

Send your reports to: Villages, 9 St George's Place, Canterbury, CT1 1UU, or by fax (01227 762415) or by e-mail on ekentvillages@thekmgroup.co.uk

Parish farewell to retiring vicar

THE PARISHIONERS of Patrixbourne, Bridge and Bekesbourne have said a fond farewell to their vicar, the Rev Raymond Gilbert.

Mr Gilbert retired on Monday after 20 years caring for the pastoral needs of the community and a career in the church spanning 40 years.

On Sunday more than 125 friends gathered at the primary school in Bridge for a farewell lunch party.

He was presented with a

collection of Mozart CDs, two cheques and a framed picture of the three churches by church wardens John Anderson, Andrea Nicholson and Jane Millyard and organist Roslaie Stacey on behalf of the community.

His wife, Rosemary, was presented with a rose tree and book on rose growing by Billie Anderson.

Mr and Mrs Gilbert also cut a cake iced with the three churches of his parish and the vicarage.

The couple are soon moving to Eythorne, where Mr Gilbert plans to spend more time mastering the Internet and walking and travelling.

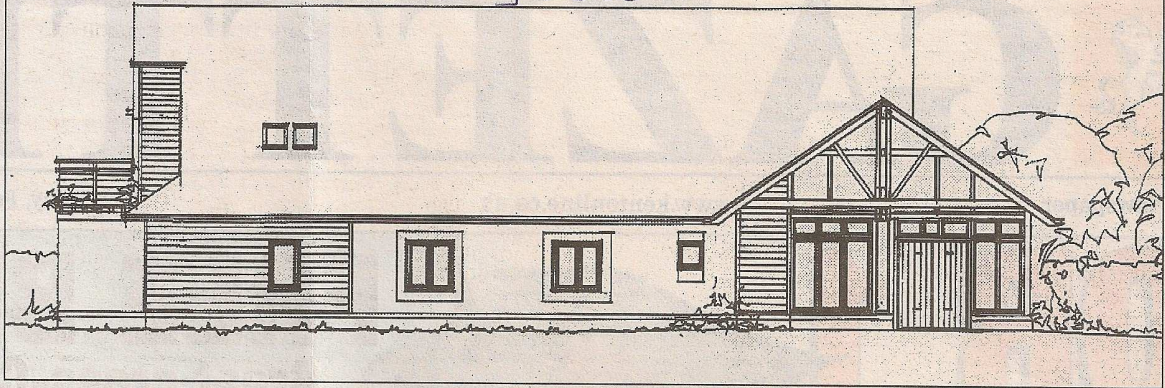
He will remain an Honorary Canon at Canterbury Cathedral.

ICING ON THE CAKE:
The Rev Raymond Gilbert and his wife, Rosemary, at the retirement party

30/6877E/99



KG February 2000



DOCTORS' ORDERS: An artist's impression of the surgery three doctors want to build next to the recreation ground in Patrixbourne Road, Bridge. It will have room for clinics and minor operations.

Village surgery plans unveiled

A PROJECT to give the people of Bridge their own purpose-built doctors' surgery has been unveiled.

Doctors Mark Jones, Mary Rafla and Peter Sykes are hoping to build the two-storey surgery and car park next to the recreation ground in Patrixbourne Road.

They have just submitted a planning application for the building, which for the first time would include a room for minor operations and space for regular clinics.

For some 20 years the doctors' surgery has been a semi-detached bungalow in Green Court.

But the bungalow is proving inadequate, said practice manager John Rofe. "It has been extended once and

by Amanda McDine

there is no way it can cope with the range of services that doctors now need to provide for their patients."

At the three doctors' other surgery, in Littlebourne, there is room for consultants to come in and hold regular clinics. Complementary medicine clinics are also held there.

But at the moment there is no room to provide this sort of service in Bridge.

Mr Rofe said: "The new surgery would include a reception area, a nurse treatment area, a minor operations room, consulting rooms, an administration area and on site parking, which the present surgery does not have. The new surgery

would also have full facilities for the disabled."

The planning application will have to be discussed by both Bridge Parish Council and the city council.

But if all goes to plan building work could start as soon as April with the new surgery open for business in late October or early November.

John Anderson, chairman of Bridge Parish Council, said: "My personal opinion is that 80 per cent of the population in the area will be pleased to have improved surgery facilities.

"We need to improve the facilities for patients in the whole area, particularly with Kent and Canterbury Hospital being reduced to cottage hospital status."

Surgery plan causes storm

A WAR of words has broken out in Bridge over plans for a new doctors' surgery.

On one side are the GPs and the parish council who support the scheme for a new purpose-built surgery in Patricxbourne Road.

On the other are some villagers who fear it will encroach on open space.

Matters escalated this week with both sides leafletting homes.

Amanda McDine talked to those at the heart of the row.

Group backs scheme

THE co-ordinator of a volunteer group in Bridge is backing the new surgery planned for the village.

Last year volunteer drivers for the Fish Scheme completed 61 trips taking villagers with no transport to the Littlebourne surgery for treatments such as chiropody and physiotherapy.

A LEAFLET war over plans for a new doctors' surgery has broken out in Bridge.

One leaflet, which has been delivered to homes in both Bridge and Patricxbourne, claims that the surgery, planned for a sheep field at Patricxbourne Road, would destroy the charm of the area forever.

But a counter-leaflet from surgery supporters, which has been circulating the village this week, is urging people to back the plans.

The surgery was supported - albeit by a one vote majority - at the last Bridge Parish Council meeting.

But parish councillor John Corfield, one of the group of "concerned residents" who published the first leaflet, was not happy with the parish council's support.

Mr Corfield, who lives in Patricxbourne Road, said he was concerned that the

village had not been adequately informed about the new surgery. He said: "People think I am doing this because it affects my personal position but I am not.

"We did a straw poll and there were a number of vociferous individuals against the idea of a surgery being built there, and that it was unnecessarily large for the needs of the village.

"People want an existing building to be used, rather than destroying forever a greenfield site."

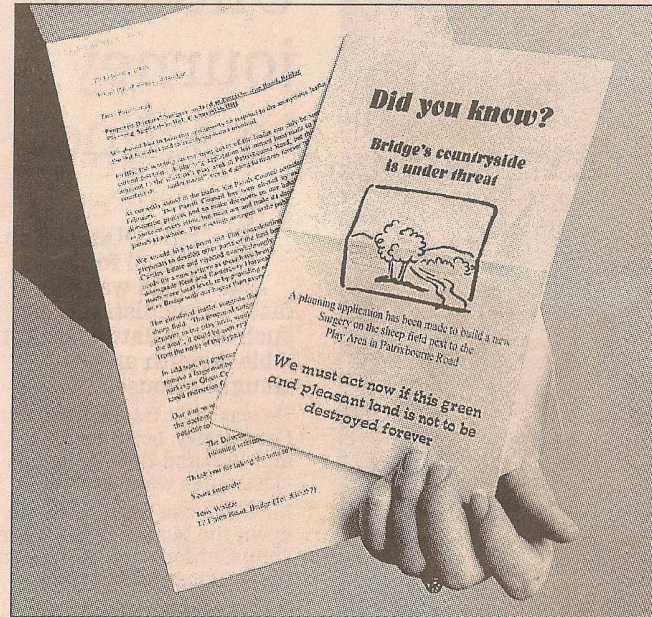
The opposition leaflets claim that Bridge's countryside is under threat and villagers must act now if the land is not to be destroyed forever.

Mr Corfield said he and other opponents were also worried the surgery would lead to more development on the field.

He said: "We felt the village ought to have the opportunity to decide whether it was prepared to accept that risk for the sake of a surgery much bigger than is really needed.

"If the villagers said to me that they wanted it I would support it, but I felt they were not being given the opportunity to make a considered judgement."

In retaliation, parish councillor Tony Walder and resident Maurice Smith distributed a response this week, condemning the first leaflet as "an emotional exaggeration".



OPPOSING VIEWS: The leaflets at the centre of the row

They said the decision to downgrade Kent and Canterbury Hospital left a need to improve and diversify facilities for patients at a much more local level, particularly in Bridge with its elderly population.

They say the surgery would only take up a small part of the sheep field and would be and screened by trees.

They said: "Rather than destroying 'the charm of the area' it could be seen rather as enhancing what can often be a bleak and exposed site by providing shelter from the

noise of the bypass and the cold easterly winds.

"Our aim has been to set out clearly and unemotionally the benefits of the planning application for the doctors' surgery."

The plan is likely to be discussed by the city council's planning committee in March or April.

A council official said: "The plan has already generated a lot of response from the public, both for and against.

"People are free to comment right up until the date of the meeting."

We must expand says GP

THE need for a new surgery in Bridge was underlined by village doctor Mark Jones.

Dr Jones, who runs the surgery with colleagues Mary Rafla and Peter Sykes, has been looking for a new site since he moved to Bridge 12 years ago.

He said: "The present surgery is a semi-detached bungalow, which has already been extended and still only has room for one doctor.

"When I started there 12 years ago I was the only doctor and there were about 2,000 patients. Now there are three doctors and 5,500 patients in both Bridge and Littlebourne."

Dr Jones said all the additional services in general practice today, from minor operations to physiotherapy and acupuncture, needed space that the present surgery did not have.

He said: "We can offer these services at Littlebourne, but not at Bridge, so if Bridge people want to use them, they have to travel out of the village.

If planning permission is granted the new surgery could be open for business in late October or early November.

Respect, please

YOUR REPORTS in last week's Kentish Gazette detailed well the outcome of the planning applications in both Bridge and St Dunstan's. Both areas were well represented in the gallery.

What was interesting was how the committee reached its verdicts.

Some members actually admitted they had not seen the plans of the Bridge site. Nevertheless they passed them.

Some members said they had read all the letters from the residents of St Dunstan's yet failed to appreciate in the ensuing debate that they were not actually opposed to the site being re-developed. The problems were the over-bearing and high-density aspect of the plans submitted by town planners whose offices are in London.

It is hardly surprising that feelings have been running high in both areas. When residents are treated with respect, the plans in question are carefully considered, the residents are given the correct information to act upon and meetings are held in a fair and consistent manner, ultimate decisions can be accepted.

As one speaker commented, when the vote goes against the developer he has the right to appeal: when it goes against the residents there is no such right available.

Lesley Forwood, St Dunstan's Terrace, Canterbury.

■ BEFORE discussing whether this or that site was appropriate for the surgery, did the councillors satisfy themselves that the doctors had proved that there was an "exceptional local need" for a new building with three GP consulting rooms for complementary medicine (are there written guarantees of NHS funding?), and a balcony.

For proof, and not simply accepting particular applicants' assertions in regard to any case, requires to be established, according to the council's own conditions set out in the Local Plan, before approval to build on an area of outstanding natural beauty can be granted.

Yet no councillor at the meeting itself asked the doctors how many patients were registered at the Bridge branch practice.

It is public knowledge that there are 5500 patients for both the combined Littlebourne main surgery (which will remain) and the Bridge branch.

Thus given NHS guidelines of, it is understood, 2000 patients per full-time GP and given the project's plan for three new consulting rooms for Bridge, do the doctors' figures in fact add up, especially as there is no significant housing expansion planned for the catchment area for the Bridge branch?

Professor G.R. Rubin, Riverside Close, Bridge, Canterbury.

conservation status of all the fields surrounding Bridge. The alternative sites, with the exception of the playing fields, all fall into this category and one has to wonder whether their opposition would have been so vehement had the committee agreed to one of these sites, given that nearly all of those opposed live either on Patricxbourne Road or in Riverside Close.

The development control committee voted in favour by 12 to 6, reflecting accurately the wishes of the inhabitants of Bridge and the surrounding villages where most of the surgery's patients live.

As one member of the committee pointed out, they were on the "horns of a dilemma", and there is a very fine line between the social responsibility of providing proper healthcare arrangements for all, and the preservation of our countryside.

I am grateful that the matter has finally been decided.

The residents of Bridge and the surrounding villages can now look forward to an enhanced healthcare provision locally, which is particularly important given the imminent running down of the Kent and Canterbury Hospital.

Finally, as those at that meeting heard, the resolve of the city council not to allow this planning permission to be the start of any

further development on the Conygham Estate, is an integral part of the development plan which can only be breached by John Prescott!

Cllr Bill Oakey, North Nailbourne Ward.

■ I READ with interest your article in last weeks Kentish Gazette of the fury over the planning permission for the new medical centre in Bridge.

As the ward councillor I have taken a great interest in this application and have met both those in favour and those against this new facility.

I have to say that those in favour have by far outweighed those against.

However, those against have made the most noise and are to be congratulated on a well orchestrated campaign.

The thrust of their argument was not to breach the area of outstanding natural beauty and

KG June 29 2000
YOUR LETTERS

The editor reserves the right to edit letters
request. Send letters to The Editor
kentishgazette@thekmgroup.co.uk Please

Fury as surgery is given go-ahead

CONTROVERSIAL plans for a doctors' surgery in Bridge have been approved, despite huge protests.

Villagers who spoke out against plans to put the two-storey building next to the recreation ground in Patribourne Road packed Canterbury council's Guildhall on Tuesday.

But after hearing from residents and one of the doctors and after a long debate by councillors, the plans were approved by 12 votes to six.

Afterwards, Dr Mark Jones from the surgery said the practice was pleased that the development control committee had approved the location of the new surgery and its design.

He said they expected the building to be ready for use early next year.

Sheila Sochacka, speaking on behalf of the Bridge residents who protested at the meeting, said afterwards that they were disappointed.

"We were heartened that six councillors spoke vigorously against this, but we were saddened that an innovative solution to use the existing building or a less sensitive greenfield site was not agreed on," she said.

"We fear that this decision puts at risk other, similarly protected land around this area."

Residents criticised the location of the surgery and the effect it would have on the countryside.

Natural beauty

Norman Fowler told the committee other sites were available on the edge of the village.

Mrs Sochacka said the cost of losing the land would be too great and the surgery would be a sore thumb in the middle of a green space, while Penny Morgan said the building was to go in an area of outstanding natural beauty.

Emily Shirley said there was no proof of an overriding need for more facilities at the surgery. The existing one could be extended or another building chosen, she said.

Dr Jones told the meeting the present facilities were woefully inadequate.

Planner Bob Britnell said allowing the surgery will not set a precedent for development.

In wrong place

IT is a pity that Cllr Bill Oakey is not a little more in tune with his ward constituents. If he were he might have actually heard what they were saying. Of the 150-or-so households in Bridge that complained about the site of the new surgery, only a few were in the immediate vicinity. The majority were households with young children who use the playground that will now be blighted by an unnecessary new building. None were against a new surgery but simply felt it was in the wrong place.

Cllr Oakey is right about one thing though, we would not have complained so much about the surgery being sited elsewhere in the village. The site chosen is the only place in the village where parents sit and enjoy the peace and quiet with their children playing in the playground. Now our children will have to be careful where they kick a ball for fear of hitting windows or cars and we will have to endure the constant movement of traffic with the fumes that entails.

It is certainly NOT a case of NIMBYism since we are very disappointed that the doctors did not seriously consider the Old School House on Patricbourne Road. This building looks potentially suitable for a new enlarged surgery and the owner recently informed the doctors that it would soon be available with vacant possession.

Frank Sochacki, Patricbourne Road, Bridge.

■ CLLR Oakey has somewhat under-estimated the strength of feeling regarding the proposed building on a designated site of outstanding natural beauty.

To trivialise the strength of the opposition to the project by suggesting that it came from a few people living in the immediate vicinity is both insulting and inaccurate. In fact, opposition to this site for the project comes from all over, from Western Avenue and Bridge Down, from within and outside Bridge. However, I have not seen nor heard of a feasibility study for any alternative site for our new surgery – maybe I've missed something.

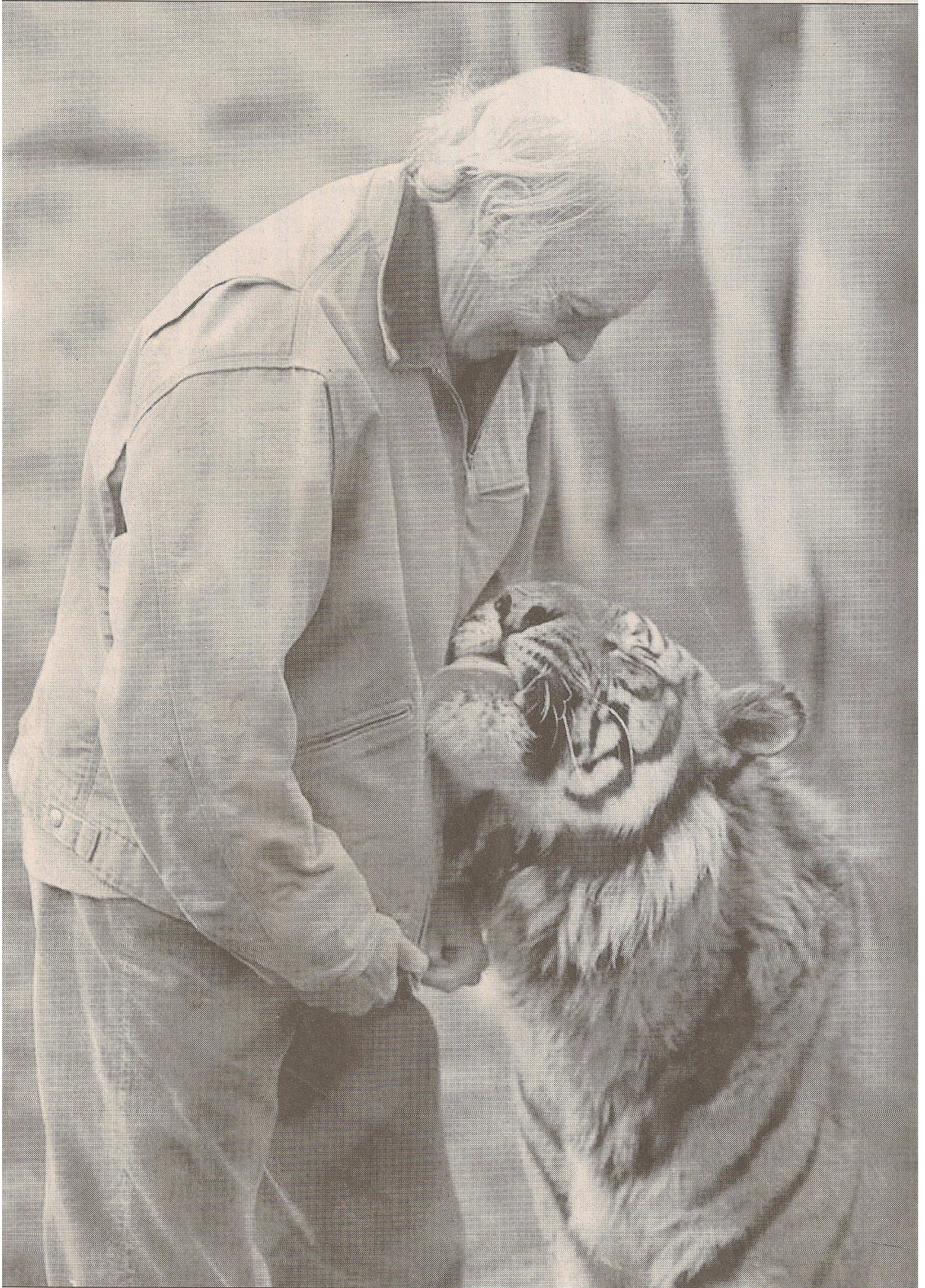
Mrs F. Krish, High Street, Bridge.

YOUR LETTERS

July 6
2000

JOHN A

Gambler and right-wing maverick who kept a tiger in]



John Aspinall at Howletts Wild Animal Park with Jara, a nine-year-old female Indian tiger, 1996

SPINALL

Belgravia and bred endangered species at his private zoos

John Aspinall lost one fortune then made another, founded two zoos, ran casinos, wrote books, gambled and worshipped the Zulu people and their culture. A friend of the rich, the famous and the notorious, he was one of the most exotic and extravagant personalities of his age, at one time keeping a tiger, Zemor, in his Belgravia apartment. He managed to form a relationship of trust and affection with the animal, as he had with an adult gorilla, in whose cage he spent several hours a week.

A gambling crony of Lord Lucan, who went missing in 1974 after the murder of his children's nanny, he was asked how he might react if the wanted man entered the room. "I would embrace him," he immediately replied. His views were deliberately outrageous. He cheerfully acknowledged being politically to the right of Genghis Khan and approved of Hitler's theories on eugenics.

Over-population of the world seriously worried him. A big, affable, voluble romantic with abundant charm, he liked to shock and impress. He once claimed that when making love, he roared like a lion and beat his chest like a gorilla.

As for gambling, what appealed to him most was "the corrosive effect that it has on such outdated concepts as the sanctity of money and the dignity of labour". Nonetheless he made plenty of money and worked hard enough. Loyalty, courage and patriotism were the qualities he most admired.

He even wanted to die in the manner of his friend George Adamson, "gunned down by poachers while protecting his beloved animals". But he admitted that he would probably die in bed "like any other boring old man".

Aspinall started gambling at Oxford. Expelled from Rugby, he had served with the Royal Marines during the war before going up to Jesus College with the help of a £90 per term ex-serviceman's grant. He invested his first instalment on a horse in the 2000 guineas. "What if it loses young man?" asked the bookmaker solicitously. But it won in a photo-finish at 7-2 and Aspinall's faith in his stars received early justification.

He was sent down for ducking his finals — feigning illness and slipping away to Royal Ascot — and soon found himself comprehensively in debt. It was then that he discovered his illegitimacy.

Despite his regard for the aristocracy and "breeding", John Victor Aspinall's own pedigree fell short of being illustrious. He was brought up as the son of a Colonel Robert Aspinall, a medical officer in the Indian Army. It was not until after Oxford, on appealing to Aspinall senior for financial aid, that the colonel announced that he was not his real father.

It transpired that Mrs Aspinall had conceived him beneath a tamarisk tree beside a lake in Uttar Pradesh on a wild fling at a regimental ball. Her extra-marital lover had been a young captain in the infantry with something of a reputation among women.

Intrigued, Aspinall set out to find his father and successfully tracked him down to a flat in Kensington. By then a major-general (retired) he affectionately embraced his natural son — but was, unfortunately, impecunious.

Forced to get himself out of hot water on his own, Aspinall started arranging gambling parties. He ran fashionable *chemin de fer* evenings around the West End in the days when gaming houses were illegal. Eventually hauled before the courts in a test case, he was cleared — a victory which prompted reform of the gaming laws.

He was among the first to take advantage of the change by founding in 1962 the Clermont Club. At its tables in Berkeley Square, as he himself put it, "gentlemen could ruin themselves as elegantly and suicidally as did their ancestors 300 years ago".

He sold the club ten years later for £500,000, only to lose all his investments in the 1974 stock market crash. This forced him to start all over again by launching Aspinall's club (later the Aspinall Curzon) in the late 1970s, with the help of his close friend Sir James Goldsmith. In 1987 he sold this too for £90 million.

Although he lived in great opulence and style, Aspinall spent the bulk of his money on his other great passion in life: his private zoos. The most important influence on his life

was *Nada the Lily*, Rider Haggard's tale of an illegitimate Zulu prince who lived outside his tribe among wild animals. The parallels are obvious.

Fired by an enthusiasm for wildlife he founded his first zoo, Howletts in Kent, in 1958, and his second at Port Lympne 15 years later. He had bought Howletts, an 18th-century Palladian house set in 39 acres of parkland, in 1956 with the proceeds of a massive win at the races.

When his animal kingdom outgrew it, he bought the 300-acre estate at Port Lympne. He later turned both over to a trust, the Howletts and Port Lympne Foundation, with himself as chairman, financed by £20 million from the sale of his Curzon Street casino. But rising maintenance costs forced him in 1992 to open yet another gaming club, again called Aspinall's, to make more money.

He once claimed to have given 80 per cent of his personal fortune to his zoos. "It's rather wonderful" he commented at the time "to think of all those Arabs pushing money down the table so that tigers could have meat and gorillas bananas". He was believed to be subsidising the zoos to the tune of some £1.5 million a year.

Gorillas and tigers seemed to fascinate him most, although these did not always reciprocate his affection. He frequently appeared in public, scarred and bruised after being all too boisterously mauled by one pet or another. Nor did they always attract the right publicity. Five keepers were killed and at least one seriously injured by his animals, while a five-year-old boy lost an arm to a chimpanzee.

However, Aspinall saw himself as a conservationist, and was proud that his zoos had achieved eight elephant births, 14 black rhinos, 75 gorillas, 25 leopards and some 400 tigers. He claimed to have more black rhinos than Zambia.

He was genuinely appalled by man's exploitation of the planet, at the cost of other species. "The general public is not really aware of any species other than man," he said.

Meanwhile Aspinall, who

had bought a South African estate, developed his growing rapport with the Zulu nation, befriending their political leader, Chief Buthelezi. He built up an impressive library on the Zulus and donated money towards their education. In 1994 they showed their gratitude by inviting Aspinall to address 65,000 of them at a gathering in South Africa. They named him Baba Um-lungu, meaning "White Father", which was, he said, "the greatest honour of my life".

Aspinall wrote extensively, his publications including *The Best of Friends*, which appeared in 1976, and numerous contributions to serious journals. At the general election of 1997 his anti-European views led him to stand for Parliament as a candidate for Jimmy Goldsmith's Referendum Party at Folkestone and Hythe. He came fourth, garnering 8 per cent of the vote.

Over the past three years Aspinall had suffered from cancer, which involved him in radical surgery to his face. This was a tribulation and a disfigurement which he bore bravely.

In September 1999 he and his wife were attacked by three men outside their Belgravia home and robbed of £5,000 worth of jewellery. Aspinall suffered severe injuries to his already traumatised face, but characteristically made light of the incident and of his injuries, instead praising his wife for her stalwart deportment under attack and for raising the alarm.

John Aspinall's first two marriages — in 1956 to Jane Gordon Hastings, and in 1966 to Belinda Musker — were dissolved. He married thirdly in 1972, Lady Sarah (Sally) Courage (*née* Curzon), a daughter of the 5th Earl Howe. Her husband, the racing driver Piers Courage, had been killed in a motor racing accident two years previously. Her Curzon Street birthplace was eventually to become the Aspinall Curzon.

He is survived by her and by three children: a son and daughter by his first marriage and a son by his third. A daughter by his second marriage died in infancy.

John Aspinall, zoo owner and casino proprietor, was born on June 11, 1926. He died yesterday aged 74.

8 June 29, 2000



FANCY DRESS: Children paraded in the High Street 15A/8937E/00

Bridge throws big party

BRIDGE saw its biggest celebrations on Saturday since its bypass was opened in the 1970s.

Music, fun, eating, drinking and general good humour took over the village for its Millennium festival.

In addition to the annual summer fete, organised by the church and the school and held on the school's recreation ground, there were events throughout the village.

They included history tours from the village hall, a duck race from Nailbourne Ford to the recreation

ground, a classic car display at Rogers Garage, jazz in the garden at the Red Lion and further music and a pig roast at the White Horse.

John Anderson, chairman of the parish council, said: "It was a big day for Bridge, the biggest since the bypass celebrations."

Highlights included the children's fancy dress parade in the High Street led by a piper and drummer, and the Sealed Knot display.

■ Full reports in Bridge news in Roundabout, pages 40-43

KG 28 April 2000

LETTERS

We'll regret it

I THINK we will all come to regret the development of the Nackington Road site for Canterbury College. Quite frankly, I am dumbfounded and appalled by the decision.

Not only have councillors flouted central Government directives, Kent County Council policy, and their own council's policies for sustainable development, but they have also disenfranchised local people. By ignoring the massive public opposition to the proposals – not only from those living near the site but also from worried people throughout the district – they are discounting genuine concerns about the environmental damage this development would bring.

Increased numbers of cars and buses would increase traffic congestion, carbon dioxide emissions and accidents. The greenfield site is grade one agricultural land, which this development would destroy forever. Against these and other key indicators of sustainability the proposed development would actually move strongly in the wrong direction – towards even lesser sustainability.

However well-founded the need may be, no arguments were put forward by the scheme's backers as to why this site is suitable. Perhaps that is because they recognise that it is indeed the wrong location.

The application is being referred to the Secretary of State, and I urge readers with sound arguments against the scheme to write to him direct: Deputy Prime Minister, Department of Transport, the Environment and the Regions, Eland House, Bressenden Place, London SW1E 5DU, with a copy to the Government regional office: David Saunders, Regional Director, Government Office for the South East, Bridge House, 1 Walnut Tree Close, Guildford, Surrey GU1 4GA.

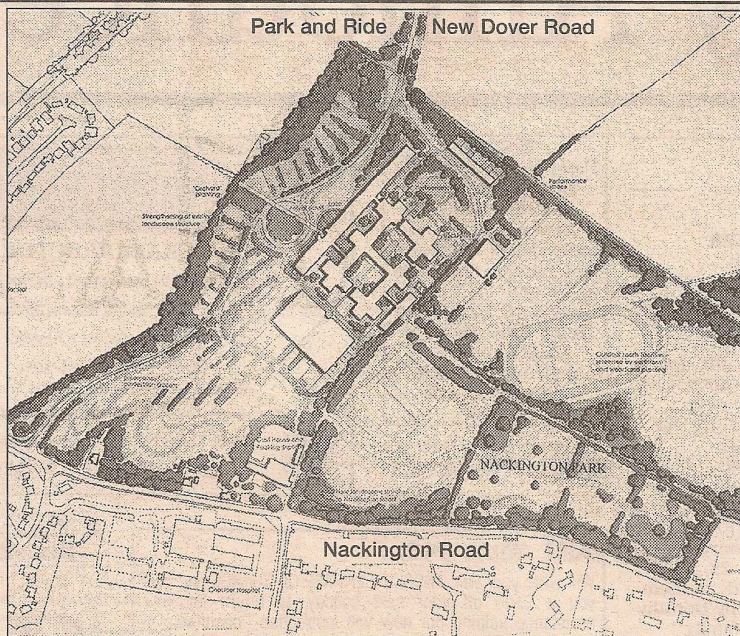
Keith Bothwell, St Augustines Road, Canterbury.

■ At the moment students can walk into the city within minutes before and after lessons to enjoy leisure time. Once they are 1.5 miles out with inevitable transport delays, their leisure pursuits will be severely curtailed.

The majority travel by bus and train from north of the city. We feel doubly sorry for them as the journey to and from their houses to the college will be unbearably slow. Those travelling by car will find there is inadequate parking.

Mrs Pember has promised to co-operate with the neighbours. She should first realise the huge delays that effect 2,500 children daily when trying to get to and from the Simon Langton and St Anselm schools

To divert buses and cars away from the overcrowded Old Dover and



CONTROVERSIAL SITE: The area outside Canterbury set to be the new home of the college

Nackington Roads, all transport must enter and exit the new college only via the proposed Park and Ride entrance at New Dover Road. It is completely unacceptable and impracticable to build a bus terminal point outside the college.

Mercifully, there are only a few students who travel by bicycle. They and all pedestrians must be diverted away from Old Dover and Nackington Roads.

The idea that students and staff will park their cars at the Wincheap and Sturry Park and Rides (which we consider will be a very unpopular choice) and then catch a bus to the college will only cause further miserable delays for all concerned.

Unless the college can defeat the problems, based on accessibility, this expensive new campus could prove to be a great white elephant as students find other learning facilities closer to their homes.

To start good neighbourly relations, will Mrs Pember please respond to these concerns.

**R. A. and V. J. Howard,
Nackington Road, Canterbury.**

■ IT WOULD be very interesting to know how long before last Tuesday's meeting the planning services committee agreed to vote in favour of Canterbury College's planning application – it was obvious that the meeting was a mere formality.

I was amused to see that probably the two most run-down buildings at Canterbury College were used as background for Susan Pember's photograph on your front page!

**Carol Mather, Nackington Road,
Canterbury.**

July 20 2000

Woman died after dispute over TV set

AN INQUEST has heard how an elderly woman may have been pushed over by another resident at a residential home in a dispute over the television.

Hilda Jackson, 88, suffered a broken hip in the fall at the New Close home in Conyningham Lane, Bridge, in April.

She died on May 6 from septicaemia after suffering a post operative infection. A verdict of accidental death was recorded at last week's inquest.

Care service team leader at the home, Gillian Ireland told coroner Richard Sturt that Mrs Jackson was found on the floor of the lounge, complaining she had been pushed over by another resident after she turned the television off.

Mrs Ireland said the elderly man accused of pushing her was relatively new to the home and was

awkward with the potential to be aggressive.

She said no one else had witnessed the incident but she was inclined to believe Mrs Jackson's version of what happened.

Coroner's officer Bill Maddox said the incident was investigated by police and a report sent to the Crown Prosecution Service.

It decided it was not in the public interest to prosecute the alleged offender because of his mental state and the lack of witnesses.

The man has since been transferred to St Martin's Hospital in Canterbury.

Recording a verdict of accidental death, Mr Sturt added that he was becoming concerned at the number of patients who suffered infections after treatment in hospital.

He added: "There seems to be far too many and it is an increasing problem on hospital wards."



PILGRIMS' STORY: Lou Round at work
on the wall hanging 23/9143E/00

Weaving their way through history

FORTY women aged from their late 20s to early 70s have joined together to make a huge embroidered wall hanging depicting Chaucer's pilgrims' journey to Canterbury.

The beginning of the story is in Chaucer's time and it ends in present day at the Cathedral.

The 40 textile students all individually worked on the piece.

Lou Round, who originally thought of the idea, said the theme of the wall hanging also tied in with the Passing Tales commemoration of the 600th anniversary of Chaucer's death.

As the story progresses in the hanging, the journey travels into modern times, with the Millennium Dome, Bluewater shopping complex and other Kentish sights such as the hop gardens.

The wall hanging will be exhibited until July 29 at the Canterbury Environment Centre, St Alphege Lane.

After that, it will be on short-term loan to libraries.

July 20 2000



PLAYGROUP FAREWELL: Leader Ettie Webb with her gifts 27/9325E/00

Fitting finale for popular Ettie

THERE was a champagne farewell for a playgroup leader who is leaving after 36 years in the job.

Ettie Webb, 79, officially retired from Bridge Playgroup and children from the group joined parents of past pupils to help her celebrate.

Mrs Webb received flowers, champagne and some commemorative Millennium china to thank her for all her work.

Chairman of the playgroup Madeline Edwards said Mrs Webb was an amazing woman.

"She has done so much for the playgroup over the years and it's lovely to be able to celebrate that in this way.

"She really has been amazing and we will miss working with her. But she certainly deserves a good retirement."

Mrs Webb started as a leader of Kingston playgroup before taking over in Bridge and has looked after hundreds of children over the years.

She said: "I shall really miss the children but now is the right time to go.

"I don't really know what I'll do now - I might take up swimming and I hope to travel to the Lake District with my husband. I'll still keep in

July 27 2000

KG

Nowhere safe?

READING a letter from a gentleman who was recently struck by a cyclist, I recently saw an elderly lady almost knocked down by a group of young cyclists in the Cathedral precincts so it seems nowhere is safe from fast aggressive cyclists.

One would have thought the precincts might be a haven from the problems of modern life but even the Cathedral cannot offer sanctuary from louts!

Maybe it should consider a ban on cycling and enforce it so people may appreciate the fine place without such anti-social modern behaviour?

P. R. Robinson, Bridge, (cyclist for 30 years).

4 August 10, 2000

From school to lifetime together

A COUPLE who grew up together and attended the same village school have celebrated their diamond wedding.

Gladys and Tom Arter married at St Peter's Church, Bridge, on July 27, 1940.

They had both attended Barham school and then went on to the Simon Langton Schools in

Canterbury.

The Queen sent a congratulatory card for their 60th anniversary, and Mr and Mrs Arter held a family celebration at the retirement home in the Canterbury area in which they now live.

The couple have four children, eight grandchildren and three great-grandchildren.

Mrs Arter trained as a teacher at Goldsmith's College in London and worked for several years before she married. Mr Arter joined his family firm, Arter Bros

Both have been involved in community activities.

Mrs Arter was president of the Kingston with Barham Women's Institute. Her husband was on the parish

council and was active in the Barham and District Motor Cycle Club.

He raced motorbikes successfully during the 1930s, and went on to sponsor other road racers.

Their daughter Judy said they had a wonderful day. "The family celebration was lovely. They are both now quietly enjoying their retirement years," she said.



DIAMOND LIFE: Gladys and Tom Arter on their 60th wedding anniversary, complete with greeting card from the Queen

Thousands of pounds damage in ram-raid

by Claire Witherden

A VILLAGE store re-opened only hours after a ram-raid caused damage estimated at £10,000 because the owner did not want to let down his customers.

A car repeatedly rammed the front wall of Bridgeway Stores, Bridge, in the early hours of Friday as owner Ranjit Dhaliwal watched from an upstairs window.

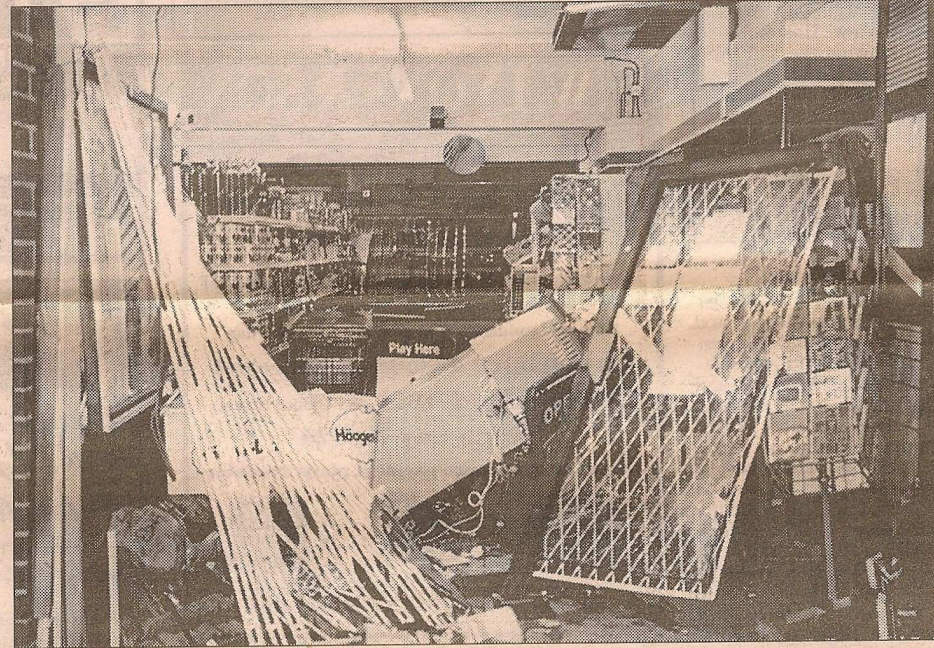
He and volunteers from the village spent the morning clearing up and the mini-market re-opened at 11am.

The shop front was rebuilt the same day.

Mr Dhaliwal said: "It was a complete mess but there are many elderly people who need their bread and milk and other necessities, and find it difficult to travel. We provide a service for them comparable to super-market prices.

"We had to wait until the scenes of crimes officer had been out at 8am, otherwise we could have been clearing up beforehand.

"A lot of people were kind enough to offer their help. About 10 or 15 people came by.



SMASHED-IN: The front of Bridgeway Store, Bridge, was rebuilt on the day of the ram-raid

In particular, I must thank Laurence Dunderdale, who works for Canterbury council's refuse department. He was clearing up from 7am while I was making phone calls."

The raiders were targeting an ATM cash machine but were disturbed before they could take anything.

Mr Dhaliwal has been a special constable with Canterbury police for six years and lives above the shop. He was watching a film when he heard a screech of brakes at 1am.

He added: "I could see a blue Ford Transit van ramming into the shop. I started shouting at them: 'You stop that!'

"The alarms were going off and I also pressed the panic button next to my bed."

Four men were in the van but they then got into a grey Ford Sierra in Western Avenue.

Mr Dhaliwal said: "They were swerving all over the road and I

Police say the Sierra was abandoned in Bridge Hill towards Barham with the engine still running. The men are thought to have transferred to another vehicle.

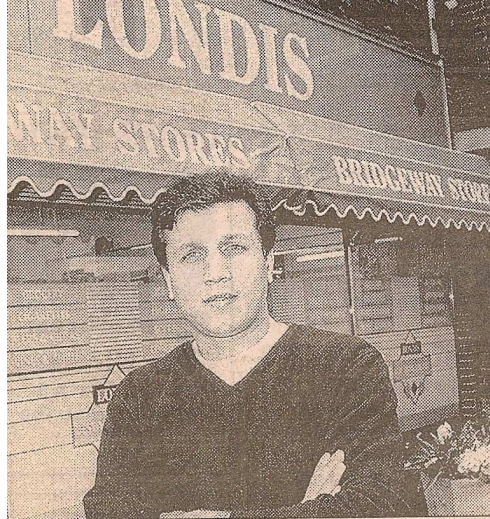
The shop has been targeted by ram raiders before, four years ago. Mr Dhaliwal is considering putting up shutters.

He said: "My wife and I were on holiday but my father was here and he came down and fought with the intruders.

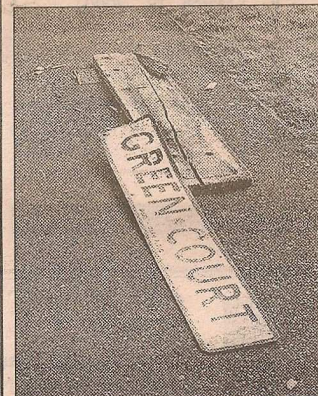
"I'm ready for them any time. These people think they can get away with it but we'll just put up more barriers and shutters to stop them."

He has dropped plans for exterior shutters because planning permission will not be decided for six weeks, and instead will put them up on the inside.

"We're talking about £10,000 or £15,000 of damage to this shop," he said, "but if we had shutters I think they would



RANJIT DHALIWAL: He shouted, 'You stop that!' at the raiders 11/7681W/00



CRIME SIGN: This was

Fascinated by lands of ice and snow

THE inhospitable wastes of the Arctic are a far cry from leafy East Kent, even in the middle of winter.

But for the last five years Ann Shirley's imagination has been firmly fixed away from her home village and on the treacherous land of ice and snow as she has researched and written her latest book.

The Search for the North West Passage, published by Chatham Publishing, is the Bridge grandmother's fourth

by **Amanda McDine**

book, written under her maiden name, Ann Savours.

It describes the adventures and ordeals of all the early explorers who took their lives in their hands when they headed into the Arctic in search of the North West Passage, the sea route linking the North Atlantic Ocean with the North Pacific Ocean.

Spanning 300 years, the stories are brought alive with

poignant and descriptive extracts from the adventurers' letters and journals.

Mrs Shirley is one of Britain's leading experts on polar exploration and history.

Her passion for the subject dates back to the days when she worked as an assistant librarian at the Scott Polar Research Institute during the 1950s and 1960s.

She also worked at the National Maritime Museum in Greenwich for 17 years.

She said: "A lot of people get hooked on polar history because it is such an interesting subject.

"You never stop learning. It was such a different world."

She also enjoys discovering, through archive material, something of the personalities of the explorers, the boats and ships they used, and the clothes and food on which they depended.

Mrs Shirley is now busy researching a book on the British sloop *HMS Chanticleer*, which embarked on a voyage in the 1830s to measure the shape of the earth.

She said: "That was another adventure. At one time the crew was so short of rations that they had to kill a great number of penguins just to survive."

The Search for the North West Passage is available through Chatham Publishing, 61 Frith Street, London W1V 5TA, price £25.

ANN SHIRLEY: A leading expert on polar exploration and history

15/6868E/00



New vicar who lived next door

WHEN the Rev Paul Filmer starts work in Bridge at the beginning of next month, he won't have had far to come.

For the new vicar of Bridge, Patricxbourne, Bekesbourne, Lower Hardres and Nackington is at present curate of the neighbouring Stone Street benefice.

Mr Filmer will be licensed by the Bishop of Dover, the Rt Rev Stephen Venner, during a service at Bridge Church on Sunday.

He is looking forward to his new job.

He said: "It is a nice compromise between staying in the same place and moving somewhere completely different."

In fact two of his old parishes, Lower Hardres and Nackington, are moving with him following restructuring of the Stone Street benefice.

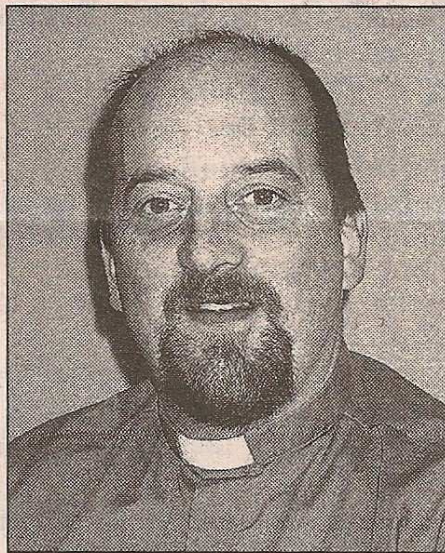
Before he applied for theological college Mr Filmer was a senior training officer at GEC Avionics in Rochester.

After two years at theological college in London he became curate for the Stone Street group of parishes, where he has worked for the past three years.

Once he, his wife Judy, and their four daughters, Sam, Vicky, Amy and Kate, have settled in at The Vicarage in Bridge, Mr Filmer is planning to focus on two sections of the community - children and men.

Running breakfast clubs for men, Sunday schools and mid-week clubs for children, plus working with Bridge

by Amanda McDine



PAUL FILMER: Looking forward to his job

Primary to strengthen links between the church and the school are all things he is hoping to do.

He will be sad to leave Stone Street, where he and his family have spent three happy years. "But I am really looking forward to coming to Bridge," he said.

"I want to make sure that the church incorporates the whole population. I also want to be accessible and be a catalyst to make things happen.

"But my main priority is the bigger picture. It is a rural benefice and although each church has its own individual character I want them to complement each other."

The Rev David Houston is to be the new Priest in Charge of the Stone Street benefice.

He will be licensed at All Saints Church, Petham, on Monday, June 12, at 7.30pm.

Service to celebrate life of a theologian



RELIGIOUS LIFE: A portrait of Richard Hooker

by Malcolm Mitchell

FLESH was put onto the bones of a theologian who died 400 years ago, at a church service on Friday.

The service, at St Mary the Virgin Church, Bishopsbourne, was held to commemorate the 400th anniversary of the death of Richard Hooker, who is regarded worldwide as the principal architect of the Anglican Church.

It drew an international congregation, including delegates to Saturday's Hooker symposium at the Cathedral's Education Centre, as well as the Bishop of Canterbury, the Rt Rev Stephen Venner, and the Archdeacon of Canterbury, the Ven John Pritchard.

In his introduction to the service, Canon Alan Duke, who, like Hooker, is a former Rector of Bishopsbourne, said they were gathered to remember a man of great courage.

While in Bishopsbourne, Hooker wrote *The Laws of Ecclesiastical Polity*, which were to have such a dramatic effect on the church throughout the world.

Humble beginnings

Hooker's biographer, American scholar Dr Philip Secor, dressed in 16th century clothes to represent Hooker and spoke as though the priest himself was returning to preach from the very pulpit for which he had left £9 in his will to have built.

He told how he had risen from humble beginnings in Exeter, eventually becoming master of the Great Temple Bar Church in London, which he described as a dangerous, political place.

It was, he said, a relief to come to Bishopsbourne in 1595.

He had married Jane, the 17-year-old daughter of wealthy London businessman John Churchman, in 1588.

They had four daughters and, said Dr Secor, Hooker wrote much of his best work



CLERGYMAN: The statue of Richard Hooker that stands in Bishopsbourne Church
12/5856E/00

after his arrival, seven years after the marriage, in Bishopsbourne.

Dr Secor said Hooker was the closest thing the Anglican Church had to offer to Wesley, Luther and Calvin.

He grew more important after his death.

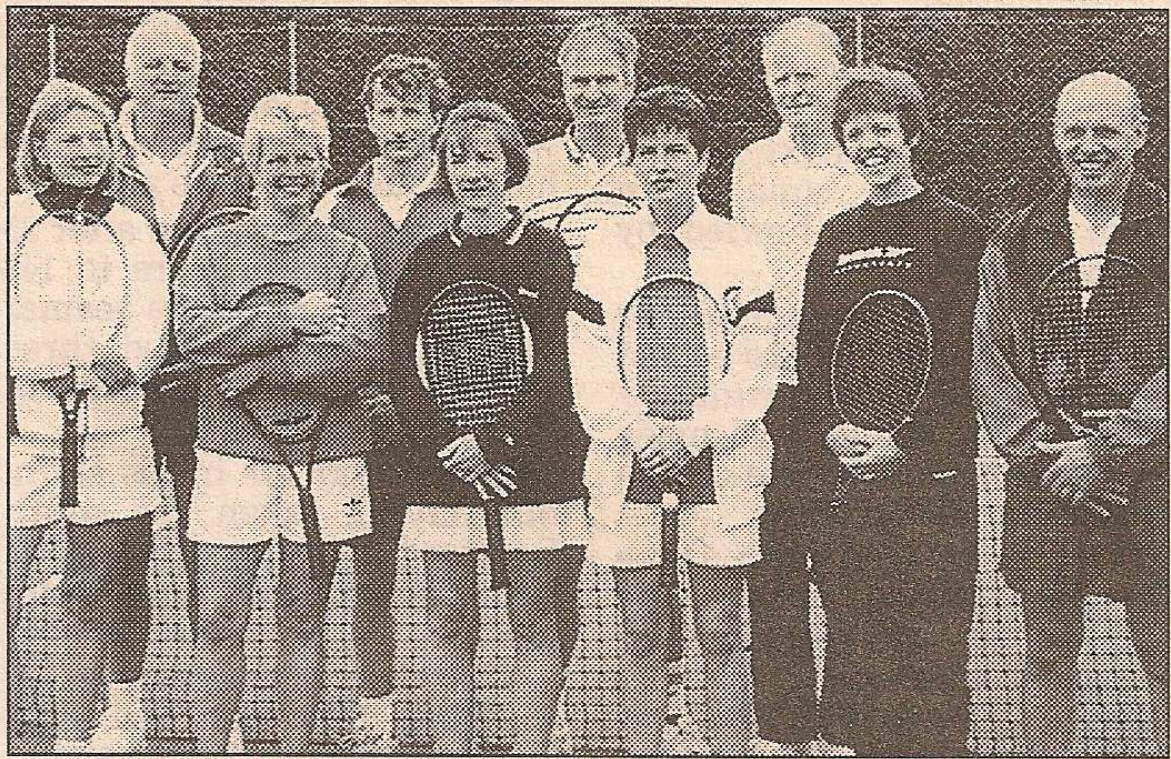
The Pope at the time said he was one of the wisest men who had ever lived and King James I had both his sons tutored in

Hooker's writings.

After Hooker's death, his widow married Edward Nethersole, who was to become Mayor of Canterbury.

Dr Secor is soon to publish a book of Hooker's sermons.

Earlier in the service, lessons had been read by Malcolm Mitchell and Mary Ambrose and at the end, the blessing was given by Bishop Venner.



BRIDGE FINALISTS: From left, Karen Furley, John Gilbey, Katharine Hewson, Kit Renwick, Dorothy Lloyd-Hughes, Andrew Rice, Ann Jones, Barry Gore, Penny Morgan, John Morgan

Double success for Ann in finals

ANN JONES and Kit Renwick were the busiest competitors at Bridge Tennis Club's finals day.

Jones won the ladies' doubles final with Karen Furley, beating Dorothy Lloyd-Hughes and Katharine Hewson 6-3, 6-3, and the mixed doubles with Renwick in a 6-4, 6-3 defeat of Penny Morgan and John Gilbey.

Renwick also reached the men's singles final, where he lost 6-3, 6-4 to Andrew Rice, and, with Barry Gore, the men's doubles, only to lose 6-2, 1-6, 7-5 to John Morgan and John Gilbey in the most closely contested match of the day.

■ THERE was a comprehensive 4-0 victory for Canterbury Tennis Club's mixed C team against St

Margaret's Bay in the Dover League at Polo Farm.

They won 48 games to the visitors' 18, with Bridget Foster and Andy Tait winning 6-0, 6-2, and 6-4, 6-2, while Sarah Forbes and Charles Harper won 6-4, 6-3, and 6-1, 6-2.

■ IT TOOK nearly four hours in windy conditions for Bromley Tennis Club's ladies third team to defeat Canterbury 3rd by three rubbers to one at Polo Farm on Saturday.

Angela Drane and Penny Morgan overcame the opposition's second pair 6-2, 1-6, 7-5, but lost in three sets to the first pair 4-6, 6-4, 2-6. Ati Collard and Francois Duprey lost both their rubbers, 3-6, 1-6, and 4-6, 3-6.

CLUBS ROUND-UP



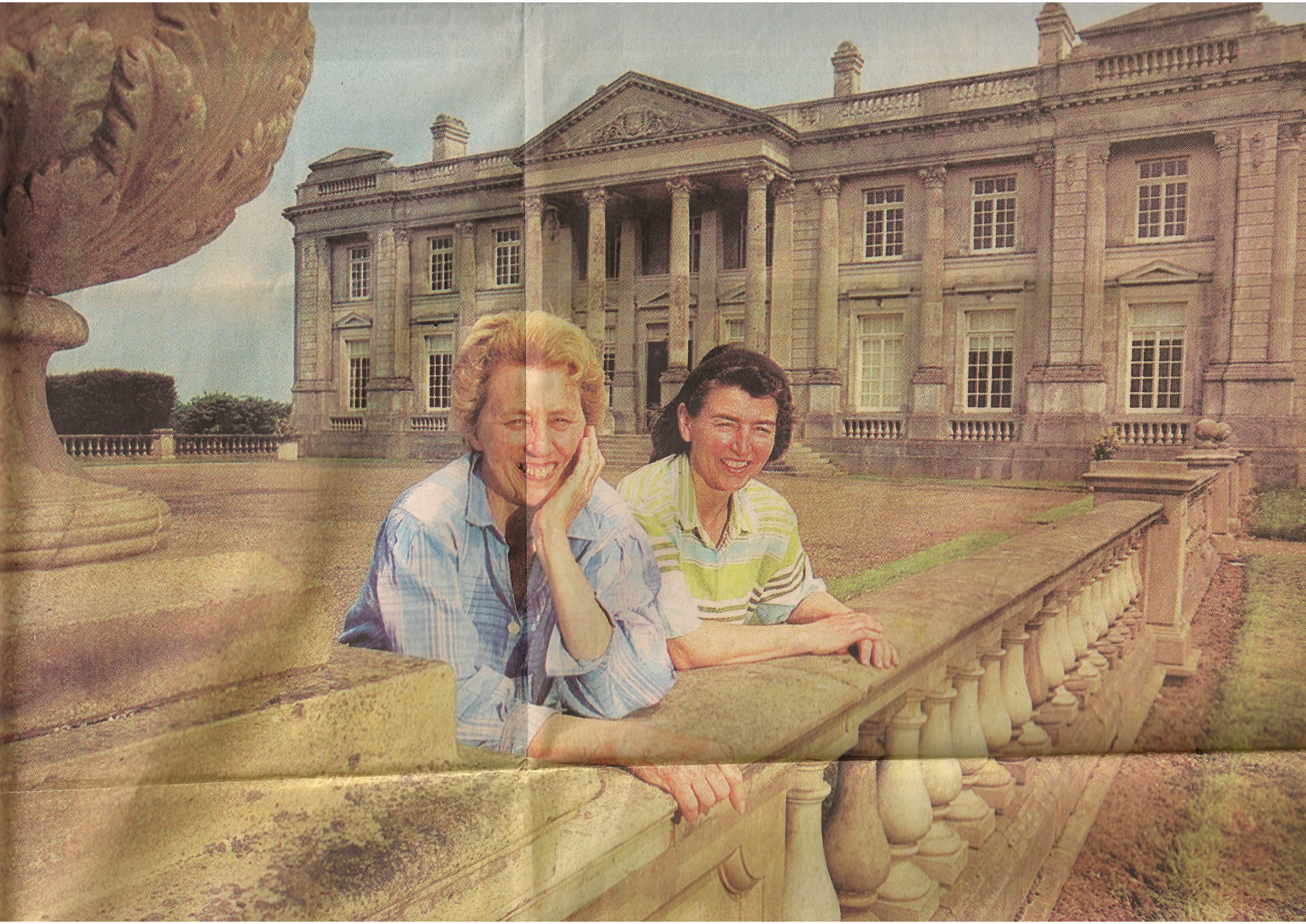
Smiles for Joan

SMILES all round as Joan Hill (left) takes over from Jean Talbot as president of the Inner Wheel Club of Canterbury.

Mrs Hill, of Renville Oast, Bridge, has chosen MIND as her charity.

She has been an Inner Wheel member for about 10 years and has served as a committee member.

She chose MIND to benefit from fund-raising because it is a "Cinderella charity".



Women behaving madly

Amanda Harris-Deans and Patricia Gibb have spent all their money on a dilapidated mansion. Five years on, they have stretched their budget by restoring it themselves. *Sarah Lonsdale* pays them a visit



Patricia Gibb was given a scaffolding tower for her birthday. "I was over the moon — just what I wanted," says the 59-year-old grandmother. "We were using tooth picks to remove old paint from the plaster mouldings on the ceiling and the tower really saved my neck from cricking. Perhaps a Jaeger suit would have been more appropriate for someone my age, but the tower was so much more useful."

Five years ago Patricia and her 49-year-old friend, Amanda Harris-Deans, were living a life of genteel semi-retirement. Both owned their own homes — Patricia in a village just outside Canterbury, Amanda in the town itself — and both were more than comfortably off, breeding horses as a

hobby, but otherwise whiling days as ladies of leisure. Aside from changing the odd lightbulb and the occasional window frame, they knew the first thing about

Then, in 1995, they did something their friends considered completely mad. With Patricia's son, Barry, they sold their homes and bought Highgate House, an 87-room stately home outside Canterbury, for just under £1 million. The house, a former residence of Countess Margaret Zborovska (née Astor) and her son, Count Louis, had been created the original *Chitty Chitty Bang* motor car there, had been there for years.

"We were living nearby and we saw this enormous 'For Sale'

Continued

board up outside. We had a look round and thought, 'Someone's got a job on their hands,' says Amanda. "There was gloss paint hanging off the ceiling like stalagmites and black mould all over the plasterwork. The roof was full of holes, the walls in the upstairs rooms were dripping wet, there were starlings nesting inside, bees' nests in the chimneys, and the gardens were choked with head-high ragwort."

After a second viewing, whether out of madness, inspiration or both, they decided to put in an offer based on what they could raise from selling their own houses.

"At the time, we had horses and needed somewhere with some land — Higham has 25 acres," says Patricia who is "amicably separated" from her husband and was looking forward to a quiet retirement in her brand-new, no-maintenance, four-bedroom house.

As things turned out, however, the horses stand idly in the paddocks and have not been ridden since the doughty ladies moved into their new

she had to shimmy down a narrow 18th-century chimney breast. "The opening was too narrow for either Patricia or Barry so they held on to my hands and dropped me down the 10ft hole. They then fed the cables down to me. I emerged later rather dusty and cobwebby but otherwise none the worse for wear."

The only frightening experience they have had was during a gale, shortly after they bought the house. The front doors blew open, starting a chain reaction that set all the other windows banging and clattering.

Amanda was in the music-room, wrestling with the heavy, mahogany window casement when a strong gust blasted the window open, taking her out with it and leaving her suspended 10ft above a mass of brambles, battered by the wind. Patricia had to lean out and wrestle her friend back in again.

Higham Park has been the site of a grand home since 1320. The present building dates from 1768, with a later front addition built in about 1805. The ground-floor rooms have 15ft ceilings and are

very lucky in getting help — local farmers have lent us tractors and machinery and lots of people drop off plants for the garden," says Amanda.

"The estate once employed people from all the local villages and then, after the war, it was a maternity hospital, so many local people were born here or else worked as nurses. There is a great deal of affection for the place."

Count Louis Zborowski had been a particularly generous lord of the manor and, in 1920, gave the nearby village of Bridge a fire engine that did 65mph, an astonishing speed for the time. When he died, four years later, in the Italian Grand Prix he left the princely sum of £2,000 to each of his nine gardeners.

Today, there is only Amanda and Patricia and a part-time gardener to look after the grounds. "Before I moved in here the most gardening I had done was to buy a rose bush from Woolworths," says Amanda.

As with the house, however, their expertise grew organically, bringing more rewards. Underneath the scrub, self-seeded trees and weeds, they discovered an exquisite Italianate water garden, designed by the Edwardian landscape artist Harold Peto, which they have now restored.

"Sometimes it's like Christmas coming every day," says Amanda. "You can strip off two inches of concrete and find a floor in Portland stone underneath, or hack back a 1950s fireplace surround to find an original Adam fireplace. It's what everybody dreams of doing."

"Sometimes we do still get daunted by what we have taken on. Under normal circumstances, I should probably be thinking about retiring to a bungalow in the next few years, but having such a lovely big place to live in has really spoilt me."

They have all but finished restoring the ground floor. The two upper floors, however, with 40 bedrooms and bathrooms, have yet to be touched. Here, the rooms are still painted revolting hospital greens and yellows; the plaster is crumbling and wallpaper hangs in sheets from the walls.

"We are waiting on a grant from Canterbury city council to help us restore the roof. Despite our patching work it needs to be completely redone and we can't afford to do it ourselves," says Patricia. "There's no point in tackling the upstairs rooms while the roof is still leaky."

Fortunately, the house was built to the highest possible specifications and, despite the damp and neglect, the floorboards are sound, the mahogany window frames solid and the plaster mouldings intact, which makes Patricia and Amanda's job only difficult, not impossible.

As Patricia says: "It's a lot more fun than slipping into gentle retirement."

● Higham Park and its gardens are open through summer, Sunday to Thursday, to help pay for further restoration work. Telephone 01227 830830 for more information.

'Before I moved in to Higham Park the most gardening I had done was to buy a rose bush from Woolworths'



mansion in October 1995. Instead, the two of them have spent their time stripping and painting walls and ceilings, rewiring, mending windows, laying dry-stone walls and even patching up holes in the 200-year-old roof. "We're just normal people on a budget so we have had to do a lot of the restoration work ourselves," says Patricia. "We watch DIY and gardening programmes on television and then copy the techniques we've seen."

They have engaged a stonemason to help them restore the creamy Portland stone in the entrance hall and up the staircase, and a specialist plasterer to advise them on the more intricate mouldings in the music and dining-rooms.

In general, however, they have tried much of the work themselves. In part, this has been to save money — they estimate that, to date, they have saved almost £500,000 in labour costs.

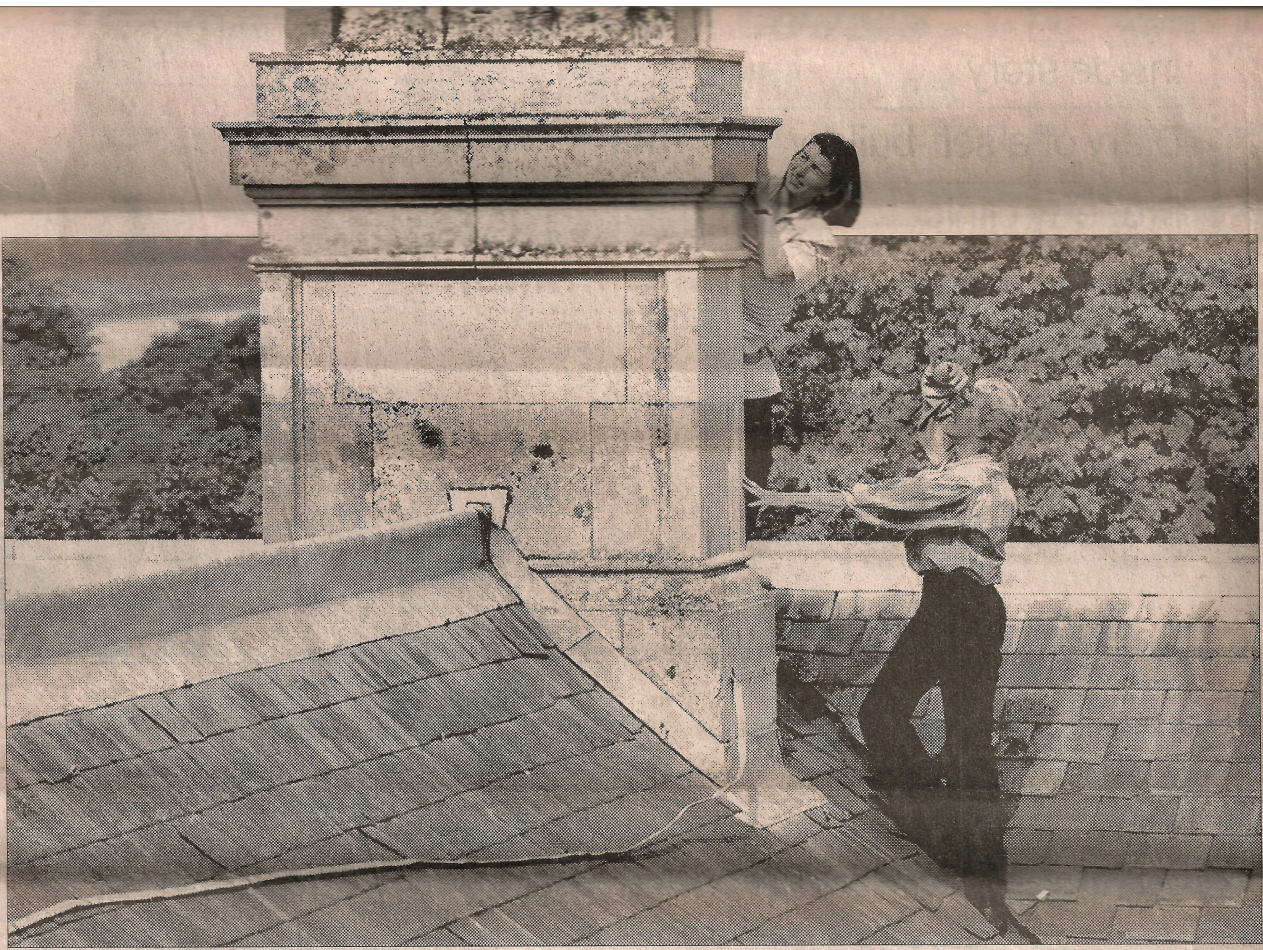
Mostly, though, they enjoy rolling up their sleeves and getting their hands dirty. Amanda is particularly proud of her efforts rewiring the mansion's ground floor, which meant

enormous; the music-room is 55ft long, the dining-room 35ft. The two cheery women bounce around, chattering about finding priest holes and secret rooms and priceless dark green scagliola marble columns, worth several thousand pounds each, under sickly yellow gloss paint in the entrance hall.

"We were in shock when we first moved in," says Patricia. "We were living in the old coach house while we were working on making the ground floor habitable. It had been home to dozens of feral cats and stank to high heaven. Our first winter's heating bill came to £8,000 and during that time five radiators burst on us."

"When we got new keys made for the walk-in silver safe, each one of a set of four cost us £124, and when we first lit the fire in the dining-room, we set fire to a bees' nest and, for the next four hours, burnt honey came exploding down the chimney."

There are two cottages on the estate which are being rented out to tenants to help pay for the upkeep of the house, as Patricia and Amanda have spent every spare penny on doing the place up. "We have been



Hitting the roof: clockwise, Amanda and Patricia at work on the chimney; in the enormous dining-room; Amanda fixing stable doors; and the Edwardian Italianate garden discovered beneath scrub and weeds

