

"BYGONE STALTBIDGE"

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Below pages 101 - 103: Resting place of John Bradbury's father.

PART V.

The Religious History of the Town in brief.

Old St. George's. Cocker Hill - St. Paul's, Stayley- St. George's, The Hague- Holy Trinity Church- St. James' Church, Millbrook-Christ Church-Chapel Street School- The People's School- The Wesleyans-The General Baptists-The Ebenezer Baptists. Cross Leech Street- Heyrod Union Sunday School- The Primitive Methodists- The Congregationalists- The ^letho- dist New Connexion Chapel-St. Peter's Roman Catholic Church
-United Methodist Free Church-The Unitarians-The Gospel Mission Hall, Kay Street.

I am fond of loitering about country churches

. I do not pretend to be what is called a devout man, but there are feelings that visit me in a country church which I experience nowhere else ; and if not a more religious, I think I am a better man on Sunday, than on any other day of the seven." Washington Irving.

mHE natives of Stalybridge in bygone times worshipped at the ancient churches of Ashton-under-Lyne and Mottram, within whose burial grounds will be found many weather and foot-worn memorials bearing local names. There is little trace of any place of worship having existed here prior to the inauguration of St. George's Church. A local tradition says that a

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Moravian Settlement was located at Rassbottom prior to the advent of that body at Dukinfield. A noted family named Swanwick, who were Moravians, gave their name to Swanwick Clough.

OLD ST. GEORGE'S, COCKER HILL.

The origination of this church dates from the 24th October, 1772, when a Requisition and Promissory Deed was drawn up and duly signed. This document is not mentioned either in Aiken or Butterworth. The writer obtained a copy of the deed several years ago, and Captain Bates recently discovered the original parchment, which he generously restored to the representatives of the church, where it may now be seen.

The first church was erected in 1776, but being defective, collapsed on the 15th May, 1778. The second building is the one which is still remembered, and was closed as being unsafe for public worship, about Christmas time, 1882. The present church was erected on the same site, and was opened on the 21st March, 1888.

The ancient burial ground was formerly surrounded by a low parapet wall with fiat coping stones, upon which many of our now aged townspeople scampered and played in bygone times. This practice was put a stop to, and the privacy of the old sepulchres ensured, when Robert Piatt, Esq., at his sole cost, erected the iron palisading now existing. The ashes of many well-known families rest within the stony bosom of

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the old graveyard. The ancestors of the Platts, the Halls, the Walton-Mellors, and the Masons, were buried here. The graves of Bradbury, the father of the explorer, of the Whiteheads, and the Taylors may be noticed, whilst the dust of musicians, lawyers, cotton masters, and innkeepers now mingles, under the foot of the visiting pilgrim.

Inside the church are numerous memorials to the memory and worth of departed townspeople and past vicars. The register of births and deaths contains much valuable data, from the year 1777. The cost of the present church is recorded as about ;f5,000, and the organ over ;f700.

The list of past vicars and curates includes the names of -

1 Rev. John Kenworthy 2 Rev. J. Cape-Atty 3 Rev. I. N. France 4 Rev. J. E. Leeson

5 Rev. J. B. Jelly-Dudley, B.A.

The present vicar is the Rev. Herbert Hampson' M.A. Excellent Day and Sunday Schools exist in connection with the church.

Below pages 204 - 210: History of John Bradbury as a young man.

JOHN BRADBURY, F.L.S.

NATURALIST AND EXPLORER.

"The Indian knows his place of rest, deep in the cedar's shade."

Felicia Hemans.

John Bradbury was born at Souracre Fold, or Far Souracre, Stalybridge, about the year 1765. The family tombs with their various inscriptions, and which are to be seen in the old burial ground of St. George's Chapel, Cocker Hill, have been of great service to the writer, in verifying many facts not hitherto known concerning the Bradburys.

The family numbered seven persons all told, comprised of the parents, one daughter, and four sons, of whom John was the youngest.

A very interesting account exists of Bradbury's early years, his future biographer, fortunately, having been his playmate in childhood, his companion in youth, and his friend and confidant in maturity.

Little has been written about Bradbury for nearly fifty years, and it is the desire of the writer to brush away the cobwebs of gathering obscurity, and retrieve from partial oblivion the name and works of our almost forgotten and unknown townsman.

As a little lad he was taught in the school of John Taylor, a local genius, who dabbled in mathematics

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and the study of botany, and whose humble academy was situated on Cocker Hill.

The future explorer was remarkably precocious, even in his early years, exhibiting great interest in natural history and wild-life. The schoolmaster saw and encouraged his pupil's leanings, and occasionally took the lad with him on his botanical rambles, whilst Bradbury's father bought him a copy of the works of Linnaeus, which he studied fervently.

Leaving school he went into one of the primitive mills, but even then he found leisure time sufficient to enable him to continue his studies. At the age of eighteen he had established a night school at which he taught the young men of his acquaintance what he himself had learned. He had acquired a microscope and a pair of astronomical globes, and by means of these appHances distributed, free of charge to his scholars, food for the mind and brain. He revelled in the explanation of the construction and habits of insects and

flowers, and fixed in the sides of one of a number of bee-hives which he possessed two small panes of glass, so that his pupils might see the wonderful honey-makers at their work.

He contributed articles to the botanical journals of that time, and his name and fame soon became well known and recognised amongst the eminent scientific authorities.

At the age of twenty-two his writings and discoveries were stirring the thoughts of the naturalists in the Metropolis, the consequence of which was that Sir Joseph Banks wrote to our subject, and as a sequel of the

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correspondence John Bradbury was invited to London, where he was presented to many noted gentlemen, introduced to and admitted a member of the Linnean Society.

Sir John Parnell, His Grace the Duke of Leinster, Mr. Legh of Lyme, and other eminent patrons and devotees of the sciences of Botany and Natural History, recognised and encouraged the country-bred aspirant. For these patrons he did much work in organising and laying out their various country seats and parks. He, however, does not appear to have been partial to lengthy engagements, preferring occasional spells of liberty and freedom. At one period he made a pedestrian tour of Ireland, and thereby discovered many new plants, his ambition being to add to the store of knowledge already amassed.

Passing over the middle years of his life, we find that in the early part of last century he lived occasionally at Manchester, periodically migrating between that town and Liverpool. At the latter place he met that noble minded man, William Roscoe, Esq., who introduced him to Mr. Bullock, at that time the head of the Liverpool Museum. A Society which had for its principles the diffusion of scientific knowledge, and was known as the Liverpool Philosophical Society, was at this period very active, and it appears John Bradbury was appointed corresponding secretary. The patrons and supporters of the society included the Earl of Derby and Col. Leigh-Phillips, and it would appear that the increasing demand for a larger supply of cotton for the manufactures in this country had been under

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consideration. The supply had been dependent upon the West Indies, and it is presumable that the new Republic of the United States, with its vast area unknown and unexplored, had attracted the attention of the Liverpool Society. Be that as it may, John Bradbury was selected and engaged to undertake a hazardous journey of survey and

exploration through the country known as the southern part of the United States of America.

At this time (1809) Bradbury would be about 43 or 44 years of age, and is described as being in the prime of manhood, swarthy, broad-shouldered, and of medium height, amiable, yet stubborn in disposition, temperate in his habits, and a most excellent marksman. He was fond of music, active on his feet, and determined in his methods and opinions.

Prepared with letters of introduction to the President of the United States, James Madison, and also to the British Consul at Washington, he left England in the spring of 1809, and was met and received by the representatives of the American Societies, to whom his labours had become known. This welcome impressed Bradbury very much, and in after years our townsman always spoke with feeling and gratefulness of the kindness, the hospitality and universal civility which he had ever met with at the hands of the American people.

If the reader would revel in a record of perilous adventure, hair-breadth escapes, and exciting yet truthful details, let him consult "Travels in the interior of America in the years 1809, 1810 and 1811, including a description of Upper Louisiana, together with the

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States of Ohio, Indiana, and Tennessee, and containing remarks and observations useful to persons emigrating to those countries. By John Bradbury, F.L.S., London, Corresponding Secretary of the Liverpool Philosophical Society, and Honorary Member of the Literary and Philosophical Societies of New York, United States of America." A copy of this book, published in 1817, may be seen at the Mechanics' Institution.

On his return to this country Bradbury was pressed to publish his diary and other writings, which he did. The years between 1812 and 1817 were probably spent in writing and publishing his book. The selling of the work and subsequent collecting of the money would entail much further labour, and to make a long story short, the publication of his works ruined John Bradbury; the result was that his future became darkened by the clouds of adversity.

There can be no greater grief to a man who honestly knows that he has done his duty than to feel that his labours are unappreciated. After his manifold work, his valuable discoveries, and the devotion of the best days of his life to the cause of natural research his future prospects were obscured and indefinite, and in the depth of despair he resolved in his heart, if a chance obtained, to quit his native land for ever.

He little dreamed how soon that chance would present itself. Wandering through the streets of Liverpool one day, he met by accident with an American sea captain, with whom he had formerly been acquainted. His friend was astonished at the condition in which he

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•found Bradbury, for the latter had almost reached a state of destitution. Explanations having been made, the Yankee, to his honour and credit be it said, kindly gripped the poor fellow's hand, forthwith offering a free passage to America on board his ship for the entire Bradbury family.

Once again the wandering naturalist crossed the western ocean, and on his arrival at New York, his acquaintances who had known him in brighter days welcomed him again with a friendliness which must have been gratifying to the heart of the exile.

Thus, on a foreign strand far away from the old home, which to-day honours his name, John Bradbury found that respect and recognition which were denied him in the land of the brave and the free.

He ultimately became Curator and Superintendent of the Botanical Gardens at St. Louis, where he was honoured and respected by the residents of that city. His family settled in their new home, and with good prospects, Bradbury was now beyond the fear of penury, and with undiminished vigour he continued his researches and investigations. He was often visited by the Indian Chiefs whom he had met in the wilds, and with whom he was always on the most friendly terms.

In the spring of 1825 a strange desire took possession of Bradbury to revisit the haunts of the Red Men, and he forthwith started from the City of St. Louis for that purpose. It may be that the trials of his early years had left their mark ; it may be that his life was cut short by accident. Be that as it may, the last record of him

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states that he is supposed to have died, and been buried with great solemnity by the Indians somewhere in the valley at the head of the Red River.

To-day the works of our townsman are being eagerly sought for by American agencies, and in a very short time the few copies remaining in the district may drift away.

In conclusion we find that in the 60th year of his age this truly wonderful man, a noble example and a bene- factor to his race, became a martyr to the love of liberty, science, and everything that was beautiful and sublime in nature.

We claim for our townsman, John Bradbury, the honourable distinction of having been one of the first white men to explore, survey, and publish an account of the hitherto unknown solitudes, which have since furnished the bulk of the cotton used in Lancashire.