

RIPLEY 1958

Ripley has neither shop, Post Office, bus service or "pub". A sort of desert island in the country where, if you are not used to lonely nights, you need plenty of records!

The villagers describe it as "the last place on earth which has never been finished!" But make no mistake; this description is quoted lightly and with affection.

Residents are used to a lonely existence and they know how to make the best of their leisure hours.

It is true they will think twice about walking a long mile to the nearest bus stop for a night out in town, but the secret, whispered an elderly resident, is — "a nice fire, a book and now — the television".

Nevertheless, one must admit it does fall hard on the fellow who likes the "odd one" at the "local".

A MILE AWAY.

Nearest public house is a mile away so it is easy to understand one villager when he says: "By the time you walk back you're thirsty again!"

The absence of a shop does not seem to worry housewives. Instead, the shops come to them.

It can never be said that nothing ever happens at Ripley. There may not be many mystery stories which present day grandfathers can unfold round the cosy fireside, but children of today have a gem of a tale to pass on to future inhabitants of Ripley.

It happened four years ago and was described as a miniature tornado. It struck while the village slept one Saturday night in May, 1954. Starting with a sudden flash of lightning, the storm thundered for only two minutes, but within that short space of time a miracle happened. No one was injured.

A 60ft elm tree on the Bransgore roadside crashed to the ground, just brushing against a thatched cottage it might easily have flattened.

Greenhouses and chicken runs were flattened and thatched farm buildings badly damaged. Telephone wires were cut and 300 yards of power cable came down, plunging the village into total darkness.

Windows were blown in and hundreds of slates were ripped off roofs. When dawn broke on the Sunday morning, Ripley—a camper's paradise in the summer time—was a complete shambles. The huge elm tree which just missed the thatched cottage, owned by Mrs. M. King knocked the chimney stack off as it fell and tore a lot of thatch from another cottage 30ft. away, owned by Mrs. J. Tuck.

"MOST UNCANNY"

Villagers described the incident as "most uncanny". One minute it was quiet and the next minute houses were shaken violently. A greenhouse in horticulturist Mr. Frank Savory's garden was telescoped to the ground, showering glass over a wide area.

Mr. Savory told me that Ripley catches quite a lot of wind and that is one drawback with his chrysanthemums. A keen gardener for over 30 years, he holds 7 cups won at local flower and vegetable shows last year. He usually wins five or six cups each year and he has about 20 medals and many certificates.

Mr. Savory, a member of Christchurch, Bournemouth and London Chrysanthemum Societies, can remember a similar miniature tornado in the 1920's which just missed Ripley but destroyed farm outbuildings at Avon.

CONGREGATIONAL CHURCH.

Ripley has a large Congregational Church for the size of the village. But this was built, no doubt, in the days when the churches and chapels were full and every available seat was needed.

Times have changed. Now, the congregation has dwindled down to about 20 and the Sunday school opens for about the same number of children.

In charge of the church is Mr. C. Salter, of King's Avenue, Christchurch, who became superintendent in 1939 after the death of the minister, the Rev. R. Howarth. At that time the church became one of the group churches connected with Christchurch Congregational Church and Mr. Salter was appointed.

Church treasurer is Mr. William Pitt, of Avon, who is also one of the four deacons along with Mr. Fred Hiscock, Mr. Dennis Waterman and Mr. Maurice Hiscock.

Mr. Pitt, one of the oldest members of the congregation, can remember the days when the church was full and the choir gallery had 20 singers. His wife has been organist for over 40 years.

It was in 1797 that the Rev. W. Hopkins became Pastor of Christchurch Congregational Church and in conjunction with the Rev. Alfred Bishop, the Independent Minister at Ringwood, he undertook the responsibility of village services held in a house at Ripley "Towns End".

In 1816 the Rev. Daniel Gunn became Pastor at Christchurch and with his people he undertook the oversight of Ripley and the Mission was transferred from Ripley "Towns End" to the house of Mr. Benjamin Tuck, which was opposite the present church.

This house soon became too small for the congregations and Mr. Tuck offered his garden as a site for a chapel. A total of £400 was raised by subscriptions and donations, and building commenced.

Many gave both labour and material so that the building cost was much less than anticipated. The internal area was 30 feet by 20 feet.

SEATS REMOVED.

When the new chapel was opened in 1822, all seats, except the pulpit had to be removed to give standing room. In 1829 Ripley was separated from Christchurch and became a distinct Congregational Church, Mr. Gunn recommending that all members of his church living north of Winkton attend Ripley.



The Ripley twins, 11-year-olds Raymond (left) and Norman Hiscock with their nine-year-old sister, Cynthia.

The following year the Rev. Charles Thurman was ordained and was succeeded two years later by the Rev. William Hopkins.

Other pastors of the church included the Rev. J. Locke, who became a missionary to South Africa in 1837, the Revs. Alfred Newth, R. R. Davies, R. Davey, Francis Baron, F. W. Turner, who became a missionary to British Guiana, H. Waring, L. J. Bailey, G. E. Page and R. Howarth, who was appointed in 1901 and stayed until 1939.

The church was rebuilt in its present form by John Kemp Welch, of Sopley Park, in 1880. Centenary of the church was celebrated on Wednesday, May 22, 1929. A service was held in the afternoon at which the preacher was the Rev. H. T. Maddeford, of Bournemouth, and at a public meeting in the evening the chairman was

Ald. F. A. Lane, of Christchurch.

Speakers were the Rev. H. Parnaby, of Portsmouth, the Rev. L. J. Bailey, of Beaminster, the Rev. H. P. James, secretary of the Hants Congregational Union, and

the Rev. Howarth.

In charge of the present day Sunday school is Miss J. Waterman. Mrs. M. F. Hiscock and Miss Angela Wiseman are also Sunday school teachers.

RIPLEY TWINS.

Attending the school are the Ripley twins, 11-year-olds, Raymond and Norman Hiscock, sons of Mr. and Mrs. M. F. Hiscock.

The Hiscock family have been associated with the church for many years and at the Sunday school anniversary services last year three generations of the family took the collections. The twins took it at the afternoon service, while their father and grandfather, Mr. Fred Hiscock, took the evening service collection. The Congregational Women's Guild was formed at Ripley about 20 years ago and the first president was Mrs. Kitley. There are about 14 members who take part in fortnightly devotional meetings.

President is Mrs. C. Salter, secretary, Mrs. H. Toop, and treasurer, Mrs. K. Saunders. The Guild anniversary is to be held this month when it is expected the church will be full of representatives from other Congregational churches in the district. There was a time when the Salvation Army from Ringwood visited the village and conducted services round a large elm tree. The tree is near the home of Mrs A. Barrow, who can remember the villagers gathering round and joining in the singing. The elm, which became known as the "Hallelujah Tree" is now only a stump. It was cut down several years ago because it became dangerous.

FISH WASHED UP ON ROAD.

One of the winding lanes leading from Ripley to Avon is known locally as "Fish Street". A ford runs across the lane and one explanation for this unofficial name is that during the floods fish were washed on to the road.

For several years the common land at North Ripley has been a favourite spot for campers. Scouts, Boys' Brigades and youth organisations have all enjoyed camping holidays in the peaceful surroundings. But this particular site will no longer be available for it has recently come under the plough.

Ripley has a total of seven farms. Mr. L. G. Hunt, of Middle Farm, has been farming in the village for over 40 years while Mr. Albert Edward Wiseman has been at North Ripley Farm for 25 years.

One of the oldest residents in Ripley is Mrs. W. Barrow, who has been associated with the Congregational Church for many years. She was married there over 50 years ago by the Rev. R. Howarth.