

JULY/AUGUST 1974

3p

Harlequin

Leisure Magazine of the United Kingdom Atomic Energy Research Group and Associated Organisations



In this issue

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ABINGDON OPERATIC SOCIETY — WALKING



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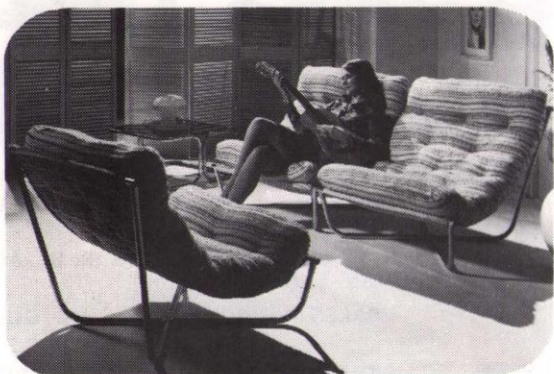
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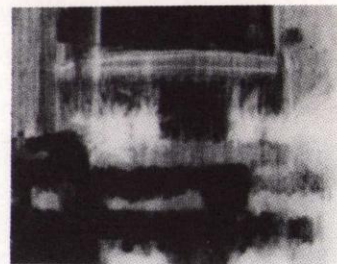
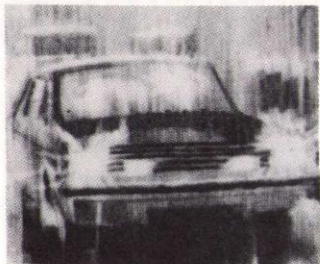
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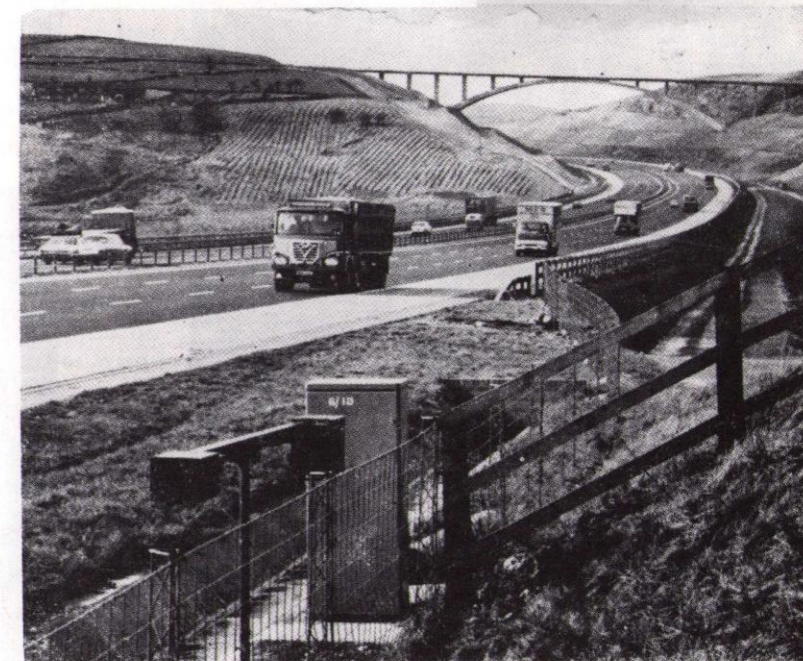
MOTORWAY FOG MENACE



Reliable and relatively cheap instruments for measuring atmospheric visibility on motorways have been developed at Harwell. The VISIRANGE* visibility meter is designed as an aid for routine traffic control whilst the VISIPLAN* system records visibility at selected points for preconstruction route planning.

Both instruments operate by measuring the loss of contrast in an illuminated target when viewed from a distance, and they differ mainly in their optical path lengths and in the type of output signal which they give. In both, the target consists of a brightly lit strip, bounded on both sides by black edges; images of the dark and light parts of this target are projected onto a pair of photoelectric detectors in the receiver. The presence of fog in the light path between the target and the receiver decreases the contrast between the dark and light parts of the target and the difference in output from the two detectors is reduced. Measurement of this differential can be related to meteorological visibility.

The VISIRANGE meter is a low cost instrument particularly suited to routine measurement of visibility levels over the range 1 kilometre to 5 metres or less. The



The VISIRANGE visibility meter, designed as an aid for routine traffic control, installed at Scammonden Down alongside the M62.

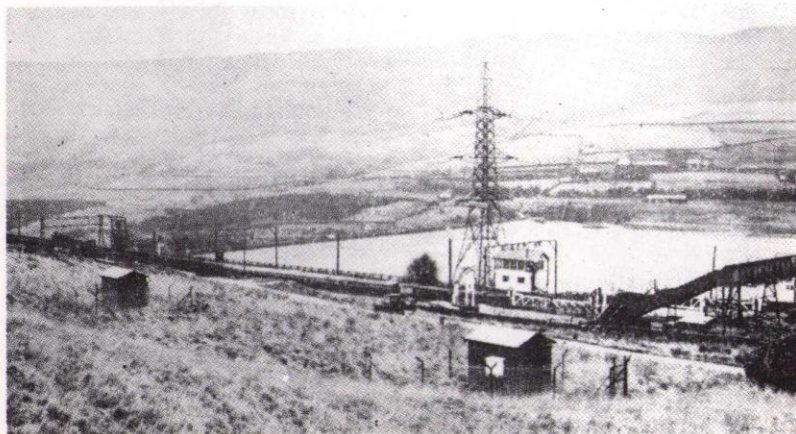
optical path length is only 2 metres, allowing the target and the receiver to be mounted in the same integral frame. The output of the instrument can be used to raise alarm signals at pre-set levels, to relay information to the

police or to bring appropriate speed limit signs into automatic operation.

The VISIPLAN fog recording service is operated by Harwell and is designed to provide a long term record of visibility conditions at key points along the prospective motorway route so that, during the planning stage, due account can be taken of fog incidence. To cover the increased range of visibility required in this application—10 kilometres down to 50 metres the VISIPLAN instrument is in two parts with the target section sited about 50 metres from the receiver. The output of the instrument is fed to an automatic recorder.

The instruments were shown for the first time at the Inter-traffic 1974 Exhibition held at Amsterdam from 14-17 May. The VISIRANGE traffic control meter was in operation during the exhibition.

* VISIRANGE and VISIPLAN are trade names for visibility measuring instruments developed at Harwell.



Harwell VISIPLAN service in use in the Peak District by the consultant engineers, Scott Wilson Kirkpatrick and Partners, for the proposed Manchester-Sheffield New Route.

FROM ABBEY TO ATOMIC

is the story

*O born in days when wits were fresh and clear,
And life ran gaily as the sparkling Thames;
Before this strange disease of modern life,
With its sick hurry, its divided aims,
Its heads o'ertaxed, its palsied hearts, was rife -
Fly hence, our contact fear!*



ARNOLD'S lines, written over a century ago, reflect some of the problems of today although we can claim, with little pride, that his knowledge of the pressures of life and high taxation was trifling compared with our own. But the Thames still sparkles, at least in these higher reaches, and the claim for Abingdon, made in an old guide book, that it is 'one of the most ancient, picturesque and interesting towns on the river' still holds good.

The river keeps to the east of the town, so that much of the original charm of the pastoral scene is preserved. Where the town does come down to the water's edge, we have the warm weathered long red-tiled roofs, dormer windows and picturesque gables of old buildings crowded as for safety behind the old protective flint wall that keeps the river at bay. Surpassing all is the unmistakeable graceful spire of St. Helen's Church, the most notable feature of Abingdon seen from a

The buildings of the once great and powerful abbey of Abingdon have been almost entirely demolished and its stones may be seen in practically every old building in the town. Some arches and old walling may be seen in the public park of Abbey House Gardens, but the most spectacular fragment, shown in this photograph, is that by the river, which now incorporates a small museum devoted to the abbey.

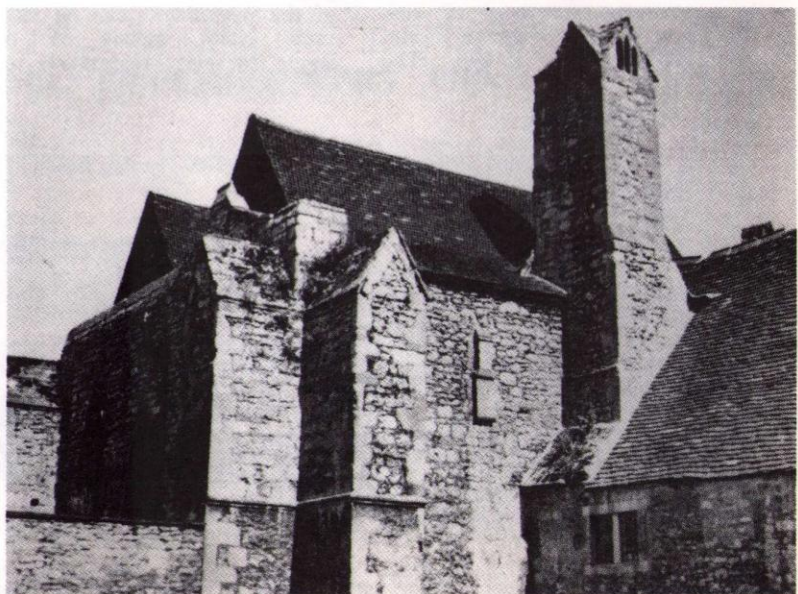
The Unicorn Theatre beside the chimney seen in lower photograph

This catalogue of monuments to a great past might give the impression that Abingdon is a muted sleepy place but this is not the case. The place is full of bustle and is expanding at a terrific rate, although the expansion has not been carried out to the detriment of the other Abingdon.

The native of Abingdon who still keeps up the age-old tunes and steps of the Morris Dance may well earn his living in the world's latest science, since a principal employer is the Atomic Energy Research Establishment.



The County Hall from the Abbey gateway



ENERGY

of Abingdon

distance. The glory of Abingdon, indeed the centre of its life and prosperity, was its Abbey, rich to the point of tyranny, for its Abbot refused to allow the people to establish a market and the dislike between ecclesiastic and townsfolk grew to hatred and, in 1327, to enmity and a riot. From Oxford there came the Mayor and a number of scholars to help the people of Abingdon in their quarrel, and part of the Abbey was burnt, its archives destroyed and the monks driven out, at least for a time. But the powerful Abbot won the day in the end and, when he had regained his place, saw to it that twelve of the rioters were hanged.

Abingdon is rich in old almshouses, the churchyard of St. Helen's being enclosed in three sides by various charitable foundations. Of these, the oldest and most remarkable is the almshouse founded about 1442 by the Guild of Holy Cross, and refounded after the Reformation in 1553 as Christ's Hospital. The almshouse of Christ's Hospital, still serving its original purpose, remains a beautiful building, a low range of chambers with a humble cloister in front.

St. Nicholas's in the Square is a charming little church in the Norman and Perpendicular styles, whose quaintness has suffered severely from restoring hands. There is an

interesting view to be obtained from the west front, with the old facade of the church contrasting with the old Abbey gateway, recessed to the right.

Abingdon is full of noble old buildings, including a wealth of old inns, for those who care to seek them. The numerous courts opening from the principal streets in the older part of the town are as much a feature of the place as the Rows of Yarmouth. But pride of place must go to the County Hall, whose name reminds us that Abingdon was for long taken as the county town of Berkshire. Any town would be glad to possess this truly beautiful structure, which seems to tolerate the flow of roaring traffic with untroubled dignity. Its design has been attributed to several candidates but the influence of Wren is clearly seen and there are those who ascribe it to Christopher Kempster, master-mason to Wren in the rebuilding of St. Paul's.

For the waterman the most familiar feature of Abingdon is the bridge, whose beauty matches that of the old buildings of the town: there is good reason, for in its original form it dates from 1416 and was the work of that same Guild of the Brotherhood of Christ who established Christ's Hospital. There is another bridge in Abingdon, at the other end of the town, familiar to motorists entering from the south. This is the stone structure over the river Ock and the old Wilts & Berks Canal, a seemingly enormous bridge for two such modest channels. The

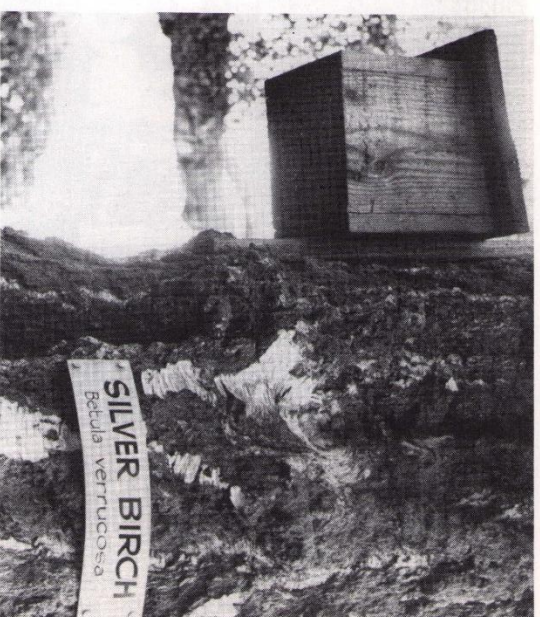
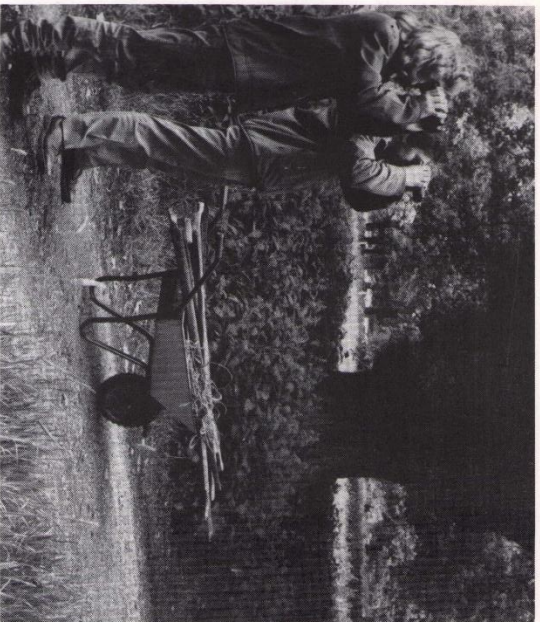
Canal indeed has now entirely disappeared having passed through the stages of muddy and dried out hollow: it was filled in and now bears a new housing estate. The Wilts & Berks has been eradicated along much of its course: between Abingdon and Wantage it has been levelled and is used as a pleasant walk across the fields.

The Ock, which we see beneath the bridge, is one of the slightest of Thames's tributaries. It is however not without appeal for it drains the Vale of the White Horse and has its origins on the slopes of the Downs near Shrivenham. Uffington, Stanford-in-the-Vale and Charney Bassett all lie on its course, and the Ridgeway runs parallel along the great bulk of White Horse Hill and the line of high hills to the south. Here is a broad realm of further interest—the Thomas Hughes Country—but, as we have so often seen, to explore every aspect of the Thames catchment area would require an encyclopaedia rather than a single volume. The Ock, small as it is, has itself some interesting tributaries, notably the Childrey Brook coming from the region of Denchworth and West Hanney, and the Letcombe Brook from Grove and East Hanney. Both combine to form the Nor Brook which flows into the Ock near Marcham.

At Abingdon the Thames turns south and then west, as if it at last had made up its mind, somewhat reluctantly, to head to the sea. From Abingdon Lock the course of the Old River runs to meet the present channel at Culham bridge, the cut-off land being called Andersey Island. Culham itself is perhaps best known now as the centre of fusion research for the UKAEA. The buildings of the laboratory lie on the former airfield on the north side of the Dorchester road A415, and it would be an irritable purist who would deny that much had been done to fit the establishment into the natural scene. The sight of Culham Laboratory set in this loop of the Thames is no visual affront but rather a tribute to the thought and care of its designers and planners.

Abingdon bridge over the Thames crosses the river in seven small and one large arch. This photograph shows the oldest part of the bridge, built by the Guild of the Brotherhood of Christ in 1416.





MICHAEL WILKINS (Nuclear Physics)

A LOCAL NATURE RESERVE

Photographs by Dr. A.G. SEARLE (MRC)

Did you know that there is a Nature Reserve less than two miles from AERE Harwell? One has been established by the Abingdon Naturalists' Society on the premises of the Esso Research Centre (ERC) at Milton Hill. It all started in 1970, during the Abingdon Festival when the ANS, together with the Berks, Bucks and Oxon Naturalists' Trust, shared the Royse Room with the ERC, who helped them with display equipment. All three organisations were displaying material concerned with conservation of the environment, so there was considerable mutual interest. The outcome of this was that shortly afterwards the President of the ANS, Gordon Maclean, was asked by representatives of Esso if a part of their grounds would be suitable for a nature reserve. After looking at the site he agreed on the suitability, and finally, in June 1972, 5% were handed over to the Abingdon Naturalists for them to manage as a reserve, together with a grant towards the running of it.

Management Committee was appointed consisting of one member from ERC and three from ANS.

The reserve is on part of the old Milton Hill estate once owned by the Singer family (of sewing machine fame), and consists of a formal rose walk outside the south wall of a walled garden, separated by a low wall and ditch from an old apple orchard which opens out into an acre of parkland having some fine native specimen trees, especially oaks. Along the western edge is a belt of trees and shrubs of many species, including most of the local common trees—oak, ash, birch, yew, holly, sycamore, beech and many others. Also there are a number of more exotic species like rhododendron, weigela and an oak with obvious cork-oak parentage.

During the first season observations were made on the existing plant, bird and animal life. Management since then has mainly consisted of increasing the diversity of habitat by planting berry-bearing shrubs for birds and flowering shrubs and plants such as buddleia and sedum spectabile as butterfly attractants, and encouraging patches of nettles and breeding areas for small tortoiseshell and



peacock butterflies. Part of the ditch was widened and lined with butyl sheeting to form a pond, so providing a fresh-water habitat and drinking place for birds and animals. Pond weed, water snails and tadpoles were introduced to give it a start, and now after a year it is full of life. Nest-boxes have been put up all over the reserve, which resulted last year in an unusually high population of ten pairs of blue tits (this year it has fallen to seven). Other kinds of boxes have been put up, including owl and open-fronted types, but with less spectacular success. The large owl box did have an uninvited visitor in the form of a grey squirrel, which when disturbed made a hasty exit via the writer's head, drawing blood in the process and nearly dislodging him from the top of a 15-foot ladder! Nest record cards of all nests found, including those in the boxes, are filled in and sent to the British Trust for Ornithology. Several bat roosting boxes have also been put up. Last summer several pupils from the John Mason School started ecological projects on life in an oak tree, leaf litter and a dead stump, and it is hoped to encourage other schools to start their own projects. A guide to possible projects has been produced and a Nature Trail is almost

ready. A large-scale map has been surveyed and tied to the Ordnance Survey's national one, and the Nature Conservancy Council has offered to draw it up professionally. This map will enable detailed recording of different habitats to be made and the special record cards of the Nature Conservancy Council will be filled in. Experiments on the best way to manage the main grassy area to encourage a wide variety of ground-flora in the absence of grazing are being carried out.

A workshop near the reserve has been made available to the Society for indoor work and storage of paperwork, tools etc. A small library and a reference collection of botanical specimens is being built up, and a variety of apparatus for ecological study is being acquired.

As interest grows in the study and recording of wildlife at Esso, more can be found out about the plants and animals in the neighbourhood of AERE Harwell.

For further details of the reserve contact the writer, or Dr. A.G. Searle, M.R.C., who are both on the management committee and will be pleased to give details of the Abingdon Naturalists' Society.

Old time music hall

PHOTOS: RON CATON



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I am standing on the corner of Ninth and Becquerel wondering whether to take in some culture in the Wilsonian Institute or some sustenance at Dick Lowe's Diner. More particularly I am thinking about what I am going to write this month. Believe me the writing and thinking business is not the pushover you might imagine, by no means and not at all. I am doing both for 'Harlequin' now for six months or so, and when I start I have the idea that Mr. Norvell will soon get his second wind and be treating us to some more of his interesting flora and fauna stuff, but I must say he seems to be taking his time.

When I take on this chore, it is the Editor's intention that I write a monthly piece under the heading of 'The Harwell Scene', and at the time this seems a reasonable idea. But when I come to consider the first item of scenery, nothing comes to mind at all, which is very worrying since I am a little short of the ready and relying on receiving a few dubs for my trouble. So I decide I must think bigger than just Harwell, and while I am pondering this problem it occurs to me that elephants come fairly large and that I will call my piece 'I can't help thinking about those Elephants'. The trouble is I then write some stuff without managing to mention elephants either, which puzzles the Editor somewhat and causes him to wonder to himself about this scribe he now has who does not seem able to stick to the point. However, he goes along with the general idea that the Harwell scene is a little quiet just then, but as far as he is concerned elephants are out and so we use a different title.

The next time I write, it is again difficult to think of something to say about Harwell, so I take another wider look at the scenery and come up with yet another odd-ball article. And so it goes on, with the Editor expressing a certain amount of peevishness but unable to do better himself or to find another writer. Mind you, for my part, I do not find the job pays too well, so I will not be too sorry if he decides to give me the brush.

This time though the Editor decides that Harwell will figure in 'Harlequin' or else, but he does not tell me what alternatives he has in mind. As it happens, one or two thoughts do occur to me which might make him happy, and one of these even has a piece of elephant about it. I refer to the new N.R.P.B. building which now gleams on the skyline with all the appeal of a concrete Clochemerle and fairly cries out for an



"I CAN'T HELP THINKING ABOUT THOSE ELEPHANTS"

—SAYS

E. RUSHMORE

RUNYON

irreverent and preferably lavatorial appellation. No doubt the Editor will suitably reward the best suggestion.

Another thought I have is that there are not many letters to the Editor, which is something that seems to happen a lot with other magazines. It could be of course that the Editor does not think the

letters he gets are worth printing, which is something of a knock at the readership and not likely to do much for the circulation figures. If I am the Editor I will reckon to do something about this, as there is nothing folk like more than to see their names in print, unless of course it is in connection with some nefarious activity that they wish to keep from the neighbours. It is worth a thought that one day in years to come, the historians may well form their views of Harwell from old copies of 'Harlequin', rather than from the official records. So take up your ball pens.

If I do not manage to work much about Harwell into previous articles, at least I am up to date and even in front somewhat on such matters as decimalisation and metrication. I would guess that it is only a question of time before the pressures are on for us to drive on the other side of the road, and so I dream up a little idea for simplifying the exercise. Instead of switching from left to right overnight, all we need to do for a week or two is to drive down the middle. Then, anything that is still mobile can carry on driving on the right.

Finally, for students of Mediterranean cooking, I have a recipe. This should not come as too much of a surprise to those who are now used to my versatility, but here is an absolutely original concoction for that special occasion:

Ingredients — 3 egg yolks, 1 tablesp. gelatine, 1 teacup chicken broth, 1 teacup double cream lightly whipped, 1 chicken, 2oz butter, 1 chopped onion, 1 dessertsp. flour, 1 tablesp. curry powder, $\frac{3}{4}$ pint white stock, 1 chopped apple, 1 dessertsp. chutney, 1 tablesp. lemon juice, 1oz sultanas, 1oz blanched almonds, dry boiled Patna rice, salt and pepper, 2 bananas.

Method — Divide chicken into joints, remove skin, fry lightly in hot butter, remove from pan and drain. Fry onion lightly, add flour and curry powder and fry well, stirring now and then. Stir in stock and bring to boil. Stir in apple, chutney, lemon juice, sultanas and almonds, add chicken joints and simmer gently for about 1½ hours. Allow to cool and when nearly set pour onto rice. Now soak gelatine for 5 min in $\frac{1}{2}$ cup broth. Beat egg yolks and stir lightly in remaining broth, bring gently to boil stirring constantly until custard consistency. Stir in dissolved gelatine, allow mixture to cool and pour over chicken and rice. When set, garnish with sliced banana.

You will find this makes a very popular Greek dish which is best served in glasses with horn rims. I call it 'Nana Mousse Curry'.

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HOW IT ALL BEGAN

— MARGARET SNOWDON,
(Market Intelligence Section)

The organisation which eventually became the Order of St. John is of such remote antiquity that numerous legends concerning its origin developed. Its real origin is probably to be found in the hostel for pilgrims established in Jerusalem, AD 600, by Abbot Probus on the orders of Pope Gregory the Great. Two hundred years later the Emperor Charlemagne was allowed by Haroun al Raschid, the famous Caliph of the Arabian Nights, to rebuild and enlarge it and add a library. It was situated just south of the Church of the Holy Sepulchre, on the famous site where the Convent of the Knights of St. John afterwards stood.

In the year 1010, together with all churches and religious buildings in the Holy Land, the hostel was destroyed by order of the mad Caliph el Hakim. For thirteen years thereafter the western pilgrim had nowhere to lay his head in a city where every man's hand was against him. With the death of el Hakim in 1023, however, the persecution of the Christians ceased and trade between the Holy Land and other Mediterranean states recommenced, the lead being taken by the powerful maritime republic of Amalfi. At the same time the restoration of the churches and other buildings began.

The merchants of Amalfi rebuilt the hostel, with its chapel dedicated to St. John Baptist, and the Benedictine monks returned to serve its needs. With the coming of the Crusades, the monks were replaced by the famous Knights of St. John, in an Order that was both religious and military.

It is interesting to note that the now familiar Maltese Cross worn by the Order was originally the symbol of the town of Amalfi, and that the four arms of the cross represent the Christian virtues of Prudence, Justice, Temperance and Fortitude, and the points for the eight beatitudes which spring from these virtues; and that its whiteness is the symbol of



15-year-old Lee Moore, St. John Ambulance cadet, gets one-year-old bomb-victim Sandra Lee ready for bed at a Belfast community centre

the purity of life required of those who fight for the defence of the Faith, and live for the service of the poor and suffering.

After many Crusades and battles, after being made homeless on many occasions, at last the island of Malta was granted to the Knights of St. John in 1530 by the Emperor Charles V. It was here that the power and influence of the Order of St. John reached its zenith. In 1565 when Sultan Suleiman landed in Malta with 20,000 troops he was opposed by an army half his strength under the leadership of the Grand Master Jean de Valette. The siege of Malta was watched with anxiety and admiration by all the Christian states of Europe, and eventually, when all seemed lost, reinforcements arrived from Sicily and the defenders were able to beat off the Turks. The following year the hero of the siege, Grand Master Jean de Valette, founded a new city which was named after him . . . Valetta.

For two hundred and thirty three years the Order reigned supreme in Malta, but in the 18th century there seemed little to occupy the Knights, and power began to slip from them. In 1798 Napoleon attacked Malta and took it with little opposition. Many of the Knights returned to their own homes in Europe, and a few went to Russia where the Czar offered them protection. Finally, in 1834, these Knights established themselves in Rome and devoted themselves to works of charity.

The establishment of the Order in Britain and the subsequent emergence of the St. John Ambulance form another story.

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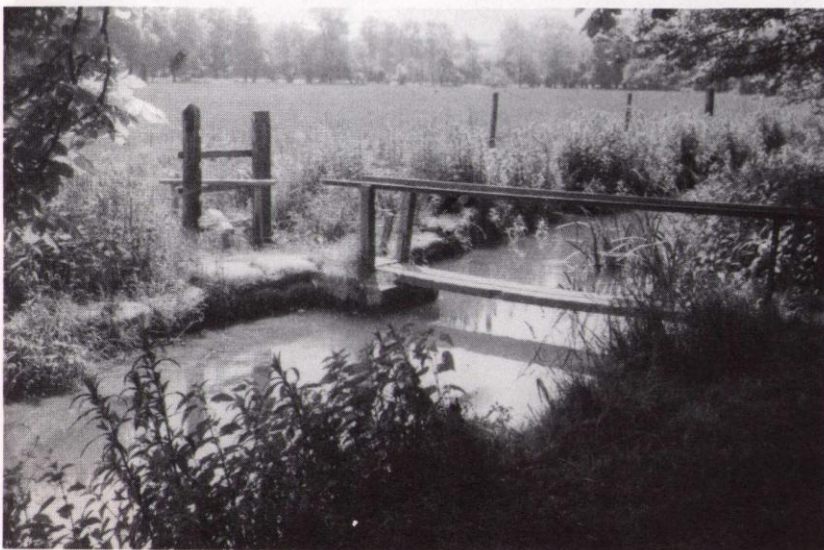
—He has previously contributed under the name of "FRED"

By 'perambulation' I don't mean pushing a pram with a load of squalling babes in it. I mean *walking*. Homo Sapiens has four limbs, the bottom two of which are called 'legs'. They are designed so that Homo S. can move around.

Unfortunately, Homo S. has now become Urban Spaceman, spending far too much time in his car. Perhaps we're in

danger, by a process of natural evolution, of developing a very large right foot (for accelerator and brake), with the left one withering away.

Some of us, however, have rediscovered the delights of walking. Even after ten years on the AERE site, I'm only now finding bridle paths that I never knew before. Of course, if you want to do a bit of lunchtime perambulation you need a



Photographs by the writer taken between Milton and Steventon

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good pair of shoes, which unfortunately seem to need a daily clean and polish.

An Ordnance Survey map is also very useful—and remember, our O.S. maps are probably the best in the world. I'm even thinking of buying a compass, as I seem to get lost rather often. Mind you, this does have its compensations. I get talking to farmers and all sorts of people—even if it's just to find the right path back to the site.

I've noticed an increasing number of people going for lunchtime rambles, so perhaps the message I'm trying to get through would be wasted on many of my readers. But during the summer walking can be an absolute joy. Flowers are blooming, butterflies are increasing and one can watch the progress of the farmers' crops. You can hear the birds bursting their lungs with song—and frankly, I don't blame them.

It's not a bad idea to carry a camera or sketch-book on this sort of walk. It may well enhance your enjoyment, as it keeps your eyes open. After all, there's a lot to see. There is quite a variety of grasses and wild flowers in the bridleways, and I sometimes feel the need of a few books to identify them.

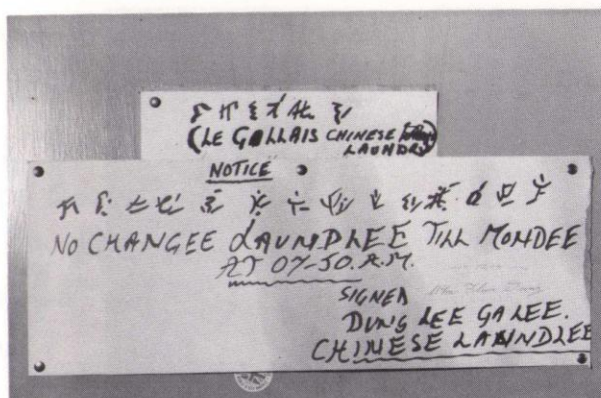
Of course, on walks in summer one does get a bit thirsty, for which the best cure seems to be ginger-beer shandy. So anyone who wants a good excuse for a 'quick one' may well like to take the advice of one of my old schoolmasters—'Git up on yer two 'ind legs' and *walk*. Regular exercise, according to a recent telly programme, can help to prevent heart disease. Mind you, one has to walk fast enough to make one puff and pant. But it can be quite fun to see how fast one can go.

So, folks, let's get out and use our lower limbs. In cold weather it can be extremely invigorating. Unfortunately, I find that lunchtime perambulations don't do my work much good, as the return to our air-conditioned, centrally-heated computer atmosphere makes me want to sleep. On the other hand, I sleep very well at night, and perhaps a few good walks may be a healthy replacement for the number of sleeping tablets that more and more people seem to need nowadays.

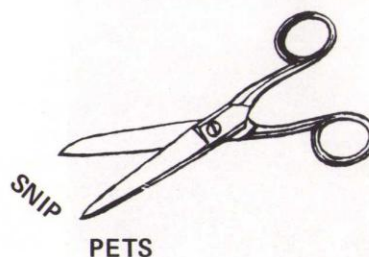
One rambler (who is associated very closely with this magazine, but wishes to remain anonymous) actually got as far as East Hendred on a lunchtime walk from the site. He then had to get a bus to Rowstock and a taxi back to AERE. His two comments on the whole episode were that it was rather expensive, and that one should keep a close eye on one's watch. As he said—'a dire warning'!



Improvised "Puppy Pound" at North Gate ▼



▲ Cryptic notice found on door in Hangar 9



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