

Elliott, Tom & Ellen, a married worker couple

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Early Workers

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TOM ELLIOTT

ONE OF THE FIRST GO PREACHERS

AFFECTIONATELY KNOWN AS "TOM THE BAPTIST"

As well as restoring the scriptural methods of preaching and worshipping, the Go-Preachers also sought to restore the scriptural method of baptism. Since the New Testament was clear on this, the only problem facing the preachers was to find someone worthy enough to perform this service. From the beginning Irvine realized that it was of prime importance to choose someone from among them who was the least likely to backslide. So Tom Elliott was unanimously chosen, and all agreed that the choice was a good one. He it was who baptized all the early preachers and converts. (eventually other preacher s also baptized new converts) He was therefore affectionately known as 'Tom the Baptist'.

He was a man in about his mid thirties who had been a very prosperous farmer and who with his wife Ellen enjoyed a comfortable home and happy way of life. They had no children. Before coming into fellowship through the ministry of Edward Cooney, they were Methodists, upright and blameless in all their ways. They too heard the call to forsake all and follow Jesus. So in 1902 they obeyed the call just 2 years after they were married. Tom sold his farm and all his earthly possessions, gave the proceeds to the poor , and with his wife, Ellen, took up his cross and went also to preach the gospel by faith in fellowship with other Go Preachers. This was no small sacrifice but Tom said to Ellen it would be worth it all if it meant winning even one soul for Christ.

Jesse Begg , the daughter of Donald Finlayson, gave the following report about them when they came to preach at Castletown, near John O'Groat's in the north of Scotland in 1916:

When Tom and his wife, Ellen, came to Castletown they were allowed to live in a small gardener's cottage on the 'estate' there. Tom worked hard outside and cleaned it up and Ellen scrubbed inside. They came with nothing but their bicycles. My mother gave them an old mattress to sleep on and sent us children (Jessie was 7 at the time) down with milk which was scarce in those days. Then it was rumoured that they were German spies. This resulted in much suspicion and persecution until Tom got a letter from the chief of police in Fermanagh, their home county in Ireland, vouching for their good characters. Even the postman used to revile them and when letters came for them c/o Finlayson's, he would fling them at my mother and say, "that's for your tin ministers".

As they cycled around calling on croft houses some zealous kirk folk were very hostile and one man tried to attack Tom with a spade. Both were very humble and kind. One of Tom's favourite verses was Proverbs 4:18: The path of the just is like the dawn that shineth more and more unto the perfect day.' Tom was unassuming but had a gentle dignity about him. My parents, who were already very righteous, God-fearing people (Plymouth Brethren) professed through Tom and Ellen. Although many preachers came to Castletown after that, my parents said that none except Tom and Ellen could ever have persuaded them to leave where they were and come into this fellowship.

When the Division came in 1928, Tom was one of the 12 workers present at the meeting at which Edward Cooney was excommunicated. He said: "I was eye-witness to every effort made to bind him." But like Edward, Tom also claimed the freedom that can be enjoyed by every born again person, namely, the liberty to speak and move as directed by the Holy Spirit. Tom took his stand at that meeting in support of Edward and was the only one to do so. Thus he too was excommunicated along with Edward even though it was he (Tom) who had baptized them all.

Jessie Begg goes on to relate that shortly after this Joe Twamley, the head worker in Scotland, (and one of the twelve present at the meeting at which Edward Cooney and Tom Elliott were excommunicated) came and closed the meeting in her parent's (the Finlayson's) home. The people thought the workers were big and bumptious because they were treated as nothing by them. They felt confused, shocked and puzzled. Before the meeting at Finlayson's was closed, Tom and Ellen had attended a meeting there at which some other workers were present. One of them was very rude and unpleasant to Tom and was rebuked by the elder, Donald Finlayson. Tom and Ellen stayed on four more weeks after the other workers left. The meeting at Finlayson's did not close as ordered by the workers for the people decided to continue without their approval and did so for many decades to come.

Tom and Ellen were the only senior workers who took sides with Edward Cooney at the time of the Division. It was said that Tom died of a broken heart because of the Division. It was also said that **Willie Gill and George Walker** visited him before he died and tried to persuade him to confess that he had been wrong in taking sides with Edward Cooney. If that is so, they failed in their attempt. Edward

Cooney said: "I met Willie Gill at Tom's deathbed and Tom and Willie wept together. I was witness." He further stated: "At my last meeting with Willie Gill he and I showed our love for each other as brothers in Christ." Tom's ministry was in the British Isles, mostly in England.

Henry Weekes stated that Tom and Ellen spent the last years of Tom's life at the home of his wife Sylvia's grandmother, Mrs. Hicks, at whose home the meetings were held. He had never met Tom but had heard from his wife's people that he was a very kind man and well versed in the Scriptures. He died at Mrs. Hick's home, Mount Hill, Kingswood, Bristol, England in 1930. He was buried in Sylvia's grandfather's grave at Holy Trinity churchyard, Kingswood, Bristol, which they termed a borrowed grave.

Mrs. Elliott (Ellen) spent the last 4 to 5 years of her life at the home of Henry and Sylvia Weekes, Oldham Common, Bristol. She died April 16, 1966 and was buried in the same grave as Tom. After Tom's death, Ellen continued in the 'work' until she died. The little church in Preston is the result of the labours of Tom and his wife Ellen.

(From: The Go-Preacher Movement an Anthology compiled by Patricia Roberts, pp 54-56)

NOTE: Tom Elliott was the only worker who stood by Edward Cooney at the meeting in which Edward was excommunicated held in Clankilvoragh, Lurgan, Ireland in 1928 . Tom Elliott was excommunicated with Eddie. Alec Buchan was a convert of Tom's, and was cast out for writing to Tom.

c/o Mrs. McQuaid
Marns of Whitehorn
Wigtownshire,
Scotland
15 November, 1929

Dear Tom, [Elliott]

I shall try to write you today. I hope you will find a few who will give ear to the message of the Lord. I have been hearing some reports about you; and my companion has received a few letters from some who heard you at Caithness . Some report you are doing an evil work causing division and speaking ill of the workers. I do not believe all I hear.

For some time past I have searched the Scriptures and I write to you what has been revealed. All around I see prayerlessness and even in myself this is much so. The disciples in Bible days were led by the Holy Spirit. Paul got the revelation that he was to go to the heathen before he met the Apostles. He was not sent to the heathen by the Apostles. They could not go against the Holy Spirit and send him anywhere else. It pleased God to call him by his grace to reveal his Son in him among the heathen. The word 'might' shows the Spirit's call was not compulsory but was voluntary. Paul knew it was God given and he did not consult flesh and blood on the matter.

Jesus sent the disciples Two by Two. He did not tell them to go any place they liked, but to every city or place where he himself should come. He told them to go their ways and to salute no man by the way. This may mean they were not to confer with flesh and blood and allow man to turn them from where the Spirit was leading. Paul stayed at Demascus three years. There he preached Christ boldly; he went to see Peter and stayed with him 15 days.

Fourteen years later he went to Jerusalem by revelation and told the Apostles the gospel he received by revelation. And they gave him the right hand of fellowship saying that Paul should go to the heathen while they went to those who were of the circumcision. Paul had thought of going to Asia but being the man he was he did not know where the Spirit would lead. So it should be with every servant of God. The whole world lay before him when he went to the heathen. Jesus when he rose from the dead told his disciples to go into all the world and reach the gospel.

If a workers' list had to be drawn up in Paul's day, he would have had Asia on his mind when he set out on his journey. But he didn't know until he got there that the Spirit forbade his purpose to go into that part. The workers' list was made up at the beginning of June while the workers did not go forth until September. But when the order is made they must go and the Spirit's guidance is not sought.

In Acts 13 we read of certain prophets and teachers gathered together. It was a time for separation. So they ministered to the Lord, prayed and fasted. The Holy Spirit said: *"Separate unto me Barnabas and Saul for the work whereunto I have called them."* They were in harmony with the Spirit's leadings.

When the lists are made out, all the workers are too busy (and are so for weeks), to minister to the Lord. It is left to one man who is relied on to have the Spirit's guidance for all the workers. There is no Scripture for workers being sent to one shire (county) for one year. The shire boundaries were man made. Acts gives a true picture of the Spirit's leadings. Barnabas and Saul were sent forth by the Holy Spirit. In Acts 16 Paul gets the call to go to Macedonia . He goes straight away; he lost no time when the call came.

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There were a few more things that opened up to me when I read John 3. It speaks of those who are born of the Spirit being like the wind: *"The wind bloweth where it listeth, and thou hearest the sound thereof, but canst not tell whence it cometh or whether it goeth. So is everyone that is born of the Spirit."*

I am 29 years old and have been 3 years in the work. My companion has been in it 8 years. I shall be glad of an early reply.

Yours in Him,

Alec Buchan

(From: The Life and Ministry of Edward Cooney 1867-1960 by Patricia Roberts p 65)

[View Photo of Tom & Ellen Elliott](#)

[View Photo of Elliotts on the 1921 Staffordshire Workers Convention photograph](#) — they are Nos. 16 & 168