

A Glimpse of Ancient Friends in Dorset.

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In the short time at my disposal, instead of following up the further history of the Quarterly Meeting, it may be well to turn our attention to some of the men who composed the before-mentioned meeting at Ryme. At the distance of two centuries later it is not easy to obtain as much detail as we should like, yet we can glean a few facts which are full of interest. Some of those who were present are now nothing to us but names, and our imaginations have to fill in between the lines in the endeavour to clothe the bare name with the actual facts of the real hard life of the time. Taking one or two of whom we can obtain more particulars will help us with the rest.

Of these Daniel Taylor and Thomas Bagg, both of whom came from Bridport, stand out rather prominently.

DANIEL TAYLOR.

Daniel Taylor was born in 1642. Little is known of his parentage or early life, except that he went to serve in a man-of-war. There was great licence at that time, but young Daniel was always of a rather sober turn of mind, and even in those days was so different from those about him, that his companions jokingly said of him, "He'll be a Quaker!" But at that time he had not met with any Friends, although he was evidently dissatisfied with the religion in which he was brought up, and was searching for some deeper Truth than he had yet found. At last, finding himself near to a Friends' meeting, unsolicited by any one, he went to it. During the course of the meeting an epistle was read by a Friend, but otherwise it was held in silence. Whether he was convinced at this meeting, or whether he attended some time before he found what he sought, we do not know; but he was only in the twentieth year of his age when he was "convinced of the precious Truth." His life soon showed the power of the change wrought in him. His trade was that of a tobacco cutter, and prospering in his business, he

became very comfortably off, yet he realised to the full the responsibility that a fair share of earthly goods laid upon him.

His friend, Elias Osborne, wrote of him :⁴

The Lord gave him Power to suffer for his Name Sake, which he did Joyfully ; to wit, Imprisonments and spoiling of Goods often. They took so often and so much from him, that some Relation or Neighbour, or both, desired him to shut his Windows, or give off his Trade, otherwise, he was, as they accounted, like to be undone ; he mildly and pleasantly answer'd, " That if they did not take Goods more or oftner than they began, he was like to get it faster than they took it away."

In 1682, when suffering imprisonment for being absent from church one month, Daniel Taylor sent the following letter⁵ to the Quarterly Meeting :—

Deare ffreinds.

Jn true & vnfeigned Loue doe J dearly salute you, whome the Lord hath visited with his day springing from on high, & hath made yo^u willing to serue him, & one another in that pure loue w^{ch} thinks no Euill ; & my true desire is, that herein wee may be all preserved aboue the Rage & Cruelty of this world, & out of all Jmmoderate Care, prejudice, & euill thoughts, & all that is Contrary to the Heavenly life ; and that wee may all wittness a growth in that life w^{ch} Endures for Ever, that soe wee may in truth be able to say What shall seperate vs from the Loue of God ? Why, neither Tribulation, nor any other thing ; but that in him wee may be more then Conquerors, & that we may persevere in well doing to the end, & then wee shall obtaine the Crowne Layd vp for all the faithfull.

ffreinds, the Lord, in his goodness, hath been pleased to Bless mee not only with a measure of his devine Loue, but also with a Competency of outward things (Jn humility of heart J write it), & hath also opened my heart to doe good vnto all, but more especially to the Houshold of ffaith ; & in a Reall sense of his mercy, & in true openness of heart, J am made ffree to Jmpart something for the service of truth, perticularly ffifty pounds w^{ch} J desire my ffreinds & Brethren of o^r mens meeting, in the wisdom of God to Jmproue for the advantage of Poore ffreinds in this County.

ffreinds, there is a Bond in the Hands of my Brother, Bagg, of 100 li. of which 50 li. is myne, w^{ch} J giue for the service aboue mentioned. He can giue yo^u a perticular account of it. J doe not doubt but it is safe, but Jf it proue defective where it Lyes while J live, & the Lord Continues mee able, J will make it good.

Soe with my loue once more, J rest yo^r ffreind & Brother,

DAN^{LL} TAYLOR.

From Prison in Dorchester, the 27th 10th, 1682.

To ffreinds at the Quarterly Meeting in Dorchester.

⁴ See *Some Remains of . . . Daniel Taylor*, etc., London, 1715.

⁵ The original is attached to a page of the Q.M. Minute Book.

In the Book of Sufferings his name appears twenty times on account of various charges.

In common with his friends at Bridport he suffered very considerably from persecution, particularly brought upon them by one William Bond, an informer. This man lost no opportunity of doing all he could to injure Friends, and enrich himself at their expense. The following are some of the accounts given in the Book of Sufferings, to illustrate that which the Friends had to endure :—

About this tyme Freinds Jn Bridport were kept out of their Meeting house every first Day for a Considerable tyme & a watchman set at ye Dore : soe they mett without ye Dore, as near as they could come to itt, sometyes Jn winde & Rayne ; alsoe, at Waymouth, our Freinds were Kept out of their Meeting house for severall weekes.

The 13th Day of ye 6th Mo., 1683, six freinds of Bridport were comitted to ye Goale Jn Bridport, p William Bull & Tho Hollins, Baileiffs of ye said Towne, for Meeting together to Worshipp God & waite vpon him as was ye manner of ye people of God Jn former Ages. Ye next Day, they with ye other 3 had to ye Towne Hall before ye Bailleiffs aforesd, where also was Willm Bond, who haue been longe an Jnformer against freinds, who there Declared Jn open Court, speaking to friends, “Ye tyme is come, you must Turne or Burne,” & Tho Nossiter, ye Towne Clerke, being Desired by freinds to Read ye Warrant of their Comittment Jn ye Court, refused it, saying to them, “You are not men, But Doggs,” with more to that purpose.

A Little before this tyme, ye aforesaid Bond, with one of this Countye Troope, Gott one of ye Constables, namely Willm Colfox, a very Rude man, & a smith, one Geore Tomson, who Came to Frds Meeting house, & Jn greate Rage & furye broke Downe ye Dores of freinds Meeting house Jn Bridport, & getting Jn Broke all ye Benches & formes & other Conveniencies, with ye Glasse Windows, soe that they left not any part whole, & since this ye aforesd Bond, when hee haue Come to ye meeting, haue uttered these words following, “If ye Kinge will giue mee a Comission, J will hange & quarter you all,” & pticularly to one freinde, holding his Staffe to his face, hee swore, “By God ! J will hange thee.”

The aforesd Willm Bond is much Given to Swearing, Curseing, & Blasphemeing ye name of ye Lord & a subborner of false witnesses against freinds. . . . Hee longe persisted Jn his wickednesse against freinds, & many other people who were exercised Jn religious worshipp, makeing it his worke to hunt after such, being to much vphelde by ye Byshopp of Bristoll who lived neare him. Hee was hardly to bee Parralleld for his abominable Cruelty & Insolent behavvour, & as Beastly in his discourse that its a shame to Modestye to mention ; hee was, Jn short, a Burden to ye Creation, & his God was his Bellye.

Finding things going against him, Bond left Bridport, and shortly after he died a violent death at the hands of Monmouth's men ; the Book of Sufferings, after recording

this, adds, "Whereby we may see the just hand of God against such wicked informers."

I have introduced this into the little account of Daniel Taylor in order that we may have some idea of the difficulties of his position, in common with other Friends. He was frequently in prison, but the more he suffered, the more his heart seemed opened not only towards his Lord, but also to those around him.

Elias Osborne wrote further of him :—

He was endued with Wisdom from above to advise and counsel, and very ready to do it as Occasion required, being of an universal Spirit of Love, to serve the Truth and Friends thereof, ready to do Good and Communicate unto all, especially unto those that were of the Household of Faith. He showed his Faith by his Works, for as the Lord was pleased to bless him with outward Substance, his Heart, his Hands, his House, his Purse, were all open to serve the Lord, his Truth and People therewith. I may, to the Praise of God who made him so, say he was a well accomplish'd Man ; First, A good Husband ; Second, A good Father ; Third, A good Master ; Fourth, A good Relation (as many can witness who are Partakers of his Generosity) ; Fifth, He was a good Neighbour, his Enemies being Judges. Next, He was a good Subject ; and that which made him so was, Lastly, his being a good Christian, through the great Love of God in Christ Jesus. He was a great Lover of Unity among Brethren, and if any thing of Discord happened, he was ready to use his utmost Endeavour for an Accommodation, and the Lord was pleased often to bless his Labour of Love with Success ; in which he rejoiced.

Elias Osborne, who was nearly the same age as Daniel Taylor, and was convinced about the same time as his friend, having received a gift in the Ministry, felt himself, about ten years after their first religious acquaintance, frequently called upon to travel to "bear a publick Testimony for his Name and Truth," and Daniel Taylor, although feeling that he had not himself received any public testimony, yet felt drawn to accompany his friend, and together they went many hundreds of miles at one time and another ; Daniel "labouring in Spirit for his companion and helping him much by his Presence and Deportment." He is pictured as being of a "modest, free and pleasant Temper," and in writing about him after his death, Elias Osborne says :—"Such was our near and constant Love to each other that I think it may be compared to that which was between Jonathan and David."

His wife was a great helpmeet to him, entering fully into sympathy with him, cheerfully sharing with him imprisonment and the spoliation of their goods as well as in the concerns that took him so frequently away from home ; the burden of the business falling upon her in the mean time. She died 19th of Fourth Month, 1705, after a long and wearisome illness.⁶

Throughout his life he was always anxious to do that which would be a help to others, and he, as well as some of the other Friends, felt that with all the distraints and claims that were made upon them it was most essential to have some funds available to assist those in need.

In 1678, one of their Friends, Joseph Gillett, of Wootten, was arrested. He had been tried as a recusant for eleven months' absence from church, and defended the suit. Judgment was given against him, and execution against his goods levied for £120. In consequence he "was Constrayned to shutt vp his trade at home, who is a Cloathyer, & kept many poore people on worke." He was then imprisoned. Such cases as this, where a man was ruined, gave the Friends very earnest thought. When, in 1704, William Scott of Sherborne died, and left Friends, in addition to property at Sherborne, £140, it was felt that the money would be best used by purchasing an estate to bring in an income every year. Daniel Taylor was asked to find out a suitable one, and he bought with this Pymore Estate, near Bridport. One or two other legacies were also utilised, and Friends made up the remainder of the £320 for which it was purchased, as they could.

Daniel Taylor did all in his power to help the Friends in Bridport. He built the Meeting House there, as well as the almshouses, and at his death left two estates to Friends, the one where we are at present, called Dunster, and another called Blunshay, or Bluntsey.

He designed these to be used as follows : "That in the first place his almshouses & Friends meeting house at Bridport be sufficiently kept in good repair, & the expenses of Friends horses that travel in the service of Truth for

⁶ Bridport M.M., 15 5 1705.—"And bee it noted y^t since our last meeting dyed our Ancient honest ffriend, Hannah Taylor, wife of Daniel Taylor of Bridport."

the meeting he belonged to be defrayed " ; 20s. per annum were to be used for buying books for Friends and others, etc.

He died in the year 1714, aged seventy-two years. He appears to have remained pretty healthy until near the close, as he attended the Quarterly Meetings with great regularity up to and including the last one before his death. His death was greatly felt by Friends, as he was one of the pioneers, and one in whom all felt they had a wise and sympathetic friend and counsellor.

ELIZABETH B. RUTTER.

To be continued.

Death of John Ellis, of Poole, 1707.¹

And bee it farther noted y^t a few dayes after o^r last Quarterly Meeting Dyed o^r honest seruisable ffriend, John Ellis, of Poole, by Trade a Cooper . . . who after pretty many years Conuincement y^e Lord was pleased to call him forth into y^e work of y^e ministry, in wch hee faithfully Laboured for y^e space of about 10 or 12 years, often vissitting y^e meetings of ffriends both in this County & y^e Countyes adjacent, whose labour of loue was genjrally well accepted by o^r ffriends amongst whome hee Trauilled, And being out off a Jurnye, as hee was Returneing home abt 10 or 12 miles from his habitation, hee was taken sick, of wch sickness hee Dyed ; & a little before his departure hee gaue a good account how it was with him, saying to his wife y^t it was hid from him where y^t would bee y^e tyme of his Death or not, withall ading, " But if this is my Tyme J am Readye, there being nothing layd to my Charge," hee haueing a sure foundation wch was a liueing & good Testimony from a Dyeing man. And oh y^t those of vs that are left behind may haue good Cause to leave y^e like Testimony behind vs, when wee come upon o^r Dyeing Beds & Rowleing Pellows is what Js sencearly desired. His Boddy was decently Jntered amongst his ffriends in there Buriall ground at Poole, y^e 4th 2^d m^o, 1707.

¹ Extracted from the minutes of Dorset Q.M., 25th of Fourth Month, 1707. For John Ellis, see *Piety Promoted*.

Shall I speak within our own knowledge, and that without Offence, there has been Ruin'd, since the late King's Restoration, above Fifteen Thousand families, and more then Five Thousand Persons Dead under Bonds for matter of meer Conscience to God.

WM. PENN : *Good Advice to the Church of England*, etc., 1687, p. 57.