

BRADWELL HISTORICAL SOCIETY



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Up-coming events

The May talk sees us with another invited speaker. It will be given on Tuesday 21st of the month as usual at 8 pm in the Methodist Hall. The speaker is to be Evelyn Harris whose subject is 'The History of Flowers'. The June meeting is to be in the hands of the members. Perhaps you can begin thinking now of something that is in the foremost of your thoughts that you would like to devote 10 min describing to us.

Success of the April Coffee Morning at St Barnabas

We haven't yet seen an account of the final amount raised at the Saturday coffee morning but seems to have been in the region of £360. We are greatly indebted to the church people for their efforts on our behalf and to you for all the help you gave.

Tales of Old Smalldale

Part 1 Ashcroft

In Chapter XXII of Bradwell Ancient and Modern there is a section entitled 'Longevity and Tragical Deaths' in which Seth Evans notes that on 29th May 1885 'Matthew James Buttery (of) Smalldale hung himself in his house when the police were searching for the body of his wife'. It seems certain that the house in question was Ashcroft. Mrs Buttery was never found and what became of her still remains a mystery. The fact of Matthew's death is corroborated by an entry in the St Barnabas church register of baptisms, marriages (and banns) and burials. This reads 'Matthew James Butters 47 2nd Jun 1885. Also known as James Buttress by Coroners Order'. The last two words imply that there must have been an inquest into the death but say nothing about its finding. In the church entry on the line below one reads 'James Buttress 47 2nd Jun 1885 buried as Matthew James Butters by Coroner's Order'. Thus the man in question had three surnames at one time or another Buttery,

Butters and Buttress. In 1885 the vicar of St Barnabas was Henry Thornton who was incumbent from 1881 to 1893. On arrival in Bradwell he resided for a short while on Smalldale when he may have been a neighbour of the Buttress family. The record of the burial is lacking in a plot number so perhaps this was in 'an unmarked grave'.

According to the birth records Matthew James Buttery was born to William and Martha Buttery in 1838 in Hope Woodland and in the 1851 census father William is stated to be a farmer of 24 acres still at Hope Woodland with wife Martha (née Dakin) and 13 year old Matthew James. In 1860 Matthew married Martha Wright of Smalldale. At this time Martha was older than Matthew – 32 to 21. By the time of the 1871 census they were living on Smalldale and Matthew's occupation is given as stone waller. They had three daughters Elizabeth aged 9, Martha 7 and Nancy 5. We can move on closer to the fatal date of 1885 and consult the 1881 census returns. In these he appears as James Buttrey a stone waller and farmer still living on Smalldale, as were his wife Martha and children Martha and Nancy. By that time Elizabeth had left home and was living as a servant with the Souter family in Nether Hallam, Sheffield.

Moving on to 1885 the death of Matthew James is well documented but not that of his wife. Where the younger Martha and Nancy still living at home in that year? If so they would have been 22 and 20 respectively. So it is very likely that they would both have left home as had Elizabeth. In 1891 Martha (daughter) seems to have been living as a servant in Brighton but confusingly her place of birth is given as South Stockton (not Bradwell). Ten years later she was married to Albert Brackfield and working in the Post Office in Tunbridge Wells in Kent with her origins now given as Bradwell. What of Nancy Buttery? By 1891 she was Nancy Hill having married Henry Hill of Peterborough the previous year.

So all three daughters were probably living away from Smalldale by the time of their mother's disappearance and father's death. The records show that Martha (wife) Buttery's parents Joseph and Martha Wright had been living on Smalldale and that in the 1843 tithe map the position of Joseph Wright's house and garden is shown to be lower down the road and on the other side from Ashcroft, near where Little Lane is now. But both Joseph Wright Snr and Martha Wright were deceased by 1885. On the other hand their son Joseph Wright Jnr a farmer, was living on Smalldale in both 1881 and 1891 probably in his parents' house. One wonders therefore if Joseph Wright Jnr might have been the one that asked the police about the whereabouts of his sister Martha.

But there is another possible informant (but on the face of it less likely) and she was Matthew James' sister confusingly Nancy Rose. This Nancy was born in 1822 William and Martha Buttery in Hope Woodland. She married Joseph Bramall (previously Bramwell) in 1861 and went to live in what was by now the Bowling Green Inn on Smalldale. She succeeded her husband as the publication in 1869 and remained so until her death in 1901.

Another consideration is that Joseph Wight's daughter Martha may not have been killed by her husband but reverted to her maiden name when she quit living with

Matthew James Buttery. In the 1891 census a widow Martha Wright aged 65 (the age she would have been) is listed as living as a lodger in Sheffield but her place of birth is given as Chesterfield. As was stated earlier in this piece what became of Martha Buttery around about 1885 remains a mystery.