

## Some Expenses of a Northern Counties Yearly Meeting held in Lancashire in 1786.

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A bundle of time-worn papers belonging to Preston Meeting came under the writer's inspection recently.

Numbering about a score and ranging in date from 1722 to 1798, they were found to consist almost wholly of notices as to when and where the next "Circular Yearly Meeting of the Northern Counties" would be held.

From these notices one infers that these annual gatherings of Friends were always held in the fourth month of the year—second month old style—and were confined to the *western* Northern Counties of Cumberland, Westmorland, Lancaster and Chester; the county of Stafford, which with Cheshire formed a Quarterly Meeting, was also included.

Yearly Meetings in other districts of England and Wales appear to have been held from time to time, but not with the same regularity as that which characterized the Northern Yearly Meeting.

A record supplied from Devonshire House gives a complete list of the towns in which these Northern Yearly Meetings were held from 1699 down to the closing meeting held in 1798.

In the *Life and Labours of David Sands*, a footnote on page 87 states that it was customary at these annual gatherings for some Friend from each of the Quarterly Meetings to give a brief account of the state of the Society in the Quarterly Meeting to which he belonged, and matters relating to the general welfare of the Society were discussed at these conferences, which were more largely attended than were the sittings before which matters of discipline came. The note adds:—

London Yearly Meeting was not at that period attended so largely as is now the case . . . especially prior to the printing of the "Book of Extracts," or "Rules of Discipline"; so that these conferences were important, as affording the opportunity for an exchange of sentiment on various subjects.

It was customary during the three days the meeting held to have one or more public meetings for worship. In the score of notices previously referred to, nearly all

describe the meetings as having been “ well attended and held to satisfaction.”

Towards the close of the century, some doubt appears to have existed as to the wisdom of continuing to hold the Yearly Meeting, for, in 1791, at the gathering held at Newcastle in Staffordshire, “ the several Quarterly Meetings constituting the Yearly Meeting ” were to be asked “ weightily to consider the expediency of continuing or discontinuing the Meeting.”

For seven more years, however, the Circular Yearly Meeting assembled as before, until from the notice dated Liverpool, 1798, we read that

Notwithstanding this Meeting hath as heretofore been held to Satisfaction, After solid consideration thereon, it is with much Harmony concluded to discontinue the holding thereof, . . . Robert Benson is desired to send a Copy of this minute to the Clerk of the Meeting for Sufferings in London and to the several Quarterly Meetings concerned.

The first six Northern Counties Yearly Meetings, from 1699 to 1705, were held at Lancaster ; other towns in which they were held were Carlisle, Middlewich, Kendal, Liverpool, Chester, Cockermouth, Whitehaven, Preston (in 1735 “ in a wooden shed 24 yds. by 20 yds., with seats, cost £25 4s. od.”), Wigan (1750, cost £54 11s. 6d.) Nantwich, Penrith, Stockport, Appleby, Bolton, Congleton, Brampton, Macclesfield, Ormskirk, Keswick, Kirkby Stephen, Ulverston, Longtown, Rochdale, Northwich, Blackburn and Newcastle.

William Stout, of Lancaster, mentions in his Journal, under date 1723,

I was at the General Meeting of our Friends at Chester. The same was kept in a large place called the Tennis Court which would hold some thousands of people.

The citizens who came in were very attentive and civil, as also in the streets and inns and to general satisfaction.

The same Friend mentions attending “ Lancaster Yearly Meeting for the Northern Counties ” in 1726, which “ was large, peaceable and to the satisfaction of all attending it, of different religious professions.”

Evidently it was sometimes necessary to put up temporary buildings to accommodate the unusual number of Friends and others who flocked to the meetings.

Amongst the papers from which the writer quotes, is a letter dated 1795, from Caleb Birchall, of Stockport, addressed to John Field, Grocer, Lancaster, wherein the former acknowledges a contribution of £35 “ towards the expenses of the temporary Erection for accomodating the Northern Yearly Meeting held at this place.” Caleb Birchall further adds :—“ I intend taking care that it may be duly reported to our next Quarterly Meeting for Cheshire and Staffordshire and am well assured the Q.M. will be gratefully sensible of the extraordinary kindness of Lancashire Friends.”

In *The Journal of John Griffiths* there is an allusion to the Yearly Meeting being “ held in a convenient booth erected for the purpose,” at Ormskirk in 1770, “ which it was thought would accommodate two thousand people ; yet it was not found sufficient to contain the numbers who came, so that some other meetings were held in the open air at the same time,”—“ the people,” he says, “ in general behaved with civility and respect and the meetings were well conducted.”

Doubtless it would be to some similar temporary buildings as those erected at Stockport and Ormskirk that the following account, found amongst the Preston documents, has reference.

Unfortunately the heading of the paper has been torn off and lost, and it is further mutilated, yet many details remain which, read in the light of present day customs, possess a quaintness and interest which is refreshing :—

. . .	[part torn off]	. . . . .	.. ..	. . . .
11 <sup>th</sup>	Cash spent at Preston upon treating with an Undertaker there	.. ..	.. ..	0 0 6
19 <sup>th</sup>	Cash paid for a Stamp for the Contract	.. ..	.. ..	0 6 2
4 <sup>th</sup> mo. 3 <sup>d</sup>	Cash spent on the Workmen when they began to erect the Booth	.. ..	.. ..	0 6 0
8 <sup>th</sup>	Cash spent on D <sup>o</sup> (2 <sup>d</sup> time)	.. ..	.. ..	0 4 6
12 <sup>th</sup>	Cash spent on D <sup>o</sup> (3 <sup>d</sup> time)	.. ..	.. ..	0 3 6
D <sup>o</sup>	Cash paid to Workmen for leveling the ground in the Booth	.. ..	.. ..	0 4 10
15 <sup>th</sup>	Cash paid for Mowing, Rakeing and Carting Rushes	.. ..	.. ..	1 1 3
D <sup>o</sup>	Cash paid for Carrying and strawing Sawdust..	.. ..	.. ..	0 1 6
D <sup>o</sup>	Cash paid for spreading the Rushes in the Booth	.. ..	.. ..	0 0 8
D <sup>o</sup>	Cash spent on the Workmen upon finishing the Booth	.. ..	.. ..	0 3 0

20 <sup>th</sup>	Cash and Bills paid Peter Rothwell according to Contract .. .. .	66	3	0
D <sup>o</sup>	Cash paid D <sup>o</sup> for some things done more than the Bargain .. .. .	0	12	0
D <sup>o</sup>	Cash paid for one man to attend and watch the Booth five days and nights .. ..	0	15	0
D <sup>o</sup>	Cash paid L : Whitaker for Ale allowed the men who watched in the night .. .. .	0	3	0
21 <sup>st</sup>	Cash paid D <sup>o</sup> for the use of his Yard .. ..	4	4	0
D <sup>o</sup>	Cash paid D <sup>o</sup> for his large Room .. ..	1	1	0
D <sup>o</sup>	Cash paid Will <sup>m</sup> Smalley for the Cunstables attending 3 days to keep the people quiet (with meat and Drink allowed them) ..	1	1	3
D <sup>o</sup>	Cash paid W <sup>m</sup> Haworth for stoping his Workmen during the meetings .. .. .	0	10	6
D <sup>o</sup>	Cash paid for the use of 22 stools to support the seats in the Chamber and carrying them (several was damaged) .. .. .	0	2	6
D <sup>o</sup>	Cash paid for damage done a Table Cloath that covered one of the Windows .. ..	0	0	6
D <sup>o</sup>	Cash paid for the Carriage of the Books from Preston .. .. .	0	0	4
		<hr/>		
		78	12	0
	Incidents .. .. .	4	4	0
		<hr/>		
		£82	16	0

There is also something paid by a Friend of Marsden towards the expenses of some Strangers who attended the Meeting, and by R. Abbott for the Carriage of the Books from London to Preston, of which I have no account: perhaps the Friends who paid the money may be at the Quarterly Meeting and give account of the same, the above account of what I paid is all that I remember.

JAMES BRANDWOOD.

It would appear probable that the Y.M. to which the account refers was held in 1786 at Blackburn. Two years prior to this a new Meeting House had been erected at Preston, and this fact perhaps caused the local Friends to decide on the Preston "undertaker" as builder. The writer of a history of Blackburn states that Friends first settled there in 1777.

James Brandwood, in whose neat handwriting the account is, lived at Westhoughton, near Wigan; born in 1740, he joined Friends at the age of twenty-two, and was

a Minister in the Society for more than fifty years ; he died in 1826.<sup>1</sup>

William Dillworth, of Lancaster, to whom the account was sent, was also a well-known Friend, and on his decease in 1789, at the age of seventy-three, a Testimony concerning him was issued, couched in the choicest of Friendly phraseology. Of his five daughters, four married into the Quaker families of Wilson, Dockray, Birkbeck, and Crewdson respectively.

Robert Abbatt, who is mentioned as being out of pocket on account of the carriage of books, was a Preston Friend who, according to the Minute Book of Filde Monthly Meeting, served "in the Capacity of Clark for about 40 years." He was seventy years old at his death in 1795.<sup>2</sup>

The following Friends were present at the Yearly Meeting at Blackburn in 1786 :—George Dillwyn, William Matthews, Mehetabel Jenkins, Esther Tuke and Tabitha Marriott. George Dillwyn from America and probably one or more of the other Friends mentioned were the " Strangers " alluded to by James Brandwood.

#### DILWORTH ABBATT.

<sup>1</sup> In 1828, John Bradshaw edited the *Letters of the late James Brandwood*, copies in D. [ED.]

<sup>2</sup> Robert Abbatt, Senr. ( -1763), is mentioned in Thomas Story's *Journal* and elsewhere. He established the first water supply in Preston, in 1729, by means of wooden pipes—tree trunks bored through—of which the writer has a small specimen. The corporation fined him for supplying water on " Good Friday," so he declined to supply it on Fridays afterwards, his reason being that all Fridays should be Good Fridays !

A few weeks ago died in this city, Mr. Thomas White,<sup>1</sup> one of the people called Quakers, son of Mr. Timothy White, schoolmaster, of the city of York, and brother to Dr. White,<sup>2</sup> of the same place. He has left a widow and three children.

Newsclipping in D., dated 1788.

<sup>1</sup> Died in London, 30 x. 1787, aged 39. A Non-member.

<sup>2</sup> For William White, M.D., see THE JOURNAL, v. 42.