

Edward and Priscilla Mugglestone



At a meeting of the management committee of the Trust on 30th January a resolution was passed authorising the officers to execute the lease on our behalf. Barring unforeseen snags the matter should be finalised in the near future.

SUBSCRIPTIONS... Subscriptions for the year to 31st March 1993 are all but due, the rate for the current season has been raised to £4.00 (including two issues of NOW and THEN) you will find a form at the back of this newsletter, we urge you to return your cheque without delay.

EDWARD AND PRISCILLA Lesley Hale

Everyone in Swannington knows the Quaker Smithy and most pass it daily on their way to school, the shop or the post office, but how many pause to wonder about the people who lived there, and the courage they showed? Courage which played a part in establishing a religious denomination which has proved a great power for good over more than three centuries. And how many look at the inscription on the slate set in the front of the adjoining Old Tap House and wonder about the meaning of the initials engraved on it.

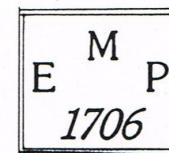
Edward Mugglestone was born - in all probability at the Quaker Smithy - on 4th July 1676 - the son and grandson of Quakers who had been imprisoned for their steadfast faith. Edward grew up into a more tolerant age but Quakers still suffered financial loss because of their determination never to pay tithes or church rates. His father had died as the new century began and in the following year he himself had lambs and fleeces of wool, wheat, barley, oats and rye taken from him, valued in all at £15.45. This was a substantial sum and no doubt considerably more than was really due.

In the early years of the Quaker movement meetings were held in the home of one of the local members. This would soon become irksome and inconvenient and as the movement grew they found the need for separate premises. In 1705 a building, given by the Mugglestone family, was converted to a Quaker Meeting House at a cost of £28.45.

On the 22nd of the 5th Month (July) in 1706 Edward Mugglestone signified at the Monthly Meeting of the Quakers for this area that he intended to marry Priscilla Moseley who was the daughter of Joseph Mosely of Twycross. Two members of the meeting were appointed to inspect his clearness, and report to the next meeting. This was always done to make sure that neither bride nor groom had any kind of prior engagement.

In August Edward "did a second time lay before this meeting his intention of marriage with Priscilla Moseley and friends upon due Enquirie made do not find but that he is clear from all other in Relation of Marriage and having Unity with his said Intention do give their consent"

We can imagine the simple and sincere ceremony at a public meeting of the people of God called Quakers at which Edward took Priscilla to be his wife and Priscilla took Edward to be her husband promising faithfulness to each other to live according to the good order of man and wife in the sight of God. Then would follow in the marriage register a list of all those witnesses who had come together to give support to the young couple.



And so Edward and Priscilla were married and moved into the Old Tap House and put up the inscription on the front of their house proclaiming their union, and with it faith and optimism in a happier future for them and for those who followed their religion.

A busy life lay before them for Edward was active in the Quaker movement regularly representing the local Monthly Meeting at the Quarterly Meeting of Quakers of the county and occasionally going to London for the Yearly Meeting. Priscilla too was active and her name can be found in the records enquiring into the "clearness" of women friends for marriage and certifying in March 1733 to Quakers in Pennsylvania that a woman emigrating from Whitwick was "an honest friend".

The seizure of animals and crops continued year after year to cover the tithes which Edward resolutely refused to pay. But

Edward and Priscilla Mugglestone



Swannington although in the parish of Whitwick was a separate township and Edward served his village in various capacities being eight times overseer of the highways and twice overseer of the poor.

There were at least two children of the marriage who survived to adulthood. A son of whose life nothing has been discovered and whose name is not found in the minutes of the monthly meeting, and a daughter Esther, who in 1741 married the innovating mine owner, Gabriel Holland.

The story of Edward's land holdings still has to be unravelled to find out how it came about that goods of his were seized in 1727 for non-payment of rent. He had borrowed substantially on his leasehold land and one of the lenders, a widow from Hinckley and a fellow Quaker, took over the land and collected the rents from the undertenants to recoup the principal and interest due to her.

Edward was dead by 1734 but Priscilla lived on till 1762 and came through the crisis of the late 1720's in such a way that she was able to provide financial help for her son-in-law Gabriel Holland. But he went bankrupt and died before Priscilla came to make her own will. Can we be surprised that in providing for her daughter Esther she stipulated that should her daughter remarry the income on the estate was to be paid "into the proper hands of...Esther...for her own sole and separate use and benefit exclusive of her Husband and discharged and clear of his Debts Contracts Controuls and Engagements..." After Esther's death everything was to go to Esther's only child Priscilla Holland.

By the time of Priscilla Mugglestone's death the period of Quaker influence in Swannington was all but over, in May 1762 it was decided that Monthly Meetings should no longer be held in the village. The Meeting House itself was finally sold in 1807, to be turned into a Baptist Chapel.

