

William Hobson, of Markfield, Tottenham [1752:1840], the Quaker Builder of the Martello Towers, etc.

WILLIAM HOBSON, of Markfield, Tottenham, was born 9th November, 1752. He married Ann Rickman, and died at Markfield, Stamford Hill, 23 May, 1840, aged eighty-seven. He it was who built the famous Martello Towers on the southern and eastern coasts as a defence against French invasion. They were so called because at Mortella Point in Corsica, a small round tower withstood an immense cannonade from an English fleet under Lord Hood in 1794.

These towers, many of which still remain, especially upon the Kent coast, are about forty feet in height, are situated upon the beach, and are of very solid construction.

William Hobson also built the London Docks and St. Luke's Hospital. He was a clever, handsome man, and died very rich. He had no less than twelve sons-in-law, by all of whom he was greatly admired, which goes to show that he was a man of superior endowments.

William Hobson was buried at the old parish church of All Saints, Tottenham, when some twelve mourning coaches and seventeen private carriages followed the remains down Stamford Hill to Tottenham.

William Hobson was certainly only a nominal Quaker, as he had a box at the opera, and a billiard table at Markfield, in his day considered inconsistent with Friends' principles. He was also fond of sport, keeping hunters in his stable, and is mentioned as hunting in Surrey by Robert Smith Surtees [1803-1864], the sporting novelist, the creator of the inimitable "John Jorrocks."

William Hobson is said to have been upon friendly terms with George III., who wished him to accept a baronetcy, but he had enough of the Quaker in him to refuse that honour.

A bust of William Hobson has been presented to the Brassey Institute at Hastings by his grand-daughter,

Mrs. Ellen Oliver, the widow of the Rev. William Oliver, and daughter of John Austin, of a West country family, by his wife Ellen Hobson. Mrs. Oliver died 26 April, 1906, in her eighty-seventh year, and she, who remembered her grandfather's funeral at Tottenham in 1840, supplied most of this information to her son-in-law, Richard F. Ball, of Theydon Copt, Epping (a great-nephew of the late William Ball), and who communicated it to the present writer.

JOSEPH J. GREEN.

Richard F. Ball, since seeing the foregoing in type, has forwarded much additional information, from which the following is gleaned.

From particulars in the possession of descendants, the paternal ancestry of William Hobson appears to be traceable from Edward Hobson, of Skipsey [? Skipsea, Yorks], who married, 1664, Ann, daughter of ——— Pilkington, of the same place. Their son, Edward Hobson (Jun.), of Berley, Co. Derby, married, 1706, Lydia, daughter of William Pease, of Fishlake, Yorks. Their son Joshua Hobson [? of Southwark] married, 1750, Martha, daughter of George Holms of Horsham, Sussex. William Hobson of Markfield was a son of this marriage.

A pedigree in the possession of Norman Penney traces the paternal ancestry of Ann Rickman, William Hobson's wife, from John Rickman of Boreham, who married Margaret Edwards in 1680.

By the marriage of William Hobson and Ann, daughter of Caleb and Susannah Rickman, in 1779, there were sixteen children. In 1800, Southwark Monthly Meeting had noted that William Hobson "continues in the practice of paying tithes and encouraging diversions in his house," and in the following year, a formal statement by the offender that he considered it right to pay, in obedience to the law of the land, led to a testimony of disownment being issued against him. Two or three years later the family removed to Tottenham, and upon the question of a certificate for Ann Hobson and her family, a hindrance arose on the ground that she "encourages and approves of her children being taught the practice of music." Notwithstanding frequent "Visits" from Committees, she adhered to her views "on music and dancing at home," and consequently she was disowned in October, 1804. The three sons were disowned in 1803, two stating that they were connected with a military association of "Volunteers." Southwark M.M. forwarded certificates to Tottenham M.M. for the thirteen daughters; subsequently three were disowned for "marrying out," one resigned on her marriage, and nine were disowned for non-attendance at Meeting.