

# Library of the Society of Friends Newsletter



Issue 02

Autumn/Winter 2008

**Welcome** to the second issue of the twice yearly Newsletter produced by the Library of the Religious Society of Friends, Britain Yearly Meeting. This edition celebrates the completion of the Library's 17th and 18th century retrospective cataloguing project: now researchers can find records for virtually all pre-1801 stock on the Library's on-line catalogue or through the English Short Title Catalogue. The recent Conference of Quaker Historians and Archivists is reviewed and a volunteer discusses the highs and lows of cataloguing the *Braithwaite Papers*. A recent bequest to the Library by Roger Warner, who served the Society in various capacities and who was equally well-known as an antique dealer, is announced, and 'BeFriend a Book and preservation news' reports what is being done to preserve the Library's unique collections. Later in the year we will be conducting a survey of Library users, to help us improve our services to you. Read 'Could we do better?' to find out more.

## Cataloguing of all pre-1801 printed materials complete!

Thanks to funding from the Joseph Rowntree Charitable Trust, the Pilgrim Trust and the Sir James Reckitt Charity a further 7,400 printed books and pamphlets are now available for users to search via our online web catalogue, [www.quaker.org.uk/cat](http://www.quaker.org.uk/cat).

During the course of this project we found that over 1,000 items in the printed books collection were not known outside the Library. Photographed and described, their bibliographic records now appear on the ESTC database alongside 470,000 other mainly English titles published between 1473 and 1800 from over 2,000 libraries worldwide: ESTC is searchable on the British Library website, <http://estc.bl.uk>.

Over the past two years the Library has been matching its holdings of all pre-1801 publications to the English Short Title Catalogue (ESTC) database and has now downloaded these records to its own



online catalogue. Other participating libraries with Quaker collections include Swarthmore Friends Historical Library and Haverford Quaker Collection in the USA.

You no longer need to visit or contact the Library to find out if we hold an item in this category; you can search online.

Searching the catalogue can be as simple or sophisticated

as you like: you can search by author, title, organisation or publisher, date, subject, publication type or language. Access is vastly enhanced.

## Commemorating the Kindertransport

On 1 December an event will take place in Friends House to commemorate the achievements of ordinary Quakers who helped in the massive efforts of 70 years ago (1938-1939) to rescue Jewish, part Jewish and other persecuted children from Nazi Germany, which resulted in the 'Kindertransport', or Children's Transports, bringing about 10,000 to the UK.



From *The Plight of the Refugee*, (Germany Emergency Committee, 1938)

The Library plans to mount a small exhibition about Quakers and refugees to coincide with the event. Among the Library's holdings are the records of the Germany Emergency Committee (later known as the Friends Committee for Refugees and Aliens), the body which coordinated and directed Quaker work to aid refugees. Besides the Committee's minute books and files, the Library holds contemporary printed sources, and related secondary material. A steady stream of former Kindertransport refugees and their families have used the Library over the years to find out more about their own histories and occasionally for help with legal matters. The Library also has a small collection of published autobiographies by former refugee children.

## Cataloguing the Braithwaite Papers

Rosamund Cummings, an archivist and former member of staff, has been working at the Library as a volunteer for over a year, cataloguing the *Frederick Arthur Bevan Braithwaite Papers* (Temp MSS 403), given to the Library in 1978 by a member of the Braithwaite family.

The correspondence of Anna Braithwaite (1788-1859, born Lloyd) accounts for the majority of the collection. On marrying Isaac Braithwaite in 1808 she moved from Birmingham to Kendal, where she was recorded as a Minister by Kendal Monthly Meeting in 1814. Anna made many visits in the ministry in England, but her major achievement was three missionary visits to America, between 1823 and 1829, at the height of the Hicksite controversy, to encourage and support those conservative Friends opposed to the views of Elias Hicks.

The collection consists of 35 boxes of diaries, notebooks and printed books, mostly Bibles and foreign language religious tracts, as well as numerous letters and papers. It had been preserved by the family in good condition, and sorted into bundles by author or recipient. These bundles were sewn together, but as this had not damaged the papers, the threads were left in place during the project.

Amongst the papers are items of interest to researchers into the period of the Hicksite controversy. There is a draft, in Anna Braithwaite's hand, of a letter to Elias Hicks where she tries to point out his doctrinal errors. There are certificates from various American Monthly and Yearly Meetings acknowledging her visits in the ministry. Correspondence between Anna and various American Friends who did not agree with Elias Hicks shows how deeply divided, and in some cases, bitter, the controversy was.



Anna Braithwaite (Pic. Vol. 7/42)

In particular opposition are the letters from Nathan Hunt, a North Carolina Friend, sent to Anna Braithwaite after her return. These letters are simply addressed to "Anna Braithwaite, Kendal, Old England". One wonders how a modern postal service would manage to deliver that in less than the six weeks they took to cross the ocean in the 1820s!

On a personal note, there is a letter from Anna and Isaac's son, Isaac junior, then aged about sixteen. In it he says that he understands that his mother feels she should remain in America, but is upset that his father, who keeps promising to return, has still not given a firm date for when they can expect him in Kendal.

Besides listing and numbering the items in the collection, Rosamund has provided biographical information about the main individuals to aid identification. This has been relatively easy for those Friends who appear in the Library's typescript *Dictionary of Quaker Biography*, but less so for others: sources within the Library's own collections and elsewhere have been drawn on to fill in the facts.

The cataloguing of the *Braithwaite Papers* is nearly complete. When it is, a fascinating collection shedding considerable light on the Society of Friends in the early nineteenth century will become accessible to researchers.

## Roger Warner Bequest

Roger Warner, who died on May 13th this year at the age of 95, had served the Religious Society of Friends in many capacities during his lifetime, but was equally well-known in his profession as an antique dealer. The two interests were sometimes combined, as when he furnished Swarthmoor Hall, former home of Margaret Fell Fox, with 17th century furniture. His autobiography *Memoirs of a twentieth century antique dealer* was published by the Regional Furniture Society in 2003.

A member of an old-established Quaker family, Roger ran his antique shop in Burford, Gloucestershire, from 1936 to 1986, with a break during World War 2. As a conscientious objector, he worked for Friends Relief Service. For much of this work he was based at Friends House, organising supplies for relief work. Here he shared fire-watching duties with, among others, Ted Milligan, who would later serve as the Society's Librarian. His friendship

towards the Library at Friends House dates from this time.



Roger Warner working for FRS at Friends House. c. 1943

Among his previous gifts to the Library was a collection of silhouettes of Quakers of the late 18th and early 19th century. In his will he generously recommended that a number of items from his personal collection of "Quakeriana" be offered as gifts to the Library. Some of the items offered – such as a remarkable collection of bonnets - were sadly beyond the Library's capacity to store or display. The items that have been received include a late 17th century oil painting of *The Quaker Meeting* by or after Egbert van Heemskirk - which may possibly be the original of which the Library holds several variants. There is also a butter dish with cover and base plate from the 1820s adorned with the most famous anti-slavery emblem, matching the cups and saucers and plates already held by the Library. We are also grateful to his family for helping us organise the collection of these items.

## Conference of Quaker Historians and Archivists 2008

This biennial conference in June at Woodbrooke was held for the first time in over 30 years in the UK and Library staff attended. Papers were given on topics as diverse as anti-suffrage women, Quakers in film, the transatlantic book trade, muscular Christianity and the *Thompson-Clarkson Manuscripts* (MS Vols. 325-328). A proposal from Haverford College to create a digital *Dictionary of Quaker Biography* was of particular interest to us and we plan to keep in touch with the project as it develops. The next conference will take place in Wilmington Ohio in June 2009.

## Could we do better?

We are planning to run a survey later this year of Library users to help us improve our services. The survey will take the form of a short online questionnaire focusing on Library services and access to collections. We plan to send out details of how to access the questionnaire in November. We very much hope you will take part and let us know your views.

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## Contact us

We welcome feedback about this newsletter and the Library's services.

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If you would prefer not to receive the newsletter, please let us know at the above address or email your name and 'Unsubscribe' to [libnews@quaker.org.uk](mailto:libnews@quaker.org.uk).

## BeFriend a Book and preservation news

The Library hosted an evening presentation for its BeFriend a Book scheme on 7 October. Contributors to the scheme and guests came to hear a talk on document repair, to see some of the repair work completed, and discuss the needs of the collections with staff and volunteers.

The Librarian first summarised the aims of the BeFriend a Book scheme, and explained that donations to the scheme are not all used for very large expensive projects, as some repairs and equipment can be purchased for small sums. Lizzie Neville, conservator for the *Swarthmore Manuscripts* (MS Vols. 351-360) and *Elizabeth Fry diaries* (MS Vols. S255-273), was introduced. Lizzie has a long relationship with the Library: she had even spent some days in the strong rooms as a trainee conservator in 1982, working on Library materials.



Lizzie described the process of repair of this most precious collection in some detail. Her work involves removing 17th century letters from their unsuitable bindings removing 'onion skin' paper repairs done over 90 years ago; flattening, cleaning (including washing) the letters, applying suitable anti-acidic buffering based on chemical analysis of the ink used by the original writers, and eventually housing them in fascicules or pamphlet style bindings, designed to reduce the wear and tear of handling, with wide margins of backing paper and smaller numbers of letters sewn into each fascicule, so that fewer have to be brought out of their boxes at any one time.

The audience was also shown Lizzie's techniques for conserving diary-notebooks of Elizabeth Fry, which required a different approach, but just as much care in choosing the right strengthening and repair tissues and papers, and sewing suitable covers.

A live demonstration of cleaning paper with smoke sponges followed. After the talk, which held the audience rapt for 40 minutes, there was time to look at the displayed documents with more educated eyes, and to have drinks and discussion in Friends House Euston Room.

If you would like to donate to the [BeFriend a Book appeal](#), or for more information, please contact BeFriend a Book (Library), Freepost, Friends House, 173 Euston Road, London NW1 2BJ