

## Chapter 5

# Village services



An outing by coach and horses outside the Bradworthy Inn at the turn of the century.

Bradworthy has built up an admirable range of services throughout this century.

Some of these, such as electricity, were initially developed by enterprising local businessmen. Sadly, in the interests of efficiency, some of these services have either disappeared or are under threat.

#### **Bradworthy or Milton Damerel? - Further claims in Key Settlement controversy**

In a letter to the Editor, Mr. D.W. Slee, Clerk to Bradworthy Parish Council, writes from Higher Terrace, Bradworthy to say:

Dear Sir, - With reference to the report published in your issue of 26<sup>th</sup> June on the subject of Milton Damerel or Bradworthy as a key settlement, I am instructed by my council to answer Milton's case against Bradworthy with some unassailable facts, if you could kindly permit us space.

We all agree that Milton Damerel is partly on a main road, but once off that road, all you have are narrow by-roads.

As for Bradworthy being remote, we are quite close to the coast and seaside resorts, and have reasonably good roads to Bideford and Holsworthy. Social activity has been, and still is, great at Bradworthy.

The parish council is very active, Church and Chapels continue to flourish, our local football club had a very successful season winning four cups, the primary school is to have another classroom built, and

a youth centre is in the offing. The BBC have paid us visits with sound and television. We have no wish to belittle Milton, but we feel that our friends at the enquiry were trying to put us in a back seat, as if we were of no account and Bradworthy was a dead community, which is far from the case.

For a key settlement, Bradworthy already has the basic qualifications, i.e. resident doctor and surgery; good social activity; mains water; mains electricity; and mains drainage.

May I give more qualifications for our claim to be made a key settlement, besides the ones listed above; new sewerage scheme and disposal plant; public conveniences; street lighting; three well equipped garages; two hauliers; children's swimming pool; resident veterinary surgeon; hotel and licensed house; cafe; two modern furnishing stores; bus shelter; draper's shop; three grocers shops with patent medicines; post office; men's and women's hairdressers; billiard room; two plumbing and engineering firms; iron monger and general merchandise; family butcher; agricultural merchant; auctioneers and valuation agent;

At one time Bradworthy had a visiting dentist once a week (Mr. Whateley, Mr. Deubler, and Mr. Satchwell).

On auction days three banks would set up shop in the village (Barclays, National Provincial in Wade's Hotel, and Lloyds in Balsdon's Store).

monthly cattle and sheep and pig market; three milk vendors; young farmers' club; two builders.

Social activities include: Playing field with children's corner; Memorial institute, with billiards, snooker, table tennis and skittles; Youth club; tennis club; Football club (two teams); bingo weekly; Women's Institute, who are very active and presented the village with a bus shelter and have been running a meals on wheels service.

We have a modern hall, where dances and receptions are held very frequently, and the Church Hall where smaller functions are held. Bradworthy is also the possessor of a very fine square, practically the largest in Devon, where people can park their vehicles in comfort, without lights up to midnight.

Surely the businesses and amenities I have listed weigh very heavily against Milton's claims. As for being remote, nowadays nowhere is remote, only as much as you make it, and my Council feel that Bradworthy has, and will, live up to its name as the most progressive village in the West and will be made a key settlement.

Denis W. Slee (July 1965)

## **Postal Services and the Post Office**

The Post Office has been on the same premises for well over a century, probably for about 140 years.

A branch of the Westaway family (including the Brays) were associated with the Post Office for four generations. Roger Allin, however, was sub-postmaster in the early years, and William Westaway was post messenger. John Bray was sub-postmaster until 1933, when he was succeeded by his son Thomas Westaway Bray. In 1946 the Post Office was bought by Sam Bond who subsequently handed it over to his son Derek Bond.

In 1993 it was bought in partnership by the Lindsay and Meyler families.

The first mail is said to have been brought here from Holsworthy by horse and cart, and a bugle was sounded to warn people of its arrival. House deliveries started after 1885.



In the 1910's the white hut on the left, which was situated opposite the Chapel, was where the postman ate his lunch before returning to Holsworthy. Notice the old oil lamp holder in the foreground.

### Postal Progress - Donkey and Gig Days

The evening postal delivery at Bradworthy commenced last week. This will be another welcome facility, especially for the business people around the village. It is wonderful what an advance has been made in this direction during the past half-century or so. The oldest people here remember the days when an old gentleman with a donkey and gig used to fetch the letters from Holsworthy. Then there was a pony and trap for some time,

going to Holsworthy in the morning and returning at night, whilst the next move was the sending out from Holsworthy in the morning, and returning the same evening. There was no delivery in those days at all and people went to the office for their letters. Some of the big houses in the neighbourhood would employ a boy to bring their letters to them after school. During the last thirty or forty years there have been great changes, and today Bradworthy is very efficiently served by the Post Office Department. (January 1936)

After 16<sup>th</sup> July 1971 this was reduced to one local postman, who handled the village delivery, with the mail for rural Bradworthy being delivered from Holsworthy. The last delivery was made by George Elliott on 16<sup>th</sup> May 1981, after which the village delivery was handled from Holsworthy.

### Telephones

The telegraph came to Bradworthy in 1895. The first telephone came to the village in 1929, when a manual exchange was opened in the Lower Village. This was operated by Mr. and Mrs. John Jewell, assisted by Miss Joyce Ham and Miss Pauline Slee. At the start there were about 20 phones in the parish - Number 1 was the Post Office. In early 1938

Regular house deliveries appear to have started about 1895, and telegraph facilities in the same year.

In the early years of the century mail was delivered, on foot, only to the 'prominent' people of the village. By 1950 Bradworthy had six local postmen

Mrs. Annie Bryant was Bradworthy's only postwoman. For 27 years, in fair weather and foul, she delivered His Majesty's mails around the farms and cottages of the east and south-east parts of the parish, and during that time she walked over 45,000 miles. It was not until she had passed 70 years of age (in 1926) that she relinquished her postal duties, and she was then almost certainly the oldest delivery postwoman in England. (April 1939 - written on her 83<sup>rd</sup> birthday)

(Mr. W. Slade, Mr. J. Prance, Mr. E. Bryant, Mr. G. Elliot, Mr. F. Slee, and Mr. H. Harris) who delivered mail to the village and the surrounding rural area.



Royal Mail delivery in about 1920. The postman is believed to be Titus Wickett.



In February 1965 the Rev. Lingham-Lees and Derrick Bond (Postmaster) locked the postmen of Bradworthy (Harry Trewin, Fred Slee, George Elliot, Henry Harris, Roy Birch) in the stocks.

it was reported that 'the work of laying the telephone wires underground is now proceeding in the village'.

The phone kiosk was erected on the Square in 1946. Before that people had to go into the Post Office, where a small 'telephone box' was erected. The manual exchange was closed in 1949 when a

new automatic exchange was built on the Mill Road. Bradworthy exchange now covers the parish and parts of the adjoining parishes of Sutcombe, Putford, and Woolfardisworthy. In 1968 the Post Office Authority installed a kiosk at Tuckers Park, but this was later removed as it wasn't sufficiently used.

## Electricity

Electricity was first brought to the village in 1928 by the late Mr. Herbert J. Wickett. This was a purely private enterprise, which was eventually taken over by the West Devon Electrical Supply Company, Ltd.

The South Western Electricity Board came with Nationalisation in 1949 and proceeded, under their Rural Development Scheme, to bring electricity to the outlying farms and cottages of the parish.

### Public Lighting at Bradworthy - Board and Council Agree On Scheme

The South Western Electricity Board submitted terms for an agreement to the Parish Council which would entail Council ownership of existing fittings, with general maintenance charged on a time and materials basis.

The Council applied for an alternative scheme, excluding purchase and ownership of fittings, with maintenance to continue as before. This was accepted by the Board only on a yearly basis. (October 1954)

## Village lighting

At the turn of the century the village was lit by oil lamps. Mr. A. Ward (and later Mr. J. Ham) were the lamplighters, and they used to carry a ladder with them in order to reach the lamps.

(At the Parish Council meeting) the public lighting of the village was also dealt with, and it was unanimously agreed to accept the terms of the lighting company which has recently taken over the district, and also to install lamps to the number of nine as before. A proposition was also passed that members of the Council should make an appointment with an official of the company, for the purpose of selecting the best and most advantageous positions for the lamps. (June 1939)

A special meeting of the Parish Council was held on 12 October 1911, when it was agreed to try a voluntary scheme to raise money for lighting the oil lamps.

On 25 March 1927 Mr. H.J. Wickett was granted permission to fix posts in the Square for lighting it by

electricity, which he produced in his garage. He continued to light the village until 1938, when the West Down Electric Co. took it over.

The installation of lighting in the village and surrounds was not completed by the West Down Electric Co. until after the 1939-45 War (during which period the village remained unlit). They were lit for the first time in October 1946.

## Water, drainage and sewerage

There were several public wells in Bradworthy.

Prior to 1895 St. Peter's Well was open with clay sides, then it was dug to a depth of six feet, walled and fitted with a galvanised door. Water was drawn by hand until 1909 when a pump was fitted.

In 1897 the pump-house was built and the well cleaned out to commemorate Queen Victoria's Diamond Jubilee. The gate was fitted in 1901.

Developments in the water supply scheme for the village were reviewed. Work in connection with the Water Supply Scheme is progressing in the Waldon valley, and the contract is to entail the provision of a reservoir of 72,000 gallon capacity, sited on the western side of Bradworthy Commons. (July 1946)

Witheridge's Well was a very old well that was dug deeper in 1905. People had to descend three

The sinking of the well at the south end of the Square is now in progress. The inadequate supply of drinking water in the village has long been the subject of much controversy. Although there are three public wells here, a shortage often occurs in the summer time, and this new undertaking by the Parish Council should be a great boon to the villagers. (June 1937)

At a Parish Council meeting the work of sinking the new well at the south end of the Square, was again referred to. The men carrying out the work have now reached a depth of thirty feet but there is apparently very little water coming up to the present. It is believed, however, that sufficient water will be found, if the well is carried still deeper. (September 1937)

steps and dipped up water. A door covered the well. A pump was fitted in 1935.

North Devon Water Board took over responsibility for the supply of water in 1950.

Bradworthy was connected to the national grid network in 1959. Prior to this water was either pumped from wells or supplied from a 72,000 gallon tank on the western side of the moor which was erected in 1946.

In 1970 the North Devon Water Board planned to close down the two water pumps on

the Square because of the poor quality of the water. The Parish Council objected, claiming that three or four old age pensioners still relied on the pumps for drinking water. The Water Board agreed to hand over the pumps to the Council for a nominal fee of 1s.

In 1970 Bradworthy's sewage treatment works was brought up to the standard of effluent discharge for 570 people, as laid down by the Royal Commission. Later new and larger tanks and filters were added. In 1974 it was estimated that 40% of the properties

in the parish were connected to the public sewerage system. In 1989 a storm tank was installed.

## Village policemen

The original Police House stood in North Road and was owned by Mr. Abraham Tribble. This was replaced in 1936 by the large house on the corner at Littleford Cross.

Bradworthy had its own local constable until 1970 when the responsibility for law enforcement was transferred to Holsworthy.

## No Nudist Colony at Bradworthy

From what I know, from many enquiries, neither in Bradworthy nor in any of the adjoining parishes is there (nor has there ever been) a nudist camp, and I want to get that fact 'home' to readers who may have seen a statement in which Police Inspector Cobbledick is reported to have said that he believed there was a nudist colony at Bradworthy. The statement was made, according to the report, at Stratton police court when a summons against a Bude newsagent was dismissed. The question was

asked: 'Do you know of the existence of a nudist camp near Bude?' To this Inspector Cobbledick replied: 'I have been told there is one on the Devon side, I believe at Bradworthy, but I am not sure'. Bradworthians were rather indignant when they read this report. They are aware that nudism is a recognised movement in this country. At the same time they hold that such a statement as the above made in such circumstances as it was, may create a distorted impression with regard to a rural village. (May 1938)

Bradworthy's local constables were PC Patt, PC Chapple, PC Fater, PC Norman, PC Hannaford, PC French, PC Mugridge (1929-1936), PC Horwood (1936-1939), PC Hardwell (1939-1941), PC Lambell (1941-1949), PC Brooks (1949-53), PC Gooding, PC Holland (1956-58), PC Chudleigh and finally PC Isles.

## Doctors and the surgery

The first Bradworthy doctor was Eusebius Rouse and he was succeeded by his nephew Ezekial Rouse. Dr. Edmund Emtage followed at Cleverdon House and on his premature death in 1908 Dr. Leonard Bowring Betts came.



Dr. Emtage in 1906.

He was followed by his son, Dr. Norman Betts, and now a third generation, Dr. John Bowring Betts, is in the practice. For over a century the surgery was at Cleverdon House. The Betts family acquired the former Walters shop in the village, and this was opened as the new surgery in 1983.

Dr. John Betts eventually took on a partner, Dr. David Waind, who on moving to another practice in 1992 has been succeeded by Dr. Kandasamy.

## Nursing Association

Bradworthy and District Nursing Association existed from the early years of the century until the introduction of the so called Welfare State. Garden parties and various events were organised in



Dr. L.B. Betts in the 1930's.

In November 1954 Nurse C. Russell, district nurse at Bradworthy, broadcast in 'Women's Hour'. Her talk was described in the Radio Times as 'a country midwife says her say'.



Dr. Norman Betts in 1988.



Dr. John Betts in 1993.

aid of the funds, and the finances appeared to be frequently low. In 1945 Nurse Courtnell's report showed she had paid 1,924 visits during the year. Until 1956 the District Nurses continued to be based at Bradworthy after which they still visited from Holsworthy and Woolfardisworthy for a time.

The District Nurses of Bradworthy were nurses Grock, Betts, Perkins, Bashford, Walker, Courtnell, Pitwood (unknown-Feb 1953) and Russell (Feb 1953-Sept 1956).

## Rail links

The railway came to Holsworthy in 1879, but it was not until 1898 that it was extended to Bude. About that time there was great

enthusiasm for railways and in about 1902 preliminary plans were made to lay down tracks from Bideford, skirting Clovelly and Hartland before turning south - serving Bradworthy with a station somewhere near Berridon Road - continuing until it linked up with the Holsworthy-Bude line. A company was even formed, but the railway never materialised.

The Parish Council agreed that a protest be submitted from the Council in respect of the proposed closure of the railway passenger services from Okehampton to Bude. (June 1964)

## Road links and developments

In the early decades of the century there were only mud roads which were on the whole in a poor condition.

Wades were the village carriers succeeding Cann, Robins, Hugh Oke, Bill Hayman and perhaps others of the previous century. Willie Found started a

Mr. Wade has been running his service for several years now and charges 10/- to Holsworthy and 20/- to Bideford. He has a six seater Austin 16 car which he uses for his hire work. Mr. Bromell uses a Rolls Royce shooting brake which will take 10 passengers and Mr. Wickett uses a Rover 16 and a Standard shooting brake, both 6 seaters. Mr. Wade travels to Holsworthy Station nearly every day to meet the trains and take people to and fro. (Ray Ham, aged 14 in 1950)

motor bus service in the early years of the century linking Holsworthy, Sutcombe and Bradworthy. The bus was named 'Devonia'.

Unfortunately on the 16<sup>th</sup> August 1908 the vehicle overturned on Sutcombe Mill hill and a police sergeant was killed.

John 'Cycle' Jennings is said to have brought the first car here in 1908. Horse drawn vehicles continued for several years more, the conveyances, brakes and wagonettes



In the early 1900's Albert Wade, pictured with his wife and son Edmund, ran his carrier brake to Bideford.

becoming more sophisticated. Edmund Jennings appears to have been in the carrier trade for a time, but a note in an old newspaper states that his son-in-law, Alfred Elliott, bought off (again in 1908) Albert Wade's horses and carriages and 'he intends the carrier's van to ply to and fro as heretofore'. It was Alfred Elliott who made the changes from horses to motor transport. Later the carriers were Charles Wade (Albert's brother) and Arthur Oke. They ran their



A pony & trap pictured outside Cleverdon House at the turn of the century.

### Bradworthy Bus Will Be Earlier - Council Informed

At the Parish Council meeting a letter was read from the Southern National Omnibus Company, stating that they were changing the time of their service to Bideford on Saturdays. The bus would in future be leaving the village in the morning, instead of the afternoon. This was not generally considered to be an improvement. (April 1958)

### Bradworthy farmer fined after crossroads crash - Blagdon Moor Incident

A road accident at Blagdon Moor Crossroads, involving a Bradworthy farmer's car and a one-ton pick-up truck was described at Holsworthy Court on Friday. The defendant held an unblemished record of 30 years' motoring. The defendant's solicitor suggested that the truck driver was one of those drivers who, because he was on a major road, thought he need not give way. That he said was a state of mind that led to many accidents. (April 1965)

charabancs regularly over the Holsworthy and Bideford routes and were also available for outings and tours. The National Bus Company eventually bought them out.

In 1950 there were three taxi services at Bradworthy.

In the last half of the century there has been much improvement in the rural roads network, but they are still of a low grade. Holsworthy, via Bradworthy, to Bideford is a grade 3 road. What is known as a connector road runs from Kesmeldon to Meddon through the north of this parish, and a parish link road runs from the Atworthy area to the village. For a number of years the only regular public transport has been a bus to Bideford on Tuesdays, and to Holsworthy on Wednesdays. In 1994, with the aid of European Union funding, Jennings and Hookways run a bus to Bideford 5 days a week (6 in the summer).

#### **Tandem Riders' Narrow Escape from Death at Bradworthy**

Two London cyclists riding on a tandem down Bradworthy Mill Hill had a narrow escape from serious injury when they were involved in a collision with a car.

The cyclists were Charles Sidney Moggridge, who was riding in front, and William George Nash. The force of the impact hurled Moggridge through the windscreen; Nash was somersaulted over the

top of the car and landed in the road.

Dr. N. Betts and P.C. Horwood were quickly on the scene, and the cyclists were conveyed to Bideford and District Hospital, where Moggridge was detained with a knee injury. After treatment for superficial cuts and bruises Nash was allowed to leave.

Damage to the car was confined to the radiator and windscreen, but the tandem was wrecked. (April 1939)

The fine weather we have been enjoying has brought several visitors to the village during the past week. One of them was eloquent in the praise of our spacious square and the 'fine, clean-looking houses' which surround it. What he did not praise however, was the roads that lead to Bradworthy. He had come from Hartland, and the road he had traversed after he left the main road had been bad enough to break the springs of his car, he said. One was pleased to hear the visitor's compliment to our village, but displeased, though sympathetic, with

his complaint regarding the roads. Nearly all the roads by which one enters Bradworthy are in an unsatisfactory state of repair. And it is strange that one of the worst is our main road to the sea at Bude. From Trentworthy Cross down to the Cornish border, this road is in a deplorable condition. We heard a good deal at one time about a suggestion that this road should be renovated and tarred, as it was a good 'short cut' through from the Cornish coast, to Bideford, via Bradworthy. We all hoped this excellent proposition would materialise. It has not done so yet. (June 1937)

#### **Travelling library**

In 1962 the 'travelling library', or 'mobile library service', introduced a free borrowing service to the village. A new library van, the second to be bought by Devon County Council, was based in Holsworthy and visited on Thursday mornings once a fortnight. The

van was staffed by two people, a librarian and a driver.

Raymond Kerslake was appointed driver. Roy Hutton branch librarian of Holsworthy, with Grace Acland as his relief, looked after the books.

As news of the service spread, requests were received from around the parish for stops at outlying farms and cottages. With the service well

Arch Dayman, watching at Little Ford, saw the first car coming towards Bradworthy from the direction of Holsworthy. He dashed back into the village and exclaimed "It ain't an 'orse, an' it ain't a cart. It's goin' like 'ell, an' it's smokin'."

established came a change of faces – Jean Sinclair, assisted by Joan Brock, replacing Roy Hutton.

Joan can remember calling at Ruby Pomeroy's at Dinworthy, then making their way along the lanes to East Youlstone, back to Mrs. Petherick's at Jenn's Cross, and then down into Kimworthy.

Another favourite 'round' was around Tamar Lake calling at Mrs. Harris' cottage - where a welcome cup of tea was provided for library staff and readers alike – before moving on to Thurdon Cross and Alfordisworthy. In the late 1960's 'our George' (George Charlton) took over the driving responsibilities.

Budget cutbacks in the 1980's saw the introduction of single manning, and with George's retirement in 1989, Jennifer Sillifant became the mobile library assistant, doing both the driving and the library work. The service has expanded to offer spoken word and music cassettes, videos and CDs for hire and large print books.

#### **Refuse collection**

Collection of refuse around the village (by lorry) started in July 1945 on a weekly basis. Prior to this rubbish was dumped at a disused quarry on Bradworthy Moor.

## Communications

Bradworthy is situated where four roads meet. There are eight bridges quite near the village.

We haven't a railway station at Bradworthy so we hire a taxi, from Mr. Wade, Mr. Wickett that owns the garage in the higher village, and Mr. Bromell who owns the garage in the lower village. Mr. Bromell's taxi is big and is used mostly to take bellringers and groups like that about.

We have a bus service twice a week to Bideford, on Tuesdays and Saturdays. It leaves Bradworthy 9.17am. and gets back again 5.18pm. On Wednesdays there are two buses to Holsworthy besides the school bus that takes the children to school every day. The first bus for Holsworthy leaves the Square 11.06am. and returns to Bradworthy 5.58pm in the evening.

Once a month a Jennings bus runs from Morwenstow to Exeter and Plymouth. There's a bus that runs from Bradworthy to Bude to the pictures every Saturday night.

Gwenyth Cheese, who was a young 13 year old school girl when she wrote this in 1949.



Devonia near the Bradworthy Inn in 1906.

