

BATTLING THROUGH TO COMBE



THE Painting family of Inkpen—saviours of many small villages on the bleak, hilly Downlands country near Newbury. That's the reputation they have earned because since the snow first fell, 69-years-old Mr. Norman Painting and his three sons have been working up to 20 hours a day to keep open the narrow lanes, which are the lifelines of such small villages as Combe, West Woodhay and Kintbury.

And even though it was 37 days ago that the white blanket first descended, the Paintings, agricultural contractors, have only just managed to conquer some of the 14 foot deep drifts.

Their work earned this praise from Combe resident Mrs. Kathleen Rowland, a nurse at Hungerford Hospital: "But for their giant efforts we would still be cut off and without food supplies. They were wonderful."

Mr. Painting told our reporter that he had never known conditions so bad and he has lived at Inkpen all his life.

"They say 1947 was terrible, but this winter is about twice as bad," he said. "We have been battling against drifts as high as 14 feet in temperatures well below freezing point. Sometimes we have come back from work in the evening really blue in the face."

He added that they had cleared about 50 miles of lanes in the most tortuous conditions. The last place where they fought their way through was Hungerford Hill, and that was only early this week.

Now he is praying there will be no more heavy snowfalls. "Our task may become impossible then," he concluded.

MR. NORMAN PAINTING describes to our reporter how he and his sons had to break through 14 feet high drifts of snow on the Kirby Facombe to Combe road to get through to the village. Even now, the snow is still piled high on either side of the road.