

Sarah Rowland

Born 1858.

Daughter of the railway age, and servant of a sporting parson.

Life story by Peter Barnes.

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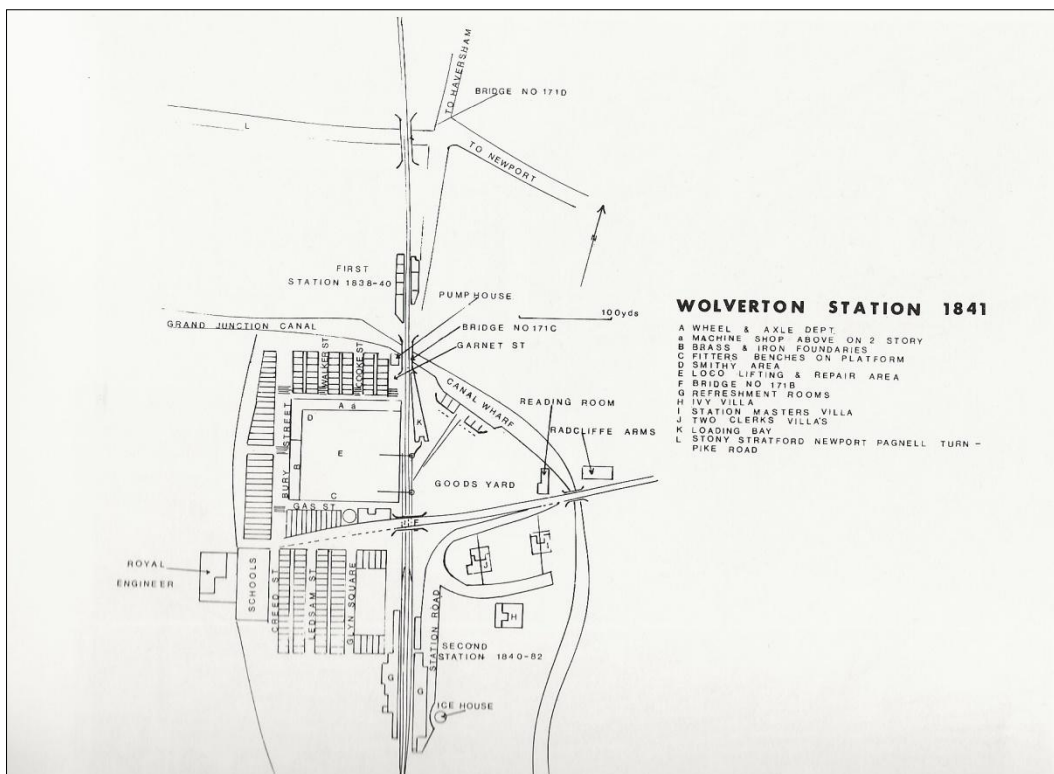
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This life story was contributed to Lives Retold in 2021 by its author, Peter Barnes. It was previously published in the Newsletter of the Family and Community Historical Research Society and is archived here with acknowledgement and thanks.

1. Introduction

In the mid-1830s, Wolverton, in north Buckinghamshire, was a small rural community with a few farms and cottages. The population was about 200. Two miles to the west lay the town of Stony Stratford, with a population of 1,500 and a degree of prosperity stemming from the coaching trade on Watling Street. That balance of fortune changed radically in the second two-thirds of the century, with the development of the railway. In 1836, Edward Bury, the first Locomotive Superintendent of the London and Birmingham Railway, walked the line with Robert Stephenson, looking for sites for watering stations. Land to the east of Wolverton fitted the bill. Midway between London and Birmingham, it was on the turnpike road between Stony Stratford and the market town of Newport Pagnell, and the Grand Junction Canal was on hand for coal delivery. The eight-acre field was purchased and development began: a station; a locomotive engine house and workshops; and accommodation for workmen and their families. The line opened in September 1838.



Wolverton Station 1841. Source: Bill West. The Trainmakers: the story of Wolverton Works. Barracuda Books Ltd., 1982, p.21 held by Milton Keynes Museum.

Earlier in 1838, Thomas Rogers (b.c.1816) married Mary Hall (b.c.1817) in Hardingstone, south of Northampton. By the 1841 census, they were living near the second Wolverton station, built in 1840. The station appears as their address on the census form, as it did for a total of 148 men, women and children. Many of those men worked on the railway – engineers, fitters, ticket collectors, firemen, engine drivers. Thomas was an engine driver. In

fact, the families were living in recently built housing, to the west of the station, but the streets were as yet unnamed. With Thomas and Mary Rogers were their children, Sarah (1838) and James (1841), both born in Wolverton.

By 1851 the streets had acquired names. Mary, Sarah (12) and James (10) were living at 403 Bury Street, named after the Locomotive Superintendent, 'initially the grandest street of New Wolverton'.¹ Several properties were shops; businesses were migrating from Stony Stratford following the decline in the coach trade. Mary, a stationer, was recorded as the head of the household and a widow.

Edward Bury resigned in 1847. His replacement, J.E. McConnell, was given the remit to 'build big'. The Wolverton Works quickly became a laboratory for innovation in design and engineering and he attracted talented young engineers and artisans. By 1851, 775 men were employed there, mostly craftsmen and apprentices. (2) Nineteen-year-old Llewellyn Rowland (b. 1831 in Duffield, Derbyshire) was one of those apprentices and, with two others, was lodging in the Rogers' household in Bury Street.

2. The Rowland family

Five years later, in the spring of 1856, Llewellyn Rowland married Sarah Rogers. Their first child, Sarah Ann Rowland, was born in 1858. She was baptised on Christmas Day 1860 at the recently built St George's Church, Wolverton, at the same time as her brother, John.

In 1861 the Rowlands were living at 406 Bury Street, three doors along from the Rogers' former family home. Also there, were Sarah's widowed mother, Mary, and two sixteen-year-old lodgers, apprentice engine fitters. By 1871 the family was in nearby Church Street, the creation of which, in the early 1860s, marked a new development in Wolverton housing, as the lots were open to private development. Previously, all housing had been owned by the railway company. The Rowland family's move there, sometime between 1861 and 1871, may have been an indication of their upward mobility. More prosaically, it may have been prompted by the demolition of some of the Bury Street houses in the 1860s. (3). Four more children – two girls and two boys – were born between 1863 and 1868.

Sometime between 1876 and 1881, Llewellyn, Sarah and five of their children had moved from Wolverton to Rugby, another important railway town on the London and North Western line. The move may have been a consequence of changes at the Wolverton Works in 1877 which saw the end of locomotive construction and repair and their replacement by carriage and wagon manufacture; locomotive work was undertaken at Rugby. (4).

Llewellyn Rowland continued to work as an engine fitter. He died in Rugby in 1891, age 59. Some of the children were living in the family home in 1881, 1891 and 1901. Sarah (senior) died in Rugby in 1910, age 71.

It is unknown whether Sarah (junior) moved to Rugby with the rest of the family and, if so, for how long. What is known for certain is that at the time of the census in April 1881, she was working as a parlour maid in the vicarage at Bradwell, a small village, two miles south-east of Wolverton.

3. Rev. Kitelee Baily



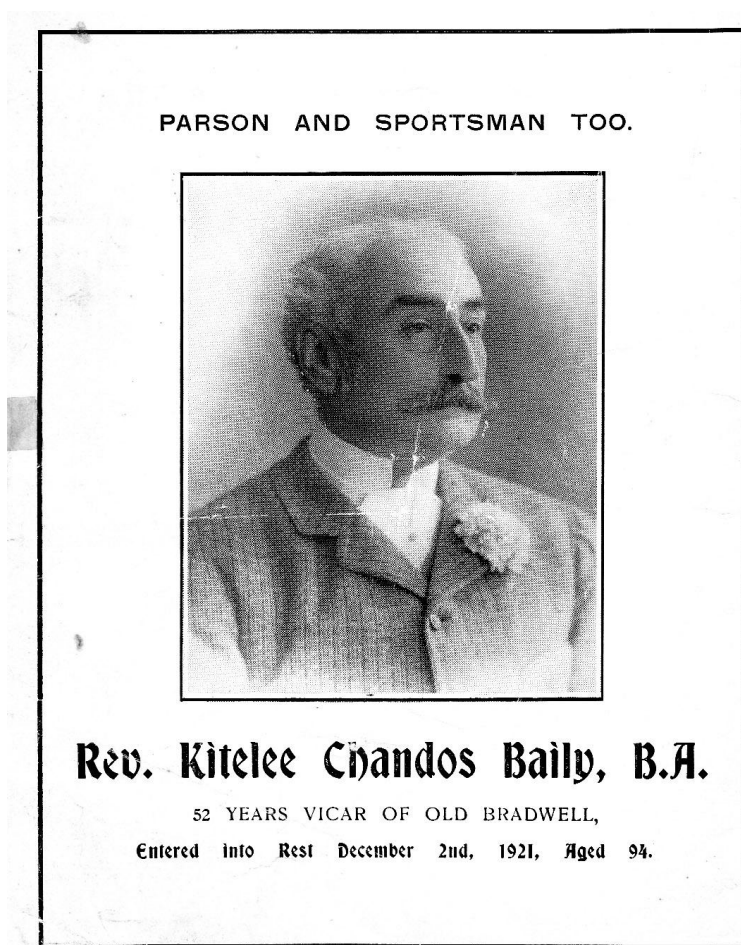
St. Lawrence's Church. Photo © Peter Barnes 2020.

In 1787 the Manor of Bradwell was purchased by William Baily, and his family played a significant role in the fortunes of the village over subsequent years. Five stained-glass windows in St Lawrence' church are dedicated to a succession of Bailys. (5). One remembers Rev. Kitelee Chandos Baily, Vicar of Bradwell from 1869 until his death in 1921, age 94.

Kitelee Baily was born in 1827 in the village of Shenley, about two miles south of Bradwell, the youngest of three children of William (b.c.1791) and Elizabeth (b.c.1801). His unusual first name was his mother's maiden name. His second name was after the Marquis of Chandos, eldest son of the Duke of Buckingham, who, like William Baily, was a shareholder in the North Western Railway Company.

Kitelee Baily graduated from the University of Durham in 1847 with a class 7 degree, one of the lowest. He is remembered in the university's archives as the co-founder of the pack of beagles. (6). Ordained in 1849, he became Curate of St Lawrence, Gnosall, Shropshire. In 1852 he was appointed Vicar of Harwell, Berkshire, where, in 1856, he married Emma Hawkins. In that same year, Kitelee joined the East India Company as chaplain to the troops, shortly before the start of the Indian Mutiny (May 1857). He served in Trichinopoly, Rangoon and Poonamallee, the last being where the Bailys' son, Arthur, was born in 1860. The Indian climate was too severe for Kitelee and he returned to England in 1862, before resigning from the Company in 1865. In 1867 he became Perpetual Curate

of Tattenhoe, near his family home, and then Vicar of Bradwell in 1869.
(7).



Rev. Kitelee Baily's memorial card, 1921. © St Lawrence's Church, Bradwell.

Kitelee Baily was a larger-than-life character. He achieved fame as a cross-country runner and rode to hounds three times a week. (8). Markham describes him as 'a remarkably handsome man' who was the doyen of the local Sporting Parsons. (9). The memorial card, following his death, identified him as 'Parson and sportsman too'. Apparently, it was not unusual for him to enter parishioners' houses and to lift the lid on their pots to see what they were cooking. He always entered the church through the Priest's door, in a procession that included all his staff. (10).

Kitelee and Emma lived in the eleven-room vicarage, built in 1870, with two servants – a cook and a parlour maid. In 1881, the cook was Hanna Eyden (26) and, as already noted, the parlour maid was twenty-two-year-old Sarah Ann Rowland.

4. Sarah Rowland as a Parlour Maid

In 1881 there were twenty-one women living within a five-mile radius of Wolverton whose occupation was recorded in the census as parlour maid or parlourmaid. All were single. Five were aged 17-19, fourteen were in their twenties, one in her early thirties, and the oldest was 43. The mean age was 23.6. Seven (33%) of the parlour maids worked in vicarages and rectories and nine were living in or associated with large houses.

A further five were living at their own family home; it is unclear whether they were working in other households while living at home or were unemployed at the time. Sixteen of the twenty-one were born in Buckinghamshire, Northamptonshire and Bedfordshire. Sarah was the only one to have been born in Wolverton.

Across the sixteen vicarages and large houses, parlour maids were part of a larger retinue of servants, 61 in total, 54 of whom were female. The next most frequently occurring servant was the cook (13 of the 16 households). Next most numerous were housemaids (7) and lady's maids (5). Five households employed a nurse, three a housekeeper and there were individual laundry-maids, kitchen maids and maids. It is impossible to establish the accuracy and significance of some of these occupational labels, as recorded by the enumerator. Was there an inclination to inflate the status of servants? There was a distinction between the jobs in terms of pay and hierarchy, 'below stairs'.

Horn reproduces figures, collected by the Board of Trade in the 1890s, which indicate that the housekeeper was the most highly paid, by some margin, followed by the lady's maid and the laundry-maid. (11). The cook, the parlour maid and the nurse were on a similar footing to one another. In 1861, Mrs Beeton detailed the job descriptions of the various roles and their relative standing in *The Book of Household Management*. However, these would seem more significant in those households with large numbers of servants, where their relative positions and responsibilities could be more readily defined. (12). It is notable that parlour maids, as such, do not feature in the book's index, whereas all the other job titles warrant several paragraphs on their respective roles and duties.

Horn also notes that, in smaller establishments, the housemaid might also perform some of the duties of a parlour maid, such as laying the table for meals, waiting at table, answering the door and announcing visitors. (13). That might indicate that in households like the Bradwell vicarage, the jobs that were required to be done by just two servants, were loosely defined. Although Sarah was described as a parlour maid, might she have also been deployed on more menial tasks than the ones described by Horn? Likewise, might the cook have done more than operate in the kitchen? It seems likely

that the Bailys would have employed other staff who did not live in. There was a large garden to maintain and the grounds accommodated stables; Rev. Bailly was a keen huntsman.



Bradwell Vicarage in 2020. Photo © Peter Barnes 2020.

On all four census returns between 1871 and 1911 the Bailys had just two servants, a cook and either a parlour maid or a house maid (1901). Their son, Arthur, was at boarding school in 1871 and was not living at home in 1881. So, it was a small household for much of the time, though there would undoubtedly have been visitors on church business and Kitelee's reputation for sociability would suggest that they entertained at home.

The population of Wolverton at that time was heavily weighted to an artisan class who were skilled, literate and comparatively well paid. By contrast, the middle class was very small. (14). That may indicate that there were relatively few employment opportunities for parlour maids in Wolverton and the surrounding area. With respect to Sarah Rowland's own employment, we know nothing beyond the fact that she was living and working at the vicarage in April 1881. We don't know whether it was her first job or whether she had been a parlour maid (or other servant) in other houses. We don't know how she was recruited. We don't know when she started at the vicarage or how long she worked there. But it is reasonable to assume that she had stopped by the time of her marriage in September 1881.

5. Sarah Browne

In September 1881, six months after the census, Sarah Rowland married George Browne (b.1858) at Holy Trinity Church, Rugby. George was born in Holborn, London in 1858. In 1873, at the age of about fifteen, he got a job as a boy sorter for the Post Office. At the time of the April 1881 census, he was in Perth, Scotland, where his occupation was recorded as 'Travelling sorter, GPO London'. He must have worked on the mail trains that travelled between the north and London, picking up mail, which was sorted *en route*. The trains would doubtless have stopped at both Rugby and Wolverton, which was presumably how he first met Sarah Rowland. Might he have lodged with the family?

George and Sarah may have spent the early years of their marriage in Rugby, as their first child, also named Sarah, was born there in 1883. Alternatively, Sarah may have returned to her parental home to give birth. By 1885, when their second child, Kate, was born, they were living in London, near George's birthplace. By 1891 there were three more daughters – Florence, Eleanor and Millicent. They were at the same address in 1901, with a further daughter, Ethel, born in 1892. Throughout that time, George sorted letters.

He died in Clerkenwell in 1905, age 46, leaving £333.8s. In 1911, Sarah was still in Clerkenwell with four of her daughters, aged 18 to 24, all single and in work. Florence's occupation was recorded as 'relief stamping'; Eleanor was a hotel cook; Millicent a fancy leather worker and Ethel a diamond polisher. Sarah, herself, was working as an office cleaner.

There is no trace of the family in the 1939 Register. Sarah died in the Islington district in 1944. Her time as a parlour maid in Bradwell was brief but her 86-year life parallels a period of profound social and economic change.

6. Notes & Acknowledgements

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Acknowledgements

Thanks to Martin Clarke and Cathy Greene (The Old Vicarage, Bradwell); Catherine McIntyre (City Discovery Centre, Milton Keynes); Stephanie Osborne (University of Durham, Alumni Office); Dianne Sutton (Milton Keynes Heritage Association); Peter Lazard (St Lawrence's Church, Bradwell).
