

Bristol Friends and the Friars Meeting House

“ On the 7th September 1654, two men arrived in Bristol; their names were John Camm and John Audland. They preached to large crowds in Broadmead fields, and ever since that date Friends’ meetings have been held in this City.”

Friends gathered in Friars Meeting House, Bristol, on 7th September, 1954, for a special meeting of Bristol and Frenchay Monthly Meeting, were startled to hear these words prefacing a contribution from one of their oldest members, and to realise that, by an extraordinary coincidence, they were meeting to decide the future of the historic Friars premises on the exact 300th anniversary of the beginning of Quakerism in Bristol.

At that meeting Friends decided to relinquish these premises to the Bristol City Council, which requires them in the interests of town planning, and to accept the Council’s offer of an alternative site and sufficient monetary compensation for the erection of new central premises. This decision was not made without appreciation of the historic associations of the Friars with the Society of Friends in Bristol, nor without assurance that the Large Meeting House and other buildings would be preserved for civic use.

EARLY HISTORY

THE site was acquired by Friends in 1669, but, as its name implies, it had connections with the life of a religious community long before that time. The buildings of the Dominican or Black Friars Priory of Bristol had been erected there between 1230 and 1267, and the House continued for nearly 300 years until it was dissolved by Henry VIII in 1538. Part of the lesser cloister and buildings to the north and south of it still stand, owing their preservation to the fact that they were used by Bristol trades guilds, from which they derive the names of Cutlers’ Hall and Bakers’ Hall.¹ In the middle of the seventeenth century the property was acquired by Dennis Hollister, grocer, a leading Bristol citizen and a member for Somerset in the Barebones Parliament in 1653. Dennis Hollister was then a Baptist, a member of the first dissenting church in Bristol formed in 1640. In his house took place some of the earliest meetings of “the baptiz’d Independent-People” with whom he had “walked in outward fellowship many years.”²

¹ See *Transactions of the Bristol and Gloucestershire Archaeological Society*, vol. 55 (1933), pp. 151-190, article by Dr. Wilfrid Leighton, “The Black Friars, Bristol”.

² *The Skirts of the Whore discovered, And the mingled People in the midst of Her. In a Letter sent by Denys Hollister to the Independent Baptiz’d People, who call themselves a Church of Christ in Bristol, but are found to be a Synagogue of Satan*, 1656, sign. A2.

Dennis Hollister had come into touch with Friends whilst in London on his parliamentary duties, and when John Camm and John Audland arrived in Bristol in 1654 he welcomed them, gave them hospitality, and became one of the earliest group of Friends in Bristol. The group met at first in the homes of its members—at George Bishop's house in Corn Street, above Dennis Hollister's shop in High Street, and at Edward Pyott's at Lower Easton, then a country district adjoining Bristol.

The first mention of a meeting room is contained in an adverse pamphlet by one Ralph Farmer, accusing Friends of throwing Martha Simmonds down the stairs after a meeting at the time of the summer fair in 1656, "at the house near the Orchard."¹ It was, fortunately, possible for George Bishop to refute the charge completely by pointing out that there were no stairs in that place, "it being on the ground."² This could not, therefore, have been the Broadmead upstairs room where Bristol Friends were meeting by 1662, when George Fox visited them, and where he was married to Margaret Fell on the 27th 8th mo. 1669.

THE FIRST MEETING HOUSE, 1669

The many Friends assembled in Bristol at that time also attended a meeting at which "the building a large meeting house on Denis Hollister his ground on the fryars" was considered, the matter being referred to a group of seven Friends to determine, among other points, "whether the meetinge house shalbee built on D.H. his ground or elsewhere."³ The choice of site obviously caused these Friends some exercise, and the problem was settled by appointing a committee of seven prominent Friends not resident in Bristol. These resolved:

A large meeting house shall be built, [and] they doe declare that the same shall be built on the ground of Dennis Hollister in the Fryars and that Wm. Taylor, Wm. Yeamans, Thos. Gouldeny, Thos. Bisse, Richard Marsh and Jno. Love, doe contract, build and furnish the said meeting house at the publick cost of Friends, and further they declare that, this judgement declared, was what was determined by lott, and that it lay upon Thomas Lower from the Lord that lotts

¹ Ralph Farmer, *Sathan Inthron'd*, 1657, p. 30. For Ralph Farmer see A. G. Matthews, *Calamy Revised* (1934).

² George Bishop, *The Throne of Truth Exalted over the powers of darkness*, 1657, p. 29.

³ Bristol Men's Meeting minutes, vol. 1 (Friars Records, 201), 28.viii. 1669.

should be cast both for the place and the persons that should go in the worke.¹

Details of the committee's proceedings are unfortunately lacking, but the earliest papers relating to Friends' building matters in Bristol² record amounts totalling over £850 spent on this first meeting house, including £200 "Purchase money for the site paid to Dennis Hollister."

The building occupied the same position as the present Large Meeting House, but the ministers' gallery faced west instead of east. There was apparently another higher gallery in existence from the beginning, and a further gallery was added seven years later when additional accommodation was required. These galleries were the source of a constant stream of complaint that appears in the minutes of the Men's Meeting³ from their earliest records, on account of the

very greate Inconveniency in Rude boyes sitting in the gallery next above the back dore in the great meeting house.

Many times it was agreed

that all friends shall be desired for tyme to come to forbid their children of goeing there and otherwise indeaver to discoradge all Ladds in sitting there.

This first meeting house was the scene of the bitter persecution that fell upon Quakers in Bristol and elsewhere in the 1670's and '80's. In 1670, following on the second Conventicle Act, the meeting house was seized by the authorities and Friends met in the street outside the locked doors of their premises. Occupation was regained four months later when Friends forced their way into the meeting house. Eleven years later the premises were again closed to them by the City authorities, and it was not until 1686, after a period of four years, that the keys of the meeting house were again in their possession.

During that period, on the instigation of the sheriff,

¹ *Ibid.* 2.ix.1669. Notes are not provided for Friends mentioned in the *Cambridge* or *Short Journals of George Fox* (ed. Norman Penney). William Taylor, baker, of the Castle, Bristol, d. 1701; m. (i) Mary (d. 1675), (ii) Elizabeth Webb (d. 1720); a sufferer in 1664, 1679, 1682-1683; served on disciplinary appointments in Bristol meeting. Thomas Bisse, merchant, of Augustine's parish (1668); m. (i) 1661 Mary Prince, (ii) Anne Hersent; served on financial and property appointments in Bristol meeting, 1667-1669; dealt with for disorderly walking, 1671. Richard Marsh, merchant (c. 1630-1704); see *Friends Quarterly Examiner*, 1907, pp. 477-490; *Journal F.H.S.*, x, 42-43; xxii, 90-92; xlv, 84. John Love, grocer, d. 1696; see *Journal F.H.S.*, xliii, 76.

² Building Book (Friars Records 149).

³ Bristol Men's Meeting minutes, 26.iii. 1673, etc.

John Knight,¹ the meeting house was pillaged, the galleries, partitions and furniture were smashed by the mob, windows broken, and group after group of Friends driven through the streets from the meeting house to imprisonment in Bridewell and Newgate.

At one time so many Friends were imprisoned that only the children were left to keep up the meetings, which they managed to do, exhorted and strengthened by the words written to them by their elders from prison. One of these letters, written by Dorcas Dole, 30.iv.1682, was printed as a pamphlet in 1683 and again in 1700. It concludes with the following postscript:

This was written to the Children who kept up the Meeting, at the Meeting-House-Door, in the open Streets, in Bristol, at that time when Friends there was generally in Prison for their Testimony to Truth.²

It was during this period of persecution that the Bishop of Bristol preached in the Friars Meeting House. On the 10th January, 1682, the mayor, sergeants at mace, the Bishop³ and his chaplain, the aldermen and sheriffs, "with a greate Rabble accompanying them," arrived at the meeting house, too late to disperse the meeting as Friends had left a short while before, and entered the meeting room,

where ye Bishop, having a large Auditory . . . as is reported, made a Speech, tending to exhort ym to go on in this sort of work & encourag'd ym to it by proposing for it a Blessing in this Life and ye Life to come. This ended, One of ye Constables came forth & said, Now ye House is consecrated for my Lord hath preachd there.⁴

Friends attending meeting at Friars one Sunday morning in 1954 noticed the present Bishop walking through the cloisters, and wondered whether this was perhaps the only other occasion when the Bishop of Bristol has visited the premises since Friends acquired them, but how different were the circumstances! Dr. Cockin was attending a conference held at Friars of young people of all denominations, including Friends.

The destruction caused during the periods of persecution was finally repaired and the meeting house restored to full use in 1686. It was to stand for another sixty years, until it became too dilapidated for further repair and too small to accommodate the increased numbers in the meeting.

¹ Sir John Knight, the Younger, d. 1718 (Dict. Nat. Biog.).

² Dorcas Dole, *A Salutation and Seasonable Exhortation to Children*; 1700 edition, p. 14. Dorcas Dole (d.1717), *née* Knight, m. (1667) John Dole, silkweaver.

³ William Gulston, d. 1684.

⁴ Friars Records 137 (Bristol MSS. V), f. 143-144.

In recounting something of the history of this first meeting house at Friars, mention must be made of a few of the personalities associated with it. George Fox visited it on his return from America in June, 1673, and stayed over the Fair, and again in February and March, 1678. William Penn had family connections with Bristol, for his father, Admiral Penn, was born in the city in 1621, and was buried in 1670 in Redcliffe Church. In 1696, in the Friars Meeting House, William Penn was married to his second wife, Hannah, granddaughter of Dennis Hollister and daughter of Thomas Callowhill, button-maker and linen-draper, and another of the earliest Bristol Quakers. William Penn and his wife lived in Bristol until they left for Pennsylvania in 1699, when a minute of the Men's Meeting records

Wm. Penn, signifieng his Intention to goe shortly to his province of Pensilvania, takeing his leave of friends at this meeting & to fullfill the good order & custome amongst friends desires a certeficate from the friends of this citty as from the place of his habetation. wch. this meeting desires Benj. Coole & Richd. Snead & Ch. Harford Junr. to draw up & make ready to be signed in our next M:M.¹

THE NEW MEETING HOUSE, 1747-49

By 1747 the Meeting House erected in 1670 was in constant need of repair, partly due, no doubt, to the damage sustained in the persecutions described above. After recent expenditure of £80 on repairs, the Men's Meeting in October, 1747, decided to build a new meeting house on the site of the old one, and to this end to raise a subscription of about £1,000. They, therefore, appointed a committee of twelve prominent members of the Society, which was fully empowered to carry out the work.²

¹ Bristol Men's Meeting minutes (Friars Records 202), 17.v.1699. For Benjamin Coole, d. 1717, see *Journal F.H.S.*, xlv, 91. Charles Harford (1662-1725), merchant, of Castle Green, m. (1686) Rachel Truman.

² All material for this account of the building work comes from the "Building Book", (Friars Records c. 1842 H.7) (149), comprising bound papers collected by the Committee on Registers in 1842. The volume is lettered "Proceedings in Building Meeting Houses, 1670, 1747, 1765". The Friends on the committee were William Tully (d. 1763), Harford Lloyd (1700-1776, of the Old Bank), Thomas Daniell (1720?-1761), Robert Farnell (1690-1760), Thomas Goldney (1696-1769, an original partner in Miles' Bank), Mark Harford (1700-1788), Nehemiah Champion (1703-1753), Samuel Smith (d. 1772), Caleb Lloyd (1707-1768), Thomas Frank (1703-1757), Francis Freeman (1698-1752) and George Tully (architect, d. 1770 aged 82; see W. Ison, *The Georgian Buildings of Bristol*, 1952, pp. 47-49; H. M. Colvin, *Biographical Dictionary of English Architects, 1660-1840*, 1954, p. 629).

The Meeting Agrees that William Tully, Harford Lloyd, Thomas Daniell, Robert Farnell, Thomas Goldney, Mark Harford, Nehemiah Champion, Samuell Smith, Caleb Lloyd, Thomas Franks and Francis Freeman, in conjunction with George Tully, or any Five of them be a Committee In order to forward the Rebuilding the Friars Meeting with as much safety and dispatch as may be: that it may be ready as soon as Possible.

The Meeting also agrees thatt the Sole Management of agreeing with the workmen and Directing the building in all its parts be Left to the said Committee. . . .

Its Also Agreed thatt any member of the Society have Liberty to Attend the Committee att any time in order to propose to them whatt may Occur to them. . . .

Said Committee are desired to meet weekly or oftener if they see occasion, at such times & places as they think most convenient.

The committee met regularly every Tuesday eighty-three times until the work was finished. It was also

Impowered to open such a Way to said Meeting-House as to them may seem most Commodious at the Expençe of any Sum not Exceeding the Surplus of ye Subscriptions Subscrib'd or to be Subscribd for Rebuilding said Meeting-house.

For many years the narrowness of the lane in Quakers' Friars had been a problem. As early as 1699 Friends were asked to advise their coachmen—

not to Drive within the lane leading out of the Fryers, but Rather to waite for them in the Broadstreet without ye same.¹

As the more wealthy Friends removed to new houses in Clifton, Cotham and Hotwells, so the need for parking space for their carriages became more acute, and the large subscriptions of several Friends to the rebuilding fund were no doubt made in the hope that it would be sufficient, when the costs of building had been met, to secure a more convenient entrance way and a coachyard. They were not disappointed, for ground in Old Orchard was acquired for this purpose, and, when the meeting house had been completed, the Rosemary Street gateway and coachyard were constructed.

Of the 200 subscribers about twenty provided more than £25 each—among them the Goldneys, the Harfords, the Lloyds and the Champions, the total collection of this group amounting to more than £700, over one-third of the whole. The total amount subscribed was £2,050. The cost of rebuilding the meeting house cannot be distinguished from the total amount spent on all the work on the premises undertaken at

¹ Bristol Men's Meeting minutes (Friars Records 202), 11.vii. and 9.viii. 1699.

that time, which included the following items: land purchases and legal fees £261, building work and materials £837, carpenter's work and timber £746, mason's work and stone £420, freestone work £180, brickmaker £40, tiler's work £158, lime £97, plumber £146, glazier £11, smith's work £14.

The planning of the new meeting house was in the hands of two Friends, George Tully and his son, William. They were house-carpenters and surveyors, and George Tully was prominent in building development in the city in the eighteenth century. He had come to Bristol from Surrey in 1700 to work his apprenticeship in house-carpentry. He was admitted a free burgess of Bristol on 17.v.1715. He was responsible for laying out several residential squares; he built a chapel in Hotwells, and was almost certainly the architect who designed Wesley's chapel in Broadmead and the Horse-fair, a building that bears a close resemblance to the Large Meeting House.

The executive committee began its work by negotiating for the surrounding property required for improving access to the meeting house. George Tully was asked

to get a plan of and levels of the adjacent Grounds and Roads,
and to

begin to pull down all the inside of the Meeting and either to hire a Cellar to putt the old Stuff in or to build a Shed for that purpose as he thinks best. (27 October 1747)

Unused material from the old house was later sold for only £4, which would imply that a great deal of the original fabric was incorporated in the present building.

A week later George Tully produced to the committee a model for the new house, which he was asked to complete and bring to the next meeting; meanwhile he was

“to take proposals of Workmen for the Necessary forwarding the Rebuilding as soon as possible”, and to get “the Foundations for the Pillars made with all speed”. Next week it was “Resolved that the Model for Rebuilding the Meeting-house is Agreed too, with the following alterations Vizt. That the Windows over the Preachers Gallery be Reduced to the same Size as the other Windows and that two more Windows be Opened in Each side of the House, and also that the Pillars have a Pedastal three feet high.”

William Tully was requested “to go to Bath to take proposals for the Pillars” and “to know in what time it can be done.” It would seem, however, that his visit to Bath was unsuccessful, for on 17th November Thomas Goldney and the Tullys

were asked "to Treat with Thos Paty for the Pillars . . . on the best Terms they can."

As a result, at their next meeting it was reported that Thomas Paty had agreed

to Erect the Pillars of the Meeting house for the sum of Ninety six pounds, of which this Committee approves.

Thomas Paty was a member of perhaps the most important family of architects, stone-masons and carvers in Bristol of the eighteenth century. He and his father and brother were together responsible for a remarkable amount of building development in the centre of Bristol, which was in process of being replanned on more spacious and dignified lines.¹ He shared in designing new buildings for the Infirmary begun in 1784, carried out the rebuilding of Bristol Bridge, and laid out the majority of the main streets in the centre of the city. As Walter Ison tells us:

It is also certain that much of the ornamental stonework used by the Bristol house-builders of that time was prepared in the Patys' yard in Limekiln Lane.²

This, then, must have been the source from which the fine Doric columns were obtained that are the most distinctive feature of the interior of the Meeting House.

Thomas Paty later contracted for "makeing and seting" the windows at 24s. each, for the freestone coping round the top of the meeting house wall, and the frontispiece to the East door with the date 1747.

In November Thomas Hutton was appointed clerk of works—

to Inspect the Workmen Employ'd about the Meeting house, to be a Check upon them and keep Account of their Work, also to take Account of all Stones, Lime & Materials for Rebuilding the Same.

His first recommendation was that "the Workmen Employ'd have no Ale gave 'em for the future." This the committee approved, but, when the work was nearly finished in June, 1748 they

Order'd that Wm. Tully and Geo. Tully do give Forty two shillings to the Workmen to Drink, as in their Discretion may seem Meet.

¹ Among Paty's work were the carving and masonry for the Corn Exchange, Redland Chapel and Court (now Redland High School for Girls), Clifton Hill House (now a University hall of residence), Arnos Court (a house built for William Reeve, a Friend, disowned 1775, d. 1778), and the Royal Fort (now the University Department of Education). See H. M. Colvin, *op. cit.*, pp. 447-448; W. Ison, *op. cit.*, pp. 40-43.

² W. Ison, *op. cit.*, p. 41.

As work progressed the committee introduced various amendments to the original plan. The level of the floor of the meeting house was raised four feet, two more windows were added to light the stairs to the galleries, and the windows over the ministers' gallery were omitted as it was realised that these would

"be Inconvenient by letting in the Sun in the Afternoon" but "in Order that the same Light may be admitted into the Meeting-house Its agreed that all the upper Windows have one light more added to their length and the Culloms Six Inches higher". (19 Jan. 1748)

Masons were employed to build the boundary walls round the property at "12d. a perch". The contract for the Meeting House walls of up to 18 inches thick was

16d a perch, & so in proportion for all thatt is thicker, And all the Windows & Over the Doors to be Arched.

By May, 1748, the roof was reached, and the committee

Agreed with Joseph Thomas, Tyler, to Tile the Meeting House at One pound two shillings per Perch at 15 feet square, the said Jo. Thomas to find lime, nails and hair. (17 May 1748)

It had originally been intended to cover the flat roof over the sides of the meeting house with lead, but on 31st May it was decided this would be "Inconvenient by Strieking down the heat in the Gallerys, as well as much Dearer."

Thus the shell of the building was completed in seven months, and now work commenced on the interior furnishing. On 7th June George Tully was directed to "lay the Floors of the Side Gallerys for four Seats, and the front Gallery for Three Seats." On 21st June, to allow for more seating, it was

"Resolv'd that the Pedastals of the Pillars have all the Corners cut off[f] to an Octagon & the Treble Pillars to the same proportion"; and on the 28th that "the Floor of the Men Ministring Friends Gallery be four feet Clear in height more than the Floor of the Meeting House, and the Women Friends Two Feet four Inches."

In August the committee directed

That Geo: Tully be desired to know from the Womens Meeting whether the Seates of the Meeting be painted or not,

and the decision came back from the Women's Meeting that they did not desire the seats to be painted. Two months later it was:

"Agreed with Joseph Thomas to paint the Meeting House three coats in oyl, at sixpence per yard, but no size or glass to be used, but to kill the knots" (11 October 1748). The colour was chosen by "a piece of cloth of which Geo. Tully has a part thereof to compare that it may be painted agreeable thereto" (15 November 1748).

Joseph Thomas was also required to "Paint the Seats in the Gallerys for One pound Ten shillings" (21st February, 1749).

In addition to the Large Meeting House a new Men's Meeting room was erected, a wall was built along the burial ground and gates hung facing the main entrance to the meeting house, and the way to Rosemary Street was paved. Finally, in February, 1749, the gateway in Rosemary Street was built, and a month later, on 21st March, 1749, the committee

Order'd that the Meeting House be Shut up this Night and to be Clean'd this Week; & also that the Ways from the Coach yard Door to the Meeting House be kept fast to prevent people from passing to & fro.

In April, 1749, the Large Meeting House accommodating about 700 people was crowded for the first meeting to be held in the new building, and there must have been among that great assembly many families descended from the first Bristol Quakers of an earlier century, and many whose names were to become well-known in Bristol and beyond. Among them, no doubt, was Richard Reynolds, then a boy of 14. He married into the Darby family of Coalbrookdale, became a director of the firm of ironfounders and, on his retirement from business in 1804, returned to Bristol, where for twelve years he was renowned as one of the city's wealthiest and most generous benefactors. He died in 1816 and was buried at the Friars, when

So great was the public curiosity that existed on this occasion and such the eagerness manifested by the poor, who had lost their best friend, to pay the last respect to his remains, that not only the spacious burial ground was filled with spectators and mourners, but the very walls and tops of the houses surrounding the area were covered in a remarkable manner.¹

Within another century other names became prominent among the worshippers at Friars—the Hunts, the Tanners, the Sturges, the Graces, the Peases, succeeding generations of the Frys, including Joseph Storrs Fry, director of the chocolate firm for over fifty years, renowned in Bristol for his philanthropic work for hospitals, Sunday schools and Y.M.C.A., and Clerk of London Yearly Meeting for fifteen years; and Robert Charleton, who was a member of the Quaker deputation which travelled to Russia in 1854 to

¹ *Letters of Richard Reynolds, with a Memoir of his Life*; by Hannah Mary Rathbone, 1852.

present an address to the Emperor in an attempt to preserve peace with that country. A member of one of these families, Carta Sturge, has left us a description of First Day morning meetings at Friars as she remembered them in her childhood in the 1850s.¹

We entered a very sombre building—dignified certainly, and spacious. It had once been a monastery, and still went by a name indicative of its past use, and underneath the sleeping Quakers in the adjoining graveyard slept in peace a layer of monks, a curious development of the irony of time. . . . The meeting-place itself was a huge square room, with a very high flat ceiling, supported by pillars of enormous height—as high as the clustered pillars of the cathedral not so very far off, but so absolutely plain and unadorned as to have a very curious effect in columns on such a scale. The square windows were placed very high, so that nothing could be seen from them but the sky. The room was filled with rows upon rows of black oak forms, very aged, with drab cushions upon them. At the top of the room, facing the meeting, were three tiers of seats raised one above the other, in which, solemnly facing the rest of us, sat the Friends of weight and importance, men on one side and women on the other. In the highest row sat the ministers who were recognized as such. . . .

We were generally seated early, so that at first there was the interest of watching the Friends come in. What stately ladies in grave silks and satins—always the best materials—walked in silence up the aisle in their coalscuttle bonnets! . . . Equally impressive gentlemen, too, walked up the opposite aisle; and young girls in untrimmed straw bonnets, and small children like ourselves.

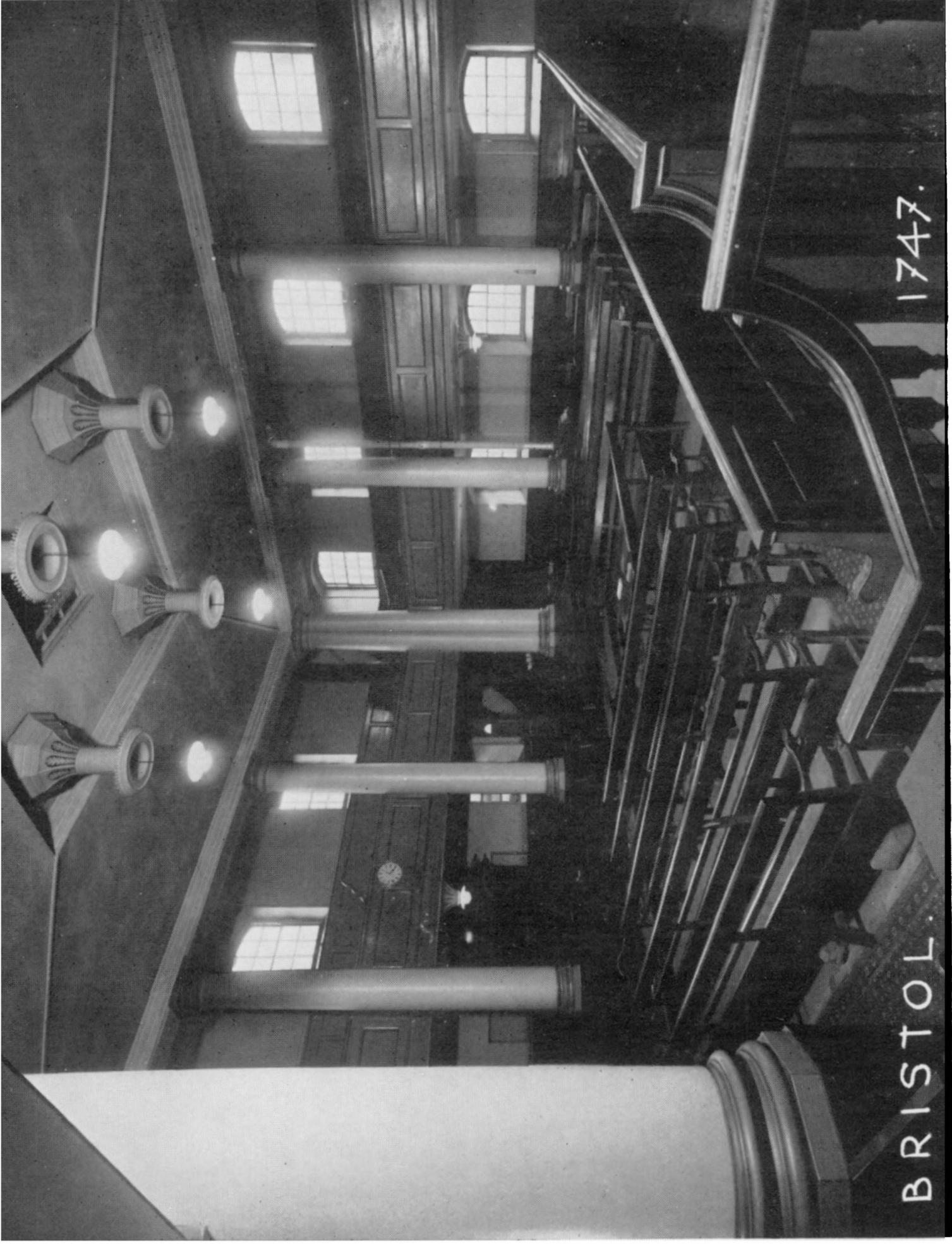
When at last all had taken their seats, a silence fell over the meeting—a silence it is impossible to describe. It was as still as a mountain-top, and all the more awe-inspiring because it was the silence of numbers—so many there, yet all silent.

What a contrast with the children of an earlier generation! Yet, perhaps it is significant that the “rude boys” who disturbed the first Quakers were also the “children who kept up the Meeting, at the Meeting-House-Door, in the open Streets, in Bristol,”² and through whom our Society increased its strength, whilst so many of these later, perfectly-disciplined children, like the writer of this passage, fell away from membership in later years.

But today we hope there are children growing up with happier memories of the Friars—not only the families of Friends, but of those living nearby, who in the past twenty-five years have passed through the Nursery School, a pioneer

¹ M. Carta Sturge, *Some Little Quakers in their Nursery*, 1906. A reproduction of a painting of the ministers' gallery of that time appeared, with biographical notes, in *Journal F.H.S.*, xxxiii (1926), 67.

² Dorcas Dole, *A Salutation . . . to Children*, 1700, p. 14.

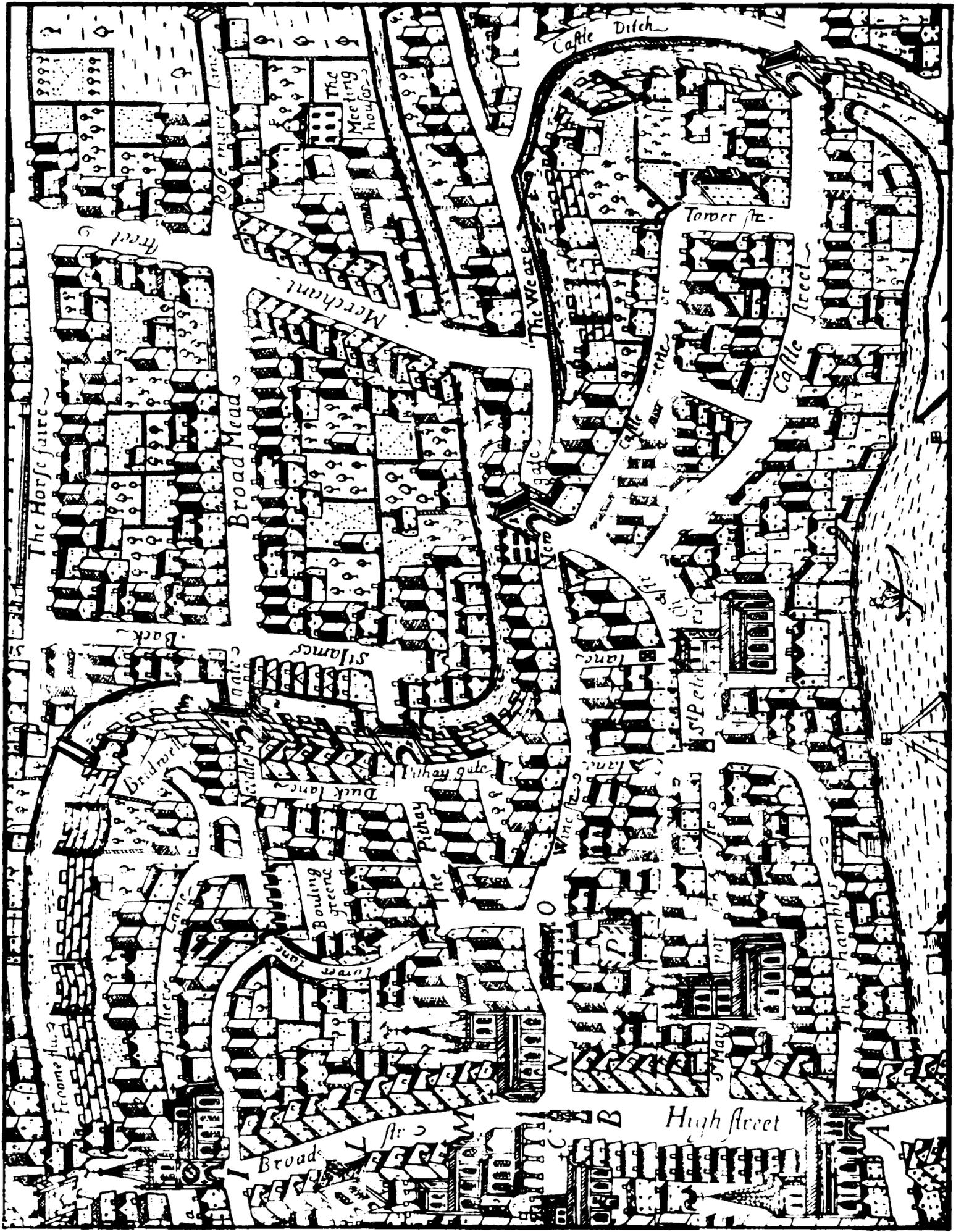


BRISTOL.

1747.

By courtesy of FEALE & CO., Photographers, Bristol

MEETING HOUSE, THE FRIARS, BRISTOL



Reproduced by courtesy of the City Museum, Bristol, from Millerd's Plan.

EAST BRISTOL IN 1673

example of this type of education, started by a Friend on the premises.

There are, too, the large number of children, some of them members of the Friars Meeting today, who remember the Sunday School work started there last century, when the ancient Cutlers' and Bakers' Halls were bought for use as First Day schoolrooms. Those were days when every room of the rambling, spacious premises was occupied to capacity each Sunday by Friends and their Sunday School and Adult School gatherings.

Today, with three other meetings in residential parts of Bristol, the Large Meeting House is rarely used for regular worship. It still, however, retains its stately dignity in spite of its dingy dress, and, when we worship there, the meeting house they built and peopled seems to form a link between ourselves and that line of men and women, known and unknown, who have there maintained a witness to their Quaker faith during the past three centuries. And although it cannot but cause us regret to break with such associations, yet there is surely a link more enduring than bricks and mortar, and of greater value. It is that precious heritage committed to us of a way of worship and an interpretation of the Christian faith that forms a vital and unique contribution within the Christian Church. We believe that, by removal to a new home, Bristol Friends can be strengthened in the task of passing on this trust to future generations, and can find in the building of a new meeting house an opportunity for renewed inspiration.

MARGARET H. SIMPSON

MILLERD'S PLAN (opposite). The original Friends' Meeting House at the Friars is seen in the north east quarter. Bristol Bridge over the River Avon is in the south east corner, south of St. Nicholas Gate.

Key to the letters on the Plan: A—St. Nicholas Church and Gate; B—the High Cross; C—the Tolzey; I—St. John's Church and Gate; L—the Guildhall; M—St. Ewen's Church; N—Christ Church; O—the Market House; P—the Meal Market.