

# John Harrison at London Yearly Meeting in 1789

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**B**Y the courtesy of Walter Barrow, of Birmingham (a descendant of the writer), a typed copy of the narrative of the visit to Y.M. by John Harrison, of Liverpool, has been on loan in **D**.

John Harrison was a son of Benjamin Harrison, of Low Groves, Kendal and Frances Farrer, his wife, and was born at Kendal in 1762, thus he was twenty-seven years old when he attended the Y.M. of 1789. In the following year he married Jane Kay, of Warrington, daughter of John and Elizabeth (Gilpin) Kay. They had three sons and six daughters. John Harrison was a corn-merchant and lived at Mount Vernon, Liverpool. The original manuscript is in the possession of Miss Ethelinda Hadwen, of Duncans, Vancouver Island.

John Harrison left Liverpool, 24 May, 1789, astride his good mare Jane and he reached the "White Bare" in Basinghall Street, London, on the 29th.

Various incidents of the journey were noted: the Friends going on the same errand whom he met; the inns where he put up and the wine he drank ("agreeable glass," "red port indeed very capital," etc.); a call on his relatives at Warrington; and a visit to Hartshill, where, in company with "J. C." i.e., Joseph Crosfield, he viewed the oft described, wide prospect of country "in which we could count from 30 to 40 spires." The Sunday was partly spent at Leighton Buzzard where he and his companions, Thomas Cash of Coventry, Thomas Cash of Morley, Isaac Hadwen and Edward Bellis, were the guests of John Grant and his wife, "who made much of us . . . they being what I call very sincere Friends." Meeting began at 10, a small company, "T. Cash appeared very acceptably after which made a very pathetic prayer." Before leaving, the Friends met some of the Leighton members again at the Grant home.

John Harrison and his "bedfellow," E. Bellis, did much sight-seeing between the sittings of Y.M.

The whole City seems nothing but hurry and confusion & shall think myself very happy when I get from it as the Driving of Coaches &c. exceeds any description I could ever have formed.

The first meeting attended was the Ackworth General Meeting at Gracechurch Street,

in which were a many of the strongest debates I ever heard & very warm ones which was not very pleasing to me and I thought if the future sittings of the Meeting were not more unanimous in sentiments not much good could be derived.

On the Sunday, Gracechurch Meeting was "crowded beyond description," George Dillwyn and a woman Friend (name not known) "went to prayer" and John Story "appeared & stood long." Westminster in the afternoon was not so crowded "W. Jepson had a lively testimony to bear," and was followed by Ann Summerland, "one White from Ireland," and others.

Nothing of special interest is recorded of the first few sittings—"they were much crowded and very warm"—epistles read, committees appointed—"50 or 60 persons for drawing up the Yearly Meeting Epistles" and later answers to the Queries. Much time was spent over a proposition

to have the Yearly Meeting held at a fixed time. After debate on the subject with much warmth the meeting came to a conclusion to hold the ensuing yearly meeting at a fixed time, say, the third first day in the fifth month from time to time till the meeting shall conclude to alter it.

One morning our friend attended a meeting at Horslydown, which began at ten and ended at one—"the most satisfactory I have yet attended since I cam here." Sundry testimonies were borne by "Ann Summerland, A. Rigg, & M. Rooth."

At one sitting (dates are scarce) "the London and Middlesex Proposition came on respecting the settlement of Friends' Childer which Friends had been married out of Society." At another sitting there was

a man named John de Maylaip that was come from France on purpose to attend these meetings if he could get admittance which was readily granted.

Several times appear hints of the slow progress made, but later,

I begun to see we should sooner get the business over than what I expected from the former days' works which indeed appeared tedious and irksome.

The next Sunday John Harrison attended meeting at Peel, "which was not very fully attended and its a Meeting I the least admire of any I have yet been to." John Story spoke at length. Later in the day he went to Devonshire House Meeting "a place I had not before been at : . . . a very neat comfortable place."

On the following morning

A case was brought before the meeting respecting a Friend who had married a second wife three mo<sup>s</sup>. after the decease of his former. Having brou<sup>t</sup> the matter regularly before their meeting twice, and it would not do, he got married by a priest for which the meeting disowned them & he made an appeal to this meeting, & the Persons app<sup>td</sup>. for hearing & judging of appeals bro<sup>t</sup> in an ac<sup>t</sup> the meeting had done right & being confirmed by the meeting the matter was fixed, after which they enquired into the state of Fr<sup>ds</sup> property in diff<sup>t</sup> parts of Jamaica and other Islands.

On the last day but one the sittings began at ten, adjourned at one till three, then Friends sat till 6.30, adjourned till 7.30 and "held till near 10 o'clock and a many Friends much spent and overdone." Next day the Meeting ended, and T. Hoyle and J. H. took a boat from London Bridge to Westminster "to see the king go in state to the House of Lords . . . which made indeed one of the most splendid appearances I ever beheld."

"E.B. was gone off for home in the coach having sold his horse to T. Palmer for £20," but J. H. had still some more sightseeing to do. Finally, he

retired to rest being desirous to get from the city early in the morning having paid all my bills & perquisites in order that I might leave the town with reputation & honour not knowing when I may have the opportunity of being here again & could I be supported with money to my request I could not wish to spend my time in this place without some employ or other as I should be quite wearied out without some other exercise than this of doing nothing. . . . As soon as Jane was ready I left the city not with reluctance being glad to set my face towards home.

On his homeward route our traveller passed through Oxford :

Oxford is a neat clean town and chiefly consists of people of Rank & I think one half of the place is Churches & Chapples for I counted to twelve spires & steeples & the students there cut a conspicuous figure in their long black Gowns & a kind of cape with a square cover on the top and in this a cluster of black fringe which hangs over ; a many of these are very good looking young men & appear with very grave countenances yet I do not admire their manners & way of bringing up, so that not being much charmed with Oxford I only spent about 1½ hours in the place while Jane got a bate.

Arrived at Coventry J. H. found it was

their great procession fair and the streets so crowded with people that it was with some difficulty I got to my Inn and got a stole for the mare. After this I went down to T. Cash's, got a glass of wine & then tea and they made me promise to take a bed which I accepted & before supper T.C. took a walk with me round the town, most part of which is very antient after which we returned and got supper. I found I. Hadwen just come. He left London the day before I did & came the direct way so that he must have rode very slow otherwise I must have done the contrary. After spending an agreeable evening we went to bed & in the morning T.C., I. Hadwen & myself went to breakfast with widow Brinsdon and her daughter Hannah who is an agreeable young woman. After this I went to see the mare & T.C. along with me, we took several walks in and about the town during the forenoon and at 10 o'clock looked into a Friends' house where we got some refreshment say cold ham, & Plumb Pudding & our liquor was some of the choicest ale I ever got, which the kind Friend called Old Tom. After this we called to see two maiden fr<sup>ds</sup> where we got a little more Plumb Pudding & some currant wine so that I had not much appet<sup>e</sup> for my dinner where we dined say at W. Cash's who lives in a very neat place & the whole of them are indeed very kind friends as ever I met with & T. Cash's wife is a most pleasing woman.

Set out for home, having been absent therefrom three weeks and two days.

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### On Christian Fellowship from the Epistles of George Fox

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“Mind that which is pure in one another, which joins you together.”  
p. 12.

“Therefore, all Friends, obey that which is pure within you and know one another in that which brings you to wait upon the Lord.” p. 70.

“And, Friends, meet together and know one another in that which is eternal, which was before the world was.” p. 115.

“Feel the power of God in one another. p. 128.”

“None may stand idle out of the vineyard, and out of the service, and out of their duty ; for such will talk and tattle, and judge with evil thoughts of what they in the vineyard say and do.” p. 235