

## The G.B. Association in Bucks.

Excerpts from the minute-book in the custody of Alderman Clarke, J.P., of Wycombe, transcribed in full by the Rev. A. Collie. Continued from page 87.

The General Baptists in England date from 1612, when Thomas Helwys brought from Amsterdam a few men hailing from the neighbourhood of Gainsborough. They settled at Spitalfields, and petitioned for liberty to worship. This was answered by throwing the leaders into Newgate prison. But the church held on, and others were formed. They organized in the Midlands by 1651, and a General Assembly was formed by 1654. Its minutes until 1811 have been issued by this Society.

By the end of the seventeenth century a movement, headed by Matthew Caffyn, was leading the Kent and Sussex churches into peculiar views on the personality of our Lord. The churches in Buckingham and Northampton took strong ground against him, and after some trouble in 1696 and a momentary reunion in 1704, they carried a resolution that every member of Assembly should sign a clear statement on the points at issue. This led to the secession of the ambiguous party.

The minutes of the Assembly from 1704 to 1733 have been lost, though we have those of the seceding churches. It is therefore very fortunate that the minutes of the Bucks Association have been preserved from 1721 to 1760. They are, however, far less interesting than might have been expected, and the excerpts presented here contain everything of any general interest.

Those who are studying local history can indeed take the Assembly minutes, these minutes, and the minutes of the Ford and Amersham churches, also published by this Society, and can follow the fortunes of all the ministers and many other brethren; and can watch the gradual extinction of the churches.

The two matters that do seem to deserve attention are the Messengers, and the change of doctrine towards Calvinism.

It was an old custom of the General Baptists that there should be an officer responsible for the evangelizing of a whole district, and available to advise the churches. They based this on scriptural grounds, and found it work in practice. But doubts arose occasionally as to the value of the office, and its functions were considerably narrowed, though it still exists.

During the eighteenth century, the old General Baptist churches found themselves in a state of unstable equilibrium. Many lapsed towards Arianism, and others tended towards Calvinism, as was shown in our volume I at page 181. The closing pages of this Association book mention the latter process, though they hardly illustrate it. It may be added that the formation of new General Baptist churches from Barton and Melbourne, organized in 1770 by a Britain into the New Connexion, showed a third possibility; but this only arose after this Association ceased.

At an Assosiation of Elders & Repress of ye several Churches whose names are as followeth, which mett in Aylesbury Oct 7<sup>th</sup> 1723

the Ch of Aylesbury	{	Bro Sturch Elder
		Bro Fulks & Bro
		Harding Representat
The Ch. of Foard	{	Bro Cripps Elder
		Bro John Goodchild
		Bro. Allen Repts
The Ch of Winslow	{	Bro Wilkins Elder
		Bro Brittain Reprts
The Ch. of Wing		Bro. Cripps Rept

It is agreed that there should be a day of Humiliation by fasting & Prayer observed in ye Churches to intreat Allmighty God to continue his present Merceys & in Great Goodness Revive his Seemingly Dieing lamp next Day [query] week or yr 16 of Oct

2<sup>ly</sup> it is also agreed that there should be another Association hold in this place y<sup>e</sup> Tuesday in Ester week

John Brittain  
Leonard Wilkins  
John Sturch  
John Cripps  
James Britton  
W<sup>m</sup> Allon  
John Harding  
John Goodchild  
W<sup>m</sup> Cripps

Att an Association of Messengers Elders and Brethren Representitives of the Several Congregations of the General Baptist mett together this Seventh day of April 1724 whose names are as followeth (viz)

Bro John Brittain	} Messengers
Bro John Cook	
Aylesbury Ch	{ Bro. Jn <sup>o</sup> Sturch Elder Bro. Rich Fulks } Repres Bro Harding
Barkhamsted Ch	{ Bro Widmer Elder Bro Treacher } Repres Bro Nichols
Ford Ch.	{ Bro John Crips Elder Bro W <sup>m</sup> Goodchild } Repres Bro Moses Pool
Wing Ch	{ Bro William Fenner } Represents Bro. William Green
Winslow Ch	{ Bro. Wilkins Elder Bro. James Brittain Represen
Sundon Ch	Thos: Brittain Representitives

The Agreements as followeth

1st y<sup>t</sup> y<sup>e</sup> Letter of Bro<sup>r</sup> Hunt Sen<sup>r</sup> be [? entered in] y<sup>e</sup> Book followeth

The humble complaint of John Hunt Sen<sup>r</sup> against y<sup>e</sup>

Church of Aylesbury for not doing of Justice between him & his Son John Hunt for altho. J. proved him guilty of y<sup>e</sup> breach of y<sup>e</sup> 5<sup>th</sup> command & also of in Pro. 30. 17 as also y<sup>e</sup> in Deut 27. 15 wh. proved him to be a stubborn & a Rebellious son, for w<sup>ch</sup> pray see is said in 1 Sam. J. also proved him dishonest in y<sup>e</sup> he denied me of what was my rights. & he proveth himself void of natural affections in y<sup>t</sup> he will have no dealing w<sup>th</sup> me nor none of his own Relations nor Society J. also charged John Harding for giving him ill Council & proved it but y<sup>e</sup> Church thought neither of them worthy of blame

J also charged his Wife of Lying & proved it but she was not worthy of their blame

Which hath given them so much encouragement, y<sup>t</sup> they have abused it in a very shameful manner, for wh<sup>ch</sup> J. would have prosecuted them but John Sturch hath kept them from Justice all he could for which J expects satisfaction of him

Friends & Brethern J. would intreat you diligently to enquire into this matter for it hath been a very great grief to me & my wife & a great dishonour, & damage to our Family & Profession So y<sup>e</sup> Lord give of his spirit to guide you in all things w<sup>h</sup> is y<sup>e</sup> prayer of y<sup>r</sup> unworthy Brother

John Hunt

2<sup>d</sup> Consequent to y<sup>e</sup> request of Bro. John Hunt Sen<sup>r</sup> Laid before us in his Letter of complaint w<sup>ch</sup> contains a Queary whether Bro. Jn<sup>o</sup> Harding ought to be Esteemed as a Represe<sup>nt</sup> and y<sup>e</sup> same being Considered it passed in y<sup>e</sup> Affirmative

3<sup>d</sup> The case depending between y<sup>e</sup> Church Meeting in Aylesbury & Bro. John Hunt, Senior, being reheard by consent of parties, & Particulars leading to y<sup>e</sup> Dissension being enquired into after a full debate, the

Association conclude y<sup>e</sup> Agreement of y<sup>e</sup> Church mentioned just & valid

4<sup>th</sup> Agreed that Aylesbury friends & Winslow friends do supply Leighton Meeting once a month

5 Agreed to have another Association Meeting at this place on y<sup>e</sup> Tuesday next after Michaelmas day

John Brittain

John Treacher

John Cook—

Robert Nichols

John Sturch

John Cripps

Richard Fulks

William Goodchild

John Harding

Moses Poole

Jonath Widmer

Leonard Wilkins

James Britten

W<sup>m</sup> Green

W<sup>m</sup> Fenner

Tho. Brittain

At an Association of Messengers Elders & Representatives of the Several Congregations of the General Baptist met together this sixth day of October In the year of the Lord 1724 whose names are underwritten— it is agreed as followeth

Bro: John Cook Messenger

Aylesbury Ch	{ Bro. Sturch elder Bro. Rich <sup>d</sup> Fulks Bro. Maiden }	} Represent—
Bark <sup>d</sup> Ch	{ Bro. Jonath. Widmer elder Bro. Thos. Sexton Bro. Iossios Sale }	} Repest
Ford Ch	{ Bro. John Cripps elder Bro. John Goodchild Bro. Daniel Rider }	
Wing Ch	Bro Rich <sup>d</sup> Bird	Repest—
Winslow	{ Bro. Leonard Wilkins Bro James Brittain }	} Elders
Sundon	No representative	

Agreed that there be an Association held at this place the Tuesday in Easter week next

John Cook	John Sturch
Leonard Wilkins	
Jonath. Widmer	
James Britten	
John Cripps	
Richard Fulks	
James Mayden	
Thomas Sexton	
Richard Bird	
John Goodchild	
Daniel Rider	

At an Association of Messengers Elders & Representatives, of the severall Congregations of the General Baptist mett together this thirtieth Day of March In the year of our Lord one thousand seven hundred & twenty & five—it is agreed as follows

Bro. John Brittain Messenger

Aylsbury Ch.	{ Bro Sturch Elder Bro Rich <sup>d</sup> ffulks } Represt.
Barkhamp <sup>d</sup> Ch	{ Bro. Jonath. Widmer } Elders
	{ Bro. Thos. Sexton } Elders
	{ Bro Fra Tristram } Repr—
	{ Bro. John Treacher } Repr—
Ford Ch.	{ Bro. Cripps—elder Bro. Pool } Represent
	{ Bro. Jo:ny } Represent
Winslow	{ Bro. Leo Wilkins } Elders
	{ Bro. James Brittain } Elders
Wing Ch.	Bro Thos. Tayler Repr
Sundon	} Nihil
Wickham	

1<sup>st</sup> Brother Brittain represents y<sup>e</sup> General want of Ministers & of little success of those y<sup>t</sup> are employed

Agreed y<sup>t</sup> a Day of fasting & prayer be appointed in all y<sup>e</sup> Severall Congregations tions belonging to y<sup>e</sup> sd. Association upon this account as likewise in Respect to protestant Interest abroad between this & this Day month & every Congregation to appoint y<sup>e</sup> most Convenient Day

2<sup>dly</sup> Bro. Allen's Case to be represented by a Letter to y<sup>e</sup> Several Congregations of the Baptist persuasion in London to procure w<sup>t</sup> assistance they see fit.

3<sup>dy</sup> Concerning y<sup>e</sup> case of the Church of Christ at Wing; desiring a ssupply for their meeting, which was agreed to for once a month by Aylesbury friends

4 Agreed that a letter be sent to the Churches of Christ Meeting at Wickham Ammersam & Sundon to invite them to the next Association Meeting at this place. & that Bro. Jony, Bro Thos Brittain & Bro: Widmer doe write the same

5 Agreed that the next Association be held at this place the Tuesday after Michlmas day next

Bro. Thos Brittain ordered to transcrib letter [? and send an] account to the Churches in Bedfordshire

& [? ask for] contributions

John Brittain

James Brittain

John Sturch

Thomas Tayler

Richard Fulks

William Rolf

Jonath Widmer

Thomas Sexton

John Treacher

John Cripps

Moses pool

Robert J. o. ny

Leon Wilkins

At an Association of Messengers elders & Representatives of the severall Congregations of the General Baptist mett together this fifth day of Oct In the year 1725—

It was agreed as foll—

Bro: Brittain Messenger—Nihill

Aylesbury Ch	{	Bro Sturch Elder	} Represent
		Bro. Rolph	
		Bro. Stone	

Barkhamst	{	Bro. Widmer	} elders	
		Bro. Sexton		
		Bro. Wheeler		} Represent
		Bro. Dooley		

fford Ch	{	Bro. Hunt	} Represent
		Bro. Jony	

Bro Hunt presented case Against Aylesbury Ch & elder

Winslow

Wing Bro Fenner Representative desires assistance in the meetings

Sundon	{	Bro. Thos. Britain	} Represt
		Bro. Cook	

Amersam	{	Bro. Beck	} Represent
		Bro. Sexton	

Wickham Bro. Hobbs elder  
Bro. Sam<sup>l</sup> Wright Represent

1 The first Case presented by Bro. Hunt [something illegible] relating to his son Daughter & Aylesbury Church

Bro. Hunt & Bro: Sturch are agreed in [illegible] & amicable manner

2 Also agreed that Aylesbury doe Suply Laiton once a month as formerly

3 Agreed that this Association takes it very kindly from the Churches of Wickham & Amersam that they have



joined with us in this Association, & that they are desired to continue their friendly assistance in such meetings for the future

4 Agreed that the next Association meeting be held at Aylesbury on Monday in Easter Week . . .

5 A Case being proposed concerning such persons as may be likely to become servicable in the work of the ministry—how Churches should proceed in such cases.

Agreed that the Church to whom such persons belong [? exercise] their Authority in caling such persons to exercise their gifts

John Brittain	John Hunt
John Sturch	Robt J:ony
William Rolf	William Fenner
henry Stone	Thos. Brittain
Jonath <sup>s</sup> Widmer	Thomas Cook
Thomas Sexton	Dan <sup>ll</sup> Beck
Joseph Wheeler	Henry Saxton
Joseph Dooly	Joseph Hobbs
	Sam: Wright

Aylesbury April 11<sup>th</sup> 1726

This Day was held An Association of the Severall Churches under named by their Elders & Representatives with Bro. John Brittain Messenger

Aylesbury Church	{ Bro. Sturch Elder Bro Rolph Represent	} Repr	} a Case
The Church of Barkhamst.	{ Bro. Widmer elder Bro Trustrum Bro Josiah Sale		
The Church of Ford	{ Bro Cripps elder Bro John Hunt Bro John Goss		
The Church of Winslow	{ Bro. Wilkins Bro Britain	} Elders	
The Church of Wing	{ Bro Green Represent	} Suply	

The Church of Sundon	{	Bro: John Randall	} Rept.
Ammersem Church			
The Church at Wickham	{	Bro: Hobbs Elder	}
		Bro: John Veary Repest	

1—The case proposed by the Church of Barkhamstead whos whether the present state of the Church upon the account of that coldness & want of zeal toward God & Religion & love towards one another, doth not call for aday of humiliation, by fasting & prayer

Agreed in the affirmative . . . & that such aday be kept the Churches on such aday as best suits them between this & Whitsuntide next

2 A question proposed by Bro Cripps relating to the case of several friends that formerly belong<sup>d</sup> to the Church of fford & afterwards Joynd with friend Gosse & now offer to return to the communion of the Church aforesaid—

Whither they Church may receive them to their communion again & upon what terms . . .

Agreed that it is the opinion of this Association that they ought to be admited: provided there be no disorder since their suspension

3 The suply desired by the Church at Wing, Agreed that Aylesbury friends suply for the half year ensuing & formerly

4 Agreed that there be an Association held at this place the Munday after Micklmass day next; & that better order be observed in keeping the aforesaid meeting for the future. (viz) that all persons keep in the meeting while business is doing & speak one by one

Also that it begin at ten o'clock

John Brittain  
Jonath, Widmer

John Sturch

John Cripps	William Rolph
Leonard Wilkins	Francis Trustrum
Joseph Hobbs	Josiah Sale
James Britten	
John Hunt	
John Goss	
Wm. Groom	
John Randall	
Henry Hobbs	
John Veary	

\* \* \* \*

At an Association of the Baptised Churches at Ailesbury on Munday Ap. 29 1734

Joseph Hobbs Messenger

Ailsbury Bro Jn<sup>o</sup> Sturch Eld—  
Wm Partridge Rept

Ford	Bro. J:ony	} Rept.—Alp
	Bro. Allen	
	Bro Goodchild	
	Bro Hunt	

Barkhampsted Rich<sup>d</sup> Butler Eld  
Bro. Jno. Treacher rept

Leighton Edward Bagley Rept.

Sunden Bro. Richard Carter Rept.

Amersham Dan<sup>ll</sup> Beck Rept

Winslow Jos. Jenkins Eld

Wickham Jos. Hobbs as above

after seeking the Lord By prayer it was agreed  
as followeth

Agreed that Warmstone be supplied as before

Agreed that Sunden be supplied as before

Agreed by this Association that the second article of  
the Union of the Assembly 1731 be entirely expunged.

Agreed that it is the opinion of this Association that

Bro. Hobbs, Jenkins & Butler be appointed to go to the next assembly w<sup>ch</sup> will be held at White's Alley London on the Wednesday & Thursday in the Whitsun week and that the assembly be desired to express their sentiments about the Doctrine of the Trinity in their own words.

Agreed that this Association be adjourned to the second Munday after Sept 29 1734

Joseph Hobbs Mess

John Sturch

Joseph Jenkins } Eld.

Richard Butler }

John Treacher

John Hunt Sen<sup>r</sup>

W<sup>m</sup> Allen

Robt J:ony

Richard Carter

Dan<sup>ll</sup> Beck

John Goodchild

William Bagley

Edward Bagley

Representatives

\* \* \* \*

At an Association of the Baptiz'd Churches Agreed  
[at the beginning of 1740]

After Seeking the Lord by prayer &<sup>c</sup> Agreed that the Messengers office be consider. &<sup>c</sup>

Agreed & a judged not Scriptural nor proper to ordain a person who is a ministering Bro. to the office of an Elder tho' other ways Qualified—If his wife is not joined in Communion & a proper member of that Church of which he is to be an Elder &c

Agreed that no Elder or Minister marry out of Communion &c

Agreed that Aylesbury & Sundon be supplied as usual

Signed by us

Henry Hobbs

Thos. Sexton

James Hall

James Young

Dan. Beck

*(To be concluded.)*