

"Our Village Series"

RODBOROUGH

- ★ A FAMILY WHICH TRAVELLED 11,000 MILES
- ★ A PRIME MINISTER LIVED IN THE PARISH ★ COUNCIL HAS HAD ONLY TWO CLERKS

THE first we heard of Rodborough, Australia, was in June, 1934. A reader sent us a cutting from "The Argus", of Melbourne, recounting details of "the Bucknalls of Rodborough Vale" who emigrated in 1840. Nothing has been heard since.

The family arrived in Melbourne by the sailing ship "Steboneith". They travelled by bullock wagon 100 miles into the centre of Victoria and settled in 1843. Their homestead was built in 1845.

The cutting tells us that Edward Gittens Bucknall was followed by his son, Edward, who devoted his leisure to making a marvellous garden, patterned upon the Blue Mountains of New South Wales. He also built a small lake with two tiny islands and quaint bridges connecting them to the shore.

Lily Bucknall built a "quaint" church in 1883 to the memory of William Bucknall. The church, according to the article, is now used for the Presbyterian service. The family gradually spread over the country, later returning to the Rodborough Vale and building several commodious houses, the most outstanding being Woorookoobanya, in 1882. In 1934, we are told, the homestead was being managed by Mr. Norman Bucknall, the only surviving son of the youngest son of Edward Gittens Bucknall.

At the time we commented that we were unaware of any prominent Rodborough family of the name of Bucknall, though it seemed possible that these settlers were related to Benjamin Bucknall, who traded as a bookseller and printer in King Street, Stroud, over a century ago.

That, of course, was only guesswork. Can anyone throw light on to this family, who after travelling 11,000 miles still retained a sentimental interest in the home country by naming their property after this district's most noted landmark—Rodborough Fort?

George Hawker (generally called Captain Hawker) built the Fort in 1761 was the site of an ancient fort, the ruins of which were formerly to be seen on the hill top, though there is no proof of this. A subsequent owner, John Stephens, used it as a school in the 1840's and it has since been a private hotel and pleasure gardens. One old Gloucestershire diary records a fire at the Fort in November, 1843.

From this vantage point, about 600 feet above sea level, a popular rendezvous for May walkers, extensive views of the Stroud Vale, Woodchester, Stonehouse, the Severn, the Dean Forest and the lofty Sugar Loaf Mountain, near Abergavenny, are accorded.

From Rodborough Hill in the early nineteenth century the "Gloucestershire Repository" recorded the following view: "The long rows of cloth exposed on racks give the prospect a garish effect, totally unpicturesque, as well from the number of right lines as the multiplicity of colours. So many whitened houses strewed about at small intervals, and the navigable canal intersecting the vale, when contrasted by the bold sweep of the Severn, may justify this assertion."

The village of Rodborough, which first appeared in history in the year 740, is now by way of being a suburb of Stroud. The late Rev. C. E. Watson, a former Minister at the Tabernacle, and an authoritative historian of the district, has said that Rodborough is probably a derivation of the Scandinavian "Raddanbeorg" (Hill of Crosses).

At least two Roman roads passed through the village one

road was known as Wick Street, though today we call it Kingscourt Lane.

Archaeologists have since established that there was a pre-Roman settlement on the Common.

Early history of the village is much the same as that of Minchinhampton as Rodborough was formerly in that parish. The Manor of Minchinhampton, including that of Rodborough, which came into being in the 12th Century, is mentioned in the Domesday Book. In the reign of Edward I it is described as a hamlet of Minchinhampton held by the Abbess of Caen, Normandy. In the 33rd year of Edward III it was held on behalf of the Abbess of Caen by the ancient family called de Rodberge, or Rod-bourge. It remained in the possession of the Nuns until 1415.

In the middle of the 1800's Lord John Russell, a Member of Parliament for Stroud and subsequently Prime Minister, purchased Hill House Estate and changed its name to Rodborough Manor.

The Rev. L. V. Miller, Rector from 1932 to 1954, who compiled a booklet on the history of the church, stated that it seemed probable that a chapel was built at Rodborough on the site of the present church round about the year 1316. However, the first distinct mention of the chapel was in a tax return of 1378 where it also mentioned its chaplain, a man named William. It was, of course, merely a Chapel of Ease to Minchinhampton. Rodborough became a substantive parish about 1840 and in March, 1841 Thomas Glasscott, who had been curate since 1819, was instituted as the first Rector.

CHURCH ON FIRE

An amusing tale of a later Rector, the Rev. Walter Waring (1897—1932) is told by Mrs. C. E. Coleman, whose family have been associated with the church and the Endowed Schools for many years. She is now a Sunday School teacher. Recalling the fire which damaged part of the church

bucket of water to the top of the tower to tip on to the roof. Unfortunately a fireman appeared immediately below him and the water engulfed him instead of the flames.

Mrs. Coleman's father, the late Mr. William G. Browne (he was most insistent about the "e") was headmaster of the school housed in the Endowed Schools until 1901. His wife, Eleanor, was headmistress of the girls' section. Mr. Browne was secretary of what was formerly the Liberal Club, at Lansdown, Stroud, Editor of the Stroud Co-operative Gazette, a member of the Board of Guardians and a parish councillor.

The present Rector is the Rev. K. F. Rogers, who was instituted in June, 1954. The church register dates from 1662 and among the unusual entries is a dispute which arose about the rights to the "singing seat". Twenty parishioners are named as having a right to sit in this pew, and they, or their heirs, might dispose of this right for the sum of five shillings to any person living in the parish who understands the Rules of Musick and can sing the Psalm tunes."

The Endowed School, opposite the church, is the oldest building in Rodborough. According to several writers it was probably the Guild Room, where the Guild of Rodborough regularly assembled. It was probably also used by the wool traders.

Rodborough Parish Council is almost unique, in that it has had only two clerks since parish councils were constituted in 1894. Mr. F. A. Miles who has been clerk since 1918, succeeded Mr. George Chandler. Between them they have completed over 60 years' service, a record believed to be unequalled throughout the country.

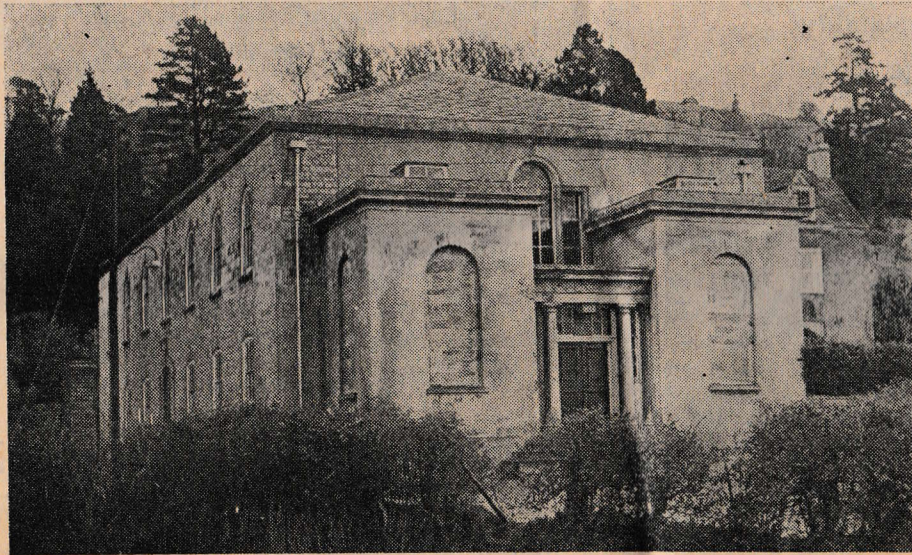
Mr. Miles is not a Rodborough man, having come to the village in 1914, but he is a man who has served the district remarkably well having given devoted service to both the Stroud Urban and Rural District Councils. He holds the distinction of being the first layman ever to have been appointed presiding officer at an election, an appointment that had invariably been held by a solicitor.

ONE CHAIRMAN

Throughout the years, Mr. Miles has served only one

ical Revival, preached to a huge congregation of 20,000 people on Hampton Common. On that occasion he used the long barrow mound near the old reservoir which has ever since been known as "Whitefield's Tump." In later days, after the Tabernacle was built, he frequently deserted it for "Rodborough Wood", of which the only remaining vestiges are the two giant beeches overhanging the "Little Chapel."

It was from Rodborough membership that the churches were formed that now exist at Frampton, Ebley, Stonehouse and Ruscombe. The Rev. Lawrence S. Squires, the present Minister, is the nineteenth since the time of Whitefield, his predecessor, Dr. W. J. Shergold, having held the pastorate twice —the only Minister to have done this. Mr. Squires ac-



Rodborough Tabernacle

Personality, but he has led such a varied and active life that a repetition of a few of the facts are essential to the story of modern Rodborough.

When he refused to return to work after a lock out of engineers in 1922 he turned poultry farmer and chimney sweep. Later he did more and more electrical work, something he learnt through a mixture of a correspondence course and experience, and it soon became his sole occupation. He took electricity inside Rodborough, Pitchcombe and Amberley Churches.

He played a big part in establishing the Labour movement in this district and today is one of the oldest members of the Stroud R.D.C.

Not far from Mr. Harper's home, which he built himself, is Rodborough Tabernacle, completed in 1749. The history of this church goes back to 1739 when George Whitefield, the great preacher of the Evangel-

Along Tabernacle Walk, down the hill below the Fort to the Pike, down Walkley Hill to the Golden Cross then across the main Bath Road to Dudbridge Hill, must be a familiar walk to two of the oldest people in the parish, Mr. Thomas T. Lippett (97), of 29, Dudbridge Hill, and Mrs. Louisa Turvey (93), who lives a few doors away at No. 36, with her daughter, Mrs. G. Davis. Mrs. Turvey lived at Church Place for over 40 years, having come to Rodborough in 1906.

BOWLING CLUB

A better known walk is that which leads across the Rodborough Fields—a short cut from the town to Rodborough Common, halfway on the side of the road leading to Butterrow, is one of the village public houses, the Princess Royal, where Mr. Charles Holder has been licensee since 1937. Another, the Prince Albert, is a short dis-