

# "OUR VILLAGE" SERIES

## FROM THE EARLY BRITONS TO A MAN WHO LOOKED AHEAD ★ FROM A PIRATE TO AN 86 YEAR OLD FOLLOWER OF HOUNDS — A VILLAGE WITH A HISTORY

FUTURE historians continuing the centuries-old story of Avening will probably never think of mentioning "Sam" Smith. Yet, in his own way, he had as much to do with the development of the village as anyone in recent years.

Samuel Smith loved Avening, and with his interest and knowledge of village affairs, in those days—a forest, by the Parish Council. But he was an elderly man when his cry of "Houses for the People" was fully appreciated.

He lived in Rectory Lane and owned adjacent land. His vision of this land being used as a building site has long since been taken up by letoury R.D.C.—though he never lived to see his dream materialise.

Today, the Rectory Lane Council houses comprise modern Avening. They stand looking across the hollow to the village proper—a village of weathered Cotswold stone, steeped in the atmosphere of the past.

Avening—the name is derived from the Aven rivulet which runs parallel with the main village street—can be traced back to a tribe of Britons who settled in the valley long before the beginning of the Christian era and practised sun and fire worship.

The druids displaced the sun worshippers and it was not until the year 320, under Roman occupation, that the first of the village's three Christian churches was built. It was later burned to the ground by the Vikings and Scots when they invaded the garrison at Rodmarton. The Danes destroyed the second church. The Norman building, though extensively altered through the centuries, still stands to-day.

### PRESENT RECTOR

# AVENING

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follow them for miles across fields and through woods—on foot.

Mr. Hopes cannot relate a lot about Avening itself, because for a great deal of his life he lived in Wales, returning "at an age when nobody wants you". He is an agricultural worker at heart but with a little persuasion will modestly admit that he can turn his hand to anything. He recalls that some 50 years ago he won a ploughing match in Monmouthshire three years running in which teams from all over Wales competed.

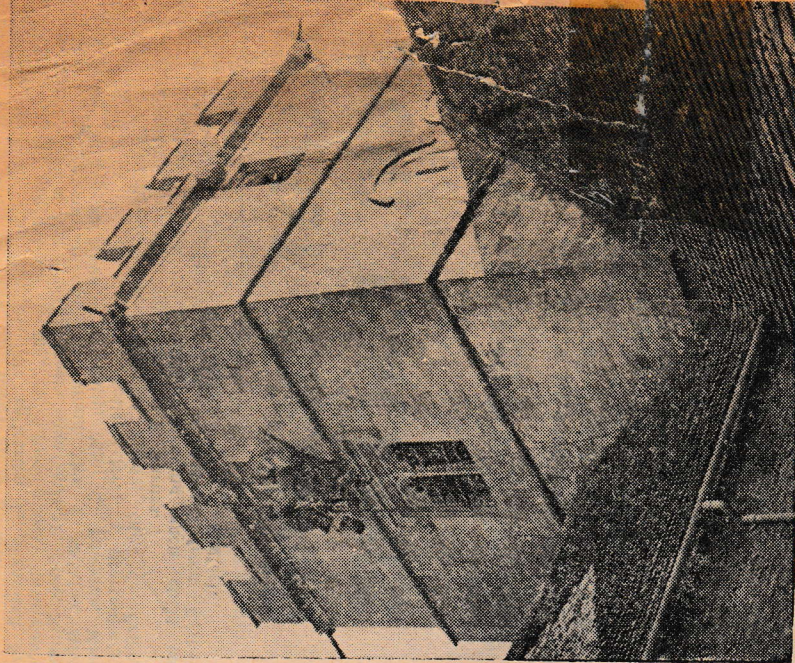
Now, back in the village of his birth he owns his own cottage, but more than that, the respect of every villager—unlike Henry Brydges, who seems to have been a more wayward character.

Born of a noble family, Brydges later turned to piracy, smuggling and the life of a high-wayman. When he reformed and settled down at Avening Court to die in the year 1615.

An alabaster figure of Brydges kneeling in prayer forms the most remarkable monument in the Avening Church—in Brydges Aisle.

The Court was the original home of Brictric, King of the West Saxons, and was later transferred to the Convent of Caen. It was the scene of some brutalities during the Cromwellian Wars. "Bloody Assizes" were held there and such prisoners were hung from a walnut tree.

Before the war Mr. F. C. Munro, noted for his coursering and turn-outs in the show-ring, lived at the Court. Its present owner, Mr. F. W. Trimmell, has one of the finest art collections in the district. A noted resident before the war was the late Lord Lee of Fareham, also an art collector of some repute. A former minister of Agriculture and First Lord of the Admiralty, he gave Chequers, home of the nation's prime ministers, to the nation. Against such a man as



The imposing Norman Tower of Avening Church.

some time great uneasiness and trouble. They were many of them very loose and dissolute and many more disaffected to the discipline and liturgy of the Church of England.

However, the Rector seems to have overcome all this because it is recorded that he suffered many indignities and reproaches with true Christian fortitude until he "removed such prejudices as they had entertained against him".

One of FIRST SHOPS A continuation of the Naisworth — Avening road forms the main High Street of the village and it was here that Mrs. Louisa Coates opened one of the first shops. It is still there to-day, though Mrs. Coates is in bed after a fall she had a little while back.

Long before Mrs. Coates opened her business, the cloth trade provided the greater part of the livelihood for the valley. Five mills are mentioned in the Domesday Book, only two remain to-day—Lorsford and what is now a em mill, run by Mr. G. Rimes. This mill is the largest in the country with a diameter, one of the largest in the village itself is rich in relics of the past. On

### CLERK OF PARISH COUNCIL

All this is ancient history. For a more up-to-date history have a word with Mrs. Humphries, for 35 years Clerk of the Parish Council. She is a member of the Fowles family, who have lived in the village for centuries. Her cousin, Mr. Tom Essex, was responsible for the Holloway statue which stands at the top of Rowcroft, Stroud. Before she became a clerk to the Council she was an

beginning of the Christian era and practised the sun and fire worship. The druids displaced the sun worshippers and it was not until the year 320, under Roman occupation, that the three Christian churches were built. It was later burned to the ground by the Picts and Scots when they invaded the garrison at Rodmarton. The Danes destroyed the second church. The Norman building, though extensively altered through the centuries, still stands to-day.

### PRESENT RECTOR

The present Rector, Canon Cuthbert Cooper, who was instituted in 1948, follows a long line of colourful men who have held the living. It is due largely to his efforts that the ancient Feast has been revived and its association with the Church fully realised. It goes back to the completion of the Church on Holy Cross Day, September 14, 1080, and is, therefore, a dedication festival.

More generally, of course, the district knows it as Pig's Face Day. The night after the church was consecrated, Queen Maulda, wife of William the Conqueror, ordered that a Feast be given for the men who had built it. The main dish was boar's head. It had been shot in the forest

and Mrs. F. Howley.) The popularity of the Feast is undisputed

to many people the Feast is all they know of Avening, but, as always, the real character of the village is reflected by the inhabitants. History books, of course, present only the more romantic characters like Henry Brydges and Dr. George Bull, but in modern times, older villagers like Mr. Ernest Hopes, now the oldest villager, Mr. Tilling, Mr. George Edmonds, Mrs. S. F. Humphries and Mrs. Louisa Coates can recall events no less interesting.

Eighty-six year-old Mr. Ernest William Hopes is a native of Avening. He tells, with the greatest pride, how he helped build four aerodromes after the age of 65.

A widower, Mr. Hopes lives unassumingly alone in his own cottage—"Me and my father paid rent for 65 years, then had to turn round and buy it or be turned out." The other things he relies on other people for are his meals, and for those he calls on his daughter-in-law, who lives just across the way on Pound Hill.

Other than that he suits himself where he goes and what he does. It is no use calling on him when the Duke of Beaufort's hounds are about. On any day of the week he will

ers were also necessary at the Cromwellian Wars. "Bloody Fortitude" until he "removed" such prejudices as they had entertained against him.

Mr. F. C. Howley, noted for his coursering and turn-outs in the show-ring, lived at the Court. Its present owner, Mr. F. W. Frimell, has one of the finest art collections in the district. A noted restorer, before the war was the late Lord Lee of Fareham, also an art collector of some repute. A former minister of Agriculture and First Lord of the Admiralty, he gave Chequers, home of the Prime Ministers, to the nation. Against such a man as Brydges, the lute of a gardener may seem colourless, but for a true villager one has no need to look further than Mr. George Edmonds. He is still a gardener at 79 and has been under the same employer, Mrs. I. M. Graham, for the past 52 years.

### DESERTING AGRICULTURE

A square set man, Mr. Edmonds declares: "Times have changed here." When he was a young lad men worked on the land near their native village, now many are deserting agriculture for the bigger money in industry. He recalls the time when a farm worker thought himself lucky to earn twelve shillings a week.

He has been a gardener for almost half a century, working for some of the time for the late Mr. Erskine Pollock, who was, when Mr. Edmonds first knew him, a Queen's Counsellor for Victoria. For over 60 years he has been a bell ringer at the church, starting first at the age of 17 when the church had only four bells. Mr. and Mrs. Edmonds celebrated their golden wedding over a year ago, have four daughters, a son and eight grandchildren. For most of his life he has been a staunch Conservative, being a member of the Avening Branch of the Conservative Association.

Mr. Edmonds could be described as a typical villager, quiet and hardworking. Avening people, however, were not always so restrained, as illustrated by the experiences of Dr. George Bull, who was instituted as Rector in 1685 and was subsequently Bishop of St. David's.

We are told that "the people of the parish gave Dr. Bull for Cooper, to mark the Festival

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Besides this public work she can relate all there is to know about the Baptist Church which was built in 1802. She is a Deaconess of the church and Sunday School Superintendent. The present Minister is the Rev. S. G. Dudley, a former chaplain to the Forces, who succeeded Dr. A. J. Nixon. The Minister to stay for one of the longest periods was the late Rev. W. E. Frost, who was Minister for over 30 years. His daughter still resides in the village at Mount Pleasant and is a Deaconess of the Church.

The present clerk of the Parish Council is Mr. A. H. Hinder. In recent years the Council has become one of the most active in the district under the chairmanship of Mr. A. Clarke.

The village constable, P.C. Dennis Tuffley, is a comparative newcomer to the village. One of his problems has been the main Nailsworth-Avening Road which winds through Hazel Wood, once part of the great forest. The road was cut in the late 19th century off the old Pack Horse Track. Its notorious corners have been the scenes of many accidents. It is on this road, opposite the new Police Station at the entrance to the village, that can be seen one of the unusual village name signs which were designed and carved in England by the Rector, Canon Cooper, to mark the Festival

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Inevitably, Avening is still very much a village of atmosphere—an atmosphere of past mingling with present. But is it destined to be merely a curio? Or will visionaries, like Samuel Smith, kindle it in to a force for the future?

blamed the glass