

Early Irish Friends in the Records of Bristol Meeting

IN the records of meetings up and down the country one can find many references to activities connecting them with places and people hundreds of miles away; bringing perhaps a small country group of English Friends into contact with a meeting in London, a West Indian island or a pioneering settlement on the American continent. These references are rarely significant or numerous enough to give any picture of events or conditions in the distant place. On occasions however one may, among a mass of records, come across sufficient detail, which (taken together) may provide a useful supplement and throw an interesting sidelight on the course of history on the foreign soil.

Trading activity between Ireland and Bristol was considerable, but there is scant evidence of it in the Bristol meeting records. One merchant, Richard Gotley,¹ was due to appear at the Bristol Men's Meeting, 14.ii.1673, but "being now on a voydge to Ireland, the shipe being to sayle tomorrow, could not well attend the meeting." He came to the meeting on 7.v.1673 "upon his retorne from Ireland." In 1701 the management committee of Friends' Workhouse in Bristol "shewing that som times it might be advantageous to buy their yarne in Ireland," received authority to do so and a promise of indemnity in the risks involved.²

Geographical situation and commercial interest account for the fact that ties were strongest between Munster (and Cork in particular) and Bristol. In the Bristol Two Weeks' Men's Meeting minutes between 1667 and 1703 there are over a score of references to Cork, as against seven to Dublin, and none to any place in the north of Ireland.

In the normal run of local Friends' documents there are few records of travellers, and one has to rely on diaries, journals and printed accounts to trace the movements of

¹ Richard Gotley (d. 1705). See *Jnl. F.H.S.*, xlv (1953), 85-86.

² Men's Meeting minutes, 1.x.1701 (vol. 2, p. 221). References throughout this article are to the first two volumes of the minutes of Bristol Men's Two-week Meeting, preserved in Bristol and Frenchay Monthly Meeting (formerly at the Friars Meeting House, Rosemary Street, Bristol). C. 1842, A 1 and A 2.

Friends. Thus, there is no Bristol Friends' account telling of the 1682 visit of Joseph Pike and Samuel Randall from Cork. They were taken up at a meeting and put in prison by John Knight, sheriff, to join the large company of Bristol Friends then in jail.¹ Travellers do come into the picture however, when they were for any reason in need of assistance. For instance, 10s. from Bristol meeting's stock was granted to "John Camm a poore freinde of Corke being in need of assistance in his passage homewards," and a fortnight later another grant was made, "10 or 20 shillings, the most if he stay long windbound."²

DISTRESS AND ITS RELIEF

The unsettled political state of the two countries during the later Stuart period and the commercial disruption and distress which wars and evictions caused in Ireland lend particular point to the instances which come to light of the mutual assistance between Friends on both sides of the Irish Sea. Bristol evidence gives a picture of both meeting-directed and private assistance to poor travellers.

William James, Joseph Kippon, Erasmus Dole, William Dawson & James Cole or some of them are desired to Receive £5 out of publick stock & Ride downe to the Pill tomorrow there to vissitt the passingers bound for Ireland & that hath Related to us their destress & desired our Assistance, and if they find their present destress moves them to a present Releife & Assistance they are desired to dispose any part thereof or all as they shall see meete to their Releife.³

A similar minute appears four years later, in 1677:

William Smith & Lydia his wife, streingers in this Citty, being poore & intending to travell to Ireland, desireing som releife, Friends doth Allow that Charles Harford shall disburst 20s. out of our publick stock. viz. 10s. towards their present suply & towards their provision, and other ten shillings to pay their passage when they shall be ready sayle. Friends also doth Allow that 10s. formerly disburst by Rich. Sneed towards their releife shalbee also reimburst out of publick stock.⁴

John Workeman was given 50s. "towards his cleareing & charges, in his retorne for Ireland" in October 1690,⁵ and there were other grants in 1699.⁶

¹ Joseph Pike, *Some account*, 1837, p. 45-46.

² Men's Meeting minutes, 14 & 28.vii.1696 (vol. 2, pp. 120, 121).

³ *Ibid.*, 13.viii.1673 (vol. 1, p. 44a).

⁴ *Ibid.*, 3.x.1677 (vol. 1, p. 67).

⁵ *Ibid.*, 20.viii. 1690 (vol. 2, p. 39).

⁶ *Ibid.*, 11.vii.1699 (vol. 2, p. 174). Grants to Anne Cooke and child, travelling to Dublin; and to Andrew Perry, wife and child, from Dublin, travelling to Salisbury.

Friends from Ireland in Bristol during King William's war were offered immediate assistance. On April 7, 1690, the Men's Meeting recorded:

Wheras tis probable that som of our friends from Ireland that have late resided here may be in som want, especially before the publick moneys may be distributed: Charles Harford, Charles Jones & Ch. Jones Jnr. are desired to have inspection into their conditions & if they find need to assist them out of our publick stock.

Ch. Harford & Ch. Jones reports 21th of 2d mo. that enquiry have been made, and there apeares to be noe present occation, but a gratefull acknowledgiment of the kindnes of Friends, but as occation may require will make use of ye kindnes.¹

It is doubtful whether Irish Friends brought with them their own meeting organization, but Bristol Meeting did obtain a certificate of clearance for marriage when a proposal was under consideration "from some friends that were neybouring to Sarah [sc. Sarah Abbott, daughter of Samuell Abbott late of Mallow, co. Cork] whilst in Ireland, now in this citty."²

Of course, not all Irish Friends came to Bristol—one of the best known cases is that of Patrick Logan "a friend late of Ireland & now at London," as the minute of 30.iv.1690 goes, "a good scholler & an apt schoolemaster to instruct youth in latten &c." Logan came to Bristol to open the Friends' school which appears to have been in abeyance since the death of Lawrence Steel in 1684, and in the person of his son James, provided William Penn with a Secretary to go with him to Pennsylvania.

In 1692 Bristol Friends had an opportunity to share in a more general relief collection for Ireland, and to make some return for the £30 which Bristol Friends received from the Irish Friends' grant for English sufferers in the persecution eight years before.³ The appeal circulated by the Meeting for Sufferings in London draws a distressing picture of conditions in Ireland at the time.

We have received divers sad accounts of the great distresses and deplorable condition many Friends are in at their returne out of England &c. finding upon their estates neither house, corn nor cow, or any thing for their present relief; and some that during the warr retired into cities and great towns from the fury of the armies, were relieved by other Friends that had some thing left, now since the wars are over there, are gone out to visit their former habitations, and finds

¹ Men's Meeting minutes, 7.ii.1690 (vol. 2, p. 34).

² *Ibid.*, 11.vi.1690 (vol. 2, p. 37).

³ *Ibid.*, 24.ix. & 8.x.1684 (vol. 1, p. 102a).

great waste and ruin, so that till they are put in a way to raise something for their subsistence their condition seemes to be more miserable now than in the time of war, though more hopeful in a year or two to be recovered if by some speedy assistance in this their time of great straight they be but helped with some relief to put them in the way of improvement.¹

On receiving this appeal, Bristol Men's Meeting set on foot a general subscription and appointed six Friends to collect it.² A fortnight later the Meeting appointed several Friends to stand at the doors of Bristol Meeting on a First-day afternoon to collect from Friends as they left, with four weighty Friends to "speake to it . . . at the end of the meeting to stirr Friends up to contribute liberally thereunto."³ The subscription collection amounted to £145, and in addition, nearly £17 was collected at the meeting house doors, and £162 was remitted to London "for the service of Friends in Ireland."⁴

Substantial assistance given to a Friend from Ireland is recorded in the following minute:

Ch. Jones & Jno. Love are desired to disburst £4 11s. 10d. out of our publick stock to releife Enoch Core in his destress, who hath been disabled to releive himselfe this 9 monethes by an infermity called the Kings evell & haveing been assisted by some acquaintances of his & our friends from Ireland with the sune of £5 10s. the said sum. above is thought meet by this meeting to be added thereunto to compleate the sune of £10 1s. 10d. which doth defray the charge of the said Enoch Core is in score for the time past as aforesaid.⁵

Sometimes however the grants were not, perhaps, so willingly made, and towards the end of the century a new note seems to come in, presaging the rule of settlement made general in 1737 whereby Friends who moved were deemed members of the meeting from which they came until they produced a certificate of removal. The protracted case of Rebecca Russell in 1697 illustrates this. Joseph Russell, millwright, Rebecca his wife, and their children appear to have moved to Dublin without approval or certificate from Bristol

¹ Meeting for Sufferings minutes, 12.vi.1692 (spelling modernized). In advance of the result of the collections, £1,000 was sent to Friends in Ireland by the Meeting for Sufferings. English Friends subscribed £3,200. See the article by Isabel Grubb, "Irish Friends' experiences of war, 1689-92", *Friends' quarterly examiner*, iv. 1916, no. 198, pp. 169-87. Total Irish Friends' losses are estimated at £100,000.

² Men's Meeting minutes, 5.vii.1692 (vol. 2, p. 66).

³ *Ibid.*, 19.vii.1692 (vol. 2, p. 66).

⁴ *Ibid.*, 17.viii.1692 (vol. 2, p. 68).

⁵ *Ibid.*, 3.ix.1679 (vol. 1, p. 82a).

Friends. Husband and wife fell out, and after an application from Rebecca £5 (probably a trading debt due to Joseph Russell) was sent to Amos Strettell in Dublin to be paid to the couple if living together, or to Rebecca if in distress with her children.¹ A fortnight later however, Rebecca presented herself in Bristol Men's Meeting, where Friends reproved her for deserting her children and urged her to return to the duties of caring for her family in Dublin; if she did so, Friends would be ready "to assist them as the case may require."² In the following autumn the Bristol treasurer paid out "21 shillings & one peney" to assist her in travelling to Ireland, and probably hoped to have heard the last of the case.³ But alas, six weeks afterwards Dublin Friends represented that they had by then paid out over £30 in assistance to this Bristol family and wanted to know how much of it Bristol Friends would reimburse them. Bristol Men's Meeting remembered their former relief of "friends both of Ireland & other places that have been in distress here," and that the family's "first going into Ireland was not by the consent or aprobacon of friends," appointed two Friends to consider what their obligations were and to prepare a reply.⁴ But there is no further minute on the matter, so Bristol records give no clue of the answer sent to Dublin, or of Dublin's reaction to it. One can hope that in their reply Bristol Friends did not claim credit for anything they had done to assist citizens of Ireland struggling up out of the ruin of war.

FRIENDS' DISCIPLINE

The case of Rebecca Russell brought into play some of the disciplinary functions of the Men's Meeting in Bristol, and the majority of the references to Irish Friends in the minutes of the meeting stem from disciplinary activities—certificates of removal, of clearance for marriage, and of consent to marriage.

A certificate of removal was granted to William Penn, coupled with a letter from Bristol meeting to Dublin Half-year meeting, when Penn was going to Ireland in 1698. The Men's Meeting minute reads:

¹ Men's Meeting minutes, 10.iii.1697 (vol. 2, p. 132).

² *Ibid.*, 24.iii.1697 (vol. 2, p. 133).

³ *Ibid.*, 11.viii.1697 (vol. 2, p. 140).

⁴ *Ibid.*, 22.ix.1697 (vol. 2, p. 144).

Wm. Penn, haveing signified to this meeting his intend shortly to goe for Ireland, desires according to the good order amongst friends, to have certeficate; Richard Snead, Charles Harford, Thomas Callowhill, Benj. Coole & Charles Harford Juner, or any two or 3 of them are desired to draw & signe it, togeather with an Epistell from this meeting to the halfe yearly meeting at Dubline.¹

Most notices of removal to or from Ireland come from the last decade of the century. This is probably due as well to the closer organization of the discipline in Friends' meetings as to a letter from Ireland which was recorded in Bristol meeting in April 1694:

This meeting received advice generall from the late halfe yearely meeting in Ireland, dated Dublin, 5th of the first mo. 1693/94, that severall friends and famelys have of late come over to them, som without certeficates & som without subsistance, which latter have become a burthen & charge upon them, desires for the future care be taken that certeficates be given, and also such helps and assistance as may be meet & nessesary to suport such as we shall countenance their goeing over.²

Certificates of removal often contained a clause stating that the person removing was "clear of all others in relation to marriage" as well as being "of sober conversation"; but if no certificate had been received by the meeting to which removal had been made, then, anyone proposing to marry had to secure a certificate of clearance from his or her former meeting before the marriage could be approved.

In 1677 Edward Perrin and Mary Robinson were proposing to get married in Bristol, and produced a certificate of clearance from Friends at Youghal.

Edward Perin and Mary Robinson did this day lay their intentions of mariage before this meeting desireing that they might have liberty to have the same caried on and accomplished in the way, & order of friends; the father & mother of said Mary being present; did signify their consent: and produced a Certificate from ye friends of Youghall in Ireland where she hath formerly been resident, to ye friends of this meeting of her deportment there in ye truth, with her being cleare from all other persons on ye account of mariage, so far as they know.³

A request on like occasion for certificate of clearance was received in Bristol from Dublin (19.v.1675) enquiring about

¹ Men's Meeting minutes, 25.ii.1698 (vol. 2, p. 154). Other removal certificates were granted to Abigale Smith (19.viii.1691), Samuel Combe and Elizabeth his wife (26.viii.1696), Philip Popleston (28.xii.1697), Mary England (12.vii.1698), James Bulgin (10.viii.1698), Richard Champion (10.i.1698/99), Gidian Noble (15.ix.1703).

² *Ibid.*, 2.ii.1694 (vol. 2, p. 89).

³ *Ibid.*, 24.vii.1677 (vol. 1, p. 66).

One Grace Whiteing whether she may be found engaged or entangled to any person here in relation to marriage. Severall friends here present giveing a hopefull account of the said Grace Whilest she lived with Christopher Birkhead &c. Whereupon Richard Sneed, William Ford and Charles Jones are desired to make enquiry amongst friends that were her acquaintance and as they find it to Certifie the same to the mens meeting in Dublin.¹

The troubled times in Ireland after the Revolution of 1688 resulted in the appearance before Bristol Friends of Irish members temporarily in the city who wished to be married in Friends' way. For instance, in May 1689 Samuel Dennis of Cork and Elizabeth Cooke of Capoquin came to the Men's Meeting:

Samuell Dennis, late of Corke, and Elizabeth Cooke, daughter of Peter Cooke of Caperqueen signified their intent of marriage & desire to accomplish the same in the way & manner of Friends in this Citty. Peter Cooke & Elizabeth his wife, father & mother of ye foresaid Elizabeth, is present testefieing their concent & aprobacon. The said Peter Cooke & also Thomas Harrisson Unkle of Samuell testefieth that George Harrisson & Bridget Father & mother of said Samuell doth concent & approve of their Joyning together in Marriage. This Meeting expects somthing of testemoney from his Neybouring friends, of what they know or understand of his ingadment or cleareness from other persons in the nature of marriage.²

A fortnight later Samuel produced "a Certeficate under severall hands of his neighbouring friends of his cleareness" and the marriage went forward.³

Again, in 1691, Ebenezer Pike, and Mary Rogers, daughter of Francis Rogers (all of Cork) "signified their intention of marriage, & desire to accomplish the same in the way & manner of friends in this Citty."⁴ The meeting received a certificate of the consent of Francis Rogers and "two certeficates from the friends of Corke in relation to the cleareness of them both from others."⁵

A marriage which illustrates the ramifications of the correspondence among Friends to secure certificates of clearance from Friends' meetings and consent of parents or guardians, is that of Benjamin Bainton of Bristol and Mary Pennock, daughter of Christopher Pennock of Cork.

¹ Men's Meeting minutes, 19.v.1675 (vol. 1, p. 55a).

² *Ibid.*, 6.iii.1689 (vol. 2, p. 27).

³ *Ibid.*, 20.iii.1689 (vol. 2, p. 27).

⁴ *Ibid.*, 4.iii.1691 (vol. 2, p. 44).

⁵ *Ibid.*, 1.iv.1691 (vol. 2, p. 45). Another Cork marriage passing Bristol meeting during this time was that of John Hammon and Elizabeth Mitchell, 8 & 22.vi, 5.vii.1692 (vol. 2, pp. 64, 65).

Benjamine hath noe parent liveing, but Charles Harford, one of the parties as Gardian to the said Benjamine is present testefieing his concent. They produce to this meeting a certificate from her mother & grandfather shewing their concent (her father is remote in America, soe yt for divers late yeares he left her education to the grandfather & mother) also a certeficate from the Monethly Meeting at Knock-graffon in the province of Munster, being the meeting to which the said Mary did belong when under the tuition of her grandfather, certefieing her cleareness from other persons there.

Richard Snead & Charles Jones are desired to make inquiry of their cleareness.¹

(Nothing obstructing, the marriage was published 27.v.1694.)

After conditions in Ireland allowed Friends to return thither, it happened that Irish meetings sometimes required certificates from Bristol. Thus, at Bristol Men's Meeting, 12.iv.1693:

This day was read a paper from Cork in Ireland, dated 22d 3d month, 1693, directed to this meeting, which desires our certificate as to the clearnes of Mary End as to mariage, who in the tyme of Irelands late troubles had some considerable residence here. And inquiry being made & nothing found contrary, a certificate was granted accordingly.²

Other certificates were granted to Cork for Thomas Knight (who left Bristol owing his landlady £5.17s.) in 1693.³ Thomas Mumford in 1694,⁴ Ann Sellwood in 1696,⁵ and Caleb Sinderby "sometye apprentice in this citty" in 1703.⁶

But there is another side to the story which is perhaps not quite so admirable, but which (to present a true picture) cannot be wholly ignored. Bristol Meeting was much concerned during the 1670s with the activities of one Charles Woodward—a Friend who they evidently viewed as a plausible rogue. Woodward had travelled in Ireland and elsewhere as a minister. In 1673 Bristol Meeting issued a paper condemning Woodward's actions and asked Francis Rogers to send copies

to the friends of the mens meeting of the province of Munster & desire them to disperse copies of them through the Nation of Ireland.⁷

¹ Men's Meeting minutes, 9.v.1694 (vol. 2, p. 94).

² *Ibid.*, 12.iv.1693 (vol. 2, p. 80).

³ *Ibid.*, 2 & 16 viii.1693 (vol. 2, pp. 82, 83).

⁴ *Ibid.*, 2.ii.1694 (vol. 2, p. 89).

⁵ *Ibid.*, 15.xii.1696 (vol. 2, p. 128).

⁶ *Ibid.*, 12.v.1703 (vol. 2, p. 253).

⁷ *Ibid.*, 7.v.1673 (vol. 1, p. 42a).

In 1678 after further dealing Woodward came to the Meeting

shewing himsele now penitent & submiting himsele to the advice of the meeting. The meting advised him to setle here close to his labour & labour dilligent therein that thereby he might become more capeable to discharge those debts he had contracted, & not to travell abroad knowing his heart was deceitfull & his pretences fayre, that might doe hurt & deceive people that knew him not.¹

Unfortunately, four weeks later, the Meeting had to record:

This meeting being informed . . . that Charles Woodward is gone hence intending for Ireland. This meeting therefore desires Tho. Gouldney, Wm. Rogers, C. H. & Th. Callowhill, Rich. Sneed or any three of them to write a short paper & signe per order of this meeting directed to Friends in Ireland & elcewhere to caution them to beware of him.²

Lastly we may remember an earlier Bristol Quaker visitor to Ireland, before the days of minutes, Barbara Blaugdone the school-teacher, who appeared before Deputy Henry Cromwell in Dublin in 1656 to plead for the Irish sufferers,³ and the later ministering journeys of other Friends like Francis Rogers, Benjamin Coole and Mary Young through Ireland.⁴

The writer has sought to show that Bristol Friends records have material in them which has an interest for the Irish historian, of no great moment, but illustrating the relations between one meeting and another in the seventeenth century, and quite numerous because of the trading interests which had long joined southern Ireland and the west of England. Friends have reason to be thankful for the ties which bound the two kingdoms together, and the efforts which west country Friends put forward to spread the truth as they saw it and to assist such Friends as might be in trouble from time to time.

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¹ Men's Meeting minutes, 15.iii.1678 (vol. 1, p. 70a).

² *Ibid.*, 12.iv.1678 (vol. 1, p. 70a).

³ W. C. Braithwaite, *Beginnings of Quakerism*, 217-8.

⁴ For a "Record of Friends travelling in Ireland, 1656-1765", printed from a manuscript presented to Cork M.M. in 1900, see *Journal, F.H.S.*, x (1913), 157-180, 212-262.