

Under a Good Shady Mango Tree: a Missionary's Tale

In searching through the 1917 newspaper cuttings for Bradwell I came across a brief mention that Lieutenant Victor Stanley Goodyer RFA had been mentioned in dispatches by Douglas Haig. In an attempt to find where in Bradwell Victor had lived I looked at the 1911 census returns. His name did not appear in the list of Bradwell residents but he was shown as living in Dronfield with two of his brothers, he was aged 26 and had been born in Jamaica. Working forward in time from 1911 the records show that in October 1914 he was attached to the Royal Naval station *HMS* President 2. His service number was AA314 and rating AB. Now *HMS* President 2 was what was known as a 'concrete frigate'. This was a shore base (this one was beside the Thames) that played an administrative role for example as a pay master for sailors with special jobs in London. Then why did the newspaper report indicate he was in the Royal Field Artillery (RFA)? His serial number suggests that he was assigned to one of the few Anti-aircraft Batteries protecting the capital. These batteries were manned either by sailors or soldiers. He may even have crewed the 6 pdr gun mounted on the Admiralty roof to protect the capital from Zeppelins! During the war he moved around being attached at one time to the Royal Naval Air Service and was commissioned Second Lieutenant. At the same time he was clearly remembered his connection with Jamaica because as late as 1939 he was recorded as arriving back at Avonmouth on his return from that island. By now he was a company director living in Sheffield.

By looking in the other direction at the earlier census of 1901 we find Victor Stanley's connection with Bradwell because we see him listed as living on Netherside with his father Samuel, mother two brothers and a sister. Samuel's occupation is given as Wesleyan Methodist minister. In fact Samuel was minister in Bradwell from 1898-1902. Samuel's career both before and after 1901 can be found in the gateway website called Mundus that contains the records of missionaries from this country. The biographies associated with these missionaries are fairly extensive and here we find of the Goodyer family association with Jamaica. Samuel was with the Methodist Missionary Society in the island from 1873 until 1886. The Society came into being in 1813 following a meeting at the Wesleyan Methodist Chapel in Leeds known as 'Old Boggart House'. This assembly was instigated by Rev Dr Thomas Coke who sadly died the following year.

Mundus traces Samuel Goodyer's association with the church. He was born in Bulkington, near Coventry in 1846. His parents were devout Calvinists, but he became connected with the Wesleyan Methodist Chapel in Warwick Lane, Coventry. Joseph, his father was a ribbon maker by trade. By 1861 Samuel was an apprentice tailor still in Coventry. But in 1870 he became a candidate for ordination and for the next three years he found himself training in the Wesleyan Theological College on Richmond Hill in Surrey (now closed). The 1871 census shows him as a 25 year old Theological Student (an intrusive 'a' had been inserted into his surname!) in the College. On his graduation in 1873 he was sent by the Methodist Missionary Society to Jamaica. By 1876 he had been joined by Elizabeth Ellen Ireland and they were married in Mandeville, Jamaica on 9th August of that year. Elizabeth's occupation in Coventry in 1871 was that of 'ribbon blocker' suggesting that she met Samuel via his ribbon-maker father Joseph.

In the missionary files there exists a copy of a letter written by Samuel in 1880 describing his service in the early years in Jamaica:

'At the end of 1877 I began preaching in a very neglected district, called Clifton and in a short time gathered together a few of the people, and formed them into a class, giving the first tickets under a good shady mango tree. We put up a School-chapel, and now have a very hopeful cause, with more than fifty members, and upwards of twenty on trial. In 1879 I established week-day preaching services in a district named Claremont. This has led to the building of a small wooden School-chapel, the formation of several classes, and establishment of a Day-school, and also a Sabbath-school. This place gives fair promise of becoming an important station'.

(‘Tickets’ were issued, usually quarterly, to members of the church as a testimonial as to religious conduct. The ‘trial’ referred to was a probationary period prior to full membership, not in a court of law!)

If we look at a partial record of the baptisms conducted by Samuel Goodyer we can get an idea of the building skills he would have been able to draw on in the erection of the school-chapel. This comes from the information concerning the occupations of the fathers of the baptised children.

- *Hollar, Robert Jennings, son of William Jennings & Elvira Vilaure Hollar, carpenter, res Port Royal, b 4/8/1874, bap 5/3/1874 by Samuel Goodyer,*
- *Ashbourne, Henry Jones, son of William & Georgiana Ashbourne, labourer res Port Royal, b Aug 1874, bap 9/28/1874 by Samuel Goodyer*
- *Brown, Thomas Henry, son of Robert C. Barton & Ann T. Brown, plumber, res Port Royal, b 7/11/1874, bap 8/13/1874 by Samuel Goodyer.*

It seems that by 1886 however Elizabeth Goodyer’s health was giving cause for concern and the couple and their three sons (including Victor Stanley) and two daughters returned to England. Part of Elizabeth’s problems might have been a difficult pregnancy because a daughter (Rita) was born immediately after their return to Coventry. A year later another son (Allan) was born as Samuel’s ministry took him and his family to Salisbury. As was then the practice in the Methodist Church the family moved on at about three yearly intervals (today Methodist Ministers are still to a degree peripatetic). They moved first to (Great) Torrington (Devon 1889-1892), then to Cadishead (outside Salford 1892-1895), on to Padiham (west of Burnley 1895-1898) until they arrived in Northallerton (North Yorkshire) in 1898. The following year the death of their 13 year old daughter Rita may have had something to do with the family moving early on to Bradwell in 1899. Here their eldest daughter Florence aged 23 joined the family. There seems to have been little by way of a documentary record of the Goodyer family’s sojourn in Bradwell although on page 73 of Seth Evans’ 1907 book *Methodism in Bradwell* Samuel’s name is listed as one of the ‘ministers who have laboured in the circuit’. Samuel Goodyer by then living in Millhouses is also listed as a subscriber to the 1911 *Bradwell Ancient and Modern*.

The rest of Samuel Goodyer’s ministry can be given briefly: to Withernsea (East of Hull 1902-1904) then as a supernumerary minister at Longsight, (Manchester 1904-1905). He was a supernumerary missionary to France (1905-1907), supernumerary minister at Broomhill, Sheffield, (1907-1915), minister at City Road, Manchester, (1915-1916) and finally minister at Earlsdon near Coventry for the rest of 1916. He died in Coventry on 7th October 1927, Elizabeth having predeceased him by 6 years. His effects were left to his housekeeper who was Coventry-born Florrie Elizabeth Jackson. She received £444 12s 11d.