

## JOINT 300th ANNIVERSARY OF THE QUAKER (FRIENDS) MEETING HOUSE IN EAST LOOE AND THE ST ANNES FREE MASONS' LODGE

Courtesy of the Grand Master of the St Annes Free Mason's Lodge in East Looe, the former Quaker Meeting House of 1717 was open to the public throughout the afternoon of Sat 16 Sep 2017 jointly hosted by the Members of the St Anne Lodge and Mr Duncan Paul Matthews of the Liskeard Old Cornwall Society

The Quakers were once quite the leading lights in the serge cottage industry of the town weaving the cloth using both 'Fullers' to process the material in urine and earth and 'Tuckers' to fold, press it than hang out the product with weights 'to the end of their tether'. They undertook the marketing of the material and a host of other woollen products, an industry destroyed in 1785 with the introduction of William Cartwright's automated loom. The Quakers were also engaged in the export of granite from Caradon and import of iron, fruit, and vegetables from Spain.

One of their greatest supporters was William Cookworthy, whose Mother came from St Martin's by Looe, he being famed for the discovery of Kaolin (China Clay) in Cornwall and the with Henry Bone of Truro developed Porcelain.

The Quakers (gaining that name from one having the fear of God to quake in his presence or upon hearing his word) more commonly known as 'The Friends', used to dress in an older style of clothing without adornments and regularly used the words 'Thee' and 'Thou' in their speech, they did not recognize those in self-imposed authority or importance believing all men and women to be equal and refused to acknowledge Magistrates Councillors by tufting their cap, or indeed removing their head-dress when entering others homes, but were renowned for their honesty and care for others irrespective of class or religion. They refused to pay Church tithes so they were terribly persecuted. for failure to attend Anglican worship, and for that they could be heavily fined, have their property confiscated or even sold as slaves to the New World being of a society that refused to employ slaves!

Prior to Methodism in Cornwall, the Seventeenth Century Friends worshiped on Looe beach for the law forbade their Meeting in houses, when that was eventually permitted all windows and doors in this Meeting House On The Hill, were to be open for scrutiny. Their Meeting House at Looe had so many windows that it is reputed it had no dark corners and as a place of worship, escaped the imposed Window Tax!

John Wesley's New Rooms at Bristol, built much later did not escape the Window Tax but had roof lights so allowing the light to permeate down through each open floor, built without wall windows to prevent the Anglicans smashing them! When John Wesley his visited Looe he was driven out and so preached at the top of West Looe hill at the Talland junction, today marked with a commemorative stone,

The Quaker 'Friends' founder 'George Fox' was held for some years in Launceston Castle in the most inhumane conditions, with therenm claimed to have had a captive

audience'. When released he spent his recuperation with Elizabeth Trelawny and her husband at Menheniot.

The Meeting House at Looe, was shared for many years with both the Ana-Baptists, the Methodist and Mechanics Institute, they valued the importance of Education and ran a 'Blue Boys School', the name coming from the colour of their students uniforms. The main sponsor being the Bullers and Deeble families.

The St Anne's Lodge at Looe is subsidiary to the St Martin's Lodge at Liskeard, (the second oldest in the West of England), inaugurated by business and influential people who would meet to discuss with whom and where best to invest their entrepreneurial skills in what new local industries, enterprises, and projects whilst recognizing through their civic and social awareness and responsibilities to local needs through their charity... One both a Free Mason and Quaker, was 'John Clerk Isaac' of Liskeard, three times Mayor, Magistrate and leading figure in the Temperance League, he gave Liskeard her Town Clock.

D.P.M.