

The Parish Church of St Barnabas, Bradwell  
Notes on the history of the above in this its centenary year  
*By Robert S Caney & Charles Bradwell Ashton, 1968*

In ancient times and indeed up to the latter half of the of the 19<sup>th</sup> 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 (CBA), 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 19<sup>th</sup> century and transport would be by means of horse-back or pack horse (not forgetting Shank's pony of course).

When Rev. Henry Buckston was appointed Vicar of Hope, in 1870 he

Found the church nine miles from a railway station, and the parish itself a hundred miles in circumference. Even Birchinlee was then in the Parish of Hope, and they could sit in the Palace Hotel in Buxton, and be within the the jurisdiction of the parish church.

So it was that the people of Bradwell who wished to worship in the Anglican tradition had to be content to walk to Hope – entering the churchyard through what is still referred to as the Bradwell Gate. With the advent of the 19<sup>th</sup> century things began to improve. Roads were made, bridges built and, (most important of all) the Church began to come out of its 18<sup>th</sup> 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 18<sup>th</sup> 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 18<sup>th</sup> 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 18<sup>th</sup> 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 September 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.

A site was eventually purchased from the then owner of the Hassop Estate, Colonel Charles Leslie of 'Fettornear in the County of Aberdeen, a Colonel in the Army and a Knight of the Royal Hanoverian Guelphic Order'. The sum paid was £76-17-6, and as soon as the financial position justified it, a contract was entered into with Mess<sup>rs</sup>. Ash & Clayton of Sheffield for the building of the church (*Architect: C. C. Townsend*). The tender for the work was £1,117. The 'extras' for the building amounted to £145.15s making the total for the work £1,262.15s. The wall round the church yard cost £60.0.0d – and other expense connected with the building and the furnishings brought up the total cost to £1,800.

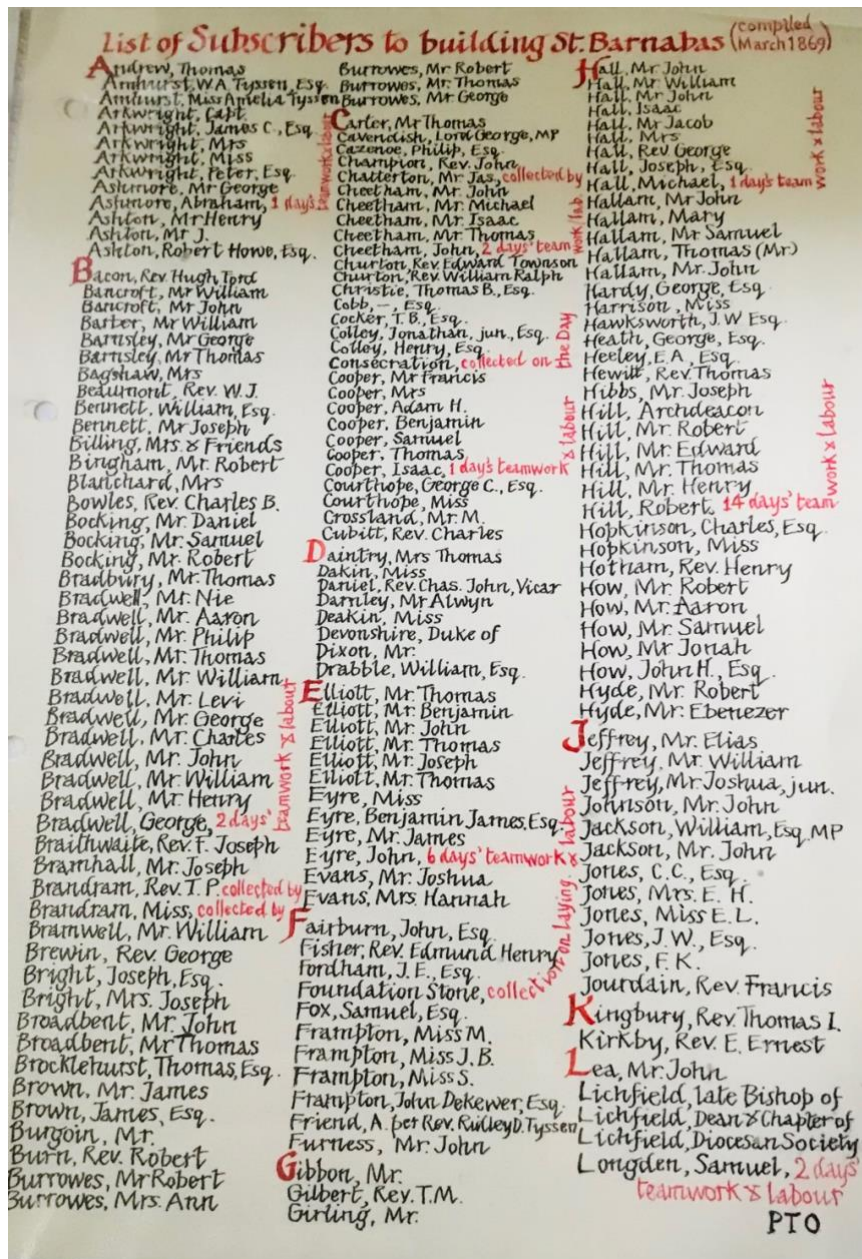
The work was commenced in 1867. The foundation stone with the date 1867 will be found above the plinth under the East Window, on the outside, not, as some people think, at the base of the tower, that being the foundation stone of the tower, which was built 20 years later in 1888. A newspaper report of the laying of the foundation stone said

On Friday June 21<sup>st</sup>, 1867 the principal stone of a new church at Bradwell was laid by W. Jackson, Esq. M.P., in the presence of a large concourse of the inhabitants of the village and neighbourhood. Though this place has a population of 1400, and was until recent times the third in population in the County of Derby, it never had a church of its own.

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<sup>s</sup> J Daniel, who was also a very generous contributor to the building fund. He further presented the church with a silver communion service. The collection on the day of the foundation stone laying was £9-14-10.

A window can be seen in the south wall of the nave. This depicts the Good Shepherd and was made by Burlisson and Gryll (*this must have been one of their first commissions because the company was founded in 1868*) and was given in memory of Rev. William James Webb. In 1912 another stained glass window, depicting Charity was given and dedicated 'To the glory of God and in sacred memory of Frances Amelia Bradwell daughter of Benjamin and Fanny Somerset June 24<sup>th</sup>, 1840 – March 16<sup>th</sup> 1909'. This is also on the South wall of the nave. Seven windows of the nave were renewed in 1946 to the memory of John Wright Ashbury, by his wife.

Many skilled men were involved in the work of building: and many local men gave 'team-work' and labour, for example we find in the Balance Sheet of Church accounts for 13<sup>th</sup> March, 1869 'Ashmore, Abraham, 1 day's team-work and labour; Bradwell, George, 2 days' team-work and labour' etc etc.

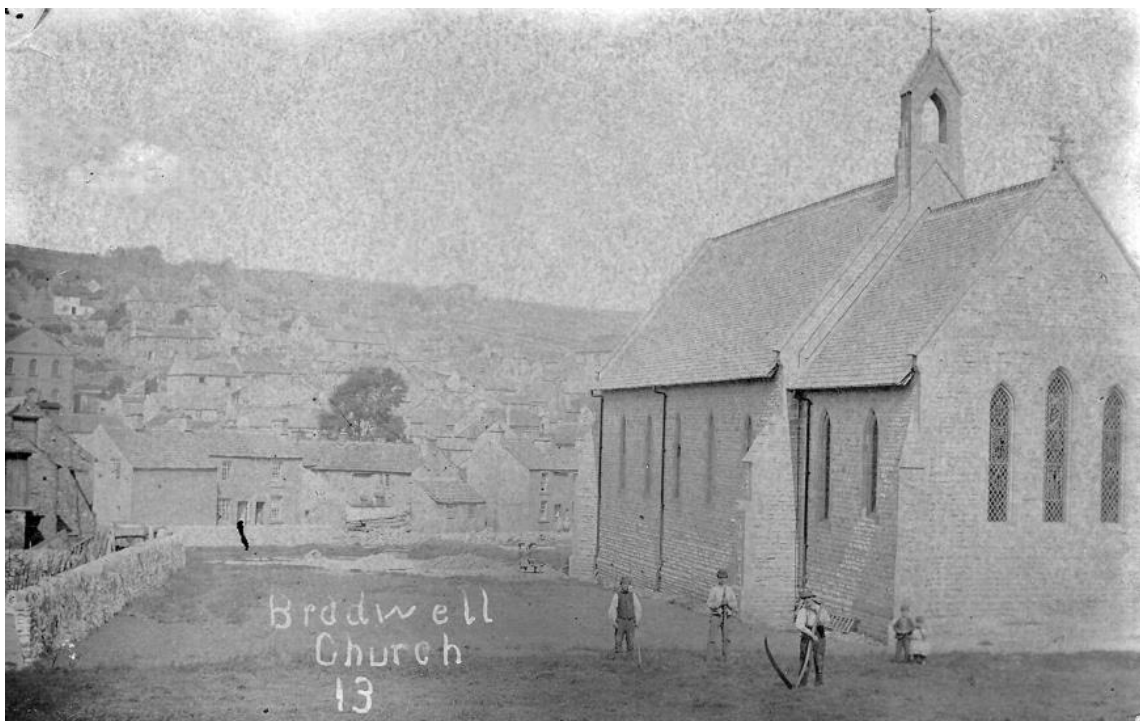


The church was completed by the early autumn and on 22<sup>nd</sup> October was consecrated; on the same day the churchyard was also consecrated. The service was conducted by the Right Reverend, Bishop Trower, Special Commissary of the Lord Bishop of Lichfield. The Diocesan Bishop himself was also the Bishop of New Zealand, and was away in that land at the time. The service was well-attended and 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 first Priest in Charge of the new church, then a Chapel-of-Ease to the mother church of St Peter's, Hope was the Rev. William James Webb, one of the curates of the parish.

In 1875 the new church became the centre of the newly made Parish of Bradwell as was reported in the *London Gazette for August 10<sup>th</sup> 1875* the parish was said to contain (and still does)

All of that southern part of the parish of Hope in the County of Derby and in the Diocese of Lichfield, wherein the present incumbent of such parish now possesses, the exclusive care of souls which is comprised within and co-extensive within the limits of the following subdivisions of the said parish to wit the township of Bradwell, the township of Grindlow, so much of the township of Wardlow as is situate in said parish of Hope, the hamlet or township of Great Hucklow, the hamlet or township of Little Hucklow, and the hamlet or township of Abney and Abney Grange, and the lordship or township of Hazlebach, all which said subdivisions of the parish of Hope aforesaid when taken together from one whole and coherent tract of territory.



*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 MA, Fellow and Dean of Trinity College, Cambridge, and a native of Bradwell (born here 1834) was instrumental in procuring for the new church the pulpit (*made partly from two desks given by his college*), 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.

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 (CBA) 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 Aumbrey and Credence table were given by Mrs. H. C. B. Bowles in 1961, in memory of her husband. The same lady presented the picture of 'Madonna and Child' in 1968.



The wall plaque depicting the Last Supper was given in memory of Mr. Cheetham Fletcher, a veteran of the First World War. The Oak Carving 'He died to Save' was the work of Jack Williams and following his death was given by Mrs. Catherine Williams in memory her husband. *(Jack's carving is 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*

A ciborium (holds the Eucharist) was presented by the Mother's Union in memory of Joan Alice Crabtree in August 1966.

The wrought iron gates in the churchyard were erected in 1965 by Walter S. Daniel in memory of James and Elizabeth Daniel and Hilda Hall.

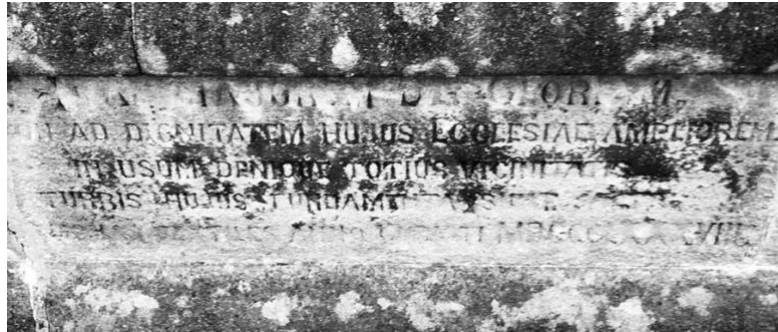
In 1967 the Bishop's Chair was presented by Mr. and Mrs. J. Ashbury and the Lantern Light over the west door was given by Miss P. Waller and Miss M. Wynn.



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<sup>s</sup> 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:

AD MAJOREM DEI GLORIAM

Necron ad dignitatem hujus Ecclesiae ampliorem in usum denique totious vicinitatis turris hujus fundamenta sunt jacta

Pridie Nonas Sextiles

Anno Christi MDCCCLXXXVIII

(Finally all the foundations of this tower were laid near to the larger dignity of this church for use on the day of August.

In the year of Christ 1888)

The original plans for the tower were to erect a tower with spire and the estimated cost was £ 552. 11. 4d but this must have been considered too much because only the tower was built. (*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 (CBA) suppose the funds ran out before it could be carved. A pity when one thinks how little extra it would have cost. The tower is thought to be a replica of the decorated Gothic style of the 14<sup>th</sup> century.

The first two graves in the church yard had to be moved during the building of the tower and can now be seen lying by the tower. These were for Jane Maltby Bradwell and her brother George Edward. Jane was six years old – her brother was eighteen years old. They died in the Bradwell Fever that affected the village in 1868 and 1869.

The peel of eight bells with chimes to the clock, and electric ringing apparatus were gift of Mrs. Fanny 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 also paid for by Mrs. Jeffrey.

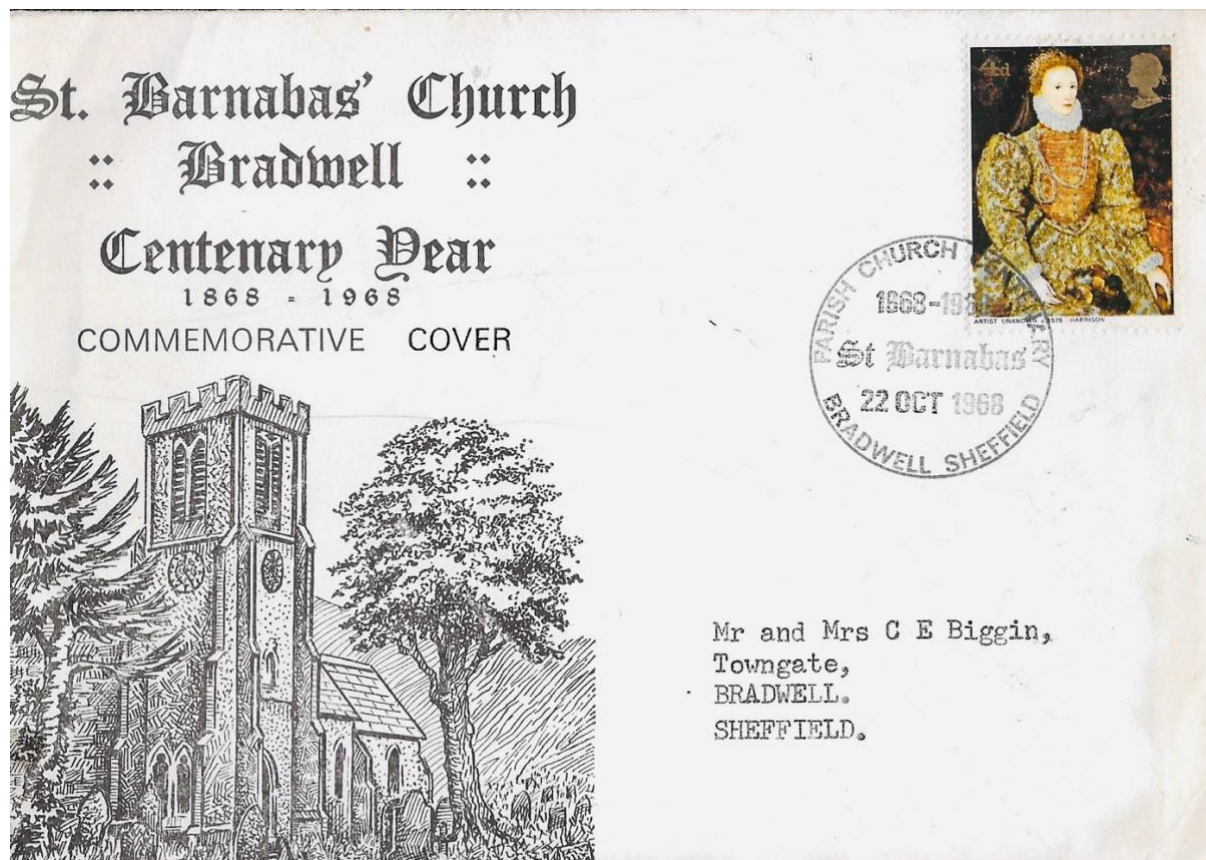


*Some of the bells awaiting installation. Rev. Keely and Cheetham Fletcher on the right*

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 at 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 leading into the vicarage grounds). The clock was made by Mess<sup>rs</sup> John Smith of Derby. It was fitted with a chiming and striking apparatus, and as already mentioned 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 5.15 am the avoid interruption of public peace during those hours.



*Old Benny's grave and railings*



*(The pictures and annotations in italics were added in 2021)*