



# THE SIGNALL

A Community Newsletter for

KINNERSLEY-SARNESFIELD-LETTON - NORTON CANNON - BROBURY  
STAUNTON-ON-WYE-MONNINGTON-ON-WYE-MOORHAMPTON

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## Upper Norton Farm

### A COUNTRYSIDE UNDER THREAT

Last October this well known local stock farm came on the open market. Formerly part of Garmons estate and farmed by the Williams family for many years, it was featured at the time in 'Farmers Weekly' and the 'Hereford Times' as a desirable and viable family farm.

Stretching from the Maddie Brook to the Letton flood plain its 283 acres represent 14% of the parish of Norton Canon, and its hedges, trees and pasture were a vital part of the local countryside.

Clearly, the farming methods of the new owners were going to have an important effect on the environment of the parish.

#### Get Lotted!

'Lotting' a farm means splitting up the land and the selling of the house and buildings on their own. It is a way of increasing the overall price per acre of the land and the estate agents who cream off a tidy profit at every transaction are much in favour of it.

The result is that the farm disappears as a viable unit, its land bought up by those who already have land. The practice is outlawed in many European countries. In West Germany, for example, it is illegal to split up a viable farm.

This is just what has happened to Upper Norton Farm. The farmhouse and buildings are currently (15th February) on the market with 1½ acres and the land has been split between three farmers, two of whom live some miles away.

**PLEASE! PLEASE! NOTE THAT COPY FOR THE MAY ISSUE OF**

**'SIGNALL' SHOULD REACH TRISANNA, STAUNTON-ON-WYE (PHONE**  
**MOCCAS 517) NOT LATER THAN FRIDAY, 12th APRIL, 1985.**

This farm has been a family farm probably since early medieval times but is never likely to be a farm again.

#### Asset Stripping the Land

The estate agents gave the game away in their details of the farm: '...this well stocked traditional farm has high inherent fertility suitable for intensive arable....' An open invitation to some prairie farmer to cash in on the accumulated fertility built up by traditional farming.

Although the new owners are not in the same league, one of them has already bulldozed out most of the hedges on the East side of the farm and cut down the trees. Only swift action by Leominster District Council under pressure from local people has temporarily saved the rest of the trees and woodland on the farm by applying tree preservation orders. But even now the new owners are appealing.

Despite the millions of words written about farming and conservation, despite appeals from the conservation bodies, the public, the government and even recently farming organisations like the NFU and the CLA, a minority of farmers are behaving as if they lived in another world oblivious to the damage they do both to the countryside and to farming itself.

#### Indecent Exposure

Of all the land in Norton Canon, that of Upper Norton Farm is the most exposed, sitting on the brow of a ridge. In the snow, the road which bisects the farm to Staunton was the only one to be blocked - by a series of 10 foot snow drifts! On Sunday, 10th February, an abandoned car was completely buried. With the hedges and trees removed the situation will hardly improve.

Those living near the farm already say they feel more wind.

There are also good farming reasons for not grubbing hedges on such an exposed land. The small increases in land area gained by grubbing the hedges will be lost because of the reduced spring soil temperatures caused by the higher wind speeds over the wet soils of Spring.

#### An Erosion of Values!

The Soil Survey which do all the research into soil and soil erosion in the U.K. have been finding that large exposed fields in high rainfall areas are prone to waterbourne erosion. Dr. Robert Evans, one of the scientists involved in erosion research, has been studying a series of aerial photographs which include Herefordshire. Although the results will not be published until June, in a letter to me he writes '...I am impressed by the amount of erosion in Herefordshire.' He sites hedgerow removal and the change over to intensive arable as the main reasons. Long term soil erosion is a serious problem with unforeseen economic consequences which the farming community has yet to face up to.

The land at Upper Norton is not exempt.