

# Indentures of Pauper Children of Bradfield

## Introduction

The Parish Council in Bradfield in South Yorkshire has an extensive collection of documents relating to the running of the Parish over the past 400 years. Within their collection there are many indentures, mainly from the second half of the 18<sup>th</sup> and early part of the 19<sup>th</sup> century. There are a small number from the 1600s.

Most of the indentures are for pauper children but there are also some private indentures. Additionally there are two ledgers in which greater detail was entered about some of the children. The ledgers cover the period 1801 – 1844.

- These downloads contain details of Apprentices and their Masters taken from the original ledgers and the actual indentures in the possession of Bradfield Parish Council.
- There is an alphabetical list of apprentices showing the names of parents if identified in the records, cross referenced with an alphabetical list of masters showing their addresses and occupations where known.

## Background to Parish Apprentices

- From the early 1600s, parishes were responsible for the needs of poor people who were unable to provide for themselves. The parish officers were able to arrange for orphans and for the children of paupers to be bound to a tradesman for a number of years. This had the advantage that the parish ceased to have financial responsibility for the pauper.

The binding of a young person to a master was made in a document called an indenture which formed a legal binding contract between the two parties.

- **So what actually is an indenture?**

An indenture is a form of contract between two people. One of the people is a young person, the Apprentice, and the other is the Master. The document was drawn up in two parts each having corresponding indented edges for identification and security. The indenture when signed by both parties bound the apprentice to the Master for a set period. One part of the indenture was kept by the Apprentice and the other part by the Master.

- **How old did you have to be to become an Apprentice and how long did the apprenticeship last?**

The minimum age was 7 and there are several examples in the Bradfield records of children of this age starting their apprenticeship. For boys, the apprenticeship would be likely to last until the age of 18 or 21. However, up to the 1760s boys would be bound until they were 24. For girls the apprenticeship was until the age of 18 or marriage if sooner. Apprentices were not allowed to marry without the agreement of their master.

Also downloadable here are transcriptions of some 'private indentures'. There are also eleven from the reign of King Charles I.