

## The Bainbridges of Stokesley

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THE settling of Mr. and Mrs. Isaac Bainbridge at Westwood Farm, Ingleby Greenhow, was an event carrying with it a significance far beyond what they themselves or anyone else could have dreamt. They went there to farm, and not a doubt is to be raised respecting the attention paid to the work on the farm. They were both diligent and thorough-going, and well deserved the prosperity that attended their labours. From that point of view one can confidently say that the move was providential. But how superficial such a survey of these saintly lives actually is, is at once seen in the light of subsequent events. Farming was a means to an end. They were here to serve their day and generation, The ultimate interpretation of their life and work at Greenhow is spiritual. They went there to sow the seed of righteousness and rear saints.



THE BAINBRIDGE FAMILY.

Ingleby Greenhow is composed of scattered farms lying among the Cleveland hills about ten miles south of Middlesbrough. Prior to the Bainbridges' going no church had ever been thought of. It has not yet been thought advisable to erect a church in such a sparsely populated and scattered district; yet one of the finest societies in Primitive Methodism has flourished there for over fifty years. Apparently there was not the slightest opportunity for useful work in such a district. Mr. and Mrs. Bainbridge, however, under the guidance of God, made one, They saw in their commodious kitchen.

a place of worship already to hand. It was opened for Divine worship. Ingleby Greenhow was placed on the plan and regular services were held. The vitality of the young church was soon made evident. Many conversions were witnessed and seasons of refreshing experienced, At one Quarterly meeting the society recommended five young men for the plan, two of whom were the sons of Mr. Bainbridge. Throughout these years the society has never fluctuated. What delightful services have been held in that kitchen! Week-night as well as Sunday you are assured of a fine gathering and a helpful service. The class-meeting which follows the afternoon service is a real means of grace. Under ordinary circumstances nobody will leave at the close of the first service; all stay to the class, and all are ready with their testimony to the saving and keeping power of divine grace. The Sunday school is a thorough training institution. The missionary meeting is always a success. The harvest festival is the gathering' of the year; crowded into the Kitchen and passage, you can have between sixty and seventy souls. The history of Greenhow, Society may very well stand as an inspiration and a rebuke. It is a splendid inspiration to those who are apt to think they labour in hopeless conditions. It is certainly a rebuke to those whose eyes are open only to what they consider great centres of useful work.

The contribution of the Bainbridges to the Primitive Methodist Church will sufficiently indicate the worth of the society, and also reveal the temper and outlook of the saints who were at the start of it. To Mr. and Mrs. Bainbridge there were born eleven sons and daughters, all of whom became members of our Church.

Mr. T. Burton Bainbridge, the eldest son, is a well-known figure in farming circles throughout South Durham and Qleveland. He has held the post of chairman of the Chamber of Commerce in Stockton, But he is equally well known as a Free Methodist. At the age of twenty-five he moved to Billingham. He was then, and had been for six years, a local preacher on our plan. Billingham being without a Primitive Methodist cause Mr. Burton entered into fellowship with the Free Methodists. Into that church he has put long years of loyal and devoted service. He is the oldest local preacher in the circuit. He is a man of splendid character and in judgment thoroughly reliable.

To Mr. and Mrs. Burton Bainbridge were born six sons and daughters, some of whom, after leaving Billingham, have become members of our Church.

Mr. James Bainbridge resides at Stokesley. No man who knows him will hesitate to speak of his worth. He became a local preacher when eighteen years of age, and has an unbroken connection with our Church. His name stands second on the Stokesley plan. There is no finer layman in our Church. His success as a farmer is to the credit of his splendid business capacity. Farmers have a reputation for whining and selfishness. Neither of these weaknesses could you ever dream of associating with Mr. James. He could lose a farm without turning a hair. He would very soon forget that he had ever owned a farm. His disappointments and losses leave him undisturbed. Complaint is foreign to his nature. I know no man less selfish. Ask him for a contribution for any worthy cause and he will not disappoint you. Many are the people whom he has filled with gratitude and laid under great obligation. He has given most liberally of his talents, time and substance to our Church, and has held deservedly and worthily the highest official positions in society, circuit and district. Mrs. Bainbridge was a woman of kindly and generous disposition, and readily supported her husband in all worthy enterprises. The family consisted of nine sons and daughters. Eight are living, and, like their parents, are of the finest temper. To-day they are scattered about the circuit and district with the love of our Church deep-rooted in their hearts. Mr. Herbert is a local preacher in the Stockton Circuit.

Some twelve years ago Mr. James married for his second wife Miss Wilson, of Faceby. Miss Wilson had done some useful work for our Church as an evangelist. She is to-day a zealous Sunday school worker and local preacher. They have three promising children—two girls and a boy—in our Sunday School.

Mrs. Watson, the widow of the late Rev. Featherstone Watson, is the eldest daughter of Mr. and Mrs. Isaac Bainbridge. The personality and ministry of Mr. Watson in the North of England will not readily be forgotten. This was truly a strenuous and faithful ministry. It began and finished in the Stokesley Circuit. It was finished by a scheme of which any minister might have been justly proud. Stokesley Church and Manse constitute a very fine memorial to his memory. They gave a very different colouring to our cause in that town. The responsibility and work were rather too much for a man of Mr. Watson's years. The family had only lived in the new manse some few months when he passed away. Mrs. Watson has equally endeared herself to the hearts of our people. Their memory is fragrant wherever they have travelled. Mrs. Watson is indeed a fine type of woman: quiet, graceful, wise and motherly. To know her is to understand the secret of the wealth of affection possessed by her. In that sublime sense she is one of the wealthiest ladies in our Church.

There are three sons and one daughter, all of whom are a credit to their worthy parentage. Mr. T.W. Watson is an accountant in Darlington. Mr. Fred was, until quite recently, professor of mathematics in Leeds University; Mr. Walter is a civil engineer, and Miss Watson is in the teaching profession. Mrs. William Armstrong, of Stokesley, is the second daughter. Her face is the index of her soul: quiet, peaceful and saintly. Along with her husband she has long and loyally supported our Church in Stokesley. The Armstrongs are a generous and large-hearted family. Hundreds of preachers, ministerial and lay, have partaken of their kindly hospitality. They have four sons and three daughters. Joseph has been society steward for a number of years, Harry and the father have in turn been choirmasters, and Miss Ruth is organist.

The late Mrs. Coward, of Brompton, was another daughter. She, too, was a woman of conviction and loyalty. Although living at a distance which made it practically impossible for her to attend our Church, her membership was retained to us until her untimely departure. Their family is one son and two daughters.

Mrs. Henry Bainbridge, the fourth daughter, was fortunate enough to secure a husband of the same name, and who carried the name most worthily. Mr. Bainbridge is a man with whom you can trust your soul. To know him is to love and honour him.

When Mr. Isaac Bainbridge retired, "Westwood" passed into the hands of Mr. and Mrs. Henry. The selection from our point of view could not be improved. Mr. Henry is a local preacher and class leader of long standing. Mrs. Henry is intensely religious in a sane and practical way. Her roots are sunk in a healthy, moral soil. The work of her parents she must continue. The kitchen was re-dedicated; and it is the great joy of Mr. and Mrs. Henry to be honoured and entrusted with the carrying on of the splendid work begun so many years ago by their honoured parents. Mr. and Mrs. Henry have eight sons and daughters, all loyal Primitives. James, Henry and Manesty, along with their honoured father, are local preachers in the Stokesley Circuit.

Mrs. Crosby, of Harrogate, married into a family of Wesleyan tradition, and a wisely decided to associate herself with her husband in attending the Wesleyan Church, My acquaintance with Mrs.

Crosby is very slight, but anyone who new her parents and the atmosphere of “Westwood” is guaranteed in describing her as a very worthy soul. She has the bearing and ways of a genuine Bainbridge; and has perhaps done more than any other member of the family to prepare the way for a United Free Church of England. Mr. Crosby, whom I know better, was always a delightful man to meet, and must be convinced by this time that Primitive Methodism is the salt of the earth. Mr. and Mrs. Crosby have one son and two daughters of the finest Methodist spirit.

Mr. Crosby Bainbridge has all the characteristics one associates with the name of Bainbridge: shrewd, far-seeing, faithful and generous. He is a farmer and Primitive Methodist. His church is as faithfully attended to as is his farm. A few years ago he moved to Ingleton, in the Shildon Circuit, and found the society in need of a new church. That new church was soon an accomplished fact; and its erection is largely due to the credit of his labours and generosity. They have two sons and two daughters associated with our Church.

Mrs. Wilson, another daughter, is a lady of sweet disposition. Winsomeness is the thought that flashes through the mind by a glance at her face. Unfortunately her life for this last twelve years has been full of sorrow and suffering. The death of her husband was a great blow. To-day she is speechless and practically helpless. But prior to her great affliction she was an active worker at Greenhow. Free from smallness, with an eye on the peace and prosperity of the Church, she cheerfully performed any task allotted to her. Our prayers are for her restoration.

Mr. Joseph Bainbridge, the youngest son, passed away some years ago. Never very strong, his weakness developed with his years until he was finally laid to rest. There was, however, nothing weak about his religion. In the ways open to him he was a ready and willing supporter of our Church, remembering all its institutions in his contributions to our work.

Mrs. Barthram, the youngest daughter, is a fine type of woman. Life to her is a thing to be taken seriously and lived strenuously. Like her sisters, she is a woman of method, and performs her manifold duties without giving the slightest impression that she is at all very busy. She along with her husband, a beautiful spirit, are members at Greenhow. They are always at the services and interested in every venture of the Church, working and giving with a glad and grateful heart.

The Bainbridges are, indeed, a remarkable family. It is doubtful whether, in point of numbers, they can be equalled anywhere. If the wealth of a nation lies in its manhood, then the contribution of Mr. Isaac Bainbridge is a very significant one; but that significance is wonderfully heightened when it is remembered that the contribution is of the finest material. They are a race of men and women with splendid physique, of strong moral fibre, and of clear spiritual vision. A Primitive Methodism of the temper and outlook of the Bainbridges would be a church freed from many of its present financial and spiritual problems; a church of enriched national worth.

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## References

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