

Seth Keeps a Diary, 1887--1890.

by T. Mardy Rees

T. Mardy Rees explores the impactful ministry of Seth through his diary, highlighting the challenges and triumphs of open-air evangelism and community outreach from 1887 to 1890.

Scripture: Psalm 126:5, Matthew 5:10, 1 Corinthians 15:58, Philippians 1:27, 2 Timothy 4:2, 1 Peter 4:19

Topics: "Evangelism", "Faithfulness"

Description

T. Mardy Rees preaches about the diligent and prayerful efforts of Seth and Frank between 1887 and 1890, as recorded in Seth's diary, showcasing their unwavering faith in the face of fierce opposition. The brothers conducted various meetings, open-air services, and cottage prayer meetings, emphasizing the importance of open-air evangelism and the consecration of public spaces through prayer. They were dedicated to social reform, Bible distribution, and Gospel Temperance, facing challenges with zeal and determination, even in the midst of hostility and interruptions.

Transcript

Seth keeps a Diary, 1887--1890. -- Programme of meetings for the week. -- Open-air services. -- Favourite spots in the town. -- Fierce opposition. -- Cottage prayer meetings. -- Buying books. -- Tract distribution. -- Beech tree in Gnoll Woods. -- Bibles sold at Neath Fair. -- Preaching to showmen. -- Sequah's visit. -- Coal waggon as pulpit. -- Crier's bell. -- Family altar. -- Gospel Temperance. -- Evidence before Sunday Closing Commission.

FORTUNATELY, Seth kept a diary between the years 1887 and 1890, and his entries enable us to see with what diligence and prayer the cause was fostered. Great social reform work was carried on in the face of overwhelming odds in the spirit of triumphant faith. people wonder at the present activities of the Forward Movement Hall, but the seeds of such an abundant harvest were sown in tears beside many waters. The brothers and their co-workers desired intensely to possess God, and their desire has been granted. Both Seth and Frank were at their post of duty early and late.

On Sunday the following services were held: 7.30 a.m., prayer meeting; 10.30, open air; 11, preaching; 2.30 p.m., school; 5.30, open air; 6, preaching. Meetings were conducted at the Hall every night of the week, including prayer meetings, Band of Hope, band practice, choir practice, holiness meeting and a number of open-air services. The brothers laid the greatest emphasis upon open-air work, and were most assiduous in their devotion to it. In the open they found scores of their most remarkable converts. Their brave example might be emulated by bands of earnest Christians to day with amazing results.

Many spots in the town have become consecrated ground on account of the earnest prayers offered in open-air services conducted in wind and rain. Under conviction of sin many seekers dropped on their knees in the middle of the ring.

"Held an open-air service near the lodging house. While singing the hymn, "Just as I am," a man came into the ring and gave himself to the Lord. He knelt down on both knees. I feel sure this was sincere."

Before public houses, in courts, lodging houses, the Cattle Market, Weigh Bridge, the Square, at the Pump, Penydre, Tynycaeau (Prospect Place), Melincryddan, Briton Ferry, Neath Abbey, and Skewen, successful open-air meetings were held.

Tuesday, 22nd Jan., 1889. At 7.30 we held a splendid open-air service near the Falcon public house. Some drunken women were very much used of Satan, but the truth triumphed. Inside I was helped to speak on laying aside every weight. There was much conviction. Again Satan sent in a drunken man who persisted in striking matches to light his pipe. Again, the Lord was the King of Kings.

On Saturday, 27th July, 1889, the police told the open-air company to move on from near the police station, then from the top of old Market Street, from Water Street, and from near the railway station. They were also much interrupted by a drunken man and a Punch and Judy show, but through it all "we had a good time and Christ was exalted." On the 24th August they were ordered off by the police from a spot near the White Hart, and because there was no obstruction of street traffic they refused to move. The captain of the army suffered seven days' imprisonment for a like offence. Seth believed that the Mayor was responsible for police interference and was determined if possible to put out the light of open-air testimony.

"Monday, 3rd February, 1890. Visited several sick ones to-day. Great numbers are sick in Neath. Held an open-air service near the Falcon public house. Large crowds stood around. When I began to speak the landlady soon commenced to mock and jeer. I got warm and my voice became loud like a trumpet. As I raised my voice she raised hers. This drew a large crowd, and I had much liberty. In the Hall two souls sought mercy--a man and woman. The man came from the Public, so the Devil kicked, knowing what was going on."

"Wednesday, 2nd April, 1890. To day we stood in open air near the Shakespeare and Narrow Gauge. They thumped the pianos and made a noise inside to drown, perhaps, the convictions aroused in the consciences of those inside."

Good Friday, 4th April 1890. Was helped to-day to enter into the worship of my Lord. We had a service at 11 a.m., and one at 7 p.m. In the open air we were much opposed by a publican. While I was speaking he was very wrathful, but the truth triumphed. We afterwards had a very blessed meeting in the Hall when many spoke with power."

"Saturday, 5th April 1890. We stood near the Elephant and Castle. We were much interrupted by people in drink, and by a publican named Skinner. Most appropriate name for every publican."

Monday, 7th July 1890. "This night we had a most fierce opposition while in open air. Two publicans got enraged. One danced in our ring and sang a comic song, while the other blasphemed fearfully and called us fearful names. He caught hold of me and pulled me about. The crowd, taking our part, broke in and pushed them. Our open-air was broken up. We marched to the Hall and were used in bringing one soul to

Christ." One who jeered at them met a sad end in 1890. "To-night (Friday) I saw the young woman who jeered at us the last two Saturday evenings carried home dead. She had drowned herself in the canal. She has come to a sinner's end. I conducted a prayer meeting at Tynycaeau."

One Wednesday evening while an open-air service was being conducted a man with a performing monkey stood near. Seth wrote: "The monkey drew a large crowd, but only a few stood around the open-air until the man took his monkey away. It reminds me of the lunatic who exchanged a sovereign for a brass button."

As many as five cottage prayer meetings were held some nights. "Tom Lloyd and Frank reported good prayer meetings on the Green and at James Street" is a frequent entry.

When hostility was fiercest he wrote: "What I believe we need in these days is a special grace to enable us to keep pegging at it." They pegged at it till the opposition pegged out.

The brothers studied hard to feed their own minds and the flock. How pathetic to read the accounts of their book purchases at the second-hand stalls in the markets at Neath and Swansea. Seth's joy was unbounded when he brought home the works of Sibbes, Howe, Owen, Manton, Baxter, Wesley, Dale and others "Rose at six this morning and enjoyed reading Luke 1 and Dr. Sibbes' 'Bruised Reed.'" "Went to Cardiff Exhibition and bought books. History of the Puritans and Manton." "Much blessed in reading. Owen on Communion with Christ."

The converts were treated to a substantial diet of theology as well as singing. Every available means was used to bring the gospel before the people. Tracts were constantly distributed. Opposition served to intensify zeal and to increase the workers. "Hallelujah! gave tracts outside cookshop until nearly eleven o'clock. There was much opposition."

The brothers found quiet in the Gnoll Woods for study. Seth had his "beech tree" there, where he spent much time in prayer and meditation, as his diaries testify. "I see God In all things" he wrote in 1889, after a walk around the mountain at the back of the Gnoll. Well could he repeat the words of Emerson: -

I laugh at the lore and the pride of man,
At the sophist schools and the learned clan;
For what are they all in their high conceit
When man in the bush with God may meet.

No opportunity of bringing the Bible before the public was missed, and Seth sold Bibles at the Neath Pleasure Fair. "Thursday, Sept. 13th, 1888. To-day was Neath Fair. I stood in the market selling Bibles. I had many a chance to drop a word, which I embraced. Frank, Mr. J. Ray, and others distributed tracts and conducted open-air work. I sold Bibles 'to the: value of £4 5s 1d."

"Thursday Sept. 12th 1889. To-day I spent in the market selling Bibles. It is Neath Fair, and thousands of people are here. I sold £4 worth of Bibles, and gave a large number of tracts. Frank and others also distributed tracts."

"Thursday, 11th Sept., 1890. I had a stall in the market as in previous years for the sale of Bibles. I sold Bibles to the value of £5 9s. 1d., and had many opportunities to speak a word for Jesus."

"Friday, 12th Sept., 1890. "Caught cold in the, Fair yesterday."

On the Sunday after the Fair Seth and Frank spoke to the showmen. "Sunday, Sept. 16th, 1888. Service amongst the shows in the Fair from 3.30 to 5 p.m. About 2,000 people." On Monday Seth suffered from his exertions, the sun having affected his head while speaking from the stage of one of the shows.

Souls were sought everywhere and at all times. Souls were the wages of Christ. If Sequah or any other popular vendor visited the town the enthusiastic brothers were there calling attention to the merchandise of heaven." Tuesday July 1st 1890. We are having, good services, but Sequah, who has come here, hinders the work by exciting the crowd and taking away the people." On Sunday, July 13th, "Sequah had a meeting at 8 o'clock in the Gwyn Hall, which was packed. The collection was in aid of our tent." Seth made good use of Sequah; and his references to teeth extraction accompanied by brass band music were amusing." I am here to extract the teeth of the dragons of evil," said the preacher, "and Gospel truth is the pincers." He preached from Sequah's carriage on Sunday evening, July 20th, at 8.15 p.m. in the Corporation Field, to two thousand people. "I felt power while speaking. One backslider restored;"

In May 1890, a coal waggon was borrowed, and they proceeded to preach at Cadoxton. The entry is characteristic. "Tuesday, 13th May. To-night we took a coal waggon, some chairs and a table over to Cadoxton, and held a gospel service there. 'A large number came and helped us, and the people of the village came out in a body. A number of young men had agreed to oppose, but when we commenced they lost power to act. We had a splendid meeting. Marched back to Neath behind the waggon. I feel led to continue this work.' The service which began with the coal waggon as platform ended in a Gospel tent being fixed at Cadoxton.

"Friday, 18th July. Went in search of a field in order to erect the tent at Cadoxton. One man refused, but another door opened. We took back the seats and chairs from the tent this evening. 'Twas a most difficult work."

"Monday, 21st July. Erected the tent at Cadoxton this evening. I feel much opposition in this village. We had an encouraging meeting for the first. "

"Tuesday, 29th July. Again we had a good meeting in the tent at Cadoxton. Mr. Howel Howells spoke from the incident on Mount Carmel. He was much helped."

"Friday, 8th August. We took down the tent at Cadoxton and fixed it at Skewen."

"Thursday, 14th Aug. Temperance meeting in the tent. Crowded. The Skewen Fife Band assisted. At the close a very large number signed the pledge. All the cards were filled and several more desired to sign." The following day was boisterous, and Seth worked hard to save the tent from the wind. This tent cost them £50, but was a great acquisition to the work at the Hall. Seth was conductor of the Brass Band, which was used for open-air services. For some time he used a crier's bell to announce open-air meetings, and the novelty of it attracted the crowds. He roused a whole street one Sunday morning by ringing the Bell and shouting "Fire! Fire!" People ran out of their houses asking, "Where, where, Mr. Joshua?" "In hell," he answered, "and there you will all be if you don't attend the Sunday morning prayer meeting."

Seth and Frank carefully observed their seasons for private prayer. The family altar was kept in good repair, and all the church members followed their example. The ashes of indifference, worldliness,

unbelief, tradition, were not allowed to choke the fire of this altar for they were taken outside the camp morning and night. "Martin Luther had so much work to do as a reformer that he could not hope to get through it without spending three hours a day in prayer."

Gospel Temperance was in the forefront of their ministry. Total abstainers alone could be members at the Free Mission. The brothers conducted successful Temperance missions in different parts of the country. W.H. David, solicitor, Neath, accompanied them to Merthyr, Pontypridd, and other towns. The brothers spoke on the Temperance platform with Dr. John Thomas, Liverpool, Plenydd, Rev. Morris Morgan, Dr. John Pugh, Rev. W. I. Morris, Pontypridd, and a host of others. Having heard a London orator on Temperance, " who spoke much but said little," Seth wrote on 4th March, 1889: " I lean more and more to the solid and the serious side of the Temperance question I rather think we defeat our ends when we make a meeting the occasion for jokes and mimicry. The subject to me is too solemn. However, it takes. This is an age of froth." He gave excellent evidence before the Commission on Sunday Closing in Wales, June 14th, 1889, based upon his experiences at Neath. Distressing disasters through drink were witnessed by them in the town. "Dr. -- visited. Gifted man. Lost sight of Christ by reading philosophical works. Drinks heavily. Fell downstairs. Once a preacher of the Gospel in Scotland. ' I hope,' he said, ' God has not given me up.'"

If members by any chance disagreed at the Mission they were invited to the front to pray and make it up, and this method never failed. Posted up in a prominent place in the vestry may be seen a card with the inscription that it is quite as much a Christian duty not to take offence as not to give offence.

Source: <https://sermonindex.net/speakers/t-mardy-rees/seth-keeps-a-diary-18871890/>

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