

LOCAL GOVERNMENT

By the time of the Domesday survey Bradford-on-Tone was part of the estates of the bishop of Winchester in the Liberty or Outfaring.¹ Bradford was still listed as part of the 'Forensic' (or Outfaring) of Taunton in 1316, but there are no further references to Bradford in connection with Taunton manor.² After the local government reorganisation of 1894 it became part of Wellington Rural District. In 1974 it became part of the district of Taunton Deane. Since 2019 it has formed part of Somerset West and Taunton.

TITHINGS

The parish was divided into two tithings, Bradford and Hele, which were first recorded in 1327. Bradford tithing included the main village settlement and seems to have also contained the smaller settlements of Stoford and Dolberry to the south. Hele tithing was centred around the hamlet of that name in the north of the parish.³

The 1353 custumal of the manor stated that a tithingman was selected from each tithing by the tenants of the manor. The tithingmen represented the homage at the hundred and county courts, and were to collect any amercements levied by the courts. They were exempt from Peter's pence and hundred pence payments and one of each tithingman's pigs was exempt from payment for pannage.⁴

In 1631 Alexander Brewford, tithingman of Bradford, complained that while 11 men in the tithing served as tithingmen many other able-bodied men refused the office.⁵ At this time the tithingmen were responsible for conveying vagrants and paupers onto the next

¹ Domesday, 234; above, landownership.

² Feudal Aids, IV, 335.

³ Dickinson, Kirby's Quest Som., 145–6.

⁴ Hunt, Bradford Customs, 89. The custumal states that the customs had been in place during the lordship of John de Montague (d. 1228).

⁵ SHC, Q/SR/66/129.

tithing, a role they were still fulfilling in 1679.⁶ In 1646 two tithingmen sought recompense for the £6 10s. 7d. they had spent transporting and caring for wounded soldiers.⁷ The Bradford tithingman took custody of a man arrested for felony in 1654.⁸ Refusal of the office remained a problem and in 1680 it was claimed that it was compulsory for the occupants of particular tenements to fill the role.⁹ It is unclear whether the office was a manorial or parochial appointment by then, though in 1702 the two tithingmen, one of whom was a woman, were responsible for organising the lawday courts. At that time they were also responsible for the maintenance of the county bridges in the parish and paying for hues and cries. That year they also organised the whipping of a Bradford woman.¹⁰ A tithingman is last recorded in 1768.¹¹ Rack made no mention of the tithings in the late 18th century.¹²

MANORIAL ADMINISTRATION

It was stated in the 1353 custumal that there were two manor courts a year, one known as the Hockday court and the other as St. Michael's court. All the lord's male villans were expected to attend from the age of 12, whether or not they were tenants. A hundred penny was paid to lord by each villan on the 25th March, with the exception of those from Heatherton who were to pay 1d. at the manor court on turning 12 but were under no obligation thereafter. New lords convened a special court, attended by the whole homage, which swore allegiance and paid the lord 2s.

⁶ E. H. Bates Harbin (ed.), Quarter Sessions Records for County of Somerset. Vol. II. Charles I. 1625-1639 (Som. Rec. Soc. 24), 156; SHC, Q/SR/139/17.

⁷ Ibid. Quarter Sessions, 1646-60, 9.

⁸ SHC, Q/SR/89/57.

⁹ SHC, Q/SR/144/11.

¹⁰ SHC, D/P/bra.t/23/1.

¹¹ SHC, Q/RJL/43.

¹² McDermott and Berry, Rack's Survey, 269.

Court rolls for the Franceis half-share of the manor survive for 1399-1587, with gaps.¹³ Courts were typically held once or twice a year. In the fifteenth century the courts were usually combined lawday and hockday courts, though these were sometimes held separately. Bradford and Hele presented separately. The court dealt with nuisances, tenants' pleas and such agricultural matters as pannage payments. There is a court book for the Warre half-share of the manor for 1538-41, where Bradford and Hele also presented separately.¹⁴ There is a court roll of combined courts for the Franceis and Warre half-shares for 1587-1618.¹⁵ There are court papers for the Clarke portion of the manor for 1689-1694.¹⁶ There were no copyholds in the Clarke portion by 1685.¹⁷ Leases were for up to three lives.¹⁸

Twice-yearly lawday courts were still being held in 1702, but it is unclear which portion of the manor these concerned.¹⁹ There is no evidence of later courts, but when William Burrige, owner of the Franceis half-share, leased the court house in 1787 he still reserved the right to hold courts there.²⁰

There is a roll for a court held in 1421 for the estate at Ford held by William Dunster and his wife Joan.²¹ A copy of a court roll survives from 1444.²²

A reeve of Bradford was first mentioned in the bishop of Winchester's accounts of Taunton manor for 1207-8 when an entry fine of 10s. was exacted from a reeve named Roger for failure to produce a warrant.²³

The 1353 *customal* states that the reeve was elected by the tenants of the manor. He was paid 6s. a year and four of his pigs were exempt from pannage payment. He was also

¹³ SHC, DD/CN/1/1-DD/CN/1/8; DD/CN/2/3.

¹⁴ SHC, DS/SF/1/1/18.

¹⁵ SHC, DD/CN/1/9.

¹⁶ SHC, DD/SF/1/3/61, jury lists and presentments.

¹⁷ SHC, DD/SF/1/3/57.

¹⁸ SHC, DD/SF/1/3/13.

¹⁹ SHC, SHC, D/P/bra.t/23/1.

²⁰ SHC, DD/DP/20/10, lease to John Norman.

²¹ Magdalen Coll., Oxford, EP 139/3.

²² Magdalen Coll., Oxford, Ford 85.

²³ Hall, *Winchester Pipe Roll*, 66.

exempt from payment of Peter's pence and hundred pence and he did not have to pay a toll when travelling to the mill. He was entitled to eat at the lord's expense, apart from during the summer, and eat in the lord's hall with the other manorial officers when the lord visited. The reeve was invited to all wedding feasts in the manor or received 6*d.* from the wedding couple.²⁴ The reeve was appointed annually in the Clarke portion of the manor in the 1690s. In 1694 his annual salary was 20*s.*²⁵ A bailiff was recorded in 1353.²⁶ Richard Bluett was the steward of the Franceis moiety in 1511-12.²⁷

A pound was mentioned in 1722 and last recorded in 1788.²⁸

PARISH ADMINISTRATION

The office of parish constable was first recorded in 1634-5 when the constable was reimbursed for transporting a prisoner.²⁹ There were two in 1842.³⁰ The role inevitably brought risks; James Wright, a Bradford constable, was assaulted in 1853.³¹ By the 19th century the constables were appointed annually at a vestry meeting. Three men were appointed as constables in March 1846, out of nine nominees.³² The final appointment of constables took place in February 1866 when two men assumed the role.³³

Stocks survive in Bradford churchyard.³⁴ In 1925 it was said that they had last been used c.1850 when a man had come to church drunk and refused to be quiet; the parish constable was asked to lock him in the stocks for the course of the service.³⁵

²⁴ Hunt, Bradford Customs, 89.

²⁵ SHC, DD/SF/1/3/61, presentments.

²⁶ Hunt, Bradford Customs, 89.

²⁷ SHC, DD/CN/2/5.

²⁸ SHC, DD/DP/20/1, lease to Prescott; DD/DP/20/7, lease to Bowring.

²⁹ SHC, DD/SF/16/4/1, churchwardens' acct.

³⁰ SHC, Q/AP/c/1/84.

³¹ SHC, Q/SR/601/68-69

³² SHC, D/P/bra.t 9/1/1, 5 Mar. 1846.

³³ SHC, D/P/bra.t/9/1/2, 22 Feb. 1866.

³⁴ Somerset HER 40894.

Two vestry books survive for the period 1821 to 1921.³⁶ Minutes up to 1829 almost exclusively comprise the meetings of the select vestry for the poor, which administered relief and oversaw the administration of the poor house. The select vestry, comprising eight substantial householders or occupiers within the parish, was appointed annually at a general vestry meeting.³⁷ General vestry meetings usually took place two or three times a year. The Easter vestry appointed the parish clerk, churchwardens, constables, the surveyors of the highways, overseers of the poor, rate collectors and assessors.³⁸ It also appointed three waywardens, representing the settlements of Bradford, Hele and Ford, respectively.³⁹ A doctor for the poor was appointed annually from 1831.⁴⁰ The vestry also concerned itself with flood alleviation, spending £16 on such work in 1870.⁴¹

The Easter vestry nominated a guardian of the poor to serve on the Wellington Board of Guardians.⁴² In 1866 the parish vestry meeting resolved that an assistant overseer be appointed on an annual salary of £12.⁴³ By 1919 the two overseers of the poor were appointed annually by the parish council and the assistant overseer received annual salary of £19.⁴⁴ The assistant overseer's salary had risen to £20 by the time of the post's abolition in 1927.⁴⁵

In 1894 an elected parish council was formed, meeting in the village hall from 1913. Minutes survive from 1919 onwards.⁴⁶ There were six parish councillors in 1901.⁴⁷ The

³⁵ Mathews, 'Bradford', 55-6.

³⁶ SHC, D/P/bra.t/9/1/1- D/P/bra.t/9/1/2.

³⁷ SHC, D/P/bra.t/9/1/1, 28 May 1828.

³⁸ SHC, D/P/bra.t/9/1/1, 27 Mar. 1837, 26 Mar. 1846.

³⁹ SHC, D/P/bra.t/9/1/1, 25 Mar. 1846.

⁴⁰ SHC, D/P/bra.t/9/1/1, 8 Apr. 1833.

⁴¹ SHC, D/P/bra.t/9/1/2, 25 Mar. 1870.

⁴² SHC, D/P/bra.t/9/1/2, 25 Mar. 1863.

⁴³ SHC, D/P/bra.t/9/1/2, 7 Apr. 1866.

⁴⁴ SHC, D/PC/bra.t/1/2/1, 1.

⁴⁵ SHC, D/PC/bra.t/1/2/1, 32.

⁴⁶ SHC, D/PC/bra.t/1/2/1- D/PC/bra.t/1/2/4.

⁴⁷ Wellington Weekly News, 13 Mar. 1901, 5.

number had risen to seven by 2019.⁴⁸ Councillors were elected, but if vacancies arose between elections new members were co-opted.⁴⁹ The council was represented on the management body of Bradford school.⁵⁰

Sewage issues were a key concern for the parish council. By 1896 sewage was being discharged into a ditch below the village, and no practical solution could be found beyond periodically cleaning out the cesspit.⁵¹ The parish council pressurised Wellington Rural District Council to address the nuisance at Gigly's Pit, the village septic tank, in 1931.⁵² The state of the septic tank again gave rise to concern in 1952.⁵³ A new sewage scheme was mooted at the same time, and after several years of discussion, work finally commenced in 1963.⁵⁴

Flooding was another preoccupation. 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.⁵⁵ In 1957 a scheme to raise the road at Tone Green and widen the river at Hillfarrance was mooted.⁵⁶

The parish council sought to secure social housing for the village. In 1925 the council wrote to Wellington RDC stating that council houses were badly needed.⁵⁷ In 1926 four local authority houses were built, at Tone Green,⁵⁸ and four more in 1930.⁵⁹ A further quartet of council houses were completed in Regent Street in 1952.⁶⁰ Between 1980 and 1984 the parish

⁴⁸ Somerset West and Taunton Council, democracy.somersetwestandtaunton.gov.uk/mgElectionAreaResults.aspx?XXR=0&ID=193&RPID=0 (accessed 9 Jun. 2019).

⁴⁹ SHC, D/PC/bra.t/1/2/1, 1, 12, 49, 61-2.

⁵⁰ SHC, D/PC/bra.t/1/2/1, 2, 50.

⁵¹ SHC, D/R/wel/2/2/1, 311, 325.

⁵² SHC, D/PC/bra.t/1/2/1, 43; D/R/wel/2/2/9, 133.

⁵³ SHC, D/PC/bra.t/1/2/1, 76.

⁵⁴ SHC, D/PC/bra.t/1/2/1, 88, 114, 144, 159, 161.

⁵⁵ SHC, D/PC/bra.t/1/2/1, 23-4.

⁵⁶ SHC, D/PC/bra.t/1/2/1, 78.

⁵⁷ SHC, D/PC/bra.t/1/2/1, 24, 27, 32.

⁵⁸ SHC, D/R/wel/2/2/9, 489, 599.

⁵⁹ SHC, D/R/wel/2/2/10, 137.

⁶⁰ SHC, D/R/wel/3/1/5, housing cttee report, 1 Oct. 1952, 45; SHC, D/PC/bra.t/1/2/1, 70.

council explored the possibilities for erecting local authority or housing association bungalows for the elderly, but no scheme materialised.⁶¹

Local services

A police station had been opened by 1897.⁶² A new police station was built at Heartherton in 1948.⁶³ It was extended in 1958.⁶⁴ A new constable arrived in the village in 1976,⁶⁵ but the station closed in 1980.⁶⁶ By 2009 the parish was served by a police community support officer.⁶⁷

By 1947 electricity was supplied by the Wellington and District Electric Co.⁶⁸ Proposals to install street lighting in the village were rejected by the parish council in 1952 and in 1959.⁶⁹ The parish council raised the matter again in 1981 but nothing materialised from the discussions.⁷⁰

In 1884 the sanitary inspector for Wellington Rural Sanitary Authority found that the sewer in the road by Gardeners Hall was choked.⁷¹ The provision of clean water became a serious concern. In 1887 a well near Bradford churchyard was closed by the medical officer of health.⁷² The water from two wells, one at Bradford Court and another at the school, was found to be unsuitable for drinking in 1894.⁷³ That year Wellington Rural District initiated a scheme to supply Bradford with water from a spring on Higher Ruggin at West Buckland, at

⁶¹ SHC, D/PC/bra.t/1/2/2, 128, 131, 172, 207.

⁶² Kelly's Dir. Som. (1897), 131-2.

⁶³ SHC, D/R/wel/24/2/104; SHC, C/CA/18/8/1; C/CA/18/8/3.

⁶⁴ SHC, C/CA/18/8/2.

⁶⁵ SHC, A/DBL/22/3, Feb. 1977, 11-12.

⁶⁶ SHC, D/PC/bra.t 1/2/2, 134.

⁶⁷ Bradford-on-Tone Parish Council minutes, bradfordontone.co.uk/minutes/20thMay2009.doc (accessed 9 May 2019).

⁶⁸ SHC, A/AGH/1/39.

⁶⁹ SHC, D/PC/bra.t/1/2/1, 76, 132-3.

⁷⁰ SHC, D/PC/bra.t/1/2/2, 153.

⁷¹ SHC, D/R/wel/2/1/3, 56.

⁷² SHC, D/R/wel/2/1/3, 290.

⁷³ SHC, D/R/wel/2/1/5, 3, 22, 54-5.

a cost of £400.⁷⁴ A new water scheme was undertaken between 1936 and 1938 at a cost of £6086.⁷⁵ By 1947 most houses had piped water and mains drainage.⁷⁶

Monthly refuse collections commenced in 1935,⁷⁷ but these had become quarterly by 1938.⁷⁸

VCH DRAFT

⁷⁴ SHC, D/R/wel/2/1/5, 13, 20, 88.

⁷⁵ SHC, D/R/wel/2/2/11, 17, 87, 236.

⁷⁶ SHC, A/AGH/1/39.

⁷⁷ SHC, D/PC/Bra.t/1/2/1, 53.

⁷⁸ SHC, D/R/wel/2/2/11, 269.