



THE SIGNAL

A COMMUNITY NEWSLETTER FOR
KINNERSLEY-SARNESFIELD-LETTON-NORTON CANON
BROBURY-STAUNTON-ON-WYE-MOORHAMPTON

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Christmas 1987

PRICE 12p



WE'RE ROLLING AGAIN!

The leading article of the November issue of 'Signal' expressed doubts as to whether publication of the magazine would be able to continue due to a crisis which had arisen as regards production.

Since that article was written we have had or two options for alternative production methods put forward for consideration and have decided to clinch a deal which would enable the whole job, from the making of the page stencils to the collating and stapling of each copy, to be carried out by an outside source at a cost very little different from what we have paying so far.

This appears to be an ideal solution to our problems for it will mean that most of the big production jobs will be taken off our hands, leaving our very limited number of helpers free to concentrate on the magazine itself.

As far as this Christmas issue is concerned our problems have been on the editorial side. Of the two members of our editorial team, one is overseas on holiday and the other has only recently returned home after a spell in hospital. As a result, not only has publication been a little later than expected, but the issue itself has fallen perhaps a little short of what we were aiming at. However, we hope to be back to normal again in the New Year.

WHAT HAPPENED TO CHRISTMAS?

OK - so what happened to Christmas then? Oh, I know that on 25th December it will be Christmas Day but WHAT HAPPENED TO CHRISTMAS?

When I was young (!) Christmas began in November when the mincemeat was made. This was an EVENT which can only be remembered in capital letters. The breakfast room

(- and yes, what happened to them?) table was covered with bowls and bags and the busyness of chopping and mixing seemed to go on for ever. It was all mixed up in a large bowl which was left to stand for a time covered in a cloth to marinate before being spooned into jars to await turning into mince pies for 25th December.

And then there was the ritual of the puddings which were boiled in basins tied up in cloths (none of your kitchen foil in those days) and the puddings were kept on the pantry shelves for weeks to mature. And of course there was the cake to be made. The whole house smelled of Christmas for weeks beforehand.

Now we pick up a pudding from the supermarket shelf along with a jar of mincemeat or even a packet of readymade mince pies made only as Mr. K..... knows how to make them, and some may possibly buy their cake as well.

Presents were made and the pennies were stretched and we all had a wonderful and warm time and exciting time. Alright, we still have a wonderful time, but is it as happy? We all spend too much, we seem to get more and more frantic as the day draws nearer and end up buying willy nilly, families vie with each other to buy bigger and better and more than often than not the holiday ends in dispute!

Perhaps I am looking back through rose coloured glasses - am I really that old? How do you view present day Christmas? Is it a time of excitement and anticipation? Does it creep up and then arrive with a bang? Do you feel pressured to spend more than you can afford? Let's hear what you think.

In the meantime let's all have a really happy and peaceful Christmas and look forward to a good and prosperous New Year.

Jill Valentine

Maurice Collingwood

The sudden death of Signal's Editor, Maurice Collingwood, has left an enormous gap in our village activities. Perhaps it is the best compliment to anyone that their activity gave a great pleasure to many. Certainly that is true of Maurice's efforts as Signal's Editor.

People with editorial experience are difficult to find and how lucky our villages were to have someone of Maurice's experience to come forward and take on a job which can so easily attract few compliments but many complaints. Nobody ever escapes criticism completely but Maurice took what criticism was ever levied like a true professional, anxious to try to improve the quality of 'Signal', but the compliments that many of us know were given to 'Signal' have much to do with the hard work and effort that Maurice displayed.

Maurice was born at an early age, which is one way of saying that he was one of the older members of our community. Not that anyone would suspect his actual age, particularly since he married Cathy who appeared to have a rejuvenating effect. The happiness that their marriage brought was evident to all who knew our before and after Maurice.

Maurice was a regular player of the Church organ at Staunton-on-Wye and Byford and filled in occasionally at Letton and Norton Canon. He was an active member of British Legion. Those of us who remember his account of his war time experiences are unlikely to forget his humour even in relation to the hardship he endured for a long time as a POW.

Maurice spent much of his life subsequent to the war in Rhodesia. He went there shortly after demob in anticipation of a better future, and eventually became editor of the in-house magazine of an International Oil Company, strangely the same Oil Company as his chief contemporary and co-worker on Signal, Gareth Evans, although until Signal brought them together they had never met.

Our deepest condolences to Cathy, still suffering from her fall which injured her wrist and leg.

Like all good actors, some editors are a hard act to follow!

Many thanks to all who subscribed to National Childrens Home in the red and white envelope last month, the response has been marvellous.

Up to date the total is £713 with yet more to be handed in. If no-one has collected your donation, just pop it in the envelope and put through the letterbox at Greenfields, Norton Canon.

N.C.H. does wonderful work in caring for children

in danger from neglect, ill treatment, abuse and crime.

With your help N.C.H. runs 60 family support centres, 21 centres and schools for teenagers in trouble, 16 homes and schools for disabled children, 29 homes and hostels, 16 phone-in and advice centres plus fostering and other support services.

R.A.N.

ROYAL BRITISH LEGION WOMENS SECTION

The Eardisley and district branch would like to invite any lady readers of 'Signal' to become members of our branch.

We are sure that there must be many ladies who have had a relative in the armed forces and would be interested in the work of the Legion, helping ex-servicemen and women and their dependents who are in need.

'All work and no play' is not our motto in the Eardisley branch. We do have a social side to our meetings and occasionally enjoy an evening out together.

If you are interested in learning more about the Womens Section or would like to join us please contact our secretary Mrs. Norah Nicholas at Eardisley Post Office.

REFUSE COLLECTION CHRISTMAS 1987

We have had details from Leominster District Council of the refuse collection arrangements over Christmas and the New Year:

W/C Monday, 21st December '87
Five days collection will be made in the four working days of that week i.e. 21st to 24th inclusive.

W/C Monday, 28th December '87
No collections.

W/C Monday, 4th January, 1988
Normal collection resumed. This will mean that, for this collection only, those places having weekly collection will have a fortnight break from the last collection, and those having fortnightly collection will have a break of three weeks.

My parents acted immediately when I was kidnapped: they rented out my room.

Woody Allen

HELP.

Have you got twitchy fingers?

Do they feel an urge to leap around a keyboard - especially on the second Sunday morning each month? Particularly about 11.00am?

Letton Church could be just the place for you.

We DESPERATELY need someone to play the organ for the Sunday morning service on the second Sunday each month. It is not necessary to be an organist - a pianist could cope quite well.

We are a small but friendly bunch of people - not too hot on the singing and all willing to have a go - BUT we do need some assistance with the music!

Sounds (pardon the pun!) like your scene? Why not give me a 'phone call and have a chat about it? - after all, that's how I got the job for the evening services!!

Gordon Valentine
Eardisley 535

NORTON CANON PCC

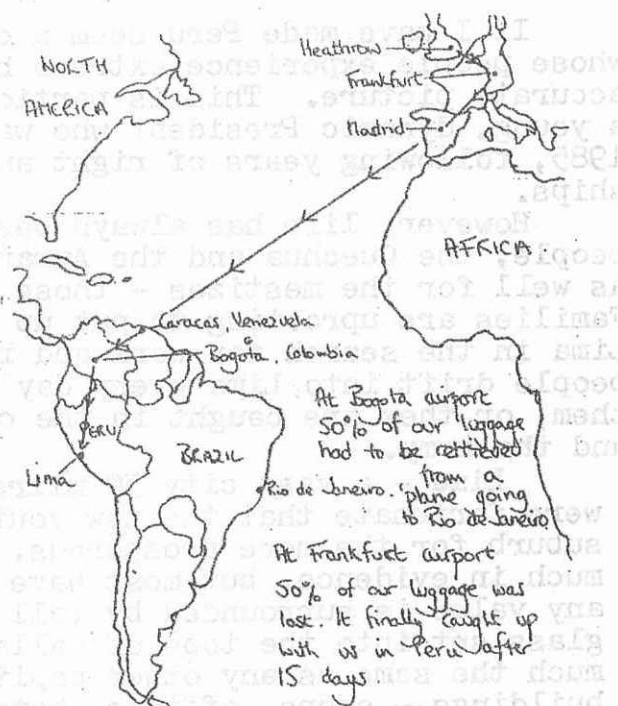
The Whist Drive held at the Village Hall on the 20th November raised the sum of £93 towards the Church Funds. The evening was voted a success all round and many players were asking when we are to hold another! This has still to be decided but you can be sure we will as the 'helpers' also had a most enjoyable and entertaining evening - thanks mainly to Bill and Judy Pritchard who did most of the organising and hard work to make the evening go with a swing.

The Coffee Morning held on the 13th November raised £24.02 for the Church Missionary Society.

Rita Kilvert

Peruvian Pictures

Readers may remember that in our August issue we mentioned that Mr and Mrs James Smith and their children, of Staunton-on-Wye, were about to fly to Peru as members of an expedition planning to build a craft centre for Quechua Indians at Hualqui in the Peruvian Andes. Below is the first instalment of a detailed account of the expedition specially written for 'Signal' by Mrs June Smith. To be continued in our next issue.



THE train lurched yet again in the darkness. Squashed in a seat meant for two with a large Peruvian lady and her teenaged son I dozed fitfully. It was the longest and most exhausting day of our trip. The lights in the carriage went out. A window was forced open. Bundles of 'fruit' from market were thrown out onto the track followed rapidly by their owner. Military police burst into our carriage barking out orders and flashing torches. With long skewers they prodded bundles of fruit and vegetables, despite the protestations of the campesinos (peasant farmers.) The search for coca leaves was on. The offender and his coca had dived out into the darkness. Now he and his bundles clambered back into a carriage already searched.

As onlookers, the incident itself was quite funny. The implications of the incident were far less so. Sadly it reflects the ineffectiveness of the Peruvian police to halt the flow of coca leaves for cocaine. Indeed they seem ineffective in many areas, from the controlling of crazy Peruvian drivers to the containment of extreme left wing terrorist activity. Wherever we went we were conscious of the police presence; they stood at every bank, every public building, every airport and on the streets, always heavily armed. Riot police and water cannon guarded the main square outside the Presidential palace in Lima.

For the ordinary Peruvian the presence of the police and the terrorists make an already hard life daily more difficult. In Lima the bombing of power stations makes for frequent power cuts. In a city already desperate for water it becomes even scarcer. A nightly curfew is imposed.

In Arequipa, a city in the south, we took a carefully selected route to avoid students demonstrating and clashing with police. Gringos (foreigners) are not popular with students and we had no wish to be the recipients of flying bricks and stones.

Even in the tiny village where we worked, seemingly miles from anywhere, the campesinos have their own teams of vigilantes guarding the crops and animals against terrorist raids. We did not stray far at night.

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If I have made Peru seem a country in difficulty and turmoil whose people experience extreme hardship, then you have an accurate picture. This is particularly sad as the country has a young, dynamic President who was democratically elected in 1985, following years of right and left wing military dictatorships.

However, life has always been hard for the indigenous people, the Quechua and the Aymara Indians. Now life is hard as well for the mestizos - those of mainly Spanish descent. Families are uprooting to put up shacks in the shanty towns of Lima in the search for work and food. Between 500 and 600 people drift into Lima every day as their land fails to support them, or they are caught in the crossfire between the terrorists and the army.

Lima - a vast city 50 miles across, and mainly desert. We were fortunate that the new youth hostel is in Mireflores, a suburb for the more prosperous. Spanish style buildings are much in evidence, but most have seen better days. Any house of any value is surrounded by tall iron railings, barbed wire and glass set into the tops of walls. The centre of the city is much the same as any other capital; a conglomeration of buildings - shops, offices, hotels, hoardings and once fashionable plazas.

Mile follows mile of poor brick houses. It reminded me somehow of post-war London - bricks and rubble everywhere; each family doing (its own thing' in a seemingly haphazard, unco-ordinated way. The steel reinforcements, needed for stability in times of earth tremors (frequent in many parts of Peru) jut out towards the sky long after the roof is on, give the houses an ugly unfinished appearance. We stopped on our way to a shanty town outside a large hospital. Built 17 years ago with foreign aid it has tragically never been used; successive governments have failed to fund it. It is just a shell.

For me the most harrowing time of the visit was a conversation with a 36 year old mother. She struggled from the one bed the family possess to welcome a small group of us. She lives in a shack with her husband and five children. Having no money to pay for medical care she had suffered intense pain until her gall bladder had finally ruptured. She showed me ugly scars from a poorly performed operation and even then, several weeks after the operation, she was still in pain, unable to eat and suffering other side effects. In all this her concern was for her husband and children; her worries were the same as any other mother's worries. Who would look after the children? How could they possibly pay the medical bills when they were already struggling to survive on her husband's wage? Her children were beautiful and I admired her for her determination to survive in this desolate, squalid desert. She had even planted three small palm trees by the 'house' in an effort to hide the ugliness. How glad we were that we had taken many small gifts from England for such children. Most of our clothes we were later able to leave behind for families such as these. Not that they want our charity, that would offend their self-respect. It was more an opportunity to show how much we felt for them, and in conveying that we had gained far more from the visit than ever they had.

The hoardings in Lima screamed with great adverts like those for coca cola, Coca Cola - Mas y Mas. Coca Cola - More and More.

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That advert set me thinking about our working holiday. Never before for us have so many 'mores' been packed into such a short space of time. More travelling; more luggage loss; more heat; more water shortage; more noise; more laughter; more poverty, more rice and lentils; more hair raising driving; more livestock; more teeth extractions; more punctures; more photographs taken and more awareness of other peoples needs and struggles.

The list could go on and on....more next month....

June Smith

ARROWVALE WINE CLUB

The judging for the Arrowvale Wine Trophies was held on the 1st October. The winner of the Arrowvale Cup was Mrs. Joyce Langmead, and the Daisy Salver was won by Mr. Gareth Evans. The wine taster and judge was Mrs. Muriel Jones.

This year the club's mathematicians got their sums right. No need for 'Sackcloth and Ashes.'

Our numbers were augmented by the presence of welcome visitors from the Hereford Social Services Wine Club and we were all intrigued by the presentation of Mr. Keith Bufton describing the intricacies of porcelain making as seen through the eyes of Boehm Porcelain, Malvern.

The vehicle for his approach to this intricate subject was the magnificent reconstruction, in porcelain, of a life size Californian Condor - illustrated by some 70 coloured slides.

We ended with the usual wine and food festivities. A most enjoyable evening.

Gareth Evans

NORTON CANON LADIES CLUB

At our November meeting we had a most interesting and enlightening talk with slides by June Smith on her recent trip with her family and a group of Crusaders to help build a school for the Charity Tear Fund in Peru. The evening left us all feeling grateful for all the everyday things we take for granted - such as our food and water, with admiration for the group who went there and more knowledgeable about the Country and the people of Peru. Thank you again, June!

Rita Kilvert

HAPPY BIRTHDAY TO:

Norton Canon

December

Nichola Cole	2nd Dec
Lyndsey Evans	2nd "
Nicola Watson	7th "

January

A Very Happy 18th Birthday to Gail Davies on 11th Jan.

Jaime Loxston	12th Jan
Andrew Davies	26th "
Duncan Hardman	30th "

THE DREAM

A woman once had a dream. She was walking down a foggy and deserted city street when she heard heavy, echoing footsteps behind her. She walked faster, only to find that the following footsteps kept pace, so she then, in terror, broke into a run. The footsteps came pounding after her until she breathlessly reached her flat,

where she slammed and locked the door and fell sobbing on her bed. In paralysing horror she heard a key turning in the lock and footsteps advancing through the hall and about to enter her bedroom.

'What do you want of me?' she screamed. A sepulchral voice answered 'How on earth should I know? It's your dream'.

F. A. Evans.

A SCHOOL WHERE LEARNING IS FUN

Mr Arthur Allsop, headmaster of Norton Canon school, is retiring at the end of the year. As a tribute to him from his many friends and the parents of the children who have passed through his hands over the years we reprint the following article by Judith Archer about his work at the school, which appeared in the 'Hereford Times' of July 13th, 1979.

FEW headmasters can say that they conduct their staff meeting in bed! But Arthur Allsop, headmaster of Norton Canon Church of England Primary School and his wife, Muriel, are something of a rarity. In these days of cutbacks and closures, a school with a married couple as its only full-time staff and with a roll of 42 children is an anachronism. But despite the problems of small ness Norton Canon School thrives. Its pupils learn eagerly and the authorities acknowledge that it is rather an exceptional school by entrusting it with rather special pupils.

Until recently there was a child with haemophilia on the register and there is currently a pupil who is partially sighted. They are placed at Norton Canon because it is a safe place in which they can make contact with normal children. Although the classes are noisy and lively the children are responsible and polite and Mr and Mrs Allsop have few of the difficulties encountered by teachers at larger schools.

Until recently they lived in the house attached to the school buildings which has been occupied by head-teachers and their wives since the school was built in the 1870s. Now they live in Hereford.

The school came into being through the generosity of a 'John Green of London Town' who left the income from a piece of property in Gloucester to the village. The rental of the property is still divided between 'the poor and needy of the parish' and the village school as Green stipulated. As a Voluntary Aided School the managers are responsible for the outside of the building and the local authority take care of the inside and provide teachers and equipment.

Although they do, in effect, run the school, it is not quite true to say that Mr and Mrs Allsop do the job single-handed. They do have a part-time teacher, Mrs Daisy Backhouse, an ancillary helper, Mrs Margaret Marshall, and two kitchen assistants. The main difficulty of successfully running a school like Norton Canon

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would seem to be how to teach 42 children, whose ages range from 7 to 11 years, in two classes. The theoretical problems are undeniable, but in practice the difficulties are turned into a definite advantage as children of mixed ages and abilities learn together. 'The abilities within the groups are so wide that class teaching is simply impossible,' said Mr Allsop. 'We have to see that one group has something to get on with while another is taught - it makes for a lot more preparation work than you need for one class of 30. We also need to know the children better. Being a small school we know all the children's backgrounds and family situations.'

The advantages of the group teaching necessarily used at Norton Canon is that children can progress at their own speed - transfer to a higher group if they are learning fast or stay where they are a little longer until they catch up with their age group. 'Quite often the children learn from each other. The older children teach the younger ones and they automatically take responsibility for them at playtimes and outside lessons.'

Mr Allsop feels his pupils have distinct advantages over those taught by the same person for five hours a day and they are expected to show good results. 'We look for the children leaving here to be very well equipped for secondary education. It is no good them going into large libraries, workshops and laboratories if they can't read or write. The basics are taught here. We think it's our duty to give them a good grounding in reading, writing and maths, so that when they enter secondary school they won't have to waste the time of subject teachers with remedial work.'

With so few children the Allsops cannot fail to have school closure on their minds. But Norton Canon has less to worry about than some. 'I think local pressures have made the county council more reluctant now to close any school,' said Mr Allsop.

For 21 years now Mr Allsop has been in charge of Norton Canon School and his wife joined him 11 years ago. The story about conducting staff meetings in bed, which Mr Allsop admits is his standard speech day joke, is fairly near the truth. The well-being of the school is so close to their hearts that they do almost eat and sleep the subject. Fortunately their enthusiasm is echoed by the parents who are happy with their children's progress and have formed the Friends of Norton Canon School in order to support the teachers.

The timetable is kept fairly flexible but the children make sure they keep their teachers up to the mark. When maths was missed out one day they were quick to point out the omission - past generations might have kept quiet!

But learning is fun at Norton Canon and going to school is fun, possibly because many children live in remote areas and see their friends only when they go to school.

'I have never known any child stay away unless they are ill,' said Mr Allsop. 'It isn't as if we were soft with them or went out of our way to give them a good time. They do get noisy sometimes but we only stop them if one group in the room needs quiet for concentration. They know that they come here to do their work and yet they like it. They really seem to enjoy it.'

MAD DOGS AND ENGLISHMEN.....

IN the days of the British Empire (on which, it will be remembered, we were assured that the Sun Would Never Set) it appeared to be the avowed aim of everyone of the countless thousands of expatriates who dwelt in its far-flung domains to make his corner of a foreign field for ever England. No matter how much the climate and conditions of his part of the Empire differed from those of the mother country it was the English way of life which the dedicated expatriate sought to perpetuate in his own home. Even though what was left of the British Empire has been replaced by the British Commonwealth the custom still survives to a large extent.

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It was particularly in evidence at Christmas when the traditional English Christmas dinner would be served in environments with shade temperatures climbing to the 80's and 90's. In the sunbaked outback of Australis, on the rolling highveld of South Africa, in the steaming jungles of Malaya and the sweltering dusty plains of India- in all these varied environments each Christmas would see the colonial family and friends sitting down to a meal in which the calories were heaped to levels which could be potentially lethal in tropical conditions. The only mitigating circumstance was that it could, in most cases, be eaten in the open air.

In my own country of Rhodesia this was not always possible, as Christmas in this part of the world falls in the middle of the rainy season. What normally happens is that the day starts fine and sunny, but by lunch time the thunderheads are already building up and the storm is liable to break at any time from 3pm onwards. But quite often the rains will ease off for a few days around Christmas time and one can look forward to a short dry spell in which the temperature may not rise much above 80 degrees. In addition, the rains will have made everything fresh and green, the air has tonic properties and, in short, everything is ideal for Christmas dinner in the open air.

Christmas Day in Rhodesia was usually enlivened, shortly after breakfast, by groups of African dancers - usually house servants and gardeners - who would go from house to house arrayed in a motley variety of carnival clothing and festooned with saucepan lids, tin cans, drums and other instruments calculated to make the maximum amount of din. The resulting cacophony was formidable, but it was redeemed by the African's innate sense of rhythm, and it was not long before one's feet were tapping in accompaniment. The object of all this was, of course, the customary 'kissmas bokkis', and the householder was usually quite generous.

The Christmas dinner would normally be served about midday, after which, suitably replete and somnolent, everyone would await the big event of the day - the Queen's Christmas broadcast. Nobody would miss this under any circumstances for it, more than any other, was the one factor which really made one feel that one was a member of a world-wide family. Even in the dark days of the UDI crisis, when Rhodesians were classed as rebels and Britain was doing its best to destroy the country, the custom still prevailed. We had many opinions, mostly unprintable, about British politicians, but as regards the Queen we were still Her Majesty's loyal rebels and hoped to be able to remain so. No doubt we were naive in the extreme, but I suppose our hearts were in the right place.

Looking back on the twenty-two Christmases which I spent in Africa, it is the very first one of all which remains mostly firmly fixed in my memory. This was in 1948. We had made no arrangements to go away for the holiday, but when it became obvious we were in for a few days of dry weather we decided, on Christmas Eve, to drive some 200 miles to the mountains on the eastern border on the offchance that we might be able to get fixed up in one of the very few hotels that existed in those days. As it happened, they were all full, but we had taken an ample supply of provisions with us and enjoyed an evening meal by the roadside. Rather than go all the way back home we decided to spend the night in the open. We were in the midst of some of the most spectacular Rhodesian scenery - mountains over 7,000 feet high all around us, virgin bush country stretching for miles

on every side - and it was obviously going to be a fine, warm night. My wife and small daughter made themselves comfortable in the car and I bedded down in the tussocky grass alongside.

I shall never forget that night. The silence was profound, apart from an occasional coughing grunt in the distance - a lion, perhaps, or a leopard or, more probably, a baboon. Overhead, the stars of southern constellation seemed so close that one felt one could reach out and touch them, and there were no clouds to dim their lustre. It began to grow light around 5am and we were then treated to the most spectacular sight of all - sunrise over the mountains. There is very little twilight in Africa, due to one's proximity to the equator, and dawn and dusk are very brief - but while they last they are unforgettable. I shall always look back on that day as my most memorable Christmas.

M.B. Collingwood

Staunton on Wye Parish Council

AT its October meeting the Parish Council returned once again to the problem of the accident spot at 'The Portway' turnings. In May a letter was sent to the County Engineer seeking the introduction of double white lines either side of 'The Portway' to prevent overtaking there. The Council felt that the Engineer's reply was unsatisfactory in that it proposed no action on the grounds that the criteria the County Council follow allows overtaking because there is sufficient forward visibility at this point. The Parish Council's view is that the question of forward visibility is not sufficient taking into account left and right turnings at what are effectively crossroads at 'The Portway.' This is why the Council has asked the County Engineer to look at this again and to consider, at the very least, putting up signs indicating a dangerous junction or an accident 'black-spot.'

Also on roads, the Council has asked the County Engineer to investigate the sight-lines for traffic coming from Bredwardine, down Tin Hill, turning right onto the A438. The visibility to the west is poor and this can become dangerous when fast moving traffic overtakes on the downhill stretch from Red Ley. The Council was happy to see that some cutting back of branches had already taken place at this junction but hopes that further improvements will follow.

From roads to houses - a recent planning application to erect a house next to Rye Gras Cottage, Staunton, has attracted some opposition. A number of local residents attended the Parish Council meeting when it decided on its attitude to this application. The Council was asked to receive a petition opposing the application signed by 21 residents immediately local to the site, together with a detailed letter from the nearest resident affected. The Council shared the concern of these neighbours at the prospect of a new house on this prominent site, with consequent overlooking, poor access arrangements, and the threat to the visual amenities of this part of the village. The Leominster District Council has been informed of these objections and, at the time of writing, we wait to hear their decision.

Finally, the Parish Council agreed to issue bus tokens to pensioners in December - the last before next April!

PETER AND THE MICE

Peter was in the garden playing in the sandpit with his tractors and digger. He was making a building site. Suddenly he heard someone call his name.

"Peter, Peter"

Oh goody he thought, Daddy's come home early. He looked around but couldn't see anyone. I must have imagined it he thought and carried on playing. Then he heard the voice again,

"Peter, over here" it called.

Peter looked again but couldn't see anyone.

"Over here, by the tree"

There was only one tree in the garden, a big one in the corner.

Peter looked towards it but still he couldn't see anyone.

"Come on, I haven't got all day"

Peter walked towards the tree and looked and then he saw a little mouse.

"Is that you talking?" he asked

"Well, you didn't think it was the tree did you, silly! Trees can't talk!"

Neither do mice - I mean mice - thought Peter!

"What do you want?" he asked the mouse.

"Come on, I have an emergency and need someone big and strong like you. Follow me"

And off he scurried towards the fence. Peter stood and watched him go. The mouse looked over his shoulder and shouted "come on"

Peter ran after him and when they reached the fence the mouse looked for a small hole and scuttled through. He turned and poked his whiskers through the hole and said to Peter

"bend down and squeeze yourself small, you'll get through alright"

Peter did as the mouse had said and to his surprise found himself going through the fence and into a lovely garden full of flowers. There was a path leading up to the house. The Mouse started up the path.

"My name is Billy" he said, "hurry up"

They ran up to the door of the house which was standing open.

Billy went in and Peter quickly followed.

"Oh I do hope we are not too late" Billy said

"Too late for what" asked Peter

"You'll see" said Billy

They went into the kitchen and there sat another little mouse weeping.

"This is my sister Milly" said Billy. "She has trapped her tail in the trap trying to get some cheese for tea. We must get her free quickly as the cat will be back soon"

At the mention of the cat Milly started to weep again.

Oh dear, thought Peter, cats don't like mice. I'd better do something about this.

He went towards the trap and tried to lift the spring which held poor Milly's tail fast. He tried and tried but couldn't free her.

"It's no good" he gasped "we'll need something to lever it"

Peter remembered how he had seen his Daddy lifting slabs in the garden using a fork.

"That's what we need, a fork"

Billy said "there must be one around here somewhere, after all we are in the kitchen"

They looked about and sure enough Peter could see one on the

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table but oh dear either Peter must have shrunk or the table must have grown for it looked so far away and he couldn't possibly reach it.

"No problem" said Billy and he scurried up the table leg and pushed the fork to the floor with his nose.

Peter picked up the fork and took it over to the trap where poor Milly sat. He managed to get the fork under the spring and after some struggling he felt the spring move.

"Are you ready Milly? When I say 'now' pull your tail free quickly"

He took a deep breath and heaved with all his might. His face went red and he began to run out of breath then he felt the spring lift.

"now" he shouted and Milly quickly whisked her tail out of the way as the spring fell back with a slap.

"Oh thank you, thank you, thank you" cried Milly and Billy hugged Milly for even though he was cross with her he didn't want the cat to get her.

"You'd better come and have some tea with us" said Milly "it's all ready, I just felt like some cheese but I don't hink I will ever eat cheese again"

Peter wondered where they would go for tea and soon found out as the mice led him towards a hole in the skirting board. They all went through and he found himself in a tiny little room where the table was laid with sandwiches and cakes and a kettle was boiling ready to make the tea.

They all sat down and when they had finished Billy said

"Well, we had better take you back now or you will be missed. Come along we will show you the way"

He led Peter and Milly down some narrow passages and into the sunlit garden by the door where they had come in. They ran across the garden to the fence and pushed Peter back through the hole just in time for him to hear his Mother calling him.

"Peter, wake up. You must have fallen asleep in the sun.

Hurry up and wash your hands, tea is ready"

"But I've just had my tea" said Peter

Mummy laughed, "silly boy, that was lunch"

"No, I had tea with Billy and Milly"

"Who are they, your new imaginary friends?" asked Mummy

"No" said Peter "They're two mi...." No he thought Mummy would never believe that he had saved Milly from the mouse trap and had tea with them. Had it been a dream? It seemed real enough. He started to walk into the house and as he went he heard a little voice say

"Thank you Peter, goodbye"

and he turned and looked at the tree; was there a pair of whiskers twitching there in the leaves?

He went into the house and sat down for tea. The table was full and there in the middle was a large piece of cheese. He helped himself to some bread and butter.

"Have some cheese" said Mummy

"No I don't really feel like cheese today, thank you Mummy"

Jill Valentine

THIS CHRISTMAS ISSUE OF 'SIGNAL' COVERS THE MONTHS OF DECEMBER 1987 AND JANUARY 1988. COPY FOR THE FEBRUARY 1988 ISSUE SHOULD REACH 'LANZERAC', NORTON CANON, (TEL. WEOLLEY 318505), NOT LATER THAN SAT. JANUARY 9TH.

DECEMBER IN THE GARDEN

DECEMBER and our thoughts turn to turkey, plum pudding, mince pies and Christmas rather than to gardening but work carried out at this time of the year in the nature of preparation and tidying up ensure that our gardens will be a joy to view in the coming year.

Having browsed through the various colourful catalogues place your seed orders early as some of the plants need a long growing season and window sills and propagators will be in use very quickly.

Prepare new borders or beds by digging the ground leaving it rough until shortly before planting time. For trees and shrubs, dig the ground in any frost free periods (do not dig the holes or they may fill with water) and plant as soon as they arrive provided the weather is not very wet or frosty. If the ground is unsuitable put them in a shed or garage and protect the roots with plenty of damp straw, peat or moist crumbly soil and polythene.

Firm plants loosened by gales or lifted by frost especially anything recently planted. Climbers against the house e.g. ivy's, may need trimming back from around windows and gutters. Check stored tubers and corms such as dahlias, begonias or gladioli; remove any showing signs of rotting.

Animal damage can be a problem in winter. Rabbits, hares and even deer can damage shrubs and other plants. In vulnerable areas wire netting and tree guards are the surest answer but these may have to be quite high. Rock plants are occasionally lifted by frost; refirm any that become loose. If you intend to plant a lawn in Spring it is not too early to start the initial clearing and digging. Plan any garden improvements for the coming year; check labels on established plants replacing any which have become illegible whilst you can still read them.

Garden pools should contain enough water to prevent freezing to the bottom or both plants and fish may be killed. An inflatable ball in the pool will prevent the pressure of ice damaging a rigid liner.

Christmas Roses (*Helleborus niger*) will benefit from the protection of a sheet of glass or cloche if this is not too obtrusive. A mulch of straw or pulverised bark may be enough to protect the flowers from mud splashes. It is also worth taking precautions to control slugs. Once Christmas roses have finished flowering cut back the old flowering stems and mulch with peat or garden compost. Any plant which is not fully hardy protect with a good layer of peat. Winter iris will be flowering in some areas, picking the flowers will encourage the plant to produce more.

If a heavy fall of snow arrives, brush it off evergreen trees and shrubs as the weight of snow can damage branches. It may be worth tying branches up with string or netting as a precaution. Check tree ties and adjust if necessary. Neglected deciduous shrubs can be pruned by removing dead wood and crossing branches, then reshape the plant. Check supports of wall plants and repair or replace wires and posts where necessary. Clean up any remaining leaves on roses and burn to reduce overwintering of blackspot infections.

Sow shrubs or alpine seeds collected from your established plants. Sow the seeds in a seed compost with sharp sand added and cover the surface with coarse grit. Stand the pots outside on a welldrained surface so that the cold can break the seeds dormancy; a north facing wall is ideal. Cover

with chicken wire to prevent birds and mice getting to the seeds. Rooted shrub cuttings in the cold frame should be well-ventilated in all but the hardest weather.

Rhododendrons can be layered at any time of the year. Choose a low branch and bend it to ground level; take out a shallow hole with a trowel, mix in peat and sharp sand. Split the branch where it touches the soil and peg down so that a rosette of leaves is just above soil level and stake to keep upright. A flat stone can be placed over the covered branch to keep the soil moist and cool. Rooting takes one to two years.

If you have an idle moment take the opportunity to repair fences and paint with a wood preservative.

For floral decorations indoors cut stems of forsythias a week before Christmas and bring inside, the flowers will open in the warmth.

Do have a Happy Christmas and a Prosperous New Year.

One Green Finger

CHRISTMAS MORNING AT ABERGAVENNY

The sheep on the hill,
A star in the east,
The sun rising up in its glory;
As I lie awake
With its light in my eyes
I know once again that old story.

Far down in the west
There is snow on the hills,
With the Sugar Loaf lying afar;
On the old Welsh moors
The shepherds now watch;
Once again they can see that bright star.

Away in the heights
Where the tumbling streams
Sweep on to the Severn seas,
The three Welsh kings
Walk over the fields
And down through the frosted trees.

I hear on the air
The choirs of Wales
Singing Glory to God in the Height;
And the old Welsh hymns
And the old Welsh sounds
Are flooding the Christmas night.

Down in the valley
A tiny Welsh babe
Lies sleeping in all its new glory;
There by its side
A mother now lies
Reliving the wonderful story.

F.A. Evans

NEIGHBOURHOOD WATCH.

All residents in Staunton/Mennington/
Brobury should have had, by now, a leaflet
about the Neighbourhood Watch Scheme. The

purpose of Neighbourhood Watch is to make people more conscious of the need to safeguard their property and to keep a look-out on behalf of the community.

As well as eyes and ears the Scheme needs some money to get going - we plan to erect signs on the approach roads to the villages. Experience gained with other Watch Schemes shows that these signs can be a deterrent. We need at least six signs costing about £10 each. The co-ordinators are seeking ways of raising this money but in the meantime all residents are encouraged to give something - either through the co-ordinators or via the collecting boxes at the Post Office, 'the New Inn' & the Doctors' Surgery. Also if anyone would care to donate an item to be raffled, Maureen Bennett at 'The New Inn' would be happy to receive it.

In the coming months the co-ordinators hope to contribute progress reports & articles to 'Signal' on crime prevention measures - e.g. Post Coding of valuables.

The co-ordinators are:-

Staunton - Martin Powell (Moccas 621)
Val Andrews (439)

Maureen Bennett (346)

Bob Doody (311)

Margaret Sheers (234)

Mennington - Iver Courtney (344)

Brobury - John Phillips (470)

The co-ordinators are not a substitute for the police - either dial 999 or our beat constable, Tony French, at Hereford Police (0432 276422) in an emergency.

Christmas
trees

10am
onwards

Saturday
December
12th

at
The Beeches
Staunton on Wye

or at other times
by arrangement.
Tel: 0600 379

4ft - 8ft

