

THE DAY THE NAZIS CAME TO GLOUCESTERSHIRE

John Moore



I think it is a particularly appropriate moment to print this tale of the Nazis in Gloucestershire. Very many countries (our own included) are bedevilled by a recrudescence of Nazism, Fascism, Racism, Militarism and all the cruelties that go with these hateful ideologies. I read that the disgusting Jean Marie Le Pen of the National Front in France is becoming powerful because of the division between the other parties, likewise the insufferable Terre Blanche in South Africa, and even the name of Mussolini is being revered once more in Italy.

John and I had fun in the 'Farmer's Arms' in 1962, and we drank to the health of the gallant locals of Guiting Power, but don't let us forget to be on our guard in this country. It is easy to say "It couldn't happen here", but ...

Lucille Bell

This weekend¹ in the Farmer's Arms at Guiting Power on the Cotswolds they'll be remembering how the Nazis came to Gloucestershire, five years ago, and how they were sent packing. Various reports of the little comedy appeared in the press; I don't think the whole story has yet been told.

It was on Sunday evening, 5 August 1962, that the BBC's television news showed a picture of a swastika flag flying over a camp on the Cotswolds. Anybody who knew our people could have told you that it wouldn't be allowed to fly there much longer. I anticipated that the villagers would have it down next day as part of their Bank Holiday jollifications; but we measured a record 3½ inches of rain on the Monday and all outdoor sports were naturally cancelled. Disappointed cricketers drank beer in the pub and cheered themselves with recollections of the discomforts of camping in wet weather. There was a move about two o'clock in the afternoon to borrow a bull and let it loose among the Nazis; but the owner of the bull was having a day's racing and although his wife gladly offered it in a good cause, people thought it would be rather a big responsibility to put upon her in case it should actually kill one of the Nazis. So the village brooded darkly till next day.

Meanwhile a number of reporters, press photographers and holiday-makers had visited the camp. Its main entrance was guarded by youths carrying cudgels. Colin Jordan was seen wearing a pseudo-military uniform with a swastika armband; being asked what it was, he said it was "political dress". A jackbooted young Nazi more talkative than his fellows explained that his Party was trying to prevent Britain being taken over by coloured people.



1. An alleged 'Nazi Storm-trooper' (Gloucestershire Echo)



2. Colin Jordan & John Tyndall² (Gloucestershire Echo)

¹ John Moore wrote this article in 1967 and it was reprinted by kind permission of Mrs. Lucille Bell, his widow and founder member of THS. It is reprinted as John Moore wrote it. [Editor]

² Colin Jordan (1923-2009) represented the most explicitly 'Nazi' inclination in his open use of the styles and symbols of the Third Reich. John Tyndall (1934-2005) went on to found the British National Party (BNP) in 1982.

Nobody was allowed into the camp and nobody tried to force an entrance. However, an airgun went off and a woman photographer, Miss Ann Ward, was hit in the stomach by the pellet. She wasn't badly hurt, but was taken to hospital. The police arrived.



3. Gloucestershire Echo headline

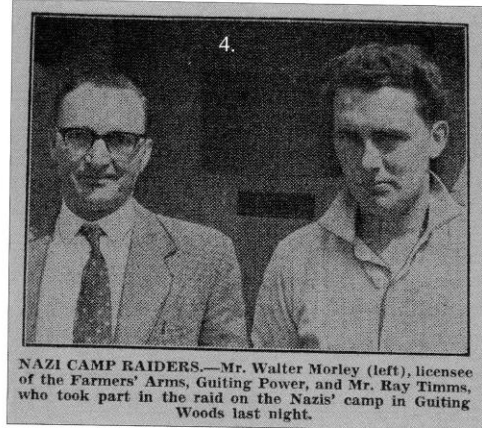
They were searching, that weekend, for an illegal immigrant, the American Nazi George Lincoln Rockwell, who had entered Britain secretly via Shannon. He was not at this camp, however, and Colin Jordan protested that the shooting of Miss Ward had been an accident. The police went back to Cirencester, and shortly afterwards Colin Jordan left the camp in a Jaguar sports car. A member of his bodyguard said to one of the photographers, "Get out of the way, you dirty lowdown Jew". The crowd, in Bank Holiday mood despite the rain, took all this good-humouredly.

Next day the weather cleared up and the villagers of Guiting Power proceeded to carry out their duty, as they saw it, of ridding the neighbourhood of an offence against decency. They had learned from the farmer who'd given permission for the Nazis' camp on his land that they had not declared themselves when they went to see him, but had simply said they belonged to 'a youth organisation'. The villagers therefore felt free to kick them out. At 6.15pm a scouting party of five went up to the camp, which was in a place gruesomely called 'Deadman Bury Hollow'. The leader of the party was Mr. Morley, the landlord of the local. They found the Nazis cooking their supper. One of the raiders carried a twelve-bore shotgun with which he shot the swastika out of the flag which was flying over the camp. (When interviewed by the press later he swore blind that he'd mistaken it for a squirrel.) The gun was put away, however, and, during the events which followed, all the villagers were unarmed.

They first explained quietly to the Nazis that their presence was distasteful and they must leave at once. When the Nazis refused the villagers did what was necessary with a minimum of force. The original five were joined by scores more: practically the whole population, I should think, of Guiting Power, with contingents from the hamlets round about. The Nazis weren't very brave, and the affray became a series of scuffles rather than a fight. Nobody was hurt; but the villagers

completely demolished the camp, cut down the tents, and took charge of the filthy emblem, which they had already shot to bits.

The frightened Nazis were then taken care of by the police, who with great tact appeared out of nowhere at just the right moment and politely regretted what they called the fracas. The villagers went back to the Farmer's Arms in time for a few pints before closing.



4. NAZI CAMP RAIDERS.—Mr. Walter Morley (left), licensee of the Farmers' Arms, Guiting Power, and Mr. Ray Timms, who took part in the raid on the Nazis' camp in Guiting Woods last night.

Now I suppose it could be argued, by legalistic persons, that all this was very wrong and undemocratic; the Queen's peace should never be broken, democracy is founded on tolerance, the law should be the sole safeguard of our liberties, and so on. But speaking as a Gloucestershire man I should be very shocked if the villagers of Guiting Power had not done what they did. After all, we blame the Germans for failing to 'nip Hitler in the bud': for not having the sense to see through the detestable doctrine of the Nazis nor the guts to act against them before it was too late. Alternatively, we seek to exculpate the 'decent Germans' on the grounds that the horrors of Hitlerism crept upon them unbeknownst and before they knew where they were, they were powerless to act against the tyranny.

"How do we know how we'd have behaved if the same kind of thing had happened over here?"

Because of what happened on 5 August 1962, now we **do** know. We **did** 'nip it in the bud'. You won't hear of any more swastikas flying over Gloucestershire; nor will you see the remains of the only one which ever did so hung up as a trophy in the Farmer's Arms. You might have expected it to be there, and there was some debate about whether to keep it; but the villagers decided that it was too dirty a thing; you couldn't display it as a trophy or a prize because of its dark and horrible association. I understand they burned it; at any rate

it disappeared. And on this little anniversary, five years after, I can't help being proud of my native Gloucestershire for that.

The Wider Importance of the Incident [Editor]

In order to reprint the article, the copies of the *Gloucestershire Echo* needed to be tracked down. The hard copies are kept in the County Archives and we appreciate both the Editor of the *Echo* and Gloucestershire Archives for permitting us to photograph and use the articles.

In pursuing this, it was evident that the *Echo* gave full coverage in both news and comment columns and indeed the local incident took place in the context of national worries concerning the resurgence of Nazism.

Threats were made against the landlord, Walter Morley, which we hope were empty. Several letters were written to the *Echo*, none siding with the campers.

Editorials were not written daily in this era but, on 10 August, the Editor joined in the debate under the heading of 'Riff-Raff'. He was concerned about the wider debate about banning such manifestations. We must remember that 1962 was at the height of the Cold War. He was opposed to this legislation because "this kind of clamour comes loudest from the Communists". His conclusion was that "we can trust the people to keep their sanity... and to take care of potential troublemakers as the people of Guiting so firmly and sensibly did this week".

The campers were forced to leave by the attack – some went to Winchcombe whilst others stayed at the Fleece Hotel, Cheltenham before catching the train the next day.

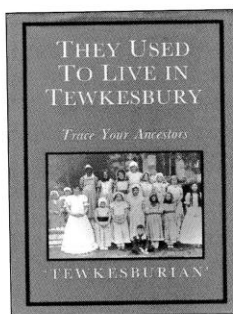
According to Wikipedia, the Guiting Power meeting resulted in the formation of the World Union of National Socialists which Jordan was the commander of its European section throughout the 1960s, and at which he was elected "World Führer" with George Lincoln Rockwell, founder of the American Nazi Party, as his deputy. There had already taken place in July demonstrations in Trafalgar Square which ended in a riot so it was no surprise that Jordan was prosecuted. On 16 August, Jordan, Tyndall and several others were charged under the Public Order Act 1936 with attempts to set up a paramilitary force called 'Spearhead', based on the SA [Brownshirts] of Nazi Germany. Undercover police had observed Jordan leading the group in military manoeuvres. Jordan was sentenced to nine months imprisonment. Upon release, he married the fiancée of Tyndall, who was still in prison, and – not surprisingly – the movement lost momentum.



5. "At the rear entrance of a Cheltenham hotel the Nazis board a truck to leave the town after their eventful camp in Guiting Wood."

Gloucestershire
Echo

THEY USED TO LIVE IN TEWKESBURY



Written by a member of the Society [Miss Norah Day], this book was intended partly to aid genealogists, and partly to put living flesh on the dry bones of history. We are all familiar with the history text book; full of facts, dates, notable events and public figures. Too often the ordinary citizen of the time is ignored.

'Tewkesburian's' book is an attempt to correct this in some small measure for our town. Part one deals first with the author's family history, but also mentions men who fought in the Civil War, the fight of the people of Bushley in 1624 to retain ferry payments in goods at Upper Lode and a fascinating list of fines, imposed by the Borough Council in 1698, as well as many other interesting topics.

Part two is intended to help those who wish to research their own family histories, and it contains much useful information

Older members, as well as anyone who has an interest in snippets of information about the town, will find much to intrigue and fascinate in this well-produced and well-written book. [1992 Editor]

[Copies of this book are still available for purchase from the President. The Society regrets that Miss Day, a Life Member, can no longer write articles for the Society as she is living in a care home locally. Editor]