

# The Quarterly Meeting of Norfolk

(Continued from vol. xxxiii, p. 49)

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THE first half of the Eighteenth Century presents a picture of the Society settling down into an organisation which continued with little change for another hundred years. The main lines had been laid down in the previous century, but there still remained numerous details to be worked out, and it is interesting to note the gradual establishment of bodies, such as the Select Meeting of Ministers and Elders or the Women's Quarterly Meeting, which play an important and vital part in the Quakerism of the Nineteenth Century. In the development of these is seen the persistence of a "concerned" minority overcoming the apathy of the general membership; a common feature in movements connected with the development and spread of Quakerism.

Even in matters connected with the Office of Clerk, there is evidence of this quest for the most satisfactory method of procedure. The beginning of the year, from a Quarterly Meeting point of view, was the Midsummer Quarter, and the choice of Clerk or Clerks for the year was usually determined at the Spring gathering. An interesting experiment was made in 1709, when the duties of the Clerkship were allotted to four Friends, chosen from various Monthly Meetings, who were to serve at the table in rotation. This practice was discontinued in 1713, but reappears in 1735, being finally abandoned on the appointment of Edmund Gurney as Clerk for twelve months in 1736. During these periods, Samuel Defrance appears, from the following minutes, to have acted occasionally as Transcribing Clerk:—

4th mo. 1713. Samll. Defrance is Appointed by ys Meeting to Write five Copies of ye written Minutes, of ye London Yearly Meeting, & bring them to ys Meeting to distribute to ye several Monthly Meetings in ye County.

Henry Fenn is Desired by ys Meeting to Deposit ye Money to pay Samll. Defrance for ye abovesd Writings.

Henry Fenn pd Samll. Defrance three shillings wch. this Meeting is Accountable to him for.

The Copies of ye private Minutes of London Yearly Meeting were Sent to all ye Monthly Meetings in ye County.

4th mo. 1733. Ordered that Nathaniell Springall pay Samuell Defrance Tenn shillings for his trouble in making up 2 Quarters in the Quarterly Meeting Book.

4th mo. 1734. Ordered that Nathaniell Springall pay Samuel Defrance sixteen shillings for making up the Quarterly meeting book to this Quarter, and two shillings for paper.

With the single exception of Edmund Gurney, all Friends who were appointed to the Clerkship were remunerated for their services. When Joseph Middleton, who had recently removed to Fakenham from Brighthouse Monthly Meeting, took office in 1713, a minute records that the Meeting "will gratify him sutably for ye same", and Christopher Catt, who followed him in 1716, receives a salary of forty shillings a year. Hubert van Kamp, who succeeded him in the following year, held the office of Clerk for seven years at the same salary; he kept a school in Goat Lane Meeting house, to which reference is made in a minute dated 1st month 1718.

All those friends whom it concerns are desired by this Meeting to send up their Accounts of Sufferings unto Hubert van Camp at his School in the Old Meeting House in Norwich by the 15th day of the 3d. Month, for him to transcribe and ingrosse the aforesaid Accounts and deliver the Transcription to the Representatives.

In 1724, William Cay was appointed to the office, and the following minute was passed in 7th month :—" This Meeting agree that Wm. Cay should have fiveteen shillings p Qur. Sallery for being Clark of this Meeting, And orderd Jno. Aggs to pay him now being the first." William Cay was Clerk of the Meeting until 1732, when John Wall was appointed in his

stead, and the following minute was passed in the 1st month of that year.

Ordered that Nathaniel Springall pay Wm. Cay Fifteen Shillings out of ye Stock for Incident Charges being his Quarter Salary and it is further Ordered that John Wall of Norwich be Clark of this Meeting in the place of the sd. Wm. Cay whose Health & Business hath not permitted him to give the Necessary Attendance wch. this Meeting Requires and he is therefore desired to send him all ye Books and Papers belonging to this Meeting.

At the very next Meeting, however, John Wall acquainted the Meeting "that he was no longer Capable of Serving Friends as Clerk of the Quarterly Meeting being shortly to Remove to the City of London", and Edmund Gurney was appointed to undertake the duties. He relinquished the position in 1741, and Thomas Davey, Jnr. succeeded him, the Meeting agreeing "to pay him Ten Shillings p. Quarter for his Trouble". No further change was proposed until 1745, in which year the following minutes are recorded.

7th mo. Robt. Holmes having proposed Isaac Jermyn as Clerk to this Meetg in ye room of Thos. Davey Junr. ye same is ordered to be considered next Quarterly Meetg.

10th mo. It is ordered that Thos. Davey be continued our Clerk till ye Midsummer Quarter next insueg. when Isaac Jermyn is appointed in his room and to have ye same Salary.

Isaac Jermyn, who commenced his duties as Quarterly Meeting Clerk in the Autumn of 1746, served the Meeting in this capacity until his death, which occurred in 1787. He was an active and influential Friend of Norwich Monthly Meeting, who, in 1750, appointed him their Clerk in addition to his Quarterly Meeting duties, and this position he also retained for the rest of his life. One would think that his service of 41 years as Clerk of the Quarterly Meeting, during 37 years of which he served his Monthly Meeting in the same capacity, must constitute a record in the annals of our Society.

The Select Meeting of Ministers and Elders was a most important and influential body in the life of the Society, whose functions corresponded closely to those of the present Ministry and Oversight Committees. In early days they were gatherings of suitable Friends for the fostering of spiritual life and ministry, and a minute of 1712 thus defines their scope and purpose.

It is mutually agreed by this Meeting that the Select meeting appointed for Ministers and Elders shall be Always Expounded and Construed to have relation unto Freedom of Speech with and unto Each other in order to provoke one another to their Severall respective duties, Either by Testimony bearing as it may please ye Lord to move any one thereto on Full Conference. It is also advised that Each Monthly Meeting do Endeavour to Stirr up Suitable members to attend the sd Select meeting, and prevent as much as in them lyes Such as are not So and that it be held at Mattishall the day before the Quarterly Meeting in the 7th and 1st months to begin att the tenth hour.

In 1744 each Monthly Meeting is directed to appoint two Elders (at least) to sit as Members in the Meeting of Ministers, whilst a rather earlier minute gives interesting details of the duties allotted to Elders at that period.

4th mo. 1741. Order'd that (pursuant to the advice of the Yearly Meeting In London) the Severall Mo. Meetings do appoint from amongst themselves Elder & Circumspect Friends to watch over Such Ministers as may belong to their Severall Meetings and to administer (In a Spiritt of Love, from Time to Time as they may find Itt their duty) Such Advice Either respecting their doctrine or Practice, as they may find necessary : & they are desired to return the Names of the Friends appointed for such Service to our next Q. Meeting, In Order to have Enquiry made by this Meeting how the said Trust is discharg'd.

In 1745, it was " agreed that ye Meetg of Ministers and Elders preceeding ye Yearly Meetg be for ye future made a Meetg for records " : from this date, therefore, the Meeting



was presided over by a Friend as Clerk, and regular reports were presented to the Quarterly Meeting. The following minutes will illustrate the general tenour of these reports, and from them we find the difficulty experienced in obtaining a proper appointment by Monthly Meetings of Elders to sit with the Ministers. Gradually, however, a regular attendance of representative Elders was secured, thus giving an added effectiveness to the Select Meetings of Ministers and Elders.

4th mo. 1746. Joseph Gurney reports from the Meeting of Ministring Friends and Elders, that pursuant to the Order of this Meeting they met in the forenoon at the Old Meetinghouse, & were favoured with a good degree of Divine Love & Mercy to the refreshing & strengthening their Spirits : & that several Mo. Meetings appointed Elders to sit therein : Norwich & Wymondham not having done it, they are desired to do it against next Quarly Meeting : And it is requested that Friends be very careful in choosing the most proper & qualified Persons that the Services intended may meet the desired Effects, which are that they give a true Acct of the State of their several Meetings both with respect to the Ministers & Members, that where there is Occasion for help, either by Admonition or Advice, the same may be administered in that Spirit of Love & Good-will as becomes the true followers of our Lord Jesus Christ, and thereby tend to the Establishing & building up One another in the most Holy Faith.

Ordered, that a Copy of this Minute be sent to each Mo Meeting ; And the several Mo Meetings are desired to take notice the time appointed for the said Meeting to sit down, is the Second Hour in the afternoon preceeding the Quarly Meeting.

4th mo. 1751. John Gurney reports from the Meeting of Ministers & Elders, that the same was held much to their Comfort & Satisfaction : and under a Concern that the same might be continued to a general Service earnestly recommend to this Meeting, that each Monthly Meeting would appoint Elders to sit as Members in sd Meeting and to be qualified to give an Account of the State of the Ministry in their respective Monthly Meetings, that where there may be a Ministry

not acceptable or in true Unity with the Society, such Advices may be communicated, & Assistance afforded as the Case may require, and which this Meeting approving do advise & direct, That each Monthly Meeting do appoint Elders accordingly.

9th mo. 1761. John Gurney reports from our Meeting of Ministers & Elders, that there was a considerable deficiency of the Elders in attending, much to the Concern as well as hurt to the Service of the said Meeting. This Meeting therefore finds it needful, not only to refer to the former Advices given on this head, but also to direct That Monthly Meetings do appoint proper representatives to each Quarterly Meeting of Ministers & Elders; and the Friends so appointed are requested to let no common Occasion prevent their attendance: And that the Monthly Meetings do require an Account from such Friends as are appointed & do not attend, the reason for their so doing.

9th mo. 1763. John Gurney reports from the Meeting of Ministers & Elders held yesterday, That it was a solid good Meeting; but so many of the Monthly Meetings had no Friend present, as Representatives, that the Queries could not be properly answered, and were therefore omitted; and the other Business of the Meeting much obstructed. This Meeting being sorrowfully affected with the latter part of this Report; do very earnestly recommend, That the Advices, so frequently given & repeated on this head, may be more properly attended to, and put in practice: and that Friends be more & more stirred up to Diligence in the several Monthly Meetings, and that they do not suffer common matters to hinder their coming up in every Service whereunto they may be appointed; that so We may become a Strength one to another; and such manifest Tokens of Indifference & Weakness may not be found amongst us.

Women's Meetings had been established by George Fox as early as 1671 (*First 50 Years of Quakerism in Norwich*, pp. 273, 274), and although mention is made of a "Womens

meeting for Worship ” in a Quarterly Meeting minute of 1714, the first reference to the Women’s Monthly Meeting appears in 1721, when stress is laid on the importance of this service.

7th mo. Our Meetings being called over to answer to the several Queries agreed to be asked at this Meeting and it appearing to this Meeting that the monthly Meeting of Lynn are defficient in the Seventh Query relating to keeping up their Womens Monthly Meeting. And this Meeting being under a due Sense of the Service of such Womens Meetings, and being desirous that the said Monthly Meeting may not fall short of the said Benefit : Do earnestly request, that the Mens Mo Meeting would be concerned to establish the said Meeting, and tenderly to encourage the Womens friends to come up to the said monthly Meetings, and it is the sincere desire, and hope of this meeting, that they will be sensible of the true benefit of such Meetings. And it is further ordered that a Copy of this Minute be sent to the said mens monthly Meeting, and they are desired to recommend the same to the particular Meeting.

About the middle of the eighteenth century London Yearly Meeting was seriously concerned at the weakness apparent throughout the Society regarding the holding of these Meetings, and an advice on the subject was sent to all Quarterly Meetings. An enquiry from the Quarterly Meeting to the Monthly Meetings elicited the information that there were no established Monthly Meetings of Women in the area of Lynn and Tivetshall, and the Quarterly Meeting minuted “ a renewed Concern, earnestly to press said Meetings to come up with the rest of their Brethren herein, and that they do take the same into their solid and serious Consideration ”.

The proposal for a Women’s Quarterly Meeting first appears in a minute of 7th month, 1754, when seven Friends are appointed, “ with any other Friend or Friends that may be free to attend ”, “ to draw up a Sett of Queries proper to be answered to in our Women Friends Monthly Meetings ; and to consider of the most proper Method for establishing a Quarterly Meeting of Women Friends in this County ”, the

following important minute being adopted at the next Quarterly Meeting.

9th mo. 1754. "The Monthly Meetings having brought in for Answer to the Minute recommending the Establishing of Women's Monthly Meetings, That such are now settled, except in Wymondham Monthly Meeting: It is the Judgement of this Meeting that it may yet further conduce to the good of the Society in this County, and prove beneficial thereto in general, that some solid Women Friends be deputed from each Monthly Meeting to meet together at each Quarterly Meeting; and therein give an Acct. of the State of their respective Monthly Meetings, amongst themselves; and to which purpose the following Queries are recommended to be answered from each Monthly Meeting. And wherein a Deficiency appear that they do administer such Help & Assistance in the meekness & wisdom of Truth, as may be necessary to the Occasion given.

This Meeting request that our Women Friends at Norwich would likewise depute a number of Friends to accompany the Women Friends of this County in said Quarterly Meeting, in the same manner as is now done by the Monthly Meeting of Men Friends there. And also, that such solid Women as may be free to attend the same, have liberty so to do, altho' not particularly appointed.

Queries to be answered by the Women Friends, in their respective Monthly Meetings, viz.

- 1st. Is your Monthly Meeting duly attended, and, is Love & Unity preserved amongst you?
- 2nd. Are First-day & Week-day Meetings diligently kept to; and if any appear careless or negligent, is there Care taken duly to admonish such?
- 3d. Is Care taken timely in your Monthly Meetings to advise such as appear Inclined to marry with those not in Profession with us?
- 4th. Do you take proper Care of enquiring into the Necessities of such Poor Friends as may fall more particularly under your Notice?



- 5th. Are you careful to example your Families, and to bring them up in the Simplicity of Truth, in plainness of Speech & Apparel, and in a diligent reading the Holy Scriptures ?
- 6th. When any Superfluity of Dress, Furniture, or in providing of Entertainments appear, is there suitable Advice & Admonition given ?

In the two following Quarterly Meetings, mention is made of Epistles addressed to the Women's Quarterly Meeting from the Monthly Meetings of Women Friends at Lynn and Wells, "but the same not being fully established" they were "ordered to be lodged with the Clerk for the present". The next extract, in a decidedly optimistic vein, is taken from the Answers to Queries forwarded to London Yearly Meeting in 3rd month, 1755.

We have Week-day Meetings in all our particular Meetings, and in general are attended: by the Accounts received there is a revival in that respect, Have also a Womens Meeting in every of our Monthly Meetings, and have reason to believe shall not only keep them up, but further be able to encourage the same, and shortly to have a regular Quarterly Meeting of Women Friends from the sundry Monthly Meetings, being very sensible the same would be of Benefit. We send you also the Queries peculiar to this Meeting.

The Women's Quarterly Meeting was fully established in 9th month 1756, but the response from the Monthly Meetings was very discouraging; the following minute was therefore sent down to them.

Our Women Friends having sent up to request the Assistance of this Meeting, in order to the Encouragement of the Women Frds to join in the Service of this Quarterly Meeting from the several Monthly Meetings; and further to acquaint this Meeting, That no Friend from any of the Monthly Meetings in the County was personally present; and an Account in Writing from One only: This Meeting taking the same into solid Consideration do earnestly press, that the Men Friends in the several Monthly Meetings Do encourage and assist their Women Friends to come up and attend with

them the Service of these Meetings ; that Opportunity by that Means may be afforded for our meeting together and jointly as well as in our separate Capacities, so far as in us lay, promote that good Cause which we humbly hope many of us are truly engaged for.

Further discouragement was expressed by the Women Friends assembled at the Quarterly Meeting in 3rd month 1757 " that they should have so small an Attendance ", and a further minute of 6th month in the same year shows a far from satisfactory state, even in the Monthly Meetings of Women.

By the Answers in writing from some Monthly Meetings, and verbal Answers from some others, it appears, that Womens Monthly Meetings are not yet in general established ; but, that where wanting, the Men Friends are endeavouring to assist and encourage the Women Frds to come up in this necessary Branch of our Christian Discipline ; and that they hope, in time may effect the same : which this Meeting finds it's Concern earnestly to press & recommend, that we may together, in our separate Stations, unite to promote the prosperity of Truth ; and not be deficient in coming up to the Advices so often recommended from the Yearly Meeting in London in this respect.

During the next ten years a general improvement took place in this respect, and the following minute was recorded at the Quarterly Meeting held on the 31st of 12th month 1766.

It appears, in answer to the Yearly Minute of last Year, respecting the Encouragement of Women Friends Meetings, that only the Monthly Meeting of Tivetshall is deficient in holding of such Mo Meetings, and in corresponding with the Quarterly Meeting ; This Meeting therefore recommends to the said Monthly Meeting that they do take the same into serious consideration ; and earnestly desire that it may come up with the rest of the Monthly Meetings in this necessary Branch of our Discipline ; And it is ordered that the Minute be again called on at next Quarterly Meeting, in order to send a suitable Answer to the Yearly Meeting in London.

At the following Quarterly Meeting a satisfactory report was received from Tivetshall Monthly Meeting, stating that "Womens Monthly Meetings are kept up, and answers to the usual Queries are sent to the Quarterly Meeting." By this date the Quarterly Meeting of Women Friends was settled on a firm basis, and it is interesting to note that (in this area) it remained in existence for 160 years, until, in 1915, it was decided that Women Friends should no longer retire to another room for certain details of the business, but that all matters coming before the Quarterly Meeting should be dealt with by Men and Women sitting together in joint Session.

#### CLERKS OF NORFOLK QUARTERLY MEETING

1709-1713.	1st Qr.	Samuel Stanton (of Wymondham).
	2nd Qr.	John Aggs (of Norwich).
	3rd Qr.	Richard Durban (of Tasburgh).
	4th Qr.	Peregrine Tyzack (of Norwich).
1713-1716.		Joseph Middleton (of Fakenham).
1716-1717.		Christopher Catt (of Norwich).
1717-1724.		Hubert van Kamp (of Norwich).
1724-1731.		William Cay (of Norwich).
1732.		John Wall (of Norwich).
1732-1734.		Edmund Gurney (of Norwich).
1734-1735.	1st Qr.	Edmund Peckover (of Wells).
	2nd Qr.	John Gurney (of Norwich).
	3rd Qr.	Robert Seaman (of Norwich).
	4th Qr.	Richard Ashby, Jnr. (of Mattishall).
1735-1736.	1st Qr.	Edmund Gurney (of Norwich).
	2nd Qr.	Robert Seaman (of Norwich).
	3rd Qr.	Richard Ashby (of Mattishall).
	4th Qr.	Edmund Peckover (of Wells).
1736-1741.		Edmund Gurney (of Norwich).
1741-1746.		Thomas Davey, Jnr. (of Norwich).
1746-1787.		Isaac Jermyn (of Norwich).

*(To be concluded.)*