from the beginnings has most successfully provided guided tours both in Britain and abroad. There have been tours to America, China and the Middle East, as well as many shorter tours to all parts of Europe. Originally developed as a separate venture, the travel section has recently been incorporated in the central organisation. There is great scope for interchange at home and abroad and as recently new societies have been formed in Germany, Brussels and Australia, one envisages an ever widening area of travel.

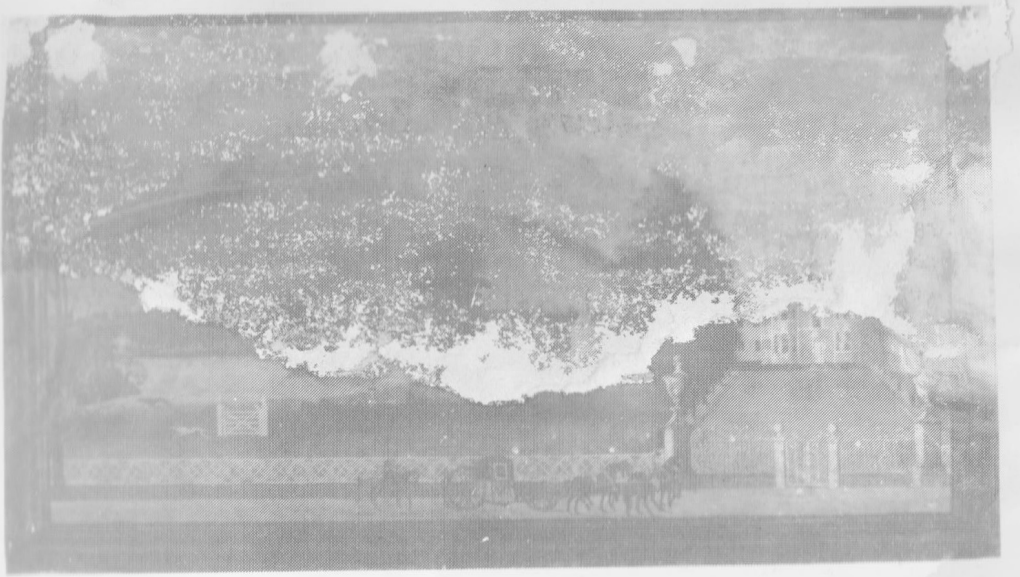
All voluntary bodies are uncertain of their futures but since NADFAS has shown how much can be done by individual effort it looks as if provided they can continue to find people willing to make these efforts, it will continue to flourish. However, it is also needful to think out new educational ideas and new voluntary work in the arts. It might seem that there is room in future for co-operation in teaching the relationships between the arts. Music and Theatre must appear in relation to painting and Architecture. On the voluntary contribution side, we should determine to act more closely with the conservation bodies. Finally NADFAS also has it in mind to give active support to contemporary artists and craftsmen. But as is often said by our members — particularly by the senior citizens, "after all we go to meetings and outings to enjoy ourselves — and what can be wrong with that?"

An Odd Turn of Events

by Karen Milner who is married to John Milner Pro-Vice Chancellor and Deputy Head of the Physics Department

I described the lives of Thomas and Ann Milner of Liverpool in the last issue of this magazine. I used Ann's own words which I had obtained from family documents and I thought that if readers were interested, I would produce another chapter from John Milner's family history in about a year's time. However, circumstances have run away with me and Tightrope Milner, his sister and his niece insist on revealing themselves now.

In 1985, Cheshire County Council carried out a re-survey of listed buildings and one of the surveyors, Richard Turner, was shown part of a mural painted onto the plaster of an upstairs room in a farmhouse called Hall Green in the little village of Acton Bridge. Richard Turner was very interested, particularly when he realised that the whole room, and perhaps the whole of the upstairs part of the house, was covered in paintings which are now hidden by many layers of wallpaper. Brian Cardy, of Manchester Art Gallery, was asked to undertake the conservation of these pictures and this work has to be done with great care as the old plaster crumbles away as the wallpaper is stripped off. Fortunately, the new owners of Hall Green are fascinated by



'Marbury Hall' the first picture to be uncovered at Hall Green
Photograph Manchester Art Gallery

the past history of their home, and are willing to put up with the undoubted inconvenience that the preservation of these unique murals will entail.

Richard Turner has identified the house in the picture as being Marbury Hall, which was about four miles east of Acton Bridge, and the details of the house, carriage and clothing indicate that this particular painting was made between 1725-45. The great unanswered question is—who painted these pictures, and why were they put on the bedroom walls where few people would see them? The only clues so far, lie in the Milner family tree and in family myths and memories which may have changed with time, but will still hold a germ of truth.

Like Lower Green (the house pictured in the last issue of this magazine) Hall Green was owned by the Milner family, although Hall Green is much older and was clearly gentrified by the same hand that built Lower Green. The first Milner recorded as living at Acton, was Daniel Milner senior, a gentleman of Acton who died on 5th April 1760. He was the eldest son of Daniel Milner, a gentleman of Frodsham, which is about four miles away. This Daniel Milner was the eldest son of John Milner, who was the third son of another John Milner of Frodsham, who was himself a third son. It would seem that Frodsham was overstocked with Milners, and this was why Daniel Milner bought Hall Green House in the 1690s. The house was

possibly a wedding present, for Daniel senior's eldest son was born in 1698 and died, aged 81 in 1779. This eldest son was known as "Tightrope" Milner — no one knows why; he never married, and eventually his brother Nathaniel took over Hall Green. However, family tradition is quite emphatic that it was bachelor Daniel Tightrope who kept a woman locked away upstairs in Hall Green, and she clearly holds the answer to the riddle of the paintings.

Tightrope and Nathaniel were the eldest boys in a family of six, the eldest girl was called Mary and she married Peter Clare of Burley Heys at Appleton (a short distance away from Acton). Peter Clare was well known as an amateur clock-maker and is recorded as being famous "throughout the County and beyond"; but the Milners regarded him somewhat sourly as being clever but eccentric, and Mary's marriage to him was not a success. When their daughter Katherine was born, Mary had left Burley Heys and was living very close to Acton at Weaverham. She and her daughter then transferred themselves to the upstairs part of Hall Green, although as yet, no-one knows why.

When Katherine Clare (who was Tightrope's niece) married John Milner (who was a nephew, being the son of Tightrope's younger brother Thomas) their uncle gave them the house that he had just built at Lower Green. Their children, the diabolical twins, Thomas of Liverpool and Sarah were born there. It is not yet known where Tightrope himself lived, but a third house in Acton is known to have been owned by Milners and probably restored by Tightrope.

Everyone is keen to get on with the restoration of the pictures, and uncover the ones that are still hidden. We also want to find out who painted them, and why. However, this type of restoration work will be expensive and it will cost at least £4,000 to preserve the paintings at Hall Green. It is very much hoped that readers of this magazine will be able to think of ways of raising this amount of money, and that they will pass on their ideas and suggestions to John Milner of the Physics Department, who numbers all this odd crew among his ancestors.