

# BRADWELL HISTORICAL SOCIETY



## NEWSLETTER NO. 3 MAY 2021

### Introduction

Together with a reminder about the May Zoom meeting and some background information on the subject matter of the talk this month's Newsletter will present a letter of thanks from Mary Oldfield. There is also a piece written by Chris Furness on the Poor Law and Bradwell. In addition there are three interesting snippets taken from Seth Evans' *Methodism in Bradwell*.

### Up-coming event

The next talk for the Society will take place at 8 pm on Tuesday 18<sup>th</sup> May via Zoom. The speaker will be Paul Hadley and his subject will be 'Transport Pioneers in and around Derbyshire'. You will receive an email before the day giving you details of how to join the talk. All you will need to do in preparation is to make sure you have the Zoom app. on your computer, laptop, tablet or phone.

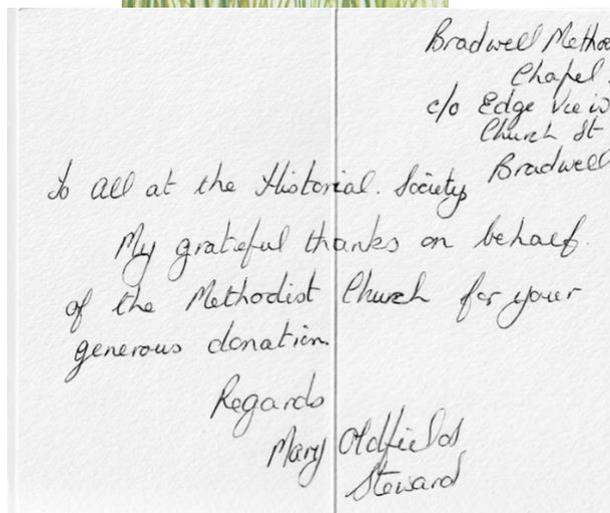
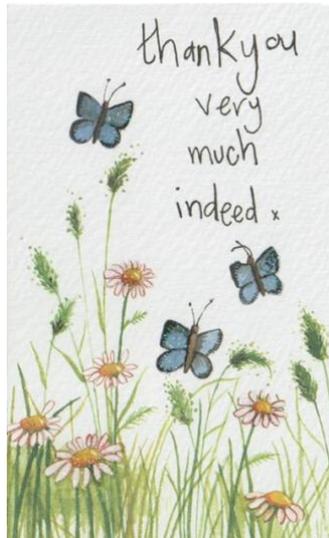
Paul Hadley will start his talk by outlining the commercial, rather than the military, purpose of some early roads in the county. He will then introduce some Derbyshire-born engineers. James Brindley, the canal pioneer, who was born in Tunstead. Benjamin Outram, another canal builder but also the developer of early waggon-ways such as the Peak Forest Tramway, came from Alfreton. William Jessop may have been born in Devonport but moved to Ripley and gave us the Cromford & High Peak Railway. George Stephenson moved from the North East to Tapton Hall, near Chesterfield, in his later life.

The Society has agreed to have a marquee on Bacca Plac for the 2021 Carnival day on Saturday 31<sup>st</sup> July.. We will have for sale publications by the Society and a 'stick the pin in the map of Bradwell' competition. We shall be asking for volunteers to help.

In the evening on Tuesday 11<sup>th</sup> May Hope Historical Society will be hosting a Zoom session when the subject will be Samuel Fox. If you wish to be invited to join this session let me know and as soon as I have the details for joining I will pass them on to you.

## Correspondence

The Society made a donation of £210 to the Methodists towards the renovation of the doorway into the undercroft in the Methodist Hall. The doorway had fallen into disrepair and the Society stores a number of its important items in the undercroft. We received this card of thanks from Mary Oldfield the Steward for the Chapel



## BRADWELL AND THE POOR LAW

Parish responsibility for the poor was essentially a Tudor notion, first proposed by Henry the Eighth, just before he dissolved the Monasteries and seized the assets of the Guilds. Henry was not well known for a caring attitude towards the poor so we must assume that his apparent conversion was a pre-emptive move to head off a possible popular rebellion against the loss of the benefits which poor people received from the monastic system and the Guilds. However, poverty increased 1,000 fold in the late 16<sup>th</sup> century and the first Poor Law Act was passed in 1601 - firmly attaching responsibility for the poor of a parish to its property-owning residents. Each parish was obliged to provide a Poorhouse for the infirm and elderly and find work for the able-bodied. Anyone refusing such work could be sent to prison. The Act was later refined and improved by the first Queen Elizabeth and became

robust enough to continue well into the 1930s, by which time the Poor Law Workhouse had become a feared institution.

Parish Councils were obliged to appoint 'Overseers for the Poor' who collected Poor Rates from property owners and distributed the proceeds to the needy. During the 17<sup>th</sup> century, Poor Houses gradually evolved into Work-houses where the able bodied unemployed were required to work in return for their board and lodging - until 1782, when Outdoor Relief was established as an alternative. From then until 1834 most beneficiaries received relief in cash, food, clothing, etc. rather than accommodation.

Bradwell's first workhouse was near the Samuel Fox public house, but in 1819 new premises were purchased on Hugh Lane – now re-named Rose Lea Cottage and, rather appropriately, owned and occupied by our (at the time of writing this)) current Parish Clerk.

The full records for Bradwell Workhouse from opening to closure in 1841, are in private hands but I've been given access to them. As Seth Evans noted, they do appear to record a cosy system which treated its subjects with care and compassion and was quite liberal with payments to the poor - and expenses for their Overseers. This was particularly evident at Overseers meetings when substantial amounts of ale and food were consumed and charged to account. Quite often some of these expenses were disallowed by Poor Law inspectors – only to reappear on the next statement. This generous attitude, reflected nationally, resulted in escalating poor rates, a ratepayers revolt and the reforming Poor Law Amendment Act of 1834. This Act did away with Outdoor Relief and resolved that anyone seeking relief must enter a parish workhouse. It also ordered the creation of large centralised 'Union' workhouses, which could accommodate all the designated poor from the parishes within a Union of Parishes. Bradwell thus became part of the Bakewell Union in 1839 and any of its residents seeking poor relief had to agree to permanent removal to the Bakewell Workhouse, when it opened in 1841, and submit to its harsh and often brutal regime. There would be no more village administered benevolence or daily visits to or from friends and relatives. The comforting workhouse had become a feared institution into which people disappeared – mostly never to return to their former communities. The Bradwell workhouse was then closed down but the parish still had to pay the costs of its parishioners who were removed to the Union workhouse and provide members for the Union Board of Guardians. However, greater efficiency and, understandably, fewer applications for poor relief reduced the overall cost to the parish – which no doubt pleased the ratepayers.

Early 20<sup>th</sup> century welfare reforms gradually reduced national poverty and the Bakewell Workhouse connotation was softened by renaming it 'The Bakewell Public Assistance Institution' in 1913. In 1930 responsibility for the Institution passed to the District Council and after the Bevan Report and the formation of the Welfare state, in 1948, it became the NHS Newholme Hospital and so remains to this day.

*This piece was first published in the Bradwell News by Chris Furness who kindly gave us permission to reproduce it here.*

### **Snippets from *Methodism in Bradwell***

1. As was common practice with books such a *Methodism in Bradwell* lengthy lists of the names of worthies who had donated to the building or renovation of the building were included. Thus the name of Adam Morton appears on p 38 as having contributed a guinea to a building fund. Seth comments:

Adam Morton who lived in house where Mr Tanfield's shop now stands on the Hills, kept a small pack of hounds on what is known as "Hunter's Green". He had such a passion for hunting that when his own wedding ceremony was commencing in Hope Church, hearing the sound of a huntsman's horn, he bounded out of the church in quest of the pack and the marriage had to be solemnized on a subsequent day.

2. It is said that when performances requiring a stage were to be mounted in the bridge-side Sunday School in the mid nineteenth century and later (empty) beer barrels were rolled down from the Bull's Head Inn and planks were laid on top of them. Seth tells that in about the year 1850

There was a most alarming occurrence during the afternoon service at the School Anniversary. Besides a strong orchestra, there were 81 female scholars on the platform, and it was during the singing of a chorus that the platform fell with a fearful crash.

The scene may better be imaged than described. It was expected that many of the scholars would be seriously hurt if not killed, but fortunately there was only one girl injured, Alicia Middleton (Mrs Robert Barker), who is still living. The service of course came to an abrupt termination, but the evening service was held as usual.

In this case, with such a large number involved, the event described must have been in the Chapel rather than the Sunday School.

Seth Evans also records that

In the bosom of a soldier slain at the Battle of Waterloo in 1815, there was found a Bible, in which was written "A present from Bradwell Sunday School".