

A Strange Marriage Procedure

PRESTON MONTHLY MEETING,

HELD AT PRESTON THE 2ND OF 10TH MONTH, 1797 :

BY the Information of Preston Particular Meeting we understand that Hannah Danson & John Whitaker got into Preston Meeting House yesterday Morning & in a clandestine Manner took each other in Marriage, contrary to the rules of our Society, this Meeting appoints Thos. Smith & David Wilcockson in company with those appointed by our Women Friends to visit her & report to next Meeting.

At our Monthly Meeting held at Preston 7th of 11th Mo, 1797 :

Thomas Smith reports, the Friends appointed to visit Hannah Whitaker late Danson have had an opportunity with her & she acknowledged the report & it being contrary to the rules of our Society, this Meeting therefore appoints William Brown and Benjm Abbatt to prepare a paper of Denial against next Meeting.

At our Monthly Meeting held at Preston 5th of 12th mo. 1797 :

A Paper of Denial against Hannah Whitaker (late Danson) was produced, read, & signed & John Danson and Ralph Alderson are appointed to read it to her, & at the close of a first-Day forenoon Meeting.

Dilworth Abbatt, of Preston, who sends the above, remarks :

“ In looking up information . . . I came across the enclosed minutes which if not unique in Quaker annals are at any rate abnormal.

“ By calling the bride by her partner’s name Friends seemed to have recognised that the ‘function,’ however it was carried out was a marriage. They seem to have lost no time in disowning the bride.

“ There is a long tale told of a John Danson (possibly the same as mentioned in the Minutes) a Gardener and a rather noted character in his day, who, on being threatened with a visit from the Bailiffs, walked over to Knowsley to interview Lord Derby with whom he appears to have been at Preston Grammar School in his young days. Lord Derby was his landlord and the result of the interview, conducted in Quaker phraseology on J.D.’s part, was that Lord Derby made his (J.D.’s) house rent free for the rest of his life.”