

Volume 1 of Slater's Directory for 1855 revealed that Sutton Baptist Chapel was one of several churches in the wider area of Kildwick. It listed the following places of worship:

1. Saint Andrews, Kildwick - Rev. T. C. Fawcett, vicar
2. Saint James Church, Silsden - Rev. Richard Heelis, curate
3. Baptist Chapel, Sutton
4. Wesleyan Methodist Chapel, Cross Hills – Rev. Paschal Hoskins
5. Wesleyan Methodist Chapel – Cononley, Steeton and Silsden
6. Primitive Methodist Church – Steeton
7. Wesleyan Association – Cross Hills.

The Directory also mentioned that, "Sutton is in the Parish of Kildwick, stuff and worsted for the Bradford market are manufactured there. The only place of worship is the Baptist Church." The records provided by Sutton Chapel were to play an absolutely vital part in uncovering the various activities in which some of my forebears had been engaged. They also showed the type of social networks within which they moved. Through these activities I got to know something about them as people and about those things, which were of importance to them. I was also able to see how some of their values have lasted right through to the present day. These included a keen emphasis on the need to gain a good education, which after six generations is still a powerful force - with my middle son expressing the desire to be a teacher. Without the survival of these records the knowledge gained about my ancestors would have proved far less rich. Having been stored since 1975 in the Reference Section of Keighley Library, it seemed as if these documents had been patiently waiting for me to use them.

In the early Victorian era the Church as an institution specialised in education. This was especially so in the larger centres of population. At Keighley Grammar School a Rev. Thomas Plummer of 25 Cook Lane (in the centre of Keighley) was on record as being the Headmaster from C.1830 until C.1837 – his son Peter, acting as 'usher' at this time. By 1843 the school was in the hands of the Rev. Thomas Brayshaw M.A. and a Thomas Holgate. (Unfortunately the oldest surviving documents of this school were financial records dating back only to 1853, which prevented any further detailed research.) By placing a high priority upon education Sutton Chapel was simply following a very typical trend of the time. In this area, the Protestant Dissenting Tradition was very strong – not least because Anglican Parishes were often very large and difficult to supervise. Nearby Halifax was the second largest parish in England. Charlotte Bronte's novel 'Shirley' testified to the fact that the relations between the Anglican and Dissenting Communities were often extremely poor. There existed a great deal of rivalry – not least in the area of education.

The fervent Evangelical Anglican Minister William Grimshaw (1708-1763) often conducted missions in the area during his time as curate of Haworth Church from 1742 until 1763. In a letter written during the year 1744 he mentioned that God was pleased to visit Keighley, Silsden, Sutton, Bingley and other localities where different branches of my family lived. On Thursday, October 9th 1755, his short-lived diary recorded a busy round of preaching engagements that covered Otley, Addingham, Silsden, Sutton and Newsholme. In spite of travelling a distance of about thirty miles he stated that it was a blessed day and that he had much of the Lord's presence in him and with him! Precise quotations from those sources will be found in Cook (1997) p. 81 & 168. William Grimshaw was a close friend of well-known eighteenth century preachers such as George Whitfield (1714-1770) and the Wesley brothers who founded Methodism.

Almost inevitably, the activities of Grimshaw would have caused comment Kildwick Saint Andrews – not least because he could easily have been viewed as an intrusive trespasser meddling in the affairs of a parish that was not his own. Among those well placed to comment upon and observe Grimshaws activities were those members of the community who were respectable enough to act as Churchwardens at Kildwick. These were John and William Smith (from early 1747 until early 1748), Robert Smith and John Gill (from early 1748 until early 1752 at the latest) Samuel Smith and William Holmes (from early 1755 until early 1756) and finally Joshua Smith and Peter Parkinson (from early 1757 until early 1758). It was by no means beyond the possibility that Samuel Smith and William Holmes actually heard William Grimshaw preach the Gospel with great fervour at Sutton on Thursday, October 9th 1755. What their reaction would have been could only be guessed at, but at Sutton Grimshaw did not meet the violent hostility he encountered in places like Colne where the local incumbent, the Reverend George White used to instigate mob attacks against him and his lay preachers. (George White's notorious drunken and gambling ways often landed him in the debtor's prison. He was the sort of eighteenth century Anglican Minister who was satirised in the prints of William Hogarth the painter. After a final spell in a debtor's prison he died in 1751. It was said that he begged William Grimshaw to minister to him during his final moments.)

The Smiths more decidedly step out of the mists of history in 1784, when they are found in the local 'Dissenting Register of births for Kildwick Parish.' Introduced by John Walton in 1785, the Minister of Sutton-in-Craven Baptist Chapel, (from 1780 until 1807) and lasting until its replacement in 1837 by the National Birth Register, this invaluable document had been stored at both Bradford and Leeds Central Libraries. It showed that John Walton was a very methodical man, endowed with a sharp intelligence and a gift for administration. Thanks to this source, possible family connections could now be traced back to the late eighteenth century. Whilst studying this source on micro-fiche, an attempt was made to begin with the earliest entries in 1785, before moving forward in time until the birth of Edmund in 1832. In John Walton's very neat script writing we hear of Susan Smith. Her date of birth provided the earliest entry in the Register. It simply stated, "Susan Smith the daughter of Robert Smith and Laura his wife of Lumb Mill in Cowling in the Parish of Kildwick in the county of York was born seventeenth of August in the year of our Lord 1784. Registered the fourteenth of May 1786 by me John Walton – Protestant Dissenting Minister." Susanna (or Susan) was the earliest Smith for whom it was

possible to gather a little more information. In addition, she appears to have had a sister called Mary Smith, born on 14th April 1786 but also registered on the 14th May of that year. (For a record of the other Smith's recorded in Dissenting Register please see Appendix Two.)

Evidence of the social problems facing the community at that time came to light in further records belonging to Sutton Baptist Chapel. One of these goes had the rather long-winded title of, "The book belonging to the Baptized – Church of Jesus Christ at Sutton containing: the Church's confession, together with the names of those that has subscribed thereunto, who are a member of the said Church, No1, 1780." The Confession itself displayed marked Calvinistic influences – with an emphasis upon the classic Calvinistic teachings concerning election and the depraved condition of human nature. Some of it would seem harsh by today's standards. What this confession did show was that the ideological roots of the Church lay in seventeenth century Puritanism rather than the more emotional revivalism of the eighteenth century. The evangelical revivals of that period appear to have largely passed Sutton by although Methodism did gain a noticeable foothold in Crosshills and other nearby localities.

For a long period after its foundation in 1712 the Chapel was a very struggling work meeting in a converted barn. It seemed to depend upon visiting preachers and it didn't even attempt to keep any records until 1768. Meetings occurred on a fortnightly or a monthly basis. There was a distinct impression of a work just about 'hanging on' in the face of severe difficulties. However some members appear to have maintained an association for all of their lives - others remaining a source of considerable trouble to a succession of pastors. It was only possible to establish a coherent narrative of events with the ordination of John Beatson as pastor in 1768. After this event "many were added unto the Church and the chapel was enlarged whilst he was here about two years. Mr Beatson added members but many were afterward proved to be unfit to have a name and place in the Church of God. He preached his farewell sermon, May 27th 1770 – again he preached on June 20th." (The record showed that he went to Hull with his wife Mary.)

"When Mr Beatson left Sutton it pleased the Lord to send the Revd William Roe, who had much work in weeding out some members admitted in Mr Beatson's day, but much disturbance taking place and continuing a long time, he thought it his duty to leave the Church. Many died and were dismissed in his day – only three he baptised remain now in the Church. According to the Church Book the Church consisted of 34 members when Mr Roe came to us; he was pastor for 8 years and supplied sometime before he was ordained. He preached his farewell sermon August 1st 1779 and removed to Farsley. He left the Church with 23 members and was dismissed (meaning 'moved' not sacked) February 23rd 1780.

When Mr Roe left us the Lord notwithstanding our manifold offence was pleased still to be mindful of us and immediately sent unto us the Rev. John Walton who preached the first time as a regular supply August 8th 1779." On becoming Pastor on July 11th 1780 "he wished to have some regular account kept." The evident effectiveness of his ministry paved the way for Sutton Baptist Chapels Victorian heyday. Near the beginning of his pastorate, he must have felt confirmed by the rightness of this move when a Mrs Elizabeth Atkinson was moved to benefit the minister with an annuity of £15.00 per year with another £3.00 per year for the poor. This incident showed that John Walton could attract loyalty from well-meaning people. Nevertheless, he

needed to be very strong-minded because the church he took over appeared to have represented every pastor's nightmare. It had suffered from a long history of internal dissension and a high proportion of deaths. Confirmation of this lay in the following three lists of names, (the exclusions having all occurred in Pastor Roe's day).

Deceased

Dismissed to other Churches

Excluded

1. Matthew Green

Rev. John Beatson - to Hull 20/6/1770

John Greenward Senr. – Shaw House

2. William Sharp

His wife Mary Beatson

Edward Duckworth Senior

3. William Ingham

John Smith

Margaret Crabtree

4. Mary Ingham

William Roe – to Farsley 23/2/1779

Ann Smith

5. Mary Hudson

Simon Topham

6. Eleanor Smith

Rose Topham – restored – excluded

7. Agnes Emmott

Elizabeth Smith

8. Sarah Gill

Richard Gairs

9. Ann Clough – died 9/8/1772

Christopher Mason – added 27/9/1772

10. Mary Smith – died 19/4/1780

John Tomlinson – added 18/7/1773

11.

Lydia Duck – added 8/3/1777

Further details concerning the administrative disarray facing Pastor Walton were provided a statement following the above list; “The greatest part of those who now stand as members have no day of the month or year of our Lord when we were joined members. What circumstances turn up after the coming of Mr Walton must be looked for among our names – excepting Mary Smith’s death. David Laycock is the first baptised and from thence names begin more regular.”

From the numbers excluded it appeared that Pastor Roe had ‘purged’ almost one third of those who had belonged to the Church in 1770. Moreover, at a later date, he then subsequently removed three of those whom he himself had made members. Admittedly, some of these individuals like Rose Topham (who also fell foul of Pastor Walton) may well have been troublemakers but the high proportion of exclusions and the variety of people involved did raise questions about the quality Pastor Roe’s leadership. Either he was a very weak man trying to compensate for this by exerting his authority in a tactless arbitrary manner, or a very proud, arrogant man who loved to have the pre-eminence, (3 John 9). What may have been on display here was the kind of ‘petty popery,’ which can still afflict rigid forms of Protestantism today. However, in fairness it must be stated that a place like Sutton would have been full of rough characters, many of who would be convinced they could do a far better job of running the Church than the Pastor. Others would have had serious social problems. Gossip too would have been rife. As Charlotte Bronte observed in her novel Shirley, “talking scandal” was a pastime shared by both rich and poor members of the community alike. There was very little privacy in small settlements like Sutton. Consequently, with hindsight it was possible to see that faults had probably existed with both Pastor Roe and his congregation. The following, heavily abbreviated extracts from his Chapel Book show that even the wise John Walton was to have his own share of problems.

In the following list a cross (or X) has been inserted against those people who left a cross-shaped mark beside their name. Such a symbol meant that another person had written their name for them because many of those joining the Church were illiterate. (Overall, illiteracy was found to be higher amongst women than men.) Those words in square brackets denote those sections so difficult to read that the original meaning could only be guessed. Any idiosyncratic spelling given to particular names has also been kept. Also, in order to give a flavour of how the original source

would have read, details concerning a few names were quoted in their entirety. However, reasons of length prevented this being done in every case.

“ROBERT CLOUGH Junior of Longhouse – added March 9th 1769 – died 1821

JOHN GREENWOOD of Glasburn - added June 1st 1777 – died 3/1821

JOHN WALTON - Received as from the Church at Halifax 20/8/1780, ordained Pastor 24/8/1780

X BLAKEY X SMITH X. Excluded April 19th 1781 for professing himself dissatisfied with some of the members, or something else, which we would not discover. But withdrew from the privileges of the house of God - Church meeting and private meetings and also the Lord's supper.
(

) And for saying one thing at one time, and the reverse at another in a contradictory manner.” Note the one sentence in brackets, which had been crossed out by a thick black line.

X MARY X GREENWOOD X. Added 24/8/1769. Excluded for tale bearing and denying the truth - excluded 19/4/1781

X ROSE X TOPHAM X. Restored 24/7/1781 but excluded for acting the part of the tale bearer or mischief maker and for attempting to justify her conduct and character by lies.

X DAVID X LAYCOCK X Baptised 30/5/1780 – member 1/6/1780, excluded 29/5/1783, restored 4/7/1796, excluded 2/3/1797 – for persevering in trade after he knew himself unable to pay his just debts. For borrowing money – when he knew himself unable to repay again.

JOHN PARKINSON – baptised by J. Walton the 20th September and added to the Church 11th October 1781

X JOHN X CRAVEN X of Sutton Brow, excluded 4th December 1783

X ABRAM X HEELAND X – Baptised 6/8/1786, added (to membership) 3/9/1786 – excluded 8/5/1802 for neglecting to fill his place in the Church.

HENRY BANNISTER – Baptised 6/3/1787 – excluded – poor attendance.

THOMAS LAYCOCK of Cononley – Baptised 19/4/1793 – member 21/4/1793 died 10/9/1854 aged 88 years.

MARTHA SNOWDON – Died October 1795, interred at Kildwick (22nd October).

SARAH LUND – baptised by John Walton and admitted as member February 7th 1796, excluded July 8th 1813 for not filling up her place and railing against the Church.

ANN LAYCOCK – Baptised 28/8/1796 – excluded 22/6/1797 – non-attendance.

ALICE CLOUGH+ – Baptised 28/8/1803, member 18/9/1803, excluded 8/7/1813, non-attendance.

JOHN HUDSON – (Born Feb. 7th 1713 old stile. In 1804 he said he had been almost 60 years a member of the Church. Died September 4TH 1804 aged 91)

MARY PEEL Died April 3rd 1805 aged 85, buried 6th.

ELIZABETH WILSON Died July 16th 1807 about 10' o Clock morning, aged 77.”

Having rearranged this list in chronological order from 1769 through to 1807, (just after the time when my Great, Great Grandfather John Smith was born) a number of interesting points emerged. The first striking feature was the great age to which some of the people lived. The only medicinal herbs available at that time would have been herbal remedies. Once people had survived childhood diseases (and childbirth in the case of women) living to an old age appeared to be a possibility. Such a health record implied that Sutton was a community in which basic provision in terms of food, shelter, and clothing was available to all but the poorest inhabitants. Conditions in Sutton would have been better than in rural Ireland or most of France, which at that time was being convulsed by revolutionary upheaval. The second striking point was the absence of drunkenness as a reason for exclusion. In the main, the disciplinary measures taken were for such 'Churchy' sins as gossip and disputing with the Pastor – rather than for carousing at the nearby Inn. It did seem that Sutton Chapel attracted the more respectable elements of the community. Hard core drunkards would stay away of their own accord. One frequent problem was 'durability' – new members were sometimes easy to find but difficult to retain even under the able leadership of John Walton. This was shown by the fact that the most common reason for exclusion was non-attendance. After a week full of toil people could not be bothered to go to meetings. Perhaps candidates for baptism should have received clearer guidance as to what church membership would entail. At least then there would have been a higher retention rate. Nevertheless, Sutton Baptist Chapel took its ministry to the surrounding community very seriously and this was perhaps a factor in fuelling its nineteenth century growth when membership rose into the mid-hundreds. Of further interest was the fact that those very problems, which confronted John Walton, still exist today in the modern twentieth Century Church today. Most Pastors reading this document would quickly recognise a Blakey Smith or a Rose Topham in their own congregation!

Financially, Sutton Baptist Chapel was not immune from the economic pressures caused by the Napoleonic wars. A Church memorandum of 1806 (the year in which Napoleon was coming to the height of his power following his great victory at Austerlitz in December 1805) provided

withdraw.

JOSEPH CRAVEN – of Lower Jack Field – Baptised by Mr Greenwood 8th July 1809 and added to the Church July 9th 1809 – died of apoplexy April 19th 1814.

MARTHA CRAVEN+ of Jack Fields – Baptised by Mr Greenwood 8th July 1809 and added to the Church July 9th 1809 – died 1838

MARGRITT OVEREND Baptised by Mr Edwards 10/5/1810, added to the Church 13/5/1810 – dead.

JOHN SMITH – Baptised by Mr Edwards’s 10/6/1810, added 7/2/1811 – dead, lived at Cranbury Hole

JOHN SMITH SENIOR of Sutton – Baptised by Mr Wilcocks 29/1/1811, added 7/2/1811 - dead

SARAH SMITH – Baptised by Mr Wilcocks, added to the Church 28/4/1811 – died 14/2/1818

JOHN OVEREND – Baptised by Mr Wilcocks, added to the Church 29/12/1811 – dead

RICHARD OVEREND – Baptised by Wm. Dyer 3/1/1813 and added to the Church the same day – excluded for non-attendance

ELIZABETH SMITH (now WILKINS) – added 3/7/1814 – moved to Shipley – dead 25/12/1857

MARY SMITH – was baptised on a profession of faith and added to the Church July 3rd 1814 – dead

WILLIAM CLOUGH – was baptised on a profession of faith and added to the Church July 3rd 1814 – excluded.”

How much these people would have known about the ‘outside world’ was open to question. Among the more literate who read the newspapers of the day there would have been a keen interest in the campaigns of the Duke of Wellington in Spain. One or two survivors of the Napoleonic wars may well have returned with horrifying tales of the battles they had fought. Any businessman would have fretted about Napoleon’s attempts to ruin British trade through his Continental- wide blockade. Napoleon's banishment to Elba in 1814 and his final defeat at Waterloo in June 1815 caused widespread celebration with some mill owners treating their workers to free beer and even a hearty feast. Nevertheless, the impression remained that for most people in the above list the campaigns of Napoleon Bonaparte (1769-1821) might as well have been in another world. They were too busy struggling to survive to worry about events in far off Europe. Even the better off wouldn’t have begun to understand the diplomatic complexities of the Congress of Vienna (1814-1815), which would redraw the map of Europe for almost a century.

Evidence concerning John Smith 'Senior' emerged with the Baptist Register of Kildwick Parish Church, which showed that he was a weaver of Sutton. His wife's name was Mary Smith. Together they produced the following children: -

Benjamin baptised on 21/10/1770

Mary baptised on 13/2/1774

Joshua baptised on 26/11/1775

Jane baptised on 1/3/1781

Peter baptised on 23/4/1787

Mary baptised on 21/8/1788

For the first two baptisms John and Mary Smith were living in Glasburn, but by the time of Joshua's Christening they had moved to Sutton. The presence of a second Mary may well indicate that the first Mary had died young. It was common custom in that period to give a new child the name of a deceased one. (This practice can be a source of nightmarish confusion for Family Historians.)

The above details from the Kildwick Parish Church Marriage Register also revealed that John Smith and his father John Smith 'Senior' were weavers, both of whom had lived on a farm called Cranberry Hole and were each married to a lady called Mary. Like many of their contemporaries they would have combined agricultural work with work associated with the rising Textile Industry. The younger John and Mary Smith may possibly have been the parents of my Great, Great Grandfather, also called John Smith.

In 1811, Sutton Baptist Chapel decided to expand its premises to celebrate its Centenary. To some extent such a step might have been taken out of sheer necessity as the converted barn the congregation met in was in a serious state of disrepair. Yet such a move could also be interpreted as a sign of fresh confidence, for the Church Membership was indeed growing. Regrettably, 1811 was one of the worst years to undertake such a project. Charlotte Bronte's well researched novel 'Shirley' (set in precisely that year) showed it to have been a time characterised by terrible economic hardship and severe social disturbances - with even large mill owners finding it difficult 'to make ends meet.' Moreover, as was often the case with building projects, costs escalated and the congregation was forced to appeal to Baptists as far afield as Leeds and Scarborough in order to pay off an outstanding debt of £117.00. (According to the accounts section of 'The Church Book' the total cost of the original project was £180.00 – a vast amount for those days.) The letter appealing for financial assistance possessed that timelessly irritating quality characterising all such correspondence. Dated July 25th 1813 it began by stating "Dear Brethren, our circumstances are of such a nature as to lead us to address you through this medium in order to elicit a little of your kind and brotherly assistance." There then followed a highly verbose and rather defensive account explaining why Sutton Chapel needed to raise such a vast amount of money. A sense of

embarrassment was very strongly present. Finally, this letter ended with the signatures of Pastor Dyer, Deacon Thomas Laycock and Deacon Robert Clough. Accompanying the appeal was the following recommendation by the influential Dr William Steadman of Horton Baptist College, Bradford and John Fawcett, Pastor of Hebden Bridge Chapel. It stated, "I am fully satisfied that our brethren at Sutton have acted with prudence, and exerted themselves to the utmost of their ability, and do therefore with pleasure warmly recommend their case to the attention of the friends of Christ and his cause.

W. STEADMAN, Bradford

JOHN FAWCETT, Hebden Bridge."

(Quoted in Pilling p. 10)

Despite this recommendation the suspicion remains that an absence of coherent financial planning meant few of the costs had been budgeted for. Sutton Chapel had not been the first or the last Church to get itself into financial difficulties through an over ambitious building programme. During the 1830s, one Baptist Chapel in Cullingworth was to find itself in an even worse mess.

Thankfully, for all concerned a subsequent record of donations showed that the appeal did produce the required funds. Pastor Dyer and his deacons were spared the humiliation of a debtor's prison. One donor helping them out was a Benjamin Smith who gave the quite generous sum of 10s 6d – thus showing he was a man with some spare money. He may have been the Benjamin Smith who had acted as a witness at John Smith's first wedding in 1824.

One literary source that threw an interesting sidelight into the kind of life enjoyed by people at Sutton Chapel was the novel *Shirley*, first published in 1849. Written by Charlotte Bronte and set in the period 1811-1812, this valuable source however must be treated with caution - not least because it represented the views of a middle class Anglican 'looking down her nose' on working class Dissenters. Nevertheless, Charlotte Bronte clearly drew on what were still living memories of the late Napoleonic period. She also knew the area where the early Smiths had lived and had an acute ear for local dialect. (On reading this novel one gained a very clear idea of how people like my Great, Great Grandparents will have spoken.) Where Charlotte Bronte was especially helpful was in having a keen ability to expose religious hypocrisy and being able to distinguish it from real Christianity. This was most evident in her waspish treatment of three awful curates. However, in relation to early nineteenth century Baptists (mentioned on p.10 of *Shirley*), the way she vividly described the high level of emotionalism in some of the sermons and the manner in which a preacher could attract weaver-girls 'in their flowers and ribbons' struck a fairly contemporary note. Apparently, a dynamic Baptist preacher of that period could enjoy a certain amount of 'sex appeal.' This was especially the case if they were also of handsome appearance. On reading this novel I was struck by how little certain aspects of both Anglican and Baptist Church life had changed over the last two centuries. The types of religious misfits that Charlotte Bronte lampooned are still around today.

During 1813 pressures other than financial were bearing in on the Chapel. One of these was the insistent and widespread local demand for a burial ground to be established in surrounding grounds of the newly refurbished building. Preoccupied with financial survival the leadership responded to this development with a marked degree of irritation as evidenced by the following brusque announcement.

“Against burying any corpse

in the Baptist Chapel at Sutton

Whereas several persons seem desirous of interring the bodies of deceased relatives in the place in which we assemble for the purpose of divine worship and different individuals have on that account applied to us frequently for our permission so to do. We feel it our duty as members of the Church whose joint property the chapel aforesaid is, to enter on our Church our full determination not to permit any person rich or poor on any account to inter a corpse or corpses in the above-mentioned place of worship.

Several reasons may be assigned for our conduct in this affair but we think every wise person will be satisfied without requiring any.

This has very unanimously been agreed at our Church meeting May 19th 1813 and signed in behalf of the whole by

Robert Clough

Thomas Laycock } Deacons

David McCroben } Member

Wm. Dyer } Pastor.”

The impression created by this document was that of inopportune enquirers being rebuffed in a very abrupt manner. One interesting signature was that of David McCroben who appeared to be a highly influential member. The 1822 Baines Trade Directory revealed that, along with Benjamin Smith, he was one of two Cotton Manufacturers present in Sutton. This fact added to the view that, socially, his voice carried some weight.

Although possibly justified at the time, the decision taken at this meeting was eventually over-ruled by popular demand. By 1830, the dead members were starting to be interred around the chapel and by the late 1870s it was evident that overcrowding was becoming a problem. I for one am grateful that this decision was eventually nullified by events. If Pastor Dyer and his deacons had had their way this Family History would have made only very little headway. The graveyard behind Sutton Chapel turned out to have been an invaluable source of information.

One problem with the employment of lists as an historical source was their tendency to 'de-personalise' the people named on those lists. The bare facts were given and the reader was left speculating about other details such as the precise reason for exclusion or an exact mode of death. Yet behind every name was a real human being with an individual story - someone that had once felt, thought and lived. Only rarely was any extra information available to reveal something more. In the case of Joseph Craven supplementary details did survive and the following account, written in Pastor Dyer's neat handwriting, give a vivid account of his untimely death.

"Departed this life yesterday April 19th 1814 our dear brother Joseph Craven an honourable and useful member. He died suddenly in a fit of apoplexy as he was returning from Sutton to his farm at Jack Field. He had conversed with great cheerfulness with his Pastor not much above a quarter of an hour before his death. His funeral sermon

was preached by his bereaved Pastor the Sabbath but one after his departure from this vale of tears. The congregation was numerous and affected. A [loving] address from the following words: -

'Be ye ready for in such an hour as ye think not the son of man cometh.'"

After nearly two centuries one can still feel the emotional intensity contained in those words. Both Pastor Dyer and his shocked congregation would have interpreted this unexpected death as a divine 'visitation,' warning people not to neglect the ways of the Lord. Whilst reflecting upon this point it was easy to imagine that Joseph Craven had been a stout, red faced 'John Bull' figure with a hearty laugh and a warm-hearted concern for others. Even Pastor Dyer, who was quite ruthless in excluding people, found him to be 'an honourable and useful member.' This minister undoubtedly preached a most moving sermon at Joseph Craven's well-attended funeral. Perhaps some of those who heard it would have been awakened to a genuine Christian faith.

Following the analysis of previously quoted documentation, it became apparent that the period of 1813-1814 was very much 'a season of trial' for Sutton Chapel. Financially it was in dire straits, with some evidence of poor planning, also an unpopular decision had been made concerning the highly sensitive issue of the interment of bodies and a much-loved member had died unexpectedly. Moreover, one long established member Sarah Lund had been excluded from the Church in acrimonious circumstances and was busily "railing" against it. (She may have felt aggrieved about the decision taken concerning the proposed graveyard.) Her defection suggested that internal relationships within the assembly were not exactly harmonious. In addition, such afflictions must have compounded the daily trial of living in early nineteenth century Britain where death, disease, and poverty were all too common. No wonder Pastor Dyer referred to this world as being 'a vale of tears.' The strain he was under must have been considerable. Hardly surprisingly he left Sutton Chapel in 1814 to become Pastor of a Church in another locality. Perhaps the trials he had endured during his brief pastorate had convinced him that the Lord's blessing was not upon his ministry at Sutton. He seemed glad to leave and take up the Pastorate of another Chapel at Bacup where the Pastor had recently died. The following interregnum of four years at Sutton Chapel suggested that the Baptist Association had known about its difficulties. If, (as seemed likely) this were the case, then Sutton Chapel would not have been a prospective Pastor's first choice. Even

when another Pastor was later to be found he was involved in some unusual business concerning the Chapel Book. Moreover, the poor quality of his handwriting, when compared to that of John Walton or Wm. Dyer reinforced the view that the new Pastor, Joseph Gaunt was a far less cultivated man than his predecessors had been. Perhaps the Church trustees who had appointed him felt that a 'rough diamond' was the best person to deal with the unruly folk of Sutton. Should this have been their intention then their decision was later to be borne out by events. During his pastorate, which lasted from 1818 until 1826, he added 40 members to the Chapel. This level of success suggested that Joseph Gaunt did indeed establish a good rapport with the local inhabitants. They would perhaps have recognised someone more like themselves.

The following excerpt was one of the most ambiguous findings made during the course of this research. It was obvious that the Joseph and his wife Ann Gaunt had at one point been involved in a conflict over the Chapel Book. Moreover, the first paragraph had been crossed out and covered in blotches of black ink in what appeared to have been a deliberate attempt at defacing details. The impossibility of fully reconstructing this paragraph meant that their exact connection with the Church in Bramley (mentioned in the paragraph) would remain a mystery. Adding to the confusion was the fact that the writing of both of this couple was of an extremely poor, semiliterate quality.

“ Joseph Gaunt having laboured [among us] in the Lord [moved]... to the Church at Bramley ... He was received as member on members 17/5/1818 [ordained] 3/6/1818. Also Ann Gaunt the wife of Joseph Gaunt [received] from the Church at Bramley by the Church at Sutton at the same time.

We do hereby declare that all connection between us as members and the Church at Sutton is entirely at an end and as proof of which with our own hands we have withdrawn our names from the book as witnessed by our hands

JOSEPH GAUNT

ANN GAUNT

I do most solemnly certify that a book called the Chapel Book which was paid for out of chapel money was frequently brought to our house by David McCroben and that I have a distinct recollection of it being left one night and that Mary McCroben came for it next morning. I delivered it to her and other circumstances were connected which I cannot forget. ANN GAUNT.”

(On the following page was an entry about Richard Smith dated 9/4/1820.)

What were the 'other circumstances' connected to 'the Chapel Book,' which Ann Gaunt couldn't forget? The answer proved impossible to find but her voice was that of an essentially timid woman obviously caught up in some unsavoury business she was later to regret. It was easy to

imagine her in a woollen shawl giving a breathless account to scowling Church elders. The exact nature of the problem was impossible to fathom but it apparently involved the disappearance of a Chapel Book that by rights was the property of the Church. Why such an event occurred was a mystery but it involved the McCroben's who seemed eager not to have it in their house. Reading between the lines there seemed to have been some kind of power struggle involving both Joseph Gaunt and David McCroben. Such struggles were a common feature of early nineteenth century Baptist life. Moreover, the list of exclusions in Sutton Chapel's own records showed that ill discipline was a continual problem. Yet much remained unknown. Even the date of this incident was uncertain. Its position in the book suggested 1818 but the actual events being recorded suggested 1826. The Gaunts may have joined the Church in 1818 and then resigned only to be recalled to a pastorate lasting until 1826. Alternatively, they may well have left a blank page in the Church Book before recording the 1820 entry. This would have been done to leave room for further additions to their record. Unless new evidence comes to light then the full events surrounding this 'cloak and dagger' business will forever remain unknown. My own instinct was to guess that somehow money was involved. It was unclear whether the Chapel Book was to be identified with the Church Book, which has proved to be such an invaluable source for this study. If they were the same one should be grateful for the documents survival.

The Birth Register showed that Joseph Gaunt made his first entry on December 10th 1818 and his last on 25th December 1826. The final entry before the start of his pastorate occurred on 29th September 1816 – a fact, which left open the possibility that this document book formed part of the Church Book, which had apparently gone missing earlier on in 1818. In his large untidy handwriting, Pastor Gaunt made the following proud entry concerning the birth of his son who was also named Joseph. "Joseph Gaunt the son of Joseph Gaunt and Ann his wife was born on Wednesday Morning (between 6 & 7 o'clock), the 26th of September 1822 in the Township of Sutton & Parish of Kildwick in the County of York. Registered 29th September 1822 Joseph Gaunt, Minister."

Returning to a more factual note, the Church lists did show that there was another David McCroben who was almost the exact contemporary of my Great, Great Grandfather. He was apparently the son of the David McCroben who had become a member in 1809 and had been embroiled in the strange business involving the Chapel Book. Mary McCroben (who was either his wife or sister) acted as a witness at the wedding of John Smith the weaver on May 24th 1824. Her neatly written signature provided evidence that she was a fairly literate woman – one who could be entrusted with updating a Chapel Book

After the dramatic episode with the Chapel Book the list of names continued its remorseless passage through time: -

"RICHARD SMITH – added 9/4/1820, having been baptised on 3/4/1820 being Easter Monday - dead

MARGARET SMITH - added 9/4/1820 - having been baptised on 3/4/1820 being Easter Monday

died 11/4/1878 aged 78 years at Kildwick Grange.

WILLIAM SMITH – Baptised 2/12/1820 and added to the Church 3/12/1820. Excluded May 1834 - association letter to Colne June 13th-14th 18[21] Baptised – twice excluded. Restored to the Church in September 1848 - dead October 1857.

BETTY SMITH added 2/8/1822 having been baptised several weeks before - dead 23/9/1854

JOHN PARKINSON – added 3/2/1823, having been baptised on 1/1/1823 - 2/1848 withdrew, 1/1849 restored – died 17th December 1875 aged 71 years

ELLEN SMITH added 21/8/1825

EMMA PARKINSON – added and baptised 18/7/1829, withdrew, restored 3/9/1863 - died 25/5/1875 aged 66 years

RICHARD & EDWARD WILSON – added 17/11/1833 – dead 1858 and 1843. Also SARAH WILSON

JESSE OVEREND – added 12/10/1834, excluded 7/1841

ELIZABETH SMITH – added 12/10/1834 – 1845 dismissed to Hall Green [Chapel] Haworth [and] received by letter

TITUS WILSON, WILLIAM WILSON (dead 4/6/1876, aged 63), BETSY WILSON – added 9/11/1834

ROBERT SMITH – added 5/4/1835, dead

Being the ordinance day of June 4th 1837 the following persons were baptised and received into the Church – having signed the covenant.

ANN SMITH from Ellers – dead 10/4/1856

ABIGAIL SMITH from Sutton – excluded - May 1841, restored in October 1841 - moved to Hudson in Australia

ANN MILBURN from Sutton – dead 6/1841

MARY OVEREND from Ellers – dead

JOSEPH SMITH from Glasburn – added 7/2/1838, excluded 1853, restored 1856

ROWLAND SMITH – added and baptised 3/6/1838

Added 5/5/1839: -

ANN WILSON from Cononley,

MARY SMITH+ from Cononley

TITUS SMITH from Sutton Mill – added 3/11/1839

Added 3/5/1840: - having been baptised the same day

ALICE WATSON – died 6/1846

HANNAH BERRY – dismissed to Haworth

MARY ROE - died 18[58]

DAVID McROBEN – withdrew, restored 31/1/1867, died 27/10/1871 – aged 70

JOSHUA BECK – excluded 1845

HANNAH RISHWORTH - excluded

JOSHUA SMITH – added 31/5/1840, excluded 11/1845 – dead 1850

ROBERT SMITH – added 31/5/1840, excluded 5/1841 – restored 10/1841”

What these set of names demonstrated was the way in which families like the Overends, Smiths and Wilsons had formed a particularly close association with the Chapel. Hardly surprisingly there was a high proportion of intermarriage between these families. John Smith the weaver had married first a Wilson and then an Overend. One other interesting feature was the way in which William Smith had a connection with Colne. Evidently there existed quite close links between Sutton and the market town of Colne.

From about 1840 onwards the Chapel began to provide detailed figures of its membership. These showed that within six decades Sutton Baptist had come a long way from being the struggling affair of 1780. Numeric growth had risen and this suggested that the Chapel was now performing a highly respected service in the community. It appeared to have benefited from industrialisation and the population increase of the surrounding area. These points were verified by the statistical data recorded in Appendix Three.

The list of new members from 1841 until 1851 confirmed the earlier impression of the Smiths and other closely connected families being strongly represented.

“SUSANNAH SMITH from Sutton Mill – added 11/7/1841, (1852 withdrew,) returned 4/12/1873 as SUSANNAH LAYCOCK

ELLEN SMITH – added 3/8/1845 – Sutton

MAVIS SMITH – added 3/8/1845 – Glasburn, dismissed to Easby 7/1/1857

JOHN SMITH – added 21/12/1845 – excluded 1850 – restored January 1852 – excluded 1857

NANCY SMITH – added 2/1846

WILLIAM SMITH – added 8/1846, dismissed to Easby 7/1/1857

MARY SMITH – added 4/4/1847 – now RISHWORTH

SARAH SMITH – added 7/11/1847

RICHARD GREENWOOD

ELIZABETH GREENWOOD - received by letter from Hall Green, Haworth, added 6/10/1849

Added 3/12/1850: -

JANE WILSON (Now EVANS)

SARAH WILSON (Now HALL)

SARAH ELYN CLOUGH (Now HAUGGAS) – KEIGHLEY PARISH

ELIZABETH WILSON (Now MCNAB) – excluded 1857

MARY SMITH – died 18/7/1874, aged 86

MARGARET WALTON (Now MIDGLEY)

ELIZABETH HILL (Now THORNTON) – died 16/2/1883, aged 46

MARY TETLEY – died 26/3/1872 aged 65

MARGARET SMITH – added 5/5/1850

Added 7/7/1851

SARAH WILSON

MARY ANN OVEREND

MARGARET WILSON – added 7/9/1851 (now WILKINSON) – moved to America 3/10/1873.”

The above list showed that most of the Chapel’s growth in the 1850-1852 period was due largely to an increase in female membership. For some reason Sutton Baptist managed to break into female social networks. This success resulted in a situation where ladies would ‘gossip the gospel’ and bring their friends or relations to particular meetings. There they would respond to the Christian message and take up Church membership. The relatively low proportion of exclusions suggested that this assembly did manage to successfully meet a variety of female needs. Improved economic conditions may have meant that the womenfolk were less bound by a daily struggle for survival. There was the odd extra penny to spend on Church activities. Not shown in the above selection was the fact that the name ‘Walton’ frequently re-occurred on these lists. A telephone conversation with a contact at Sutton Baptist did confirm that the Walton family had been active members in the Church for the three to four generations covering the late to early eighteenth centuries. At one stage of this research it seemed possible that the twice-excluded John Smith may well have been my Great, Great Grandfather. However, later findings nullified this conclusion.

One important source was “the minutes of the teachers and committee of the Baptists Sunday school, Sutton, with registers of teachers.” Covering the period from 1837 until 1853 this ‘minute book’ provided much useful information. However, the presentation was highly variable - what was often poor writing was marred still further by ink stains, rough calculations and what appeared to be early Victorian doodles drawn by a bored minutes secretary! Even worse, the page edges had at some time in the past become damp and were beginning to crumble away. It was decided that the best way to handle this evidence was to quote some of the more clearly written parts pertaining either to my own family or to families closely connected to the Smiths. Portions in square brackets represent my own guess at what key words meant, whereas portions in curved brackets represent additional information inserted from elsewhere in the book. Nevertheless, the following excerpts are fairly typical of the document as a whole and conveyed something of the flavour of Church life. For reasons of brevity, these excerpts will mainly be extracted from the 1837-1840 period.

“Sutton Chapel, May 28th 1837

The meeting having opened with singing and prayers, Wm. Samuel Bairstow was elected

chairman in the absence of Wm. Fawcett the president.

Judith Wilcock was elected a treasurer (for the next session)

The following persons were then appointed as officers for the ensuing year: -

Wm. Fawcett, president by virtue of his office as the Minister of the place

Superintendents

John Parkinson (for the first course)

Samuel Bairstow (for the second course – a man called Charles Asquith replaced him during the annual meeting held on 4/6/1838)

Thomas Wilson (for the third course)

(James Laycock was serving as a superintendent from 4/6/1838 but had gone by 20/5/1839)

Secretaries

Richard Petty (resigned in 1839 and was replaced by John Wilson)

Thomas Berry

Librarians

Richard Wilson

William Wilson (from Sutton, resigned in 1839 and was replaced by Lawrence Moss)

Treasurer

Thomas Berry

Members of the committee

Matthew Sugden

Duncan Campbell (Jesse Overend replaced him during the annual meeting held on 4/6/1838)

William Wilson (from Crosshills)

James Fox (Rowland Smith replaced him during the annual meeting held on 4/6/1838)

It was ordered that no [pieces] should be separated on the anniversary day.

That 60 Circulars be printed for the use of persons who may wish to invite their friends to the Anniversary.

That [Martha] Berry and Mary Ann Clough find places for the children and get them tea on the anniversary.

[Robert] Parkinson, Stephen William, Matthew Sugden and Lawrence Moss were appointed visitors for the next quarter.

(Minutes recorded by) Richard Petty”

A distinction appeared to exist between the Committee Meetings and the actual Teachers Meetings, which were held more frequently. In the latter the minutes appeared to be very terse as can be seen in the following example.

“Teachers Meeting July 2nd 1837

1. Ordered that Benjamin Smith be received as a teacher
2. Ordered that Charlotte [Moreley] be received as a teacher
3. Ordered that Joshua Walton be received as a teacher.”

The size of this mainly male dominated committee showed that the Sunday school was a very large affair taken seriously by all those involved. Women tended to be given an auxiliary role and were very much in a position of subordination. There also appeared to be a great concern on formality and order. It was easy to imagine that some of these meetings were tedious in the extreme – hence the doodles in the book. Present at a committee meeting chaired by John Parkinson on 30/8/1840 were David McCroben, Jonas Tetley, Benjamin Smith, and William Wilson.

The above-cited information was particularly illuminating because it showed that through John Parkinson my Great, Great Grandparents were possibly connected to one person who was actively involved in Sutton Baptist Chapel. This strongly implies that they themselves could have enjoyed some contact with this assembly – albeit a very loose one because they lived elsewhere. This would lend credibility to the family tradition, which stated that “the Smiths were all originally Baptists.”

By the time of the Committee Meeting's AGM on 8/6/1840 various personnel changes had taken place i.e: -

The Secretary was now Samuel Bairstow

The Clerk was William Wilson

Assistants were Robert Parkinson and Stephen Wilson

The Treasurer was James Laycock

Superintendent for the first course was Walter Midgley

Superintendent for the second course was Rowland Smith

Superintendent for third course was Thomas Wilson

Librarian Charles Asquith - the 1841 Census showed him to be a joiner

At about the same time Henry Smith of Sutton Mill had been admitted as a teacher.

It was perhaps the long working hours of the time that created the problem of a lack of punctuality. At one Committee Meeting held on 27/9/1840 with John Parkinson acting as Chairman, Richard Petty (acting as Secretary) proposed a motion, seconded by Matthew Sugden. This requested "that the superintendents be requested to censure the teachers in their respective courses to be more punctual to the time of opening the school. Present, Males 13, Females 9."

These minutes also showed that by 6/1/1841 Titus Smith (who had become a member on 3/11/1839) was serving on the Sunday school Committee. The 1841 Census showed him to be a Worsted Weaver, living in Sutton Mill. It also confirmed that he had been born in 1780, the year John Walton had become Pastor. He would have been in his late fifties when he became a member. This Titus Smith also ensured that the births of his two daughters Hannah and Charlotte were registered at the Chapel in 1811 and 1814. By drawing together information from a variety of sources it became possible to supply biographical details about particular characters. These sources also confirmed that different branches of the Smith family formed a major and enduring presence at Sutton Chapel. Their spiritual roots were indeed Baptist.

Also provided by these minutes was useful statistical and financial information concerning the running of the Sunday school. The following table (compiled by the teachers themselves) shows the number of Sunday school Scholars, confirming that the Church had undertaken a very major educational work at a time of much socio-economic hardship. The sheer scale of its effort could only be commended. Clearly, Sunday school work at the Chapel enjoyed massive support from within the surrounding locality. The education facilities it provided were obviously highly regarded.

On the books,

May 21st 1837

Admitted during the year

Totals

Dismissed during the year

On the books,

June 2nd 1838

Male

Female

Male

Female

Male

Female

Male

Female

Male

Female
Scholars

74

79

51

44

125

123

2

9

123

114

Teachers

1st course

12

12

4

4

16

16

3

4

13

12

2nd course

12

12

1

4

13

16

1

3

12

13

3rd course

10

11

3

3

13

14

2

2

11

12

Totals

34

35

8

11

42

46

6

9

36

37

Beyond legibility, one difficulty with these figures was the absence of any consistent system of presentation. This point was confirmed when an attempt was made to compare these figures with those of subsequent academic years.

Number of Scholars

Number of Teachers

Number of Scholars on the Books, May 6th 1838

237

73

Admitted during the year

27

22

Dismissed

32

9

Number of Scholars on the Books, May 5th 1839

232

84

Number of Scholars

Number of Teachers

Number of Scholars on the Books, 5th August 1839

229

86

Admitted during the year

20

13

Dismissed

20

9

Number of Scholars on the Books, June 8th 1840

229

99

The financial returns also revealed much in the way of interesting information. They showed exactly where the income from this work was coming from and where it was going. Also displayed was a certain degree of generosity when rewarding scholars.

Receipts

£

S.

D.

Expenditure

£

S.

D.

Balance from last year

6

By expenses last anniversary

3

15

0

Collection 18/6/1837

16

2

1

By Whit Monday

19

10

To books sold to Richard Petty

1

6

By Rent

5

0

0

By balance due to treasurer

1

3h

By attending Night School

17

8h

By propitiation of attending alterations in Chapel

4

8

6

By rewards

14

9

By Books and copies

9

7

Total

16

5

4h

Total Balance by 4/6/1838 Committee Meeting

16

5

4h

N.B. h means halfpence

The minutes showed that “after the business had been transacted Mr Matthew Sugden and Wm. Fawcett addressed the meeting and the whole was concluded with singing and a prayer.”

Receipts

£

S.

D.

Expenditure

£

S.

D.

Collection

21

6

3h

Rent

5

0

0

To W. T. Bairstow for books

9

Coals

2

0

0

Sweeping

10

0

By expenses last anniversary

2

16

6

Books

2

14

6

Sundries

13

10h

Whit Monday Balance

1

12

9

Total

21

15

3h

Total Balance by 20/5/1839 Committee Meeting

21

15

3h

From this data, it became immediately apparent that the Sunday school was largely dependent upon individual giving. There were neither grants nor any other sources of income from outside the area. The high level of giving was indicative of a solid core of commitment; people were determined that this work would succeed in bestowing a basic level of education. Lending further support to this view was the large number of obviously very busy people determined to give what little spare time they had by supporting this work as volunteer teachers. In operation at a Community level were the principles of 'self-help' taught by the well-known Leeds-based author Samuel Smiles. A succession of zealous Pastors also took an interest in establishing activities for young men, with night classes being conducted for 'their mental advancement,' (Pilling et al P.11).

Sometimes material outside of the archives of Sutton Baptist Chapel would give more insight into some of its active participants. Both the 1841 Census and modern sources like Whittaker and Wood (1992) revealed that Richard Petty was a Schoolmaster, living at North Street, Crosshills. His school had been founded in 1775 and was to last until 1857 - by which time it was known as 'the Richard Petty School.' Apparently, the schoolroom consisted of one large room, 30 feet in length and 18 feet wide. It had five writing desks and a 'Master's desk' in front of the fireplace. Its pupils consisted of 17 boys, a few of them boarders. One senses that Richard Petty had struck a good bargain when he had purchased some Sunday school books for only one shilling and six pence. He would undoubtedly have put them to good use.

A review of the monumental inscriptions for Kildwick Church revealed: -

Richard Petty of Crosshills June 21st 1861, 60 years

Margaret his widow January 18th 1884 - 84th year

Martha infant

For Remembrance

Charles eldest, died Sutton 1896

Joshua second son, died Preston 1894

Richard third son died Brisbane 1899

Francis William fourth son, died January 2nd 1918 - 80th year

An interesting feature of this epitaph was the way in which a man who was highly involved in the Baptist Church could at the same time have chosen to be buried in the local Anglican graveyard. Nor was his behaviour unusual, for other families such as the Cloughs and some branches of the Smiths followed the same pattern of high activity in the Baptist Church being followed by burial in the Anglican Cemetery. It seemed as if the Church of England was still used for 'despatching' purposes though not for 'hatching' or 'matching.'

Over the 1840s and early 1850s the whole of the Sunday school prospered. On 8/6/1840 the balance stood at £24. 14s 6h – during a time when a severe economic recession was provoking large-scale Chartist agitation! In the more prosperous 1850s the balance grew even higher at £35.00 for 26/6/1852 and £36 12s 9d for 19/6/1853. After further review of the Sunday school material it became clear that my own family's marked passion for education went back at least five or six generations. In those days education, along with religion, provided hope for people who were bearing the full brunt of industrialisation. It also provided a way for overworked parents to get their children away from overcrowded living conditions – especially on Sunday afternoons when their parents would want some peace and quiet.

Nevertheless, even though Sunday school work met an evident need and grew in terms of financial prosperity this did not automatically mean it was free from problems. On 9/8/1849 “A teachers' meeting was held this day at [this Church]. It was resolved that a monthly teachers prayer meeting be held on the last Sabbath of every month to commence at 5 'o' clock for the purpose of the instructions given and labours exercised in the Sabbath School. Rowland Smith Junior.” The information here was especially fascinating because it provided a glimpse into the spiritual life operating behind the Sunday school work. It showed that it existed on a dynamic of prayer. One could easily imagine any prayer meeting led by a Smith would be somewhat verbose and long-winded in nature. Even in those times the Smiths appeared to be a family who liked the sound of their own voice. (Significantly, 1849 was the year after Karl Marx and Frederick Engels had published their Communist Manifesto, whose diatribes against political opponents showed that sectarian feuding was not something confined to the Christian Church alone.) A likely reason behind this recourse to prayer could be found in the details of the teachers meeting held on 11/11/1849. During it both John Smith and Samuel Bairstow proposed a motion “that absent teachers should have their names read out at successive teachers' meetings.” As it happened one victim of this exercise of group pressure was to be Mary Smith herself!

By 1/4/1850 Samuel Bairstow (who was a farmer) had become treasurer on the Sunday school Committee whilst Rowland Smith acted as Librarian. Also remaining on the Committee but not serving in any office was Jonas Tetley who had been a next-door neighbour to John Smith the weaver at the time of the 1841 Census. The persistence of these names over a decade was indicative of a strong degree of commitment to this work. Perhaps the longest track record was that of John Parkinson who was still chairing committees until the year of his death in 1875 – but by that time it was for the Glasburn Mission, which had been established by Sutton Baptist at about that time. For a certain type of personality committees can be a highly addictive activity. John Parkinson appeared to have been a naturally born chairperson.

Other written records concerning the Sunday school, from February 1845 until March 1846, were also located in the Local History Reference Section of Keighley Library. These included the scholars register for that time period and the Sunday school minutes book. With 287 admissions in the 5 to 15-year age range, it was a thriving work, overseen by a large but variable number of teachers. The two main subjects it offered were maths and reading. Clearly, the Church was making a brave attempt to provide what seemed to be the only large-scale educational service in

the area. Despite the classes having been very popular throughout the district, my Great Grandfather's name did not appear in the list of pupils. Neither did his name appear in the 1841 or 1851 Census Returns for Sutton or Crosshills ~ although these were very settled communities with insignificant rates of migration even during periods of economic difficulty, (including the 1839-1841 textile recession which brought considerable hardship to the mill workers of Manchester.) For reasons that will become clear later, Edmund obviously retained a very strong attachment to his place of birth. He must have had some other links beyond being born there.

However, this Register showed that a significant proportion of Smiths in Sutton were Baptists. (Relevant details concerning the Smiths and other connected families registered in the Sunday school are presented in table form in Appendix Four.) Like many of their contemporaries, the Smiths were greatly concerned with religion, education, and social development – they lived in the age of 'self-help.' Despite many positive services offered by the School, a combination of low attendance and high turnover rates would have made it difficult for children to pick up any more than basic literacy and numerical skills. Even the Sunday Schools Minutes Book was at times badly written and blemished by rough workings out of financial transactions, blotchy ink stains and what appeared to be early Victorian 'doodles' made during the more tedious parts of Committee meetings.

Found within the scholars register was an example of the kind of work that teachers of this period inflicted upon their charges. Printed on a crumpled piece of paper were some Arithmetic and English exercises. The latter included two fragments of rather charming story called 'The Animals that Ran Away.' A start will be made with some of the Arithmetic where forty-one questions were asked. As can be seen from the following extracts, the exercises got harder as one went along. Question numbers were placed in brackets

(1) 97351 X 2

(5) 54917 X 4

(9) 45897 X 6

(13) 60839 X 8

(17) 26948 X 10

(21) 89657 X 12

(25) 239765 X 2,3,4.

(28) 3974268 X 7, 8.

(31) 893746 X 16,17,18.

(35) $962503 \times 19,21,34$

(39) If Tom has 4 apples, Jane 101, Kate 7562, and if Bill takes 9 from each, how many remain?

(40) If every inn in England has 6 horses in its stables and if there are 517 inns, how many horses are there in all? [Work this first as an addition, and then as a multiplication sum.]

(41) In a desk there were 6 drawers, each draw was divided into 8 compartments, and in each compartment were 87 pounds. How many pounds did the desk contain?

Not very nice work for a child to do at any time of the day! However, it was through the English exercises such as the one below that an attempt was made to instil the right moral values into a child.

“Up be watchful! Day is dawning!

Softly steals the gleams of morning,

Thank thy God who guards the night

And who brings the morning light.

[Write from dictation the last four lines of the last verse]”

Only the last two verses of the following twelve verse moralistic poem survived.

“11.

If he had thought how tender hearts

Love every living thing,

And would not hurt the lowest beast

And bird upon the wing;

And how the good and kind can feel

E'en for a bird distressed,

I think he would have left the eggs,

In Robin's pretty nest.

[Write from dictation the ninth verse.]

The story 'The Animals that Ran Away' was written for the same edifying purpose. Only the pupils were expected to 'spell and write' words like 'animals, consider, ploughing, quality, appearance, company, resolved.' It would have been worth quoting if only a full copy of it was available. The degree to which children in places like Sutton absorbed its moral message probably varied from case to case. Then as now, their home background would have been the decisive factor. Overall, the impression generated was one of unbridgeable gulf existing between the world of the Upper Middle Class Victorian moralist who designed this literature and rough working class children in Sutton who could only look forward to a life of hard manual work alleviated by drink. Even today, the gulf between educational experts and the pupils who often act as the unfortunate guinea pigs for their theories remains a perennial problem in education. Pity the teachers who are caught between the two parties!

Three years after the passing of the 1870 Foster Education Act what had then become the Baptist Day School reverted back to being a Baptist Sunday school. The new Board School met in the former premises of the Baptist day school. It stayed until 1896 when purpose-built buildings became available, (Wood p.65). By that later period there co-existed within Sutton a fierce rivalry with the Parish Church of Saint Thomas, which had been consecrated on 21/12/1869. In the village a three way split existed between Church people, Chapel people and godless 'roughs.' This type of division was very common in the Victorian era.

Despite its well-documented problems, it was still possible to gain a marked feeling of respect for the Sunday school work of Sutton Baptist Chapel. Whatever its shortcomings, it at least attempted to offer a positive service in an area of severe socio-economic hardship. Most of those who played their part in that activity really did have the best interests of the children at heart. They accepted the value of combining strong Christian belief with an emphasis upon education and a determination to serve their local community. In their own quiet way, the 'Sutton Chapels' of this world did far more good than the revolutionary ideology of Karl Marx (1818-1883) with its 'Gulags' and mass execution pits. Perhaps the time has now come to appreciate the achievements of such places.

Although rather idealised, the following paraphrased notices concerning two Pastors, in Pilling pp. 13-14, conveyed something of the flavour of life at Sutton-in-Craven Baptist Chapel during the Victorian period. "The Rev. William Elisha Archer became Pastor of the Church on May 12th 1861, and retained the office for nearly a quarter of a century. Mr John Walton, (a descendant of Pastor John Walton) the Church Secretary mentioned earlier, thus described Mr Archer's characteristics: 'He was a great thinker, and the way he prepared and wrote his sermons showed him to be a man of method. He made it a point to be in the pulpit always five minutes before the service began. As a preacher he appealed to the heart and conscience. His language was always choice, and his sermons were all based upon the foundation truths of the gospel. During his long ministry he baptised and received into fellowship 334 members... The Chapel was taken down and rebuilt in an enlarged and improved style. Mr Archer's ministry closed on 23rd September 1883. In his retirement he resided first at Harrogate, and then at Leeds, near which he died at an advanced age.

The Rev. John Aldis, Junior was his successor and commenced his ministry on 23rd January 1884. During his seven years' pastorate the present large and beautiful school premises were erected and certain structural alterations effected in the Chapel at the cost of £5,770...

The good work done by Mr Aldis during his ministry cannot be tabulated, though in manifest results his ministry was richly blessed, for he baptised 117 new members. After further periods of ministry at Batley and Little Leigh near Northwich, he died at the latter place after a very short illness on 27th November 1900, deeply lamented by a sorrowing people. His remains rest in the Sutton Baptist burial ground, near the scenes of his former gracious ministry."

Amidst driving rain on Monday, February 5th 2001 I came across Pastor Aldis' headstone. Its inscription confirmed that he was a man who had experienced both personal tragedy and the heartfelt respect of his congregation.

"In loving memory of

Lizzie Aldis

Who fell asleep

April 30th 1886 aged 19 years.

Also of John Aldis

Father of the above

Born July 30th 1837, died November 27th 1900.

A faithful minister and Pastor at

Sutton Chapel for 7 years 1884-1891

‘So he giveth his beloved sleep.’

Also of Elizabeth

Widow of the aforesaid

Born June 25th 1840, died May 10th 1919.

‘Even to your old age I am He.’

In the course of their ministries both Pastor Archer and Pastor Aldis would have met my Great Grandfather, though sadly in rather tragic circumstances. Following many years of absence from Sutton, Edmund would have spoken with them face-to-face and from them he would have heard the Gospel message. How he responded to it is not yet known.