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Communications should be addressed to the Editor at Friends House.

Editorial

IN this issue we print the Presidential Address by Irene L. Edwards, based on her study of the records of the Box and Women's Meetings interpreted in the light of her extensive knowledge of the history of London.

A second local study with more than local interest is presented jointly by Hubert Lidbetter and Margaret Simpson. Margaret Simpson, clerk of Bristol and Frenchay Monthly Meeting, deals with the historical side of Bristol Friends' connection with the Friars premises, now about to be ended after three centuries. Hubert Lidbetter, the architect for the new central meeting house to be erected in Queen Square, Bristol, writes on the architecture of the 200-year old Friars Meeting House. The site is one which has Quaker associations dating right back to the missions sent out by Friends from the North of England in 1654 and the coming of John Camm and John Audland to Bristol. In this place many Friends taking ship for the New World attended their last meetings for worship in the old country before setting out on the great adventure westwards. As the name "Friars" implies, the religious associations of the site date back much further, in fact right back to the thirteenth century when a Dominican Priory was established there. The street named Quakers' Friars will still record the association with the members of two religious communities stretching back for six hundred years, after both are represented there by no more than bones in the burial ground.

These papers are illustrated by a photograph of the interior of the present meeting house, which was opened in 1749, and a reproduction (by courtesy of the City Museum, Bristol) of a portion of Jacobus Millerd's Plan of Bristol, 1673. Millerd not only shows the situation of the meeting house in relation to the old walled city and the castle, but also gives a representation of the original building (built 1670) which agrees, right up to the turret to be seen at the top, with what is known of that structure from written and printed sources.

Lydia L. Rickman presents some new and little known information about Esther Biddle, stemming from a find in the Public Record Office.

A meeting of the Society was held on 3rd March at Friends House with Geoffrey F. Nuttall in the chair. Muriel Hicks reported on the year's work, and members were urged to make every effort to secure new members to bring the membership up to 500 in two years; at present it is about 380.

Some short addresses on topics of current historical interest followed. David Butler spoke of a guide to the history of meeting houses, on which he is engaged, and appealed to Friends who have access to local records to send him information on the history of their meeting houses. Edward Milligan described his work on a concise guide to the constitutional changes in the various Quarterly and Monthly Meetings since the seventeenth century. When completed this will indicate the steps by which 37 Quarterly Meetings and 151 Monthly Meetings in 1691 have become 17 and 67 respectively today. Hubert Lidbetter urged upon Friends the desirability of preserving old meeting houses, many of which have architectural interest, and of getting them used where possible.

George W. Edwards gave a brief history of the Bull and Mouth, London's first Friends Meeting House.

The Baptist Quarterly, vol. 15, no. 8 (October, 1954) includes a note by A. Gordon Hamlin on the Pithay chapel, Bristol (pp. 378-379) which, after being used by Baptists for over two centuries, passed into the possession of J. S. Fry and Sons and was demolished early this century in the course of business premises extensions. Friends in business thus followed the Baptists in the Pithay, just as they had followed the Baptists in the Friars—for the Baptists met in the Friars before moving to the Pithay.

The Women Friends of London

The Two-Weeks and Box Meetings

Presidential Address to the Friends' Historical Society, 1954

By Irene L. Edwards

The principal sources consulted were:

1. Accounts, Minutes and other MSS. of the Meeting of the Women Friends of London for transacting the business of the Two-weeks and Box Meetings.
2. Minute and Cash Books of the Friends Workhouse, Clerkenwell (now Friends' School, Saffron Walden), 1702-1745.

For sources besides these, exact references are given if not apparent in the context.

I should like to thank the present members of the Box Meeting for allowing me to use their records, and the Headmaster of Friends' School, Saffron Walden, for personally conveying between Saffron Walden and Friends House the early records of the Workhouse for my use. Finally I would like to express my gratitude to all the staff of the Library at Friends House for help freely given to me.

ONE afternoon in the winter of the year 1659[1] at Samuel Vosse's house, the Sign of the Helmet in Basinghall Street, a number of London women Friends were listening to George Fox. He was advising them to have

> a meetinge once a week every second day, yt they might see and enquire into ye necessity of all friends whoe was sick or weake or whoe was in wants or widdowes and fatherlesse in ye City and suburbes.[2]

The women had been called together by Sarah Blackbury at only a few hours' notice; in the early morning of the same day she had sought George Fox's advice as to what could be done to help the great distress of the many poor Friends about the City. Persecution was severe and many heads of families were in prison.

That more than sixty women could be summoned so speedily is evidence of the large number of Friends living close together in the heart of the ancient wall-encircled City, so much of it unchanged since the Middle Ages.

Writing many years later, Mary Elson recalls the occasion

> we had an answer of God in our Hearts to his (G.F.'s) testimony and we joyned . . . in the Power of God in it and so we appointed a Meeting

[1] Exact date is not known, see Braithwaite *Second Period of Qu.*, p. 272.
[2] *Journal of George Fox*. Camb. Edn. Vol. II, p. 343.

and after we had met for some time we considered which way we should answer the necessities and it arose in the Hearts of some Friends that we should have a conveniency that so all the Faithful might offer as unto the Lord not knowing what one another offers, that so from him they might expect their Reward.[1]

This "conveniency" was the Box in which they placed their money and which in time gave the Meeting its name. Thus under George Fox's direct inspiration was organised the first meeting of London women Friends.

About the same time the London men Friends at their Two Weeks Meeting, which had been set up to care for the practical affairs of the Church had themselves felt the need of "Helpmeets". Edward Burrough, Wm. Crouch and Gilbert Latey all record this sense of need. In 1705 Gilbert Latey wrote,

It was opened in our Hearts plainly that the women . . . would answer the Service which was so needful; for that we could no longer do without their Help, care and assistance, we believing it would be much on them as their concern and being satisfied they were fitted for the work and should be careful and vigilant therein, names from all parts of the City and suburbs of the antient women Friends should be taken and some from every Quarter met.[2]

Mary Elson's account goes on to say

after some time of our meeting together there came two of the Brethren from the Men's Meeting to us expressing their unity and they would be ready to help and assist us in anything we should desire of them for Truth's service.

This seems to indicate a Women's Meeting in direct contact with the Men's Two Weeks Meeting, receiving from them part of its income to be expended on relief and taking on the wider duties of oversight and discipline; in time this Meeting became known as the Women's Two Weeks Meeting.

None of these accounts of the first setting up of the Women's Meeting in London mention two separate meetings, yet it seems from other evidence that there were two, but as William Charles Braithwaite suggests "the distinction between the two was one rather of function than of membership."[3] There are no early minute books surviving for either of the meetings, though from 1669 cash entries connected with both meetings were put down in a book without very clear distinction.

[1] *An Epistle for True Love &c.*, by Ann Whitehead and Mary Elson, 1680.

[2] *Life and Death of Gilbert Latey* . . ., 1707, pp. 145-149.

[3] *Second Period*, p. 272 note.

I propose, therefore, to speak of the two meetings together as the Women's Meeting of London for so they were generally known.

Owing to the integrity, wisdom and good reputation of its leaders the London Women's Meeting became an example to other gatherings of women all over the country.

It corresponded with women Friends in many English and Welsh counties and in Scotland as well as Jamaica, Barbados and the American mainland, giving details of its duties:

> wee meet every second day of ye week to communicate each to ye other, but chiefly our works are to help ye helpless, more especially for household of faith but we cannot be limited. . . . [it] raine on just and unjust, others we cannot send empty away. But on ye Lord we wait.[1]

A letter sent to Barbados in 1671 had seventeen signatures attached, but mentioned "there are 150 here but too tegous [tedious] to trouble you with all our names."[2] Cumberland women acknowledged the "godly care and counsell" set forth in the Epistle sent to them; they recognized the members of the London Women's Meeting "as Elders and First Fruits in this service of the Womens Meetings."[3]

Amongst the MSS. in which these epistles appear are several written by George Fox for the encouragement of women's meetings:

> train up your young women to know their duty in this thing . . . and so make all the sober women in the Country near acquainted of this thing and when you have them together then read this amongst them.[4]

George Fox was concerned to give women their rightful place in meetings for discipline and to stir them up to take it and so, throughout the country he encouraged the setting up of separate Women's meetings for discipline, particularly was this so in 1671 and the years immediately following.

Monthly meetings had been settled in 1666; in the London area all the monthly meetings, except Ratcliff, were being held with men and women jointly. As there was already the strong Women's Meeting functioning centrally and concerned for all London, no attempt was made to organize separate women's monthly meetings until a very much later date.

The meeting of London Friends, known as the Six Weeks Meeting, begun in 1671, being for a time "the prime meeting

1 Box Meeting MSS., p. 17.
2 *Ibid.*, p. 25.
3 *Ibid.*, p. 21.
4 *Ibid.*, p. 3.

in the City" to which all the monthly meetings could appeal, had at first a membership of 84 Friends, 35 of whom were women, most of these being prominent members of the London Women's Meeting.

There was much opposition to the setting up of separate women's meetings, it being one of the points at issue in the Wilkinson-Story controversy.

Ann Whitehead, from her long experience of the London Meeting wrote an Epistle in 1680 defending such gatherings. Three years later the Six Weeks Meeting tell "the dear and faithful friends of the Womens Meeting that their work has not been in vain."[1] "And this I can say," writes Mary Elson, "the more opposition we have had against our Womens Meeting, the more we have increased in the Power of the Lord and he hath blessed our endeavours and services."[2] In a letter written about this time by Rebecca Travers to George Fox, she tells him that "the womens meetings [in London] are accompanied with ye power and presence of the Lord as ever, our services great and our supply faileth not."[3]

From a comparison of the names of the women members of the Six Weeks Meeting, with those mentioned in the London Women's Meeting account books, the signatories to their epistles, the list of women visitors to the London prisons and the women's names mentioned in the London Monthly Meeting minute books which have survived from the early period (Horselydown in Southwark on the south and Peel and Westminster on the north), we note very many of the same women active in all these affairs.

A fellowship of women busy with practical matters, upheld in very difficult times by the power and love of God. This is well expressed by one of the group:

> blessed be the name of the Lord who hath quickened and made alive unto himself and hath made us near and dear one unto another and hath knit and tyed and bundled up and hath united us together in one Spirit.[4]

As those early Friends found it too tedious to send all the 150 women's names to Barbados so it would now be too tedious to give you a long list, but some must be specially

[1] MS. sundry ancient Epistles, p. 113.
[2] *An Epistle for True Love*, by Ann Whitehead and Mary Elson, 1680.
[3] R. Travers to G. F., 1676. Gibson MSS. Vol. II, 119.
[4] Mary Elson in *Piety promoted by faithfulness . . . testimonies concerning Ann Whitehead*, 1686.

mentioned. Such a one as Sarah Blackbury, that earnest hearted woman who laid the needs of the poor before George Fox. She was one of the first women ministers in London, she started the meeting at Hammersmith and tended Richard Hubberthorne in his last hours at Newgate Prison. She died in 1665, too early to be mentioned in the surviving Women's Meeting records. There is nevertheless a note there recording that in 1671 the Meeting received from her husband, William Blackbury, the sum of £25 being a legacy left to the Meeting by Abigall Pocock, a second reference to this money says it was left by Abigall Darcy. Possibly the Lady Darcy mentioned in George Fox's Journal who became the wife of a Mr. Pocock. Among the Box Meeting's papers is a memorandum dated 1665 and signed "J. Pococke", giving an indemnity to the Women Friends for any goods, money or plate received by them from his late wife Abigail.[1]

Ann Whitehead was the undoubted leader of the London women's group for many years; as Ann Downer, the daughter of the Vicar of Charlbury in Oxfordshire she came to London about 1654 and became one of the first Quaker converts, her wisdom and practical usefulness was given to the service of George Fox as he lay in Launceston prison, when she went 200 miles on foot to see him. Her first husband, Benjamin Greenwell, died in Newgate Prison, later she became the wife of George Whitehead. She died in 1686 at the home of a Friend at Southgate (near Winchmore Hill, in Middlesex) after thirty-two years of loving service on behalf of Friends. The day before her death George Fox made a special journey to see her and finding her very weak remained the night, being with her a short time before she died.

Nineteen London women Friends who had known her intimately wrote separate testimonies to her memory; these are in print followed by the general testimony signed by seventy-nine other women.[2] Many of the separate writers speak of their long friendship with Ann,

> our dear Ann cannot be forgotten by us, we have not buried her works with her body . . . who was my ancient acquaintance both before and since she knew the Truth,—writes one Friend. Another recalls the very early days before the Women's Meeting was settled, . . . she went visiting the young, convinced both Rich and Poor, counselling and exhorting, supplying the Poor, stirring up others thereto, watching with those that were sick. . . . And since the Women's Meeting

[1] See *James Nayler, a fresh approach*, by Geoffrey F. Nuttall, p. 12n.
[2] ***Piety** Promoted by Faithfulness*, 1686.

(the writer continues) came to be settled, in which her services were very great, as in the Plague time and after the Fire, there was much need of wisdom (and) of her care, diligence and pains and readiness in accounts for her abilities therein exceeded most. Tho' many were willing to work with her she only in those things moved the great Wheel that caused the rest to follow.

She was very serviceable in the Churches in and about London and in other parts of the World where her hand of Love and motherly instructions did reach, yea to the Isles afar off.

This last is an extract from yet another Friend's tribute, surely indicating the authorship of many of the Meeting's epistles.

Due to Ann Whitehead's skill in figures we have some knowledge of the early money transactions undertaken by the Women's Meeting. Gifts of ten and five pounds were made to George Fox, the first during his imprisonment at London and Worcester, the second, "at his going his journey" to Lancaster the following year. William Dewsbury received two gifts of five and three pounds. Six pounds was sent to John Whitehead a prisoner at Lincoln, and other well known names are mentioned.

Ann Whitehead is careful to note that before handing over the money she had consulted two or three other Friends, including sometimes, the donor of the fund from which the money had been taken. In 1674 Mary Lawrence (later to become the first wife of William Meade) gave the sum of £50 "for use and service of truth as managed by women friends." Ann Whitehead adds "by Mary Lawrence's knowledge and Mary Elson disposed to G. F. £10."

Mary Elson, convinced of Truth by the ministry of Ann Whitehead when at Meeting at John Feilder's house at Kingston, was the wife of John Elson, carpenter, living at the sign of the Peel, Clerkenwell, which became the home of Peel Meeting. With gifts in the ministry and great compassion for the poor and all in need she was greatly beloved. She died at the age of 83 in the year 1706. "Deare Mary Elson" records a minute of her own Monthly Meeting, "in ye instructions to her Will give unto all and everyone of ye ancient people at Friends Workhouse 12d each as a token of her love," not a great sum perhaps, but expressing a thoughtfulness which one senses in many another contemporary reference to "deare Mary."

As time went on it was possible for the Women's Meeting, from its accumulated funds to lend money to individuals. In

1674 William Penn was lent £300 under his own bond, this sum being repaid by him four years later; a number of Friends took out loans on which they paid interest. Many small sums were also lent as when £2 was given to Thomas Chalkley, which he repaid within a year. Generally the smaller sums were lent for a limited period, but more than one Friend was allowed "to repay when ye Lord enables him"; and a woman Friend, "when her Husband sent her moneys from Holland." In these cases the repayment was guaranteed by several women Friends each "engaging" for sums varying from two and six to ten shillings.

From these lists of guarantors we obtain some knowledge of the membership of the Meeting.

That the Meeting's work was appreciated is very evident. From its earliest days money gifts to it were frequent, sometimes to be distributed at the same meeting at which they were received, sometimes to be used as a capital stock and sometimes given by a Friend on condition the Meeting paid him or her an annual sum for life.

In 1679 £110 had been received from Frances Van Helmont "for ye consideration thereof to pay him £11 per year during his life if he demands" but three years later the £110 was repaid to him. By his hand the Meeting had already received a legacy of £10 from Lady Conway of Ragley, who had been well acquainted with George Fox, Robert Barclay and William Penn.

Several sums of £5 and £10 were given "for a stock to sett ye poor spinning," the friend in charge was Susannah Yokely, sister-in-law of Michael Yokely, the founder of the Stoke Newington Almshouses. Cash receipts probably relating to this scheme are the 32s. received "of Mary Meade for 2 pare sheets" and the £16 received in 1684 for "linen cloth sold that Fds. made."

Many widowers made gifts to the Meeting in memory of their deceased wives, some of whom had been active in the meeting's work. By the hand of Richard Hawkins of Westminster the Meeting received an East India Bond, being £50 left by his first wife Susannah and £50 left by his second wife, Mary, both former helpers of the Meeting.

Richard Hawkins' uncle was Gilbert Latey (whose account of the origin of the Box Meeting is still read yearly by the present members). By his will Latey gave "ye womens meeting in

London . . . £10 as a token of my love." His wife, Mary, had been a member of the Meeting.

Robert Fairman of Horselydown (one of the original Trustees of the Yokely Trust) gave

> £30 to Meeting of Women Friends at Aldersgate . . . having often had a sense of the great charge that attends that Meeting, my dear and loving wife Mary Fairman to send it by what hand she shall think fitt and add what more she thinks meet.[1]

Another £30 came from John Staploe of Peel Meeting with instructions that it be given

> to honest poor Frends yt happen to marry, to buy them some little necessaries at ye discretion of ye women friends not exceeding four or five pounds to a Couple.

Up to 1941 in the yard of Peel Meeting House could be seen a leaden cistern dated 1654; this had come from Sarah Sawyer's house in Rose and Rainbow Court off Aldersgate. A meeting for worship had been held there from early times. In 1673 Friends paid her rent for the two lower rooms,[2] but when Sarah Sawyer married and moved to the sign of the Golden Key in the Strand, Friends took over the whole house.

At this time the Women Friends held their Meetings weekly. Once every four weeks they met at this house in Aldersgate to allocate payments "out of the Box" to those who were in receipt of regular relief. They also met at Devonshire House Meeting House in Bishopsgate and at the Bull and Mouth Meeting House, St. Martin's le Grand, where other poor Friends received help. Contributions from the Men's Meetings held on the same premises were added to their own collections, if held as a Quarterly Meeting or at the time of Yearly Meeting the money collected was greatly increased.

The women's fourth meeting place, named in the early accounts was at the house of Rebecca Travers at the Three Feathers, Watling Street. This Friend, who had been convinced by James Nayler, was a prominent minister and writer; she, like Mary Elson, actively supported Ann Whitehead in the affairs of the Women's Meeting. In 1678 she had borrowed £30 from Ann, on the security of four pieces of plate weighing 112 oz.; three years later, with Rebecca's approval, the plate had been sold, realizing £28. This transaction is noted in the Women's Meeting's account and a docu-

[1] Southwark M.M. Minutes, 3.viii.1716.
[2] Peel M.M. Minutes, 26.ix.1673.

ment signed by Rebecca Travers exonerating Ann Whitehead and her husband from any liability in the matter is amongst the Meeting's MSS. It would seem that the Meeting suffered loss, but perhaps it was made up in some other way.

In 1681, Sarah, the fourth daughter of Margaret Fell, married, as his second wife, William Meade of Fenchurch Street. At Swarthmoor Hall, in Lancashire, she had kept the household accounts and been active in the affairs of the Swarthmore Women's Monthly Meeting, so it is not surprising to find that within a few months of her marriage she is taking over the accounts of the London Meeting from Ann Whitehead whose health was failing. Most of the entries in the Ledger for the next twenty-six years are in Sarah's hand-writing. Her sister Susannah had married William Ingram of Fenchurch Street; she, too, was a member of the Women's Meeting.

Arrangements were made in 1684 that the "stock of money, estate in land, writing bonds and other papers belonging to the Women's Meeting of Friends in London" should be kept in a chest with two locks upon it, each lock with three keys, one for each of the six women appointed to be in charge, and at that meeting Ann Whitehead handed over to the six women Friends her cash balance of £87.

One of the six women was Ruth Crouch who as Ruth Brown had been amongst the earliest London converts; from her childhood she had known Ann Whitehead and she had been associated with her as visitor to the prisoners in the Ludgate Compter. The chest was kept for many years at her home in Crown Court, Gracechurch Street; she and her husband, William, had moved there upon the rebuilding of the City after the Great Fire. In 1725 the chest contained £184 in cash, including 74 English Guineas, 15 half Guineas, 22 Jacobuses and 36 Caroluses, the last items being gold coins struck in the reigns of James I and Charles I. The Meeting used some of this money to purchase an East India Bond for £100 to add to its stock.

The gathering of 23 women at Ruth Crouch's house in 8th month 1697 was a memorable occasion, for with them was Margaret Fox, who, at the age of 83, was in London on what proved to be her last visit to the capital; with her at the meeting were three of her daughters, Mary Lower, Susannah Ingram, and Sarah Meade. Many present must have remembered the letter written to them by Margaret Fox a few years

before.[1] It had been enclosed in a packet sent to the Meade's home near Romford, but it was winter and Sarah had been unable to come to town so William Meade himself had brought it to the Meeting.[2] Part of the message was specially for those in whose homes George Fox had so often stayed.

I write these few lines unto you, acknowledging your tender love and care to mee and my dear Husband when he was with you in his service and Travells for the Lord. And for your tender care and love unto him you will have an everlasting Reward.

There was a close connection between the Women's Meeting and the Men's Two Weeks Meeting. An important duty of the Men's Meeting was the oversight of marriages in the London district. In addition to obtaining the consent of their Monthly Meeting the parties had to appear in person twice before the Men's Two Weeks Meeting and, although we have no record until 1753 of such appearances before the Women's Meeting, it is evident from an early date that they, too, had a similar duty. The proposal of marriage of Sarah Sawyer with Josiah Ellis was passed at Westminster Monthly Meeting in 1675, but then ordered to be taken to the Men's Two Weeks Meeting and "ye womens meeting".

The Women's Meeting expressed its opinion about many different matters. They complained in 1677 that at Gracechurch Street Meeting House, "unseasoned persons and forward lasses take up seats in the women's gallery" and under it "where many of us sit, many forward young lads and apprentices thrust up among some young maides which commonly setts on that side too, which is unseemly in our view."[3] This led to the Six Weeks Meeting recommending that in all London meetings, "the women sitt apart from the men as it is practised in some parts of the Nation."[4]

Twenty years later 35 women Friends of London addressed an Epistle especially to the young generation. This Epistle was sent into forty-two counties, the copyist being paid 22s. for the work. It gave warning against "pride and vanity in aparell and the wearing of ruffled phantasticall and high dresses" for, they said, "Adorn yourself not with broidered haire or pearls, but with good works, and if ye garments be never so plaine, you shall be comely in ye eyes

[1] Margaret Fox to Women Friends, 16.ix.1691. MS. Early Friends correspondence (Swarthmore Transcripts, Vol. V).
[2] Wm. Ingram to Margaret Fox, 9.xii.1691. Abraham MSS. 21.
[3] Southwark MSS. Vol. I, p. 120.
[4] Southwark MSS. Vol. V, p. 140.

of all them yt fear ye Lord."[1] The Men's Two Weeks Meeting had been complaining that some women Friends appeared before them "without aprons"[2] to the great exercise of Friends in general.

In 1677 the Women's Meeting had shown practical interest in Joan Bullock's School at Shacklewell near Dalston; in 1706 Wandsworth Friends had asked for help in enquiring for some qualified person to be assistant to Sarah Pierce of Croydon "to preserve the Boarding School for maidens"[3] and much later the Meeting was asked to look out for a suitable person to take over Widow Chorley's School at Tottenham.

Help was given to the Friend's Workhouse at Clerkenwell when their committee asked the Women's Meeting to agree to allow any "who incline to serve us in the post of Schoolmistress" to appear first before the Women's Meeting, and "be recommended from thence to us (when you have fixt)"; This workhouse eventually became the Friends' School, Saffron Walden. The schoolmistress taught the girls sewing and knitting; this could only be done if the women Friends "send in plentifully of work and allow reasonable prices for doeing the same." Again and again the Workhouse Committee entreated the Women's Meeting members for better support, after some years "fine sewing" was abandoned in favour of "common (or plain) sewing", later still on the advice of the women the policy was again reversed, but when the Workhouse Committee asked for help in procuring such work the women replied "it is not the business of this Meeting to put out needle-work but we have passed on the proposal to the several Friends present."

With the setting up of the Clerkenwell Workhouse in 1702, the pattern for the relief of the poor of the London Meetings was complete. The responsibility was that of the Monthly Meetings, they received help for some of their poor women members from the Women's Meeting, and the Workhouse provided a home for the aged poor, and for children of both sexes, orphans and others in need of care.

There were no women on the Workhouse Committee, but from time to time the Women's Meeting was requested to appoint some of their number to visit and make report. Sometimes the management of the Workhouse came in for

1 Swarthmore MSS. Vol. V, 90.
2 Men's Two Weeks Meeting, 19.vii.1692.
3 Wandsworth M.M. Minutes, 1.xi.1706.

adverse criticism. Two years after its establishment the Committee received a visit from four women Friends bringing a complaint "that ye Women's Meeting are at a greater charge than they were at before ye seting up of ye workhouse and particularly for cloths". A charge of 4s. per week for an aged woman who had to have a nurse was considered excessive, but the Workhouse Committee justified this sum, saying

> Therefor we tenderly request those Women friends which have set in a hard opinion of ye workhouse be very careful how they, through a misunderstanding take occasion against it, for we are not without hope that this Workhouse will in due time answer the end of ye Quarterly Meeting in settling ye same.

Payments made for the year 1707 by the Women's Meeting for the maintenance in the Workhouse of certain poor aged women amounted to £81.

Each Monthly Meeting usually had two or three women maintaining the link between them and the Women's Meeting; such a one was Mary Fairman of Horselydown in Southwark who "looked after the poor for 30 years." She was chosen by her Monthly Meeting as one of "the women to whom widows and orphans may have recourse to for counsel and advice in concerne of marriage and settlements" and was on the first list of women "to visit and incorage the Poor in the Workhouse." She wrote a letter to her Monthly Meeting in 1713[1] pointing out that the Women's Meeting in Aldersgate was giving a constant monthly allowance to many poor widows and other families in Southwark.

> Five pounds and sometimes more every month brought away from that meeting by the women friends of Southwark for the poore (and not above 4 or 5 women Friends of Southwark that comes to said Meeting to helpe support that charge we are att). I have been ashamed to see so much moneys carryed away from our Meetings and so few women from our side to help support the charge.

From this it is evident that the women who attended the Women's Meeting were expected to bring donations with them to place "in the Box", for it was not until much later that the property and invested funds brought in sufficient income to meet all demands. Mary Fairman asked her Monthly Meeting to follow Devonshire House Monthly Meeting's example in stirring up Men Friends to encourage their wives to come to support the Meeting.

[1] Southwark MSS., 7.viii.1713.

If they come not themselves then to send subscription monthly (or quarterly) and to stir up widowers that have not wifes to give something quarterly.

At this period occasional gatherings of the Women's Meeting were held at Mary Fairman's own Meeting House at Horselydown situated on the south side of the River (near to the present Tower Bridge) and also at the Savoy Meeting House in the Strand. Two very active early members of the Women's Meeting, Jane Woodcock and Martha Fisher, had paid for the building of this Meeting House on the site of the old Palace of the Savoy, they themselves having living accommodation adjoining. Both had now been dead for some years, but Susanna Hawkins, the wife of Richard living nearby, then became mainly responsible for the care of the poor in the Westminster area.

With the passing of the first group of keen concerned women it was not always easy to maintain the same live interest, but the need was still great and the work did continue.

Mariabella Farnborough of Peel Meeting of the same generation as Mary Fairman had a similar record of service. In her early days she had been imprisoned more than once for speaking at meetings for worship held in the street. "The Beadle called Marrabella, hussy" indignantly records a by-stander on one such occasion.[1] Her son-in-law wrote,

> she prity constantly attended ye womens Meeting yt takes care of the poor and was one of our most servisablest and she used to goe and visit ye Sick and to meetings tho' it was with crutches.[2]

In 1701 Mary Lower in a letter to her mother, Margaret Fox, says, "Marabellow Farmbora desires to be remembered to thee, she is my next neighbour and hath been lamely in her foot, the fever fell into it."[3] We are glad to know that when Marabella was nearly 80 the lameness was cured and the crutches discarded. After her death, the work for Peel and the Women's Meeting was ably carried on by her daughter, Mariabella, the wife of Peter Briggins of Bartholomew Close. The third Mariabella mentioned in the Women's Meeting records was *their* grand-daughter; when she died, in 1769, her brother, John Eliot (III) sent thirty guineas to the Meeting as a remembrance of his sister.

[1] MS. Original Records of Sufferings, 1683/4, p. 779.
[2] Eliot Howard, *Eliot Papers*, 1894, II, p. 4.
[3] Mary Lower to Margaret Fox, 2.iii.1701. *Journal F.H.S.*, ix.185.

The Women's Meeting provided assistance in many different ways. "To mitigate present trial", was always "considered the more peculiar object of the meeting." Help was given for journeys to New Jersey and Jamaica and American women visiting England received monetary gifts. Two north country women Friends who came to visit London and lost some linen, were given £2; a bedstead was bought for 4s.; a dress was purchased for one Friend "she not having any fitt to go to Meeting in." Blue aprons, petticoats and many other articles of clothing were provided for prospective inmates of the workhouse. Sums of £2 or £3 were allowed as maternity gifts.

In 1689 "£5 was paid to Thomas Lurtin" on the occasion of his taking a poor young girl into his household. In 1756 two Friends, Claud Gay and his wife, were given 6s. per week for looking after a poor sick woman "to nurse her and do well by her". The Women's Meeting, having already granted a considerable sum of money towards the maintenance of this poor sick woman, a member of Peel Meeting, asked her Monthly Meeting to share the charge. They replied,

> that they were of opinion that it is an unprecedented method, for any Monthly Meeting to add to or relieve one under the care of the Womens Meeting, tho' readily believe it is a heavy charge on them but we must request them continuing this poor Friend under their notice.

On another occasion temporary accommodation at 5s. per week was found for a feeble minded Friend while she was awaiting a bed at Guy's Hospital for Incurables. Greater efforts to help were made at special seasons and in times of national depression; "it being a hard time with the Poore in respect of want of work and scarcity of money." "The severity of the season, high prices of provisions and dearness of coals," were all good reasons for additional generosity. In the winter of 1773 special gifts were sent to each monthly meeting with the request that some Friends be appointed to distribute the same amongst the most necessitous of the poor, "which will be giving Friends an opportunity, by visiting them in their families of communicating suitable advice as they may see occasion."

From the early days a number of poor women Friends had received "a constant allowance" of 2s. per week, raised to 4s. in cases where a nurse was needed. Subsequently the allowance was varied from 3s. to 6s. per week according to

the number of applicants and the state of the Meeting's finances.

At one time these pensions were only granted if the proposed recipients had already been receiving rent and coal from their monthly meetings for at least a year. Individual members were responsible for conveying the allowances and gifts of the meeting to the recipients; Letitia Aubrey, the daughter of William Penn is mentioned between the years 1721 and 1724 as one "of ye women Friends yt takes care of our poor friends." In 1851 the Meeting minuted that requests for help should not be made in writing, but "that those friends who have the charge of the poor in our different Monthly Meetings would endeavour to attend here in person."

In 1680 "42 elles of cloth for poors shifts" had been bought from John Bellers, a linen draper, and from that time until 1901 material for clothing was kept in stock for distribution. "Bought 3 pieces of Irish cloth it being now cheap" reads an entry in 1754. The Rules of the Meeting provided for "7 ells of cloth, calico or Flannel of equivalent value to be granted once in 2 years to Friends for whom application for such benefit be approved." In the year 1853, twenty-two Friends had been given cloth or calico; a little later it was decided that "Calico being now greatly preferred to linen cloth, the latter be no longer kept in stock, but whether calico or flannel be preferred the quantity given is to be to the value of 10/-."

Various ways were devised to keep the Meeting in funds. In 1751, and continued for several years, collections were taken at the Men's Yearly Meeting by women Friends posted at strategic positions:

> 4 within the Meeting House, 2 at ye Meeting House door, one at the end of ye Gallery leading from the Chamber and one at ye end of ye other gallery and one at the outward door.

There was no escape for the men.

In 1768 Susanna Barclay heads a list of annual subscribers with the sum of four guineas. Smaller amounts were given by other women Friends. This was the result of a suggestion that personal visits should be made to "Women Friends in affluent circumstances" asking for their support for the Meeting.

It was in 1680 that the first Recording Clerk, Ellis Hookes, purchased on the Women's Meeting's behalf, an estate of land and houses for £350 at Southgate, Middlesex (the last portion of this estate was sold in 1923). Sometimes negotiations about

the property were conducted in the adjoining Cherry Tree Inn (a well known local landmark). For 243 years the management of this property occupied much of the Meeting's time and attention. £114 was spent in 1697 for rebuilding a burnt out house and barn. In 1720 Thomas Story was paid 31s. for "drawing the writeing belonging to the Estate at Southgate." Part of the property was let on building lease in 1775 and in 1878 the old Southgate Burial Board purchased 4 acres of the land for use as a cemetery. Fearing interference, the Women's Meeting did not wish to consult the Charity Commissioners about this transaction. Eventually their solicitor, Richard Smith, persuaded them it was necessary and right, for the proposed purchasers would not buy unless they did. Through the Charity Commissioners' action the Women's Meeting were awarded an additional £400 on the purchase price. "We are therefore quite willing to accept the increased amount," says the minute recording this unexpected result! Owing to the development of the neighbourhood the wells of the houses on the remaining part of the estate were beginning to dry up, six houses having only a few gallons of water between them. The tenants were borrowing from each other for drinking purposes and had to fetch water for washing from the pond on the other side of the road. The Women's Meeting, as landlord, considered the matter and decided it only right that every house should be duly supplied with water, and so agreed to have it laid on from the pipes of the New River Company.

The women were helped in their business affairs by several able and concerned men Friends. Thomas How acted as banker and adviser from 1743, followed by his nephew and great nephew, John Masterman and John How Masterman. In 1886 the Meeting lost a considerable sum of money when Ager and Masterman's Bank suspended payment, after which their account was transferred to Dimsdale's Bank. It was not the first time the Meeting had lost money, for they noted a deficit in 1718 caused by "gold falling", the value of the guinea, which up to then had been fluctuating, was then fixed at 21s. A few years before, they received a legacy from a former Ratcliff woman Friend who had emigrated to America. Instead of the expected £10, £6 13s. 4d. was the actual amount received. Such was the then rate of exchange between Pennsylvania and English money.

John Kitching of Stamford Hill was appointed treasurer

in 1844; his duties were to superintend the collector of the rents and manager of the estates and to meet the Women's Committee once during the year in order "to audit the accounts kept by thee and ourselves."

A slight misunderstanding arose with his successor, Joseph Sterry. He offered to resign if the Meeting "thought they had committed an eror in appointing a man Friend as Treasurer", but the Meeting assured him they valued his services and asked him to continue.

The late eighteenth-century records make it clearer than the earlier ones that the Box and the Two Weeks Meetings were considered separate gatherings. In 1767, partly owing to declining attendance it was decided that the Box Meeting should still meet monthly, but on the same day as a Two Weeks Meeting. Thirty years later, the passing of marriages having been transferred to the Women's monthly meetings, the Women's Two Weeks Meeting itself decided to meet monthly, and so the amalgamation of the two meetings was complete. It was minuted that in future the Meeting was to be held on the first second day in every month, when the collections were to be made and the poor on the two lists relieved. The Meeting's title was The Meeting of Women Friends of London for transacting the business of the Two Weeks and Box Meeting, empowered to have the care of the stock of those meetings with the receipt and application of the income. (This is still the official description of the present Meeting.)

In 1881 the women decided that when the meeting occurred on the same day as a Bank Holiday it should be postponed until after the midweek Meeting for Worship at Devonshire House, because of the condition of the streets on the first Monday of August. "Women Friends finding it extremely difficult to get thro (the crowds)." These crowds were the result of Sir John Lubbock's Act establishing Bank Holidays, passed ten years before.

A useful service of the Women's Meeting was the keeping at Devonshire House of a Register of the names of women servants and nurses,

> a means of both mistresses and servants being more agreeably suited and thereby prevent servants from being under the necessity of living with people of other professions.

A Yearly Meeting for women was first recognised in 1784, but for some years before women Friends from all parts of the country had held gatherings in London at the time of the

Men's Yearly Meeting. They received epistles from the Women's Yearly Meetings in America, and from the Women's Yearly Meeting for the dominion of Wales. The despatch of the answers to these epistles was recorded at the London Women's Two Weeks Meeting following Yearly Meeting. In the case of America the name of the ship and its captain is sometimes given. During the American War of Independence a second copy was also despatched "by another conveyance."

A proposal from the Men's Meeting that the women should meet with them at an earlier hour than usual for a time of religious and solemn worship before separating for their respective business meetings was answered with restrained disapproval by the Clerk of the Women's Meeting.

> So far as we know (she replied) ever since the Women's Meetings in London were established a time for retirement has been constantly in use. If this has not been ye practice of our Brethren it becomes not us to enquire into ye cause thereof.

It was not always easy to find suitable Friends to act as clerks, especially when they were to follow such an outstanding one as Elizabeth Talwin of Ratcliff, who had served for many years in that capacity. She resigned in 1779 and Mary Bevan, appearing the most suitable person *willing* to undertake the clerkship, was recommended to the meeting for their "approbation on the plan of Tryal for her ability in the said service." The meeting agreed and recorded "Our Friends choice meets the approbation of this Meeting, as with Deborah of old we can say our Hearts are with the *willing* in Israel."

An interesting proposal for consideration and encouragement was laid before the Meeting in 1775 by two Friends, one being Ann Fothergill, the sister of Dr. John Fothergill. They pointed out the difficulty of young women of the Society "whose income or other prudential motives prevents keeping house, in meeting with suitable families to board with." It was suggested that a house should be provided in some of the open Courts in or near the City, and be furnished in plain and decent manner for the reception of three or four boarders. A person of stability and experience should be placed in charge. The boarders each to pay not more than £40 per year or £1 1s. per week if for a short stay. It was to be for single women only, but married couples might sometimes be accommodated. The Meeting arranged for the proposal to

be read occasionally "to see if any encouragement be met with". We do not know if the plan was ever carried out.

There has never been any direct appointment to the Women's Meeting from monthly meetings, but in practice it always endeavoured to secure representation from each of the London districts. It was not until 1892 that members from Kingston and Tottenham Monthly Meetings were added. In 1711 Joan Dant (the Friend pedlar of hosiery and haberdashery) was invited to join. Tace Raylton, a practical printer and business woman became a member of the Meeting in 1734.

In 1855, in order to secure a regular attendance, fifteen Friends were named as considered to constitute the Meeting at that time, some from each monthly meeting, but it was also to be open to any friend who may feel an interest therein and "incline to attend".

This address outlines the story of "The Box Meeting" up to the year 1890, the concluding date of the last Minute Book deposited in Friends House Library. Margaret Darton of Peckham Rye had recently resigned the Clerkship after many years service and been succeeded by Caroline Hipsley with Alice Dell as Assistant. The meeting's work has continued and today continues under a concern expressed in the Rules laid down in 1836—"that the origin of this Meeting and the feeling manifested on its institution may be kept in remembrance and that neither we of the present privileged day nor yet our successors may be unmindful of our individual responsibilities, but strive to acquit ourselves as good stewards of the manifold gifts and graces of God."

The *Transactions of the Unitarian Historical Society*, vol. 10, no. 4 (October 1954) include three interesting articles—Lydgate Chapel: the date of the building; A minister's wife of the eighteenth century (on Mrs. Elizabeth Bury, wife of Samuel Bury, minister at Bury St. Edmunds and then later of Lewin's Mead, Bristol); and a study of the Presbyterian Classical system, 1646-1660.

The Mennonite Quarterly Review, vol. 28, no. 4 (October 1954) is largely concerned with articles on the Amish Mennonite communities, commencing with the eighteenth-century settlements in Pennsylvania and bringing the story down to modern times.

Bristol Friends and the Friars Meeting House

"On the 7th September 1654, two men arrived in Bristol; their names were John Camm and John Audland. They preached to large crowds in Broadmead fields, and ever since that date Friends' meetings have been held in this City."

Friends gathered in Friars Meeting House, Bristol, on 7th September, 1954, for a special meeting of Bristol and Frenchay Monthly Meeting, were startled to hear these words prefacing a contribution from one of their oldest members, and to realise that, by an extraordinary coincidence, they were meeting to decide the future of the historic Friars premises on the exact 300th anniversary of the beginning of Quakerism in Bristol.

At that meeting Friends decided to relinquish these premises to the Bristol City Council, which requires them in the interests of town planning, and to accept the Council's offer of an alternative site and sufficient monetary compensation for the erection of new central premises. This decision was not made without appreciation of the historic associations of the Friars with the Society of Friends in Bristol, nor without assurance that the Large Meeting House and other buildings would be preserved for civic use.

Early History

THE site was acquired by Friends in 1669, but, as its name implies, it had connections with the life of a religious community long before that time. The buildings of the Dominican or Black Friars Priory of Bristol had been erected there between 1230 and 1267, and the House continued for nearly 300 years until it was dissolved by Henry VIII in 1538. Part of the lesser cloister and buildings to the north and south of it still stand, owing their preservation to the fact that they were used by Bristol trades guilds, from which they derive the names of Cutlers' Hall and Bakers' Hall.[1] In the middle of the seventeenth century the property was acquired by Dennis Hollister, grocer, a leading Bristol citizen and a member for Somerset in the Barebones Parliament in 1653. Dennis Hollister was then a Baptist, a member of the first dissenting church in Bristol formed in 1640. In his house took place some of the earliest meetings of "the baptiz'd Independent-People" with whom he had "walked in outward fellowship many years."[2]

[1] See *Transactions of the Bristol and Gloucestershire Archaeological Society*, vol. 55 (1933), pp. 151-190, article by Dr. Wilfrid Leighton, "The Black Friars, Bristol".

[2] *The Skirts of the Whore discovered, And the mingled People in the midst of Her. In a Letter sent by Denys Hollister to the Independent Baptiz'd People, who call themselves a Church of Christ in Bristol, but are found to be a Synagogue of Satan*, 1656, sign. A2.

Dennis Hollister had come into touch with Friends whilst in London on his parliamentary duties, and when John Camm and John Audland arrived in Bristol in 1654 he welcomed them, gave them hospitality, and became one of the earliest group of Friends in Bristol. The group met at first in the homes of its members—at George Bishop's house in Corn Street, above Dennis Hollister's shop in High Street, and at Edward Pyott's at Lower Easton, then a country district adjoining Bristol.

The first mention of a meeting room is contained in an adverse pamphlet by one Ralph Farmer, accusing Friends of throwing Martha Simmonds down the stairs after a meeting at the time of the summer fair in 1656, "at the house near the Orchard."[1] It was, fortunately, possible for George Bishop to refute the charge completely by pointing out that there were no stairs in that place, "it being on the ground."[2] This could not, therefore, have been the Broadmead upstairs room where Bristol Friends were meeting by 1662, when George Fox visited them, and where he was married to Margaret Fell on the 27th 8th mo. 1669.

The First Meeting House, 1669

The many Friends assembled in Bristol at that time also attended a meeting at which "the building a large meeting house on Denis Hollister his ground on the fryars" was considered, the matter being referred to a group of seven Friends to determine, among other points, "whether the meetinge house shalbee built on D.H. his ground or elsewhere."[3] The choice of site obviously caused these Friends some exercise, and the problem was settled by appointing a committee of seven prominent Friends not resident in Bristol. These resolved:

> A large meeting house shall be built, [and] they doe declare that the same shall be built on the ground of Dennis Hollister in the Fryars and that Wm. Taylor, Wm. Yeamans, Thos. Gouldeny, Thos. Bisse, Richard Marsh and Jno. Love, doe contract, build and furnish the said meeting house at the publick cost of Friends, and further they declare that, this judgement declared, was what was determined by lott, and that it lay upon Thomas Lower from the Lord that lotts

[1] Ralph Farmer, *Sathan Inthron'd*, 1657, p. 30. For Ralph Farmer see A. G. Matthews, *Calamy Revised* (1934).

[2] George Bishop, *The Throne of Truth Exalted over the powers of darkness*, 1657, p. 29.

[3] Bristol Men's Meeting minutes, vol. 1 (Friars Records, 201), 28.viii. 1669.

should be cast both for the place and the persons that should go in the worke.[1]

Details of the committee's proceedings are unfortunately lacking, but the earliest papers relating to Friends' building matters in Bristol[2] record amounts totalling over £850 spent on this first meeting house, including £200 "Purchase money for the site paid to Dennis Hollister."

The building occupied the same position as the present Large Meeting House, but the ministers' gallery faced west instead of east. There was apparently another higher gallery in existence from the beginning, and a further gallery was added seven years later when additional accommodation was required. These galleries were the source of a constant stream of complaint that appears in the minutes of the Men's Meeting[3] from their earliest records, on account of the

very greate Inconveniancy in Rude boyes sitting in the gallery next above the back dore in the great meeting house.

Many times it was agreed

that all friends shall be desired for tyme to come to forbid their children of goeing there and otherwise indeaver to discoradge all Ladds in sitting there.

This first meeting house was the scene of the bitter persecution that fell upon Quakers in Bristol and elsewhere in the 1670's and '80's. In 1670, following on the second Conventicle Act, the meeting house was seized by the authorities and Friends met in the street outside the locked doors of their premises. Occupation was regained four months later when Friends forced their way into the meeting house. Eleven years later the premises were again closed to them by the City authorities, and it was not until 1686, after a period of four years, that the keys of the meeting house were again in their possession.

During that period, on the instigation of the sheriff,

[1] *Ibid.* 2.ix.1669. Notes are not provided for Friends mentioned in the *Cambridge* or *Short Journals of George Fox* (ed. Norman Penney). William Taylor, baker, of the Castle, Bristol, d. 1701; m. (i) Mary (d. 1675), (ii) Elizabeth Webb (d. 1720); a sufferer in 1664, 1679, 1682-1683; served on disciplinary appointments in Bristol meeting. Thomas Bisse, merchant, of Augustine's parish (1668); m. (i) 1661 Mary Prince, (ii) Anne Hersent; served on financial and property appointments in Bristol meeting, 1667-1669; dealt with for disorderly walking, 1671. Richard Marsh, merchant (*c.* 1630-1704); see *Friends Quarterly Examiner*, 1907, pp. 477-490; *Journal F.H.S.*, x, 42-43; xxii, 90-92; xlv, 84. John Love, grocer, d. 1696; see *Journal F.H.S.*, xliii, 76.

[2] Building Book (Friars Records 149).

[3] Bristol Men's Meeting minutes, 26.iii. 1673, etc.

John Knight,[1] the meeting house was pillaged, the galleries, partitions and furniture were smashed by the mob, windows broken, and group after group of Friends driven through the streets from the meeting house to imprisonment in Bridewell and Newgate.

At one time so many Friends were imprisoned that only the children were left to keep up the meetings, which they managed to do, exhorted and strengthened by the words written to them by their elders from prison. One of these letters, written by Dorcas Dole, 30.iv.1682, was printed as a pamphlet in 1683 and again in 1700. It concludes with the following postscript:

> This was written to the Children who kept up the Meeting, at the Meeting-House-Door, in the open Streets, in Bristol, at that time when Friends there was generally in Prison for their Testimony to Truth.[2]

It was during this period of persecution that the Bishop of Bristol preached in the Friars Meeting House. On the 10th January, 1682, the mayor, sergeants at mace, the Bishop[3] and his chaplain, the aldermen and sheriffs, "with a greate Rabble accompanying them," arrived at the meeting house, too late to disperse the meeting as Friends had left a short while before, and entered the meeting room,

> where ye Bishop, having a large Auditory . . . as is reported, made a Speech, tending to exhort ym to go on in this sort of work & encourag'd ym to it by proposing for it a Blessing in this Life and ye Life to come. This ended, One of ye Constables came forth & said, Now ye House is consecrated for my Lord hath preachd there.[4]

Friends attending meeting at Friars one Sunday morning in 1954 noticed the present Bishop walking through the cloisters, and wondered whether this was perhaps the only other occasion when the Bishop of Bristol has visited the premises since Friends acquired them, but how different were the circumstances! Dr. Cockin was attending a conference held at Friars of young people of all denominations, including Friends.

The destruction caused during the periods of persecution was finally repaired and the meeting house restored to full use in 1686. It was to stand for another sixty years, until it became too dilapidated for further repair and too small to accommodate the increased numbers in the meeting.

[1] Sir John Knight, the Younger, d. 1718 (Dict. Nat. Biog.).

[2] Dorcas Dole, *A Salutation and Seasonable Exhortation to Children*; 1700 edition, p. 14. Dorcas Dole (d.1717), *née* Knight, m. (1667) John Dole, silkweaver.

[3] William Gulston, d. 1684.

[4] Friars Records 137 (Bristol MSS. V), f. 143-144.

In recounting something of the history of this first meeting house at Friars, mention must be made of a few of the personalities associated with it. George Fox visited it on his return from America in June, 1673, and stayed over the Fair, and again in February and March, 1678. William Penn had family connections with Bristol, for his father, Admiral Penn, was born in the city in 1621, and was buried in 1670 in Redcliffe Church. In 1696, in the Friars Meeting House, William Penn was married to his second wife, Hannah, granddaughter of Dennis Hollister and daughter of Thomas Callowhill, button-maker and linen-draper, and another of the earliest Bristol Quakers. William Penn and his wife lived in Bristol until they left for Pennsylvania in 1699, when a minute of the Men's Meeting records

> Wm. Penn, signifieing his Intention to goe shortly to his province of Pensilvania, takeing his leave of friends at this meeting & to fullfill the good order & custome amongst friends desires a certeficate from the friends of this citty as from the place of his habetation. wch. this meeting desires Benj. Coole & Richd. Snead & Ch. Harford Junr. to draw up & make ready to be signed in our next M:M.[1]

The New Meeting House, 1747-49

By 1747 the Meeting House erected in 1670 was in constant need of repair, partly due, no doubt, to the damage sustained in the persecutions described above. After recent expenditure of £80 on repairs, the Men's Meeting in October, 1747, decided to build a new meeting house on the site of the old one, and to this end to raise a subscription of about £1,000. They, therefore, appointed a committee of twelve prominent members of the Society, which was fully empowered to carry out the work.[2]

[1] Bristol Men's Meeting minutes (Friars Records 202), 17.v.1699. For Benjamin Coole, d. 1717, see *Journal F.H.S.*, xlv, 91. Charles Harford (1662-1725), merchant, of Castle Green, m. (1686) Rachel Truman.

[2] All material for this account of the building work comes from the "Building Book", (Friars Records *c.* 1842 H.7) (149), comprising bound papers collected by the Committee on Registers in 1842. The volume is lettered "Proceedings in Building Meeting Houses, 1670, 1747, 1765". The Friends on the committee were William Tully (d. 1763), Harford Lloyd (1700-1776, of the Old Bank), Thomas Daniell (1720?-1761), Robert Farnell (1690-1760), Thomas Goldney (1696-1769, an original partner in Miles' Bank), Mark Harford (1700-1788), Nehemiah Champion (1703-1753), Samuel Smith (d. 1772), Caleb Lloyd (1707-1768), Thomas Frank (1703-1757), Francis Freeman (1698-1752) and George Tully (architect, d. 1770 aged 82; see W. Ison, *The Georgian Buildings of Bristol*, 1952, pp. 47-49; H. M. Colvin, *Biographical Dictionary of English Architects, 1660-1840*, 1954, p. 629).

The Meeting Agrees that William Tully, Harford Lloyd, Thomas Daniell, Robert Farnell, Thomas Goldney, Mark Harford, Nehemiah Champion, Samuell Smith, Caleb Lloyd, Thomas Franks and Francis Freeman, in conjunction with George Tully, or any Five of them be a Committee In order to forward the Rebuilding the Friars Meeting with as much safety and dispatch as may be: that it may be ready as soon as Possible.

The Meeting also agrees thatt the Sole Management of agreeing with the workmen and Directing the building in all its parts be Left to the said Committee. . . .

Its Also Agreed thatt any member of the Society have Liberty to Attend the Committee att any time in order to propose to them whatt may Occur to them. . . .

Said Committee are desired to meet weekly or oftener if they see occasion, at such times & places as they think most convenient.

The committee met regularly every Tuesday eighty-three times until the work was finished. It was also

Impowered to open such a Way to said Meeting-House as to them may seem most Commodious at the Expence of any Sum not Exceeding the Surplus of ye Subscriptions Subscrib'd or to be Subscribd for Rebuilding said Meeting-house.

For many years the narrowness of the lane in Quakers' Friars had been a problem. As early as 1699 Friends were asked to advise their coachmen—

not to Drive within the lane leading out of the Fryers, but Rather to waite for them in the Broadstreet without ye same.[1]

As the more wealthy Friends removed to new houses in Clifton, Cotham and Hotwells, so the need for parking space for their carriages became more acute, and the large subscriptions of several Friends to the rebuilding fund were no doubt made in the hope that it would be sufficient, when the costs of building had been met, to secure a more convenient entrance way and a coachyard. They were not disappointed, for ground in Old Orchard was acquired for this purpose, and, when the meeting house had been completed, the Rosemary Street gateway and coachyard were constructed.

Of the 200 subscribers about twenty provided more than £25 each—among them the Goldneys, the Harfords, the Lloyds and the Champions, the total collection of this group amounting to more than £700, over one-third of the whole. The total amount subscribed was £2,050. The cost of rebuilding the meeting house cannot be distinguished from the total amount spent on all the work on the premises undertaken at

[1] Bristol Men's Meeting minutes (Friars Records 202), 11.vii. and 9.viii. 1699.

that time, which included the following items: land purchases and legal fees £261, building work and materials £837, carpenter's work and timber £746, mason's work and stone £420, freestone work £180, brickmaker £40, tiler's work £158, lime £97, plumber £146, glazier £11, smith's work £14.

The planning of the new meeting house was in the hands of two Friends, George Tully and his son, William. They were house-carpenters and surveyors, and George Tully was prominent in building development in the city in the eighteenth century. He had come to Bristol from Surrey in 1700 to work his apprenticeship in house-carpentry. He was admitted a free burgess of Bristol on 17.v.1715. He was responsible for laying out several residential squares; he built a chapel in Hotwells, and was almost certainly the architect who designed Wesley's chapel in Broadmead and the Horse-fair, a building that bears a close resemblance to the Large Meeting House.

The executive committee began its work by negotiating for the surrounding property required for improving access to the meeting house. George Tully was asked

> to get a plan of and levels of the adjacent Grounds and Roads,

and to

> begin to pull down all the inside of the Meeting and either to hire a Cellar to putt the old Stuff in or to build a Shed for that purpose as he thinks best. (27 October 1747)

Unused material from the old house was later sold for only £4, which would imply that a great deal of the original fabric was incorporated in the present building.

A week later George Tully produced to the committee a model for the new house, which he was asked to complete and bring to the next meeting; meanwhile he was

> "to take proposals of Workmen for the Necessary forwarding the Rebuilding as soon as possible", and to get "the Foundations for the Pillars made with all speed". Next week it was "Resolved that the Model for Rebuilding the Meeting-house is Agreed too, with the following alterations Vizt. That the Windows over the Preachers Gallery be Reduced to the same Size as the other Windows and that two more Windows be Opened in Each side of the House, and also that the Pillars have a Pedastal three feet high."

William Tully was requested "to go to Bath to take proposals for the Pillars" and "to know in what time it can be done." It would seem, however, that his visit to Bath was unsuccessful, for on 17th November Thomas Goldney and the Tullys

were asked "to Treat with Thos Paty for the Pillars . . . on the best Terms they can."

As a result, at their next meeting it was reported that Thomas Paty had agreed

> to Erect the Pillars of the Meeting house for the sum of Ninety six pounds, of which this Committee approves.

Thomas Paty was a member of perhaps the most important family of architects, stone-masons and carvers in Bristol of the eighteenth century. He and his father and brother were together responsible for a remarkable amount of building development in the centre of Bristol, which was in process of being replanned on more spacious and dignified lines.[1] He shared in designing new buildings for the Infirmary begun in 1784, carried out the rebuilding of Bristol Bridge, and laid out the majority of the main streets in the centre of the city. As Walter Ison tells us:

> It is also certain that much of the ornamental stonework used by the Bristol house-builders of that time was prepared in the Patys' yard in Limekiln Lane.[2]

This, then, must have been the source from which the fine Doric columns were obtained that are the most distinctive feature of the interior of the Meeting House.

Thomas Paty later contracted for "makeing and seting" the windows at 24s. each, for the freestone coping round the top of the meeting house wall, and the frontispiece to the East door with the date 1747.

In November Thomas Hutton was appointed clerk of works—

> to Inspect the Workmen Employ'd about the Meeting house, to be a Check upon them and keep Account of their Work, also to take Account of all Stones, Lime & Materials for Rebuilding the Same.

His first recommendation was that "the Workmen Employ'd have no Ale gave 'em for the future." This the committee approved, but, when the work was nearly finished in June, 1748 they

> Order'd that Wm. Tully and Geo. Tully do give Forty two shillings to the Workmen to Drink, as in their Discretion may seem Meet.

[1] Among Paty's work were the carving and masonry for the Corn Exchange, Redland Chapel and Court (now Redland High School for Girls), Clifton Hill House (now a University hall of residence), Arnos Court (a house built for William Reeve, a Friend, disowned 1775, d. 1778), and the Royal Fort (now the University Department of Education). See H. M. Colvin, *op. cit.*, pp. 447-448; W. Ison, *op. cit.*, pp. 40-43.

[2] W. Ison, *op. cit.*, p. 41.

As work progressed the committee introduced various amendments to the original plan. The level of the floor of the meeting house was raised four feet, two more windows were added to light the stairs to the galleries, and the windows over the ministers' gallery were omitted as it was realised that these would

"be Inconvenient by leting in the Sun in the Afternoon" but "in Order that the same Light may be admitted into the Meeting-house Its agreed that all the upper Windows have one light more added to their length and the Culloms Six Inches higher". (19 Jan. 1748)

Masons were employed to build the boundary walls round the property at "12d. a perch". The contract for the Meeting House walls of up to 18 inches thick was

16d a perch, & so in proportion for all thatt is thicker, And all the Windows & Over the Doors to be Arched.

By May, 1748, the roof was reached, and the committee

Agreed with Joseph Thomas, Tyler, to Tile the Meeting House at One pound two shillings per Perch at 15 feet square, the said Jo. Thomas to find lime, nails and hair. (17 May 1748)

It had originally been intended to cover the flat roof over the sides of the meeting house with lead, but on 31st May it was decided this would be "Inconvenient by Strieking down the heat in the Gallerys, as well as much Dearer."

Thus the shell of the building was completed in seven months, and now work commenced on the interior furnishing. On 7th June George Tully was directed to "lay the Floors of the Side Gallerys for four Seats, and the front Gallery for Three Seats." On 21st June, to allow for more seating, it was

"Resolv'd that the Pedastals of the Pillars have all the Corners cut of[f] to an Octagon & the Treble Pillars to the same proportion"; and on the 28th that "the Floor of the Men Ministring Friends Gallery be four feet Clear in height more than the Floor of the Meeting House, and the Women Friends Two Feet four Inches."

In August the committee directed

That Geo: Tully be desired to know from the Womens Meeting whether the Seates of the Meeting be painted or not,

and the decision came back from the Women's Meeting that they did not desire the seats to be painted. Two months later it was:

"Agreed with Joseph Thomas to paint the Meeting House three coats in oyl, at sixpence per yard, but no size or glass to be used, but to kill the knots" (11 October 1748). The colour was chosen by "a piece of cloth of which Geo. Tully has a part thereof to compare that it may be painted agreeable thereto" (15 November 1748).

Joseph Thomas was also required to "Paint the Seats in the Gallerys for One pound Ten shillings" (21st February, 1749).

In addition to the Large Meeting House a new Men's Meeting room was erected, a wall was built along the burial ground and gates hung facing the main entrance to the meeting house, and the way to Rosemary Street was paved. Finally, in February, 1749, the gateway in Rosemary Street was built, and a month later, on 21st March, 1749, the committee

> Order'd that the Meeting House be Shut up this Night and to be Clean'd this Week; & also that the Ways from the Coach yard Door to the Meeting House be kept fast to prevent people from passing to & fro.

In April, 1749, the Large Meeting House accommodating about 700 people was crowded for the first meeting to be held in the new building, and there must have been among that great assembly many families descended from the first Bristol Quakers of an earlier century, and many whose names were to become well-known in Bristol and beyond. Among them, no doubt, was Richard Reynolds, then a boy of 14. He married into the Darby family of Coalbrookdale, became a director of the firm of ironfounders and, on his retirement from business in 1804, returned to Bristol, where for twelve years he was renowned as one of the city's wealthiest and most generous benefactors. He died in 1816 and was buried at the Friars, when

> So great was the public curiosity that existed on this occasion and such the eagerness manifested by the poor, who had lost their best friend, to pay the last respect to his remains, that not only the spacious burial ground was filled with spectators and mourners, but the very walls and tops of the houses surrounding the area were covered in a remarkable manner.[1]

Within another century other names became prominent among the worshippers at Friars—the Hunts, the Tanners, the Sturges, the Graces, the Peases, succeeding generations of the Frys, including Joseph Storrs Fry, director of the chocolate firm for over fifty years, renowned in Bristol for his philanthropic work for hospitals, Sunday schools and Y.M.C.A., and Clerk of London Yearly Meeting for fifteen years; and Robert Charleton, who was a member of the Quaker deputation which travelled to Russia in 1854 to

[1] *Letters of Richard Reynolds, with a Memoir of his Life*; by Hannah Mary Rathbone, 1852.

present an address to the Emperor in an attempt to preserve peace with that country. A member of one of these families, Carta Sturge, has left us a description of First Day morning meetings at Friars as she remembered them in her childhood in the 1850s.[1]

> We entered a very sombre building—dignified certainly, and spacious. It had once been a monastery, and still went by a name indicative of its past use, and underneath the sleeping Quakers in the adjoining graveyard slept in peace a layer of monks, a curious development of the irony of time. . . . The meeting-place itself was a huge square room, with a very high flat ceiling, supported by pillars of enormous height—as high as the clustered pillars of the cathedral not so very far off, but so absolutely plain and unadorned as to have a very curious effect in columns on such a scale. The square windows were placed very high, so that nothing could be seen from them but the sky. The room was filled with rows upon rows of black oak forms, very aged, with drab cushions upon them. At the top of the room, facing the meeting, were three tiers of seats raised one above the other, in which, solemnly facing the rest of us, sat the Friends of weight and importance, men on one side and women on the other. In the highest row sat the ministers who were recognized as such. . . .
>
> We were generally seated early, so that at first there was the interest of watching the Friends come in. What stately ladies in grave silks and satins—always the best materials—walked in silence up the aisle in their coalscuttle bonnets! . . . Equally impressive gentlemen, too, walked up the opposite aisle; and young girls in untrimmed straw bonnets, and small children like ourselves.
>
> When at last all had taken their seats, a silence fell over the meeting—a silence it is impossible to describe. It was as still as a mountain-top, and all the more awe-inspiring because it was the silence of numbers—so many there, yet all silent.

What a contrast with the children of an earlier generation! Yet, perhaps it is significant that the "rude boys" who disturbed the first Quakers were also the "children who kept up the Meeting, at the Meeting-House-Door, in the open Streets, in Bristol,"[2] and through whom our Society increased its strength, whilst so many of these later, perfectly-disciplined children, like the writer of this passage, fell away from membership in later years.

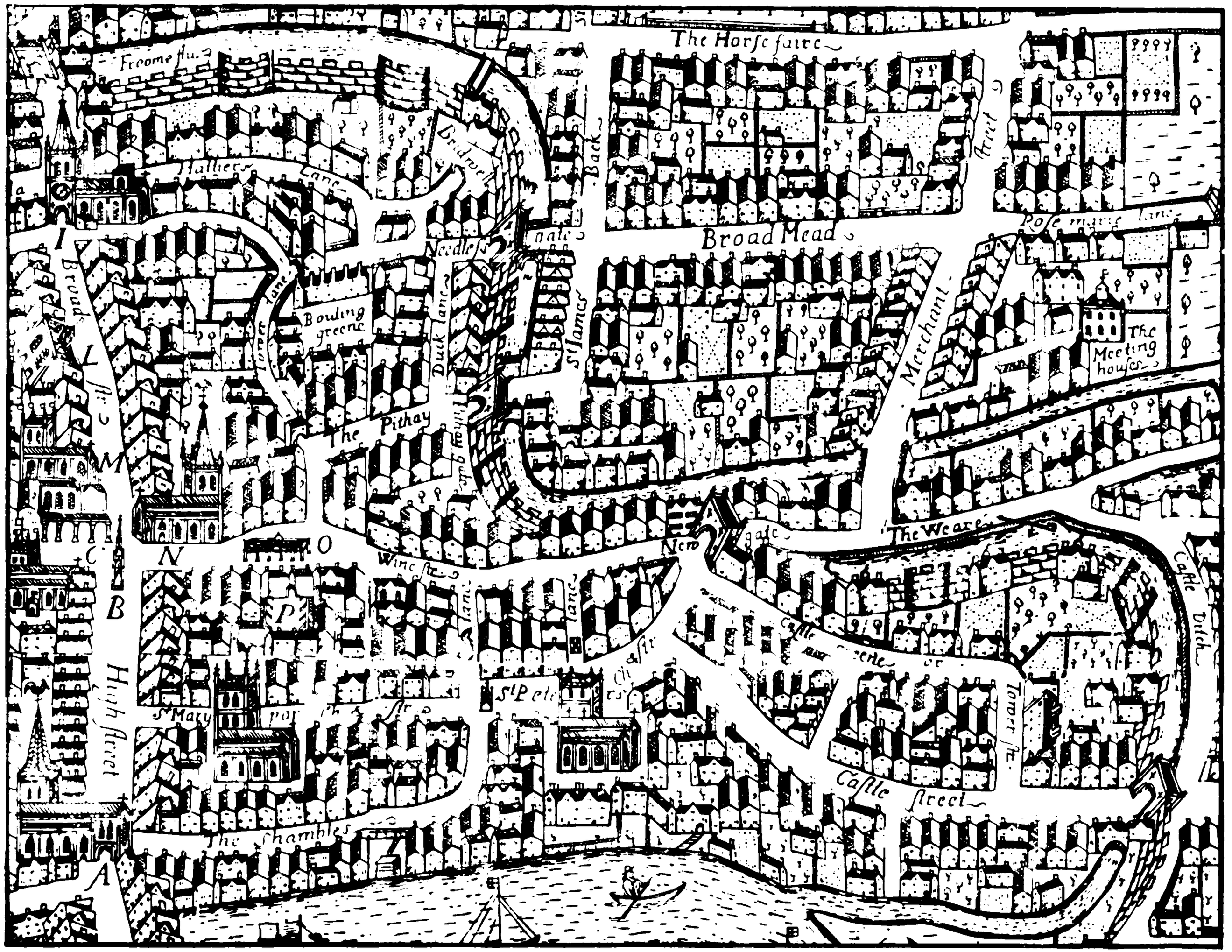
But today we hope there are children growing up with happier memories of the Friars—not only the families of Friends, but of those living nearby, who in the past twenty-five years have passed through the Nursery School, a pioneer

[1] M. Carta Sturge, *Some Little Quakers in their Nursery*, 1906. A reproduction of a painting of the ministers' gallery of that time appeared, with biographical notes, in *Journal F.H.S.*, xxxiii (1926), 67.

[2] Dorcas Dole, *A Salutation . . . to Children*, 1700, p. 14.

By courtesy of VEALE & CO., Photographers, Bristol

MEETING HOUSE, THE FRIARS, BRISTOL



Reproduced by courtesy of the City Museum, Bristol, from Millerd's Plan.

EAST BRISTOL IN 1673

example of this type of education, started by a Friend on the premises.

There are, too, the large number of children, some of them members of the Friars Meeting today, who remember the Sunday School work started there last century, when the ancient Cutlers' and Bakers' Halls were bought for use as First Day schoolrooms. Those were days when every room of the rambling, spacious premises was occupied to capacity each Sunday by Friends and their Sunday School and Adult School gatherings.

Today, with three other meetings in residential parts of Bristol, the Large Meeting House is rarely used for regular worship. It still, however, retains its stately dignity in spite of its dingy dress, and, when we worship there, the meeting house they built and peopled seems to form a link between ourselves and that line of men and women, known and unknown, who have there maintained a witness to their Quaker faith during the past three centuries. And although it cannot but cause us regret to break with such associations, yet there is surely a link more enduring than bricks and mortar, and of greater value. It is that precious heritage committed to us of a way of worship and an interpretation of the Christian faith that forms a vital and unique contribution within the Christian Church. We believe that, by removal to a new home, Bristol Friends can be strengthened in the task of passing on this trust to future generations, and can find in the building of a new meeting house an opportunity for renewed inspiration.

MARGARET H. SIMPSON

MILLERD'S PLAN (opposite). The original Friends' Meeting House at the Friars is seen in the north east quarter. Bristol Bridge over the River Avon is in the south east corner, south of St. Nicholas Gate.

Key to the letters on the Plan: A—St. Nicholas Church and Gate; B—the High Cross; C—the Tolzey; I—St. John's Church and Gate; L—the Guildhall; M—St. Ewen's Church; N—Christ Church; O—the Market House; P—the Meal Market.

Architectural Notes on the Friars Meeting House, Bristol

THE property known as the Friars in Bristol is situated between Broad Weir, Philadelphia Street, Rosemary Street and the street called Quakers' Friars. It is just outside the old city wall to the north-east of the old city and in the shadow of the castle. The castle was demolished after the Civil War, but when Friends first went to the Friars in 1670 and built their "Great Meeting House" on Dennis Hollister's ground at a cost, including the land, of £857, they had to have the city gate opened for them to go out to meeting on Sundays.

In the course of three centuries, Friends have extended their holding in the area to comprise a large portion of the site of the Black Friars monastic buildings. Much of this expansion dates from last century, when buildings were purchased to house the rapidly expanding First Day School and other educational activities, but some of it dates from the eighteenth century, as for instance the 1749 Rosemary Street entrance and coachyard.

The meeting house of 1670 was found in 1747 to be in such bad repair that it was decided to demolish it and rebuild on the old foundations. The present meeting house was completed and first used early in 1749. The total cost was £2,050, which included the freestone pillars, an item of £96.

It is interesting to note the increased cost over three-quarters of a century of more than 100 per cent., and to compare the cost of the freestone pillars with the larger ones at Friends House (1925)—although the comparative diameters differ considerably, the height is not much different and the comparable price per cubic foot is as eight to one, and nowadays the cost would be about twenty times more than in 1750.

Friars was built at a period when meeting houses were developing to a larger type with a gallery running round three sides supported on columns—wood or iron, but reaching only to the underside of the gallery, not up to the ceiling as hereinafter described at Bristol.

There never was, nor has there ever been, any definite Quaker architectural tradition other than simplicity and

suitability, and most of the earlier examples, with the exception of the Friars and Gildencroft, Norwich (and a rather smaller example at Hertford) were small buildings which, in the words of Martin Shaw Briggs, have maintained even to this day their architectural integrity.

The Friars did, however, differ from its contemporaries in the method of supporting the gallery, and went so far as to make the columns serve the dual purpose of supporting the roof also. It also indulged in a rather richer standard of furnishing and finishings than its contemporaries, and followed the Georgian tradition of panelling, though not indulging in any of its extravagancies; there is, however, a note of solid opulence about the gallery front and ministers' gallery, perhaps influenced—who can say—by the Merchant Venturers who made Bristol so prosperous.

The late Sir George Oatley compared the Friars with John Wesley's Chapel in the Horsefair, known as the New Room, which was possibly built at the same time—and also with the Penn Street Tabernacle built for George Whitefield (1753). In his opinion all three of these buildings must have had the same architects, George Tully and his son, William. He also draws attention to the lantern over the centre of the Chapel, somewhat similar to that at the Friars, through which Wesley, it is said, used to watch his preachers when he himself was not in the congregation.

The peculiarity of the gallery construction has been stressed, but the lantern in the centre of the ceiling is a much greater curiosity, the use of which can hardly have been the same as Wesley's use; presumably, therefore, it was in the interest of ventilation.

It is doubtful whether many Bristol Friends, other than those who serve or have served on the Premises Committee, have squeezed up the narrow staircase at the junction of the south and east galleries and reached the "leads"—an old-fashioned term for a roof, but in this case an accurate description. Those who have not done so should, before it is too late —they will be rewarded by the sight of the unique erection best perhaps described as a "gazebo" some sixteen feet square and twelve feet high, surrounding and enclosing the comparatively small five feet square opening in the Meeting House ceiling.

The outside is covered with small slates and the whole is supported by sloping roofs at each corner covered with much

larger slates: on three sides are windows and on the fourth is a door.

The glimpse of this feature from the burial ground gives little idea of its extraordinary character. There is a sliding panelled door in the opening in the meeting house ceiling which can be manipulated, presumably for the control of fresh or vitiated air, assisted by the four somewhat ungainly gas pendants, of course a much later addition. What, if anything, was there before?

The flat roof presents a somewhat hybrid appearance—slate in the centre, wide expanses of lead, and over the north and south galleries tiled roofs. Once having solved the problem of supporting the roof and gallery on the same pillars it would appear that the Georgian Quaker architects, George Tully and his son, were rather at a loss to know what to do. It is possible that some of the eccentricities are the result of later "improvements" and rearrangements.

So much for the interior of this fine old building which retains its charm even though it has lost much of its original use and suitability. Externally it is simple and straightforward and must have been more so before the extraordinary covered ways were erected, no doubt, with the best intentions if with the minimum of grace. Take these away and also the south porch, and you have a square building in the best traditions of Quaker architecture, with a rather more than ordinarily ornate east porch much more in the contemporary Georgian tradition than is usually found in our meeting houses. It is also repeated inside in the same tradition. This porch is the work of Thomas Paty.[1]

Of the ancillary buildings there is little to be said, and the less said the better of the library, erected in the Victorian era—it is not even structurally sound, though some of the book-cases can well be adapted and made good use of in the new buildings.

The design of the Small Meeting House, added in 1759, shows a considerable falling off from the original inspiration of the main building erected only twelve years previously. It is as traditional as a Friends Meeting House can be, and the high windows afford no view other than of the sky.

The residential quarters are evidently of the Regency period, and though by no means convenient according to

[1] See p. 29 *ante*.

present day standards, they have the quiet dignity of their period.

The buildings to the north of the meeting house are of little architectural value and call for no comment, neither is it proposed to make much mention of the three halls which are adequately dealt with in the booklet compiled by Marian Pease[1] with the assistance of W. H. Woolley and Frederick C. Hunt, to whom the writer of the foregoing is indebted for certain particulars and dates particularly.

A great relic of the past is passing out of the Society of Friends—it is the fervent wish of all, including the undersigned, that the new buildings will be worthy successors, and in every way suitable for the twentieth century and after.

HUBERT LIDBETTER, F.R.I.B.A.

[1] *A Brief Historical Account of the Friends Meeting House Premises called The Friars . . . Bristol, period 1227 to 1939.*

Accounts for the year 1954 and *Journal*, vol. xlvi

	£	s.	d.		£	s.	d.
Journal of Friends' Historical Society, vol. xlvi, parts 1 and 2 ..	171	1	10	Balance brought forward	306	12	9
Taylor. J. G. Whittier. Supp. No. 25	71	10	6	Subscriptions and Donation	244	8	8
Nuttall. J. Nayler. Supp. No. 26	48	7	0	Sales	21	13	3
Stationery	21	6	3	Advertisements ..	5	4	0
Expenses, including postage	23	4	2	Donations towards Supplements Nos. 25 and 26	65	8	1
Balance carried forward to 1955:				Interest on Post Office Account	4	14	8
Post Office Account— 247 5 8							
Barclays Bank— 65 6 0							
	312	11	8				
	£648	1	5		£648	1	5

Examined with the books of the Society and found correct.

16.v.55. (Signed) BASIL G. BURTON.

Esther Biddle and Her Mission to Louis XIV

IN the light of recent Quaker history it seems odd that what was probably the earliest attempt of a Quaker at mediation between the heads of states at war with each other met with the disapproval of Friends at the time. The story of Esther Biddle's visit to Queen Mary II in 1694, and to Louis XIV following it, is recorded by Gerard Croese,[1] but was purposely omitted by Sewel[2] as he makes plain in his introduction. It was, he says, a personal matter to herself, not approved by Friends (and ill advised), hence "not to be imputed" to them by inclusion in his history. Probably this is why it has remained buried for nearly two hundred and fifty years in Croese's not very reliable and almost unreadable volume. Indeed there is a note of doubt in even his account of Esther's mission (and also of Mary Fisher's visit to the Grand Turk in the same chapter) due, I think, to incredulity that *women* could have accomplished such hazardous journeys and interviewed such exalted persons. George Keith[3] wrote to him that if God sent a message to the French King by Esther it could only be by such a miracle as that of Balaam's ass. But whatever the doubt and disapproval of her contemporaries, documentary evidence has recently come to light that confirms the story.

It has been necessary to condense Croese's account, but in doing this I have retained, as far as possible, his own wording.

Esther Biddle went to Queen Mary and, after complaining that the war between Christians with its suffering was a grief to her heart as a woman and a Christian, she asked the Queen to endeavour to end it. After the Queen had answered her, she asked leave to go to France to speak to the French King on the same matter and desired a letter from the Queen to the same effect. This was at first refused and she was warned of the difficulties and dangers of such a journey, yet for all that after much importunity she got a pass from the Queen's Secretary and forthwith set out. After various traverses she came to Versailles and applied to the exiled James II as to one to whom she had some years before been known upon a like occasion.

She delivered to him the letter she had written to King Louis. He gave it to the Duke of Orleans who promised to pass it on to the King, but she insisted on speaking to the King herself. "Am I permitted to speak to the King of Kings, and may I not speak with men?" Hearing

[1] Gerard Croese, *General History of the Quakers*, 1696, p. 267.
[2] Sewel, *History of Quakers* (1844 edn.), Vol. I, p. xvii.
[3] Croese, p. 570.

of this the King admitted her to his presence. He entered the room full of Princes, Princesses, Prelates, and great men and spoke to her with his hat under his arm. Apparently she refused to believe it really was the King until he put on his hat. Then she gave him the substance of her letter, in which she prayed the King to make his peace with God and with the nations he was at war with and put a stop to such an overflowing and Rivulet of Blood that was shed.

The King replied, "But woman I desire Peace and seek Peace and would have Peace, and tell the Prince of Orange so." Having got passes from the King she returned to England via Holland, "having with all her endeavours effected nothing", says Croese, presumably because the war did not stop at once. He adds that while the Quakers think her story ought not to be doubted as she was known to be sincere and honest, others were more likely to heed it since she showed the letters given to her, "one signed by the Queen's secretary and the other by the King's command and with his own hand."

So much for Croese.

Neither of these letters found its way into any of the Quaker collections that have come down to us. But the record of the first of them I recently discovered in the Public Record Office. It is in Queen Mary's Entry Book where record was kept by the Secretary of State, Lord Shrewsbury, of actions ordered by the Queen herself. It reads as follows:

> Passe for Hester Biddle a Quaker to go to Harwich or Gravesend and embark within 20 days for Holland or Flanders.
> Dated Whitehall 5th of September 1694.
> Shrewsbury[1]

Corroborative evidence is to be found in Peel Monthly Meeting minutes. Esther Biddle was at that time a "poor Friend" of that meeting. For several years she received her five shillings pension in every single distribution recorded except for the months following the date of the "passe" until February, 1695. I conclude from this that it took her three or four months to fulfil her mission and return. How interesting it would be to know what the "various traverses" were, and since she was a "poor Friend" one wonders who united with her concern and made the journey financially possible.

A marginal note in the record of Esther's pass in the Queen's Entry Book presents a problem to which no authority consulted, Quaker or other, seems able to give a definite solution. In the space where sponsors' names are placed in other such entries appear the words "Minister etc. of St.

[1] S.P.D. 44 Entry Book 344, p. 248.

Sepulchres." She was living in St. Sepulchres parish when she died two years later. Did she perhaps have the backing of unnamed members of another religious body in her concern, so that here was an early joint pacifist deputation? Or alternatively is it possible that Esther herself, a woman, was recognised as a minister by the Whitehall authorities? It would be pleasant to think either of these explanations was the true one.

Not only in this culminating exploit near the end of her life, but throughout the forty years of her ministry Esther Biddle seems to have gone her own independent way. She apparently took no part in meetings for discipline, for Irene Edwards, in her study of the records of early women's meetings in London, did not find her mentioned once. Writing, and above all, preaching were her contribution. She had begun her ministry by 1656 and she was still preaching in London in 1694, the year she put her peace concern into action. According to Friends' Register she died two years later, 5.xii mo. 1696, aged 67.

We know little about Esther's early life until she met Francis Howgill, probably on his first visit to London, 1654, but after that her life is well documented. Of all early women Friends in London none seems to have been so active over so long a period of time or so frequently imprisoned. I have found references to fourteen imprisonments, and she is on Besse's list of twenty women and some sixty men who had, during the thirty years of persecution, "frequently exposed themselves at the hazard of their estates, liberties and lives . . . by preaching in assemblies for worship in London."[1]

That Esther was an educated woman is evident from her handwriting and also from her command of language. Her own account, in one of her tracts,[2] of her background and upbringing shows she had not, like so many early Friends, been a member of one of the Seeker or Independent groups, but had always been a devoted, if unsatisfied, Church woman and a good Royalist. She says that her father had her "bishopped to gain a blessing for me," and that she lived many years in Oxford, then came to London where she sought satisfaction "evening, morning and noonday, in the Common Prayer" and when only one church was left in the

[1] Besse, *Sufferings of The Quakers*, 1753. Vol. 1, p. 484.
[2] Esther Biddle, *The Trumpet of the Lord*, 1662.

City she went to it.[1] She adds "when their books were burned I stood for them and my heart was wholy joyned to them, and when the King's head was taken off my heart and soul was burdened that I was weary of my life." She makes it plain in a much later letter to Francis Howgill that it was he who drew her to Friends.[2]

Thomas Biddle, Esther's husband was also an active Friend. He was a cordwainer and seems to have had a prosperous business in Old Change with a number of Quaker apprentices.[3] This business was carried on till Old Change was burnt out in the Great Fire. They moved south of the river for a period, but evidently did not recover their former prosperity, for shortly after Thomas's death Esther became a pensioner of Peel Meeting, and at one time lived in one of the rooms behind the meeting house given over to "poor widows." The only one of their four sons who grew up was Benjamin, apprenticed first to his father, but later reapprenticed to someone else by Peel Meeting out of a bequest left for apprenticing sons of "poor Friends." But still Esther managed to travel in the ministry, visiting Scotland and Ireland during these years.[4]

Esther travelled far and wide in the ministry. She was arrested in 1656 at Banbury[5] and at Launceston[6] with John Stubbs and William Ames, with whom she was in Holland a little later.[7] In that year she went to Newfoundland,[8] which had then only a thinly spread population of a

[1] This was probably St. Peter's Queenshithe. There is a tradition that only one church in the City kept to the old form of Service throughout the Commonwealth, and Esther's contemporary account lends it further credence. Since Evelyn mentions (March 25, 1649) having heard Common Prayer ("a rare thing nowadays") in St. Peter's Queenshithe, it has been assumed that this was the one church. It was only a few minutes' walk from the Biddles' home. (*London Past and Present*, Wheatly and Cunningham, Vol. III, p. 22.)

[2] S.P.D. CIII, 75. The house in Watling Street where meetings were held following Howgill's first visit to London would be just around the corner from the Biddles' home in Old Change near St. Paul's, W. C. Braithwaite, *Beginnings of Quakerism*, p. 157.

[3] W. C. Braithwaite, *Beginnings of Quakerism*, p. 157. One of them was William Biddle, ancestor of the Philadelphia Biddle family, who was probably his nephew.

[4] *Journal F.H.S.*, x, 159; xii, 138.

[5] Besse: Vol. I, p. 366.

[6] *West Answering to the North*, 1657.

[7] W. I. Hull: *Rise of Quakerism in Amsterdam*, 1938, 282.

[8] *Journal of George Fox*, Cambridge, 1911, Edition. Vol. II, p. 334.

few thousand except during the fishing season, when ships from Bristol and other European ports crowded the harbour.[1] Hers is the only Quaker visit to it recorded. In 1657 she went to Barbados[2] and she seems to have made contact with George Fox himself in that year. She is said to be the woman who stopped him in the Strand and "prophesied concerning King Charles II three years before he came in." She said she must go and tell him, but George Fox, according to the Journal, sensibly told her to "keep it to herself for they would look upon it as treason."[3]

During the late 1650s she spent some time in Holland and seems there, as always, to have followed her own line, for Dr. Hull reports her to have been "a thorn in the side of Dutch as well as English Quakerism."[4] One of William Caton's letters from Holland[5] in 1661 mentioned that she and another woman Friend had been to "The Straits" some time previously. A contemporary Seaman's Calendar[6] (of which George Fox is known to have possessed a copy) shows that "The Straits" at this period meant the Mediterranean from Gibraltar to Constantinople. What countries she visited and when the journey took place remains unknown. But it is perhaps not irrelevant that there exists a letter[7] from her to George Fox dated from Cowes the 15th of Second Month (April) 1659. Cowes was at that time a port of call for ships from Holland to distant parts, so perhaps she was on the way to "The Straits" then. The tone of the letter is certainly compatible with such an assumption. She dedicates her "body sole and Speritt" for "the advancing of the Glorious Truth unto which I am called," and has

> surrendered all for the Gospell's sake. I desire in the Lord thy prayers . . . and let us be remembered amongst you forever so in the Lord farewell. O that I could see thy face once more. . . . My life breathed to thee over all the mountains and the seas.

Esther Biddle's career as a pamphleteer may have begun as early as 1655, but the first of her "books" to bear a date was *A Warning to the City of London and the Suburbs Thereof* (1660). It consists mostly of an attack on luxury and corruption, and contains an account of the celebrations following

1 Pedley: *History of Newfoundland*. 24.
2 *Journal of George Fox*, Cambridge, 1911, Edition. Vol. II, p. 334.
3 *Journal of George Fox*. Ed. Nickalls, 1952, p. 355.
4 W. I. Hull: *Rise of Quakerism in Amsterdam*, 1938, 282.
5 Swarthmore MSS. Vol. I, p. 4-5 (Caton).
6 Phillips: *Seamans Calendar*.
7 Swarthmore MSS. Vol. IV, 164.

General Monk's arrival that is interesting to set beside Pepys's diary for the same day. She writes:

> all trampling on the seed of God which lyeth low in you, some in darkness others in swearing . . . some pushing and haling and beating the lambs of God and all in disorder dishonoring God on the 21st of the 12th month 1659, your evil work and words did exceed in that day and night.

This was the day the secluded members of Parliament were admitted to the House, and voted to free the City members who were in prison. The rejoicings were very great according to Pepys,

> Here out of the window it was most pleasant to see the City from end to end with the glory about it, so high was the light of the bonfires and so thick around the City and the bells rang everywhere.

He mentioned earlier that the City had been "open-handed" to the soldiers and that they were most of them drunk all day, which may perhaps explain the "pushing and haling."

Esther's tracts mostly follow the usual pattern of denunciation and prophecy of judgment on offenders, sometimes for their personal sins, but often for their treatment of Friends. A manuscript in Friends House Library, not in her handwriting but in her style and endorsed "Esther Biddle's message to King Charles" (1670) both denounces the luxury of the Court and demands that persecution should be stopped. But there is one "book" that is different. It is "The Trumpet of the Lord. . . . By Esther Biddle a Sufferer for the testimony of Jesus in Newgate" (1662). In it she appeals as a former churchwoman against the Act of Conformity, and ends on a defiant note of refusal to conform to "that vain religion" from which the Lord had set her "at liberty." No wonder that before the end of 1662 she was again in prison, this time for "writing a book."

We learn of this in a letter from Ellis Hookes to Margaret Fell which never reached her. The letter is now in the Public Record Office. It was intercepted at the Westmorland end, and its presence in the Public Record Office is probably due to the interception at the London end of a letter from Esther Biddle to Francis Howgill in Appleby jail in 1664. The Secretary of State in Whitehall sent this later letter to the Lord Lieutenant of Westmorland in order that he might use it to get information from Francis Howgill about people mentioned in it. The Lord Lieutenant bethought him of the letter

to Mrs. Fell, already in his possession which contained some of the same names. Howgill was interviewed by the jailer and agreed that the letter (signed Esther Biddle) was from a woman, but they could not believe that the "E. Bidle" of Ellis Hookes' letter could be the same, for the latter was a "writer of books", and, therefore, must be a man! However, they sent the whole correspondence to Whitehall to follow up the names of Friends mentioned in both letters,[1] and it was forwarded to Sir Richard Browne, the persecutor, to take action.[2]

Francis Howgill's jailer wrote "He much desired the letter, but to no purpose."[3] It would have meant a great deal to him if he had been allowed to have it. The letter is full of affection and gratitude to Francis Howgill. It also gives news of persecution under the Conventicle Act and the deportations ordered at the "sessions." Others "have not been called, the Jury could not agree. The Lord did soe confound them, six were for Friends and six against them." Among those not called, Esther Biddle mentions Anthony Garnet, an apprentice of her husband's. A year later he was dead of the plague. She sent her love to various people and to "Anthony's mother and to all Friends as thou art."[4] In this letter Esther tells of being ill-treated by the persecuting ex-Lord Mayor, Sir Richard Browne, in person. She writes (from Bridewell) of having been "taken from the Bull and Mouth where I was unmercifully used by Browne, he pinched me as black as a hatt and kicked me till I was sore and struck me on the mouth." This was not the only time she met with violence at that meeting house, or was taken off to prison from it.

There is one more letter[5] of Esther's in existence, written a year later in November, 1665, the year of the Great Plague. It is to John Smith, a Friend in Surrey, and touches on the Biddles' personal life as well as on their varied Quaker interests. Its account of Friends transported to the West

[1] When eventually, together or separately, they reached the Public Record Office, Ellis Hookes' letter was filed according to its (earlier) date, but since all the names mentioned in the covering letter are underscored and no others, it seems pretty clear that this, the original letter, arrived instead of the copy promised in the covering letter and not found with it. (*Extracts from State Papers*, 1912, p. 224.)

[2] S.P.D. LXIII, 70; printed in *Extracts from State Papers*, 1912, 154.

[3] S.P.D. CVII, 25; *Extracts*, 255.

[4] S.P.D. CIII, 75; *Extracts*, 222-223.

[5] A.R.B. MSS., 94; printed *Journal F.H.S.*, xlvi, 79-80 (delete note 2 on p. 80).

Indies has often been quoted. Mention is made of George Fox and other prominent Friends, their health and whereabouts. Then in the last quarter of the letter she comes to the real occasion for it.

Deare freind my husband desireth thee to acquaint Margarett Reynolds that he would have her son to come home, Anthony being dead, we have need of one; and if he cometh not he intendeth to have another in his stead and not to receive him againe. It is about three months agoe since our maid and Antony[1] dyed. I think here is not now much danger, soe farewell, my husbands love is to thee and Margarett my dear love salluteth all Friends that way. In haste I rest Thy sure Friend Esther Biddle.

It is a pleasant thought that the site of Thomas and Esther Biddle's home in Old Change, burnt over again in 1940, now lies in the middle of the permanent garden by St. Paul's.

LYDIA L. RICKMAN

Recent Publications

Through a City Archway: The Story of Allen & Hanburys, 1715-1954. By Desmond Chapman-Huston and Ernest C. Cripps. London: John Murray, 1954. Pp. xv, 326. 25s.

Readers familiar with Ernest Cripps' history of Allen & Hanburys, published in 1927 under the title *Plough Court*, will welcome a larger and more comprehensive history by him and Desmond Chapman-Huston, quite as enjoyable as the former book. The new volume, *Through a City Archway*, not only brings the story up to date (including a graphic description of air raid damage in the second world war), but fills in the earlier period with new material formerly unavailable.

The book is beautifully produced and a pleasure to handle: paper print and binding are all good, and about fifty illustrations add considerably to its interest. Many of these are portraits of characters closely connected with the firm.

[1] Friends Registers record both of these deaths of plague, Anthony Garnet and "Biddle, Thomas, servant to, named Elizabeth." Their son Daniel died that same summer, but whether of plague or not is not stated. He was born 1st January, 1661. His mother as well as his father is on Besse's list of two hundred and eighty Friends crowded into Newgate during December, January and February of that year. One is left to wonder whether Esther was released before his birth or snatched away shortly after or even whether he was born in prison.

The history is divided into four sections: Foundation (The Bevan Period), Expansion (The Allen Period), Consolidation (The Hanbury Period) and Realization (The Modern Period). Social, technical and religious history are woven together, finding embodiment in many live biographical portraits of men and women whose quality of character matched their outstanding ability. "Five Fellows of the Royal Society were trained in the old Plough Court Pharmacy and a sixth, Luke Howard, was associated with it for a short period."

Striking changes are traced in the course of this history. A chapter on transport shows the development from packhorse to motor lorry, and this is parallelled by the change from polypharmacy to the synthetic manufacture of pure drugs, vitamins and hormones, and the production of antibiotics like penicillin.

Until the mid-Victorian era Allen & Hanburys was primarily a Quaker concern, and the first two thirds of the book are, therefore, a study in Quaker history comparable to Arthur Raistrick's *Dynasty of Ironfounders*. The studies of the outstanding figures are by no means confined to their business interests. Silvanus, Timothy and Joseph Gurney Bevan each receive a chapter, and William Allen is given 84 pages in which many of his multitudinous concerns are vividly described. This is, in fact, the best study of William Allen in a short compass that has yet been written, and it includes the fine tribute, "few Englishmen in any station have lived as useful, varied, devoted and influential a life as did William Allen." Five generations of Hanburys follow, and the fine traditions of the firm are maintained in them. In addition the book is enriched by pen and often picture portraits of many others such as Luke Howard, William Cookworthy and John T. Barry.

A good deal of interesting material, much of it from the firm's letter books, is here printed for the first time, and the appendices occupying over 30 pages are specially valuable containing, for example, original letters to William Allen from Sir Humphrey Davy, John Dalton, and S. T. Coleridge, the syllabus of William Allen's lecture courses, and a number of orders placed with the firm at different periods showing the extraordinary variety of transactions in which they were involved.

Minor corrections may be noted. On page 50 there is reference to the abolition of "the slave trade", where "slavery" is intended since the reference is to 1833, not 1807. On page 71, Joseph Fox is referred to as a Quaker. In spite of his name, it appears that he was never a Friend, and probably was a Baptist. On pages 107-108, referring to Friends' disapproval of William Allen's third marriage, the statement is made that "even second marriages were not generally approved by Quakers." That there was strong disapproval of William Allen's marriage to Grizell Birkbeck is clear (see *Journal F.H.S.*, xviii, 29f. and xix 33f.); but this was a particular case and there were particular reasons. Friends generally had accepted the rightness of second marriages since the seventeenth century, and the Book of Discipline in William Allen's lifetime only advised against "very early proceedings in regard to marriage after the death of husband or wife."

L. Hugh Doncaster

London to Philadelphia. By Caroline C. Graveson. London: Bannisdale Press, 1954. Pp. 272. 7s. 6d.

Caroline Graveson has followed up her admirable historical novel *The Farthing Family* (1950) with an equally successful book, at once a sequel and an independent work, covering the years 1666-1689. It is much more firmly set in the contemporary scene than its predecessor, where historical events formed a backcloth, vivid, but distinct from the story. Here fact and fiction are much more closely, effectively and excitingly interwoven. Ellis Hookes, Ellwood and Upperside Monthly Meeting, the Six Weeks Meeting, the Penn-Meade trial, the saintly Isaac Penington—these are but few of the folk, events and institutions that are re-enacted through an historian's as well as a novelist's imagination. There has obviously been a vast amount of research, yet it never obtrudes: Caroline Graveson teaches subtly, with none of the heavy didacticism which mars the novels of, shall we say, Disraeli.

If there is a weakness in the novel it is that, to follow the fortunes of her growing number of characters travelling in this country and oversea, Caroline Graveson has had recourse to that time-honoured device, the letter. Her narrative style is so powerful and compelling that it becomes a trifle disappointing to follow events thus at second-hand, and in Chapter 21 and onwards it tends to mar the structure, slowing down the movement and the reader's interest, so that the Toleration Act seems an appendix rather than a climax.

One or two small anachronisms, slips and misprints have crept in—John Farthing (p. 17) should be William; the style Gracechurch Street M.M. (p. 109, 186) was not adopted till 1742; the pronouncement, "Judges must not be coerced" (p. 127) should read Juries; Bristol Q.M. (p. 231) should read Two-Weeks Meeting, also where is the "main street" of Bristol? Ellis Hookes died (p. 242) not in 11th mo. 1681 (January 1681-2) but in 9th mo. (November) 1681. Probably there are others: but it would be churlish to cavil and they can readily be corrected in the next edition. We must be profoundly grateful to Caroline Graveson for this book and it is much to be hoped that she will increase our gratitude still further by writing yet another novel to complete the trilogy.

EDWARD H. MILLIGAN

Friends' School, Wigton, 1815-1953. By David W. Reed. Wigton Old Scholars' Association, 1954. Pp. [x], 376, illus. 21s.

Wigton School for boys and girls was founded in 1815 by Cumberland Quarterly Meeting of Friends largely for its local needs at a time when Cumberland was much more cut off from the rest of England than it is today. Scotland General Meeting also supports the school. Partly on account of its isolation, in its first forty-five years the school faced difficulties of staffing which at times threatened its continuance, but by 1860 it was on its feet.

From 1860 to 1946 it has only had four headmasters, each with a long and steady term of service, during which the school has enlarged its curriculum, raised its standards, become fully co-educational, and

earned government recognition without sacrificing its character and independence.

The author was headmaster from 1923 to 1946, and after his retirement through ill-health he rendered the signal service of compiling this book before his death in December, 1954.

Full use has been made of the substance of two earlier accounts of the school which are enlarged and brought up to date. There is a full and lively account of every aspect during each "reign", and there are several contributions from old scholars.

Appendices give a complete register of scholars since the beginning, and one of staff, besides a tabular summary of the annual doings of the Old Scholars' Association. There is also an index, and the book has nearly sixty illustrations.

One Man's Vision: the Story of the Joseph Rowntree Village Trust. [By Lewis Waddilove.] London: Allen & Unwin, 1954. Pp. xiii, 149, illustrations, plans, tables. 10s. 6d.

The principal work of the trust has been the planning and development of the village of New Earswick, York, and the fostering of its community life in education, recreative and cultural interests, health services, etc. The trust has also contributed substantially to pioneer schemes of social amelioration for the community at large, such as a home for the education of mothers who have been prosecuted for neglecting their children, research into the causes and remedies for "broken homes", mobile rural health services, care of old people, community centres for instruction in better house management, and other projects.

This is a valuable factual history of a kind of public service to which Friends have often contributed inspiration and solid work; and when it has been joined to material resources it has produced great examples to be followed. Joseph Rowntree himself gave humble yet inspired leadership to the trust from his foundation of it in 1904, when he was 68, until his death in 1925.

The *Bulletin of Friends Historical Association*, vol. 43, no. 2, autumn number, 1954, includes a paper on "Charles Lamb and the Quakers", by Professor Warren Beck of Lawrence College, Appleton, Wis., and one by T. D. Seymour Bass of Earlham College on "The Quakers and Communitarianism", dealing largely with nineteenth century American experiments in this field. The notes include some interesting remarks on "The Quaker in the Dime Novel" (American fiction later nineteenth century) by Thomas Kimber, Professor of English at Pasadena College.

The *University of Birmingham Historical Journal*, vol. 4, no. 2 (1954) includes an obituary notice of John Sturge Stephens, 1891-1954, by Philip Styles, Reader in English History in the University of Birmingham, pp. 182-185.

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26. JAMES NAYLER, A FRESH APPROACH. By Geoffrey F. Nuttall, D.D. 1954. 1s. 6d.

Journals and Supplements Wanted

F.H.S. would be glad to receive, and in some cases to buy unwanted copies of the following. Address to F.H.S., The Library, Friends House, London, N.W.1.

Journal: Vol. 37 (1940); Vol. 46, No. 1 (1954).
The London (Quaker) Lead Co. By Arthur Raistrick. 1938.
Psychical Experiences of Quaker Ministers. By John W. Graham. 1933.

More Members Needed

During the last two or three years the Committee of the Friends' Historical Society has made special efforts to bring to the notice of Friends and others information regarding the Society with a view to increasing its membership.

The Society needs the support of its members to get new subscribers. Members are invited:

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