

Fradswell: A Staffordshire Village and It's People

By Marion Hall, West Mildands

Fradswell is a tiny village about 8 miles north-east of Stafford, in the centre of the triangle formed by the main roads between Stafford, Stone and Uttoxeter. It is set in very pretty countryside, especially in the late spring when it's narrow, winding lanes are filled with cow parsley and other wild flowers. There is no village green or pub or shop, just a church with Fradswell Hall adjacent, a parsonage now used as a retirement home, a village hall and a scattering of farms, cottages and modern houses.

There has been a community at Fradswell for over 1000 years. The name has Saxon origins and is recorded in the Domesday Book. The oldest part of the Church is said to date from 11th Century although it was mostly rebuilt in the 18th and enlarged in the 19th. An early history of the village can be found in Staffordshire Historical Collections 1914, and two early name lists in the subsidy roles of 1327 and 1333 in S.H.C. Vol. VII and X. Non of the names listed is known to relate to the sixteenth century or later Fradswell families. The earliest useful sources for Fradswell research are the 1532-3 list of families in the archdeaconry of Stafford and the 1539 muster role which includes all able bodied men aged between 16-60. Names recorded in one of both lists and in the first parish register (starting 1578) include CLIFF/clyffe, FERNALL, HALL/Hawle, Harve(y), HODD(G)SON, MADDER/Mathur, RUSHTON/Ryston, Stenson and Stonson which are possibly variants of STEVENSON.

The most commonly recorded name sin the register to 1615 are Cliffe, TOWNSEND, Stevenson, WILLAT, Fernal, COLLIER, ALLEN, (A)PRITCHARD and Hall (all with variant spellings). The TOOTH family is first recorded in 1587 and other names in this period include BRACKLEY, HOO(L)ME, IRELAND, PROUDLOVE and SUTTON. By mid 17th Century many of these families have disappeared from the records. It may be that an old settlement had existed near the church and that his was cleared to make for Fradswell Hall. As new people arrived in the village in the late 17th century and 18th century to work as farm labourers and servants most of their cottages were built on Fradswell Heath.

The main Fradswell land owners were the Earls of Essex and later the Shirleys, Earls Ferrers of Chartley, and the various owners of the Fradswell Hall Estate. Chartley Estate records reveal that in the mid 17th C the largest portion of its Fradswell land was occupied by the Hall family, other tenants being (W)RIGHT, Tooth, MILLS, BO(UG)HEY, A(u)ncel(l)/ANSELL, Cliff and SPOONER family. Late 17th to early 18th C tenants include GENDER and LATHBURY families. The Lathbury's tenancy was transferred to the MIDDLETON family in the 1750's, when widow FRADLEY was paying rent for the Genders former landholding. The Hall family continued to be Chartley estate tenants until 1860's with increased land holdings, also buying some land of their own in Fradswell and elsewhere. The Wright's land was later occupied by the ASHLEY/ASTLEY family and from the 1730's by the ADAMS family. The Tooth's held land until the 1760's when it was divided between the Hall and ELSEMOORE/Elsmore families, the latter family also taking the tenancy of the Ansell's landholding.

The TABBERNOR/Tavernor family are recorded as estate tenants from 1764 having been first recorded in Fradswell five years earlier.

The Fradswell Hall estate had belonged to the Meveralls of Throwley, passing by marriage to the Cromwells who established a 'seat' at Fradswell, building a large house. A survey of 1655 mentions 'the Hall Hill' and names the tenants as William ADDERLEY, William BRADBURY, John Spooner, Humphrey HOWARD, Francis DUNNE, Humphrey LOWE, Hugh CLARKE and Sybell Stephenson.

The estate was sold c.1660 to Sir Theophilus Biddulph, a London silk merchant and younger son of Sir Michael Biddulph of Elmhurst. In 1754 the Biddulph family sold the estate to Thomas Swinfen Esqr. Who let the Hall to the ROGERS family. The inventory of Thomas Rogers (d. 1759) describes the Hall as having a half left and right hand parlours and kitchen, with chambers over, brewhouse, dairy and cellars. The inventory of Samuel POTTS (d. 1737) seems to describe the same house, suggesting he was the tenant at that date.

In 1781 Thomas Swinfens other tenants were Thomas MOTTERHAM, Thomas CHELL, John Spooner and James CAPEWELL. Fradswell Hall was sold c. 1785 to John Pegg Esqr. . The Rogers family remaining as tenants until 1806. By this time, Francis DEAKIN had taken over the tenancy of John Spooners land. In 1806 the estate was sold to Edmund John BIRCH Esqr., who rebuilt the Hall and took up residence until his death in 1827. The Tithe Award of 1841 names Mrs Elizabeth Bree as owner of the estate, her tenants include Henry OWEN at the Hall, BURTON, Capewell, Deaking, GRIFFIN, Johnson, Motterham, NICHOLLS and NICKLIN.

The Doglands Farm has a long history, one of the few place name references in the early registers is the burial of a child of the Stephenson family of Doglandin 1582. Thomas Willet of 'Doglone' dies in 1648. Thomas Middleton (d.1682) and his wife Sarah (d.1698) were both 'of Dogland'. Their son, Thomas and his wife Dorothy (Hall) had children baptised at Fradswell until 1703 and may have lived at the Doglands, but their burials are not recorded at Fradswell. Some later Middleton records may relate to their descendants.

In 1707 the name YATES first appears in the register, in 1727 Walter Yates died leaving his leasehold lands at Dogland, where he lived, to his son Walter, who died in 1752. His widow is recorded in the 1752 Land Tax, which does not record locations or land owners. In 1781 Ann Yates is recorded as tenant of Fitzgerald esq., who's land was later occupied by Walter Yates. John Fitzgerald appears to have sold the Doglands between 1809 and 1812, and it became part of the Fradswell hall estate. The Yates family remained at the Doglands untill the death of Sarah, wife of Walter in 1815. He died 10 years later at Cheadle. In 1841-51, the Doglands was occupied by James Kapewell and his family, and in 1861 by William HOULDCROFT.

The Rising Sun, a four roomed thatched house was the village pub. It stood near the present Sun Farm and in 1841 John Capewell lived there. He died in 1847 and in 1851 Edward HOWE from Leigh was the publican. In a survey of Fradswell Heath in 1842 John Capewell of the Rising Sun stated that he owned the premissis as had his father David Capewell, the land having been enclosed and the house built for many years. The first Capewells to be

recorded in the village were David and Catherine in 1680. This is the only one of the 'old' families to still have descendants in Fradswell.

The biggest family in the village was the BAILEY family, founded by Anthony and Mary, who were first recorded in the register in 1722. William Tooths account as Overseer of the Poor, records that Anthony Bailey came October 17th 1719 and was given 'house room'. Theirs was one of the poorer families appearing time after time in the Overseers accounts. By 1841 there were 7 Bailey households, the 1842 survey describes their cottages as small, sometimes only one room, brick built and thatched, one described as 'miserable' another as 'old and poor'. There were Baileys in Fradswell into the early 20th century. The Chell family appeared in 1690. They were the village blacksmiths, tenants of the Fradswell Hall Estate. In 1841 William JOHNSON was the blacksmith, the remaining Chells were dispersed around the village as a butcher, labourers and servants., The Johnson family was recorded from the late 18th century. Other Fradswell families include ARNOLD, COPE, DUTTON, PLANT, REDFERN. THOMAS, TURNER (all 19th c)

Many more families and individuals are recorded for short periods or have only a single mention in Fradswell records. Bridegrooms from outside the area include Joseph SMITH of 'Ashby de la Souch', married 1716, William Hanson of Sedgeley, 1842, Richard TOPOTT, of Nottingham, 1873, Henry ATKINS, a soldier from Surrey, 1889 and Paul Max Frederick OSTERBURGER, a watchmaker of South Wimbledon in 1892.

Census returns include Francis FOX (33), a mole catcher from Westmoreland, in 1861 and Mary J BILLINGTON (21) schoolmistress from London, in 1871. In 1881 Emma KEW was the village schoolmistress, she and her brother Charles, both born at Newark Nottinghamshire were living with their widowed mother Sarah who was born at Southfleet, Lincolnshire. Emma married local farmer John SPENCER and raised a family in Fradswell. She died in 1956 aged 96. The furthest travelled visitor to the village was John B EARP (16) from Oregon, America, one of five scholars staying with Rev Thomas

Worthington (born at Prestbury, Cheshire) and his wife Laetitia at the Rectory in 1871. His household also included Ralph A BROWN (27) tutor from Exeter.

Anyone who had ancestors in Fradswell is fortunate to have many sources of information available including the accounts of church wardens and Overseers of the poor, also the Parish Constables. There is a good collection of Bastardy Bonds (there were numerous illegitimate children), Settlement Examinations and other 'Parish Chest' papers. A Window Tax list exists from 1785-6, also a 1785 list of people taxed on horses, wagons and carts. Chartley estate records can be found at both Stafford and Leicester record offices. The surveys, maps, plans and rentals are in the Shirley, Earls Ferrers collection (ref 26D53) at Leicester. This includes estate tenants in the Parish of Stow including Amerton, Charltey and Grindley, the Parish of Colwich (of which Fradswell was a detached part until the mid 19th Century), and other places in the vicinity.