

"Our Village" Series

Continuing

CAINSCROSS

- * 18th Century Sundial
- * Need for Church
- * 2,500 At Laying of Corner Stone Ceremony

AS to history, one has only to look inside Stroud Museum to see that Cainscross has what might almost be termed its special corner.

The noted Cainscross gravel beds which stretch from Gannicox to beyond the village, marking where a great river flowed in prehistoric times, is a treasure house of human and animal remains of the period long before recorded history. Frequently the bones of Ice Age and Neolithic animals are unearthed and some fine sections of mammoth tusk, taken from the gravel beds, are now preserved in the Museum.

It is appropriate that the elegant 18th century pedestal sundial which

has for so long been a feature of Cainscross, should command the busiest cross-roads and thus remind us of a more leisurely and, probably, a more satisfying age.

The sundial bears the date 1754, and it is thought that it may stand on the shaft of a mediaeval cross, once prominent at the cross-roads.

Recently, as a consequence of the road-widening scheme, some apprehension has been felt about the future of the sundial. Investigations show that it is now vested in the Stroud Urban District Council and a watchful eye is being kept upon it to ensure that it is carefully preserved. Some time ago an offer was made to find a home for the sundial in the grounds of Marling School but the Urban Council decided to leave it where it is, outside the quaint old house near the traffic lights, until it is absolutely necessary to remove it elsewhere. The replacement of the name plate below the dial has restored its double function—as a time piece and a milestone.

In half a century the centre of Cainscross has changed almost out of knowledge. This is shown in a painting, the work of Paul L. Smith of the cross-roads as they were in 1903. Then the old turnpike gates were still in existence with the keepers' house, now a hairdressing shop, opposite. In 1903 Cainscross was "truly rural."

WHAT'S IN A NAME?

As to the derivation of the name "Cainscross" there is—as always—some difference of opinion. A possible explanation is that the original name was "King's Cross," commemorating for all time that it was on the route of some royal progress. Certainly Henry VIII with his Queen Anne Boleyn travelled through Gloucestershire in the summer of 1535.

More likely, however, is the suggestion that the name is taken from a family who came originally from Wiltshire, namely Keynes, and who settled in the district. Thus, Keyne's Cross.

The issue, however, must be left in doubt. It has been spelt as one word "Cainscross," two words "Cains Cross" and, on a tombstone in Stonehouse churchyard, it is given as "Caines Cross."

THE PARISH CHURCH

In many ways the Cainscross we



The Sundial At
Cainscross

nexion and which was well served by some outstanding ministers including the Rev. Benjamin Parsons whose centenary was celebrated two years ago, but there were also many who preferred the Establishment and it was from among these that support for the building of a new church came.

The population of the village and the immediate neighbourhood likely to benefit from the building of a church was upwards of 1,500, comprised mainly of the working classes, many of whom were employed in the nearby cloth mills. At the same time the population of the three older parishes mentioned earlier was in the region of 12,000, yet the three churches available could accommodate less than 2,800, few seats being open to the poor.

With these and other facts in mind a number of enterprising people determined to provide a church in Cainscross, opening subscriptions with that object in view. A committee was formed, and eventually the building of St. Matthew's commenced, it being estimated that the project would cost £2,100 or more.

FIRST CORNER STONE

In September of 1835 the following note appeared in a local newspaper: "We are authorised to say that the first corner stone of the

word "Cainscross," two words "Cains Cross" and, on a tombstone in Stonehouse churchyard, it is given as "Caines Cross."

THE PARISH CHURCH

In many ways the Cainscross we now know can be said to centre on the formation of a separate ecclesiastical parish and the building of the Parish Church of St. Matthew, which was consecrated in 1837, the year of the accession to the throne of Queen Victoria.

At that time Ebley, with its thriving cloth industry and well-established Congregational Chapel, was regarded as superior to Cainscross and when St. Matthew's was eventually built it took the name of St. Matthew's, Ebley.

The need for a new church and parish came when the Industrial Revolution was getting into its stride and there was vast growth and movement of the population. It was also a time when the spiritual life of the Church was reawakened partly as a result of the men associated with the Oxford Movement and also by the great Evangelical revival.

Cainscross lay at the converging point of three large parishes, Stroud, Stonehouse and Randwick, but the churches in each, all of considerable age, were some way removed from growing population centres.

WALKED MILES

It was necessary for inhabitants needing the ministrations of the Church to walk many miles. It is true that some cast in their lot with Ebley Chapel, which was in the Countess of Huntingdon's Con-

cost £2,100 or more.

FIRST CORNER STONE

In September of 1835 the following note appeared in a local newspaper: "We are authorised to say that the first corner stone of the New Church at Cainscross will be laid on Monday next, at one o'clock, when the Clergy and the other respectable inhabitants of the neighbourhood will be present to assist at the ceremony."

The article went on to note that the land for the site of the Church had been given and that subscriptions to the amount of upwards of £1,000 had been raised in the immediate locality. The Church, it said, would accommodate at least 700, a large proportion being fitted up as free sittings for the use of the poor, the residue of the rest of the seats being appropriated to increase the endowment.

The laying of the corner stone was a great event in the district and we are told that no less than 2,500 people were present to witness the ceremony which was performed by the Rev. Henry Cripps, Vicar of Stonehouse, in which parish the Church was then situated.

And in January of 1837 the Lord Bishop of Gloucester and Bristol consecrated the new building.

Col. Daubeney, of Bath, endowed the Church by investing £1,000 in it, and it was his son, the Rev. Henry William Bowles Daubeney, B.A., who became, in 1837, the first Vicar of St. Matthew's. Since that time there have been eight vicars, of which the Rev. H. G. Wicks is the present incumbent.

To be continued