

# The recollections of a Lancashire Clergyman

Rev Alfred Wood

Vicar of Ainsworth

1905 – 1930



## THE CHURCH

The church is a pre-reformation foundation. Although the current church building is not ancient, there is mention of Cokkey Chapel in 1515 and there are records from that date giving names of families in the village which were still going strong in 1905 – Greenhalgh, Lomax, Kirkman

The church seems to have been dominated by Presbyterian ideas during the days of the Stuarts – some of its ministers were not episcopally ordained and did not use the “Book of Common Prayer” Three of the ministers who had served at Cockey – Goodwin, Lever (from Bolton) and Peter Bradshaw at Ainsworth, were ejected by the passing of the Act of Uniformity in 1661

The sympathies of the people in the village seem to have been with their pastors – for no episcopal minister seems to have been appointed to replace Peter Bradshaw

Non residents took the Sunday Service, until Mr Parker came in 1800



Unitarian Church 1900

Reverend Wood (Daddy Wood) was a curate in the rural deanery of Bolton and when in 1905 Rev Lauria - who had been in Ainsworth for 17 years and wanted a change – was offered Emmanuel in Bolton, Rev Wood came to Ainsworth

He describes the “living” as not big (an income of about £260) nor deemed an important charge

*(Hilda Lord – nee Mudd- told us that he had baptised her)*



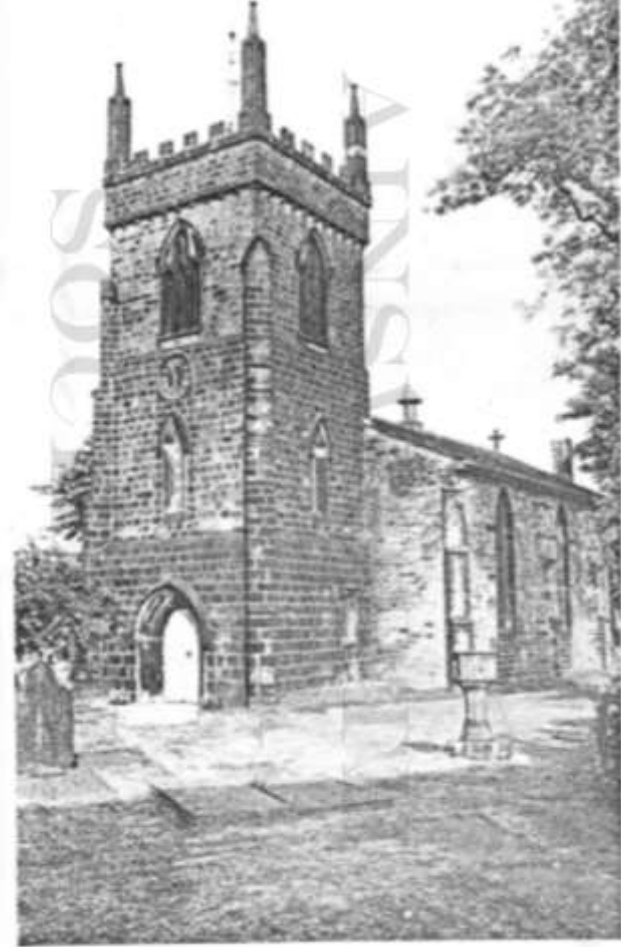
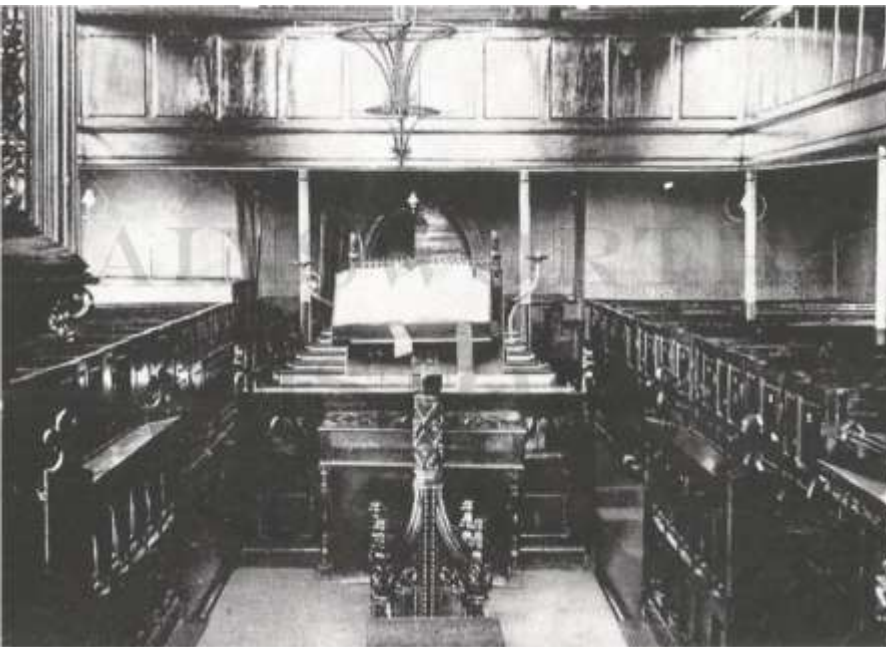
Alfred Wood with the Parochial Church Council when he became vicar of Ainsworth in 1905

## THE CHURCH

He describes it as a small very plain rectangular meeting house with galleries, onto which has been added (in the 1830's) a tower at one end and a small chancel at the other

There were straight backed pews with doors – some with baize – along the side walls and short benches up the middle

And they had gas lighting





## THE FURNITURE

He mentions the fine oak furniture –  
the pulpit,  
lectern  
prayer desk,  
and communion table  
all brought from the Old  
Bury Parish Church



## THE SERVICES

When he arrived the services were at 10:30 and 3pm. Subsequently they changed the 3pm service to 6:30 – a move he later on questioned as many who came to 3pm did not come to the 6:30 service – probably because they had got used to spending their Sunday evenings in front of the fire!!

and they used to get Sunday School scholars both morning and afternoon, but didn't get many once the time changed

## THE SCHOOL

There were changes to the school – screens were erected to divide the main room into classrooms. A permanent platform was erected and a new floor laid.

The schoolyard was extended and new “offices” erected outside

Electric lighting was also introduced



## THE SCHOOL

By late 1920's there was a need for improvements to the school

The building was not only used by the day school and the Sunday School but also, on three evenings a week, for evening continuation classes under the Local Education Authority.

In addition church groups – Mothers Union, Girls' friendly society, Men's society, Dramatic Society and socials, lectures and tea parties! - all used the hall - sometimes with four meetings running at the same time

The Board were also under pressure from the Education Authority, to improve the lighting and to increase the accommodation

## THE SCHOOL

And so plans and estimates were prepared

At first they intended to carry out part of the scheme – the cloakroom, kitchen and new windows for the Infant room –as this was as much as they could afford.

But enthusiasm carried them along and the whole scheme was launched in Autumn 1928 and completed by 1929.

The money came in wonderfully – over £600 had been raised by the time of the opening

There was no overdraft at the bank, so the Diocese Loaned £300 and others lent sums from £10 to £300 - loans which were cleared through Bazaar and other fund raising



Opening of the New Room

William Hampson (fred Lord's grandpa), Jack Platt, Henry Thompson (headmaster), Mr Nightingale ?, Emily Mudd (Hilda's grandmother), Mrs Crompton? (from Bankfield), William Sumner, Polly Platt, Miss Haslam (infants' mistress), Rev Wood, ?, Mrs Dawson (one of founders of Mothers Union in Ainsworth)

## THE VICARAGE

He does not seem particularly impressed with the vicarage as it had never been built as a parsonage. He felt the rooms were too small and the place wasn't compact – too much stone passages was how he described it

Despite that there seem to be advantages – it had a coach house and stable and a paddock of nearly an acre. There were trees at the back and it was out in the country which was an improvement to living on a street and he acknowledges that it became a very dear home for more than 20 years

Water and gas had only just arrived in the village and had not got to the vicarage in Mr Lauria's day. They had a pump behind the house and there was no bath.

(Hilda Lord remembers that the toilets were outside – a stone building with 2 holes!)



Ainsworth Vicarage in 1905



1910.

This is a photo of Alfred Wood on the steps of Ainsworth Vicarage with their maid Eliza Tilley and her step-sister Alice Partington, home from Philadelphia USA.

Alice was deaf and dumb and went to the deaf school in Manchester, where she met her husband.

They emigrated to America and had a large family – none of whom were afflicted.



Alfred Wood on the steps into the church yard



Oswald Wood with the Vicarage pony trap with Alice and Eliza Tilley



## AINSWORTH

He describes Ainsworth as an isolated village, standing on a hill three miles from everywhere!

It is not on the high road to anywhere – you must journey specially to it if you want to visit.

Whilst trams had linked up Bolton, Bury, Radcliffe – and many other places – to travel by tram meant walking down from the moor

- and before that travelling from Ainsworth to town was done on foot

But trams running from Bolton to Bury along the lower road made a great difference to life in the village – formally strangers passing through the village were few – and noticed!

And as for cabs – one old person told him “if we seed a cab, we stood a’ th’ door to watch it – to see where it were goin, but now there’s so many strangers we don’t know folk

## AINSWORTH

The village consisted mainly of the one short street – on one side there were old stone built cottages (built in about 1750-1780), with cellars, in which handloom weaving was done.



## AINSWORTH

Rain tubs caught water for washing.

Water supply and gas arrived in the village shortly before Rev Wood himself! - The village relied on wells, which sometimes failed

He thought the village looked rather dilapidated when he arrived, but during his time in the village, many of the stone-slate roofs and chimneys have been re-slatted and repaired and he felt that the village looked better off

Whilst he was here, several rows of new houses had been built The homes were comfortably furnished and clean. He found that the villagers were generally a thrifty, self respecting, intelligent class of people.

Most of them owned their own homes and pianos were common!

## AINSWORTH

Many of the children from the cottages had, through County Council scholarships, been sent to secondary schools in Bury and Radcliffe



AINSWORTH  
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AINSWORTH 28



BINSWORTH  
HISTORICAL  
SOCIETY

CHURCH ST  
BINSWORTH

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## WORK IN AINSWORTH

Apart from one weaving shed, there were no mills or workshops on the moor at this time. Villagers walked to and from their work – the bleachworks and weaving sheds in Brightmet, Bradley Fold, Elton, Radcliffe and near the Coach and Horses on Bury Road

When Rev Wood arrived, wages were low – workers in the crofts got less than £1 a week – and there was short time

But even this was better than the old days of handloom weaving

An old villager – Hampson Hardman – had worked for a firm at Nangroves (near Bury) and told how they carried home their warps and took back the cloth when woven.

They “settled” 12 times a year. The works kept a truck shop from which they obtained food on credit

and by the end of it the worker always owed more than they had earned – and so they went home without a penny – only more warps to weave!

## WORK IN AINSWORTH

During his time in the village, a big branch shop of Dobson's Textile Engineering Works was opened at Bradley Fold, as well as a weaving shed. A new Colliery shaft was sunk near Countess Lane.



## DRINKING IN AINSWORTH

There were six licensed public houses in 1905 – drinking was hardly considered a vice

But during his time here, he noticed a difference – rarely seeing anyone under the influence of drink

Men didn't spend their time in public houses as they once did

By voluntary agreement (with due compensation) the licensed houses on the moor went down to two

## THE ISOLATION HOSPITAL

Another addition to the work of the vicar was the taking over of the Joint District Isolation Hospital – just built - as a temporary Sanatorium for tubercular cases (a provision of the new Health Act.)

Here were housed for several years some 40 to 50 patients, mostly in a hopeless stage of consumption.

Alfred visited the patients once a week and also held services

Shortly after the end of the war, the Sanatorium reverted to its original use – as an isolation hospital – and the consumptive patients were transferred elsewhere



AINSWORTH  
HISTORY  
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RECREATION PARK  
AINSWORTH

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*Basildon House.*

In the back of the notebook is the following list.

Seat Holders

Allen - (2)	Holly Bank		Dawson (1)	Bury Road
			" Fred (2)	Schoolside
Brooks Sarah (1)	Oak's Nook		Drinnan (1)	"
" Wm (2)	Church Street			
" "	Schoolside			
Butterworth Ann (1)	Church Street	given up?	Eccles Jos. (1)	Church Street
Booth Harry (1)	Schoolside		Entwistle Albt (1)	Well Street
" Timothy		?		
Bailey Dr. (2)				
Barton Mr. (2)	Redbridge			
			Fawcett	Starling Road
Calvert J. C. (2)	Starling Road		Farrington (?)	
Coup (2)	Bradley Fold		Forrest (1)	Church Street
Crankshaw Mrs. (1)	Redbridge		Firth Jno ?	Schoolside

Greenhalgh	Ada	(1)	Church Street	Hardman	Mrs	(2)	Church Street
"	Peter	(2)		"	Wm Albt		
"	Arthur	(2)		"	Mary		Schoolside
"	Edwin	(2)		"	Mrs Herbt		Well Street
"	Ellis	(1)	Black Lane	Howard	Mrs Alfd		
"	Wilfrid			Hutchinson	Wm	(1)	
"	Wm Albt		'Red Lion'	Hulton	Squire	(?)	
Haslam	Emily		Coronation Terrace	Howarth	Mrs		Duke William
"	Herbt		Stanley Terrace	Hardman	Jane		Well Street
"	Albt		Bury Road	Haslam	Joe		Bury Road
"	Hannah		" "	Hargreaves			Well Street
"	John		Redbridge				
Horrocks	Chris.		Stanley Terrace				
Hampson	Wm	(1)		Jones			Greenside
"	John	(1)					
"	Susan	(1)		Kirkman	Alice		Schoolside
"	Chris.	(2)		"	Mary		Bury Road
				"	Hannah		Church Street
				"	Sarah		" "



Kirkman	Wm		Oak's Nook	Nightingale Rd		
"	Peter		Victoria Terrace	Norris	J. R.	
"	"		Church Street			
Kay	Mrs		Whitehorse			
				Syddall	Fred	
Lord	Harry	(2)		Olive	Ellis	
Lomax	John	(2)		Orrell	Wm	
Lockwood	J.		?	Openshaw	Ann	Church Street
				"	Jno	" "
				"	H.	" "
Mudd	Jno.	(2)				
Mather	Walter					
Morris	Albt			Partington	O.	
"	Sarah		Schoolside	"	J.	Church Street
Mills	Squire			Phethean		
Marlow	Mrs					
Marshall	Fred					
Myers	Jno					
Moran	Mrs					
Monks	Mr					

Pilling	Jno.		Smethurst	J. W.	
Platt	Jas.		Simmons	Mr	Bury
Parkinson	Mrs		Shepherd	Tom	
Platt	Jno		Spencer	Cecil	
		Bury Road			
Raynon	W. N.	(3)			
Readyhoff	Thos	(5)	Thomas	Walter	
Rodgers	Peter		Tootill	Arthur	
Rayson	Robt	(1)	"	Alice	Schoolside
			"	Jas.	Tong
			Taylor	Mrs	Post Office
Smith	Jas.		Thomas	Walter (Junr)	
Schofield	Jno.				
Sumner	Wm	(4)			
Spencer	H. J.	(2)			
Syddall	Mrs	(2)	Walker	Wilfrid	
"	Jos.	(1)	Warburton	Miss	Bury Road
"	Maria	(1)	Wood	Ralph	(2)
"	Robt	(2)	Williams	J.	(2)
			Walker	John	(2)
					Starling
		Schoolside			
		"			

Gallery

Brooks	Fred	(1)		Church Street				
"	Amos	(2)		"				
"	Esther		(Joe Holt)					
"	Thos			Schoolside				
"	Esther			"				
Foster	E.			Coronation Terrace				
Greenhalgh	Chris.	(2)		Church Street				
"	John	(3)		" "	Openshaw	J. R.	"	
"	Sarah	(1)		Well Street	Kirkman	Robt	"	
					Barber	Ethel	} ?	
					Kirkman	Edith		
Hardman	Seymour	(1)			Openshaw	Sam.	(2)	Church Street
Lowe	Alice	(1)	(James)		"	John	(2)	Starling
Holt	Wm			Schoolside	Rayson	J. W.		Victoria Terrace
					Tootill	Esther		Church Street
					Wright	Mrs		Well Street
					Unsworth	W.		Starling