

The Birkbeck Library, York

READERS may recall an article on Morris Birkbeck in this *Journal* by Isaac Sharp in 1911.¹ The paper gave some account of Morris Birkbeck the man and his bibliographical work, which secured for him an honourable place in the range of Quaker bookmen between John Whiting and Joseph Smith. Isaac Sharp had little to say of the collection of books which now has for the last century and a half graced the walls at the meeting house in Clifford Street, York.

The collection itself was brought particularly to notice a year or so ago when a reprint publishing firm enquired for the 1699 edition of *God's Protecting Providence* (Philadelphia, R. Jansen),² which was, through a misapprehension, thought to be in the Birkbeck Library, and is so recorded in Donald Wing's *Short-title catalogue of books printed . . . 1641-1700*. The Birkbeck Library does contain many rare works, but not that particular one. It may, however, be useful to give a brief account of the scope and coverage of the collection, to show what it may provide to the Quaker historian seeking printed material.

THE COLLECTION

The current catalogue of the collection is in manuscript drawn up by Henry O. Scott of Leeds in the 1930s. The catalogue reveals some 4500 entries for individual works. This figure may not be entirely a net figure of items, owing to the presence of certain double entries, so that the number of books and pamphlets in the library (short of making an exact count) may be nearer 4,000. Of these works, 2,500 approximately come from the seventeenth century, and the balance from the next century and a half. Less than a hundred items seem to have been added since 1840, and those entered for this period consist largely of annual reports for Friends' schools and the York Retreat.

It has been estimated that some 6000 works were printed for Friends in the seventeenth century, so that one can see

¹ *Journal F.H.S.*, 8 (1911), 9-15.

² D. G. Wing, *Short-title catalogue . . . 1641-1700*, D1389.

that a sizeable proportion of the output of the Quaker press during that period is represented on the shelves in York. Bearing in mind the errors which are possible in the figures, working from a catalogue instead of an actual examination of the books, it may nonetheless be revealing to give a table of the number of items for the different decades. These numbers in themselves mask some significant variations; for instance, the 1650s total (625) includes peaks of 107 and 103 separate publications in 1655 and 1656, falling to the 70s in the next couple of years, and rising sharply to 167 in 1659 and 215 in 1660, the two troubled years of the Restoration period, then falling away to 115 in 1661, 100 in 1662, and right down to 24 in 1666—the time of the Plague and the Fire of London. Thereafter output only rarely reached the fifties in any year.

TABLE OF PRINTED WORKS IN THE BIRKBECK LIBRARY

Dates	Numbers	Dates	Numbers
pre-1650	10		
1650s	625	1750s	53
1660s	818	1760s	66
1670s	439	1770s	101
1680s	308	1780s	71
1690s	310	1790s	122
1700s	250	1800s	148
1710s	129	1810s	212
1720s	62	1820s	266
1730s	81	1830s	233
1740s	55	1840s	72
(1650–1749)	3077	(1750–1849)	1344
		From 1850	21

The fall in numbers in the middle of the eighteenth century gives substance to the usually accepted view of Friends' small publishing activity during the "quietist" period. It probably represents a real trend, because there is no reason to suspect that Morris Birkbeck would have restricted his intake of material if it had been available to him. The rise in the 1810s and onwards, until the end of the 1830s must represent the activity of York Friends (and in particular, as will be seen, William Alexander) in making efforts to complete and continue the collection of printed works which had come to the Quarterly Meeting.

Over 130 of the main Quaker authors are represented at York by more than about four books each in the collection. The following have more than a score of works or editions each: Robert Barclay, William Bayly, George Bishop, Edward Burrough, William Dewsbury, Richard Farnsworth, George Fox, Francis Howgill, Richard Hubberthorne, George Keith, James Nayler, Isaac Penington, William Penn, Humphrey Smith, William Smith and George Whitehead.

The Library catalogue is arranged basically in the order of books recorded in Joseph Smith's *Descriptive Catalogue of Friends' Books*, 1867. There are about 100 linear feet of books in the collection. Some have never been read, being unopened, and some still have evidence of having been housed at a former time in a damp place, although whether this was before or since they came to York is not determined. The volumes of bound pamphlets have lists of the contents inside the front covers.

According to a note by Henry Scott, some 35 volumes were removed to Friends House Library in 1937/38, as they contained works which supplied gaps in that library.

The York books are shelved in the Strong Room at the Friends' Meeting House, 15 Clifford Street, York, YO1 1RG, and may be consulted on application to the Curators.

MORRIS BIRKBECK AS COLLECTOR

Morris Birkbeck was son of William and Sarah (Morris) Birkbeck of Settle. They were married 5 May 1730 at Stafford.¹ Morris Birkbeck was born 4 November 1734, and died at Guildford 14 April 1816. Details of his life are given in the article by Isaac Sharp mentioned above.²

In a letter to Thomas Thompson of Liverpool, Morris Birkbeck gives an account of his method of collecting books, and how he set about increasing the collection which he intended to present to the Society of Friends for the use of its members.³ "The mode which I pursued . . . was first to ransack all the old book shops and stalls I could find where I

¹ The marriage certificate (University of Durham, Department of Palaeography and Diplomatic, Backhouse Papers, no. 52) has 34 witnesses.

² *Journal F.H.S.*, 8 (1911), 9-15.

³ Letter dated Guildford, 4. x. 1808, addressed to Thomas Thompson, Chymist & Druggist, Liverpool; in volume of bound papers, Yorkshire General Meeting archives, Clifford Street Meeting House, York, Strong Room, shelf 6, no. 9, pp. 2-3.

went, as well the Nation over, as in the bye corners, allies, and publick streets of the Metropolis. If going out on other business, my Catalogue, mostly, was my *vade mecum*; in which I regularly marked off, or entered every fresh acquisition as the case required, old and new . . . thus, I was not liable to purchase the same article twice over, unless in volumes of tracts, some containing, perhaps, only one or two such as I wanted; the rest duplicates, or even triplicates; for the holders rarely would suffer a volume to be mutilated, unless at an extravagant price, inducing me to purchase the whole.

“I also obtained many in the families of Friends, especially of ancients, descendants of the First convinced, and of some who had left the Society, seldom meeting with a refusal, either for love or money; to some I made returns in some shape, thought to be equivalent, in books or otherwise; but I have this testimony to give, that Friends, knowing my motive and intention, have been liberal and kind generally throughout furnishing what I wanted gratis. Some, who seemed not altogether to comprehend the service it might be, for *Cui bono?* was no uncommon question. After all my researches, I suppose I yet want half as many *hundreds*, as I have obtained *thousands*, of distinct publications, large and small. Some may have become quite extinct or lost; but others, I doubt not, are in collections which I have not seen.”

ESTABLISHING THE YORK LIBRARY

The first official communication presented to the Quarterly Meeting concerning the Birkbeck Library came on 26.vi.1811 in the form of a letter addressed to that meeting from Morris Birkbeck. He told Friends that he had, by codicil to his Will, bequeathed the books he has been collecting, to Friends, namely

to the Quarterly Meeting of York; first supplying, out of them, the Library of Friends in London, which belongs to the Society at large, with what may be wanted towards completing the Collection there . . . it being my desire that, as there is one Collection of the greatest part of the Books &c. published by Friends, kept in London, there may also be the like or a duplicate thereof, kept in the Country; not only for the perusal of Friends that may incline to read them, but for the use of any who may be engaged in writing on subjects relating to the Society, and with its approbation; but it is my desire that no Books, Pamphlets, &c. be lent, or

taken out of this Library, except on some occasion of this sort; and that, in this case, a particular account kept of such Books, Pamphlets, &c. when taken and when returned; and that this return be made in due time.¹

In his letter Morris Birkbeck proposed that the transfer to York should take place immediately he had been able to arrange the books, and before his death, but the Will did not take effect until after that event in 1816.² Even after Morris Birkbeck was dead, there were delays. John Eliot was handling affairs in London, and he wrote 3.ii.1817 to William Tuke, that "the Books were received several months since from Guildford, and deposited in the Record Room at Devonshire House Meeting House, where they now remain."³ The selection for London stock was to take place before the Yorkshire trustees took up their duties, and London Friends had not yet begun to make the examination of the books for the choice of works. However, Thomas Thompson of Liverpool, "a Friend peculiarly well qualified for the task", so John Eliot wrote

has spontaneously offered his assistance, which has been gladly accepted; and I expect that the whole of the Collection will be shortly conveyed to Liverpool, in order that he may proceed in this business as his leisure will permit.⁴

When the books arrived in Liverpool Thomas Thompson wrote to William Tuke:⁵ "As the Collection is now under my

¹ Morris Birkbeck to York Quarterly Meeting, dated Guildford, 8. vi. 1811; Strong Room, shelf 6, no. 9, p. 7. The terms of the codicil are recited on pp. 9-13 of the same volume.

² Responding to a suggestion from Morris Birkbeck, Henry Tuke [1755-1814] stopped at Guildford on his way to Chichester, intending to assist in the arrangement of the books, but he found that his assistance would not be effective, Morris Birkbeck's "mode of proceeding would be too deliberate for his attendance". The impreciseness of the arrangements gave rise to misunderstanding later, when some York Friends thought that, as the books had been given to them, Morris Birkbeck's trustees in London were interfering, and doing too much. However, in his letter of 27.viii.1817, William Tuke admitted that the testamentary documents supported London Friends' action, and to Thomas Thompson of Liverpool, who made the selection for London, he expressed his "satisfaction that this business fell into thy hands, being persuaded that it might otherwise have been difficult to find one competent to the undertaking." (Yorkshire G.M. archives, Strong Room, shelf 6, no. 9, p. 200.)

³ John Eliot to William Tuke, York; dated London 3.ii.1817 (Yorkshire G.M. archives, Strong Room, shelf 6, no. 9, pp. 17-20; quotation from p. 17).

⁴ 3.ii.1817; York G.M. Strong Room, shelf 6, no. 9, p. 18.

⁵ York G.M. Strong Room, shelf 6, no. 9, p. 24. See also John Eliot to Thomas Thompson 1.v.1817, pp. 183-86.

roof, the selection for the London Library will I believe devolve upon me, as I am perhaps most conversant with the subject." He asked for the appointment of some York Friend to correspond with him to expedite the business, and proceeded to present a claim for duplicates. He told William Tuke, "Thou has perhaps been told that our valued Friend M. Birkbeck repeatedly promised me, that upon this appropriation, I should have the duplicates. If the Trustees think it worth while I would endeavour to substantiate my claim." This he could well do on the basis of the letter quoted above.¹ In September 1817 he wrote again to William Tuke to report that he had almost completed the selection for London Friends, and from the remainder had taken a copy for himself "according to what I believe was M.B.'s intention . . . I hope that I have not selected a single page which York Library will not possess, nor a single copy of which I have not left a superior in their collection."

For despatch of the books to York, Thomas Thompson continued, "I think the Leeds & Liverpool Canal will be the best conveyance,² & should I hear nothing from thee by an early post I shall forward them accordingly to the address of Wm. Tuke & Co." He hoped also to provide a catalogue, and gave advice about shelving:

It would be desirable that the frames of cases have wooden backs at a little distance from the walls, & that the doors (if any security is thought necessary) would be preferred in having lattice work of wire instead of glass in order to admit a free ventilation. If some part of the shelving could be (conveniently) made of cedar it might

¹ Morris Birkbeck to Thomas Thompson, 4.x.1808; York G.M. Strong Room, shelf 6, no. 9, p. 2. "I have some duplicates yet remaining, which are at thy service, and may be sent to thy order; and, had I thy assistance in the proposed plan of a General Catalogue . . . I believe divers more duplicates will arise . . . some of which, probably, may fall to thy lot, provided J.G.B. [Joseph Gurney Bevan] do not want them." See also letter from John Eliot to Thomas Thompson, 4.vii.1817, in which he says "Leave was very readily granted by the Meeting for Sufferings held this morning, for thy retaining any spare publications of which a copy occurs both in our Collection and in that intended for York." (p. 197 of the same volume).

² Thomas Thompson advocated canal transport for the books when they were being sent from London to him at Liverpool; see draft letter of 22.ii.1817 to John Eliot (York G.M. Strong Room, shelf 6, no. 9, p. 176). The proposal to send the books by Leeds & Liverpool Canal followed the suggestion of William Tuke, who, in his letter of 27.viii.1817, said he thought that books would be sent "best by the Canals, as the friction is great by Waggon", and added the query, "Is there not a regular Conveyance from Manchester by the Rochdale Canal to Wakefield?" (p. 199).

tend to prevent the devastation of the worm. I think that it would be advisable to have the collection, such as need it, half bound with Russia backs & corners. It will much facilitate references as well as tend to their better preservation.¹

Some time elapsed after their arrival in York before the books were dealt with. Eighteen months later Thomas Thompson was writing to Samuel Tuke as follows: "It is satisfactory to be informed that you are about to unpack them, & place them upon shelves, as I have not been without apprehension that they might suffer some injury for want of proper ventilation."²

In regard to the unbound pamphlets, which formed a large proportion of the whole, Thomas Thompson suggested that the York librarians should

select all the loose tracts & class them in suitable numbers & size under their authors, & alphabetical succession as may be, & have them bound up in volumes, perhaps half bound in Russia (having a larger volume or portfolio for the broadsides & half sheets in preference to folding them to the quarto size) with the precaution in all the older ones of having three or four fly leaves of good writing paper at the beginning tinged nearly to the colour of the paper of the tracts, upon this may be written at a future time the contents of each volume for easier reference.³

This was what York Friends eventually did, although without the refinement of the volumes half-bound in Russia. Good quality paper boards have served well, and at this distance of time one cannot judge to what extent William Alexander felt obliged to match the tint of his endpapers to the colour of the original pamphlets.

Samuel Tuke and William Alexander were appointed by York Quarterly Meeting a committee "to have the care of the Books received from our late Friend Morris Birkbeck, & such other books as now are, or may become the property of this Quarterly Meeting."⁴

¹ York G.M. Strong Room, shelf 6, no. 9, pp. 26-27.

² 11.iii.1819; York G. M. Strong Room, shelf 6, no. 9, p. 36.

³ 11.iii.1819; York G. M. Strong Room, shelf 6, no. 9, p. 38.

⁴ York Q.M. 25.iii.1819, 23rd minute. By the same minute the same two Friends were appointed to take charge of transcribing the minutes of the Quarterly Meeting; work which William Tuke wished to relinquish "from the defect in his sight". Six months later, the committee proposed and Quarterly Meeting agreed, that a transcribing clerk should be paid twelve guineas a year. Here we may see the advent of the second paid official of the Society of Friends, noted in Thomas Pumphrey's remark of about 1880 (see *Jnl. F.H.S.*, 45 (1953), p. 56).

Thomas Thompson wrote to John Eliot in London saying that he had recently received a letter from York, and "They are anxious to commence their catalogue".¹ John Eliot replied in April that he was sending parts of the catalogue which had been transcribed in London back to Thomas Thompson "by this Evenings Mail". Josiah Forster and John Eliot were making slow progress in London in sorting Morris Birkbeck's manuscripts, from the surplus of which Thomas Thompson was anxious to secure autographs for his own collection.²

With the catalogue in active preparation, events indeed were moving in York. At the December Quarterly Meeting in 1822 a broadly based committee was "appointed to unite with the Library Committee, in considering whether further use, might not be made of the Library belonging to this Meeting".³

The Friends appointed to this committee were Samuel Tuke (1784-1857), William Alexander (1768-1841), William Tuke (1732-1822) and William Richardson (d. 1864), all four of York and members of the Library Committee, and the following:

James Backhouse, of York (1794-1869);
 Thomas Backhouse, of York, nurseryman (1792-1845);
 Robert Bainbridge, of Helmsley;
 Joshua Bowron, of Ayton, yeoman (d.1837);
 John Broadhead, of Leeds, grocer (1761-1830);
 Henry Casson, of Hull, tanner (d.1826);
 Richard Cockin, of Doncaster (1753-1845);
 John Firth junior, of High Flatts, clothier (d.1847);
 Caleb Fletcher, of Leeds, (at this time probably of Kirbymoorside)
 flax spinner (d. 1841);
 James Harrison, of Ackworth, yeoman (1762-1828);
 John Hipsley, of Hull, woollendraper (1775-1866);
 Benjamin Hustler, of Yeadon, clothier (1749-1833);
 John Hustler, of Bradford, merchant (1768-1842);
 Simon Hutchinson, of Helmsley (1745-1830);
 John Johnson, of Sutton on the Forest, farmer;
 John King, of Lothersdale, weaver and schoolmaster (1765-1836);
 John Rowntree, of Scarborough (d. 1845);

¹ Thomas Thompson to John Eliot, draft, Liverpool 22.iii.1819; York G.M. Strong Room, shelf 6, no. 9, pp. 235-6.

² John Eliot to Thomas Thompson, London 20.iv.1819; York G.M. Strong Room, shelf 6, no. 9, pp. 237-40.

³ York Q.M. 25.xii.1822. The list reads like a Cabinet Committee of Yorkshire Friends.

William Rowntree, of Settrington, farmer (1768–1832);
John Shackleton, of Airtton, shopkeeper; and
William Smith, of Doncaster (1756–1832).

The committee duly met on 26 December 1822, and the report was presented to Quarterly Meeting (15th minute, 27 March 1823) by William Alexander. In the report the committee recited the terms of Morris Birkbeck's letter (p. 155 above) to the Quarterly Meeting, as guidance for arrangements to be made for the use of the library: "I doubt not but you will provide a suitable place for depositing them in, & appoint a friend or two to have them properly under care."¹

A Library Committee minute of 31.iii.1824 records that the catalogue was then in the hands of Wilson Marriott who engaged to return it completed within six months.² Wilson Marriott seems to have used an interleaved copy of John Whiting's *Catalogue of Friends' Books*, 1708, as working material, marking his items in red ink. The marginal "Y" in the book appears to refer to material in the York collection. It appears that Wilson Marriott may have worked through the volume at two separate times in 1819 and 1820.³ A second copy of Whiting (Birkbeck Library, 842) was taken in pieces and bound up again interleaved, with a new back and the old sides, by William Alexander, November 1820, and this volume appears to have been used by Wilson Marriott up to the time of his last work for the committee in 1825. At the end of this copy is a letter from Wilson Marriott to Samuel Tuke, dated Bradford, 21 April 1825, recording his completion of work on the catalogue, and asking for the gift of a duplicate copy of George Keith's *Way to the City of God*, 1678. The book was given him.

FORMER OWNERS

In view of the remarks made by Morris Birkbeck about his methods of collecting books it is not surprising that many

¹ Yorkshire G.M. Strong Room, shelf 6, no. 8, pp. 37–38; see also shelf 6, no. 9, p. 7 (Morris Birkbeck to York Q.M., 8.vi.1811).

² York G.M. Strong Room, shelf 6, no. 8, p. 2. Wilson Marriott, son of John (1762–97) and Ann (Wilson) (b.1772) Marriott, b.22.v.1796; m. at Bradford, 20.iv.1825, Margaret dau. of William and Margaret (Richardson) Maud; d.5.ix.1842 at Kendal. A good deal of Marriott's work may be detected in one of the old catalogues still kept with the library.

³ Birkbeck Library, 843. In the Quarterly Meeting minute of 27.xii.1820 (15th minute) William Alexander reported that the books in the Library had been arranged by Wilson Marriott.

of the works bear many signatures and marks of ownership, some of them names well-known in Quakerism.

"Bethiah Rous's Book 1691" is on the fly-leaf of Joan Vokins, *God's mighty power magnified*, 1691 (Birkbeck Library, 652),¹ and the same signature appears in George Fox's *The Saints . . . their heavenly and spiritual worship*, 1683 (45/1), where Morris Birkbeck has noted, "N.B. This Book was given to Bethiah Rous, (Judge Fell's Daur.) by G.F."

"Wm. Sewel, 1685" appears at the foot of the title-page of George Fox the Younger, *A collection*, 1662 (492). On the title-page of *A Christian-Testimony born by . . . Quakers in London*, 1683 (106/5) is the unmistakable initial "R. Sn" of Richard Snead of Bristol.² "Mehitabell Speed her Booke 1663" appears on the fly-leaf of Richard Hubberthorne's collected works, 1663 (838), eight years before her marriage to Issac Hemming, merchant, of London.³ Thomas Waite's volume of pamphlets (246) is inscribed: "The Guift of Thomas Waite, To his Deare Friends called Quakers Prisoners in Yorke Castle, To Remaine for their Comon use, within the said Castle 1684. the xiith of ye xth mo. 1684." This volume may well have formed part of the Quarterly Meeting's own library before the accession of the Birkbeck gift.

George Keith, *Immediate revelation*, 1668 (60/2) belonged to George and Anne Whitehead, and is marked, "To be returned to G. Whitehead If lent to any". John Whiting had a collection of William Gibson's tracts bound in 1692, and thus a volume (49) owned by the first Quaker bibliographer finds its place on the shelves in the library of the second such.

Friends' libraries supplied certain items; Guildford Meeting (Morris Birkbeck's home) more than twenty, Leeds one (50/1), Oar Meeting five items, Settle, Bentham & Bolland two (935, 1069), Skipwith one (349/11), Monthly Meeting Upperside Bucks one (808), and two (938, 965-966) *Spirit of the martyrs*, 1682 and Ellwood's *Sacred history*, 1705, came from the Chamber in Whitehart Court, Gracechurch Street, London. Non-Quaker sources include the library of the Duke of Newcastle (784), that of St. John's Fort,

¹ For Bethiah Rous see George Fox, *Short journal*, 1925, p. 331. Birkbeck Library call numbers are given in brackets after entries for works referred to in this section.

² Richard Snead, d.1712; Bristol Record Society, xxvi, 216.

³ Bristol Record Society, xxvi, 203.

Newfoundland (801), and a sale of British Museum duplicates in 1787 (26/1).

It is not possible to name all the signatures which appear: there are four Alexanders; Robert Arthington owned works by Penn and Ellwood; three Backhouses; Anthony Benezet presented his own works; Joseph Gurney Bevan; two James Clothiers, one 1695 of Street, another in 1785; Thomas Crewdson of Kendal; Nathaniel English's collection supplied a dozen books, including Bethiah Rous's Joan Vokins; three Fothergills; Travel Fuller, 1745; Anthony Gundry of Chard, and William Gundry of Calne; Thomas Hammond the York printer; Gilbert Heathcote the London physician owned John Freame's *Scripture Instruction*, 1713 (193/3); Benjamin Horner of Leeds; four Howards; three Hustlers; William Jenkins the early Sidcot schoolmaster owned John Whiting, *Judas and the chief priests*, 1701 (837); Edward Penington son of Isaac Penington of London (655); the signature "Wm Penn" appears on the blank final page (Aa2b) of George Bishop's *A rejoinder*, 1658 (10/4); and there are two signatures of Sir John Rodes (374, 620).

From members of his own family, John, William and Wilson Birkbeck and Mary Clutton (born Mary Morris), Morris Birkbeck received books. William Caton's *Journal*, 1689 (17/20) was given to Morris Birkbeck in 1788 by his aunt Sarah Dillworth who (as Sarah Shires)¹ had received it from her grandfather at his decease in 1720; the book is initially inscribed "Willam Storrs his Book." Richard Morris "of Rudgley" signs some leaves in *Compendium trium linguarum*, 1679 (474), which also includes the names Gilbert Thompson (1716) and John Mattern.

Morris Birkbeck's comments are often interesting. At the foot of the title-page of Samuel Crisp's *A libeller expos'd*, 1704 (180/1) is a note, "3 mo. 18th 1704. The Morning Meeting stop'd this being publish'd or dispersd for a while." This note gains added point when one turns to the Advertisement on p. 77. Perhaps Morning Meeting had reason, and its delays at least were effectual with the Birkbeck copy, which has remained uncut and unopened for 250 years.

Other inscriptions there are, not all of serious moment. On

¹ Sarah, daughter of John and Alice Shires, b. 2.iii.1708, m. Thomas Dilworth of Lancaster, 19.xii.1740 at Bradford; H. R. Hodgson, *Society of Friends in Bradford*, 1926, 91, 112.

p. 1 of John Bellers' *To the Arch-Bishop, Bishops, and Clergy*, 1712 (7/10) one may see inscribed,

“John Bellers has no fellers amonge ye Quakers.”

LATER HISTORY

The work of keeping the Birkbeck Library up to date was taken seriously, at least during the lifetime of William Alexander, and his work on the Library Committee is well attested by the recorded minutes of that body. In 1826 Joseph Tatham¹, John Hipsley and William Rowntree were added to the committee, which was “directed to make such additions to the Collection of Books, as may keep it up, on the plan of the Societys Library in London, under the care of the Meeting for Sufferings, & to report to this Meeting annually.”² Accordingly, in June 1826 the committee met and considered the Quarterly Meeting minute. The committee “agreed that Wm. Alexander & Son as the booksellers of the Library be requested to prepare a list of such works as have been published by friends since the books came into possession of the Quarterly Meeting & which are not in the collection.” Further, “It is agreed that a catalogue of the old books wanted to compleat the collection be made under the care of the members of this Committee at York & that 250 copies of the list be printed if they deem it expedient & circulated amongst friends.”³

Six months later at the December committee meeting it was agreed to purchase books amounting to about £15 for the library. The committee also decided that the books in the library should be numbered in black by the bookbinder.⁴

On June 27 1827 the Library Committee received a bill for books from William Alexander amounting to £15 1s 11d, and one for £2 8s 10d “for numbering & repairs”. In its report to Quarterly Meeting the committee asked William Rowntree to say:

Agreeably to the direction of the Quarterly Meeting in the 3rd Mo. 1826, the Library Committee have purchased a copy of each of most of those Books which have been

¹ Joseph Tatham, of Leeds, schoolmaster (d. 1843, aged 76).

² York Q.M. 29.iii.1826 (Strong Room, shelf 6, no. 8, p. 38).

³ York Q.M. Strong Room, shelf 6, no. 8, pp. 3-4.

⁴ 28.xii.1826; York Q.M. Strong Room, shelf 6, no. 8, p. 4.

published since the decease of Morris Birkbeck, which come within the prescribed limits of the Quarterly Meeting's instructions, and some others have been furnished gratuitously. The Committee have also directed the arranging & numbering of the whole, which has been completed, together with some needful repairs, and the amount of expences incurred for these several purposes is £2.8.10, and for the purchase of the Books published during eleven years past is £15.1.11."¹

The collection, as the statistics reveal, continued to grow through the 1830s and 40s. Memoranda respecting Desiderata for the library, commenced 18.viii.1836, in the hand of William Alexander, are contained in the committee's records.² At the same time he wrote to William Manley in London with a series of queries to find out which classes of books were included in the London library, as guidance for the York committee. In the course of his reply William Manley stated that the supply of books to the Library the property of the Yearly Meeting is "left with Darton & Harvey, but in the multiplicity of their business some works it is to be feared escape their attention." For instance, he believed that a complete set of William Alexander's *Annual Monitor* "is not in the Library, but to ascertain what is and is not in the Library would be a great work, the Catalogue not being made up for some years past. There is a Committee who have the charge of the Library, but they seldom meet. Friends in London have so many Societys concerns to claim their notice".³

The Birkbeck Library is a valuable collection of works containing much of the printed material basic for the study of the first two centuries of Quaker development. Painstakingly gathered by one keen bibliophile and carefully preserved by Yorkshire Friends for a century and a half, this collection merits continued maintenance and greater use.

R. S. MORTIMER

¹ York Q.M. Strong Room, shelf 6, no. 8, pp. 5-6.

² York Q.M. Strong Room, shelf 6, no. 9, p. 247.

³ William Manley's reply of 20.viii.1836 to William Alexander's letter of 18.viii.1836; York Q.M. Strong Room, shelf 6, no. 8, p. 39.