

## BRADFORD-ON-TONE

Bradford-on-Tone is a rural parish three miles north-east of Wellington and four miles WSW of Taunton, in the former hundred of Taunton Deane.<sup>1</sup> The small village lies immediately to the south-east of the river where several roads converge on the medieval bridge that replaced the ford. Also within the parish are the hamlet and former manor of Hele, the former Heatherton Park estate and a number of scattered farmsteads. There is a diverse range of buildings, from the medieval church and a number of late medieval houses to several substantial 19th-century dwellings and the early 20th-century chapel at Heatherton Park. In the 17th and 18th centuries Bradford seems to have been of some importance as a regional centre for the cloth trade. Today it is probably best known for its cider farm.

Bradford takes its name from the ‘broad ford’ across the river Tone, described as Bradan Forda and Bradanford in a charter of 882.<sup>2</sup> It was referred to as Bradeford in the Domesday Book.<sup>3</sup> It was Bradeford by Welyngton in 1311,<sup>4</sup> a name still used in 1424.<sup>5</sup> In a will of 1429 the parish was described as Bradeford by Taunton.<sup>6</sup> However, it was most commonly referred to simply as Bradeford after 1399.<sup>7</sup> The half-share of the manor owned by the Franceis family was known as Bradford Fraunceys between 1461 and 1482<sup>8</sup> but the epithet never became attached to the parish, which was known as Bradford by 1617.<sup>9</sup> The

<sup>1</sup> C. and J. Greenwood, Somersetshire Delineated (London, 1822), 27. This article was completed in December 2019.

<sup>2</sup> H. P. R. Finberg, The Early Charters of Wessex (Leicester, 1964), 127; G. B. Grundy, ‘The Saxon Charters of Somerset’, PSANHS 77, appendix 142–9.

<sup>3</sup> E. Ekwall, The Concise Oxford Dictionary of English Place-Names (4<sup>th</sup> edn., Oxford, 1960), 58.

<sup>4</sup> E. Green (ed.), Pedes Finium, Commonly Called Feet of Fines for the County of Somerset: 1 Edward II to 20 Richard III, A.D. 1307 to A.D. 1346 (Som. Rec. Soc. 12), 113.

<sup>5</sup> *Ibid.* (ed.), Pedes Finium, Commonly called Feet of Fines for the County of Somerset, (fourth series) Henry IV to Richard III (Som. Rec. Soc. 22), 183.

<sup>6</sup> F. W. Weaver (ed.), Somerset Medieval Wills (1383-1500) (Som. Rec. Soc. 16), 130.

<sup>7</sup> SHC, DD/CN/1/1-DD/CN/1/7, *passim*.

<sup>8</sup> SHC, DD/CN/1/8, *passim*.

<sup>9</sup> E. H. Bates (ed.), Quarter Sessions Records for the County of Somerset: Vol. I. James I. 1607-1625 (Som. Rec. Soc. 23), 216.

parish was referred to as Bradford-on-Tone in 1898,<sup>10</sup> but trade directories did not use the name until 1919, and then only as an alternative to Bradford.<sup>11</sup> In 1955 the parish council rejected an offer from Somerset County Council to officially change the name to Bradford-on-Tone.<sup>12</sup> Not until 1959 did the parish registers begin to use the name.<sup>13</sup> The parish is still officially called Bradford, though Bradford-on-Tone is typically employed today.<sup>14</sup>

## LANDSCAPE, SETTLEMENT AND BUILDINGS

### BOUNDARIES AND PARISH ORIGINS

The parish boundary between Bradford and West Buckland originated as part of the estate boundary between the lands of the bishop of Winchester (granted by Æthelwulf, king of the West Saxons, in 854), and the Wellington estate, which included West Buckland. Two of the boundary landmarks described in Æthelwulf's charter, 'the stone ford' and 'the Alder Trees of the Hawks', survive in the Bradford place-names Stoford and Hawkaller.<sup>15</sup>

In the 1780s Rack noted that Bradford was bounded on the north by Hillfarrance and Oake, on the east by Bishops Hull, south by West Buckland, and west by Wellington and Nynehead.<sup>16</sup> On the tithe map of 1841 the parish is shown as sharing its boundary with Oake, Hillfarrance, Nynehead, West Buckland, Trull, Bishops Hull and Norton Fitzwarren. There was a detached field which formed part of Bradford parish situated just to the east of Barr in Bishops Hull.<sup>17</sup> There were minor changes to the parish's boundary in 1978, when it lost a small number of properties to Norton Fitzwarren, Bishops Hull, West Buckland and

<sup>10</sup> *Taunton Courier*, 26 Jan. 1898, 7.

<sup>11</sup> *Kelly's Dir. Som.* (1939), 106.

<sup>12</sup> SHC, D/PC/bra.t/1/2/1, 90.

<sup>13</sup> SHC, D/P/bra.t/2/1/10, 177.

<sup>14</sup> [somersetintelligence.org.uk/census-datasets/](http://somersetintelligence.org.uk/census-datasets/) (accessed 1 Aug. 2019).

<sup>15</sup> Finberg, *Early Charters*, 122; Grundy, 'Saxon Charters', *PSANHS* 73, appendix 7-22.

<sup>16</sup> M. McDermott and S. Berry (eds.), *Edmund Rack's Survey of Somerset* (Taunton, 2011), 269.

<sup>17</sup> SHC, D/D/Rt/M/401.

Nynehead.<sup>18</sup> The area of the parish in 1831 was 1,710 a.<sup>19</sup> In 1939 it was recorded as 1,814 a.<sup>20</sup> In 2019 the area of the parish was still 1,814 a. (734 ha.).<sup>21</sup>

## LANDSCAPE

Most of the parish of Bradford-on-Tone lies on Keuper Marl, though the low lands along the river are on alluvium, which is also to be found to the south-east of the village. There are some river terrace deposits at Three Bridges and around Ford Farm. Hele Hill stands at 48 m. above sea level, in contrast to the surrounding streams which stand at 25 m. The land beside the Tone is 31 m. above sea level, while the centre of Bradford village stands at 38 m., the land to the south of the village rising to 47 m. close to the entrance to Heatherton Park.<sup>22</sup>

## COMMUNICATIONS

### Roads and Bridges

The old Taunton to Wellington road, now the A38, lies to the south-east of the village, entering the parish at Three Bridges, and running in a south-westerly direction to Heatherton.

It was turnpiked in 1752. A diversion was constructed in the 1920s, running from the Bradford turn for about 3/8 mile, bypassing Three Bridges, the old road to the south subsequently disused but still in evidence in 1985.<sup>23</sup>

Bradford bridge crosses the Tone below the church, just to the north-west of the village. It probably dates from the 15th century, though a 13th-century date has also been

---

<sup>18</sup> SHC, D/PC/bra.t/1/2/1, 89.

<sup>19</sup> Abstract of Population Returns of Great Britain, 1831 (Parl. Papers 1833 (149), i), 548.

<sup>20</sup> Kelly's Dir. Som. (1939), 106-7.

<sup>21</sup> Census.

<sup>22</sup> Geol. Surv. Map, 1:50,000, sheet 311 (1976 edn.).

<sup>23</sup> J. B. Bentley and B. J. Murless, Somerset Roads: The Legacy of the Turnpikes: Phase 1 – Western Somerset (Taunton, 1985), 53-4.

suggested.<sup>24</sup> Local tradition had it that the bridge and that at Hele were built by monks.<sup>25</sup> It was accepted as a county bridge by 1661.<sup>26</sup> One of the parapets bears the date 1698 but this undoubtedly records repair work on the bridge. The bridge consists of two pointed arches, each of chamfered orders, and a central pier with cutwaters on the upstream and downstream sides. It is narrow but with widening approaches immediately beyond the arches.<sup>27</sup>

Hele bridge, which also crosses the Tone, is architecturally similar to Bradford's and probably also dates from the 15th century. It comprises three pointed arches and two centre piers with cutwaters. The original width was 3.5 m, but this has now been extended to 4.5 m.<sup>28</sup> It was 'greatly in decay' in 1617 and still had not been properly repaired in 1621, largely due to a county collection not having been fully submitted.<sup>29</sup> In 1647 it was stated that the bridge, described as a county bridge since time out of mind, had been demolished by the Parliamentary forces of Col. Ralph Welden, during the siege of Taunton.<sup>30</sup> However, observations during strengthening in 2003 suggest that only the southern arch had to be rebuilt.<sup>31</sup> Bradford's tithingmen were responsible for the upkeep of the two county bridges in the parish 1701, when 7s. was spent on them.<sup>32</sup>

A third important bridge lies at Three Bridges, on the Taunton to Wellington road, crossing the Stoford stream and the little brook that runs into it. In 1749 the Quarter Sessions ordered that the bridge at Three Bridges be repaired.<sup>33</sup> It was again in disrepair in 1811.<sup>34</sup> In 1831 it was recorded as a county bridge, together with those at Bradford and Hele.<sup>35</sup> The

<sup>24</sup> Anon., 'Bradford Church', PSANHS 11 (i), 47; E. Jervoise, The Ancient Bridges of the South of England (London, 1930), 94.

<sup>25</sup> F W Matthews, 'Bradford and its History' (1925) (SHC, DD/THR/22/1), 33.

<sup>26</sup> SHC, Q/AB/1.

<sup>27</sup> Somerset HER 43377.

<sup>28</sup> Somerset HER 43378.

<sup>29</sup> Bates, Quarter Sessions 1607-25, 216, 272-3, 295.

<sup>30</sup> J. S. Cockburn (ed.), Somerset Assize Orders, 1640-1659 (Som. Rec. Soc. 71), 19-20.

<sup>31</sup> Somerset HER 43378.

<sup>32</sup> SHC, D/P/bra.t/23/1.

<sup>33</sup> SHC, Q/SR/317/3/43.

<sup>34</sup> SHC, Q/SR/381/58.

<sup>35</sup> SHC, Q/AB/2.

bridge was damaged by the fall of trees in 1897.<sup>36</sup> The present bridge is a reinforced concrete arch built in 1926 to the designs of Edward Stead, county surveyor.<sup>37</sup>

A bridge of c.1831-8 crosses the remains of the Grand Western Canal at Trefusis farm. It was designed by James Green, engineer to the canal company. The bridge is a single flat segmental arch carried on four cast iron ribs bearing cast iron plates as centring for the road bed. It is a rare example of a canal bridge of cast iron construction.<sup>38</sup>

A number of other road and footbridges populate the parish. Binham bridge is a small stone arch lying on the road from Bradford to Hele. The minor Bradford-Hillfarrance road crosses the site of the canal on a stone built bridge which has a narrow circular arch lined with brick.<sup>39</sup> A bridge runs over the railway line from Taunton to Exeter close to Bradfields Farm. There are also minor road bridges at Ford and Stoford. Between 1690 and 1692 Richard Wyatt was presented at the manor court for not repairing a bridge that adjoined his land.<sup>40</sup> A bridge called Nightingale's was repaired by the tithingmen in 1702.<sup>41</sup> In 1923 several footbridges in the parish were said to be disrepair, including one over the stream between Bradford and Hillfarrance.<sup>42</sup>

### Waterways

The Tone enters the parish just to the north of the village centre, running north-east to Hele. In 1638 John Malet (c.1593-1644) began work to make the Tone navigable between Bridgwater and Bradford bridge.<sup>43</sup> In March 1638 a commission to compound with the

<sup>36</sup> SHC, D/R/wel/2/2/1, 443.

<sup>37</sup> Somerset HER 14379.

<sup>38</sup> Somerset HER 40890.

<sup>39</sup> Somerset HER 44136.

<sup>40</sup> SHC, DD/SF/1/3/61, presentments.

<sup>41</sup> SHC, D/P/bra.t/23/1.

<sup>42</sup> SHC, D/PC/bra.t/1/2/1, 19, 22.

<sup>43</sup> Hist. Parl. Commons 1604–29, s.v. Malet, John, of Enmore, Som. (accessed 20 Apr. 2019).

owners of property around the river was issued.<sup>44</sup> Letters Patent issued in 1684 vested Malet's interest in his granddaughters, Elizabeth, countess of Sandwich, Malet, Viscountess Lisburne, and Anne, Lady Greville.<sup>45</sup> In 1698 they sold their interest to John Friend of Taunton for £330.<sup>46</sup>

Bradford's proximity to the Tone and its many tributaries and its low-lying situation have made it susceptible to flooding. Flood prevention work was undertaken in 1870.<sup>47</sup> There was severe flooding in January 1920.<sup>48</sup> In 1924 it was reported to the parish council that flood prevention work recently undertaken had only served to exacerbate the flooding problem at Tone Green.<sup>49</sup> In 1957 a scheme to raise the road at Tone Green and widen the river at Hillfarrance was mooted.<sup>50</sup> There was serious flooding at Stoford in 1978.<sup>51</sup>

In 1792 a canal was proposed to link the river Exe to Taunton, to connect with the Tone Navigation, or with a projected Bristol to Taunton canal.<sup>52</sup> Construction on this Grand Western Canal did not begin until 1810, and four years later had reached Lowdwells on the border between Devon and Somerset. The completion of the Bridgwater to Taunton canal in 1827 revived enthusiasm, and a revised plan was put forward for a canal between Lowdwells and Taunton with one inclined plan and seven boat lifts, rather than locks.<sup>53</sup> Construction began in 1831. There were numerous delays and the section between Lowdwells and Taunton finally opened in 1838, but faced competition from the railway after 1842.<sup>54</sup> In 1853 the Grand Western Canal was leased to the railway company.<sup>55</sup> In 1865 ownership of the canal

---

<sup>44</sup> J. Broadway, R. Cust, Stephen Roberts (eds.), A Calendar of the Docquets of Lord Keeper Coventry, 1625-1640 (List & Index Soc. Spec. Ser. 34 [2004]), 49.

<sup>45</sup> SHC, DD/TC/24.

<sup>46</sup> SHC, DD/TC/10.

<sup>47</sup> SHC, D/P/bra.t 9/1/2, 25 Mar. 1870.

<sup>48</sup> SHC, C/E/4/378/2, 12.

<sup>49</sup> SHC, D/PC/bra.t/1/2/1, 23-4.

<sup>50</sup> SHC, D/PC/bra.t/1/2/1, 78.

<sup>51</sup> SHC, D/PC/bra.t/1/2/2, 80.

<sup>52</sup> C. Hadfield, The Canals of South-West England (Newton Abbot, 1967), 95.

<sup>53</sup> R. Russell, Lost Canals and Waterways of Britain (Newton Abbot, 1982), 71.

<sup>54</sup> *Ibid.* 72.

<sup>55</sup> Hadfield, Canals of South-West England, 111, 114.

transferred to the Bristol and Exeter Railway Co., which drained the canal from Taunton to Lowdwells in 1867.<sup>56</sup> The remains of a wharf and related buildings could still be seen near the Victory Inn (now the Allerford Inn) in 1989.<sup>57</sup> There was also a wharf close to the canal bridge on the minor Bradford-Hillfarrance road.<sup>58</sup>

### Railways

The Bristol and Exeter Railway from London to Exeter reached Taunton in 1842 and was extended to Exeter in 1844. Bradford lies on the 8½ mile stretch between Taunton and Beambridge (beyond Wellington), opened in May 1843.<sup>59</sup> In 1842 two workmen killed during the construction of the railway were buried in Bradford churchyard.<sup>60</sup>

The railway line runs approximately parallel to the site of the canal. It enters the parish to the north of Hele, running in a south-westerly direction into Hillfarrance, before re-entering Bradford between the village centre and Ford, and then entering Nynehead just to the west of Trefusis farm.

Bradford was the scene of a serious railway accident in May 1991. A petroleum tank train carrying oil from Milford Haven to Bovey Tracey was derailed at the level crossing near Trefusis farm and exploded. There were no fatalities, but there was a major fire, with oil running down roads and into fields.<sup>61</sup>

### Post, carriers, buses and other communications

---

<sup>56</sup> TNA, RAIL 891/1.

<sup>57</sup> Somerset HER 44134.

<sup>58</sup> Somerset HER 44136 .

<sup>59</sup> E. T. MacDermot and C. R. Clinker, History of the Great Western Railway I, 1833-1863 (London, 1964), 72, 92.

<sup>60</sup> SHC, D/P/bra.t/2/1/8, 29.

<sup>61</sup> SHC, C/FB/51/2/1.

There was a post office in the village by 1859.<sup>62</sup> In 1923 an application from the parish council for the office to become a money order office was rejected by the postmaster of Taunton.<sup>63</sup> Its existence in the period after the Second World War was precarious. It seems to have briefly closed in 1949 after the retirement of the village postmistress.<sup>64</sup> It ceased trading again in 1995.<sup>65</sup> A new post office and village shop was opened later that year, but the owners struggled to break even and announced its closure in February 1998.<sup>66</sup> The parish council was unable to take responsibility for running the post office, but following a community campaign to save the post office and the shop the Bradford-on-Tone Village Shop Association started trading in April 1998.<sup>67</sup> Operated and managed entirely by volunteers, the post office was still open in November 2019.<sup>68</sup>

In 1933 the parish council wrote to the National Bus Co. asking them to re-consider their decision not to run services through Bradford.<sup>69</sup> By 1947 there was a bus stop at Heatherton, ½ mile from the village centre, with regular services to Taunton and Wellington,<sup>70</sup> but the lack of a bus service in the Hele area remained a concern.<sup>71</sup> In 1988 a limited bus service running through the village itself was introduced<sup>72</sup> but this was no longer operating in November 2001.<sup>73</sup> By 2012 bus services between Bradford and Taunton and Wellington were intermittent, with no service at weekends.<sup>74</sup> In 2019 Heatherton and Three Bridges had regular bus services to Taunton and Wellington on weekdays and Saturdays.<sup>75</sup>

<sup>62</sup> Bristol PO Dir. and Gaz., with Gloucs. and Som. (1859), 862.

<sup>63</sup> SHC, D/PC/bra.t/1/2/1, 19.

<sup>64</sup> SHC, D/PC/bra.t/1/2/1, 64.

<sup>65</sup> SHC, A/DBL/22/21, April. 1995, 10.

<sup>66</sup> SHC, A/DBL/22/24, Feb. 1998, 10.

<sup>67</sup> SHC, D/PC/bra.t 1/2/3, 194, 205; SHC, A/DBL/22/24, Jun. 1998, 10.

<sup>68</sup> [bradfordontone.co.uk/shop.php](http://bradfordontone.co.uk/shop.php) (accessed 1 Nov. 2019).

<sup>69</sup> SHC, D/PC/bra.t/1/2/1, 47.

<sup>70</sup> SHC, A/AGH/1/39, 1947

<sup>71</sup> SHC, D/PC/bra.t/1/2/1, 66.

<sup>72</sup> SHC, D/PC/bra.t/1/2/3, 28.

<sup>73</sup> SHC, D/PC/bra.t/1/2/4, 126.

<sup>74</sup> SHC, A/EPF/14/2, Mar. 2012, 11-12.

<sup>75</sup> [bustimes.org/services/22-taunton-wellington-rockwell-green-tiverton](http://bustimes.org/services/22-taunton-wellington-rockwell-green-tiverton); [bustimes.org/services/22a-taunton-tonedale](http://bustimes.org/services/22a-taunton-tonedale); [bustimes.org/services/22b-west-buckland-taunton](http://bustimes.org/services/22b-west-buckland-taunton); [bustimes.org/services/20-taunton-hemyock-honiton](http://bustimes.org/services/20-taunton-hemyock-honiton) (accessed 5 Dec. 2019).



A telegraph service was introduced in the village in 1901. It was reported that 625 messages had been sent and 908 received in the service's first year.<sup>76</sup> There were at least two telephones in the parish by 1927.<sup>77</sup> The telephone exchange was extended in 1937.<sup>78</sup>

Land near Three Bridges, bordering the Taunton-Wellington road, was one of a number of sites proposed as a possible location for Taunton aerodrome in 1930 but nothing came of the scheme.<sup>79</sup>

## POPULATION

In 1086 there were 26 tenant households (19 villans and seven lower-status bordars) in Bradford, with five slaves working the demesne land; there were nine tenants (two villans and seven bordars) and four slaves at Hele.<sup>80</sup> In the lay subsidy assessment of 1327 at least 17 people were assessed in Bradford and seven at Hele.<sup>81</sup> In the poll tax of 1377 there were 117 taxpayers in the village, with a further 50 at Hele.<sup>82</sup>

Bradford tithing was able to provide just three men for the muster in 1569, while Hele could supply 17.<sup>83</sup> In the lay subsidy assessment of 1581 19 people were assessed at Bradford and nine at Hele.<sup>84</sup> A church rate levied in 1631 listed 31 men and women in Bradford, 17 in Hele and Wheaton, 11 in Stoford and Dolberry, and 16 cottagers.<sup>85</sup> The vicar, constable,

<sup>76</sup> Wellington Weekly News, 29 Oct. 1902, 5.

<sup>77</sup> Kelly's Dir. Som. (1927), 144.

<sup>78</sup> SHC, D/U/wel/24/2/14.

<sup>79</sup> SHC, C/CSEN/2.

<sup>80</sup> A. Williams and G. H. Martin (eds.), Domesday Book: A Complete Translation (London, 2002), 251.

<sup>81</sup> F. H. Dickinson (ed.), Kirby's Quest for Somerset (Som. Rec. Soc. 3), 145–6. The Bradford section is mutilated and one or two names missing.

<sup>82</sup> C. C. Fenwick (ed.), The Poll Taxes of 1377, 1379 and 1381 (Oxford, 2001), 424.

<sup>83</sup> E. Green (ed.), Certificate of Musters in the County of Somerset (Som. Rec. Soc. 20), 274.

<sup>84</sup> A. J. Webb (ed.), Two Tudor Subsidy Assessments for the County of Somerset: 1558 and 1581-82 (Som. Rec. Soc. 88), 122-3.

<sup>85</sup> SHC, DD/SF/16/4/1.

churchwardens and overseers listed 133 adult males in the Protestation Returns of 1641–2.<sup>86</sup> Thirty-five people were exempted from the hearth tax in 1674.<sup>87</sup> In the ten years between 1750 and 1759 the average annual number of baptisms was 12.3 and the average number of burials was 9.4.<sup>88</sup>

The population stood at 447 in 1801, falling to 436 in 1811. By 1821 it had risen to 525, which remained the population ten years later. In 1841 the population was 550, rising to 569 in 1851. The population steadily declined over the remainder of the century. It had fallen to 552 in 1861, 479 in 1871, 462 in 1881, and 444 in 1891. The general pattern of decline was replicated in the opening decades of the 20th century. The population stood at 422 in 1901, falling to 361 ten years later. It was 382 in 1921 and 393 in 1931. By 1951 it had risen to 442. It stood at 575 in 1961, rising to 583 in 1971 and 620 in 1981. By 1991 it had fallen to 587. In 2001 the population was 573.<sup>89</sup> In 2011 it was 622.<sup>90</sup>

## SETTLEMENT

### Prehistoric to Anglo-Saxon settlement

A bout coupe handaxe (Middle Palaeolithic) of greensand has been found to the west of Heatherton Park.<sup>91</sup> A further handaxe was discovered in a garden in Regent Street in 1976.<sup>92</sup> A Palaeolithic implement of honey-coloured chert and discoidal form, having a bi-convex section, has been discovered close to Risdon House. The same site has yielded a collection of flint and chert implements (largely flakes), mostly of Neolithic type.<sup>93</sup>

<sup>86</sup> A. J. Howard and T. L. Stoate (eds.), The Somerset Protestation Returns and Lay Subsidy Rolls, 1641-2 (Bristol, 1975), 100.

<sup>87</sup> Dwelly's Index to the Somerset Hearth Tax Exemption Certificates of 1670 and 1674 (Bristol, 1976), 305.

<sup>88</sup> SHC, D/P/bra.t/2/1/4, Jan. 1750-Dec. 1759.

<sup>89</sup> Census.

<sup>90</sup> [somersetintelligence.org.uk/census-datasets/](http://somersetintelligence.org.uk/census-datasets/) (accessed 11 Apr. 2019).

<sup>91</sup> Somerset HER 44290.

<sup>92</sup> Somerset HER 44291.

<sup>93</sup> Somerset HER 43379.

A possible prehistoric hillfort has been identified on Hele Hill.<sup>94</sup> The area is partially covered with trees. A later possible prehistoric settlement, which may have been connected with any hillfort, lies a short distance to the west.<sup>95</sup> Observation work in 1997 identified outlying ditches in a muted state on this site. They may also have had a connection to the postulated hillfort.<sup>96</sup>

A Roman settlement was identified to the south of Hele in 2010. Two evaluation trenches were subsequently excavated showing that the features were deep ditches whose upper fills contained much Roman material. It has been suggested that the ditches originated in the prehistoric period and were finally infilled, either with rubbish in the Roman period or by the subsequent ploughing of adjacent settlement deposits. Analysis of the pottery suggested that the occupation may date to the later Roman period.<sup>97</sup>

Little is known of Anglo-Saxon settlement in Bradford, but it may have been part of the estate granted to the bishop of Winchester by Æthelwulf, king of the West Saxons, in 854. Stoford, which developed as a separate settlement within the parish, grew up around the ‘stone ford’ mentioned in Æthelwulf’s charter.<sup>98</sup> Bradford and Hele were recorded separately in 1086.<sup>99</sup>

#### Medieval and Early Modern settlement

In 2006 archaeological work at an old orchard in the centre of Bradford-on-Tone discovered a ditch and a pit dating from the 12th to the 14th centuries. Pottery dating from the 10th or 11th century onwards was recovered.<sup>100</sup> Medieval pottery sherds that were probably the result of

---

<sup>94</sup> Somerset HER 29288.

<sup>95</sup> Somerset HER 29289.

<sup>96</sup> Somerset HER 29290.

<sup>97</sup> Somerset HER 32366.

<sup>98</sup> Finberg, *Early Charters*, 122; Grundy, ‘Saxon Charters’, *PSANHS* 73, appendix 7-22.

<sup>99</sup> Williams and Martin, *Domesday*, 251.

<sup>100</sup> Somerset HER 28251.

the manuring of agricultural land have been found nearby in Gardeners Close.<sup>101</sup> An estate was recorded at Stoford in 1227.<sup>102</sup> Heatherton was first recorded in a grant of c.1240. A William de Ford was recorded in the same grant.<sup>103</sup> This appears to be the earliest reference to the settlement of Ford in the north-west of the parish.

Sixteen cottagers were listed in a church rate of 1631.<sup>104</sup> The exemptions from the hearth tax in 1674 suggest a number of small cottages and may point to a degree of poverty among the population.<sup>105</sup>

### Settlement from the 18th to the 21st centuries

In the 1780s Rack noted that Hele hamlet, 1½ miles from the church comprised 14 houses with four houses at Stoford. The remainder of the houses in the parish were concentrated around the church. The whole parish contained c.50 houses in total. He made no mention of Ford.<sup>106</sup> However, in 1844 there were still three waywardens representing Bradford, Hele and Ford, respectively.<sup>107</sup> In the 1891 census Hele, with 40 houses, and Ford, with five, were recorded as separate hamlets, while Bradford, with 59 houses, was described as a township.<sup>108</sup> Hele remains a substantial hamlet.

The main settlement lies about a mile from the Taunton to Wellington road, a loop lane from which passes through the centre of the village. The main village street, Regent Street, forms part of it. Back Lane runs parallel to Regent Street. From the centre of the village another lane descends rapidly to Bradford bridge and, crossing it, divides almost

---

<sup>101</sup> Somerset HER 32413.

<sup>102</sup> Cal. Chart. R. 1226-1257, 17.

<sup>103</sup> Magdalen Coll., Oxford, Ford 69.

<sup>104</sup> SHC, DD/SF/16/4/1.

<sup>105</sup> Dwelly's Index, 305.

<sup>106</sup> McDermott and Berry, Rack's Survey, 269.

<sup>107</sup> SHC, D/P/bra.t 9/1/1, Mar. 25 1844.

<sup>108</sup> TNA, RG 12/1871.

immediately, one branch leading to Oake and the other to Nynehead. Another lane, running north from the loop lane, leads to Hele.

The 20th century saw modest development in the parish. A small number of local authority houses were built.<sup>109</sup> There was also growth in the private housing market. In 1935 five detached houses and eight bungalows were erected at Heatherton Park.<sup>110</sup> The same year a further 12 semi-detached houses were begun nearby.<sup>111</sup> Regent Street includes eleven detached bungalows of c.1980. There are a number of 20th-century properties in Back Lane. Six detached houses were built in Gardeners Close, off Back Lane, in 1990.<sup>112</sup>

## BUILT CHARACTER

The principal surviving medieval building is the parish church but there are a number of other medieval buildings in the parish. Ford Mill House is of late medieval origin.<sup>113</sup> Riscons Farm is also late medieval, with later additions including a 16th century fireplace and a rear wing added in 1635.<sup>114</sup> Orchard Cottage in Regent Street is another property believed to be of late medieval origin, with 16th century and later additions and alterations. The cottage is rendered, over uncoursed limestone rubble, and has a half-hipped thatch roof.<sup>115</sup>

Hele House (now called Hele Manor) is a former farmhouse probably built in the 16th century. A bay was added to the south and another to the south-east, probably in the 18th century. The house is roughcast over random rubble, probably a similar construction to many houses built in the area at the time.<sup>116</sup> By 2019 the house and its barns were divided into several properties.

<sup>109</sup> Below, local government, parish administration.

<sup>110</sup> SHC, D/U/wel/24/2/2.

<sup>111</sup> SHC, D/U/wel/24/2/3.

<sup>112</sup> SHC, D/PC/bra.t/1/2/3, 60.

<sup>113</sup> Below, economic history, mills.

<sup>114</sup> Somerset HER 40897.

<sup>115</sup> Somerset HER 16373.

<sup>116</sup> Somerset HER 40905. The property was not called Hele Manor until c.1972, see SHC. D/R/wel/24/2318.

Jeanes Farm, in the centre of the village, has an 18th-century red brick façade over rubble and cob.<sup>117</sup> The major 18th-century house in the parish is Heatherton Park, built *c.*1770 for Sir Thomas Gunston.<sup>118</sup>

Substantial 19th-century properties include Springfield House of *c.*1850 and Rose Cottage of *c.*1840, both built by the Adair family of Heatherton Park.<sup>119</sup> The former vicarage, opposite the parish church, dates from *c.*1873.<sup>120</sup> There are also large Victorian houses at Hele: Stone House (now two properties), Hele Hill House and Hele Mount were all probably built for members of the Easton family.<sup>121</sup>

Bradford Court is the major 20th-century property in the parish. Built in the Jacobean style *c.*1905, for Thomas Edward Wilkinson (1837-1914), former bishop of Zululand, the two-storey house is of coursed local stone rubble, with a plain clay tiled roof. There are inserted French windows, both with strapwork and lettering above the parapets in the manner of Oriel College, Oxford.<sup>122</sup>

By 1910 many cottages were described as brick with slate or tiled roofs,<sup>123</sup> though some cob and thatch dwellings survived.<sup>124</sup> By 2019 Bradford's residential properties were chiefly of the 19th and 20th centuries. Substantial recent properties include Courtland House of *c.*2000.

---

<sup>117</sup> Somerset HER 40896.

<sup>118</sup> Below, landownership, Heatherton.

<sup>119</sup> Somerset HER 40901; Somerset HER 40898.

<sup>120</sup> H. W. Baldwin, 'The Parsonage and Vicarage of Bradford' (1996) (SHC, PAM 1917), 6.

<sup>121</sup> Somerset HER 40906; Somerset HER 40904.

<sup>122</sup> Somerset HER 40889.

<sup>123</sup> For example, TNA, IR 58/82133, 49, 65-69, 79, 108, 181.

<sup>124</sup> TNA, IR 58/82133, 56.