

# TO-MORROW'S WHITEFIELD'S TUMP CELEBRATIONS

## WHY DISTRICT SHOULD BE INTERESTED

To-morrow evening at 7 p.m. Nonconformists from all parts of the district will meet on a portion of ground on Minchinhampton Common, which has the unique distinction of being registered in the Bishop's court as a "place of religious worship," to celebrate the bi-centenary of George Whitefield's address to a gathering of 20,000 on July 1st, 1739.

It was to this meeting on Whitefield's Tump, situated a few yards west of the old reservoir, that several of the local Free Churches owe their origin.

Below we give a summary of why these celebrations should be of interest to the whole district.

**Randwick.** It was at Randwick that the evangelist preached before proceeding to Hampton Common on July 1st. Of this meeting he recorded, "the church was quite full, and about 2,000 were in the churchyard, who by taking down the window behind the pulpit, were able to hear." Of the 15th he notes, "Twice in Randwick Church, and in the evening was enabled to lift up my voice like a trumpet to about 20,000 on Hamton Common."

**Painswick.** He frequently preached at Painswick, generally on the bowling green at the Falcon Hotel, and it is significant that his most noted convert from that district, William Hogg, butcher and grazier, should have been a keen bowler, in fact keener bowler than butcher. Of a bluff and genial disposition he was a man of gigantic stature and strength who gave up his life of dissolute indifference to become one of the foremost workers and preachers at Rodborough.

**Minchinhampton** produced the man who might be described as the local champion of Whitefield's cause. Thomas Adams, born in 1718, went to the Tump to hear the evangelist out of curiosity. Being converted himself he persuaded a small group at Hampton to buy a meeting house there. They found one in Well Hill and got it cheap for it had the reputation of being haunted. But opposition was aroused and in a riot in 1744 the leaders of the Society were taken and thrown, either into the Bourne, or into a tan pit—Adams being reserved for both.

**Horsley.** Another convert to the cause was John Croome, a Horsley weaver, who after abusing his patient wife for months because "she attended the preachers" eventually joined them. In him seriousness bordered on gloom but his earnestness and natural eloquence were irresistible and he quickly ranked among Whitefield's recognised preachers.

**Woodchester and Lightpill.** Croome formed a Society at Horsley which he afterwards transferred, first to Woodchester, and then to Freke's Mill (now Messrs. Holbrow's Nurseries) at Lightpill.

**Standish.** A third Society met in the kitchen at Moreton Hill Farm near Standish Sanatorium under the leadership of William Vines.

**Rodborough.** In 1749 these three Societies joined together to erect a central preaching chapel, and, in selecting a site in what had been Rodborough Wood, completed by the following year the meeting house, since known as Rodborough Tabernacle. Whitefield preached in it for the first time in the following February and at the present time his arm-chair stands under the pulpit and bears the following inscription, written by the late John Rees, minister from 1813-1823:—

"If love of souls should e'er be wanting here,  
Remember me,—for I am Whitefield's chair;

I bore his weight, am witness to his fears,  
His earnest prayers, his interesting tears;  
This thou man was filled with love divine;  
Art thou the same? Sit down and call me  
thine."

**Stonehouse.** Whitefield, who "took orders" in the Church of England, was in charge of the parish of Stonehouse for a short time, but resigned on resolving to go to America in 1737. The Congregational Church at Stonehouse, like the ones at Ebley, Frampton-on-Severn and Ruscombe, have grown out of the Church at Rodborough Tabernacle.