LOUGHTON & DISTRICT HISTORICAL SOCIETY

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Loughton Methodists and the gipsy missioner

CHRIS POND

In my history of the Loughton Methodist Church, I postulated, without any evidence, that far from in 1872 there being no Methodist church within seven miles, as had been claimed, any local Methodists would probably have attended the Woodford Wesleyan Church, some two miles distant. This church, which was in the building that is now the rather dilapidated Working Men's Club, at the corner of Links Road, was not in fact a Wesleyan society, but was independent, to become part of the United Methodist Free Church (as were the later Cambridge Park and Winchester Road chapels).

Just before Christmas 2001, Mr Gordon Longmore, from Cardiff, contacted me in my capacity as chairman of the Loughton and District Historical Society.

He has in his possession a Bible, given in 1862 to his forebear, Alexander Longmore, from 'Wesleyan friends in Woodford and Loughton', on his appointment as missioner to the gipsies of Epping Forest, based at Sewardstone.

1862 was 10 full years before Edward Pope came to Loughton and established the LMC and several other Wesleyan chapels in the area. There was indeed a Sewardstone Wesleyan chapel, but that was not founded until the twentieth century – Don Poynter, one of our LMC members, remembers it being built.

Who, then, were the gipsy missioners, and who were the Wesleyans of Woodford and Loughton who sponsored them? It will be remembered that Pope and his friends also arranged missions to the Romany, for whom the Forest was a great gathering ground. In this case, the missioner was Alexander Longmore.

We know little about his activities at Sewardstone, but he was still attached to Woodford a few years later, in 1869, and still preaching to gipsy families in the Epping Forest area. In August that year, Mr Longmore organised a tea party for over 300 Romany on Mill Plain, at which William Burnett, the Woodford Free Methodist minister spoke. He and the later 'official' Wesleyans under Edward Pope attached great importance to the task of preaching to the gipsies, who were very numerous in the area, and it is said, of course, that the family of the great evangelist, Gipsy Smith, were missioned and converted in this area. Indeed Gipsy Smith may have been present at the tea, as a nine-year old boy, and his memorial stone stands on Mill Plain Woodford to this day – behind the present Oak Hill Gardens. We know little more about Longmore, but the likelihood was that he was a local preacher, and about 40 when the mission to the gipsies was ongoing.

The Wesleyans of Loughton who signed Alexander Longmore's Bible were Mr and Mrs Heath, Miss Osborne, and Mr, Mrs and Miss Searl.

Noah Heath was a builder, who was just over 70 in 1862. He lived in the High Road, probably in two houses at different times, at first in Victoria Place, on the west side of the High Road north of Albion Hill, and afterwards at Nafferton Lodge, which was demolished in 1988 and Nafferton Rise built on its site. Thomas King Searl was Loughton's vet, who most probably lived at the still extant, but much altered, Rose Cottage in York Hill. Miss Osborne was the schoolmistress of the old British, or nonconformist, School, in Smarts Lane. The building of this school was later used as a factory and was saved from demolition and converted to a house, being on the market as I write for £475,000. Miss Osborne may have been related to Heath, as Nafferton Lodge was later called 'Osborne House', but she was not from Loughton originally. The British school was established by the Baptists of what is now the Union Church, and it is interesting that they appointed a Methodist as their head.

Heath and Searl and their families travelled to church the two miles to Woodford, the only nonconformist church in Loughton being the Baptist Chapel, later the Union Church. I daresay they used pony and trap, or one of Sadler's or Askew's cabs. And although the chapel at Woodford was called 'Wesleyan', it had in fact split from the main Wesleyan connection in 1852: by 1862 its members had grown in numbers, and were still led by their breakaway minister, William Burnett, who the Wesleyan Conference had expelled on doctrinal grounds. Later on, in the 1870s, some of the members rejoined the Wesleyan Church, and started services in the little disused chapel in the Square, Woodford. This society became the nucleus of the new Derby Road church when that was founded in 1876. Those who were left in Links Road became part of the United Methodist Free Church, and joined with the Baptists and Congregationalists to form the United Free Church, which is still there, but across the green: the old building is the Men's Club.

So just because there was no chapel at Loughton before 1873, it does not mean there were no Methodists. When Edward Pope came to live in Loughton, it is amusing to think that his first chapel in England's Lane was about the same distance from the South Loughton residences of himself and the Heaths as was the Woodford 'Wesleyan' chapel. But Pope, being the brother of a prominent Wesleyan minister, would have had no truck with the renegades of Woodford Green – indeed, he may well have been behind the scenes in the foundation of Derby Road.

The Coffee House Movement

EVE LOCKINGTON AND WIN TRICKEY

[Our Treasurer, Eve Lockington, and her sister, Win Trickey, have written *The Coffee House at Woodford*, published by the Society last May. It chronicles the lives of their grandparents, mother, aunts and uncles, living at and running the coffee house at Woodford at the beginning of the twentieth century. This article, taken from the appendix to the book, sets out the background to the story.]

In Victorian times many of the working and labouring classes lived lives of great poverty and deprivation. One of the few places available to them for relaxation was the public-house, where amidst companionship and with cheap alcohol, despair and the struggle for existence could be, for a short while, forgotten. But drunkenness could lead to violence and drunken or semi-drunken men could be roused to frenzy by agitators, especially as bitterness and unrest were often very near the surface. Consequently the public-house was frowned on by the upper and middle classes. Nevertheless some of them realised that working men needed a place of retreat, a place where games could be played and cheap food obtained in a relaxed atmosphere away from the stresses and discomforts of home.

This concern with drunkenness and dislike of the public-house led to a rather remarkable Coffee Tavern Movement. This movement sprang up all over the country starting around the 1830s and carrying on until the First World War. It was certainly associated with the churches in some areas. Occasionally, a nonconformist church and an Anglican church joined together to start the project. In 1861 at Streatham Common the Vestry and the Congregational Church raised subscriptions to buy the freehold of an old public-house which was rebuilt and turned into a Temperance Coffee and Working Men's Lodging House. This was a large affair containing a reading room, seven small bedrooms and a concert and lecture room for 500 people. But this was one of the more ambitious projects. Many were small houses, centrally placed, where there would be sufficient space for games to be played – dominoes, draughts or chess – and where good cheap food would be served.

The movement was country-wide and by 1881 it was reported, for instance, that in London there were 300 such houses and in Liverpool 41.

The coffee houses had their own newspaper, started in 1837, named the *Coffee Public House News*. It continued under this title for several years until it became the *Temperance Caterer*. From this newspaper it is possible to get some idea of the movement and the scale of its activities.

Women were not generally catered for. They did not, it was believed, need this type of entertainment, indeed they would not have time for it if they looked after their homes and children properly. But in some areas Women's coffee houses were started. In Poplar in 1900 a Miss Philimore erected, at her own expense, a building which comprised a home for working-class women with a coffee house downstairs. She must have been quite broadminded for the times, because a large room was incorporated for dancing when this was considered to be sinful by many churchgoers. Also, in 1878, a coffee tavern called Princess House was opened in Brompton Road for women only, who could stay there for 3s 6d and 4s 6d a week.

Normally, however, the coffee houses were for the use of men only. Boys were discouraged as they were often noisy and interfered with the men's games. As the boys could not use the coffee houses, they met their friends in the public-houses. But this was what the Coffee House Movement had wished to discourage, so the boys had to be catered for somewhere else, therefore, boys' rooms were opened in some of the coffee houses. In Sheringham on the East Coast, for instance, at the 'Two Lifeboats' coffee house, there were a classroom, a boys' room and stabling for horses. There was a coffee house opened for boys in

Kensington, too, but the local vicar said that they required very strict supervision.

Companies were set up to promote coffee taverns and these offered £1 shares to the public. One such was the Bradford Coffee Tavern Co, which paid a 10 per cent dividend. It claimed that its coffee houses and taverns catered for all types of persons, luxurious coffee houses or temperance hotels for the well-to-do, while, for those with less money, there were houses with billiard rooms and, for the poorer working men, taverns. Public-houses were often converted, sometimes the old name was retained or a completely new one given. In some areas houses were purpose-built and, in others, suitable shops or buildings were converted. In Tenby, the coffee house had originally been a draper's shop.

The movement was supported by the upper class. In West Clandon, Surrey, Lord Onslow changed a pub into a village club and coffee house for the men on his estate. On one occasion the Earl of Derby, supporting the movement, said in a speech that one acre of good land cost £60 which equalled 3d per square yard. How much better it would be, therefore, if instead of paying 3d for a glass of beer the men put it towards buying land. What the men would have done with the land or how they would in fact buy it was not made clear.

In the earlier years the *Coffee Public House News* reported that it was difficult to obtain good managers but, by 1881, in the 'vacancies' and 'jobs wanted' columns, seekers after manager's jobs well outnumbered the jobs vacant. Later, criticism was made of the quality of the food and tea served and organisations were advised not to take managers on recommendation only but to examine credentials carefully and interview applicants.

In Northern England the term 'Cocoa Tavern' seems to have been widely used for the same type of institution. There was for example a 'Nags Head Cocoa House' in Chester and, in Liverpool, the 'British Workmen's Cocoa Rooms' which served no food, only soft drinks. The men frequenting this house apparently preferred to bring their own food.

The houses were open for very long hours in order to compete with the public-houses. The 'Douglas Cocoa Rooms' in Fetter Lane, London, were still open at 2 am. A check on who frequented the rooms at that hour found them to be full of compositors, printers, van men and packers from the newspapers – and also law writers. Two well-spoken but very poorly dressed men proved to be 'down and out' barristers.

Whether the movement did have an effect on drunkenness it is difficult to say. It catered for a need: supplying reasonably priced food to working men, and the prices were reasonable. A plate of roast beef cost 5d, steak and kidney pie 7d, meat and potato pie 5d and steak pudding 5d, potatoes were a penny a helping. In 1887, when the movement was perhaps at its strongest, it was claimed that there was a decline in excise duty, which suggests that less alcohol was being drunk.

Although it was largely a movement designed by the upper and middle classes to discourage drunkenness and the risk of revolt in the lower orders, in some instances the coffee houses were used by philanthropically motivated people for alleviating hardship. The 'Cross Keys Coffee Tavern' in Roberts Street, Chelsea, supplied breakfast in batches to large numbers of children daily. The tavern was not big enough to accommodate them all so they were given their

meal in a local hall and, additionally, food tickets were issued to people living in the area who were in deprived circumstances.

Whatever the reasons for the movement, it was, as can be seen, widespread. Apart from food at reasonable prices the houses were expected to offer warmth – a large fire – non-alcoholic drink, amusements ranging from draughts and chess to billiards and, in some cases, music hall entertainment. Music hall died out quickly as it was impossible to afford the better acts. There were coffee houses or cocoa taverns in places as far apart as Festiniog in Wales (a purpose-built house) to Sheringham on the East Coast and Poole in Dorset, where the house was built by a pottery owner for his workpeople. The houses could be in towns or in the country, wherever it was thought there might be a need. In Southall, Middlesex, which in 1880 was still a country district, the vicar would arrange for coffee barrows to be taken from the coffee house to the men in the brickfields.

The movement was still in existence at the outbreak of the First World War but thereafter seems to have disappeared. With changing times, needs had changed. Cheap restaurants like the Lyons Tea Shops in London had opened in many areas.

Our grandparents ran one of these coffee houses and, in a very different guise, the building is still there in Woodford Green behind the Castle. It was while we were trying to find out how our grandparents originally became involved with this that we realised that our particular coffee house was not one on its own, but part of a large country-wide movement.

Why or how our grandparents had been chosen to run the coffee house, when Hannah had been taught fine needlework and Alfred had been a carpenter, our mother, Daisy, never knew. However, many years later it came to light that, while Hannah was in service in a big house in the area, she became pregnant by Alfred. Her employers (who are presumed to have been the Spicer family because that family took such a continuing interest in Hannah's family), thought so much of Hannah that they set the couple up in the coffee house on their marriage. Our book, *The Coffee House at Woodford*, is about that coffee house and the family that lived in it at the beginning of the twentieth century. It is taken from stories told to us by our mother and her sister, and incidents recorded in the local newspapers.

At a local printers 40 years ago

TED MARTIN

I had been trained in London with The Eastern Press, a book printer which specialised in legal work. They printed for Sweet & Maxwell, the law publisher, the Council of Law Reporting and also worked for various institutes, learned societies and Commonwealth research organisations. When I completed my training my firm offered me a job as a proofreader and on 15 May 1961 I became a 'journeyman' reader. Two years later, saving up to get married, I was looking for a job with more opportunity for overtime and a higher salary. The printing ads in the *Daily Mail* seemed to have what I was looking for: 'Proofreader required at E G Ellis & Sons, Willow Street, Chingford.'

This was doubly attractive: my fiancée lived in Chingford. I could drive her to the train in the morning and, if not working overtime, meet her from the train in the evening. If I did work overtime I could call in on my way home or, as quite often happened, stay for a meal and the evening.

I applied for the job and soon had an interview with Edwin ('Teddy') Ellis, the proprietor and the grandson of the founder of the firm. He was a small, very active and excitable man, who spoke very fast and always took the stairs three at a time. He spoke so fast that I never actually heard him finish a sentence. After this interview I had some doubts, so I decided not to proceed until Teddy Ellis, who must have been impressed by my credentials, rang and offered what amounted to a 25% rise to join them.

In October 1963 at 8 am I reported to Willow Street for what was to be, in terms of the variety of work, the most interesting and demanding 10 months of my life as a proofreader.

The Willow Street premises consisted of two Victorian villas with a two-storey factory building built behind and at their side. What would have been the front room of the left-hand villa was the standing type store. In the days before computers, jobs that were likely to require a reprint were stored as type pages tied up with string on stout boards and, if there was room, placed on racks with a piece of card identifying the job. The back room of this first villa was my office and a certain amount of the stored type had overflowed into it. You had to be careful when getting to your desk – one false move and you could knock the lot all over the floor creating what was known as printer's pie or pied type. This would certainly not endear you to the overseer or to the compositor who had to put it together again.

The type store became a magnet for some compositors who needed a special character for a current job or were short of display type. They would come in and rummage around for what they wanted. This practice, known as 'picking', was strictly illegal and there were prominent notices banning it. The consequences were, of course, that when a reprint was required and the job was taken out of store it could be seriously incomplete and a lot of remedial work would be required. The price for the reprint would have been given without allowing for this, so a loss would be made.

The rooms immediately above in the left-hand villa were offices for Mr Ellis and his secretary. The right hand villa was the hand-binding department where ledgers, account books and other books were bound in leather with marbled endpapers. All new entrants were asked if they would like to kiss the binder's daughter but, being forewarned, I declined that pleasure and thus avoided a slap in the face with a paste brush.

At the rear of the villas in the factory building was the machine room where all the printing machines were housed. It is difficult to recall how many there were, but there must have been at least two large machines and three or four smaller platen machines. Attached to the back of the villas was a little room where Tom Charlwood, who was the general handyman, melted down the lead from jobs that were scrapped and recast it into ingots for the Intertype composing machines. These machines were situated in the composing room on the ground floor of the factory building that was at the side of the villas. Intertypes were similar to Linotypes but from a different manufacturer.

The composing room was quite large and had the usual complement of type cases and imposing 'stones'. The latter were metal tables that were absolutely even and flat on which the type pages were 'imposed' and then locked up in their iron frames for printing. Imposition was, and still is, the art of placing pages in their correct sequence so that when printed and folded the work will read in the correct order. The old-time compositors (or 'stone hands') used to carry the rules for the more usual impositions in their heads and there was a book to refer to for anything out of the ordinary. Nowadays, anything but the most simple imposition is done by computer.

The department was under the control of Tom Donatz, the overseer, a large man of few words but you could not mistake what he wanted! He was not overly popular with the younger members of his staff, but no overseer ever is. At the far end of the composing room were the Intertype composing machines. So far as I remember there were five under the control of the 'clicker', Fred Logan, who lived just across the road in Willow Street. There was also a mini composing section in the machine room under the control of a compositor called Alan who dealt with the more prestigious work: The Licensed Victualler magazine and brochures and leaflets for Tricity at Enfield and Bex Bissell at Highams Park. Much of this work was brought in by Tom Tuckwell, the Commercial Manager, who had an office in this part of the factory.

The first floor of the factory was never in use during my time there. It had been built for future expansion.

The variety of work was quite staggering: the Victuallers magazine (monthly), mentioned above; publicity material for Tricity and Bissell; insurance policies and payment books for the Post Office Assurance Society; Chingford Ratepayers Association magazine; printing for many small businesses in Chingford; minutes for local councils (this was just before the London government reorganisation so it was Wanstead and Woodford, Walthamstow, and Chingford); annual reports and accounts for businesses – one I remember particularly was for one of the large cemetery companies. There was also diary printing for drug companies: one was such a small format that I had the complete job on each side of one sheet of paper 96 pages! (*To be continued*.)

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