

Another approach to Rev Thomas Bramall

As stated above, Thomas Bramall married Eliza Cooke in 1859. Her brother George, ten years her senior, had married Harriet Wallworth three years earlier and they had started a family, the first four being Emma (b. 1856), Fanny (b. 1857), Randle (b. 1858/9) and Betsy (b. 1860). By the time of the 1861 Census, George, Harriet, Emma and Betsy were living as 'visitors' near Congleton; Randle was not living with them (I have not been able to find where he was) and Fanny was living with her aunt and uncle Thomas and Eliza Bramall in Ellesmere, Shropshire. We learn from Fanny's obituary (see [Fanny Dudley](#) née Cooke) that she lived with the Bramalls (who had no children) from the age of six until she married, but this census evidence shows she was living with them at the age of 3½. We don't know why the two children were living away from the family – were there financial or medical problems?

In 1867, George and Harriet moved into Irby Hill Farm, Irby, Wirral with four or five children. Two years later they took over or rekindled the Irby PM society and held services in their kitchen. As their society grew, they decided to build a chapel which opened in 1881 (see [Irby Hill Chapel](#)).

Rev Bramall (with his wife and Fanny) was stationed in Shrewsbury (1873-76), Ramsor North Staffs (1876-79) and Stafford (1879-82) so it is not obvious how Fanny might have met her future husband [Rev John Dudley](#); over the same period, he was stationed in Sunderland (?-1876), Oldham (1876-78) and Liverpool (1878-80). John and Fanny were married in July 1880 in Stafford (perhaps by Rev Bramall) and they then moved to John's new station in Birkenhead 1880-1882; Irby was in his circuit so they would have been able to see Fanny's parents quite often and would have taken part in the opening of the new chapel.

After the Stafford station, the Bramalls moved to Market Drayton (1882-84) and then to Chester II (1884-87) where they would have been near Fanny and John, who were then stationed in Chester I (1882-86). On 9 August 1884 the *Cheshire Observer* reported on the anniversary services at Irby Hill PM chapel: Rev Bramall was invited (by Harriet, the Society Steward, or at Fanny's suggestion?) to play a leading part:

'IRBY PRIMITIVE METHODIST CHAPEL. – The anniversary of the above place was held on August 3rd and 4th. On the Sunday the **Rev T. Bramall**, of Chester, preached morning and evening with his usual ability. The sermons were very thoughtful and impressive, and the congregations good. The day following a public tea meeting was held, when about 200 persons partook of an excellent tea [note that the population of Irby was fewer than 200 at that time!]. This was followed by a platform meeting, which was of a very interesting character. Mr W. Porter presided, and Messrs Webb, Pugh, Revs W.H. Brownson and **T. Bramall** delivered stirring addresses. A good collection was then taken. On the Sabbath Miss Maddock presided at the harmonium, and the choir rendered very creditable service.'

After 1886 the Bramall and Dudley paths diverged.

Christopher Wells

January 2021