

Policing in the Peaks in the Interwar years: The Bradwell Constabulary

By Tim Knebel and Les Bradwell

One of the historical challenges facing a region like the Peak District in past decades was how effectively to police a scattered series of geographically isolated villages in a remote and often inhospitable landscape in an era before police officers could be quickly mobilised to crime and incident scenes via squad cars and motorcycles. A key solution was the deployment of the 'Village Bobby' - a fulltime, paid police constable sent to live in and patrol a particular village, assisted (when required) by 'special constables' - trained volunteers drawn from the local community.

In the following piece the archivist Tim Knebel, with the help of the reminiscences of Les Bradwell, considers the role of the police constabulary in the Derbyshire Peak District village of Bradwell in the interwar years and seeks to shed some light on the men in the photograph of the 'Bradwell Constabulary' below. This photograph (along with others in this piece) has been reproduced with the kind permission of Les Bradwell and his family. Les Bradwell grew up in Bradwell (the village which shares its name with his surname) in the 1920s and 1930s and his father Thomas Frost Bradwell (one of the men featured in the photograph) served as 'special constable' in Bradwell after the First World War.



The Bradwell Constabulary, [c. 1920s]; Left-Right: Thomas Frost Bradwell (Special Constable), PC Applegate (Village Bobby), Cyril Evans (Special Sergeant) and Mr Bromage]

The 'Special Constabulary' and the 'Village Bobby'

The roots of the 'Special Constabulary' in the UK can be traced back centuries but the body which exists more-or-less as we know it today was effectively formalised during the First World War: a voluntary, part-time organisation paid only expenses. During the war, the primary function of the Special Constabulary was to safeguard against the infiltration of German spies who it was feared were intent on trying to disrupt the country's water supply. After the war, the Special Constabulary concept continued to play a key role in community policing, particularly in remote rural areas such as the Peak District. At a parish level, the 'specials' were trained volunteers drawn from the village, and paid only expenses, who would support the work of a fulltime paid policeman, the 'Village Bobby'. During the interwar years, before police motorcycles and cars became prevalent, the village bobby would often conduct his patrols on bicycle.

In the decades leading up to the First World War, the village of Bradwell had experienced a remarkable period of continuity with regards to local policing. PC Thomas Brown had been the popular village constable there for 30 years from 1883 up until his retirement in September 1913, which was a police service record. Local newspapers reported how 'never before in the history of the County Police' had an officer served in the same station for such a length of time.



PC Thomas Brown pictured in the Sheffield Telegraph, having attained a record 30 years service as police constable for Bradwell, 20 Sep 1913

Thomas Brown's successor as village constable was PC Charles William Roome who died prematurely in post (following illness) in March 1919 aged 48. This created a vacancy which PC Applegate would fill, heralding another long period of stability of policing in Bradwell with the village once more having a bobby who would remain in post for over two decades...

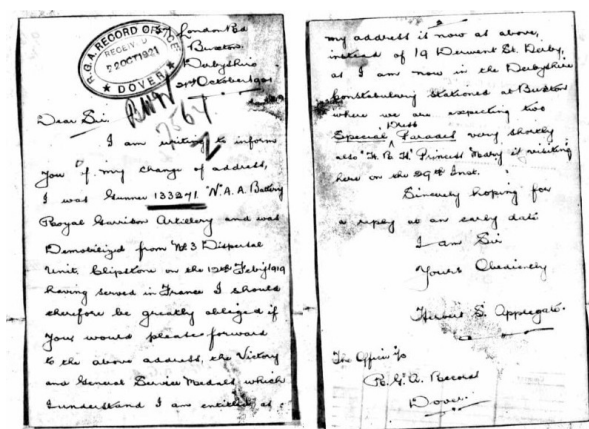
PC Herbert Stanley Applegate (1896-1969), the 'Village Bobby'

PC Herbert Stanley Applegate was the only salaried police officer in the above photograph of the Bradwell Constabulary. He was employed by the Derbyshire Constabulary to serve as the fulltime 'Village Bobby' for Bradwell.

Applegate was not a native of Bradwell. He was born on 8 March 1896 in Ribbleshead in the Yorkshire Dales, the son of Eleazer Applegate (c.1863-1915), a 'railway signalman', and his wife Harriett (nee Morriss) (1861-1928). Eleazer Applegate's job as a railway signalman evidently led to the family moving around somewhat from place to place during Herbert's upbringing. By the time of the 1901 census, the family had relocated to Derbyshire where they lived in Belper and, by the time of the 1911 census, they were living in Derby where Herbert (aged 15) worked as an 'Office Boy'. In September 1916, aged 20 and now working as a clerk in Derby, Applegate was recruited into the Royal Garrison Artillery where he served as a 'gunner' in France during the First World War.

A First World War service record (held at the National Archives) survives for Herbert Applegate which reveals his height on enlisting as 5' 9¼" which was well-above average for the time (his taller stature would make him perfectly suited to the role of a police officer!). Applegate was discharged from the army in 1919 and shortly afterwards he married Hilda Parkin in 1920 (the marriage took place in the Selby district of North Yorkshire). Herbert and Hilda Applegate had a daughter Joan born (in the Chapel-le-Frith district of Derbyshire) in 1921.

By 1921, Applegate had become a police constable, having joined the Derbyshire Constabulary where he was stationed at Buxton. His First World War army service record includes a letter he wrote to the military authorities in October 1921 requesting that the war medals to which he was entitled (the 'Victory' and the 'General Service Medal') could be sent to him as soon as possible to his new address in Buxton. In the letter, Applegate cited his particular reasons for wanting to have his medals at the earliest opportunity: the Buxton Police HQ had two 'special dress' parades coming up and they were also expecting a visit from HRH Princess Mary. Clearly he wanted to look the part and be proudly bedecked with his army medals for the occasions!



Letter written to military authorities from PC Herbert Stanley Applegate of the Derbyshire Constabulary requesting his First World War service medals be sent to his new address in Buxton, 21 Oct 1921

At some point in the early 1920s, Applegate was posted to Bradwell to become the 'Village Bobby' there. The 1939 register reveals how the Applegate family home in Bradwell was at 1 New Church Street.

Local newspaper reports paint PC Applegate out to be quite the daring 'all action' hero who was prepared to go to extreme lengths in the line of duty. In January 1936 for example, he was commended for diving into an icy pool on the windswept Bradwell moors on a bitterly cold day to recover the body of a missing man (Joseph Ollerenshaw) who had tragically drowned.

PC Applegate was particularly noted for undertaking several courageous animal rescue attempts in what was often treacherous landscape around Bradwell. In October 1933, he was awarded the National Canine Defence League's *silver medal* after he volunteered to be lowered 40-foot down by a rope tied around his waist through a narrow shaft of a disused lead mine at Dirlow Rake (on the moors above Bradwell) so he could rescue a 'valuable sheep dog' which had fallen down the shaft onto a narrow ledge. Applegate carried out the rescue despite the danger caused by falling loose stones around him. Remarkably, the reports reveal how he had carried out a 'similar rescue' just a couple of months previously. In December 1933, he was also awarded the RSPCA 'Bronze Medal for Animal Rescue' for saving the sheepdog.

At the end of December 1934, PC Applegate was again praised in the local press for showing 'great heroism' when on Christmas Eve he used a rope and pulley to undertake a 'perilous descent into darkness' in what proved to be an ultimately unsuccessful rescue attempt of a young cow which had fallen 60-foot down a disused spar mine in the moors above Bradwell.

In October 1936, Applegate again distinguished himself in a gallant act of animal rescue along with another local police officer Sergeant Frank Shimwell of Castleton. The officers were supervising the 'dipping of sheep' at a Ministry of Agriculture compound in the neighbouring Derbyshire village of Hope at the time. Whilst waiting for the first batch of sheep to arrive, they had taken a walk alongside the River Styx (Peakshole?), which was heavily swollen with floodwater following recent heavy rains, when they noticed a sheep stranded and terrified on a small island in the middle of the river with the water rising around it. Using a rope and plunging into the water, the officers were able to haul the sheep to safety. In May 1938, PC Applegate was one of five local men reported as having risked their lives to carry out a daring rescue of another sheep and a lamb which had fallen over a 250-foot high cliff in Bradwell. Applegate scaled down part of the cliff face and lowered a sack down at the end of a long rope whilst two other men, Robert Wilson of Hope, manager of the Bradwell Dale Quarry, and Albert Hancock of Bradwell, clambered further down the cliff to where the sheep were trapped. Although the ewe perished the lamb was saved.

By all accounts Applegate was a brave and well-liked police officer who also took an active role in village social affairs. In March 1933, for example, he is reported as having organised a 'Whist Drive and Dance at Bradwell Memorial Hall' in aid of the *Derbyshire Constabulary Widows' and Orphans' Fund*.

Applegate died in the Chesterfield District of Derbyshire in 1969, aged 73.



Local newspaper article relating to PC Applegate rescue of the 'valuable sheepdog' from the disused lead mine taken from the Sheffield Telegraph, 17 Oct 1933

Thomas Frost Bradwell (1890-1970), Special Constable

Small, bespectacled, quiet and unassuming, at first glance Thomas Frost Bradwell might seem like an unlikely volunteer police constable. Bradwell lived at Towngate in Bradwell where he worked as a master butcher, grocer and farmer. His son Les Bradwell remembers Thomas Frost Bradwell as a kind and gentle soul who would often give away for free his meat and grocery produce to the poorest members of the village. However, although Thomas Frost Bradwell was short in stature, Les recalls how his father was physically very strong. Bradwell never wore gloves, even in the bitterest of weathers, and would heft sheep and pigs around in the slaughterhouse with an ease which could scarcely be believed.

Thomas Frost Bradwell also followed in a long family tradition of playing an active role in public affairs of the village. He was from ancient Bradwell stock - his family had lived in the village for generations where they hugely respected. He was born in Bradwell on 3 September 1890, the son of Spencer Joshua Bradwell (1844-1919) and his wife Nancy. Spencer Joshua Bradwell was a butcher and grocer (who passed on the family business to his son) and who also served as secretary of the Bradwell Wesleyan Sunday School as well as acting as a trustee for the school and secretary of Marshall's Educational Charity.

The roots of an effective police officer in the Bradwell family genes can be traced directly back to the figure of Thomas Frost Bradwell's great grandfather John Bradwell (1789-1853), who was a widely revered figure in Bradwell. He was an innkeeper, butcher, lead ore merchant and lead mine owner, as well as a Wesleyan local preacher who also officiated as 'village scribe' and 'counsellor and confidential adviser to the whole village and its immediate neighbourhood'. To John Bradwell's 'counsel and judgement' were 'referred all matters of dispute around him' and it was noted how 'rarely indeed did he fail to bring matters to a satisfactory and peaceful termination'. (Such high praise for John Bradwell can be found in a newspaper obituary for him printed after his death in 1853, the text of which is

reproduced in *Bradwell Ancient and Modern* by Seth Evans, 1912, p.65).

Like his forebears, Thomas Frost Bradwell, was a committed Wesleyan Methodist. He acted as superintendent of the Bradwell Wesleyan Methodist Sunday School as well as serving on the committees of the Bradwell Wesley Guild and the Bradwell Hospital Association (which he chaired) and he also presided over meetings of the Bradwell Band of Hope.

Thomas Frost Bradwell married Louisa (1886-1958) on 6 November 1916 and they had four surviving children: Jessie (1919-1984), Cyril (1922-1991), Leslie (born 1923) and Stanley (born 1926). Given his multiple family business concerns, and responsibilities juggling various official roles for the Bradwell Wesleyan Church and other local organisations, in addition to raising four children, it is incredible to think of how Bradwell managed to find time to undertake additional duties as a special constable as well! However, Les recalls his father's many stories about how he, along with his 'boss', special sergeant Cyril Evans, used to venture out to arrest 'villains' in the neighbourhood and cart them off to lock-up cells in the neighbouring village of Castleton.

Bradwell died in his home village of Bradwell in 1970, aged 79.



Thomas Frost Bradwell, . 1940s

Cyril Evans (1894-1987), Special Sergeant

Like his friend, neighbour and special constabulary colleague Thomas Frost Bradwell, Cyril Evans was a fellow "Bradda-ite" through and through. Born in the village on 28 April 1894, Evans was also from a well-regarded Bradwell family who had been in the village for

generations. Similarly, like the Bradwells, the Evans family were also staunch Wesleyan Methodists who played prominent roles in local public affairs.

Cyril was the son of Dennis Evans (1862-1923) and his wife Felicia (1861-1942). Dennis Evans was a limestone waller and builder, who later became manager of the Spar Works at Outland Head, Bradwell (the concern of Messrs Hodkin and Jones of Sheffield). Dennis Evans also became chairman of Bradwell Parish Council and was a teacher of the Wesleyan Sunday School in the village for over 40 years, and conductor of the Wesleyan Church Choir for 36 years.

As a young man, by the outbreak of the First World War, Cyril Evans was one of the secretaries of the Bradwell Wesleyan Sunday School. In August 1916, Evans enlisted in the Sherwood Foresters with whom he fought in France during the First World War. In March 1917, local newspapers reported how Evans was hospitalised in France suffering with 'trench feet'.

Following in his father's footsteps, Cyril Evans became a builder along with his older brother Fred and worked his way up to becoming a 'Master Builder'. The 1939 register reveals how he lived at Brookside in Bradwell. Like his father Dennis, Cyril also served on the Bradwell Parish Council and was also involved with the Bradwell Wesleyan Choir, taking charge of various choir outings amongst other things. He also served as treasurer of Bradwell Hospital Association (the same local organisation which his special constable Thomas Frost Bradwell chaired).

After serving as special sergeant in the village for many years, retaining a lifelong interest in helping to uphold law and order, in 1949 Cyril Evans was appointed both a 'Magistrate' and 'Justice of the Peace' for Derbyshire.

Having remained a bachelor for most of his life, in 1951, Evans married Dorothy Leech (1909-1974). Evans died in his home village of Bradwell on 31 August 1987, aged 93.

Mr Ernest Arthur Bromage (1879-1951)

The non-uniformed man in the bowler hat Mr Bromage's precise role in connection with the Bradwell Constabulary which led to him being photographed in the group shot is unclear. However, he is known to have served on the Bradwell Parish Council and so may have had some kind of liaison role between the village police and parish council.

Like Applegate, Bromage was not a native of Bradwell and is understood to have moved to the village at some point in the 1920s where he became manager of a grocery store. Ernest Arthur Bromage was born Arthur Ernest Bromage on 9 Feb 1879 in the market town of Pershore in Worcestershire. He was the son of William Henry Bromage (1851-1906) a railway porter, and his wife Charlotte (nee White) (c. 1851-1926).

Bromage married Florence Martin (1879 - 1933) in 1904 in Sheffield. The couple had a daughter Edna Bromage born in Sheffield in 1908. At the time of the 1911 census, the family lived at 110 Pomona Street, Sheffield, where Bromage worked as a foreman packer in the grocery industry.

Although only arriving in Bradwell later on in life, Bromage quickly established himself as a prominent public figure in the village and became one of the leading lights on the Bradwell Parish Council. Like Thomas Frost Bradwell and Cyril Evans, he was also a committed Wesleyan (his grandfather Thomas Bromage had been a Wesleyan Minister). Bromage presided over the Young People's Guild in the Bradwell Primitive Methodist Schoolroom and took charge of outings of the 'Sunshine Methodist Sunday School'. He also joined Bradwell and Evans on the Committee of the Bradwell Hospital Association for which he was elected president.

Following the death of his first wife Florence in 1933, he later married Winifred Bromage (born 1898) in 1935. Bromage lived at East View, the Hills, Bradwell and he died in the village on 22 Sep 1951 age 72.

Stanley Bradwell (1894-1970)

Although he does not feature in the group photograph of the Bradwell Constabulary, the best-known police officer to come from the village of Bradwell is Stanley Bradwell. Stanley was special constable Thomas Frost Bradwell's brother-in-law (and Les Bradwell's uncle) as well as a former school class mate of special sergeant Cyril Evans.

Stanley was born in Bradwell on 18 December 1894, the son of John Bradwell (1857-1896) and his wife Nancy. John Bradwell, who worked as a green grocer and lived at Water Lane, Bradwell, died when Stanley was just a toddler and so never got to witness the impressive accomplishments of his son as both a soldier and police officer. Stanley went on to serve with distinction with the Sherwood Foresters during the First World War, for which he was awarded both the Distinguished Conduct Medal (DCM) and Military Cross (MC) for gallantry, before becoming a 'Police Inspector' and later 'Police Superintendent' in Derby.



Stanley Bradwell of Bradwell on joining the police service, 1913;



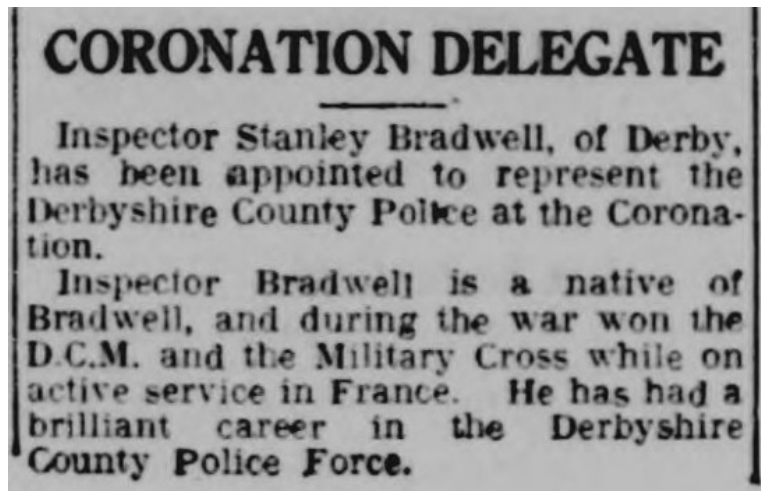
2nd Lieutenant Stanley Bradwell of the Sherwood Foresters awarded Military Cross for gallantry in the First World War, 1918

Stanley joined the police service in 1913. At the time, he was also a member of the territorial section (Chatsworth Rifles) of the Sherwood Foresters. In Bradwell, he also served as a Sunday School teacher at the Bradwell Wesleyan Chapel and was a member of the Wesleyan Chapel choir.

Stanley was sent to France in 1915 as a sergeant with the Sherwood Foresters. On 5 June 1916, he won the DCM for his action at Givenchy. His citation reveals how the medal was awarded for: *'conspicuous gallantry during a raid on enemy's trenches. He repelled an enemy counter-bombing attack, driving three of the enemy into a dug-out, where he bombed them. Later he assisted in the rescue of one of his officers who was wounded during the withdrawal.'*

In July 1916, Stanley was 'severely wounded' in France according to local newspaper reports and hospitalised. He eventually recovered to return to the front line but, during his recuperation period, he was afforded the opportunity to give his sister Louisa away at her wedding to special constable Thomas Frost Bradwell at the Bradwell Wesleyan Chapel on 6th November 1916. On returning to action in the First World War, Stanley later gained promotion to temporary 2nd Lieutenant in the 5th Battalion. On 29 September 1918, he was awarded the MC for his gallantry at Bellenglise during an attack on the Hindenberg Line. The citation for his medal in the *London Gazette* reports how he showed: *'exceptional powers of leadership and organisation throughout the action. When the advance of his platoon was temporarily checked, he showed absolute disregard for danger, although exposed to machine gun and snipers' fire, and his leadership and devotion to duty enabled the advance of his flank to be continued'*. Stanley is said to have shot three Germans with one bullet from his revolver.

After the war, Stanley re-joined Derbyshire Police Force where he had a glittering career. He served as a sergeant in Alfreton before becoming an inspector at Staveley and later joined Derby Divisional Headquarters. In 1937, as an inspector in Derby, he was selected to



Announcement in Sheffield Telegraph of Inspector Stanley Bradwell's selection to represent the Derbyshire County Police at the Coronation, 6 Apr 1937

represent the Derbyshire County Police at the Coronation of King George VI and Queen Elizabeth. In 1941, he was promoted to police superintendent. Stanley married Lily Walker in the Stafford District in 1920. They had a son John (1925-1929) and two daughters Joan (born 1922) and Stella (born 1930). Stanley Bradwell died in Derby in 1970, aged 75. Les recalls his mother Louisa saying of her brother (and Les' uncle) Stanley: 'He was frightened of nothing and no-one'.



Derby Police Superintendent Stanley Bradwell c.1940s;

Conclusion

In the second half of the 20th-century, communication and transport developments meant that the localised policing model of the 'Village Bobby', supported by the special constabulary

sourced from volunteers from the village, became outdated, replaced by a more centralised system. There still remains however much nostalgia for this parochial system of the benign, bicycle-riding bobby, well-known and regarded in the local community.

Archival research, along with Les Bradwell's long memory, allow us to build up a picture of the background and personalities of the men who served in the Bradwell Constabulary. More than just policemen, they were pillars of the community. Shaped by their experiences of the First World War, their strong Wesleyan faith and an unwavering sense of public duty, they were driven by a determination to keep their local village and neighbourhood safe. They were clearly greatly esteemed by the community they strived to protect during their lifetime, and are deserving of our respect and admiration today.