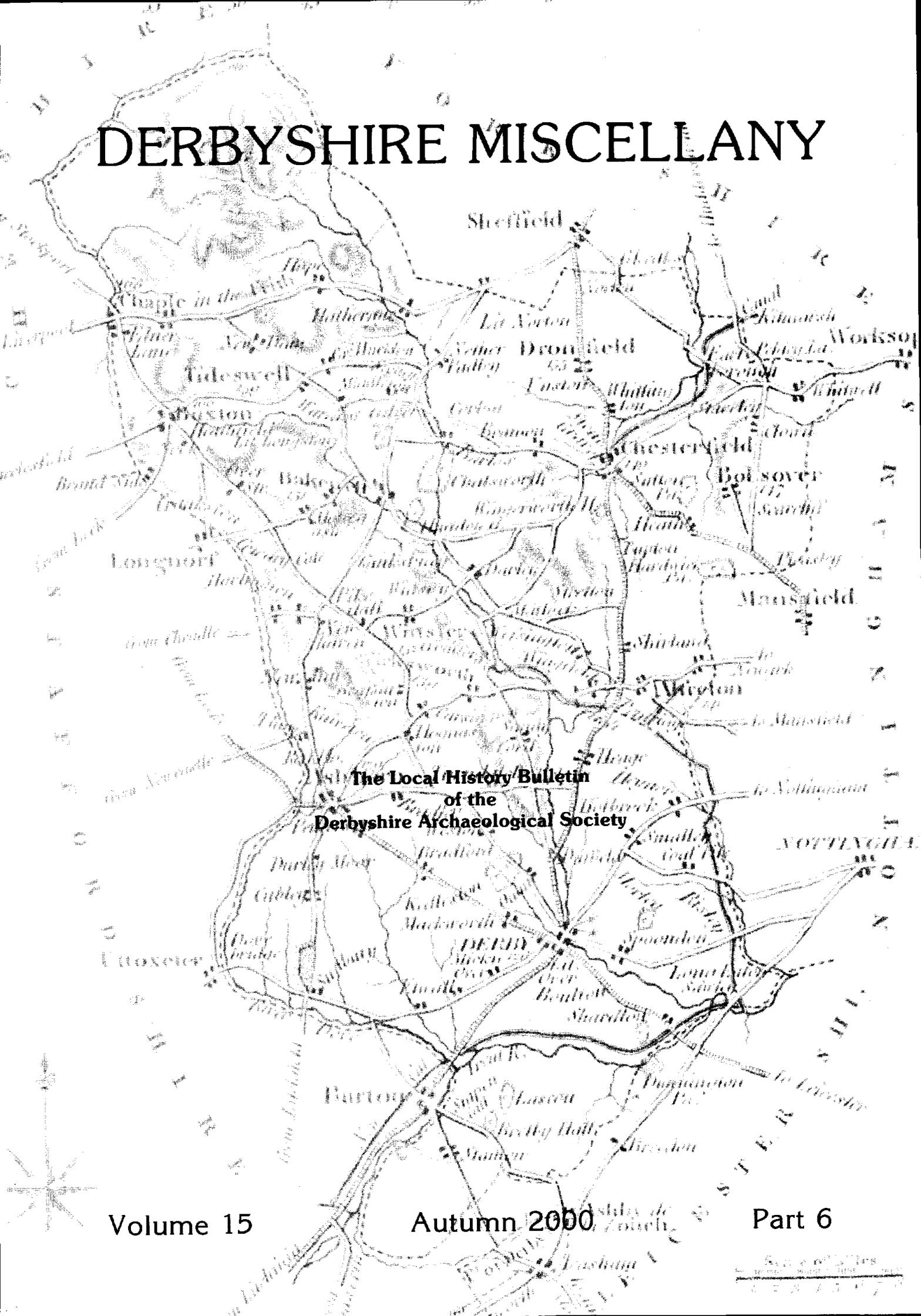


# DERBYSHIRE MISCELLANY



**The Local History Bulletin  
of the  
Derbyshire Archaeological Society**

# DERBYSHIRE MISCELLANY

Volume 15: Part 6

Autumn 2000

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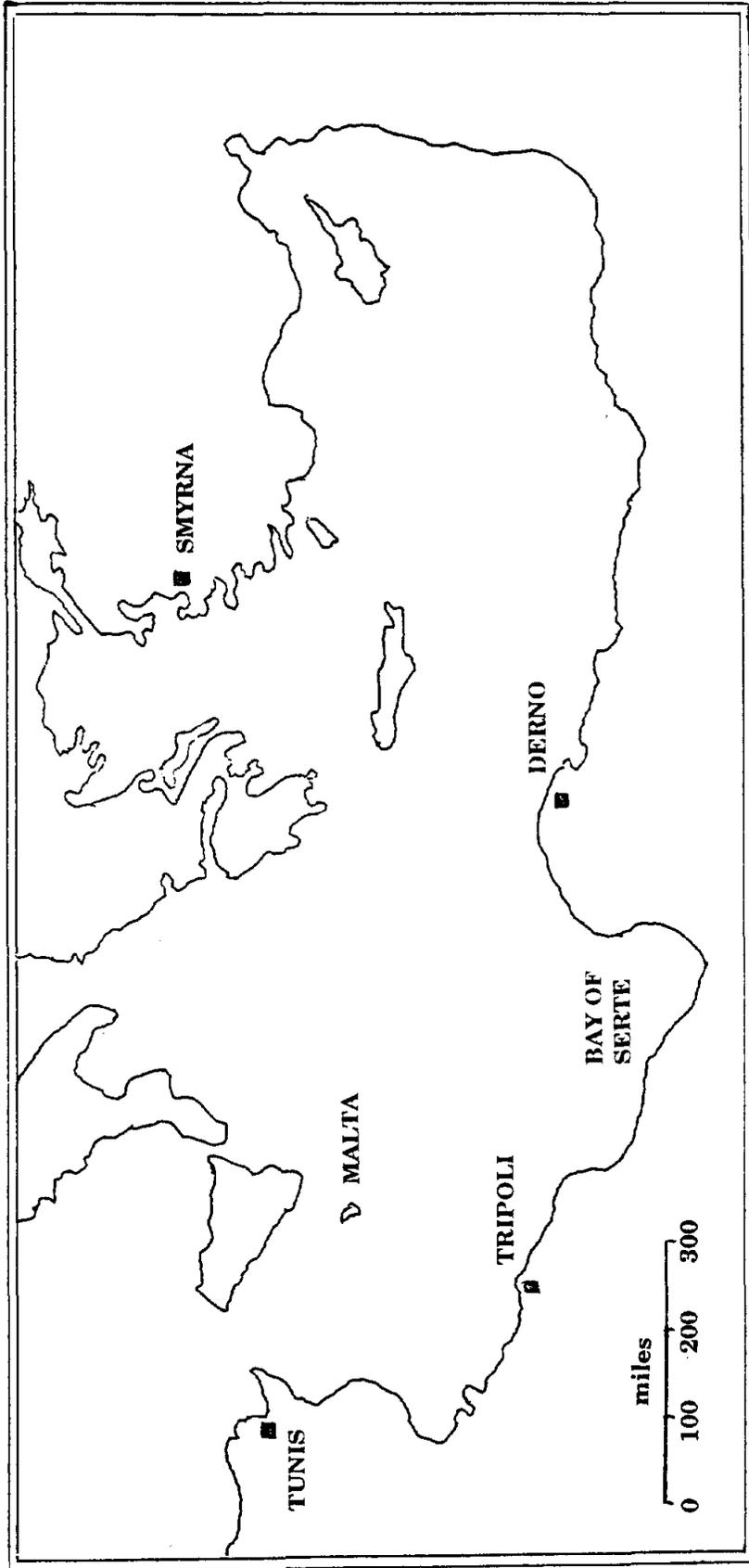
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ISSN 0417 0687



The East Mediterranean

## PHILIP GELL AND THE CORSAIRS

(by Ron Slack,

The corsair came up with the Bristol Merchant on the 20th September 1675, 14 days out of Smyrna. She came from Tripoli, was commanded by the Vice-Admiral of the city's fleet, had a crew of 500 and was armed with 48 cannon. The English captain, Anthony Plurrier, had known when he set sail from Smyrna that before he was out of the Mediterranean he would have to run the gauntlet of the piratical ships of Tripoli, Tunis and Algiers, the three corsair ports on the Barbary Coast of North Africa. These three Arab cities, which had been part of the Ottoman Empire for 100 years, preyed on Mediterranean merchant shipping until as late as the 19th century. However, they frequently attracted the attention of the Royal Navy and Plurrier knew that a Navy squadron under Rear-Admiral Sir John Narborough was in the Mediterranean, under orders to protect the shipping lanes and exact compensation for recent acts of piracy by the Dey, or Governor, of Tripoli. Plurrier was unlucky that the Dey's ships got to him first.

### The Turkey trade

The Bristol Merchant had set sail from Smyrna, the modern Izmir, in Turkey, on 6 September on a return trip to Liverpool. She had a crew of 43 and was carrying five passengers, English merchants based in Smyrna. Among them was Philip Gell of Hopton Hall, near Wirksworth. Philip was the second son of Sir John Gell and, until the early death of his elder brother, was not destined to succeed to his father's baronetcy. He had therefore been set up in business as a cloth merchant in London in 1671 and had been trading in Smyrna since January 1673.<sup>1</sup> It was Philip Gell, in letters to his father, relatives and other businessmen, who described what happened when the corsairs of Tripoli encountered the Bristol Merchant, and what came afterwards.<sup>2</sup>

Merchants such as Philip Gell used Smyrna as a base for trading in the Mediterranean and thirty years after his adventure with the corsairs, in a statement of the case for lifting export duty on lead, Gell described the nature of the 17th century trade with Turkey.<sup>3</sup> The outward cargo consisted chiefly of wool, tin and lead. While tin and lead were sold in Turkey for cash, wool was bartered for silk, cotton, mohair, dyes and drugs. The trade was important. A quarter of all England's external trade was with the Ottoman Empire, and an indication of the volume is that in 1693 there were 400 English and Dutch merchant ships on their way to Turkey in a convoy escorted by a unit of the Royal Navy. It was ambushed by the French and the convoy scattered, in the worst naval disaster of the period. There were many Englishmen living in Turkish territory, as merchants, diplomats, missionaries, adventurers and slaves.

Gell's accounts describe trips to Ephesus, Marseilles and Leghorn. He had arrived in Smyrna on 6 March 1673 on a ship called the Turkey Merchant, Captain Richard Partridge, paying the Captain £8 for the voyage and a provision merchant a further £4 for food. As his stock in trade he brought with him a quantity of "broadcloth" valued at £1050 and insured in London for £500. His accounts include deals with local merchants and consignments of silk and angora sent to his contacts in London. They record sales of tin and lead to his Turkish customers and the receipt of a consignment of lead from London. Gell lived in some style in Smyrna, with a servant, John Barton, employed at an annual salary of 93 dollars (£18.60 at the current rate of 5 dollars to the pound). He bought a pair of horses, a sorrel and an iron grey, paying 100 dollars for one of them. This seems to have been a bad bargain as when the time came for him to return home his agent could raise only 49 dollars for the two. Gell's return in 1675 was presumably because, with the death of his elder brother, he had become the heir to the Hopton estate and his father's baronetcy. In clearing up his business in Turkey he transferred to his account in London a "*cleare estate*" of 6914 dollars (£1382.80). Since he had started his Smyrna adventure with goods valued at £1050, he had made a profit of over 30 per cent from his trading between March 1673 and September 1675.

### The capture

On 20 September the Vice-Admiral's ship was soon joined by a second one, commanded by the Admiral himself, and with the same number of men and guns. The two ships from Tripoli opened fire. The Bristol Merchant stood no chance of success in a battle with the Dey's ships since, in addition to the great disparity in numbers of men, she had only 16 guns. Even the 16 cannon on show exaggerated her warlike effectiveness, since only 11 of them were serviceable. It proved to be impossible to fire any of the other five. After a volley of shots and a broadside,

the men of the Bristol Merchant *"were forced to yield ourselves into their hands finding it impossible to resist, our men not standing to their quarters seeing themselves so overpowered"*. Captain, crew and passengers, along with the crew of a second captured English ship, were put ashore at the slave trading port of Derno, the modern Darnah, on 28 September. Since the value of the Bristol Merchant's cash and goods would be augmented for the Dey by the potential value of the men on board, they were kept there, well treated, until the end of the month.

### **The desert march**

After two comfortable days at Derno, 54 of the English captives were marched out into the desert on October 1st, bound for prison in Tripoli. This was a forced march, presumably undertaken because Narborough's men-of-war posed too much of a risk for a sea voyage. To keep them moving the English were beaten by their guards and abused by the guard commander in *"the worst language he could imagine"*. The party covered the 800 miles between Derno and Tripoli, round the shore of the Bay of Serte, in 34 days, which was a desperate ordeal, especially for the gentlemen traders who were completely new to any physical exertion. They marched 12 or 14 hours at a stretch, *"Mr Thomas Laxton and myself seldom riding above 2 hours or 3 on the camels in a day and often not at all; of 100 camels about 30 of them died by our hard travelling"*. Though there was a tent they were often prevented from pitching it during the rest periods and were made to sleep *"on the cold ground with our 2 barracanos [rough goats' or camels' hair blankets]"* to cover them, *"open to the dews which were very great"*. There was an occasional meal of wild goat's meat, caught as they travelled, and they were sometimes fed on ground corn *"boiled with a pint of oil in it for all our company"*, but they usually found themselves *"drinking stinking and salt water and eating mouldy and wormy biscuit"*. However, *"blessed be God, we had fair weather all the way and for all our ill usage, he protected us and hath brought us all hither for which his holy name be blessed and praised"*. They arrived in Tripoli on 3 November, having lost only one of their number, who was buried by the wayside.

### **Captive in Tripoli**

The captives were regarded either as slaves to be worked, prisoners to be ransomed or hostages to be exploited in negotiation with their government. They spent their first night in Tripoli in what Gell called the Bania - the slave quarters - with the rest of the corsairs' slaves. However, the Dey, presumably because he recognised that Smyrna merchants like Gell and his fellow passengers from the Bristol Merchant had hostage value, soon gave them preferential treatment. At the request of a French Smyrna merchant called John Baptista Virenne they and the two captains were taken out of the Bania and lodged with the English Consul, Mr Bradley, *"where thanks be to God we have all conveniences"*.

The following morning Gell and his companions were summoned to the Dey's presence, where the only prisoner who spoke Turkish, a Mr Turner, acted as interpreter. They were served with coffee and at their request a servant, Mark, whom they had brought with them from Smyrna, was restored to them, to complete the *"conveniences"* of the Consul's house. The Dey, expecting the arrival of Narborough's squadron at any time, clearly saw his captives as go-betweens in the hostilities with the English. He explained that goods which had been seized from English ships captured earlier than the Bristol Merchant, during the reign of a previous *"king"*, had since been sold *"and money spent by the Levants"*, throwing the blame on to the Turkish authorities. He had already offered slaves and salt in compensation. Having kept his fleet in port for several months without response to his offer he had sent 10 of his warships out again, after warning Narborough. He was not to blame for what had been seized in this latest sortie as his ships had been ordered not to attack any English ships - they had done so because they *"thought themselves slighted"* by the failure of the English to respond to his offer and it was not his fault that the war continued. He told them not to worry, that they would be well treated, and suggested that they all write home and make it known that he wanted peace.

In his first letters home, sent on the following day, 6 November, Gell fervently hoped for the peace which he assumed would be made once Narborough's ships arrived *"that we may bee delivered out of slavery"*. In spite of the relative comfort of the Consul's house there was a great shortage of food in Tripoli and, most alarmingly, the city was in the grip of the plague. *"At our first arrival died 90 to 106 daily of the natives besides Christians and Jews"*. By the time of his next letters, delayed until 24 December because of a lack of paper, the death rate had fallen to 10 to 14 a day. 6 of the ship's company, including their doctor, had died and 5 had been sick but had recovered. Gell and his friends avoided contact with the locals - *"We keep close in the house and are as wary as well can be"* - but their anxiety had been aroused by the arrival of 2 men from the religious and caring order of the Knights of Malta whom the Dey had decided to move into the Consul's house after the plague had claimed their servants. The Englishmen resisted their arrival *"yet were forced to obey being slaves as well as they: so we put them in one part of the"*

house, not mixing with them". One of the Knights, the Chevalier Daniel, developed symptoms after 3 days and died 3 or 4 days later and, while his companion survived, the English "*do not mix as yet*". By 1 January 1676 the plague had subsided.

#### Naval assault

The corsairs of Tripoli were cooperating with those of Tunis. 4 of the 10 ships, dispatched after the refusal of the Dey's offer of compensation, had returned by 24 December with a captured Venetian merchantman, the Prophet Daniel. This prize, and its captain Stephen Audibert, had been taken by one of the Dey's ships and a Tunisian warship as it was on its way from Syria, after the Venetian seamen had abandoned their ship to avoid capture. Gell and the others impatiently waited for rescue. They had heard of 3 "*great men of war*" of the English squadron seen at Tunis in November, and some of the newly arrived crewmen from the Dey's ships told them that they had been chased by the English. The Dey ordered that 4 more warships be fitted out.

Release for Philip Gell and his companions from their (rather comfortable) "slavery" seemed at hand when Admiral Narborough and his squadron at last arrived during the night of 10-11 January. On the 12 Narborough's Lieutenant came ashore with letters for the Dey and a message from his Admiral that he understood that the Dey was anxious to make peace. As soon as the boat landed the Dey sent for his English hostages and sent the Lieutenant back with a request that Narborough should send negotiators. The subsequent negotiations degenerated into disputes and the Dey eventually detained the Lieutenant and sent some of his own men over to the English fleet as guarantors of his sincerity. The Lieutenant was sent to join the English captives at the Consul's house. On the 14th Narborough sent his final demands.

The Dey was ordered to return all captives and captured goods and pay 80,000 dollars in restitution. If he was unable to raise the money Narborough would accept slaves instead - England was a keen competitor in the African slave trade. The Dey replied that he was under orders from the Turkish government not to make restitution, that he was entitled to keep whatever was taken in war, and that if he did not receive 60,000 dollars for the return of Gell and the rest of the two ships' companies he would send them in chains to work in the quarries. Narborough rejected the demands and warned the Dey not to mistreat his captives. The Dey angrily sent the Lieutenant back to his ship and moved the captives back into the Bania.

Narborough's response was to attack. At about 2 o'clock in the morning of 15 January Gell and the others were awakened in their prison by the sound of musketry. From their windows they could see a great fire. At first they imagined that there had been an uprising in the city, but soon discovered that the fire was in fact among the Dey's ships. Narborough had sent the boats of his squadron, under the command of his Lieutenant, among the enemy fleet, where they succeeded in burning 4 ships. The rest of the fleet fled out to sea, apart from one ship which was spared because it lay next to a Tunisian ship carrying a former Dey of Tunis who had been forced to flee after an insurrection. The Dey and his officers watched this catastrophe from the walls of the castle, which was soon under cannon fire from the English ships.

#### Hard labour

The immediate result of Narborough's action as far as Philip Gell was concerned was that the Dey carried out his threats to put the Englishmen in chains and set them to work. They were locked in the Bania while the destruction of the Dey's ships was going on and in the evening of the 15th were brought out and separated into 3 prisons. At night they were measured for their chains and the following day marched out to begin their new lives as stone breakers. On 18 January, presumably thinking that they were sufficiently chastened, the Dey came out to where they were working and questioned Turner, the interpreter, about the English fleet's movements and the possibility of Narborough coming to an agreement with him. The Dey was obviously desperate after Narborough's attack had revealed the impossibility of beating the English fleet, but he was still angrily defiant and, when it became clear that Turner could not reassure him that Narborough would vary his terms, he declared that he would never surrender. The hard manual labour of stone-breaking under an African sun was clearly becoming more than these English gentleman could bear since at this point Turner abandoned all attempt to keep a stiff upper lip and "*kissed his vest and begged of him to ease us of the work. But he said we were his slaves and cutting stones was his work and that we must do*". Their ordeal lasted until the 20th when "*one Salamon the chief Jew of this place*" interceded for them and persuaded the Dey to end their brief spell in the quarries and return them to the Consul's house. The only hardship from that point was that their servant Mark was taken by a prominent Turk into his own service. His new master was so pleased with him that he tried to persuade him to "*turn Turk*",

as many Englishmen did at the time, finding Islam a more congenial religion than Christianity and Ottoman society one in which they had a better prospect of success than at home. However "*thank God he is very resolute and I hope will continue so*".

Release finally came in February when, after several more naval defeats, the Dey came to terms, released his captives, paid the 80,000 dollars compensation, and conceded commercial privileges to the English. Having survived attack at sea, a forced march through the desert, slavery, plague and hard labour, Philip Gell came home to Derbyshire.

#### **Postscripts**

There are two postscripts to the story. The first is contained in a letter which Henry Caple, the Consul, wrote to Philip Gell at Hopton on 5 May 1676 from the house in which the captives had spent those three anxious months.<sup>4</sup> Caple reported that on 23 March the Dey had fled the city with a fortune of 4,000,000 dollars. On the 28th the army had appointed the Grand Mufti as the new Dey and on April 9, during a short-lived rebellion, 150 soldiers had threatened to decapitate him, a threat which was not carried out.

The second postscript concerns the Lieutenant who so daringly and successfully stormed the port of Tripoli and destroyed four of the enemy ships. His name, improbably, was Cloudesley Shovell. Cloudesley had started life as a shoemaker's apprentice and had run away to sea and served as cabin boy to Sir John Narborough. He made his way in the Navy, became an Admiral, was knighted and, after Narborough's death, married the Admiral's young widow. He fought several major battles, was temporarily disgraced by the Smyrna fleet disaster of 1693, when he was joint Admiral of the Fleet, and successfully stormed Gibraltar in 1704. However, he is best remembered for a great tragedy. The fleet, under Sir Cloudesley, was returning in foggy weather from destroying the French Mediterranean fleet in 1707 when, by a failure of navigation, it blundered into the rocks of the Scilly Isles. 4 ships were sunk and 2,000 men drowned. The Admiral's flagship, the Association, was lost with all hands and Sir Cloudesley himself was thrown, still alive, onto the shore at Porthellick Cove. He was found by a local woman who, as she confessed on her deathbed thirty years later, finished him off for the sake of an emerald ring he was wearing. He was buried in Westminster Abbey and, seven years later, Parliament passed the Longitude Act, offering £20,000 to the first person to perfect a means of calculating longitude, and avoiding Sir Cloudesley's mistake.

#### **ACKNOWLEDGEMENT**

Many thanks to the staff of the Derbyshire Record Office for their help.

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# A SHORT HISTORY OF THE CENTRAL UNITED REFORMED CHURCH, DERBY

(by K. M. Eagers)

## Introduction

The year 1558 not only saw Elizabeth I ascending the throne of England but the return of those Protestant divines who had sought exile in Europe while the Roman Catholic Mary ruled. During their sojourn abroad, many had come under the Geneva influence of Calvin and his followers; consequently, they considered their immediate task to be the purifying of the work and worship of the Church of England. Their zeal and Calvinism earned them the name of 'Puritans' and was to influence the outlook of ministers, teachers and laity alike for hundreds of years to come; viz. the Protestant ethic.

The Puritans (or Presbyters) of England were not particularly interested in the political side of church government, as opposed to their Scottish counterparts such as John Knox, although some did campaign for ecclesiastical reform such as the removal of bishops and archbishops. It should not however be assumed that during this time, Puritans were tolerated: many, together with Roman Catholics, were persecuted.

The first Puritans in Derby were probably Presbyterians who worshipped in private houses during the reigns of Elizabeth I, James I and Charles I but little is known of them. This changed during the Civil War when the Puritans took over the town's principal churches. Their reputation was somewhat tarnished by the zeal with which they removed anything that hinted of idolatry from the buildings (eg stained glass, statues, etc.). Davison states that by 1646 the pulpits of Derby were filled with Puritan ministers, suggesting that Derby was pro-Cromwell.

Cromwell's Commonwealth (1647-1660) saw many Presbyterian and Independent ministers appointed parish priests as the Puritans were now in complete control throughout the country. Many Presbyterians saw themselves as members of the Church of England inasmuch as their concern was parochial. The Independents, on the other hand, considered their churches as separate units with the emphasis on the congregation.

Quakers were not popular, particularly with the Presbyterians. During 1650, their leader, George Fox, was imprisoned at Derby but was allowed parole during the daytime when he preached in the Market Place. Davison does not report on what sort of a reception he received.

This was the situation at the restoration of the monarchy which Derby Presbyterians had urged from their pulpits, but with the Act of Uniformity of 1662 making acceptance of the Book of Common Prayer and ordination or re-ordination by a bishop compulsory, large numbers of the clergy who could not accept these terms, were ejected from their pulpits. In Derby there were three such ministers including Wirksworth born Samuel Beresford, who, according to Tilley's notes, occupied the pulpit of St Werburgh's church from 1657 to 1662.

By 1664 harsh penalties were being imposed on those attending nonconformist places of worship. This did not deter men set on following the dictates of conscience and consequently a number of ministers were ordained outside the established church.

Many ejected ministers rendered great service to the community during the Great Plague of 1665. Not least of these was Thomas Stanley, ejected Puritan rector of Eyam, whom the history books have tended to overlook in favour of the official conforming rector, William Mompesson. Stanley was highly praised by the Earl of Devonshire but probably the work and honours were shared equally between the two men.

The support given by the laity to the Presbyterians was strong in Derbyshire. It is reported that the village of Stenson had about 160 people 'who sat under a nonconformist minister' (Bolam). At Little Ireton, 240 persons were served by seven ejected ministers, six of whom were Presbyterians and included the aforementioned Samuel Beresford.

The year 1670 saw the second Conventicle Act which put an embargo not only on house meetings but also on field meetings. 1672, however, brought the Declaration of Indulgence which applied not only to dissenters but to Roman Catholics. Among the many ministers licensed in that year (923 mostly ejected Presbyterians; 416 Congregationalists) were John Oatfield and Luke Cranwell, two Derby Presbyterians, who received licences to officiate at the houses of Thomas Sleigh and Samuel Ward. Compton's religious census of 1676 gave Derby as having 4 Roman Catholics, 101 dissenters and 2014 conformists. It is interesting to note from the Green Lane booklet that a group of Presbyterians was granted a licence by the bishop to worship in St. Mary's Bridge Chapel.

In 1673, Indulgence was withdrawn and until 1682, the persecution of Protestant dissenters was severe. It was not until the accession of William and Mary in 1689 and the Toleration Act of the same year that Dissenters were free to worship as they pleased without fear of reprisals.

The Toleration Act was not pleasing to Presbyterians who saw themselves from now on classed as a denomination and excluded from the Established Church. The Presbyterian belief was that ministers should be ordained by other ministers and that communion should be made available for all unless they were deemed unfit. The Independents (Congregationalists) believed in gathered churches, separate from the community, and none eligible for communion until proved fit (for example, evidence of the Holy Spirit working with the soul). The local Congregational church was a supreme unit whose power lay in the church meeting and majority vote. Their ministers were chosen from the more 'gifted' brethren and ordained within the congregation. Another small bone of contention was that Presbyterians tended to think that Independents '*talked too much*'.

The year 1691 witnessed what was known as the 'Happy Union' between the Presbyterians and Congregationalists. Nevertheless, as with many other unions of one kind and another, there was a good deal of discord between the two. Furthermore, the Presbyterians themselves were beginning to show signs of a split (the moderate Calvinists v. the traditional Calvinists), which reached a climax at what is known as 'The Salter's Hall' controversy of 1719.

The main cause of friction in the Union, in addition to ordination, was the way some Congregationalists were sending out missionaries to the Provinces and putting them in charge of 'mushroom congregations'; the Presbyterians were particularly critical of this. The Congregationalists were suspicious of anything resembling synodical jurisdiction and eventually deserted the Union. In 1695 the Congregational Fund was founded in London but the rest of the country was much slower in ending the association. Relations in the metropolis did eventually improve but the Union was not restored. Tory agitation against Dissenters was one of the factors which helped to patch up the differences.

About this time the Baptists joined with the Presbyterians and Independents to form a Committee of Three Denominations to organise the protection of civil liberties.

### **Derby**

In 1698, the building of the Friar Gate Chapel was begun, to be described locally (1713) as the 'Congregational Protestant Dissenters'. The pastorate was shared by William Cross and Robert More, both of whom had been ejected 36 years previously. Fernando Shaw, M.A., became minister soon after the chapel was completed and was a well-known and esteemed figure in the area. However, there were still strong feelings lingering in the town against Dissenters as evidenced by Dr. Henry Sacheverell's famous anti-sermon '*The Communication of Sin*', preached at Derby Assizes in 1709. Davison states that the Church v. Dissent controversy was viewed by the poor from a question of doles and charities; the poor could not afford to dissent.

With the passing of the crown to the House of Hanover and the emergence of Jacobite leanings in some directions, Dissenters were again in bodily fear. Sermons against them were preached at a number of Derby's established churches. This did not prevent the Calvinistic Baptists (probably the last of the Puritans) from establishing a chapel in Agard Street in the year 1700, but as late as 1736, a Dissenter was still unable to take public office.

The early eighteenth century saw the growth of liberalism, coupled with a growth of scepticism; it was the 'Age of Reason', helped by scientific development and the Royal Society. Although liberalism might be said to have led to the climax at the Salter's Hall, not all liberals were Presbyterians; Isaac Watts gave the liberal lead to the

Congregational Fund.

The year 1717 marked the deviation from orthodoxy, ie the Trinitarian controversy leading eventually to Unitarianism. Most Independents were subscribers to the Trinitarian doctrine; most Presbyterians, non-subscribers, although there was a hard core of traditional Calvinists. The Baptists were also divided between themselves. Churches of mixed denominational origins were now bearing definite labels (eg Bridport, Dorset, which had originally been Congregational after the Salter's Hall split, became Unitarian although it was to split again later, the more orthodox forming the Independent Chapel).

The protest of the moderate Presbyterian was not so much against doctrine as being enslaved to doctrine; the issue was not as clear as saying one was for or against Trinity. It was more reliance of the integrity of reason against those who regarded it as corrupt.

Not all Presbyterian churches turned to Unitarianism straight away; it was 1738 before the Friar Gate Chapel began to swing from orthodoxy and 1799 before it was finally declared a Unitarian Church.

This raises the issue of whether the Independent Chapel at Brookside (forerunner of the present church) came about through a split in the membership of the Friar Gate congregation. William Hutton maintains this was so. The authors of *1778 to 1928* cast doubt on Hutton's statement. Nevertheless, Hutton spent his boyhood at Derby and at the time he wrote his history of the town, must have been in touch with those who could support what he wrote. Congregations had been splitting up all over the country and it is hardly likely that Derby's would remain unaffected. England had also been through a great Evangelical revival; Wesley had visited Derby in 1764 and the following year. Although an unsympathetic mob had prevented him from preaching on the first visit, he had been more successful the second time and had preached in the Market Place.

Another blow to Presbyterianism in the mid-eighteenth century was the closing of their academy at Findern in 1754. This had been founded in 1710 by Thomas Hill and his work carried on by Dr. Latham. A number of well-known Presbyterian divines had been students at this establishment.

Presbyterianism may have been on the wane, but Congregationalism was waxing in many places; a number of churches adopted Independence rather than accept Unitarianism.

### **Brookside Chapel**

Moves towards creating an Independent Chapel in Derby appear to have begun in the year 1778. Thomas Jones and Joseph Griffiths, who resided in Melbourne, came to Derby and held the first service in the Market Place. They had already been preaching regularly both at Melbourne and Alvaston and after their initial service at Derby, were urged to return to the town. It is not known how many services were held in the Market Place; the probability that they were irregular is born out by the fact that the Town Crier was called into service when another meeting was imminent. Eventually a room was secured for these meetings as evidenced by a notice in the *Derby Mercury* for 11 September 1778:

'We hear that the Revd. Mr Jones (one of Lady Huntingdon's Ministers) intends preaching on Sunday morning in a room lately occupied as a school at the back of the Town Hall.'

The exact location of this room is unknown; it may have been in one of the buildings which stood on the site of the Market Hall. An application was made to Quarter Sessions on 23 January 1779 *'for a certain house or school, late in the possession of Samuel Congrave, situate in the Common Yard, Derby, to be registered as a meeting place of a certain congregation of Protestant Dissenters ... under the denomination of Independents.'*

The application was granted and later in 1779 one, Thomas Wilson, undertook to procure ministers to supply the congregation constantly. It is possible that many of these were from 'Lady Huntingdon's Connexion'. This 'Connexion' numbered around 60 clergymen and many lay workers. Some of the clergy had a settled ministry but many worked on the circuit system, as specified by John Wesley. *'The early years ... were closely bound up with the Connexion'* say the writers of *1778 to 1928*, not only through Lady Huntingdon but also her friend Lady Anne Erskine who carried on the work for thirty years after Lady Huntingdon's death.

The first two ministers, Mr Hewitt followed by Mr Middleton, had only short stays; they were followed in 1781

by Mr Joseph Thomas who was sent from the academy at Mile End. *'He was a young man of pre-eminent piety and of a sweet, heavenly temper but it pleased God to "weaken his strength in the way"'*. So much so that he died on a Sunday evening at the age of 28 at his lodging, according to the *Derby Mercury* of 7 February 1782. One wonders if it was before or after he delivered his sermon!

By 11 July 1782, the congregation had moved to a barn in Cross Lane (now Macklin Street), where, the *Mercury* announced, the preacher was the Rev. Mr Scott.

The next to arrive was the Rev. Thomas Bryson who had been educated at Lady Huntingdon's College at Trevecca, although he had withdrawn from the 'Connexion' before coming to Derby. It was during his ministry that trouble arose as he manifested *'a considerable degree of warmth and ... acerbity of temper which produced unpleasant effects'*. *'From a difference of judgment'*, says Hutton, *'in religious points, which will happen among men, a separation took place in the Congregation'*. It was for the use of the seceders that the aforesaid Thomas Wilson built the Brookside Chapel. But whether these members had already seceded from the Unitarian Chapel is open to debate.

Equally debatable is whether the Brookside Chapel was built on land where once stood a chapel dedicated to St Thomas a Becket. Davison suggests that the Becket Well may originally have had some relic (or relics) of St Thomas a Becket lodged within its chapel walls. This could have been possible if such a chapel existed but as many of Derby's records were destroyed in a fire in 1841, it is impossible to be categorical about exactly where and if such a chapel was built. That there was a medieval well in Becketwell Lane there can be little doubt: it still existed up to the time of the development of Duckworth Square. The reference to the well in the Annals of All Saints Church reads:-

1510 - item, John Warde holdeth a gardyn ate Begette Welle And payeth yerely xiid.

The writers of 1778 to 1928 nevertheless suggest that 'Begette' need not necessarily be a contemporary phonetic spelling for Becket.

Mr Wilson's chapel, erected at his own cost, was a plain brick building, 54 ft. long, 46 ft. wide, lit by 25 windows, with vestry attached. In the *Mercury* for 3 June 1784, it was advertised that the new meeting house by the Brook Side would be open for divine worship on the following Sunday morning.

For a period after the opening, The Rev. Thomas Bryson and his congregation continued to worship in the barn in Cross Lane but they were neither happy nor comfortable there and the minister eventually appealed in the *Mercury* for subscriptions to assist in the building of a new place of worship. The oblique references to the one-time 'friends' now occupying the New Meeting House, caused the latter to insert a reply in the *Mercury* to the effect that the Brookside chapel was for the benefit of *'the whole town ... and open to all'*. Shortly afterwards Mr Bryson took up residence in London; it is not known what happened to the members of the Cross Lane congregation.

The new chapel was without a regular pastor until 1787 when The Rev. John Smith was ordained and served the church until 1792.

In 1793 the members agreed to form a closer alliance with the 'connexion' now under the patronage of Lady Anne Erskine and this alliance was continued until June 1800 when *'The Rev. James Gawthorn of Hoxton Academy supplied this and several Sabbaths'*. In July of that year Mr Gawthorn was invited to be the settled pastor: he accepted the invitation and was ordained into a ministry which lasted from 10 June 1801 until his death on 6 September 1857 at the age of 82. The first deacons, four in all, were elected on 5 March 1801 shortly before Mr Gawthorn took up his pastorate.

### **The Sunday School**

The year 1801 was momentous in the history of the church. In addition to the events recorded above, the Sunday School was founded. No details of the precise date of foundation are available but it is recorded that on 7 June 1801, a collection was made for the benefit of the Sunday School which realised £26 11s 6½d and *'a sermon was preached in the afternoon'*. It is known that Thomas Blossom of Swanland Congregational Church, Yorkshire - later to become a London Missionary Society missionary in the South Seas - a member of the first Sunday School in

East Yorkshire (1798) came to Derby and was proposed for church membership in 1801, so it is possible that he worked with Gawthorn in founding the Brookside Chapel Sunday School.

### The Church Meeting

As stated earlier, the Church Meeting was paramount in the Independent Church and its discipline strict. Not all those who applied for admission to membership were accepted; an honorable report or an unsatisfactory report could be the result of examination; if the latter, the applicant was expected to withdraw his or her name. Deacons could be suspended from duty and communion if their behaviour outside church was considered to be below the accepted norm of fellow members. A sister was suspended for '*publicly fighting*', until considered sufficiently penitent and a brother was expelled for being '*one who has walked disorderly*'.

Though '*staying late at public houses*' was frowned upon, strict teetotalism had not yet gripped the more sober of the populace with any great fervour. It is reported (but unconfirmed) that when application for membership was received from one known to be a total abstainer, the brother was admitted, after much deliberation, on condition that '*there should be none of this teetotal nonsense*'. His influence must have spread however, as it is later reported that a deputation waited upon The Rev. Gawthorn, urging upon him the '*duty of abstaining from brewing and drinking beer, only to meet with a blunt and uncompromising refusal*'. A very independent Independent Mr. Gawthorn!

Despite what some might term strict discipline, the church grew in numbers. The various resolutions proposed and accepted at Church Meetings indicate that the members were benevolent, friendly and peaceable; anything unpleasant had to be discussed at a special meeting, not at the regular Church Meetings. As it says in 1778 to 1928, '*How they must have looked forward to such special meetings*'.

On 9 August 1814, the first Missionary Meeting was held when it was decided to form an Auxiliary Missionary Society. Not only did Thomas Blossom sail to the South Seas but another member, Thomas Beighton, sailed to Malacca in April 1818.

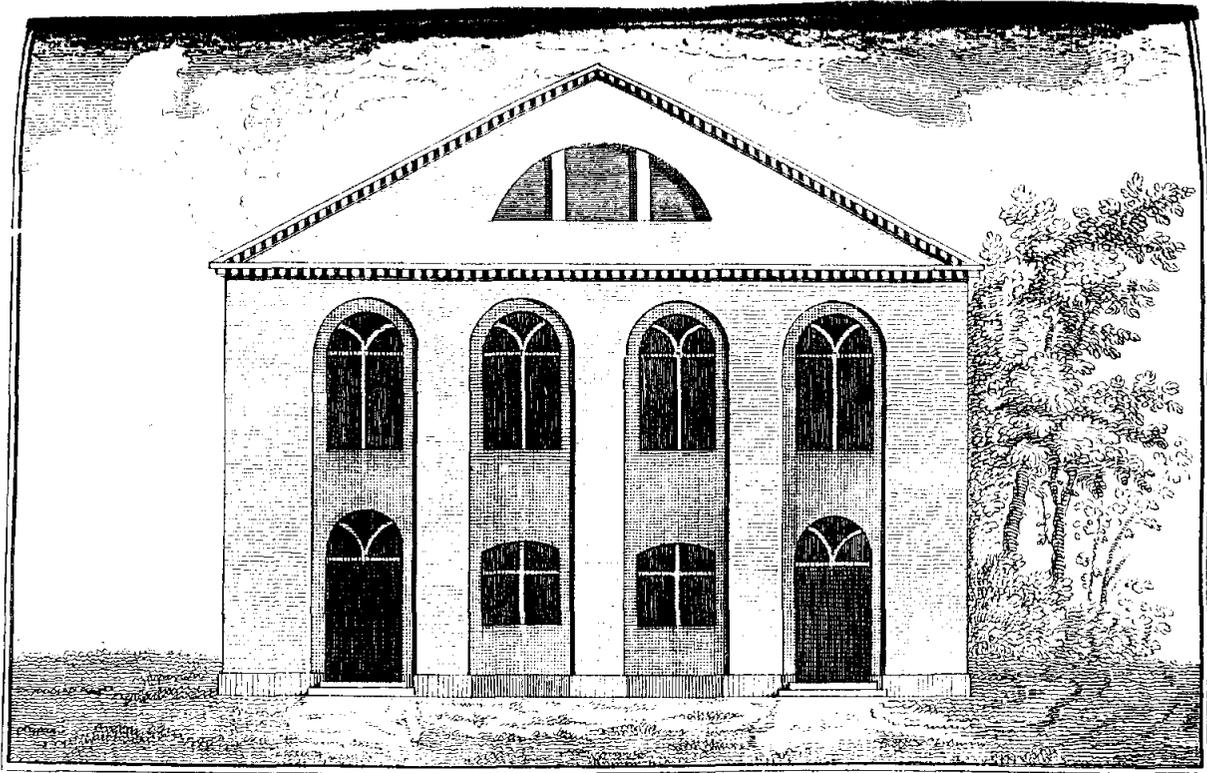
Little is known of the order of service in the early days. Mention is made of prayer and praise and the hymns being led by the Clerk to the Chapel but the 'Preaching of the Word' was the central factor. When the offer of an organ was made, it was accepted under certain stipulations, including the one that '*no symphonies be played at any time during divine worship*'.

By 1839 The Rev. Gawthorn had need of an assistant in his ministry. 1778-1928 states that he had two, The Rev. J. Corbin and The Rev. A. Tarlton. After Mr Gawthorn's death, The Rev. H. Tarrant was the pastor (1858-1864).

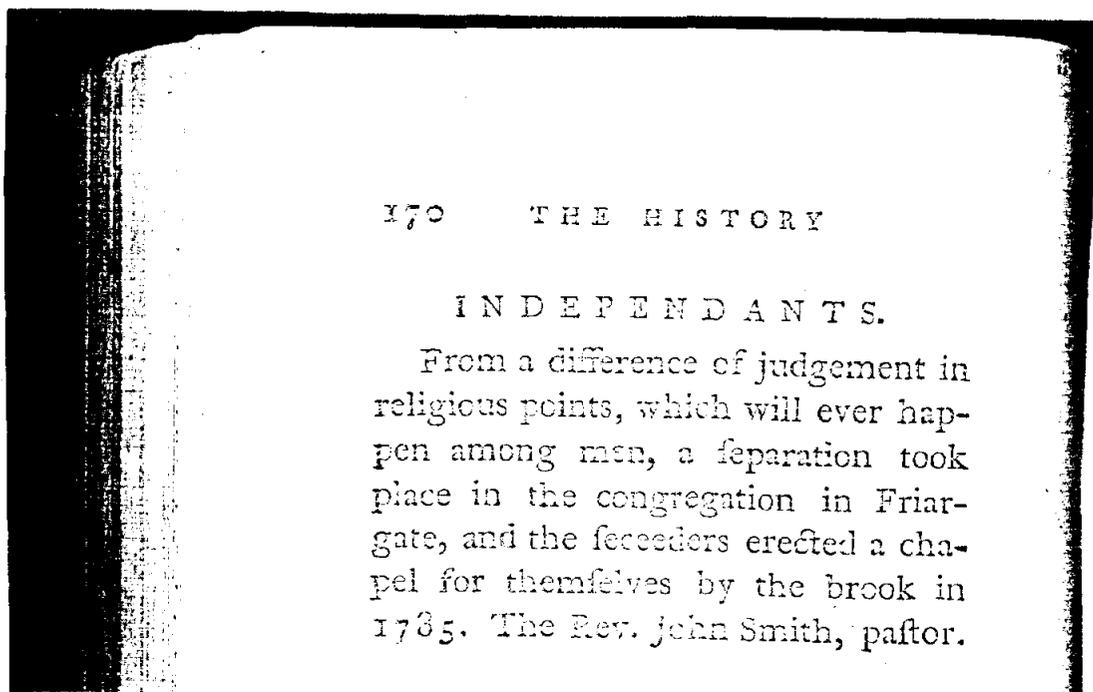
Thomas Wilson of London who had built the original church at his own expense bequeathed the building on his death to his two sons, Thomas and Joseph. They in turn presented it to the church members on 3 December 1835, to be vested in trustees. Llewellyn Jewitt's *Guide to the Borough of Derby* (1852) states that the original church was considerably enlarged in 1836 by the addition of a new front. Other extensions had been made from time to time to accommodate the Sunday School. By 1860 however, the first chapel had been pulled down and a new far larger edifice, in the Victorian Gothic style had been erected and opened on 12 December of that year. The cost was in the region of £10,000 and by May 1871, the debt on the building had been completely cleared. A new church had also been erected in Derwent Street; mission halls inaugurated at Normanton Road and Ashbourne Road and a chapel at Normanton by the end of 1871. The earliest mention of the chapel at Coxbench occurs in 1828 and a chapel at Little Eaton is referred to in 1841.

Before ending this early period of history concerning the Victoria Street Congregational Church, further mention should be made of the benevolence of both the early congregation and later members. Among the extracts from the church's title deeds is one dated 1856:

*"Declaration by William Sparkes of Derby, gent., Joseph Tomlinson of Derby, silk manufacturer, William Pike of Derby, bookseller, Joseph Denstone of Derby, maltster, Richard Hipworth of Derby, draper, William Spalton of Derby, grocer and John Bryer of Mackworth, farmer, that three shares in the capital of Derby Waterworks Company in their names, are held by them upon trust to pay the interest to poor members of the congregation of the Victoria Street Congregational Church at their discretion. Dated 1 October."*



An early engraving of Brookside Chapel



The entry in William Hutton's *History of Derby* relating to the "Independants"

Among those known to have benefited from this scheme were members John and Sarah Page of Ashbourne Road who had fallen upon hard times.

### **London Road Congregational Church**

A sum of £500 was donated for the extension of Congregational churches in Derby. In 1850 a group of members were willing to assist in forming a church on London Road and were '*affectionately dismissed*' for that purpose. A large imposing building was erected which by the early 1930s had been converted into a cinema (The Coliseum). The site of the church is now part of the Traffic Street section of the inner ring road.

### **The Scots at Victoria Street and Green Lane**

In 1864 The Rev. William Crosbie, MA, LL.B., took up his ministry at Victoria Street. He is referred to in 1778 to 1928 as a Covenanter of the Covenanters. He was a Scot and reputed to be of great intellectual power, at the time showing '*simplicity and earnestness of character*'. The year of Mr Crosbie's arrival saw also a hall at the Athenaeum Rooms in Victoria Street being rented by converts to the United Presbyterian Church of Scotland as a preaching station. This was officially opened in May 1864. The committee included George Boyd, Walter Scott, T.R. Hutton and Alexander Croall. At a meeting on 21 March, The Presbytery recognised the Derby group as a full congregation of the church: the first communion service was celebrated on 15 May and was attended by 36 people. The Rev. Adam L. Simpson of Edinburgh was inducted on 2 November 1865. The station at the Athenaeum Rooms was superseded by the building of a church on Green Hill (later Green Lane) completed in the spring of 1869, officially opening on 20 May. The costs were covered by money raised by members of the congregation, from contributions made by friends and relatives in Scotland and last, but by no means least, from a substantial loan from the Midland and North Western Counties Home Mission Board.

At Victoria Street the congregation was increasing under Mr Crosbie's ministry, numbers rising from 765 on 31<sup>st</sup> December 1873 to 971 on 31<sup>st</sup> December 1878. The amount subscribed during 1877 was said to be £1258. In 1869 an additional thirteen deacons had been elected, strengthening the administrative power of the church.

### **The Centenary of Victoria Street Congregational Church (Brookside)**

In March 1878 the Centenary of the church was celebrated. There were special services which began with a meeting for prayer and praise on the 5<sup>th</sup> and ended with a public meeting on the 27<sup>th</sup>.

In April 1880, Mr Crosbie's sixteen year association with the church was broken when he accepted a call to the Congregational Church at Brighton. His departure was much regretted but in later years he moved to Park Hill Church, Nottingham, and he was a frequent visitor to his former congregation.

In November of the same year, an invitation was extended to The Rev. George Hunsworth, MA., and his acceptance was the beginning of a pastorate which was to last almost 24 years. He was quite a different character from Mr Crosbie: '*the keynote of his ministry was his desire for peace*' in contrast to the '*fiery eloquence and covenanting zeal of the Scot*'. However, he was quite militant in '*his determination to maintain the Dissidence of Dissent and the Protestantism of the Protestant religion*'. On the platform he was an accomplished speaker and his words are reputed to have carried weight in the town. (An elderly member mentioned in 1978 that as a child she had found him '*very frightening*'.)

### **Normanton Road Church**

Mr Hunsworth began his ministry at a time when an ambitious scheme was being contemplated which would eventually result in the building of a new Congregational church on Normanton Road.

In 1860 a Sunday School had been opened in premises at the rear of 64, Regent Street. Later it moved to a 'school chapel' on Normanton Road known as Salem. The initiator of the plan was George Pegg, a member of the Victoria Street congregation. Salem Chapel was opened for public worship by The Rev. John Kennedy, MA., DD., Chairman of the Congregational Union of England and Wales. The Mayor of Derby, S. Leech, presided at the Public Meeting held in Victoria Street Church with which the chapel remained closely associated. As late as 1937 there were still two of the original Salem scholars, Mrs G.H. Brown and Mr W. Ford, on the Normanton Road church roll.

Mr Hunsworth gave much encouragement to the scheme to build a new church and in 1883 an assistant minister, The Rev. James Hyslop, was appointed to take charge of the work there. It is recorded that in 1885 that *'with the generous support of Victoria Street Church, £650 was raised by a bazaar towards the purchase of land'* on Normanton Road. The meetings at Salem concerning the new church were chaired by Mr Hyslop but he resigned over a matter of principle in July 1887 shortly before the opening of the new building. He believed that Normanton Road should be a completely independent church from the beginning, not a satellite of Victoria Road. In fact it was not until 4 December 1889 that Normanton Road became an independent church when 159 members were transferred from the Victoria Street roll and the first deacons elected on 11 December under the ministry of The Rev. J.W. Hodgson who had been appointed pastor in 1888. However, financial assistance continued to be given by the 'mother church' until the end of 1894 when the debt was finally extinguished and Normanton Road Church was at last a self-supporting unit.

The Rev. J.W. Hodgson, a much-loved pastor, ministered the new church for 28 years and returned to preach from time to time until shortly before his death in the 1930s.

In the meantime, Mr Hunsworth had continued at Victoria Street, staying there until he resigned his ministry in 1904, three years after the Sunday School had celebrated its centenary.

### **The Literary Society**

This had originally been formed in 1847 under the title of 'Young Men's Discussion Class' but possibly because of the admission of ladies to the meetings it was re-christened the 'Mutual Improvement Society'. In 1904 it was given the title of 'Literary and Debating Society' by which name it was known until its demise, some time in the dark days of World War II.

### **The Rev. S. Lawson Platt**

After an interval of nearly two years a man arrived at Victoria Street who was to have an extraordinary impact on its congregation. This was The Rev. S. Lawson Platt who accepted a call to the church and began his ministry in Derby on 17 June 1906. He remained at the church for only four years but for many decades afterwards was still spoken of by those who knew him *"with bated breath"*. A year or two after leaving Derby, he gave up the ministry altogether under what some would term tragic circumstances.

To quote 1778 to 1928 his coming marked a period of change and transition. *'New points of view, different perspectives'* were in the air; *'conclusions of modern scholarship had filtered down to the ordinary man'* becoming almost common knowledge. The old orthodox way of preaching held no appeal to those whose thoughts were moving along different planes. Mr Lawson Platt understood this; an eloquent preacher, he presented the old truths in a new light. His 'modernism' may have disturbed some but to others it brought new life. His appeal was probably more to the young and *'those who had remained young in spirit'* as much of his best work was done for and through the younger members of the church, particularly in the Sunday School, the Boys' Brigade, the Christian Endeavour and what was known as 'The Stand-by Society' which he organised to give personal service to the poor and needy. The 'Christian Endeavour' at Victoria Street was thought to be the largest in the county.

One of the traditions at this time was the Christmas Day breakfast for the poor children of the district. The young people of the church arrived at the Sunday School room around six o'clock on Christmas morning, many having walked from home or cycled, ready to serve a good meal for the less fortunate from the 'twilight zones' lurking behind the facades of respectability which lined the business centre of the town. So great was the number that two sittings were arranged. On one occasion it was noticed that a small girl and her brother were not eating; on being asked why, they said that they were taking the food home to share with the rest of the family. Consequently they were given enough food for all of those at home and from then on these children came regularly to the Sunday School and the parents kept in touch with the church. Many young men and women who had never been to church before were recruits into 'Christian Endeavour', some going on to teach in the Sunday School. There can be little doubt that The Rev. Lawson Platt had what sociologists refer to as charismatic quality, so when after four years he decided to move on, the news was received with consternation. On the occasion of his last sermon, the church was overflowing.

Towards the end of Mr Platt's ministry the building of a church at the Ashbourne Road Mission was proceeded with. The new church was open for public worship in September 1909 and the old Mission Hall became the

Sunday School building.

### **The Rev. J.R. Ackroyd**

Within a few months, Victoria Street was fortunate in obtaining the services of The Rev. J.R. Ackroyd (July 1911). He was quite different from Mr Platt but nevertheless a striking personality and a preacher of great ability with a strong intellectual grasp. He was ably supported by his wife who will be remembered principally for inaugurating The Girls' Life Brigade, later the Girls' Brigade, in Derby by the formation of the 1st Derby Company, in time to be followed by many more.

With the outbreak of the First World War, Victoria Street, in common with other churches, suffered from its disruptive and disastrous effects. Its young men joined the forces, the premises were taken over for military purposes and Mr Ackroyd was released for service as an army chaplain. 133 men and 8 women joined the armed forces, seventeen men and one woman losing their lives. Normanton Road and Green Lane were similarly affected, with 35 casualties at the former and 47 at the latter. Both Victoria Street and Normanton Road also rented and furnished a house to accommodate Belgian refugees.

Shortly after the Armistice, Mr Ackroyd received a call from the church at Lewisham. He left in June 1919 *'leaving behind a fragrant memory and a great number of warm friends'*. Both he and his wife returned from time to time and the family's connection was perpetuated by their granddaughter, Helen, being ordained an elder of the church.

### **Green Lane Church**

By 1880 the numbers on the roll had reached a hundred and The Rev. Adam Simpson's theological scholarship earned him the degree of Doctor of Divinity (Edinburgh). His literary interest also brought him the position of chairman of the Book Committee of the Derby Free Library. He retired in 1888, receiving *'a purse of 110 guineas from his congregation'*, and died in 1893 at Bridge of Allan near Stirling.

Dr Simpson's departure left behind a struggling congregation: there was even talk of closing the church but among the members were a determined youthful few very much against the idea. They made up a nucleus which rallied around the new minister, The Rev. David MacDonald, who turned out to be a dynamic leader. The debt arising from the building of the church twenty years earlier was cleared in 1891 and in 1893 electric light was installed, an innovation in the town's churches at that date.

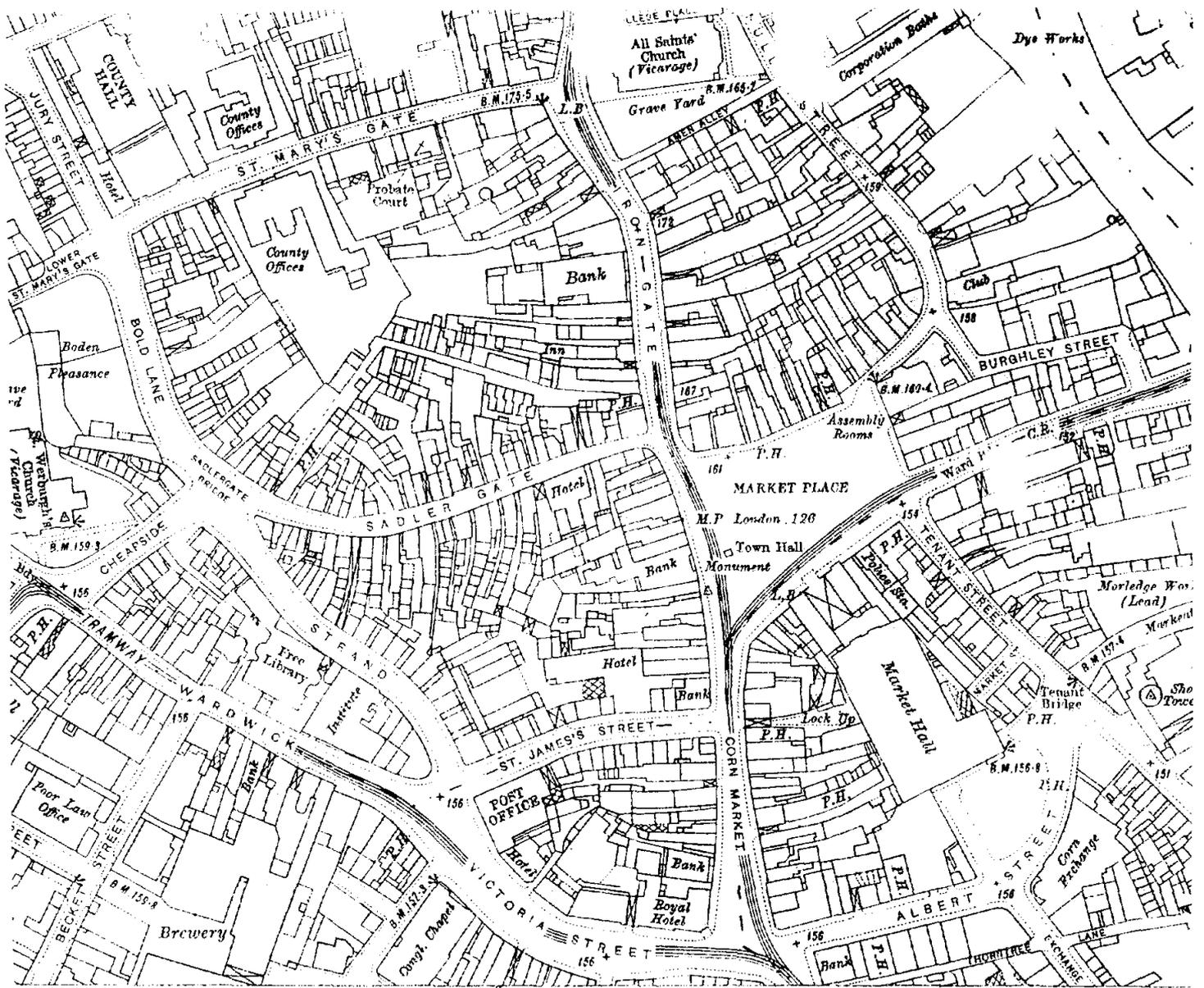
In December 1896 an ambitious three day bazaar was held to finance the rebuilding and extension of the church's halls and vestries. A manse was also purchased in adjacent Wilson Street, the ministers having hitherto lived in a small house near the bottom of Green Lane.

There had also been progress nationally with the union of the three strands of Presbyterianism - those congregations connected with the Church of Scotland, the original few dating from the seventeenth century English Presbyterians and those of the English Synod of the United Presbyterian Church. Locally there was also the foundation of a mission hall in Britannia Street which was then one of the worst slums in the town. The Mission Hall, once a store, provided accommodation for a Sunday School, midweek youth activities and a gymnastic club. These endeavours to improve the lot of the youthful poor were justified by a report to the 1898 Synod of the whole church to the effect that *'the police and others consider that the work is telling on the neighbourhood and improving it'*. A Band of Hope was also formed at the Mission, a reflection of the congregation's enthusiasm for temperance work.

When Mr MacDonald left Derby in 1902, the congregation had increased from 70 to nearly 200. The church continued to provide for emigrant Scots but the mission work also brought in local people.

The period between 1902 and 1919 saw the arrival of four new ministers; each time the interim moderator was The Rev. J.C. Grant of the Presbyterian Church in Nottingham.

The first of the four was The Rev. J.R.P. Sclater, the product of an English college. He was the son of a Presbyterian minister in Manchester and a newly ordained and erudite young man. The membership of the church increased to 260, a figure which was to remain constant for over thirty years. Early in his ministry a pipe



The environs of Victoria Street Congregational Church, formerly Brookside, 1914

organ was installed. Fund raising for this had begun in Mr MacDonald's time when help had been invoked from Andrew Carnegie with whom he was acquainted. Carnegie did not usually support churches outside Scotland but on this occasion promised £200 if the congregation raised a matching sum.

In 1906, two stained glass windows, depicting John Knox and Calvin, were set in the north wall of the church. These commemorated the long association between the church and the founder member and senior elder, George Boyd. The exact period of Mr Boyd's service is unknown but it is thought to have been about forty years.

Mr Sclater moved to Edinburgh in 1907 and he was replaced by The Rev. Alexander Fyfe. It was Mr Fyfe's first ministry although he had been an assistant in Dumfries. Church affairs reflected the general atmosphere of Edwardian serenity and the work of the Britannia Street Mission flourished. Mr M.H. Gray made a loan of £300, enabling the property to be bought outright in 1908. By 1914, however, even before the opening of hostilities, the shortage of Sunday School teachers was reported, a problem that was to remain with the Mission until its ultimate closure.

With the declaration of war, an additional complication at Green Lane was the fact that Mr Fyfe was a Pacifist and unable to agree with the church's official view regarding the war. In March 1915 he announced his intention to resign. This was accepted by the Presbytery of Birmingham and the congregation found itself about to celebrate its 50<sup>th</sup> Anniversary without a pastor. The special services were postponed until May when Mr Sclater returned from Edinburgh to preach and lead the thanksgiving. Mr Fyfe returned to the ministry after the war but in 1929 he joined the Roman Catholic Church.

Within five months, The Rev. Thomas Houghton was selected as Mr Fyfe's successor. He had carried out three years evangelical work in Cardiff before studying divinity at Aberystwyth and showed great energy in pastoral work. As a gifted young man he was soon in demand and in the summer of 1918 moved to Palmers Green in London.

After these three short ministries by talented young men, The Rev. John Bell, a man in his forties, was selected as the next minister. He remained in Derby until his death in 1938.

#### **Normanton Road**

After The Rev. J.W. Hodgson's long ministry which ended on 5 March 1916, an invitation was extended to The Rev. Ernest Bristow who began his work at the church in October of that year. With troops billeted in the school premises, the Sunday School was transferred to one of the neighbouring day schools and classrooms were turned into reading and recreation rooms.

Other developments over the later years of Mr Hodgson's ministry had been the installation of a new organ in 1912 to replace the second-hand one which had been in use since 1893 and the death in 1913 of Mr G.S. Pegg, one of the founder members and 'father' of the Sunday School.

At a church meeting in April 1921, it was agreed to purchase a field in Littleover Lane for the sum of £900, for recreational purposes. This field became the permanent home of the Derby Congregational Cricket Club, which had been formed by men from Victoria Street Church in 1869. Mr A.W. Ford offered to advance the necessary deposit to acquire the land and other monies were raised from gifts and loans made by members and friends. The young men of the church transformed the rough field into passable tennis courts and even a bowling green; the cricket pitch was laid by professionals. The opening ceremony was performed by Lord Roe and, perhaps appropriately, took place in pouring rain.

The Rev. Bristow's service at the church ended in October 1921 when he moved to a Congregational church in Manchester.

#### **Victoria Street**

Also in 1921, Victoria Street welcomed a new minister in the form of The Rev. Thomas Rook, late of Whitley Bay. *'Victoria Street has been consistently fortunate in its ministers and never more so than in Mr Rook'* say the authors of 1778 to 1928. The most notable event after his arrival was the unveiling of the church war memorial on 16 October 1921. The memorial was in one of the transepts of the old church and was erected at a cost of £700. The

unveiling ceremony was carried out by the mayor, Alderman Robert Laurie, and the address was given by the previous minister The Rev. J.A. Ackroyd.

The Literary Society was flourishing at this time. At its 75<sup>th</sup> Anniversary, Sir John Forbes-Robertson had been the speaker and other notables who addressed the meetings were E.T. Reed, the famous *Punch* artist, Spencer Leigh Hughes, MP, of the *Daily News* and Charles Roberts, MP, one-time Under Secretary for India. The 80<sup>th</sup> Anniversary was celebrated by 'a well-attended dinner held in the Assembly Rooms' in October 1927.

The Recreational Society had been formed on 29 April 1908. Three and a half acres of land had been leased at the top of Crewe Street for a period of ten years and the accommodation consisted of a pavilion, four tennis courts and a bowling green. In 1922, the year in which the ground was purchased, two hard courts were constructed by a number of unemployed members; a children's playground had also been added. During the First World War part of the ground was cultivated as allotments and in the 1920s an abundance of strawberries could still be found by those willing to look hard enough. The ground was eventually sold in 1947 through lack of support.

Also in 1922, a manse was purchased on Breedon Hill Road and the debt on the Ashbourne Road Church was paid off. The Sunday School was reorganised and graded throughout to make a total of five separate departments: Beginners, Primary, Junior, Intermediate and Senior. At the end of 1927 there were 480 scholars and 71 teachers and officers. The Boys' Brigade which had been started during Mr Platt's ministry had dwindled away and was replaced in 1928 by a troop of Boy Scouts, the 54<sup>th</sup> Derby, which had about a hundred members.

During Mr Rook's ministry there was also increased missionary work. The Young Men's Missionary Union and the Girls' Auxiliary not only educated young people in the needs of missionary work but also organised them for propaganda service among the churches of the district.

As is well known, large parts of Derby were flooded to a depth of five feet in May 1932. Needless to say given its location, Victoria Street church did not escape being reported as being affected by two feet of floodwater. It is recorded that in June 1932 the teachers and scholars of the Sunday School were thanked for their services in cleaning the church premises in the aftermath of the flood.

It was also in 1932 that The Rev. Thomas Rook departed for a new ministry in Buxton and it was not until May 1934 that he was replaced by The Rev. O.J. Beard. This appointment turned out to be controversial as his wife was a communicant member of the Church of England, a situation previously unheard of at Victoria Street. Oliver Beard's pastorate was therefore predictably short and he left in January 1937 for Stone in Staffordshire.

It was during Mr Beard's short pastorate that Mr Bond's Sunday School in St. Helen's Street for poor boys from the slum areas was amalgamated with the Victoria Street Sunday School, although it continued in its original premises. Sydney J. Bond, grocer of Sadler Gate, had started this Sunday afternoon school before he became a member of the Victoria Street congregation. With the help of his wife, he organised the school in the Friends Meeting House, St. Helen's Street and among the activities provided was an annual Whitsuntide train trip to Skegness from Friar Gate Station.

Among those who regularly visited St. Helen's Street to speak to the boys was Mr Peach of the Railway Servants Orphanage. The RSO was for the children of railway workers who had lost either one or both parents. Many of the children attended St. John's Anglican church but the minority of nonconformists walked from Ashbourne Road to Victoria Street every Sunday not only to the morning service, where they occupied a designated section of the gallery, but also to the afternoon Sunday School. In the 1920s there were around thirty to forty of these children.

Many of the staff at St. Helen's Sunday School were recruited from Victoria Street so the later link-up is hardly surprising. World War II caused the closure and the absorption of the scholars by Victoria Street. The annual trip to Skegness was adopted by Victoria Street however and lasted for a number of years after the War until the family holiday became commonplace.

The Rev. Beard was replaced by The Rev. J.F.S. Solomon after an interregnum of six months. He remained at Victoria Street for the War years being appointed Moderator of the local province in 1945. World War II did not have the same impact on the life of the church as the Great War but the 'black-out' meant that evening services

were switched to the afternoons and other evening activities suspended. For a time St. Werburgh's Church had been running a canteen for the troops but the building in which this operated was commandeered for other purposes. St. Werburgh's approached Victoria Street and it was arranged that the two churches should carry out the work jointly. In February 1941 a canteen was opened in the school hall and continued there until the end of hostilities.

### **Green Lane**

The Rev. John Bell had been ordained in 1901 and served at South Shields and Birmingham before coming to Derby. Soon after his arrival he was appointed Clerk to the newly created Presbytery of Nottingham, an office he was to keep until his death. The year 1919 saw the death of the Senior Elder, George Boyd, but in this period several new activities commenced including bible classes, a junior choir, a tennis club and a men's club. In 1922 an annual Scottish service was instituted as a result of links with The Derby Scottish Association and Burns Club. By 1929 membership had reached 280 and in 1931 Mr Bell inaugurated the morning Sunday School to allow children to come to church with their parents, a successful experiment which led to the eventual closure of the afternoon school. Affairs at the Britannia Street Mission were less happy but a few devoted workers carried on although activities were now reduced to a Sunday evening service and a Sunday School.

As previously stated, Mr. Bell died in November 1938 having being prevailed upon in June of that year not to carry out his intention of retiring. His successor was the Rev. Alexander R. Paton who suffered a great deal of ill health and a somewhat curtailed ministry. His eventual successor was The Rev. George A. Harding, a young Irishman who had graduated at Dublin and what was described in the church's Centenary Brochure as "*one of the most exciting periods in the history of Green Lane*" began.

### **Normanton Road**

In April 1922, The Rev. H.J. Coxon of Long Buckby was invited to take up the position of minister and he began his pastorship in the September of that year. Housing accommodation was scarce and after considerable thought, it was decided to purchase 108, Rose Hill Street at a cost of £800, the members responding to an appeal with gifts and loans.

Mr Coxon was a keen debater and under his guidance the Literary and Debating Society was revived. The Monthly Men's Meeting, the descendant of The Pleasant Sunday Afternoon, also flourished, as did a series of social gatherings after the Sunday evening service.

Mr Coxon left Derby for Ashton-under-Lyne in September 1932 and the church was without a minister until May 1934 when The Rev. Leslie Hall was appointed. During the 1930s, the church had become well-known for its music. The choir performed a number of oratorios and in 1932 the Amateur Operatic Society was founded. The church also had a high reputation for its work among children and young people in this period with companies of Boys' Brigade, Girls' Brigade, Guides and Brownies.

Starting with The Rev. G.W. Gregory in 1941, the final ministers at Normanton Road were The Rev. Harvey Allen (1951-1956), The Rev. Sidney Smith (1957-1964), The Rev. John Flack (1966-1971) and The Rev. Cyril Jones (1972-1974).

### **Victoria Street**

Although conditions were still very unsettled in the immediate post-war period, every effort was made to fill the vacant pulpit and on Whit Sunday 1946 The Rev. R.F.J. Charlish began his ministry. He was a true shepherd of his flock, covering many miles by cycle visiting members of his congregation.

Among the events recorded during Mr. Charlish's ministry was a visit from the then BBC organist, Reginald Foort, who gave a recital to raise funds for a plaque commemorating the two young men from the church who gave their lives in World War II. The church was also used on numerous occasions for 'Youth for Christ' rallies. In 1951 the Sunday School celebrated its Triple Jubilee with a Youth Rally addressed by the Secretary of the Youth and Education Department of the Congregational Union. In 1954 there was a major upheaval with the redecoration of the church.

After a lengthy interregnum, Mr Charlish was replaced in 1958 by The Rev. Alan Balding from Poplar in East

London. Only a year into his ministry, the church was approached regarding redevelopment in the Becket Well Lane area and after much heart-searching it was decided to opt for a new building in view of the run-down state of the 1884 church. The last service in the old church took place at the end of April 1961 and the new building was dedicated on 7 December 1963. In the intervening two years the congregation was given a temporary home in the former King Street Methodist Church which had been acquired by Derby Corporation.

Mr Balding's term of office ended in 1965 and he was replaced a year later by The Rev. W.J.L. Paxton from Liverpool. It was Mr. Paxton who introduced the idea of the 'Spring Forum'. The first of these was held in 1967 and among the well-known names to address these meetings were George Targett, Canon Collins and Godfrey Wynn. The first session drew audiences of between two and three hundred but dwindling support and increasing costs accounted for the idea after four years.

About this time the work for Christian Aid increased and it was decided to form the church's own Christian Aid organisation to which the profits from the regular Friday morning coffee mornings and other special efforts were channelled. On the other hand, the Senior Women's Class which met every Sunday afternoon closed down. Its main function had been fund-raising. Once again though, another group emerged, this time the Monday Club which developed from the Young Wives Group. Meeting in the evenings, it was the responsibility of this group to arrange the regular anniversary dinner.

### **Green Lane**

The sixteen years of Mr. Harding's ministry saw much progress at Derby Presbyterian Church. The membership doubled from 200 to 400 and for a time the Britannia Street Mission was revived. It was decided in 1949 however, that the work could be carried on equally well at Green Lane and the mission building was sold. In the 1950s the area was gradually demolished and redevelopment begun.

In 1960 Mr. Harding moved to Bedford and was replaced by The Rev. Herbert Mulholland. Shortly before his arrival it was decided to sell the old manse in Wilson Street and replace it with a more modern house on Burton Road. In 1963 the organ was given an extensive overhaul and other major renovation schemes were undertaken to mark the church's centenary in 1965. This hundredth anniversary saw the membership standing at ten times its original figure and the finances and fabric in a reasonable state.

In 1972 The Rev. John Waller replaced Mr. Mulholland and it was under his *pastorship* that the congregation became part of the United Reformed Church.

### **The United Reformed Church**

In 1947 discussions between the Congregational Union of England and Wales and the Presbyterian Church of England failed to bring about a union between the two churches. The idea was revived in the 1960s however, and on 5 October 1972, after much debate, the two denominations joined to form the United Reformed Church.

This union meant that there were two United Reformed Churches in the centre of Derby within a few hundred yards of each other, Green Lane and Victoria Street. Links between the two were already on a firm footing as both worked together as members of the Derby Churches Fellowship and the Derbyshire Free Church Council. In 1974, Normanton Road, by then also a United Reformed Church, began to feel the need for closer cooperation and approached Green Lane who immediately consulted with Victoria Street. The fabric of Normanton Road was in a poor state and a decision was made to close down.

A working party of the three churches was formed in 1975 and in the autumn of that year a definite proposal of union was put forward. A vote for or against the proposition was held at three simultaneous church meetings with the stipulation that a 75% majority vote at each church was necessary for acceptance. Both Normanton Road and Victoria Street were 100% in favour but Green Lane returned only a 69% majority.

United evening services continued however and Green Lane agreed to hold a second ballot on 10 March 1976 at which the necessary majority was achieved.

### **The Central United Reformed Church, Derby**

Normanton Road closed its doors in June 1976, Green Lane followed in September and 5 October - the date of

the anniversary of the United Reformed Church - was chosen as the date of the formal union. Members were asked to submit names which might be applied to the new church and The Central United Reformed Church, Becket Well Lane, was agreed upon. The three serving ministers - The Rev. C. Jones, The Rev. Leslie Paxton and The Rev. John Waller - would remain in office as a combined ministry. Mr. H.D. Miller (Green Lane) was appointed Secretary, Mr. C. Bates (Normanton Road) his assistant, and Mr. W. Long (Victoria Street), Treasurer. There was a combined eldership of 36, the United Reformed Church having adopted the practise of the Presbyterian Church of ordaining elders in place of the Congregational custom of appointing deacons.

At the time of union, Green Lane had the highest membership (around 300), numbers at Victoria Street having declined dramatically over the previous five years. The new building in Victoria Street was nevertheless adopted as the united church and as early as possible the redecoration of the sanctuary and adjacent hall was put in hand. Minor adjustments were made with church furniture and the Memorial Chapel was further embellished with windows depicting John Knox and Calvin from Green Lane, inserted in the outer wall at right angles to those portraying Martin Luther, John Bunyan and Oliver Cromwell from the old Victoria Street church, all united as 'Fathers of Dissent'.

The Junior Church expanded to include scholars and staff of all three congregations; the women's meetings were likewise amalgamated. The two afternoon meetings at Normanton Road and Victoria Street became the Monday afternoon meeting and the three evening clubs united to become a monthly evening meeting. Normanton Road had had a men's Adelpic Club for some time; this was reorganised at the Central Church in September 1976 to become Adelpic No. 21. The first magazine of the new church was issued in September 1976.

The triumvirate of ministers did not last long with Cyril James leaving for an appointment in Leicestershire and John Waller moving to Purley but The Rev. Bernard Chart joined the church in September 1978 as a colleague for Leslie Paxton.

#### NOTES AND BIBLIOGRAPHY

Mrs Kate Eagers was one time Deacon of the Congregational Church, Victoria Street, and also Secretary of the Church prior to the amalgamation with Green Lane and Normanton Road. She was ordained Elder of the United Reformed Church on the union of the three churches. This short history was originally written in January 1979 when Mrs. Eagers was resident at 159, Duffield Road, Derby.

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## THE OPERATION OF THE OLD POOR LAWS IN BOULTON

(by Dudley Fowkes)

An interesting small group of photocopies of civil parish documents for Boulton in Derby Local studies Library (ref: 20807) provides a microcosm of the operation of several aspects of the Elizabethan Poor Laws in the eighteenth-century village. The existence of civil parish papers for Boulton is in itself of interest as, despite the heading on some of the documents, Boulton was not a parish in the ecclesiastical sense but a township or hamlet within the parish of Derby St Peter, and in a civil sense likewise. The neighbouring township of Alvaston, with which it was intermixed, was part of the parish of Derby St Michaels.

Among the information revealed is the name of the overseers of the poor at various dates and despite its small size Boulton had two overseers. As is so often the case, the same names recur, implying that in Boulton, as elsewhere, a relatively small group of people took part in an unofficial rota. These are the overseers who are named:-

1749	Robert Baker and Jonanathan Sharwin
1756	Robert Baker and Henry Daniel
1757	William Roulston and Francis Woodward
1784	Robert Garner and Thomas Bembridge
1789	Thomas Riley
1793	Jonathan Sharwin and Samuel Morris
1795	John ... and William Roulston

As was customary, the overseers served for a year from Easter Vestry to Easter Vestry.

The first document is an order signed by John Gisborne directed to Robert Baker and Jonathan Sharwin in 1749 directing them to levy a poor rate in Boulton, 28 March 1749. The levying of the poor rate, via a poor rate assessment, was one of the basic tasks of the overseers and out of the poor rate the poor of the village were relieved either by weekly pensions or casual sums of money, or by relief in kind such as the supply of food, clothing or coal, or the payment of rent.

As far as providing insight into the lives of the local poor, the most informative documents are three settlement examinations where poor people moving into the village had approached the overseers for relief. Under the laws of settlement, the first act in the procedure would be to examine the poor persons before a local justice to see whether they had carried out one of the five "acts of settlement". In order to obtain a legal settlement in a place a person had either to have been born there; to have served in a parish office; to have been hired for a full 365 or 366 day year; to have been a tenant for a property with a rental of more than £10 per annum or to have owned freehold property in the place. If one of these acts of settlement could not be proved then the poor person and his family could be sent back to their place of origin within 40 days authorised by a legal document known as a removal order. The most prized document a poor person could possess was a settlement certificate by which the place in which he had a legal settlement acknowledged that it would pay him relief should he fall on hard times. The possession of such a certificate would enable a poor person moving into another parish in search of work to remain there as the overseers knew that he would receive relief from elsewhere.

The three settlement examinations available in this group of papers provide several references to the "acts of settlement", and in the case of Mary Woodward in 1778 we have a settlement examination, removal order and settlement certificate showing the laws of settlement in operation in a particular instance. The earliest examination is for Sarah Parker who was examined before John Gisborne on 5 May 1749. If her testimony was correct, her case should have been straightforward to resolve. She had been born in Boulton but left the village at the age of sixteen for London where, after a short period of hiring, she married a soldier. She had returned to her home village on the death of her husband and would presumably be allowed to stay.

The case of John Keeling, examined before Francis Ashby, on 18 June 1773, was more complex. He claimed to have been born at Boulton but his father had a certificate from Overseal, then in Leicestershire. He left Boulton at the age of fourteen when he was apprenticed to George Eaton, a hat-maker at Repton. He did not complete the

apprenticeship, however, and went on to be hired for short spells at Pindley in Warwickshire and Newhall in South Derbyshire, before returning to his mother in Boulton where he was married. He admitted that he had never rented a ten pounds a year property nor served any parish office. We do not know whether he was allowed to stay in Boulton.

Sarah Woodward's case was more simple. In her examination on 19 May 1778, again before Francis Ashby, she claimed that she was born in Boulton and that she lived there until the death of her father. At this point she was hired to serve Thomas Adams of Aston-on-Trent for a year, and continued with him for a further four. For some reason Sarah was apparently not believed for she was authorised to be removed to Aston-on-Trent three days later on 22 May 1778. However, on the strength of the five years continuous hiring, Aston-on-Trent did admit to Sarah having a legal settlement there and the overseers of that parish issued a settlement certificate on 19 June 1778. She would therefore presumably be allowed to stay in Boulton, if she wished.

Under the bastardy laws, illegitimate children born to people chargeable on the parish became the responsibility of the parish and the existence of one bastardy bond for 3 December 1793 relating to the illegitimate child of Mary Baker, demonstrates part of the administrative process in action. The initial step was to establish the identity of the "putative father", and once he had been tracked down he was obliged to enter into a bond to indemnify the parish against the costs and charges arising from the raising and educating of the child. He had to enter into an agreement by which he paid a weekly sum to the parish. In this instance, Joseph Hibbert of Twyford was identified as the offender.

The collection is completed by six apprenticeship indentures by which six poor children from the township were apprenticed to tradespeople until the age of 21 in the case of boys, or 21 or the age of marriage, if sooner, in the case of girls. John Stone was apprenticed to William Harrison, a framework knitter in 1756, whilst Catherine and Sarah Gray aged only seven and nine respectively were each apprenticed to Samuel Potter of Derby St Werburgh's, mantua-maker, on 24 May 1784. Luke Woodward aged ten was apprenticed to William Matlin of Duffield, framework knitter, on 6 June 1789, and Hugh Hughes, aged fourteen, to Henry Hunt of Repton, calico-weaver, on 7 October 1795.

Whilst some parishes well-endowed with surviving civil records may have hundreds of these documents, this small collection of papers for the township of Boulton nevertheless provides a useful insight into the characteristic vicissitudes of the lives of the labouring poor and a practical demonstration of the laws of settlement in operation.

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## A SHORT LIFE OF J. CHARLES COX

*DERBYSHIRE MISCELLANY*, SPRING 2000

### A NOTE

(by Bernard Nurse, Librarian of the Society of Antiquaries of London)

Canon Maurice Abbott's article 'A Short life of J. Charles Cox' in the Spring issue of *Derbyshire Miscellany* should have acknowledged the considerable help provided by Bernard Nurse, the author of the entry on Cox for the *New Dictionary of National Biography*, which is due to be published in 2004. Canon Abbott was particularly grateful for details on Cox's early life, education, political career, conversion to the Catholic Church and his death. He should have pointed out that the sources listed were those used for the new DNB, and not necessarily for his own article. There are many aspects of Cox's life in Derbyshire that remain unclear, such as the location of the colliery which he owned at the time of the 1871 census. One invaluable source that seems to have disappeared in recent years is Cox's collection of newspaper cuttings which Dr. Robert Wearmouth possessed when he was writing *Some working-class movements of the nineteenth century* (1948). If any reader knows where this is now, the editor would be pleased to hear.

## ALLOTMENTS IN MID-NINETEENTH CENTURY DERBYSHIRE

A request for information

by Jeremy Burchardt, Rural History Centre, PO Box 229, University of Reading, Whiteknights, Reading, RG6 6AG

I am researching the history of allotments in the mid-nineteenth century and would like to find out more about the relationship between allotments in Derbyshire between 1820 and 1860. Several local land and allotment societies were set up in the county in this period but I have not been able to trace them. I am particularly interested in the relationship between allotments and framework knitting: the Report of the Royal Commission on Framework Knitting (1845) suggests that framework knitters depended on access to land to see them through hard times. There are also two other aspects I would like to find out about. The first is the connection between Chartism and allotment provision. In some areas the Chartists regarded the allotment movement as a dangerous rival. The second aspect is the role of James Orange. Orange was a Nottingham nonconformist minister and promoted allotments very actively in the framework-knitting villages between Nottingham and Derby during the early 1840s.