

Minety Village Hall – A Peep At It's Early History

12 May 2021

By David Miles, from the archives and memories of my late father, Gordon Miles 1926 – 2020.

Our families' connection with the hall begins with my father's grandfather, Havilah Miles, who was born on Aug 24th 1868 when his parents lived at Lower Moor Minety. He was the second son of John and Elizabeth Miles. John being one of a succession of Minety carpenters dating back to at least the start of 19th century.

By the 1891 Census, his father has already died and his elder brother Charles has left the village to work in the carriage and wagon section of the GWR works in Swindon. Charles rose to a senior position and his retirement in the 1930s made the front page of the Swindon Evening Advertiser.

<i>Head of House</i>	<i>Elizabeth Miles</i>	<i>age</i>	<i>47</i>
	<i>Havilah</i>	<i>"</i>	<i>22</i>
	<i>Lousia</i>	<i>"</i>	<i>20</i>
	<i>Arthur</i>	<i>"</i>	<i>15</i>
	<i>Joseph</i>	<i>"</i>	<i>12</i>
	<i>John</i>	<i>"</i>	<i>5</i>

My father told me Havilah took over the family business while still quite young and the census confirms this. He had a long life of responsibility.

These words on Havilah appear in Len Manner's book "A Countryman Looks Back" published in 1973 (Ref2)

"The Miles family have for generations carried on the trade or craft of Carpenter, Wheelwright, Sawyer, Builder, etc. One Jesse Miles and another William Havilah being also organists at the church. Havilah William, another Miles born in Minety in 1869 was also a wheelwright, builder and decorator, etc. in the village and was sexton at the church for over 40 years.

There are many visible reminders of his work in the Minety, at least ten houses including Silver Street House, where he lived for most of his married life. He it was who carried out the work of the underpinning the church tower and the alterations to the interior of the church already mentioned.

(It should be said the house building and the underpinning of St Leonards was accomplished in conjunction with the Jones family, who were skilled masons).

By 1923 Havilah was married to Stella Miles (Nee Read), with four sons and one daughter. He had, assisted by his sons, become a successful master builder. The houses mentioned by Len Manners were mostly rented out, that being a common practice at the time, the majority were situated on land purchased from Paul Family Estate. The remainder of that land is now the village playing field. Havilah had also purchased Swillbrook Farm (which he rented out) and had more recently acquired land from the Hawkins Family on the western edge of lower Minety. The present village hall stands in the NE corner of that land.

Things were going well, but in 1923 tragedy struck when his wife Stella, still only 51 years old, was struck down by a local resurgence of the 1919 influenza pandemic. Unlike our current pandemic the Spanish Flu overwhelmingly killed the under 65's.

Len Manners recorded:-

In the late twenties he gave a piece of land centrally situated for the erection of a Village Hall. Until then the only places suitable for entertainments were the two schools, one at each end of the village. The hall was officially opened in 1930 by the late Mrs. Cecil Gouldsmith then of Minety House, and although it was a wooden structure it lasted until 1968 when again through the generosity of many local people (here should be mentioned the names of Major and Mrs Crocker, the present owners of Minety House, and Mrs Jonas it was possible to erect a new hall of more permanent structure.

A brass plaque next to the kitchen in the current hall (moved from the original hall) records Havilah's gift in memory of his wife Stella.

It was a source of some amusement to my father that the erection of the new hall was not awarded to Havilah and his sons but another Minety builder who are still operating in the village: H V Cook.

I was also told the 1930 structure was prefabricated and not necessarily new, so it did well to last until the late 1960s by which time kitchens had been added to the west side and a car park to the rear.

From its earliest days the hall has been in continual use. The photographs on the following pages chronicle the changes to the building and some of the activities.

Minety Village Hall

In aid of the Village Hall
Redemption Fund, and to
celebrate the 75th Birthday
of Mr. George Hucks,
(to whose energies the provision of the Village Hall is chiefly due)

A Whist Drive AND Dance

will be held in the Hall

On Tuesday, Sept. 1st, 1931.

To which you are cordially
invited, and it is hoped you
will attend and bring as many
Friends as possible so that the
Hall may be crowded.

ADMISSION 2/6

INCLUSIVE OF REFRESHMENTS

Please buy your Tickets early.

G. HUCKS.

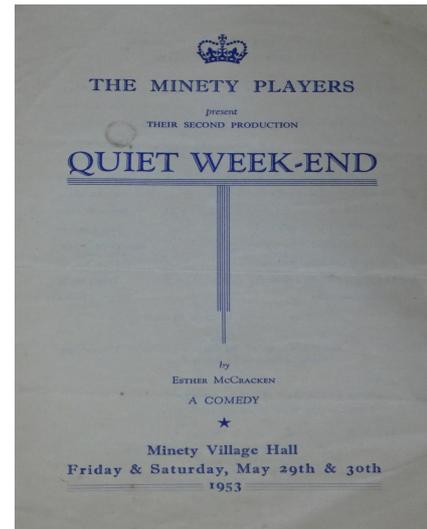
An early fund raising social



The original wooden building as erected by HV Cook. Note the stove pipe



1930s – A Play: 'Prison Lane' - Havilah's son Phil Miles is the policeman at the far right.



CAST
(IN ORDER OF APPEARANCE)

Sam Pecker (<i>occasional handyman</i>)	FRANCIS MILES
Mary Jarrow	VERA MARTLEW
Sally Spender (<i>a hoyden</i>)	MAUREEN ROBINSON
Mildred Royd	EMILY BEASANT
Arthur Royd	PHILIP MILES
Bella Hitchins (<i>maid to the Royd's</i>)	GRETA NEWMAN
Marcia Brent (<i>The Royd's married daughter</i>)	...	ANGELA MILES
Miranda Bute	DELIA BURTON
Denys Royd (<i>the Royd's son</i>)	JOHN BARLOW
Adrian Barasford	ROBERT MARTLEW
Jim Brent (<i>Marcias' husband</i>)	JACK YOUNG
Ella Spender (<i>Sally's mother</i>)	DORIS MILES
Rowena Marriot	JUDITH CLOVER

Play produced by JACK BEASANT

ACT 1 : The living-room of the Royd's cottage in Throppleton.
A Friday afternoon in September.

ACT 2 :
SCENE 1—The same as Act 1—Saturday afternoon.
SCENE 2.—The same about six hours later.

ACT 3 :
The same as Act 1 and 2 —Sunday Afternoon.

GOD SAVE THE QUEEN

THE MINETY PLAYERS

★

President of the Society: MR. GEORGE TAYLOR
Chairman: MR. W. G. ROBERTS
Secretary: MRS. P. MILES
Treasurer: MRS. J. BEASANT

★

Producer: JACK BEASANT
Stage Manager: GORDON MILES
Electrician: TONY BAUGH
Property Master: DR. R. MARTLEW
Prompter: MISS M. MOSS

★

THE SOCIETY is desirous of obtaining premises for the purpose of making and storing scenery, electrical equipment etc.

IF ANY MEMBER OF THE PUBLIC has a barn or shed which they could spare for this purpose, will they please communicate with us.



OUR THANKS

To all who have helped towards the success of this production, by lending furniture and property and by helping back stage and front of the house etc.

Our Thanks also to our audiences for their support.

The 1950s Minety Players. (The photo is most likely from a different play to the programme). The producer of 'Quiet Weekend' and his wife were the Lower Minety postmasters for many years.



Early 1960s. Minety WI. The tall lady at the rear is Mrs Nichols, famous for her huge teapot.



1960^s PARTY GIVEN BY MINETY W.I. FOR ELDERLY PEOPLE

The Reverend Windsor Grace is standing at the rear



The 1960s – now with kitchens the west side



Photo taken in the 1990s of the new hall which was built built around 1968. To minimise disruption to social activities the erection of its initial frame commenced over the top of the old hall

