

## THE BUILDING OF SETTLE MEETING HOUSE IN 1678

Settle Friends Meeting House, in Kirkgate, Settle, North Yorkshire, has been in continuous use by Quakers since its building in 1678. David Butler, in *The Quaker Meeting Houses of Britain*, records that a parcel of ground in what was then known as Howson's Croft was first acquired by Quakers in 1659, and was confirmed in 1661 as having 'a meeting house and stable erected thereon'.<sup>1</sup> The indenture itself, dated 4 September 1661, is not in fact quite so specific, referring only to the land having 'houses and other grounds', but it makes very clear that the intention in 1659 was (and remained) to provide a burial place and 'a free meeting place for freinds to meet in'.<sup>2</sup> The parcel of ground, 18 x 27 yards in extent, had been purchased from William Holgate on 2 March 1659 by John Kidd, John Robinson, Christopher Armetstead, John Kidd [junior], and Thomas Cooke, 'tradesmen'. The deed of 1661 formally assigned the property (for a peppercorn rent) to two other Quakers, Samuel Watson of Stainforth Hall, gentleman, and John Moore of Eldroth, yeoman, 'in the behalfe of themselves and all other freinds belonging to Settle meeting'. That is to say, Watson and Moore became the first trustees of the property.

Settle Preparative Meeting minutes do not survive before 1700, and so it is not possible to say whether Settle Friends used the existing buildings on the site for their meetings. That they continued to meet in each other's houses is clear from Settle Monthly Meeting Sufferings, which record a number of fines for holding meetings in the years 1670-72 (following the Second Conventicle Act of 1670), Samuel Watson being hit particularly hard.<sup>3</sup> However, the question of a purpose-built meeting house is raised soon afterwards: a Monthly Meeting minute dated 5<sup>th</sup> of 12<sup>th</sup> month 1672 (i.e. February 1673) decides that enquiry should be made of every particular Meeting 'what they are willing to doe towards the charge of building a meeting house for the service of the truth'.<sup>4</sup> But the response to this minute was presumably poor (or local circumstances may have changed again), because no follow-up is recorded, even though the particular meetings were asked to report back by the next Monthly Meeting.

For unknown reasons, despite there being markedly less persecution during the mid- and later 1670s,<sup>5</sup> Monthly Meeting

did not return to the subject until 1678, when matters move on decisively. There is first a minute (5<sup>th</sup> of 4<sup>th</sup> month, i.e. June) that repeats, in noticeably stronger terms, the request of 1672:<sup>6</sup>

[...] that freinds of each particaller meeting doe bring an acount to the next monthly meeting what they can freely contribute to the charge of the meeting house Intended to be built at Settle for the servuce of truth.

A longer minute the following month (3<sup>rd</sup> of 5<sup>th</sup> month, i.e. July) then makes it clear that the building project is already under way: agreements with workmen are in place, costings have been obtained, and the contributions now required to be made by the particular meetings are to ensure that the work gets finished:

It is this day agreed & concluded vpon that the meeteing house att Settle which is agreed with worke men to be builded and the charg of it is supposed to be 80<sup>li</sup> att least and Settell meeteing haueing concluded to collect & pay 50<sup>li</sup> or vpward towards the said charge which falles short at least 30<sup>li</sup> it is therefor seene meete & convenient that the rest of the meeteings belonging this monthly meeteing doe make a free & voluntary contribution or collection in each perticuler meeteing in order to the finishing the said work & the cole[c]tions soe mad to be brought in the next monthly meeteing to be in readynesse to be disposed of as aboue said.

In summary, the work is expected to cost at least £80, of which Settle Meeting will contribute £50 or more, and the other meetings, it is hoped, at least £30.

Finally, on the 7<sup>th</sup> of 6<sup>th</sup> month (i.e. August 1678), the sums of money actually received from the other particular meetings are recorded: from Bentham, £7 12s.; from Bolland (i.e. Newton-in-Bowland), £5 towards what was eventually £7; from Rulston (i.e. Rylstone), £3 13s 6d; from Scarrhouse and Hauksweek (i.e. Scar House and Hawkswick), £2 18s 8d; and from Salterforth, 15s – a total of £21 19s 2d. Settle Meeting House today has the date 1678 above the door, which would appear to confirm that the building work was completed as planned. It appears to be the earliest purpose-built Quaker meeting house in Yorkshire.<sup>7</sup>

A document has now come to light that broadly confirms the income received from the different meetings and sets out in detail the various items of expenditure, naming many of the people

involved with the work. It is undated, but clearly relates to the 1678 building. To a note on the reverse in a later hand, reading 'Notes of contributions & disbursments about Settle Meeting house', another hand has added 'When built'.<sup>8</sup> The document is currently in the possession of Elizabeth Griffiths, an American descendant of one of the prominent early Quaker families in the Settle area, the Tathams, but Mrs Griffiths wishes to donate it to Leeds University Library, and arrangements have been made for it to join the collections there in Autumn 2016.<sup>9</sup> Specifically, Elizabeth Griffiths is descended from Marmaduke and Frances Tatham (d. 1691 and 1677), members of Bentham Preparative Meeting (and hence of Settle Monthly Meeting) but resident in Tatham, Lancashire. The descent comes down through their son John (1658-1701) and his wife Elizabeth Skirrow of Wray, Lancashire (1666-1730?), who moved to live in Over (i.e. High) Bentham, eight miles from Settle; and then by way of John's son James (1695-1772) and his wife Martha Whalley (d. 1737), also of Over Bentham.<sup>10</sup> James Tatham's name is prominent in Settle Monthly Meeting minutes of the first half of the eighteenth century, when he was evidently a leading Friend. It would seem that local documents of different kinds were entrusted to him in this period or later, and that they remained in his family over the centuries. As will be seen, however, members of this Tatham family appear to have played no part in the building of Settle Meeting House, and it may be that they had little connection with the town in the 1670s.<sup>11</sup>

The new document reads as follows:

The seuerall contribucions of fri[n]ds  
to the charge of the meetting house  
at Settle as followeth.

	li	s	d
Settle Meeting	51	15	0
Bentham Meeting	7	12	0
Bolland Meeting	7	10	0
Rullston Meeting	3	13	6
Scar House Meeting	2	18	0
Sallterforth Meeting	0	15	0
The tottall sum	73	13	6

Disburssed <sup>12</sup>	li	s	d
To the workemen at two payments in Michael Prestons	36	0	0
Payd to Lawrence Tateham for feeter	3	0	0
Charges at the setting up the timber of the meeting house	0	10	6
Expences on the workmen at three tymes	0	3	0
The last payment in Michael Prestons	13	10	0
The same day spent on the workmen	0	0	9
One bad halfe crown exchanged	0	2	6
One window to Lawrence Tateham	0	4	0
To John Robinson which he had laid out for lyme & boards leading	1	0	0
For windows glassening	1	3	0
To John Kidd which he had payd for casements	0	18	0
For boards at Lancaster	3	0	0
For boards at Sipton	2	16	8
Expences on the joyners at twice	0	1	6
Spent on John Robinson the carpinter	0	0	4
To John Bradley for works	0	18	0
Henery Buck for works	2	10	0
To William Hall for works	0	8	0
Giuen to Lawrence Tateham man	0	0	6
To the smith at Wharfe for work	0	5	9
To Thomas Kidd for spikins & other things	0	5	11
	li	s	d
tottall	66	18	5
The remaynder of Samuell Wattson & his daughters) contribution which he disburssed himselfe}	4	0	0
George Atkinson for leading slayte	1	10	0
Christopher Armittsted vnpayd	1	0	0
Martin Lambert vnpayd	0	5	0
Thomas Robinson Junior vnpaid	0	10	0
	7	5	5
	li	s	d
The tottall sum is	74	3	5

As regards income, these accounts show that Settle Meeting itself contributed just over £50, and that slightly more than at first reported was forthcoming in the end from Bolland and Scar House. The several contributions in fact add up to £74 3s 6d, a penny more than the final declared expenditure, and so the meeting house did not turn out to cost '80<sup>li</sup> at least'. David Butler erroneously gives the cost as £50, the low figure 'suggesting a

good deal of self-help as was usual',<sup>13</sup> but even at c. £75 the cost was considerably less than that of most of the other early meeting houses whose accounts Butler very helpfully prints in his Appendix (the earliest Yorkshire example being Huddersfield, 1770, £162). As Butler says, 'Care is needed in using these figures, as Friends often provided some of the work or materials, or led [carted] them'.<sup>14</sup>

In the case of Settle, Butler supposes that the existing building was demolished to make way for the new meeting house, and, because of the cheapness, suggests 'the presence on site of a large supply of materials: stone certainly, possibly also roofing flags and roof timbers from the previous building. Perhaps the foundations too were re-used, which could account for the building having a north aspect'.<sup>15</sup> Stone, in particular, is not mentioned in the newly discovered accounts, bearing out this theory, and timber and slate, also, are mentioned only as having been 'set up' and 'led', respectively, not purchased. Indeed the only listed materials that would seem definitely unconnected to labour costs are the boards bought at Lancaster and Skipton, the casements, the 'spikins' (spike-nails),<sup>16</sup> and possibly the lime, unless that was also merely 'led'. As can clearly be seen, a very high proportion of the expenditure was on direct charges for labour, paid in particular to Michael Preston, who was evidently the main contractor. The two items relating to Lawrence Tatham, probably also a contractor in having a man of his own, may be partly for the labour of installing 'feeter' and a window, and partly for the materials concerned. The word 'feeter', apparently a plural, is unrecorded, but is likely to be related to 'footing' in the sense of 'A projecting course or courses at the base or foundation of a wall or other erection to give it security'.<sup>17</sup>

The accounts printed by Butler that are closest in date to Settle, and also closest in cost, are for Cartmel Height Meeting House in Lancashire, which cost £106 in 1677.<sup>18</sup> Here too there are entries where the costs of labour and materials are clearly combined (e.g. 'slates and dressing of them', £7 7s 7d), but others that appear to be for supplies alone (including wood, stone, glass, and casements) total almost £45 whereas 'mens wages', the final item, are given as no more than £25 14s 3d. This distribution of costs would seem to support Butler's deduction that comparatively few building supplies had to be purchased

at Settle, substantially reducing the expenditure, despite the relatively high sums paid to Michael Preston for his workmen.

The Settle accounts are particularly interesting in demonstrating the extent of what Butler refers to as 'self-help' by the Settle Quakers. A high proportion of the names mentioned can be identified as local Friends, including Michael Preston himself, Henry Buck, and probably also John Bradley and William Hall out of those who are being paid for 'works'.<sup>19</sup> Others in the list, seemingly not involved in construction, are clearly being reimbursed for money laid out on particular things, three of those in question being the leading Quakers John Robinson, John Kidd, and George Atkinson. Robinson and Kidd were among the five who originally purchased the land in 1659, as above.<sup>20</sup> The John Kidd named in the accounts could be either the elder or the younger; the elder is likely to be the man of this name recorded as giving shelter to the early Quaker preacher John Camm when he visited Settle in c. 1653.<sup>21</sup>

There is then a third category, represented by four names in the supplementary list of disbursements, who are being paid money apparently due to them in an unspecified way: on the one hand Christopher Armittsted (another of the original purchasers), Martin Lambert, and Thomas Robinson Junior, who are all said to be 'vnpayd',<sup>22</sup> and the special case of 'Samuell Wattson & his daughters'. It looks, from the wording, as if Watson, one of the most prominent Settle Friends (and of gentry status),<sup>23</sup> is being reimbursed for a portion of a larger contribution to the costs of the new meeting house (very likely part of Settle Meeting's overall £51 15s), 'which he disbursed himself'. Given that the additional £7 5s 5d expenditure itemised in the supplementary list brings the overall expenditure to within 1d of the total income for the project, and that the items in question were not originally accounted for as expenditure, the probable explanation is that the accounts are now deliberately being balanced, to show that all the income was spent.<sup>24</sup> That is to say, it may be that the five named payees in the supplementary list had not, as it were, originally submitted claims for payment, perhaps regarding that as unnecessary, but that the decision has now been made, after the completion of the work, that the unspent part of the overall income should be distributed to them in recognition of their financial contribution.

The reference to Samuel Watson's contribution being partly from his daughter or daughters is particularly striking. Given that an actual financial contribution seems meant, the reference is very likely to his step-daughters Elizabeth and Mary, daughters of Mary Monke, the widow of a Quaker from Nottingham, whom he married in 1664; in 1678 his daughters Grace, Mercy, and Peace would have been ten, eight, and less than a year.<sup>25</sup> It is clear at least that Samuel Watson, perhaps conscious of his status, wanted his contribution to be regarded as a family affair. As noted above, in 1661 he had become one of the two trustees of the plot of land in question, and, for whatever reason, his fellow trustee John Moore is not named in the accounts, although he appears to have lived on until 1690. It is highly probable, in the circumstances, that Samuel Watson took the leading part in getting Settle Meeting House built, judging the time to be propitious. Persecution for holding meetings did return to Settle in the early 1680s, as elsewhere, notably in May 1683: while Friends were 'peaceably mett together in their publick meeting place', informers came in, who subsequently reported the matter to the local justice, Henry Marsden of Gisburn. Fines and distraint of goods were imposed, the main Sufferers being Samuel Watson, John Moore, and John Robinson, along with Richard Armitstead.<sup>26</sup> By this time, however, the meeting house was well established, and unlike in some other places in the country it appears to have been left untouched.

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## END NOTES

1. David M. Butler, *The Quaker Meeting Houses of Britain* (London: Friends Historical Society, 1999), p. 828, quoting from an unspecified Yorkshire Quarterly Meeting document. His wording is very close to that found in the 1854 'Statement of the Trust Properties within York Quarterly Meeting [...] as Furnished to the Charity Commissioners', Leeds University Library [LUL], Clifford Street Archive, III 5.1, p. 887.
2. LUL, Carlton Hill Archive, U 3/1.
3. See Settle Monthly Meeting [MM], Record of Sufferings 1654-93, LUL, Carlton Hill Archive, D 9, pp. 15-18, and Joseph Besse, *A Collection of the Sufferings of the People Called Quakers*, 2 vols (London, L. Hinde, 1753), II, pp. 130-32. For detailed examples, see Jean Asher, 'Samuel Watson (c. 1618-1708) of Knight Stainforth Hall, Quaker', *North Craven Heritage Trust Journal*, 2009, pp. 22-26.
4. Settle MM minute book, 1666-1700, LUL, Carlton Hill Archive, H 1, p. 27. In quoting from documents I have reproduced manuscript spelling but capitalized according to modern practice.
5. The Settle MM Sufferings book records no fines 'for meeting together' between 1672 and 1682. Penalties imposed on Settle Friends for non-payment of tithes, unrecorded since 1659, reappear from 1679.
6. Settle MM Minute book, 1666-1700., p. 56, as for all three of the minutes quoted here.
7. W. Pearson Thistlethwaite, *Yorkshire Quarterly Meeting (of the Society of Friends), 1665-1966* (Harrogate: The Author, 1979), p. 93. However, Brigflatts Meeting House, built in 1675, and now in Cumbria, was formerly within the West Riding.
8. On another fold of the reverse is 'Accounts of building the meeting house', written probably by the second of these hands.
9. The donation will also include signed papers of denial and acknowledgement (i.e. declarations of disownment and contrition) dating from 1716 to 1729, all relating to Settle MM. I wish to thank Elizabeth Griffiths for her kind cooperation during the preparation of this article.
10. James Tatham's date of death appears to be unrecorded in



- the Quaker burial registers, but it is given as 1772 in Richard E. Tatham, *A Genealogical Chart of the Family of Tatham in the County Palatine of Lancaster from about the Year 1580 to the Present Time* (Settle: [s.n.], 1857).
11. James Tatham's name also appears frequently in the papers of denial and acknowledgement referred to in n. 9. His younger son Joseph Tatham (1732-86) established the well-known Quaker school in Leeds.
  12. For the terms 'feeter', 'leading', and 'spikins', see further below. 'Glassening', glazing, is not recorded in the *OED*. 'Wharfe' is a small village near Austwick, North Yorkshire, five miles from Settle.
  13. Butler, *Quaker Meeting Houses*, p. 829, referring to a short entry in *The Friend* for 21 July 1978 (p. 886), where the anonymous writer, evidently drawing on the Settle minutes for July 1678, states that the meeting house 'cost about £80, of which £50 was raised in the meeting'. Butler's page reference to this item ('302-3') is mistaken.
  14. *Ibid.*, p. 914 (for the accounts he prints, see pp. 915-20). For 'lead' in this sense, see *OED*, s.v. *lead* v.<sup>1</sup>, I.1.b, 'To carry or convey, usually in a cart or other vehicle'.
  15. *Ibid.*, p. 829.
  16. *OED*, s.v. *spiking* n.<sup>1</sup>.
  17. *OED*, s.v. *footing* n., 12. The *Dictionary of the Scots Language* records an 1821 usage of 'feeting' to mean 'footing' or 'foothold'.
  18. Butler, *Quaker Meeting Houses*, pp. 915-16, drawing on Isabel Ross, 'The Cartmel "Book for Pious Uses"', *Friends Quarterly*, 8 (1954), 245-56 (p. 248).
  19. A Michael Preston appears in a 1660 list of 229 West Riding Sufferers, and is listed again in 1683 (Besse, *A Collection of the Sufferings*, II, pp. 102, 152). He occurs in the Quaker birth registers as father of a child born in Settle MM in 1666, and in the Settle MM minute book in 1671. He may be the Michael Preston whose death is recorded in 1713. A Henry Buck is minuted from 1679 to 1686, and is censured in 1684 for having been married by a priest; he may be the man of this name who died in Knaresborough MM in 1717. The names of John Bradley and William Hall appear once each in the minutes, in 1680 and 1700. Lawrence Tatham is absent from

- the records, and would therefore seem not to be a Quaker, despite the Tatham name.
20. The names of John Robinson and John Kidd feature many times in the Settle MM minutes, and they, along with George Atkinson, are regular Sufferers (Besse, *A Collection of the Sufferings*, and LUL, Carlton Hill Archive, D 9). The Quaker burial registers record Robinson's death in 1699 and Atkinson's in 1703. It is unclear when the elder John Kidd died – MM minutes continue to refer to a John Kidd senior up to and beyond 1700 – but it appears from the registers that John Kidd junior died in 1705. The birth of a Thomas Kidd in Settle MM (son of John) is recorded in 1654. 'John Robinson the carpenter', listed separately in the accounts, is presumably different from the Quaker John Robinson.
  21. *The First Publishers of Truth: being early records (now first printed) of the introduction of Quakerism into the counties of England and Wales*, by ed. Norman Penney (London: Headley Brothers, 1907), p. 303.
  22. Christopher Armitstead (the usual spelling) appears in the Quaker registers as the father of children in Settle MM, 1664-75; he may be the man of this name who dies in 1718. Thomas Robinson Junior is likely to be the Thomas Robinson born in Settle MM in 1657, son of John, and who died there in 1716. The name of Martin Lambert appears not to occur in Quaker records.
  23. For a detailed account of Watson's life, see Asher, 'Samuel Watson'.
  24. Cf. Butler's comments on the earliest building accounts (for Hertford Meeting House, 1670) printed in his *Quaker Meeting Houses*, p. 915: 'Two accounts for this work appear in the minute books, neither dated, the earlier one amounting to £155, the later to £243 and corresponding with the sum of money received for the work. The later account is assumed to give the full cost of the work making allowance for the value of contributions in kind'. The Hertford accounts are also similar to Settle's (and different from most of the others printed by Butler) in naming people who were involved.
  25. Asher, 'Samuel Watson', p. 25.
  26. LUL, Carlton Hill Archive, D 9, p. 32.