Another year is well under way at North Road School. The number of pupils has now topped the 100 mark (103) and we are beginning to wish that we had expanding walls!

We have recently had all the doors in the school painted, and the outside ones are now a cheerful shade of red, to see us through the long winter ahead! We just wish that we could persuade Avon to meet the cost of the rest of the external painting needed.

This term we have welcomed Mrs Ridd to our team and she is currently working alongside Mrs Ellery, with the oldest children, to prepare them for their future Secondary Schools. Mrs Child has now produced a son, to keep an even balance to her family, and hopes to return in February.

Now that PE, music and art have come on stream in the National Curriculum we are pleased to have Bob James, Alan Tinsley and Robin Rycroft running an after school football club, and delighted that Robert Hutton has made the under 12 squad for the Avon Schools Badminton. Mr Thomas is our new Brass Teacher, piano lessons are available during school time. Mrs Karen Quinlan, a mum in North Road, plays the piano for singing and Mrs Burrows has joined me in running an after school recorder club. Avon are providing a Music Workshop Day on 9 December which will be for the older classes and will provide topic based opportunities to compose music. We feel that these activities go a long way to support our work in the National Curriculum and we are VERY grateful to all concerned.

The Christmas Concert this year will be split for the Infants and Juniors. The Infants will be sharing their celebrations at 2 pm on Wednesday, 16 December and the Juniors at 7.15 pm on Thursday, 17 December. If you would like to attend either of these please contact the School to reserve your place and mince pie!

Glenys Anderson / Head Teacher

DIARY OF FORTHCOMING EVENTS

In the Village Hall:

Every Monday & Thursday	Nursery School	9.00 am
Tuesday	Brownies	6.00 pm
Wednesday	Elizabethans	2.00 pm
	Junior Actonians	6.00 pm
	Actonians	7.30 pm
2nd Monday in the month	Women's Institute	7.30 pm
3rd Monday in the month	Parish Council	7.30 pm
4th Monday in the month	Whist Drive	7.30 pm
3rd Thursday in the month	Knitting Group	1.30 pm
November 28	St James the Less Christmas Fayre	3.00 pm
December 2 - 5	Actonians "Oliver"	
December 12	Northavon Auctions	
December 19	Acton Aid Party	8.00 pm
December 20	Children's Party	2.30 pm

In the Parish Church

November 28	Christmas Fayre-Village Hall	3.00 pm
December 5	Christingle Workshop at the School	10.30 am
December 6	Christingle Service	6.00 pm
December 24	Crib Service	6.30 pm
	Midnight Mass	
CHRISTMAS DAY	Holy Communion	8.00 am
	Holy Communion	9.30 am
December 27	Carol Service	6.30 pm

In North Road Baptist Chapel

December 12	Carol Service	6.00 pm
December 27	Carol Service	6.00 pm

At Iron Acton School

December 14	Afternoon Performance of School Plays	
December 16	Plays by Children to the Elizabethans	
December 17	Christmas Concert Evening Performance	
December 21	Christmas Party	2.30-4.30 pm
December 22	End of Term	
January 4 1993	School Closed In-Service Day	
January 5	Spring Term Commences 1993	

At North Road School

December 16	Infants' Concert	2.00 pm
December 17	Juniors' Concert	7.15 pm
1st Monday in the month	North Road Ladies	7.15 pm

At the Rose & Crown

1st Thursday in the month	Acton Aid	8.00 pm
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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 any of the persons named on the Editorial page, who will be ready to help with advice 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 B Cook (228202) or Mr L Alsop (228400).

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- \* Inferiority feelings
- \* Inhibitions
- \* Learning difficulties
- \* Legal testimony
- \* Meanness
- \* Memory
- \* Nail biting
- \* Nightmares
- \* Over eating
- \* Panic
- \* Public speaking
- \* Relaxation
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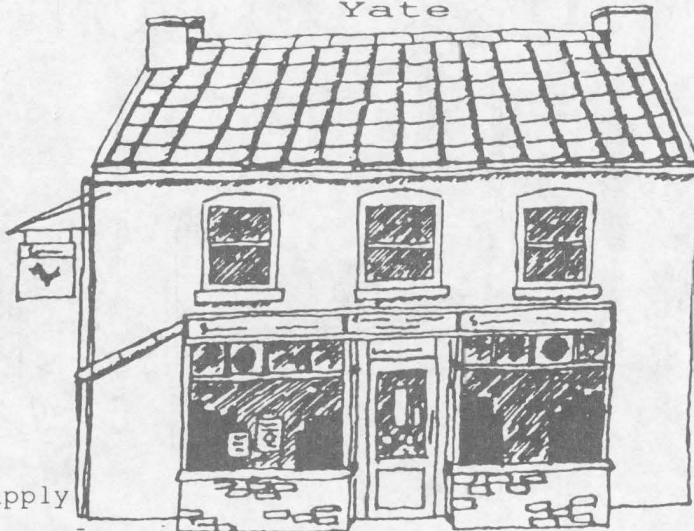
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