

Written by Godfrey Hugh William BRAMHALL

John PIGOTT 1858-1931 and Eliza Matthews LINDOP 1861-1924

John Pigott junior was born in Faringdon, Berkshire, in 1856 and his brother Josiah two years later. Their father, John Pigott senior, was a cordwainer with premises in the Corn Market, right in the centre of the little town. Their mother was Emma Jane Oldaker, a milliner and straw bonnet maker whose father Charles, a saddler, had come to Faringdon from Witney. For a short time before her marriage Emma had her own millinery business in the neighbouring town of Wantage.

Grandfather's schooldays were probably spent at the local National School. Mother used to say that her father 'left school early' as he had shown high promise and attainment. Although there is no evidence to show the precise date when he left school there is plenty to show that he was possessed of outstanding ability.

John's mother died in 1866 and great-grandfather took as his second wife Sarah Day, the daughter of a Shrivenham baker. Some time in 1871 the family moved to Filkins, a village between Burford and Lechlade. Sarah's first child, Elizabeth Hannah, was a year old. Living space in the new home must have been very limited for 'The Evergreens' had to double as village grocery store and Post Office as well.

All this must have imposed some pressure on John junior to leave home at the earliest opportunity. But it would not be fair to cast Sarah in the role of the archetypal, wicked stepmother of cheap fiction. Far from it. All the evidence points to the fact that relationships within the family were warm and affectionate from beginning to end and it is surely significant that when he had a daughter of his own grandfather named her Henrietta Day.

It is interesting to find that one hundred years later 'The Evergreens' still serves Filkins as village store and post office. In 1981 a postcard was issued by the Gloucestershire postal authorities illustrating some of the more picturesque post Offices in the Cotswolds. One of them was 'The Evergreens' at Filkins.

I have a letter written by grandfather which makes it clear that by the middle of 1872 he was established as an apprentice to a grocer named Porter at 10 Arundel Place, Westbourne Road, Barnsbury, London. A few years later Josiah followed a similar path and went to work for a grocer in Thrapston in Northamptonshire.

By May 1881 Josiah was assistant to a grocer named Edward Candler at 42, South Street, Worthing. Where grandfather spent the twelve years after 1872 will probably never be known but by 1884 the brothers had joined forces in their own grocery business at 117, Montague Street, Worthing.

All that I have learnt about the brothers indicates clearly that John must have been the driving force in this enterprise.

[Page 2]

The two boys were brought up in a Strict Baptist household but at Worthing they joined the Salvation Army, which had started its evangelical work in that respectable seaside resort in about 1883.

In its avowed purpose of bringing the gospel message out of the chapel and into the streets General Booth's Army encountered noisy and often physical abuse from the very people it was trying to reach. For reasons which are impossible to identify this opposition reached alarming proportions in the Worthing disturbances which reached their climax in July and August 1884.

It seems possible that, in the first instance, the troubles may have been little more than noisy, and initially good-humoured, barracking of the 'boys in their red jerseys ornamented with texts, and the girls in their coal-scuttle bonnets and draggle-tailed dresses' *Sussex Coast Mercury Newspaper 1884* especially when the idle by-standers recognized in the Army's processions some of their own workmates or neighbours engaged in a novel activity which was, of course, intended to draw attention to itself.

It is hardly surprising that the out-door meetings with uniforms and singing should have excited the noisy and mindless derision of local rowdies but, left alone, it seems highly probable that they would have tired of their sport once the novelty had worn off. Unfortunately there is evidence that certain publicans, seeing the Army's denunciation of the 'demon drink' as a threat to their trade, orchestrated the hoodlum noisiness to suit their own ends.

It came as no surprise to read in *The Sussex Coast Mercury* of July 12th 1884 that, in order to formulate the activities of the 'Skeleton Army' in opposition to the Salvation Army, a meeting was convened by 'Mr Fletcher of the Victoria Arms'. More surprisingly the somewhat reluctant chairman of the gathering was a certain Dr Coxwell, a Worthing doctor. There is further evidence to suggest that 'dutch courage' was freely available to members of the 'Skeleton Army' who felt they needed it. Small wonder that the Worthing papers soon became full of reports of verbal abuse, jostling, egg-throwing, disruption of processions and indoor meetings and even overt, massed and premeditated attacks on the persons of Salvationists and their property.

One such account in July 1884 reads thus:

'Such a shocking desecration of the Sabbath we have never witnessed at Worthing. The Salvation Army did not attempt another procession after the morning's disappointment but went quietly to and from the Montague Hall.

But the spirit of discord and riot was abroad and as one of the 'soldiers', Mr Pigott, grocer, of Montague Street, was proceeding towards his home after the afternoon meeting he was surrounded by a number of the 'Skeleton Army'. A gentleman went to his assistance and the young man escaped uninjured though his cap was torn'. Grandfather John got off lightly on this occasion. Although this was the

[Page 3]

only instance when he was named as having been the object of physical attack there is no doubt that he was fully involved in everything that happened both before and after.

What were the authorities doing in the face of these public disorders?

It seems that they blew hot and cold. At times the police gave protection to the Salvationists. At others they did not. The local papers reported that Worthing magistrates had, on one occasion, described the Army's activities as 'provocative and an incitement to rowdyism.'

On more than one occasion William Booth wrote to the Home Secretary demanding protection for his 'soldiers', but there was no response. As a result Booth ordered the Worthing Salvationists to refrain from open air activities. For a time they obeyed but fearing that their enforced inactivity would be construed as an admission of defeat they decided to force the issue and recommenced their marches.

By August 20th the situation had become so serious that the police and magistrates were forced, at long last, to clear their minds of prejudice and recognize where their civic responsibilities lay. The Riot Act was read from the Town Hall steps and a detachment of the 4th Dragoon Guards was brought in to disperse the mob and restore order. Notices were displayed warning that further attempts to disturb the Army's lawful activities would be treated as criminal offences punishable by imprisonment without the option of a fine.

But peace was only gradually restored. Even after the Riot Act had been invoked it became necessary for many local residents to be sworn in as Special Constables, among them being Mr Pigott, grocer on September 5th, which might, perhaps, be taken to mean that grandfather was not wholly content to 'turn the other cheek'! A week later brother Josiah tried to enrol but was turned down as being under age!

There had been breaches of the peace, many prosecutions before the local magistrates and some before the Sussex assizes. Among the latter was that of a certain Mr Head of 39, Montague Street, a Salvation Army sympathiser, who had used a revolver to repulse rioters who had broken into his paint and hardware store and were threatening to set fire to it.

The local press, and to a lesser extent the national press had a field-day. Apart from endless reports of events, court cases and editorial comment the correspondence columns reverberated with the thunderings of correspondents who, for the most part, concealed their identities behind such pseudonyms as 'Disgusted' 'Quietness', 'Reason', 'Fair Play', 'Lover of Justice' and 'Disgusted Resident'.

Strangely these pen-names seldom indicated which side of the fence the writers were sitting on! Of course there were braver spirits who did sign their names although one of them could find nothing more significant to say than that Salvationists were just,

[Page 4]

a lot of boys and girls parading the town in grotesque costumes and filling the air with a hideous bawling, screeching and clanging.
'Worthing Intelligencer' 26th July 1884

It is, perhaps, not entirely fair to reproduce snippets from letters without printing all that has gone before, but space will not allow such an objective approach. (After all this is merely a family history exercise!) Grandfather was a Salvationist. It follows that anything he wrote in reply to others must be biased. Nevertheless we reproduce extracts from two of his letters because they demonstrate that he was possessed of strong but balanced convictions supported by admirable powers of self-expression.

From the *Sussex Coast Mercury* August 30th 1884

Your correspondent's letter of the 24th conveys an entirely wrong impression as to our motives in holding our procession at Worthing on Sunday. The facts of the case were that in consequence of strong representations. The Worthing magistrates arrived at the wise determination to protect the Salvation Army in the exercise of their established rights against mob violence. It was, therefore, in fulfilment of a prearranged plan that our procession took place on Sunday morning from 10.15 to 10.45 a.m. and in consequence of the admirable arrangements of the Chief Constable there was no disturbance worth mentioning, and this has been the invariable result when the authorities have determined, at any cost, to put down rowdyism and brutality with a strong hand.

I should add that, although in most of our six hundred and twelve stations in the United Kingdom we are in the habit of marching with a band, yet at Worthing this was not the case, and what your correspondent terms the 'fons et origo' [Latin 'source and origin'] of so much hatred and bitterness has been forty or fifty Christian men and women singing hymns (of which the sentiments are those professed by all Christian denominations) through the streets for about one hour a work between the hours of divine service.

Mr J Pigott, Montague Street, Worthing

In another long and closely reasoned letter to the same paper on November 8th John had this to say about the people who sought to disrupt the Army's work:

The people who have opposed us in the open air have done it to please themselves, and they do not profess to believe that they were under the painful necessity of doing what they have done but have thoroughly enjoyed it.

The Salvation Army has annoyed no-one but is disliked because those who persecute it enjoy what they do to such an extent that their doings become scandalous. The Salvation Army is persecuted because it is persecuted.

If our processions had never been molested by those, remember, who enjoyed the chance of doing so, no one would have complained about annoyance. Many have despised the processionists, others pitied them, but neither of these sentiments would have led to open persecuting by force and violence, but would sooner or

later have been dispelled by the chance of coming to acquaint themselves with, and understand, the objects or their pity and scorn.

As to respecting a place of worship by ceasing singing whilst passing, I would only say that the truest, and only real respect anyone can show to a church is that we should love. There is no virtue in respecting an empty place of worship. Let us enter its gates with thanksgiving. That every house of prayer in the town may be crowded with devout worshippers is the earnest desire of my heart.

Yours respectfully, John Pigott

[Page 5]

Clearly the Worthing Salvationists had, in John Pigott, an advocate of formidable eloquence!

There is no way of telling how long grandfather had considered becoming a full-time member of the Army. It is worth recalling that his father often preached in the Strict Baptist chapels in Berkshire and Oxfordshire, that his aunt Elizabeth had recently gone to India to work in the Zenana Mission of the CMS in Karachi, and that his uncle Robert, pastor of the Providence Baptist Chapel in Swindon, had a nationwide reputation as a persuasive preacher.

Certain it is that the Worthing experience had in no way changed his views on full-time commitment. Early in 1885 he left brother Josiah to run the grocery business and entered the Army's Training Garrison at Clapton, East London.

Josiah was a more easy-going character. My mother recalled that on more than one occasion Josiah brought the business to the verge of bankruptcy by extending too much credit to the numerous 'genteel' families who, after renting rooms in Worthing for the summer season all too frequently disappeared without settling their accounts.

Grandfather had to seek leave of absence from his duties and use all his skill and influence to resolve his brother's difficulties. When admonished for granting too much easy credit Josiah would assert that if he had acted differently he would have lost many customers. Grandfather's reply to this shaky reasoning is not recorded but would, no doubt, have contained some reference to the scriptural authority which exhorts the businessman to combine the gentleness of the dove with the wisdom of the serpent!

John's training as an officer lasted a bare three months. On April 7th 1885 he was sent to do evangelical work at Metherringham in Lincolnshire. Other similar appointments of short duration followed at York, Yarmouth, Derby and finally Ryhope near Sunderland in 1888. By this time he was a Captain.

By 1890 it is clear that grandfather's ability in administration had been recognized for in that year the Army's journal, 'The War Cry', recorded that he had been promoted to the rank of Staff-Captain and appointed ADC to Colonel Ridsdel of the Bristol Division.

From this time grandfather's career in the Army is clearly charted by at least twenty-two entries in 'The War Cry' and the Army's 'Year Books', right up to the time of his retirement as Lieutenant-Colonel in 1919. The Army's use of quasi-military terminology sometimes makes it difficult to appreciate the precise nature of his many appointments eg

'May 16th 1896. Staff. Capt. Pigott (Staff Secretary at IHQ) to the Foreign Office as Asst. Sec. for Foreign Trade Affairs under Commissioner Howard.'

Or 'August 26th 1899. Major John Pigott (Central Staff Sec.) to take charge of Food and Shelter Dept. of City Colony under Commissioner Cadman.'

[Page 6]

But enough comes through to show that grandfather was an able businessman and administrator who was to be tested to the full when, in 1907, with the rank of Brigadier he was appointed manager of the Uniform and Outfitting Department of the Salvationist Publishing and Supplies Limited.

The Year Book for 1907 provides us with the Army's own valuation of this post when it says that the Uniform and Outfitting Section was,

'The most important division of the Trade Headquarters', 'the value of the business is considerable, 'the Uniform Section sent out last year some forty thousand garments. Under the control of this department is a well-established Straw Goods Factory at Luton.'

Subsequent Year Books record that grandfather's department dealt with, *'straw hats and bonnets, tailoring, hosiery, red guernseys, furnishings, drapery, boots and shoes, dressmaking and also all the insignia and badges of the Army.'*

The workers in the workplaces under his supervision were, *'employed on a proper trade basis and paid the prevailing rates of wages, while every care is taken that work is done under the best conditions. The well-known serges and other textile specialities sold by this department are manufactured especially for it.'*

To obtain supplies of the right quality John had to travel extensively in the United Kingdom and my sister Olive has reminded me that to secure raw materials for the Army's bonnet factory John had to go as far afield as Italy.

It was interesting to read in the Year Book for 1920, the year following grandfather's retirement, that two men had been appointed to share the managerial responsibilities he had shouldered alone for twelve years.

John did not get married until his work had enabled him to settle in the London area. In 1891 he married a petite and attractive young Army officer named Eliza Matthews Lindop who came from Newcastle-under-Lyme.

She was the second daughter of a Methodist brush-maker, William Lindop and his wife Elizabeth Wilbraham. William's father was a potter named Joseph Lindop who

lived at Etruria, the village built by Josiah Wedgwood to house his employees. Elizabeth Wilbraham was the third child of a labourer named John Wilbraham (born in Crewe in 1788) and his wife Elizabeth Luntby.

John and Eliza Pigott made their home in Walthamstow in about 1895, first at 4, Verulam Avenue and later at 71, Greenleaf Road. They had three children:

- My mother Henrietta Day who was born in 1892. She, and her brothers, first went to Gamuel Road School of which, by great coincidence, I later became the Headmaster. Later mother went to the Technical School in Hoe Street. On leaving school mother worked for the Icilma company before marrying, in March 1917, Lt. William Bramhall of the Manchester Regiment.
- My uncle John William Vincent (born 1894) who became a Salvation Army officer and served in Scotland before resigning due to ill-health. He later took a degree in History and became a schoolmaster.
- My uncle Douglas Randolph Oldaker (born 1900), a bank official whose third name reminds us of his grandmother, Emma Jane Oldaker.

[Page 7]

My memories of my maternal grandparents are of two loving and delightful people whose religious convictions were profound but never bigoted. On Sundays it was grandfather's custom to don his Colonel's uniform and walk from our home in Greenleaf Road to the Army's Hall in High Street. As the years advanced this walk proved more than he could manage.

Fortunately Greenleaf Road was well endowed with places of worship and grandfather demonstrated an ecumenical outlook far ahead of his time. Thus his Sabbath pilgrimages took him first to the Baptist Chapel at the far end of the road, then to St. Luke's Parish Church a mere hundred yards from our home, and finally to the Friends' Meeting House which was literally next door.

Grandmother Eliza died in 1924 and grandfather in 1931. They rest in the Walthamstow Cemetery in Queens Road, sharing the same grave as my infant brother Douglas John.

SOURCES

Family Bible of John Pigott senior

Letters of John Pigott junior to his grandmother and to his father.

Census Returns for Faringdon, Worthing and Stoke-on-Trent

'The War Cry'

'The Salvation Army Year Books'

Kelly's Directories for Berks. and Bucks.

'Happy Heart of Youth', by E.J.Allen (nee Pigott)

'The General next to God'

General Registry, St. Catherine's House