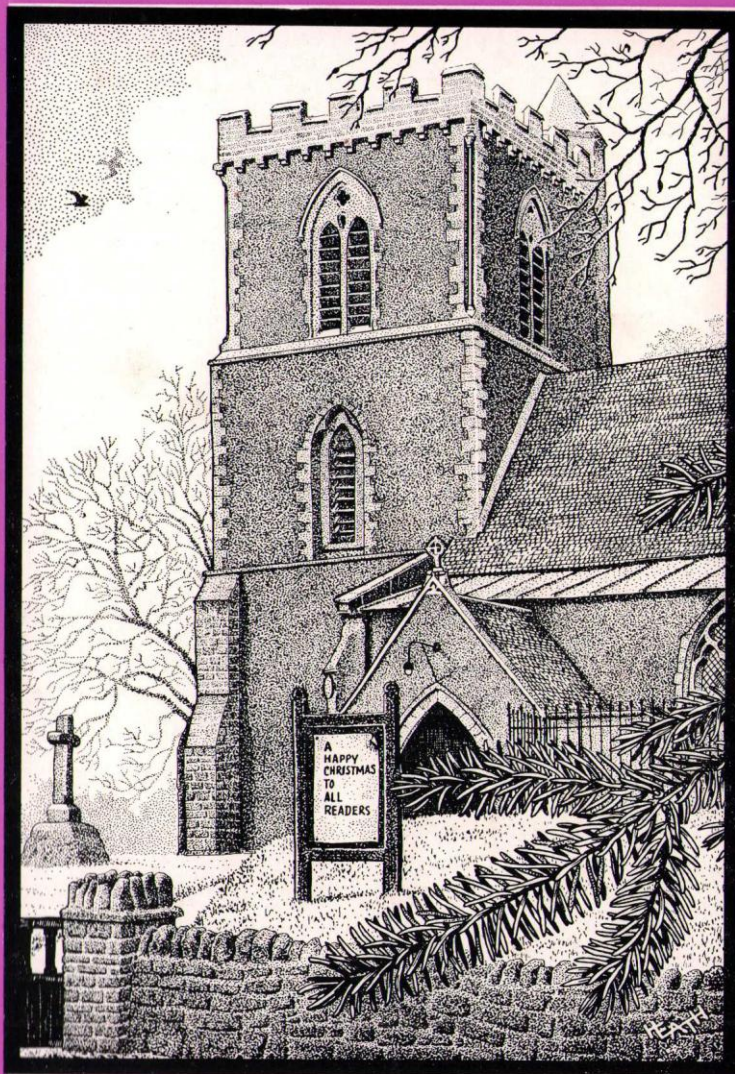


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ISSUE No.51 - ONE SHILLING - CHRISTMAS 1965

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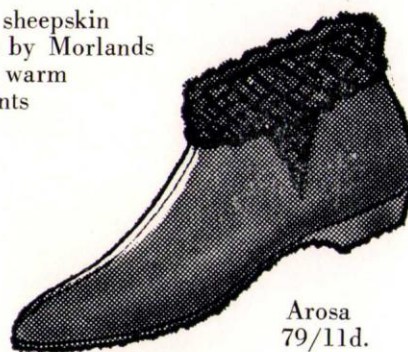
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Vol. XV, No. 4 (51)

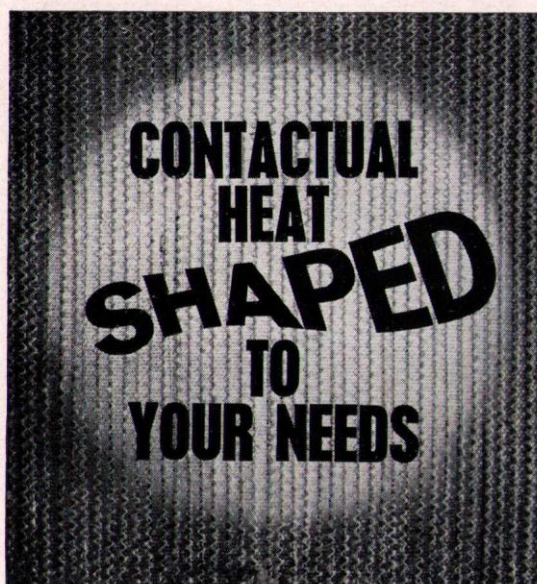
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The outstanding event of 1965 in the field of atomic energy was the acceptance of the A.G.R. power reactor as a generating system fully competitive with coal fired stations. Although the responsibility for development of the A.G.R. reactor was largely with the Reactor Group the path towards it was first cleared at Harwell. Practically every conceivable type of power reactor was examined and a great deal of experimental work was done on several of these. Some, such as PIPPA and HTR, were original Harwell concepts which became forerunners of present day designs; others, such as LEO, HAR, LMFR and Felix were dropped and over the years we have become accustomed to quite drastic changes of programme.

Looking towards the future, we expect the fast reactor to supplant thermal reactors as the major source of nuclear power towards the end of the century and it will be our task to widen and strengthen the foundations for this major development. More work will of course, be needed on thermal systems, but we have also been examining possibilities for new work either allied to the field of atomic energy or outside it. Research on desalination of sea water began some months ago and we expect that other new projects will start in 1966.

I hope everyone will have a Happy Christmas and will return refreshed to face the tasks of the New Year.

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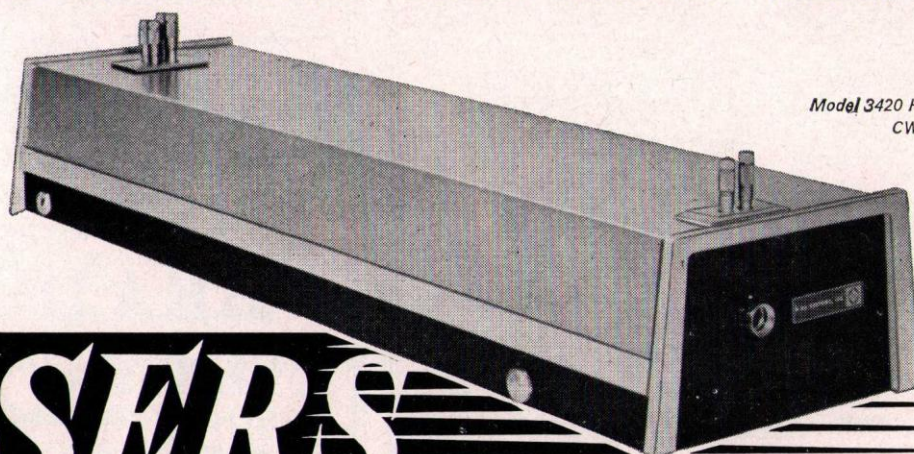
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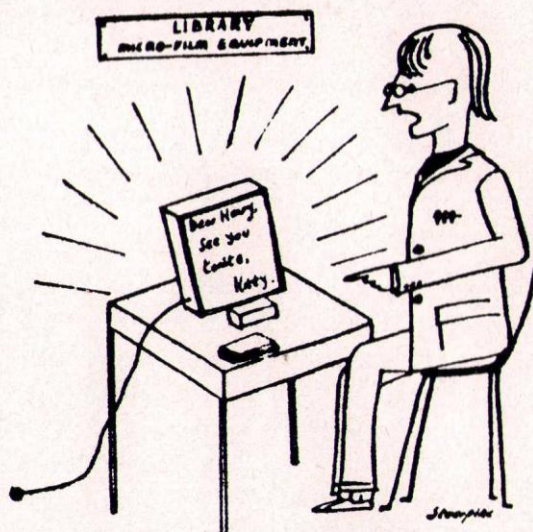
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EDITORIAL

At R.A.F. Harwell in the dusk of December 31st, 1945, the R.A.F. ensign was lowered for the last time. The Air Ministry had intended that it should be a permanent R.A.F. station, but in the last minute of the last hour, twenty years ago, the empty wind-swept airfield with its vast hangars, its dumps, its ugly buildings and its brick houses on the perimeter was handed over to atomic energy.

From time to time "*Harlequin*" tells the tale of what has followed, with news of what is going on now, and of our plans and aspirations for the future. When on occasion we look back it is because we feel that happenings which have changed our lives should not be lost in obscurity. We should remember also that it is not only we of A.E.R.E. who have been affected by the changes.

The scientists who came to Berkshire from the Manhattan Project were to find the nearby village very different from the mountain top of Los Alamos with its Pueblo Indians. Harwell was an agricultural centre famous for its cherry orchards and admired for its thatched houses of weather-scarred stone. May it always be so! We have been pleased that, prominent at the recent planning enquiry into the proposal for three hundred new houses, were new Harwellians joining forces with the old to preserve the present size of this quiet old village.

We hope we may remain aware of our part in the life and thought of the local community. In this issue we start a series on local government, and in coming issues will be looking at some of the local villages and towns in which many of us are living and playing a part.

When we look back this Christmas we do not do so nostalgically with rose coloured spectacles, nor to denigrate the past. To these twenty years we owe the confidence and faith with which we look to the future.

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CHRISTMAS 1965

Vol. XV, No. 4 (51)

*in this
issue*

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DR. R. B. JACOBI

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COVER DESIGN: St. Matthew's Church, Harwell, built in 1130 and rebuilt in the thirteenth century. The remains of the Black Prince are sometimes wrongly described as being buried here, but his Coat of Arms are to be seen in the east window.

Twenty years ago a search was made for available R.A.F. airfields to find one that could best offer the facilities needed for the successful development of Britain's post-war atomic industry.

THE GENESIS OF A.E.R.E.

SIR J. D. COCKCROFT

A.E.R.E. was conceived, I think, at a discussion we held in Washington in November of 1944. Akers came over from England; Chadwick and Peierls from Los Alamos; Oliphant from Berkeley, and I came down from Montreal where the Canadian-U.K. Group were then working—in the huge building of the University of Montreal.

We thought we would set up an Establishment on a modest scale, with a pile and a Van der Graaff machine and a few other tools of nuclear physics. This recommendation was made to Sir John Anderson and his Consultative Council and during the Summer and Autumn of 1945 the plan was further elaborated in England. We considered the desirable conditions for the future Establishment. It should not be too far from London; there should be easy access to a major University; there should be some degree of isolation, and lastly the countryside should be pleasant to live in. It was thought necessary also to start with a prepared site with roads, services and some permanent buildings, and Lord Cherwell suggested that we should look for a suitable R.A.F. airfield.

So, in a hurried visit to England in the Autumn of 1945, Professor Oliphant and I looked at airfields. Most of those suggested had very temporary buildings and offered little advantages over open sites; we were left with a short list of Duxford (near Cambridge), South Cerney (near Cirencester), Benson and Harwell. Duxford, in spite of the great advantages of proximity to Cambridge, was voted to be too inaccessible to most Universities and there was not enough water available. South Cerney was an attractive airfield but somewhat too isolated; so in the end we were given Harwell, and on a

windy day of February 1946, on another flying visit from Canada, I was able with Skinner and Fisher to look closely at our heritage.

Meanwhile, after the Washington meeting of 1944, much planning had been going on in Canada. We had formed the well known "Graphite Group" to prepare a first design for the Harwell Pile. Amongst its members were Newell, now returned to I.C.I., Volkoff, now Professor in British Columbia, Kowarski, Pryce and Guggenheim, together with Tongue, Dunworth, Rennie, Bunemann, Whitehouse and Fenning. Later, Watson Munro and his New Zealand team were commissioned to design the Gleep. A Ministry of Works Mission came to Canada to discuss "hot lab" design with Spence and the chemists, and experienced the delights of Deep River hospitality—there is a delightful Kodachrome showing red steaks being grilled before a fire for an open air feast. There was much Transatlantic cabling on where we should establish our housing sites. A start had to be made quickly and the only solution was to provide prefabs and to erect them on our own site where services and sewers were available and where the minimum of consents had to be obtained. A little more time was taken to search for other sites and, in the end, we were lucky in finding places as good as Fitzharries and Wantage.

So finally, all took shape, and we can look at the first fruits. Though some things might have been better done had we had more time for thought and less separation in space in the planning stage, we can claim to have made a good start towards establishing the working and living conditions which are necessary for the successful development of Atomic Energy in our country.



Sir John Cockcroft and Sir Marcus Oliphant talk with Dr. Peter Thonemann, the Deputy Director, on their recent visit to Culham Laboratory. They have both been interested in Fusion Research since the early days.

WHEN FYFE ROBERTSON CAME TO HARWELL VILLAGE TWENTY YEARS AGO HE MET WITH SOME BLUNT SPEAKING FROM VILLAGERS WITH INDEPENDENT VIEWS.



"Bang! — and up we all goes". But old John Long doesn't really believe it, and neither does Harwell — well . . . not really.



ATOM VILLAGE

Britain's £50,000,000 Atomic Research Station will be built on the Berkshire Downs. "Sleepy" Harwell, two miles away, will be livened up.

— "Picture Post", December 8th, 1945.

There was a full house at the Queen's Arms in Harwell, and the radio in the landlord's sitting-room talked to itself, so the two urgent young men who tumbled out of a car into the taproom brought first news of the £50,000,000 atomic research station. Harwell was to be the Atom Village. Up on the Berkshire Downs, a couple of miles away, British scientists and technicians might win the race to bring in the new power age, and put Harwell on the map of the world. Harwell laid its pint-pot down, posed for its photograph, listened to the gear-whine of the receding car (for the urgent young men had an edition to catch), and sat back too astonished to order that last pint, almost.

They are still a little dazed by coming greatness, but they've had time to sort things out, and Harwell is all for splitting

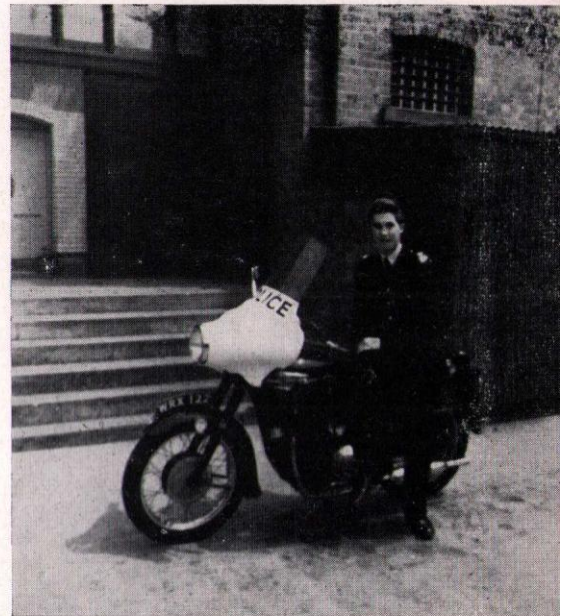
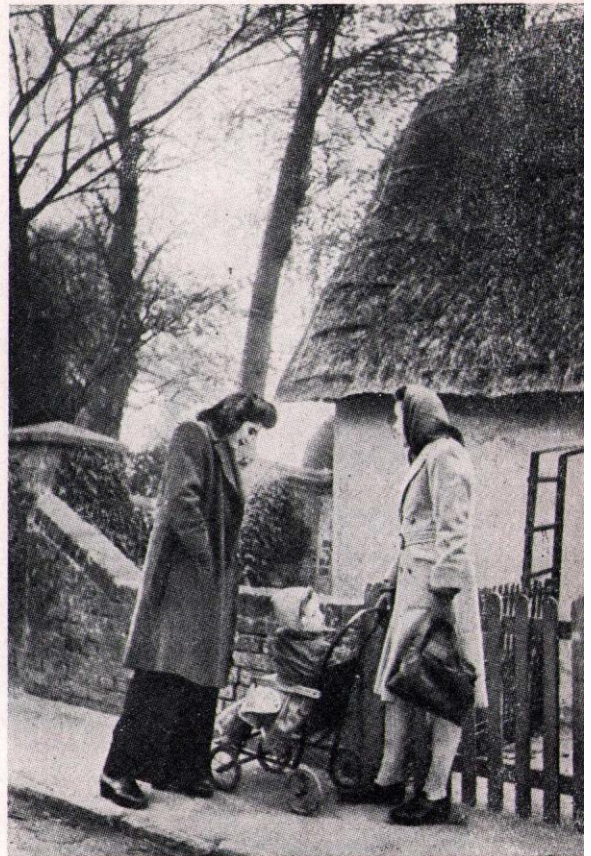
the atom, on a regular wage-packet and a 44-hour week. It's a friendly village, where they take to a stranger easily, and they're ready to take to the split atom too, with Hiroshima reservations. "If we all goes up like a load o' mangolds," says John Long, 75-year-old master of ceremonies in (and out of) the Queen's Arms, "all right, we all goes up like a load o' mangolds. But I bean't a-worrying. These professor fellers knows what they're a'doin' of, and they'd go up first, d'ye see? Bang!" says old John, and startles unprepared strangers with sudden bass-throated laughter that rattles the ornaments. That goes for Harwell, which shakes its head about the Big Bang, but doesn't really believe it will ever happen.

The research station is just another bit of luck for a lucky village, for Harwell has done pretty well on whole atoms. The permanent Ordnance depot at Didcot employs more than half the men in the village, and the pre-war aerodrome and the Anglo-American Oil Company at Milton give work and trade. Farm work ("stagnation at starvation wages," said one man with memories of thirty shillings and choosey farmers) has been a poor fourth for many years. Young Harwell mostly doesn't want to get any nearer to a cow than the milk bottle, which is one reason why farmers are less enthusiastic about the

Heir to the Atomic Age.

"It won't make much difference to me — my husband's at the Depot" says Mrs. Fleetwood. And Master Fleetwood is just bored.

— but not so bored in these photographs "Harlequin" found of him. After two years as a cadet at Wantage Police Station, PC Fleetwood, as we must now call him, was posted to Windsor and following an advanced driving course, is now on patrol cars. We find that he worked at A.E.R.E. — Health Physics — from 1961-1963!





Twenty years ago Mr. Leonard Jeffrey (in the centre of this photograph) talked with Ernest Clarke and Mrs. Cox in the Queen's Arms about the coming of the new atomic station.

Since then the name of the inn has been changed — not, we regret, to the Atomic Arms but to the Kicking Donkey!

In other ways, too, life seems to go on as usual in the shadow of the ancient church as Mr. Jeffrey tends the garden.

The only difference is that the present Vicar, The Rev. E. C. Atkins, is a B.Sc.

new station. But even so, Harwell was wondering what's going to happen now, and where jobs would be found for the men and girls coming home from the Services; and their headache is that they can't find out what the new establishment will mean in houses, jobs, and amenities. "They're cagey, these Guv'ment fellows," says Bert Hamblen, landlord of the Queen's Arms. But Guv'ment fellows always are.

Not everybody is pleased, of course. Old folks—and some young ones—fear that new houses and strange people will mean the end of their quiet old village. But these are a minority. Harwell's shops and pubs (five for 900), and Harwell's young people, are all set for more business and a fuller life—more amenities, more people, better transport. "We'll maybe have our own cinema one day, even," said more than one sufferer from busbound Grablestarvation. If the new age is born on Harwell aerodrome, Harwell is prepared to be midwife, with only one misgiving—

"Bang!" says old John Long, and goes through the motions of hoisting a forkful of mangolds.

Fyfe Robertson



GETTING TO KNOW YOUR LOCAL AUTHORITY

—by **L. L. HALL (GEN. SERVICES)** who writes from experience gained both as a Local Government Officer and as a Councillor.



This article is not meant to be a treatise on local government, but rather an outline of the subject for those unacquainted with it. The hope is that it will be of interest because we all come within the ambit of local government one way or another; if it were not so our streets would not be swept, our roads repaired, our dust-bins emptied; and we should be deprived of a host of other amenities which local government provides — nor should we have to pay rates!

Outside the nucleus of Boroughs in the Greater London Council area there is a well-defined hierarchy of local government units. At the head there are the County Borough Councils (who have all the powers of County and Borough Councils) and the County Councils. Then there are the non-County Boroughs, the Urban District Councils and the Rural District Councils; all are within the administrative area of the County. Finally there are the Parish Councils, which are sub-divisions of the Rural Districts. Thus, County Boroughs operate within a single-tier system, the Districts within a two-tier and the Parish Councils within a three-tier. The difference between County Boroughs and non-County Boroughs is basically one of size. Boroughs with a population of 100,000 or more may qualify for County Borough status, although there are those with considerably less; a position which might have arisen because of declining population in a particular area. The earlier Boroughs were created by Charters given by the ruling Monarch, often in recognition of the part played by the local population in regard to a particular event. Some of these Royal Charters are ancient indeed, dating back to the Middle Ages, and they are regarded today with considerable civic pride. Nowadays, Charters are recommended by the Privy Council. The remaining types of local

authorities owe their origin to Parliamentary legislation.

The present pattern of local authorities is not by any means logical or consistent. There are some County Boroughs with populations considerably less than the larger Urban Districts, and some non-County Boroughs have populations in excess of certain County Boroughs. Critics argue that local government should be on a regional basis, and a Commission was appointed by Parliament some years ago to enquire into the system. Nevertheless, in spite of defects and anachronisms the system has withstood the test of time and works reasonably well.

Local government is one of our most democratic institutions; it is related to the concept that those who pay a local rate have the right to be elected to, or represented on, the Council which levies it. The franchise is wide and extends to all those whose names are entered on the electoral roll — in effect a register of rate-payers and of persons residing with them on a stipulated date compiled annually. Elections vary according to the type of authority, i.e. County, Borough, District or Parish; for example, in the case of Boroughs, representatives are appointed each year, the elected representative (or Councillor) serving for three years. One-third of the Councillors retire each year so that continuity of knowledge and experience is assured. Paradoxically, the whole of the Councillors of the County Council retire together (at three year intervals) so that Councillor representation is not continuous. However, the Aldermanic system, which applies equally to Counties and Boroughs, ensures continuity. Aldermen are elected by the Councillors to the extent of one-third of the number of Councillors. They serve for six years, half their number retiring every three years. Legally

the choice of Aldermen is not restricted to the Councillors: any elector is eligible for Aldermanic election. In practice, however, election is invariably confined to sitting Councillors.

The Aldermanic system has been criticised on the grounds that it is a negation of democratic principle. There is, of course, truth in the criticism. Aldermen are not directly approached by the electorate, and the critics fear that a person may be so elected who might otherwise be unsuccessful at the polls. Rarely, however, is the system abused, and Aldermanic election is invariably reserved for those Councillors of long standing who have served the electorate faithfully and well. In the Urban and Rural Districts the appointment of Councillors follows the same lines as in the Boroughs, whereas, in the case of the Parishes, the Councillors retire en bloc as in the Counties. Each year the Council appoints a Chairman who, in the Boroughs, is known as the Mayor. Considerable tradition surrounds the Mayor who, by virtue of his office, is the Borough's principal citizen and the civic representative at social and other functions. A Chairman or Mayor may be appointed from outside the Council; invariably, however, the appointment is made from within the Council.

Ultimate responsibility for the affairs of a local authority rests in the elected representatives meeting in full Council. The size of such a meeting which, even in the case of a small authority, might comprise as many as 30 members, would impose serious limitations on the effective despatch of business. Consequently, what is termed the 'Committee' system has evolved: a system by which the Council divides itself into a number of specialist committees with membership limited to a dozen or so, and each responsible for the affairs of a department of the authority.

There are a number of advantages in the Committee system; in the first place effective use can be made of the specialties of individual members, and secondly the committees, owing to their limited size, are able to deal more effectively with detail than would be the case if the entire Council sat as a Committee. Further, since Councillors are not members of every Committee, they are relieved of the burden of undue attendance at meetings. Committees are informal gatherings presided over by a Chairman elected from one of their number. One or more local government officers are responsible to and attend each Committee, and members and officers collaborate in the

work. These Committees have no plenary powers and their responsibilities are limited to making recommendations to the Council.

As opposed to the informality of the meetings of Committees, ordinary meetings of the Council are formal affairs conducted strictly in accordance with the rules of debate and with standing orders. The main object of a Council meeting is to receive the reports of the various Committees. These reports are presented by the respective Chairmen, and are subject to question and discussion. When formally moved and seconded, the reports are put to the meeting and, if accepted by a majority vote, they become legally binding on the Council. A matter, once settled, cannot be re-opened within a period of time prescribed by standing orders—usually six months. All decisions which entail capital borrowing require ministerial approval. By this means central government exercises regulatory control. Subject to such control, local authorities have wide powers indeed, and a Council decision cannot be challenged except in certain circumstances which affect the rights of the individual, who may appeal to the appropriate Minister. By Act of Parliament local authorities must admit press and public to meetings of the full Council.

Committee meetings are usually held *in camera* because of the confidential nature of the discussion. Sometimes 'press releases' are made of information which, in the public interest, should be promulgated. By this means the elector is kept in touch with Council matters, and is able to contact his elected representatives before discussion by the full Council.

Electors are often unaware of what they owe to local authorities, whose responsibilities extend far beyond the collection of waste and the cleaning of streets—essential though these services are—but include, to mention a few, the provision of social services such as markets, library facilities, municipal housing, education, sewage disposal, welfare, police and medical services. In addition, they are charged with the enforcement of Acts of Parliament relating to hygiene, the sale of food, meat inspection, weights and measures and, more recently, certain provisions controlling the employment of persons in offices and shops under the Offices, Shops and Railway Premises Act. Before the various Acts of nationalisation, the larger authorities operated public utilities such as electricity and gas, as well as hospitals. Indeed, local government, especially in the case of the larger authorities, was (and still is) big business.

The diversity and complexity of the work of a local authority requires a very high degree of competency from its staff, and the local government service has produced a dedication in its officers probably second to none. The Clerk is regarded as the principal officer of a municipality. He is usually a Solicitor, concerned with the legal activities of his authority. In addition, he is responsible for the administrative functions and for the general co-ordination of the work of the various Committees. A Clerk therefore has to be a man of many parts. The Treasurer is responsible for the financial and accounting functions, and is invariably a qualified Accountant. Again, his professional knowledge is wide because he is concerned with a variety of accounting requirements peculiar to the diverse departments operated by his authority. Then there is the Surveyor or Engineer, whose field covers the construction and repairs of roads and sewers, the building of municipal houses, the construction and maintenance of sewage works—in short, the various building, civil and engineering requirements of the authority. There are also the Medical Officer of Health, the Chief Constable and the Heads

of other departments for which the authority is responsible.

The complexity of local government has been recognised of late by appointments by the larger authorities of persons to act in the capacity of Senior Administrator. This sort of appointment would have the effect of relieving the Town Clerk of his administrative responsibilities and of transferring them to the person so appointed. The post would be very much in the nature of that of a Town Manager—an experiment which has from time to time been made, but probably without a great deal of success.

The responsibilities of a Councillor are two-fold. In the first place, he represents his electors at meetings of the Council, and he can do this only by keeping in touch with them. Secondly, he is regarded by the electors as a link between them and the officers. Consequently he is the recipient of many of their individual problems, the majority of which he can often settle informally outside a meeting. As such, a Councillor's work is "a full-time spare-time job", but one which can be of great reward to those interested in community service.



ITS COMING OF AGE

CLIFF FISHENDEN (WELFARE DEPT.)

Next year sees the start of the 21st volume and the thousandth issue of the *AERE NEWS*, and we should take this opportunity to look back at past volumes and consider the role of this weekly paper of the Research Group today.

AERE NEWS is a household name to anyone with Harwell connexions and it is found in the course of visiting the homes of staff that this weekly publication is awaited as eagerly by wives (with perhaps an eye on the "For Sale" Column) as by their lab-, shop-, or office-bound husbands. That it provides a useful social function is beyond dispute. *AERE NEWS* has become all things to all men—it publicises forthcoming events at AERE, outstations, and Culham, and in due course reports on their success (or otherwise); it gives commentaries on the various sporting activities of the more energetic; it ensures that official notices, such as the creation of one-way-street systems, will be brought

to the notice of most employees; it provides a service through its exchange and mart columns for sellers of the unwanted and hunters of bargains (and in so doing it helps to keep down our cost of living); it gives ideas for recreation and encourages contact with the greater community outside Harwell.

From humble beginnings the *AERE NEWS* has become an institution and nowadays, at a cost which is a fraction of that allocated by other industries for their journals, it sports a circulation of approximately 7,500 and covers a geographical area comparable with that of many local newspapers. It is interesting to compare its achievements of the present day with the

limited aspirations of the pioneers. In the editorial column of VOLUME 1, No. 1, on 14th November, 1946, the editors explained, to an establishment which could then be counted only in hundreds, their aims and ambitions:

This being the first issue of "AERE NEWS", perhaps we may be excused if we talk about ourselves. The "News" is sponsored by, and published on behalf of, the Recreational Association. It will appear each Thursday and will be delivered, gratis, to each family residing on the Station; a number of copies will be placed on the Post Tables in each Staff Club and, in order to cater for non-residents, a further supply will be available at the Pay Tables.

So much for publication—now a word as to contents. The "AERE NEWS" will contain information of interest to residents which has normally been the subject of a Circular, e.g., 'Bus times', etc. The programmes of each Section and Society of the Recreational Association will also be published together with (we hope) reports of all their respective activities. In this respect we crave the assistance of all Hon. Secretaries, and ask them to let us have their "copy" regularly and punctually. Other items of interest and news value will appear as far as space permits.

We welcome contributions from all—please write to us and let us know what you would like to see in YOUR paper. . . .

Although perhaps a door-to-door distribution today would be regarded as something of an extravagance, much of this rings familiar to our ears. Indeed, the *News* became a mirror reflecting social (and semi-official) activities on the Harwell scene and to anyone interested in a social history of A.E.R.E. back numbers are very useful material. Although the paper is regarded with such familiarity by staff and their families, and despite the size of its circulation, it seems almost incredible that the author has been able to locate only one complete collection of past issues; thanks for this must go to Miss M. Gosset (Harwell Librarian from 1946 to 1965) who, despite a certain amount of ridicule at the time, began from the outset to file issues. This collection presents a bizarre appearance owing to the relatively frequent changes in the size of the sheets—obviously the editors never thought of their publications being kept for posterity in a variety of different sized covers. The most revolutionary change in its history was the rejection in 1960 of eight cumbersome, uncut sheets in favour of four larger pages. By reducing the space wasted on margins a smaller sized ream could be used which did not have to

be folded. Paper and labour costs were reduced by over £100 a year but, in terms of readability alone, it is surprising the change was not made earlier. In passing, it is of interest to note that the present dimensions of the paper have been selected to comply with the new general international agreements governing sizes of envelopes, letter paper and printed matter.

On browsing through the odd-shaped volumes the reader is taken back through the history of the establishment, whilst also being reminded of matters of national interest; and, since the material in the *News* embraces most aspects of life at A.E.R.E., this collection forms a unique history of social activity at Harwell from 1946 to the present day. The following quotes, selected from past issues, have been edited to make easier reading in this more hurried age!

EDITORIAL, 10 July, 1947

The postman had a shock in West Drive last week when he opened the Post Box. He thought he'd got a new type of "L-Bomb" in the mail but fortunately it was only a few bits of conduit piping, rubble, chalk, etc. dumped in the box by small nuclear physicists, etc. I hope parents will ask their children to refrain from these activities in future. . . .

RATION BOOKS, 17 June, 1948

A.E.R.E. Residents. The present Ration Books may be exchanged for the new books on Friday, 25th June. . . .

SHOPPING PETROL, 19 Dec., 1947

Those who normally obtain their allowance of petrol coupons for shopping purposes through the medium of this establishment . . . should apply to Bldg. 77 on the 19th Dec., 1947, bringing with them their Car Registration Book.

BALLOON FABRIC, 28 Aug., 1947

A source of balloon fabric which will prevent decay in cars has been discovered by a reader; anyone wishing to take advantage should . . .

FOR SALE, 1 May, 1947

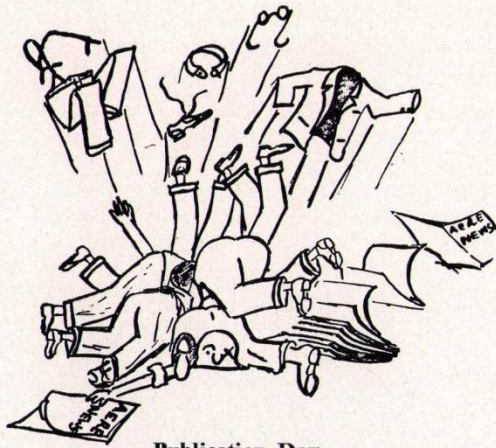
Singer 9 Saloon (1934). Excellent mechanical condition—4 New Tyres—£200.

FIRE PREVENTION, 12 Dec., 1946

The only real protection for Fire Extinguishers is to take them indoors during frosty weather. Would all householders and heads of sections please arrange to have this done as and when necessary.

LADIES DARTS, 16 Jan., 1947

We have been challenged to a dart match by an Oxford Team who run a Ladies Dart Team. Can we raise one? Anyone who can hit the board at all is requested to communicate with the Editor, Hugh Roskell, Welfare and Recreation Officer. . . .



Publication Day

EDITORIAL, 6 Jan., 1955

We have great pleasure in presenting in our first issue of the New Year, this record of the Prime Minister's recent visit to Harwell. . . . (Prime Minister—Sir Winston Churchill).

SPORTS DAY, 15 July, 1954

Full details of Sports Day will be published in a special edition of the "News".

NEW COAT OF ARMS, 27 Jan., 1955

The Authority's Coat of Arms and Badge are now in use. . . .

(As from this date the present day Mast-head replaced that illustrated in the title to this article.)

OFFICIAL NOTICE, 15 April, 1948

There is a great shortage of paper in the country. Board of Trade figures give the deficiency as 200,000 tons annually. A special appeal is therefore made to residents in the houses and Staff Clubs to save waste-paper by keeping it apart from other refuse. . . .

AERE HOUSING, ABINGDON AND

WANTAGE. 5 June, 1947

Site layout plans, with detail plans and Sections of the above houses, have now been lodged with the Library, Building 161. You are invited to inspect the plans. . . .

And on National disasters:—

EDITORIAL, 17 April, 1947

What a week! Woodcock as good as knocked out. . . . and now cigarettes 3/4d. a packet. . . .

The earlier issues record the pioneering spirit of a small group of people setting about the task of studying the potentials of a new form of energy and learning to live together on a remote airfield, and in so doing creating a 'community'. The reader becomes aware of a dynamic spirit, in those days of the "Black Beetle", that was geared to hard work and hard play:—

EDITORIAL, 29 May, 1947

Since last we assumed the Editorial role, not only the weather has changed but we sense an increase in our suburbanity, a feeling of growth to village status. We have our P.O., a store, telephones, pillar boxes, bus service, newspaper, chaps sweeping the roads of Prefabria. . . .

EDITORIAL, 27 Feb., 1947

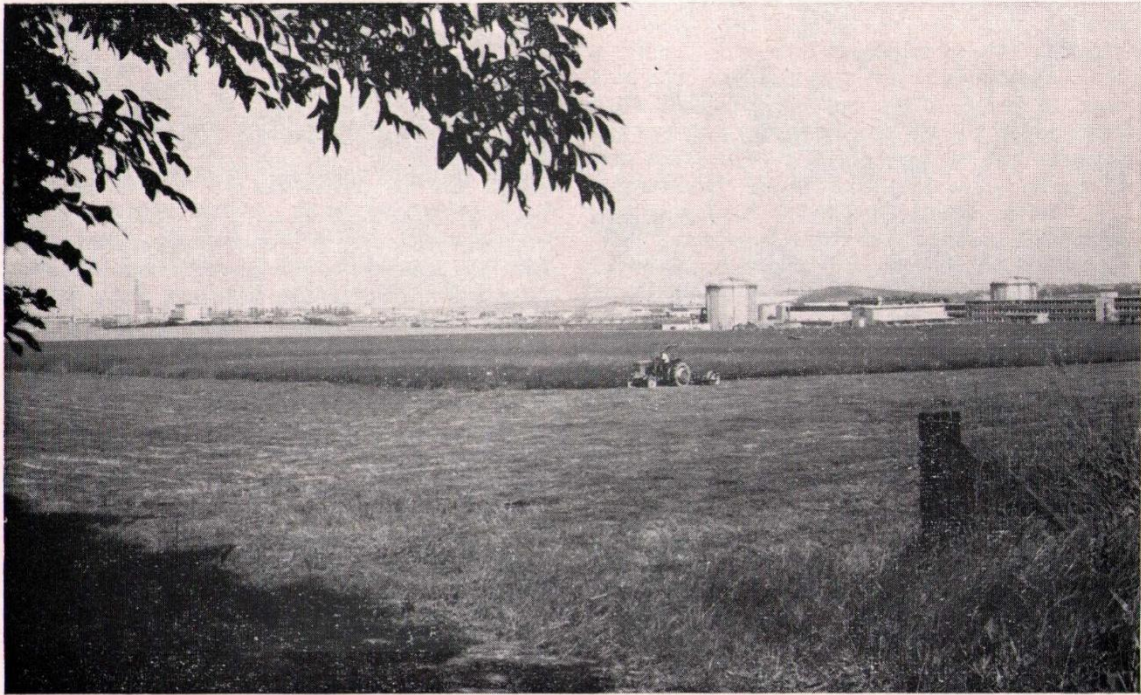
It was with a light heart that we assumed the editorial role; but after having taken dictation over the telephone the lightness has departed and it is with tired heart that we sit atop our paraffin stove in this ice-age contemplating the wonders of the Atomic Age to be, much as Columbus looked into the great new continent of America or as Cortez, peering over the hill-tops, viewed the mighty Pacific Ocean before him. You must work out the parable in this yourself, dear reader. . . .

SIR JOHN'S CHRISTMAS MESSAGE ten years later, 19 Dec., 1957

The year 1957 has been memorable for the coming into use of Dido, the start of Zeta and Pluto and for start of work on the Rutherford High Energy Laboratory. . . . We have had a strenuous year. . . .

It was in this same spirit that a few keen members of the staff launched the *AERE NEWS*, then sponsored by and published on behalf of the Recreational Association, editorial work being done on a part-time basis sandwiched between normal working routine. Publication techniques were naïve compared with those employed today, and throughout the first few years the editorial work, research, and preparation were largely done by a series of enthusiastic editors working in their own time and, occasionally, on a borrowed typewriter! One of the pioneer editors, Mrs. Le Cren (Welfare Officer 1948-1959), has said that one of her problems was that of finding sufficient material to fill the single news sheet; a more common editorial problem today (the present part-time editor assures me) is that of deciding what material should be omitted from what is now the larger publication of a much larger collection of organisations.

But this is another story that must be told in a later issue—the story of how the "*AERE News*" is produced, from the first discernment of news, its presentation and printing, to the despatch of 7,500 copies weekly, with the "up-to-dateness" which a monthly cannot achieve and by which the "*AERE News*" has indeed "become all things to all men".



In February, 1946, Professor Skinner, who six years previously had helped to make centimetric radar possible, came with Sir John Cockcroft to the deserted Harwell airfield to look closely at our heritage.

Surveying in 1949 the changes brought about, he penned these words which sum up the first two of the exacting but exciting years that were to follow.

THE THR

Foul Harwell, ugliest village of the downs,
Where labs and aluminium prefabs sprout,
And houses camouflaged in greens and browns
Their military architecture shout,

Here, in a wire-net fence, set out in trees
Which none of them are more than twelve
feet tall,
(And which is surely scalable with ease)
The Piles and Cyclotron are lords of all,

And here, from whence the dauntless paratroops
Flew off on missions planned like games of
chess
To Arnhem, dropping from the sky in groups,
To glory which so nearly was success,

Here, scientists their radioactive plans
Propound to give the world atomic power;
They quarrel and they form up into clans,
But through it all there looms the shining hour

* With apologies to Goldsmith.



From these recent photographs taken for "Harlequin" the reader will judge whether or not the new Harwell is the "Ugliest Village of the Downs".

IVING VILLAGE *

When all the world is run on 2 3 5
 Instead of coal and such out-dated drudgery,
 And this will cause our industries to thrive.
 (But if we can't use science, we use fudgery).

On site, among the stainless and the ditches
 Provided by the Ministry of Works
 (One lures, the other necessitates stitches
 If one should stray at night, where danger
 lurks),

I took a job — they did not overpay me —
 I sold my soul to nuclear fission,
 I thought I might serve science and my country,
 I thought I had a real and pressing mission,

And here, beside the chimney, seen so clearly
 As landmark on the skyline of the down,
 Harwell is thriving and however queerly
 Must serve as monument to our renown.

H.W.B.S.

BERKSHIRE PLACE NAMES



Although the study of place-names goes back several centuries or more, a systematic approach to the subject was not started until 1924 when the English Place-Name Society began to publish full, authoritative accounts for each county. This survey has not yet been completed, but several independent scholars have written books filling in some of the gaps, and a good deal of research has been stimulated by two recent more general books*. The best volume on Berkshire at the moment is still the book by F. M. Stenton ("The Place-Names of Berkshire") published in 1911, although, as in all other fields of vigorous research, many views date quite quickly. The present article can only just touch the surface of such a complex subject, and suggest further reading.

The study of the origin of English place-names demands patience, a knowledge of languages, and a completely open mind. Many "obvious" etymologies based on the modern form of a name are wrong, and one must search exhaustively for the earliest recorded forms before one can begin to interpret the original name, and then show how it changed in the course of several hundred years. There are many cases of identical modern forms which have different etymologies, and of identical original forms which developed differently: *Teddington* (Middlesex) is derived from *Tud-incgatun* ("the farm of Tuda's people") recorded in 970, and *Teddington* (Worcestershire) from *Teottingtun* ("Teotta's farm") recorded in 780; whereas *Harringay* and *Hornsey* are both derived from the same original name, recorded in the 13th century as *Haringesheye*.

The name of the county itself is derived from Old English *Bearruc*, the name of an old forest, which was in turn derived from British *barrog*, meaning "hilly". Some 250 names are recorded in the county before the end of the 12th century, about 100 of which are preserved in their pre-Norman Conquest forms, including Abingdon, Wallingford, Cholsey, Reading and Wantage. This is important, for sound-changes occurred in the English language during the 11th and 12th centuries which obscure the true origins of names recorded only subsequently.

Place-names may often be broken down into a number of constituent parts, the detailed construction of which gives a valuable guide to the meaning and original date of the name. A

An extract from Saxton's map of Bucks., Berks., and Oxon., published in 1574, by which the reader will be able to find his way to Harwell via Abbingdon or via Redinge and Goringe. →

good example is the use of the element—*ing*—which was shown by J. M. Kemble in 1848 to indicate a settlement by a tribe. This element is very common in Berkshire place-names: *Wallingford*, *Yattendon* and *Pangbourne* are derived respectively from *Wealhingaford* ("the ford of Wealh's people"), *Yetingadene* ("the valley of Geat's people") and *Paeginga burnan* ("the stream of Paega's people"). These names introduce two other common features: (a) an Old English personal name as the first element, (b) a distinct Old English ending: *ford* (ford), *denu* (valley) and *burn* (stream).

The number and type of first elements, apart from personal names, is considerable, as a few examples will illustrate: *Chilton* is derived from the OE *cild* (child), *Hinksey* from OE *Hengest* (stallion), *Aldermaston* from the OE *ealdorman* (king's deputy).

So far as distinct terminals are concerned, there are approximately 40 standard forms regularly encountered in Berkshire, some of the main ones being: *beorh* (hill) as is *Farnborough*, *dun* (hill) in *Abingdon*, *hamm* (meadow) in *Marcham*. The necessity of going back to the earliest form possible is readily demonstrated by the possible confusion in these endings: *beorh* with *bearu* (small wood) or *burh* (fort), *dun* with *tun* (town), *hamm* with *ham* (home or village) and several others. For example, *Inglewood* is derived from OE *Engelflod* (*flod* = stream) and *Boxford* from OE *Box ora* (*ora* = bank), rather than the "obvious" derivations.

There are still a number of names in Berkshire which remain more or less unsolved: no justification for the element *cild* (child) in *Chilton* has yet been offered, and the derivation of *Wantage* is an incredibly complicated matter, its original meaning still a mystery. A good deal remains to be done in the search for still earlier forms, and on the subject of Old English philology; but if you are interested in the meaning and history of the name of your own town or village, you could try looking up one of the books mentioned for a start. You will probably get quite a few surprises.

V.J.W.

* P. H. Reaney, *The Origin of English Place-Names*, (Routledge and Kegan Paul, London, 1960).

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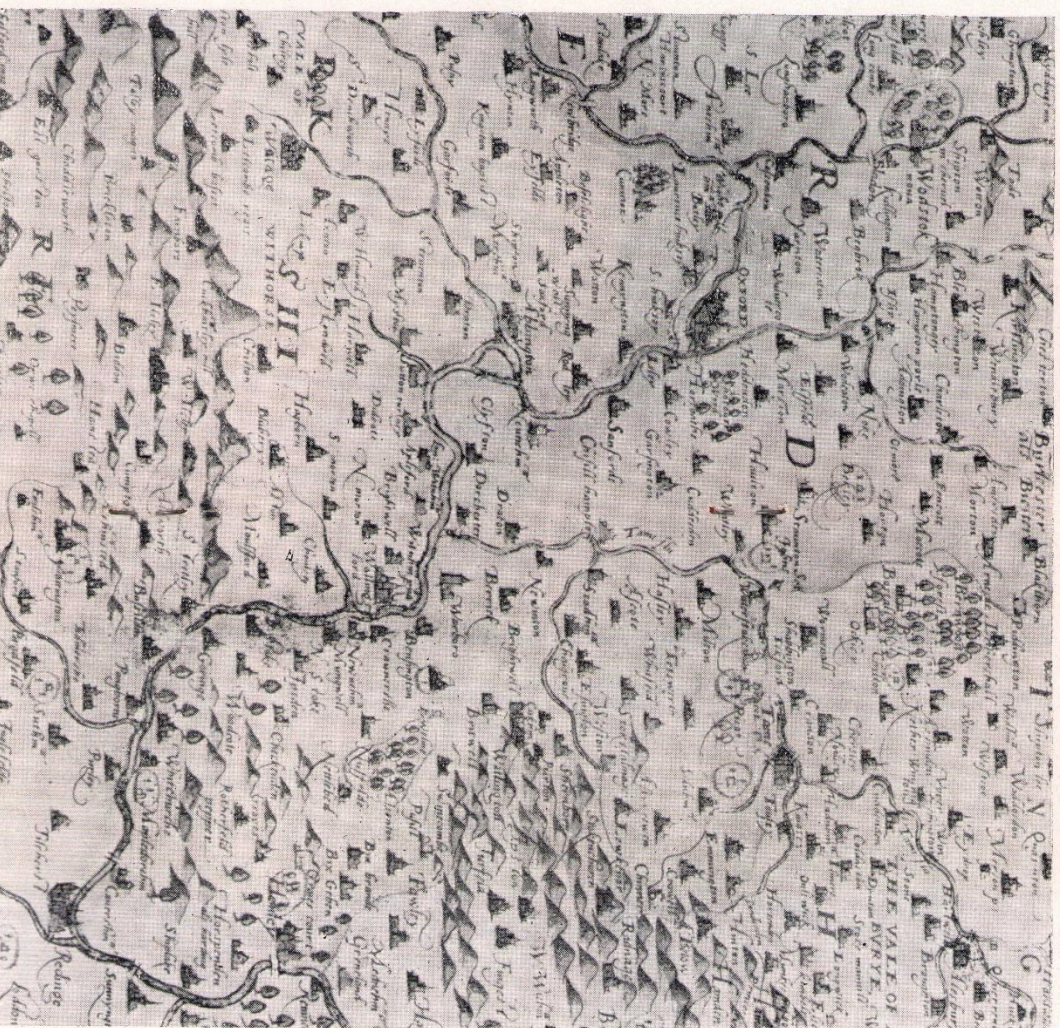
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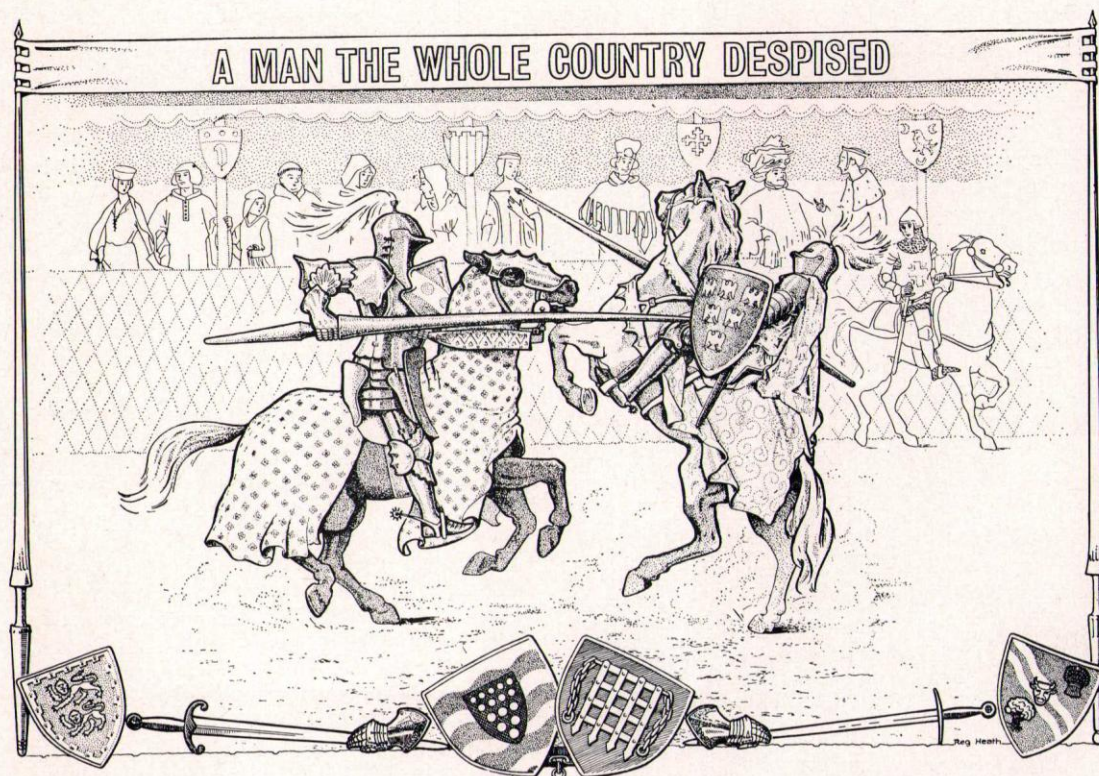
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BY KEITH B. POOLE

HIGH up in the east window of Harwell Church is the simple shield of one of the most despised men in English history. It was put there over 600 years ago by his widow, who was granted the Manor of Harwell after her husband's violent murder.

The six heraldic golden eagles on their green field are not only a pathetic token of love from a wife to a husband whom the whole country loathed and despised, but all that now remains of his vast estates and enormous wealth, which exceeded even that of the King his master.

Piers de Gaveston, Earl of Cornwall, Baron of Wallingford, Lord of the Manor of Wallingford and many others, was, from his youth to his death, the indisputable Royal favourite, the man for whom Edward the Second had an almost unnatural love. So completely in thrall was he to Piers that the roles of king and subject were completely reversed and it was the favourite who virtually ruled the country.

He was the son of a Gascon knight, and he had earned such grace and favour from Edward the First and his wife Eleanor through his faithful services that he was brought back to England to act as foster-brother and companion to the Prince. It was one of the greatest mis-

takes the King had ever made, and it was not long before he realised it. Piers, so far from being, as one courtier described him, "graceful and active in person, nice in his manners and intelligent", qualities which had originally endeared him to the King, very soon became arrogant, insolent, ostentatious, supercilious, ambitious, skilful in chicanery, and a ruthless schemer for his own ends. In addition to all these things he had an inflexible will, so that the Prince became as clay in his hands; and it was not long before men of high degree and position in the land began first to be disturbed by, and then resentful against, this new upstart.

They had not to wait long before the King, in a fit of furious temper over a demand made to him by the Prince which was obviously the work of Piers, banished him from the court; but he died shortly afterwards and his son, now Edward the Second, not only recalled Piers but created him Earl of Cornwall, Baron Wallingford, Lord of the Manor of Wallingford, and made him a gift of £100,000 from the Royal treasury. The anger of the powerful barons at this injustice was very considerable, but he placated them by marrying his niece Margaret,

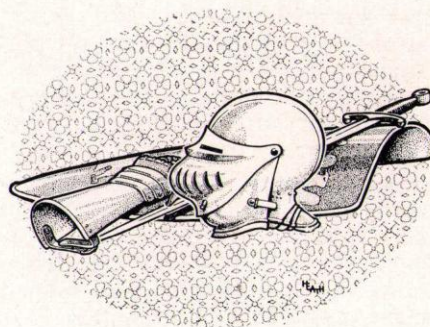
daughter of the Earl of Gloucester, to Piers, which alliance brought the favourite enormous wealth and power. "His pride," wrote a contemporary, "would have been intolerable even in a King's son, though I firmly believe that had he borne himself discreetly and with deference towards the great lords of the land he would not have found one of them opposed to him."

On the 2nd December, 1307, Piers ceremoniously proclaimed a great tournament in his own castle grounds at Wallingford, and the earls and barons, seeing in this some way of venting their hatred on the Gascon favourite, turned up in strength. There were actually ranged against him the four Earls of Hereford, Arundel, Warwick, and Warenne, and many barons. Piers' side could not raise one, but all the brave young knights in England, tempted by promises of honours and awards, flocked to his standard and defeated all four Earls. It was a crushing blow to the prestige of the nobles, and their hatred, and now fear, of this upstart was almost uncontrollable, especially as a royal edict now required the favourite to be addressed, not as Sir Piers Gaveston, but as the Earl of Cornwall.

On the last day but one of the same year the young king sailed for France to contract the marriage between himself and the French king's daughter, having insulted the whole country by appointing Piers as regent in his absence. At the Coronation in Westminster Abbey the favourite once more eclipsed all his rivals and, as a special affront to all his enemies, was given the highest privileges of carrying the crown of St. Edward in the Abbey procession and fixing the spur on the left foot of the King. The relatives of the French Queen were appalled and disgusted at the insolent and ostentatious behaviour of their own countryman, and their report to the French King on their return did no good to England.

It was the match to the powder barrel. Almost to a man the barons rose against this hated usurper, binding themselves by a mutual oath never to cease their demands until Piers had been driven for ever from the kingdom. The angry and thwarted King was forced to comply. Not only was sentence of banishment passed on Piers but the dreaded sentence of excommunication was pronounced on him by both Archbishops.

On the 28th June, 1308, Piers embarked for Ireland at Bristol, to which place he had been accompanied by the King himself and a great



company. He was granted full royal powers of authority in dealing with that rebellious land. During his stay he successfully restored all the fortresses to his king, but at his own price, for he freely converted to his own use all the Irish revenues which rightfully belonged to the Crown, and this with the King's own consent. The year was not out before he secretly returned to England, landing in Wales, and the King, having been previously informed, welcomed him at Chester with love, joy, and honour. The barons seemed powerless to keep him under.

His conduct was even worse than before, his insults more studied. He gave opprobrious nicknames to the great barons. The Earl of Lincoln was "burst-belly"; Lancaster "the fiddler" or "play-actor"; Gloucester, his own brother-in-law, "horeson"; Warwick "the black hound of Arden". "Let him call me hound," retorted Warwick bitterly when he heard this insult, "but one day the hound will bite him". The words were prophetic, the threat all too soon to be carried out.

The King, overjoyed at his favourite's return, spent Christmas with him at Langley, near St. Albans, in feasting and revelry, as if he had come back from a long pilgrimage. Once again Piers strutted on the royal stage, squandering money to such a degree that the Treasury was depleted as it never had been before, and the Queen's own household and personal allowances reduced to pay for it, which made her even more bitter than the barons. The whole land, rich and poor, young and old, hated, loathed and despised this leech which sucked the blood of the nation.

The rancour and disgust of the barons was so great that they forced the king to sign a Royal Ordinance of perpetual banishment for the favourite, not only from England but from Scotland, Ireland, Wales, and even his native

Gascony. He had no sooner left Dover than the barons next demanded that all partisans and friends of Piers should leave the court under penalty of imprisonment if they should attempt to stir up the king to recall the favourite yet once more.

The King's anger was uncontrollable when he heard these fresh demands. "Am I not allowed to keep even one member of my household at my table at my own wish?" he demanded. "Is the ordering of my whole house dependent upon the will of another as if providing for an idiot? By God's soul I will use my own judgment", he ranted. Incredible as it seems, he sent messengers post haste after Piers calling him back, which call the cunning favourite very quickly obeyed, living first in the king's own chamber, then in Wallingford, then at Tintagel Castle. A year later, in 1312, he was met by the King at York and publicly restored to his former position, estates and honours. It was the last rash act of many, and the long-smouldering ashes burst into flame.

The King was setting out for the north, vainly hoping to persuade Robert the Bruce to grant asylum to Piers from the danger he now all too clearly saw. The whole country seethed with anger and violence at this fresh stupidity from the King. The barons, headed by Lancaster, actually took up arms. They now demanded the unconditional surrender of the favourite, and to make certain this time Lancaster, Pembroke, Hereford, Arundel, and Warwick held a council, pooled all their men-at-arms and decided to deal with it once and for all themselves. Lancaster went north whilst the other earls staged tournaments in different places to distract the attention of the people, for had they marched together great anxiety would have spread through the whole land.

The King and Piers, aware at last of the danger they were in, had fled to Newcastle; but Lancaster, hot on their heels, forced them to split. Piers went to Scarborough, the King to Knaresborough. Lancaster proceeded to lay siege to Scarborough.

When Piers saw the siege had begun, all supplies from the King cut off, the castle without food and his men unwilling to hold out against the insuperable odds they now knew to be against them, he sent to the Earl of Pembroke, offering surrender. The Earl, delighted by this important capture, agreed to the terms, and with Piers as his prisoner he came, after five days' journey, to Deddington in Oxfordshire, where he lodged him in the castle before going off on

his own affairs, some said to see his wife.

The Earl of Warwick, however, having been informed of this capture, and to make absolutely certain there would be no escaping this time, raised the whole countryside, and with a strong force surrounded Deddington Castle, disarmed the guards, and crying out: "Arise, traitor, thou art taken", entered the castle. Piers, hurriedly dressing, came down to the courtyard, a prisoner to the man he had once so insolently called "The Hound of Arden". Guy, Earl of Warwick, summarily stripped him of his belt of knighthood, and putting him in chains led him out on foot like a thief through the howling mob now gathered outside demanding his death.

After some time he was ignominiously put on a mule and led thus to Warwick Castle, where Warwick at once summoned the other Earls. As he was related to the Earl of Gloucester, they decided he should not be hanged or drawn, but be beheaded. Piers, led from the Castle, was handed over by Warwick to the Earl of Lancaster who, seeing Piers fling himself on his knees for mercy, said contemptuously to his men: "Lift him up! Lift him up! In God's name let him be taken away!"

The now cringing favourite, all his former arrogance and insolence gone, was led to Blacklow Hill, about a mile to the north of the castle, where by Lancaster's command he was handed over to two Welshmen. One of them promptly ran him through the body with his sword, the other hacked off his head; but even when news of this was sent to Lancaster he refused to believe it until the head was actually brought to him as proof, so many times had the prey eluded him.

The body was found by some Dominican friars who, after sewing on the head again, carried the body to Oxford; but because Piers was excommunicated they dared not bury it, and it lay in the city for more than two years before, by the orders of the still sorrowing and grieving King who loved this man as a father a child, he was taken to Kings Langley in Hertfordshire, and buried there, in 1315, with great ceremony.

It was as if with this last vain gesture the King tried, even in death, to restore to his beloved favourite all the lavish honours, power, and glory to which he had been accustomed all his life. Piers left a widow and a daughter to mourn him, but the rest of England rejoiced at the death of one they had for so many years hated, loathed, and despised.

ANY GOOD BOOKS LATELY ?



Pippi and the Stonemason (Methuen). We were pleased to discover this book by Eve Jay, who will be known by many as the wife of the late Mr. Kenneth Jay. Three children are in a wood, when they come upon a little man in a leather apron. They realize from his strange speech and manner that he is the stonemason of local legend who lived five hundred years before. He cannot rest until his work is completed, and the story tells how with the children's help this is finally accomplished. It is published in the Pied Piper series for children of seven to ten, but we must confess it rivetted our attention until we had finished it unashamedly on a Harwell bus!

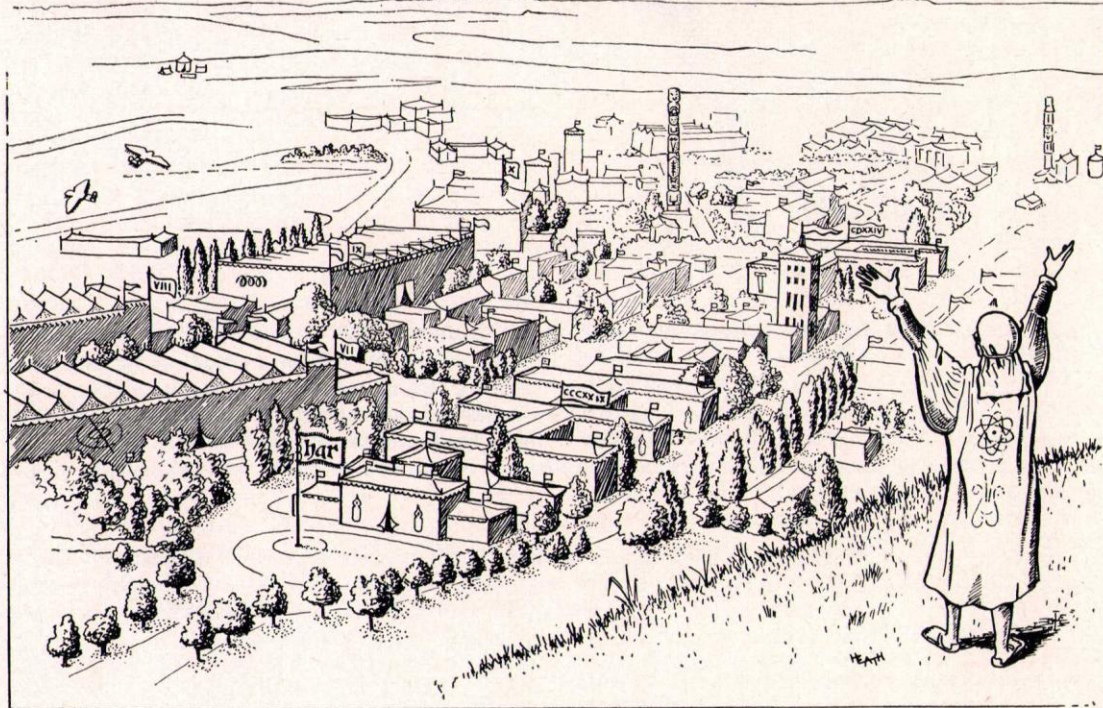
To confirm, however, that the book also appeals to the young we gave a copy to ten-year-old Rosetta James of Oxford's new Bishop Kirk School. "I could certainly believe in the three children searching for their lost cat, Pippi, in the wood", she reported. "And in the little man that they met. The book is too exciting to read late at night, but I recommend it. I've read it twice already, and I'll read it again!"



Recent excavations during site works for the new power station at Didcot have uncovered an ancient settlement. This appears to have been on the shore of what was once a large lake or inland sea. Some earthenware pots discovered intact in a cave were found to contain rolls of hand-beaten copper. These were covered with the ciphers of a most primitive language.

The following is an abstract from the preliminary translations of these scrolls which has been carried out for "Harlequin" by G. A. Holder of P.G.E.C.

THE DID SEA SCROLLS



... At that time there was a light as of a thousand suns, and heat as of a burning, fiery furnace, and the war did cease.

And the cry went up throughout the land, "Let there be search into these wondrous things, that we need no longer buy oil for our lamps."

In a far off place there dwelt Ion, the son of Cockro; and lo, the cry came even unto him.

And Ion did heed the cry, and made a long journey to the land of Lond, from whence it came.

And there in the hall called White, the lord of the land of Lond saith unto Ion:

"Go, seek a place that is green, and pleasant, and peaceful, and there gather the men of the tribes of Sci.

"And when ye have gathered them there, command them to ponder these mysteries, and see that they wax fruitful and multiply."

And Ion replied, "Verily, I will find such a place, and gather there the Mathemites, the Physites, the Chemites, the Metallurgus, the Enginus, the Industines and the Administrites; and I will do even as you say."

Then Ion went on his journey and came into the land of the people of the east.

But though he searched diligently, he found not there any place to his liking.

And it came to pass, on the third day in the morning, that there were thunders and lightnings, and a thick cloud covered the land.

And Ion was exceeding sad, and smote his breast, and said "I will get me hence from this land of fens."

And as he journeyed westward he came to the banks of a mighty river, and he wondered how that he might cross.

But lo, at eventide there came a herd of



"And Ion tarried at the Well of Har"

oxen to the water's edge, which did ford the river.

So Ion followed on the heels of the herd of oxen, and he came to an encampment where dwelt the tribe of Claren.

And there he took bread with the men of the tribe, and found them comely, and full of wisdom.

Then spake Ion privily, and said "I will go and find me a place near to the tents of Claren, for they may lend me of their knowledge."

And Ion journeyed southwards, through the plain of Steven, and came unto the well of Har.

And there a fair maid drew water from the well, and fed him of the fruit from the trees.

And Ion tarried at the well of Har, and became exceeding drowsy, and fell asleep.

But he was awakened by a sound as of a mighty rushing wind; and he beheld a bird, far larger than the eagle, which swooped low from the skies.

And it flew up, high to the hills above, so that Ion cried out, "Adastra, Adastra, verily this is the sign which is given unto me".

So he girded up his loins and ran, and followed in the course of this great bird.

And when Ion came to the top of the hill he beheld a vast plain on which were many tents, and lo, a flock of the great birds stood all around.

And Ion turned, and from the hill looked down upon the well of Har, and beheld the orchards and the green fields, and saw that it was fair.

Then spake he, This is the place; Here will I gather me the tribes of Sci, yea, the Mathemites, the Physites, the Chemites, the Metallurgus, the Enginus, the Industines and the Administrites.

But the birds were the gods of the men of Taf of the tribe of Raf, of the line of Airmin, and they did like it not.

And they did mutter among themselves and

say, "Why should we yield our tents to the long-haired tribes of Sci, to the Mathemites yea, even to the Administrites?"

But the lord of the land did harden his heart against the men of Taf of the tribe of Raf, and favoured the cause of Ion.

And he decreed that the men of Taf should depart from thence, and give that place unto the tribes of Sci.

But the men of Taf of the tribe of Raf did scheme in high places, to take all things with them and leave desolation for the tribes of Sci.

When word came of these things to the lord of the land of Lond, he waxed exceeding wrath and issued a decree.

And he rebuked the men of Taf, and told them what they might take, saying:

"These mighty birds, far larger than the eagle, which are your gods, these may ye



"So Ion displace the Men of Taf"

take with you, yea, even unto the bowsters and the trolley acs.

"But the tents, the great tents, even unto the smallest, and all things that be fixed to the ground, these you must leave for the tribes of Sci to enjoy."

So Ion displaced the men of Taf, but as they moved out they muttered rude words and did poke fingers against the long-haired tribes of Sci.

And as they moved out, Ion filled their tents with Mathemites, and Physites, and Chemites, and Metallurgus, and Enginus, and Industines, and Administrites.

And they settled, and busied themselves among the tents of the men of Taf, and did wax fruitful and multiply

Especially the Administrites.

Officers of the A.E.R.E. Recreational Association and its Sub-Committee Chairmen — 1965-66

Geoffrey Bell. Chairman of the Association; was first elected to this office in 1964. Joined the Association when he came to Harwell in 1957. In 1961 he was co-opted onto the old Central Committee by Dr. Norman Goodway, the then Chairman, and with whom he subsequently worked very closely until the latter's retirement from the Authority this year. He brings to his job as Chairman practical experience gleaned over many years of most of the activities promoted by the Association.



Norman Crick. Deputy Chairman of the Association which he joined in 1954. Four years later he became Treasurer of the Bar Committee, until in 1963 he was elected its Chairman. He is a well-known local cricketer who, for the past five years, has captained the A.E.R.E. Cricket Club. An all round sportsman he also enjoys a game of squash or tennis. Is a past Chairman of the Residents' Committee of Icknield Way House.

Don Rowe. Treasurer of the Association; has held this onerous office for four years. His main sporting interest has always been hockey and it was as Secretary of the A.E.R.E. Hockey Club that he began his long connection with the Management of the Association. From being his Club's representative on the Central Committee he became Secretary of the Association until it became a full-time appointment in 1960. He also found time to serve for five years as Chairman of the Grounds Committee. He has this season been elected President of the Berks and Oxon Mixed Hockey Association.



Jimmy Hill. Chairman of the Grounds Committee, must be considered the doyen of the Association. He has throughout his time at Harwell played a very active part in Association activities, both as a games player and a Committee man. Three years as Treasurer of the Association, from 1947 to 1950, were followed by eight years as its Chairman. Preferring since to stand aside from top Office, he has nonetheless continued to serve on the Management of the Association. He is a rugger and cricket enthusiast and has been Chairman of the Rugby Club since 1959.



Bett. Battershill. Chairman of the House Committee, and now in her second term of office, she has been an active member of the Association since its earliest days. As Chairman of the Townswomen's Guild she found a place on the old Central Committee as long ago as 1953 and has been actively connected with the Management of the Association ever since. She still, however, contrives to hold down a part-time job with A.E.R.E., run a home and give time to one of Harwell's welfare organisations.

Syd Burnett. Chairman of the Bar Committee. Entering Harwell as a Student Apprentice in 1950 he has, over fifteen years, taken part in many Association activities and still maintains his link with the Apprentices Association. Although this is his first year in office, he has been an active member of the Management Committee since 1961.



Bob Forbes. Secretary to the Association; came to Harwell in 1960 to take up this appointment, which had grown to be a full-time job. He also acts as Secretary to the Management Committee and to each of its five Sub-Committees. He brings to his work the experience of a Service life in the air and at sea, and of a spell in industry. Being at the focal point of the Association, his friendly advice is sought wherever the topic concerns its many and varied activities.

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Too Long in a Coach Seat



KAREN CORP, M.R.C.

Our holiday had begun. Only a week before, we had discovered that the "we leave Victoria for Dover Saturday morning" in the brochure meant "we leave Victoria at 7.00 a.m.", and as it just isn't possible to get to Victoria at that time from the wilds of Berkshire, we had booked at an hotel in Dover and travelled there on the Friday. We were staying for one night in the most expensive hotel in Dover, in the attic; by standing on one of the beds we had a marvellous view of the harbour. While eating our dinner — Dover Sole, of course — we were eyeing greedily the mountain of asparagus being devoured by the man at the next table, and trying to convince ourselves that we had done the right thing in coming on this holiday. As it had been my idea, I was thinking with some trepidation of what could go wrong.

The crossing from Dover to Ostend the next day seemed to augur well; it couldn't have been calmer on the Serpentine. This was very fortunate as the boat was so crowded that it would have been impossible to get near the rails. The boat had been invaded by hordes of little people, schoolchildren about seven or eight years old, on their first trip to foreign lands. These, plus Whitsun weekend travellers, contributed to make it more like a Rugger scrum than an orderly packet-boat.

On arrival at Ostend, and after a cursory

trip through the Customs hall, we were presented with the problem of finding our bus from among the fifty or sixty lined up to greet us (and the thousand or so other hopeful holiday-makers). Eventually we found the right one, and after waiting about an hour whilst a search was made for somebody's case (fortunately for them a successful one) we were soon speeding along the motorway towards Brussels, which we by-passed, and on towards the Ardennes forest where we made our first stop, for dinner. Afterwards most people settled down for a doze, only to be woken at the border of Luxembourg and France by a prolonged argument between our drivers and the French Customs officials as to whether we had more than the permitted volume of diesel fuel in the tank. Apparently if you are going to cut across part of France (as we were) without stopping, you are only allowed to take a certain number of litres of fuel with you, and after much to-ing and fro-ing with dipsticks it was decided that we had exceeded the limit, so the drivers had to pay up for the excess.

After this diversion we settled down to sleep again, remembering the phrase in the brochure "we adjust our reclining seats and speed silently through the night" as we fidgeted and wriggled, trying to find a comfortable position. I think most people were awake by the time we had

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negotiated the Vosges mountains at about 4 a.m., and by 5 we were all chattering gaily as we remarked on the fact that people go to work very early in France. An emergency stop was made at Mulhouse station for the usual reasons, and we brightened the lives of a few young Frenchmen who were totally unprepared for this bevy of beauty at 6 a.m. Encouraged on our way by these encounters, we sped off again to Basle, where we met our courier for the first time. She was a round, exuberant, blonde Italian named Clara, and after five minutes she had been nicknamed Clara Cluck. However, she was to prove a good friend to us all.

Perhaps you didn't realise that you have to go nearly to the top of the pass before you reach the entrance to the Grand St. Bernard tunnel from Switzerland to Italy. I didn't realise this either, and as I got the jim-jams on the top deck of a bus I wasn't too happy at the prospect. The views on the way up, and a realization of the difficulties involved in making a tunnel four miles long and 5,000 feet up, helped to dispel my fears, and as we descended on the other side into the Aosta valley I began to enjoy life again.

We stopped at Piacenza that night, and after a delicious meal fell into bed exhausted, ready for a 7 o'clock start the next day. In fact we didn't leave until 7.30, because the drivers had overslept! No-one could blame them, as they had driven in two to three hour shifts with no proper sleep since Ostend, which was 26 hours and 600 miles away.

So we set off on the road to Rome, on the newly finished Autostrada del Sole, or Motorway of the Sun. This, a total of 500 miles from Milan to Naples, has taken only seven years to build, which impressed us very much, used as we are to the snail-like pace of British motorway construction. The road was well engineered, particularly the section over the Apennine mountains from Bologna to Florence, a series of tunnels and viaducts designed to keep the interest and cut out the hard work of this stretch of road. We arrived in Rome in time for dinner, and after this we were taken on a tour of the city by night, the high-spot being the Trevi fountain, which benefited considerably as we upheld the custom of throwing in a coin and making a wish.

The first visit we made the following day was to the catacombs of San Sebastian on the ancient Via Appia. We were shown round by a monk with a voice like Guinness, rich, black, and full of goodness. I could have listened to

him all day, even in those damp, dark tunnels, but we were rushed away to visit St. Peter's Basilica. It wasn't as spacious inside as I had imagined, though perhaps this was because the tiers of seats for the Ecumenical Council were still occupying most of the nave. The view from the top of the dome compensated for this. It was breathtaking. The Sistine Chapel was closed for cleaning on the day we went, so we were unable to appreciate Michelangelo's ceilings.

The afternoon was just as exhausting as the morning — the Romans left so many ruins. The Forum first; then (something more modern) the Victor Emmanuel monument, built to commemorate the first king of the united Italy, and called "the wedding cake" by present-day Romans because its sparkling white stone has withstood all attacks by grime and pigeons. Finally the Colosseum, standing majestically at the end of the Via dei Fori Imperiali, so well preserved that one could almost imagine the galleries filled with enthusiastic spectators cheering on the gladiators.

After a morning of leisure spent wandering around the local market and sampling pizza pie, we left Rome on the Wednesday afternoon for Sorrento. Once more on the Autostrada, past the Abbey of Monte Cassino, splendidly rebuilt after the catastrophic bombing it received in 1944, to Naples, and from there on to a narrow road which clung tenuously to the cliffside until we arrived at the magic town of Sorrento. Magic? After six days there the magic had disappeared. Sorrento is not a very exciting town and has *no* beach, which disappointed us all. One reads the brochure and imagines a 15-day holiday with 9 days' travel and culture and a 6-day seaside holiday in the middle. In fact, of all the seaside resorts along the Western coast of Italy there are only two natural beaches. The others have man-made beaches, sandstone ground up and deposited there for the holiday-makers who want to laze in the bright Italian sunshine (we didn't get much of that either, it isn't only in England that the summer has been washed out).

As there was no beach to laze on, we spent two of the days sightseeing. On one of these we spent the morning at Pompeii and the afternoon inside the crater of an active volcano called Solfatara, which translated means sulphur earth.

One needs more than a morning in Pompeii really to appreciate its vastness and complexity — it is about the size of Wantage — but in the time available one is taken on a fairly comprehensive tour. Pompeii is made all the more interesting by the fact that its people had

so many aids to gracious living that we in our civilization are only just acquiring, such as central heating, baths and sewers. There were even local taverns to sustain the Pompeii businessmen on their way home.

Particularly intriguing to the ladies of the party were the murals in the house of the Vetti brothers, which they were not allowed to see, and so had to imagine from the lurid descriptions provided by husbands and boy-friends; the inhabitants of Pompeii were uninhibited in their art.

After lunch we proceeded to the active volcano. This is well worth a visit, if you can stand the shock of finding out that the crust which separates you from the hot sulphurous mud is only one foot thick; indeed at one spot, well-fenced and marked "pericolosa" (comprehensible when accompanied by the skull and cross-bones symbol, as it was), the mud bubbles away happily with no crust at all. The sulphur fumes are said to be good for the lungs, but after coughing and wheezing their way round the crater, I think our coach party would disagree.

The other day's sightseeing was spent on the island of Capri, which is paradise in miniature. The island is only three miles long by one mile wide, and yet there is a selection of all types of terrain, although the mountains here are less than 1,000 ft. high, and the plain is necessarily small. One couldn't visit Capri without visiting its famous Blue Grotto, and this proved to be quite nerve-racking. The visible entrance to the Grotto is only about 3 ft. high, and as we crouched in the bottom of the boat the boatman waited for the right moment, and then dragged the boat in, hand over hand, by a chain fixed to the wall. Suddenly we popped up in a turquoise blue world which took my breath away, it was so beautiful; I was afraid to breathe lest it all dissolved like a dream. It was an experience I shall never forget, and will repeat as often as I can afford.

After these six days at Sorrento we started our journey homewards. The first night's stop was at Florence, and the following morning we had a chance to explore this medieval city. One of the main stopping points was, of course, the Ponte Vecchio, or Old Bridge, which was the only bridge in Florence not bombed during the last war. Such a pretty bridge, with shops along its length and arches giving tantalising glimpses of the River Arno. This is what London Bridge must have been like at one time.

We also saw the Baptistery with its bronze

doors decorated in gold leaf, one of which, executed by Lorenzo Ghiberti, was described by Michelangelo as being "fit for the gates of Paradise"; and the Cathedral, which has an interesting steeple called Giotto's steeple after its designer. The windows in it are grouped with the top one larger than the middle two, which are in turn larger than the bottom pair, so that from the ground the perspective is such that they all look the same size.

Our next stop was at Magenta, where we stayed one night before departing for the day-and-night drive back to Ostend. The first, and for me the worst, part of this drive was over the St. Gotthard Pass. This is about 6,500 ft. high, and is reached by a series of hairpin bends which the bus had great difficulty in negotiating, having to go back and forward two or three times to get round some of them. I was very thankful I was not sitting in the back seat, as apparently this was hanging over the edge on nearly every corner! At the top of the pass the snow was still very much in evidence, and a passage only just wide enough for the bus had been cut between two snow banks about 12 ft. high. After that the road down was easy; long gentle curves descending very slowly to Lucerne; and then on to Basle, where we had dinner and said goodbye to Clara, who waited there for the next party. On through the night again, across the corner of France, through Luxembourg and back into Belgium. At about 6 a.m. another unscheduled stop was made at a Belgian transport cafe, where our drivers bullied the proprietor into letting his thirty English ladies take over the gents' lavatories for a while, there being no alternative. Two of the ladies, very genteel and proper, refused to go in there, to everybody's increasing wonderment. Everyone else thought it a good joke, and squeals of laughter were to be heard for quite some time, quickly followed by squeals of horror when two lorry drivers, not aware of the arrangement, walked in. I have never seen women powder their noses so quickly in my life!

We finally arrived at Ostend full of praises for the drivers who had worked too hard and too long, and full of moans for the company who had arranged the tour with a time-table so tight that we didn't have time for the promised breakfast at Ostend.

On reflection, it had been the most exhausting, most interesting, most hair-raising holiday I had ever had; it took me thirteen hours' sleep that night to get over it.

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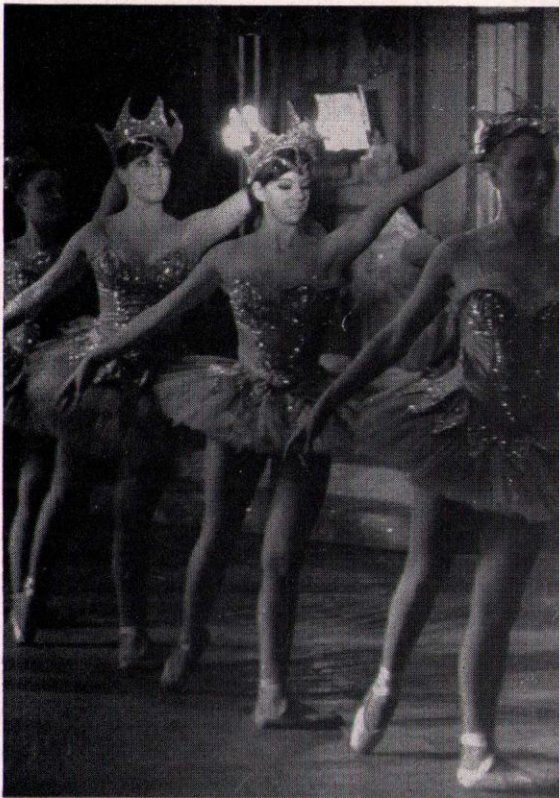
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Photos: Stephen Carter (Eng. Div.).



Here it comes again, that eternal concomitant of the festive season with its pervading sense of high spirits and the triumph of the forces of good over evil and of jollity over gloom.

We refer, of course, to Pantomime, and on this page we anticipate the gay aspect of the Christmas season.

This year Oxford's New Theatre will be presenting Billy Fury as the street boy, Aladdin, and Lauri Lupino as the hard-working but jolly Widow Twankey.

One cannot but admire the way in which today's Pantomime Principals, in spite of the high speed age with its diversions and complications, apply their contemporary talents and personalities to the simple formula of the Christmas entertainment.

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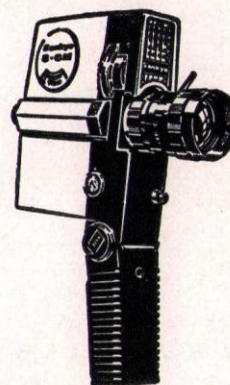
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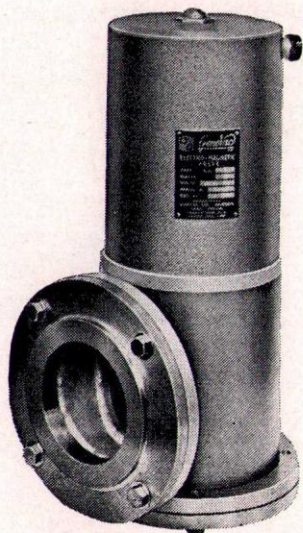
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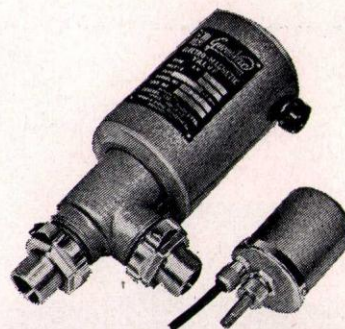
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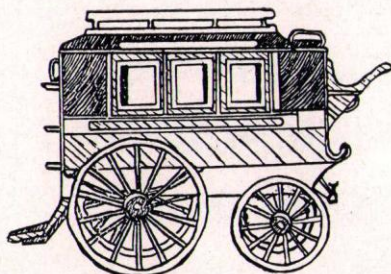
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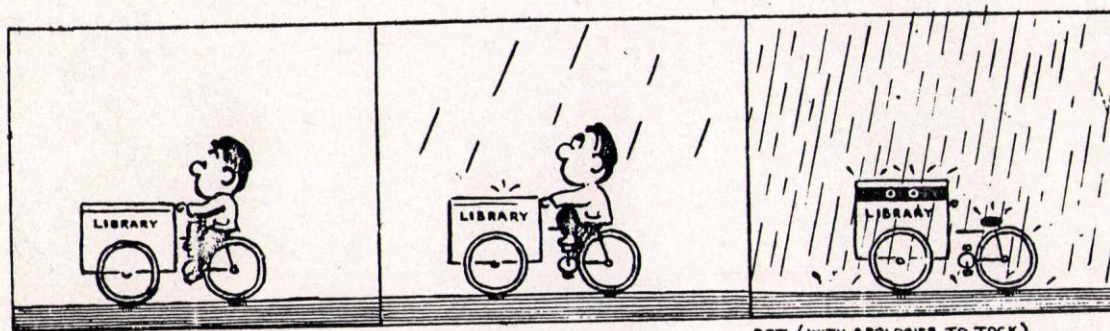
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The cartoon from the 'AERE News' of ten years ago shows that the site had not become so mechanised as it is today, but that human ingenuity was capable of meeting the occasion!

CHRISTMAS HAMPERS

These have this year been sent to the following, whose efforts were particularly appreciated this year: R. D. Pead, R. James, L. Shepherd, V. J. Wheeler, D. Knight, C. J. Fishenden and V. J. Horgan.

CONTRIBUTIONS

Before-and-After photographs are sought of gardens, buildings, streets; articles, serious and humorous, cartoons or ideas for cartoons, on a general theme or on life in the Research Group; are also sought, as well as new ideas which you think would enliven the pages.

AERE TOC H GROUP

Some help to the Ockenden Venture is being attempted and the Group will be glad to handle orders for Christmas Cards which can be sent to Toc H, c/o Harlequin. A clothing drive for OXFAM will be launched in the new year.

Fröhliche Weihnachten

Kurisumasu Omedetō

Felices Pascuas

Buon Natale

Glad Jul

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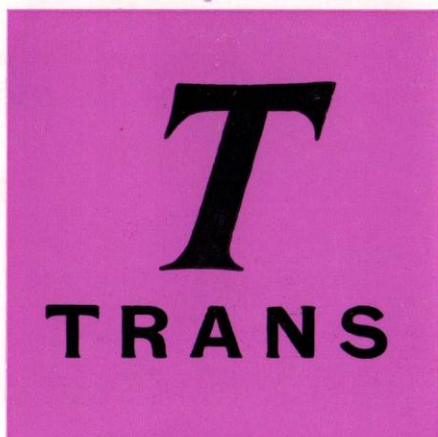
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