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Broadmead Records.

BROADMEAD CHURCH, BRISTOL, is celebrating its tercentenary in October. Its "Records" are commonly thought of as the manuscript book of Edward Terrill, which is widely known, but actually they include much more than Terrill's book, valuable as that is. The period covered by him is 1644 to 1687, and from that point there is a hiatus of thirty-three years, the story being taken up by the Rev. Bernard Foskett in 1720.

It is a matter of regret that the records of these thirty-three years, covering a most interesting period in the religious life of England, should have been lost.

In 1847, the Hanserd Knollys Society first published the Records from 1640-1687, edited by Dr. E. B. Underhill, and in 1865 the Bunyan Library issued a brief reprint, adding a short history of the Church to that point by Dr. Nathaniel Haycroft, M.A. The original documents then appear to have been thrust into a corner of the strongroom, and were forgotten for about seventy years, when they were discovered in a sad condition recently, many early papers falling to pieces when handled.

Edward Terrill's "Record" had fortunately been made on good paper, and bound in whole calf, and after its discovery in 1933 was carefully rebound leaf by leaf, so that it is now in good order.

His writing was ornate (he was among other things a writing master) and the flourishes at the openings, and the headings of each page in Hebrew and Greek, show him to have been a facile penman.

He was baptized, and joined Broadmead at the age of twenty-four, and became ruling elder in 1666-7. No picture of him is extant, but we gather that he was a man of good stature, wearing the dress and canister hat of the period, and of powerful physique. During the years of persecution he was a doughty antagonist, and—with the ministers and other members—suffered fines and imprisonment many times. In his Church account book, kept meticulously, each quarter's income and expenditure are shown separately, and on some of the pages appear "Paid our minister in prison, when several of us were also imprisoned, a quarter's salary." A quaint entry is the account of the first legacy, which reads, "Margery Simmonds, an ancient maid, left the Church Five Pounds for stock."

Terrill records "three blazing stars which were visible in December 1664, and March, 1665," and includes a sketch of the

heavens, showing the positions and paths taken by them "as described by dear Mr. Ewins" (the minister at that time).

The early connection between Wales and Bristol recounts that the Rev. Mr. Wroth of Wales often preached, also the Reverend Walter Craddock, of Llan Vaughas (Llanvaches).

Among Terrill's personal papers is a marine insurance policy, drawn up by him, on a cargo of sugar shipped by his brother-in-law, who was a sea captain and ship owner, from the West Indies, duly underwritten and signed, and cleared on the vessel's safe arrival. This is probably one of the earliest Bristol marine policies.

There is also a school account paid by him for the daughter of the sea captain, which includes ten pounds for "a year's tabling (board residence), and fifteen shillings for a year's tuition"! His marriage certificate is among the papers thus preserved.

A letter from the Church at Lyme, dated January 8th, 1692, is as follows:—

"The Church of Christ meeting at Lyme to ye Church of Christ meeting at Broadmead, Bristol, sendeth greeting.

"Dearly Beloved and much respected Bretheren Wishing you all grace mercy and peace in full and flourishing communion with ye ever Blessed Father Son and Spirit who hath blessed you with Abundance both of Grace and Abilityes above many of yr brethren whereby we are incorageed under our wants and necessityes to make our application to you for some help to keep up ye worship and intrest of our Lord Jesus amongst us who in this present day of liberty have an opportunity put into our hands above many of our Brethren and our own capacity to get up a meeting and an auditory both hopeful and encouraging in ye town of Lyme whereby ye honor and Interest of our Lord may be advanced in a place where once it was flourishing under the management of such hands by whom it was creditably and acceptably maintained till by death and violencq we were almost left Destitute there remaining only in ye town a few members of a poor congregation who are not able however willinge to bear those charges which ye present occasion calls for to carry on ye work of ye Lord in preaching ye Word amongst us, itt principally lying on ye shoulders of two young men who have laid out several pounds in fitting a house to meet in & ye like which we are not able to make up or they comfortably to bear. And knowing ye state of our neighbouring congregations to be with ourselves Low we asayed to Implore yr Pitty and help according as God shall make you willing in Contributing to our necessityes which we shall Intreat with no further argument than ye support and Increase of ye Interest of ye Lord Jesus who is both yrs and ours to whom

we owe all yt is ours and for whome we would all very willingly do what we are able and hope we shall not want ye needed help of such who many have found redy to incourage ye work of ye Lord to whom we commit both ourselves and you.

“ Begging ye influence & prayers of all grave among you and remain Bretheren in ye Faith and Order of ye Gospel.

“ Signed by us att our Church meeting ye 8th January, 1692.”

(Here follow ten names).

Another letter reads :—“ From the Church of Christ in and about Wantage to The Church of Christ at Bristoll walking together with Brother Vaux. Grace be to you and Peace from God our Father and from our Lord Jesus Christ. Beloved Brethren, the sad occasion of these lines to you is in behalf of our friend Samuel Bull of Grove in the parish of Wantage (a miller) at whose house there happened a sudden and lamentable fire which in three hours burnt down all the mill and buildings, two horses, the millstones (good and substantial) and a greate quantity of wheat, barley, and other grain, and all their household goods and linnen amounting in value to above three hundred pounds to the utter undoing of the said Samuel Bull his wife and his children. Unless it shall please God to move the hearts of charitable and well disposed people to give their assistance to the repair of these great losses. The reason why we are concerned for them and crave your charity are these :—The father of the person was a worthy brother and greatly serviceable in his day to us, being in fellowship with us ; and his house where this sad providence hath befallen hath been free and open to us to meet in and assemble once a week not only in peaceful times but in the times of the greatest difficulties and dangers for this 30 or 40 years, his son continuing the same upon whom this stroke is come. Their connection with us has caused many to withhold their charity from him at this time, and we have opened our hands to them according to our ability in this their distressed condition ; but we have been concerned lately to buy a Meeting House and a Burying place which hath cost us three hundred pounds and upwards and things lie hard upon us, otherwise our charity had been more fully extended to him. We know the times are hard and we regret to bring this trouble to you and to request this favour at your hands but the honor of God and commiseration of this poor family's distressed condition who have been so kind to the Lord's interest have put us upon it, and so we put it to your Christian consideration with our dear and affectionate love to you in the Lord, desiring the God of grace to make all Grace abound in you, and to carry us through all the difficult passages of life, to guide us by His counsell, and to bring us to His glory.

“Signed by the Church at our meeting the 2nd day of the second month commonly called April by us, in the year 1693.”

(Here follow six signatures)

In 1736, a letter was sent to the Rev. Bernard Foskett by the Rev. Jenkin Jones, of Philadelphia, on behalf of a daughter of the Rev. Peter Kitterell, a former minister of Broadmead (1707-1727) relative to a slave child left in Bristol, asking to have her sent to America. He also asks for the transfer of Elizabeth Mowron from Broadmead Church to his Church, and adds :

“I have been minister of a Baptist Church in this city for upwards of ten years, and we have nine congregations of Particular Baptists meeting in an Association meeting once a year after your custom at home. We have three Churches now destitute of ministers and if you have any good men sound in ye faith willing to travel to these parts please advise them to come, for the harvest is great.”

The Rev. Bernard Foskett had evidently made some study of medicine, for several letters from former Broadmeadians who had removed from Bristol describe their symptoms with a wealth of detail, and Mr. Foskett has written copies of the prescriptions sent them at the foot or on the backs of the epistles.

He made extensive use of a system of shorthand in his work, but no key can now be found to it. Many of his sermon notes were written in the same manner. One lady wrote him under date June 11th, 1744, from Bromsgrove.

“Dear Sir, The favour of your last demanded my thanks and acknowledgements much sooner, but a bad state of health has interrupted. Please excuse it. Through the indulgence of heaven and the success which attends your past prescription my dear sister has been much better tho’ she could not be prevailed on to use cold bathing nor have an issue cutt. She has lately attended upon her shop of her own accord and been more sociable, but what is very afflicting to us is a notion she has lately imbibed of starving in the midst of plenty, and since that has taken place ’tis with difficulty she is prevailed on to eat her food. As we thought the electuary very useful should be glad to know if proper to be repeated.”

Of a different character is a letter dated 1753, from Rhode Island, to Mr. Foskett, asking for news of the writer’s brother, a former member of Broadmead, continuing “I have for some years sustained a Public Character in matters of religion, and shall be glad to have your apprehensions of ye State of Religion in my Native Country.”

The Church letter to the Western Baptist Association meeting at Broadmead in June, 1786, was written by the Rev. Caleb

Evans, and opens thus :—" It is with great pleasure we hope to meet you at the nearly approaching season appointed for that purpose, and to give you the most hearty welcome in the name of the Lord. We trust you will be brought to us in safety, and in all the fullness of the blessing of the Gospel of Peace. It will probably be the last meeting of the kind we shall all of us ever have in the present world, and we earnestly pray therefore it may be a happy one, filled with the presence and blessing of our God and Saviour. Which of us, or how many of those who now assemble together, may be removed to another world before the return of our next meeting, we cannot say." This letter was signed on behalf of the Church by Caleb Evans, Robert Hall, Hugh Evans, and well-known names of Church officers of that day.

Written on an imposing foolscap sheet with a printed heading, is a request for a transfer to the Church at Wellington, Som., dated 1793, by the minister. The heading reads :—" At the Rev. Mr.——'s School, Wellington, Somerset, Young Gentlemen are taught The English Grammar, the Latin, Greek, and French Languages, Arithmetick, Common and Shorthandwriting. Lectures are delivered to them suitable to their Years and Comprehension, upon Natural Philosophy, History, and Geography, illustrated by Globes, Maps, etc. An unremitting attention is given to enable them to read, write, and speak their own language well, and their Morals are religiously regarded."

There is a delightful letter from the Rev. John Fawcett, Halifax, written February 1st, 1792, declining an invitation which had been personally conveyed by one of Broadmead deacons (in stage coach days!) asking him to preach at the Church with a view to the pastorate. In it he says :—" I am content and happy in the humble situation which a kind providence has assigned me. I love my few poor friends and—however unworthy—am beloved by them. A friendship confirmed by almost thirty years of mutual trial and mutual endearment is like a threefold cord which cannot easily be broken." Mr. Fawcett is remembered by his hymn "Blest be the tie that binds".

In 1757, a Paedo-Baptist section of the Church was formed at Broadmead, and worshipped regularly in another part of the building until 1853, when it was incorporated with the larger Church. This "little Church", as it was called, united in the call to the ministers during that period, and in everything the associations were very happy.

Included in the documents also, are receipted accounts for two funerals, the costs of which were borne by the Church. In 1825, Dr. Ryland's funeral cost £91, and among the items are coffin £12, 75 yards of rich black satin for draping the Church

£41, 74 pairs black kid gloves, and 12 pairs black leather gloves; whilst for the funeral of the Rev. Robert Hall are included coffins (3) £19. 10. 0., 13 satin hatbands, scarves, and gloves, £43, and other items totalling £103, plus draping the Chapel for three months £25, and £6 for interment, a total of £133.

An item on quite another note is furnished in 1834, for in that year the Church paid three shillings per quarter as their share of the salary of the Police Constable for the parish, who was considered quite satisfactory in his duties!

Two entries occur in later books of which Broadmead is justly proud. In 1794, there is a note of the baptism of Joshua Marshman, one of the immortal missionary trio, Carey, Marshman, and Ward, and in Dr. Ryland's personal note-book in 1822 is recorded "J.R. baptized—after preaching—William Knibb."

When Dr. Haycroft left Bristol in 1863 for Leicester, he said that in his opinion Broadmead had done its work and that the premises should be sold, but after a two years' ministry by the Rev. Charles Clark the Church called the Rev. E. G. Gange in 1869, and a new era commenced. In 1871 the Chapel was enlarged at a cost of £2,030, and in 1877 it was again enlarged at a cost of £2,820. Following Mr. Gange's ministry of twenty-four years, the Rev. D. J. Hiley came in 1893, and for fourteen years conducted a most successful period of ministration. He was succeeded in 1908 by the Rev. F. G. Benskin, M.A., for fourteen years, during which time the Great War created difficulties as everywhere, not the least of which was the compulsory closing of the building for a year whilst a new roof and east wall were replaced. This cost over £13,000. When Mr. Benskin left in January, 1922, Dr. H. C. Mander followed him, and after his departure in 1933 for Hampstead, the Rev. R. L. Child, B.D., B.Litt., commenced his ministry in 1934, and continues happily to the present time.

Broadmead has entered into a great inheritance, and through cloud and sunshine has borne faithful witness to her Lord and Master, exerting wide influence in the city and the denomination, and her sons rejoice that through such men as Marshman and Knibb, and many humbler followers, witness has been carried to the uttermost parts of the earth.

F. ESSEX LEWIS.