



## Rodborough Football Club

It is 9.30am on a very, very cold Saturday morning in the middle of January. Warm and comfortable behind the wheel of your car, you approach the sharp bend on the top of Rodborough Common. Driving sleet hits the windscreen and as the wipers clear the screen you see large numbers of Kids and a handful of adults playing football. You hardly bear them a thought however, save for a whispered "they must be mad!" for you see them there every Saturday morning.

What you don't see is an even larger group of youngsters doing exactly the same thing just along the road at Bownham Park School.

We have over two hundred youngsters with Rodborough Youth Football Club. A major proportion of them live in the parish, others come from adjacent areas in particular Minchinhampton which does not have a youth Football club. The youngest are five years old, the oldest sixteen with every age in between catered for. No

regular competitive matches (apart from occasional friendlies) are played until the age of eight or nine. For the youngest ones the emphasis is on enjoyment of the game in a friendly team environment and the learning of basic soccer skills. The under nine and under ten year olds plus next season the under 11's take part in the seven a side Gloucestershire mini league. The squad sizes dictate on A and a B team. Our under twelve to under sixteen will be competing once again in the Stroud and District League.

On numbers alone, Rodborough Football Club is one of the biggest youth football clubs in the district. We believe that kids of all ages, even more with lesser abilities should if they desire, be given the opportunity to develop their skills and play the game they are so obsessed with. Yes there has been a lot made of British sporting failures because as a nation we are more concerned with taking part than winning. Sport by its very nature is competitive

and winning is important. It should not be the sole driving force that motivates however. We are realistic at Rodborough. All our coaches are parents with no official coaching qualifications. We have all played in the past (many years ago) and try to pass on our knowledge and enthusiasm for the game. There is, we believe, a strong community spirit within the club that involves parents as well.

We also believe that we have a role to play in the general health and fitness of a generation who are witnessing the time allocated to sport at schools being squeezed, the continued disappearance of playing fields and green areas and armchair virtual sport on PC or playstation.

Don't let the money mad antics of the game at its highest level influence your opinions of youth football, or at least youth football in Rodborough. Yes the kids may idolise their soccer superstars, imitate them, parents spend a small

### Commoner in instant crisis

This issue of *The Commoner* has been put out by a press-ganged editorial group. What's needed is someone with experience to take over as Editor. You're out there somewhere so don't be too shy to become Rodborough's answer to Rosie Boycott or Janet Street-Porter.

But how you've come to read this is beyond our understanding at present. As we write, we have little idea how *The Commoner* will be distributed and we need volunteers to undertake to deliver to their own street/locality once a month. If each volunteer undertakes to deliver 100 copies, 25 deliverers will do the trick or 50 delivering 50 ...and so on. Potential editors and newspaper deliverers please contact us at: 42 Hill Close Estate Lightpill GL5 3PG or commoner@capers.co.uk

#### TEAM CONTACTS

Chairman	Steve Roberts	759797
Secretary	Clive Hill	763036
Under 16's	Gary Smith	792673
Under 15's	Mick Hurst	885350
	Steve Roberts	
Under 14's	Mike Panton	764320
Under 13's	Rob Griffiths	755965
Under 12's	Steve Tubb	750827
Under 11's	Les Hanley	753653
Under 10's	Chris King	882018
Under 9's	John Murray	

Rodborough veterans.

So if you want to see how we are doing, hop along to Rodborough Pavilion, Butterow West any Sunday from 1st September to 31st March.

There are usually games at 11am and 2.30pm.

The younger ones play at Bownham Park on Saturday mornings. Results are in the Stroud News and Journal.

If you want to join the club, contact numbers are listed below. If you want to help us in any way (we are always looking for sponsorship etc.) Contact myself Steve Roberts on Stroud 759797.

fortune on replica kits but the game in its most basic form is still something special to those involved with it. Maybe we are mad.....mad about football, but it is a difficult habit to break. Ask most of the managers who still can't hang up their boots and who step out occasionally to represent the



Personally I just couldn't survive without 'out of town stores'. They are always open at the right time and I can get everything under one roof

# THE COMMONER

Views and News from Rodborough

Rodborough • May 2000 • Issue 1

## Dump Gang dumps the

Concerned cits in Rodborough Avenue had enough of fly-tipping on their own doorsteps

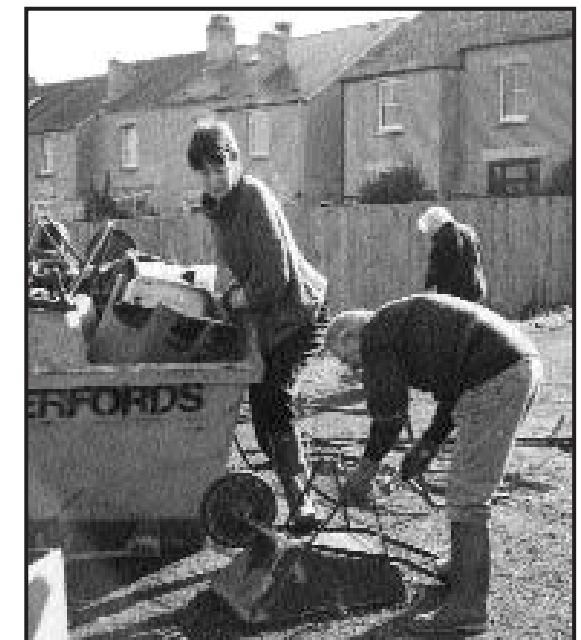
Six weeks ago concerned cits in Rodborough Ave rolled up their sleeves, spat on their palms - and that's just the women - and set about improving their own environment.

Six weeks later: an unsightly dump at the back of their houses has been relieved of a skip load of fly-tipped builder's rubble, the front end of a Volvo and a cornucopia of domestic waste; a well-used, long-

established, seriously overgrown path has been cleared right down to the Bath Road; a garden-waste compound has been built and another area has cleared for a communal compost bin; the remnant of the dump has been planted with trees and shrubs and a post and rail fence now separates it from the service road down which nefarious night visitors used to shunt their illegal loads.

There are 50 households

in the Avenue and so far around 30 people - of all sexes and ages - have been involved in the donkey work. Others, unable to dig and hump in the dump, have dug in their pockets instead and the whole project, to date, has been constructed and financed exclusively by the Avenue. The path, however, has been habitually used by others who live on or around Rodborough Hill and they too will be able to



'What a load of rubbish'

enjoy the product of the Avenue's labours.

The Avenue's own historian, Oliver Wicks, says the path has existed for over 20 of the 60 plus years he's lived there and where the lock-up garages now stand - hence the service road - there were once allotments. The whole area is what the naturalist and writer, Richard Mabey, has designated *unofficial countryside* and it's been a natural adventure playground for the children of the Avenue as long as Mr Wicks can remember.

Avenue residents have further plans for their unofficial countryside but all involve as little intervention as possible. The path is to be graded and surfaced with gravel, the steepest bit is to have some railway sleeper steps, the natural amphitheatre below the tamed dump could become a small communal

retreat - one resi fancies a boules pitch - and an audit of the local flora and fauna is to be made.

The project is one from which the whole community can benefit in the end and maybe the Parish Council and Gloucestershire Rural Community Council would care to look at their budgets and see if they, too, might stump up some dosh for the dump?

Meantime, any Rodborough cits who fancy avoiding the current heavy traffic on Rodborough Hill should nip down the Avenue and walk into Stroud via the dump path.

And any who have memories of the allotments and the path as they once were, are invited to pass them on to the Dump Gang (tel: 758 188) who - as they've done for their own patch - will put them to good use.

## Rodborough Revel Revived

Rodborough may not be thought of as a place to look for traditions, but scratch the surface and you will find many - existing and extinguished

May is often thought of as a time of revels - bonneted milkmaids skipping daintily around the Maypole. This idea of Merrie England was built up at the end of the 19th century and the beginning of the 20th, and is thought by some to be a 'cleaning-up' of older, pagan activities; but in all

Continued on page 2



## LOCAL NEWS &amp; VIEWS

# Putting the Poetic Boot in

Stuart Butler uses football, poetry and history to speak to Stroud

Stuart Butler, the writer, poet and teacher who likes living in Rodborough - and Coronation Road in particular - is one of the founders of the Stroud Football Poets.

Formed to celebrate the national game via poetry, the Football Poets quickly found success and gigs at the County Ground in Swindon and in the foyer of

the Festival Hall followed.

Stuart, however, was keen for them to take on drama as well and their musical play, *No Pasaran!*, was acclaimed at the 1998 Stroud Fringe Festival.

Dedicated to the Gloucestershire volunteers who fought with the International Brigade in the Spanish Civil War, Laurie Lee was one of those depicted in its cast of real

and imaginary characters.

Lee's words and the stirring music, song and dance alone made it worthwhile but *No Pasaran!* was much greater than the sum of its parts.

A bit like the Beatles, in fact, and the audience at the Sub Rooms was, reputedly, even bigger than the one which attended the Fab Four's historic gig there in '62 or whenever.

Stuart and team mates did not rest on their success either and followed it with *Poor Beggars in Red* about the production of the army's redcoat cloth by local weavers. Now Stuart is busy researching the life of the Nailsworth poet, W H Davies, who spent the last years of his life in Rodborough. Davies' *Autobiography of a Super-tramp* was a cult book in

the 60s and gave its name to a phenomenally successful rock band. The poet himself, will be the subject of the Football Poet's next production intended for the Festival in 2001 but Stuart's own poetry is pithier and more political than the Supertramp's.

Born in the "town built on steam", Swindon, another of his poster poems tells how he saw:

*The ghosts of five generations of my family,  
tramping through the tunnel,  
From village and from London,  
in search of work, wage and pride.  
I smelt the steam and oil and gas and smoke,  
I heard the factory hooter echo around the Downs,  
I tasted the soot in the cold spring April air;  
and my mother picked up a piece of ballast as a keepsake,  
and touch stone.*

## GARDENERS' QUESTIONS

BBC Radio Gloucestershire 104.7 FM & 1413 AM

invite you to a recording of Gardeners' Questions at

### Rodborough Pavillion

on Thursday 1 June 2000. Doors open at 7pm

Presented by Reg Moule and Mark Cummings, with our panel of experts on hand to solve all your horticultural headaches

## Rodborough Revel Revived continued from page 1

likelihood is probably the figment of an overactive imagination.

However, some activities from this period are still in practice. The Gastrells School Country Dance Group often perform Maypole dances - not every year, but certainly most. Gastrells have also created a custom of building a May Bower during the first week of the month. The pupils and staff go foraging through the school grounds for branches and twigs in flower or in bud, and build them into an arch around the school entrance.

Until the early 1970's, Stroud Salvation Army band used to march from the town centre up to and around Rodborough Fort on the first Sunday in May. This would regularly draw a large crowd. Another religious procession was always held on Whit Sunday, when the members of the Choir of St. Mary Magdalene marched from the Prince Albert to the top of the church tower, where they sang hymns.

A somewhat less religious tradition lasted from 1980 to about 1992 when Stroud Morris Dancers would climb to a flattish piece of land in front of the Fort and dance at

dawn on May 1st. This again is attributed by some to be of Pagan origin but, in fact, performing Morris at dawn on May Day was invented earlier this century by dancers in Oxford, who would dance after the choristers had sung from one of the college towers.

Stroud Morris abandoned the Fort as a performance venue in favour of Coaley Peak - too many ankles were twisted while climbing in the dark. But after great discussion, they felt that they would like to find a venue closer to Stroud, so propose to dance in one of the small car parks at the top of Rodborough Common (well away from houses) starting at 5:15am on Monday 1st May for about one hour. This marks the beginning of their dancing season, and is followed on the day by breakfast at the Prince Albert, a coach tour to Stow and a performance at Chalford Village fete. So, after a break of 8 years, a Rodborough tradition is coming home.

If any reader knows of other Rodborough traditions, new or old, please write to *The Commoner* at the address shown on page 3 or email them to [commoner@capers.co.uk](mailto:commoner@capers.co.uk).

## Where there's a wheel there's a way

In a supposedly green town, Stroud cyclists are notable for their absence. But all that could change if the Stroud Cycle Campaign gets its way.

Ever tried cycling along the Golden Valley between Stroud and Chalford and decided the traffic is too much to bear? Ever got tired of waiting for the bus or frustrated at finding a parking place and all because you felt that cycling to town was simply too dangerous? Well, there is something you can do about it.

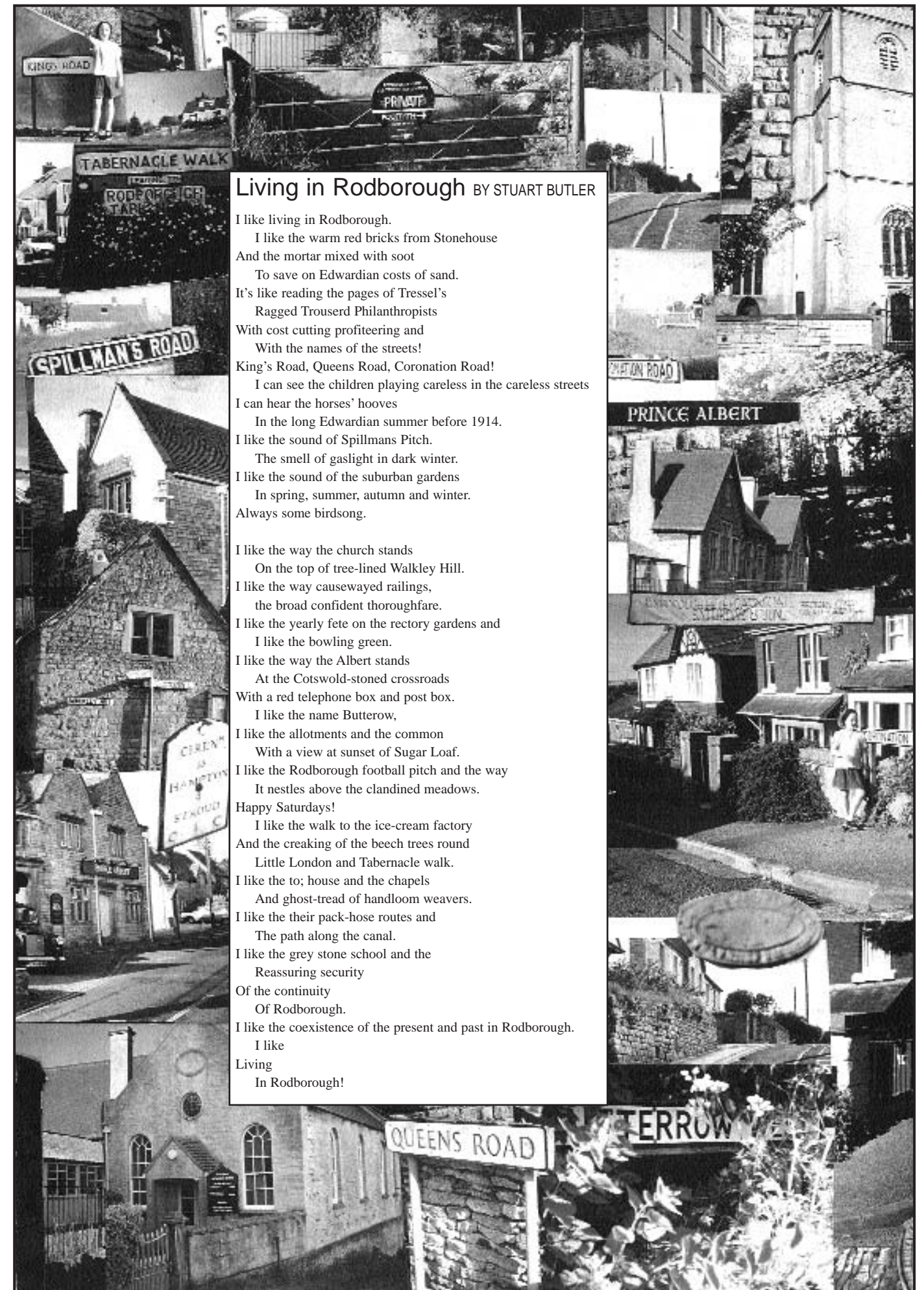
On Sunday 25 June the Stroud Cycle Campaign\* as part of the Millennium Festival of Cycling 2000 - will be cycling back and forth along the A419 in support of a safe Stroud-Chalford cycle route and urging all cyclists to turn out in sufficient numbers to show the demand for such is overwhelming.

More news of this and other cycling initiatives in the June issue of *The Commoner*. Watch this space.

\*Further info from Sheila Booth: 01453 762233.



Don't look now Councillor - I think we're being followed



## Living in Rodborough BY STUART BUTLER

I like living in Rodborough.

I like the warm red bricks from Stonehouse  
And the mortar mixed with soot

To save on Edwardian costs of sand.

It's like reading the pages of Tressel's  
Ragged Trouserd Philanthropists

With cost cutting profiteering and  
With the names of the streets!

King's Road, Queens Road, Coronation Road!

I can see the children playing careless in the careless streets

I can hear the horses' hooves

In the long Edwardian summer before 1914.

I like the sound of Spillmans Pitch.

The smell of gaslight in dark winter.

I like the sound of the suburban gardens

In spring, summer, autumn and winter.

Always some birdsong.

I like the way the church stands

On the top of tree-lined Walkley Hill.

I like the way causewayed railings,

the broad confident thoroughfare.

I like the yearly fete on the rectory gardens and  
I like the bowling green.

I like the way the Albert stands

At the Cotswold-stoned crossroads

With a red telephone box and post box.

I like the name Butterow,

I like the allotments and the common

With a view at sunset of Sugar Loaf.

I like the Rodborough football pitch and the way

It nestles above the clandined meadows.

Happy Saturdays!

I like the walk to the ice-cream factory

And the creaking of the beech trees round

Little London and Tabernacle walk.

I like the to; house and the chapels

And ghost-tread of handloom weavers.

I like the their pack-hose routes and

The path along the canal.

I like the grey stone school and the

Reassuring security

Of the continuity

Of Rodborough.

I like the coexistence of the present and past in Rodborough.

I like

Living

In Rodborough!

# News from the Parish Pump

A year of improvements - and more to come

During the last year your Parish Council has been very active, reports the *Chairman*. In particular, it has continued the Parish Paths Partnership with the GCC. It also has played its part in maintaining some of the paths and a contract has been let to keep them clean each month. GCC have been busy replacing stiles with kissing gates. The Council has also sited two poop-scoop bins, one in Church Place and the other in Castlemead Road, again to help in keeping the Parish clean and tidy.

The Amenities Committee has been particularly active and all facilities provided for parishioners, including the three play areas, the skate board ramp and the basketball court, were well used. The playing field was well used by local children and the Youth Football Club. A programme of improvement to the playing surface will be carried out shortly.

Grass cutting continued and the standard of work has improved over the course of the year. Work being carried out by contractors for the Water Authority had very often interfered with grass cuttings when verges were crossed or material tipped on them. The provision of skips has been appreciated by parishioners. These were provided at the Pavilion, Fishers Way and the Bear and were extended to Dudbridge Meadow, Dudbridge Hill and Oak Drive.

The Committee is investigating ways of extending leisure facilities in the parish.

Donations to Local Voluntary bodies: the criteria for making donations has been altered by the Finance Committee. The result has been that 17 local voluntary bodies received donations from the Council at a presentation evening held in the Pavilion. Refreshments were provided by the

Chairman and the event was very well received.

The Council has offered to purchase books up to £50 for each of the Primary Schools to mark the Millennium.

Parish Councillors' Training Course: the majority of Councillors have attended two training evenings with Councillors from other parishes. They found the evenings very valuable and interesting.

Planning Committee: the Ward Planning Committee is meeting monthly to consider applications as a Committee. This will be for a trial period. The Committee has produced a planning policy which can be adapted/adjusted when circumstances demand.

Pavilion: bookings for the Pavilion have increased during the year and income now exceeds expenditure, so that further improvements can be considered.

Police: we have been advised that there will be four officers and a sergeant based at Rodborough Police Station. Offending

behaviour continues, with a small number of people committing most of the crime in the Parish; when they are caught and put away, crime figures drop dramatically. All members of the public are urged to be vigilant.

Highways: with the Water Authority contractors being very active in the parish the condition of roads and the disruption to motorists has been considerable.

Work has begun on the pedestrian crossing in Dr Newtons Way, and work is also planned for the bottom of Rodborough Hill. Traffic lights are planned this year for the junction of Bath Road and Dudbridge Road.

A traffic calming scheme for the Butts will be carried out in mid-August.

The 40mph speed limit

across Rodborough and Minchinhampton Commons has been brought in and new signs erected. A cycle/pedestrian link near Sainsbury's has been completed.

The latest obstruction to the A46 will continue until after Easter, and the GCC will be carrying out curbing work and tarmacing either following the last contractors or in August.

Street lighting is to be improved at the junction of Kitesnest Lane and Hill Close; the work is to be carried out by the end of April.

Finally, I would like to thank, on behalf of the Parish, all Members of the Council for their dedication and hard work. We do have a vacancy for a parishioner to be co-opted onto the Council. The work is

## Hot from the Cop Shop

Since 1st March this year a total of 38 crimes in the Rodborough Parish have been reported with 19 of them being detected, giving a 50% detection rate.

Now that British Summer Time is with us and the weather is getting better, many of you will be working in the garden, sometimes away from the house. If this is the case, then you are urged to secure your property as best you can and, of course, lock your garden equipment away when you have finished with it. This is a time of the year when criminals are able to dispose of garden equipment easily and all we can do is to make things as difficult as possible for them by not leaving temptation in their way.

PC Wyatt  
Rodborough Police Station

## Home Grown

**Rodborough Glebe Allotment Assosiation.** Plots are now available for Rodborough people keen to grow their own vegetables. Whilst the Association has a healthy membership, new plot holders are welcome. Satisfaction, exercise and better tasting veg guaranteed!  
**Contact Bob Tiley on**

Pavilion Car Park Butterow West	Fisher Way Car Park	Bear Of Rodborough Car Park *	Dudbridge Meadow	Dudbridge Hill	Oak Drive
3 - 6 March <u>w</u>	1 - 3 April <u>w</u>	2 May <u>AW</u>	24 - 27 March <u>w</u>	24 - 27 March <u>w</u>	14 - 17 April <u>w</u>
23 - 25 May <u>SDC</u>	3 - 5 June <u>w</u>	4 July	21 - 24 July <u>w</u>	23 - 26 June <u>w</u>	
7 - 9 July <u>w</u>	28 - 31 July <u>w</u>	5 Sept		22 - 25 Sept <u>w</u>	
10 - 13 Sept <u>w</u>	6 - 8 Oct <u>w</u>	7 Nov	24 - 27 Nov <u>w</u>	15 - 18 Dec <u>w</u>	15 - 18 Dec <u>w</u>

w Skips from Hales - Mr A Watson ( 01453 832257 ) Delivered PM Collected AM

SDC Skips from SDC - Mrs Sinton ( 01453 754424 ) Delivered PM Collected AM

AW Skips from Hales - Mr A Watson ( 01453 832257 ) Delivered 9.00 AM Collected 9.30 AM the following day

\* By kind permission of Mr C Ashby, General Manager of The Bear of Rodborough.

# Bother at Bownham

Brian Kelly, Head Teacher at Bownham Park School, argues that his school should be included in the 'Inclusion Project'

In 1994 the Audit Commission carried out a survey of Special Education within Gloucestershire. One of its findings was that there were significantly more children being educated in special schools in this county compared with the national average.

My immediate response was - so what? Perhaps the rest of the country is wrong. There is no evidence to prove otherwise. However, the Education Committee embarked upon an 'Inclusion Project' which slowly reduced the numbers on roll at all the Area Special Schools i.e. Alderman Knight in Tewkesbury, Belmont in Cheltenham, Dean Hall in the Forest and Bownham Park School in Rodborough.

In November 1999 the Education Committee

produced a plan which hinted strongly that all the Area Special Schools would eventually be closed, and as a result, the Special Schools Protection League (SSPL) was formed in order to ward off any such closures.

During the many months that followed, the Local Education Authority held numerous meetings to endeavour to persuade people that the inclusion of children with moderate learning difficulties in a mainstream setting would be beneficial and better than remaining in a special school.

The campaign against closures, led by Graham Barton, Chairman of the SSPL (who can be contacted on 01453 765839) became more intense and support has increased over the last few months to quite stupendous levels. It's present target

is to gather as many people as possible to sign an Official Objection document. This can be obtained from Graham Barton or from Bownham Park School.

By closing Special Schools, parental choice is virtually being taken out of the provision available and will put pressure on mainstream schools' resources and increase class sizes.

The most puzzling aspect of the 'Inclusion Project' is why it is that only those 'special' schools which cater for pupils with learning difficulties are being closed when the county persists with a specialist provision for the most able? If 'inclusion' means all pupils should be catered for in comprehensive schools, why are grammar schools not to be closed too?

## WHY THE COMMONER?

Four years ago to the month, a questionnaire was distributed to 2,200 households in Rodborough.

Its purpose: to gather information for the Parish Appraisal. One of the questions was: "Does the village/parish require a newsletter or magazine?"

Of 3,200 cits who replied, 58% answered "yes", 15% answered "no" and 36% sat on the fence - er dry stone wall.

When the appraisal was published in 1999, it recommended the production of a magazine which would be "a community project involving as many people as possible".

The *Commoner* certainly is a community project - it has been launched with a grant from our Parish Council - but, so far, it has involved very few people. The grant should enable its first three issues to be free and those who've produced this issue hope it will always be so.

Whether it continues to be free, however - or even continues - will depend on the degree of support it gets and more importantly *deserves*, from its readers, advertisers and contributors.

Rodborough Common is what makes our Parish so special and the Appraisal revealed just how special Commoners think it is. But if their heads are in the clouds, their feet - as their answers showed are firmly on the ground.

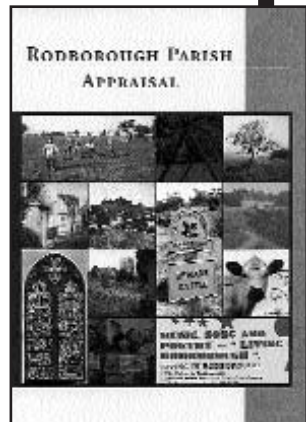
To the question: "What is most important to you about this village/parish?" 65% answered "the environment", 27% "the community" and 46% answered "yes" to the question: "Would you like more information about Local Leisure Activities?".

Pretty obvious, then, what The *Commoner* ought to be about. And if enough cits contribute, it will be so.

We intend it to be a monthly and your news stories, reports, features, letters, or whatever, should be sent in any medium to **42 Hill Close Estate Lightpill GL5 3PG or commoner@capers.co.uk**. With your support, *The Commoner* will be - whatever else - uncommonly useful.

Thankyou to all those who took the time to contribute to this issue of *The Commoner*.

**GOT A VIEW FROM RODBOROUGH? IF you want the rest of the Parish to know what it is, send it to *The Commoner*. Copy deadline for June issue is Monday 15th May SO DON'T DELAY.**



## EDUCATION EDUCATION EDUCATION

# Hogg's headache

Alan Hogg, Rodborough School's head, tells a story of achievement, heartbreak and ultimate triumph

I first took up post as Headteacher at Rodborough School in September 1987 and became immediately aware of the poor conditions of the buildings.

The financial climate at that time in education, and Gloucestershire in particular, was such that there had been little or no input of money for any regular maintenance of schools. All repair work was strictly on an emergency or last minute basis.

Rodborough School was no exception to this. Although we were, and still are, thankful to the Victorian craftsman who built such a solid and long-lasting structure during

1900 and 1901, we were still painfully aware that both the levels of comfort and facilities on offer were woefully inadequate for teaching and learning nowadays.

During the next few years some improvements were made to the school. The old toilets were demolished and a new block spectacularly craned in over the rooftops, a new wildlife area was created and the administration block was resited in a different HORSA (Home Office Replacement School Accommodation) block. However, the general fabric of the school was slowly deteriorating around us. In

1998 the backlog repair and

maintenance bill was over £150,000 and climbing. Although many visitors commented on the charm and interest of working in a living museum piece, they were unaware of the difficulty of coping with leaks, draughts, potentially dangerous wiring and an antiquated heating system. The BBC, however, was delighted to record 'Cider with Rosie' in the school for the authentic sound of wooden floors and glass screens.

Salvation came in October 1998 with the criteria for the latest round of 'New Deals for Schools' bids. Money was on offer to schools which needed to -



## Life was a Lottery for Alan Hogg

b. internalising toilet facilities

c. remove old HORSAs blocks

This described Rodborough School to a tee and with only ten days to submit the bid, I went to visit our M.P. David Drew, contacted the development department at

Gloucestershire County Council and together we formulated an initial plan to re-develop the school on three floors.

The bid was successful and we were awarded £282,545 to fund the project. This figure was eventually raised to over £360,000 by a superb

fundraising effort of £5,000 by the Friends of Rodborough School and additional input from Gloucestershire County Council.

Beam Construction from Cheltenham was awarded the contract. The local firm of R.D. Lewis completed the electrical work and Gloucester Road Forge of Stroud supplied literally tons of steelwork to support the new floor.

In the winter of 1999 the school 'moved out' into temporary accommodation and the workmen moved in. The school was gutted and slowly, like a phoenix, a new school grew inside the original shell. The staff, governors and pupils were occasionally allowed inside to see the work progressing but it was not until late October, when everything was finished, that parents had their first glimpse of what had been happening. I will never forget the gasps of delight and joy from those mums and dads who, like me, were amazed at the quality and extent of the facility that had been provided.

Our official opening was planned for February 2000 and everything felt wonderful. Then, during the night of 21st December, a new pressure reduction valve failed and released thousands of gallons of water into the new school. The sight of the fire brigade wading through several inches of water in the classrooms was heartbreaking. It was immediately clear that we had lost thousands of pounds worth of books and equipment and that although we could not ascertain what structural damage had occurred, we needed a lot of re-decoration.

The decision was taken

to close the school for two days at the beginning of the spring term, but to go ahead with the February opening. There followed six weeks of manic preparation, but on 10th of February the new 'Rodborough Community School' was officially opened by Christopher Awdry and the invited guests toured the school praising everything they saw. However, for me the highlight of the day was the open-evening when hundreds of ex-pupils, ex-staff, friends and neighbours from Rodborough all descended on the school and, in what can only be described as a party atmosphere,

celebrated the wonderful new school.

The past fifteen years have been extremely demanding for education in this country and no school has been spared the delights of each new government initiative.

A crumbling infrastructure has only added to this burden. Rodborough School has now thankfully been released of one of its major headaches and has a teaching and learning environment fully equipped and fit for Primary Education as we enter the twenty first century. It is a school of which we can all be very proud.

# Jane Arnold's nursery school

1979 saw the start of the Jane Arnold Nursery School in her home at Millfarm Drive, Paganhill.

The nursery grew and soon the numbers increased so much that it had to find new premises. So, in 1989, the nursery moved to the Old Endowed School, Walkley Hill. The building lends itself very well for its use as a nursery, it is well established and has a maximum number of 26 children at each session.

The sessions are

structured and organised with a wide range of activities. These activities and experiences are planned to enhance the child's development and learning with plenty of opportunity for free play and choice. The dedicated staff are all experienced and qualified.

Children start at two and a half years up to school age, opening Mon and Thurs mornings, Tues, Wed and Fri all day 9:00am - 3.30pm. There is also lunchtime supervision if required.

It is a very safe haven for little ones as the park is also nearby (no roads to cross).

If you would like to know more about the nursery in its friendly, warm environment, please ring Mrs Sandra Weaving on Stroud 753045.

## Rugby Club Rascals Mother & Toddler Group

Rugby Club Rascals is celebrating its tenth birthday at the end of this year. Based at Stroud Rugby Club we are open on Wednesday and Thursday mornings from 10.00am to 12.00pm, we provide a safe, stimulating and social environment for pre school children from

0 to school age and their mums.

There are a wide variety of toys from rattles to bikes as well as creative activities such as play-doh, sticking and gluing.

If you would like more information phone Sharon Ashenford on 01453 750124.

# Rodborough Tabernacle Playgroup

Rodborough Playgroup has been running since 1964.

Our aim is to provide a safe, stimulating and affordable environment for children aged from 2yrs 9 months until they go to school.

We hold five morning sessions a week running from 9:15am to 12 mid-day with the Wednesday session set aside for children going to school the following academic year.

The last few months have seen many changes for the playgroup. Sadly, our play leader of 9 years, Wendy Wager, decided it was time to leave for pastures new and also her able play assistant Eileen Roberts left to join the staff at Rodborough Community School.

How were we going to replace two such capable pillars of the playgroup?

Well we were delighted to welcome Louise King as our new play leader and Sarah Sinton as her deputy, both are N.N.E.B qualified.

Louise came to us with glowing

references and an impressive track record from Haresfield and as they themselves said, their loss is most definitely our gain. Sarah has lots of experience and the children warm to her quiet nature.

Since then the playgroup has gone from strength to strength despite financial setbacks due to new government legislation on holiday pay - which is crippling a lot of local playgroups. With the support and hard work of parents, committee and staff we have overcome these hurdles and are now reaping the benefits.

Playgroups are non-profit making and all incomes, including fundraising, go on running costs. This year we have been lucky enough to receive a Millennium Award For All lottery grant and are having great fun replacing some of our worn-out furniture and equipment (much of which has been around since some of our parents attended the playgroup).

We were also greatly helped by an award from Rodborough Parish Council, which has gone towards replacing the Tabernacle's flooring which will benefit not only us but also the Beavers and Guides who use the premises.

Louise has been introducing lots of new ideas with her storyboards and her dance and movement sessions, all backed up with the lovely messy things children love to do.

For more information contact Louise King on the above number or call in for a visit.

We are holding a "messy play" session on May 9th where you can come and join in the activities.

**Rodborough Tabernacle,  
Tabernacle Walk, Rodborough.  
Stroud, GL5 3UJ  
Contact: Louise King  
01453 758179 (am)**

# Captain Ruth in Furlough Drama

Her enthusiasm and energy makes her a hard act to follow

After two years at the helm of the Rodborough Mother and Toddler Group, Ruth Little is desperate to find someone - or a rota of someones - to take over.

She's been on the bridge and taking her own son, Andrew, there for over two years but she wants out. It's not a case of abandoning ship: Andrew is off to nursery school, she needs to be home, and the time is right, she says.

Her enthusiasm and energy makes her a hard act to follow and perhaps that's why she's still awaiting a volunteer to succeed her.

The group meets in the old Endowed School - next to the Parish Church - from 10-12 every Thursday but it's a four hour morning for Ruth. "Hard work but



I've enjoyed every minute and it's very rewarding" she says "and if one mum feels it's a bit much to take on, maybe a group of mums could take it in turns?"

The endowed school, an unsinkable building with massive stone walls, was built sometime before 1700 and the one-time classroom on the ground floor, where the group meets, is a well-

equipped and airy space where toddlers can let off steam in comfort and safety.

However, the group will be rudderless when the September term starts, unless someone comes forward. Maybe there's a mum or dad reading this who used to take their children there and now has a bit of spare time and - better still - a bit of experience?

If you're such a person and you feel like having a go, why not come along during the Summer term (11th May-20th July) just to see how Ruth manages week in, week out.

As she says, no one's indispensable but somebody has to open up, clear up, and keep things going in between. If that somebody is you, give her a