

Quakers in Early Twentieth-Century Scotland

THIS paper is intended as a sequel to that in the previous issue (Vol. 52, No. 2, pp. 67–77), on “Quakers in Victorian Scotland”. It seeks in the main to treat of the period 1901–39, though in some particulars it has seemed well to bring the story up to date. The last thirty years are, however, too near for adequate assessment. As indicated in the previous study, the Society in Scotland indeed grew numerically in the later nineteenth century—rather surprisingly, in view of few convincements and apparently more disownments. The growth seems explicable, partly by the Victorian philoprogenitiveness of some members, as records of births imply, and partly to immigration from England, probably outbalancing emigration. It is, however, in the early twentieth century that genuine growth occurred. There were more frequent admissions and Scottish Friends expanded their activities, both within the Society and in the Scottish community. The former loss through marrying out is partly compensated by “marrying in”, i.e. by those brought in contact with the Society by marrying a member, and subsequently joining it and sometimes taking a prominent part—e.g. E. A. Walton, A. E. C. White. The nominal membership indeed was virtually the same in 1902 and in 1936 (363, 362); it was not until 1970 that it reached 500. With recurrent “pruning” of the lists, and the later abolition of birthright membership, conditions for a largely fictitious increase ended. The old dynasties died out or ceased active membership; a predominating part was taken by the “convinced”.

One of the factors to be considered is the Adult School movement. Though already active for generations in England and in some areas closely associated with the Society and augmenting its membership, it was not introduced into Scotland until the first decade of the new century, and was relatively short-lived, the last School (Edinburgh) being closed in the 1960s. It was, however, intimately connected with the Society, in personnel and meeting places. Andrew White, long Treasurer of General Meeting, was mainly

responsible for its introduction, following on a conference in Glasgow in April 1906, addressed by Edwin Gilbert; he and such Friends as Crawford Thomson, A. G. Wallis, Robert Donaldson and William Boag were among its stalwarts.

Kilmarnock, with two Men's and three Women's Schools was at one time its stronghold. Other centres were Glasgow, usually held in the Meeting House; Edinburgh, at first connected with the Pleasance; latterly, until its end in 1966, at Stafford St., though with few Friends participating; Montrose (1911), Greenock and Aberdeen; the maximum number was eleven. The First War occasioned the suspension of some; a few emerged after its close. A Scottish Adult School Federation (re-named Union in 1913), was formed in 1908; for a time it issued a Newsletter (1912).

A second factor was the First World War. The Presbyterian Churches, with their military traditions, were in general violently pro-war; Tribunals were generally hostile and contemptuous; consequently many pacifists were alienated from the Church. In Glasgow, the "Study Circle" (described in an earlier issue,¹ drew many into its fellowship, and some of these joined Friends, including its founder, Robert Shanks, and its last Chairman Tom Taylor (now Lord Taylor of Gryfe).

In Edinburgh, some were attracted to St. Mark's Unitarian Church, whose minister, Raymond Holt, was leader of the anti-war movement; a few later came over to Friends. Friends generally were loyal to the Peace Testimony, and several of military age served in F.A.U. or F.W.V.R.C. Aberdeen Meeting cared for the welfare of "C.O.s" at the Dyce camp, and obtained a few members.

A third contributory factor was the foundation of a new Meeting in Edinburgh. The late eighteenth-century meeting house was in a part of the city which had degenerated almost into slumdom, and was out of the main stream of civic life. Its membership was declining. Ernest Ludlam² who had taught at Clifton College, and suffered long imprisonment during the War, came to the University in 1922 as a lecturer in chemistry; he took an active part in the life of the univer-

¹ *Journal F.H.S.*, vol. 51, no. 3, 1967, pp. 167-73.

² W. H. Marwick, *Ernest Ludlam* (Quaker biographies, Friends' Home Service Committee), 1960.

sity and of the city, being a founder of the Edinburgh Christian Council for Overseas Students, and of the Cosmopolitan Club, which long met in his home; both were concerned with the welfare of the numerous students from abroad. He felt the need of a fresh stimulus to Quakerism, and in 1924 with a few sympathizers, he started a Meeting for Worship in hired premises, where Sunday evening addresses were also given. After several changes of location, the Meeting, having acquired the status of a Preparative Meeting, obtained its own premises (1938) at 28 Stafford Street, in the "West End", best known through the presence in the same street of "Free St. George's" (now St. George's West), the most popular Presbyterian church. The two Preparative Meetings subsequently united (1944). The Meeting proved attractive to visitors, and some were drawn into contact through the Children's Meeting and the Young Friends' group, several becoming members while others preferred to remain regular Attenders. The holding of Yearly Meeting in Edinburgh in 1948 (the first time in Scotland), for which the Church of Scotland granted the use of its Assembly Hall, put Quakerism on the map in Scotland. Since then, numerous invitations to speak on the subject have come from other religious groups, ranging from the Presbytery of Inverness to Women's and Youth Church Fellowships, and from secular bodies, e.g. Toc H, a W.E.A. class and the sixth-form of the Royal High School, Edinburgh.

As regards organization, Scotland General Meeting ranked as a quarterly meeting in the hierarchy of the Society. It was entitled to send representatives to Yearly Meeting, to Meeting for Sufferings and central committees. The right seems to have been little exercised until after the First War. Since then, some representatives have attended regularly and a few have held office. When Church Government was revised (1967), and quarterly meetings were laid down, the special position of Scotland General Meeting was recognized, in its relation to the Scottish legal and administrative system, and to Scottish religious and other bodies (Sect. 777). After informal discussions (1951-52) it had been agreed that when possible a Scottish member should be included in London Yearly Meeting representatives to Ireland Yearly Meeting, with which inter-visitation had been practised. Scottish Friends have also been appointed representatives

to continental yearly meetings, in which, from historic national contacts, and from similarity as largely composed of Convinced members in a very minority position in their respective countries, they have felt a special concern. Scottish Friends have also served as Chairman and as Secretary of the European Section of Friends World Committee for Consultation.

There has been inter-visitation between Scottish Friends and those of Fritchley Meeting, among whose founders were Scots from Aberdeenshire. General Meeting has been represented on the Northern Friends' Peace Board almost from its establishment, and Stanley Farrar became its Secretary (1942-57). Scottish Friends have since 1819 had representation on Wigton School Committee.

Edinburgh Two Months Meeting included all local meetings in the south of Scotland as far north as Dundee. It was raised to the full status of a monthly meeting in 1903. Dundee was transferred in 1939 to Aberdeen 2 M.M. which comprised the rest of Scotland, but only one-fifth of members. With the introduction of direct representation of monthly meetings on central bodies in the "sixties", Scotland was divided into four monthly meetings each around one of the four main cities.

The old Edinburgh meeting house was sold when the Pleasance Meeting was laid down. Among its active members had been Robert Donaldson (1881-1936) and John Erskine, successively clerks. Edward Walton, R. S. A. (1861-1922), a distinguished artist and his wife Helen, of an old Quaker family. Their sons served in the first war in the Friends' Ambulance Unit and Friends' War Victims' Relief Service respectively; the elder, John, became Professor of Botany in Glasgow, the younger, Arthur, a Cambridge don. Among those prominent in the newer Meeting in its earlier days were Stanley Farrar (1891-1962), a Yorkshireman who had come to Edinburgh as a master at George Watson's College, Mary F. Smith, daughter of Henry Lloyd Wilson of Birmingham, whose husband Lionel was Head of Edinburgh Academy, and Edwin Catford, a Londoner, a founder of the "Considerers"¹ at the turn of the century, an official of municipal transport.

Glasgow sold the meeting house in North Portland Street

¹ W. H. Marwick, *Quaker social thought*, p. 13.

in 1921 and met in the Royal Philosophical Institution's rooms in Bath Street until 16 Newton Terrace, near Charing Cross, the modern centre of the city, was bought in 1944. Notable among its members were Arthur H. Catford (of Gray Dunn's, the Quaker biscuit firm) (1864-1935), Arthur G. Wallis, Richard Field, and George Macdonald, a master tailor (1866-1935), all of whom became clerks of M.M., the two latter of G.M. as well; and Edward Kaye, a master at Glasgow Academy, who also served as M.M. clerk. An offshoot in Paisley had a short existence as an Allowed Meeting.

Aberdeenshire, a stronghold until the later eighteenth-century, had dwindled, partly through emigration, and the last of the rural Meetings, Kinmuck, was laid down in 1944. The venerable meeting house survives as a village hall. In the city of Aberdeen a new meeting house was built in 1902. The meeting was described by Thomas Hodgkin (c.1900) as "inert and self-contained". It was much under the influence of John Duguid, a farmer of "conservative" views. It experienced more than one recovery, thanks mainly to incomers. Prominent before 1939 were Ernest Lawton, an organ-builder, whose admission was at first refused owing to his occupation; James Milne and John Mitchell, a fruiterer (1874-1956).

Dundee Meeting suffered from internal dissension early in the century, but revived under the care of Robert Allan (1845-1916), Head of the Art Department of the Harris Academy, and James A. Braithwaite (1870-1935), owner of a provision business, who was strongly Evangelical. The issue by the Meeting of a pamphlet expressing this standpoint was "regretted as inadequate" by M.M. (1930). A children's school, Band of Hope, and Mission Meetings were held.

The small meetings established through the Evangelical movement of the late nineteenth-century in Ayrshire came to an end: Maybole (1901), Ardrossan (1930), Crosshill (1932). The last survivor was Kilmarnock, closed in 1954. Latterly a new Meeting has been started, centring in Ayr. Other small and isolated meetings, largely dependent on a single individual or family, have risen and fallen; e.g. Annan, Dumfries, Helensburgh, Kirkintilloch. A Meeting at Dunfermline, carried on in his own house by John Yule (1839-1924), an ex-miner, was recognized in 1907; shortly after his death it

was revived by Alex. Hay (1878–1960), an artist and teacher of art, an Aberdonian who joined Friends in 1909 and served in Friends' work for refugees in Holland during the war. The Meeting has recently been discontinued, its place being taken for Fife Friends by one in Kirkcaldy. A group in Greenock which had gathered round Helen Blake, a widow with a business in town, was constituted a Preparative Meeting in 1916; William Boag, a cabinet maker, was long Clerk until the Meeting was laid down (1958). Colin Macleod, son-in-law to Helen Blake, was for a few years clerk of General Meeting.

The Meeting at Perth has more than once died and been resurrected. After being reduced to a single member, it was carried on from 1932 in their home by Cyril and Ethne Walmesley. The Meeting was discontinued after Cyril Walmesley's death in 1956, and the removal of Ethne Walmesley to Bristol. It was again revived a few years ago.

The early meetings in the Borders had long been discontinued: Kelso (1797), Hawick (1844). I. Gray Wallis (1877–1967), who came from Wakefield, and revived the original connexion of Quakerism with the local woollen industry as a partner in Innes Henderson (Braemar hosiery), for many years arranged occasional meetings for visiting Friends. In the 1960s regular meetings rotating in various centres, were organized.

There have been active Young Friends' groups in the cities, largely composed of students, and thus fluctuating in membership. In several cases successful Children's Meetings have been held. Adolescent groups under such names as "the Seekers" have also sprung up. Study groups have frequently been held, and a Mothers' group in Edinburgh has had a regular programme. A Scottish Young Friends' Committee was formed, and arranges conferences. It is represented on Young Friends' Central Committee.

Concern for the many isolated members has led from time to time to arrangements for visitation. An annual conference, primarily for their benefit, was commenced shortly before the second war, and has usually been held during the holiday period in guest houses at Dollarbeg and Bonskeid and has proved popular. This was also largely responsible for the institution of a Newsletter—as well perhaps as an aid to future historians. It was initiated in

1944 by Katie Ratcliffe (1871-1962) (wife of the well-known Fabian), then resident in Scotland, and has continued in varied format (printed, cyclostyled, etc.), and with varying frequency. Copies are circulated to Friend households in Scotland, to those Attenders who desire and to a number overseas or south of the Border, former members or having a Scottish connexion or interest. The Horniman Trust, "for the spread of Friends' principles in Scotland", finances "outreach" and distribution of Quaker literature. Alex. Rice of Glasgow served for some years as its Agent.

Alterations in Scottish marriage law, intended to discourage "runaway" weddings at Gretna Green, affected Friends, whose simple form had been recognized under Scots Common Law and affirmed by an Act of 1878. After negotiations, conducted chiefly by Stanley Farrar, a satisfactory provision for registering marriages of Friends and Attenders in accordance with Friends' usages was secured by legislation (1938).

The then "Seven Points of a True Social Order" were endorsed by Edinburgh M.M. in 1918. Later, General Meeting was represented on the Industrial and Social Council until it was laid down in 1957. Among concerns of Scottish Friends in the social sphere were the "Barns School" and an Allotment scheme. The latter was started for the unemployed during the period of great depression (1932) and administered by a joint committee of Friends, with Harold Sharp as chairman, and the Scottish Allotments and Gardens Society. The Barns School was established in the second war for "difficult" evacuee boys, with David Wills as Warden. It was continued as a residential school until 1953 for other boys requiring special care, with Government recognition and aid (1946) and directed by a Council on which Friends were represented.

General Meeting became affiliated to the Scottish Temperance Alliance and the Scottish Council of Social Service, and several Friends were engaged in the work of the Edinburgh Council. Agnes Macdonald (1882-1966), who had been a militant Suffragist, was for long secretary of Edinburgh Women's Citizens which promoted many civic reforms. She joined Friends and was active in many "good works" including care for refugees from Nazism, organized in 1938 and conducted from Friends House, Edinburgh.

Work for aid of refugees on a wider basis was carried on for many years, particularly in the collection and despatch of clothing, by a Quaker Overseas Relief Committee. Similar activities went on in Glasgow and elsewhere.

Several Friends extended their advocacy of the Peace Testimony by participation in the Fellowship of Reconciliation, Women's International League, and more recently, C.N.D. (the Campaign for Nuclear Disarmament).

The World Missionary Conference held in Edinburgh in 1910 may be regarded as a harbinger of Ecumenism. Henry Hodgkin was among the speakers. At the Faith and Order Conference, also in Edinburgh, in 1937, Scottish Friends were represented by Ernest Ludlam. They were represented on the World Mission of the Church, an inter-denominational committee, absorbed in the Scottish Ecumenical Council after the establishment of the World Council of Churches. As this body adopted the "Amsterdam credal basis", they felt unable to affiliate. Some individuals joined the voluntary Scottish Ecumenical Association. On the substitution of the Scottish Council of Churches (1964), General Meeting was admitted to full membership without credal subscription. Friends have also participated regularly in the Women's World Day of Prayer.

Interest in Scottish Quaker history was evinced early in the century. William F. Miller (1834-1918), the last of a family long associated with Friends, contributed articles to *Journal F.H.S.* Richard Field of Glasgow and Edwin Catford of Edinburgh searched records, compiled notes and delivered talks. Church of Scotland ministers, Dr. Dugald Butler and Rev. John Torrance wrote about seventeenth-century Friends in Scotland. Dr. George Burnet compiled a thesis from the records of the Society covering its history up to the middle of the nineteenth-century. The substance of this work was published in 1952 as *The Story of Quakerism in Scotland*, with an epilogue by the present writer bringing it up to date.

(Most of the material, where not otherwise indicated, is derived from the MSS. Records of the Society and from the Scottish Friends' Newsletter.)

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