

LATTER-DAY SAINTS IN SOUTH DERBYSHIRE 1842–1857

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The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints was organised in New York in April 1830 and in July 1837 seven missionaries of this new American sect arrived in Liverpool. On 3rd February 1842 in south Derbyshire the first three members of the Wooden Box branch of the church were baptised followed, over the subsequent fifteen years, by more than one hundred local adults and children. Much attention has been given to the development of the British Mission, to the mass emigration programme to America and studies have been conducted into national and regional membership, yet less scrutiny has been given to individual branches. Using church archives, in conjunction with censuses, it is possible to determine the likely factors affecting the establishment and growth of the Wooden Box branch and whether it was characteristic of national membership.¹

From the moment of their arrival in Liverpool the missionaries were appalled at the disparity between social classes, particularly the squalid conditions and poverty in which most of the working families lived. The members of the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, more commonly known as Mormons, travelled with little money, food or clothing and were humbled by the assistance of the poor in providing meals and accommodation when they had so little for themselves. It was probably because of social similarities between the two groups that the missionaries found the working classes to be more sympathetic to their teachings.

The pattern of introduction of the Mormon gospel through family members was integral to the growth of the church in England. It began with an invitation, issued by a brother of one of the first missionaries, to preach to his nonconformist congregation in Preston and continued to Bedford where the same missionary had a brother in law, also a nonconformist minister.² He too allowed the visitors to preach to his congregation resulting in more converts. The church had strong support in the northwest in the Preston, Ribble Valley and Alston areas, as well as Bedford, providing a solid foundation for the second mission of 1840–1, when the group of nine apostles included the future leader Brigham Young. Following an introduction by a member of the already established Burslem group in the Staffordshire Potteries, a foothold was gained in Herefordshire. Here a United Brethren minister and his wife were converted followed by forty of the fifty local United Brethren preachers and in some areas the apostles preached at open-air meetings with attendance of up to one thousand people in a day.³ During both missions, and when the leadership from America had left England, their success was augmented by male converts who had been ordained as elders and between 1837 and 1851 their combined efforts had led to over 51,000 conversions nationally.⁴ The impressive result of the apostolic programme was accomplished, in part, to the targeting of cities, towns and larger villages but branches of the church were also established in smaller, rural communities.

Philip A.M. Taylor conducted a significant study of over 19,000 Mormons who emigrated to America between 1849 and 1870.⁵ Although many results of this investigation were found to be inconclusive due to their complexities, it could be seen that the majority of emigrants were whole families, sometimes even extended or multiple families. The ‘contagion’ effect of introduction through kinship, neighbourhood or occupational links seemed to be at the forefront of membership and emigration. Taylor asserted that a test for the contagion hypothesis cannot be made stating “with thousands of people, many with common names, relationship could not be traced accurately, and it would be wholly impossible to trace friends, who might have been equally important in the spread of the ‘contagion’”. This is obviously the case nationally or for a large group due to the intricacies of identifying individuals and their relationships, but a local study on a smaller scale is feasible and, in the case of the Wooden Box branch, can be accomplished.

Wooden Box, a small village between Ashby de la Zouch and Burton on Trent, was renamed Woodville in 1845, and gave its name to the Mormon branch. The main employment was found in earthenware potteries and firebrick works while the approximately 2,000 inhabitants of the nearby township of Church Gresley and village of Swadlincote were similarly engaged, with collieries being a second major employer in those places.⁶ Wooden Box may have been where the early converts first heard the Mormon gospel, where they lived or met or where they were baptised and the branch attracted converts from Church Gresley, Swadlincote, Blackfordby, Coton in the Elms, Newhall and Burton on Trent.

By the 1840s industrialisation and demand had led not only to the expansion of the coal and clay interests in the area of south Derbyshire around Church Gresley but also to social problems. More employees were required and those workers most adaptable and mobile were single young men. Their loutish behaviour away from work, particularly their consumption of alcohol, caused concern and, in 1836, an unsuccessful petition was raised in the Church Gresley area requesting a police force.⁷ The 1851 census shows that some migrant workers from north Staffordshire moved to south Derbyshire in the 1820s and 1830s, probably due to dissatisfaction and the reformation of working practices in the pottery industry there which resulted in strikes.⁸ The census reveals that many of these men later married and settled in the area but a rising population still included numbers of unmarried men whose conduct caused concern to those with families. In the summer of 1842 there was further unrest when the miners from Newhall and Swadlincote went out on strike for a few weeks.⁹ The colliery owners wanted to withdraw, without compensation, the free beer they gave to the miners on the grounds that it encouraged them to drink even more and affected their work. It was in early 1842, within a setting of growing industry, increasing population and social instability that Mormonism appeared in south Derbyshire.

To understand the reasons for conversion it is necessary to consider whether prior religious experiences may have been influential. The church seemed to attract more new members from areas of high nonconformity and prior affiliations of 280 early members of the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints have been recorded.¹⁰ Of those 20% came from the Church of England but the Methodists, including the Primitive Methodists, provided the largest group, 26%, of converts. The majority of the

remaining members had belonged to other denominations, both leading and minor, while less than 2% were not religiously inclined.

To establish the religious pattern in south Derbyshire the results of the 1851 Religious Census can be revealing. The census attempted to record a head count of all those attending a religious service on Sunday, 30th March. Details included the estimated erection date of each meeting place which can be used to denote the provision and location of places of worship existing in 1841 and continuing in 1851, though not those which ceased to exist during or prior to that decade. This can give an indication of the religious views and influences at that time. Nationally, a growing population and reorganisation of parishes had led to a building programme for new Anglican meeting places in the 1840s and this is indicated in the Church Gresley registration district by buildings in Swadlincote, Woodville and Coton in the Elms.¹¹ Over the decade there was also increasing provision for dissenting worshippers with a Primitive Methodist chapel in Linton and inhabitants, particularly those of Woodville, would have had access to the new General Baptist chapel in Hartshorne. Between 1841 and 1851 the south Derbyshire population could have attended services of the Church of England, in addition to the three main nonconformist groups of Wesleyan Methodists, Primitive Methodists and General Baptists, and also the Latter-day Saints. Nationally the returns showed that the Church of England was supported by about half of those attending services and a high proportion attended other Christian churches. The figures for Derbyshire did not reflect this and showed that there was substantial dissent accounting for 61.5% of the total attendance.¹²

The returns, indicated in Table 1, give total numbers attending public worship, including Sunday School, in the south Derbyshire area and attendance for each denomination is shown as a percentage of the total for that place. The industrial areas of Swadlincote and Church Gresley attracted more nonconformists; the Wesleyan Methodists were strongest in Swadlincote with 70% of all attendances while the

	Total Attendance	Church of England	Wesl Meth	Prim Meth	Gen Bap	LDS
Proportion of total attendance						
Caldwell	140	*			100%	
Church Gresley	764	21%		62.5%		16.5%
Coton in the Elms	100	100%				
Linton	243		63%	37%		
Lullington	236	62.3%	12.3%	25.4%		
Newhall	918	57.7%	42.3%			
Rosliston	144	100%				
Stapenhill	27	*	100%			
Swadlincote	534	30%	70%			
Walton on Trent	417	93.5%			6.5%	
Woodville	272	100%				

*Meeting place where no attendance given

Table 1

Primitive Methodists were the largest group in Church Gresley providing just over 62% of all attendances there. The Church of England had higher support in the rural areas of Walton, Rosliston, Lullington and Coton in the Elms and similarly Woodville, where there was no nonconformist meeting place recorded, although there was access in the locality to other denominations. The returns, therefore, suggest that Mormon converts living in Church Gresley or Swadlincote were likely to have had a prior religious affiliation with nonconformity while those living in Woodville, although a small industrial area, were likely to have been Anglicans. These results can only be indicators as actual attendance would be determined by many personal factors such as location, allegiance and family or employment connections.

In 1850 national membership of the British Mission of the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints was approaching its peak of over 30,000, a figure which would not be matched for over a century.¹³ The ecclesiastical census of 1851 for Derbyshire reports that there were five groups of Latter-day Saints in the county at Church Gresley, Ashbourne, Heanor, Belper and Chesterfield, the latter three being in the north of the county, Ashbourne in the west and only Church Gresley in the south.¹⁴ Existing branch records suggest that at least fifteen groups had been formed by this time, several less than two years old, and probably meeting in homes or hired halls. The majority of branches established in the 1840s in Derbyshire were in villages, such as Bolsover and Staveley, and in tiny communities, such as Calver and Bolehill; the common theme was of working class areas with the main employment in mills, collieries or potteries but showing that membership was growing in large and small communities in urban and rural areas.

It is not only necessary to consider why south Derbyshire inhabitants may have been predisposed to a move towards Mormonism but how it came about in this area. Initially, travelling elders or missionaries would receive invitations to preach to local communities or they would conduct open-air meetings to introduce the gospel to the audience. Early available branch records from either Birmingham or the Potteries, where there were well-established groups, do not show an eastwards movement towards south Derbyshire and the only group in the adjoining county of Leicestershire at that time appears to have been in Leicester. The nearest and only Derbyshire branches, for which records survive, were in Chesterfield and Bolsover and they probably started after visits from one or more members of the Staffordshire Conference which, in the early 1840s, reached as far eastwards as Sheffield. The term 'conference' is used to denote a group of branches within a geographical area that, in the early years, could be extensive. From February until September 1842 two elders performed the baptisms in the Wooden Box branch. This suggests that they were either missionaries or travelling elders and is emphasised by the fact that there were no other groups locally with which prospective members may have had contact. The next baptism in February 1843, and those subsequently, were performed by the local leaders who had been ordained as priest or elder and they were also active in the development of other branches, particularly in Branston and Dunstall in south-east Staffordshire, and later they worked in Leicestershire groups.

The early records of the Wooden Box branch from 1842 to 1857, including two membership registers, have been filmed by the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints and are available at their Family History Centres. One is the branch register

and the other, amongst records of the Derbyshire Conference, will be referred to as the conference register to avoid confusion. Viewed together they may contain a varied amount of personal information such as name, date and place of birth and place of residence or, conversely, there may be only a name. A third record gives ordination details of male members and the fourth list shows those who were rebaptised in 1857 and the amount of tithing paid at that time. None of the first three records are absolutely contemporary, chronological or complete but the four used together provide sufficient features to illustrate the growth and composition of the group.

The two registers list 132 individuals in total, reduced to 121 when second baptisms and duplicated names with no supporting information are disregarded. Only 110 of those have baptism dates, with 55 of them consisting 27 males and 28 females included on both lists. The branch register dating from 1842 to 1850 has been used to monitor the fluctuation in baptism numbers for those dates because it contains the larger number of 89 baptisms compared to 54 for the same period in the conference register.

Table 2 shows there was a gradual growth in membership with no mass baptism or sudden surge in numbers and male and female baptisms were fairly evenly matched throughout. The original three members increased to 14 by the end of 1842 and the following year there were a further 17 baptisms. In 1844 the branch moved to a chapel which had previously been registered as a meeting place for Arminian Methodists.¹⁵ Baptisms remained high in that year with, again, a total of 17 and could have been the result of the permanent location. In the early to mid-1840s initial enthusiasm for this new sect subsided throughout the country, probably due to the lack of coherent leadership of the British Mission.¹⁶ Between 1842 and 1845 the Wooden Box branch was becoming established and so showed a reversal of this trend with numbers increasing.

Year	Branch Register			Conference Register		
	i) Male	i) Female	i) Total	ii) Male	ii) Female	ii) Total
1842	8	6	14	5	4	9
1843	8	9	17	5	5	10
1844	6	11	17	2	3	5
1845	4	9	13	2	3	5
1846	0	4	4	0	2	2
1847	6	5	11	6	5	11
1848	4	3	7	3	3	6
1849	2	1	3	3	0	3
1850	2	1	3	2	1	3
1851	*	*	*	2	4	6
1852	*	*	*	4	3	7
1853	*	*	*	0	0	0
1854	*	*	*	7	1	8
1855	*	*	*	0	1	1
	40	49	89	41	35	76

*No information available

Table 2

National membership then rose dramatically from 1848 and with more missionaries crossing the Atlantic and the move of the American community to permanent settlement in the Great Salt Lake area, there was also encouragement to prepare for emigration.

There were ten baptisms in the branch during the first three months of 1845 prior to the General Conference held on 6th April 1845 in Manchester. The conference summary was printed in the 'Millennial Star', the church's newspaper in the United Kingdom, and reported Elder Robert Crook stating that "*the Derbyshire Conference was in a good condition at present, but much in need of some active labourer*".¹⁷ Despite assistance given to the Derbyshire Conference in 1845 there were only three further baptisms that year in Wooden Box and a noticeable decline to only four in the following year. Circumstances improved briefly in 1847 with eleven baptisms, seven of these identified as relatives of existing members. At the Derbyshire Conference in April of that year one of the Wooden Box elders "*spoke of some places near, wherein the gospel had been preached some time back, out of doors, and asked counsel in reference to out-door preaching in those places again*".¹⁸ The reply was that the decision was left with the elders but that they should "*act cautiously and preach the pure principles in simplicity and kindness*". In Wooden Box, if that did happen, it had little effect as there were only three baptisms between April and December.

Wooden Box, being an early formation, gave its name to a conference, or group of branches, that included the five branches of Wooden Box, Dunstall, Branston and Barton in south east Staffordshire and Coalville in Leicestershire. On 6th April 1844 it was renamed the Derbyshire Conference.¹⁹ The report of this conference held on 4th April 1847, when the area group also included the thriving branch of Whitwick, contains the only record of membership numbers at any one time and is shown in Table 3.²⁰

The branch register lists 73 baptisms by this date, while Table 3 shows a loss of about one-third of that membership. The conference register corroborates this figure showing seventeen 'cut off' or excommunicated, thirteen removed (to another branch), four emigrated and four died which equates to 31% of the total membership. Interestingly it also records those who were received from other branches and the thirteen who moved away were replaced by only three transferring church members.

In 1848, when national membership rose, there was a decrease in baptisms in the branch continuing for the following two years with seven in 1849 and just three in 1850. The branch register finishes in 1850 but the conference register for the following five

Branches	Members	Elders	Priests	Teachers.	Deacons
Wooden Box	50	6	4	1	1
Dunstall	22	3	3	1	0
Barton	14	0	2	1	1
Branston	14	3	0	1	1
Coalville	44	4	3	1	2
Whitwick	95	5	8	3	3
Total	239	21	20	8	8

Table 3

years shows annual baptisms of six, seven, none, eight and one. Of these twenty-two at least six were under 16 years of age, ten were probably related to existing members and a maximum of only six in that five year period were new converts, showing the branch in decline and attracting few, adult members. Another attempt was made to re-invigorate the Derbyshire Conference area in June 1854 at the Special General Council in London when Elder William Pitt stated that “*Derbyshire Conference is a small one, but the standing and faith of the saints are good, and they mean to do right, and to do all in their power to roll forth the work of God. Circumstances have been of such a nature that the Saints have not had it in their power to contribute to the funds, according to their wishes, but nothing will be lacking on their part. It is a very old Conference, and has been preached in a great deal, so much so that the Saints thought there had been preaching enough, but instead of cherishing this opinion now, we are preaching in every place in the Conference, and we have men who can preach as well*”.²¹ It seems that despite efforts by conference members the church was attracting few converts.

Nationally and locally concerns about persecution may have influenced some prospective members and there was considerable opposition to the church in newspapers. In 1852 lectures were given in Derby on “the delusions, blasphemous doctrines and immorality of Latter-day saints” and in Nottinghamshire, reporting a death by drowning following an attempted baptism in the River Trent, the journalist wrote “the enthusiasm of those wretched fanatics is astonishing.”²² However, many were strong in their faith and were not dissuaded. In April 1854 at the Leicestershire Conference it was announced that “*at a new place, twelve baptisms had been reported, and many persons were believing, though the new members were expecting to have notice to leave their homes and employ.*”²³

Throughout the 1850s ‘pruning’ took place at all levels to ensure a dutiful membership, tithing was introduced in 1856 and the following year there was a rebaptism programme. In the Wooden Box branch thirty-six individuals were rebaptised between 22nd February and 1st April 1857. There is only one male with a surname not found in the earlier registers and the other members are either the same, or related to, the group baptised before 1850. In addition, probably over one-third of these later emigrated and it seems that the Wooden Box branch may have had its best days.

An examination of the composition of the branch members may indicate reasons for its limited growth. Both the branch and conference registers give details of either age at baptism or date of birth. The branch register of 1842 to 1850 has a larger sample, containing 58 names while the conference register to 1855 has only 45 names. The time period and number of people differ on the two records yet give similar results with the average age at baptism for adult males over 16 between 31 and 35 years, and for females between 34 and 36 years.

Table 4 shows the age of members at baptism compared with Taylor’s study of age at emigration. Baptisms of children took place after the age of eight years and early branch baptisms were usually of adults. The first recorded baptism of a child under 16 years was of a ten-year old in April 1844, two years after the branch’s establishment. The conference register, although the smaller sample, does include details for a longer period and closely matches Taylor’s result showing that the ages of those who emigrated corresponded to those who were members of the Wooden Box branch and,

	Branch Register	Conference Register	Taylor's Migrant Study
Infants–15 years	17.24%	28.88%	30.94%
16–40 years	60.34%	55.56%	53.24%
Over 40 years	22.42%	15.56%	15.82%

Table 4

consequently, the migrants were likely to be from the general membership. Both registers show that the largest groups of new members were aged between 16 and 40 years and while the numbers of children under 16 increased, those aged 16 and over decreased. Also, it can be seen that a higher proportion of children show in a study conducted over a longer period of time and, together with the result of the average age at baptism, it can be concluded that the general membership comprised young couples with growing families.

Place of residence is given on the branch register for 69 members. This shows that 46 members, or 67%, lived in the areas of industry and higher population of Woodville, Swadlincote and Gresley with 36% of the total from Woodville. The move to the chapel in 1844 attracted new converts from Swadlincote and nearby Newhall, both industrial areas, and from further afield such as rural Coton in the Elms and urban Burton on Trent. Interestingly, 17 of the members from Wooden Box, or Woodville, were baptised by March 1844, prior to the removal to Church Gresley, followed by none in the following two years. The remaining eight were baptised between March 1846 and October 1850 and were all related to existing members, showing the church was not attracting new converts from Woodville.

Taylor's emigrant study found that the majority of males, about 89%, were working class with the remainder middle class and concluded that emigrant occupations were representative of the areas in which they lived.²⁴ This corresponds with results obtained from both the Preston branch and Leeds.²⁵ A local history group researched south Derbyshire using the population census of 1851 and found that 49% of males over the age of 21 who lived in Woodville worked in the clay and pottery industry with less than 1% working in coal, whereas those living in Church Gresley and Swadlincote were more evenly divided between the two industries.²⁶ It would follow from these four sources above, therefore, that the adult male branch members were working class and those living in Woodville were more likely to have worked in the clay and pottery industry while those from Church Gresley and Swadlincote would have also included coal workers.

The registers, which include those who had been baptised and later left the Mormon church, give some birth dates and these have been used with the place of residence to identify 41 members on the 1841 census and 46 on the 1851 census. In addition, at least three members had died by 1851, one had emigrated and two were living out of the area. The composition of the census groups are similar for both years — in 1841 there were 17 males, 16 females and 8 children while ten years later there were 19 males, 18 females and 9 children. Overall there were only eight females in paid employment showing four in both censuses, of which two in each year worked in the pottery industry, so it is the occupations of the male workers which can more positively indicate employment and social status. In 1841 11 males, or 65% of those identified, and in 1851

15 males, or 79% of those identified, are described as working in pottery or earthenware production; ten were found on both censuses. Employment categories are given in more detail in 1851 and branch members worked in a variety of duties from the experienced fireman and potter to the lowly attendant. The remaining six males in the earlier census included six agricultural labourers, three of whom lived in the rural area of Coton in the Elms, shared the same surname and were found again in 1851. The two others from 1841 worked in the brickmaking industry and one of these is again shown in 1851.

Twelve of the 15 male workers in 1851 were aged 21 and over so can be compared with the local study. Of these nine worked in the pottery industry, with two agricultural labourers and one brickmaker. Three of the nine pottery workers lived in Woodville, three in Church Gresley, two in Blackfordby (not covered by the local study) and one in Swadlincote. It has to be acknowledged that the occupation statistics provide a small representation of the Mormon group but do show that the majority of those male workers were employed in a dominant local industry. The more significant feature is that there were no miners, either coal or clay, and no men with either middle class or commercial occupations. It could be expected that, only two years after the branch's establishment, the move to Church Gresley and its close association with Swadlincote and collieries might attract coal workers or commercial sector workers but, surprisingly, this was not the case.

Several surnames are prominent among the 89 people in the branch register and family reconstruction techniques can show the strength of kinship links within this group.²⁷ Blood and marriage ties can link one family, consisting of eleven members over three generations, with three other family groups to total at least twenty members. A family from Coton in the Elms had eleven baptised members. Together with two related families of four and two other families each of six members these five groups account for fifty-one people, or 57%, of the members on the branch register. Of the remaining thirty-eight people a further fourteen can be distinguished as couples or belonging to a small family group, while the identities and relationships of the remaining twenty-four have yet to be established. It seems likely that further investigation may show even more members linked to some of these families or to each other.

It has been shown that the occupational association of male members and kinship connections were important to the increasing membership. A third bond, that of neighbourhood links between prospective converts, emerges using the information from family reconstruction and censuses. Discrepancies between place of residence as shown in the register and in the 1841 census can be found for some members baptised within the first year of the branch. The census shows the likelihood of fewer people living in Wooden Box at the time of their baptism, instead living in either Church Gresley or Blackfordby and it again raises the question of the reason for the naming of the branch. Examination of the census shows that, amongst thirty consecutive households in Church Gresley, in the area of Coppice Side, there were five family groups that, between them, provided twenty-three Mormon members as shown on the branch register and even more when the other Mormon records are consulted. Interestingly, the chapel used by the Mormons was probably in the same area "overlooking Messrs. Woodward's clay hole" although the site has not been located.²⁸ Despite the name of "Wooden Box branch" the group appeared to have closer links with Church Gresley.

The emigration process, first to Nauvoo, then in the late 1840s to the Great Salt Lake area in today's Utah, was an ongoing success for the Mormon church due to enthusiasm and good organisation. It is estimated that 38,000 members travelled to America between 1840 and 1870.²⁹ In the case of Wooden Box the first emigrations took place in 1845 and the majority occurred after 1855. The four branch records, which finish in 1857, note at least nine emigrants but this misrepresents the true picture of Mormon emigration from south Derbyshire both up to that date and later. Statistical analysis is difficult as, in some cases, spouses and children are not found in the early registers or there is no supporting information to a name or the family moved away from the area prior to emigration. Using the family links already established and the Mormon Immigration Index it is possible to form a more accurate representation, although only a long-term study of the members and their extended families with the American place of settlement will give a complete picture.³⁰

Ten members and seven children probably emigrated between 1845 and 1872 while a further fourteen members, who are definitely identifiable, emigrated between 1855 and 1872 with 29 children. In 1845 the first emigrants from Wooden Box were a young couple and the second was a young male in 1850. However, in the spring of 1855, a family comprising parents and seven children were followed at the end of the year by two couples, their five children and possibly one or two young men, all unrelated, travelling on the same ship across the Atlantic. Further emigrations involving eight or nine members and three children were spasmodic in 1856, 1857 and 1859 when the journey to Utah included travelling almost 2,000 miles with their belongings on handcarts. In 1868 one female member made the transatlantic journey with her husband and twelve children, following her brother and his family who journeyed twelve years earlier. Six weeks later a family group and two brothers related to them journeyed on the same ship as a middle-aged couple, all of whom were likely to be travelling to America to join other family members. Male emigrants often returned to Britain as missionaries and it is feasible that they encouraged further emigration of family and friends. The Immigration Index also shows that some of the few who returned to England later chose to go back to America and it is reasonable to assume that about one hundred adults and children, who had Mormon roots in south Derbyshire, emigrated. In Utah where the early emigrants were occupied in building Salt Lake City some of the pottery workers from the Wooden Box branch are recorded in the city's history as working together to establish or manage seven of the fifteen early potteries of British immigrants.³¹ While inclusion on a passenger list is not indicative of all emigrants travelling to Salt Lake City, or even Utah, it seems likely that many did.³² This is shown by the pattern of emigration where sometimes three generations of a family made their journeys over a long period, in one case eighteen years, probably as and when funds allowed.

A comment in the "Swadlincote and Church Gresley Year Book" of 1904 says that the Mormons had "managed to lure away some young inhabitants".³³ Taylor records a similar comment made in 'The Times' newspaper — "it was a sort of half religious, half worldly dream, which led them out in quest of a sort of earthly paradise where, under a theocratic rule, peace, pleasant and comfort reigned without interruption or decay."³⁴ The realities were that they had to make an arduous journey by sea, wagon,

rail and, sometimes on foot, to escape from a life of poor working and living conditions. At their journey's end would be open country and a city which they could help build and populate and, probably more importantly, where they could fulfil their duty to God. Whatever their motives the opportunity for the Wooden Box emigrants to return was open to them but few did.

After the first twenty years or so of success in the British Isles the fervour of the early converts was diminishing. Disaffection set in and emigration had an effect on membership nationally as thousands set sail for a new life. The Wooden Box branch records which survive from its origins in 1842 until 1857 can only give an indication of the development of this particular group but those of other branches show that the group was still in existence until at least 1861. Burslem branch records show that six members of the Wooden Box branch transferred to the Potteries during 1860, with three of them returning to south Derbyshire early in 1861. The records of children's blessings for Burton on Trent branch in 1884 and 1885 appear to include grandchildren of early south Derbyshire Mormons, indicating continuity over generations, as also confirmed by the emigrations of the 1870s on Mormon ships. Many of the smaller branches were consolidated and those in existence at the beginning of the 20th century were in larger towns such as Burton on Trent, Derby and Leicester.

The information available from the early branch records is fairly limited with small samples for analysis but implies that this was a representative group of the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints at that time. The membership was fairly equally divided between males and females, of couples having young and extended families and living in an area with access to several nonconformist denominations. They were from a working class background with the males of this small group employed in one of the dominant industries of the area, pottery. The absence of a mass baptism, perhaps illustrating lack of appeal and indifference by the local population, together with members having occupations outside the pottery industry were prime factors influencing a gradual growth of the branch. There is evidence that preaching by the local leaders to widen interest and encourage conversion had limited effect and the perception is of individuals joining relatives and neighbours and 'drifting' towards the group. However, the enthusiasm of some members cannot be under-estimated. Some travelled far and wide in their own time and at their own expense to spread the gospel while others perhaps sacrificed family relationships and, in the case of some emigrants, lost their lives in search of their faith and new opportunities.

The 'contagion effect' has been demonstrated to be powerful in this branch, both in terms of membership and emigration. The survival of this group depended on its leadership with regular attendance and perhaps dominance by several families. The rebaptism programme, fifteen years after the branch's establishment, includes the same names as the early registers and the group was not attracting new members. Those who emigrated were ardent Mormon supporters and, particularly in the mid- and late-1850s, their departure could have undermined the stability of the group.

While samples for analysis within this group are small the combination of information available for the individuals gives an insight into a minority group within a small community. A more comprehensive examination of members and families to include both emigrants and those who stayed, further identifying associations with

each other, their religion and other branches of the church, could be an important contribution to both Mormon and south Derbyshire history.

NOTES AND REFERENCES

- ¹ Microfilms of early archives of the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints are detailed in the Family History Library Catalogue and can be viewed at Family History Centres worldwide.
- ² V Ben Bloxham, James R Moss and Larry C Porter, eds, *Truth Will Prevail — The Rise of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints in the British Isles 1837–1987*, Solihull (1987), 74, 82, 84
- ³ Bloxham, Moss and Porter, *Truth Will Prevail*, 133–137
- ⁴ Richard L Jensen and Malcolm R Thorp, eds., *Mormons in Early Victorian Britain*, Salt Lake City (1989), xi
- ⁵ Philip A M Taylor, 'Why Did British Mormons Emigrate', *Utah Historical Quarterly*, 22, 3 (1954), 249–270
- ⁶ *Post Office Directory of Derbyshire, Leicestershire, Nottinghamshire, Rutlandshire, with Bedfordshire, Buckinghamshire, Huntingdonshire, and Berkshire, Northamptonshire, Oxfordshire*, London (1848), 2444, 2485, 2621
- ⁷ Janet Spavold, ed., *Pits, Pots and People — South Derbyshire in 1851*, South Derbyshire Local History Research Group (1981), 5–6
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- ¹⁷ *Millennial Star*, April 1845, V, 11, 167
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- ²⁰ *Millennial Star*, 15 July 1847, IX, 14, 215–216
- ²¹ *Millennial Star*, 5 August 1854, XVI, 31, 487
- ²² *The Derbyshire Advertiser And Derby, Ashbourn, Uttoxeter And North Staffordshire Journal*, 1 October 1852 and 6 February 1852
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- ²⁴ Taylor, 'Why Did British Mormons Emigrate', *UHQ*, 22, 3, 267
- ²⁵ M R Thorp, 'The Setting for the Restoration in Britain' in *Truth Will Prevail*, eds., Bloxham, Moss and Porter, 57–58 and Susan L Fales, 'Artisans, Millhands, and Labourers' in *Mormons in Early Victorian Britain*, eds., Jensen and Thorp, 165
- ²⁶ Spavold, ed., *Pits, Pots and People*, 42–43, 59–62, 79
- ²⁷ Sources used include the International Genealogical Index in conjunction with parish registers and bishops transcripts, civil registration, population censuses and the Mormon Immigration Index.
- ²⁸ *Swadlincote & Church Gresley Year Book*, Swadlincote (1904), 2

- ²⁹ Taylor, 'Why Did British Mormons Emigrate', *UHQ*, 22, 3, 251
- ³⁰ The Mormon Immigration Index contains information on members of the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints who emigrated to America between 1840 and 1890 and is compiled from church records.
- ³¹ Kirk Henrichsen, 'Pioneer Pottery of Utah and E C Henrichsen's Provo Pottery Company', *UHQ*, 56,4, (1988), 394–395
- ³² Notes of family histories in the possession of the author
- ³³ *Swadlincote & Church Gresley Year Book*, 2
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