



December -January 1995

VILLAGE VOICE



Published bi-monthly.

Founded by Dudley Drabble.

Cover pictures by Len Hubbard

EDITED AND PRINTED BY

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at

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NUMBER 71.

TWELFTH YEAR OF PUBLICATION. DEC-JANUARY, 1994.

VILLAGE VOICE IS SAVED! This good news came just as this edition was going to Press(or rather Gestetner).

Ever since your present Editors announced that they would be resigning from editing and producing the magazine, many people in the villages determined that Village Voice must not die.

A series of meetings followed with all interested parties deciding (a) who was going to do the work and (b) where the new printing works of the magazine would be sited. Gradually a large team emerged to shoulder the production and printing of the Voice, but the space to do the printing was in short supply. Finally, due to the generosity of one of the team, a home for the printing machine was found. And now all systems, as they say, are go.

This means that our advertisers, who report good business from their displays in our pages, will now be able to book for a whole year ahead and be confident that they will continue to reach the prosperous market of this parish.

We hope that our advertisers will continue to support the magazine as it is the revenue from advertising which covers the total costs.

We hope too that our circulation manager, Mr. Peter Bromfield, will continue to rush copies of Village Voice to parish residents as he has done in the past. And he has, in fact, agreed to continue, as has Mrs. Jean Hurrell, who looks after Bantham and Buckland circulation.

We hope too that all our loyal contributors will continue to entertain and inform you as in past years, and that our front page artist, Mr. Len Hubbard, will continue to ensure that Village Voice is the best-looking magazine in the business.

And finally, let us wish every success to your new Editors, Mrs. Pat Macdonald and Mrs. Jo Parkin.

A Happy Christmas and a Wonderful New Year to Everyone whose life has been touched by Village Voice.

P O S T B A G...LETTERS TO THE EDITORS...

Dear cur,

I wood like too bee thee editor off thee vilidg vice butt i carnt spel. is thes a distvantige. mi tippin is also a bite orf..praps i cud delever thee pappers to thee hises instid off petre thee milk. lik barcus i aim willin.

Villdger, Thirliston.

(THE EDITORS WERE CONSIDERING THIS APPLICATION VERY SERIOUSLY UNTIL THE PRESENT SYNDICATE CAME FORWARD).

Dear Editors,

I, along with nearly 90 other villagers, attended the Thurlestone Harvest Supper on September 23rd in the Parish Hall.

We enjoyed a fine meal of ham and beef, baked potatoes, roll and butter, and salad, followed by apple tart and clotted cream, downed by lashings of cider and beer, and, lastly, coffee.

Five indomitable ladies and a pianist gave an amusing skit of Flanders and Swans' "T'was on a Monday morning the gasman came to call".

Knowing all the hard work entailed, putting up all the tables and chairs, organising the cooking and shopping beforehand, not forgetting the clearing up tasks - and then...Not a word, not a voice raised in a vote of thanks was heard.

Well, I for one appreciated all that was done - Thank you one and all!

J.MILLS.

DEAR EDITORS,

Please let me, through you, thank all the villagers, all my customers, who have stayed with me despite the fact that I like all other milk suppliers was forced to raise my prices by twopence a pint.

This rise, as I am sure you know was brought about by the disbanding of the Milk Marketing Board and I had no alternative but to make my first increase to my customers since 1991.

I am totally committed to maintaining the tradition of Doorstep Delivery and look forward to serving you for many years to come. Once again I do thank you for your loyalty.

PETER BROMFIELD.

ANSWERS to Pat Machin's "Missing Links" Puzzle:

Quotation: On earth peace, goodwill toward men.

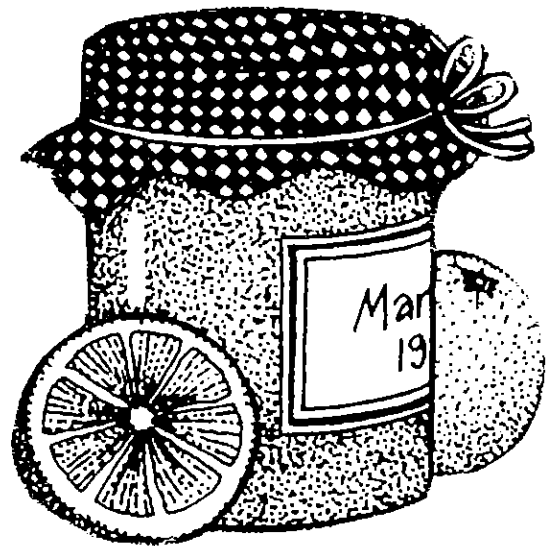
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January is Marmalade time

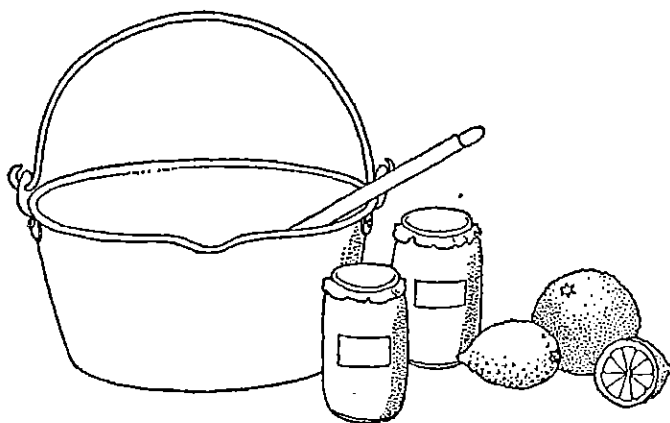
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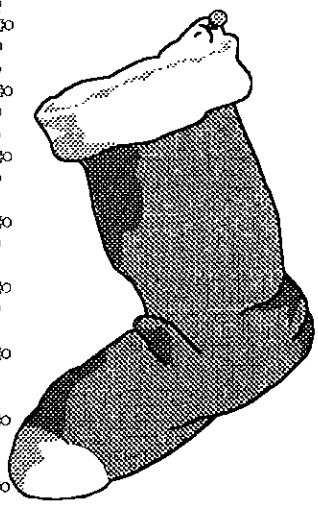


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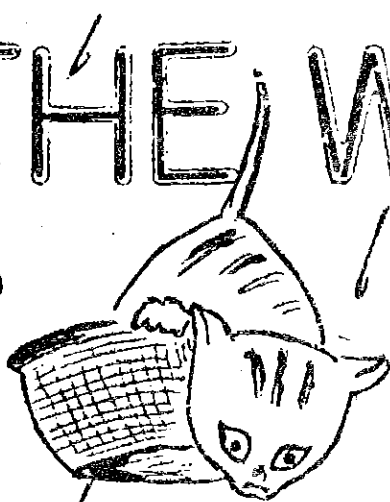
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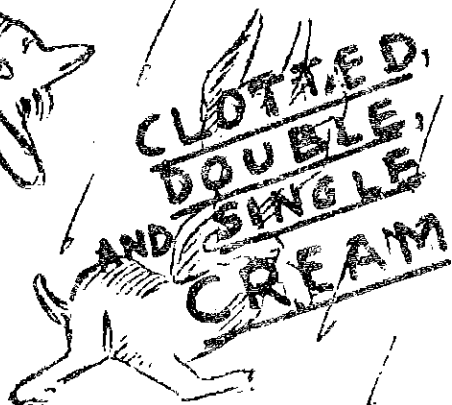
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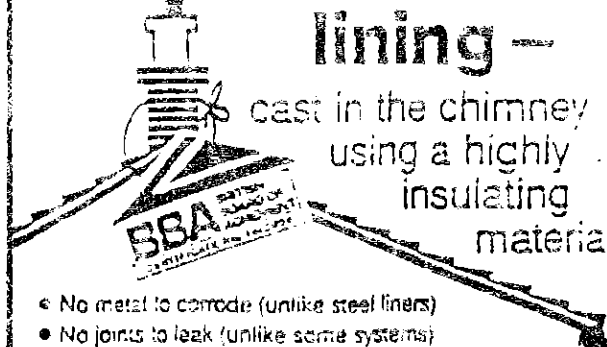
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The Rector Writes...

ON CHRISTMAS EVE each year, since the 14th century, Bishop Grandison's Office for Christmas Eve has been celebrated in Exter Cathedral, nowadays in the context of a lovely carol service.

Each year I offer my personal allocation of two seats in the Nave to someone from our parishes. Once again I am open to requests. Don't be shy if you would like to attend, please ask me.

This year I can also make available just one seat in the Quire.

The service commences at 6 p.m., but due to the demand for admission, those with reserved seats need to be in their places by 5.30 p.m., after which seats unoccupied are re-allocated to the public.

Family commitments will, I know, prevent many from accepting my offer, but please come with your families to the services available within this Benefice.

Here are the times of services in both Thurlestone and South Milton, as I know that there is a lot of cross-parish attendance according to which times are most convenient:

11th December, 3 p.m. Toy Gift Service and Lighting of Christmas Tree" for both parishes at South Milton.

18th December. "Festival of Nine Lessons and Carols"

11.10 a.m. Thurlestone
6 p.m. South Milton.

23rd December. For younger children - "Placing the Figures in the Christmas Crib.

3 p.m. South Milton.
4 p.m. Thurlestone.

24th December, Christmas Eve. "First Communion of Christmas (B)

10.15 p.m. South Milton
11.45 p.m. Thurlestone.

25th, December. Christmas Day. 8 a.m. Holy Communion (B)

Thurlestone.

All-Family Worship for Christmas Morning, followed by shortened Holy Communion (A)

9.30 a.m. South Milton
11.10 a.m. Thurlestone.

From the Rectory we wish you all a very happy Christmas and a peaceful New Year.

Sincerely,

PETER STEPHENS, Rector.

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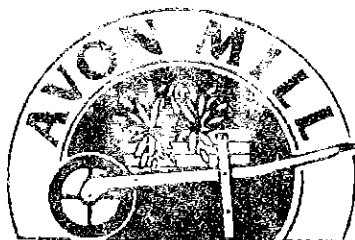
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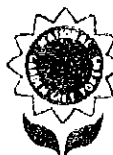
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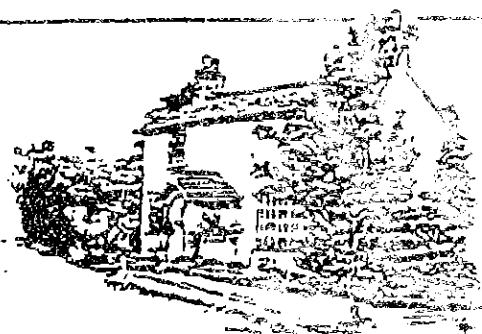
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YOUR MAGAZINE

VILLAGE VOICE can only be distributed FREE TO RESIDENTS of the Parish.

The magazine is entirely self-supporting and is not a charge on the Parish Rate, but it was founded on behalf of the Parish Council and is delighted to remain under the Council's sponsorship. But this does not mean that the views and opinions expressed in these pages are the views or opinions of any member of the Thurlestone Parish Council and should be ascribed only to the authors concerned.

Your copy is delivered to you by volunteers. In Thurlestone, this is dairyman Peter Bromfield, and in Bantham and West Buckland, Mrs. Jean Hurrell.

Extra copies may be bought from local newsagents, Mr. and Mrs. Bob Morley at the Village Stores.

There is also a subscription service, which sends copies to readers all over the country at an annual cost of £6, which includes postage.



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Kate's Kitchen



DUCK, no longer a treat for special occasions, with larger less fatty birds being bred and sold in top quality butchers and supermarkets. The Barbary and Gressingham birds are good examples - not all ducks are from Aylesbury, as many restaurant menus would have us believe!

My recipe, with a sweet, spicy glaze, and a simple fruit and nutty stuffing, has a festive flavour.

4lb. -5lb duck.

Salt and freshly ground black pepper.

1 tablesp. Honey)	Mix together in a small bowl and warmed.
1 " Ginger Marmalade)	
¼ teasp. Coriander)	
¼ " Cumin)	

For the stuffing

4 ozs. Long Grain Rice, cooked and drained

4 " Dried Apricots, soaked overnight, drained and chopped

2 " Hazelnuts, finely chopped

2 " Raisins

1 Egg, beaten

2 sticks Celery, finely chopped

Small bunch Spring Onions, finely chopped

Pre-heat oven to 425F (220C) 190c in fan assisted ovens. Wash and thoroughly dry the duck. Put all the stuffing ingredients in a mixing bowl and season to taste, add the egg to bind together. Fill the cavity of the duck with the stuffing, brush over with a little melted butter, sprinkle with salt and pepper. Prick all over with a fork and place on a rack over a roasting tin. Place in the oven on a high shelf and cook for 20 minutes, then lower the heat to 400F (200C) 170c fan assisted, and cook for approx 1½ hours. Ten minutes before end of cooking time, take out duck & brush with the warmed glaze, then return to oven for its final cooking time.

Serve with a Red wine sauce, madewith the duck giblets, shallots or onions, a clove of garlic, ½ pint red wine, salt & pepper to taste & ½ teasp. dried thyme (1 teasp fresh) & a dash of Worcester sauce. Either reduce to required thickness by fast boiling or thicken with a little cornflour, mixed with a knob of butter to a paste.

PS. Don't forget the cook's nips. Cheers!

PUZZLECORNER

A
T
M
A
C
H
I
N

MISSING LINKS.

Find the missing link between these pairs of words by filling the space in the bracket. Each word has THREE letters. e.g. pea(nut)case.

When completed, the middle letters of the words will spell out a seasonal quotation.

TEN	()	ATB
RAMP	()	ELOPE
BAR	()	ROOM
POLE	()	KIN
HE	()	FULLY
BAND	()	ELF
WORK	()	LOCK
PRESS	()	TART
ALPHA	()	RAY
BUTTER	()	RIOT
TEN	()	TIC
SWEET	()	COCK
NEST	()	CUP
SEA	()	NET
TOSS	()	AGE
TORN	()	RATION
TWENTY	()	FOLD
FIR	()	SHIP
OVER	()	OWING
DRAGON	()	PAPER
FIG	()	LIST
PIER	()	ATE
FORTY	()	PLY
CAT	()	KIN
SUN	()	AD
AN	()	TO A GRECIAN URN
FIRE	()	BRE
OF	()	ACE
INDIAN	()	LING

THE FEMALE OF THE SPECIES...

The reasoning of some golfers is beyond ordinary explanation. For example, a member recently saw a lady member walk up to his ball on the fairway and prepare to hit it.

"Hi, that's my ball," he shouted. "No, it's not, it's mine" came the reply.

"You just pick it up and you'll find my initials on it".

This she did, but replacing the ball, hit it into the distance, muttering to herself - "What are his initials doing on my ball?".

N.C.O.



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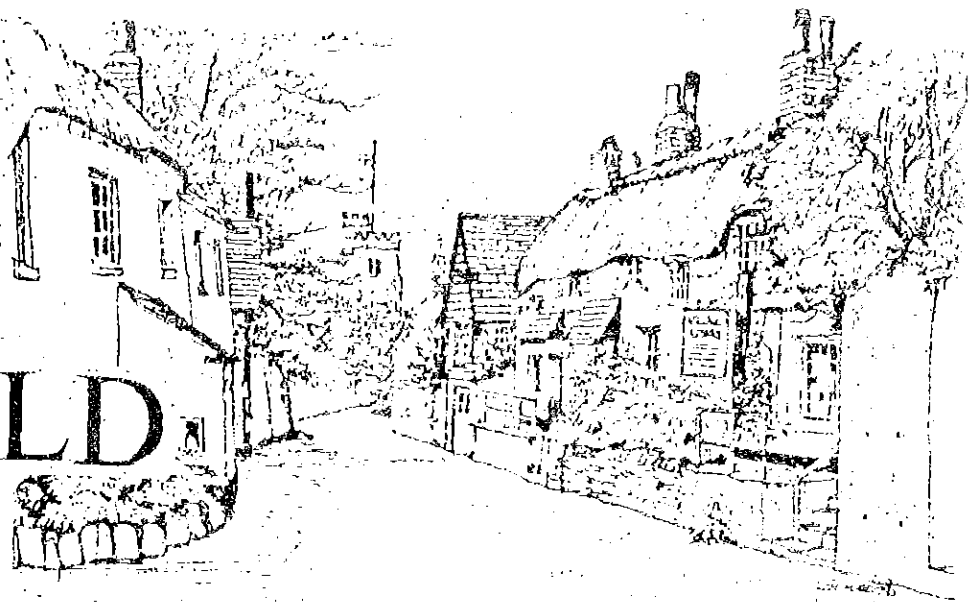
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Neville OSWALD reports



DURING THE PAST 200 years, the farmers of Thurlestone have continued their traditional task of providing an abundance of cattle, sheep and crops. Most of them have either been born in the parish or have had close family connections with it. This article seeks to investigate the trends in ownership during a period of profound change in farming methods and to compare them briefly with trends in neighbouring parishes in the South Hams.

THE FARMLANDS.

In 1777 the Earl of Devon, who then owned most of the parish, ordered a detailed survey of his holdings. This 'Courtenay Survey' described his estate of over 900 acres in the fertile southern part of the parish, which included the hamlets of Thurlestone, Buckland and Bantham. The pastureland was divided into 228 fields of an acre or more, each with its own name. These were grouped into 48 farms that were divided between 17 tenant farmers who sublet small holdings and allotments. About one-half of the fields have survived unchanged, retaining their old names; the remainder have either disappeared as they have been absorbed into larger fields or can be identified in outline as ridges covered with grass and sometimes strengthened with local stone.

The Courtenay family retained the land until 1859 when it was sold to Samuel Brunskill, an Exeter tailor; it remained with the Brunskills, less 200 acres that were sold in 1918, until 1923 when it was acquired by Commander Evans, an industrialist and a regular visitor to the district. The Evans Estates of Cardiff, having sold the coastal strip of 124 acres to the Thurlestone Golf Club in 1923, now own and let about one-half of the farmland to tenant farmers, the other half being the freehold property of their respective owners.

With three very different landlords in the past 200 years, the parish has prospered in a modest way. The livestock and crops have found a ready market at nearby Kingsbridge, especially in times of war. Latterly, with better communications, improved farming methods and income from holiday makers and new residents, it has been able to sustain a good standard of living.

FAMILY CONNECTIONS 1777 to 1900

Of the 17 tenant farmers in 1777, 13 or 77 per cent, were baptised in the parish church, as were nine of their fathers and eight of their grandfathers. Three years later, in 1780, 23 or 69 per cent of the 34 parishioners who contributed to the Land Tax had been baptised in the church. Thus, land tenancy was firmly in the hands of the native born, that is, born in the parish. With the publication of various directories in the nineteenth century, notably by White and Kelly, similar comparisons between farmers and baptisms may be made.

Total baptisms in the Thurlestone parish registers during the period 1650 to 1900 show a consistency which suggests reliable registration, with a peak in the years 1750 to 1850, in accord with the national experience. Under-registration is bound to have occurred at times, maybe by as much as 15 per cent, but accurate assessment of the shortfall is impossible at Thurlestone, as it is elsewhere. White's Directories of Devon describing the years 1850, 1878 and 1880 list on average, 12 farmers of whom about 70 per cent had been baptised in the parish church; Kelly, in the years 1866 to 1893, noted an average of about 55 per cent. Thus the native born still maintained their hold on the tenure of land into the latter part of the nineteenth century. After 1900, baptisms progressively fell all over the country and are of very little value in comparative studies.

This sustained hold on tenancies up to 1900 may be explained in part by the structure of society in the rather isolated community of Thurlestone. From 1753, when marriages started to be registered on printed forms showing the occupations of bride-grooms, farmers accounted for about 12 per cent and husbandmen for another 53 per cent. Thus, with about 65 per cent of the men working on the land, about 100 of the population of 350 and many from large families, continuity was ordinarily a matter of course.

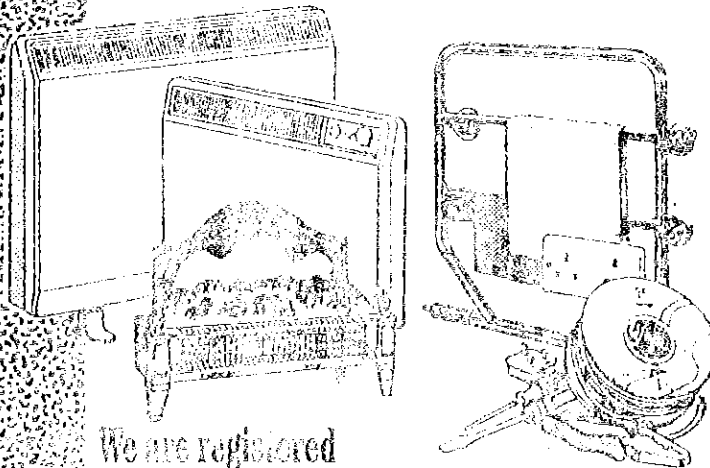
THE PRESENT CENTURY.

During this century, there has been a gradual reduction in the number of farms, as small unprofitable properties have been absorbed by or leased to larger farms. The eight that remain are scattered over the parish all but one showing on the map of 1777 and some retaining relics of a distant past. Five have a water supply from their own springs and six have cess pits, the others having connections with the main water and sewage systems. They comprise the following.

COURT PARK. (Messrs. Rodney and Geoffrey Stidston). 230 acres with 200 South Devon cattle, 400 sheep and 75 acres of corn. The Stidston brothers' grandfather, Albert, a native of Kingston near Modbury, where he was brought up on his father's farm, bought the tenancy of the farm in 1887 and the freehold in 1918. The estate passed to his son Eric in 1938, and to Eric's sons Rodney and Geoffrey in 1971 and will probably pass to one of their sons in due course.

WHITLEY. (Mr & Mrs Wilfred Palmer). 165 acres with 200 South Devons and a milking herd, 250 sheep and 75 acres of crops. Mrs Palmer's father, Mr Pearse of Stokenham nearby, acquired the tenancy of the farm in 1933 and bought the freehold in 1948. He gave it to his daughter Helen in the year of her marriage in 1966 to Wilfred Palmer who was born and bred on a farm in Blackawton. Their son now works full time on the farm.

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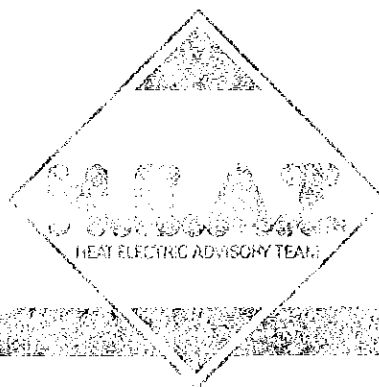
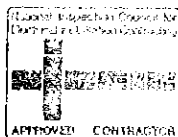
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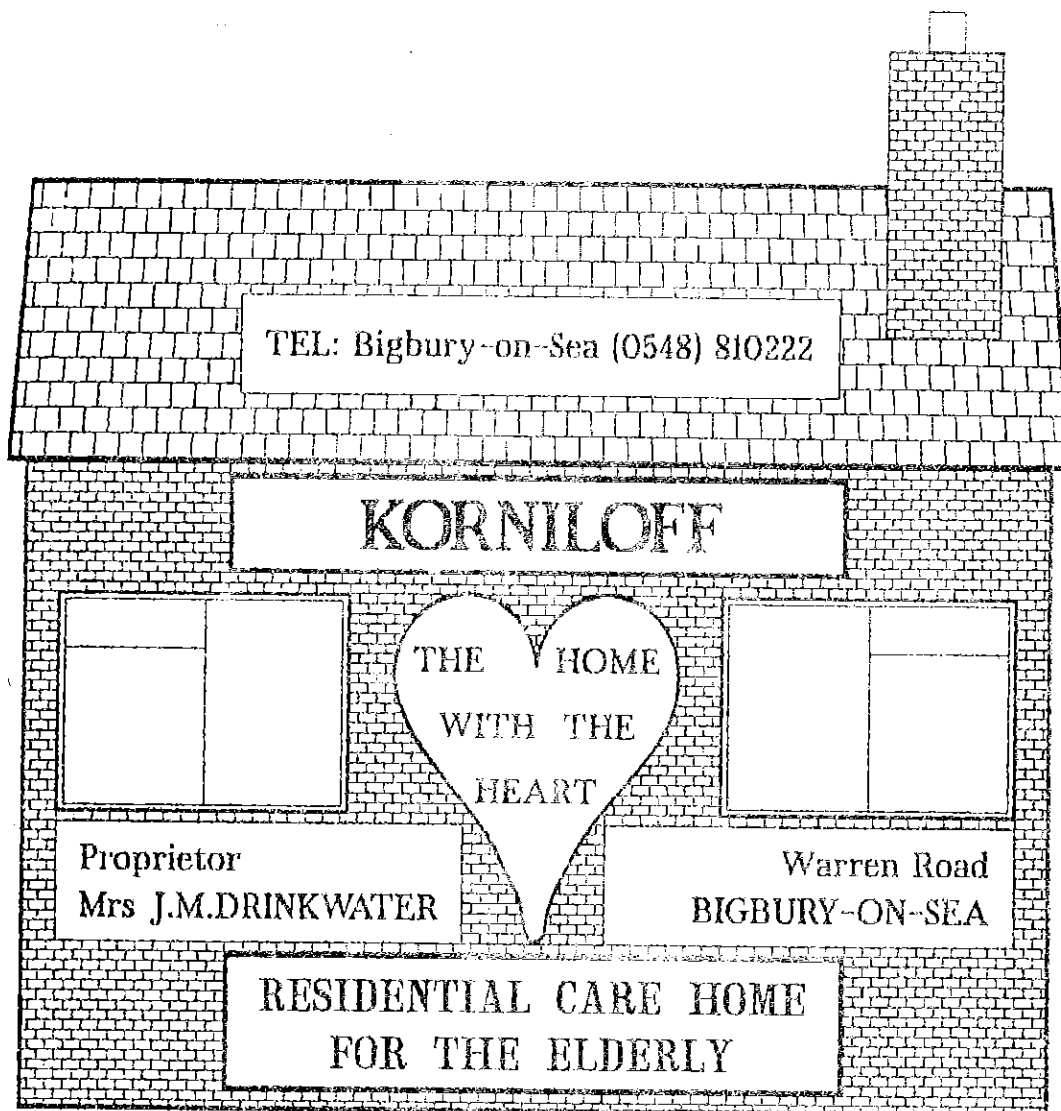
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HOMEFIELD. (Mr Gordon Bromfield). 132 acres with 140 Friesians and no corn since the barns were destroyed by fire in 1979. Gordon's great-uncle Mr Jack Broad, Cornish born but raised in the hamlet of Buckland, secured the tenancy of the farm from Mr Stidston in 1919, and handed over its unprofitable 69 acres to Gordon in 1969, together with the village shop which Frances his wife successfully manages. Gordon came from Tiverton and, after qualifying at Bicton, worked for a time at Flete. He hopes his son will follow him.

AUNEMOUTH. (Mr John Dayment). 203 acres with 80 beef and 60 dairy cattle, 40 acres of crops. John's father brought his family down from Bridford near Exeter in 1946 and rented the farm; he passed it on to John in 1970, one of whose sons will presumably follow him.

BUCKLAND. (Mr Vic Adams). 150 acres with 55 dairy cattle and up to 25 acres of corn. Vic's father came from nearby Hope Cove and took over the tenancy in 1959, passing it on to him in 1986; his son may follow him.

CROSS PARK. (Mrs W.J. Sharley). 56 acres. 5 cattle only. Mr & Mrs Sharley came down from Somerset and bought the freehold in 1958; they farmed 80 cattle with 50 sheep and 10 acres of crops until Mr. Sharley's death. The pastureland is now let. Mrs Sharley lives in the farmhouse and hopes that one of her children or grandchildren will revive the farm eventually.

HIGHER AUNEMOUTH (Mr P.O. Williams). 50 acres with formerly 50 Friesians and 30 pigs but, with indifferent health, he sold them and lets the pasturage, retaining the house. Mr Williams comes from Plymouth and bought the freehold in 1964, having been selected from several applicants because of his interest in the wild life and game birds on the estate. His son, a professional photographer, intends to live there in due course.

NORTH UPTON. (Mr. Tom Gunning). 90 acres, formerly up to 120 cattle, 40 pigs and 5,000 chickens. Coming from Bristol, Tom's father bought the freehold in 1964 from a religious sect which left some caravans on the site. He handed it over in 1972 to Tom who hopes his son will follow him. Tom found farming on the comparatively poor soil to be unprofitable and so he has now leased it for grazing. He has converted the farm buildings into private residences and has a stand for 30 privately owned caravans which he services.

These brief notes summarise the family connections of the owners of the eight farms in the parish. Of the present owners, ^{only} the Stidston brothers were baptised in the parish church, but they and two others were native born. Significantly, all of them either have a son working with them or one they hope will inherit the property in due course. Three can claim ownership by their families since before World War II, namely at Court Park (1887), Homefield (1919) and Whitley (1933); all three were acquired by young South Hams farmers. The remainder changed hands after the war, their new owners coming from nearby Hope Cove, Plymouth, Exeter, Somerset and Bristol;

No farm has been sold since 1964, mainly due to changes in farming methods. Until 40 years ago, half-a-dozen or more husbandmen would be employed on farms of over 100 acres, most of them living in cottages that were part of the farm. Now, thanks to modern methods and

machinery, two or three men manage the larger farms, sometimes with the wife of the owner helping with the paperwork. With the high cost of hiring labour, the only way to ensure a profit is to limit the wages bill, increase the livestock and rent or buy more pasture-land. This has been done on the larger farms and has included the acquisition of the grazing rights on the three farms that are no longer farmed by their owners and which might otherwise have been sold.

DISCUSSION.

The scope for assessing tenure and inheritance is necessarily limited if it is confined to the eight farms in the parish of Thurlestone. Hence, for comparison, the opinions of two much respected farmers in nearby parishes have been sought, namely Mr John Rossiter and Mr. Richard Rogers; between them, they have an intimate knowledge of farming in the district covering the dozen parishes from Thurlestone to Kingsbridge and Charleton and down to Salcombe. They both stressed the similarities in tenure throughout the district, except for the Evans Estate in Thurlestone; they knew of no other large holding that embraced more than one farm.

The farms in the district ordinarily extend to 100 to 150 acres with much the same livestock and crops as Thurlestone; the owner is often assisted by his son or a close relative and hires self-employed farmworkers as necessary. The need to enlarge estates to maintain viability has meant the disappearance of smallholdings: in South Milton, the number of farms has fallen from 14 to six since 1950. Allotments, which were so popular up to 1950, have gone as their owners have found more enjoyable ways of spending their evenings and leisure time.

Almost all farms in the district are now freehold properties. When an owner contemplates retirement and has no successor, he ordinarily has no difficulty in letting or selling his fields to a farmer nearby; he may then retain his house or convert it into a retirement or holiday home. Very few farms have reached the open market since 1970.

About one half of the existing farm owners in the district are native born and, having relations and friends in the community in which they have spent their lives, are proud of their heritage. In this respect South Milton has much in common with Thurlestone, which it adjoins. Three of their six present owners were born in the village and another at nearby Stokenham; they are all the sons or daughters of West-country farmers and hope their children will follow them. The same general pattern prevails throughout the district.

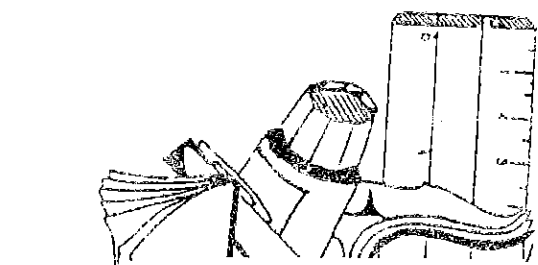
For the future, the mode of life and the opinions of the farmers are relevant. They all work long hours & are aware of the importance of maintaining their health. They have little time for hobbies but gain much information as well as pleasure from regular attendance at local markets. All are to some extent concerned about the steadily rising cost of the routine maintenance of their farms and of the restrictions that may come from the European Economic Community. Yet farming is their life and they intend to continue with it, come what may.

I wish to thank the farmers for the information and assistance which they have given me and the Thurlestone Parish Council for its support.

(This article appeared in The Devon Historian in the issue of Oct 1994, the editor has kindly given permission for it to be reproduced in Village Voice).

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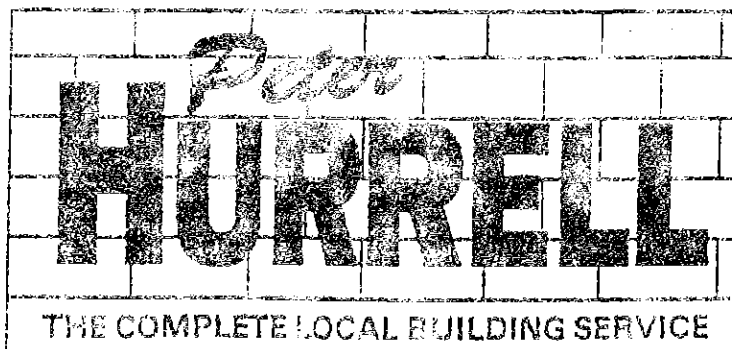
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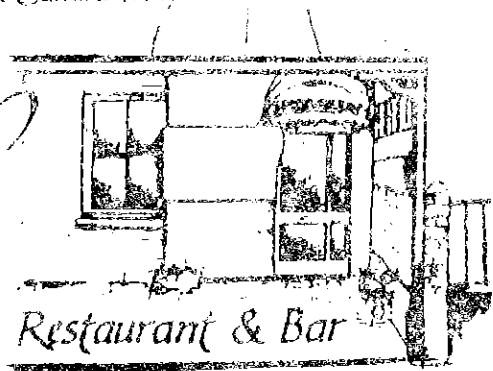
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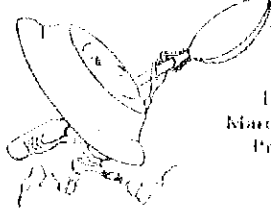
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Drabblemania

THE LETTING OF FURNISHED HOUSES & HOLIDAY HOMES -

There is, if you are not already aware a mighty serious problem arising from the imprecise drafting of the 'Furniture and Furnishings (Fire) (Safety) (Amendment) Regulations 1993. Over the next two years those who let furnished houses and holiday homes are going to have to replace all items of furniture and furnishings which fail to comply this Act - under threat of criminal prosecution.

For years, as you probably realise, there has been growing concern at the number of people killed by fires involving furniture incorporating highly inflammable synthetic materials such as plastic foam which gives off toxic fumes. The British Self Catering Association are stated to have worked out that it could cost an average of £2,000 to replace such items of furniture and furnishings in each of Britain's 100,000 self catering flats and cottages. At a time when most second-hand furniture will disappear off the market and hundreds of thousands of sofas, beds, chairs, etc. have to be burned - or buried in landfill sites. Your District Council Environmental Officer should be able to advise you.

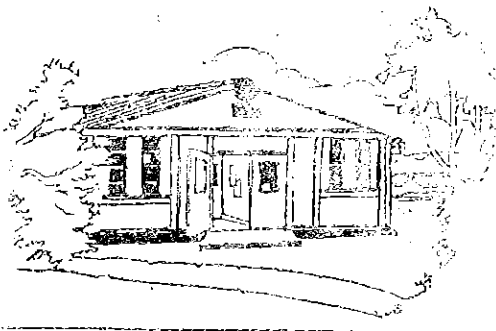
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Sadly, if not person or party are prepared to undertake the task of continuing to publish this Magazine, it will cease publication very shortly. This will be the last Drabblemania - due entirely to increasing age and incapacity. In my 86th year I should grumble !! I'll miss it as I think will many others. The Magazine - not Drabblemania ! I would like to wish all readers the Compliments of the Season. I think Penny and Kendall have done such a great job and our Milkman Peter Bromfield and Jean Hurrell a really fine delivery service as free as the Magazine has been to you - for which the people who have advertised in the magazine are responsible !

+ + + + +

HAVE A LITTLE SYMPATHY FOR YOUR DOCTOR WHEN YOU COMPLAIN OF BACKACHE !..

DURING the 2nd. World War - I was too young for the First - I was in RAF Signals, as it was then known - and spent the whole period out in the Desert sands of Egypt. Among other things I used to test aircraft radio equipment - air to ground, and on one occasion we made an 'emergency' landing which landed me in Sick Quarters for a month. Opposite to my bed was a tent like object erected on the top of a bed, with electric light bulbs in a triple row. From time to time Airmen would enter the small ward, climb into this affair with all lamps shining. At the end of around 15 minutes an overheated airman would clamber out and stagger away. I became fascinated. "What" I said to the MO one morning, "is the object of yonder 'tent'". "There is really no secret about it", he said. A chap comes to me and says Doc my back is killing me. I just can't carry on. Now, the point is I examine the patient and I cannot tell if he is telling the truth or pulling a 'fast' one, for his back might seem quite normal. My treatment is a few days - twice a day - in what I call my treatment tent. Bearing in mind our normal temperature out here is around 100 degrees - anyone who can take my treatment for a few days convinces me he has backache and needs whatever treatment is available."



THURLESTONE PARISH HALL

A BIG THANK YOU to all who helped to make the Autumn Fair such a success and raised £437.35 (after expenses) for the Parish Hall funds. Without your support and generosity in gifts for the cake, raffle and bottle stalls plus the hard work put in by the Committee, this would not have been possible. It was a great effort by the Village and well rewarded.

The Bowling Club, unable to man a stall this year, have donated a handsome Clock to the Hall, which will be of benefit to all.

Mrs Joan Mackenzie has resigned from the Committee due to pressure of other committee work. We shall miss her wise counsel and knowledge. The Village is indebted to her for the sterling service willingly given. I thank her on your behalf.

The Committee has decided to make application for an "Entertainments Licence", which should benefit hirers of the hall for the future.

To Penny and Kendall McDonald - what can we say? "Thank You" seems so little in proportion to the enormous amount of pleasure and interest given to us throughout the years they have produced "Village Voice". The Parish Hall Committee are indebted for their co-operation,

JOHN SLINGER
Chairman,

STOP PRESS: The JumbleSale held by W.I. to raise funds for the hall roof raised the magnificent sum of £150. Well Done! and thank you to those hard working ladies (Jumble Sales ARE hard work!) for holding the event.

POETRY DAY

The sun has gone, the curtains drawn,
And I suppress another yawn.
Jen and Phil are on the road,
And soon will reach their own abode,
Where peace and warmth await them there
And comradeship beyond compare.
The day has been a lovely one
With gifts and Scrabble, chat and fun.
'A happy tired' as Jen would say
Pervades me in the usual way,
And now my lids are drooping low
So up the wooden hill I go
To dream of kindness, loving care
Which I have been allowed to share.

H.R.DAVIES

6.10.94.

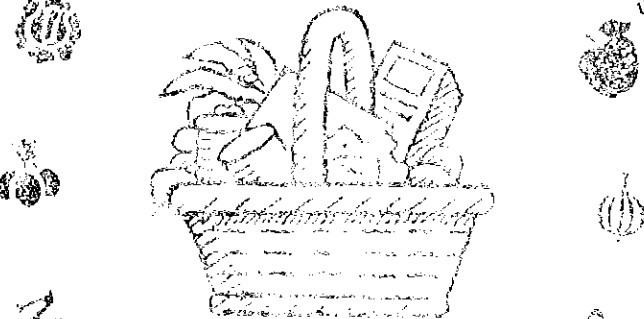
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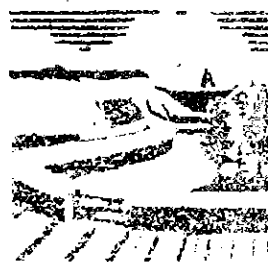
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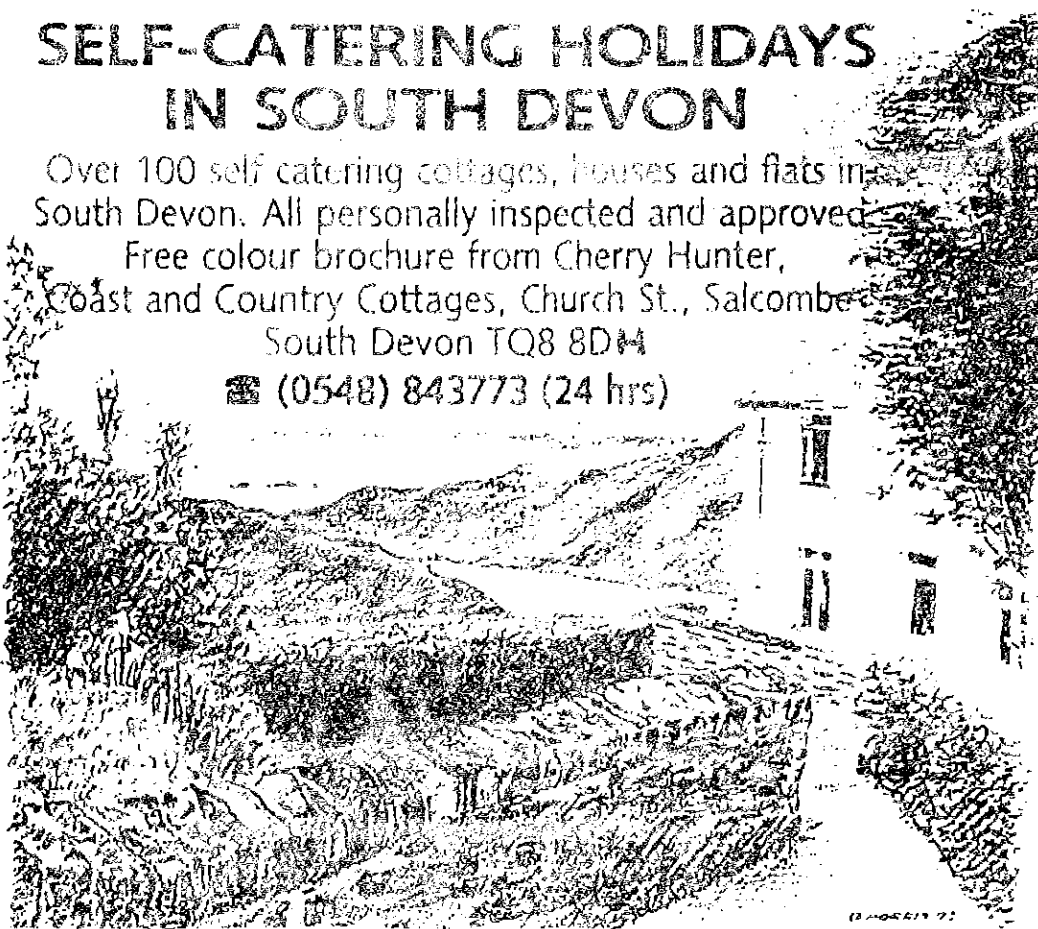
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LOCAL NEWS

TRAMP, YEAR 7

Yet again, throughout the year, it has been the Parish Hall's privilege to witness the assembly and subsequent departure of those members of TRAMP, more or less numerous but always stalwart, resolute and armed with maps and compasses, who have steelled themselves to take part in that fortnight's or month's venture. Their numbers are regularly swelled, sometimes almost doubled, at the start of the walk by loyal trampers from further afield, to form a group of a dozen or so on average. We have been glad to welcome one or two new enthusiasts this year. Regrettably the dog numbers have been down but I understand they promise to do better next year. Top dogs are again Homer and Ambrose.

Only one of the walks has had to be cancelled owing to inclement weather. In fact the ground was covered in snow and ice and we don't all possess skis or crampons. We are not masochists; we do not relish being soaked to the skin, frozen to the marrow or anything of a similarly unpleasant nature. Roasting is not normally a problem. On the other hand we are not deterred by knee-high mud, wet feet or the promise of showers. We have, as it happens, been extraordinarily lucky with the weather and the sun, disregarding Craig Rich's decrees, has frequently had the temerity to shine, albeit fitfully, when we should have been drenched by vicious showers. There have been some glorious days - and not only in the summer.

The 18 walks have again been varied, covering all manner of terrain; The Moors in the summer, closer to home in the winter. We have been as far as Horrabridge, as near as S. Milton; Many a tale of gallantry and heroism can be told but not about TRAMP. Walks have been memorable for the beauty of the scenery or of the weather rather than the exploits of the walkers. There are always highlights. One such was in June when most of us, with a few notable exceptions, plunged into the sea at Mothecombe (they said it was lovely but did not claim it was warm) thus reviving a former tradition. The December walk was popular, too, though whether this was due to the prospect of a bracing day in the fresh air or to a warm pub is open to debate.

Pub lunches, though, are really intended for the chillier days and although we are building up an extensive knowledge of those pubs that can face a horde of hungry trampers without blenching (see the TRAMP welcoming Inn Guide, 1994 edition) a picnic in an idyllic spot or even a not-so idyllic spot, is generally preferred. One can remember sitting on the leeward side of a friendly tor which protected us from the worst of a heavy shower, and on the parapet of an ancient bridge over a stream, where we found that we were at risk from a large lorry of a size that should not be permitted on rural roads, and again in the shade of trees beside another stream.

There has also been a slightly educational aspect. One one occasion, we visited a church to examine a notable historical monument, have learnt a lot about feasts and for those who are not content merely to follow, sheep-like, the leader, there are valuable path-finding skills to practice.

Plans for next year are even now being made and will follow a similar pattern of a mixture of old walks which are particularly worth repeating or which we have not done for several years and of new walks which our indefatigable trail-makers have cunningly devised. This is a most time-consuming task and the idler ones, amongst us are most grateful to those who take it on.

We are also all of us most grateful to Kay Morley and Frances Bromfield for letting us display our notices in their shops.

General information.

P.S.B.

1. Walk Leaders:

Pam Brewster (PB) 560345
Susan Dwyer (SD) 560648
Bob Nicholls (BN) 560576
Stewart Reynolds (SR) 560643
Ron Savage (RS) 852861
Roy Travis (RT) 0364 72104
Derek Yeoman (DY) 560300

2. The rendez-vous for all walks will be Thurlestone Parish Hall Car Park (TVHCP)

3. There will be two walks per month from March to September, inclusive on the 1st and 3rd Wednesdays.

4. The January and February walks will probably be on the 3rd Wednesdays, and the October, November and December walks on the second Wednesdays.

5. Reminder notices will be posted up in the Post Office and Village stores, nine days before the walk takes place.

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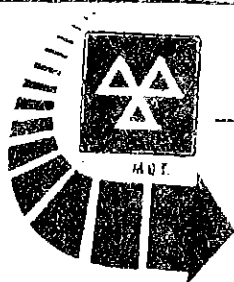
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Jacket Potatoes
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Fish Pie

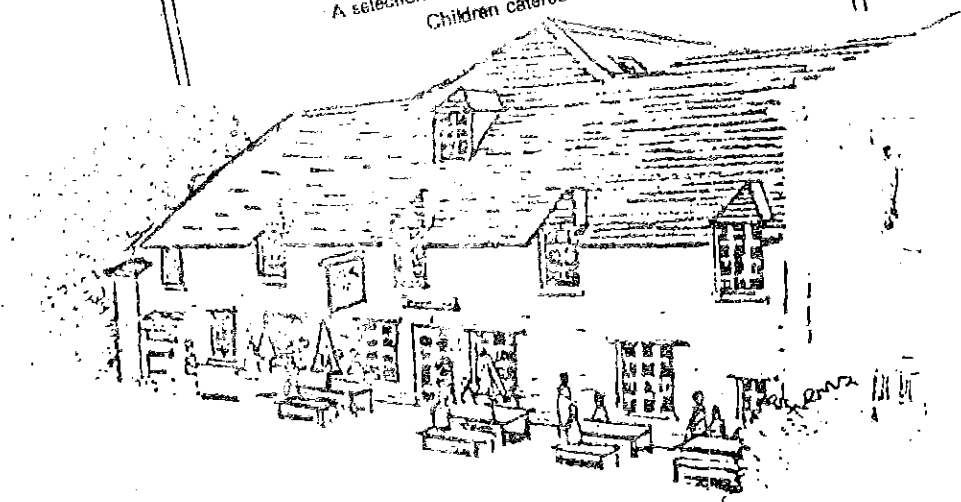
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HARRY HUGGINS

WE HAVE THIS theory that if you go somewhere warm in November it makes the winter shorter. A good story, and justification for a bit of extravagance. There is a down side - maybe you do miss out on some cold weather, but one certain thing is that it feels jolly cold when you return; never more so than when we came back from Israel a year or two back.

Last year it was Mallorca again. To our horror, in winter they didn't fly there from Exeter any more. Tenerife, yes, the Algarve, yes. But for Mallorca you had to plot off to Bristol. That is now our furthest limit. Nothing, but nothing, would induce us any more to go to Heathrow or Gatwick.

We wanted to go to Puerto de Pollença, on a land-locked inlet at the north of the island. That is where the birds are. And we wanted the Illa D'Or hotel, which meant we had to go with Thomson's so-called "a la Carte"; They took you by taxi from the airport and gave you flowers in your room when you got there. Jolly nice the flowers were, but I dared not enquire the extra cost of all this (in every hotel we go to everyone seems to have paid less than we have). For one thing you feel you must tip the taxi driver. Some say doubtless that paying him is down to Thomson and that is enough. My hide is not thick enough for that, and it cost me.

The hotel is old and comfortable and the staff seem to have been there for ever, though the little man who came sometimes in the evenings and sang like Placido Domingo, only better, seemed to have vanished. They gave us the balcony room we asked for, at the front of the hotel, overlooking the sea. You could bird quite adequately from there, no need to go any further. We saw gulls, cormorants and shags on the sea, and little birds trickled through the pines outside the balcony: Goldcrests, Blackcaps, Goldfinches, Cross bills - the tips of their bills overlap, for getting seeds out of pine cones. There are some in Haldon Forest, but generally they are pretty rare in Britain. Not as rare though as the Sardinian Warblers we saw also, the gentleman is greyish, with bright red eyes in a black head. There are lots of them in Mallorca, we have never seen one in Britain, would get very excited if we did.

In winter it was, maybe still is, the practice of the Illa D'Or to provide you with a car for three days per week, therefore two weeks, six days. We had a Seat Panda before, not our favourite means of transport. It was better than walking, being a bit quicker, and it carried the gear, binoculars, telescope and so on. But it was only just better. This time we said could we pay for a further four days and could we have a Fiat Uno, please. It was absolutely basic, no

radio no frills but remarkably roomy in front, as much leg room as in our Mondeo, and it was a real honey to drive. There was one local modification; when you started the engine you were hooted at by a mad motor scooter. After some research we found it was us; When we released the handbrake the noise stopped. What a good idea!

We spent a lot of time at the S'Albufera marsh, near the proliferating hotels of Aldudia, half an hour's drive westward along the coast from Puerto de Pollenca. It is one of the top reedbeds in Europe, now luckily turned into a Spanish government nature reserve. May it remain so. You are never quite sure about such places and have a nasty feeling that if the cash was right it might still get hotels built all over it, though recession seems to have removed any such threat for the time being.

It rained sometimes. One very wet day we sat in one of the hides at S'Albufera watching the poor miserable horses they turn loose in the reserve to chew down the vegetation - we have seldom seen anything quite so wet and unhappy looking. Except a nearby Marsh Harrier, a magnificent Buzzard-like creature. He just stood on a tree with his wings held out and the rain sluicing off them. Oddly enough a tiny Chiffchaff feeding on insects in the plants close to the hide was quite unperturbed by the rain.

But the sun shone a lot. For most of the time we were in cotton dress/shirt sleeve order, even when we climbed up to the Talaia d'Aldudia, which is a tower high on a hilltop. There we saw Alpine Accentors, cousins of our garden Hedge Sparrows (Dunnocks if you prefer). In summer they are birds of the high mountains - these must have come from the Alps to spend the winter in the warm.

Elsewhere Robins and Black Redstarts were what there were most of, migrants from the north. We get the Black Redstarts passing through here in most autumns - we saw seven at once on Links Court last year, but not a single one this. Has anyone seen one?

There was often a Kingfisher outside the hotel, and each evening a party of bats came bursting out of a pine tree by our balcony. There were always Ospreys and Marsh Harriers circling over the S'Albufera reserve; often there was a Great White Egret, bigger than the Little Egrets we see around the Kingsbridge estuary, and with a sort of crick in its neck. There were Flamingos, and Black-winged Stilts, smallish waders with absurdly long legs. In the mountains we saw Black Vultures, huge things, a good eight feet across the wings, and best of all there were Cranes, all legs and neck, drifting over the high tops on their southward migration.

But that was last year. This year as we thought about the holiday companies' brochures our central heating boiler thought about itself and began to weep; sad tears saturated the walls around it and brought off the paint. So we had a new one; the change out of £2,000 was enough for a carvery meal for two and not much more. So Mallorca or wherever has had to wait.

We did settle, though, for a break in mid-Wales, hoping for the rare Red Kites, bigger than our Buzzards, with much longer wings and tails, and truly spectacular fliers. We had three days, at £99 each, which cannot be bad. This was at Llanwrtyd Wells, the Lasswade Country House Hotel. We didn't like to ask why the "Country" - it had been just the Lasswade House Hotel when we drove past it last. You think

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of a country house hotel as being like the Buckland tout Saints, an imposing pile in a park. Lasswade is a fair sized house in the town. I suppose calling it "Country" is like calling flats "luxury" - it gives a je-ne-sais-quoi and doesn't mean much... But I mustn't knock it; it is a warm and cosy little hotel and they fed us so well that on the second day my belt burst.

On the way there, out of the car window, I noticed half a dozen Fieldfares, big winter thrushes, grey, chestnut and black. I saw no more, we would have been off the mountain road and into a bog if I had gone on watching, but June counted over 400 of them in the flock, fugitives from bad weather or maybe lack of berries further north. In Wales there were plenty of berries for them to find, unlike here where the crop has almost failed this year; bitter winds at blossom time were the cause of that.

In one respect Llanwrtyd Wells is not the most ideal centre. Along a good road you can go north, towards Builth Wells, or south, to Swansea. Coming from the east, over the high road from Brecon, which is what we did, is all right; it is a B road; most B roads in Wales are far better than our A roads here in Devon. But if you want to go west, there is just a tiny mountain road, very narrow and very exciting, especially when you come to a steep bump and can see nothing beyond the bonnet of your car. You wonder if coming the other way there is someone who can see nothing beyond the bonnet of his car. Quite by chance we picked the days when no one else was practising for the RAC Rally, nor mountain biking, and the oaks were all red and the beeches golden. We saw sheep, though, thousands of them, which about ten men and twenty dogs were bringing down off the mountain as we drove west along the little road to Tregaron.

Just north of Tregaron is Cors Caron, or Tregaron Bog. They say it started life as a shallow lake and has filled slowly with sphagnum moss until it is piled up in a hump, about thirty feet high, but you don't really notice that because it is so big. It is a national nature reserve now, and as long as your arm is the list of birds you might see; rare plants too, but like our South Milton Ley it doesn't show you much on a single casual visit. We did see a Red Kite overhead, though, and a flock of Redwings, the smaller winter thrushes

A bit further north, towards Devil's Bridge, we stopped in a lay-by to eat our biscuit and cheese. Not really needed, but if you don't nibble something in the middle of the day you gobble up your roll and butter as soon as you start your dinner in the evening and then don't have room for the rest of the meal. As we sat we saw something on the side of a hill, about a quarter of a mile away. We realised it was eating, probably a rabbit. Another came, and another - eventually there were eight Buzzards, a Raven and three Red Kites, one of which had red tags, like ribbons, in its wings, it must have been one of those released to try to get the numbers up (the Mallorquins were doing the same with their Black Vultures).

The day before we went away, when Bronwen came with the newspapers she brought our copy of Bird Watching magazine. We took it with us unopened; when we did look inside we found a long article about the Wildfowl and Wetlands Trust's new centre at Llanelli.

When Peter Scott started Slimbridge he insisted they must have other places too, so that if disease such as a fowl pest wiped out the birds at one, as well it might, the other collections would escape. Good thinking, for some of the birds involved, like the Hawaiian Geese, were so rare that if Peter Scott's were lost, that would be the end of the species. Several more of the centres have been opened; there are now eight of them, and this one at Llanelli began in 1991. Empire building I suppose it is, but the sort you can go along with.

We asked at the hotel how long to get to Llanelli. An hour and a half they said. That meant two hours for us, we reckoned, but in fact it was an hour and a quarter. You come off the M4 and follow duck signs until you find you are there. Some of these places for wildlife seem a bit odd, there is the great Llanelli tin plate works just a couple of fields away, but birds don't mind that sort of thing, making tin plate disturbs them far less than many country activities. The centre is 200 acres, with a fine HQ building - these places don't stint themselves. You can laurate in arm-chairs watching the birds in the pools outside. There are several ponds with the collection of tame swans, geese and ducks - the afore-said Hawaiian Geese, Barn-headed Geese, which migrate from Siberia to India over Mount Everest, and are now very rare in the wild, and the like. Overlooked by several viewing hides (no, they don't all have armchairs) is a biggish lake for wild birds. WE WERE surprised to see a party of Whooper Swans, the larger of the wild swans. Only six of them, but they included two of this year's cygnets, and must have flown in from the far north.

There were also the tribes of squealing schoolchildren whom you always find at these WWT places - the Trust tries to indoctrinate them young. To an old codger like me, who thinks of school as a grim classroom presided over by an ogre with a piece of chalk in one hand and a cane in the other, these outings seem a bit odd, but I suppose they learn something and it is nice to see them.

For the birder the glory of the place are two hides which look south across the Burry Inlet to the Gower. There are thousands of acres of salt marsh, flooded at the highest spring tides. Out of these, close to the hides, they have dug out several areas of mud and very shallow water - scrapes, they call them. The birds love these. There were hundreds of Shovelers, the ducks with the great spatulate bills, thousands of Wigeons, a few Pintails, Jazzy graceful ducks these, and a fair number of waders, mostly Redshanks, which we go to see on the Kingsbridge estuary. With them was the occasional Spotted Redshank, longer beaked than its commoner cousin and now in silvery winter plumage - they are black in summer; and a few Greenshanks, another bird of the Kingsbridge estuary. My wife whispered to me where they were; but was overheard by a lass in the hide who was surveying the scene through a telescope. "She's only been here ten seconds and she's seen birds which I haven't found yet!" Experience is what it is that counts. If the young lady had spent years on wind-swept sea walls in East Anglia looking for these things, like my wife has, she would see them equally quickly.

So, if you happen to be popping along the M4, go off at junction 47 or 48 for the Wildfowl and Wetland Trust's Llanelli Centre. In winter, preferably, when the wildfowl come in from the north. We hope to go again soon. But we want to go somewhere warm first.

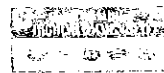
LOCAL NEWS FROM THE W.I.

Wyn Cousins will continue as President for a further year, with her existing committee, all of whom were re-elected at the November annual meeting. Rosemary Mackay and Joan Reece, who were retiring, were thanked warmly for their past work. Tricia Millman, Margaret Illingworth and Janet Fraser were also elected.

Art Workshops are continuing and a furniture restoration day was enjoyable..and productive. Six flower arranging workshops, with Alice Foster, will be held in December and January in the Parish Hall, starting Friday, December 2nd. Non-members welcome. Ring 560436.

Christmas lunch at the Hotel on December 8 is followed at 2.15pm by a demonstration of Christmas parcel decorating with Sheila Blake. Non-members welcome at 2.15. Ring 560436. P.M.

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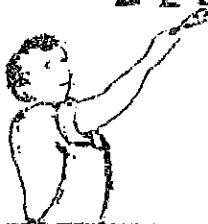
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Sat. 3rd. Church Christmas Bazaar. Parish Hall. 10.30 am.

Wed 14th. Tramp Christmas Walk. Lunch at Hunters Lodge, Cornworthy

January.

Thurs 26th. Conservatives Bridge. Thurlestone Hotel. 6.30 pm.

February.

Sat 4th Junble Sale. Horticultural Society. Parish Hall 2.30 pm

Fri 24th Conservatives AGM (and lunch) Thurlestone Hotel. Noon.

March.

Tues 14th Boutique 144 Fashion Show in aid C.R.M.F. Kings Arms.

Sat 18th Devonshire Association. Slide talk. Parish Hall. 2.45 pm

April.

Mon 24th Mead AGM. Parish Hall. 8 pm.

May.

Sat 20th Flower and Plant Sale. Horticultural Society,
Parish Hall. 2.30 pm.

August.

Sat 5th Thurlestone and South Milton Horticultural Show.
Parish Hall. 2.30 pm.

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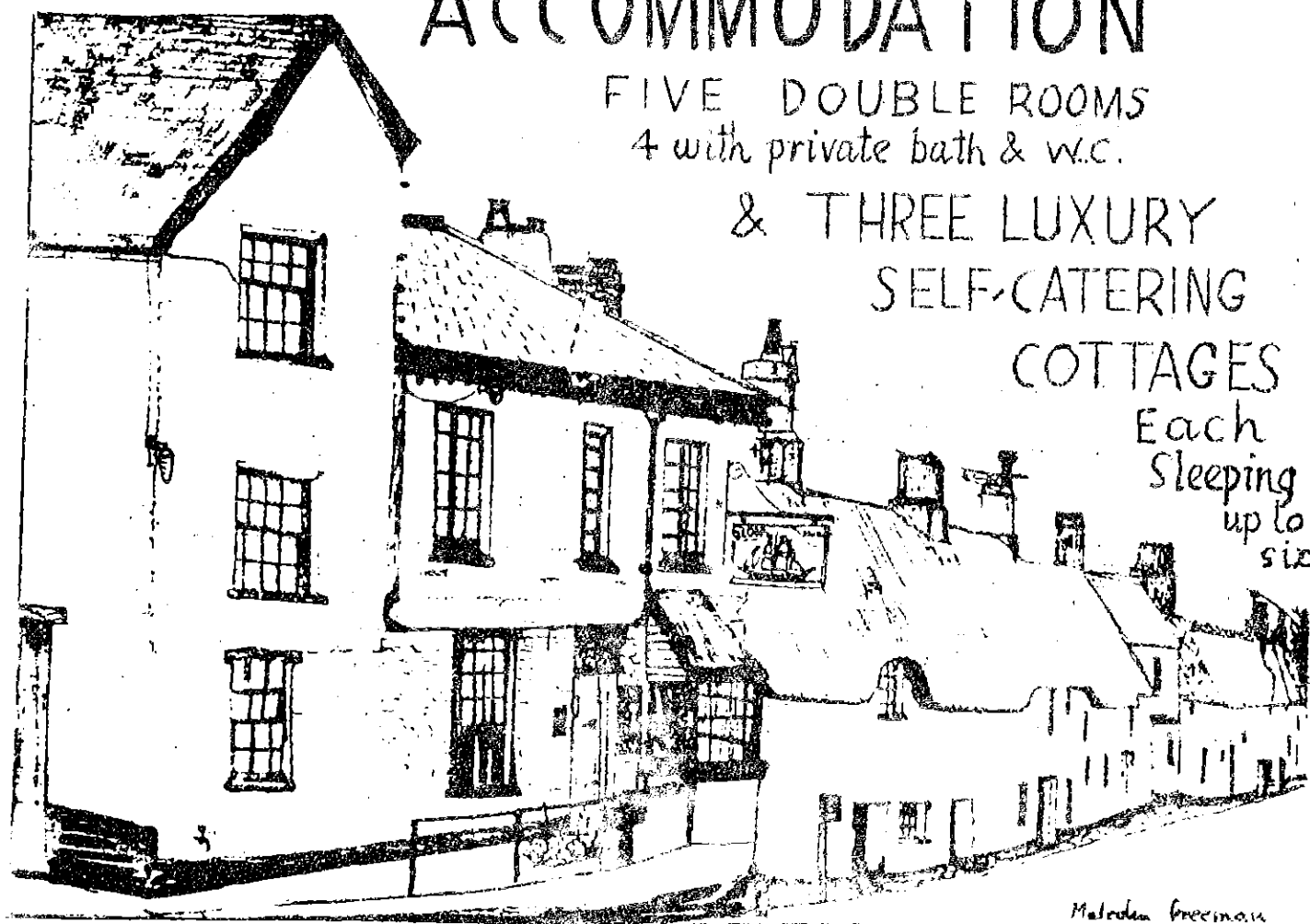
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