

THE JOURNAL OF THE REVEREND TIMOTHY MOXON

Edited transcript of a talk given to Uppingham Local History Studies Group
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INTRODUCTION

Reverend Timothy Moxon was Uppingham's Methodist Minister from September 1847 – August 1850. I should explain that all Ministers then as now were 'stationed' to a circuit rather than one church. So Moxon was stationed to the Oakham Circuit and lived there - at least when he was at home – for he had to cover numerous Chapels or 'societies' as they were called.

We are very fortunate that Moxon kept a journal* for some of the time he was in Uppingham and that it was preserved in the Methodist Archives in Manchester. This gives us a wonderful insight not only into the life and trials of a Methodist Minister, but lots of interesting bits about the people in the villages and in particular the mode of travel.

One major difference in those days was that now there are only 4 churches in the Oakham part of our circuit, but in 1849 there were approx. 20 covering most of Rutland and part of east Leicestershire.

However, Moxon didn't have to cover quite all of these as there were always two Ministers in Oakham and the circuit was divided into what were known as rounds. Bearing in mind that each church usually had a morning and evening service, mid-week meetings, and needed pastoral visiting it was still a heavy workload considering the lack of modern transport which I shall go on to.

MOXON'S BACKGROUND

Timothy Robert Moxon was born in 1813 in Norfolk making him 36 when he arrived in Oakham. We don't know much about his early life but he entered Methodist ministry around 1844. In 1845 he was sent to the Wigton and Keswick circuit and the next year he got married there so I assume that Mary, his wife was in his congregation. The following year the couple were sent to the Stroud circuit where their son Thomas was born in 1847. It seems they only had one child which was unusual but his wife seems to have suffered ill health.

He appears as a hardworking diligent minister, much concerned with his spiritual struggles.

UPPINGHAM

The Religious Census of 1851 shows the Methodist chapel as having 64 free sittings and 130 other. The morning attendance is given as 50 plus 30 scholars. In the afternoon 27 scholars attended, and in the evening 150 with no scholars. I find that amazing that number could be seated in the original building. I know people were thinner but even so we can only seat about 100 nowadays in an enlarged church.

There was also a Sunday school even though the building (now the hall/Wesley Room) wasn't built until 1887. So, the Sabbath school returns for 1849 show 49 scholars with 9 teachers. It is also noted that 30 of these children attend a Day School.

OAKHAM

So in September 1848 the couple arrived in Oakham with a baby son. Unfortunately we don't know whereabouts in Oakham they lived but it seems they were reasonably comfortably housed even though Moxon comments that the allowances were small. What is now called a stipend was then called quarterage and for 1847 the quarterly amount was £8 8s with £2 for a servant and £3.3s for a child. In Wesley's day Ministers were only given expenses to do the job and initially no allowance for children. Of course, the house and furniture were provided and the Circuit seems to cover quite a lot of household expenditure such as:

Coal, candles, wood £2 8s 3d
Washing and stationary £1 11s
Medicine 10s 6d

In 1848 and 49 there seems to have been some refurbishing i.e. 20yds carpeting @3/6d = £2.10s, a cinder sieve 1s 6d and a flour cask 2s 6d
looking glass 2s6d, mending chairs 4s 6d, new lock and screws 2s 6d

Moxon is constantly concerned about his wife's health – she seems to have been rather a frail creature with periods of ill health but he seems to have been a concerned husband (unlike John Wesley) arranging for companions for his wife when he is away and getting the Doctor when necessary.

There is very little mention of Moxon's son but he cares a lot about his parents in Norfolk and on one occasion sends them a parcel as a present. It would be lovely to know what he sent.

TRAVEL

Moxon's accounts of how he travelled around the county are particularly interesting because the years 1848 -1850 were quite a turning point in means of travel. Most of his journeys were done on foot and when you think of travelling from Oakham down to Uppingham via Wing and Preston and back in the day, or up as far as Wymondham in the north you can see why he describes the circuit as

heavy as regards walking

However, where possible Moxon took 'lifts'. Some of the better off members in the circuit had some form of horse drawn transport. There are many accounts of returning home with Mr Spreckley of Wymondham or Mr Shilcock of Tilton. The only account of anyone transporting him in Uppingham is of returning home in Mr Perkins' coach. On one occasion he mentions travelling in a fly to Wymondham – this was when he had his wife and a lady friend with them. I believe a fly was similar to a hansom cab and could be hired.

During Moxon's time railway travel became available in parts of Rutland. The first railway in Rutland was the Midland – the Syston to Peterborough line opened in 1848. Rutland stations on this line were Whissendine, Ashwell, Oakham, Manton, Luffenham and Ketton. He does occasionally mention train to Manton and thence bus to Uppingham – this of course was horsedrawn and operated from the Falcoln. But of course there was no Sunday transport available so the majority of his Rutland journeys were on foot. On one occasion he records

Walked to Wymondham and back 14 miles preached to 8 adults and 4 children

and of course with no modern communications there were wasted journeys. On one occasion he walked to Somerby and on his way diverted to Knossington

for Bro Kempin to supply Whissendine. He however was at Cold Overton Church so my journey was useless and Whissendine had no Preacher!

But in contrast towards the end of his time in Oakham he could travel countrywide by train from Oakham and indeed he went to meetings in Leicester, Nottingham and on one occasion to Gloucester and back in a day

Left Oakham at 7am for special train for Gloucester and Stroud. The fare 2nd class 11/- (now between £50 and £75 pounds changing at Birmingham).

When their friend Miss Denton returned home to Sheffield she left Oakham at 1.10pm and arrived in Sheffield at 6pm! And incidentally she left on a Friday and on the Saturday the Moxons got a letter to say she had arrived safely. Our post is certainly slower.

HOSPITALITY

Although Moxon did do vast distances in a day, mostly he set off on his round from Oakham and was away for several days..

Following the example of John Wesley the ministers would be given hospitality by members in each society he visited. The popular image of Wesley and his ministers was that they stayed in very humble cottages, but it was pointed out to me by an eminent Methodist historian that contrary to popular belief, Wesley mostly stayed in the most comfortable homes and there is some evidence to suggest that he chose to travel where he had a good place to stay!

So in Uppingham we find Moxon most regularly staying with the Drake family (father and son). John Drake and his family lived on North St West and the house is still there. His son Henry lived in the High Street. Quite often he slept at one place, breakfasted at another, dined somewhere different and then tea and supper elsewhere.

The Drakes were staunch members and on Mrs Drake's death her obituary records the warmth of the hospitality given in that home. Other homes in which he stayed were Geeson, a whitesmith of High St, Scofield a Master Carpenter of North Street and Jackson a chair maker and farmer of Stockerston Road. Also Houghton the watchmaker – the premises which are now Forrest Books. These would all have been fairly humble but respectable homes.

In contrast, as he goes round the Circuit he is often with Mr Spreckley of Wymondham Lodge. He is a farmer of 162 acres. He and his wife are in their early 60's and have a large number of relations living with them and 2 live in servants. Mr Shilcock of Tilton Grange also gave hospitality. Moxon seems to have made good use of these wealthier homes and their available transport.

He had an adventure when he preached at Empingham. His friends Mrs, Mr and Miss Denton were with him. They all went to bed about 11 but were roused again after 20 minutes, and in his words

had to vacate the room in favour of a lady who was confined the following morning at 7 of a stillborn child. Mrs Mr Denton had to go a distance and find a bed. I slept with the son of our hosts Mr Charles Keen.

FOOD

Rev Moxon seems to have been well fed when travelling the circuit – he mentions breakfast, dinner, tea and supper but doesn't tell us what he actually ate. Being a country area there was probably an abundance of fresh meat and vegetables and lots of pickled and preserved foods in winter.

I'm also not sure what they drank at that time. Had tea drinking reached Uppingham by that period or were people still drinking home brewed beer? I'm not sure whether Methodists were required to be teetotal at that time but it is clear that Moxon disapproves of drunkenness although there is drink in some of the homes he stayed in. John Wesley was against tea drinking and drunk herbal teas. It would be a useful study to see what people in Uppingham were eating and drinking mid nineteenth century

A TYPICAL JOURNEY TO UPPINGHAM AND VISITS AND SERVICES

As well as taking services – both Sunday and midweek there were also Class meetings and Missionary Meetings. A lot of pastoral visiting took place. And this is where we learn about the ordinary people.

Monday 10th December 1849

3.30 pm started for Uppingham

Called at Preston and visited Mr Freeman to arrange an obituary for his wife to go in the Methodist Magazine

On to Uppingham to take a service which included baptising Mary Ann Drake, daughter of Henry Drake.

Supper at Henry Drake's, Slept at John Drake's

Tuesday 11th December

Breakfast at Schofield's (master carpenter, North Street)

Then visits in Uppingham and set off for Norton arriving tired at 5pm and took service at 6.30pm

Wednesday 12th December

Morning spent reading religious works

Dined with James Holland (a bit of a drunkard)

On to tea with Mrs Bloomer at Tugby and took service

Slept with John Curtis

Thursday 13th December

Late downstairs did not sleep well. After breakfast went to Bilsdon. They wish preaching at Bilsdon Bro Broome has been very ill Took tea at Mr Olivers found Mrs O a little better .Preached, walked to Mr Shilcocks at Tilton Grange to sleep (also a drinker)

Friday Dec 14th

Walked home this morning from Mr S the roads heavy quite tired thankful to be at home. God has mercifully preserved my dear wife and child during my absence and also brought me safely home to them, to God be all the Glory.

Moxon used Uppingham for some of his shopping. He records

Friday May 10th 1850 At 1pm took train and bus for Uppingham ordered a coat waistcoat and trousers of Hopkins – called upon Stanyon took tea at Drakes and returned by the 25 past 5pm to Oakham.

He was obviously upgrading his wardrobe as a week or two later he records that he hadn't spent the day in study and reading but that his wife assisted him in making a pair of drill trousers. Earlier that year he had paid bills in Uppingham at Hope (chemist, Hope's yard) Kirk (butcher, Methodist) the shoemaker and Hopkins. Hopkins were of course a big drapery concern in Uppingham at that time. Although the family was Congregational, he records more than once visiting and dining with Miss Hopkins.

HEALTH

Health of course is a recurrent theme both for his own family and the members. People died at home so there are many death bed scenes, also tragic cases of women dying in childbirth.

Moxon comes over as sensitive and caring and pastoral visiting is clearly an important part of his work. Life was dangerous - accidents happened frequently – the diary opens with an account of seeing a pony and cart overturned and a man and wife thrown out – luckily not too seriously injured. On another occasion he found a man at the roadside with his cart overturned (although the conclusion was that he was drunk!)

Drunkenness was a continual problem He recorded that he called

upon Martha Cooke at Somerby a poor woman once a member now suffering, I believe from an internal disease. The Doctor who attended is a drunkard and inattentive now. How much are the poor to be pittied! Her husband poor man! In pulling at a rope slipped and fell and have seriously hurt his leg! Troubles seldom come alone.

On another occasion he wrote

Heard this morning of the death of poor James Kendall who fell from a cart in going to Skeffington from Halstead. He died at noon on Saturday – his end was peace. He has left a widow and one child, a daughter about 14 years old, deaf and dumb. How uncertain is life! On Thursday evening at the Missy Meeting – on Friday fell from a cart – on Saturday died and on Sunday worshipping in Heaven!

Moxon notes that Thursday 15th November 1849 was the Thanksgiving Day appointed by the government. I think this was for the end of a cholera epidemic. There was a set service to be used in all churches (probably not the non conformists). 1849 had been a bad year for cholera (33000 affected countrywide) year. It is not clear whether Uppingham was affected but in Feb 1850 he notes

Pretty good season on the whole! The Lord is visiting us here; whether the affliction with which the town has been visited or the deaths that have occurred

THE UPPINGHAM SICK

On one occasion in Uppingham Moxon records visiting 7 or 8 sick persons, on another occasion he notes

Visited a few families including Bro Pickering (probably lived at Beaumont chase) and reported that his wife was fast going into the ?world of spirits but 'on the rock'

Visited Mrs Freer a member of Mr Drake's class apparently dying but Christs the foundation! Her husband William Freer was a wheelwright in North Street

Saw Mrs Geeson She is somewhat better hoped that the affliction would be sanctified to her good.

Called upon Bro Geeson, he is very ill indeed, and I know not what to think about his recovery. If it please God I hope he will recover for the sake of his family and the Church. Later, Bro Geeson seems in a very precarious state.

Braunstone. Visited Mrs Rawlins one of the members who has lately been confined since when she has lost the use of her legs- may she soon regain the same!

There was a sad story at Norton.

The member who was brought to God by Bro S's efforts has died happy in the Lord since I was last here; his widow and three orphan children have this day been taken to Ashley – the mothers native place. Bro Browitts friends who are in good circumstances will take care of the children.

In spite of all these deaths there is no mention of funerals – only funeral sermons which seemed to be preached sometime after the event. Like most Methodist Churches Uppingham had no burial ground so Methodists were buried in the Parish Church graveyard so presumably this was just a committal by the rector at the graveside.

MARRIAGE AND BAPTISM

Although it was possible to marry in a Methodist Church quite early in the nineteenth century, most chapels were not licensed until much later – in Uppingham's case not until 20th century and even then the Registrar had to be present.

But Moxon did carry out many baptisms around the circuit. In Uppingham Moxon and the second Minister baptised about 11 infants during his time in the circuit. These would have been committed Methodists because many still felt that the Parish Church was the lawful place. One significant baptism was

Mon 10th Jan 1849 Good congregation Baptised Mr Henry Drakes daughter 'Mary Ann' May parents and children live before God. Supped at Mr H D's Slept at Mr Drakes Senior.

WEATHER

Considering all the walking I expected to find a lot about weather particularly snow and winters but surprisingly I found hardly any mention of weather. On one occasion he turned back on his journey because of heavy rain but I concluded that before the days of waterproof clothing rain would perhaps be worse than snow. He does note on one winter evening that Langham Chapel was very cold, and the night piercing cold.

WORKING PATTERN

Moxon constantly grapples with time management feeling he should get up earlier (it would be good to know what time he meant by early) He is always tired the day after he returned from his round. He tries to keep Saturday free for preparation but he is constantly interrupted by callers. Nowadays ministers get frustrated with the amount of paperwork but Moxon had the same pressures. Once a month the book parcel arrived. John Wesley started to produce 'improving' literature for people to read to keep them away from what was seen as corrupting literature. This was a busy day when he had to sort out the copies for each church. We have records of recipients in each church so we can assume these people at least were literate.

So in Uppingham Mrs Cross took the Sixpenny Magazine, James Kirk, Mr Jackson and Mrs Drake took the Youth's Instructor and the Cottager's Friend and the Childs magazine. Mrs Burbidge took 6 copies of the Cottagers Friend (she was an unmarried dressmaker in School Lane so not sure why she needed 6 copies.)

Money raising was a constant pressure – many of the chapels had outstanding debts from building works etc., so many money raising meetings were held. There was also a big emphasis on Missionary Meetings.

LEISURE AND FRIENDS

It seems unlikely that Ministers had holidays – Moxon is even baptising a child on Christmas Day but he does record some leisure activities. There appears to have been a friendship with the Congregational Minister in Oakham and they went to visit Burley House together – in much the same way as we would go to a National Trust property today.

Moxon and his wife kept up friendships, some local and some distant. There is mention of a Miss Foster coming to tea She had lost her Father who had been Minister at the Independent Chapel in Oakham.

There is frequently a mention of a Miss Denton and the Denton family staying with the Moxon's. Miss Denton had apparently been jilted by a Methodist preacher! According to the journal he

paid her attentions for 5 years and after all behaved anything but what he should have done. Ministers are not all what they should be!

ECUMENICAL LINKS

Moxon seems to have been on good terms with other non conformist ministers in Oakham enjoying meals together, but there is no mention of Uppingham Congregational which is surprising as this was a flourishing Church, and nothing about the Baptists. He does have theological differences with C of E. There was a bit of an upset and disagreement with the Curate in Norton about whether a dying man would achieve salvation through the Methodists! The poor man was being argued over as he died.

THE FLY LEAF CONTROVERSY

One big shadow which hung over Moxon's time in the Circuit is what has become known in Methodism as 'the fly leaf controversy' (fly leaves being what we would call flyers) This was a big upset in Methodism generally and led to many members leaving to join other denominations or branches of Methodism. I won't bore you with the details of the upset but it was to do with the national management of Methodism. This controversy reached Uppingham

and Moxon spent a good deal of his time in debate with ‘the great and the good of the circuit’. It was later recorded that some of the leaders left but John Drake and others remained loyal.

DEPARTING

When the time came for Moxon to move on he recorded that

The Circuit was heavy as regards walking and few to help forwd the work. Notwithstanding these things and the smallness of the allowances I spent 3 comfortable years in the Circuit and had it not been for the agitation I fully believe much good would have been done As it was I collected 52. 9. 6. and paid off a Circuit debt, and left the steward about 11 pounds in hand when I left the Circuit!

As he came to the end of his time in Uppingham he seems sought after for various other appointments and seems to have had an element of choice and eventually moves to Ripon in Yorkshire. He continued to move around the country every few years as was the pattern. By 1881 he is a widower and his father is living with him His father died in June 1883 aged 92 and Moxon himself in November of the same year aged about 69 both in Stockport District.

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*Manchester, John Rylands Library, manuscript journal of the Wesleyan minister Timothy Robert Moxon, Methodist Collections, ref MA1687, accession 1981/005.