

First Publisher of Truth in Warwickshire

Marjorie Fretwell which was Anthony Bickeley daughter give An Account that Richard Farnsworth of Tickhill in York shire was the furst Freind that did declare truth at Badgley Ensor in the yeare of 1654 and he was entertaied for several week theare and he vieseted several other plases while he was theare.

The above note is to be found pinned on page 99 of volume 1 of Warwickshire Q.M. Minute Book. It was written on a slip of paper about 2 inches square in a handwriting contemporary with the original minutes.

The little slip of paper was evidently overlooked in compiling *The First Publishers of Truth*, 1907, pp. 239f, and that not unnaturally since the minutes in the book are ill arranged. It was clearly intended as a contribution to compiling an account for the Quarterly Meeting and on page 49 of the Minute book is one of the characteristic Q.M. minutes asking for information about the first publishers in accordance with the request sent down from London.

The information of the note is of special interest since the presence of Richard Farnsworth in that part of the country is not mentioned either in the brief list of "The first publick ministers, that travailed in the severall parts of this County in the service of Truth," published in lieu of the regular type of record by Norman Penney, nor in the History of Friends in the Midlands by A. Neave Brayshaw in the handbook to London Yearly Meeting held in Birmingham in 1908. The sentence is, however, quoted in William White's *Friends in Warwickshire*, 1873, p. 61, and on the same page another from the minutes of Warwick meeting to the effect "that Richard Hubberthorne did largely declare the blessed truth of Christ in Warwick, Coventry, Kenilworth, Alcester, and Stratford and other places, by the space of one month, in 1660, and did gather many to the truth."

Baddesley is frequently mentioned by George Fox in his Journal, but not before 1654. The regular spelling there is Bagley, which shows that our fragment also reflects a contemporary pronunciation. Fox also mentions in the year named Anthony "Bickliffes" in Warwickshire at whose house he held a great meeting. Bickley resided at Baddesley Ensor, near Atherstone.

One is surprised that no earlier date is given for the publishing of truth in this neighbourhood. Fox himself says that "The truth sprang up first (to us, as to be a People to the Lord) . . . in Warwickshire in 1645" (Epistles, 1698, p. 2). Baddesley Ensor, like Atherstone, was very near Fox's home, and there is unpublished evidence which makes me think that Fox dated the beginning of his public career from the night of the 8th of September 1643, following the events described in his Journal (bicent. Ed., p. 3.), the fair being "Authorston-fair".

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