

## A VILLAGE CHAPEL.

### Romantic P.M. History at Ashbury.

#### A NEW BUILDING.

An interesting phase in the history of Primitive Methodism in Ashbury in the Faringdon district was reached on Monday when the foundation stone of a new Primitive Methodist Chapel was laid by Mrs. Partridge, of Tilehurst, Reading, and formerly of Ashbury.

The site of the new chapel was the gift of the Earl of Craven, and the cost of the church has been borne by Mrs. Partridge, of Tilehurst, at the request of her late husband.

The late Mr. Partridge, a native of Ashbury, and a keen Primitive Methodist, conceived, with his wife, the idea of building a new chapel in the village, as the old one was getting in rather a delapidated condition. Mr. Partridge died before the idea of a new chapel could be carried into effect, but he left £600 with the wish that it should be used for the erection of a chapel at his wife's death. Mrs. Partridge, however, decided to proceed with the erection at once.

Building operations were commenced by Mr. Payne, of Wanborough, about a fortnight ago, and it is hoped that the chapel will be completed in June. The chapel occupies a site to the main road. It is 31ft. long by 21ft. wide. There will be a porch, of brick and rough cast, and a room at the rear. The chief building material will be brick and there will be an old-fashioned tile-roof at the particular request of the Earl of Craven.

The approximate cost of the building itself will be £600, incidental expenses amounting, it is expected, to £40.

The chapel will have seating accommodation for about 80 people. Until the new building is completed, the old chapel will be continued in use.

#### INTERESTING HISTORY.

Primitive Methodism in Ashbury has a romantic history.

On April 27th, 1829, two Primitive Methodists from the Brinkworth Circuit, by name, John Ride and John Petty, set out for the Berkshire Downs, where they intended holding a mission. The first sermon was preached at Bourton, between Ashbury and Shrivenham. On arrival at Ashbury they found that a sermon had not been preached here by a Dissenter for over 40 years. The evangelical clergyman in the village hailed them by exclaiming, "Now my curate has come!"

John Petty was succeeded by Thomas Russell, who continued the mission in February, 1830, with the aid of John Ride.

#### Stone Laying.

At Ashdown, a short distance from Ashbury, where nearly 1,000 years before, King Alfred had beaten the Danes, the two held an impressive prayer meeting in the snow, and the success of the whole mission was summed up in their prayer, "Lord, give us Berkshire."

In 1834 the men purchased a piece of land, and with the aid of the villagers set up the first chapel at Ashbury. This chapel has been regularly used for Sunday and weekday service since that date.

There were about 200 people at the stone laying ceremony and Mrs. Partridge said she was pleased to perform it in memory of her husband and to the glory of God. She hoped that much good would be done in the new chapel.

With the aid of a new trowel, presented to her by the trustees, Mrs. Partridge applied the mortar, and then raised the stone into its allotted place.

The Rev. W. Harper, of Faringdon, the Circuit minister, declared that it was one of the red letter days in the history of Primitive Methodism at Ashbury.

After relating the history of that body in the village, Mr. Harper said that 20 years ago there were people in that village who hoped that the old chapel might be succeeded by a new one. To-day they saw the first visible signs of their hope.

Mr. H. J. Langham (Faringdon) also expressed his pleasure at being present on such an historic occasion. Firstly, he said, the new chapel would stand for simplicity of worship, for all the gold in the world would not guarantee the presence of God. The glory of the church was when God was in its midst. The church would also stand for the revolution, the regeneration and redemption of human life, and for the cultivation of friendship in mankind.

After tea, a public meeting was held, at which the Rev. W. Harper was the principal speaker.