

Strange But True

By F. H. MacArthur

In a quiet valley in Hertfordshire, Eng., there stands in a beautiful grove of oaks and elms, the little Norman Church of Avenbury — the haunted church.

On a number of occasions music has been heard issuing from the empty church, and persons living near there also speak of seeing the phantom of a beautiful lady moving about in the shadows of the church.

The first recorded date for this strange sweet music is September 8, 1896, when the vicar's wife, Mrs. Wilson and three other persons, all hearing it at the same time.

On the date of September 5, 1919, when a man employed in buying horses for the first World War heard music as he passed along the road.

The Rev. E. H. Shepherd, who was vicar of this church from 1897 to 1931, scoffed at members of his flock when they brought up the subject of heavenly music and of ghosts.

But one day as the minister walked in the vicarage garden he heard music coming from the direction of the church and naturally concluded that Mrs. Smith, the woman who cleaned the church, was allowing her daughter to amuse herself at the organ while she performed her regular duties.

Immediately the vicar investigated. He was amazed to find the church door locked and nobody could be seen through the window.

He pondered over the strange affair for some time before he wrote: "I have advanced many theories but not one of them will hold water. I just can't explain the music now."

Then Mrs. Smith who cleaned the building said that one evening she saw a funeral attended by a number of persons. The church wardens backed up Mrs. Smith's statement, claiming they'd seen a similar vision but recognized the congregation as a company of monks.

A happier event concerning the haunted church is told by a woman who lived in the vicinity in these words: "My husband and I were coming home from a visit. The time was 11 p.m. It was snowing hard which made walking rather difficult.

"As we drew near the old church I remembered the porch leading to the main entrance and asked my husband if he should go in and wait and see if the storm would let up. It was Christmas night. No sooner had we stepped across the threshold of the porch than we heard many voices in conversation. The church seemed full of happy human sounds, though we could not make out a word they said. We tried the door but it was locked. The place was in darkness, but the sounds came distinctly from the inside of the church."

The bells of the church were said to toll of their own accord when a vicar died or when tragedy affected the parish. Be that as it may, the records show that strange things happened at the church of Avenbury.

One day the vicar had a seizure while in the church and had to be taken to his place of residence on a stretcher. Ten days later he died, and strange as it may seem, the bells started tolling about nine

o'clock on the morning the vicar passed away.

No other vicar came to Avenbury. The parish was later divided between three neighboring ones; the church was dismantled and the bells sold to a London church with the odd name of St. Andrew's-by-the-Wardrobe.

A few years back one of the old sexton's sons passed through the picturesque valley. He found the haunted church had become a scene of squalor and desecration. Vandals had smashed the windows. The exterior was a sorry sight. Instead of the former exhortation: "Whosoever thou art who enters this church, leave it not without one prayer to God for thyself, for those who minister and those who worship here," there was now posted this building: "Anyone entering this building does so at his own risk."

You have just been reading the story of the haunted church of Avenbury, in Hertfordshire England, which was built in medieval times. During the London blitz the church was destroyed, and if you passed the secluded valley today you would not find one stone to indicate that a church had ever stood on the spot. Gone, too, are the bells whose tolling told of departing bodies on their last journey to the grave. Yet there are persons living in Avenbury today who are so deeply impressed with what they saw and heard that the memory of the haunted church has never grown dim.

Elected President of Canadian Physicists

WINNIPEG, (CP)—Dr. K. L. Kerwin of Laval University, Quebec, was elected president of the Canadian Association of Physicists for 1954-55 at the annual meeting here. Dr. B. W. Sargent of Queen's University, Kingston, was named vice-president.

The association is meeting in conjunction with the Conference of Learned Societies.

Anti-polio Injections in Halifax

HALIFAX, (CP)—The first of 5,000 Halifax school children to receive new anti-polio injections were treated yesterday.

The vaccinations are the first in three stages to test the effectiveness of a vaccine discovered by Dr. Jonas E. Salk last year.

About 600,000 children in the United States and Canada are receiving the injections.

\$1,458,500 Allotted for Halifax Spending

HALIFAX, (CP)—Halifax city council Tuesday night approved capital spending of \$1,458,500 for 1954, including a \$100,000 grant for purchase of a new airport site.

MARITIME WILDLIFE CONVENTION TO STUDY NRA HUNTER SAFETY PLAN

Great interest is being taken in the announcement that the delegates attending the Maritime Wildlife Convention at Pictou Lodge, June 26th and 27th, will consider the National Rifle Association Hunter Safety Plan which has been so successful in many of the United States. Convention plans call for this important matter to be presented at the meeting on Saturday evening, July 26th, and an outstanding speaker will describe how the plan was introduced and the success it has met with in the State of New Hampshire.

Many questions have been asked regarding the plan and about the principles under which it operates. Briefly, it requires all young hunters to pass a uniform test before being given a license. To enable them to do so, experienced gunners must volunteer to become instructors under the plan and agree to teach the beginners.

Since its inception in 1871, the National Rifle Association of America has been vitally interested in the field of firearms safety education. It is convinced the educational approach is the most effective method of reducing the number of gun accidents which occur in the hunting field. Records show that the vast majority of hunting accidents are the result of either lack of knowledge or failure to apply such knowledge.

The instruction and testing was done on a voluntary basis by NRA members, who had been certified as qualified NRA Hunter Safety Instructors. Since the plan has been in operation, the number of accidents involving young hunters in New York State has been considerably reduced.

Great interest in the problem of hunting safety exists throughout the entire country. The National Rifle Association, in consultation with units of the National Education Association, has revised its Hunter Safety Course for acceptance on an international basis. The course is designed for use in any community where public-spirited citizens desire to apply to the problem of hunting accidents the same principles of safety education which are now applied in automobile driver education courses. It is designed to benefit inexperienced hunters regardless of age. Its success will depend entirely upon the sincere efforts of instructors and sponsors who are willing to volunteer their services in order to reduce hunting accidents.

A hunting accident prevention programme has been the objective of the Maritime Wildlife Federation since its inception some four years ago. While Prince Edward Island has been remarkably fortunate New Brunswick and Nova Scotia are faced with a steady toll of hunting casualties each year. The Maritime Federation of Fish and Game Associations will have achieved a

NRA Program

Instruction in marksmanship and safe handling of firearms has been a prominent activity of the NRA for more than eighty years. The specific application of safety instruction to hunters had its beginning in New York State in 1949. In order to reduce accidents in the hunting field, a law was enacted which required that young hunters who had not previously been issued a hunting license receive instruction in the safe handling of firearms before being issued their first hunting license.

The instruction and testing of these applicants was to be done by State Game Protectors. During the first year under the new law, it was indicated that the burden imposed on the game protectors was one which they could not absorb and still have adequate time to devote to conservation law enforcement. In 1950, the National Rifle Association was designated to give instruction and issue the certificates required by law.

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