

Kingswinford: Manor and Parish

New chapters from the history of
Kingswinford, Staffordshire

Part 4. A Clergyman, a Constable
and a Church

Chris Baker

Kingswinford Manor and Parish; New chapters from the history of Kingswinford, Staffordshire; Part 4 A
Clergyman, a Constable and a Church

© C J Baker, 2021. All rights reserved

The author

Chris Baker was born and brought up in the parish of Pensnett, part of the ancient manor and parish of Kingswinford, and attended Bromley County Primary School and Brierley Hill Grammar School. He then studied Engineering at St Catharine's College, Cambridge, from where he gained his MA and PhD. After spending some time working for British Rail in Derby, he moved back into academia – firstly to the University of Nottingham, and then to the University of Birmingham, where he taught fluid mechanics to several generations of Civil Engineering students. His research interests are in the fields of wind engineering, environmental fluid mechanics and railway aerodynamics. He is a Fellow of the Institution of Civil Engineers, Institution of Highways and Transport, the Higher Education Academy and the Royal Meteorological Society. He retired in December 2017 but continues to work on various aspects of railway aerodynamics as Emeritus Professor of Environmental Fluid Mechanics at the University of Birmingham. He is also an Anglican clergyman attached to a parish in Lichfield.

Contents

The author	2
Contents	3
Acknowledgments	5
Permissions and license details	5
Preface	6
Chapter 1 Introduction	10
Chapter 2 An Ecclesiastical Affair	11
Richard Boot and Charles Atherton	11
The first scandal	14
The second scandal	15
Charles Atherton - Vicar	16
Agnes Bowdler	19
The anonymous letters	21
The libel trial	24
The aftermath	30
Later years	33
Chapter 3 A policeman's life	38
Early years	38
A (very) young constable	39
Climbing the ladder	46
Head of Division	50
Chief Superintendent Hicklin	55
Chapter 4 Shut End Methodist Primitive Methodist Church	64
Introduction	64
The Chapel Building	65
The Baptismal Register	67
Chapel families	76
References	82

Appendix 1	The anonymous letters	88
Appendix 2	Baptismal Register Transcriptions	93

Acknowledgements

Much of the work presented here is based on archival material and the help and advice of staff at Dudley Archives and Local History Centre, Staffordshire Record Office at Stafford, and the William Salt Library at Stafford is gratefully acknowledged.

Permissions and license details

Cover, based on the 1822 Fowler map (DE/16/6/23)
Permission from Dudley Archives and Local History Services

Figure 2.2 - Public Domain

[https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Selwyn_George_Augustus_\(1809-1878\),_by_Mason_%26_Co..jpg](https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Selwyn_George_Augustus_(1809-1878),_by_Mason_%26_Co..jpg)

Figure 2.4 - Used by permission of Edward and Agnes' great-granddaughter, Soo Linacre.

Figure 3.2 - Wikipedia

<https://creativecommons.org/licenses/by-sa/3.0/deed.en>

Figure 3.8 Wikipedia

<https://creativecommons.org/licenses/by-sa/2.0/deed.en>

Figure 3.10 Wikipedia

<https://creativecommons.org/publicdomain/zero/1.0/deed.en>

Preface

Those readers who are well versed in Black Country history will be very aware that the subtitle of this series of books is not original. The phrase "*Chapters in Kingswinford History*" was first used for a number of short studies of aspects of the history of Kingswinford Manor and Parish, by David Guttery in the late nineteen forties and early nineteen fifties. David Reginald Guttery (1890-1958) was born and brought up in Brierley Hill, and lived in Amblecote, where he was a local councilor on the Urban District Council and a JP. He spent his entire career as a Schoolmaster and was Headmaster of Bromley County Primary School from 1932 to 1950 – and taught my mother there during the early 1930s. It was he who wakened her interest in local history, an interest she ultimately passed on to me. When I was in my early teens, she gave me two of the Chapters in Kingswinford History, and these short booklets have remained with me ever since, well-thumbed and read over and over again. His work is not however without its faults. It would be regarded as far too romanticized by current historians, and Guttery (infuriatingly) simply does not give references to source material. Nonetheless, my choice of subtitle for this book is meant as a tribute to David Guttery, for the pleasure that his work and his books, with all their flaws, have given me over the years.

As the astute reader will quickly gather, this study was for me, in many ways, a personal journey. The Kingswinford area, and in particular the parish of Pensnett, were the confines of my childhood, and this study was conducted with the aim of trying to understand better the history and geography of the area that, to some extent, has made me who I am. The process has been full of unexpected surprises. Firstly there were some surprising, if rather general, insights - I have come to realize that the area was,

in its early days, very much a borderland between different tribes and possibly ethnic groups, which is to some extent mirrored by the realization that in the early 19th century, Kingswinford and Pensnett was home to a migrant society, with an influx of families from both the surrounding counties and beyond. Then there were surprises about the relationships between individuals and families – in particular how closely connected by marriage the leading families of Kingswinford have been in recent centuries, and how these relationships have deeply influenced the industrial and commercial developments of the area. Then there is the joy of realizing that some of the names and events that occur, almost in passing, in the history of Kingswinford are of historical significance – the Rector of Kingswinford at the Reformation, who rescued the bones of St Chad from Lichfield Cathedral and arranged for their safe keeping in the Kingswinford area; a Kingswinford landowner who was a member of the Lunar Society, and another who was a Count of the Holy Roman Empire; the intervention of the first Bishop of New Zealand in an ecclesiastical scandal in Pensnett; and how the area was the location of a financial crisis that brought much trouble to a future prime minister. Then there are the simple pleasures of meeting my forbears in the story – migrant miners from Shropshire, who founded and worshipped at the forerunner of the Methodist church where I was baptized in the 1950s. But through all of this, most of all I have come to admire those who called themselves Coalmasters and Ironmasters, fallible men in many ways, but with immense energy and ambition, and not a little intellect, who shaped the Black Country. This shaping has left deep physical scars, but it has made the area what it is, and its inhabitants what they are, for both good and ill.

There are four parts to this study of which this is the third. Part 1 deals with the development of the parish of

Kingswinford from the Roman period, through Domesday and up to and including the Enclosure at the end of the eighteenth century and introduces the most prominent families of the parish. Part 2 of the book is an extended study of the Fowler Maps of the parish that were produced in 1822 and 1840 and give a great deal of information about the nature of the parish at that time. Part 3 of this book looks in detail at just one part of the parish from 1840 to 1900 - the industrial village of Pensnett.

This part is of a somewhat different nature and considers the careers of two individuals who spent their formative years in Pensnett but who then moved elsewhere, and also considers the life of a particular church community. The first individual is a clergyman - Charles Atherton - who was at the centre of a major ecclesiastical scandal in Pensnett in 1870, and who later became a Canon of Exeter Cathedral. The second individual is a policeman - Samuel Hicklin - who in the early 1880s was the Pensnett constable, but later rose to become a Chief Superintendent in the Staffordshire Constabulary. The community is the congregation of Shut End Primitive Methodist Church, a church wholly comprised of miners and other manual workers and their families, many of whom migrated from elsewhere in the country. As such the discussion aims to give something of a voice to a section of the populace who rarely figure in normal histories, but on whom the prosperity of the country was ultimately based.

Finally, I perhaps need to justify my choice of material for this book. This essentially represents my own interests and concerns, and my basic method has been to simply include the material that I found appealing in one way or another, perhaps at the expense of overall clarity. My exemplar in this would be Nennius, author of the *Historia Brittonum* in the early 9th century who wrote

"...I have made a heap of all that I could find as well from the annals....".

I leave it to the reader to decide whether or not this was the correct approach. But it is to be hoped that some at least will find some of the heap's contents to be of interest.

Chris Baker

Lichfield

February 2023

Chapter 1. Introduction

This Part of the book “Kingswinford Manor and Parish” is rather different in style and content to Parts 1 to 3. The earlier parts looked in detail at the life of the parish or part of the parish over a specific period, drawing in part on quite detailed and sometimes quite technical sources and the material included reflected this in being quite quantitative in places. In this part we move away from this wider view and look at the lives of individuals and groups within the parish. We begin in Chapter 2 by considering a major scandal within the Anglican church in Pensnett in 1870 that resulted in a clergy discipline hearing, a flurry of anonymous letters and a nationally reported libel trial. This story primarily involves the vicar of the parish. Charles Atherton, and a teenage girl, the daughter of a shopkeeper in Bromley, Agnes Bowdler, and caused much excitement in the parish. Both Charles and Agnes moved away from the parish after the affair and seem to have lived successful and fulfilling lives.

Chapter 3 then looks at the career of Samuel Hicklin, the son of an agricultural labourer with minimal education, who was the parish constable in Pensnett in the late 1870s and early 1880s, but again moved on, climbing the police career ladder, to attain the highest rank open to him in the Staffordshire Constabulary. In some ways this is a very ordinary description of the life of a late Victorian policeman, made extra-ordinary by its start and end points.

Chapter 4 then considers the life of the congregation of the Shut End Primitive Methodist Church in Pensnett in the nineteenth century. Most of the families who attended the church originated in the Madeley / Wombridge area of Shropshire and were part of the migration of the 1820s

and 1830s. They were almost exclusively manual workers in the mining and iron industries. It was thus very much a church of working-class families – and from the author’s experience, those families remained members of the church well into the 1950s and 1960s.

This part of the book thus allows us to hear, to some degree at least, those whose voices are seldom heard, those in the lower levels of society whose stories collectively form the basis for the wider histories of places and events.

Finally, it will become clear that much of the basic information that is used in this part came from census and other associated records. The records that were used are not specified individually, but the information can be accessed from a number of sources.

Chapter 2. An Ecclesiastical Affair

Richard Boot and Charles Atherton

In Part 3 of this book, the creation of the parish of Pensnett and the founding of St Mark's church in the 1840s were described, and brief details were given of the nineteenth century incumbents and curates. The incumbencies of Richard Boot and Charles Atherton in the 1860s and 1870s were not however discussed in any detail as these rather turbulent periods in the life of the parish requires an extended presentation.

Richard Webster Boot was from Truro, and was born in 1831, and was thus only 27 when he was appointed. He came from a Wesleyan Methodist family, and in 1851 is recorded as an Assistant School teacher in Truro. He received his ministerial training at St Bees Theological College in Cumbria. He was ordained deacon in 1854 and priest in 1855 by the Bishop of Lichfield and served a curacy at St James in Wednesbury before coming to Pensnett as Perpetual Curate (or vicar in modern terms) in 1858. In the census of 1861, he is recorded as living at the Parsonage with his wife Charlotte Phillips Boot, aged 22; his 9 month old son Charles Webster Boot; Maria Jarvis (17), the cook; and Jane Dunstone (18), the housemaid.

It was normal practice for the incumbent to appoint a short-term curate, recently out of college, to learn about parish life and to share the pastoral load. In 1863 Richard Boot appointed Charles Isaac Atherton as one such, who is one of the main characters in this story. Charles Isaac Atherton was born in 1839 in Liverpool to Samuel and Ann Atherton, but in the 1841, 1851 and 1861 censuses, he, his mother and a brother and sister are recorded as living in Nottingham with Ann's mother, without his father.

Samuel, a solicitor, disappears from the historical record after his marriage, but, as we shall see, reappears in the 1871 census. This strongly suggests that he was out of the UK, either on a series of temporary visits, or on a permanent basis over that period. Ann Atherton seems to have developed a significant business in her own right as a milliner / outfitter, employing up to a dozen people as dressmakers and lace makers. It was in Nottingham that Charles went to school, and his obituary suggests that as a teenager he worked in the Midland Bank, his abilities earning him the role of Chief Cashier. He matriculated as a Pensioner at St Johns College, Cambridge in 1860 and receiving his BA (without honours) in 1863 (Cambridge University, 1922). The Cambridge degrees of that era were not terribly well regarded, and the examinations for the ordinary (non-honours) degrees were not very rigorous but would probably have given him a reasonable grounding in the Classics, Greek and Latin, and perhaps if he was that way inclined, in Mathematics. He was ordained deacon in Ely in 1863 and priest in Lichfield in 1864, and eventually took his MA in 1866 i.e. 3 years after his BA, which was, and indeed still is, the custom. He married Selina Mallet, from a family of lace makers, in Nottingham in 1864, and it is possible that they lived at the Vicarage with Boot and his wife. They had two children – Ernest, born in 1865 and Gertrude born in 1866. He found the time, between family and church duties, to write and publish a booklet “Nature’s parable” – which are theological reflections arising from a consideration of the natural world – and which can still be read on the web thanks to the Hathi Trust Digital Library (Figure 2.1) (Atherton, 1865). Interestingly Charles’ mother’s maiden name was Boot and it seems to the author that there was most likely a family connection with his employer. This cannot be proven, as both Richard Boot and Ann Boot’s families seem to have come from the non-conformist tradition for which baptism and marriage records are not

generally available. In all likelihood then, Atherton owed his position to family contacts – something that was far from unusual in that (or indeed any other) age. Be that as it may, from 1863 onwards, Charles Atherton would have lived and worked in close proximity to Richard Boot and his family, as his employee, and quite possibly as his relative.

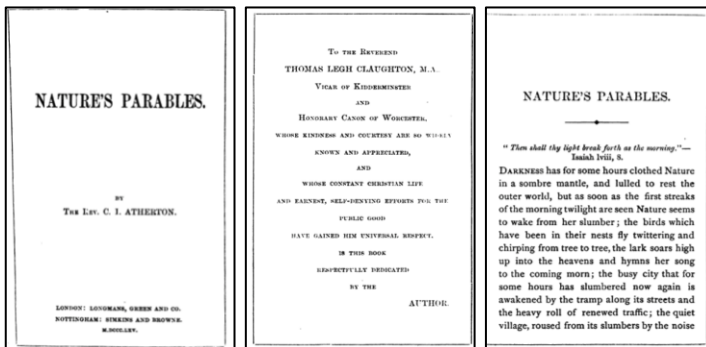


Figure 2.1 Pages from Nature's Parables

The first scandal

Around 1860, before Atherton was appointed, Boot employed as a curate one William Henry Hyde, originally from Newcastle under Lyme, and educated at London University. Hyde was around 29 at the time, and it is here that this story takes on its most sordid aspect. In the Worcester Chronicle of April 1861, it was reported that he had been brought before the stipendiary Magistrate in Brierley Hill charged with indecently assaulting a member of the church choir - Samuel Bradley, the son of a shoemaker and a parish constable (BNA, 1861). The paper reports that the major portion of the evidence was unfit for publication. He was committed to trial, but no further reports appear in the press. It would appear that he was acquitted however as he is recorded as holding a series of

curacies mainly in the London area in the 1860s and 70s. He appears in the census records of 1871 as visiting a family in Toxteth in Liverpool, as a clergyman without cure of souls. From 1878 to 1882 he was the vicar of Ditton in Lancashire, but then seems to have reverted to curate status in parishes in Rochester and London. Interestingly William Hyde is not included on the official list of curates of Pensnett church, either through a desire to forget the whole affair, or perhaps because he was simply a short-term hire to assist Richard Boot.

The second scandal

The next scandal concerned Richard Boot himself. In 1867 his wife petitioned for divorce due to adultery (BNA, 1867a). In court, it was reported that in 1865, Boot had left his wife in Pensnett (and by this time, his three children) due to financial difficulties, and Mrs. Boot had returned to her father's home in Cornwall. The alleged adultery was with Eliza Brinton, the daughter of William Brinton, a gardener of Tansy Green in Pensnett, who was employed as a nursemaid at the Parsonage from 1863, when she was aged about 13 or 14. When Boot left Pensnett, she also left the Parsonage, and it was reported she was later to accompany Boot on visits around Britain and Europe, passing as father and daughter, but allegedly sharing the same room in hotels, and on one occasion in Le Havre, the same bed. Affectionate letters between the two were produced during the trial for adultery. Eliza Brinton herself gave evidence and claimed that no impropriety had taken place. In his summing up the judge commented that

“...if he were guilty, what a monstrous outrage it was that he, a clergyman of the Church of England, should put into the witness box the girl he had seduced and oblige her to commit perjury”.

Without hesitation, the jury found Boot guilty of adultery, and custody of the children was given to his wife. The *decree absolute* was granted in 1867. Boot thereafter disappears from the census record, which suggests that he moved overseas. It is possible that the record of a will in 1892 for Richard Boot of Calais, artist, giving £296 to Emilie Louisa Boot, spinster, may refer to him. In this case Emilie would either be his sister named as Emma in the census records, or possibly a wife or daughter.

The effect of this unpleasant episode on the life of the parish would have been significant. Charles Atherton was of course present throughout and indeed as curate would have been left to pick up the various activities of the parish, both in terms of worship and involvement with the local community. It would have been something of a baptism of fire for a young and inexperienced curate. If he was indeed related to Boot in some way, there would have been added personal and family pressures.

Charles Atherton - vicar

Whatever the pressures that Atherton felt in keeping the parish of Pensnett going during his time as a curate, he was clearly perceived as doing so successfully and the Patron of the Parish, the Earl of Dudley, presented him to the living in 1867. Like Boot he was young – aged just 28 at his appointment. To get a flavour of his priorities and beliefs, it is worth looking at the sermon he preached (and distributed) early in January 1868, which reviewed the activities of the previous year (BNA, 1868a). Firstly, it is clear from the sermon that he made major efforts to address the physical concerns of the parishioners in terms of providing food and clothing to a population on the edge of poverty and where work was often difficult to find. Secondly, he was concerned not just with the physical needs of his parishioners, but also with the intellectual

needs, as evidenced by the formation of the Young Men's Mutual Improvement Society; he encouraged the musical life in the parish centred on the choir: and was instrumental in the growth of the boys' and girls' schools, in their new buildings on the Turnpike Road. But most of all he was concerned for the spiritual development of his parishioners urging them to become regular communicants, at a time when many church goers simply did not attend the services of Holy Communion; and reminding them that "*the time is short*" and the "*night cometh wherein no man can walk*" and urging them to "*walk while you have the light*". In this he shows a conventional, if zealous, evangelical piety that was to characterize his mission throughout his career. That being said, it would seem that whilst he was at Pensnett, he also became close to Richard Twigg and George Body of St James', Wednesbury, where Richard Boot served his curacy, which was the centre of what came to be known as Catholic Evangelicalism, which brought together evangelical concern for the salvation of souls and a zeal for mission work, with a Tractarian ritualism and a concern for the needs of the poor. Both were to have long careers as missionary priests both in the Black Country and elsewhere. They were in some ways dangerous friends, being censured and disciplined by the Bishop of Lichfield for illicit evangelical low church practices, for example, holding extempore prayer groups in the homes of workers in Wednesbury, and also for such Tractarian high church practices as having a cross and candles on the holy table (or altar as they would probably have called it). One can see these influences quite clearly in Atherton's career, and they presumably reflected on his practices in Pensnett. Certainly, during his career at Pensnett, he showed very considerable energy in opening a Mission Church of Holy Trinity in Bromley in 1867 (also referred to in the sermon), in developing the life of the National Schools after the 1870 act and in beginning the efforts to stop the

church falling apart due to subsidence. An obituary written in the Guardian 40 years later (BNA, 1907a) informs us that

..... the immediate occasion of Charles Atherton's first interest in Mission-work was the sudden death from a stroke of lightning of a godless parishioner, which made a great impression on the collier nature. Mr. Atherton seized upon it and used it as the starting point of a remarkable spiritual revival in the parish. A great love of souls hence forth possessed his heart and he went forth on Mission enterprises far and wide.....

There was one other interesting point in the 1868 sermon, which shows that Atherton was clearly not afraid of speaking his mind. It takes either bravery or a degree of recklessness for a young twenty-eight-year-old clergyman to tell some in the congregation

".....It appears that those who have been loudest in the praise of the choir, and in their desire that a choir fund should be established, are those whose names are not found on the list (of subscribers to the fund). I would venture to remind some of those who appropriate seats in the church that by not subscribing either to the schools or the choir they are absolutely doing nothing for the church, they are having their religion at a cheaper rate than they could have it anywhere else, and they are taking up room that might be better occupied by many families who are waiting for sittings...."

Unsurprisingly this did not go down well with some, but rather than making the usual complaint at the church door, the complaint was made anonymously by someone calling themselves "Alpha" to the local newspaper – which occasioned the printing the week after of a letter from Atherton containing the full sermon, and a letter from another parishioner in Atherton's defense (BNA, 1868a).

Agnes Bowdler

The defining event of Atherton's incumbency occurred in early 1870. He seems to have developed some sort of infatuation or attachment to a sixteen-year-old girl, Agnes Bowdler. She was the seventh of eight children of George and Mary Bowdler who were grocers in Bromley, and was a pupil teacher at the National School, where it is likely they became acquainted. At this distance it is not really possible to say anything about the motivations of either Charles Atherton or Agnes Bowdler, or indeed anything else about the relationship, and certainly there should be no rush to judgment on either. However, in the court case that will be described in what follows, it was revealed that on March 3rd 1870, Atherton took Agnes on a trip to Birmingham, first class on the train, having given her the money for her fare somewhat surreptitiously in Rookery Lane (modern Tiled House Lane) the night before. He then took her to a Refreshment room, bought her a necklace and took her to the circus. This was done without the permission of the parents. Unfortunately for Atherton and Agnes, they were observed by Cornelius Chambers of Bromley Lane, who first saw them together whilst they were changing trains at Dudley Port station. Here our story takes a somewhat comic turn, Chambers then followed them around Birmingham – from New Street Station to Avery's refreshment rooms in Bull Street; after 20 minutes waiting outside, he followed then to a Jewelers shop also in Bull Street hiding in shop doorways on the way; and then to the Market Hall where he gave up his pursuit. As an aside, that is perhaps not wholly scurrilous, Chambers was a member of St James' New Connexion Church, married to the daughter of one of the founders of the church, and was later to become a liberal county councilor. The shock he must have felt in seeing a minister of the established church acting in this way can only be

imagined. Chambers reported this matter to a next-door neighbour of his at Bromley House (close to the current Bromley Bridge) – Mr. Benjamin Wood, the People’s Warden at St. Mark’s. Clearly the parents of the girl found out what had happened and threatened legal action, and Atherton wrote to the father on March 14th apologising for his actions, for denying them when first confronted, and for having caused him uneasiness. This letter was apparently made public, and Atherton then wrote to the bishop the day after setting out the facts. The bishop at that time was George Selwyn, who had been till 1868 the first Bishop of New Zealand, and would have known Atherton personally, having spent a weekend in Pensnett in April 1869 confirming and preaching (Figure 2.2). The bishop first instituted an enquiry through the churchwardens and wrote to the parish on April 10th. Whilst acknowledging the indiscretion, he took the view that Atherton was not *“unworthy of the confidence of the parishioners”*. A more formal enquiry was however instituted a month later under the Clergy Discipline Act, with a Commission consisting of the rector of St. Peter’s Wolverhampton, and the vicars of St. Michael’s, Coventry and St. Edmund’s, Dudley. They questioned around twenty witnesses from the parish, including Cornelius Chambers, Benjamin Wood and Agnes Bowdler and her parents, in proceedings that lasted until 10.00pm in the evening (and would thus have involved an overnight stay in Lichfield for those involved). The Commission came to the view that, though Atherton had acted extremely unwisely, no impropriety has been committed, and the bishop took the view that Atherton should take a break from the parish for a six-month period, and strongly advised him to do so in a letter of May 27th. Atherton took the bishop’s advice and absented himself from the parish. He was however away for only three months and thus would have returned sometime in early or mid-September 1870.



Figure 2.2 Bishop Selwyn of Lichfield
Wikipedia (2019t)

The anonymous letters

After the incident in Birmingham took place in April 1870, a number of anonymous fliers had circulated around Pensnett (DA, 1870). The first of these is reproduced below.

“By their works ye shall know them”

Is it a fact that the Parson kissed and embraced the girl repeatedly in the wood and dark lanes? Yes

Is it a fact that he went down on his knees in his library with one arm around her waist declaring his love and trying to get an answer from the girl that she loved him? Yes

Is it a fact that he made arrangements with the girl for going to Birmingham? Yes

Is it a fact that he met her in a certain lane, the night previous to going to Birmingham, and gave her money to pay her fare, and a note stating the time and place of meeting, and parting with kisses and embraces? Yes

Is it a fact that he bought a necklace for her and declared he did not care what he did for those he loved? Yes

Is it a fact that he took her to the Circus and gave her the advice that "when everything else failed on this earth, to take to this"? Yes

Is it a fact that he enquired whether she was cold or not, and replying she was, saying, "Ah, Agnes, you want my arm around you to keep you warm?" Yes

Is it a fact they rode by themselves in a First Class Carriage, and that he frequently kissed her? Yes

Is it a fact that they rode together in a cab from the station, and that she was to thank him for giving her this ride down, so that the Cabman might not think anything wrong? Yes

Is it a fact that he told the girl to look at him in the pulpit and when he wink'd his right eye, it meant Birmingham? Yes

Is it a fact that when the girl's mother went to see about her daughter about being in Birmingham on the previous day, he stigmatized the man who took her there "as a villain who wanted hanging, and whether he be married or single, his motives were bad"? Yes

Is it a fact that after the mother's departure from his house, he sent for the girl, and persuades her to tell a lie to her parents? Yes

Is it a fact that when charged with being with her in Birmingham, he strongly denied it on several occasions? Yes

Is it a fact he gave and instructed another party to give for him, apologies confessing "the lies he told" Yes

Is it a fact that judging from the man's conduct at the present time, that he seems to glory in the matter? Yes

And this is the man who occupies our pulpit, this is the man who takes upon himself the responsibility for ministering to the wants of the people, this is the man from whom we might have expected more independence, more straightforwardness and to have been actuated by motives less selfish, hold up before the people as their pattern, in all good things.

No doubt these few facts will be denied as previous facts have been in this scandalous affair before, but still they remain facts, which cannot be denied.

Beware of wolves in sheep's' clothing!

The flier thus essentially gives an account of the incident, perhaps with some embellishments. It is undated but seems to come from sometime around April / May 1870 i.e. not long after the incident. These proved to be the first of a number of such documents whose contents are summarised in Appendix 1. The next two that followed were written as doggerel ballads to be sung to popular music hall tunes. The first of these (The Parson's Intrigue) had eight, ten-line verses and the second (The Model Parson) thirty, four-line verses, going over much the same ground as in the extract above. They both refer to Benjamin Wood as Atherton's henchman and apologist. The Parson's Intrigue ends with the rather damning couplet.

"And oh, dear oh! Don't all of us know, this parson's religion is nothing but show".

A further document entitled "Another Pensnett Mystery" seems to date from around this time and suggests a relationship between Selina Atherton and Wood, who apparently bought her "garters with silver buckles". It also

introduces the practice of referring to various church members by none too polite nicknames.

On his return to the parish in September 1870, another series of anonymous letters began to be circulated around the parish and posted on a weekly basis to Atherton himself. Again, some of these survive in the archives. These were of the form of (fictional) notices of sermons that Atherton was to preach the following Sunday – on Character, Faith, Morality, Virtue, Truthfulness, Harvest, Character, Charity and Faith. These too are summarised in Appendix 1. They all contained implicit attacks on the character of Atherton and other church members, although their names were changed in a rather Dickensian fashion to those that referred either to their jobs or their physical appearance. These letters must have caused deep distress to members of St. Mark's, as was presumably intended to be the case. In places they include fairly obvious sexual innuendos aimed at a wide range of church members, male and female, and in particular Agnes Bowdler – who it should be remembered was probably a fairly naïve 16-year-old girl at the time. Various extra allegations are made: that Agnes (referred to as “Flowing Hair”) and another girl gave Atherton an expensive present of a gold pencil case before he left the parish in May 1870 for three months; that there was sexual impropriety and inappropriate touching at the Ladies Bible Class; a description of a “tickling” match with female “starters” and male “riders”; that Benjamin Woods engaged in illicit activities with a maid and so on. The truth of these allegations is impossible to judge of course.

The libel trial

It was the last but one of these letters, on Charity, that would result in a libel action being brought that attracted

local and national publicity. The full text of the letter is given here.

“Sheepskins and beeswax, Thunder, pitch and plaster, The more you try to pull it off, Its sure to stick the faster”

*My dear parishioners – On Sunday next, I shall deliver an address on charity. Since my return amongst you, I have done all the good I possibly could for those who would uphold me in my damnable and lustful practices, whilst to those who have desired to speak and act according to the dictates of their own consciences, I have done all I could to injure them in their business, and have actually sent to Brierley Hill and Dudley for articles which cost no more than tuppence before I would spend a farthing with some of my dear parishioners, but truly charity inspires towards our enemies forgiveness and humanity. Mr. Buttons, the tool of the hundred-faced man Yardstick, doing his dirty work, which he dare not do himself, because he would sell a yard or two less calico per week; “henchman bold” to himself, and the laughing stock of the village. Why should you put yourself forward to defend me? Did you not forbid my late curate, Rev B****y from visiting at your house? And did you not forbid your wife from speaking to him, because you were jealous of him? Oh, mushrooms!!!! What a man to be played with in this way; but I hope I shall hear no more of you making yourself so busy in this matter again, or I shall have to call your attention to an occurrence soon after your marriage.*

We all recollect the fun and stir a short time ago about Mr. Button’s daughter being christened, and the admirable repast that was provided at his house for a few friends. The wines were excellent and soon began to tell on the company. Our holy vicar proposed the health of one and another till he was quite done up. The following was the last he tried at – “This is the happiest moment of my life (hic), my Curates

attend to the church (hic), my wife attends to the curates (hic) and I propose my excellent friends health, Mr. Cooper (hic) and down he tumbled into his chair. This holy man of God quite drunk and incapable of taking care of himself.

I might here explain that the packman's daughter is the wife of our old friend "Buttons"; also that Dirty White's wife did exceedingly well in the tickling match, and had she had a better jockey, she might have been close on the favourites.

What Christian men I have around me. There's little Buggins who can't go along the street on the Sabbath morning without disgracing himself by fighting, and then running away. There's our old friend "Buttons" leaves the holy sanctuary. He can't get home without threatening to give another ____ good hiding, but dare not, so fetches others to do it, and so set up a fight on Sabbath evenings. With such defenders, the Church of Christ must and shall overcome its enemies.

An offertory as usual for necklace and silver buckled partners.

Subscriptions received – Eggs and ham 6s; Cork leg 3s; Joey 3d,

VICAR ST MARK'S

Boot, Hatherton and Co, Printers, Coventry

It is possible that this letter was chosen as the subject for a libel action, as it contained only minor references to the female members of the congregation, and had little implicit sexual content, and would thus have been the least painful one to make fully public. Its form is typical of them all. It can be seen that it is of a thoroughly scurrilous nature, beginning with a verse from a music hall song, and signed by "Boot and Hatherton" inevitably linking the old scandals with the new. Whilst the letter contains allusions

to a number of potential incidents that would have been well known in the locality, it is not possible to fully understand them all now. However, the following can be identified from the libel proceedings described below, and from the other letters.

- The vicar is of course Atherton himself.
- “Buttons” refers to the churchwarden, Mr. Benjamin Wood of Bromley House, Bromley Lane, who has already been mentioned. At the time he was aged 31, married to Eliza Bryce, daughter of John Bryce, an Iron and Coal Master, and his wife Elizabeth. John Bryce himself had been both Parish Clerk and Schoolmaster at the National School and Elizabeth was still a teacher there in 1871. Their son David was to become churchwarden a few years later.
- “Packman’s daughter” refers to Eliza Bryce / Wood herself.
- “Yardstick” and “Cooper” refer to Charles Cooper, Churchwarden from 1860 to 1866, and described in the 1871 census as a Mercer i.e. a dealer in cloth – which would fit in with the use of a yardstick and make sense of the reference to calico. The insinuation might be that as a former churchwarden, he had the current churchwarden, Wood, doing his bidding. Such a thing is not unknown in the Anglican Church. In the 1871 census his domestic arrangements are interesting, as he is recorded as living with Elizabeth Pope (aged 34, four years his junior), who is described as an assistant. Whilst this arrangement may be entirely innocent, it would no doubt result in gossip – and was clearly referred to another of the sermon outlines (on Virtue).
- “Rev B****y” must refer to Atherton’s curate from 1867 to 1868, George Henry Brierley, but why he

should be so honoured with a mention it is not possible to say.

- “Buggins” refers to Benjamin Blewitt, a butcher and farmer, and a member at St Mark’s.
- “Dirty White’s wife” possibly refers to Ann Bryce, wife of David Bryce who seems to have been notable by wearing a somewhat grubby surplice in church.

Atherton and Wood brought a libel case against John Talbot, a stocktaker of Pensnett and John Candlin, the landlord of the Lion Hotel on High Street whom they regarded as being responsible for circulating the letter, if not for writing it (BNA 1870a, b, c, 1871). They did so with the full approval of the bishop, who presumably felt that this was the only way to resolve the issue. Another document, which was referred to in the press as another letter, but not produced in court, described the vicar as “kissing her twice”. This may refer to the musical hall song that is used as a heading for the letter on Morality.

I kissed her two times on the cheek.

I would have kissed her thrice.

But I whispered “Ain’t it naughty”?

She said “Yes, but it’s so nice”

The main reason for the action seems to be that Atherton denied this “kissing”, and also denied that he was drunk at the meal at the Swan Inn after the christening of Benjamin Woods’ daughter in late 1869. The case was originally heard at Brierley Hill Petty Sessions on December 8th, but the crowd of 1000 people from Pensnett trying to enter the court had resulted in a transfer of the case to Wolverhampton, although a considerable number made the trip there as well for the hearing on December 14th. A series of witnesses were then called, who described seeing versions of the libelous document in the Swan Inn and elsewhere around November 9th, which established in the

mind of the magistrate that a libel had been committed, but in the first instance it was not clear who the author was. Due to the lateness of the hour, the case was adjourned for a week and the court reconvened on December 23rd. At the reconvened hearing the authorship of the libelous pamphlets was again probed by the stipendiary. Benjamin Blewitt (butcher and a member of St. Mark's) told of an altercation (both verbal and physical) with Talbot on a Sunday in October 1870, and he was identified as the Buggins in the letter. Atherton himself was then called to give evidence, and in that evidence the issues that were behind the charges laid under the Clergy Discipline Act were exposed and made public in the national press. Despite these revelations, the magistrate expressed the view that there was enough evidence to take Talbot and Candling to trial. He did however ask if, for the sake of the peace of the parish, some agreement could be found between the parties. After some discussion between Atherton, Talbot and their legal representatives, it was agreed that apologies should be made and the libel proceedings halted, and the case was closed.

That was however not the end of the anonymous letters and pamphlets. The last of the letters above, on Faith, hints that a new series of documents was in preparation. These seem to have gone under the title of the Pensnett Review. One of these survives in the archive (number 2) and is dated December 1st 1870 – i.e. while the above legal proceedings were underway. An extract is given in Appendix 1. This is a particularly vicious document, alleging that Atherton conspired against Boot to obtain the living.

The final document that survives is dated March 10th 1871 and returns to some of the themes of the earlier letters, but particularly lampooning Wood's desire to be nominated for the new School Board. It is doubtful if this was the end

of the matter however, and it is likely that there are other later letters and documents that have not survived.

The question of who actually wrote the string of anonymous letters does not seem to have been resolved. The letters show a good, if somewhat twisted, grasp of biblical quotes, music hall references and past history and it seems to the author that those who were named in the libel trial were not of an adequate educational level to have written them, and were probably no more than distributors of the letters. Two general possibilities for the actual authors come to mind. Firstly, there was clearly some antagonism between the Anglican and Non-Conformist churches at the time, and it seems possible that someone in the well-educated non-conformist circle of Cornelius Chambers, horrified by the seeming lack of moral probity in the Anglican church, might have been responsible. Against this was the intimate knowledge that the letters showed of Anglican church affairs, which would point to somebody within the Anglican congregation – perhaps the “Alpha” who complained about Atherton’s 1868 new year sermon. Of the two possibilities, the author favours the second, but it is unlikely that the author will ever be identified.

The aftermath

Whilst the formal proceedings of the libel action were closed in late 1870, no doubt the emotional and mental wounds took longer to heal. With regard to Agnes herself, it is not clear what happened to her immediately after the 1870 incident. She does not appear in the Pensnett entries for the 1871 census, carried out on April 2nd. There are two possible explanations for this. The first, and most likely, is that she appears in the census as the Annie Bowdler, aged 17 and born in Bromley, living at her uncle’s home in Stourbridge – sufficiently far away to be removed from the

local gossip. The other, less likely but more intriguing, possibility is an entry in that census of the correct age of one Agnes Brice who is recorded as a domestic servant working for Rev. Francis J Burlton, the curate of Stottesdon in Shropshire (near Cleobury Mortimer) and is registered as being born in Staffordshire. The name of Brice provides the possible clue. It has already been noted that John Bryce was the Parish Clerk of Pensnett in the 1850s and his daughter was married to Benjamin Woods. Indeed in 1871 his widow Elizabeth was also living with the Woods in Bromley House and was still the Infants Teacher in the National School. Also, Agnes Brice does not appear in any census records before or after 1871. It can thus be conjectured that there is a possibility that sometime in late 1870 or early 1871 Agnes was “found” a position in domestic service by the churchwarden at St. Mark’s and his wife and mother and given what was to be a temporary false name. Or in more blunt terms, she was sent away so she would be no further cause of embarrassment. Presumably the Burlton family would have been known to the Bryces through Anglican circles. At the time that Agnes was employed, Francis Burlton was over 60, with six children (including four unmarried daughters in their 20s and 30s which gives the whole affair a Jane Austen touch). For someone who was used to the responsible teaching role, she probably would have found the imposed role of domestic servant more than a little difficult. Of course, it is quite possible that both these explanations of her absence are “correct”, and that, the census entry for Cleobury was an entry of who should have been there rather than who was there. Certainty is not possible.

In the census returns of 1871, Charles’ wife, Selina Atherton was not at the Vicarage, although the rest of the family and a number of visitors were, including Ann and Samuel Atherton, the latter making his first appearance in

the historical record since his marriage in the 1830s. Selina was at the home of her sister Henrietta Baldwin and her family in Carrington in Nottinghamshire. Whether this was due to the events of the previous year it is not possible to tell, but her absence from the vicarage may well be related to these events. Thereafter however, things seem to have settled down and Selina returned.

No doubt the lives of others involved were similarly affected and the pain caused would have remained for some time. Atherton himself is recorded in the press as engaging in all the normal aspects of church life, and as noted above, was quite heavily involved in the restorations and alterations of St Mark's that began in the early 1870s. He left Pensnett for Nympsfield, Gloucestershire, in 1876, partly it would seem to lighten his workload due to a period of ill health. The social event to mark his departure heard warm words and glowing tributes for his preaching and his pastoral work. The report in the local newspaper notes that

"If the hearer was told that there was a hell and a judgment to come, he was reminded that by the acceptance of the Sacrifice once offered, there was the bright hope of immortality in the glorious abode of the spirits of just men made perfect. Truly has Mr. Atherton's career at Pensnett been far from an uneventful one". (BNA, 1876b)

That last phrase might be regarded as something of an understatement. Tributes were also paid to Selina

"who has ever heartily entered into his schemes for improvement and afforded that consolation to him in his hours of unremitting toil, which it is Woman's and above all the true help-mate's province to impart".

Atherton's departure in some ways marks the beginning of the community forgetting of the events of Atherton's incumbency. The history of the parish by Anderton (1965)

makes no mention at all of them, and the latter history of Cope (1999), whilst having access to the copies of the Pensnett Review fails to understand their context, as the nature of the original scandal had been forgotten. In any case, after Atherton's departure, the church settled down, under a series of unremarkable vicars, to the routine of Anglican life, with the major concerns being how to stop the church falling into the Earl of Dudley's mines beneath the land he had so thoughtfully provided.

Later years

Charles Atherton's later career can be traced quite easily through the ecclesiastical records. After two years at Nympsfield he moved to St Paul's in Bedminster in 1878 where, through his leadership, the church entered a period of very considerable growth. From 1885 to 1887 he spent a short period as Vicar of Snaith in Yorkshire (effectively swapping Livings so that he could recover from a further period of ill health – see below), followed by two years as Rector of Faringdon in Devon, where he was also appointed Diocesan Missioner. In 1885 he published a further book, "Instructions in the Way of Peace" (Atherton, 1885), which can be purchased as a special printing from Amazon (Figure 2.3a).



(a)



(b)

Figure 2.3 Instructions in the Way of Peace and the Atherton Memorial

He then moved to Exeter Cathedral in 1889 where he remained until his death from throat cancer in 1907, becoming Treasurer in 1891 and Warden of the Society for Mission Clergy. A lengthy obituary was published in the *Guardian* (BNA, 1907a) and republished in a St John's College magazine (Eagle, 1908), from which it is clear that he had considerable gifts in both administration and as a missionary and a considerable capacity for work, organized major diocesan gatherings and touched the lives of both individuals and churches. No mention is made of the incident with Agnes, or of the libel case. A common theme throughout his career seems to have been the recurrence of periods of ill health that required he lighten his workload. His life is celebrated in a monument situated in the south aisle of the cathedral (Church Monuments Society, 2019) – figure 2.3b. In his will he left an estate valued at £3713, a not inconsiderable sum (BNA, 1907b).

Selena Atherton outlived her husband, dying in 1922. Their oldest child Ernest followed his father to St John's in Cambridge, and, like his father, became a clergyman, holding a series of parishes in the Devon. He married

Sophia Loch, 20 years his senior and had no children. His sister Gertrude married Captain David Brodie-Thomas and had three children, Dorothy Gwenyth, Audrey Gwendoline and Bryn Atherton, all born in Madras in India. Neither of the two girls married and both lived to very old age until the 1980s. Bryn was killed in action in 1916. Gertrude also died that year. Selina would thus have experienced the death of her daughter and grandson within a few months of each other.

The other major character in the saga is of course Agnes Bowdler herself. Tracing her fortunes is not altogether straightforward. As noted above, she does not appear at all in the 1871 census, at least not under her proper name, but does reappear in the records again in 1875 when she married Samuel Edward Worton in Sheffield. The later census records reveal (after allowing for transcription errors in her surname that complicated the search) that both she and Samuel worked as schoolteachers in Halifax and Leeds, with Samuel becoming a headmaster at a County (Board) school in Elland by 1911 and Agnes becoming headmistress. She appears twice in the press in that period – in 1882 at a trial of a mother of one of her children who assaulted her in school and was duly convicted and fined (BNA, 1882d); and in 1884 when she was herself accused of pulling a child's hair out - the case was dismissed (BNA, 1884). Samuel appears to have been a noted organist and gave concerts throughout the area at Methodist chapels and other venues, including at Leeds Civic Hall. They had five children – Frederick born in 1876 who died in infancy, Ralph born in 1883 who died aged 15, Adelina Minnie born in 1878, Bertrand born in 1885 and Percival born in 1886 who all survived into old age. Agnes died in 1935 in Liverpool, four years after Samuel. Pictures of them both survive – one a posed photograph of Agnes and Samuel in Blackpool possibly on their honeymoon,

and others of Samuel himself, including one of him at the organ (Figure 2.4).

The census records indicate that Samuel himself was born in Pensnett, and in the 1871 census, when he was 15, he lived close to the New Connexion Chapel and is recorded as a pupil teacher. His father is recorded as an engineer. Lodging next door were William Hinton and Sarah Gibbons, the teacher and assistant schoolteacher at British / Board School associated with the chapel. This, and the fact that Samuel and Agnes later moved in non-conformist circles, suggests that Samuel's position as a pupil teacher was at this School. Samuel's connection with the New Connexion church is further confirmed by the fact that in 1887 he wrote a testimonial letter that was read out at an event to mark 50 years of a William Barlow's, involvement with the church – as founder, Steward, and Sunday School Superintendent. Also, a John Worton was a major benefactor in the building of the original Schoolroom behind the chapel, indicating a further family connection. It would seem likely that Agnes and Samuel had known each other from childhood. Unfortunately, there is no record of what happened to Agnes between 1871 and her marriage in 1875 in Sheffield, and how she again came into contact with her childhood friend. In Anglican eyes Agnes would thus have compounded her sins in leading the vicar astray by marrying a Methodist.



Figure 2.4 Edward and Agnes

Ancestry (2019)

But there is a little more of the story to be told. In 1883 the Bishop of Ripon led a large-scale mission to the churches in Leeds. His chief assistant was George Body whom we have already met as a curate in Wednesbury in the 1860s and 1870s. On his team we find his close friend, Charles Atherton. The events were well advertised in the press, including the names of the missionaries, and it seems very likely that Agnes would have been aware of Charles' presence in her locality (BNA, 1883). One wonders if they met. As mentioned above, for the brief period when Charles Atherton and his family made the rather dramatic move to Snaith, and for that period they were within 20 miles of Agnes. Was there more to this than a simple move because of ill-health? There is a family story that her daughter Minnie had two very valuable rings and a diamond brooch that had been given to her mother by "Uncle Charlie" so *"she would have something to fall back on if she ever needed money"*. There is no obvious "Uncle Charlie" in the family so this opens up a whole new area of speculation that they met again while Charles was at Snaith, with or without the knowledge of their respective families.

Both Charles Atherton and Agnes Bowdler seem to have found some sort of success and stability later in their lives. There are however many questions that the sources are simply unable to answer, as well as who actually wrote the anonymous letters. What were the long-term effects of the events on the Atherton marriage? Did the events of 1870 and her possible exile leave their mark on Agnes in any way? Were there lasting effects on the life of Pensnett parish? Did Francis Burlton ever manage to marry off any of his spinster daughters? And who was Uncle Charlie?

Chapter 3. A policeman's life

Early years



Figure 3.1 The church of Hilton, St Mary's

From St Mary's Hilton (2020)

Arthur Samuel Hicklin was born in Hilton near Marston-upon-Dove in Derbyshire in late March / early April 1858, to John and Ann Hicklin. John was a farm labourer in the area, but there are no further details available of where or for whom he worked. Arthur Samuel was baptized at Hilton church (figure 3.1) on 25th April 1858 and was the couple's fourth child. Eliza was born in 1852, John in 1854 and Samuel in around July 1856. The latter died the next year in May 1857. They were to have a further child, William, in 1860 before John himself died in that year, leaving Ann a widow. Ann married again in the mid-1860s to William Long, another farm labourer from Hilton, and had two further children, Ann and Harriett. In the 1861 census, Arthur Samuel was referred to using his first name. After that he always seems to have been known as Samuel, or one suspects, as Sam. I will in general use either "Sam" or "Hicklin" in what follows. In 1871 he was no longer with his family but was a thirteen-year-old general servant on William Loverock's farm in Horninglow near Burton upon Trent. Loverock was a major landowner in the area and employed a number of men and boys on his

farm of nearly 300 acres, as well as a number of domestic servants. Sam seems to have lived in a house adjacent to the farm (possibly Hodgkin's Farmhouse although the census return is difficult to read), with a number of other servants, both male and female. He thus probably only received the most rudimentary of educations, which makes his rise through the Staffordshire Constabulary that we will discuss in what follows the more remarkable.

A (very) young constable

The next we learn of Sam is when he joined the Staffordshire Constabulary in November 1875, when his age is given as 18 years and 7 months, implying a birth date of April 1857 – i.e. a year earlier than the actual date. There must therefore be a suspicion that he exaggerated his age in order to join the police. He was initially stationed at Tividale in the Black Country. How he went from being a farm servant in rural Staffordshire to being a policeman in the industrial heart of the Black Country is not known. On entry to the force, he was described as being 5' 8 ⁵/₈" tall, with brown eyes, dark brown hair and a fair complexion. His previous trade was given as labourer.

The Staffordshire Constabulary at that time was divided into three districts – the Mining district of the Black Country; the Potteries district around Stoke; and the Rural District for the rest of the county. This basic organization persisted, with some alterations of boundaries and nomenclature, throughout Hicklin's career. At the head of the organization was the Chief Constable, based in Stafford. Each district was headed by a Chief Superintendent, one of whom served as Deputy Chief Constable. At times however the latter role was taken by a fourth Chief Superintendent. Each District was divided into Divisions headed by a Superintendent or Inspector, and each division into Sub-divisions, which included two

or more police stations. Hicklin thus began his career in the Tividale station in the Blackheath Sub-division of the Brierley Hill Division in the Mining District.

His life at Tividale would have mirrored that of young constables anywhere. His first appearance in the press seems to have been in the County Advertiser of April 1st 1876 which contains the following report of the proceedings of the Rowley Regis Magistrate's court (BNA, 1876a).

"Isaac Fisher was charged with being drunk on the 25th ult., and pleaded guilty. Police Constable Hicklin proved the case, and the defendant was fined 5s with costs."

Dozens of similar mentions appeared over the months and years that followed, mainly in the County Advertiser and County Express, as he rose from Constable 3rd class on appointment, to Constable 2nd class on 1st August 1876 and Constable 1st class on 1st August 1877. He was clearly well regarded for his dealings with drunkards. To add a little variety, we also read of him apprehending carters driving too quickly or not exercising proper control over their horses; children stealing coal; bringing publicans to court for selling out of hours or for encouraging drunkenness; and (perhaps the highlight of his time in Tividale) bringing Joseph Evans and Benjamin Baker to trial for shooting ducks on the canal at Brades Village (BNA, 1878).



Figure 3.2 Brades Hall locks

From Wikipedia (2020a)

During his time at Tivdale, his private life was probably more interesting than his professional life. During that time Sam met and married Eliza Taylor, the daughter of the boat builder John Taylor at Brades Hall locks on the Gower Branch of the BCN (figure 3.3). They were married at Christchurch, Oldbury on 10th February 1878 (figure 2.3). Here, for what seems to be the last time, the name Arthur Samuel was used in the registers. Both he and Eliza were recorded as being 20 at the time, which at least for Samuel, was not the case. Eliza was baptized in August 1858, so should only have been 20 at the time if there had been a significant delay between her birth and baptism, but she could well have been born in late 1857 or early 1858. Perhaps at this point Sam was finding it necessary to continue the minor deceit concerning his age. The

couple were to return to Oldbury for the baptisms of their children John in 1880, William in 1883 and Samuel in 1891.

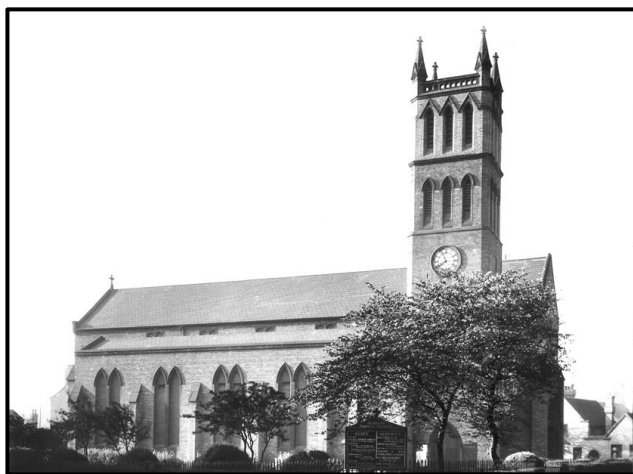


Figure 3.3 Christchurch Oldbury

From History of Oldbury (2020)

In late 1879, Hicklin moved to a new posting in Pensnett – still in the Brierley Hill Division, but also in the Brierley Hill Sub-division. The head of the Division, Superintendent John Wollaston was based at Brierley Hill police station (figure 3.4). The census record indicates that in 1881 Samuel and Eliza lived on Commonside (almost certainly in a police house) with their baby son John, and Police Constable Edward Wynn as a lodger. Their age inflation continued, with Samuel giving his age (in early April 1881) as 24, which implies a birth year of 1856/1857, and Eliza being 23, with a birth year of 1857/58. The move also coincided with a “merit” award on 1st January 1880.

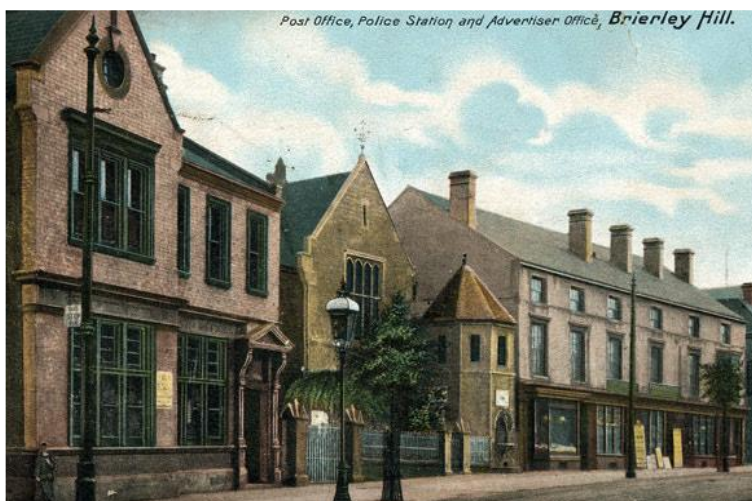


Figure 3.4 Brierley Hill Police Station and Magistrates Court

From Brierley Hill blog (2020)

In many ways, Hicklin's life in Pensnett was very similar to his life Tividale – the large majority of the cases he took to court were charges of being drunk and disorderly, with the next most common being coal stealing, other petty theft, "furious" wagon driving and so on. But there were a number of other notable events. On the 26th of October 1880, Hicklin and another policeman, concealed themselves at a pit in the Wallows area, and watched a large crowd of mainly women and children picking coal from that stored at the pit (BNA, 1880b). When the constables emerged from their hiding place, all the coal pickers ran away, but most were apprehended later, having been identified. In total 26 were brought to caught with ages ranging from 11 to 61. All were fined between 2s 6d and 5s, or 7 to 14 days in prison. The report ends with the rather sad note that *"the charge against May Angel (13) a deaf and dumb girl, was withdrawn"*.

He also continued to come into conflict with publicans for failing to keep hours. Almost as soon as he arrived at Pensnett, on Christmas Day 1879, he visited the Sampson and Lion and found them still serving at 3.00 in the afternoon – half an hour later than should have been the case. The whole case hinged upon whether or not his watch was correct, or whether the landlord's clock was correct. After much discussion the bench dismissed the case, on the grounds of the landlord's respectability and the fact that there seemed to be no intention to remain open (BNA, 1880a). Hicklin's zealousness probably did little to endear him to his local pub landlords. In a similar way, he charged the landlord of the Rifle in March 1881 with selling beer after hours, Hicklin and a colleague having concealed themselves behind the pub to observe. This time the case was proven, and the landlord fined (BNA, 1881l).

There were further instances. Early one Sunday morning in October 1881, he heard voices from a house close to the High Oak public house at 2.00 on a Sunday morning, and (after secreting himself in the door of the post office) saw a group of women coming from that house to collect ale from the High Oak to take back to the house. After they had entered and then left the pub, he confronted them and found ale in their possession (BNA, 1881hh). Despite a raft of excuses made to the bench, the landlord of the pub, William Evans, was found guilty of keeping his house open during prohibited hours. On another occasion in December 1881, Hicklin and the main witness to drunken behavior at the Fish Inn (Cornelius Chambers, one of the leaders of the teetotaler movement in Pensnett) were challenged in the court by the defense solicitor Mr. Waldren as to whether or not he was teetotaler, in such a way that implied they had an animosity towards the sale of alcohol in any form. Hicklin admitted he was a teetotaler, but denied that he had signed any pledge, and

had no intent to do so (BNA, 1881tt). A similar challenge by Mr. Waldren was made in a case in 1883 concerning drunken behavior at the Crown Inn on Commonsides, which was bluntly rebutted by Superintendent Wollaston on Hicklin's behalf.

The local animosity came out into the open in the middle of December 1881. Hicklin and a colleague, PC Lafford, assisted in throwing out four people from the Crown Inn on Commonsides. He then went to the King's Head Inn along the road to see the landlord there to ask him to serve on a Jury (figure 3.5). As he entered, a man on a bench behind the door hit him a number of times with a stick, and a second man assaulted him with a poker with a blow across the shoulders. Lafford left to find assistance. When Hicklin recovered from being stunned, he found his assailants and two of their friends had disappeared (BNA, 1881ww). Eventually Noah Bate, a miner from Commonsides was arrested and brought to trial in March 1882. It would appear that Bate and the other three were those who had been thrown out of the Crown earlier. He was sentenced to jail with hard labour for two months. At that time, Hicklin was still suffering to some extent from the injuries he received. The story did not end there. On his way to the prison in Stafford, Bate was heard to say (by the accompanying Police Constable) that he would "do for that ____ Hicklin" when he came out. He was further charged with using threatening behavior and bound over to keep the peace (BNA, 1882a). Whilst Bate was clearly not the sharpest knife in the block, the story does illustrate the underlying threat of violence that Hicklin faced on a day by day basis.



Figure 3.5 Kings Head 1997

From Hitchmough (2010)

Finally, the last case that is worthy of note is an instance of forgery from 1882 BNA, 1882c). Hicklin was asked to check that the signatures on testimonials provided by an applicant to be a constable were valid, and he showed that two of them were forged. One suspects that this must have been a slightly uncomfortable experience for one who did not tell the whole truth on his application to the police force!

Climbing the ladder

Hicklin's next move was to a completely different area – Bradley Green, near Biddulph in the Potteries District, where he took up a position as Sergeant 2nd class on December 1st 1884. Perhaps oddly, as he scaled the promotion ladder, he becomes somewhat less visible, because of fewer court appearances and, one suspects, because the Congleton and Macclesfield Mercury, on which we rely for this period of Hicklin's career, provided

a less comprehensive news coverage than the County Express and County Advertiser between them for Tividale and Pensnett. But the necessity to deal with drunks and disorderly behavior continued, and we meet Hicklin in court a number of times proving cases of this type. In addition, there are the usual incidences of petty theft and “furious” driving of horse and carts that needed to be addressed. He was also called to a number of suicides usually by hanging, then a criminal offence of course, and had to cut down the body. He was clearly becoming involved in more administrative duties, and we hear reports of him attending the Biddulph Local Board and being given authority by that board to prosecute for “*stone-throwing, swearing and dis-orderliness in the public street*” on behalf of the Board.

Of the more unusual incidents he had to deal with, perhaps the most distressing was that of Emily Poole of Hanley, who was very badly mistreated by her stepmother Priscilla Poole, a case which came to court in 1887. Emily was about 20, but looked much younger, and had been repeatedly beaten, left unfed with very little clothing, and was often required to work naked around the house. The neighbours, taking pity, gave her some clothes, but the stepmother pawned these. She slept in a damp, leaking garret room with very little bedding. Hicklin in giving evidence said he would rather sleep in the open air than in such a room as that. Over the past year Emily had tried to commit suicide, and Priscilla had continually abused the neighbours who remonstrated with her over her stepdaughter’s treatment. The magistrate stated that this was the worst crime that he had ever had to deal with and sentenced Priscilla Poole to the maximum level he was allowed – six months in prison with hard labour (BNA, 1887c).

Perhaps the main incident that occurred during his time at Bradley Green, was in 1889 when he and one of his

constables. PC Clay were charged with assaulting Samson Chadwick, a collier, in 1889. Chadwick had clearly been acting in a disruptive fashion in public, almost certainly due to drink, and PC Clay had tried to arrest him. He went with the PC quietly at first, but then began to resist. In a scuffle Clay threw him to the ground and tried to drag him, handcuffed, to the police station. Being unable to do so, he fetched Hicklin and another PC and between them they dragged Chadwick along the ground for three hundred yards to the station, in full view of the public. At the station he was put into a cell, and was allegedly thrown roughly onto a bench, resulting in a black eye and other injuries. Witnesses testified that Clay kicked Chadwick on the ground while he was being dragged and that he did not have any injuries when he was put into the cell. According to Hicklin's statement he was "*laid very carefully upon the bench in the cell*". Despite what appeared to be quite strong evidence that the police had been somewhat rougher than they ought to have been and the less than convincing police statements, the magistrates conferred and decided in favour of the police. And Samuel Hicklin was able to continue his career (BNA, 1889f).

The Hicklin's third son Samuel was born in March 1891 and was baptized at Oldbury in early September. In the census of that year, Hicklin's age had increased again to 36, giving a birth date of 1854/1855. In reality he was coming up to 33 at the time. Eliza's age was given as 35 and thus a birth year of 1855/56.

In November 1891, Hicklin moved directly from being a Sergeant 2nd class to being an Inspector 2nd class, thus jumping a grade. This involved a move to Burton upon Trent in the Rural District in 1891 and a subsequent move to Tipton, back in the Mining district for a brief period in 1896, at the same grade. Burton was of course near to his home, and the duties would have involved policing the area where he was born and brought up. In 1896 there

were 17 Inspectors and 14 Superintendents in the Staffordshire Constabulary, which implies roughly one each per division. In this period of his career, Hicklin is at his least visible and the Burton Chronicle makes few mentions of him – too senior to be required to make many press-reported court appearances, but not quite senior enough to be the public face of the force. But where he does appear, the incidents he was dealing with were far removed from the drunkards of earlier years. At Burton in 1892, he rather wonderfully identified a shop-breaking suspect by comparing a boot print at the crime scene with the suspect's boots – proper police procedure (BNA, 1892)! In 1895, he was instrumental in the arrest of a fraudster on the run from the police in Oxford, having obtained jewelry by false pretenses; and in the same year, he arrested another travelling fraudster, who had pretended to be an old acquaintance of a number of leading cricketers of the day, now suffering from sickness, in order to obtain donations (BNA, 1895b). He moved to Tipton in early 1896 on what would seem to be a short-term posting. The major incident that he was involved with there was the trial of Sarah Jane Williams (43) and Frederick Ward (49) were charged with the theft on significant money and property to the value of £400 from John Williams, Sarah's husband, and then eloping via Liverpool to the United States. Hicklin was entrusted with sailing to the United States in their pursuit and received them into custody on board the *Belgenland* in Washington Docks, Philadelphia (BNA, 1896). It is to be hoped that he was actually allowed to disembark and see something of the USA after such a trip!

During their time in Burton, the Hicklin's daughter Flora was born in Burton in August 1892.

Head of Division

On December 1st 1896, Hicklin was appointed as a Superintendent (again jumping a grade) and moved back to Burton upon Trent where he was in charge of the Burton Division, with 18 stations including Uttoxeter, Tutbury, Horninglow, Alrewas, Yoxall and Burton itself. By this time the districts had been renamed –the Mining District as District A, the Rural District as District B and the Potteries District as District C. After the years as Inspector when his activities were not very visible, becoming the Superintendent put him very much in the public eye. Whilst he was no longer involved in arresting drunks, he was responsible for licensing public houses, and had to report on an annual basis to the various licensing authorities in the area on the number of licenses, number of offences of drunken behavior, recommendations for granting or withholding licenses etc. He seems to have exchanged catching drunks for counting them! He can also be seen making reports to local council committees on various aspects of policing; attending fund raising functions, including kicking off a charity football match between Burton and Lichfield Police; organizing inspections of police forces; and attending funerals and delivering tributes. In short, he became a public representative of the police in the area.

He and his family lived in accommodation at the Police Station on Station Street, together with 8 police constables (presumably in some sort of dormitory facility) and for the night of the 1901 census, three prisoners in the cells. The picture in Figure 3.6 below is from the Burton upon Trent History website and is captioned there as showing the newly appointed Superintendent Moss in 1898. Moss was actually appointed in late 1906 / early 1907, after Hicklin left Burton. Either the picture is wrongly dated and shows Superintendent Moss in 1907, or the picture is of Samuel Hicklin himself. It would of course be nice if the latter were

true, but even if it is not, it does give clear indication of the sort of uniform worn by the Staffordshire Constabulary at the time, and also of course of the importance of mounted constables.



Figure 3.6 Superintendent Moss or Hicklin?

From Local History of Burton on Trent (2020)

Some things however remained the same – he continued to bring malefactors to court for not being in proper control of their horse and cart, or for causing obstructions on the highway. “Reckless cycling” through the borough was also becoming an issue. The range of minor crimes he and his men investigated was very wide – for example house breaking, cruelty to animals, shoplifting, perjury, embezzlement and fraud, illegal betting, trespass and family maintenance defaulters. He also had to deal with a distressing number of suicides and attempted suicides. In general, both Hicklin and the bench of magistrates were very gentle with survivors and tried to place them in situations where they might find help.

Amongst the most amusing of these, was the case in 1899 of the shop fire at Burton-upon-Trent where the owner, a

Mr. Joseph North, a draper from Uxbridge Street, was unable explain to Hicklin how the fire had started at around midnight and why he and his wife were fully dressed at that time after retiring to bed early. Hicklin, unsurprisingly, found the facts that Mr. Richardson's attire included collar and tie and laced up boots more than a little suspicious, particularly in the light of the fact that the level of insurance was about eight times the value of the stock that was burnt (BNA, 1899). There was a further case in 1905, when Hicklin was able to solve a series of robberies that had been committed by Elizabeth Smith and Mary Parkes, through the initiative of a local shoe shop owner, who attached an enticing pair of slippers to a cord, leading to a mousetrap that was activated (presumably loudly!) when the slippers were taken. When Hicklin searched the suspect's homes, he found, to quote his evidence "*a cartload of stuff, including boots, shoes and clothing*".

The ongoing series of relatively minor offences however were punctuated by major incidents of violence and murder, which naturally made the headlines in the local (and sometimes national) press. Of these two incidents stand out –the first that ultimately involved only minor injury, and the third that involved quite a complex murder investigation. In both Hicklin showed himself to be much more than a desk bound administrator.

In the first of these, in 1900, some children were standing on the Recreation Ground canal bridge in Burton, when one of the boatmen on a passing barge shot at them from below with a pellet gun. Five of the children were injured in the face and shoulders. The incident was reported to the police in Burton, and we read that Hicklin chased them for seven miles along the canal (presumably mounted) and then arrested them at Alrewas. The claim was made that the children had been throwing stones. The three boatmen – Benjamin Nixon, Emmanuel Lloyd and Harry

Banks- were charged with causing grievous bodily harm to the children. From the evidence presented it was not clear which of the three had fired the shots. They were committed for trial at the Quarter Sessions. From our perspective, the interesting aspect is that Hicklin, even at the rank of Superintendent, rode after them, and arrested them, knowing that they were potentially armed – an act of considerable bravery (BNA, 1900).

We find a similar pattern in perhaps the major incident of Hicklin's time in Burton. On a Sunday morning, in late January 1903, PC William Price, based at Stretton near Burton, was investigating the stealing of some ferrets. His enquiries led him to a "gypsy" encampment consisting of several caravans, where he arrested a certain Tom Sherrif. Sherriff's two brothers John and William then attacked him with sticks and stones. When trying to use his baton, Price was repeatedly hit and forced to the ground where they continued to beat him. They eventually made their escape, despite the efforts of Price who tried to pursue them before collapsing. He was taken to Burton Infirmary and wounds on his head dressed. Later however at home he became delirious and was readmitted to hospital, where a fractured skull was diagnosed, and an operation performed. Price however died later that night. It would seem that when Hicklin heard of the events, he drove (a horse and trap) and having driven through his home territory of Marston-on-Dove and Hilton, caught up with the caravans at Hatton, and arrested the group. He was assisted by a number of constables it would seem, although reports are a little vague. Those he arrested however, were the mother and father of the three brothers - Hope and Hattie Sherriff who were traveling Hawkers, and another Hawker Arkless Holland. The evidence that these gave at the inquest the following day suggested they were not involved in the assault although they did little to prevent it. The three brothers in the meantime were

nowhere to be found and a search was instigated. Again, the actions of Hicklin are interesting – driving after what could have been a group of very violent youths in order to make an arrest, with little support. The runaways were eventually sighted at Scropton about eight miles from Burton but overpowered and maltreated the officer who tried to detain them, Sergeant Hutchinson who tried to arrest them. Eventually reports were received of them being sighted in Derby and Belper. They were eventually captured at Buxton on Wednesday night and Hicklin and a Sergeant went by train to collect them, suitably handcuffed, on Thursday morning. They met with a hostile reception from a large crowd at Burton station, and were brought to court very quickly, where they were remanded in custody. At the County Sessions a week later the three brothers pleaded guilty to murder but stated that their father and Holland were not guilty. They were all committed for trial at Stafford Assizes in March 1903. In the train on the way to Stafford Jail the three brothers were overheard discussing the fight with the Price by the constable accompanying them. The charges against Hope Sherriff and Arkless Holland were not proceeded with at the Assizes due to lack of evidence, but the three brothers, who had changed their plea to not guilty, were found guilty of manslaughter, based partly on the overheard conversation on the train. This sentence was possibly arrived at, as it was not possible to say which, if any of them, was actually responsible for the blow that fractured Price's skull and resulted in his death. They were each sentenced to 15 years penal servitude. In 1911 they were all held in the prison on the Isle of Portland (BNA, 1903a, b).

Samuel and Eliza's time second period in Burton was not without personal trauma however. Their two older sons, both in their twenties, died in that period – John in 1899 and William in 1904. Their youngest child Reginald was

born in 1899. In the 1901 census, Samuel's age is given as 46 and Eliza's as 43 and thus implying birth years of 1854/5 and 1857/58. At that time, William, aged 18, is recorded as an Engineer's apprentice.

In August 1906, Hicklin was promoted to the rank of Chief Superintendent, and left Burton with fulsome tributes from the Mayor, the bench of Magistrates and court officials and counsel. The tone of the tributes as reported in the press was warm and he seems to have been held in genuine respect and affection (BNA, 1906).

Chief Superintendent Hicklin



Figure 3.7 Burslem Police Station

From Art UK (2020)

Hicklin became Chief Superintendent in late 1906 in charge of the Potteries District (District C) with its four Divisions of Burslem, Longton, Stoke and Tunstall, and was based at Burslem Police station (figure 3.7). He also

seems to have more local responsibility for the Burslem Division with its 16 police stations, although this was no doubt delegated to some extent. As a Chief Superintendent Hicklin was even more a public figure than before and attended many civic and community functions. The Staffordshire Sentinel reported on his involvement in St John's Ambulance exam awards, civic church services and church parades, charity football matches, formal dinners, funerals, council events and so on.

The range of crimes and offences dealt with by Hicklin and his men was similar to that at Burton, with licensing issues and traffic offences forming the majority of cases. The one that drew most public attention however was again a murder – that of Sarah Ann Price, aged 51, the wife of George Price, a colliery labourer. It would appear that the couple had been drinking heavily together and had then quarreled. During the quarrel, Price had poured paraffin over his wife and set her on fire. She died from her burns, *“burnt to a cinder”*. Hicklin arrested Price and was involved in his prosecution for murder. Not surprisingly the incident created much interest in the press, both locally and nationally (BNA, 1909a).

The other major challenge that presented itself was the policing of elections and, with more difficulty, strikes and industrial action. The major incident during Hicklin's time at Burslem was a widespread strike amongst miners in early July 1909, aiming to increase the length of the lunch break and to increase pay for Saturday working. This not only involved walk outs, but also large crowds of striking miners moved around the area, aiming to force miners at non-striking pits to join them, and closing other industries. There was much violence and intimidation, and the police stood between the strikers on one hand and the non-strikers and mine owners on the other. The whole police force in the area was stretched very thinly, and Hicklin himself, whilst trying to persuade a crowd of 300

to 400 miners to disperse to enable non-striking miners to go home, was himself “*assailed with a volley of stones*”. The strikes were settled after a few days, with some small concessions from the employers on the length of the “snapping time” – or lunch break, but the trials for riot and affray occupied the Magistrate’s courts and Assizes for many months after (BNA 1909b, c).

In 1910 Stoke on Trent City Police was formed with a merger of Hanley Borough Police and that part of the County Force area then within the Potteries Federation. This included significant parts of the then District C of the Staffordshire Constabulary, and a major re-organisation of the County force took place. A new District C was formed, spanning both parts of the Potteries and also more rural areas of the county, of which Hicklin took charge. The Divisions of this District were Leek, Newcastle, Stone and Uttoxeter. The District covered a very wide geographical area in the north of the county. Hicklin and his family moved to the police station at Leek, where the District headquarters were located, in early 1910 (Figure 3.8).



Figure 3.8 Leek police station

from Wikipedia (2020b)

The 1911 census gives us a further snapshot of the family – Samuel aged 56 with a birth year of 1854/5, Eliza aged 55 with a birth year of 1855/56, young Samuel aged 20, now a tailor running his own business and shop; Flora, aged 18, helping with the domestic work; and Reginald, aged 11 still at school. Their accommodation, in the police station, had seven rooms (Figure 3.9).

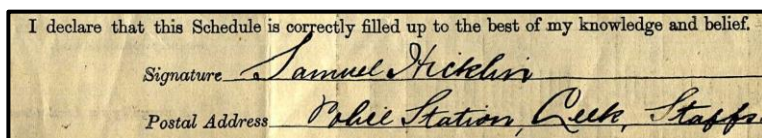


Figure 3.9 Samuel Hicklin's signature from the 1911 census

At Leek, Hicklin's life seems to have continued in much the same way as at Burslem, no doubt the majority of the time being taken up by the administrative roles necessary in any large organization – appointments and promotions, finance and reporting and so on. It is likely that, as one of the four Chief Superintendents, he also played a role in the determination of strategy and plans for the whole constabulary under the direction of the Chief Constable. He continued to deal with much the same range of crimes and incidents as before, although it seems that the war years were rather quieter than previously, in part because licensing hours were restricted. His first involvement with motor vehicle transgressions is recorded– a taxicab colliding with a horse and cart in 1918; and the death of a pedestrian after being knocked down by a car whilst disembarking from a tram (BNA 1918, 1921). The war also caused a significant decrease in the number of public functions. One that did occur after the war in 1923, was the presentation of certificates to the 219 special constables who were in post in the Leek Division between 1914 and 1919, replacing those who had volunteered to enlist (BNA, 1923).

During his time at Leek, two major honours came his way - the King George V Coronation Medal in 1912, and the MBE in 1919.

The final mention of Hicklin in the press was on the 9th February 1924 when he reported at the Annual Licensing Sessions of the Leek Division.

Chief Superintendent Hicklin reported that the number of licenses in the Division was 142, no license holders had been proceeded against under the licensing laws; 52 males and 10 females were proceeded against for drunkenness, all except 6 males and 4 females being convicted.

As he began his career with drunken behavior, so he ended it (BNA, 1924a).

Samuel Hicklin died on Thursday March 27th 1924 having made his last court appearance on the Monday before, when he was in good health. This suggests that death was due to a heart attack or something similar. The obituaries were fulsome and generous. From the Staffordshire Sentinel of 31st March 1924 (BNA, 1924b).

.....During his 14 years at Leek, Chief Inspector Hicklin has made himself extremely popular with all classes but the courteous and tactful way in which he has carried out the important and various duties attached to his office. Of a quiet and unassuming disposition, and a man seeking little publicity, he was nevertheless a strict disciplinarian and his organization of the police in the large and important Leek Division was as complete and as efficient as anywhere in the county..... He was a zealous and efficient police official carrying out his work with conspicuous ability and whilst ever mindful of the responsibilities of his position, he was always fair and impartial in the preparation of prosecutions...

He was also described as being in his 69th year, implying birth years of 1855/1856. The tributes from magistrates and court officials were equally fulsome. In his obituary in the Staffordshire Constabulary Monthly Budget of April 1924 (Staffordshire Constabulary, 1924) we read

The Chief Constable wishes to express his deep and sincere appreciation of the very valuable and loyal work of this officer during his long service of 48 years in the force.

In the same obituary his birth date is given, for the first time in the historical record, as 28th March 1857, which was probably one year earlier than his actual birth date.



Figure 3.10 Leek Parish Church

From Wikipedia (2020c)

His funeral took place on the afternoon of Monday 31st March. There was a procession of 100 officers, including many ex-officers who had served with him across the county from the Police Station to Leek Parish Church (Figure 3.10), led by six mounted constables. Chief Constable Anson also attended. At the service there were representatives from the two Freemasons lodges of which he was a member, many magistrates and court officials, representatives off the Licensed Victuallers Association (which seems wholly appropriate) and many others. The coffin was carried into church by six constables. After the funeral service led by the vicar, his body was laid to rest in Leek Cemetery. The mourners were recorded as

“Mr. Reginald Hicklin (son), Miss Flora Hicklin (daughter), Mr. and Mrs. A Tipper (sister and brother in law) , Mr. and Mrs. T E Harper, Mr. J Goode (nephew) and ex-Inspector George Oulton of Leek, formerly of Burton”.

Sam Hicklin, the eldest son was stated to be in Canada. Mrs. Tipper was actually his half-sister Harriet. It is notable that Eliza was not present. In the pre-second world war register of 1939, she is registered as still living in Leek, with her unmarried daughter Flora, and as being incapacitated. Perhaps that was already the case in 1924. The Staffordshire Advertiser (BNA, 1924c) who reported on this event, also contained the only known picture of Sam Hicklin (figure 3.11)



Figure 3.11 Samuel Hicklin 1858-1924

Samuel Hicklin's life was in some ways quite exceptional – that a farm labourer's child should rise to perhaps the highest police rank that was available to him (as Chief Constable and Deputy Chief Constable ranks were largely restricted to “gentlemen” or retired military officers) must be viewed as remarkable, and a tribute to his abilities, hard work and diligence. From press reports it is not really possible to form a view of his character and personality,

but he does seem to have been genuinely well liked and respected by his peers. The number of colleagues and acquaintances his funeral alone is testimony to that.

Throughout this chapter the rather variable birth dates that he assigned to himself through the years have been mentioned. This might have been in part due his own uncertainty about his age, but this explanation is not wholly convincing in view of his precision in other areas (not least his pedantic interactions with landlords who keep their pubs open somewhat later than they should). It is likely that throughout his career he was careful to ensure that nobody came to realize that he gave a wrong age at the very start of it. He may also have, consciously or unconsciously, trying to take over the birth details of his older brother, the first Samuel, who died before he was born. A very small blot on the copybook of a remarkable man!

Chapter 4. Shut End Primitive Methodist church.

Introduction

In this chapter we will consider in detail the life of the Primitive Methodist Church in Tansey Green in Pensnett. The Baptism Registers from the 1840s to the 1890s are available and enable a quite full picture of the life of the church and its congregation to be painted. The chapel is mentioned a number of times in the 1837 diary of J. Petty (Primitive Methodist Magazine, 1838), an itinerant Primitive Methodist preacher, which gives a good indication of the life of the church at the time.

Sunday April 2. — In the morning and afternoon, I spoke at Shut End. I was pleasingly surprised to see so many people present and was much refreshed with the consolations of the Spirit. It was also a very profitable time during the administration of the sacrament of the Lord's Supper.

Sunday, May 28. — At seven in the morning I renewed tickets to two classes at Brierley Hill. I then hastened to Shut End to conduct a Camp meeting. The Lord blessed us with a fine day, and with the gracious influences of the Holy Spirit. A large assembly listened with becoming attention to the word of life, and much evident good was done. We had a love feast in the chapel in the evening, and one backslider or more professed to be reclaimed. Praise the Lord.

The chapel continued to flourish over the years. The 1851 Religious Census records morning / afternoon and evening congregations of 110, 134 and 120 respectively, with 120 sittings provided, and in 1887 there were over 250 children in the Sunday School and 20 teachers. The Church also operated its own Friendly Society – the Shut End Primitive Methodist Economic (Sunday School

rooms) with 54 members in 1878, and assets of £200. Over the years the building continued to deteriorate and there were repeated moves to persuade the local Primitive Methodist circuit to purchase land for a new chapel. Matters came to a head in the early 1890s when the congregation purchased land for a new chapel on Commonside themselves and were expelled from the circuit. It seems that payment of the quarterly circuit fees was also an issue at the time (Wesley History Society, 1961). In 1893 the original building, which by that time was badly in need of repair, was finally sold and the new Independent Methodist chapel on Commonside built. The baptismal registers are available for this chapel, unlike the other non-conformist chapels in the area (Dodd, 1983).

In what follows we firstly consider the chapel building, and then look in detail at what the Baptismal Register can tell us about the nature of the congregation. We then look at a number of church families in rather more detail.

Chapel Building

The Shut End Primitive Methodist Chapel and its associated Schoolroom was situated in the triangle of Tansey Green Road, Dreadnaught Road and Pensnett High Street, on a rectangular plot of land parallel to Tansey Green Road, behind the Brickmaker's Arms (Figure 4.1). The whole triangle of land between the roads was indicated as owned by Ben Gibbons on the 1822 Fowler Map of Kingswinford and consisted of crofts and houses (DA, 1822a). By the time of the 1840 Fowler map (DA, 1840a), the Chapel building itself existed, to the north end of the plot in Figure 4.1. The land in the triangle was then owned by the Trustees of the Earl of Dudley and was described as old colliery lands or crofts. The Chapel itself is described as being owned by the "Trustees of William

Porter and others”, whilst the southern half of the plot was owned by Joseph Downing, but occupied by Ephraim Guest, William Greenway and William Morris. These surnames occur frequently in the Baptismal Register.

The 1859 redrawing of the Pensnett portion of the 1840 map (DA, 1859) shows no change to the chapel but there were by then mines to the north of the plot and open cast workings to the west. By the 1883 OS map (figure 4.1) the Schoolroom was present, and the open cast mine to the west was very clear (OS, 1883). Both the Chapel and the Schoolroom were rectangular in form, roughly 14m by 8m in plan. After the congregation moved to the new building on Commonside (the Independent Methodist Chapel), it would seem that the buildings were in use as a sewing factory. The 1910 OS map indicates that they had become a “Picture Theatre” and the Chapel and Schoolroom had been joined together into one long structure.



Figure 4.1. The chapel and schoolroom

No details of the interior of the building survive, but these can perhaps be conjectured by what was built to replace them on Commonsides. This had a balcony at the front of the chapel for the choir and organ, with the raised preaching desk and the table for the Lord's Supper placed centrally at the front of the Chapel beneath the balcony. Pews occupied the rest of the chapel building. Although the original chapel was unlikely to have had a balcony, it would almost certainly have had a preaching desk / pulpit of some sort of simple communion table at the north end.

As noted in the Introduction above in the 1850s there were three services on a Sunday – morning, afternoon and evening. In the latter years of its life various directories in the 1880s indicate that there were only two services on a Sunday – at 10.45am and 6.00pm, but there was also a mid-week service on Wednesday at 7.30pm, which probably existed throughout the life of the chapel. Similar midweek services were common practice for all the churches in the area at that time. The dates in the baptism register indicate that baptisms could occur on Sundays and also on other days.

The Baptismal Register

The typed transcript of the Baptismal Register of Dodd (1983) is a copy of a handwritten transcript, that has itself been significantly amended. This was in turn a copy of the original register. The Baptismal entries from 1845 to 1887 are given, with the following information; date of baptism; Christian name(s) of baptized child.; Christian name(s) of father and mother, and surname; address – usually given by a broad area location; occupation of father; name of officiating minister; (sometimes) date of birth of child.

In total there were 777 entries over the period of 42 years, with 514 different couples represented. The Register can thus be seen to contain a great deal of potentially interesting information. However, it must be admitted that that the typed transcript of the register is a bit of a mess – which either reflects the original register or may be partly due to its transmission history. Entries are not always in the correct date order, with some being significantly displaced. Names on the original were clearly difficult to read, and some of the guesses thus made are meaningless. The spelling is in general variable, which probably reflects the abilities of the officiating minister in transcribing names given orally.

To analyse the register in detail, all the entries were transcribed to an EXCEL spreadsheet. This is available at Baker (2020e) and is described in Appendix 2. To enable the data to be ordered to reveal its various aspects more clearly, some cleaning up was needed. This involved adopting common spellings for addresses, occupations and names. The latter had to be done with care, so as not to use essential information, but most name changes were trivial – for example to standardize on “Henry” rather than “Henery” or “Henary”. In other places a greater degree of interpretation was required. Whilst these changes may have resulted in minor errors that affect the statistics presented below, these should not be significant.

Table 4.1 shows the number of baptisms in five-year periods. It can be seen that these increase from 50 between 1850 and 1854 to a maximum of 132 between 1870 and 1874 i.e. from 10 to 26 / year on average. After that there is a slight fall off. The data in Part 3 for the population of the Shut End area shows a similar trend, peaking in the 1860s and then decreasing, and whilst the number of baptisms possibly reflects this, it also reflects the age distribution of the chapel congregation. Baptisms usually took place between 2 and 4 weeks after birth, but

there were exceptions. For example, sometimes double family baptisms are recorded in the register. Whilst a few of these were baptisms of twins, for most of those where children's birth dates are given, they are for a baby and an older sibling who had clearly missed out on baptism after birth for one reason or another.

Year	Baptisms
1850 to 1854	50
1855 to 1859	93
1860 to 1864	84
1865 to 1869	123
1870 to 1874	132
1875 to 1879	110
1880 to 1884	91

Table 4.1 Baptism by year

Table 4.2 shows the number of baptisms by area of residence. To compile this table, the register entries have been consolidated somewhat – for example in the few cases where streets are given, these are included in the relevant area. In the table, the Pensnett area refers to the area of the new developments, mainly centred on the Hollies area, but extending as far west as New / Swan St. It is not clear how Shut End and Tansey Green were distinguished by residents, and there may well be some confusion between them. These uncertainties aside, the vast majority of baptisms were of those in the 1845 ecclesiastical parish of Pensnett (Pensnett, Commonsides, Shut End, Tansey Green and Bromley – 83.1% in total) and most of the rest from closely surrounding areas (Kingswinford, Coopers Bank, Oak Farm, Brockmoor, Brierly Hill and Wordsley – 13.8%). The remaining entries were widespread, from as close as Dudley to as far away as Wigan, and probably indicate married children

returning home for the baptism of their child at their home chapel. But it is clear that the Chapel served the local population in its vicinity.

	Baptisms	%
Pensnett	156	31.6
Commonside	90	18.2
Shut End	87	17.6
Tansey Green	53	10.7
Kingswinford	26	5.3
Bromley	25	5.1
Oak Farm	18	3.6
Coopers Bank	17	3.4
Brockmoor	4	0.8
Brierley Hill	2	0.4
Wordsley	1	0.2
Other	15	3.0

Table 4.2 Baptism entries by area of residence

Table 4.3 shows the Register entries grouped by father's occupation. Here again some cleaning of the data was required. The major change was to re-label a range of entries as "Iron Workers". These took on a large variety of forms including moulder, furnace man, roller and puddler. Some of these, particularly the latter, were regarded as highly skilled jobs. The "other" category includes trades such as groom, keeper, horseman, boat builder, shoemaker, grocer, butcher, with a very small number classified as managers or clerks. It can be seen that the majority of the entries are for fathers who were miners or labourers, whilst almost all of the others would be working in or servicing the various industries listed. The labourers could be working in any of the other industries included in the list.

Now to some degree these figures will reflect the fact that the fathers of those baptized were relatively young and unskilled, and thus more likely to be labeled as labourers than their elders, but nonetheless they do show that the congregation at the chapel were overwhelmingly manual workers of various skill levels.

	Baptisms	%
Miner	169	33.9
Labourer	153	30.7
Iron Worker	64	12.8
Engineer	17	3.4
Blacksmith	13	2.6
Stock Taker	8	1.6
Brick Maker	8	1.6
Carpenter	7	1.4
Boiler Maker	5	1.0
Other	54	10.8

Table 4.3 Baptismal entries by father's occupation

The baptismal registers of course give a very great deal of information concerning names – both Christian names and surnames. However, this aspect of the register data is most difficult to analyse because of the huge variability in spelling, and a lot of cleaning of the data was required to put the most common names into a common format so that the data could be ordered and searched. The results of the analysis are shown in Table 4.4 for male names and Table 4.5 for female names. Each table shows the most common ten names and their percentage of the total from the following sources.

- The Fowler 1822 map directory for the whole of Kingswinford parish (DA, 1822b).

- The names of the mothers and fathers in the Baptismal register.
- The names of the children in the baptismal register.

This thus represents three different time slices – the first reflecting names given between around 1780 and 1820, the second for the period between approximately 1820 and 1860, and the third for the period between 1845 and 1885. The second and third thus overlap somewhat.

Consider first the male names in Table 4.4. The most striking thing is the similarity between the three lists, with most names occurring in all three. Benjamin, Richard and Samuel become less popular over the years, whilst George moves up the popularity list. Overall, the top ten names contribute 85% to the total in 1822, but only 60% between 1845 and 1885, reflecting the fact that outside the most popular names, there was an increasing variability. For both the father's and the son's names, there was a consistent use of Old Testament forms, some more obscure than others. There were also a few oddities: from 1871, Lord Dando, son Mark and Caroline Dando of Pensnett, Blacksmith; from 1849, Squire Shuker, son of Samuel and Ann Shuker of Shut End, Engine Worker; and from 1860, Theophilus Hadduck son of Benjamin and Meriah Hadduck of Commonside, Forgeman.

	Fowler Directory male names 1822		Shut End Baptism father's names 1845-1887 (61 different names)		Shut End Baptism boy's names 1845-1887 (73 different names)	
	Name	%	Name	%	Name	%
1	John	17.6	William	13.6	John	12.8
2	William	14.3	John	12.2	William	9.8
3	Thomas	13.2	Thomas	11.8	George	7.5
4	Joseph	10.8	Joseph	7.9	Joseph	7.0
5	James	6.0	George	7.3	Samuel	5.5
6	Richard	5.5	James	5.3	Thomas	4.8
7	Benjamin	5.4	Edward	4.1	James	4.3
8	Edward	4.2	Richard	4.1	Edward	3.0
9	Samuel	4.0	Samuel	3.7	David	2.8
10	George	3.4	Henry	2.4	Richard	2.8
		84.6		72.4		60.2

Table 4.4 Male names

The female names in table 4.5 show something of the same level of stability for the top 5 names, but thereafter the names in the list are very variable. In 1822 the top 10 names contributed 86% to the total, but for the baptized girl's names, this figure fell to just 56%, indicating again a greater variability as the years go by. This trend seems to be more pronounced amongst the female names, perhaps indicating a greater influence of prevailing fashion. Of all the names the most variable in spelling was Maria and its variants – Mariah, Meria, Meriah and Marieh. Whilst they all obviously refer to the same name, the large number of occurrences of these variants suggests a variability in the way that they were pronounced – and thus recorded in the register. Again there were some oddities: in 1865, Tryphena Wassell, daughter of John and Sarah Wassell of Bromley, Brickmaker; in 1868, Ursula Adelaide Danks,

daughter of William and Caroline Danks of Pensnett, Roller; in 1874, Adelaide Amos, daughter of John and Pamela Amos of Tansey Green, Miner. The name Adelaide seems to have been taken from Queen Adelaide, the wife of William IV.

	Fowler Directory female names 1822		Shut End Baptism mother's names 1845-1887 (76 different names)		Shut End Baptism girl's names 1845-1887 (79 different names)	
	Name	%	Name	%	Name	%
1	Mary	19.2	Mary	16.2	Mary	11.3
2	Sarah	18.4	Sarah	10.4	Sarah	11.3
3	Elizabeth	15.7	Ann	7.8	Elizabeth	6.6
4	Ann	11.5	Elizabeth	7.6	Ann	6.3
5	Hannah	7.7	Hannah	6.6	Hannah	6.0
6	Jane	5.0	Eliza	6	Alice	4.4
7	Margaret	3.4	Emma	3	Emma	3.0
8	Ruth	1.9	Maria	2.6	Phoebe	2.7
9	Zipporah	1.5	Jane	2.6	Eliza	2.5
10	Lydia	1.5	Caroline	2.4	Fanny	2.2
		85.8		65.2		56.3

Table 4.5 Female names

The Baptismal Register gives details of those ministers who baptized the children. These can be expected to be in two categories – members of the church who held a position of authority of some form and conducted services who were perhaps stewards or trustees, and preachers from the local Primitive Methodist Circuit. In total 151 baptising ministers are listed (although the variable forms of the names may mean this is an overestimate), with most

officiating at just a few baptisms. The five most common baptizing ministers are shown in Table 4.6 below.

Name	Number of baptisms	When active
William Dudley	18	1855-1884
Samuel Kendrick	38	1856-1874
Robert Bowen	30	1860-1885
Abraham Dodd	40	1871-1887
Joseph Homer	28	1871-1886

Table 4.6 Baptising ministers

The census returns in principle allow a little more information to be gleaned for these ministers. For one of them – Robert Bowen – there is however no obvious candidate in the census record. Of the others, William Dudley was born in 1817 in Oldswinford and in 1861 he is listed as a tailor and draper in Kingswinford. Samuel Kendrick was born in 1811 in Ketley in Shropshire, lived in the Smithy Lane area and is listed as a miner. Abraham Dodd was born in 1844 in Oak Farm and also worked as a miner. He was the son of another Abraham, a miner from Wombridge in Shropshire. There are a number of Joseph Homer's in the census record, born around 1835 to 1845, so it is not possible to be precise concerning his birth or residence, although all of the possible Joseph's were either miners or labourers.

The longevity of the ministry of all in Table 4.6 would suggest that they were all members of the congregation itself – indeed in the case of Sam Kendrick and Abraham Dodd, their families can be traced in the baptismal entries themselves. It is likely that many of the others who performed just a few baptisms were circuit ministers. Only two such can be identified with confidence by their

appellation – Rev. R Brewen in 1861 and the Rev. J Hawkins from 1881 to 1884. Dodd (1883) draws attention to another – Henry Higginson – and says that he was nicknamed the Roving Ranter. Full details of his rather intriguing life story as an itinerant minister and his larger than life character can be found in Hall (2022).

Two further points arise – firstly the ministers in the local congregation all shared the same background as those to whom they ministered, as manual workers or small shopkeepers. Secondly the link with the Shropshire coal field is obvious. Part 3 describes the society in Pensnett in the 19th century as a migrant society, with a considerable population influx, particularly from the Shropshire area.

Chapel families

To fully describe all the families and individuals mentioned in the register is of course not possible, and its primary use in this regard will be by those researching family histories. The approach taken here is to consider in some detail just three families, who between them were involved in 46 baptisms over the course of the 42 years of the register. These are the Astons, the Cottons, and the Shukers. The family connections for these three families are shown in figures 4.2 to 4.4 below. In these figures the following conventions have been adopted.

- Those individuals with no shading on their entry appear directly in the register either as parents of as the child being baptized.
- Those shaded in green indicate membership of families that appear elsewhere in the register.
- Those shaded in blue indicate individuals who have been identified through census / BMD searches, usually from generations earlier than those in the

register, that connect some of the register entries together.

- Those shaded in yellow indicate linkages between the three families.

Note that these trees only show the names of individuals in the register or those who link the various individuals together. Many of the families in these figures can be shown through census records to have other children who do not appear in the register for one reason or another.

First consider the Aston tree shown in figure 4.2. Three generations of the family appear in the register. Those in the first generation – John (1822) and Richard (1830) were probably brothers, but their parents are elusive in the record. The earlier generation comes from the Dudley area, and the later generations lived in the Tansey Green and Commonsides areas. Without exception all those in the register were manual workers throughout their lives. Richard (1830) married Maria Shuker (1832), the first of the inter-family connections that we can identify.

The Cotton tree in figure 4.3 covers four generations. George (1792) (not in the register) came from the Wombridge area of Shropshire (near Oakengates and Wellington), and the two distinct families of the Cottons were his descendants, migrating to the Kingswinford area in the early 19th century. James (1818) and Hannah Bird (1822) also come from the same area. Hannah is the second of the family interconnections – see below. After the family moved to the Pensnett area, they all lived around Shut End / Coopers Bank / Tansey Green. Without exception, all the males mentioned in the register were miners.

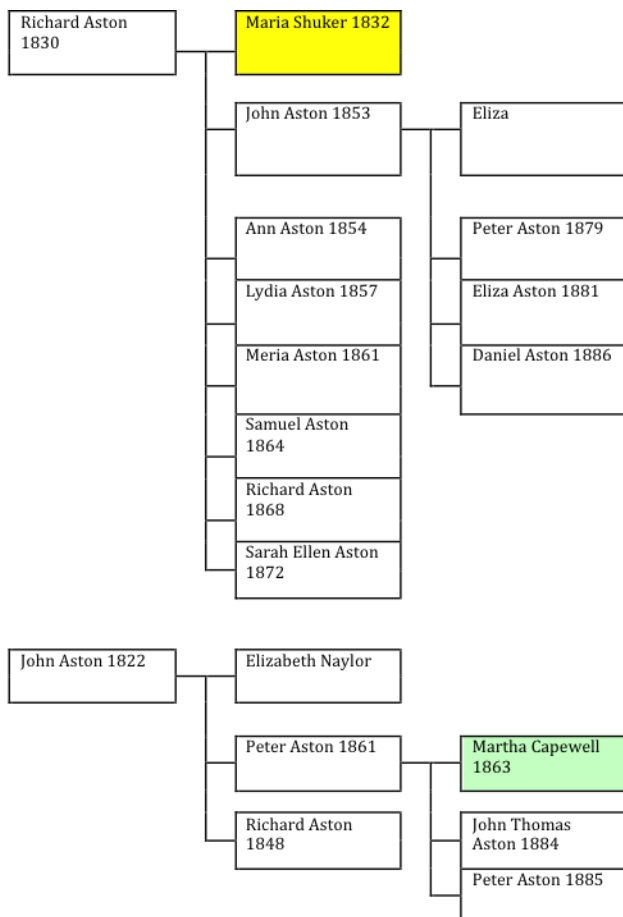


Figure 4.2. The Aston Tree

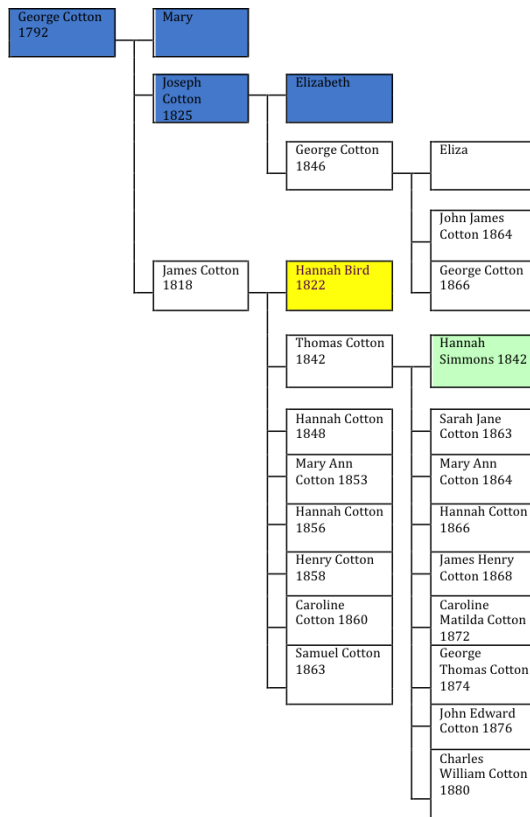


Figure 4.3 The Cotton Tree

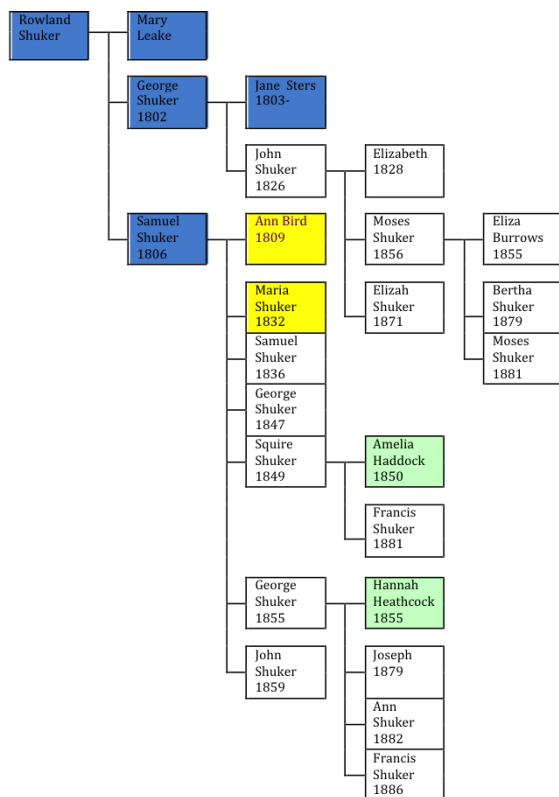


Figure 4.4 The Shuker Tree

The third tree in figure 4.4 is that of the Shukers. Here 5 generations are shown, with the latter three appearing in the register. The early generations were again from the Wombridge area. Samuel Shuker (1806) married Ann Bird (1809), the elder sister of Hannah in figure 4.3. The Bird family was again from Wombridge. One of their children, Maria (1832) married into the Aston family (figure 4.2). The later generations lived in the Shut End / Tansey Green / Commonside area and were mainly labourers, but one or two were skilled manual workers.

These three trees can only of course represent a snapshot of a small section of the register, yet they do show the interconnectedness between the families and other

families who attended the Chapel, and their common roots. Other families could of course be considered – such as the Dodds from Shut End and Tansey Green (12 baptisms), or the Greenaways from Coopers Bank (19 Baptisms), both of which had those in leadership positions in the church – Abraham Dodd (mentioned above) baptizing in the 1870s and 1880s, and Christopher Greenaway baptising in the 1880s. The significant point remains the same however – the lack of social and occupational mobility for such families.

References

Deciding on a format for references for a work of this type is not wholly straightforward, as the source material is of many different types. The approach that has been taken is as follows.

- Books and journals are referenced in something approaching the normal “Harvard” style – author name, date, title, and publication details. DOI or web links are given where they are available.
- Web sites are referenced in a similar way as far as possible, but the date for all websites is given as either 2019 or 2020 i.e. the date on which they were last accessed.
- Items from Grace’s Guide to British Industrial History (GG), and from Wikipedia, are treated in the same way as web sites, with a 2019 date. Within that, these entries are ordered in chronological order of their subject, be that either an individual or an organisation. Wikipedia is used sparingly because of long term concerns over its accuracy, but those items that are included are convenient summaries of a range of sources, and as far as can be judged are accurate.
- Items from Dudley Archives, Staffordshire Archives and the British Newspaper Archive are indicated by DA, SA, or BNA. This is followed by the date of the archived item. The details of the item itself then follow. All newspaper references are included within the BNA category.
- Government or Parliamentary papers and reports are indicated by GP, followed by the year in which they were produced.

The overall system thus allows a convenient alphabetic and chronological ordering of all items into one list.

Ancestry (2019) <https://www.ancestry.co.uk/mediaui-viewer/tree/18182697/person/625177745/media/478bb333-abe4-4e4f-8f3d-95d4eded3901> ,
<https://www.ancestry.co.uk/mediaui-viewer/tree/18182697/person/625177745/media/d06e1f8a-51b8-42eb-8de4-ddf06559c32e> ,
<https://www.ancestry.co.uk/mediaui-viewer/tree/62279743/person/36088024189/media/12dc6274-0a7c-4160-b5bc-5360ac4b5099> , Accessed July 2019

Anderton, R. (1965) "A History of the Parish Church of St Mark Pensnett",
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=WRmmpH9Uc1o>,
Accessed July 2019

Art UK (2020)
<https://artuk.org/discover/artworks/burslem-police-station-18678>

Atherton, C.I. (1865) "Nature's Parables", Hathi Trust Digital Library
<https://catalog.hathitrust.org/Record/100592554>

Atherton, C. I. (1885) "Instructions in the way of peace", Special printing from Amazon
<https://www.amazon.co.uk/Instructions-Peace-Charles-Isaac-Atherton/dp/B0068QV0YK>

Baker, C. J. (2220e) Transcription of the Baptism Register of Shut End Primitive Methodist Church, EXCEL spreadsheet

BNA (1861) Worcester Chronicle 3/4/1861

BNA (1867a) Sheffield Independent 25/3/1867

BNA (1868a) County Express 25/1/1868

BNA (1870a) Birmingham Daily Post 15/12/1870

BNA (1870b) Birmingham Daily Post 24/12/1870

BNB (1870c) Aris's Birmingham Gazette 24/12/1870
BNB (1871) County Express 1/1/1871
BNB (1876a) County Advertiser 1/4/1876
BNB (1876b) County Express 23/9/1876
BNB (1878) County Advertiser 2/3/1878
BNB (1880a) County Advertiser 3/1/1880
BNB (1880b) County Advertiser 13/11/1880
BNB (1881l) County Advertiser 19/3/1881
BNB (1881hh) County Advertiser 8/10/1881
BNB (1881tt) County Advertiser 17/12/1881
BNB (1881ww) County Express 31/12/1881
BNB (1882a) Dudley and District News 18/3/1882
BNB (1882c) Birmingham Daily Mail 29/12/1882
BNB (1882d) Huddersfield and Holmfirth Examiner
27/7/1882
BNB (1883) Leeds Times 27/1/1883
BNB (1884) Bradford Daily Telegraph 18/2/1884
BNB (1887c) Gloucester Citizen 22/3/1887
BNB (1889f) Staffordshire Sentinel 13/8/1889
BNB (1892) Burton Chronicle 13/10/1892
BNB (1895b) Burton Chronicle 7/11/1895
BNB (1896) Liverpool Echo 5/9/1896
BNB (1899) Staffordshire Advertiser 2/9/1899
BNB (1900) Birmingham Daily Post 21/3/1900
BNB, 1903a) Burton Chronicle 29/1/1903
BNB (1903b) Burton Chronicle 5/2/1903

BNA (1906) Burton Chronicle 2/8/1906
 BNA (1907a) Guardian 13/12/1907
 BNA (1907b) Bristol Times and Mirror 16/11/1907
 BNA (1909a) Staffordshire Sentinel 17/5/1909
 BNA (1909b) Staffordshire Sentinel 9/7/1909
 BNA (1909c) Staffordshire Sentinel 16/7/1909
 BNA (1918) Staffordshire Sentinel 23/5/1918
 BNA (1921) Staffordshire Sentinel 23/12/1921
 BNA (1923) Staffordshire Advertiser 5/5/1923
 BNA (1924a) Staffordshire Advertiser 9/2/1923
 BNA (1924b) Staffordshire Sentinel 31/3/1924
 BNA (1924c) Staffordshire Advertiser 5/4/1924
 Brierley Hill Blog (2020)
<http://www.brierleyhill.org/blog/2014/08/04/brierley-hill-on-the-day-war-broke-out-and-the-departing-of-the-first-troops/>
 Cambridge University (1922) "Alumni Cantabrigienses. A Biographical List of All Known Students, Graduates from Cambridge University", compiled by J Venn and J. A. Venn, Cambridge University Press,
<https://archive.org/details/alumnicantabrigipt1vol1univiala/page/n6>
 Church Monuments Society (2019)
http://www.churchmonumentsociety.org/Devon_2a.html, Accessed July 2019
 Cope, S. (1999) "The Black Country Cathedral. The history of St Mark's church Pensnett 1849/1999", Huntsmill Publishing Ltd.
 DA (1822a) DE/16/6/23 "1822 Fowler map of Kingswinford"

DA (1822b) DE/4/4/4/1 "Reference for the 1822 Fowler map of Kingswinford"

DA (1840a) DE/16/6/46 "1840 Fowler map of Kingswinford"

DA (1859) DE/16/6/104 "Photocopy of plan of Pensnett District, Kingswinford Parish"

DA (1870) BK 01750 "The Pensnett Review, no.2 Thursday December 1 1870 and letters concerning morality in the parish of St. Mark's Pensnett"

Dodd, G. (1983) "Shut End Primitive Methodist Church Baptism Registers 1845-1887"

Eagle (1908) "Obituary of C. I. Atherton", The Eagle, A magazine supported by members of St John's College, Cambridge

Hall M. (2022) "Henry Higginson", The Blackcountryman 55, 4, 48-52

Hitchmough, T. (2010) "Hitchmough's Black Country Pubs, Brierley Hill (including Pensnett, Quarry Bank, Round Oak)", 3rd Edition www.longpull.co.uk

History of Oldbury (2020)

<http://www.historyofoldbury.co.uk/2story.htm>

Local History of Burton on Trent (2020)

<http://www.burton-on-trent.org.uk/category/amenities/police/police1>

Ordnance Survey (1882) Staffordshire sheet LXVII.14 surveyed 1881 and published in 1882 and LXXI.2 surveyed in 1882 and published in 1884

Primitive Methodist Magazine (1838) Dudley Circuit - Journal of J. Petty, 1837,

<https://www.myprimitivemethodists.org.uk/content/plate-2/staffordshire-2/a-m-staffordshire-2/dudley-circuit-journal-of-j-petty-1837>

Staffordshire Constabulary (1924) "Monthly Budget", II, 16.

St Mary's Hilton (2020) <https://stmaryshilton.org>

Wikipedia (2019t) [https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/George_Selwyn_\(bishop_of_Lichfield\)](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/George_Selwyn_(bishop_of_Lichfield)), Accessed July 2019

Wikipedia (2020a) https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Gower_Branch_Canal#/media/File:Brades_staircase_locks,_Gower_Branch.jpg)

Wikipedia (2020b) https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Leek_-_Police_Station_-_geograph.org.uk_-_1937202.jpg

Wikipedia (2020c) https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/St_Edward_the_Confessor%27s_Church,_Leek#/media/File:Leek_church_of_St_Edward_the_Confessor.JPG

Appendix 1. The anonymous letters

Dudley Records Office holds a bundle of documents of different sorts that relate to the events of 1870 (DA, 1870). These are mostly undated and not chronologically arranged. These are summarised below and arranged in chronological order through a consideration of internal evidence within the texts. The suggested order is however far from certain.

Document - By their works he shall know them. This is given in full Chapter 2. It was probably written not long after the Atherton / Bowdler incident.

Ballad - The Parson's intrigue. This contains eight, ten line verses to be sung to the tune of "Simon the Cellarer". It confirms that Agnes Bowdler and Atherton met in the school and paints a picture of Benjamin Wood as Atherton's henchman, who travelled to Lichfield to plead his cause with the Bishop. It ends with the rather damning couplet "*And oh, dear oh! Don't all of us know, This parson's religion is nothing but show*". Lack of any further detail beyond the incident itself suggests it was written around April 1870.

Ballad - The model parson. This contains thirty, four-line verses telling story of the incident. Again, lack of any further detail suggests it was written around April 1870.

Document - Another Pensnett mystery. This consists of one sheet of prose, written sometime before the Bishop's Commission reported and thus in April / May 1870. It suggests a relationship between Selina Atherton and Wood, who apparently bought her "garters with silver buckles", and introduces other characters by pseudonyms, other than those listed in Chapter 2 and discussed in the main text. These are Bonevendor (probably Samuel Blewitt, a butcher on High Street, who may be related to Benjamin Blewitt); Mr. Sawmills (possibly the other

church warden Joel Hildick, who was a Timber Merchant); Mr. Swansneck (unidentified)

Sermon notice – Morality The words “*I kissed her twice on the cheek*” are contained in the title song. This Introduces “Flowing Hair” (Agnes Bowdler) and “Step and fetchit” (probably another girl) who are alleged to have given Atherton a gold pencil case worth £3 10s before his “transportation”. An invite is given for Female Bible Class members to attend a rehearsal of Nature’s Parables while Atherton’s wife is away. The offertory at the service will be used to defray expenses of necklaces and sliver buckled garters, which is a recurring refrain in the documents that follow. It contains the first mention of Hatherton and Boot as publishers, which occurs in most of the documents that follow. In testimony at the libel trial, Charles Wall in Fountain Inn in mid-October 1870 heard the phrase “I kissed her two times” while one of the notices was being discussed, which suggests a date of September / early October 1870.

Sermon notice – Virtue There is a Tansey Green reference in the opening song, referring back to the home of Eliza Brinton in the Boot adultery case. The notice introduces Yardstick and his Virtuous Housekeeper – Charles Cooper and his assistant Elizabeth Pope. It also introduces Butcher Beckley (Benjamin Beckley, Butcher on High Street) and Grandfather and Grandmother Wheelwright (Charles and Martha Wall on Commonsides), with the latter accused of listening at doors. It announces that Female Bible Class will shortly be holding annual “leg tickling” match. Bonevendor is taking bets and Flowing Hair and Step and Fetchit are favourites. The probable date is late September / early October 1870.

Sermon notice - Truthfulness The document describes young ladies decorating the sanctuary (for harvest?), whilst Atherton hold a chair in one hand and tickles their

legs with the other – this is perhaps a precursor to the Tickling Match described below. A tea party organised by Atherton for Flowing Hair and Step and Fetchit is described. The probable date is in mid-October 1870.

Notice of Harvest festival Flowing Hair is quoted as saying that “if I (Atherton) had done to her in public what I have done in private mine enemies might well talk about me”. The document describes the leg tickling match held the Tuesday before, in terms of horses and jockeys (the by-names of who are given) and much sexual innuendo of a fairly unpleasant nature. The notice ends with the announcement that the silver buckled garters and necklace together with pencil case are on display, with a private viewing for ladies. The date is probably in mid-October 1870, although any Harvest Festival at St. Mark’s could be expected to have occurred in mid-September if the practice of previous years had been followed.

Sermon notice - Character Bonevendor is said to be taking Atherton to court for unpaid bills. Flowing Hair denies the comments from the last notice concerning public and private actions. There is an unpleasant description of sexual touching in the Ladies Bible Class, whist quoting Nature’s Parables. Notice is given that a new series of documents is in preparation. A date in late October 1870 is most likely.

Sermon notice – Charity This is given in full in chapter 2 and discussed in the main text. It was circulating in the Swan Inn on 9th November 1870 according to witnesses in the libel trial, and thus a date of late October or early November 1870 is likely.

Sermon notice - Faith This implies a new series of documents will be circulated in the following week. It introduces “David” who played a nice little game with his maidservant and alleges that Buttons did the same not long ago. David is probably David Bryce, the future

churchwarden, David is said to wear a brown white surplice in church. This possibly identifies him as Dirtywhite and his wife Ann as Dirtywhite's wife. A question is raised, but not answered, about what Atherton and Flowing Hair did during the recent excursion to Kenilworth Castle. The likely date is mid-November 1870, with the first edition of the Pensnett Review out in the last week of November.

Pensnett Review 2 This is dated Thursday 1/12/1870 An extract is given below.

To the saints in and around Pensnett, holy brethren. You will remember that in the days of my predecessors, Peter and Paul, also in latter times how the enemies of our religion persecuted the saints on earth. Being carnal and sensually minded they heeded not the things above but pandered to the things of earth, reviling the elders and apostles of the churches and bringing contempt upon the ordinances of the same. But beloved, as there were scoffers then so also are there scoffers now, and I intreat you to avoid such unseemly persons and keep in memory the things I have spoken to you. Recollect that divine saying 'By their fruits ye shall know them' and when my persecutors and slanderers speak disrespectfully of me rebuke them and say 'Ye understand not the spirit'.

Our holy vicar.

Why, this man got all the evidence which is adduced against the Rev Boot and after it was arranged for the curate to be placed here, and the parishioners paid what was owing to them, this treacherous wretch reaped up all the evidence he could get and forced the matter into the divorce court. And why did he do this? Simply because he wanted the living and did not care a fig neither for the feelings of his friend nor the interests of the parishioners so he might have it. And now what has he done with it? Why split on the very same rock: and he must surely have followed the Rev Boot had he had a

curate who could have sunk low enough to prove as treacherous to him as he himself did to the Rev Boot. And now this poor cowardly poltroon goes skulking about a night disguised for fear the dear parishioners should recognise him and if it should so happen that circumstances compel him to come in the daytime he goes about like a convicted felon. Surely judgment has come to this man in this world for his hellish actions towards his friend.

Up in a balloon. Dated March 10th 1872. It refers back to many of the previous letters, and in addition satirizes Benjamin Woods attempts to be elected to the new Kingswinford School Board.

Appendix 2. Baptismal Register Transcriptions

The Baptismal Register of Shut End Primitive Methodist Church (Dodd, 1983) was used in Chapter 4 to help paint a picture of the life of that church in the second half of the nineteenth century. To enable the register be used in a quantitative sense the entries were transcribed into an EXCEL spreadsheet (Baker 2020e). This spreadsheet contains the following.

- The entry number.
- The baptism date.
- The child's Christian names.
- The father and mother Christian and surnames.
- The address of the parents (usually a district location).
- The father's occupation.
- The Christian name and surname of the Baptising minister.
- The birth date in some cases.
- Other comments.

To enable electronic searches, the spelling of names (which was very variable) has been made uniform