**A few more Bible Christian Ladies**

By Bob Booker

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**Mary Toms (Warder) and Charlotte Bunce (Warder)**

Mary and Charlotte were two Bible Christian preachers who after their itinerancies lived quite close to each other. They were connected by marriage into the same extended family. They both served on the Isle of Wight. They both became Mrs Warder. This has caused their life histories to become confused and even merged together. An obituary for Mrs Warder was published in an 1872 edition of the Bible Christian magazine. Her Christian name isn’t used, she was only named as Mrs Warder. Her husband’s death was also referred to without using his Christian name. The Mrs Warder who died in 1871 was Charlotte Bunce. Her husband was Robert Warder. The couple have understandably been confused with Mary Toms and her husband William Warder.

My intention is not to repeat the details of Mary or Charlotte’s ministries but to identify who these ladies were. For details of their itinerant ministry I suggest reading the extract of ‘A History of the Bible Christian churches on the Isle of Wight by Rev J Woolcock’ and ‘The Ladies who served as ministers among the Bible Christians by Joan Mills’ Both available on line through the My Bible Christian Ancestors web site.

**Preacher Mary Toms**

Mary was the first of the two to serve as an itinerant preacher on the Isle of Wight. It was a new mission for the Bible Christians when Mary was sent there in 1823. This was also her last itinerant posting. Previously she served in Cornwall, twice in Luxullyan and once in Morvah. This is near Penzance. This was probably when she visited and preached on Scilly. F W Bourne tells us in his book ‘The Bible Christians’ that her parents were Charles and Mary Toms and that she was born at Tintagel. I believe this to be basically correct. The Toms were not a long term or large Tintagel population. They were more numerous in the adjacent parish of St Teath. Those whom I believe to be Mary’s family flip between the two parishes.

The Tintagel, St Teath, Boscastle area was part of the Michaelstow Circuit which was opened up to Bible Christian preaching in the early 1820’s. The first circuit baptisms were recorded from 1822. Mary Toms joined the itinerancy in 1820 and may well have preached locally before this.

*Note: There are records for people with the name Tom and Toms at St Teath and Tintagel. Regardless of spelling they appear to be the same people or family. The difference between Tom or Toms seems to be who the vicar was, or who filled in the census form. People who are obviously the same person have their name spelt either way.*

Single man Charles Tom married widow Mary Kernick at St Teath on the 8th of February 1896. Charles made his mark and Mary signed her marriage registration.

The baptism records suggest that Charles and Mary Tom had three children:

Mary baptised 25th of December 1796 *(Born 24th November 1795?)*

Charles baptised 12th April 1798 *(Presumably died before 1804)*

Charles baptised 20th of May 1804

Charles’s wife Mary and mother of preacher Mary Toms died at Treknow Tintagel in 1826.

The above doesn’t tie in with FW Bourne. He tells us that Mary Toms was born on the 24th of November 1795. This was over two months before Charles and Mary were married and over a year before their daughter was baptised. I have no reason to believe that Rev Bourne was wrong. I’m also confident that my research above is correct.

Charles Toms’ wife Mary Kernick was born Mary Bonear. She married William Kernick in 1785. Their 5th and last child to be baptised under their names as parents was James baptised on the 12th May 1794. William Kernick was buried at St Teath on the 14th of July 1795. Three months before Mary Toms date of Birth as given by Rev Bourne. Bible Christian Preacher Mary Toms was Mary Kernick daughter of William and Mary Kernick. It seems to me that Charles Toms was Mary’s step father, that she was born before Charles and Mary married. She was baptised later and given her stepfather’s name as if she was his.

Charles and his son Charles 2nd were both quarrymen. They were both on the census in 1841 and 1851. Charles Junior at Treknow Tintagel and Charles Senior at Medrose St Teath. The census shows that Charles senior was born at Lanteglos and that his second wife Joanna was from Tintagel.

Charles Toms was recorded on the 1851 census as a pauper quarryman. He died age 80 at Medrose St Teath and was buried at St Teath 27th November 1853. Medrose lies on the Titagel side of Delabole village within the Parish of St Teath. Charles would have been a quarryman at Delabole Slate Quarry. This was a time before pensions, if you were too old and unfit to work you became a pauper on parish relief.

Charles son Charles 2nd was also a quarryman he was recorded on the census at Treknow Tintagel. This is only a short distance from the Prince of Wales slate quarry. Mary’s mother Mary Toms died at Treknow in 1826. Presumably at the time, Charles senior was also working in Tintagel’s Prince of Wales slate quarry.

After four appointments Mary’s Toms itinerancy ended. She married shoe maker William Warder on the 5th of January 1824 at Brading Isle of Wight. You can’t keep a good preacher down. Mary continued as a local preacher. Mary and husband William Warder were recorded on the 1841 census at Brading with their four children. Mary wasn’t a native of the Isle of Wight. She was listed as born outside of Hampshire. Mary Toms Warder died in 1850. Her husband William was recorded on the census in 1851 as a widower.

**Charlotte Bunce**

Charlotte was born at Calbourne Ile of Wight in 1809. She was a very young teenager when Mary Toms arrived on the island in 1823. Charlotte’s detailed obituary in the 1872 edition of the Bible Christian magazine mentions her attending class meetings at Gunville with her sister. It also states the meeting house was about four miles from their home at Porchfield. They probably heard Mary Toms preach and I would be very surprised if Charlotte wasn’t influenced by her.

Charlotte joined the Bible Christian itinerancy in 1827 and served in Kent and London until 1830. By this time, her health was suffering. Her last listing the following year was as a supernumerary back home on the Isle of Wight. This was where she married boot and shoe manufacture Robert Warder at Newchurch on the 27th of September 1832. They can be found on the 1841 census at Newchurch with their children. Robert died in 1849. A building which Robert owned at Wroxall was used as a chapel. When a new chapel was built, the old building was used as a B.C. Sunday school room. Charlotte was recorded on the 1851 census as a boot and shoe manufacturer’s widow. In 1861 Charlotte was with her son Isiah at Shanklin Ile of Wight. They were living with Robert Warder’s brother James, also a shoemaker and his wife Harriett. Bible Christian preacher Charlotte Bunce Warder was 62 years old when she died in 1871.

**Lavinia Dunn**

Lavinia Dunn was born in Mevagissey to fisherman Stephen Dunn and Mary Lelean who were married at Mevagissey in 1802. Lavinia born September the 6th 1805 was the third of at least nine children born at Mevagissey. All of whom were baptized within the St Austell Wesleyan Methodist circuit.

Lavinia served a couple of years from 1826 as a Bible Christian itinerant preacher in Cornwall and Devon. I don’t know why she didn’t continue after 1827. This was when O’Bryan’s leadership was being questioned and conference wanted more democracy. It’s possible that she was needed back in her home community. There were many early deaths in Mevagissey, including infants to whom she was possibly related.

April 1827 Ann Dunn age 27

August 1827 Maria Dunn age 24

June 1828 Louisa Ann Dunn age 2

July 1828 Maria Penhall Dunn age 1

April 1829 James Dunn age 1

Twenty one children under eight years old died at Mevagissey in 1828. Most were younger than four years old. This was an exceptionally high mortality compared with previous years. Childhood diseases like measles or whooping-cough were frequently fatal during the nineteenth century. Did Lavinia return home to help with an epidemic?

I have no details of Lavinia’s life from 1828 until 1841 when she can be found on the first census to include names. Could she have returned to her previous calling as an itinerant preacher. From 1829 until 1835 O’Bryan’s brake away Armenians were moderately successful in Cornwall. They were particularly successful around Breage. This had been Lavinia’s first appointment in 1826. Pure speculation but, could she have returned for O’Bryan after the 1829 split. Unfortunately, very little of O’Bryan’s 1829 to 1835 Armenian documentation has been found. What is needed in this case is an Armenian Breage preaching plan. This would help to disprove or prove my speculation.

The Mevagissey Bible Christian Circuit record book contains baptisms from November 1838. Lavinia’s two brothers Mathias and Stephen both have a child each recorded in this record during the early 1840’s. Lavinia was in her 50’s by the time she married so had no opportunity to have children.

In 1841 Lavinia’s parents Stephen and Mary were recorded at Mevagissey on the census with three or possibly four of Lavinia’s younger siblings. Lavinia was unmarried and living on her own at Black Moor Tenement Ladock. There was no employment recorded for her on the census. I don’t know what she was doing, but by 1851 she was a shop keeper at Ladock lodging with thatcher William Blackmore and his wife Margaret at New Mills. Margaret died age 66 during December 1853 and was buried on boxing-day.

Lavinia Married William Blackmoore during the summer of 1854. In 1861 they were living at Newmills Ladock. William was a 74 year old thatcher, and Lavinia was a 56 year old schoolmistress. They were next door to either the Bible Christian chapel or the Bible Christian school room. The census recorded two B.C. chapels a short distance apart. Both buildings are also marked on the early ordinance survey map. I assume one was used as a Sunday school room after a new chapel was built. It’s possible that Lavinia was running a school by using the Bible Christian Sunday school room. If this was the case, was this a private Dame School? These were quite common during the nineteenth century. This is pure speculation, but was she also Ladock’s Bible Christian Sunday school teacher? William died in 1862. The 1871 census tells us that Lavinia was a 66 year old widowed junior school mistress. She was still teaching age 76 as an infant school mistress in 1881. By this time education was compulsory and run by local school boards. She retired at some time after this but continued to live at Newmills. She was recorded in 1891 as living on her own means. It looks as if she returned to Mevagissey shortly before she died or was taken back for burial. The best death index I can find for her is a St Austell registration age 86 in the spring of 1892.

**Susan Furze**

Susan Furze served from 1819 to 1823. Her first three stations were in Cornwall which could suggest that this may be her home county. She is only mentioned twice by Bourne. The first time is on page 81 in the 1819 list of stations. He informs us that she was posted to St Keverne with John Metters. This was her first posting when the new denomination was about to enter its fifth year. The other is on page 112. He tells us that she was sent in December 1822 to help-out in London. (presumably from Shebbear, this is where it seems that she was at the time) Her last placing in the conference year 1822-23 was to Sheerness. This is the last we hear of Susan. Did she die? Probably not, she would then be mentioned rather than just disappearing. Did she marry? I have only found three possible baptisms for a Susan Furze which fit within an appropriate time frame. All three were in Devon and not one stands out as being particularly hopeful. There are three possible marriages the first of which is in 1827. But once again no one Susan stands out as being our possible preacher. For the time being Susan’s background will remain a mystery.

**Ann Potter**

Joan Millls tells us that Ann was born at South Tawton and that she was converted by Andrew Cory in 1820. Bourne tells us that this was when Andrew was at Chagford. This certainly makes sense Chagford and South Tawton lie reasonably close in the North East Corner of Dartmoor. From the start of her itinerancy in 1825, to her first year as a supernumerary, Ann only had four full time appointments. These were all in Cornwall. Her last fulltime appointment was followed by a year as a supernumerary. These were both at Truro. In 1830 she was appointed as a supernumerary to Chagford and Buckfastleigh. I assume that her parents or close family were living in the area and that when her health deteriorated, she moved to be close to them. Her last appointment in 1831 was as a supernumerary to Exeter. Had her parents, a sister, or a brother moved to Exeter? Was this where there were hospital or care facilities? It seems that when her health had deteriorated to the point that she was unable to even preach occasionally, and was unlikely to return to work, conference stopped listing her as a supernumerary. Four years later she died. Bourne gives us an exact date: 25th of February 1835. This was two years before the national registration of deaths, and I’ve failed to find a burial record. If we knew her age this could help to locate her time and place of birth.

I’ve found four possible baptisms for an Ann Potter but the most likely one was in 1806 at Newton Abbot.

Children of William and Mary Potter baptized at Salem Independent Chapel Newton Abbot:

1802 William 1851 at South Tawton - age 46 - born South Tawton

1806 Mary Ann ? - BC Preacher Ann Potter

1807 Henry Recorded age 44 born Exeter - at Hoxne Suffolk in 1851

1819 George Recorded age 23 at Samphord Courtney in 1841 - age 36

born South Tawton living at Torquey in 1851 and at Exeter in 1861 and 1871.

The following two children were baptized at South Tawton Church

1816 Jane ? - May have married James Clarke at St Thomas Exeter 1st Nov 1835

1818 James Recorded age 34 born at South Tawton, at South Tawton in 1851

William age 69 of independent means was recorded with his wife Mary age 67 at South Tawton on the 1841 census. William a widower age (70?) Pauper at South Tawton in 1851. I’ve failed to find any Potter residents at Newton Abbot on the census. It looks as if this family were in Newton Abbot and then moved to South Tawton, or they lived at South Tawton but wanted their children to be baptized in an independent church. This wasn’t close, but at the time there was a lack of nonconformist churches. It’s probable that the family simply went home to Mary’s parents for the baptisms. The best marriage record I found for the couple was William Potter and Mary Ballamy at Newton Abbott on the 11th of September 1798.

There is a high probability that Bible Christian preacher Ann Potter was born at South Tawton and baptized Mary Ann at Newton Abbot.

**Jane Bird**

Jane served one year at Shebbear followed by two as a supernumerary at Ringsash. This posting was back on her home territory. Jane was the daughter of Robert Bird and Jane Reed baptised at Chawleigh on the 26th of December 1800. She desisted and wasn’t included in the 1828 list of preachers. After Jane gave up the itinerancy, she married blacksmith and local preacher John Beer on the 6th of October 1829 at Burrington Devon. The couple lived at Bulkworthy and their first child Jane Bird was born on the sixteenth of August 1830. Their new baby was baptised at Bethel Chapel by Bible Christian minister Harry Major on the 5th of September. Jane died two years later in 1832 as the result of child birth. John Married his second wife Elizabeth Parkhouse in 1836. John and Elizabeth and their three children were recorded at Haytown Bulkworth on the 1851 census. Jane and John’s 20 year old daughter Jane Bird was still at home with her father and step mother and John was still blacksmithing.

Could itinerant preacher Jane Bird, whose mother was Jane Reed, be related to Bible Christian minister William Reed of Holwell Buckland Brewer?

**Mary Ann Clifton**

Thomas Shaw and Colin C Short, in their book Feet of Clay, mention local preacher Mary Ann Clifton who started preaching when only fourteen years old. The Clifton family are a long-term Week St Mary family. Their roots go back to at least the 16th century, and only appear elsewhere in Cornwall during the second half of the eighteenth century. The only Mary Ann Clifton I can find of appropriate age was baptised in 1804, second daughter of Richard Clifton and his cousin Elizabeth Clifton. They were married in 1799. Mary Ann would have been 14 in 1818. She married James Symons at Week St Mary in 1827. Could she have been our Bible Christian preacher? Both James and Mary Ann signed their marriage record, so they were literate. One of the two witnesses was Charles Jordan. He was almost certainly Charles Jordan of Furze Farm Week St Mary, which lies just along the road from Week Orchard. Charles Jordan was a brother in law of Bible Christian circuit steward Richard Spettigue. He was also an uncle of Bible Christian minister Rev Charles Jordan Spettigue. The Bible Christian denomination was born at Richard Spettigue’s farm house at Week Orchard. Richard’s second wife and mother of Charles was Mary Jordan from Furze Farm.

I’ve only found one baptism for James Symons and Mary Ann Clifton, William baptised C of E in 1828. This baptism doesn’t preclude Mary Ann Clifton Symons from being a Bible Christian preacher. Many Bible Christians continued to have their children baptised in church. William and Martha Clifton of Week St Mary had four children baptised during the 1830’s in church. They emigrated to Ontario in about 1841 to 42 where they were recorded on the Canadian census as Bible Christian. Mary Ann Clifton Symons grandfather was William Clifton Snr of Week St Mary. He died in 1815 whilst farming at ‘Gatherlea’ Lifton. He was brought back to Week St Mary and was buried behind the church where the non-conformist graves are located. Mary Ann Clifton inherited half of Henning’s Tenement. Her older sister Patience inherited half of Clifton’s Tenement.

The corner stone for Week St Mary’s village chapel, the first of three Bible Christian chapels in the parish was laid by James Thorne in 1829. This chapel lies on the southern side of the house and land known as Clifton’s Tenement. At some time between 1823 and 1851 John Balhatchet, grandfather of Bible Christian minister Rev John Balhatchet, moved into Clifton’s Tenement.

The original village chapel also lies directly behind the dwelling known today as Clifton Cottage. I have spent many years trying to locate Henning’s Tenement without success. Henning’s was recorded on the land tax assessment as occupied by William Clifton in 1799 before he went to Lyfton. Could the properties today known as Clifton Cottage One and Clifton cottage Two, the converted chapel be the agricultural holding previously known as Henning’s Tenemant inherited by Mary Ann Clifton in 1815.

The house and land to the northern side of Clifton’s Tenement today is known as Glanville. It was previously known as Elliot’s Tenement. Simon Clifton Elliot was born in 1800, the illegitimate son of Simon Clifton of Ashbury Week St Mary and Margaret Elliot. Simon Clifton Jnr married Catherine Colwill in 1827. They had three children baptised in church under the name of Elliot and one under the name of Clifton. After his father’s death Simon Jnr gradually dropped his birth name and his family become ‘Clifton’. In 1851 Simon and Catherine Clifton were living in the dwelling attached to the Bible Christian Chapel at Bakesdown. Simon and his extended family left for Australia just after the 1851 census. His family included his granddaughter Catherine Buckingham who was baptised by Bible Christian minister John Hopper. His second grand child Edward Parry Buckingham was born on the way to Australia and named after the ship they sailed on.

*Note: Bakesdown Week St Mary and Week Orchard are a long way by road, but only a short distance by foot path. The land on which the cottage and chapel room at Bakesdown were built on was probably owned by Walter Spry. He was the part owner and occupier recorded on the 1799 land tax returns for Fuges, the nearest dwelling to Baksdown Cottage and chapel. Walter was buried in the non-conformist section of the Church Yard. The 1st Bible Christian circuit steward was Richard Spettigue of Week Orchard. His 1st wife was Phillipa Spry.*

*The roof of one of the buildings at Clifton’s Tenement was constructed by John Rick. He left his mark on the timbers. In 1841 carpenter John Rick was recorded at Kellacott Broadwoodwidger. He was living next to Rexon Bible Christian Chapel. His landlady was Susan Doige. (could she be related to Bible Christian minister Thomas Doidge?)*

All the indications are that Mary Ann Symons of Week St Mary was Local preacher Mary Ann Clifton. She may also have had some involvement in providing the land for the first village chapel. I’ve failed to find any documentation for James Symons and Mary Ann Clifton after the birth of their son William in 1828. It could be they emigrated. I’ve tried Canada and the United states without success if they went to Australia, they will be more difficult to trace.

**Bibliography and Resourses**

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**Researched by Bob Booker**