

The Parish Church of St Barnabas, Bradwell
Notes on the history of the above in this its centenary year
Charles Bradwell Ashton, 1968

In ancient times and indeed up to the latter half of the of the 19th century there was no Anglican church or chapel in Bradwell.

The people of Bradwell were included in the vast and unwieldy parish of Hope, which was one of the largest parishes in England stretching as far as Fernilee and Shallcross (near Whaley Bridge). There was a church and priest at Hope in Saxon times, but of any assistant clergy there is no mention as such, as far as I am aware, at the time of William the Conqueror's Domesday Book in 1086, so the population of the parish could only have received very scant attention to the spiritual needs, owing to the physical impossibility of the priest to visit them properly. There were no real roads in the parish until the early 19th century and transport would be by means of horse-back or pack horse (not forgetting Shank's pony of course).

With the advent of the 19th century things began to improve. Roads were made, bridges built and, (most important of all) the Church began to come out of its 18th century sleep and general apathy. Several factors contributed to this awakening. After the Act of Uniformity of 1662, some of the ejected Presbyterian clergy (notably the Rev William Bagshawe of Glossop and others) set up their own places of worship in various parts of the Peak District of Derbyshire. The first place of worship in Bradwell to be built was the old chapel in Charlotte Lane, and the form of worship would of course be Presbyterian.

This declined in later years, and became what is known as Unitarian worship.



Chapel in Charlotte Lane top of Smithy Hill

Then in the latter half of the 18th century the Methodists came into being. Methodism was inaugurated by two brother priests of the English Church, John and Charles Wesley. They were motivated by the fact of the very low apathetic state of the church in the 18th century. This was when the squire-parson state of affairs was at its worst, and Methodism as a result had a great success in awakening the people to the need for spiritual things, as well as the material things of life. John Wesley paid two visits to Bradwell in the 18th century and a great many people became Methodists as a result, although of course they were still married, baptised, and buried at the parish church at Hope. They also had to go there for Holy Communion, but only on rare occasions did this happen in those days. The first Methodist Chapel was built here in 1807. Initially, before that, they had had to meet in private houses. However, in spite of all this, there were still people who were very much concerned about the lack of facilities for Anglican worship in Bradwell and in 1865 a committee was formed for purpose of raising money and support generally towards the building of a church of their own in the village. (Bradwell being the most populous village in the Hope Valley, with a population of 1400.)

A site was eventually purchased from the then owner of the Hassop Estate, Colonel Leslie, for the sum of £76-17-6, and as soon as the financial position justified it, a contract was entered into with Mess^{rs}. Ash & Clayton of Sheffield for the building of the church (*Architect: C. C. Townsend*).

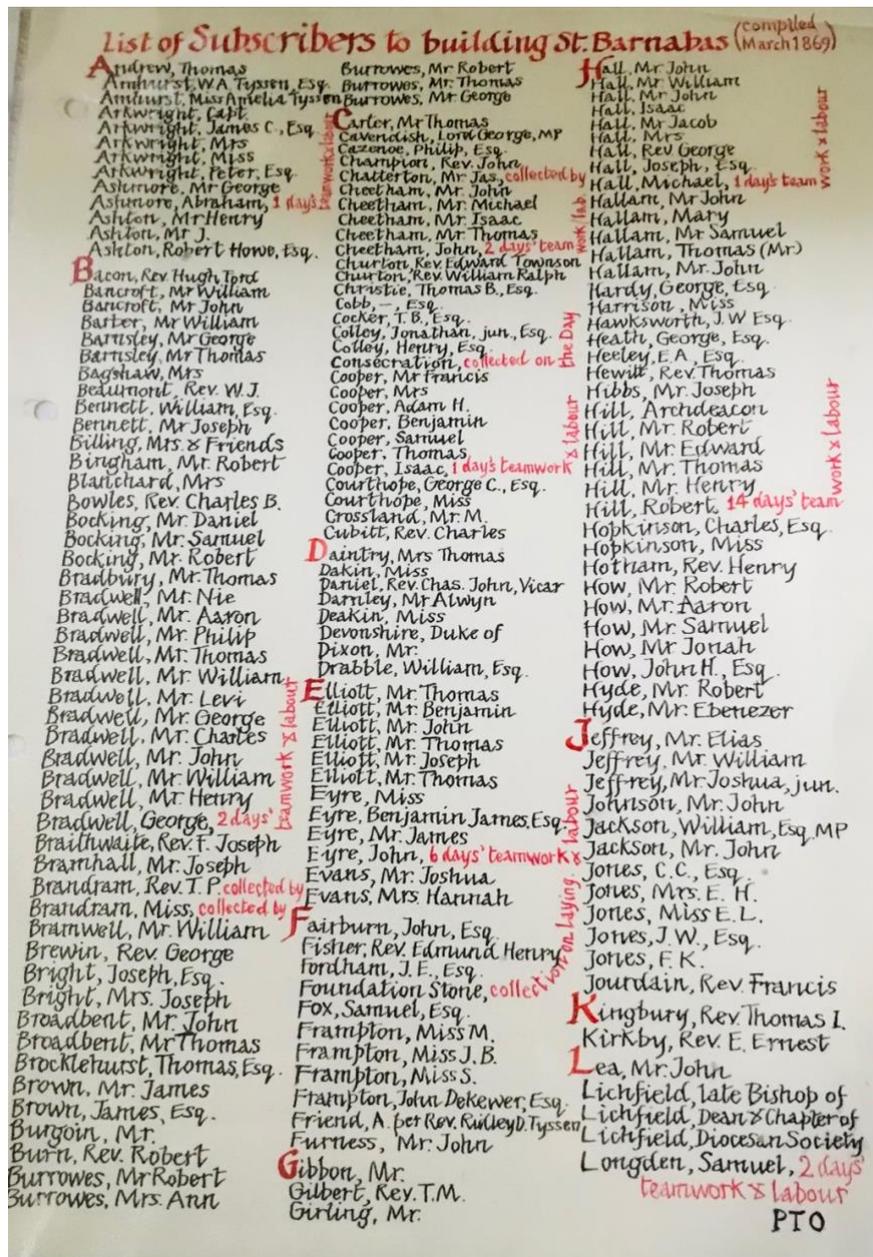
This was commenced in 1867. The foundation stone with the date 1867 will be found above the plinth under the East Window, on the outside, not, as some people think, at the base of the tower, that being the foundation stone of the tower, which was built 20 years later in 1888. The contractor's estimate for the building of the church was £1650. The architectural design for the church was a copy of the Early English Gothic style (more or less). The East lancet windows being the most faithful replicas of that style of architecture. The stained glass in the lancets represents the Fall and Redemption of man, and was given by the vicar of Hope, the Rev. Cha^s J Daniel, who was also a very generous contributor to the building fund. He also presented the church with a silver communion service. The collection on the day of the foundation stone laying was £9-14-10. The church was completed by the early autumn of 1868, and was consecrated by the Bishop of Lichfield on October 22nd (?) of that year. The collections on that day amounted to £26-0-0 a quite fabulous sum, when one compares the value of money then and now (*in 1969 £1864*). (A labourer's wage in 1869 was exceptionally good at £1-0-0 per week.)



The church before the addition of the tower

The various fittings furnishings of the church were largely gifts from many sources. The Rev. Ralph Benjamin Somerset who was a prominent man at Cambridge University was instrumental at procuring for the new church the pulpit, pulpit light and chancel screen. He also gave the Sedilia and the book desk for the pulpit. An alabaster memorial to this benefactor (who also contributed a considerable amount in money) is fixed to the north wall of the sanctuary.





The organ, built by Brindley's of Sheffield was a gift from Sir W Jackson M.P. for North Derbyshire, who also was a generous contributor to the building fund, and later to the endowment fund for a new parish. It must be noted in passing that Bradwell did not become a separate parish until 1875 , seven years after the consecration of the church, the first vicar being Rev. W.J. Webb, who was previously the curate-in-charge.

The seating of the church was at first in the form of chairs (rush bottomed, I believe), and the lighting was by means of oil lamps which I

well remember as a child. The church bell was placed in the bell-cote (still there) over the chancel arch. The site of the bell-cote corresponds with the ancient bell cote sites of the sanctus bell, still to be seen in some mediaeval churches (Tideswell, for example). The marble cross, now fixed in the north wall behind the font, was the original altar cross. The present altar cross, and two massive candlesticks were a present from a former vicar Rev. George Bird MA who was vicar here from 1893 to 1913. He was also the donor of the fine massive brass eagle lectern and stand in 1899. He was a good poet and musician, and several of his poems and hymn tunes are still in existence..

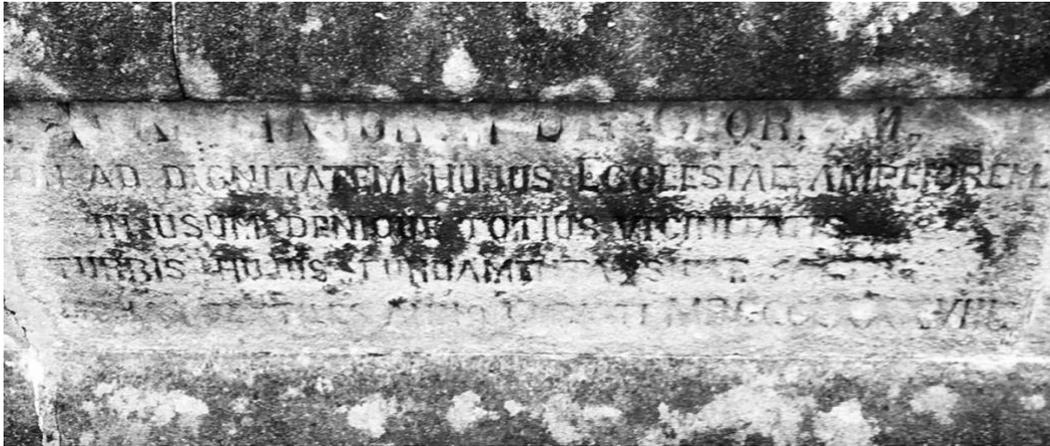
The wall plaque depicting the last supper was given in memory of Mr Cheetham Fletcher, a veteran of the First World War. *Next to the Last Supper is a Carved a First World War Memorial by Jack Williams described in Pevsner's Buildings of Derbyshire as 'An affecting naive carving with soldiers in trenches, others going over the top beneath exploding shells, and angel above).*



Carving by Jack Williams

The processional crucifix was presented in memory of George Fletcher (son of Mr J Fletcher) who lost his life at the Battle of Arnhem in the Second World War. The rood beam and figures were left to the church by Mr Cha^s C Hallam, who was a very good and faithful worker for the church and Sunday School for a great many years.

The oak altar and surrounding panelling were the work of the Hunstone family of wood-carvers from Tideswell.



The tower was built in 1888, as be seen from the Latin inscription cut into the foundation at the base of the tower. (*The architects were Naylor and Sale of Derby*) and the contractor was Mr A Hill of Tideswell who, along with his brother Hedley, was noted for church building all over North Derbyshire. Hedley Hill carved the gargoyles which are built in near the top of the tower, and provided a niche over the North Door to accommodate a figure of St Barnabas, our patron Saint. The figure is still required. (I suppose the funds ran out before it could be carved.) The tower is a replica of the decorated Gothic style of the 14th century. The peel of eight bells were gift of Mrs F Jeffery a niece of Samuel Fox who was a very generous benefactor to the building of the church and vicarage, also the endowment of the new parish in 1875. The bells were hung in 1938 during the incumbency of the Rev. H Keely, and the tower was strengthened to take the extra weight and strain of the bells.



The bells awaiting installation. Rev. Keely and Cheetham Fletcher on the right

The clock was paid for by money left by Benjamin Giles who was a well-known hawker and pedlar in the Peak District. He lived in a very humble

circumstances, and at his death left money to Mr Wass of Matlock, a wealthy lead mine owner who had befriended 'Old Benny' during his life time and Mr Wass' *executors* returned the money to Bradwell for the purpose of providing a clock. *They also* had a headstone and railings erected round the grave of 'Old Benny' (which is near the side gate



Old Benny's grave and railings

leading into the vicarage grounds). The clock was made by Mess^{rs} John Smith of Derby. It was fitted with a chiming and striking apparatus, and these were connected up to the new bells in 1938. A device was incorporated at the time to knock off the chiming and striking from 11 pm to 5.25 am to avoid interruption of public peace during those hours. Below is a list of the Vicars of Bradwell since the parish was formed in 1875.

Rev. W J Webb	1875 - 1881
Rev. H J Dudley	1881 - 1893
Rev. G Bird MA	1893 - 1913
Rev. A J Cowen	1913 - 1916
Rev. S C Moseley BA	1916 - 1923
Rev. J R Donald	1923 - 1936
Rev. H E StJ S Keeley	1936 - 1944
Rev. E N Kemp	1944 - 1947
Rev. G L Vigar	1947 - 1952
Rev. P G Williams	1952 - 1956
Rev. V Crabtree	1956 - 1966
Rev. R S Caney	1966 -

(The words in italics and the pictures were added in 2021.)