



THE SIGNAL

A COMMUNITY NEWSLETTER FOR

KINNERSLEY · SARNESFIELD · LETTON · NORTON CANON
BROBURY · STAUNTON-ON-WYE · MOORHAMPTON

No. 66

February 1988

PRICE 12p

SAD

IT is sad that our village school is closing. The school has been under almost constant threat since the 1950's, but the village always fought back. A Terrapin extension was erected, the Hall was built - partly to assist the school - and the indoor toilet block was added.

The Association of Friends of the school was formed in 1978 to resist school closure. The Friends, with the essential help of the villages, both here and at Mansel Lacy, raised a lot of money and provided a considerable amount of equipment as well as funding school outings.

Yet despite these efforts finally, the Govenors and Friends were not required to resist but to accept the final massive blow - the concerted withdrawal of ten children from the school roll. Over the past year there was a gradual withdrawal of four pupils leaving a roll of eighteen at Christmas. Yet the school was still viable with potential new pupils in the district.

At the joint meeting of Staunton-on-Wye and Norton Canon Govenors late last year, Mr. Tempest attending for the County Authority stated that Norton Canon School would be given time to RECOVER. Not to produce another twenty pupils by the next review but to RECOVER. Anyone who has heard Mr. Tempest speak will know that he does not speak without great deliberation. We cannot now put his assertion to the test. Certainly no village school today with a roll close to say twenty can withstand a sudden reduction of ten from the roll.

The behaviour of the County Authority during the last two years has been exemplary. Not once during this time have they hinted in their treatment of the school that it had no future. A new electric heating system was installed, false ceilings fitted,

PLEASE NOTE THAT COPY FOR THE MARCH ISSUE OF
'SIGNAL' SHOULD REACH LANZERAC, NORTON CANON
(PHONE WOBBLEY 318505) NOT LATER THAN MONDAY,
15th FEBRUARY, 1988.

carpets fitted, the toilet block, lobby and classroom decorated. In the school house the staff room and office have been decorated, water heaters fitted, electric heaters installed and the house required. The cynic may well say - the money was there to be spent. Maybe, but at no point did the County assume that the school would close.

The joint Governors meeting at Staunton-on-Wye also established a plan of co-operation between Norton Canon and Staunton schools. For the first time in six or seven years the county agreed to provide transport for suitable school visits and for co-operative ventures including sports events. I felt that with the newly engendered co-operation of Staunton and Norton Canon schools, the excellent physical state of the school, the assertion by the Minister of Education, (Mr. Baker,) that the roll number at a small school would no longer be a major factor in deciding its future, plus the amount of money due from the Charity which could be spent on the school/children, plus the funds of The Friends - higher than they have ever been - the prospects for the school were bright.

The eight children left at the school have a final settled two terms with a headmaster and teacher.

The village has been fortunate to have five essential units, School, Post Office, Church, Shop, Garage. The school is to go and should the need arise, we must stand to as a village to protect the remaining amenities.

John Absolam

Competition

(to all those not yet 16)

A PRIZE TO THE FIRST CORRECT SOLUTION RECEIVED.

Mary Dear,

We are ideally suited with a pub right on the beach. It's prices are the lowest of three we tried and everything is good, notably the food. All bedrooms even the cheapest one have new foam mattresses the softest I've slept on, so we do very well. Both casino and pub lack pools for swimming, but there are walks along the coast or quay-side and when not shovelling sand, the children are climbing fences and gates, snagging their clothes on thorns each time. Last night we met Eric on way to casino where we lost every sou, then danced a sort of fox-trot he says he invented himself - nearly pulled my arm out however. Hope we are not now hit by bad weather. Never does to bank on it.

Marilyn, Tony.

P.S. We have now visited 20 seaside towns on our tour, and I've mentioned all of them. You will even find RYDE in the first two words if you look closely. How many more can you find?

STAUNTON-ON-WYE

THE ANATOMY OF A HEREFORDSHIRE VILLAGE by Maurice Collingwood

PART ONE

(Editors note: We are happy to include this well written article not only because of its own innate worth but also in affectionate memory of a Signal Editor whom we all miss. The final part will appear in the March issue.)

THIS is the century of change - change more rapid and violent than in any other century in history. Everything today is so entirely different from what it was eighty years ago that to those who were born in the early years of the century the life they led in their childhood seems as remote as to be almost dream-like and they find themselves today, like Housman's Shropshire Lad.

.....A stranger and afraid
In a world I never made.

In rural England this change is nowhere more marked than in the pattern of village life. True, in Herefordshire, the old pattern still exists in places and it is probably correct to say that Herefordshire is the English county which has changed least during the past eighty years. But all the signs are there nevertheless.

Try for a moment to imagine what the life style of a typical Herefordshire village was like in 1900. The majority of the villagers would have been employed either by the local large landowner - the squire or lord of the manor - or some of the larger farms. Many of them would probably never have travelled further afield than Hereford or the nearest market town. The social life of the village would centre to a large extent round the church, which everyone attended as a matter of course, not, perhaps, through any marked sense of religious belief but simply because it was the 'done' thing. The main social events would have been the summer fete, cricket or football on the green, the harvest festival and, perhaps, an annual coach or rail excursion to the seaside. Working hours were long but for that reason leisure was all the more precious and far more appreciated than it is today.

In short, life was simple and perhaps hard at times but on the whole the villagers were content. They were a self-contained little community not much interested in what went on in the world outside.

Today few of the villagers work for the local large landowner, chiefly because as a class the large landowner no longer exists, having been wiped out by over-increasing taxation. There are still a few villages where the landowner - nowadays usually a limited company - is still the chief employer, and it is noteworthy how, in most cases, his employees are more contented than those who work in industry or for large impersonal corporations. The old respect between master and man still prevails and the workforce have not yet succumbed to the trade union doctrine of looking on employers as the enemy from whom the maximum wage must be extracted, usually for the minimum amount of work.

Most farms today are completely mechanised and employ very few people, so the average villager is no longer a farm worker or, indeed, a worker on the land at all. As a result, the main reason for many villages' existence has gone and

there is no local work available. In consequence, most of the village's working population - if they have not moved away - have their jobs in nearby towns and the houses of those who have left have been taken over by retired city people in search of the quiet life. So even the pattern of village population has changed.

All this is very noticeable in my own village of Staunton-on-Wye. During the twelve years in which I have been a resident many of the younger people have left in order to be nearer their jobs in Hereford or other adjacent towns. This exodus has been very marked since the spiralling price of petrol increased transport costs and the trend is certain to continue. An inevitable result of the drain away of the younger villagers is the decline of village social activity.

Up till the end of World War II social activity in Staunton was still largely centred round the church. There are still quite a number of people in Staunton who have lived in the village all their lives and it is very interesting to discuss the old days with them. Everybody went to church on Sunday and afterwards would meet for coffee and village gossip at one another's houses. Today very few people go to church at all. There are seldom more than half a dozen people (mostly those over sixty) at Sunday service and it is practically certain that the church will have to close before long due to the lack of support required to pay the annual Diocesan quota which, like everything else in this age of never-ending inflation, increases each year.

The village inn is still to a certain extent a social centre, particularly at weekends, but a good deal less so than formerly, due once again to rising prices. Alcoholic beverages are an unfailing target for chancellors of the exchequer at budget time and as a result it is now beyond the means of the average villager to spend convivial evenings with friends in the pub. Instead, he stays at home and watches television, which is undoubtedly the most devastating destroyer of social life so far invented.

If Staunton has any social centre at all it is the village post office and shop. Sooner or later you will run into everybody you know here for Mr and Mrs Blake are universal providers and sell just about everything you are likely to require for everyday use, not to mention acting as local newsagents - a most useful service since there is no other way of getting delivery of Sunday newspapers. We are continually exhorted to support the village post office and store, to 'use it or lose it,' and the message has gone home in Staunton. If you want to know what's on, who's who or simply the latest gossip, just pop round to Staunton post office, there's bound to be someone there who will put you in the picture.

Village activities depend very largely on somebody willing to devote time and energy to organising them, and in a village like Staunton, where so many of the inhabitants are elderly retired people, such public-spirited souls are rather thin on the ground. Up till a few years ago Staunton was luckier than most in having one man who, without exaggeration,

practically was the village. The late Mr Bill Price, affectionately known to one and all as 'Welshie,' was the leading light in practically every village activity and his death in 1977 created a gap which has so far not been entirely filled. The over-sixties club, the football club, the mothers and toddlers group at the school and other activities still flourish, but there is no doubt that since Bill Price's death social life in Staunton is not quite what it was. Such men are irreplaceable.

One of the main problems facing rural life today is increasing isolation, and Staunton has never been ideally placed as regards transport facilities. When in the heyday of the railways the nearest station was three miles distant at Moorhampton and nowadays there is no station nearer than Hereford. The main rail link from Hereford to London via Ledbury, Malvern, Worcester and Oxford has been in jeopardy for some years and, despite repeated official denials, there can be no doubt that it is right at the top of the list for closure when the threatened route reductions take place. One only has to travel fairly regularly on this route to see how it is being steadily and deliberately run down.

ON WRITING FOR SIGNAL by May Loxston

I haven't any idea what the heading of this little episode will be (We thought up the title ourselves, Edit.) but after a Signal Committee last night I feel I have got to put pen to paper. I think there are times when the Signal comes out some of us say 'not a lot in it this month, is there?' My answer, if that is said to me is 'Well have you ever put anything in?' The answer is often 'No - I couldn't' or, 'I wouldn't know what to write about.' But I think articles that people write about, the simple things and happenings in their life, are very interesting to other people. We get quite a lot of the heavier articles but the lighter things don't come in so easily. So I am going to write a few happy memories of the times I was taking B & B, etc.

It's more than 25 years ago since I had my first B & B. We were at The Old Vicarage. I had been visiting a friend on the Hereford/Brecon road about 6 miles away. She had just had some alterations made to her house and had started doing B & B. She said to me why didn't I do it? I had the room. My answer was 'Oh, I couldn't do that.' She said she enjoyed it - I knew I couldn't do it.

A week later the phone rings at 4pm. Yes, it's my friend who wants to know if I can take 4 people for one night. 'Oh, no' I replied. She then said she could take two so if they would be willing to part would I take two? I thought I was pretty safe. They surely wouldn't part - so I said yes - and so did they! That was the start and everything went well - especially when they paid next morning, I felt it was really something of my own. Two nights later I had four - so I was on my way.

The year before we had moved to the Bungalow, a 'Gentleman' came to see if he could stay Monday-Friday while finishing off inside jobs to his bungalow in the village. His work was in Hereford and he lived in South Wales. He was with me about 6 weeks. The day he came I took him to see the bedroom - then he fetched his wife in

to see if she approved!! I said to them his neighbours were very quiet and would not disturb him. They looked through the window and there was the churchyard! Anyway, he was with me 6 weeks. Then he brought his family to live in their new bungalow. Since living at Bronte I have had so many people from this country and abroad and lots of happy memories and funny happenings which I may write about in the future - but only if you like this sort of article.

EDITOR'S NOTE

IN thanking May for her article, may we re-emphasise her plea for 'all of you out there' to consider writing something for Signal. It is not overstating the case to say that the whole future of our newsletter depends on our being able to increase the number of our contributors.

May we, therefore, repeat the list of possible subjects which we printed a year or so ago:

1. Any topic of local interest i.e. agricultural, educational, historical, public safety etc.
2. A hobby.
3. A childhood memory or one of not so long ago.
4. A book that has left a strong impression.
5. An experience or unusual occurrence - imaginary, real or supernatural.
6. A travel tale.
7. A plea for local improvement.
8. A poem.
9. A cookery recipe and
10. What about something from the children?

GARDENING IN FEBRUARY

Our introduction to 1988 on the gardening front has been very wet and unless your soil is very free draining you will have been unable to do very much in the way of soil preparation for the coming season.

On previous occasions I have said that gardening has many facets and to avoid boring you by repetition of the same information every season I thought that I would write about fruit growing for this year. This is one aspect of gardening which, I think, we tend to take very much for granted in that we plant bushes or trees and leave them to their own devices praising them when they crop in abundance; blaming the weather or the season when they do not come up to our expectations.

When I was asked to write an article for the Signal on gardening, I said that I was very interested in the subject but not very knowledgeable (that did not get me off the hook,) and so for the first year I wrote about the vegetable garden and last year I concentrated on the ornamental garden. I have found the exercise of research and writing beneficial to my own gardening efforts and hope that this year my fruit production and knowledge of the subject will show the same improvement.

Stored fruit: Check regularly and remove any rotting fruit. Apples, such as Blenheim Orange, Laxtons Superb, Egremont Russet, are at their best this month. Winter pruning: Carry out winter pruning if not done last month. The golden rules are to remove dead, diseased or crossing branches on fruit trees. Apples and pears planted since Autumn, if you are training them as cordons, cut the side shoots back to 4 inches but do not prune the main leading branch unless the tree is weak, in which case, it is best shortened by one quarter to an upward facing bud.

Plant bush, cane and tree fruits provided the garden is not frozen or waterlogged. Cut back newly planted cane fruits down to 9 inches and blackcurrants 1 inch above soil level. If rabbits are a problem protect the bark with tree guards or wire netting. Pick up any fruit on the ground and compost or bury it. It is worth while protecting the small fruits on figs by wrapping the branches with straw against frost damage. Burn prunings that have accumulated. If you collect the ash and keep it dry it can be used as a potash fertiliser at a later date. Check tree ties, adjust or replace where necessary.

Winter spraying with a tar oil winter wash may be worthwhile on fruit trees and bushes if aphids or scale insects were troublesome during the summer. Check grease bands and remove any dead leaves that may be forming a bridge across them.

Firm Autumn planted strawberries if ground frost has loosened the plants but avoid firming very wet soil. For early fruit cover with cloches or polythene. Those under glass cloches should ripen about 7 days earlier than those under polythene tunnels. Prune black-berries and hybrid berries if not already done, cut out old fruited canes, tie in strong young canes.

Remove top netting or replace with pigeon net on fruit cages so that snow cannot build up and cause damage to the cage. Keep an eye on fruit cuttings in frosty weather, soil between the rows should be firmed as soon as it firms and dries.

Happy Gardening,

One Green Finger

ARROWVALE WINE CIRCLE - FUN EVENING

Our January meeting is officially described as 'Members own contributions' but it always turns out to be a real 'Fun Evening.' On this occasion it proved that there were 9 of us who were willing to do something to entertain the others - even at the expense of looking idiots ourselves. We had two female impersonations - by females; a ridiculous game of seeing how many matches could be piled up on a bottle top; hilarious and serious readings (prose and poetry) and a salutary tale of how not to go on holiday i.e. travel the $3\frac{1}{2}$ hours car trip to London before discovering that you have left your passports and air tickets behind!

What with all this, plus the excellent food and wine it was perhaps not surprising to hear one member ask why don't we have this sort of evening all the year through - and forget all about this wine jazz. An iconoclastic remarks if ever I heard one.

Gareth Evans

STAUNTON-ON-WYE GROUP PARISH COUNCIL By John Davies

A special meeting of the Parish Council was held on the 14th January to consider its views on a planning application for the erection of a building and the conversion of a building at Thyddwr Farm, Staunton, to provide five dwelling houses.

The Council acknowledged that this was a very important site in the centre of the village and that any development there should reflect this, with consequent maximum use of open space for the benefit of the whole village.

After a long discussion - during which several members of the public expressed their views - it was agreed to inform the Leominster District Council Planning Officer that in its opinion the development as proposed should only go ahead if (a) the plans are enlarged to include detailed proposals for the existing farmhouse and granary, and that the decision should be deferred if necessary to enable the Council to look at the whole site; (b) the final construction and appearance of the timber-framed buildings shown on the plans and drawings are not materially altered; and (c) the proposal to re-establish a pond along part of the road frontage is altered to provide a grass area, given over to use by the public.

These views have been passed to the Planning Officer and the final decision rests with the District Council Planning Committee.

The Council has now received notification that the District Council Planning Committee has given outline planning permission for a new house next to Rye Gras Cottage, Staunton (see the last 'Signal' for details.) Although a site meeting was held our Chairman was not invited to attend (as he had requested) and although the District Councillor put our case the Council feels that more attention could be seen to be given to the strongly held local opinion against the proposal.

It is not all doom and gloom however - there has at last been some success over the road markings at 'The Portway.' Due in no small measure to the pressure brought by the Council, the County Council has put into effect new signs and road markings which, hopefully, will reduce the hazards and the risk of accident at this junction.

STAUNTON, MONNINGTON & BROBURY NEIGHBOURHOOD WATCH by John Davies

THERE has been a heartening response to the appeal for money to get the Neighbourhood Watch properly off the ground - so good in fact that all the 'Neighbourhood Watch' signs needed have been ordered and, hopefully, they will be in place shortly.

Many thanks to all those who contributed so generously.

It is intended to cover an aspect of Neighbourhood Watch and crime prevention in each of the next few issues of 'The Signal' and this month some thoughts of an ex-burglar about how thoughtless we all can be when it comes to protecting our own property.

'I could walk down any street, anywhere in the country, and there they were - open invitations to help myself. There's the open window, milk and papers left uncollected on the doorstep, and even notes to let me know that the house is empty and for how long!'

'People are really stupid when it comes to protecting the back of the house. Out of sight, out of mind is the order of the day. People go out and leave the windows open, doors unlocked, and even doors open! I do appreciate their logic - they think that as they're popping out for a few minutes it should be okay. But then that's all I needed - a couple of minutes.'

'Window locks are a blooming nuisance. It just wasn't worth the aggro as far as I was concerned - I'd move on to someone else's house. You see, if I smashed the window I still couldn't open the frame. And to climb in I'd have to break a large part of glass which is dead noisy.'

'Quite frankly the majority of locks and bolts that are fitted by builders are cheap and nasty and I could get round them without trying too hard. But if the owner has a decent mortice lock plus key-operated bolts top and bottom, and he's remembered to use 'em, I'm on me bike. Mind you, if I was a bit annoyed and the house looked like good pickings then I'd have a quick gander at the patio doors - unless they had been fitted with extra locks.'

'Certainly wandering into an area with a Neighbourhood Watch sign is a bit of a turn-off for the average burglar. You know for a start that the people in the area have been pointed in the right direction by the local constabulary, if you get my meaning.

'I know at least two ex-mates who have had their collar felt by the local CID because some nousey parker had spotted something out of the ordinary.'

'Personally I reckon that the nousey neighbour is the burglar's worst enemy, and if these schemes take off it could put a few of my ex-colleagues out of work - if you know what I mean.'

CHURCH SERVICES

KINNERSLEY

February

7th 10am Holy Communion
14th 10am Mattins
17th 10 am Ash Wednesday
Holy Communion
21st 10am Holy Communion
24th 10am St. Natthias' Day
Holy Communion
28th 10am Family Service

March

2nd 7.30pm Lent Service and
address
6th 10am Holy Communion

BIRTHDAYS

A VERY HAPPY BIRTHDAY TO:

Norton Canon

Cathy Goodwin	2nd Feb
Thomas Meredith	13th "
David Gittins	18th "

THE STARS FOR FEBRUARY.

By GYPSY MISERABLIS

ARIES:- An exciting and disappointing month. You will win a first dividend on the Pools. So will all other Arieans. The share out will be roughly 0.03p. per person.

TAURUS:- This month, either while shopping or at work, you will meet someone you haven't seen for years

and always dreadfully upsets you. Do stay indoors for the next four weeks and not confront this disaster.

GEMINI:-Someone you need to impress and who is vitally important for your future pays a visit. Good, too, for gardening. At the exact time of the visit a farmer dumps 3 ton of pig manure in your drive in mistake for someone miles away.

CANCER:-You will win an exclusive tropical holiday. Ooh, the excitement! There is a chance that the revolution that breaks out in that country won't affect you but do pack a Jungle Survival Kit and something for the snake bites.

LEO:- Oh dear, oh dear, oh dear.

VIRGO:-Nature provides for you. The month-end gales blow down an 80ft. Ash in the next field. It falls right across your property providing firewood for years. A small disappointment - you haven't renewed the house insurance but, brightly, the shattered beams provide even more firewood.

LIBRA:- This is the month for whirl-wind romance, passion and true love. Unfortunately it won't happen to you but to your best friend. It's also the month for raging jealousy.

SCORPIO:- You are relieved. It's not the septic tank after all. You've always been

attractive to wild life but are puzzled as to why 3 badgers, a fox, assorted squirrels, hedgehogs and rabbits should crawl into the remotest part of the house foundations and there die. Don't worry, there's probably a curse on you.

SAGITTARIUS:- You know you've always deserved fame, and now you have it. Your name is in all the papers especially the week-day and Sunday tabloids.

CAPRICORN:- An excellent month for decorating. But do cheer up - just think how much worse the galloping dry-rot you uncover would be next month.

AQUARIUS:- What on earth can I say? Is your passport in order?

PISCES:- Your heart 'zings' when you pick up 36 Valentines from behind the door but they're for the teenager next door. Still, you do get to keep the 'phone and electricity bills.

Gypsy Miserabilis would be very pleased to cast your own, personal horoscope - free of charge, (especially if she can rid herself of the blinding headaches.)

When he heard that a dim-witted impresario (no friend of his) had blown his brains out, Noel Coward remarked 'He must have been a marvellous shot'.

ROBERT LOXSTON

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