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# Proceedings

OF THE

## Wesley Historical Society

*Editor: E. ALAN ROSE, B.A.*

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### SIDELIGHTS ON THE ORIGINS OF PRIMITIVE METHODISM IN NORTH STAFFORDSHIRE

**I**n May this year many Methodists will make their pilgrimage to Mow Cop to celebrate the bicentenary of the first English Camp Meeting, following in the footsteps of their forebears who came on their hajj to the Jubilee, Centenary, and 150th anniversary camp meetings. The rugged landscape of Mow Cop, together with the romantic nostalgia generated at each of the big anniversary celebrations, has done much to create the popular image of Primitive Methodism. More than that it has influenced the way that religious and social historians interpret what they perceive to be the natural birth place of Primitive Methodism. In a recent radio programme, Professor Robert Colls encapsulated this in his explanation of why the first camp meeting was held at Mow Cop.

This is a theological landscape - a landscape in a tradition - a tradition not just of Wesley speaking to people but I suppose even right back into the New Testament and Jesus's Sermon on the Mount where he takes a commanding prospect and can look down upon the world. There is this wonderful sense of command which people like Bourne and Clowes wanted. The other thing is, as centres such as the English Local Studies Centre at Leicester have shown that dispersed settlements such as this, moorland fell, coastal settlements, were incredibly attractive to Primitive Methodism, because the kind of people that controlled England then did not control things up here.

Two great reasons - one is theological and spiritual - the second is social

and political - you can get away from the masters. It was a movement made up of poor people. They had no other resource.<sup>1</sup>

Does any of this have any relevance to the actual history of Methodism around Mow Cop, or of Methodism in and around the Staffordshire Potteries? Methodism had reached the Mow Cop area long before 1807, but it was not to be until the 1830s that a permanent Primitive Methodist society was established at, or within a three mile radius of, Mow Cop, and, with the exception of Tunstall, Primitive Methodism remained comparatively weak in the Pottery towns and for a long time struggled even to get a foothold. This is not necessarily the impression given by accounts of the origins of Primitive Methodism which, from the popular to the academic, have relied almost exclusively on the writings of Hugh Boume, and the rather more limited output of William Clowes. However, other contemporary sources do exist, although as these are all somewhat obscure and some have only recently become more readily accessible, it is perhaps not surprising that they have been largely overlooked.

An extensive archive relating to the Burslem Wesleyan circuit, previously held at Burslem Mission, has recently been deposited with the Stoke-on Trent City Archive Service at Hanley Library. This material comprises Burslem society and circuit records from 1794, including membership rolls for 1796-7, 1803-5, 1808, 1810-11, 1813-14, 1816, and 1818 with the totals in each society for many of the intervening years. This information is supplemented by some significant pamphlets and ephemera which survive in various local collections. All very rare, and most, if not all, probably unique, these comprise:

1. *An Account of the Introduction and Progress of Wesleyan Methodism in Tunstall and the surrounding neighbourhood; By an Old Local Preacher* [Aaron Leese] (R. Timmis, Market Place, Burslem, 1842) iv, 34pp.

The only known surviving copy of this useful pamphlet, which has sections on Tunstall, HARRISEAHEAD, KIDSGROVE, GOLDENHILL, and HALL-GREEN, is in Volume 32 of a collection of local pamphlets in Stoke-on Trent City Archives at Hanley Library. Missing its title page, it is catalogued as "R. Timmis: 'History of Wesleyan Methodism in the Tunstall Circuit'." Timmis was, in fact, the printer of this anonymously published pamphlet. The full title is given by Hugh Bourne, who also identifies the author as Aaron Leese, a contemporary of his.

<sup>1</sup> 'Something in the water' during part of a series exploring the origins of radical thought broadcast on Radio 4. January 1 2005

2. Hugh Bourne, *Letters to Mr. Aaron Leese on his history, entitled...* (James Bourne, Bemersley, 1842) pp. 12; Hugh Bourne, *No.2. An Account of the Work of God at Harriseahead, near Mow, in Staffordshire* (James Bourne, Bemersley, 1842) pp. 12.

These two pamphlets, copies of which are in the library at Englesea Brook, are in the form of four letters to Aaron Leese from Hugh Bourne. In characteristic fashion, he makes clear his intention to set the record straight by giving his version of events. The only reference made to these pamphlets is by John Walford, who in his life of Bourne footnotes his remarks on 'the assistance given by H. and J. Bourne to the seceders, or divisionists, as they were designated by the opposite party' with 'See the History of Wesleyanism at Tunstall by Mr. A. Lees; and the answer to it, by H. Bourne.'<sup>2</sup>

3. *Camp Meeting: An Address to the Methodists*, John Riles, Burslem, July 8th, 1807.

This is one of the handbills referred to by Hugh Bourne in his *History of the Primitive Methodists*.<sup>3</sup>

[The camp meetings] met with great and unexpected opposition. In the first place, the two travelling preachers in the Burslem circuit put out hand-bills against them. And in a short time, the travelling preachers in the Macclesfield circuit did the same.

It was issued by John Riles, the Burslem superintendent, probably in response to the circulation of Hugh Bourne's pamphlet, *Observations on Camp Meetings, with an Account of a Camp Meeting held on Sunday, May the 31st, 1807, at Mow, near Harriseahead*, which had given notice of a second, longer meeting to begin on Mow Cop on Saturday, July 18, 1807. It survives in an album of local ephemera collected by Enoch Wood, and which is now held at the Potteries Museum, Hanley. There is a photocopy in Hanley library, and the original, with the other items in the album, may be viewed on line.

4. *The Annual Sermon for the Methodist Sunday School, Tunstall...*  
2 June, 1811

<sup>2</sup> John Walford, *Memoirs of the Life and Labours of the Late Venerable Hugh Bourne* (1855-6) Vol.I, p.320

<sup>3</sup> First published in the *Primitive Methodist Magazine* in 1821 and 1822

The footnote of this single page hymn sheet explained the reason why the managers of the school were unable to give their usual annual report, namely the schism that had taken place within the previous two months. The original is in private hands, although copies were supplied to Hanley Library and the then Connexional Archivist some years ago.

What these sources may help to supply is a fuller, more rounded, and possibly less partisan, view of the development of Methodism in the North Staffordshire/South Cheshire border area, than that given by Primitive Methodist historians, or indeed by historians of Primitive Methodism.

It would appear that Methodism first reached the then scanty and scattered population of the HARRISEAHEAD /Mow Cop area in the late 1770s through the instrumentality of Thomas Mores. He was living at Congleton Edge, about two miles to the north of Mow Cop and from about 1777 attending preaching at Charles Shaw's house at the Lime-kilns. Mores joined the class there and became its leader, and a local preacher. At a time when 'the great extent of the circuit rendered it impossible for the three regular ministers to do more than visit the principal towns in it, with a few old established country places' he developed 'a circuit of his own, embracing Astbury, Biddulph, and Lawton parish... and God succeeded his humble efforts in the awakening of many souls... and his labours had a good effect upon the then small population'.<sup>4</sup>

The society of 13 members at the Lime-kilns became part of the Burslem circuit on its creation from the Macclesfield Circuit in 1783.<sup>5</sup> The Burslem membership rolls list a class of 14 members, including Thomas Moor [*sic*], at the Lime-kilns in 1796 and 13 in 1797, when it was transferred back to the Macclesfield circuit, becoming part of the Congleton Circuit in 1803. J.B. Dyson records a fascinating incident in 1801/2 when Jabez Bunting, on arriving to preach there, was taken ill and had to retire to bed. However, when Hugh Bourne, who happened to be in the congregation, 'commenced worship by singing and prayer... and clearly indicated his intention to go through the service and preach to the people... Mr. Bunting... immediately rose, and in a very significant manner said... "Charles, I'll preach, I am better now."<sup>6</sup>

Aaron Leese tells how, from about 1785, Methodists from Tunstall

<sup>4</sup> Leese, *op.cit.*, pp. 16-7; J.B Dyson, *The History of Wesleyan Methodism in the Congleton circuit* (London and Leeds, 1856) p.83

<sup>5</sup> J.B Dyson, *A Brief History of the Rise and Progress of Wesleyan Methodism in the Leek Circuit* (Leek, 1853) p.28 quoting a now lost Burslem circuit book.

<sup>6</sup> Dyson, *Congleton*, p.120. He would have heard this story from Charles Shaw, whose house it was and was still alive when Dyson was stationed in Congleton.

went out in parties into the countryside to hold prayer meetings, and to establish preaching places. Meetings were formed at Job Oakes's, Harriseahead and nearby at Abraham Lindop's, Wainlee, where a class was formed and preaching commenced with Joseph Pointon as the leader.<sup>7</sup> The Burslem circuit membership rolls for 1796 and 1797 list under the Tunstall society a class of a dozen members, led by Abraham Lindop, meeting at Wainlee on a Sunday. The dozen members included Lindop's son and daughter in law, Joseph Pointon and his wife, and Jane Hall. No further rolls are available until 1803, but figures are given recording 9 members in 1798 and 7 in 1799 at Harriseahead. They removed the class and preaching 'every other Sunday, to Joseph Pointon's, near the summit of Mow Cop' and on occasions 'the house would not hold the people, and they were obliged to turn out upon the side of the hill.' Hugh Bourne preached in the open air at one of these services on 12 July, 1801, which he later, with hindsight, regarded as a precursor of the first camp meeting on that same site. Outside the urban areas this was still the Methodism of cottage meetings and open air preaching. Dyson tells how James Handcock, then resident at Harriseahead, held prayer meetings at nearby Bradley Green, now Biddulph, and 'in 1802 brought Thomas Allen from Burslem, who preached under a tree, which stood in a croft adjoining the house'.<sup>8</sup>

Sometime in the late 1790s the preaching was moved from Wainlee and for a short time was conducted at Samuel Oakes', near Dales-green, and then at the Ash Farm, Harriseahead. Hugh Bourne became involved in 1800 when business engagements brought him to work in the Harriseahead area, about two miles from his home at Bemersley, first in connection with the purchase of standing timber on a farm at Dales-green and then on an engineering work in the development of Stonetrough Colliery. It was while working at Ash Farm in 1800 that he came into contact with his first convert, his cousin Daniel Shubotham. Bourne later claimed that he had found himself amongst a growing colony of miners in a neighbourhood 'ungodly and profane to a proverb... Harriseahead, in point of religion, being neglected by all men; indeed it was reckoned almost dangerous for a stranger even to pass through the neighbourhood.' He did, however, find that about a mile from Harriseahead, where there was but 'one member, old Jane Hall', on the Cheshire side of Mow Cop 'there was, and had been for years, a small Methodist society, which met at the house of old Joseph

<sup>7</sup> According to a story told by Henry Allen Wedgwood, in his *Romance of Staffordshire* Vol.I Abraham Lindop was converted by John Wesley himself, in Burslem in 1760 on Wesley's first visit to the Potteries

<sup>8</sup> Dyson, *Congleton*, p.116.

Pointon's in the Burslem circuit with preaching once a fortnight.<sup>9</sup> In fact, as Bourne later acknowledged, in his *Letters to Aaron Leese*, the HARRISEAHEAD class had been established for many years, and although, as the Burslem rolls indicate, there had been a slight decline in 1798/9, this was not, as Bourne claimed, to the extent of becoming more or less extinct. There was, however, coinciding with his arrival on the scene, a revival in the society's fortunes. As Leese put it:

God began a gracious work of the Spirit upon many minds; and some champions in God's cause were raised up; who for zeal, life, and fire, were perhaps not excelled in any part of the Methodist connexion, indeed they sometimes carried their zeal beyond the bounds of moderation; yet they were simple, honest, and sincere; their object was the conversion of everybody with whom they had to do; whether above ground, or in the bowels of the earth, they were always preaching the doctrine... and... many have been soundly converted in the bottom of a coal-pit.

This is strikingly similar to an often quoted passage in Hugh Bourne's manuscript autobiography, the first text of which was written in 1844, two years after the publication of Leese's account:

Our chapels were the coal-pit banks, or any other place; and in our conversation way, we preached the Gospel to all, good or bad, rough or smooth. People were obliged to hear... and we soon had four other colliers in distress, deeply awakened.

In 1801 Hugh Bourne, with William Handley, Daniel Shubotham, and others, built a chapel at HARRISEAHEAD for the growing society, the first of several such chapel building projects which he undertook for the Wesleyan Methodists. By 1803 there were 47 members at HARRISEAHEAD, in two classes led by Joseph Pointon and Daniel Shubotham.

In 1804-5, there was a dramatic increase in the circuit membership from 621 to 878. The membership at Tunstall more than doubled and at HARRISEAHEAD peaked at 87. Bourne attributed this to contacts made with revivalists from Stockport, who had been invited to a lovefeast at the Congleton chapel at Michaelmas 1804. In November 1806, Lorenzo Dow was invited to preach in the Congleton chapel and there Hugh Bourne purchased from him American camp-meeting publications. Dow wrote of this invitation that:

<sup>9</sup> 'On the origin of the Primitive Methodist Connexion, with notices of the origin of the Wesleyan Connexion', *Primitive Methodist Magazine* 1836, p. 177.

These were *Old Methodists*, and there was no separate party at Congleton; but a great majority of the leaders, &c., were determined to leave the society if the invitation was prevented, which I knew not of till afterwards.<sup>10</sup>

He compared this to the situation in Macclesfield where a separation had already occurred and his 'visits had been the means of the late great revival, and a large addition to their society'. In the Burslem Circuit, in spite of the difficulties the circuit had with the camp-meetings, there was to be no such separation for another four years.

Following the holding of, in May 1807, the first camp meeting in Joseph Pointon's field at Mow Cop, the Burslem superintendent, John Riles, on 8 July, issued a handbill:-

### CAMP MEETINGS

#### An Address to the Methodists

The Camp-Meeting held on Sunday, May 31st, at Mow, near Harseahead, has given rise to various conjectures; and the public in general have been led to draw very wrong conclusions, respecting the authors and encouragers, of that meeting. We are sorry that the Methodist Connexion has been charged as patronising such irregularity and disorder. To vindicate the reputation of the body, they deem it their duty, to come forward in this way, to inform the public in general, and the Methodist Societies in the vicinity of the Burslem Circuit in particular, that they highly disapprove of these Meetings.

This measure has appeared the more necessary, as '*Observations on Camp-Meetings*,' has been printed, and industriously circulated through the country, in which the writer endeavours to vindicate them, and advertises for two other meetings of a similar nature.

There were reasons for Riles's hostile reaction. When he was in the Macclesfield circuit, from 1804-6, a group calling themselves Christian Revivalists had separated from the Methodists and built their own chapel opened in 1806 by Lorenzo Dow. Official Methodism found that the activities of the revivalists 'a well-meaning body; but enthusiastical and ungovernable to an extraordinary degree'<sup>11</sup> and encouraged by

<sup>10</sup> Lorenzo Dow, *History of a Cosmopolite; or The Four Volumes of... Journal*, 3rd.Ed. (Joshua Martin, Wheeling, V A., 1848) pp.289-90.



Lorenzo Dow, an American and a republican, not merely disruptive but, in so far as it undermined Methodism's claim to respectability, at the very least, unhelpful. Between 1799 and 1811 Methodism had to make strenuous efforts to counter a political threat from those supporters of the Establishment who saw the numerous preachers and teachers that Methodism was raising up as a 'wandering tribe of fanatical teachers, mostly taken from the lowest and most illiterate classes of Society, among whom are to be found raving enthusiasts... obtaining thereby an unlimited sway over the minds of the ignorant multitude' and abusing 'the protection of their Meetings for purposes highly injurious to Church and State' In such an atmosphere, the presence of Lorenzo Dow merely added fuel to the fire. Methodism responded to such attacks with a combination of extravagant expressions of loyalty to the state and stricter enforcement of 'order and regularity'. John Riles, who later told Hugh Bourne that he had been afraid that the camp meetings might alarm the government, promoted a Conference resolution banning camp meetings (and American preachers!) and circulated the handbill to let it be known

that the official members are not accountable for the irregular proceedings of a few individuals; and after they have taken every step that reason and prudence can suggest, they conceive that no odium can justly attach to the Methodist Connexion on this account.

Leese refers to the difficulties that the stricter and more literal interpretation of the Toleration Act by local magistrates were causing in the Burslem circuit.

Methodism was looked upon in that day by the great men of the land as... likely to produce mischievous effects on the nation if not timely checked... some of the public prints took up the subject, and hinted that magistrates and subordinate officers should put the law in force against those fellows who were running about the country in every direction without license or authority.

... a gentleman in the neighbourhood of Hall Green fined Thomas Allin and several hearers seven shillings and six pence each, for preaching in an unlicensed house, though he was licensed himself.

A Conference ruling that required the expulsion of any member

<sup>11</sup> Joseph Nightingale, *A Portraiture of Methodism* (1807) p.489.

applying for a preaching licence without being approved as a Preacher by the Quarterly Meeting' could have been the reason for Hugh Bourne's expulsion in June 1808.

The camp meetings, and the expulsion of Hugh Bourne, do not seem in themselves to have had any dramatic impact on circuit membership. Interestingly, a Baptist historian believed that a contributing factor to the establishment of a Baptist cause in Burslem was that

This neighbourhood had lately been stirred by a great evangelical wave, and the great camp-meeting at Mow Cop has made that place a Jerusalem for the Primitive Methodist. Some converts were evidently more primitive than even any Methodist, and were content with nothing more modern than primitive apostolic church and baptism.<sup>12</sup>

On 10 February, 1812, the Baptist pastor, Thomas Thompson, James Nixon and fellow Baptists and Primitive Methodists registered for worship a house at Thompson's family cotton works, just north of Newcastle-under-Lyme.<sup>13</sup> This is the 'Cotton Works' which appears on the first printed Primitive Methodist plan.

Robert Currie and others have divided the Methodist denominations into revivalist offshoots, such as the Primitive Methodists, which developed a mass following round a very few ex-Wesleyans, and secessions, composed almost entirely of ex-Wesleyans and constitutionalist in emphasis.<sup>14</sup> In an article in the *Wesleyan Methodist Magazine* 1835, Thomas Hams, wrote that in Tunstall.

..in the year 1812 [actually 1811] a very serious division took place in the society, and nearly one half of the members left, and formed themselves into a separate body. They afterwards assumed the name of Primitive Methodists; and Tunstall continues to be their most important and influential circuit.<sup>15</sup>

Hugh Bourne responded, by publishing in the following year's *Primitive Methodist Magazine* a historical account of the Primitive Methodist Connexion's first movements to 'show it to have been as really an original as was Mr. Wesley's' and in it questioned Harris's

<sup>12</sup> W.T Whitley, *Baptists of North-West England* (1913) p.171

<sup>13</sup> Barbara Donaldson, *The Registrations of Dissenting Chapels and Meeting Houses in Staffordshire, 1689-1852* (Collections for a History of Staffordshire, Fourth series, Vol. III, 1960) p.26.

<sup>14</sup> Robert Currie, *Methodism Divided* (1968) p.54.

<sup>15</sup> Thomas Harris, 'Methodism in Tunstall and its Vicinity' *Wesleyan Methodist Magazine* 1835, Abridged Ed. pp.262-4;

version of events.

How the writer got this information we do not know; there being surely Wesleyans at Tunstall, who, of their own knowledge, could have informed him, that his statement was wide of all historical truth.<sup>16</sup>

In fact, the circuit rolls, reveal a reduction in membership between 1810 and 1811, from 1090 to 982, mostly at Tunstall, where the society declined from 267 members to 154. Harris seems to have been correct in describing this as a division. The hundred or so members who left the Wesleyan society were to provide a substantial basis for the 'society of Primitive Methodists' when this was constituted in February, 1812, the Tunstall society probably comprising about half of the 200 total membership of infant Connexion.

In the years leading up to this schism, the Burslem circuit had found the activities of the revivalists in Tunstall increasingly troublesome, and that they were becoming as 'ungovernable' as their counterparts in Macclesfield. John Riles later told Bourne that the main reason for his expulsion in June 1808 had been his tendency to set up other than ordinary worship.

Being in Mr. Riles' company, in regard to trustee business, I remarked on his having put me out. He intimated about my having a tendency to setting up other places of Worship. Of course I was not conscious of such a tendency. He might, is true, have Mr. Smith's kitchen in his view...<sup>17</sup>

By 1808 the revivalists had been registering their own places of worship in Tunstall. On 18 February that year, Hugh Bourne registered the two houses in Tunstall, the occupiers being given as Hugh Wood and William Clowes.<sup>18</sup> About this time Bourne, according to his later account, registered John Smith's kitchen.

Towards the close of 1807... I found John Smith and James Steele in trial of mind. The female preacher being again at Tunstall, was shut out of the chapel under a plea of Conference. They said it was enough to make a secession and they had determined to fit up Mr. Smith's kitchen for a place of worship. Their talk gave me alarm. I dreaded a secession... so they concluded that the kitchen should be for preaching only, and no society should be formed in it. I then fell in with them, and I obtained a

<sup>16</sup> *Primitive Methodist Magazine* 1836, pp.68-9.

<sup>17</sup> Walford, *op.cit.*, p. 180.

<sup>18</sup> Donaldson, *op.cit.*, p.13. Hugh Wood was the founder and first superintendent of the Tunstall Methodist Sunday School. He was succeeded in that office by James Steele.

license from the Bishop's court, and it was settled for preachings to be on Friday evenings.<sup>19</sup>

Leese interpreted the troubles at Tunstall as another episode in Methodism's ongoing internal disputation about church government.

In 1808... a storm was gathering over this fine society... Some part of it, with James Steele at their head, and some others in the country, were dissatisfied with our church government. James Steele was one of the first members of the Tunstall society, a steady, sensible man, of great influence... a leader of two classes, a trustee and steward, also a superintendent of the school, and with all a person highly respected, but he could not brook any superior. They had been agitating in some of the country societies for some time, but they kept things as secret as possible; however it was very evident, their purpose was to form a party, upon what they called the simplicity and uniformity of Primitive Methodism.

Matters came to ahead when, in 1810, John Aikenhead was stationed in the Burslem circuit. Described by Leese as 'a sober-minded man, a strict disciplinarian'

He took notice of their irregular proceedings, such as holding lovefeasts of their own, in the same neighbourhood, and at the same hour we had service in the chapel; indeed they seemed to be a distinct people before the division took place... and when Mr. Aikenhead told them 'that we could not consider them as belonging to our body, so long as they trampled under foot our rules'... they gave out to the public that they were expelled, when the real fact of the case was, they expelled themselves by breaking our rules. And now it was, 'to your tents, O Israel!' They used all their influence to draw as many people as possible to their party, both in Tunstall, and likewise by saying all manner of evil against us falsely.

When Thomas Harris wrote his article in 1835, he was having to confront Warrenite agitation, which in Burslem, as some other places, eventually boiled down to a bitter dispute over Sunday school management and a local schism over this issue. The agitation which culminated in April, 1811, in the division in the Tunstall society and Sunday school, followed a remarkably similar pattern to that in

<sup>19</sup> Hugh Bourne, Manuscript Autobiography, A Text, f227. at Methodist Archives

Burslem some twenty five years later. It was the managers of the Sunday school who found themselves in the eye of the storm, with disputes over such issues as the teaching of writing on the Sabbath, as the annual report of the Sunday School endorsed on the hymn sheet for the Annual Sermon on 2nd June, 1811, sought to explain:

The managers of this School think it incumbent on them to state, that in promoting its general welfare, they have met with much opposition from some of those who were Teachers; that these teachers were not *expelled*. (as they declare,) but separated themselves from us, taking with them a large proportion of the Scholars, and also of the books &c. properly belonging to the ORIGINAL METHODIST SUNDAY-SCHOOL; and have established a School in opposition.

Firmly persuaded that this most excellent Institution has been awfully abused, by appropriating a portion of the LORD'S DAY, to teaching the Elements of WRITING and ARITHMETIC, because inconsistent with the religious observations of, that Day, they think it their duty further to observe, that for the SPIRITUAL and TEMPORAL ADVANTAGE of the children taught in *this* SCHOOL, they have set aside the practice above mentioned, which affords more time for reading, and religious Instruction, and have set apart two Evenings in each week for the purpose of teaching *writing* &c, to those children who merit such a Privilege.

In the surviving Burslem circuit archive there is little overt reference to these events. Aikenhead adds a note to the statement of collections for Connexional funds for 1811 that

I have done my best to make our collections productive but have had to contend with an accumulation of untoward circumstances which have operated unfavourably.

In a society steward's book there is a minute recording that at a meeting of Preachers and Leaders held in the vestry of Burslem Chapel on 15 July, 1811

It was unanimously agreed (or with one exception) that Samuel Broad having conducted himself in a manner unbecoming a Leader and member of our Society, by condemning the conduct of our Brethren the Leaders of the Tunstall Society and approving the conduct of the new

party in that place, we therefore are agreed, that it is proper to expel him from our society.

As a consequence of the division, the revivalists in Tunstall found themselves with a ready made society and Sunday school. Within a short time Hugh Bourne and his brother James provided them with a building in which to meet, and here, on 13 February, 1812, the Society of Primitive Methodists was formerly constituted. Six years later, in 1818, Lorenzo Dow returned to Tunstall to preach the annual sermons for the Sunday school for which 'the friends of the old Methodist Connexion generously offered the use of their Chapel, by which a more numerous congregation may be accommodated'.<sup>20</sup>

No Primitive Methodist society was established in the vicinity of Mow Cop until the mid 1830s. By the time Walford was writing in the 1850s, there stood on Mow Cop:

a new and modern-built village, a district church, an elegant, newly-erected Wesleyan chapel, which has a very fine and commanding appearance, and the Primitive Methodists' chapel of less dimensions, and these ornament the heights of Mow Cop.<sup>21</sup>

JOHN H. ANDERSON

(John Anderson is a retired solicitor)

<sup>20</sup> Photograph of handbill in H.B.Kendall, *The History of the Primitive Methodist Church*, Vol.I, (c. 1904) p.60.

<sup>21</sup> Walford, *op.cit*, p.50.

# TWO PRIMITIVE METHODIST WOMAN PREACHERS

## Introduction

When, in the 1980s, I researched the phenomenon of the Primitive Methodist female travelling preachers I was only able to note brief details of most of the women.<sup>1</sup> Over the years more information has come to light and so, in celebration of Primitive Methodism in 2007, I offer a few additional thoughts on two of those women. Ann Tinsley, in fact, appeared twice, once in the Primitive Methodist stations under her maiden name and secondly, in the *additional list*, under her married/widowed name of Ann Longmire(s), so now the two become one! Mary Bulmer was accorded a very sparse entry in the *additional list* because she worked towards the end of the nineteenth century, when the Connexion was no longer making official use of women as itinerants, though a number, of whom she was one, were considered as travelling preachers by their own circuits.

### Ann Tinsley (1808-c. 1882+)

Ann Tinsley was born in Balderton, Nottinghamshire circa 1808/11, daughter of William Tinsley, a labourer. Little is known of her before she became a travelling preacher in Grimsby in 1828,<sup>2</sup> where she worked for six months before moving on to Lincoln. Primitive Methodism appears to have arrived in Grimsby with Thomas King in October 1819 and the first society was formed on 3 November. So much progress had been made that by the time of the second Conference in May 1821 Grimsby had become a circuit.<sup>3</sup> It is not certain when Primitive Methodist missionaries first visited Lincoln, though William Clowes and John Wedgwood are credited with entering the city in 1818, when they encountered considerable opposition. Until 1820 the Lincoln Branch was part of the Nottingham circuit, but at the September quarterly meeting it was made into an independent circuit. The first

<sup>1</sup> Graham, E. Dorothy, 'Chosen by God: The female itinerants of early Primitive Methodism (Ph.D. thesis, University of Birmingham, 1986); Graham, E. Dorothy, *Chosen by God: A List of the Female Travelling Preachers of Early Primitive Methodism* (Bunbury, Cheshire, 1989)

<sup>2</sup> Grimsby Circuit plans, 13th July 1828 - 4th January 1829

<sup>3</sup> Petty, J., *The History of the Primitive Methodist Connexion* (1880) pp. 103, 137; Kendall, H.B., *The History of the Primitive Methodist Church* 2 vols. (n.d.) vol. 1 pp. 444-448

chapel or room used in 1819 by the early Lincoln Primitive Methodists was in Mint Street. At that time prospects seemed to be promising as six preachers were stationed there and a membership of 664 was recorded, but the following year there were only two preachers and only half as many members. The fluctuation may perhaps be accounted for by shifting boundaries, the creation of too many new circuits too quickly, lack of good strong local lay leadership, dissension within the local societies and the acceptance of too many unsuitable travelling preachers, who were unqualified and too inexperienced for the job. It is difficult to tell as records are scant and statistical returns for the years 1824-1829 are non-existent. However, by 1829 the Lincoln circuit reported a membership of 221. By this time Ann had been working in the circuit for the second six months of the connexional year of 1828 - 1829, so maybe she can be credited with some of the improvement in its fortunes! In 1829 Ann Tinsley was stationed in the extensive Hull circuit for six months before returning to Lincoln for the last six. Then she moved back to Hull for two years (1830-32). As the Hull circuit, with a number of Missions and Branches, covered much of the North of England one must not assume that travelling preachers appointed to 'Hull', necessarily worked in the vicinity of Hull itself; often they travelled far afield. In 1823 missionaries from Hull visited Nenthead, Allendale and Weardale, a lead mining area, near Alston in Cumberland.<sup>4</sup> A society was established as part of the Barnard Castle Branch and prospered. It seems that Ann was sent into that area around 1830 and the *Primitive Methodist Minutes* record payments from the Travelling Preachers Sick Fund Accounts for the year ending May 12 1830 to the Hull circuit in 1830 on account of (her) illness. - of £1.4s.0d. (for 40 weekdays) and 12s.0d. (for 60 weekdays).<sup>5</sup> It was while Ann was working there that she met John Longmire of Allendale, a partner in a shop which sold mining clothes and equipment. John was ten years older than Ann, and they married on 26 August 1831 at St Cuthbert Parish Church, Allendale Town.<sup>6</sup> Unfortunately, John died on 24 February 1832 and was buried in Middleton churchyard. Nearly five months later their son, named John after his father, was born on 21 July 1832. He was baptised by the Primitive Methodist minister on 3 August 1832 at Nenthead, but a second baptism took place at the

4 Petty, op.cit. pp. 203-204; Kendall, op.cit vol. 2 pp.146ff; cf. Patterson, W.M., *Northern Primitive Methodism* (1909) pp. 171-177

5 *PM Minutes* (1830) p.8

6 Marriage certificate of John Longmire and Ann Tinsley, St Cuthbert's Parish Church, Allendale. I am indebted to Derek W. Longmire, her great, great grandson, for personal family details.



Parish Church in Middleton on Teesdale on 27 October 1832.<sup>7</sup>

Ann and her son then disappear from the accounts until records in Lincoln Record Office for June 1837 show an Ann Longmires (*sic*) in Lincolnshire. As she is no longer listed on the Primitive Methodist Stations as a travelling preacher Ann must now have been regarded as a hired local preacher.<sup>8</sup> As Ann Longmire she is listed on the Scotter station in that circuit's Local Preachers and Quarter Day Minutes, along with William Sanderson as superintendent. The Preachers Meeting Minutes for September state that Sister Longmires (*sic*) go into Epworth Branch on 15 October for 2 months. The Scotter Circuit Accounts for 1837 give details of her salary - 14 weeks £2.5s.3d; allowance for her child 14 weeks at 3s per week £2.2s.0d., plus travelling expenses, chiefly ferries. While the 1838 Scotter Circuit Plan of Sunday appointments shows that in the 13 weeks of 21 January - 15 April she had 20 appointments with 2 Sundays free. Her name does not appear on the weekday plan, perhaps this was because of her son. The Gainsborough Circuit Accounts for June 1838 give details of her salary - £2.10s a quarter; one child £1.19s; travelling expenses and ferries 3s 6d and meat bill £1.4s 4d; in August her bill at Mrs Walker's for 53 meals was 19s 10d and meat bills at Mr Rexe's came to 19s 6d - no salary for her or the child recorded. There are similar accounts for the rest of 1838, 1839 and March 1840. Ann took anniversary services at Marton on 4 March 1837 and at Misterton in 1838 and at Ovingham in 1839. William Lonsdale, a Primitive Methodist itinerant, had been stationed in Scotter in 1837, so obviously Ann Longmire would have known him as a colleague. William had married Elizabeth Batey of Nenthead in 1837. Elizabeth had been brought up by her uncle and aunt, Mr and Mrs Harrison, who were described as well-off. When she died on 5 October 1841, leaving William with two small children Mr and Mrs Harrison looked after the children. Unfortunately, Mr Harrison died while William was stationed at Whitby (1842-3) and Mrs Harrison was unable to cope with the children on her own, so William resigned from the itinerancy in 1842 and in December that year went as a hired local preacher to Scotter, where, doubtless he renewed his acquaintance with Ann Longmire. In 1843 William was restored to the itinerancy as a probationer and on 15 August 1844 at All Saints Parish Church in

<sup>7</sup> Nenthead Primitive Methodist register, no 136 (Carlisle Record Office); Parish Register of Middleton in Teesdale: John, son of John and Ann Longmire, Alston.

<sup>8</sup> Hired local preachers were often regarded by their own circuits as travelling preachers, even if not recognized as such by the Connexion. *Primitive Methodist Minutes* 1821 p.4 Q.9. Hired local preachers were taken out by circuits when they could afford an extra preacher and there was a mission opportunity.

Gainsborough, he married Ann Longmire. Her son John (aged 12) went to live with a Primitive Methodist family in Fulbeck, and census records show him living with William and Mary Ockland. John died on 24 February 1871.<sup>9</sup>

A son, Walton, was born to Ann and William and he was baptised by Charles Parker, the Primitive Methodist itinerant at Grimsby, on 2 August 1846. Then, on 14 September 1846, the family moved to Doncaster.<sup>10</sup> In the following years William and Ann served in the Swinefleet (1847-9); Grimsby (1849-51); Pocklington (1851-53); Driffield (1853-55) and Brigg (1855-57) circuits before they returned to Gainsborough in 1857. The circuit records include the statement that Mrs Longmire's name (it looks as if the circuit still thought of Ann as Mrs Longmire, rather than Mrs Lonsdale), come off the plan as she is removing next mid-summer.<sup>11</sup> In 1859, the Lonsdales moved to Hornsea (1859-61) before going to the Swinefleet circuit. William Lonsdale died on 19 May 1863 and was buried in Gainsborough cemetery. Ann paid tribute to her husband in his obituary in the *Primitive Methodist Magazine*.<sup>12</sup>

By now Ann's son John Longmire had started his own business in Silver Street, Gainsborough and had become a local preacher.<sup>13</sup> In a will (unproved) made by John on 21 November 1863, he refers to his dear Mother Ann Lonsdale of Gainsborough, widow.<sup>14</sup> This would imply that Ann had now returned to Gainsborough, which would make sense as her son was there and she herself must have had many friends in the area after working there many times over the years. Added to this William Harland (1801-1880), another Primitive Methodist itinerant, whom Ann had probably known as a colleague when both were in the extensive Hull circuit in 1829 and 1830, was stationed in Gainsborough in 1862. By the age of 26 William Harland had already been married, widowed and married to his second wife, Jane. In 1828 he entered the itinerancy and was first stationed in the Driffield Branch of the Hull circuit, but then travelled in other Hull branches. He had a distinguished ministry, being editor of the *Connexional Magazine* (1857-1862)<sup>15</sup>, President of Conference (1862), Secretary four times (1842, 1852, 1856, 1864) and a Deed Poll member (1870). Jane died on

<sup>9</sup> *PM Mag.* (1871) p. 632

<sup>10</sup> Gainsborough Primitive Methodist Quarterly Meeting Minutes 1846  
[Lincoln Record Office]

<sup>11</sup> Gainsborough circuit minutes, June 13th 1859

<sup>12</sup> *PM Mag.* (1863) p.577-582, especially 581-582

<sup>13</sup> *PM Mag.* (1871) p.632

<sup>14</sup> Information from Mr Derek W. Longmire

12th February 1866.<sup>16</sup> Sometime later William married Ann Lonsdale, but she is only referred to as the sorrowing widow and not named in his obituary.<sup>17</sup> Her great great grandson, in his notes, says we have a photograph of her which refers to her as Mrs Lonsdale now Mrs Harland.<sup>18</sup> Leaving Gainsborough in 1868 the Harlands went to the Barton on Humber circuit, but William's health forced him to superannuate in 1872 and he is listed on the Stations as a supernumerary at Gainsborough, but in time they must have returned to Barton on Humber because, from his obituary, we learn that in July 1880 he suffered a stroke, dying on 10 October 1880. Following an impressive funeral he was interred in the cemetery and laid next to the remains of the late Rev. H. Knowles.<sup>19</sup> Henry Knowles died at Barton in 1877 and the writer of William Harland's obituary, James Calvin, was the itinerant at Barton at the time of William's death.

The 1881 census states that Mrs Ann Harland, aged 70, a widow and annuitant, born at Balderton, Nottinghamshire, about 1811, was then living at West Ackridge in Barton-on-Humber. In 1882 her address was Beech Villas, West Ackridge, Barton-on-Humber.<sup>20</sup> There is no note of her death, but by now she would be well into her seventies. Her name does not appear on the 1901 census.

### Miss Mary Bulmer (c. 1870 - 1934+)

Mary Bulmer was born c. 1870 at Wylam in the parish of Tanfield, County Durham.<sup>21</sup>

Nothing is known of her earlier life, except that she was educated at Tanfield Church School, apparently an elementary school. Then, in the spring of 1888, she went to Stanhope, County Durham where she spent three years, presumably working as an evangelist, as she is so described in 1901 census, or, perhaps in Primitive Methodist parlance a hired local preacher, in Weardale. Mary conducted a very successful mission in the Newcastle II circuit in November 1891, most probably in West Street chapel. As a further indication of the activities in which Mary Bulmer engaged we note that in the early part of 1892 she preached the chapel anniversary sermons at Toft Hill; in June she conducted a

<sup>15</sup> Barber, B. Aquila, *A Methodist Pageant* (1932) p. 161 - portrait

<sup>16</sup> *PM Mag.* (1866) p. 379

<sup>17</sup> *PM Mag.* (1881) pp.241-243

<sup>18</sup> Information from Mr Derek W. Longmire

<sup>19</sup> *PM Mag.* (1881) pp.241-243

<sup>20</sup> *History and Gazetteer and Directory of Lincolnshire, 1882*

<sup>21</sup> 1901 census

memorable mission at Brotton; then a fine mission at Shotley Bridge and also we learn that her visit to Consett was attended with much blessing.<sup>22</sup>

Richard Robinson (1850-1899) was stationed at Stanley in 1899 as the superintendent minister, but unfortunately he died on 16 September. His colleague, David Kyles (1872-1900), was in his first appointment after leaving Hartley College, having been stationed in the circuit in 1897. As it was the beginning of the connexional year when Robinson died the circuit was in dire need of more assistance, so turned to Mary Bulmer, already a well-known local and respected evangelist. Mary stepped into the breach to support David Kyles, but tragically he then died on 12 August the following year. So Mary continued to work in the Stanley circuit and, therefore, for two years worked as a travelling preacher in the circuit, even if not recognized and stationed as such by the Connexion. Certainly, the circuit and the Sunderland and Newcastle District would regard her as an itinerant!<sup>23</sup>

Sunday School work and temperance had always been important in Primitive Methodism and the Young Peoples Society of Christian Endeavour was formed in 1896. The latter had grown so much that by 1898 it was decided that they should become two separate departments. The first Connexional Christian Endeavour Secretary was George Bennett and the following year the rules of the Society for Christian Endeavour were altered to conform with those of the National Union of Christian Endeavour.<sup>24</sup> The movement became very important in the life of the church in its work with young people. In 1904 Mary Bulmer was elected to the National Executive of the Christian Endeavour Council and in this capacity visited extensively throughout the country. She served for several years on the National Council and also on the local Christian Endeavour councils, including being President.

Chester-le-Street seems to have rather a chequered history, being first missioned in 1823, and again in 1841 by the South Shields circuit which

<sup>22</sup> Patterson, *W.M., Northern Primitive Methodism* (1909) pp. 317-18, 79, 30, 214, 216

<sup>23</sup> *General Consolidated Minutes on the Primitive Methodist Connexion 1892* p.69 Rule no. 251 - No hired local preacher must be employed, without the consent of the General Committee, except to supply the work of a sick travelling preacher who is on the Conference fund. a. Every application by a station to employ a hired local preacher must contain the following particulars respecting the person whom it is desired to engage: his name, age, employment, to what station he belongs, and how long he has been a local preacher. See also footnote 7.

<sup>24</sup> *Primitive Methodist Church. Centenary Celebration, May 25-27th, 1907. Souvenir and Programme of Camp Meeting etc., Mow Cop* p. 36; Kendall, H. B., *History of the Primitive Methodist Church* (1919) pp. 143-144; cf. *The General Rules of the Primitive Methodist Church* (1912) pp. 130-139, (1922) pp. 126-135

appears to have given it up. Then the Durham circuit December quarterly meeting of 1846 reported that Chester-le-Street and four other societies only had a membership of 23, so they were handed over to the Sunderland Circuit to form a branch, along with some other small causes. However, by 1871, chiefly due to the development of the coal industry, the Chester-le-Street society had gone from strength to strength and became head of a strong circuit. Alfred J. Campbell, FLS (1858-1931) was the superintendent minister, with George Fawcett (1874-1950) as his probationer colleague in 1899.<sup>25</sup> Two things are obvious - first, the Primitive Methodist ministry was by this time much more settled as Campbell stayed until 1905, Fawcett until 1903 and his successor, Thomas Anthony Young, from 1903-1908, second, there must have been great opportunities in the circuit as Mary Bulmer was engaged as virtually a third travelling preacher for three years. During her period in the Chester-le-Street circuit Mary enjoyed considerable success and the circuit prospered. However, she had to refuse the invitation to stay for a fourth year as she married John Edwin Leuty, a Primitive Methodist itinerant.<sup>26</sup>

John Edwin Leuty (1855-1945) appears to have first entered the Primitive Methodist ministry in 1878, but resigned in 1881.<sup>27</sup> At the time of his marriage to Annie Arch (1849-1904), the third child and second daughter of Joseph Arch, MP (1826-1919), the Farm Workers Leader, he was a minister in the Wesleyan Reform denomination stationed in Middlesborough. They were married in Leamington on 12 August 1880. Although Annie was not strong, when she was 19 she had been appointed a Primitive Methodist local preacher on the Leamington plan where she was a highly regarded. Now, despite her health problems, she played a full active part as the wife of an itinerant, very interested in temperance, missions and a supporter of the Primitive Methodist Orphanage.<sup>28</sup> Annie, who had been a dressmaker, kept up her contacts with her home area, despite being the wife of an itinerant, by opening a draper's shop in Leamington in 1886. In 1889

<sup>25</sup> Fawcett later became Secretary of the Connexional Christian Endeavour (1915-1920), yet another contact with Mary Bulmer (Leuty).

<sup>26</sup> Patterson, *op.cit.* pp.275-276

<sup>27</sup> Leary, W., *Directory of Primitive Methodist Ministers and their circuits*, (1990), p.131

<sup>28</sup> 1881 census birth; Horn Pamela, *Joseph Arch (1826-1919): The Farm Workers' Leader* (Kineton, 1971) p.157, note 18 on p. 174

Leuty became (or returned as) a Primitive Methodist itinerant.<sup>29</sup> He was stationed in the Sheffield IV circuit and then from 1891-3 the Leutys served in Leamington. Did Annie perhaps keep up her interest in the draper's shop - if so, no doubt, it would have provided a welcome extra source of income to a Primitive Methodist travelling preacher. Apparently her father borrowed money from Annie in October and December 1892, which was while they were stationed in Leamington, so maybe this bears out the thought that she kept on her draper's shop!<sup>30</sup> After Leamington the Leutys moved to the Swindon II (1893-1895), Bristol IV (1895-1899), Durham (1899-1902) and Chester II (1902-1906) circuits. It was, doubtless, while they were in Durham that they got to know Mary Bulmer, who was acting as a travelling preacher in Chester-le-Street. Annie Leuty died 3 November 1904 in Chester, aged 59. Annie and John had no children of their own, but they adopted Daisy Isabella, the daughter of her Annie's youngest brother, Thomas.<sup>31</sup> She was always known as Daisy Leuty.

So to return to Mary Bulmer. Mary became the second wife of John Edwin Leuty on 8 August 1906 and moved with him to the Newcastle-under-Lyme, Staffordshire circuit. Having served in that circuit (1906-1910), Preston I (1910-1914), Haltwhistle (1914-1919), Normanton (1919-1923). Leuty retired to Chester-le-Street as a supernumerary in 1923 and the *Annual Returns and Balance Sheet of the Primitive Methodist Friendly Society for the year ending December 31st 1939* record a annuity payment of £22. 2s 6d. to John R. Leuty. In 1910 Mrs J. E. Leuty's name appears under the heading of Speakers for the Mow Cop Camp Meeting, specially invited by the General Centenary Committee. She was the only woman among the 29 invited speakers and was the speaker at Stand No. 1 on Sunday afternoon June 19th. Mary became the first organizing Secretary of the Primitive Methodist Women's Missionary Federation in 1909 and continued to serve until 1919. She was the founder and editor of the *Primitive Methodist Women's Missionary Federation Yearbook* and is listed, with a portrait, at the Centenary Conferences Ladies' Missionary Meeting and also in the 1932 *Yearbook*.<sup>32</sup> In the same *Yearbook* Mary is named, again with a

<sup>29</sup> Ibid. p.156, note 15 on p.174

<sup>30</sup> Ibid. p. 204, note 24 on p.215

<sup>31</sup> Ibid. p.214, note 52 on p.216-7. Joseph Arch made provision in his will for her to inherit his cottage at Barford after the death of his second wife. Daisy and J. E. Leuty attended the unveiling of the memorial to Joseph Arch in Barford churchyard on 25 March 1922. Horn, op.cit. pp. 214, 220

portrait, as being President of the Womens Missionary Federation in 1919-1920. Writing an article entitled 'The Past' in that *Yearbook* she commented,

The writer, as Secretary for the first ten years (and still alive) desires to express sincere gratitude to all our workers for their confidence and regard and for the outstanding honour conferred in the naming of the hospital at Ituk Mban as the Mary Leuty Hospital thus placing flowers on the pathway instead of on the tomb.<sup>33</sup>

Entries under her name in various *Methodist Who's Who* volumes show that Mary Leuty was still active in the Christian Endeavour movement locally. It is obvious that she was in great demand as a speaker, especially at Sunday school conferences, and Christian Endeavour conventions. A frequent member of, and speaker at, District synods, she was elected, in 1899, as the first woman delegate to the Primitive Methodist Conference and attended Conference on at least five occasions.<sup>34</sup> A member of the Sunderland and Newcastle District Committee from 1927-1929, also involved membership of the Building, Furnishing Fund and Equalisation Committees, so her role in the District was of considerable importance.<sup>35</sup> Add to this the fact that Mary was on Connexional Committees - in 1928/9 and 1929/30 on the Women's Missionary Federation Executive Committee and also on the General Missionary Committee - one can see that she was heavily involved with Primitive Methodism in the years immediately preceding Methodist Union.<sup>36</sup> Plus, of course, still being a local preacher since she was accredited in 1891.

J. E. Leuty's address in the 1930 *Yearbook* is given as 61 St Georges Rd, Harrogate, so why had they moved from Chester-le-Street? It seems that they stayed there until 1932 when they moved north, to Monkseaton. Mary is listed as a lay member of Committees appointed by Conference in the *Minutes of the Uniting Conference* and also in the following year.<sup>37</sup>

<sup>32</sup> *Primitive Methodist Church. Tunstall Conference. July 14-25, 1910. Centenary Souvenir. Mow Cop Camp Meeting June 18, 19, 20. Price 6d. pp. 49, 81, 88 (portrait); Primitive Methodist Women's Missionary Federation Yearbook 1932 pp. 4,5 (portrait),7 (portrait)*

<sup>33</sup> *Ibid.* p.20

<sup>34</sup> *Methodist Who's Who* 1914 p.174, 1933 p.355; *The Methodist Local Preachers' Who's Who* (1934) p.328

<sup>35</sup> *The Primitive Methodist Year Book*, (1927), pp.77-78, (1928) pp.75-76, (1929) p.77

<sup>36</sup> *ibid.* (1928) p.61, (1929) p.63, (1930) p.69; (1929) p.62, (1930) p.68

Although all the entries, both for Mary and her husband, state that they had one daughter there is no indication whether this refers to the Daisy Isabella, Leuty's adopted daughter, or a daughter of their marriage, though I suspect it was the former. The only personal information in Leuty's obituary states in all his preaching there was a true note of the evangelist seeking to point the way to the Saviour; and in this glorious work he had a true helpmate in his wife. There is nothing further about either of his wives, his adopted daughter, the time prior to his resignation from the Primitive Methodist ministry or the years when he presumably was a minister in the Wesley Reform denomination.<sup>38</sup> He died in his 91st year and it is assumed that, if Mary outlived her husband, she would then be in her mid seventies.

The entries in the *Who's Who* volumes give some statistics relating to the extent of her activities. Referring not only to her five years as a ministerial substitute, but also that she was a local preacher for 39 years, a member of the Primitive Methodist General Missionary Committee for 21 years, a delegate to Conference five times and a contributor to the Connexional magazines and papers.<sup>39</sup>

Two very interesting, but hitherto shadowy figures have now taken their place in the story of the contribution Primitive Methodist women made to the development of the denomination, both in their own right as preachers - be it as local preachers, hired local preachers, travelling preachers, ministerial substitutes or evangelists - and as the wives of Primitive Methodist itinerants.

E DOROTHY GRAHAM

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*Saved to Serve* (2002)

<sup>37</sup> *Minutes of the Methodist Conference*, (1932) p. 467, (1933) p. 648

<sup>38</sup> *Minutes of the Methodist Conference*, (1946) p.133

<sup>39</sup> *The Methodist Who's Who 1914* p.174; *Who's Who in Methodism 1933* p. 355; *The Methodist Local Preachers Who's Who 1934* p. 328



## THE TIDE OF TIME

### The Primitive Methodist Centenary Celebrations in Norfolk and Suffolk

‘**T**hat whole day’s praying and preaching on Mow Cop was the rising of the spring which was destined to become a broad river that has, through the divine direction, become one of the mightiest influences for blessing in the world,<sup>1</sup> wrote James Henry Rose, minister of the East Dereham Primitive Methodist circuit and editor of its magazine. He drew the attention of his readers to the suggestion of the Connexional Centenary Committee to set the last week in January as a time of prayer and thanksgiving for all that had been achieved in Primitive Methodism. This would be, he thought, the best possible start for the great Centenary commemoration.

His celebration was planned to span the years 1907 to 1910. It would mark the centenary of the first camp meeting at Mow Cop and the amalgamation three years later of the followers of William Clowes and the Camp Meeting Methodists led by Hugh Bourne thus forming the Primitive Methodist denomination.

James Rose was the first in Norfolk and Suffolk to alert the congregations to this momentous event. However, a Connexional Centenary Committee had been in existence since 1903. Its aims were two-fold; that there should be ‘a general and enthusiastic return to our earlier methods of Evangelism, such as Camp Meetings, Open-air Missions and protracted Services in which our Sunday Schools and Christian Endeavour Societies especially will be asked to join,<sup>2</sup> and that the Centenary ‘may bring to all our members anew sense of responsibility, a new passion for service and anew faith in the power of the Gospel to save all sorts and conditions of men.’<sup>3</sup> A Thanksgiving Fund would raise the mighty sum of £250,000. Two-fifths of this would be used for Connexional purposes such as home and foreign missions, the support of the institutions<sup>4</sup> and philanthropic work.<sup>5</sup> The remaining three-fifths would be for circuit projects. These would be decided locally.

<sup>1</sup> *East Dereham Primitive Methodist Magazine*, ed. J. H. Rose, no. xxxvii, January 1907.

<sup>2</sup> *Minutes of the Eighty-seventh Annual Conference of the Primitive Methodist Church*, 1906, p.174

<sup>3</sup> *Ibid.*, 1907, p.212.

<sup>4</sup> These comprised Manchester College, the Chapel Fund, Local Preachers’ Aid and Homes Fund, Local Preachers’ Training Fund, Itinerant Preachers’ Friendly Society and the Training Fund for Sunday School Workers.

<sup>5</sup> This included the Primitive Methodist Orphanage and the Training Home for Sisters of the People.

The Connexional Centenary Committee set up three sub-committees to deal with the evangelism, literature and the finance of the project and listed events which it recommended should take place throughout the Connexion.. The Centenary celebrations were initiated on the national stage by a series of great meetings at Mow Cop in Staffordshire on the week-end of the 24-27 May 1907. The event was reported to East Anglians in a very lengthy article in the *Eastern Daily Press* 'by One who was Present.'<sup>6</sup> It described the vast crowds travelling to Mow Cop, making use of the cheap fares and excursion trains from all parts of the country. It estimated that the North Stafford Railway Company had 'reaped a rich harvest' from those 'pouring into the little station. . . made gay with bunting.'<sup>7</sup>

Outdoor preaching was led by the President and Vice-President of Conference whilst on Saturday evening an indoor meeting was 'packed, with hundreds unable to gain admission.'<sup>8</sup> Several Primitive Methodist Members of Parliament spoke, all acknowledging the debt they owed to their denomination. Although a choir was present, the whole audience became a choir, with choruses of hymns or final verses being repeated again and again so that 'it seemed that the people would have sung songs of praise all the evening.'<sup>9</sup> On Sunday, processions wound their way from miles around to Mow Cop. 'The vast camp ground was filled in every part. . . covering a greater part of a square mile. . . The people came by train in thousands while hundreds of vehicles of all kinds. . . brought thousands more.'<sup>10</sup> The police estimated that fully 90,000 people were present and the Mow Cop station master claimed that 70,000 had passed through the railway station.<sup>11</sup> It was thought to be the largest outdoor religious demonstration ever held in Britain.<sup>12</sup>

Further services were held on Monday. That at Tunstall heard speeches from W.P. Hartley, J.P. the industrialist and Primitive Methodist philanthropist, Professor A.S. Peake, D.D., the Rev. James Travis, former President of Conference<sup>13</sup> and others.

Reading such an inspiring newspaper report, Primitive Methodists in East Anglia must have swelled with pride at such a huge public demonstration of the strength and influence of their denomination while other readers would, no doubt, have marvelled at the support the

<sup>6</sup> *Eastern Daily Press*, Thursday 30 May 1907.

<sup>7</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>8</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>9</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>10</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>11</sup> *East Dereham Primitive Methodist Circuit Magazine*, no. xlii, June 1907.

<sup>12</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>13</sup> Having become a supernumerary in 1906, he threw himself into centenary work with energy and enthusiasm.

great event had attracted and the numbers associated with Primitive Methodism.

The celebrations of the Norwich District began officially four weeks later on Saturday 22 June 1907 when a service of prayer and praise was held at Scott Memorial Church in Norwich. The Rev. A.T. Wardle of Wymondham presided, the Rev. T.H. Champion of Norwich welcomed the delegates from across the District<sup>14</sup> and the Rev. G. Armstrong, the Connexional Centenary secretary, responded to his address. The gathering had been planned for Mousehold Heath on the edge of Norwich where the first Primitive Methodist missionaries to reach the city had held their meetings in 1821. However, the weather was unfavourable and it was decided that an outdoor gathering was impractical. On the following day, an early communion service was held at each of the five inner city Primitive Methodist churches. Later in the morning, all these congregations held open-air meetings followed by preaching services inside the churches.

In the afternoon, a large gathering assembled near the Boer War memorial on Agricultural Hall Plain. After hearing an address, the audience formed into a long procession which moved along Castle Meadow, wound round the Back-of-the-Inns and along London Street to the Market Place where an open-air meeting was held. Several platforms had been erected on the north and east sides of the market from which the crowd was addressed. 'In order that the Methodists might have the square to themselves, the Salvation Army, Independent Labour Party and the Social Democratic Federation, all of which bodies are accustomed to gather here, generously consented not to hold any meetings there.<sup>15</sup> The procession was described as 'truly magnificent,' the subsequent meeting as 'a never-to-be-forgotten time'<sup>16</sup> and the occasion was captured for posterity by a series of photographic postcards showing different scenes of the event. The next day saw afternoon and evening services in Norwich at Dereham Road and at Queen's Road chapels. At the latter place, the District delegates were received by the mayor who then addressed the meeting. He was followed by Alderman Adam Adams, J.P., of Lowestoft, a member of the Connexional Centenary Committee and District Missionary Treasurer and then by the Rev. F.C. France of the Martham circuit, District Building Committee secretary, who was the leader of the

<sup>14</sup> The Clacton-on-Sea circuit decided not to send any representatives to this celebration in Norwich because of the great travelling distance involved. N.R.O., 2004,96, Box 6a, District Centenary Committee minute book, 1907-11.

<sup>15</sup> *Eastern Daily Press*, Monday 24 June 1907.

<sup>16</sup> *East Dereham Primitive Methodist Circuit Magazine*, no. xliii, July 1907.

District Centenary Committee. In the subsequent discussion, the aims of the committee were stated and forthcoming District celebratory events were announced. A crowded evening meeting was chaired by the District Centenary Treasurer, T.W. Swindell, who urged his audience to contribute generously to the fund whilst a stirring speech from the Rev. George Armstrong underlined this appeal and by the close of the meeting more than £700 had been promised.

The Norwich District Centenary Committee had been formed in December 1906 and it held its first meeting on the 31 January 1907 at Scott Memorial church, Norwich. All officials of the various District committees and the Circuit Centenary committees were automatically made members of the District Centenary Committee, but its active members comprised the executive of seven ministers and five laymen, headed by the Rev. Francis France. This committee was expanded by adding additional members in September 1907.

The Lynn and Cambridge District Centenary Committee consisted of all the members of the District Committee; the executive was chaired by the Rev. Charles Shreeve of Watton, its secretaries were the Revs George Bell and Robert Holman, both of Wisbech and the treasurer was J.T. Jeffrey. There were, in addition, two other ministers and four laymen.

In order to achieve effective District organisation for the celebrations, the Norwich District committee divided its huge geographical area into two sections - a large northern section including the central and eastern Norfolk circuits together with Lowestoft, Bungay and Beccles and a smaller southern section comprising the Wangford, Ipswich and Hadleigh, Colchester, Kelsale, Harwich, Clacton-on-Sea and Diss circuits. This was done in April 1907 immediately following the Norwich District meeting at Harwich which was transformed into a Centenary event with camp meetings on the Sunday and a public meeting on the Monday. Perhaps delegates travelling to Harwich were reminded by the extremely long journey of the immense geographical extent of their District.

Although the District Centenary Committee initially asked that a young man be appointed to help Francis France in his circuit work so that he might have more time to promote the Centenary, there is no evidence that this request was granted. However, when he also took on the job as secretary of the committee on the resignation of J.C. Mantripp, it was agreed that ministers from other circuits should help out with his regular preaching appointments.

France and the other members of the Centenary Committee were extremely active in their Centenary work throughout the Norwich District and visited a large number of services and meetings. Their offer to help at celebratory events was taken up with enthusiasm. They attended a three-day celebration in the Dereham circuit in July 1907. A.E. Calvert and F.C. France spoke at the circuit demonstration at Darsham in the Wangford circuit and others of the District committee were at Halesworth in the autumn of 1907. The Colchester, Wymondham, Watton, North Walsham and Sheringham circuits were all visited in September 1908. F.C. France preached at Bramfield, Yoxford and Darsham in autumn 1908 with public meetings at Yoxford and Westleton on subsequent evenings. He was much in demand for special services and officiated at the opening of several new chapels.

A series of events organised by the District Centenary Committee followed on from the Norwich meeting in June 1907. A circular invited all circuits to co-operate in a simultaneous mission for the 10-20 November 1907. Another was sent to all Sunday school and Christian Endeavour secretaries appealing for the help of young people in the celebratory movement. A letter from the Connexional Centenary Committee offering a motor car tour of the District by Centenary officials was eagerly received. It was arranged in Norfolk and Suffolk for two weeks in May 1908. The itinerary and the proposed route were sent to the March circuit meetings.

A District Centenary conference was held at Lowestoft in early summer 1908, a District Centenary rally was conducted at Yarmouth in November 1909 with another at Aylsham in June 1910.

A succession of visits from the Connexional officers was arranged throughout the three years of the celebration. The Rev. George Armstrong visited the Ipswich and Hadleigh circuit, the Brandon and Methwold circuit and the Wymondham circuit in 1908.<sup>17</sup> The 1909 President, Sir William Hartley and the Vice-President, John Welford, paid official visits to East Anglia, thus fulfilling their promise that they would make their services readily available to urge the Centenary project forward in its final year.<sup>18</sup> Hartley preached at the Temple at Great Yarmouth and led a conference and public meeting there at the beginning of November 1909. John Welford was also present at these events after spending the previous day at Queen's Road chapel, Norwich, and then, after leaving Yarmouth, going on to Beccles for a conference and public meeting also attended by Adam Adams, J.C. Mantripp, Francis France and other Centenary officials. The next

<sup>17</sup> In 1908-9 he was President of Conference.

<sup>18</sup> *Minutes of the Ninetieth Conference of the Primitive Methodist Church, 1909*, p.202

President of Conference visited the Ipswich, the Norwich, the Brandon and Methwold, and Wymondham circuits<sup>19</sup> and attended a District Centenary week-end in Norwich from 19-21 November 1910. He visited the Martham circuit on the 22nd.<sup>20</sup>

James Travis, another prominent member of the Connexional Centenary Committee paid a ten-day visit to East Anglia at the end of September 1908 when he undertook a gruelling programme of speaking and preaching at Acle, Martham, Lowestoft, Oulton, Yarmouth, Aylsham, East Dereham and Norwich.

The District Centenary Committee sent a succession of letters and circulars encouraging circuits to instigate their own projects. Camp meetings were widely held, with every circuit holding at least one. Perhaps the popularity of this form of gathering received an impetus from the stress laid upon it by speakers lecturing on Primitive Methodist beginnings and the news of the huge popularity of the Mow Cop meetings in May 1907. Circuit camp meetings had always been held regularly in Norfolk and Suffolk, but now a great deal of publicity was employed to encourage a good attendance at these meetings.

The Watton circuit held a camp meeting on the cricket ground in the summer of 1907 where a group of Primitive Methodist fishermen from Sheringham led the worship and preached to the assembled crowds. A procession from two points in the town preceded the morning meeting whilst another made its way to the cricket ground before the afternoon session.

The East Dereham circuit planned three camp meetings for the summer of 1907. Immediately beforehand, the villages chosen for the meetings - North Elmham, Lyng and Mattishall - together with all the other villages and hamlets within a three mile radius of these places, were actively missioned in order to enhance attendance. Instructions were issued from the circuit meeting to ask 'if our friends who have conveyances will kindly lend them to fetch or take all who cannot walk or find their own conveyance.'<sup>21</sup> Those interested in music were asked 'to get well acquainted with the old hymns and tunes. . . We must make the singing a great feature of these meetings. . . Commence at once.'<sup>22</sup>

The Lynn circuit camp meeting arranged for the summer of 1908 was

<sup>19</sup> The President of Conference in 1908-9 was the Rev. George Armstrong. He was also the organising secretary of the Connexional Centenary Committee.

<sup>20</sup> The President of Conference in 1910-11 was S.S. Henshaw.

<sup>21</sup> *East Dereham Primitive Methodist Circuit Magazine*, no. xl, April 1907.

<sup>22</sup> *Ibid.*

a sophisticated event with a united choir, printed programme and with lunch and teas provided at a small price.<sup>23</sup>

In the Wangford circuit, a large number of camp meetings were held, first at Yoxford and Halesworth in early summer 1909 and then another twelve camp meetings were organised during July, August and September.

Sunday 31 May 1908 saw a large and well-organised circuit camp meeting at North Walsham, beginning with a sermon by the minister, John Snaith, at 6.30 am. He followed this with a communion service at 7.30 and then led one of the three processions through the town. He conducted a service in the Market place at 10 o'clock, then went to the recreation ground where he gave an address and led the meeting at the first stand. At half-past one, he began a meeting at the Market Cross and then conducted another during the afternoon at the recreation ground. Early evening saw him taking another service on Malt House Plain, followed by a love feast at the chapel. The day must have left him utterly exhausted.<sup>24</sup>

Street missions usually accompanied the camp meetings. That at East Dereham centred on Baxter Row, the site of one of the first Primitive Methodist meeting places in the town. Conferences, meetings and lectures were arranged as part of the celebrations. Inevitably, most of the addresses looked back on earlier notable events. At Dereham in July 1907, a conference heard lectures by F.C. France on 'The Story of a Hundred Years' and another on the history of the circuit with special reference to the great evangelist of central Norfolk, Robert Key.

At a public Centenary meeting at Methwold in March 1908, talks were given on Hugh Bourne, William Clowes and James Crawfoot as well as a selection of 'old hymns and tunes' by the George Street chapel choir.<sup>25</sup> A picture postcard recorded an open-air meeting at Martham in the summer of 1907. At Acle, a Centenary rally in September 1908 was a victim of the bad weather. As a result of the torrential rain, the meeting was thinly attended although the evening meeting was better supported and the audience heard a lecture on 'The Pioneers of Methodism.' Newspaper reports the following day, described floods in Norwich with water more than a foot deep and houses flooded. It was the heaviest rainfall for five years.<sup>26</sup>

Circuit plans were studded with Centenary Sundays 'in celebration

<sup>23</sup> N.R.O., FC 54/358, Lynn P. M. circuit Quarterly Meeting minutes, 1909-22.

<sup>24</sup> N.R.O., FX 188/1, North Walsham Centenary Celebrations programme.

<sup>25</sup> N.R.O., FC 63/167, 25 N.R.O., FC 63/130/1 Brandon and Methwold P.M. circuit Quarterly Meeting minutes, 1898-1919.

<sup>26</sup> *Eastern Daily Press*, Thursday 21 and Friday 22 September 1908.

of the Hundred Years' Toil' and successes 'achieved under God's Blessing by the Primitive Methodist Church'<sup>27</sup> as well as details of money collected. Plans were a useful advertising tool.

Services of Song were in great demand. One chronicling the life and work of Robert Key was regarded as particularly appropriate in East Anglia and was, in consequence, often performed.

Sunday schools were urged to hold Centenary services and to draw the attention of young people to their denominational history. Circuit meetings sometimes instructed the teachers to repeat anniversary services to boost collections for Centenary funds. The District Centenary Committee noted in spring 1908 that special meetings for young people had been arranged in the Martham, Norwich and Diss circuits and at Kenninghall with others planned in the near future at Wortham and Blythburg. Young people's meetings at Reepham, Mattishall, Lyng and Garvestone were not well attended. The editor of the circuit magazine 'wondered if some stayed away for fear of an appeal for subscriptions to the Centenary fund. ' In fact, no such appeal was made and 'the object was to arouse interest in the Centenary movement and use Sunday schools and Christian Endeavours to this end.<sup>28</sup> Haverhill Sunday school framed a commemorative scroll and ruled that 'any Teacher or Officer of the School can have their name put on the Centenary scroll by paying a shilling' to the Centenary fund.<sup>29</sup>

The celebration prompted a large number of publications by the Connexion. H.B. Kendall's *Origin and History of the Primitive Methodist Church* towered above all others.<sup>30</sup> Another of his books, *What God Hath Wrought*, was published specifically to commemorate the Centenary and a substantial number of other books were produced. Indeed, the Book Committee reported that 'Arrangements have also been made for the publication of suitable literature in a cheap and attractive form which it is hoped will be at once educational and stimulative of the enthusiasm of the Connexion' and the following year reported that this literature was having a wide circulation.<sup>31</sup> The 1909 statement of the Book Committee reported the highest sales ever recorded which was gratifying in view of the depressed state of trade.<sup>32</sup> However, the sale of denominational magazines, although given a temporary boost by the

<sup>27</sup> N.R.O., FC 107/130/1, Watton P. M. circuit plans, Oct.-Dec. 1909.

<sup>28</sup> *East Dereham Circuit Magazine*, no. lix, November 1908.

<sup>29</sup> Suffolk Record Office at Bury St Edmunds, FK1/508/2/54.

<sup>30</sup> The Connexional Book Committee reported to Conference in 1906 that it was now available in two volumes. *PM Minutes* 1906, p.135

<sup>31</sup> *PM Minutes* 1907, p.187.

<sup>32</sup> *PM Minutes* 1909, p.138. This achievement was greatly helped by Sir William Hartley's offers of books to ministers, local preachers and Sunday school teachers.



Centenary celebrations, continued their slow decline which was already noticeable by the early years of the twentieth century.

Perhaps the most popular book of the Centenary was Joseph Ritson's *Romance of Primitive Methodism*, published in 1910, a somewhat sentimental overview of the Connexion's history. Haverhill Sunday School Teachers' meeting decided to buy a copy of this book for the library.<sup>33</sup> Ritson acknowledged that he had used as his sources many of the local histories which had been written to mark the festivities.

Circuit magazines at this time contained advertisements for a substantial number of anniversary publications. The East Dereham journal for March 1907 mentioned eleven new books on various aspects of Primitive Methodism, as well as *The Miraculous River* by J. Day Thompson, a popular history of the Connexion written for young people, costing one penny. The Quarterly Meeting of the Brandon and Methwold circuit recommended each of its Sunday schools to supply every home represented by the children with a copy of this book. The Lowestoft Quarterly Meeting encouraged officials 'to seek every opportunity to circulate the literature of this movement.'<sup>34</sup>

The Mow Cop Centenary meeting souvenirs were still available in the autumn of 1907 in East Anglia. Also, a pamphlet of 'Special Hymns for the Centenary Celebration,' printed in London and sold for two shillings per hundred copies was widely distributed. This booklet had pictures of William Clowes and Hugh Boume on the cover and contained 31 hymns. It was widely employed at Centenary meetings and sometimes had an extra cover added with additional information relating to specific local events.<sup>35</sup>

The Norwich District was keen to promote the reading of Centenary literature, especially that concerning its history, in the hope that its inspirational stimulus would enthuse readers to go into the villages and win new converts. It sponsored and promoted its own souvenir, *A Century of Blessing*. This contained a historical sketch of the District from its beginnings in 1821 to the present, illustrated with pictures of churches and local officials. It also contained advertisements for a large number of commemorative books including the Lives of Hugh Bourne and William Clowes, *The Miraculous River*, *What God Hath Wrought*, and *Centenary Speeches for use at Special Juvenile Services. . .* by Joseph Ritson, the Connexional editor. It also announced the publication of the three winning hymns in the Centenary hymn competition, price a halfpenny

<sup>33</sup> S.R.O. at Bury St Edmunds, FK1/508/2/54.

<sup>34</sup> S.R.O. at Lowestoft, 558/3/3, Lowestoft P. M. circuit Quarterly Meeting minutes, 1901-13.

<sup>35</sup> For example, the Acle circuit meetings at Freethorpe on the 14 and 15 July 1907.

each or one shilling per hundred as well as 'New Real Photo Postcards' showing W.P. Hartley, Professor A.S. Peake and other contemporary Primitive Methodist officials, price one penny each.

District celebratory events were itemised with details of dates, venues and speakers and illustrated with pictures of local ministers. Local newspapers reporting Centenary events were listed.<sup>36</sup>

The publication of *A Century of Blessing* was reported in the *Eastern Daily Press*<sup>37</sup> and copies were presented to delegates at the District weekend celebration in Norwich in June 1907.

The Lynn and Cambridge District's Centenary publication, *The Tale of the Years*, was a much more substantial and impressive historical study. Its price was sixpence and it was compiled by E.A. Harvey, a local preacher in the Watton circuit.<sup>38</sup> His book showed that he had not only read a number of relevant publications, but had also undertaken original research. It is impossible to know how many copies of *The Tale of the Years* were sold; however, the Fincham Branch of the Lynn circuit ordered 25 copies, the small Brandon and Methwold circuit of only 163 members bought 54, the Downham circuit took 140 copies and the Watton circuit purchased 120.<sup>39</sup> The Lynn circuit was unable to sell all its copies and the Quarterly meeting agreed that the financial deficit incurred should be met from the Centenary fund and entered on the accounts as 'expenses.'

Some East Anglian circuits produced Centenary publications. The Docking Quarterly meeting published its own memorial and directed that 'all officials of fifty years' membership be requested to have their photographs in the Handbook.'<sup>40</sup> Many circuits ordered special Centenary class tickets - Docking ordered 600, Watton 300 and Dereham 560 tickets at 2/1d a hundred. In addition, the Connexional Book Committee published a new edition of the hymnal tune book as a Centenary memento and this was widely advertised.

Running through all the celebrations was the strong theme of the

<sup>36</sup> These included the *Norwich Mercury*, the *Lowestoft Journal*, the *Dereham and Fakenham Times*, the *Downham Market Gazette*, the *Thetford and Watton Times*, the *Yarmouth and Gorleston Times* and *The People's Weekly Journal*. The Norwich District Centenary Committee passed a special vote of thanks in July 1908 to 'the Editors of the Eastern Daily Press and Norwich Mercury for the fine reports of meetings held during the Motor Car Tour.' N.R.O., Box 6a/2004; Norwich District Centenary Committee Minute Book, 1907-10.

<sup>37</sup> *Eastern Daily Press*, Friday 5 July 1907.

<sup>38</sup> He was assistant overseer, collector of poor rates and clerk to the charities for the poor in Watton.

<sup>39</sup> N.R.O., FC 54/357, Lynn P. M. circuit Quarterly Meeting minutes, 1901-9

<sup>40</sup> N.R.O., FC 49/4, Docking P. M. circuit Quarterly Meeting minutes, 1898-1914.

Centenary Fund. When reading the Norwich District Centenary Committee minutes, the impression is sometimes given that the collection of money was its overriding concern.

The aim to raise £250,000 for the Connexion was very much to the fore. Officials from the Connexion, the District and the circuit repeatedly stressed its importance. When Sir William Hartley became treasurer of the fund in 1907, he urged the audiences he addressed on his visits to Norfolk and Suffolk to accept their responsibilities and give freely of their money, and pointed out that 'if they did not begin giving when they had only a little, they would not do it when they had a lot.'<sup>41</sup>

The Centenary Committee's report to Conference in 1909 concerned itself with financial matters alone whilst the 1910 Conference urgently pressed for more individual contributions to boost circuit totals and declared that those who had not contributed to the fund should be 'personally interviewed and the claims of the movement fully and plainly laid before them.'<sup>42</sup> Sunday schools and Christian Endeavour societies who had not yet made efforts for the fund were urged to do so; one Sunday's collection was to be handed to the fund by every society and a final appeal for more contributions should be made by each circuit. The time available for collections was extended a further year until the 1911 Conference.

Representatives from the District meeting addressed Quarterly meetings and urged circuit officials to encourage donations from their circuits and from individual societies. The District Centenary committees sent a stream of letters to remind people about the need for donations and the Norwich District Centenary committee also sent out blank cheques to chapel treasurers to facilitate donations. Special Centenary fund account books were provided for all circuit treasurers.

The Centenary coincided with a sudden sharp rise in unemployment between the summer of 1907 and the end of 1909. At the same time, prices had risen whilst the wages of those engaged in farm work were low and stagnant.<sup>43</sup> In the overwhelmingly agricultural counties of Norfolk and Suffolk, collecting money for the Centenary fund must have been hard work.

Often circuits increased their promises for the fund. After a series of meetings at Beccles at the end of 1909, the amount pledged by the Wangford circuit was increased by £30 to £186 whilst the Docking

<sup>41</sup> *Eastern Daily Press*, Thursday 4 November 1909, 'Primitive Methodist Centenary; Sir William Hartley at Yarmouth.'

<sup>42</sup> Minutes of the Ninety-First Annual Conference of the Primitive Methodist Church, 1910, p.220-1.

<sup>43</sup> *The Growth of British Industrial Relations*, E.H. Phelps Brown, London, 1960, p.306.

circuit doubled its promise to £600. The motor car tour took collections wherever the occupants stopped for a service or meeting, giving a half of its collections to the District fund.

In spite of these efforts, the 1908 Conference learned that the Norwich District had sent only £2.10.0d to the central fund. This was the second lowest total in the Connexion. Most Districts had sent between £100 and £200 with Manchester topping the list with £405. The Lynn and Cambridge District sent £97.17.4d. Yet at the end of 1909, Francis France in a speech at the Temple in Yarmouth told his audience that the Norwich District had pledged the fourth largest contribution in the Connexion with nearly £7000 promised so far.

By September 1911, the Norwich District had raised £2951 for the central fund plus £5823 for local projects. Perhaps the most startling circuit contribution was the £2404 given by the Norwich III circuit which consisted of just two churches and a mission.<sup>44</sup> Possibly this huge sum may have had something to do with the architect A.F. Scott who had built Scott Memorial church in memory of his Primitive Methodist minister father, Jonathan Scott, and was a wealthy member of the church. The small Diss circuit collected the lowest total in the Norwich District with just over £ 14. It is impossible to know if the promises were fully realised as the documentary record is incomplete. However, by December 1910, £305 was still needed fulfil all the pledges made. The East Dereham circuit treasurer's book shows that where promises have been entered into the book, five societies met their promises whilst seven did not.

Last minute attempts by the Connexion and District Centenary Committee to encourage circuits to make a final effort for the fund met a rather weary response. The King's Lynn Quarterly meeting decided that 'we are unable to do more owing to the financial difficulties of the circuit.'<sup>45</sup> The Wymondham circuit insisted that as 'we have sent our full share to the Centenary Fund and we can make no further circuit effort for it.'<sup>46</sup> The Norwich I circuit felt 'it would be unwise to harass the people with further appeals.'<sup>47</sup> On the other hand, the Fakenham circuit admitted in December 1911 that it had sent nothing at all.

Whilst the money given towards the Connexional projects was slow in coming in, that given for use in the circuits was more readily collected. Several chapels in the Brandon and Methwold circuit

<sup>44</sup> These were Scott Memorial church, the new Plumstead Road church and a mission at Thorpe St Andrew.

<sup>45</sup> N.R.O., FC 54/358, King's Lynn P.M. circuit Quarterly Meeting minutes, 1909-22

<sup>46</sup> N.R.O., FC 25/34, Wymondham P.M. circuit Quarterly, 1908-20

<sup>47</sup> N.R.O., FC 73/2, Norwich I P.M. circuit Quarterly Meeting minutes, 1891-1912.

relinquished their receipts from the Centenary fund to help reduce circuit debts. Chapel debts were also relieved. The Docking circuit cleared the money owing on Heacham chapel, the Thetford circuit reduced the debts on Blo Norton and Hepworth chapels and the Watton circuit also helped with the debts on several chapels.

Most circuits planned to build or renovate a manse with their share of the money although this did not always materialise. The Loddon circuit decided that because of 'the recent storm, many of the officials sustaining heavy financial loss, we cannot see our way clear to proceed with the building of a minister's house and must postpone it indefinitely.<sup>48</sup> Debts remaining on some manses were also cleared or reduced.

Were the numbers of new buildings significantly boosted by the Centenary? In the Norwich District, four new chapels were built in the two years prior to the Centenary whilst during the three years of the celebration, six new chapels were built and another just afterwards. In the Lynn and Cambridge District, two chapels were built in 1906 and only one was built during the Centenary years.<sup>49</sup>

The Connexion hoped for a great increase in membership as a result of the celebrations. In fact, it only achieved an overall increase of 18 members.<sup>50</sup> Suffolk had found the firm hold of the Independents and Baptists was a brake on Primitive Methodist expansion. In contrast, Norfolk had always been a stronghold of Primitive Methodism. By the second half of the nineteenth century, however, the growth in membership in relation to the population had slowed down and during the years of the celebration, the numbers fell still further. Emigration took its toll. Many moved away from the land to nearby towns, whilst others left for the northern industrial towns, the United States, Canada, Australia and Argentina. In spite of the evangelistic efforts during the Centenary years, membership numbers in the Norwich District fell slightly from 7171 in 1906 to 7153 in 1910. In the Lynn and Cambridge District, the numbers also fell, from 5887 in 1906 to 5397 in 1910.

A notable feature of the celebrations was the general absence of women in influential positions, all the more regrettable in view of the admirable pioneering work done by female travelling preachers in the early years of the denomination and contemporary efforts of women to secure the vote. Letters in the *Primitive Methodist Leader* expressed regret and frustration that women were playing only a discreet role in the

<sup>48</sup> N.R.O., FC 50/1, Loddon P. M. circuit Quarterly Meeting minutes, 1912-20.

<sup>49</sup> Wiggshall St Mary the Virgin.

<sup>50</sup> The Conference of 1901 reported a decrease of 477 members in the previous year, the second decrease in succession.

celebration and that their talents were being wasted. In 1907, a single woman was co-opted on to the all-male Norwich District Centenary Committee; two more were added later in the year. Unusually, the Brandon and Methwold circuit resolved that its Centenary committee should comprise men and women equally. Two women were co-opted on to the Wymondham committee, but otherwise, as far as evidence exists, men were the only representatives. No doubt women worked hard to cater for teas, sales of work and other events, but their names are not recorded. Uniquely, a woman conducted a massed choir at a Yarmouth camp meeting in July 1907.

Because of the uneven survival of contemporary records and the style the secretaries used in recording circuit minutes, it is difficult to know which Norfolk and Suffolk circuits were the most enthusiastic about the Centenary and which the least.<sup>51</sup> East Dereham appears to have been very busy with celebratory events though perhaps this was the result of the commitment of their minister, J.H. Rose, a member of the District Centenary Committee. The Brandon and Methwold circuit also held a very large number of events. On the other hand, the Sudbury, the Stowmarket and the Haverhill circuits appear, from their minute books, to be almost unaware that the celebrations were taking place.

The Centenary celebrations must have quickened the spiritual life and fellowship of many congregations and made East Anglian Primitive Methodists much more aware of their denominational history although all these things are impossible to measure. E.S. France, the son of Francis France, in an article to mark the 1921 centenary celebrations of the Norwich District, expressed the real purpose of all these commemorations; he wrote, 'The call that comes to us from the past is. . . to fulfil the purpose and promise of those early years.'<sup>52</sup>

NORMA VIRGOE

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<sup>51</sup> For example, no Quarterly Meeting minutes exist for the Ipswich and Hadleigh circuit during these years.

<sup>52</sup> 'The Centenary of Primitive Methodism in the Norwich District,' Ernest S. France in the *The Aldersgate Magazine*, March 1920, p.164.

## BOOK REVIEWS

*Yorkshire Returns of the 1851 Census of Religious Worship, volume 2, West Riding (North)*, edited by John Wolffe. (Borthwick Texts and Studies 31, Borthwick Institute, University of York, 2005, pp. vi + 183, ISBN 1904497101); *Yorkshire Returns of the 1851 Census of Religious Worship, volume 3, West Riding (South)*, edited by John Wolffe. (Borthwick Texts and Studies 32, Borthwick Institute, University of York, 2005, pp. vi + 200, ISBN 1 904497 11 X); *The Religious Census of 1851 in Yorkshire*, by John Wolffe. (Borthwick Paper 108, Borthwick Institute, University of York, 2005, pp. 33, ISBN 1 904497152). No price stated.

John Wolffe's positive assessment of Horace Mann's influential report on the 1851 Census of Religious Worship as 'a lucid and penetrating analysis, based on a great command of the evidence available to him' is equally applicable to the quality and authority of Professor Wolffe's own twenty-first-century evaluation of the returns for Yorkshire. His overview of the Yorkshire Returns, including the previously published volume for the City of York and the East Riding, in an accompanying Borthwick Paper which complements his editions of two further volumes of edited returns for the West Riding, is a model of clarity, providing a succinct and stimulating analysis based upon a thorough investigation of every conceivable issue relating to the returns.

Wolffe, however, is rather less impressed by Mann's judgments, which he describes as sometimes 'sweeping and tendentious.' Indeed, they contrast markedly with Wolffe's own more tentative and judicious historical judgments in his introductory essay. He has no hesitation, however, in dismissing the common fallacy that the census showed a declining pattern of attendance at worship by the mid nineteenth century, insisting that 'in the absence of any comparable earlier survey no such confident judgment can be made about the trend, one way or another'. Despite Mann's apparent lack of awareness and consequent disregarding of the popularity of evening worship amongst Nonconformists in his formula for estimating attendances, Wolffe accepts that it is 'hard to improve upon it as a basis for a quick estimate of the nationwide picture', but he rejects Mann's conclusions in so far as they apply to Yorkshire as overly pessimistic. Although total church and chapel attendances in Yorkshire as a percentage of the population were slightly lower than the average for England and Wales,

comparisons with other industrialising counties, Wolffe observes, were remarkably favourable. Moreover the correlation of data from other sources such as near contemporary Anglican visitation returns and Wesleyan circuit plans suggests that the published registration district and borough tables may in some cases 'significantly understate attendances, especially for the Church of England and Wesleyan Methodism'. Furthermore, the impact of virulent influenza in some urban industrial communities and heavy rain, which posed a particular problem in rural areas where people often faced lengthy walks to get to church, may also have depressed recorded attendance.

What, then, do the returns reveal about Yorkshire Methodism in 1851? Wolffe, like informed Victorian Yorkshire clergymen such as William Farquar Hook, acknowledges that the 'overwhelming reality in Yorkshire religion was the ascendancy of Methodism', with the combined forces of Methodism significantly exceeding Church of England attendances in all three Ridings in 1851. Moreover, in relation to the numbers of recorded places of worship, which Wolffe regards as the most systematic and unproblematic evidence provided by the census on medium term religious change, the Wesleyans alone with 1,168 venues comfortably surpassed the Anglicans with 1,119. Wolffe, an Evangelical Anglican, convincingly attributes the underlying strength of Yorkshire Methodism to the legacy of two generations of revivals from the ministry of William Bramwell in the 1790s to that of James Caughey in the 1840s, a period which also witnessed the establishment of a strong Primitive Methodist presence in Yorkshire, with 482 recorded places of worship across the county by 1851, the second largest number of Methodist places of worship after the Wesleyans. Indeed, Wolffe notes that all strands of Methodism, with the exception of the Bible Christians, were well represented in Yorkshire by 1851.

However, Wolffe is uncharacteristically imprecise in his somewhat tardy dating of the expulsion of the Wesleyan preachers involved in the Fly Sheets controversy to 1850 rather than 1849 and slightly misleading in suggesting that the impact of the Wesleyan Reform schism was felt only in the six months prior to Census Sunday in March 1851. The returns indicate no fewer than seventy-six gatherings of Reformers with a particular concentration in the central part of the West Riding. Moreover, the anguished remarks of some anxious Wesleyan society stewards in their returns indicate the extent of the



turmoil experienced by Wesleyan Methodism in the worst affected parts of the county by 1851. John Nussey, steward at Birstall Wesleyan Chapel, confided that 'a revolutionary spirit having crept into the Society under the name of reform a great disruption and loss of numbers has recently taken place'. The losses were equally catastrophic at Churwell in Batley, while plans were being made for the erection of 'a new Chapel and School' by the Wesleyan Reformers at nearby Gomersal. It is not surprising that these mid-century eruptions on the religious landscape, the most turbulent years in the history of Wesleyan Methodism in Yorkshire in the nineteenth century, left some Wesleyan chapel stewards reluctant to spell out the full extent of the impact of the schism as at Heckmondwike, where two-thirds of the congregation had seceded to the Wesleyan Reformers, and where it was noted that on account of the large secession the authorities were 'unwilling to give particulars'. Wolffe infers that where chapel accommodation was less than half full this probably also related to the secession and suggests that in some places Wesleyan losses may have substantially exceeded those who joined the congregations of Reformers. For example at Great Horton, near Bradford, barely half the reported Wesleyan losses are accounted for in the recorded attendances of Wesleyan Reformers.

Another reviewer, Professor David Jeremy, has criticised the textual editions for their lack of biographical annotations and illustrations of ecclesiastical architecture, and though this would have clearly enhanced the appeal of the publications, it would also have added considerably to the size and cost of a publication which necessarily had to appear as two separate volumes. As Wolffe points out in his introductory note to each volume, the West Riding with nearly two thousand returns, generated more returns than the other two Ridings put together and more than any other entire county for which the returns have yet been published. Sheer necessity, therefore, compelled the division of the registration districts between two volumes and also the referral of the reader to the full explanation of editorial method in the previously published volume for the City of York and the East Riding. Wolffe makes a convincing case for his self-confessedly 'somewhat arbitrary' division based partially on the numerical sequence of the registration districts and partially on the geographical location which corresponds fairly conveniently to the modern line of the M62 motorway west of Leeds and is neither the first nor likely to

be the last to have been exercised by the problems of drawing ecclesiastical boundaries across such a vast county. Moreover, there are some other intriguing problems highlighted by Wolffe. Quite apart from the returns for 126 places of worship in the Halifax registration district which apparently mysteriously disappeared from the national archives in the second half of twentieth century and which the present reviewer attempted unsuccessfully to track down with the aid of a former Keeper of Public Records who was himself a native of Halifax, Wolffe deduces that a small minority of other returns appear either never to have been collected or lost en route to the Census Office.

Wolffe's overall conclusions tentatively challenge Mann's overwhelmingly pessimistic assessment by suggesting that mid-nineteenth century Yorkshire was 'a somewhat more religious county than might appear from an initial and superficial reading of the census' and that such religiosity included the 'intermittent attendance at church of the industrial working class and the dispersed farming communities of the Dales and Wolds'. He also concludes that many individuals did not have an exclusive denominational allegiance and that there appears to have been significant dual attendance at Anglican churches and Wesleyan chapels, particularly in rural areas. Here again Wolffe's argument is enlivened by nuances from the returns. For example, in the dispersed rural parish of Alne, to the south of Easingwold, where many of the Wesleyan farmers from necessity attended morning worship at the parish church, the Vicar ruefully remarked that despite their readiness to accept his ministrations, they apparently bestowed 'all their zeal and liberality on Dissent'. There is scope for further research in order to determine precisely how long into the nineteenth century some Methodists continued in regular attendance at Anglican worship and how marked were the differences between rural and urban situations. Finally, sophisticated techniques of statistical analysis, Wolffe observes, such as that assembled by Snell and Ell in their *Rival Jerusalems* (2000) may generate useful working hypotheses but it is 'important to scrutinize closely individual returns in the context of other available evidence' in order both to test their reliability and 'to develop an enhanced appreciation of what they really tell us about religious practice at the grass roots'.

JOHN A. HARGREAVES

*Nonconformist Theology in the Twentieth Century* by Alan P.F. Sell. (Paternoster Press, 2006; pp.239; PB £18.99. ISBN -13: 678-1.84727-471-2.)

Dr Alan Sell's Didsbury Lectures for 2006 outline the theological contributions of English and Welsh Protestant Nonconformity - including Unitarians and Methodists 'those relative youngsters', some of whom do not like to be dubbed 'Nonconformists'.

The first lecture covers the controversies of last century. Calvinism seemed superseded; evolution was accepted, so the Fatherhood of God was stressed by Scott Lidgett and W.F. Lofthouse. Then we have the assertion of God's immanence by R.J. Campbell, whom P.T. Forsyth, Sell's hero, called a 'quack'. Did the First World War then kill off the optimism of the Free Churches? God's *holy* love is stressed by Forsyth, foreshadowing the influence of Karl Barth and the 'Genevan' group in Congregationalism and the rather different approach of John Oman and H.H. Farmer at Cambridge. In Methodism there was the revival of Reformation scholarship led by Gordon Rupp, Philip Watson, Rupert Davies, and later Peter Stephens. *The Catholicity of Protestantism* (1950) edited by Davies and Newton Flew showed the positive side of a renewed Protestantism across the Free Churches. It is interesting that C.J. Cadoux always pops up to give a more liberal viewpoint! Then we have the influence of Bonhoeffer, Bultmann and Tillich with resultant 'secular theology', *Honest to God* and all that with, later, John Hick seeing incarnation as metaphor with God as the 'Real' (countered, much later, by the late Colin Gunton and the Baptist Paul Fiddes, still very much with us. I regret that 'frontier' thinkers like the historian Sir Herbert Butterfield and the scientist Charles Coulson, who feature in David Ford's *The Modern Theologians*, do not appear. They were more significant than some of the forgotten men revisited here. Nevertheless this is a fine panorama.

The second lecture is a notable survey of writings on Christ, the Holy Spirit and the Trinity. Rightly, we move from the *work* of Christ to his *person*. Featured are, of course, Forsyth but also R.S. Franks, an 'Abelardian', Wheeler Robinson, Farmer, Gunton and Fiddes. Methodism is featured by A.L. Humphries, Russell Maltby, Harold Roberts and, above all, Vincent Taylor. It is significant that only one woman is featured in the book - Frances Young! Leslie Newbigin's summaries of the controversies helped many of us. Sell reckons that Forsyth's statement: 'The atonement did not produce grace, it flowed from grace' was the most important sentence in the whole of twentieth century theology!

We move to ecclesiology with the negotiations between The Church of England and Methodism, the failure of 'The Covenant' in 1982, the setting up of the *United Reformed Church* in 1972 and much else. Each church asserted its particular emphases in 'committee theology' typified by the Methodist statement of 1937, greatly influenced by Newton Flew. Bernard Manning comes to the fore with his staunch opposition to Establishment and the 'historic episcopate'. Yet in South India in 1947, Methodists, Congregationalists and Presbyterians accepted episcopacy with Newbigin emerging as a mode. Is the situation on Establishment different now in a multi-religious society with the state, apparently, dictating to all about sexuality? Is Roman Catholicism now the Nonconformist Conscience? The statement from Methodism on *Church, State and Establishment* (2004) shows the complexity of the problems, suggesting modifications to the Establishment rather than its abolition. Anglicans have moved significantly - The *Meissen* and *Porvoo* rapprochements with Lutherans and Reformed and the *Covenant* (2003) with Methodism suggest possible new initiatives. We have moved on from the 1960-1982 failures. Sell states the classic Free Church position.

The last lecture, *Rivers, Rivulets and Encroaching Desert* seems a little patchy. We begin with eschatology - Agar Beet is interestingly surveyed, but William Strawson's *Jesus and the Future Life* (1970) covers the ground well and Rupert Davies' *Religious Authority in the Age of Doubt* (1968) with critical analyses of Oman and Forsyth is an omission from the list in the middle of the chapter and the 30-page bibliography, which is magisterial. It all, I fear, becomes rather pessimistic. Are we producing scholars now? Geoffrey Wainwright features - his life of Newbigin covers not a little of Sell's scenario.

I commend this book heartily even if some might interpret events and some thinkers differently. Sell must be taken seriously as no other book features so much material. Read this alongside the four volume *Protestant Nonconformist Texts* (Ashgate, 2006-7) of which the prolific Alan Sell is the Series Editor.

JOHN MUNSEY TURNER

# THE ANNUAL LECTURE

will be delivered at the Nazarene Theological College, Dene Road, Didsbury,  
Manchester M20 2GU on Saturday 30 June 2007 at 2.30pm

by the Revd Dr Kenneth G.C. Newport

**Charles Wesley, 'warts and all': the evidence of the Prose Works.**

Chairman: the Revd Dr Herbert McGonigle

Timetable: 12.00 noon Members who want to meet and eat their own lunch  
12.45-2.15pm Annual General Meeting.

## **Travel Directions**

### **Coming by Train to Manchester:**

As you leave Piccadilly Station, walk down the slope to the right and follow the main road until it leads you into a large square called Piccadilly Gardens. Facing Primark you want the bus stops on the left hand side of the square.

### **Coming from Manchester by Bus:**

From Piccadilly Gardens take the number 42 bus and ask for Didsbury Village. A 25 minute bus ride takes you eventually along Wilmslow Road. You get off after the traffic lights where Barlow Moor Road crosses Wilmslow Road. At the far end of the village, just after the 'Shell' petrol station, turn right at the traffic lights (this is Dene Road). Go to the very end of the road (don't bear right where the road bends). NTC is located at the far end.

### **Coming by Car from the North/North West:**

Take the M60 (previously the M63) and follow the signs for Manchester Airport. Take the exit for the M56, but keep to the left-hand lane. Look for the B5166 Northenden on the overhead gantry, and take the slip-road. At the traffic lights at the bottom of the slip-road turn left through Northenden village and follow the road for about a mile and a half. Passing under a flyover, you will see a long, straight stretch of road (Palatine Road) ahead of you. Take the first turning on the right (Dene Road West). Proceed slowly, follow the road as it turns left, until you come to a junction with Spath Road. Turn right onto Spath Road, then take the first right again onto Lancaster Road. NTC is located at the far end where Lancaster Road turns left into Dene Road.

### **Coming by Car from the South/South West:**

Take the M56 and follow the signs for Manchester Airport. After the Airport exit the M56 splits. Follow the signs for Stockport and Didsbury. Take the next exit, marked Didsbury A34. Once on the A34 (Kingsway), bear left at the first major junction on to Wilmslow Road. At the third set of traffic lights, as you enter Didsbury Village, turn left into Dene Road. Go to the very end of Dene Road (do not follow the road to the right at the traffic island). NTC is at the very end on the left.

### **Coming by Car from the centre of Manchester:**

Head south down Oxford Road through Rusholme, Fallowfield, and Withington, by which time the road has become Wilmslow Road. Bear left where the road forks, and keep on Wilmslow Road until you cross traffic lights (Barlow Moor Road) and enter Didsbury Village. Turn right at the next traffic lights at the far end of the village (some 200 yards ahead) onto Dene Road. Go to the very end of Dene Road (do not follow the road to the right at the traffic island). NTC is at the very end on the left.