

SEPT 17, 1956.

## Our Village Series

# WHITESHILL

- ★ "Spoot's" Last Fight
- ★ An Unsavory Reputation
- ★ Sports Shop to Vicarage

**W**HITESHILL was formerly famous, almost infamous for the political zeal of its inhabitants, who were almost to a man Conservative or as they would have termed it "Blue".

Chief among the political zealots was the late Mr. Thomas Hogg, a general labourer, who readily answered the name of "Spoot 'Ogg", or just plain "Spoot". Now "Spoot" was totally unconcerned with the intricacies of the Conservative or other party politics; he simply voted "Blue", and, as a good Tory, did his best to see that others voted likewise.

A strong believer in the law of force Mr. Hogg applied it with zeal and at the least pretext on all opponents, for he was in his prime a slogger of the first order. There is no doubt that, if he was not wholly successful in gaining political converts by ungentle methods, he possessed an enviable record for the number of successful assaults he committed during election times.

Many a time during successive stormy elections did "Spoot" and his crony Tom Dalbt, lead the local "Blue" assault columns into action.

### "SPOOTS LAST FIGHT"

It was in the early years of the local political activities of the late M. C. A. Cripps (then

a Unionist candidate and later a Socialist Peer) that a mass demonstration had been arranged at Fromehall Park for the Liberal cause. As a meeting it appears to have been a success, and to have passed off without incident. But some malignant spirit had included in the programme a torchlight procession—an item which could hardly fail to lead to at least some unpleasantness. At the close of the Fromehall Park rally the procession was formed and marched into Stroud, by the Bath Road, headed by a brass band and torch-bearers protected on the flank and rear by a number of redoubtable Liberal fighting men.

Possibly the procession might have been completed without tragedy had not someone in the procession taken a sudden and violent dislike to the face of a bystander, and endeavoured to set that face on fire with a torch. With a screech of pain the victim of this outrage leaped backwards and just at this moment "Spoot", who had been refreshing himself at the "Bell Hotel" at the expense of certain political friends, made his appearance.

Without a second's hesitation the veteran Hogg waded into the crowd, smashing his way through until he stood before the enemy he sought—a tall man younger than himself and a boxer of no mean record.



Fetes are a popular part of the social life of Whiteshill. A church fete was in progress when this photograph of Whiteshill Church was taken last year.

in went "Spoot" trusting as ever to his enormous physical strength, forgetful of his advancing years and the handicap of his recent alcoholic consumption. Smash went both fists at the body of his opponent only to be neatly avoided, while he in turn was hotly assaulted with hefty blows, and a wicked uppercut that stretched him out.

"Spoot" rushed in afresh and fought gamely to the bitter end. All in vain, age and beer were too much for him and finally poor "Spoot" was led from his Waterloo, a broken man. It was his last fight and not long afterwards Mr. Cripps lost the vote of his too zealous supporter by the death of Mr. Hogg.

### UNSAVORY REPUTE

A peaceful enough spot nowadays. Whiteshill was not al-

lead him to Whiteshill Vicarage.

He sold his sports shop and joined the Mission to Seamen. For seven years he was in charge of the Society's Church and Institute at Avonmouth. He returned to Stroud in 1936 as curate at Thrupp.

When the second world war began Mr. Beck was in the Army for the second time, and he became a chaplain of the 1st Battalion of the Monmouthshire Regiment. Mr. Beck saw service before returning home to a Gloucester Church and then to become Vicar of Whiteshill.

### THE POST OFFICE

It was 44 years ago that Mrs. Vines first became associated with Whiteshill Post Office. Her father bought the Post Office in 1919 and it passed to Mrs. Vines in 1927 and she has been in charge ever since.

Whiteshill is well blessed with village organisations. There is

a Women's Institute and a Mothers Union. The fortnightly meetings of the Child Welfare are held in the Institute. The flourishing Youth Club has just celebrated its first anniversary, and there is a strong women's section of the British Legion.

The Whiteshill institute was opened in 1910, in memory of Miss Rose E. Stanton by her sister Miss E. R. Stanton and her brothers. In its early days the Institute was equipped with a billiard table etc, and was very popular as a social entre. It was controlled by the Church and the Vicar paid 2/6 per annum for the right to hold the keys. On Tuesday evenings it was "devoted exclusively to the young women" when cookery classes, Nursing demonstrations and socials were organized.

In the first World War the Institute housed Belgian refugees, and in the second it was used by the Home Guard. Today although no longer connected with the Church, the Institute is used by many of the village organisations.

### IMPROVEMENTS

"What is the biggest improvement which has come to Whiteshill in recent times" we ask, answer—a regular bus service. In "the good old days" the men left home at six o'clock and clattered through the Whiteshill streets in their clogs as they walked to their work which might be as far away as Thrupp or Chalford. Today a double-decker bus climbs the steep hill from Stroud to Whiteshill.

Whiteshill is little known except for its Youth Club, in local sporting circles; but in the days when Mr. H. E. Billett was the headmaster of the school he helped run a flourishing soccer and cricket team. Another feature of the village in earlier days was the Whiteshill Band though perhaps this tradition is kept alive by the Ruscombe and Whiteshill Sea Revellers "Jazz Band"

Compared with some villages, Whiteshill is not a gem of Cotswold architecture; but the village is built on a plain overlooking the Painswick valley on one side and Randwick and Standish woods on the other, so where ever you may go in the village there are really glorious views of the Cotswold countryside.

supporter by the death of Mr. Hogg.

## UNSAVORY REPUTE

A peaceful enough spot now-a-days, Whiteshill was not always so quiet. Fisher in his "Notes and Recollections of Stroud" described Whiteshill as being of unsavoury moral and social repute. The inhabitants included a number of beggars, one of whom (a woman) Fisher met plying her humble trade as far afield as Somerset. These deplorable conditions were caused chiefly by Whiteshill's distance from the parish Church and the town of Stroud. But at length, by the residence of a clergyman at Randwick from the year 1819 and by the erection of a Church and school at Whiteshill with a resident clergyman the character of the population was greatly improved.

Fisher writing of Whiteshill at the time says "the character of the population has been greatly improved, its old reputation has well nigh passed away; and the houses with the habits of their occupants, now wear the usual appearance of comfort and respectability." In short Whiteshill has a reformed character.

In 1784 at the Market House, Whiteshill, a Sunday School was opened by the Rev. William Ellis, the officiating Curate in Stroud Parish.

St Pauls Church, Whiteshill, with its embattled tower, was erected in 1841. The money for the Church was raised by public subscription. Together with the hamlets of Bread Street and Ruscombe, Whiteshill was formed into an ecclesiastical parish in 1844, and became a civil parish (with a parish council) in 1894. The Congregational Chapel at Ruscombe was erected in 1828, a burial ground was attached in 1876.

## A SPORTS SHOP

Just after the first world war, Mr. H. C. V. Beck came to Stroud from his native Bristol. He went into business with Dan Browning—whose football teams are well-remembered in the district—and started a sports shop. Later he had his own shop in Russell Street, and took an interest in every branch of sport in Stroud.

But there was another side of his life that many people did not know about. He was a regular churchgoer and a devout Christian; St. Lawrence Church, Stroud was his church and there he was a sidesman. And Mr. Beck took the first step on the path that was to

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