

VILLAGE MOURNS MAN OF COURAGE

By RON COATES

'He was a brave man who knew the odds'

A VILLAGE near Swindon mourned today as tributes mounted for murdered MP Airey Neave, who was assassinated yesterday.

For the war hero, Shadow Ulster Secretary and close adviser to Mrs Thatcher, was a loved and respected villager in downland Ashbury for most of his political career.

He left recently when his safety in the isolated village became a major security problem. But villagers remember him as the man always with time for local problems.

He was in Ashbury at the height of the IRA terror campaign, and strict security was a way of life for villagers when Mr Neave was at his weekend retreat.

His former gardener, 78-year-old Stan Halliday, said Mr Neave had never been afraid and had accepted the threats on his life.

Ten o'clock prayers for him will be offered at the parish church of St Mary where he frequently read the Lesson.

The village, said the Rev. Derek Burden, was completely stunned and shocked.

"But for four years, he lived with the possibility of violent death," said Mr Burden. "He was a brave man, and knew the odds."



Airey Neave and his wife in 1974 at the time when they lived at Ashbury.

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