

“ The First Publishers of Truth ”

In the volume with the above title, published in 1907, the only account for Devonshire concerned the Plymouth district. By the kindness of William J. M. Thomasson, of Exeter, we are able to supplement above by extracts from the minutes of Topsham Monthly Meeting, dated *circa* 1681. The extracts were printed in Robert Dymond's *Early Records of the Society of Friends in Devonshire*, 1873; they have been checked with the original entry by John K. Absalom, of Plymouth, custodian of records, 1929. This account of First Publishers was apparently never completed and hence never sent up to London.

“ TOPSHAM. The first y^t came to this place in y^e testimony of truth was Geo: ffox and Edward Pyett about y^e year 1655, and y^e first y^t received them was Ann Mories, who had a meeting at y^e time at one Marks Parsons', who for a time made a profession of truth, but hath since walked disorderly to y^e dishonour of it, and after them came Margaret Killlem and Barbary Padison, Miles Halwood and Tho Salthouse, and others in y^e same testimony. The greatest opposition y^t truth and friends meet in this place in y^e time of its breking forth was from one Mathew Hall, a Baptise Preacher who often reviled ffriends wth bad language, and many times stured up y^e rabble to doe wickedly; who afterwards gro loose, soe y^t his hearers left him, and his profession came to nothing, and he became as y^e offscouring of y^e Earth, and soe dyed.”

“ EXON.¹ The first y^t came in y^e testimony of truth to this place was Geo: Fox, who had a meeting at one Morgin's at y^e sine of y^e seven Starres neare Ex Bridge, where were several of Plymouth and Kingsbridge friends. About which time Tho: Salthouse and Miles Halwood ware sent hither to prission, whare they remained Prissoners about a yeare, and after them came severall friends, y^e first y^t received them was John Ganecliffe.”²

¹ The information given with regard to Exeter is not accurate; John Audland and Thomas Ayrey came to Exeter in 1654, Miles Halhead and Thomas Salthouse came in May, 1655, and George Fox himself came to Exeter and held a meeting in the prison, where more than 20 Friends were then confined, on 14th Sept. 1656. The General Meeting at the Seven Stars was held in 1st mo. (March), 1657. (W. J. M. T.)

² “ John Gannicliffe was of St. Thomas, a suburb of Exeter, then inhabited by many of the chief men of that city. He received George Fox on his first visit to the West, was a frequent sufferer for adherence to the principles of Friends, and a very constant attender of meetings for discipline till his death in 1701, *æt.* 80. It does not appear that his children retained their membership, but the family is still extant in Exeter, and its living members preserve traditions of their ancient connection with our Society.” (Robert Dymond, *Early Records of the Society of Friends in Devonshire*, 1873.)

“WOODBEARY. GRINDLE.”³ [A blank is left here as if the particulars were not forthcoming.]

“CRISTOW.⁴ The first y^t came in y^e testimony of truth to this place about y^e year 74 was Richard Samble, who had then a meeting at Elies Tockett’s at a place called Clampiett, whare he was received and his testimony.”

As respects “adversaries,” the following appears in a minute of Plymouth Monthly Meeting, 14 ii. 1680: “One is called by his surname Champernowne of Modbery, and the other is called by surname Bare, dwelling near Kingsbridge. These are both very wicked to friends and meeteings in these westarne parts, and, indeed, also to other professers both priestbiterjans and baptists. The one of the two espetially, named Champernown, he doth glory greatly in his acts of wickedness, who said to a baptist at whose house the said Champernown was inquiring his name, I am one Champernown who persecuteth the Saintes. This is as farr as wee can say in the matter at the p̄sent.” Above resulted from an inquiry made by William Penn of Arthur Cotton.

Robert Dymond (*loc. cit.*) refers several times to John Bear, of Bearscombe, near Kingsbridge as “notorious for his rigid enforcement of the laws against nonconformists,” and adds: “The Champernownes had been settled from the reign of Edward II at Modbury Castle, the site of which was sold in 1705, and the family seat is now at Dartington Hall, near Totnes.”

Other addenda to *F.P.T.* appear in vols. v (Staffordshire), xiii (Middlesex), xviii. (Norwich), xxv. (Lancashire).

³ “Grindle is a farm in the parish of Colaton Raleigh, where Friends possessed a small burial-ground within living memory. It lies about seven miles from Exeter, and a quarter of a mile off the turnpike road leading from that place to Sidmouth. The site is marked on the parish Tithe map with the number 84 and is described in the apportionment as the Quakers’ Burying Ground. On visiting the spot a few months since, I found that the hedge which once surrounded it had long since been levelled, and it is only to be distinguished from the field of which it now forms a part by a slight elevation of the ground. John Hook, an old man who has spent his life close by, well remembers playing at leap-frog over the tomb stones when a boy. No trace of these stones is now to be found above ground.” (*ibid.*)

[Note: The correct number on the Tithe Map is 48, not 84. This error of reversion occurs also in F. W. Dymond’s book of 1899. I have traced it from the original Tithe map of 1845. W.J.M.T. 1928.]

⁴ “Christow is a village on the river Teign, about seven miles southwest of Exeter, . . . The Tuckett family, now of Frenchay, then followed agricultural pursuits at Clampitt, in this parish, and at Abbotskerswell, near Newton Abbot.” (Dymond, *ut supra.*)

[Note: Clampitt is situated on the edge of the Torquay reservoirs, west of Christow. The present owners are the Corporation of Torquay Borough. W.J.M.T. 1928.]