

### ***File Editor's note***

This study was compiled by Mrs Joan Mills of Solihull in the late 1990s: the circumstances she told in her preface.

On 15 October 1999 she sent me a copy, after I had made a small contribution to her project. Then she described her work as, "It's really just a pulling together of all the odd bits of information I could find on the women."

Whereas this is almost true – a lot of the material here was published over a hundred years ago – yet such an effort is worthwhile as it draws together into one place what was then known.

I encouraged Joan to place a copy of her work with the Methodist Archives at The John Rylands University of Manchester Library, Deansgate, Manchester, a suggestion she received with surprise, but I believe accepted. For many years I understood that she had done so. It was only when others failed to find it that I realised that her fatal illness had prevented her from making the deposit.

Her work is presented here now as a tribute to what she achieved.

It has been made available using a simple OCR program to scan Joan's typescript. This has led to one or two issues, not all of which have been easily rectified. Some obvious slips have been corrected (some twentieth century dates being corrected to nineteenth century, for instance).

Is it without error ? No, some slips have entered and there are some omissions. The reader is always best advised to try to refer to the sources quoted. Occasionally however it is the footnotes themselves that mislead. Where noticed, slips in them have been corrected.

I have added an Appendix of additional material, and it is intended that other files on individual female itinerants will be added to the system in due course.

# WHAT ARE OUR THOUGHTS ON WOMEN PREACHERS?

The Female Itinerant Preachers  
of the Bible Christian Church.

Joan Mills

## Preface

When I was researching my family tree, I found that in 1847 my great-great-grandfather had, on the Isles of Scilly, married an agricultural labourer's daughter from Somerset. I asked a distant cousin (also discovered during these searches) why such a girl should have been on Scilly, so far away from home. He replied, 'She was a Methodist minister.'

As women have only fairly recently been ordained into the Methodist Church, I thought he was mistaken but knew I must check. Methodist Archives confirmed for me that she was a Bible Christian Female Itinerant Preacher. This set me off to find out as much as I could about these brave, dedicated and godly women.

### The Bible Christian Church.

As a separate entity, the Bible Christian Church lasted less than a hundred years- from 1815 to 1907, when it joined with the United Methodist Free Church and the Methodist New Connexion to form the United Methodist Church. This, twenty-five years later, joined with the Primitives and the Wesleyans to form the present Methodist Church.

William O'Bryan was a Methodist from Cornwall who had a real passion for evangelism which exceeded the geographical bounds the Quarterly Meeting wished to impose on him. He was expelled from the Society in 1815, for not keeping in line with their instructions but some people chose exile with him and continued to meet in class.

This was the nucleus on the new movement, which was joined by some who had come under the influence of an evangelical Anglican curate named Daniel Evans and then by those who heard the Gospel through William O'Bryan's preachers. In the beginning the 'Bryanite' preachers confined their evangelistic campaigns to the West Country round the Devon and Cornwall borders, but soon began to look further afield. Islands seemed to them to be fruitful areas for mission for they went to the Isles of Scilly, the Channel Islands (or Norman Isles as they were then called) and the Isle of Wight. They also established Missions in Kent, Canada, South Australia and later in China.

They originally called themselves 'The Armenian Bible Christians' but shortened this to 'The Bible Christians' in 1821. A similar structure to that of the Wesleyans was used but they felt themselves to be less hampered by rules and more open to the leading of the Holy Spirit. The preachers started as Local Preachers and then after their call had been judged, could become itinerant. There was a period of probation before being received into Full Connexion. Women as well as men became itinerant and the Church owes as much to these women and their labours, as much as it does to the men.

In time a Book Room, together with a printing press and publishing house, was established at Plymouth which was later moved to Shebbear. A school, which is still flourishing, was started on the same site and included a Theological Faculty to enable ministers to deepen and broaden their education.

In 1828, William O'Bryan was thought to be too autocratic and voted out of the Presidency. He found this humiliation too hard to bear and, in 1832, sailed to New York where he became an itinerant preacher. He visited England frequently during his ministry in America but died and was buried in New York.

The Connexion continued to extend its witness to many parts of England, but its heart was in the West Country. The work and witness of the Church in China was one of the remarkable and exciting ventures of faith undertaken by the Bible Christians in 1886 and its effect is still seen today.

Around the turn of the century, talks were initiated to see if there could be a union of the churches with their roots in Methodism. Only the Bible Christians, the Methodist New Connexion and the United Methodist Free Church felt able to commit themselves at that time, and the United Methodist Church came into being in 1907. It took another twenty-five years before the other strands of Methodism joined with them to form the Methodist Church.

## Using Women as Preachers.

From the beginning of the Bible Christian movement, William O'Bryan thought it right to use women as preachers. He believed there was no Scriptural objection and that there were women with gifts which could be used to spread the Gospel. The first women to preach was Johanna Brooks, who was planned locally but the earliest itinerants to be employed, in 1817, were Elizabeth Dart who was stationed at Alsworthy and Elizabeth Gay, Mary Lyle and Susan Nankivell at Truro. From this beginning grew the small army of indomitable women who preached in many parts of England and overseas.

Scriptural objections to women preaching were countered with more judiciously chosen Scripture and its interpretation. At the 1819 conference the question was asked, 'What are our thoughts on women preachers?' This was the reply.<sup>1</sup>

'We believe God can enable a woman as well as a man to speak to edification and comfort. Paul was too pious to oppose piety himself which he must have done if he opposed pious women speaking on pious subjects to the edification of others.'

Bourne<sup>2</sup> says of that Conference

'The subject of a female ministry was largely discussed and the employment of women as preachers unanimously approved. Those engaged had so many seals to their ministry wherever they went that the last lingering doubt as to their Divine call had been removed.'

Only four years later, William O'Bryan<sup>3</sup> published 'A discourse in vindication of the Gospel being published by females' which sounds as though there were some who were not totally convinced by his arguments at the 1819 Conference. Here he makes a logical Scriptural apology for his views. The first text is from Joel 2v28 where the prophet says he will pour out his spirit on all flesh and both sons and daughters will prophesy. This gift is promised to all and was fulfilled at Pentecost where all were filled with the Holy Spirit. O'Bryan claimed that they all spoke with a new spiritual tongue in words which were more easily understood. It followed therefore that women as well as men should prophesy. There were doubtless women in the Early Church. So if women have this gift they may publish Christ in spirit and with power- that is to prophesy. Christ does not forbid women to preach so it is a dangerous presumption for men to do so. He then says, 'Let none despise plain truth spoken by women.', emphasising that women have preached to great effect and 'God has owned the work for His.'

As to the other Pauline quotation about women keeping silence in church, he points to another verse where Paul says women must keep their heads covered when they prophesy. So many had been converted that this could not have been done by an evil spirit and so women's preaching must be right. 'Whenever God qualifies and sends women to prophesy, it is their duty to obey and stand forth and bear witness to the truth.'

The Bible Christians. Vol.I' published in 1862 restates this position. It clarifies the status of the Female Itinerants and makes a more emphatic case for their employment. '.. we dare not prevent them from engaging in this work when they possess unquestioned piety and acceptable talents and believe themselves to be called of God therein.'

<sup>1</sup> B.C. Minutes 1819  
1823. <sup>2</sup>B.B.C. p79

<sup>3</sup> B.C. Mag.

## Rules.

O'Bryan was concerned for the Female Itinerants and laid down what he felt should be their standards of behaviour, dress and care of themselves. Those who undertook to give the preachers lodging were also reminded of their responsibilities.

In 1820 he wrote, <sup>1</sup>our sisters who travel as helpers should keep their own place, be watchful, always neat, plain and clean, discreet, humble, grave as mothers in Israel, diligent according to their sex as well as their brethren, being as much as they can their own servants and helps to families wherever they go and when they leave their room in the morning leave everything in its proper place.' The phrase 'Mothers in Israel' became part of the Bible Christian 'language' as in many obituaries the married Female Itinerant is referred to as a 'Mother in Israel'. He continues, 'let all, both male and female, take care of their health; beware of taking too long journeys and of remaining with wet clothes and also, beware of going out after preaching at night and of sleeping in damp beds.' Some of this advice was not heeded as we read of a woman preacher walking thirty miles over bad roads in appalling weather and preaching in three places.

Lastly he gives an admonition to landlords and landladies. 'Our friends who lodge the preachers are earnestly requested to pay particular attention to this (damp beds) especially in winter as otherwise it may possibly cause the preacher his life.'

The women were told to dress very plainly. There was a hint of this in the passage already quoted but O'Bryan went on to state precisely what he meant. Those who were not prepared to dress as the Conference directed could go! They were not to wear 'frills, chitterlings, lace and bunches, gold and pearls.' This was spelt out more simply and tersely in the Minutes of Conference for 1825. 'We are resolved to keep to our rules but those who will not keep to them are at perfect liberty to leave us but we may not suffer them to remain among us on any other terms.' Later his attitude softened a little as at a Devonport District meeting he allowed that <sup>1</sup>...silk shawls might be worn but of one plain colour either drab or brown,' Remuneration was poor. The minutes for 1820 give a woman's 'quarterage' as £1 10s. which was about the same as the wages for an agricultural labourer. By 1837 she received £7 a year with board and lodging. Later probationers received £18 a year while those in Full Connexion earned £24 annually, both with the addition of board and lodging.

It took several years to work out a selection process and a system of probation. In the Bible Christian Vol.1 published in 1862 it says, 'Before they are taken out to travel, their pastor converses with them respecting their Christian experience, call to the work and state of health and submits their case to the Quarterly Meeting when, if appropriate, a certificate of recommendation, signed by the Circuit Steward is sent to the Conference. They remain three years on trial, but do not undergo any examination at the Conference. When they became disabled in their labours after they are admitted into Full Connexion they receive such support as their necessities require as long as they maintain a becoming character and remain unmarried.'

<sup>1</sup>B.C.Min. 1820    <sup>2</sup>B.C.S p110

## Numbers

Altogether, over the ninety or so years of the Bible Christian Church, there were eighty-seven Female Itinerants. Between the years of 1874 and 1894 there were none. The greatest numbers were during the early years with the peak of twenty-nine being reached in 1826. In some years there were only a one or two and at Church Union in 1907, the four who were left....'ceased to be recognised.' Some only served a year or two but one, Catherine Harris, remained in the active work for a total of twenty-seven years between 1825 and 1853. She then remained a Supernumerary until 1896 when she died aged ninety-two. Pyke said, "Evidently therefore the ministry of women, radiant and invaluable as it had been in the early years, had not established itself as an integral and enduring part of the Bible Christian denomination. "

There were various reasons why the women left the work. Some married. The men preachers were encouraged to marry the Female Itinerants. Conference recommended that -'....the Itinerant brethren who intended to marry, choose their partners from among our sisters who have dedicated themselves to the service of God by coming forward as travelling preachers.'

They promised them '... the first support from the Connexion.' As we are not told what form this support would take, one assumes that it was of the moral variety ! Others married men they met on their stations, often carrying on the work as Local Preachers as well as coping admirably with family and household duties. One, Elizabeth Dart, married a man who was converted through her preaching. He too became a preacher.

Some drove themselves so hard that their health broke. Many were able to resume work after a year as a Supernumerary but others were so ill that they were never able to return. Some died of diseases such as smallpox and scrofula while for others the list of their stations ends with the bleak words, 'desisted' or 'disappears'. There are no details as to why the women desisted, and 'disappears' often means for reasons of marriage they no longer travelled. It has proved impossible to trace a large number of the 'disappeared'.

## Position.

Despite William O'Bryan's protestations that there was a Scriptural authority for women to preach, the church still felt a little uneasy about their position. No woman ever became a Superintendent or served on any Connexional Committee. There is a two-volume collection of biographies of Bible Christian Preachers and they contain not one single biography of a Female Itinerant. O'Bryan said, having upheld their right to preach,<sup>3</sup> 'They do not however, take part among us in Church Government, they are entitled to attend meetings for business but not to vote.'

Pyke said,<sup>4</sup> 'Even though these female preachers were but "helpers" they were more than auxiliaries, in many cases they were pioneers,' He feels that had they been given equal status with the men, speaking in meetings and serving on committees their numbers might have been maintained and their influence 'a powerful factor in the life of the denomination'. In 'The Golden Chain' he assesses the importance of the women preachers in these words.<sup>5</sup> 'The heroic part which these (Bible Christian Female Itinerants) took in proclaiming the Gospel, in opening up new ground and in the endurance of hardships, is surely sufficient to entitle them to a place in the Kingdom of Heaven.'

Margaret Adams.

Born Morwenstow February 27<sup>th</sup> 1799  
Died Hartland July 26<sup>th</sup> 1822

*Stations*

1818 ?  
1819 Truro  
1820 Canworthy  
1821 Supernumerary

At the age of seventeen Margaret looked in the mirror and told herself that if she were to be converted she would have to <sup>1</sup>'take down her curls'. Although we have no details of her conversion, this most certainly took place as three years later she was described as <sup>2</sup>'a female preacher of considerable repute.'

Her obituary says <sup>3</sup>'...she laboured with success.' Her preaching was very effective as when she was warning her congregation to flee from the wrath to come. '... many people would cry together for mercy.' At Gracca later that year, together with William O'Bryan, she spent a whole day till two o'clock the next morning, praying with new converts. Bourne <sup>3</sup> describes her as a '...bright and shining light' but due to her early death '...melted away into the light of heaven'.

She became ill with scrofula but continued to travel even when medicine did not help. The illness became worse, forcing her to abandon her itinerant ministry, but she was able to speak at occasional meetings. The disease could not be cured and she became so weak that she was confined to bed in her uncle's house at Hartland. She displayed great patience and courage in suffering and died witnessing to Salvation.<sup>1</sup>

<sup>1</sup>S.B.C. p110    <sup>2</sup>B.C. Mag. 1823    <sup>3</sup>B.B.C.p69

## Emily Bailey

### *Stations*

1893 Chao Tung Fu

1894 Tung Chuan Fu

The Bible Christian magazine for 1892 and 1893 published two of Emily's letters which give some insight into the difficulties of the journey to China and starting up new mission work. The first letter was written from the ship going out to China, and is dated 20<sup>th</sup> September 1892. This was mainly an account of the voyage out but the second starts after landing in Shanghai and takes the reader to the middle of June 1893.

Emily and Maud Cannon started their journey up the Yangtse by houseboat travelling about twenty-five miles a day. After rising at six, they spent the day reading their Bibles, having prayer meetings and learning Chinese. Sometimes when the boat was moored they would take a little exercise on the river bank but the children chased them, shouting, 'Foreign devils!'. She wrote a graphic account of the scenery they passed through. It was very dramatic with snow-capped mountains, the river running through gorges and the beauty of the foliage colours. At another place she noted the fields of sugar cane. This beauty was in stark contrast to the primitive conditions on the boat where the rats were running over them. At another landing place their presence almost caused a riot but this was fortunately avoided. The further upstream they travelled the more dangerous the river became, It was a hazardous undertaking towing the boats by ropes over the rapids. At one point the towrope broke and they had some frightening moments as the boat was swept downstream but no great damage was done. They passed many towns on their way.

After a month of travel, they arrived extremely dirty but safely at the American Mission. The next dangerous river journey began again on 30<sup>th</sup> December which they thought would last two weeks but took much longer. The final part of the journey was by chair. The country was mountainous and very cold as there was three feet of snow. All their goods had to be carried by porters. It had taken five months to travel from Shanghai.

The area was very poor. Emily wrote that,<sup>1</sup> '...the children are starving, the poverty heart-breaking.' By June 1893, she reported that a school had been started. Maud taught the children while she taught the women to read and proclaimed the Gospel to them.

In the Autumn of 1894, she married a young Bible Christian minister called William Tremberth. Another of her letters was published in 1895<sup>1</sup> when she wrote about the way the work was increasing and that they hoped to start a boys' school. Including children there were nineteen enquirers. The weather was bitterly cold, she added.

The Tremberths went on furlough for a year in 1899. They were then stationed at Holsworthy for two years after which they returned to China for four years. From 1906 to 1922 William was in the home circuits, afterwards returning to China for another four years. After a year's furlough, he remained in English circuits.<sup>2</sup>

The Bible Christian magazine for 1903 has her portrait with three children.

<sup>1</sup> BBC Mag. 1892-1903

[The original does not have a reference <sup>2</sup>]

Grace Barrett

*Stations*

1820 St. Neot.  
1821 Desists

Susannah Baulch

*Stations*

1819 Kilkhampton  
1820 Truro  
1821 Luxillian  
1822 Falmouth  
1823 Kilkhampton  
1824 Ringsash  
1825 Guernsey Mission  
1826 Truro  
1827 Truro Supernumerary  
1827 Scilly Isles  
1828 Truro Supernumerary  
Disappears

In the Bible Christian Magazine of 1826, there is a letter from Susanna to Catherine O'Bryan. In it she tells of the conversion of two brothers, one a seaman. Their mother wanted them to attend the Bible Christian meetings but they did not want to leave the Methodists. Eventually they fell in with her wishes, were converted and began to speak in public. She was so convinced of her calling she wrote, 'I can give up all for God.'

She figured in Mary O' Bryan's diary. 'One night Sister Susannah Baulch was asked to go to the house of a certain person to sleep and when he had brought her home, his wife would not suffer her to go to bed, though they had an empty bed and she had waded through one, if not more rivers to get to the congregation.' Her own words were, 'I sat up by the side of the chimney all night and little or no fire and was afraid to rise and shut the door, fearing the people would think I was going to rob the house; though I believe quarts of water ran out of my clothes while I was preaching.'

It seems an unkind way to treat someone, unless the wife disapproved both of the Bible Christians and women preachers. They certainly had not taken heed of William O'Bryan's plea to those giving hospitality to the preachers to make sure they were warm and dry.

Patience Bickle.

*Stations*

1819 Michaelstow  
1820 Dock  
1821 St. Neot Supernumerary  
1822 Sheerness  
1823 Chatham  
1824 Sheerness  
1827 Devonport Supernumerary

Bourne<sup>1</sup> makes a passing reference to Patience Bickle. In 1818 she held meetings in the neighbourhood of Tavistock, helped by a girl of fourteen. He wrote that ten societies were started where there had been no preaching previously.

Mary Biddick

*Stations*

1829 Penzance  
1829 Luxillian  
Disappears

Mary Billing

*Stations*

1822 St. Ervan  
1823 Luxillian  
1824 Isle of Wight Mission  
1825 Portsea Mission  
1826 Bristol Mission  
1827 London

In March 1824, Mary Billing was sent to the Isle of Wight where there was a great growth of the Society. She is quoted as saying,<sup>2</sup> 'The cries for mercy and the shouts of joy soon drowned my voice,' and 'Hundreds were unable to get into the little chapel.' She was a most effective preacher and must have been a good administrator too for when Portsea was made into a separate station in 1825, Mary was in charge.

She married twice, both times to ministers. Her first husband was Harry Major. After his death in 1839, she married Richard Kinsman. Both men held many high offices in the movement, including that of President of the Conference. Harry Major was considered by <sup>3</sup>Shaw to be the first theologian of the denomination, setting down the Bible Christian view of Baptism. It was, 'a seal of the covenant of grace and ...equivalent to Jewish circumcision.' Baptisms were always to take place in the 'midst of the congregation, and baptised children belong to the visible Church of Christ'.<sup>3</sup>

<sup>1</sup>B.B.C.p67    <sup>2</sup>op.cit. p166    <sup>3</sup>S.B.C.p90

## Jane Bird

### *Stations*

1825 Shebbear  
1826 Shebbear Supernumerary  
1827 Ringsash Supernumerary  
Disappears

Before she became an itinerant, Jane was a Local Preacher in the Ringsash circuit. <sup>1</sup>When she was speaking in Crediton in July 1823, she could scarcely speak for weeping over the godless condition of the people. This indicates how she threw herself both heart and soul into the work of preaching. It is not surprising then to read that after a year in the full-time work, she had to give up as it was too taxing for her health. She was two years as a Supernumerary, hoping to be fit enough to return but she did not recover sufficiently to do so. She then married a Mr. Bear of Chawleigh.

## Jane Bray

### *Stations*

1823 Falmouth  
1824 ?  
1825 St. Neot  
1826 Breage  
1827 Falmouth  
1828 Luxillian  
1829 Buckfastleigh and Chagford  
1830 Somerton  
1831 London  
1833 Somerton  
Disappears; married William Hill in 1838.

It is recorded <sup>2</sup> that in 1831 Jane was in the Forest of Dean at a time of sickness and shortages. She suffered from, 'Typhus, Black Fever and want of food'. Her co-pastor at this time was William Hill whom she subsequently married in 1838. He, according to his obituary, <sup>3</sup> was known for always working in the most difficult places. 'His toils and hardships were truly astonishing!' He drove himself so hard that his health broke in 1857 and he was prematurely superannuated. Jane's 'fervent piety' greatly increased his usefulness and her devoted care prolonged his life so that he lived ten years in retirement before his death in 1867. She was as a 'devoted female preacher'.

Their son, William Hill and grandson, William Penryn Hill both became Bible Christian ministers.

<sup>1</sup>L.C.C.

<sup>2</sup>F.D.p2

<sup>3</sup>B.B.C. p416

## Johanna Brooks.

Although Johanna Brooks was never an itinerant, being married at the time of her conversion, she merits a place in these records as one of the first woman preachers in the Bible Christian Church. She was a local preacher.

Bourne<sup>1</sup> describes as a 'strict church woman'. While reading 'Drelincourt on Death', she became convinced of the need for repentance and experienced conversion, leading her to feel she must testify in the church of her wonderful experience. Because of the feeling against women preaching in church, she did not dare to speak out until her third visit. Johanna was promptly ushered out by her husband and the Parish Officer! This outpouring had affected many of her hearers. Her husband and her family were <sup>2</sup>'...exceedingly mad' at her at first but then many of them and their neighbours were brought to Christ.

In the sixth chapter of Ephesians verse twenty-one it says that, Tychicus, ... a minister in the Lord, shall make known to you all things.' When Johanna met William O'Bryan she felt he was her Tychicus. Even so, according to Pyke, <sup>3</sup>she shrank from preaching at first. She prayed for direction and her preaching was used mightily. A farmer offered his barn for services. So many societies were started that there were not enough preachers to visit them all. In 1841, she was one of the preachers who were active in a revival in Ringsash.

Morwenstow Chapel was built close to where Johanna Brooks lived and that is where she worshipped. In August 1891, a tablet to her memory was placed in the Chapel. It reads-

'Search the Scriptures.' John v 39

Erected in memory of JOHANNA BROOKS NEAL by her children and grandchildren in Thanksgiving to God for her consistent, devoted and godly life and testimony in Morwenstow Church. She was one of the first members of the Bible Christian Connexion, with whom she continued for 43 years- from 1815 to 1858- when she fell asleep in Jesus.

'She being dead yet speaketh.'

## Ann Brown

### *Stations*

1822 Morvah  
1823 Scilly  
1824 Truro  
1825 St. Ervan  
1826 Shebbear  
1827 Exeter  
1828 Crewkerne  
1829 Weare  
1831 Somerton  
1832 Devonport  
Disappears

James Roberts (2<sup>nd</sup>) was converted through the preaching of Ann Brown in the mid 1820's. She married William Conibeare, another Bible Christian minister.

<sup>1</sup>BBCp32    <sup>2</sup>PBCp42    <sup>3</sup>PGC

## Bessie Alice Bull

### ***Stations***

1902 China  
1903 TungChuanFu  
1904 Chao Chuan Fu  
1905 Tong Chuan Fu  
1906 Chao Tong

In 1906 Bessie married Alfred Evans, a Bible Christian Minister, who served in China until after 1931. After 1906 she is said to 'disappear but in the Minutes for 1907, the year of Union, she was classed as a female missionary under her maiden name.

## Charlotte Bunce

### ***Stations***

1827 Hastings  
1828 London  
1829 Tenterden  
1830 Tenterden Supernumerary  
1831 Isle of Wight Supernumerary  
Disappears

## Maria Bush

Born Barwen Heads Australia 1872  
Died Nosu, China 25<sup>th</sup> October 1924

Married Charles Hicks in 1903.

### ***Stations***

1897 China  
1898 Chao Tung Fu  
1902 Tung Chuan Fu

Most of the information about Maria is found in her two letters published in the Bible Christian Magazines of 1903 and 1906, that is before and after her marriage to Charles Hicks, a Bible Christian Minister.

After her move to Tung Chuan Fu in September 1902, she wrote of how hard it had been to leave the women and girls in her other station. She then spent five months in the city, building on work that others had started.

It was difficult to get children, and particularly girls, to school. One girl in whom she had a particular interest was quick, retentive and responsive to her teaching but her many chores prevented her from attending regularly. She had to guard the crop from thieves, mind the pigs and grind maize. It must have been a source of great sadness to Maria to see such a good mind unable to be stretched by education.

Various schemes were tried out. She ran a Tuesday class in the city for little girls which was

a moderate success. The weekly classes for women met with a poor response until they started to meet in each others' houses. The 1905 letter was written after her marriage by which time she had one child. She wrote movingly of the difficulties of Chinese women and in particular of the absolute right of a father over his daughters. Some girls were sold into slavery to finance their fathers' opium addiction. One girl was sold from family to family until she could take no more and committed suicide.

Charles Hicks wrote to his father in June 1900 about their narrow escape for the rebels. When they heard there was a riot in the town, Charles called for chairs and they all left. Later they found out that within two hours of their departure, their house had been completely wrecked. The French houses were safe as their troops were guarding them, so the Hicks took refuge in the French sector of the city. He reported that the C.I.M. station was intact despite attempts to wreck it.

Sadly Charles decided that under the circumstances, 'Mission work must cease.' They were obliged to leave escorted by French and Chinese soldiers. He wrote, 'Fancy! Four children and only what they stand up in! my wife's nerves are completely unstrung and to stay seems like folly. Here I am without a cent.' In the next letter, written in 1901, he said that they were 'driven from China'. An Imperial Edict was issued commanding that they should be put to death but friendly officials helped and they were not molested. They were not in fact, 'driven from China' at all but Charles must have felt that everything was conspiring to push them out.

Cheering news and sad news were recorded in his letter from Tong Chuan in 1902 after they were able to return. The work was progressing so that the Buddhist and Taoist priests were being turned out of their temples. Even though their children were the only foreign ones in the city, they were very happy. Groups of villagers in the south had hidden in caves to escape from rebels who were causing trouble. When the Mandarin's messengers arrived to sort the matter out, the people killed them thinking they were being tricked. The mandarin took a terrible revenge, ordering the death of all those in hiding. Later the mandarin himself was executed because of the massacre of the villagers.

The 1905 magazine published another letter and a photograph of Maria and the children now numbering five. She must have been very unhappy when two of the boys had to return to England for schooling. Charles commented that it still took two months to get from their station to the port. Maria continued to teach the women's classes.

The Hicks remained in China apart from furloughs until her death in 1924.

### Maud Cannon

Born New Zealand

*Stations.*

1893 ChaoTung Fu

1894 TungChuanFu

Married Francis J. Dymond 1895

From Maud's and her husband's letters, it is possible to see the difficulties, dangers and privations some of the missionaries to China underwent. These letters were published in the Bible Christian Magazine between 1893 and 1905,

In 1893, she wrote describing her journey from Australia to her first station. She travelled with Emily Bailey but the two accounts are so different that they complement each other. She arrived in Shanghai on 14<sup>th</sup> October and spent a week or so at Yang Chau at the C.I.M. station. From there they travelled up river ('very yellow and muddy looking') towards Chew Kiang. She commented that the countryside was very flat and the journey slow. On arrival she was 'surrounded by coolies and crowds of gazers'. A stressful time followed as there was a quarrel with porters about off-loading the luggage and an argument over payment for the chairs but all was resolved eventually. She was struck by the 'degradation and misery'.

On 1<sup>st</sup> November Maud left by steamer for Chew Kiang. One boat had left the previous day but somehow the captain had left her behind. She wrote, 'This month I have been in China has been very precious to me. I feel I can never praise the Lord enough that he has chosen me to carry the glorious news of salvation to this land where Satan reigns and over which hangs the dark shadow of misery, sin and idolatry which the glorious light of the Gospel alone can dispel.'

As the work expanded and the Mission staff increased, more letters were sent home for publication than could be printed in the magazine. This means that some parts of their lives are chronicled in detail and other parts are frustratingly sparse. We do know, however, that their son, Frank Dymond, became a doctor and served in China at the Wenchow and Chao Tong hospitals before his premature death in 1928 at the age of thirty-two.

### Annie Carkeek

#### *Stations*

1894 Blaenavon

1895 Retires to become an Evangelist.

### Elizabeth Carne

#### *Stations*

1823 Canworthywater

1824 St. Neot

1825 Brighton Mission

1826 Isle of Wight

1827 Portsea

1828 Devonport

1829 St. Ervan Supernumerary

1819 Michaelstow

Disappears

## Mary Coffin

### *Stations*

1827 Penzance  
disappears

## Ann Cory

### *Stations*

1819 Gracca  
1820 Kent Mission  
1822 Tiverton Mission  
1823 Michaelstow  
1824 Kilkhampton Supernumerary  
1825 London  
1826 Chatham  
1827 Kilkhampton  
Supernumerary  
Disappears

In 1819 Harry Major and Ann Cory were sent to the Gracca Circuit and preached on St. Austell Downs. There were so many conversions that a new society was formed there.

Ann had a good voice, great courage and an impressive manner which made her eminently suitable for open air work. Pyke<sup>1</sup> underlines this observation when he described her as '...highly gifted (and with) all the qualities of an open air speaker.' She is also said to have been, '...strong and very courageous'. Sometimes there were as many as a thousand people in the crowd. He commented that her preaching had an air of severity, '...like John the Baptist rather than his master'. She struck terror into the hearts of her hearers! In Chatham, one John Allen had an unenviable reputation as a profane and dissolute man.

He experienced conversion under Ann's preaching and the local people could hardly believe the transformation. By his own admission he had been '.... crowned king of the liars, swearers and blasphemers' by his wicked companions. The landlord of the inn he frequented was so amazed that he said, <sup>2</sup>'The Bryanites having got John Allen will get the Devil next; their influence over the people is such that I shall have to let my house to them!'

A new mission was started in Kent and Ann was stationed there. Here again the force of her personality was seen. There was a great novelty in having female preachers and many must have gone to the meetings just to see this strange phenomenon. One young man went to the meeting intent on trying to put Ann off her stroke. He intended to quote a line from the play 'Bluebeard' which was running at the time. He started to say, 'Ann, Sister Ann, do you see anyone coming?', but her look silenced him and he sat quietly for the rest of the meeting.

A Mr. Drawbridge and his family were so affected by Ann's preaching, that they decided that a chapel must be built at Hartlip. Subscriptions came in slowly so Mr. Drawbridge met the rest of the cost from his own pocket and left the freehold of the chapel to the Bible Christians in his will.

<sup>1</sup> P.B.C. p45      <sup>2</sup>B.B.C. p86

From Kent, Ann was sent to Tiverton. On her way she called in to see the societies in London and was asked to stay until a new preacher could be sent. A female preacher was a novelty which attracted crowds and her words were powerful.

Her health broke down in 1824 as she had to become a Supernumerary, but after a year she was able to continue her itinerancy once more. There must have been a much more serious breakdown in 1828 as she again became a Supernumerary and then 'disappears'. As she is not mentioned again she may have married someone who was not a Bible Christian minister.

During the early part of her ministry in Gracca, Paul Robbins, an eminent Bible Christian minister and missionary to Canada, was converted under her preaching. He was married twice, both times to Female itinerants.

### Sarah Cory

#### **Stations**

1819 Luxillian  
1820 Buckfastleigh  
1821 Desisted

### Mary Cottle

*Died* 15<sup>th</sup> August 1871

#### *Stations*

1822 Exeter  
1823 Exeter  
1824 Shebbear  
1825 London  
1827 Faversham  
1829 Kilkhampton  
1830 Kilkhampton and Chacewater Supernumerary

Married William Reed

Mary travelled Cornwall, preaching. Lewis Court<sup>1</sup> wrote her own words in a manuscript. 'It seems strange to me that they should come to hear such weakness, but the Lord has the hearts of all men in his hands, what is done from a pure motive, the Lord will bless.' She showed great humility when many came to hear her message.

She felt she must give up work for a while and go to nurse an aunt and her children in Bowleigh.

Some time after this, she was married to William Reed who was a Bible Christian minister. Both her son and grandson. William Bryan Reed and John Ford Reed were also ordained. Shaw says that other members of the family took an important part in the affairs of the church.

<sup>1</sup>L.C.C

## Elizabeth Courtice

### **Stations**

1820 Michaelstow  
1821 Ringsash  
1822 Falmouth  
1824 Kilkhampton  
1825 Luxillian  
1826 Exeter  
1827 Weare  
1829 Shebbear Supernumerary  
1830 Michaelstow  
Married Andrew Cory

In 1821 Elizabeth was sent to Sedcott near Axebridge. She was a wonderfully effective preacher. Bourne<sup>1</sup> said that '...scars and hundreds gathered to hear this woman and her word ...' and many were converted as a result. Her work led to the creation of the Weare Circuit which had 212 members by 1826.

She married Andrew Cory who was a Bible Christian minister but sadly he drowned before the birth of their only child.

## Elizabeth Dart

Born Poundstock  
Died Canada 1<sup>st</sup> January 1857

### **Stations**

1817 St. Ervan  
1818 St. Ervan  
1819 Kilkhampton  
1820 Kilkhampton Supernumerary  
1821 Buckfastleigh Supernumerary  
1822 ?  
1823 Bristol  
1824 Monmouth Mission  
1825 Kilkhampton Supernumerary  
1826 Ditto  
1827 St. Ervan  
1828 Jersey  
1829 London  
1830 Devonport  
1831 Mevagissey  
1832 Mevagissey Supernumerary

Married John Eynon Hicks 22<sup>nd</sup> March 1833

<sup>1</sup>B.B.C.

To Elizabeth Dart falls the distinction of being the first Bible Christian Female Itinerant Preacher. She was formerly a Wesleyan. Writing about Elizabeth, Bourne<sup>1</sup> was moved to pay tribute to all women preachers, likening them to Old Testament women, but felt that with the Female Itinerants, the parallel is more sharply drawn. They sacrificed none of their native modesty and grace, performed innumerable noble deeds and rendered much heroic service.' They left their comfortable homes to become pioneering evangelists. Elizabeth Dart was the forerunner. She was described as the<sup>2</sup> 'finest Bible Christian missionary ever sent to Canada.'

A high point in the revival at Alsworthy took place on 1<sup>st</sup> January 1817. A great number of people came and Elizabeth was one of those<sup>3</sup> 'praying and conversing with the penitents for many hours.' There were so many enquirers that to counsel them all took till two o'clock the next morning.

Her husband, John Eynon Hicks was converted through her preaching. He was to go to the Bible Christian Mission station in Cobourg Canada but when he sailed from Liverpool on 7<sup>th</sup>. In October 1832, the ship was driven back to Cork because of bad weather. All his boxes were stolen so he was forced to stay in England for the winter while he got himself reorganised.<sup>1</sup> He then met Elizabeth once more and they were married. This time they sailed from Padstow in the May of 1833 and arrived in Quebec six weeks later.

Cobourg was not an easy station. John wrote in 1835<sup>4</sup> that the Mission was looking better than six months previously and the congregation was on the increase. Even so, the church was divided into sections quarrelling about doctrine. The station was in the middle of a vast forest but despite all the difficulties, by 1847, there were twenty-four places of worship. Living conditions were primitive and hard. He remarked, <sup>5</sup>'We are not walking in silver slippers here.'

With all these problems it is hardly surprising that he sometimes suffered from despondency but Elizabeth only had to speak her husband's name for him to be revived. She was a strong woman who underpinned her husband's work. He was often away on preaching tours and then Elizabeth took his local appointments.

Apart from a year's deputation in 1848, they remained in Canada. During this year she had an opportunity to talk to Mary Thorne. Wickes<sup>6</sup> quoted Mary's words recorded in *The Maiden Preacher* (see Mary O'Bryan). '....she still retains a seasoning of Christian devotedness that used to be so much the subject of pursuit and conversation among us as a Christian church.'

Elizabeth died in 1857. In her obituary Bourne said of her<sup>7</sup>, 'One thing about her is certain; she never lost her ardour in the glorious task of soul-saving. In her last illness and in death she was triumphant. One of her delightful expressions was, "God has lit up the valley for me all through with the rays of his glory." '

<sup>1</sup>BBCp54

<sup>2</sup>BBCpl05

<sup>3</sup>BBCp42

<sup>4</sup>BCMAG 1834

<sup>5</sup>BCMAG 1847

<sup>6</sup>MW p51

<sup>7</sup>BBC p347

Frances Davey

*Stations*

1823 Penzance  
1824 Breage  
1825 Kilkhampton  
1826 St Ervan

Susanna de St. Croix

Born St. Helier, Jersey

*Stations*

1835 St. Austell  
1836 St. Ervan

Susanna was converted in 1825 through Edward Hocken, a Bible Christian Minister. She bore the same name as her mother. And was French speaking. Until her conversion she, 'lived in the world'. After travelling for two years she met and married her husband who was a former Methodist. They had a large family and great financial hardships which, 'ground her down' but in spite of all her difficulties, she remained a faithful member of the Society,

Lavinia Dunn

*Stations*

1826 Breage  
1827 St. Ervan  
1827 Buckfastleigh  
Disappears

Eliza Dunn

*Stations*

1894 Chao Tung Fu  
1895 Tung Chuan Fu  
1897 Chao Tung Fu

Married Ernest John Piper 1898

Eliza sailed for China on 21<sup>st</sup> December 1893 and on arrival studied in Yangchao before leaving for her station almost a year later. A letter was published in the Bible Christian Magazine for 1895 which told of that journey. They had great difficulty in finding a place on a boat as most of it had been requisitioned by soldiers, but eventually they managed to get on. 'It was the Lord providing for us.'

Travelling was better than she expected as there were two four berth cabins between the five of them and their servants. There were no other passengers. They wore Chinese clothes and travelled like the Chinese with their baskets and beds. They watched the riverside life as they sailed by and she wrote about the fishermen on the bank.

When they reached Hankow, they stayed at the C.I.M. station and were pleased to have fellowship with other Christians but they were eager to be off and get to their own station.

The next part of the trip was on a comfortable houseboat up to I-Chang. Going through the gorges took two weeks. There was a slight collision which caused no big problem and they arrived at Wansein on 21<sup>st</sup> December. The editor commented that the river journey took more than two months. Eight days later they were still travelling and Eliza continued to write in diary form. She described the scenery and noted that they preached where they could but this was not always well received. The missionaries were accused of removing eyes to make medicine which they strongly refuted. Eliza was '....pained by seeing an idol.'

In the middle of January she changed boats. She spent her days reading, studying and taking walks on the river banks. After a week on this boat, she had a week at another station where she celebrated Chinese New Year with a service and presents. Then she was on her way once more, this time overland by chair. During the slow progress she was able to observe the lovely scenery but noted that the houses were very dirty though the Chinese showed them much kindness. One night Eliza stayed in temple lodgings which were very clean. Whenever possible she preached and witnessed. She stayed a short time with the Dymond family and then started on the last leg of her journey to Chao Tung Fu.

The next year another letter was published, written two years after the first. This is very much shorter just giving details of her work. There was no time for a detailed diary like the one for the journey out ! She wrote of the ever increasing work. There was visiting to be done. Children were attracted to the church and came bringing their mothers. On Tuesdays and Thursdays she ran catechism classes for boys. They must have kept her on her toes as she said that they had 'a love of fun'. Perhaps she was on the receiving end of practical jokes !

Nothing more is heard of Eliza personally. From her husband's list of stations we see that after the marriage, two more years were spent in China before furlough in Australia and a subsequent appointment in the South Australian Methodist Church.

#### Elizabeth Dymond

##### *Stations*

1861 Gwennap  
1863 Breage  
1866 Truro  
1867 South Molton  
1869 disappears

#### Ann Edmunds

##### *Stations*

1821 Falmouth  
Disappears.

## Lillie Edwards

### *Stations*

1894 Sevenoaks  
1898 St. Mawes  
1903 Hastings  
1908 'ceases to be recognised'

With the formation of the United Methodist Church in 1907, several Female Itinerants in effect lost both their jobs and their status as the other uniting churches had no similar order for women. Lillie Edwards was one of these.

## Mary Elson

Born 1811  
Died 29<sup>th</sup> July 1888

She entered the ministry from the Armenian Bible Christian Connexion.

### *Stations*

1834 Kingsbrompton and Taunton Mission  
1837 Exeter  
1838 Scilly Islands Mission  
1841 Falmouth  
1842 Faversham  
1843 Tenterden  
1844 Eltham  
1845 married John Brown at Dover.

The story of Mary's life is found in the obituary written by her husband and printed in the Bible Christian Magazine for 1889.

She was the daughter of Thomas and Jane Elson who were farmers at St. Gennys. They were honest and upright folk training their children in the same way. It was difficult to instil such concepts at that time as 1811 was considered to be a year of great 'spiritual destitution'. The clergy were immoral, and smuggling, drunkenness and vice were rife. In this area of such great need, the Bible Christian preachers' efforts were crowned with success.

Early on it was noted that Mary had a feel for spiritual things and when she was converted, she took over the leadership of a class and became a Local Preacher. Because of her eminent suitability, in 1834 she was pressed to offer as an itinerant. Her parents were at first opposed to this move but later relented and gave their blessing.

Paul Robbins encouraged her and stimulated her in the work. In 1838 she became very ill and her life was despaired of, but she made a good recovery and was instrumental in the revival on Scilly.

Mary married John Brown in Dover in 1845. He wrote, 'She was a true helpmeet. She not only managed all her domestic affairs with wisdom and discretion, but was also very careful in training up her children for the life that is now, as well as that which is to come.'

When her husband was stationed at Devonport in 1863, her daughter opened a school. Mary helped her and the enterprise was a resounding success. She continued to lead a class and preach.

Of her five children, four predeceased her. She almost lost her other daughter but she recovered. It was the loss of her son John, just before her own death which was such a heavy blow that it hastened her end. She died of 'a violent inflammation.'

At her memorial service, her daughter and son-in-law spoke of her life and witness in glowing terms. 'We always felt her religion to be a reality, it never failed to give a hallowed tone to her character.' They said that in all the bereavement and affliction she had suffered her behaviour was 'most exemplary in her patience and resignation and ever confident God would....work his sovereign purpose wisely and well.'

### Susan Furze

#### *Stations*

1819 St. Keverne  
1820 Truro  
1821 Luxillian  
1822 Shebbear  
1822 Sheerness  
1823 disappears

In December 1822 Susan was sent to London to the Hoxton area in response to a plea for more help as there was such a large congregation. After a visit, Catherine Reed<sup>1</sup> wrote that she had never seen a place so crowded except the little chapel at Sheerness.

### Mary Gale

#### *Stations*

1824 Canworthywater  
Married John Roberts.

### Jane Gardner

Born Worldham 28<sup>th</sup> November 1815  
Died Flushing 19<sup>th</sup> March 1841

#### *Stations*

1838 Isle of Wight  
1839 Tenterden  
1840 Portsea  
1841 Falmouth

<sup>1</sup>BBC p112

Jane was converted through Frederick James Pudney in 1834. The next year she became a Local Preacher and was accepted as a Female itinerant three years later. When she was working in Portsmouth she caught Smallpox which proved fatal. She was only twenty-five. In her obituary<sup>1</sup> we read that her efforts were 'crowned with success'. Her funeral text was 'I have fought the good fight and have obtained the crown of righteousness.'

Elizabeth Gay

***Stations***

1817 ?  
1818 Dock  
1819 desists

Eliza Giles

***Stations***

1890 Scilly  
1892 St. Just  
1894 Forest of Dean (received into Full Connexion.)  
1897 Dalwood  
  
1899 resigned.

Lilian Mary Grandin

Died 5<sup>th</sup> September 1924

***Stations***

1905 China  
1906 Chao Tung  
1907 'ceases to be recognised'.

The two sources of information for Lilian Grandin are a letter she sent for publication in the Bible Christian Magazine and her obituary reproduced in <sup>2</sup>'The History of the United Methodist Church.'

She was born into a Bible Christian family who lived on Jersey. She paid for herself to train as a doctor so that she could go to China as a pioneer lady doctor.

The journey to the mission station was as horrific as the others already mentioned. (See Emily Bailey and Eliza Dunn.) There were problems with the boat, a fierce storm blew up and the boat was wrecked. The pilots deserted. They managed to reach the bank and rescue their boxes but were forced to stay there while the boat was being repaired. It took three hundred people to tow the boat up the rapids but they arrived safely eventually.

<sup>1</sup> BCMInl841      <sup>2</sup> UMC p66

After seven years of sterling work, she resigned as she wished to be married to a Mr. Dingle.

It may be that her husband died, but in 1923, after taking further qualifications to better fit her for her work, she returned to Chao Tong and became the doctor in charge of the hospital. Lilian was only able to give sixteen months to the hospital as she contracted typhus during the course of her medical duties and died on 5<sup>th</sup> December 1924.

'She was one of those whose only delight was to give of her best to others.'

### Ann Arthur Guest

Born 1801  
Died 30<sup>th</sup> September 1872

#### *Stations*

1820 Dock  
1821 Falmouth  
1822 Kingsbrompton  
1823 Somerton  
1824 London  
1825 Northumberland Mission  
1827 Jersey  
1828 Exeter  
1829 Guernsey  
1830 London  
1831 Shebbear Supernumerary  
1832 Portsea Mission  
1833 Faversham and Elham Mission  
1835 Scilly Isles Mission  
1836 Penzance  
1837 Breage  
1838 Shebbear Supernumerary  
1839 Winkleigh Mission  
1840 Shebbear Supernumerary  
1842 Northlew Mission Supernumerary

Married James Brooks in 1841

Ann's obituary, published in the Bible Christian Magazine for 1872, said that she gave her heart to God when she was fourteen and joined the Bible Christians. She began preaching soon after her conversion, warning sinners to amend their lives. Bourne<sup>2</sup> mentions a memorable open-air meeting at St. Austell, when Ann, together with Harry Major and Richard Andrews spoke to a large crowd with great success. 'The Lord wrought gloriously for His name's sake.' This formed the basis of a Society where many years later it was said 'the work prospers abundantly.' Perhaps this experience of work with a large crowd prompted her to offer as an Itinerant as the next year, 1820, sees her first appointment in Dock.

<sup>1</sup> UMC p66

<sup>2</sup> BBC p73

James Way, an eminent missionary to Australia, was converted through her preaching in about 1822.

She was in the work of the ministry for twenty-one years before she married James Brooks, a Bible Christian Minister who held many high offices including that of President of the Conference. They were married for about twelve years before his death in 1854.

Ann continued as a Local Preacher for as long as her health would allow. Towards the end of her life she developed dropsy which was the cause of her death in 1872 at the age of seventy-one.

Tribute to her ministry is paid in her obituary, 'Hundreds will have reason to praise God throughout Eternity for having heard her.'

Catherine Harris

Born 1804  
Died Medland 9<sup>th</sup> January 1894

*Stations*

1825 Truro  
1826 Luxillian  
1827 Breage  
1828 Michaelstow  
1830 St. Ervan  
1831 Penzance  
1832 Scilly  
1834 Michaelstow Supernumerary  
1835 Devonport  
1836 St. Austell  
1837 Scilly Isles Mission  
1838 Michaelstow Supernumerary  
1839 Scilly Isles Mission  
1840 Michaelstow Supernumerary  
1841 Luxillian  
1843 St. Ervan  
1844 Tavistock and Torrington  
1845 Northlew  
1846 Pontypool  
1847 Kingsbrompton  
1849 Chard  
1850 Chagford  
1851 Isle of Wight Mission  
1852 ?  
1852 Michaelstow Supernumerary  
1855 ? Supernumerary  
1870 Bodmin Supernumerary  
1874 disappears

As she was the only woman Supernumerary she possibly remained as such but was not listed in the Minutes.

There is only one reference to her ministry in Bourne<sup>1</sup> and that relates to her time in Devonport. This had been a flourishing society but the numbers had fallen to sixty-seven. Catherine was appointed to Devonport as a colleague to Jacob Hunt Prior and under their ministry the cause was revitalised.

Through her preaching two future ministers were converted; William Hawkin in 1853 and William Luke in 1843. The latter was president of the Conference in 1864 and held many other Connexional offices.

Hers is a remarkable ministry which lasted twenty-six years with only three years out as Supernumerary during that time. Catherine was the longest serving of all the Female Itinerants and, it would seem the one who drew a pension for the longest time ! The little we know about her points to a woman of persuasive preaching ability and great stamina.

### Mary Hewitt

Born Chitterwell 20<sup>th</sup> December 1803  
Died Launceston 5<sup>th</sup> June 1853

#### *Stations*

1826 Exeter  
1826 Shebbear  
1827 Luxillian

Married William Mason 22<sup>nd</sup> August 1827

Mary's granddaughter, Lois Deacon has written a very full account of the Masons' life called, 'So I went my way'. This is a condensation of what she wrote.

Mary was brought up as a Quaker. Her father was a gentleman farmer who forfeited his membership with the Friends as his second wife was not a Quaker. Mary became a Friend. She used plain language, convinced that she 'ought not to depart from Scriptural usage to accommodate man, when the Lord was invariably addressed in that language..' Sitting in Meetings which were often held in silence, she learned to be quiet, patient and attentive when someone was moved to speak.

When she was about eight, she was staying with a friend in Bristol and went to service where a young woman was giving her testimony. This made a great impression on Mary who began to feel that she was not doing what she was meant to do and realised that she wished to become a preacher.

The household was run very strictly and the children had many chores to perform. They feared, if not disliked their father. There were to be no idle moments. Her grandchildren describe her as being 'delicately nurtured and well-educated.' She herself later said that she loved gaiety and pleasure but was in no danger of succumbing as 'I was blessed with moral parents who would curb me with the bridle of restraint.'

In October 1822, she heard that preachers, including females, were going to hold meetings in the neighbourhood. Mary persuaded her sisters to go along too. The subject was the

<sup>1</sup> BBC p269

necessity for a new birth and she was 'convinced of the truth of this subject.' When she told her parents of the sermons, they were happy to receive the preachers in their house particularly as all four girls and a maid were all greatly affected by the message. Her future husband, William Mason, was the preacher.

She felt she must demonstrate her faith and began to visit the sick, talking and praying with them. Although she could pray in this way she felt too nervous to pray in public. When William came that way again, she talked with him about this and he gave her confidence.

There was strong resistance from her parents when she wanted to join the Bible Christians and become a preacher. They tried to keep her away but she 'began to steal my way to meetings without their knowledge' and by so doing ran the grave risk of being turned out of her home. She gave an exhortation Daw's Green in March 1824. The preachers liked both her message and her sincerity and asked her to enter the ministry. She felt she was not worthy but was put on the plan, having 'covenanted with the Lord that if he would open my way I would go.'

She then had to screw up her courage to tell her father who predictably refused. He told her that if she had a call to preach, he had no doubt it would be among the Friends. She stood up to him and without his consent became a Local preacher in the Kingsbrompton Circuit.

A London Quaker came to pay the family a visit. He, not knowing of her inner turmoil, unwittingly spoke to her condition. He said one should not hold back from guidance because of feeling inadequate, nor expect a visit from an angel to confirm it. This was all she needed to make a break from the Friends and to join the Bible Christians. There was still opposition from her parents but she knew she must widen the limits of her work.

'On the 9<sup>th</sup> day of the 7<sup>th</sup> month 1825, I left my father's house without assent or approbation, for the Exeter Circuit where I felt satisfied the Lord had sent me.' She made her escape through the pantry window, where William Mason was waiting for her. This courageous act shows her strength of purpose and depth of conviction which typified her life.

For six months Mary and William worked together in Exeter, where he was the Superintendent. Next she went to Weare and '...saw God in some measure acknowledge my feeble efforts.' She was always soberly dressed. This was due in part to the influence of her Quaker upbringing and partly due to the strict rules of dress imposed by the Bible Christians on their women preachers.

Mary met the Mason family when she worked in the Shebbear Circuit and preached in places where he had preached in his youth. She had the joy of being reconciled with her father again. He accepted her 'with much kindness.' An Independent church in Wellington was lent to her and she had over 1500 people in the congregation.

She saw the seamy side of life when she went to Devonport and visited the docks. Once when she was preaching on the Barbican at Plymouth, some hecklers threatened to throw her into the sea but she was not intimidated and remained on land.

'I felt quite unprepared for my meeting,' she said as she had been seized by a violent neuralgic pain. The inflammation increased so that she became almost blind in one eye. The doctor was called but it was several days before she was well again. She went to stay with Samuel Thorne and his wife Mary (nee O'Bryan) until her marriage to William Mason in Stoke Damerel Parish Church in August 1827. He was then Superintendent of the Luxillian Circuit.

Over the next twenty-five years, they had twelve children and during this period moved circuits almost every year. Mary's husband said of her, 'She accompanied me in my labours from west to east, to the Norman Isles etc. and in every station she took part in the ministerial labour with acceptance as far as her health would admit ....she continued to lead classes and preach for nearly thirty years...her constitution was delicate.'

A colleague said, 'William was a great man but he had a great wife also.' Her household was run efficiently- she made do and mended cleverly. With twelve children and a modest stipend it was as well that she did. As a Sabbatarian she never cooked on a Sunday.

The last time she preached was at Launceston on 22<sup>nd</sup> May 1853 on the folly of building on any other foundation than the rock of Christ. She had a severe chill, her heart was in such a poor state that after an illness of a few days she died. She was prepared for death and glad to go. She wanted to be buried with the Bible Christians.

Her husband in writing her obituary<sup>1</sup> said, 'I cannot refrain from weeping while I write.' He knew her true worth.

Another grandchild wrote, 'She was certainly an inspired person, probably very psychic in that she could heal the sick and minister generally. My own picture of her is that she gave. She seemed to be weak physically but a tower of strength spiritually. Certainly there is a heritage of spiritual strength which runs through many descendants like a streak of pure gold. It comes out in the utter integrity which so many of them have.' This is a wonderful tribute to a very remarkable woman.

#### Elizabeth Hilborne

*Stations*  
1826 Weare  
disappears

#### Susanna Hobbs

*Stations*  
1850 No station  
1851 Michaelstow  
1853 Faversham Supernumerary  
disappears

Susanna's health must have been delicate as the 1850 Minutes of Conference said that her health was not equal to the work and so her name did not appear. By 1851 she was considered to have travelled one year. As she soon became supernumerary, she must not have proved strong enough for the arduous work.

<sup>1</sup> BCMag 1853

## Kate Howe

### *Stations*

1896 China

1897 Tung Chuan Fu

Married Lewis Savin December 1898

In a letter dated 18<sup>th</sup> November 1896 and published in the Bible Christian Magazine for 1897, Kate described her journey out to China, As there were about twenty missionaries on board, there were wonderful opportunities for fellowship, Bible reading, prayer meeting and witnessing to other passengers despite rough seas. Some of her fellow missionaries were travelling to China, some to India and others to Aden. The China contingent included Sam Pollard, his wife and WAGrist. The Italians in Brindisi were delighted when they sang and prayed in the town.

In the same magazine, another letter dated 7<sup>th</sup> May and written in a lively manner recorded her first impressions of China, she was really happy to at meeting with Chinese and English Christians. Although the scenery was beautiful, the journey by chair made her more sick that the voyage across the Bay of Bengal, so it was with some relief that she arrived at the Tong mission. There she was able to sleep in a clean whitewashed room after the rigours of the journey.

Three weeks of rest and study followed before she continued by chair for five days, '...much more pleasant....' than the last time. When Kate arrived, she found herself responsible for a school of about sixty girls. She wrote, 'My words are so limited that I can hardly say anything and oh, want so much teaching. Never before had I so longed to be able to speak. Do pray for us and these people...especially to ask God to give me tact and wisdom with these dear children that they may be won for the Saviour.' It must have been a formidable task to teach eager youngsters without a good grasp of the language.

Her next letter was written a few months later, but published in the Magazine of the following year. It had been a year since she left England and she described it as the happiest one of her life. It had not been one of entirely victory or sunshine but one of revelation. One has the feeling that she was a very level-headed young lady.

The school in her charge was flourishing and people came in daily for medicine from the 'wonderful doctor who gives such good medicine.' The 'wonderful doctor' was Lewis Savin whom she married in December of that year, 1898 ! She told stories of converts and of people gathering to hear the Gospel. Three evangelists were given bicycles to help them travel round the villages. Unfortunately the roads were unsuitable so they had to pay other men to carry the bikes while they rode on mules !

Kate wrote of celebrations at Chinese New Year in her next letter dated 8<sup>th</sup> March 1898. There was a prize distribution and little gifts were hung on a Christmas tree. They had a party on new Year's Day.

Because Kate was run down, she took a week's holiday in Wa-Ku, staying in a local inn where she was an object of curiosity to the local women who came to see the foreigner. She used this opportunity to tell them of 'the story of the Cross'. The room was neither clean nor comfortable, being small, dusty and festooned with cobwebs. The three beds

were just boards placed on heaps of mud and stone. The other 'visitors' were three pigs, a donkey and two fowl which lived in the apartment opposite. None of these difficulties seemed to dampen her spirits.

Her landlady heard the Gospel and wanted to believe but was in such pain from an ulcer on her eye that she sacrificed a fowl to appease the evil spirits. Kate tried to help her believe the Christian message but it was a difficult task.

People came to her with common ailments which she was able to cure with simple remedies. One elderly woman took a larger than prescribed dose of medicine and appeared dead. Her relatives angrily accused Kate of killing her. She knew this could not be possible as the woman had only taken Epsom Salts ! She wrote, 'Rough men used threats and sought opportunity to carry them out but God protected us ....' The woman came to and all was well.

There is no record of Kate's doings from then on (apart from her marriage to Lewis Savin) until 12<sup>th</sup> June 1900, when Lewis himself had a letter published in the Bible Christian Magazine. It was written from Yunnan Fu and told of their problems in the same riot experienced by the Dymonds. (Maud Cannon) Both of their houses were looted and the Savins lost everything apart from the clothes they were wearing. They were kindly treated by the Mandarin and at the time of writing were expecting to leave for Hong Kong. They had not heard from their colleagues stationed at Chao Tong and Tong Chu'an and were fearful for their safety. He said how sorry he felt for the Dymonds with their family of four. Everyone was, in fact, safe but not without having gone through a very stressful time.

Lewis described their departure as being 'driven from China'. They had an anxious journey to the French border as there was an Imperial edict out that they should be killed. Some officials helped but the travelling was made more difficult by the rains and the porters could only cover ten miles a day. On their way to the Red River, lodgings were difficult to find and the heat was terrific. They managed to charter two small boats and so began a most uncomfortable journey. 'The junk was small, the people many, the smells were more and every kind of creeping and flying things seemed present to pester us.' The beds were uncomfortable at first but seemed to improve as time went on. Hong Kong was reached ten days later, having had help on their way from a hospitable Frenchman. There they attended a service.

Lewis later wrote something which seems prophetic knowing the current situation in China. 'Let us not despair of a better time for China....but pray for that dark land. Remember those left behind.'

After their return in 1903, the work was extended. He commented in a letter of 1905, that the new members attended well – the women on Thursdays and the girls on Tuesdays. The new hospital was the finest building in the city with a first floor dispensary, a consulting room and a separate entrance for the women. He was looking forward to the arrival of Lilian Grandin. ( a BCFI) He spoke about the Miao people among whom they worked and how they were different from the Chinese. Soon after the Miao came to the Mission they suffered fierce persecution. They were put in chains, tortured and had their cattle and goods confiscated as they would not 'give up Jesus.'

The church is still flourishing among the Miao people.

Harriet Mary Hurdle

*Stations*

1835 Portsea  
1836 Scilly Isles Mission  
1837 Winkleigh Mission  
1839 Exeter  
1840 Luxillian  
1843 South Devon Mission

Mary Husband

*Stations*

1828 Falmouth  
1829 Scilly Isles  
1830 Penzance  
1831 Weare  
1832 Somerton  
1833 London  
1835 Faversham  
1836 Exeter  
1837 Luxillian  
1839 Mevagissey  
1841 St. Austell Supernumerary  
1842 Milverton and Taunton Mission  
1843 Tawstock and Torrington Mission  
1844 Devonport  
1846 St. Austell Supernumerary  
disappears

Sarah Hatchings

*Stations*

1859 Monmouth  
1860 Chatham  
1863 Penzance  
1864 South Devon  
disappears

Martha Hatchings

Born Seavington St. Mary 27<sup>th</sup> February 1825  
Died St. Agnes Isles of Scilly 11<sup>th</sup> September 1884

*Stations*

1846 St. Ervan  
1847 Scilly Isles  
Married Edwin Lewis Davis 20<sup>th</sup> September 1847

Martha Hutchings was the daughter of an agricultural labourer, the seventh of nine

children. The family attended the local parish church regularly. When she was seventeen, Martha attended a service of worship conducted by the Bible Christians in connection with their Quarterly Meeting. Samuel Crocker preached from the text, 'What must I do to be saved?' This spoke to her need and she was converted.

From that time until she offered as a Female Itinerant, she was a 'most acceptable local preacher' in the South Petherton Circuit. She had only two stations and is then said to have 'disappeared'. The first station was at St. Ervan with William Drew, whose wife Amy Terry had also been an Itinerant. He wrote in her obituary.<sup>1</sup> '....I remember being at the Conference when she was very heartily recommended. I found her an earnest, devoted Christian and we worked in harmony during the year. She was very well received in the Circuit, very earnest in her work and had great power with God in prayer.' This 'great power in prayer' lasted throughout her life.

Her appointment to Scilly was to change the whole course of her life. St. Agnes is a small island in the Scilly group. She found the lighthouse keeper in great distress, his wife having died in October, 1847 leaving him with six children under the age of ten. He, according to family tradition, was a 'larger than life' character, easily roused if one did not fall in with his plans. Martha was then aged twenty-two while Edwin was thirty-nine. 'After much prayer and in full assurance it was of the Lord, she was united to brother Davis.

This marriage took place about a month after his first wife, Jane, had died. In a family letter, a granddaughter defends this marriage which appears to have taken place in unseemly haste after Jane's death. Alberta wrote,<sup>2</sup> '...Grandpa Davis married again within a month. The youngest of the children was a girl of about thirteen months. If he did marry within a month, he had a little baby to be looked after and lighthouse duty also no doubt no "baby sitters" or "home helps" then.' Martha must have looked like an answer to prayer. It must have taken some time to adjust to this new life on a small island, a ready-made family and a husband who worked shifts, but she coped admirably. They had eleven more children, only one of whom died in infancy, all the others reaching adulthood.

Martha took her family duties seriously. William Shortridge, also in her obituary, wrote, 'Her home was well regulated; family worship was conducted three times a day.' His comments were followed by those of William Dennis who wrote, 'She was a wise and judicious mother who trained her family in the principles of total abstinence.' He noted the influence she had over her children and their ready obedience to her wishes. The writer of her obituary, William Penrose says, 'The best testimony to the discretion and kindness with which Mrs. Davis discharged the duties of her responsible and difficult position is the filial affection with which all the children cherish her memory and the fraternal affection they have for each other.'

The work benefited from her support. She is described as, '....cheerful and large hearted, deeply attached to Bible Christian cause ... at the same time loving all who love the Lord Jesus in sincerity and truth.' She was a rigid teetotaler and actively supported the Band of Hope. Alberta's letter said that she played the organ in the Parish Church and another family source recalled that she would even take services and preach there when bad weather prevented the parson coming by boat from St. Mary's.

<sup>1</sup> BCMag 1885

<sup>2</sup> Personal letter

Of her later life, William Shortridge wrote, 'In 1881.... Mrs Davis...was...not able to attend the means of grace regularly owing to personal and family affliction.' The two may be linked together. All her seven sons had, as good Scillonians, become seamen, most of them Master Mariners. By this date, all but one had died mostly by drowning and nearly all overseas. The one who was left, Samuel, on his father's instruction joined Trinity House as a lightkeeper and lived to a ripe old age. Despite this weight of sorrow, she supported the preachers with good advice and prayer.

She died suddenly of a brain haemorrhage in 1884. Her daughter who was married to a Bible Christian Minister and living in Somerset knew the precise moment her mother died. She woke suddenly in the night, roused her husband and said, 'Mother died.' He thought she had been dreaming and told her to go back to sleep. But she was right! When the letter containing the sad news arrived, they knew she had awoken at the precise moment her mother died.

Martha's obituary was written by her son-in-law, Rev William Penrose, who became at various times, both President and Secretary of the South Australia Conference. He asked all the brethren who had known her to give their personal view of her and her life. He then collated them and wrote, 'I have preferred to let these brethren speak of my dear wife's mother, lest any should think I was unduly biased; but I may be permitted to say that, with closed intercourse with the family, I can fully endorse all that they have said, both as to the management of the home, and to the beauty and completeness of her consecrated life.'

Martha is also mentioned in William Penrose's obituary in the Bible Christian magazine for 1907. 'The mother of Miss Eva Davis, whom he married, was in the early days of our Connexion one of the devoted band of women who laboured in our itinerant ministry.' She was my great-great-grandmother.

#### Eliza Jew

Born nr. Plymouth	26 <sup>th</sup> September 1802
Died	28 <sup>th</sup> April 1866

#### *Stations*

1824 Jersey  
1825 Devonport  
1826 Portsea Mission  
1827 Southampton

Married Mr Stear

Eliza's obituary in the Bible Christian Magazine of 1874, begins with a short autobiography. Her parents were not religious so she received 'no pious training' though she was 'brought into a state of grace' before she was eighteen year old. In 1819, she heard a preacher at the Methodist Church who asked anyone who felt 'inclined to serve the Lord, to cast in their lot with them'. She stayed, but this did not give her peace with God. She was undergoing inner turmoil and was at odds with her family.. We have no details of this family problem but if they were 'not religious' perhaps her time at church annoyed them. Later that year a Local Preacher assured her that God would save her. 'From that time she walked in the fear of the Lord and in the comfort of the Holy Ghost'.

When she heard a female preacher in 1820, she realised that she was called to preach. She remained in fellowship with the Methodists until 1823, when she heard James Thorne preach and obtained 'entire Sanctification'.

At this time Mary Toms was working in the isle of Wight and sent out a request for helpers. Mrs. Thorne said she would go if she could take Eliza with her. The work flourished under this team's ministry: seventeen new places of worship were opened. Bourne<sup>1</sup> wrote of her walking through the streets, singing in order to gather a crowd. There was opposition as the obituary recorded her courage in standing up before 'a rough, ignorant crowd' – at one place it numbered six hundred. After preaching at Brading one evening, she had to walk over two miles to her hosts for the night. She was followed by a dozen of these ruffians who shouted, clapped, hissed, stoned them (and missed!) and set the dog on them but they emerged unscathed. She was described as a 'pious, laborious and useful young woman

This experience convinced her that she should become an itinerant but there are no details of her work in other places.

Eliza retired from the itinerant work early in 1828 to be married. One wonders if this was a disaster as the obituary<sup>2</sup> says she, '...took a step which greatly interfered with her subsequent happiness and usefulness in the church'. Nevertheless after her marriage she worked locally, but family cares interfered and she was able to do little outside the home. She looked after her motherless grandchildren but rarely attended worship though her membership was retained to the end. A sickness of a 'painful nature' afflicted her and she died at peace.

No mention is made of her husband and her obituary was not printed until eleven year after her death. This might indicate that she was so far removed from church affairs that no-one in authority knew of her death at the time. It is sad that one who was so active and useful in the mission of the church should finish by attending worship rarely and her early work almost forgotten.

### Elizabeth Ann Jollow

Born Milton Damerell 14<sup>th</sup> September 1842

Died 2<sup>nd</sup> January 1876

#### *Stations*

1861 Newport Mon.

1862 Portland

1863 Southmoulton

Married Amos Brayley at Holsworthy August 1865

Lived at Holsworthy

Elizabeth's father said that as a child she would spend hours reading the Bible. In the Spring of 1858, George Gill preached at Gillott Cross and many people were converted. Elizabeth walked the three miles there every night for weeks in succession after which she was converted.

<sup>1</sup>BBC p136

<sup>2</sup>BCMAG 1874

The next year she felt the call to preach and became a Local Preacher. Her sermons contained, 'much Scriptural truth and such thrilling calls to the unconverted that ... conversions usually took place before the service was over.' She conducted many revival meetings. Her popularity and effectiveness did not turn her head.

Her Superintendent in Newport was F.W.Bourne. He had a throat infection and she helped with preaching to relieve him. The work was languishing because of the American Civil war. Bourne had also been let down by those of whom he had great expectations.

He was very impressed by the girl who lived with them. He wrote<sup>1</sup> in her obituary that she had, 'all the graces which ornament and beautify the Christian character and many of the best elements of a successful preacher ... She was tender, devout diligent and devoted.' She was a very effective preacher, speaking to the hearts of her hearers. Prayer was her lifeblood. She would spend two or three hours in prayer before breakfast, often weeping over those she wished to help. Her face was radiant like Moses as if she had been 'talking with God.'

In Portland she was ill for several months so she was sent home to recover. She was universally liked and respected. When she was fit, she returned to the work at Southmoulton where she stayed for two years. It was said in her obituary that she had 'more than ordinary gifts for public speaking, clear perceptions of Divine truth and a deeply pious earnest desire to win souls which she did.'

In 1865 she married and entered this state with a 'sense of joyful responsibility'. The couple had six children and Elizabeth was survived by five of them. We read of severe trials and afflictions' during her married life but we do not know the nature of these troubles.

During her time at Stoke Damarell, she carried on with her preaching even when her family numbered three or four, often walking several miles in stormy weather to reach an appointment. She remained an acceptable and sought after preacher as her sermons contained freshness of thought and were Scriptural. Elizabeth would visit the sick and dying even at midnight. She was lived and respected as she was upright and truthful. Spiritually she did have conflicts with sin and doubt but rose above them.

Mary Julliff

*Stations*  
1855 St. Columb  
disappears

Joan Lock

*Stations*  
1826 Exeter  
1828 Kings Brompton Supernumerary

<sup>1</sup> BCMag 1878

### Grace Mason

#### *Stations*

1819 Truro  
1820 desists

### Mary Lyle

#### *Stations*

1817 Truro  
1818 retired

Married Mr Tucker

Mary and her brother, William, were both itinerant preachers were sent to Cornwall. Bourne<sup>1</sup> included an extract from one of her letters, written in 1818. 'We have been twice round the Circuit, and in every place where I have spoken some have been convinced. Last Tuesday at Ladcock the presence of God was with us in a wonderful manner. Many were deeply affected, and cried aloud for mercy. The next day at a place about two miles from St. Stephen's there were fourteen earnest suppliants at one time; we prayed with them for hours and some of them were greatly comforted.' One of these who had come out of curiosity to hear a woman preach, was greatly affected and said that the 'first arrow she drew....pierced his heart, for which he would have reason to praise God for ever and ever.'

She was evidently a powerful preacher and no doubt carried on after her marriage but there is no record of this. It is possible that the man she married was the farmer who lent his barn to Johanna Brooks for her meetings. She was the mother of Richard Lyle Tucker who was a Bible Christian missionary for several years.

### Ann Mason

Died Sutcombe 7<sup>th</sup> March 1826

#### *Stations*

1819 Shebbear Supernumerary  
1822 Luxillian  
1823 London  
Joined Society of Friends

Married Henry Freeman 9<sup>th</sup> August 1824

Ann joined the Methodist Church in the summer of 1815 and resolved not to leave them. In her testimony, printed in the Bible Christian Magazine for 1824, she explained that the Bible Christians came and even though she had heard unfavourable things about them she went to a meeting and was 'profited'. She was blessed by hearing James Thorne preach. Her

<sup>1</sup> BBC p62

teachers reproved her for attending these meetings but she kept on going. The next year she was worried by the 'remains of sin' but having heard James Thorne again felt completely cleansed. Ann still held back from throwing in her lot with the Bible Christians until she was convicted in February 1817. She wrote that she was a witness to the fulfilment of a promise, 'I will bring the blind by a way they know not.'

Illness dogged her life and she was unable to become itinerant until three years after she was accepted. Bourne <sup>1</sup> wrote of that first illness in 1820. He said that her pain was 'excruciating' and that it sometimes 'deprived her ... of her reason but she was in such a delightful frame of mind throughout, and had such wonderful manifestations of the Divine presence, that it was not only good for her and the preachers and the others who visited her, but the young church also that she was thus afflicted.' Ann was one of those remarkable people who, when ill, give more to their visitors than they receive from them. She said repeatedly,

'Jesus comes with my distress, And agony is heaven.'

Even before she was strong enough to pray in public it was felt that the power of the Lord was with her.

Nothing is known of her year in Luxillian, but Bourne described the time working in London with her future husband, Henry Freeman. Ann was the 'female' in the following article printed in the 'Brighton Herald'.<sup>2</sup>

'A female has, within this last fortnight, been preaching in a room in North Steyne Row and also in some of our public streets. She is a young woman, and report says delivers discourses with animation; she speaks fluently and with tolerably correct language. The doctrine she advances comes nearer the Wesleyan Methodists than of any other religious denomination.'

A somewhat grudging description of what must have been stirring stuff, possibly delivered in a Devonian accent which could have made what she said sound like only 'tolerably correct language'!

Having moved from the Methodists to the Bible Christians, Ann and her husband were still not quite at ease in worship and transferred their membership to the Quakers. Of this painful separation, Bourne <sup>1</sup> said that he believed she was a Quaker by temperament and conviction long before she knew anything about their organisation and she was unable to reconcile the two viewpoints. Even though she knew the Bible Christians must exclude her, she would submit to their discipline, yet would always claim them to be her people. In a letter to William O'Bryan, written in June 1824,<sup>3</sup> she explained her actions and at the end said, 'I have nothing that I can keep from God. I am fully persuaded that I shall have a Missionary's crown. The Lord will either open my way to go, or take the will for the deed. And if it be deemed right, at the Conference to exclude me, do not permit thy mind to be pained, lest it should be hard for me to bear.' She went on to say how this would increase her love towards the other ministers by sinking her further into God.

In 1824, after the break with the Bible Christians, Ann and Henry were married, took up the 'Missionary's crown' and went to Ireland for a year. On their return, Ann went to stay with her parents in Sutcombe while Henry returned to Ireland. This may have been because she was not strong enough to go with him, as once again, Ann became very ill, suffering great pain and weakness. She lingered in this state for some months and, her husband having returned, died in peace on 7<sup>th</sup> March 1826. She was buried in Sutcombe churchyard a few days later. She was described as a woman of deep piety, absolute sincerity and abundant usefulness. She must have been under thirty when she died.

<sup>1</sup> BBC p89

<sup>2</sup> BBC p161

<sup>3</sup> BBC p161

## Mary Ann Mason

### *Stations*

1820 Ringsash  
1821 Desisted  
1822 St. Neot  
1824 Kingsbrompton

Married John Beadon

There are accounts about Mary preaching in Dulverton and Exebridge told by Bourne.<sup>1</sup> Some of the villagers who had heard her preach elsewhere, invited her to go to Dulverton to preach. Mary felt led to do so, but could find no room in which to hold her meeting. She believed the way would open and the Baptists made their room available to her. News of a woman preaching rapidly circulated and the large room was full.

Her fame spread and she was invited to other places. Not all went as smoothly as at Dulverton. An innkeeper in Exebridge said she might use his house but another innkeeper was annoyed by this and decided to scare her congregation. A sweep was hired to go down the chimney of the meeting room, making 'the most hideous noises he could all the time'. The plan was for him to go into the chimney, while his accomplices released sparrows there to extinguish the lights. He then pretended to be the Devil and jump into the hearth. He was slightly tipsy, and, as he made his descent fell into the room together with dislodged stones. He tried to make a getaway but was grabbed by a man who said, 'If thou art the devil I can hold thee.' He was removed to another room till the meeting had finished when he confessed everything.

These meetings led to many conversions and the Kingsbrompton Station was opened as a result.

## Susan Nankivell

### *Stations*

1817 Truro

## Betsy Nicholls

Born 20<sup>th</sup> January 1861

### *Stations*

1824 Luxillian  
1825 Falmouth  
1826 Penzance  
1827 Michaelstow Supernumerary

Married Mr Richards

In 1827, Betsy's health failed but her name was retained for some time, according to Bourne.<sup>2</sup> Despite her failing health in her twenties, she lived for over thirty more years before she died 'adorn(ing) her Christian profession.'

<sup>1</sup> BBC p92

<sup>2</sup> BBC p418

## Mary O'Bryan

Born Gunwen 3<sup>rd</sup> April 1807  
Died Plymouth 12<sup>th</sup> November 1883

### *Stations*

1823 London

1823 Guernsey

1824 Isle of Wight Mission

Married Samuel Thorne 12<sup>th</sup> November 1825 at  
Stoke Damerel Parish Church

Mary was the daughter of William O'Bryan, the founder of the Bible Christian movement and as such was brought up in a household where women preachers were not unusual. Her own mother became a preacher when Mary was a little girl. She must, too have heard many times, her father's story<sup>1</sup> of being taken as a child to see John Wesley. The old man blessed William and prayed over him, 'May he be a blessing to hundreds and thousands.' Despite his split from Wesleyanism, John Wesley's doctrines and organisation were his model.

As a child Mary greatly influenced the younger children in the family for good. At the age of nine she prayed in public in a prayer meeting. Her education was a good one at a private school in Plymouth where she learnt French enabling her to preach in French as well as English when she worked in the Channel Islands. She became a Local preacher in 1823, the same year that she was accepted as sixteen-year old itinerant and sent to London for six months.

Pyke<sup>2</sup> said she was a keen advocate of practical education and social reform. The latter was endorsed by Bourne<sup>3</sup> who quoted her diary, saying that the poor in London needed proper housing and adequate food as well as spiritual guidance.

Apart from the poor social conditions in which she had to work, in London, she walked long distances to preach in Kent. Lois Deacon<sup>4</sup> included extracts from Mary's diary which illustrates this. She often rose at 4am to preach at 5am. She would walk twenty to thirty miles in a day. At other times she travelled long distances at night on the outside of coaches and short distances by day in gigs and donkey carts when she could get a lift. This child preached throughout Kent, often in the open air, supping and sleeping where she could.' Lois then gave Mary's own words.

'One dear woman compelled us to take some beer and biscuits.... I slept in a very genteel house next to the Parsonage, and, while repairing to rest, was led to compare the elegant furniture and fittings with the condition of Him who had not where to lay His head....Sister Bing offered me a shilling which I did not accept, as I did not want it. I walked to Canterbury, about twenty-one miles... .On my way from Faversham to Wormshill I spent the middle of one day in the corner of a field of oats and sweet smelling flowers, singing birds and humming insects. What a beautiful world God has made, if only we have eyes to see it !' About this time she had a dream that she was talking to Wesley and receiving his encouragement.

<sup>1</sup> SBC p14

<sup>2</sup>PGC

<sup>3</sup> BBC p114

<sup>4</sup>LD

Later that year she was sent to Guernsey to replace Mary Ann Werrey. The work must have been very time-consuming as Mary received a letter from her father chiding her for not writing frequently enough. He wanted to hear at least once a fortnight.

In Guernsey Mary went from house to house with a companion. In Mary's obituary,<sup>1</sup> written by her daughter, it says this companion was Mary Billing but according to the list of stations Mary Billing was in Luxillian at the time ! They were, '....helping many a woman to raise herself and her family to higher social comfort as well as religious life' she then went on to remark what a pleasure it was to hear 'the two relate some of their experiences among the almost half barbarous state of things then prevalent.' Conditions of work were no easier. Her diary told of wading through water half-leg high and being obliged to stop so often so that she could wash her boots and pattens before appearing before the congregation. 'Returned to Brading with difficulty in the storm. Shattered my umbrella, broke both pattens, got wet and dirty. How careful the Almighty is of me !' At Whitwell rotten eggs were thrown at her. And a Local Preacher was challenged to a fight by a man holding a stone. When Mary began to pray, he dropped it and the danger was averted.

Samuel Thorne, whose family had been associated with the O'Bryans and the Bible Christian movement from the beginning, knew from the time she was ten years old that he wanted to marry Mary O'Bryan. He first had to bide his time until she was old enough but then wooing her was no easy task. She had other suitors, at times encouraged him and at others rejected him, but he remained steadfast for eight years. She eventually married him in 1825. Strangely enough her father at first disapproved of the match but later agreed. Shaw<sup>2</sup> describes her as, ',,,an attractive, bright-eyed girl who looked older than her years; scorned by some folk who called her a Quaker and criticised by some of her father's followers as being too worldly....'

May bent the strict rules of dress a little by wearing a beaver hat with a broad band. The way in which the men dictated what the women should wear annoyed her too. Shaw<sup>3</sup> quoted the feelings which were expressed in her diary following a District Meeting in 1825. 'Our men preachers, it seems, are not above employing hours disputing about women's bonnets, cloaks, and even the colour of their gowns, kerchiefs, etc. Had I been there I must have reasoned thus, "My mother and others have taught me, that single females have only to please the Lord, but those who are married, their husbands; but now it seems the case is altered; those bachelors are endeavouring to lord it over us, tyrannically dictating the colour of our garments; what husband could do more ? And having discussions about our very petticoats!" ' It must have seemed to her to be a waste of valuable time as well as presumption to dare to tell her what she might or might not wear.

Mary's loyalties were badly strained when her father's bid for leadership failed in 1829 and William O'Bryan left to begin a new life in America. Whatever her personal feelings she remained loyal to the Bible Christians as wife of one leader and daughter-in-law to another.

Samuel became publisher to the Connexion based at Stoke Damerel from 1822 to 1829 and at Shebbear from 1829 to 1861 when they and the printing business moved to Plymouth. The first move occurred after the break with O'Bryan and her experiences were anything but pleasant.

<sup>1</sup> BCMag 1884

<sup>2</sup> SBC p43

<sup>3</sup> op cit p43

Wickes<sup>1</sup> includes Mary's vivid description of this in his book. 'We moved from Devonport to Shebbear March 20<sup>th</sup> 1829. It was a cold wet season... We left Devonport on Friday morning 8 o'clock: I and my two dear little ones, Mrs Stenlake (our binder's wife) and two children, and our apprentice girl had a covered cart, in which Mr Stenlake, Jabez Mountcastle, John Pett and Samuel Lowry rode occasionally. Some waggons, containing our goods, accompanied us. We arrived at Lake... the next morning at 4 o'clock.'

At Shebbear they established not only a printing press, but also a stationer's, a chemist's shop, a library and a school. Mary found herself looking after the boarders, helping with the printing as well as assisting at the school and caring for her own family of thirteen children.

The order for services had received official approval in 1838. Mary complained that the prayers were too long !

Mary lived to a good old age – long enough to look back and be disappointed that the Connexion was not as it had been in the pioneer days. Shaw<sup>2</sup> wrote of her feelings . The '... established Bible Christian Ministry....seemed to her complacent....so different from when she had gone out to preach in distant places.' The service of the Lord's Supper was unfavourably compared too. Formerly there had been wine and simple unleavened bread, broken as a symbol of Christ's broken body but when Mary was writing, there were,<sup>3</sup>'junks of leavened bread cut with a knife,'

Her granddaughter said she was depressed in her old age both by the pain in her body and also mentally. Her sight began to go but she quoted Paul, ' My present suffering is not to be compared with the glory that is to be revealed.' Of herself she said. 'I am become a very feeble and almost useless woman.' She died in 1883.

Samuel Ley Thorne, her son and also a Bible Christian minister, wrote her biography called, 'The Maiden Preacher.' A review of this book was published in the Bible Christian Magazine for 1890. Mary was described as, '....a fluent speaker, her knowledge of Bible truth deep and extensive. She was well read in history, and had a wide acquaintance with men and things, and laid the affairs of everyday life under contribution to illustrate and enforce spiritual and eternal realities.' It is no wonder therefore that her preaching was very acceptable and useful. The critic felt that the compiler had not been selective enough, including, '...trifling matters, only of interest to friends and family..' he went on to say, '.... The book is worth reading as furnishing an example of sincere love of God, of zealous and untiring labour...of blessed success....of patient endurance....and of a busy Christian life finished with tranquillity and joy.'

There could be no finer tribute.

<sup>1</sup> MVV p43

<sup>2</sup> SBC p86

<sup>3</sup> SBC p93

Lily Oram

*Stations*

1894 London Jubilee  
1895 Resigned

Grace Palmer

*Stations*

1823 Wales  
1824 Crewkerne  
1825 Shebbear  
1826 Devonport  
1827 St. Neot  
Disappears

Ipsa Parnell

Born Veryan Cornwall

*Stations*

1832 Penzance  
1833 Exeter  
1835 London  
1836 Faversham  
1837 Isle of Wight  
disappears

Hannah Pearce

Born Devon                      circa 1800  
Died Ohio                      13<sup>th</sup> November 1868

*Stations*

1821 St. Ervan  
1822 Disappears  
1825 Crewkerne Mission  
1826 Chagford Supernumerary  
1827 Kilkhampton  
1828 Hastings  
1829 Portsea  
1830 Forest of Dean

Married William Reeves

Hannah's family were yeomen farmers in Devonshire who had a reputation for being good with horses. She helped in the family business.

When she was nearly eighteen, Hannah went to hear James Thorne preach and was converted. With conversion came the call to preach though her education was sketchy. Even so, it was said of her that she was '...never known to violate the laws of grammar, logic, good taste or Scriptural theology.' Of her preaching the writer of her obituary said it was '...without ornament or display, imparting the most beautiful, sometimes the most pathetic truth.' She was certainly a most effective preacher. At first she worked as a glove maker and then as a servant. Her employers saw her worth and tried to help her improve herself both socially and mentally. Such was her influence that her employer was converted and also became a preacher.

A year or so after her call to preach (accounts vary) she left home to become an itinerant. Hannah showed amazing courage, tenacity and stamina in her itinerant days. Nothing and no-one intimidated her<sup>1</sup> Hannah's obituary, published in the Bible Christian Magazine for 1878, tells of '...travelling many miles, undertaking arduous journeys through forests, over streams, preaching in cabins and meeting houses, to both lowly and high born. Thirty miles a day and three services were quite common.

She appeared to lead a charmed life as she had so many narrow escapes from danger. She seemed to be, '...invested with a spiritual panoply impervious to the assaults of the elements or circumstances.' The Superintendent refused to go to one appointment as he was intimidated by threats. Hannah went instead. 'Ruffians' invaded the meeting intent on mischief but Hannah's silence and composure quite unsettled them. She said, 'It looks like a man. If it is the Devil, I will know before he leaves the house !' She then bolted the door, sent for the constable and preferred charges. The magistrate sentenced the ringleader to prison but his mother pleaded with Hannah so that she asked if he might be given a fine instead. Half of this was spent on the poor and the other half on printing handbills publicising the incident. The sequel to all this was that the gang leader was converted and 'ruffianism' quelled.

An Officer of the Law thought Hannah was acting illegally by preaching and tried to find Scriptural backing for his position. Hannah found other Scripture passages and 'expounded them in so orderly and cogent a manner....' That she convinced him so that he said, 'Who shall say that a woman may not preach?' On another occasion some came to scoff but when she had finished preaching the men were 'abashed and pallid.' The obituary writer likened her courage to that of Luther and her conscientiousness to that of Nelson '...but with a gentle and feminine heart.' In 1831, Conference asked her to accept a certain appointment, but she refused as it would mean being parted from a husband who had been appointed elsewhere. Her husband is described as a 'Methodist Protestant minister in America.' He is not listed as a Bible Christian minister so to which branch of the church he belonged is uncertain. They left for America and worked together in Ohio 'in close harmony.'

<sup>1</sup> BCMag 1878

Her again her courage and stamina were tested. They found themselves in the middle of a typhoid epidemic so Hannah threw herself into nursing the sick as she thought the local medical men were incompetent. She caught the disease herself but fortunately only a mild dose and she recovered completely. There was another encounter with a violent man. He had threatened William physically and so William carefully avoided the house to give him no excuse for an attack. None of this deterred Hannah, who marched straight into the would-be attacker's house, talked to him and led him to Christ.

Some of her congregation were a little unsure of her at times. We read that she 'won antagonists over with her gentleness.' One observation on her character was that her Christian grace '... spread a soft radiance over a character which might have been too sharply salient on its vigorous sides,' Anyone who had the toughness to deal with troublemakers in the way she did must have occasionally let that show through the 'gentleness'. Another church member worried about her great influence perhaps fearing a kind of personality cult but realised his fears were groundless and apologised to her.

She was described as a healer of minds, bodies and souls. And yet she had her own sorrows. Their only child died and a family who owed much to Hannah for her love and kindness, offered her their baby daughter to raise as her own. Hannah handed her back. This was probably done with an aching heart and immense gratitude to the young couple yet with such graciousness that they did not feel that their precious gift had been rejected.

In her sixtieth year, her health began to fail, but she continued to do what she could. Eight years later she 'died well'. The obituary concludes with the observation that hundreds, possibly thousands of souls were converted through her ministry.

The obituary was not published until ten years after her death, so close links with the church of her youth were broken, particularly as the greater part of her life was spent in America. Someone, somewhere must have heard of her death and such was the affection with which she remembered that it was felt appropriate to publish her obituary so long after she died.

### Margaret Pinwill

Born Plymouth      13<sup>th</sup> January 1813  
Died Bristol        17<sup>th</sup> December 1875

#### *Stations*

1836 Isle of Wight  
1837 Kingsbrompton and Taunton Mission  
1838 Exeter  
1839 Elham Mission  
1841 Faversham

Married James Hinks

Margaret was born in Plymouth but when she was a baby the family moved to Guernsey. She had no religious training from her family, which her obituary writer<sup>1</sup> described as 'godless'. After a walk in the heat one day, she went into a Bible Christian Chapel as it was a place of shade and coolness. This sparked her interest in the cause which took on a new impetus when she became converted under the ministry of Richard Vicary.

<sup>1</sup> BCMag 1876

Not surprisingly, there was opposition from her family who thought she was wasting her time. Despite this, she threw herself wholeheartedly into work for the church. It is noted that she organised a bazaar.

Soon after this, she felt a call to the ministry and offered herself for the itinerant work. Her first station was in the Isle of Wight where growing congregations made heavy demands on the ministers. She had a very full preaching commitment and needed to travel long distances to fulfil her appointments.

A former colleague wrote in her obituary 'I knew her many years ago when she was with us on the island. Her work and character were Christ-like above many. She loved and lived for God.'

Life was no easier in the Kingsbrompton Circuit, which was described as 'trying and exhausting.' At Brixton, Margaret had her share of persecuting rowdies. More long distances were travelled in the Exeter Circuit when we are told that she walked from Exeter to Halberton, a distance of about twenty miles, only calling in at Tiverton for refreshment.

Her delicate health must have caused some concern when she was stationed at Elham, as she had to remain on trial for longer than the usual period. While she *-was* there, many new preaching places were opened and there were 'interesting conversions', though we are not given details, perhaps she could have overtaxed herself here for she had many requests to preach and could refuse none.

At her last station, Faversham, she was a popular and useful preacher. The obituary writer noted, 'The little woman always gets the most custom !'

James Hinks was her colleague at Elham and they married some time after her time at Faversham. She worked unstintingly and selflessly for the cause and there are many testimonies to her work. Bourne<sup>1</sup> wrote of a wonderful revival in the Tavistock area after which the membership in the chapels trebles. Her husband was ill so Margaret, '...laboured more abundantly than they all, and for eleven weeks was not absent from a single meeting.'

Her time was more than filled with preaching, leading prayer meetings and class meetings, visiting the sick, and organising tea-meetings, bazaars and other efforts. She had an amazing capacity for organisation which makes the reader almost breathless! <sup>2</sup>'Exercise of forethought and diligence enables her to attend to the duties of one and not to leave the other undone.'

This cracking pace was kept up for many years, fitting household duties between her Circuit work '...until frailties rendered her incapable.'

For the last four years of her life, her increasing weakness kept her confined to the house. Her eyesight was so poor that she could not sew and could scarcely read but she was always cheerful. Her condition deteriorated badly, completely exhausting her from pain and lack of sleep. She died at the end of 1875, aged sixty-two.

<sup>1</sup> BBCp301

<sup>2</sup> BCMag 1876

Two letters from ex-colleagues were quoted in her obituary, praising her as model Christian. One said, 'the Bible Christian cause never had a truer or steadier friend and no man ever had a more devoted wife. How many times in the South Devon Circuit have I gone with her to listen to her earnest appeals from the saint to the sinner! What miles she walked! What a number of appointments she took! No conveyance was sent for her, but with untiring zeal she went to proclaim the loving Saviour she adored. I have often spoken of her, for I never saw her equal for holiness of heart and sweetness of temper. She has now joined the great Love-feast in heaven.'

### Ann Potter

Born Southtawton  
Died Exeter 25<sup>th</sup> February 1835

#### *Stations*

1825 Michaelstow  
1826 St. Ervan  
1827 Scilly Islands Mission  
1828 Truro  
1829 Truro Supernumerary  
1830 Buckfastleigh and Chagford Supernumerary  
1831 Exeter Supernumerary

Ann was converted through the preaching of Andrew Cory in 1820 and became a Local Preacher soon after. In 1825 she became a full time itinerant but a glance at her stations shows that after only four appointments, she had to become a Supernumerary through ill health.

Bourne<sup>1</sup> said of her that she was an 'earnest and diligent worker and her ministrations were both acceptable and useful. The long and painful affliction which ended in death, she bore with exemplary patience.'

Ann was probably in her thirties when she died.

### Betsy Reed

Born Hollwell circa 1794  
Died Langtree 8<sup>th</sup> July 1877

#### *Stations*

1819 Morvah  
1820 Shebbear

Married John Nancekivell

<sup>1</sup> BBCp231

The Reed family was one of the earliest to join the Bible Christians and several of the children became itinerant preachers. Betsy was one of these, though the period of her full time service was rather short.

William Reed and his wife Catherine, farmed at Holwell, Brewer Buckland and the whole family became involved with the Bible Christian movement. There are no details of Betsy's conversion but it was probably through William O'Bryan. After talking at length to friends, she felt called to the itinerant ministry; the first of her family to do so. Catherine, William and Henry all became itinerants.

Blazing a trail is never easy. Being not only the first in her family but also one of the first female itinerants held difficulties for a 'young tenderly brought up female' as her obituary writer put it in 1879.<sup>2</sup> As already recorded, there were some men who objected strongly to women as preachers and one Local Preacher in the neighbourhood objected to Betsy, This did not deter her in the slightest. Her obituary writer marvelled that '... Paul used Phoebe, Priscilla and Tryphena as helpers, yet some men are prejudiced against women preachers.'

In a contemporary letter quoted in the Bible Christian magazine for 1879, her work was described as 'glorious'. 'Multitudes attend to hear, some to are crying aloud for mercy and some have found peace.' Two notable men who 'found peace' through Betsy's preaching were Abraham Bastard and Edward Hocken. Bourne<sup>3</sup> wrote that when she was still a Local Preacher, Betsy was asked to preach at St. Teath. Abraham Bastard was a famous character as he was a wrestler and a very strong man. After hearing Betsy preach several times he was converted. 'Recognised as "chief of sinners" by all the countryside, he was among the first to believe, after a night of prayer, that Jesus died for him.' William O'Bryan said, 'Wrestling Abraham Bastard is become a wrestling Jacob indeed.' He became an open-air preacher and a revivalist. Edward Hocken was not such a colourful character but he too saw the light under Betsy's preaching and went on to become a leader in the local church and later an itinerant preacher. These were two among many.

Marriage to John Nancekivell, a farmer, did not put an end to her preaching. She sometimes went on preaching tours of days or weeks. Betsy also found '....delight in domestic duties'.

The only child mentioned, a daughter, was handicapped. Latterly the care of this daughter and her own advancing years prevented her from preaching as she had done in the past. Even so she remained interested in Christian affairs and attended church whenever possible. Betsy's memory began to fade making it easier to remember early incidents more clearly than those which occurred the previous day.

Her last illness was short and before she died, Betsy '....shouted praises and sang hymns.' The last comment in her obituary was, 'Seldom have we witnessed such a triumphant death'.

<sup>2</sup> BCMag 1879

<sup>3</sup> BBC p66

## Catherine Reed

Born Holwell circa 1789

Died 14<sup>th</sup> May 1875

### *Stations*

1819 Shebbear

1820 Kent Mission

1822 Chatham

1823 London

1825 Sheerness

Married James Thorne 15<sup>th</sup> September 1823 at Shoreditch

Betsy Reed and her sister, Catherine, became itinerant in the same year. The family must have been thankful to God that he had chosen their children to be his ministers. The Christian upbringing had borne fruit.

After a year at Shebbear, Catherine and Ann Cory were sent to help establish the Kent Mission as James Thorne and William Lyle needed help. Bourne<sup>1</sup> quoted James Thorne who said. Ten weeks ago I could scarcely get on opportunity to speak, and then only to about twenty-eight persons, but now I have preached four times to large congregations.' The girls attracted people to the meetings as they were curious to hear women preach. One of these was a doctor who was astonished at the power of her message and said that Catherine must have been inspired by God.

A visitor to Chatham, Miss Ann Radford, was so impressed with her preaching that she persuaded her own congregation to invite Catherine to visit London. Catherine agreed but as the time drew closer became more and more worried about this as she thought of all the difficulties and her own inadequacy. While praying she was reminded of the story of Jesus and the Samaritan woman, who testified to Jesus and the local people believed in him. This convinced her that she should go. Catherine had many appointments which were crowded to capacity. 'Many were deeply affected,' wrote Bourne<sup>2</sup>. In the congregation were '...the wretched, and miserable and poor, and blind.' At an afternoon class, she was able to give hope to those who realised their sin but did not understand the pardoning love of God. During the next few months Catherine preached often in chapels, tents and in the open air. At one time her congregation numbered at least a thousand. She so impressed a baker that he promised never again to open his shop on a Sunday.

In prayer she and her colleagues began to realise that the Bible Christians should establish a base in London and the way was opened up for them. Some who had joined the church through the Kent Mission moved to London and their homes were used until rooms could be rented and finally chapels built.

<sup>1</sup> BBC p85

<sup>2</sup> BBC p110

Most of the female itinerants 'disappear' on marriage but after her marriage to James Thorne in 1823, Catherine had two further stations, one of which was after her first child was born in December 1824. Five more children followed at two or three year intervals so that Wickes<sup>1</sup> remarked that eventually she had to give up the itinerancy and devote herself to the family. It was a very happy marriage as shown in an extract from James' journal<sup>2</sup> which said, 'I could not but reflect on the providence of God which has brought us together. For years I waited on the Lord about this union, and he has brought it about that in every circumstance has proved favourable.'

In 1825, the family left London for good and lived in Devon for the rest of their lives. James held many high offices in the church, being at different times President, Connexional Secretary, Mission Secretary and holding a number of treasurers' posts. From 1844 he was Secretary of Shebbear School and managed to get it back on a sound financial footing. In 1869, he became Governor. As he and his wife were responsible for discipline, one wonders what authority was vested in the headmaster !

During these years Catherine was Matron. A story which illustrates her character is told by Shaw<sup>3</sup> and Pyke.<sup>4</sup> 'She(Catherine) might well have attained distinction if she had no other interests but preaching. She had a vigorous intellect and a sense of proportion, which coupled with a sharp tongue and an ample vocabulary, stood her in good stead when she and her husband returned to Shebbear School in 1844 to nurse and develop the struggling school. "Sir," she said to a newly appointed master when she handed him a short piece of candle, "sir, if you are not accustomed to long devotions, this candle will be sufficient; and if you are, you will know that the darkness and the light are both alike to God." ' Theology and thrift in one sentence !

In some places she is described as 'severe'. Bourne<sup>5</sup> gave an appreciation which the Right Honourable Sir Samuel J. Way had written in 1891. He was one of distinguished old boys of the school who became Chief justice of South Australia. 'Scarcely second to Mr. Thorne's influence do I place that of Mrs, Thorne. I have heard her spoken of as severe, but her severity arose from her scorn of any thing that was mean or unmanly ... No one who could appreciate purity and sincerity and lucidity of mind could withhold from Mrs. Thorne at least esteem, and I am sure that with many old boys she still has a place in their hearts.'

Catherine and her husband set standards for discipline and spiritual matters for both staff and boys. She led Bible Class and in the prayers, which were very long, the boys were obliged to kneel on the hard floors.

Thomas Braund and her nephew William B. Reed, both Bible Christian ministers, wrote appreciations of her in 1895. These were quoted by Pyke<sup>6</sup> Braund wrote, 'Mr Thorne could never have accomplished what he did if he had not had an intelligent wife in full sympathy with his work. My impression is that we are more indebted to Mrs. Thorne than is generally known and that our obligations have never been duly acknowledged.'

The other appreciation ran,<sup>7</sup> 'I do not think that she was second to her husband. For strength of character, for patient and indomitable courage, for true womanly insight and tact, there are few who are her equals. How much the Denomination in the former part of its history was indebted to her quiet heroism will, perhaps, never be known.'

<sup>1</sup> MW p20

<sup>2</sup> MW p20

<sup>3</sup> PBC p28

<sup>4</sup> SBCp112

<sup>5</sup> BBC p265

<sup>6</sup> PBC p28

<sup>7</sup> PGC

Catherine was a woman of superior intellect, great organising ability, effective preaching power and a tower of strength to both her husband and the Shebbear College. The careful stewardship of money and oversight of the staff and pupils at the college laid firm foundations for Christian lives that have served the church in many ways and in many places all over the world.

She was about seventy-seven years old when she died.

#### Elizabeth Rowcliffe

##### *Stations*

1828 Exeter

1829 Forest of Dean

Disappears

#### Winifred Champion Rowland

##### *Stations*

1825 Somerton

1826 Monmouth

1827 Northumberland

1828 Forest of Dean

1829 Forest of Dean Supernumerary

disappears

There is scant information to be found about Winifred. It is interesting to note that one of her stations was in Northumberland as so few people were posted there. Mary Ann Werrey started the Mission but she 'disappeared' after 1824, a couple of years or so before Winifred arrived.

Bourne <sup>1</sup> has one story about the Bible Christians trying to reach the people of Ruardean, in the Forest of Dean who were 'proverbial for wickedness/ Both the Primitives and the Wesleyans had been chased off by stones and at first so were the Bible Christians but Winifred and her colleague, William Lowry, won them over. There was a novelty value in a woman preacher which drew a large congregation but the 'wicked were awed and the rest received the word with joy.' One convert, Mrs. Cook, bought land and built a chapel at her own expense and presented it to the Connexion.

In 1829 she became Supernumerary which probably means that she was in such poor health that she could not continue in the active work. The word 'disappears' may mean that she married, but not to a Bible Christian minister.

<sup>1</sup> BBC p185

Mary Runalls.

*Stations*

1821 Canworthywater  
1822 Desisted.

Elizabeth Sinclair

*Stations*

1824 Falmouth  
1825 Breage  
1826 Isle of Wight Supernumerary  
1827 Luxillian  
1828 St.Ervan  
1829 Exeter  
Disappears

Ann Slooman

*Stations*

1821 Somerset  
1822 Ringsash  
1823 Desisted

Mary Ann Soper

*Stations*

1819 Ringsash  
1820 St.Ervan  
1821 St. Neot  
1822 Kingsbrompton Supernumerary

Married William Lyle 16<sup>th</sup> June 1823

William Lyle was a Bible Christian minister but after their marriage, they both 'disappeared'. There is short entry in Bourne<sup>1</sup> about Mary Ann, telling of her being sent to London in January 1823 together with William Strongman as the London work needed more help.

<sup>1</sup>BBCp112

## Ethel Maud Squire

### *Stations*

1903 ChaoTongFu

The Squires were a prominent Bible Christian family who came from the Shebbear area. Her father was Richard Squire, who was a Bible Christian minister as were her brothers, Harold Hearn and Ernest Richard.

After 1907, Ethel is said to 'disappear', as that year was the year of union and she would 'cease to be recognised', but from her diary and the Minutes of Conference, we know that she carried on working and in 1907, she was listed as a 'Female missionary'.

Ethel was a graduate teacher sent to the Miao tribe of China. Extracts from her diary were published in the Bible Christian Magazine for 1905 and 1906, telling of the work and the problems besetting the people.

At first she was trying to learn Chinese on her own and experiencing some difficulty, but her confidence increased with her knowledge of the language till she was able to address meetings. As later she remarked that she was trying to prepare for her third year exam after only a year in the country, she must have been a talented and able linguist. All this kept her very busy. There were four morning services, each of which lasted for nearly three hours. It is to be hoped that they operated a shift system ! One hundred and sixty were present at a service after dinner and sometimes there were seven services in a day.

She recorded a visit by Sam Pollard, who was surprised at the extent of the mission. He was greeted by two or three hundred people at each place he stopped.

The Miao people found becoming Christian could bring persecution. Some were maltreated and others returned home to find the Mandarin prying into their private things. One of the landlords threatened to turn them off his land and others spread malicious rumours that the Miao were going to rebel after being trained by the Christians. Despite all this, the work grew so that in 1906, Ethel wrote that there were a thousand in the congregation at one of the services and a hundred and fifty were baptised in a single day. The work continued to prosper.

Christians are still active in the old Bible Christian area. Rev Ken Parsons <sup>2</sup>in a Christmas letter a few years ago says that all the Christian property has been returned and that there are thousands of Chinese Christians among the Miao. The 'remnant' has been preserved by God.

<sup>2</sup> Personal letter

## Mary Ann Taylor

Died 1892

### *Stations*

1832 Faversham and Elham  
1833 Kingsbrompton  
1834 Kingsbrompton and Taunton Mission  
1835 Exeter  
1836 Weare  
1839 Luxillian  
1840 St.Austell  
1842 Launceston  
1844 St.Ervan  
1846 Chatham  
1848 Tenterden  
1851 Chard  
1853 Luxillian

Married Paul Robbins 1854

Mary Ann spent more than twenty years as an itinerant before her marriage. Most of the women were stationed at a church for a year; more than that is unusual and then perhaps only once in a career. No less than seven circuits kept her for two or even three years over the period of her active ministry. This would seem to reinforce Bourne's<sup>1</sup> description of her as a 'much esteemed female preacher.'

In 1832, a young man called John Gammon, was converted through Mary Ann's preaching and subsequently entered the ministry in 1837.

Paul Robbins' first wife, Ann Vicary, also a Female Itinerant, died in 1853. The next year, he and Mary Ann married. There are no details, but as all Paul's stations were in Canada after this date, she may have sailed to Canada to marry him there. It is more than likely that they knew each other well, having served in several of the same circuits in their earlier ministries. In 1874, Paul became Supernumerary in Bowmanville, Canada, having held many high offices in the church there, including that of President of the Conference and Connexional Secretary. He died in Bowmanville in 1890 and Mary Ann died two years later.

<sup>1</sup> BBC p521

## Amy Terry

### ***Stations***

1834 Portsea  
1835 Tenterden and Elham Mission  
1836 Tenterden Mission  
1837 Faversham  
1838 Chichester and Brighton  
1839 Weare  
1841 Mevagissey  
1843 Devonport  
1844 Luxillian  
1845 Sally Islands

Married William Drew

As the Stilly Islands were Amy's last station before she 'disappeared', she and William were probably married in 1846. They travelled round the country including Devon, the Channel Islands and Cornwall, William becoming Supernumerary in 1877.

## Lois Malpas Thorne

Born Nr. Chepstow 1858  
Died Newport 25<sup>th</sup> November 1904

### ***Stations***

1894 Chao Tong Fu  
1897 Yunnan Fu  
1898 Tong Chuan Fu  
1901 on furlough

Married Samuel Thomas Thorne 24<sup>th</sup> April 1888

For this short account of Lois Thorne's life I am indebted to Rev. Keith Parsons who gave me a copy of his biographical sketch 'My Moving Tent' which is a full story of her life and work. I have drawn heavily on this, particularly for the time she was working for the CIM.

The title 'My Moving Tent' was chosen as Lois had carved on her husband's tombstone, in Chinese characters, these words from a hymn.

'And daily pitch my moving tent  
A day's march nearer home.'

She moved home so often and never lived longer than three years in one place, so these lines were particularly appropriate.

She was born into a staunch Wesleyan family, the youngest of seven children; her father and three older brothers were all Local Preachers. They made their living as market gardeners. After the death of her mother, Lois kept house for her father. In 1882, the CIM prayed for seventy workers to offer themselves for China and Lois responded.

She sailed for Shanghai in the October of 1883 and arrived a month later. After fourteen

months of language study, she was sent up to Yang Chao, on the river Yangtse where she was well received and well liked as a willing and helpful worker. The women in particular were responding well to the Gospel, coming in such large numbers and returning so frequently that their premises were becoming too small.

The next station was to be Yunnan, a long distance away which would be covered by river boat and sedan chair. The weather was calm and Lois, together with her colleague Miss Todd, enjoyed the passage through the gorges, taking every opportunity to witness to the people they met on the way. Even the dreaded rapids section was not as bad as expected: the only alarming incident being when someone with no love for foreigners cut the mooring ropes of the vessel one night. No harm was done and they proceeded unscathed. Then eight hundred miles had to be undertaken in a sedan chair over the mountains, which usually took a month even when the going was smooth.

The next few months were spent settling in, teaching villagers, particularly women, visiting unevangelised villages and enjoying Christian fellowship with their colleagues. Lois and Miss Todd soon were living alone, pleased that they were able to manage by themselves so quickly. Two young Bible Christian ministers, Thomas Vanstone and Samuel Thorne, arrived in 1888, as a co-operative venture with the CIM. Three days after their arrival, Lois met her future husband at the weekly English service. The four began to take tea together and sang hymns afterwards. The ladies moved house but were accused of being spies, so moved elsewhere.

In 1887, Lois and her companion were moved to Chungking. While Samuel went north to Chaotung to open up what was to become the headquarters of the South China District. Thomas Vanstone, his new wife and two more Bible Christian ministers, Frank Dymond and Sam Pollard, were shipwrecked in the Yangtse rapids and were helped to dry out by Lois Malpas. Many years later Frank wrote of her, 'The picture of health, a typical farmer's daughter, ready for any kind deed, never happier than when helping someone, everything she did was done heartily, a ring of sincerity in her praise and prayer. No one doubted the goodness of such a soul.'

When the dried out party reached Chaotung, Samuel was free to travel south with Lois to Pao Ning to be married there by an Anglican clergyman, licensed to marry British nationals. After a short honeymoon, it was back Chaotung. Samuel Thorne was in a great line of Bible Christians, being the son, grandson and great-grandson of Bible Christian ministers. His great-grandfather was none other than William O'Bryan himself.

There was much to be done and time passed very quickly as they sold books, preached in the streets, held meetings in the hall on most days or went out either singly or together on evangelistic tours. To begin with, Lois saw her vocation as teaching the women, but one Sunday when Frank Dymond had not returned from seeing a patient in time to take the service, she filled in, preaching in Chinese. Thus came her call to preach. During the next few months, both Lois and Samuel were ill, possibly from malaria, which recurred frequently, leaving them both so weak that eventually they had to give in and travel to the coast to recuperate. They were away from home for more than a year, suffering another set-back when Samuel caught typhoid during that period.

They started work again with a will, planning to visit unevangelised areas as well as keeping up with the growing work in the town. Samuel, though not really well, started out on one such visit, but became so ill that he was forced to return. This time he had caught typhus which proved fatal. They had been married for less than eighteen months. Mr

Parsons says of her,' Lois Thorne faced this devastating experience with immense courage, and through the tragic story as she wrote it in some detail for the Missionary Secretary at home, there shines through a supreme faith. Though she could not understand why this should have happened she never doubted that it lay within the goodness and providence of God.' Lois took a short holiday and then it was decided that as she had been eight years on the field, she should return to England for furlough.

Conference on the Isle of Wight, gave Lois a whole-hearted welcome when she addressed the delegates. 'Mrs. Thorne replied under deep emotion, and often caused tears to flow down many cheeks. She brought greetings from the missionaries in China. They were full of hope. She gave a telling account of the work in China giving many pathetic instances of kindness received from the natives. She urged that a band of young men and women might be set apart for China at that Conference.' Lois was active in the setting up of the Bible Christian Women' Missionary League during Conference. In her fifteen month furlough, she toured Britain, taking meetings during which she wore Chinese dress and sang well known hymns to Chinese words. She must have thrived on hard work, as her health improved so much that she was found well enough to be able to return to China.

On the return trip, she had a pleasant voyage and in a letter printed in the Bible Christian Magazine for 1894, mentions little but the fellowship she had with other missionaries on board. The river trip was more hazardous than her first one as the boat was unfit to sail and the boatman was on opium. Lois gave a graphic description of the boat breaking loose in a thunderstorm and the rain pouring through the roof. Fortunately they were safe and their things not badly damaged. Lois was overjoyed to be back in China.

In the 1895 magazine her diary said, The work is growing and requires much thought and attention. Two men publicly burnt their idols and are witnessing, independent of us.' In May of 1895, she went to Sa-ii-ho spending a week there with an old lady who was a Christian and most helpful to her. Earlier in Lois 'career, this had been a place of outreach. The Pollards were hopeful of the place as the work was beginning to take root. The villagers gave her an extremely warm welcome and provided her with food. During the evening meeting, a group bent on mischief tried to break it up by throwing clods of earth and shouting as they surrounded the house. Lois was accused of causing the deaths of many children by her presence. She went straight to the elders and demanded they prove the charges. When they saw her determination, they promised it would not happen again.

Six months later she wrote to the Bible Christian Magazine, <sup>1</sup>that the work was progressing well but '...we have much more sowing to do. The work is only fringed and the time is short. Face to face as we are with this huge mountain of superstition and gross idolatry, we are often deeply moved and almost despairingly cry, "Who is sufficient for these things?" By him we are sustained in this great work.' Lois was saddened that the mission and the message were misunderstood. Many Chinese thought that the missionaries were there to open up the way for the British army to occupy China and others saw that in becoming Christian, they might better themselves materially. They would readily part with their idols as long as 'Our Jesus' would make them rich. There were macabre beliefs about the missionaries too. Some Chinese thought that English children were born blind and that foreigners would tap the water from Chinese children's eyes and inject it into those of English children so that they would be enabled to see. Lois seemed to set them right on that one. In the same letter, she talked about the difficulties they were under and how hard

<sup>1</sup> BCMag 1896

it was for people at home to understand these. She said, 'Ours is to plant and water, but God giveth the increase.' It was hard to wait for the fruit even though she was sure it would come.

The next station was Yunnan Fu and she left Chao Tong fu in 1897, with '...goodwill sympathy and prayers.' There were some problems in getting a house on the right location, at the right price so she stayed with some CMS missionaries till one could be found. She was laid up for a month after a fall from a horse. A description of the festival for the Goddess of Mercy's birthday was printed in the 1898 magazine. The Chinese dressed up and took offerings but there was a 'dull, sad, monotony about the whole thing.' The worshippers were surprised to be told that 'heathen rites' were useless and do not turn one to the one true God. '...they wonder at our daring to speak against idols....it is as though the devil was in the air, laughing at the feeble and apparently fruitless efforts of the missionaries.' It did seem an uphill task and occasionally Lois became downhearted but not for long. 'A better day will dawn and...thousands will crowd together to do homage to Jesus.

1899 found her in Tong Chuan Fu where the work had been continuous and very well organised, but different from what she had been used to. Lois could not help but compare the two places, 'our Tung Chuan people, are I fear, behind in spiritual gifts; they leave all to the missionary, and seem to lack enthusiasm. Perhaps it is because we ourselves fail to inspire them. I am hoping for a better state of things there. Please pray for us that we may have a better state of reviving.' She firmly believed the Lord would answer her prayer.

Lois was the most senior missionary on the staff of four and, as can happen when people live and work together so closely, some tension developed which troubled Lois as she tried to resolve the problem. She wrote, 'Owing to a slight misunderstanding with one of the band, have not spent a happy day, but greatly exercised in my mind about many things. How to avoid collision! What course would the Lord have me pursue? Whether I should quietly forbear or follow my own conviction. Oh! For more light and the peace which flows like a river, deep and undisturbed.' Mr Parsons adds, That reaction was typical, there was never any breath of recrimination, always a prayer for more grace.

There was good news about the work, reported in the Bible Christian Magazine for 1900. She wrote that the Chinese were taking a more prominent part in the services and there was marked progress on every branch of the work. Collections were used to send evangelists on preaching visits to the outlying districts. In the schools two boys were preparing for the ministry, some women were learning to read and all the girl pupils had unbound feet. One girl's mother had strongly objected to this but had been won over and attended classes herself! More staff were needed to keep pace with the growing work.

Soon after she wrote this, the Boxer Rising affected the neighbouring province so badly that some missionaries fled in fear of their lives and others were killed. Their area was not disturbed, but on the advice of the Consul, decided that they should also leave. Sam Pollard arranged that all the church affairs should be taken over by Chinese leaders and they all set out as soon as possible for Hong Kong with a great sadness and some feeling of guilt. The journey was safe and quiet as they avoided the towns and for most of the way had an escort of soldiers. They arrived in Hong Kong on 5<sup>th</sup> September 1900 where they met up with the Dymonds and the Savins. She stated that all the missionaries had left. Prayers for the Chinese Christians in difficulties were requested.

On arrival in England, Lois was eagerly sought as a speaker and a contributor to magazines. She seems to have taken on too much as Dr and Mrs Savin looked after her when she became seriously ill. Her health fluctuated for many years when, even though she was unable to take meetings, she would write appealing for funds for the work. She was eventually pronounced fit but not well enough to be able to return overseas, which was a dreadful disappointment as it seemed all her talents in language and suitability for mission work were now to be wasted. She had hoped that even if she were not fit enough at that examination, she might be encouraged by knowing that there was hope in the future, to return to China and carry on the task she had begun. It was not to be. Lois then used all her great gifts in an evangelistic campaign in Cardiff. That was in 1904.

A few days after the end of the campaign, her old illness returned and she suffered an internal haemorrhage which could not be stemmed. She was cared for by her brother and sister-in-law. All their love and attention could not prevent her death in November aged forty-six.

In her obituary, Frank Dymond wrote, 'Her house in China was poor and small. In self-sacrifice they forgot themselves in the Great Mission, absorbed in the Chinese and their needs.' He gave a tribute to Lois in Cheotung at the District meeting. At the end of his account for the Bible Christian Magazine he wrote, 'a holy quiet fell upon our Annual meeting when news came from Bro. Squire, writing to his daughter, that Mrs Thorne had entered the Royal presence of her Lord. Upon whom shall her mantle fall?'

'For ever with the Lord,  
Amen! So let it be.'

Those were the first two lines of the hymn from which she had taken the words to be engraved on her husband's tombstone, thirteen years earlier.

'And nightly pitch my moving tent  
A day's march nearer home.'

### Ann Tremelling

*Stations*  
1825 Kingsbrompton  
1826 Somerton  
disappears

### Elizabeth Trick

*Stations*  
1819 St. Neot  
1820 Morvah  
1821 desisted.

## Mary Toms

Born Porchfield Isle of Wight 24<sup>th</sup> November 1795  
Died Isle of Wight 1<sup>st</sup> February 1871

### *Stations*

1820 Luxillian  
1821 Morvah  
1822 Luxillian  
1823 Isle of Wight Mission

Married William Warder

There are one or two contradictions in the various accounts of Mary's life, she was born in Tintagel according to Bourne<sup>1</sup> yet in her obituary<sup>2</sup> it spoke of her as a native of Porchfield in the Isle of Wight. In 1821, the list of stations had her in Morvah, but Pyke<sup>3</sup> wrote that before that she went to Luxillian, she was in Scilly. Perhaps she went from one to the other. All agree, however, in their praise and thanks for her work, her indomitable spirit and her Christian example.

In her young days, Mary was fond of pretty clothes. While she was on a visit to an aunt in Plymouth, a sermon by a Methodist preacher made her aware of her spiritual condition and she was converted. This brought her into violent confrontation with her parents who disowned her, and, having beaten her, turned her out. Fortunately it was not long before the family was reconciled once more. The change in her spiritual state, made her change her style of dress to one so plain, that someone asked if she were a Quaker. The nearest Methodist church was over two miles away, but for several years she would walk there regularly over almost impassable roads, no matter how bad the weather, at night to attend service. It was here that she received 'entire sanctification'. Bourne<sup>4</sup> said 'her peace flowed as a river, her joy was rapturous, and her righteousness abounded as the waves of the sea.'

In about 1817, she heard a sermon by a Bible Christian, possibly William O'Bryan. This put her into a spiritual state where she seemed to be sustained with little or no food and affecting those near her with her ecstasy so that they too felt God's nearness. Mary felt loyalty to the Methodists but wanted to join those who had been instrumental in leading her to her wonderful spiritual experience. She became a Bible Christian. At first she gave her testimony locally, working as a dressmaker by day. At the second Conference, Mary was accepted as an Itinerant.

Morvah figures in Bourne's<sup>5</sup> account of her early ministry, Mary was a very popular and effective preacher and people came long distances to hear her. She never spared herself. Sometimes after a meeting, someone who had been deeply affected by her message would invite her home to spend the night so that they could hear more. It happened more than once that when she arrived, the partner of the one who did the inviting, would have none of it, and Mary had to go on, hungry, cold and wet, with no place to sleep.

<sup>1</sup> BBCpl26

<sup>2</sup> BCMag 1872

<sup>3</sup> PGC p52

<sup>4</sup> BBC p126

<sup>5</sup> BBC p128

There are accounts in several books of her encounter with a large animal, probably a dog, one dark night as she was travelling to a meeting. The creature trotted along beside her then left just before she arrived. Some thought it was sent by God to protect her but Mary herself believed it to be a messenger of the Devil to try to frighten her from her mission. If it were the latter, the ploy failed as she preached with renewed power that night and many were converted by listening to her words.

Early in her ministry Mary felt called to serve in the Isle of Wight but instead she was sent to the Scilly Isles where there was much need and she underwent great hardship, and then to Luxillian, according to Bourne. When it was agreed that she should go to the Isle of Wight, there was no money for her fare so friends collected enough money and Sam Thorne gave her some books as hers had been burnt in a fire. These had the added advantage of being able to be sold and turned into ready cash should the need arise. She said she would have made the long journey<sup>6</sup> '...even though the road had been paved with fire.'

One of her letters published in the Bible Christian Magazine for 1823, where she wrote of her rough journey over to the island. Never one to miss an opportunity, Mary began to preach to the twenty-two passengers. 'I had plenty to do to reprove sin,' she wrote. To one who enquired whether she was a Quaker, she replied, 'No....a Bryanite preaching woman.'

'What religion are you?'

'There is but one way to Heaven - follow Christ and unless you have the religion you now laugh at, your state will be awful.' When a storm blew up their attitude altered and they asked her to pray.

Conditions were no better on land. Mary walked all over Cowes trying to find decent lodgings until, sheltering in a doorway of a cook's shop, a woman came out and after hearing her story, offered her a bed for a shilling. The next target was a congregation and then a room for meetings. The day after her arrival, Mary went into the street and began preaching. On Sunday the weather was cold, wet and windy but, nothing daunted, she borrowed a chair, stood on it in the street and sang, 'Come ye sinners poor and wretched.' This spectacle soon had a crowd gathered and though some scoffed, with others, '...tears began to flow.' A woman who had been touched by Mary's preaching, offered a small room for her use. Another was heard to say, 'I hope to see more Bryanite preachers here soon.'

The meetings were so well received that they often did not finish until ten or eleven o'clock at night. This revival disturbed the local worthies and the parson. She was accused of making a riot and a magistrate, urged by a local clergyman, ordered a policeman to arrest her. He wanted her off the island but a wise friend advised him to leave the 'Bryanites alone, lest haply he should be found to be fighting against God.' The Methodists did not receive her kindly either as they thought she was out to '...tear up Methodism by the roots.' These charges, together with the accusation that she was turning people crazy, seems to have been quietly dropped. Some unfortunately could not abide a woman preacher and joined other societies, calling it a 'woman's cause' and asking for a man to come.

<sup>6</sup> SBC p30

Mary carried on working at the cracking pace she had set herself, preaching three or four times each Sunday, at churches two to four miles apart and taking classes in between. Within a month there were enough people to form a Society of two hundred which needed more full time preachers. Mary, in the mean time, had nearly worn herself out. It was decided to send Catherine O'Bryan and Eliza Jew to help her. These three women travelled all over the island, finding more and more people who wanted to hear the Gospel. Eliza Jew,<sup>7</sup> writing soon after her arrival, said, 'We preach at so many places that we cannot speak at any one place more than once a fortnight, and at some only once a month.

Although her list of stations her list of stations does not say she became Supernumerary, her obituary, printed in the Bible Christian Magazine for 1872, said Mary had to leave the itinerancy on account of her health. She returned to the Isle of Wight and lived there until her marriage to William Warder, after which she moved to Wroxall. She then went on the plan as a Local Preacher. Her obituary continues, 'She was mighty in prayer and possessed a wrestling spirit. Her exhortations were short and to the point, delivered with much earnestness and pathos to great effect. She chased up backsliders. She was so compelling that the congregation were often reluctant to leave the service. She was well received as a preacher. Her discourses were plain but practical and delivered with much earnestness and often with tears. It was a cause of great distress that her children were not converted. She entertained preachers with great hospitality. Her sick visits were not long and tedious, but short and to the point.' Towards the end she suffered from rheumatism. A fortnight before her death it was said, 'Satan powerfully assaulted her but victory was delightfully given her.' Mary must have been seventy-six years old when she died.

### Mary Urch

#### *Stations*

1825 Monmouth

1826 Weare Supernumerary

<sup>7</sup>BBCp139

## Ann Vicary

Died Canada 18<sup>th</sup> September 1853

### *Stations*

1820 Kilkhampton  
1821 Michaelstow  
1822 Truro  
1823 St. Keverne  
1824 Luxillian  
1825 Luxillian Supernumerary  
1826 London  
1828 Portsea

Married Paul Robbins 1831

Before Ann offered as an Itinerant at the second Bible Christian Conference, she had conducted prayer meetings, worked with young converts and preached locally. Even after her marriage to Paul Robbins, another Bible Christian minister, she carried on her ministry, being posted to Jersey after the birth of her second child. Domestic matters were so arranged that she could take Sunday services. Her obituary <sup>1</sup>noted that would walk to her appointment carrying the baby, hand it to a member of the congregation to mind during the service, claim it back at the close and walk home again. All the preparation for Sunday meals was done the day before. Any gap in the plan could be covered as Ann was always willing to arrange her affairs to free herself to preach. It is no surprise to read that she had little sympathy with preachers who failed to turn up to their appointments because of bad weather or difficult travelling conditions. She had no help with her domestic duties apart from the time when her second child was a baby. Ann greatly helped her husband in all his stations and on her own account took classes, held prayer meetings and, of course, kept on preaching <sup>2</sup>'in season and out of season'.

The couple moved to Canada in 1846. Ann became ill with a tumour and died in 1853, exhorting those gathered round her to seek holiness. Her husband wrote 'Her nature was stubborn but Divine Grace triumphed.' She was a remarkable woman with great stamina whose life was cut short. All the Female Itinerants would have needed a stubborn nature to have accomplished all they did in such difficulties. With all too it can be said that 'Divine Grace triumphed.'

<sup>1</sup> BCMag 1854

<sup>2</sup> BBC p347

Susanna Walter

*Stations*

1842 South Devon Mission  
1843 Luxillian  
1844 Northlew  
disappears

Eliza Wheeler

*Stations*

1837 Farnham Mission ½ year  
Chichester Mission ½ year.  
1838 Faversham  
1841 Elham Mission  
disappears

Ann White

Born Bembridge 8<sup>th</sup> August 1805  
Died South Australia 8<sup>th</sup> May 1894

*Stations*

1833 Portsea  
1834 Surrey Mission  
1836 Devonport  
1837 Week St Mary  
1840 St. Austell  
Camelford  
Launceston  
1842 Dover  
1844 Tenterden  
Michaelstow  
1849 Kingsbrompton  
1850 Exeter

Married James Roberts (2<sup>nd</sup>) 1850

Ann was a Local Preacher for nine years before she became itinerant in 1833, at the age of twenty-eight. She travelled thirteen years before marrying James Roberts, a Bible Christian minister.

They lived in Penzance for three years and in 1853, set out for South Australia where they spent the rest of their lives. James was District Superintendent from 1864 to 1866.

Her obituary in the Bible Christian Magazine for 1895 gives a few more details of Ann's life. She was described as a true 'helpmeet' for the sixteen years of their marriage and survived

thirty years after his death. Until a short while before her death, she was preaching, leading a Class and visiting the sick. She could still read without glasses though her distance vision was poor. She had no family but a wide circle of friends and at her death, in her ninetieth year, was the oldest living member of the Bible Christian Church.

### Mary Ann Werrey

#### ***Stations***

1820 St. Keverne

1821 Truro

1822 Scilly Isles

1823 Jersey Mission and Guernsey

1824 Northumberland

Mission

disappears

I am indebted to Rev Colin Short who has kindly given permission for me to quote from his book, 'Durham Miners and West Country Methodists' to fill in details of Mary Ann Werrey's life which I had not found in my searches.

There is little information about Mary Ann before her arrival in the Isles of Scilly, where she made a great impact on the inhabitants. She had an overwhelming conviction that she should go there, and in her case, Conference agreed. They did not always support an itinerant who felt called to a certain station. The Scillonians at this time were a lawless bunch with smuggling and drunkenness rife though they were very poor. The inhabitants of one of the smaller islands were known as the 'St Agnes Heathens' but they responded so well that William Mason was sent over to assist. The transformation was dramatic. In less than a month a chapel had been built where forty members met in class, and in less than a year, many drunkards and smugglers had been reformed. On the neighbouring island of St Martins, there were a hundred and forty people meeting in class and the moral change was very great.

From there she was sent to Guernsey and ran into a storm. Mary Ann was completely unperturbed even though death seemed near as she was convinced that God intended her to reach Guernsey. She took the opportunity to pray with the seamen. Her reception was mixed but her faith kept her going. She was quoted as saying,<sup>2</sup> 'Methinks I hear the shouts of victory before the battle begins.' Mary Ann had been given a letter of introduction to the Local Preachers, some of whom received her warmly but others merely out of duty. An old minister showed outright hostility, warning his congregation to have nothing to do with her. He felt partly that they would be going to her services, not to worship, but because of the novelty value. To defend his stance he said, 'One of the wisest men who ever lived (we are not told his name!) has declared that a sermon hunter is no better than a fox hunter.'

<sup>1</sup> BBC p145

<sup>2</sup> PGC p48

All this deterred neither Mary Ann nor the people of Guernsey. She began to preach in the Baptist Chapel but when that became too small, she took to the promenade, sometimes preaching to two or three thousand people. During an evangelistic campaign, many were converted. The work grew so rapidly that Samuel Smales was sent to help her. A letter from Guernsey was printed in the Bible Christian Magazine for 1824, which read, 'One night after preaching, Mary Ann had no place to eat or sleep and was glad to dig out a place in a heap of straw in a farmyard in which she lay down, after hanging her bonnet on a stick, which she placed in the straw to prevent it from being crushed.' With conditions like these it is a wonder she was not ill, but her health held up and she worked tirelessly. The first Bible Christian Chapel in the island was an ex-Government store room which Mary Ann furnished with a plain pulpit, thirty-three forms and two chandeliers. She wrote,<sup>3</sup> 'I assure you it is a neat little Bryanite chapel.'

Five months later Mary Ann moved to Jersey. Her fame had preceded her and within days a room was offered to her for use as a preaching place. There were crowded congregations both there and in the open air. A slight disturbance in one meeting caused Mary Ann to reprove the rowdies whereupon they began a mock fight, frightening the women present. A preacher in the crowd restored order and Mary Ann carried on with her message in her usual energetic way. The troublemakers were intent on making a point and thumped a soberly dressed young woman as she left the meeting, thinking it was Mary Ann. No doubt the magistrates dealt with them. Others responded to her words and after a room had been rented, a new convert offered to let her have as much wood as she wanted for furnishing and would wait for payment until the Society could afford it. Three carpenters gave their services free so that pews and a pulpit could be made at minimum cost. Again Mary Ann felt God was calling her elsewhere and wanted to move on. Her place was taken by Mary O'Bryan.

This time she dreamed of Scotland, though details of her destination were very hazy as she could not remember the name of the town to which she felt called. The conviction remained that Scotland must be her next station and knew the dream was the sign she needed. Having settled her affairs in Jersey, the ship set sail for Scotland. On the way she held services which were greatly appreciated by the captain and the crew. The ship put in at Blyth and Mary Ann decided to disembark there and travel overland to Scotland, preaching along the way. Her luggage went on ahead. The Wesleyans at Blyth looked after her well but she had a difficult time at Newcastle. No-one would give her lodgings so she slept where she could, and in her clothes, for nearly a week. She went hungry too. This poor reception made her decide to return to Blyth, where she knew she would be received with kindness.

She began to preach in the Wesleyan Chapel and later at Morpeth preached in the Wesleyan Chapel and the Town Hall.<sup>4</sup>The refusal to admit her to Alnwick Methodist chapel, eighteen miles to the north, led her moving to Belford, thirteen miles south of Berwick. Here Mary Ann was to come into contact with what was probably an existing Bible Christian society from the older work ... Robert Barwick was the householder at the place where Mary Ann Werrey lodged.'

<sup>3</sup> SBC p83

<sup>4</sup> CCS p11

Sleeping rough and not eating properly, sparked off an old complaint and she became so ill that she was near to death. While in a coma, she believed she heard God promising recovery and she was cured. In a short time Mary Ann was up and preaching to a large crowd for over an hour. She preached as often as she could though her health kept breaking down, limiting what she could do. She felt as though she were battling against overwhelming forces, as she had help neither with her work nor her own needs. Bourne <sup>5</sup>wrote of her feelings at that time. 'Her actual position was like that of one in a deep pit into which she herself had voluntarily gone, or had been thrust by an unseen power, and there was no one holding the ropes.' William Mason was sent to help her but too late as she had worn herself out, unable to preach but only put herself in God's hands, '...let the Lord dispose of me now as he thinks fit. ...the Lord is mine and I am His.' Bourne continues, 'Two or three further glimpses of her of no particular importance we get before God took her, no one living so far being able to tell how or when or where for not a trace has been left behind.'

But that was not the end. William Mason believed she had died but<sup>6</sup> Nursed by her friends, the Barwicks, Mary Ann recovered. It was through these people that her call was fulfilled. For when they moved from Belford Mary Ann travelled with the friends to Edinburgh and Scotland. The story is taken up in newspaper accounts: the Edinburgh Evening Courant 2 May 1825:

'It having been publicly announced that a young lady from Guernsey would preach in the Caledonian theatre yesterday evening, at half-past six o'clock. As might be expected the novel and ridiculous exhibition drew together an immense concourse of people. So early as five o'clock crowds began to besiege the doors, and before they were opened there were as many collected as would have filled the house ten times. When the doors opened the rush was tremendous and in a few minutes the house was completely. Just as public worship was about to commence some of the seats in the gallery gave way from the pressure, the crash of which making the people apprehensive that the gallery would fall down, the whole multitude was seized with panic and pressed towards the doors, when a scene of the greatest danger and confusion ensued that can be conceived. Some were so impressed with fears for their safety that, forgetting the danger they run from broken limbs, two men and a woman leapt to the street from the window of the first storey. Many had their clothes torn and several lost shoes and shawls, but we have not heard of any person being hurt. After the fear of danger had subsided the theatre was again filled, but as it was then too late for public worship, a strong party of police, under the orders of Captain Robison, cleared the house and the people soon dispersed. The lady herself took her departure among the cheers of the mob, in a hackney coach. We trust the public authorities will take care that no such disgraceful proceedings are again permitted to disturb the peace and sanctity of the Sabbath.

Ten days later the same newspaper picked up the story again: The Courant, 12 May.

'The young lady from Guernsey having returned to this city begs to intimate that she intends preaching in the Free Mason's Hall, Niddry Street, on Monday 16th, Wednesday 18th, Thursday 19th, and Friday 20th. Service on the first two mentioned days at one o'clock and on the latter two days at six in the evening. In order to prevent a recurrence of the painful disturbance which took place on the evening of Sunday 1st inst. None will be admitted without a ticket.'

<sup>5</sup> BBC p145

<sup>6</sup> CCS pl2

No account of these meetings taking place has come to light. It seems the story of Mary Ann Werrey must yet come to a mysterious end. " No register now extant records her death and burial, but she herself knew beyond doubt the Book in which her name would be written." "

Pyke<sup>7</sup> suggested that she was unable to take kindly to the supervision of William Mason and desisted, but this was not the case. But even so, driven by such sure guidance, any suggestions as to the use of her time must have been dismissed as superfluous.- she knew what she had been sent to do and needed advice from no-one. Pyke also told of a Primitive Methodist minister in Melbourne, speaking in a public meeting, who was indirectly influenced by Mary Ann. The work started by the Bible Christian Northumberland Mission was taken over by the Primitive Methodists and his father was converted through their ministry. He felt he owed much to Mary Ann Werrey for her brave pioneering work.

Rev. Lewis Court, who made an invaluable collection of Bible Christian material, wrote a poem in 1915, praising her life and work. It was called, 'A Song of a Century', as 1915 was the centennial year of the Bible Christian Church.

#### Mary Ann Werrey

Her birth, her lineage- these are all unknown  
And how she passed into the land of light.  
She came, they say not whence; her spirit's flight  
We know not: but we know the great white throne  
Of those brief years which marked her glorious fight  
She loved and served her Lord with all her might,  
And bore a bitter cross without a moan.  
Her life was like a golden summer glow  
Between two glooms,- that all too swiftly flies;  
Yet leaves a deathless glory for the race.  
She was enraptured with her theme of Grace.  
Men heard entranced, and turned them from their woe.  
God keeps the record though his servant died.

<sup>7</sup> PBC, p.28

## Bibliography

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⚡ I believe this is The Rules. (CCS)	
An extra reference is ... Methodist Worthies	MW

Appendix : Additional information as at March 2015, the date of  
compiling this file.

1. Two Omissions:

1.1 : Ann Leah Bonetto.

Not listed in UMMC, but see ... *Bible Christian Magazine* 1862 p158f, as an Obituary for Ann Leah RICHARDS by Matthew Robins.

Born Tolcarne, Madron, 15 April 1794; brought up a Wesleyan.

Back-slid, she was converted through the preaching of Mary Lyle and William O'Bryan.

"About the year 1822, from letters addressed to her parents, she appears to have been employed, for a time, in the itinerant work in the neighbourhood of Launceston and Tiverton, but soon after her arrival at Tiverton she was laid by with a fever, and at one time it was thought her end was near. ... It pleased the Lord however to prolong her life for many years; but as her name does not appear in the Minutes of Conference, I suppose it was found her health was not equal to the word."

The date of her marriage is not given.

She died at Penzance on September 19 1861.

1.3 : Eleanor Turner.

In 1822 to St. Keverne.

1823, desisted.

No further information.

2. Ann Cory.

Reference to a Gracca Circuit: no Circuit of this name is listed in the *Minutes of Conference* in 1819 nor 1820. William Mason was stationed in the St. Neot Circuit in 1819, but was working with the newly established Luxillian Circuit, which covered St.Austell. The 1819 *Minutes* lists "another female" who turned out to be Ann Cory.

Gracca is near Bugle, now lost under expanding china clay tips.

3. Catherine Harris.

An obituary of Miss Harris, late of Temple, appears in the *Cornish and Devon Post*, 18 January 1896. See *Cornish Methodist Historical Association*, Vol.9, No6 (2002)

In 1851 she retired to become housekeeper for her brother at Blisland.

Her funeral was at Blisland Church. She was 91.

4. Ann Freeman

See also Henry Freeman, *A Memoir of the Life and Ministry of Ann Freeman* London: Harvey & Dalton (1826). [By 2015 there was a 'print-to-order' facsimilé edition of the American edition (1831) available.]

5. Mary Ann Mason.

'Afterwards Mrs May' *Bible Christian Magazine* 1855, p78.

That statement contradicts what Joan had written, and opens several issues.

In the 1820 *Minutes* there are two female itinerants called Mason: Ann, who became Mrs. Freeman and is well detailed, and, Mary (only name), who was sent to Ringsash. In 1821 she is listed as desisted.

In 1822 the name Mary Mason appears again in the list of Itinerant Females, and is stationed at St. Neot. She is there again in 1823. In 1824, still as Mary Mason, she

goes to Kingsbrompton (Brompton Regis today).  
Her name never appears again in the *Minutes of Conference*. All this while she is never called Mary Ann.

In Louis Court's *The Romance of a Country Circuit* (i.e. Kingsbrompton; London: Henry Hooks (1921)) Mary Mason is noted as born at North Lew, Devon in 1795 and at work in Kingsbrompton in 1824. She exhausted herself and had to retire. In 1827, "She married a Godly Cornishman, a Mr. Jno May, of St. Teath, and nine years after she died of consumption, leaving four little children to mourn her loss." This has the ring of truth.

The only source for the name Ann is the reference (in UMMC) to the one who married John Beadon.

It must be concluded that that statement does not refer to the Itinerant Mary Mason.

6. Betsy Nicholls.

Obituary as Betsy Nicholls, *Bible Christian Magazine* 1862, pp136-40.

7. Margaret Pinwell.

Her obituary was written by her husband; the 1876 reference is pp193-201.

8. Annie Carkeek.

See also the study of her life and ministry in ... *Journal of the Cornish Methodist Historical Association* Vol.9, №3 (1999).

9. Comments on the 'Numbers' page

The total must be adjusted for the two omissions noted above.

If we allow for Supernumeraries there was never a time when the Bible Christians were without a Female Minister. But of course, Supernumeraries don't itinerate, so perhaps we might pass on that question.

10. Betsy Reed and Catherine Reed

Their home was Holwell Farm, Buckland Brewer, Devon.

11. Mary Toms

An important historical document hidden away in the « Toms family history site » adds much to Mary's story.

Most importantly, by identifying her parent's marriage at St. Teath, about five miles from Tintagel, on 8 February 1795, confirms that Mary was born at Tintagel on 24 November 1795.

12. Mary Ann Werrey

An exploration of her possible origins can be found in another paper on the site. Lewis Court's 'A Song of the Century' is a celebration in verse of the whole Bible Christian story, not Mary Ann Werrey alone.