

Stories from the Archives

23. Hope Townhead

Hope Townhead had several notable families living there. We have already met the Hall family, but living nearby at Bridge Cottage was Jonathan Longden and his family. Jonathan was a stalwart of the Methodist church in Hope and one of the original signatories to the purchase of the land to build Hope chapel. He was 58 at the time of the census, a farmer of 34 acres. Mary his wife was 54 and his daughter Sarah was 18. Robert the eldest son was 16 and 12 year old George was still at school.

Another Longden family at Townhead was John Longden aged 64, farming 30 acres of land. He had a full household, with Mary, his wife, his two grown daughters Mary and Maria aged 23 and 21 respectively and his son, 17 year old John, together with two small grandsons Walter Allott (5) and baby Wilmot Burgon. It is intriguing to speculate on how such an assortment of surnames could occur.

Woodroofe is a very old name in the annals of Hope. Besides being church wardens for several generations, a Woodroofe was overseer of the poor in the early 1800s and also Surveyor of the Highways responsible for seeing that the Hope inhabitants repaired the roads throughout the parish.

There were two branches of the family in Hope at this time. We already know of Nathan Woodroofe, who kept the Woodroofe Arms. Living at Townhead was another Nathan Woodroofe, a married man aged 40, who farmed 74 acres and had 3 labourers to help him. He had seven children – John aged 18, 4 daughters, Jane, Mary, Ann and Maria ranging in ages from 14 to 6 and all at school and two small sons Benjamin (4) and George, newly born. Nathan's wife is not included in the census, but the household also contained Fanny Ashton, a cousin as housekeeper and an elderly aunt, Martha Bagshaw, as assistant housekeeper.

It has been difficult to pinpoint where families lived in the Townhead area. However we are grateful to Vivienne Taylor who has researched the area around Underleigh and Losehill House Hotel. A house owned by James Burdekin appears on the 1847 Tythe map. In the census he is described as an agricultural labourer living with his wife Mary, 17 year old son, Josiah, also a labourer and three daughters "at home", Martha, (11) Louisa (7) and Elizabeth (5).

Sources: Vivienne Taylor – "Underleigh", "Loose Hill House Hotel", 1851 Census Returns, 1847 Tythe Allotment

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