

THE SIGNAL

A Community Newsletter for
KINNERSLEY-SARNESFIELD-LETTON-NORTON CANON-BROBURY
STAUNTON-ON-WYE-MONNINGTON-ON-WYE-MOORHAMPTON

NO. 35

APRIL 1985

PRICE 12p

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
'SIGNAL' 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.

Wildlife - Hedging its Bets?

Hedges are important for wildlife. Starting from the bottom up: Their root systems will behome for small mammals like shrews, bank voles, field mice and weasels. The hedge bottom will contain a great variety of wild flowers, typically cowslips, primroses, wood anemonies, bluebells, dogs mercury, celandine and many more wild plants on the run from 'modern' farming. The hedge itself will be made up of a variety of native shrub and tree species. The older the hedge the more species.

Many hedges around here will have 5 or 6 species per 30 yard stretch giving an approximate age of 4 or 5 hundred years. 7 or 8 species hedges are not unusual. This plant diversity gives rise to all the insect species, most of which are harmless to agriculture like most butterflies and moths. Insect pests from aphids to root grubs will be kept in check by parasitic wasps, ichneumon fly and hoverfly larvae and various beetles like ladybirds and their larvae all of which overwinter in hedges. Furthermore, insects are an important factor in the number of breeding birds the countryside supports in the spring.

All of this counted for nothing as the farmer and his contractor bulldozed the hedges into smouldering heaps in a matter of hours.

Oaks get the Chop

The importance of mature oak trees to open farmland cannot be over-estimated. From insects to woodpeckers they are indispensable as well as being majestic in appearance. With young oaks coming through the hedges to replace them, a mature oak can be felled for timber and firewood without long term loss, but an asset stripper or prairie farmer only interested in the annual cash crop, whose price is supported by public money, the cutting down of trees is a final act giving a temporary glow in a few woodburning stoves.

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A Matter of Courtesy

Nobody locally was asked if they minded this imminent change in their environment or whether anyone may have been concerned about loss of wildlife and its habitat. Even if the intention remained inflexible it would at least have been common courtesy.

The Ultimate Loser - Farming Itself

What is happening at Upper Norton Farm is part of a national trend that is devouring the countryside of Western Britain. Even though current EEC and Treasury support for farming is higher than for all public sector industries put together, the number of farms and farmers declines every year. Furthermore, farm incomes of the smaller farmers are declining. So where is all the money going? ** Everyone, and particularly farmers, who want a serious answer to this question should read the recently published book:

'Farming for Farmers?' by the agricultural economist Richard Howarth, available from the Institute of Economic Affairs, 2 Lord Street, London SW1 3LB, price £4.

** (No prizes for guessing!)

A Postscript: The Farmer's Case

Before writing this I contacted one of the new owners of Upper Norton Farm and discussed these issues and had a useful discussion. The situation is by no means black and white, and I admit to writing this from a strongly conservationist viewpoint. What is destruction to me is an economic imperative to him and he did say he would replant a hedge or two. There were many issues where we had to agree to differ and I remain unconvinced. But maybe he can put his case in the next issue?

Earlier this month Leominster District Council's planning committee held a meeting at the site so that councillors could see the woods for themselves before deciding whether or not to confirm a tree preservation order. An emergency order has already been served on 16 oaks and a small area of woodland to the east and south-east of the farm. The final decision will be made later during the month.

David Lovelace

STOP PRESS

The sub-committee of the planning committee of the Leominster District Council have voted in favour of retaining the Tree Preservation Order on all the trees, but this has to be ratified by the planning committee of the full council.

EDITOR'S NOTE

The subject of conservation is highly contentious. We ourselves are great believers in the 'Right to reply,' and will be glad to publish any opposing views you may hold on the subject.

The Anatomy of a Village

FIGURES which strikingly reflect the changing pattern of life in at least one Herefordshire village have been revealed in a survey of Staunton-on-Wye recently carried out by the Leominster Marches Project.

The Project began in 1981 as a five-year community development scheme working in west Herefordshire villages. It is funded by the Community Projects Foundation, the Hereford and Worcester County Council and the Leominster District Council. The four-person team worked with local people, voluntary groups and the private and public sector to create social and economic opportunities in the area and the scheme is the first of its kind.

The Staunton-on-Wye survey used as its basis the 1971 and 1981 censuses, supplemented by interviews with some 15 residents in the village. The survey revealed that:

- The total village population fell from 399 to 375 between 1971 and 1981, although it may have risen slightly again since then.
- There was a sharp fall in the number of young children in the village. Those under the age of 9 fell from 70 in 1971 to 29 in 1981.
- It was revealed that 98, or 26 percent, of the population in 1981 were over the age of 60, compared with 80 in 1971. This compares with 21 percent in the Leominster district, and with 18 percent in England and Wales as a whole.
- Out of the total population of 375 in 1981, 148 were working, 16 (mainly in the 16-24 age group) were seeking work, and 137 were economically inactive (including 56 retired persons.)
- Out of 132 households, 86, or 65 percent, were owner-occupied.
- 29 households in the village did not own a car, although as many as 36 owned more than one.

Mrs. Suzanne Penny, one of the Marches Project's three Community Development Workers, quoted these and other figures revealed in the survey to a meeting of the Staunton-on-Wye Parish Council which she addressed on 14th February. She mentioned that the areas which gave most cause for concern were the declining role of the village school, planning for housing and the lack of village identity.

The meeting was thrown open for discussion at the conclusion of Mrs. Penny's address and various opinions regarding causes and remedies were advanced. Many people were of the opinion that planning policy was one reason for the decline and feared that Staunton might in consequence become a 'geriatric' village. Mrs. Penny mentioned that the Leominster District Council's Chief Planning Officer was a member of the Marches Project

Committee and received copies of survey reports..

As regards the fall in the number of pupils at the village school various possible causes were put forward, and everybody interviewed during the survey stressed that they would be sorry if it had to close.

The conclusions finally arrived at was that Staunton had definitely lost its identity and was a 'difficult' village geographically.

Mrs. Penny was asked for suggestions to 'revitalise' the village. She replied that the Project was in no way trying to impose ideas on any community but could suggest and assist in any ideas that were proposed. She quoted the example of village classes at Almeley which had come into being as a result of Marches Project help in implementing suggestions. These had been tried in Staunton a couple of years ago but had not been a success.

Many members felt that there were very few village activities for the younger age groups. Mrs. Penny mentioned the 'Play Day' scheme operated last summer by Mrs. Linda Stokes and how successful it had been, although its organisation involved much hard work. As regards getting the public involved in any ideas Mrs. Penny suggested a possible survey of interests and the inauguration of classes, perhaps by small informal groups. She also mentioned the Resource Centre at the school and the comprehensive facilities it could offer in the field of duplicating and photo copying.

It was unanimously agreed by the meeting that Staunton very much wished to be involved with the Marches Project and Mrs. Penny was invited, and agreed, to attend the next meeting in May.

Among other matters discussed at the meeting was the question of the village hall, which was suffering from lack of support and finance. It was felt that it needed to be more generally used and to be the pivot of the village. It was agreed that the Hall Committee should be invited to the next meeting.

EDITOR'S NOTE:

To what extent do you feel that this survey of Staunton applies to your own community? If you would like to comment please write in.

A BAZAAR

will be held at

STAUNTON-ON-WYE HALL

on 27th April, 1985 at 2.30 pm

IN AID OF CHELTENHAM COBALT UNIT.

Any items given for the sale can be left with Mrs. Chant, Orchard Cottage.

WINE AND CHEESE PARTY

at

OLD LETTON COURT

26th APRIL - 8.00 p.m.

In aid of Staunton-on-Wye Playgroup.

By kind permission of Mr. and Mrs. A.B. Cowap.

Church Notices

The Weobley Group of Parishes

EASTER DAY - April 7th

Services of Holy Communion (1662) will be held in each church:-

Sarnesfield	10 am
Norton Canon	9 am
Staunton-on-Wye	11 am
Byford	9 am
Monnington-on-Wye	10 am
Letton	11 am

Other Services as follows:-

Sarnesfield

28th 10 am Morning Prayer

Norton Canon

14th 9 am Morning Prayer
21st 9 am Holy Communion
28th 9 am Family Service

Staunton-on-Wye

14th 11 am Morning Prayer
21st 11 am Holy Communion

Byford

21st 6.30 pm Evening Prayer

Letton

28th 6 pm Holy Communion

Annual Parochial Church Meetings

April 23rd Sarnesfield 7 pm at Sarnesfield Court
April 30th Staunton-on-Wye 7.30 pm at the School
May 2nd Monnington-on-Wye 7.30 pm at Chase House

Other Meetings

Wardens' Council on Monday April 22nd at 8 pm in the Willow Gallery, Weobley.

The Christian Ministry of Healing
A talk by the Revd. Stephen Parsons Vicar of Lugwardine at 7.45 pm in the Willow Gallery, Weobley.

Holy Week Meditation on Wednesday at 2.30 pm in Weobley Parish Church led by Mrs Kathleen Anderson

Maundy Thursday Holy Communion at Hereford Cathedral 10.30 am
Weobley Parish Church 7.30 pm

Good Friday 1 hour service in Weobley Parish Church

Deanery Synod April 16th

One-day Conference on Rural

Evangelism - specially for small Parishes. April 20th in the Bishop Mascall Centre, Ludlow. Details from Revd. Colin Sneyd (Weobley 415)

Church Missionary Society "Who wants Missionaries?" Speaker Revd. Maurice Sinclair, Principal of Crowther Hall. St. Peter's Church Hall, Thursday April 25th

KINNERESLEY

APRIL

2nd 7.30 pm (Tuesday) Holy Communion
5th 10.00 am (Good Friday) Good Friday Service
7th 10.00 am (Easter Day) Holy Communion
14th 10.00 am Mattins
21st 10.00 am Holy Communion
28th 10.00 am Family Service

MAY

5th 10.00 am Holy Communion

FRIENDS OF WEOBLEY PARISH CHURCH

An association for people who are interested in the Church as a building, not necessarily to worship there, but perhaps who have family connections or who appreciate its history and architectural beauty and its value to the village.

Details: Phone Weobley 8177

STAUNTON-ON-WYE VILLAGE HALL

BINGO

THURSDAY 4th APRIL

Eyes down at 8 p.m.

In aid of Village Hall Fund.

A DATE FOR YOUR DIARY

STAUNTON-ON-WYE PLAYGROUP

'Signal's Annual General Meeting, followed by our usual Wine and Cheese evening will be on Thursday, 18th April at Norton Canon Village Hall commencing at 7.45 p.m. Nominations for the committee will be accepted from the floor of the meeting.

For those who have not previously attended a 'Signal' Wine and Cheese evening, we do ask people to bring along a little food - you can bring your own wine too if you wish!

If anyone has transport problems in getting to the event or would like further details, please contact Rod Kilvert, Weobley 306.

BIRTHDAYS

HAPPY BIRTHDAY TO:

Norton Canon

Clare Sweet	1st April
Paul Colcombe	2nd "

Moorhampton

Gail Price (Upperton)	10th April
Claire Bradley (Yarsop)	22nd "

Sarnesfield

Allan Williams	3rd April
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Kinnersley

Liza Parish	5th April
Fiona Ellam	15th "
Georgia Benjamin	16th "
Francis Higginson	24th "
Tom Jones	24th "

Letton

Jobie Hoare	12th April
David Addison	16th "
Sara King	20th "

Staunton-on-Wye playgroup, which at the moment meets on Monday and Thursday mornings in the school hall, is taking on the ambitious project of converting the old school kitchen into permanent premises for the playgroup.

This has been brought about by the enthusiasm of the supervisor, Jane Bryan, (a qualified nursery nurse) and Joy Trumper her assistant, who wished to open the playgroup for more sessions, but were unable to use the school hall. At the suggestion of the head teacher they wrote to the appropriate authorities and have obtained permission to use the old school kitchen.

The room has not been used since Herefordshire discontinued school meals, and the cost of converting a cold and dismal room into an inviting environment for children to play in has to be met by the playgroup itself. Estimates for the heating alone run into several hundred pounds.

Parents have volunteered to clean and decorate the room and have formed a committee to support Jane and Joy and help with fundraising activities.

The first of these is a 'Wine and Cheese' Party at Old Letton Court on 26th April at 8.00 p.m. Tickets £1.50 from Jane Bryan, Moccas 498.

The success of the playgroup depends mainly on the support of families with children aged 3-5 years. So if anyone in the area has children coming up to this age please come along on a Monday or Thursday morning to see what goes on. Both Jane and Joy are qualified playgroup leaders and offer a variety of interesting activities for the children, including painting and modelling activities, singing - musical instruments and stories. There is also a climbing frame, slide, see-saw, sand and several other toys.

NORTON CANON LADIES' MONDAY CLUB

THERE'S no doubt that it was Polly the German Shepherd dog who was the star attraction at the Club's March meeting. She was brought by Mr. and Mrs. C. Archer from Ivington to demonstrate how obedient a dog can be when it is trained by a good dog-handler. Polly lay quietly by her mistress, eyes intelligently summing up the eighteen ladies who had come to see her and to listen to Mr. Archer's friendly advice on choosing and training a dog. Choosing the right breed for the right job in the right environment was all important we learned. Some dogs are much more easily trained than others; some have special qualities bred in them that make it difficult for them to become perfectly obedient. Difficult but not impossible; and all dogs can be improved by training even if they are six or seven years old.

After the talk Mrs. Archer showed us how Polly responded to her commands. She walked to heel, turned tightly on the left side of the handler, sat, lay and remained motionless at the word of command. We were greatly impressed and many of us returned to our less disciplined dogs with a firm intention to persuade them to follow Polly's good example.

This month, April, the meeting at 8 p.m. in the Village Hall will be held on 15th April, the third Monday of the month because of the Bank Holiday. A representative from Wyevale nursery will be talking about indoor plants. Don't miss it!

READER'S LETTER

Grateful thanks to Stephen and Sarah for my surprise farewell party, and to all my other friends who contributed and attended.

For all my happy years in Kimmersley, THANK YOU.

Myra Grigg
Well House,
Ffynnon Gynydd
Glasbury via
Hereford

MANSEL LACY W.I.

invite you to a

WHIST DRIVE

at

NORTON CANON VILLAGE HALL

on FRIDAY, 26th April, 1985
at 7.30 p.m.

HELP YOURSELF TO HEALTH

NEW APPROACHES TO CANCER

A talk by Tony Neate - Chairman
of Cheltenham Cancer Help Centre.

TUESDAY 7th May at 7.30 p.m. in
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Admission 30p

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Aid for Ethiopia

THERE can be few amongst us who have not been moved to giving financial help to relieve the appalling conditions suffered by those starving in Ethiopia. I am appealing to you all to give even more help - but this time it need not cost you a penny!

Did you realise that one of the reasons babies and small children are dying is due to the cold? Without shelter their little, undernourished bodies are unable to fight the bitter nights and although food may be available to save them from death by starvation, they die from hypothermia.

This is how we can help. Look in your knitting baskets - all oddments of wool can be made into jumpers, simple T-shirt styles. Warmth, not fashion is what is needed, and any colours, even multicolours, will keep a child warm.

These, and blankets (all those of you who have changed to duvets will probably have one to spare!) will be sent by the Save the Children Fund to Ethiopia.

'Signal' is read in nearly 350 homes in our villages - if every household contributed just one jumper or blanket we could keep 350 children warm at night - I'm sure we can provide at least that number.

If you would rather knit 6" squares in Double Knitting these will be made up into blankets by Save the Children, and don't worry, all you non-knitters - if you want to help by donating wool I will ensure they are passed to Save the Children as speedily as possible - so get out the knitting needles and I'll let you know how we're doing in the next edition.

Rita Kilvert

Unfruitful suggestion

A NOTICE seen outside a Hereford greengrocer's shop last week offered: "Local grannies for sale, 23 pence per lb."

(From the 'Daily Telegraph' Monday, 4th March.)

'Signal' readers will remember that this item appeared in last month's issue. It looks as if a copy has somehow found its way into the exalted purlieus of Fleet Street,

We regret to report that 'Signal's' treasurer, Douglas Berry, is ill, and we all wish him a speedy recovery.

WEOBLEY

Part time help required with children, home and teashop.
Hours by arrangement. Weobley 548

CANON MOTORS

(Brian Robbins)

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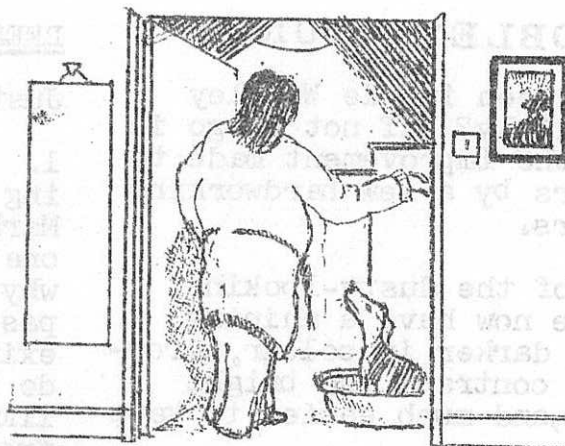
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Sunday 9 a.m. - 5 p.m.

A night in the life of...

A MOTHER



AFTER some concentration, I realise almost twenty years have passed since the night of the odd occurrence in this story. It was long before we came to live in Herefordshire - which led to more strange happenings. A friendly Welshman (no, not Gareth this time) explained to me 'the nearer you are to Wales, the more miracles happen,' but those are other stories!

I return to my memories of the Swinging Sixties and the night when I was awakened by the sounds of groaning, retching, vomiting and misery. I thought of Honey, our dog, who slept in the warm kitchen below our own bedroom, and wondered if she were about to die. I went downstairs, opened the kitchen door and turned on the light, dreading what I expected to see. Honey looked cosy and blissful in her bed. She gave one wag of a weary tail and a reproachful blink at such a thoughtless intrusion in the early hours and sank straight off to sleep again.

Back upstairs, I slithered gently and quietly into bed, but George stirred and wanted to know what I was doing. 'Somebody Sick - thought it was dog,' I said shortly, as I tend to do when addressing the sleepy, the simple or the foreign. 'Silly dream,' he said, 'I didn't hear anything.'

The next day, as I was preparing breakfast, there was a telephone call from Teena, a bright young thing with whom my daughter Isobel, then aged eighteen, shared a flat in Kensington. She reported that Isobel had been horribly ill and 'kept being sick' throughout the night. She had said she wished she was back home with her mother.

Millie Jones

Publishing a volume of verse
is like dropping a rose
petal down the Grand Canyon
and waiting for the echo.

Don Marquis
American Writer

His was the sort of career
that made the Recording
Angel think seriously about
taking up shorthand.

Nicholas Bentley,
Humorous Artist

OBITUARY

Mr. D. Ridge

It is with sadness that we report
the death of Des Ridge - The Glyn,
Norton Wood - on Friday, 22nd
February last.

By all who knew him - and he had
many friends - he was known to be
always helpful and considerate.
He will be greatly missed. We
extend deep sympathy to his wife
Barbara and family.

WEOBLEY CHURCH

Have you been inside Weobley Church lately? If not do go in and see the improvement made to the floors by a few hardworking volunteers.

Instead of the dusty-looking boards we now have a shining surface, darker in colour, throwing into contrast the bright kneelers, and much easier to keep clean.

Money is needed for all kinds of work around this lovely building and this job has been paid for by the Friends of Weobley Parish Church. The mower, bought last summer, was also a gift from the association.

An annual donation of five pounds will make you a member and you can take pride in the thought that you are helping to keep this beautiful and historic building in good repair. After all, if it fell down Weobley would not look the same, would it?

P. Haigh

She ran the whole gamut of emotions from A to B.

Dorothy Parker

WEOBLEY

CONSERVATIVE ASSOCIATION

EXHIBITION

of Paintings and Works of Art

by LOCAL ARTISTS

on 27th April, 1985

at Marlbrook House, Back Lane, Weobley.

Further details from Miss P.G. Miller, 90 Bearcroft, Weobley, tel: 715.

PEES IN THE BONNET7

Just two questions:

1. There are swing doors leading from the Hereford Butter Market into High Town. If only one happens to be pulled back why does everyone queue up to pass through this restricted exit area when all they have to do is push the other one open - like me. Then everyone can pass freely. I've seen the same thing happening at Boots.

2. Why is everything 'monitored,' these days? No longer do we 'check,' 'examine,' 'watch over,' or 'study' - all good English words which lend much needed variety. It's almost as bad as saying 'in short supply' when you mean 'scarce.'

PERPLEXED

Norton Canon

Marriage: the state of a community consisting of a master, a mistress and two slaves, making, in all, two.

Peace: in international affairs, a period of cheating between two periods of fighting. from 'The Devil's Dictionary'

by Ambrose Bierce.

BIRTHDAYS

Staunton-on-Wye

Mary Beach	3rd April
Hilary Beach	16th April

A very happy 18th Birthday to Nicky Jenkins on 19th April.

