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May Drummond
(1696-1777)

An Unruly Quaker

Janette Walkinshaw

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College of Arts
University of Glasgow

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ABSTRACT

Two aspects of the history of the Religious Society of Friends (the Quakers) have in the last few decades begun to attract attention namely the state of the Society in the 18th century, and the role of women. These are examined in the current work, using the biography of one unusual woman.

In the 18th century Quakers entered what later became known as the Quietist period. They tried to withdraw from the world, placing barriers such as particular dress codes, ways of speaking, non-participation in any cultural activities, and endogamy. Membership was falling. Ministry became dry and uninspiring and meetings became silent. Despite this, evangelically minded Quakers, many of them women, continued to travel preaching at public meetings. These 'Public Friends' included May Drummond, the subject of this work. She was born into an elite Edinburgh family on the eve of the Enlightenment and in middle-age joined the Quaker movement. She travelled, preaching, for the rest of her life. She attracted a great deal of publicity, and was the focus of admiration and opprobrium. In many ways she refused to conform to the strictures laid down by the elders. As a result she was disowned, forbidden to preach, and attempts were made to blacken her name.

The present research examines her life in detail, against the background of the Enlightenment and the Quaker Quietist period. The public records reveal her true date of birth. She was not, as had been thought, a girl of twenty-one, but a mature single woman who deliberately turned her back on the life society had mapped out for her. Her life can be traced through contemporary newspapers, her letters, and the diaries and other records left by fellow Quakers.

Because the records of her disownment by the Quakers were kept in detail, this event has formed the main narrative of her life, which has seemed to be one of failure. On the contrary, as this work shows, she was a successful independent woman who defied the norms of both the society she was born into, and the movement she joined. She has been written out of the history of both Scotland in the Enlightenment and the Quaker movement and deserves to take her place in both.

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And thanks to Dr Paul Burton, Quaker Archivist for Scotland for his encouragement which gave me confidence to start this work.

I declare that, except where explicit reference is made to the contributions of others, this dissertation is the result of my own work and has not been submitted for any other degree at the University of Glasgow or any other institution.

Janette Walkinshaw

Abbreviations:

BL	British Library
JFHS	Journal of the Friends Historical Society
LSF	Library of Society of Friends, London
NRS	National Records of Scotland
ODNB	Oxford Dictionary of National Biography
SP	www.Scotlandspeople.gov.uk

Dating:

The Quakers did not use the names of the days of the week nor the months of the year. Thus Sunday was First Day, Monday Second Day etc.

Until 1752 the year started on 25th March. Quakers called e.g. June the Fourth month. In 1751 by Act of Parliament the New Year began on 1st January 1752. Thus for everyone, Quakers included, June became the Sixth month.

For clarity in following the timeline I have modernised the dates in the text as far as possible.

May Drummond (1696-1777)

INTRODUCTION

There is some mystery about her, and the annals of her life are too fragmentary to admit of any balanced verdict. [1]

May Drummond c. 1733, sketch by Jonathan Richardson[2]

In his presidential address to the Friends Historical Society in 1997 Larry Ingle identified seven areas of Quaker history in which he wished to encourage more research. Two of these are of present interest. He wrote 'The subtle and complex interplay between men and women and the power they vied for – if they vied at all – has not yet claimed its historian.'[3] He also reminded the conference that '. . . from the end of the seventeenth century to the very end of the nineteenth, English Quaker history is pretty much a void.'

These are broad questions and one way to approach them is to examine the life of a woman who lived through this period. Using biography, the study of one individual within her culture gives us an understanding of that culture.[4] The work that follows is a study of May Drummond (1696-1777) who became famous as a travelling Quaker preacher. She inhabited two cultures. One was the life of Edinburgh in the Enlightenment, the other the world of Quakerism. She was steeped in both, and she rebelled against the constraints of

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[1] George B. Burnet and William H. Marwick, T*he Story of Quakerism in Scotland 1650 – 1950*, (Cambridge: The Lutterworth Press, 1952) 155.

[2] Reproduced by permission of the British Museum. See Appendix A for a discussion of this sketch and the oil painting reproduced in the frontispiece.

[3] Larry H. Ingle, 'The Future of Quaker History,' *JFHS,* Vol. 58 No. 1 (1997) 9,10.

[4] Lois W. Banner, 'Biography as History,' *The American Historical Review*, Vol. 114, (June 2009). 582.

both. Her story is not only the story of one woman, it is the story of those cultures and how they were evolving during the eighty years of her life.

She was born into an elite Edinburgh family, the daughter of a prosperous merchant and the sister of a Lord Provost. At the age of thirty-five she joined the Quaker movement, upsetting her family and friends. For several decades she travelled throughout England and Ireland preaching the Quaker message, the only Scotswoman I have been able to trace who did so. She was by all accounts a fine public speaker and a woman of considerable charm.[5] Those who knew her thought highly of her and wrote in complimentary terms, and with some affection.[6] She attracted crowds wherever she went, poetry was written about her, she was the object of satire, and she received both praise and opprobrium. This publicity aroused the antagonism of the men in the Quaker movement responsible for oversight of the preachers. She was disowned and forbidden to preach. She fought back but was silenced.

The Religious Society of Friends, known as the Quakers had its roots in England during the Wars of the Three Kingdoms (1642-1651). George Fox (1624-1691) is regarded as the founding father. He had a religious bent from a young age, his family intending him for the church. In 1643 at the age of 19 he left home and travelled round England in his search for answers to the religious questions which plagued his mind. He was dissatisfied with the answers from those he called 'the professors' i.e. those ordained ministers in the Church of England who professed to know the truth about God, but did not understand his struggles. He tells us that 'I went to another ancient priest in Warwickshire and reasoned with him about the ground of despair and temptations, but he was ignorant of my condition; and he bid me take tobacco and sing psalms. Tobacco was a thing I did not love and psalms I was not in an estate to sing; I could not sing.'[7] One day he had 'an opening'. He understood that people could connect with God through their own inner light (what he called 'the light of Christ').[8]

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[5] Letter from William Cookworthy to Richard Kingston, 30th July 1745, *Cookworthy Papers*, Library of Society of Friends, London, MS Box V4/1.

[6] Emily E. Moore, *Travelling with Thomas Story: The Life and Travels of an Eighteenth-century Quaker,* (Hertfordshire: Letchworth Printers Ltd. 1947) 249.

[7] George Fox, *The Journal of George Fox,* Edited by John L. Nickalls,(Philadelphia: The Religious Society of Friends, 1997), 5.

[8] Ibid. 12.

He reasoned that God did not 'dwell in temples made with hands' but in people's hearts.[9] From this it followed that no one place was more sacred than any other, or one day more holy than any other. The day of revelation had not ended with the Book of Revelations but continued as long as people were willing to listen for the voice of God. Further, he realised that 'being bred at Oxford or Cambridge was not enough to fit or qualify men to be ministers of Christ.'[10] The logical extension of this was that people who gather to worship together do not need the supervision or guidance of an appointed minister, but could wait in their meetings for guidance from God, and that anyone may minister.

Fox gathered a group of convinced people and the movement began.[11] His insights were not unique, for there was much religious turmoil during this period of civil war. Many of the other dissenting groups disappeared, but Quakerism survived because of the administrative genius of Margaret Fell (1614-1702), who opened her home to those seeking refuge, and who held the movement together as she and her daughters were indefatigable in gathering and disseminating reports of the activities of Quakers throughout the country, recording their sufferings (for this was a time of great persecution), fundraising, organising help for those in prison and their families, and copying and distributing letters, pamphlets, sermons and epistles.[12] Thus there was built up a network of Friends who in time coalesced in recognised meetings, paving the way, when an end to persecution came, for the organisation which evolved in the next century.

Numbers are difficult to estimate, as formal membership was not instituted until the 1730s and took some time for the rules about this to bed in. It has been estimated that adherence to the Society in England was about 46,000 in 1700. There then set in a gradual decline until there were some 22,000 members in 1800.[13] Comparable rough figures for Scotland are a membership of 1,000 at 1700 and 100 by the end of the century.[14]

By the 1730s when May Drummond joined, the movement had become tolerated but seen as something apart. The movement had entered into what was later known as the Quietist

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[9] Ibid. 24.
[10] Ibid. 7.
[11] John Punshon, *Portrait in Grey: A short history of the Quakers*,(London, Quaker Home Service, 1984) 58.
[12] Isabel Ross, *Margaret Fell: Mother of Quakerism,*(London: Longmans 1949).
[13] Andrew Fincham, 'Faith in Numbers: Requantifying the English Quaker population during the long Eighteenth Century', *religions* 2019, 9.
[14] Paul Burton, *A Social History of Quakers in Scotland 1800-2000* (Lampeter: Edward Melton Press, 2007) 95 and 97.

period. It is not clear why this label became attached. It could have been because the theology of the time drew something from the mysticism of the Quietist movement on the Continent, though there it was antinomian, while Quakerism most decidedly was not.[15] It is more generally accepted by historians to be a description of the way in which Quakers emphasised the importance of inner spirituality over public display, and were trying to withdraw from the world by erecting barriers using different dress, manners of speech, endogamy, and a rejection of 'wordly' pursuits.

The emphasis on abasement of the self discouraged speaking in meetings, which fell silent. Ministry, which in the early days had been vibrant and stirring became 'a dead formality.'[16] This decline can be traced through the Epistles from Yearly Meeting sent out to all the meetings.[17] These were the result of an annual gathering held across several days in London of hundreds, sometimes thousands, of Friends from all over Britain and overseas. They met to discuss problems, learn from each other, exchange news and ideas and socialise in a way that provided the movement with cohesion. The Yearly Epistle was a distillation of the matters discussed, and each one therefore gives us a picture of what was exercising the minds of those gathered in any particular year.

London Yearly Meeting also composed and developed a set of Advices and Queries. Each meeting was to consider how these were being observed. They were not, in the words of the first epistle 'a rule or form to walk by' but were meant as guidance.[18] These, added to across the years, were first issued in one document in manuscript form in 1738 and in printed form in 1783.[19] Peter Collins has analysed how this discipline was increased during the century as practice became increasingly codified and prescribed. The Quakers began to concentrate on right action, with questions of belief being downplayed.[20] Richard E. Stagg in his examination of the way these advices and queries evolved has noted that there was an increasing tendency to comply in a legalistic sense, in other words, the letter

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[15] John Punshon, *Portrait in Grey,*120; Robynne R. Healey, 'Quietist Quakerism, 1692-c.1805' in *The Oxford Handbook of Quaker Studies,* ed. Stephen W. Angell and Ben P. Dandelion, (Oxford: Oxford University Press 2013). 50.

[16] Abiah Darby, quoted in Edwina Newman, and Judith Jennings, 'New Perspectives on Eighteenth-Century British Quaker Women', *Quaker Studies* 14/2 (2010) 169.

[17] *Epistles from the Yearly Meeting of Friends held in London to the Quarterly and Monthly Meetings in Great Britain, Ireland and Elsewhere from 1681 to 1857,* Vol. I and II, (London: Edward Marsh 1858).

[18] Meeting of Elders of Balby, 1656, quoted in *Quaker Faith & Practice*, (London: Quaker Home Service 1995 edition), 1.01.

[19] *Quaker Faith & Practice*, 13; Robynne R. Healey, 'Quietist Quakerism,' 53.

[20] Peter Collins, 'Discipline: the codification of Quakerism as orthopraxy, 1650-1738' *History and Anthropology*, 13:2, 86.

and not the spirit.[21] By 1750 Friends were being castigated for 'manifest lukewarmness and indifferency.'[22] We shall see later how May Drummond felt they had become too rigid and protested that epistles from Yearly Meeting were not the rule, but only guidance.[23]

At the beginning of the 20th century Quaker historians William Braithwaite and Rufus Jones both wrote full histories of Quakerism, both characterising the 18th century as a period of decline.[24] A more recent one-volume history by John Punshon devotes almost half the book to the first sixty years, and only twenty or so pages to the Quietest 18th century. He too sees the period as one of decline, when there was greater emphasis on silence in meetings, and, with the absence of active ministry 'the spiritual life of many parts of the Society of Friends went cold.'[25] These were Quaker historians looking at their own history from the viewpoint of the times in which they were writing. A non-Quaker, George B, Burnet, took an even darker view in 1937 when he saw this period as the beginning of a permanent decline of the movement in Scotland. They became 'hermit-like.'[26]

In the last twenty years historians have begun to take a more nuanced view of the Quietist period. Ben Pink Dandelion describes a duality in which the world and the inner spirituality were held in balance, allowing faithful dealing with the world.[27] He is also joint editor along with Stephen Angell of the *Oxford Handbook of Quaker Studies,* the only recent book which covers the whole period of Quaker history both in Britain and America and includes a large body of research up to the date of publication. This demonstrates that the 18th century was not such a desert as the older historians thought. A chapter is devoted to Quietism in all its aspects and there is frequent reference to the period under other subject headings.[28]

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[21] Richard E. Stagg, 'Friends' Queries and General Advice: A Survey of their Development in London Yearly Meeting 1682-1860' *JFHS,* Vol.49 No.4 (1961) 218.
[22] 1750 Epistle, *YM Epistles Vol. II,* 268.
[23] May Drummond, Letter to John Wilson, 8th April 1759, LSF MS Box10/11.
[24] William Braithwaite, *The Second Period of Quakerism,*(London, Macmillan & Co. 1912); Rufus Jones, *The Later Periods of Quakerism* (London: Macmillan 1921).
[25] John Punshon, *Portrait in Grey* 120.
[26] George B. Burnet, *The Rise, Progress, and Decline of the Quaker Movement in Scotland,* (Ph.D thesis, University of Glasgow 1937) 313.
[27] Ben Pink Dandelion 'Guarded Domesticity and Engagement with "the World": The Separate spheres of Quaker Quietism,' *Common Knowledge* Vol. 16 No. 1 (2010), 95.
[28] Stephen W. Angell and Ben Dandelion, *The Oxford Handbook of Quaker Studies,*(Oxford: Oxford University Press 2013).

The quantity of material published during the Quietist period indicates a movement which was not as moribund as earlier historians would have us believe. David J. Hall has examined in depth what was being published in the name of Quakers, and what they were reading.[29] It is estimated that there were some 3,700 titles published in the 18th century and the efficient Quaker network ensured that these were distributed round all the meetings.[30] Some were intended to inform non-Quakers while others had Quakers as the intended readership. An appointed group, the Second Day Morning Meeting, who had oversight of the preachers, also sought to control what was published in name of the Quakers.[31] In the present work I examine the process by which they approved of one of May Drummond's epistles for publication, and refused to sanction others.

Until recently historians interested in the history of female Quakers have tended to concentrate on the heroines of the 17th century, many of whom suffered imprisonment and some of whom died for their beliefs.[32] More attention is now being paid to the women of the 18th century. Historians have, in the words of Mary Van Vleck Garman, 'reopened debates about the participation of women in particular events in Quaker history.'[33] There have been several major works published looking at the whole history of women in the movement. Michele Lise Tarter and Catie Gill have edited a 2018 collection of essays on many aspects of the lives of Quaker women including literacy, education, and family stresses.[34] This looks at Quaker women from the beginning, and has the purpose of gathering together as much recent scholarship on the subject as possible.

Writing in 2010, Edwina Newman and Judith Jennings called for further research, drawing attention to the fact that most research on British women has meant English women.[35] I hope my work on May Drummond will go some way to remedying this, even though most

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[29] David J. Hall, 'Spreading Friends Books for Truth Service: the distribution of Quaker printed literature in the Eighteenth Century,' *JFHS*, Vol. 62 No. 1 (2010) 3-24.

[30] David J, Hall, 'What should eighteenth Century Quakers have read?' *JFHS* Vol. 62 No. 2 (2010) 4.

[31] Christine Trevett, "Not Fit to be Printed": the Welsh, the women and the Second Day Morning Meeting.' *JFHS* Vol. 59 (2004) 115-44; David J. Hall, 'The Fiery Trial of their infallible examination.": self-control in the regulation of Quaker publishing in England from the 1670s to the mid-19th century' in *Censorship and the control of print in England and France 1600-1910,* ed. Robert Myers and Michael Harris, (Winchester: St. Paul Bibliographies 1992).

[32] Phyllis Mack, *Visionary Women: Ecstatic Preaching in Seventeenth century England,* (Berkeley: University of California Press 1992).

[33] Mary Van Vleck Garman, 'Quaker Women's Lives and Spiritualities' in *The Oxford Handbook of Quaker Studies, 232.*

[34] Michele Lise Tarter and Catie Gill, Eds**.** *New Critical Studies on Early Quaker Women, 1650-1800.* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2018).

[35] Edwina Newman and Judith Jennings, 'New Perspectives on Eighteenth-Century British Quaker Women', *Quaker Studies* 14/2 (2010) 159.

of her preaching was done in England. The only other female Scottish Quaker who is remembered in the histories was of a previous generation. Interest in Lilias Skene (1628-1697) focusses on her activities in Aberdeen Quaker meeting and for founding a school there.[36] Otherwise she is chiefly remembered for her poetry.[37]

Some historians have examined how the Quaker women were perceived by the world. There seems to have been less interest by the public in the men. They did not stand out as their plain clothes were not that different from those of business and professional men. Women in simple dark clothes did stand out and seemed to have attracted undue interest, some prurient. Erin Bell has examined how they were portrayed on stage.[38] Plain dress and a stiff bonnet were enough to denote a Quaker without any delineation of character. Likewise Ana M. Acosts has shown that the demure clothes led people to believe that there was a demure woman underneath.[39] Some of this perception will partly explain the excessive interest which May Drummond attracted when she spoke at public meetings; much of this would be mere curiosity.

In 1994 Jean E. Mortimer described the lives of some of the 18th century female Quakers who had left a record behind them.[40] The reason she entitled her talk 'Opportunities and Constraints' was because the structure of the society which the early founders had established enabled women to leave the domestic setting to undertake early forms of social work, to take part in the anti-slavery movement and to travel.[41] On the other hand, societal pressures were discouraging women in general from any public role. Christine Trevett discusses the evidence showing that although theoretically there was no difference in the spiritual lives of men and women, women were being discouraged from ministering in large gatherings or where there were men who wanted to speak.[42]

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[36] Burnet and Marwick, *Quakerism in Scotland*, 67.
[37] Gordon DesBrisay, 'Lilias Skene: A Quaker Poet and her "Cursed Self"' in *Women and the Feminine in Medieval and Early Modern Scottish Writing,* eds. Sarah M. Dunnigan, C. Marie Harker, and Evelyn Newtyn, (London: Palgrave Macmillan 2004).
[38] Erin Bell,'Stock Characters with Stiff-Brimmed Bonnets: depictions of Quaker Women by Outsiders c.1650-1800' in *New Critical Studies on Early Quaker Women,* Chapter 5.
[39] Ana M. Acosta, 'From Unnatural Fanatics to "Fair Quakers": How English Mainstream Culture Transformed Women Friends between 1650 and 1740', *Eighteenth Century Fiction* 31 No. 4 (Summer 2019) 706.
[40] Jean E. Mortimer, 'Quaker Women in the Eighteenth Century: Opportunities and Constraints' (Presidential Address given at Carlton Hill Friends' Meeting House, Leeds on 25th June 1994)*, JFHS,* Vol. 57 No. 3 (1996) 228-259.
[41] Jean E. Mortimer, 'Quaker Women,' 253.
[42] Christine Trevett, "Not Fit to be Printed": 120.

Robynne Rogers Healey has identified three strands in Quaker theology, of which Quietism was only one, the others being evangelicalism and rationalism.[43] George Fox, with whom the story of Quakerism began, saw that 'the Lord God did send me forth into the world, to preach his everlasting gospel and kingdom.'[44] He and many of those he convinced evangelized throughout Britain and the American Colonies. This waned in the 18th century.[45] By 1760 Friends had to be reminded that there were enquirers 'secretly dissatisfied with the empty forms in which they have had their education' who would look to Quaker for 'hopes of finding what they inquire for.'[46]

Women had always taken their place as preachers beside the men. While in prison for non-payment of tithes Margaret Fell wrote a pamphlet justifying preaching by women.[47] She quoted extensively from the Bible to support the argument that women always having been the equal of men, she should equally be able to speak up. Ministry was a spontaneous utterance flowing from silent worship, and here women were considered as equally qualified as men to speak. Some men and women were recognised by their meetings as having a special gift of ministry. If they felt the call, they could be granted a certificate which allowed them to travel to other meetings for a period, and to hold public meetings.[48] It is not certain how many of these 'Public Friends' there were. Some useful figures were prepared from the records by John Stephenson Rowntree in 1859 at a time when there was anxiety that although there was a substantial increase in the population, the number of Quakers was still falling.[49] His essay spans the whole history of Quakerism from the earliest days up until the time he was writing. Reviewing the activities of the late 17th century and early 18th century, Rowntree had this to say:

> The power wielded by an itinerant ministry has been prominently displayed in modern times by the Methodist preachers, and we may estimate its influence on early Quakerism by learning that the visits paid by ministers from a distance, averaged one a fortnight in some meetings for years together. In Bristol, so fully was the time devoted to public worship occupied by ministry, that the expediency of holding meetings compulsorily silent was seriously entertained.[50]

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[43] Robynne R. Healey, 'Quietist Quakerism,' 48.
[44] George Fox, *Journal.* 34.
[45] John Punshon, *Portrait in Grey*, 216.
[46] 1760 Epistle, *YM Epistles I,* 316.
[47] Margaret Fell, *Women Speaking Justified, Proved and Allowed of by the Scriptures and other seventeenth century Quaker writings about women,* publ. 1666. (London: Quaker Home Service 1989 edition).
[48] John Punshon, *Portrait in Grey,* 91.
[49] John Stephenson Rowntree, *Quakerism Past and Present: Being an Inquiry into the Causes of its Decline in Great Britain and Ireland,*(London: Smith Elder & Co.1859).
[50] John Stephenson Rowntree, *Quakerism Past and Present,* 108

He lamented the decline which took place in the 18th century, a time he considers of 'a general lethargy of the Society'.[51] Of the preachers he wrote

> The number of preachers was largely reduced from what it had been in the earlier period, whilst the number of women in that station bore a larger proportion to that of men than had previously been the case; and there will hardly be a dissentient of Joseph J. Gurney's statement, that it is far from being an indication of life and soundness in the body [i.e. the Quaker movement], when the stronger sex withdraws from the battles of the Lord, and leaves them to be fought by those whose physical weakness and delicacy have an obvious tendency to render them less fit for the combat.[52]

In his analysis Rowntree used as a benchmark the number of preachers visiting Ireland. In the two decades 1720 to 1739 there were seventy-eight men preachers and fifty-seven women and he took this to be a reasonable reflection of the relative proportions throughout the Society.[53] Rowntree later published a table of the number of ministers in London Yearly Meeting who had died in each decade. In the 1770s, the decade in which May Drummond died, he lists ninety-three men and ninety-five women, suggesting that for some time before that the numbers were fairly equal.[54] It has been estimated that across the whole of the 18th century there were some 1300 – 1500 women ministers on both sides of the Atlantic.[55] Not all of these travelled far from home but many did.

Research into the female preachers has depended to a great extent on the journals kept by the women themselves because they were expected to report back to their home meeting on their travels. Ben Pink Dandelion has drawn attention to the 'rich and deep spirituality of the journals,' which help to throw light on an era 'under-research and misunderstood.'[56]

The keeping of a spiritual journal had long been an habitual practice of Protestants, since one of the effects of the Reformation had been to encourage men and women to look into their own souls.[57] There was an ambivalent attitude to these journals. They were meant for private thoughts and self-observation over time and recorded many internal struggles with

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[51] Ibid. 111
[52] Ibid. 106
[53] Ibid. 107
[54] John Stephenson Rowntree, *Life and Work,* 252 reproduced in Rebecca Larson, *Daughters of Light , Quaker Women Preaching and Prophesying in the Colonies and Abroad 1700-1775.* (New York: Alfred P. Knopf, 1999), 334.
[55] Rebecca Larson, *Daughters of Light,* 63.
[56] Ben Pink Dandelion, *An Introduction to Quakerism,* (Cambridge University Press 2007) 77.
[57] Alec Ryrie, *Being Protestant in Reformation Britain,* (Oxford: Oxford University Press 2013). 294.

spirituality, but some of the writers seemed to accept that after their deaths they need not remain private. They were often copied and circulated among friends and family, or deliberately left as a guidance to the children.[58] Quakers had the example of George Fox who in his later life wrote a memoir that was edited and published after his death. This was a travel journal but also contained thoughts on his own and others' spirituality and advice to his readers.

The female preachers' journals were edited for publication either by the writer herself or by her family after her death. Indeed, the formulaic nature of these journals also attest to some editing. They followed a pattern: childhood; searching for answers; reading religious literature; convincement; longing to testify and finally courage to minister.[59] The uniform nature of the journals leads to the suspicion that the families and the Society wished to present a picture of an ideal Quaker for the edification of others. The result is that many of them emphasise piety, obscuring the broader picture of the real woman. The flesh and blood woman disappeared. In her 1994 study of the diaries of three women Margaret Hope Bacon examined original manuscripts which fortunately had survived. When compared with the printed ones, she found much had been edited out. She gave the example of one woman who found her companion uncongenial. This was entirely edited out.[60]. There is a telling note by the editor of the journals of Fanny Henshaw. Her son William Paxton, in a prefatory note to the publication in 1793 writes that the document would appear in print 'when copied in order to meet the approbation of the Society'.[61] In other words for a journal to be published it had to be approved by the men who formed the Second Day Morning Meeting.

American historian Rebecca Larson has published a major study of the travelling women preachers, both British and American, and many who criss-crossed the Atlantic.[62] Historians have taken the view that there was a distrust of evangelising in the 18th century.[63] Her work contradicts this. Using memoirs and journals she talked about the

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[58] Ibid. 310.
[59] Gil Skidmore, *Strength in Weakness: Writings of 18th century Quaker Women.* (New York: Yale University Press 2010) 17.
[60] Margaret Hope Bacon, ed. *Wilt Thou Go on my Errand? Three 18th Century Journals of Quaker Women Ministers,* (Pennsylvania: Pendle Hill Publications 1994) 14.
[61] Stephen Hobhouse, *William Law and 18th Century Quakerism,* (London: George Allen & Unwin Ltd. 1927) fn.76.
[62] Rebecca Larson, *Daughters of Light, Quaker Women Preaching and Prophesying in the Colonies and Abroad 1700-1775.* (New York: Alfred P. Knopf, 1999).
[63] John Punshon, *Portrait in Grey,* 216.

homes which the women left, their motivations and the hardships they faced. Their journals speak of riding or walking for miles in all weathers, wading through swamps, storms at sea and threats from French ships when Britain and France were at war. May Drummond is one of the many individual women she writes about, and interestingly, does not refer to the ignominious end of her career, highlighting instead the years of her fame.[64]

Margaret Hope Bacon further supports the picture of the international nature of Quakerism. We can cross-reference their travels, and the people they met, with the records of meetings in Britain. One, Elizabeth Hudson, travelling from Philadelphia writes of a visit to Edinburgh in 1749.[65] I found in my own researches a reference to this visit in the accounts of Edinburgh Quaker Meeting who gave her and her companion financial help for their onward journey.[66]

May Drummond did not keep a journal or if she did it has been lost so we depend on the records left by others for her story. Although she was written out of Quaker history, her memory was revived again in the early 20th century.

With the publication of the Braithwaite and Jones histories there came a renewed interest in the past and the result was the formation of The Friends Historical Society in 1903. They began publishing a journal in 1907. One man who took advantage of this was William F. Miller (1834-1918). He was a descendent of William Miller (1655-1743), the first of five generations of the Miller family who were leading activists in Edinburgh Quaker Meeting. Much will be said about the Miller family in the present work. Although not a professional historian William F. Miller was deeply interested in history and his family's traditions. He wrote extensively about Edinburgh using the records of the Quarterly and Monthly Meetings and his own family archives. He wrote two articles about May Drummond in 1907.[67] They give a summary of her life but concentrate at length on her disownment by Edinburgh meeting. These two articles have been used as the main (sometimes only) source material by some subsequent writers, so that she has become defined by the disownment, and much else of her life glossed over or ignored.

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[64] Rebecca Larson, *Daughters of Light,* 243 *et seq.*
[65] Margaret Hope Bacon, *Wilt thou go,* 181.
[66] Edinburgh Monthly Meeting Accounts August 1749 NRS CH/1/1/2.
[67] William F. Miller, 'Episodes in the life of May Drummond,' (Part I) *JFHS,* Vol. 4 No. 2 (1907) 55-61; 'Episodes in the life of May Drummond,' (Part II) *JFHS,* Vol. 4 No. 3 (1907) 103-114.

Recently she has been given an entry in *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography* and the *New Biographical Dictionary of Scottish Women*, both authors acknowledging Miller as the main source.[68] This source is also acknowledged by Stephen Hobhouse in his 1927 work on the 18th century Quakers William Law and Fanny Henshaw, where he examines Drummond's influence on Henshaw who in her turn became a travelling preacher.[69] I have also used Miller's articles extensively as a starting point for further research.

My own researches started with the Parish Registers in Edinburgh, in order to establish a correct date of birth, which hitherto had been guessed at as c.1710. This is wrong, as I can prove. This alone throws new light on her life. Previously it had been erroneously believed that she was twenty-one when she joined the Quakers. I can demonstrate that she was a much older woman and this provides a different perspective.

I found in the Commissary Court records for Edinburgh proof of the date of death of her father which had also previously been uncertain. These records also contained a previously unexamined inventory of May Drummond's possessions at the date of her death. This document both establishes the date and also gives us a picture of the way she was living.

The National Records of Scotland hold the Quaker archives and there I researched the minutes and financial accounts of Edinburgh Meeting, and the minutes of the Quarterly Meeting which was, as its name suggests, a quarterly meeting to which all the Quaker meetings in Scotland sent representatives. From these I have been able to track the decline of Edinburgh Meeting across the 18th century, and May Drummond's place in that. There also I was able to see a letter, hitherto unknown, sent by May Drummond to her cousin in London. In records relating to the wider Drummond family I found fragmentary traces of her financial situation.

In the archives in Friends House in London there are preserved many letters and Commonplace Books of this period, and these contain references to her. People recorded their opinion of her, wrote to their friends about her, wrote summaries of her sermons and copied her letters which were passed round for the purpose. These show how contemporary Quakers viewed her. It was also there I came upon in the mammoth archival notes of

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[68] Gil Skidmore, 'May Drummond,'*ODNB,* (2004); Paul Burton,'May Drummond,' *New Biographical Dictionary of Scottish Women*, (Edinburgh University Press, 2018), 123.
[69] Stephen Hobhouse, *William Law,* 100.

William Braithwaite a letter dated 1843 which throws some light on how she was remembered by subsequent generations in Edinburgh.[70] Some of the original letters written by May Drummond herself were saved by their recipients and are now in the archives, and these give insight into her feelings. Unfortunately none of the letters written to her have survived.

May Drummond's life was one of two halves. For thirty-five years she lived the life of a sister and daughter within an elite family in Edinburgh. Chapter One is therefore devoted to her birth and family background. Since nothing is known of her education we can only use what we know of the normal upbringing of a girl of this class and time. The chapter also includes some speculation that before she joined the Quaker movement she was already showing signs of rebellion against her lot in life. This rebelliousness flowered when she attended a Quaker meeting in Edinburgh in 1731.

Chapter Two is a close look at Edinburgh Quaker Meeting, beginning with the particular legislation which made life difficult for them, and describing the structure of the Quaker organisation. This helps to understand the procedure by which she was disowned. The chapter uses the minutes of the meeting to trace its decline from its heyday in the early part of the 18th century to its near-demise in the 1760s.

For the third chapter, on her life as a travelling preacher, I was able to follow her movements from contemporary newspapers: her regular visits to London; her preaching there; her travel to other meetings. Reading some of these reports it is notable that even though she was often sharing a platform with other preachers, they were not mentioned. She was attracting all the attention. This chapter also discussed pamphlets and poetry written about her. I have included in Appendix B some of this literature, which, although for reasons of space cannot be given in full, at least gives a flavour of the material. She was an early role model for young women, but she was also the focus of satirical attacks on women, on women preaching, on Quakerism, and on religion generally. Much of this is preserved in the library of Friends House and in the British Library.

I have devoted the whole of Chapter Four to her disownment in 1765, quoting in full the minutes and letters surrounding this event to give a clear picture of the feeling against her.

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[70] Letter from William Miller to George Crosfield dated 20th March 1843. LSF MS Vol. 214 No. 91.

She fought back of course and I have included her own response. Chapter Five covers the last years of her life, her death, and how she was remembered within the Quaker movement.

We know what she looked like. Unusually for the period we have two images of her, the pencil sketch at the top of this introduction and the later oil painting which forms the frontispiece. In Appendix A, I examine the provenance of these two portraits.

In conclusion I consider her life against the background of Quakerism as it was evolving during that period. I argue that while Quakerism freed her from many of the restrictions of life as a woman in this period, the movement itself formed a new discipline, which in many ways she resisted. I argue that while history has given us a portrait of failure, on the contrary her life was one of success, the success of a woman who lived independently on her own terms, who inspired other women, and who kept going despite attempts to silence her. The annals of her time tell us her story, and the passage of time can allow a more balanced verdict.

CHAPTER ONE

Birth, Family Background and Young Womanhood

As most of what has been written about May Drummond has concentrated on a few facts we have a distorted picture of her. Because there is documentation to attest to it, the concentration has been on her disownment by Edinburgh meeting. That episode only lasted a few months in 1765 when she was already approaching the age of seventy. The impression left is that her life ended in failure. It ignores a whole lifetime of activity. This chapter recounts her family history and her own life up until the date when she joined the Quaker movement.

Researchers into family history are fortunate in having on-line access to the Parish Records for the whole of Scotland, and these include births, deaths and marriages, wills and much else.[71] The Red Book of Scotland provided a few more facts about the family.[72] They were a minor branch of the family of the Drummonds, Earls of Perth, promoted secretly in the Jacobite peerage to Dukes of Perth in 1690.[73] The immediate family were the Drummonds of Ledcrieff, Newton and Blair Drummond.[74]

My researches began with establishing an accurate date of birth. The ODNB gives the date as 1709/10.[75] The New Biographical Dictionary of Scottish Women has c.1710.[76] A search of the Parish Registers for the period 1700 to 1720 fails to disclose any child in Scotland born or baptised with the name May. However a search in the Parish Registers of Edinburgh clarifies the matter and establishes her date of birth beyond doubt, and it was not 1710.

May's father, John Drummond, was apprenticed to an Edinburgh merchant in 1671.[77] He would likely be in his mid-teens at the time, and this would suggest he was born in the

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[71] www.Scotlandspeople.gov.uk.
[72] The Red Book of Scotland, 5th edition, (Tanner Ritchie Publishing 2024) Volume 3, 860.
[73] Edward Corp, 'James Drummond, 4th Earl of Perth and Jacobite 1st Duke of Perth,' *ODNB*, (2004).
[74] The Red Book, Vol. 3, 856; Biographical Sketch of the late George Drummond Esq.' *The Scots Magazine*, May 1802, 375
[75] Gil Skidmore, 'May Drummond', *ODNB* (2004)..
[76] Paul Burton, 'May Drummond,' *New Biographical Dictionary of Scottish Women*, (Edinburgh University Press, 2018) 123.
[77] The Red Book of Scotland, 5th edition, Volume 3, 860.

mid-1650s. He prospered and became known as 'a man of substance'.[78] He acquired the lands of Newton in Perthshire some time before 1693, as it was after that date he began to refer to himself as John Drummond of Newton.[79] This estate already was in the family, having been purchased by George Drummond of Blair (his great-grandfather) in 1560.[80] John Drummond most likely purchased the estate from a relative as neither he nor his father were eldest sons and would not therefore have inherited it. May's older brother George was born in Newton Castle but most of the other ten siblings were born in Edinburgh.

John Drummond married Marie Menzies in the early 1680s.[81] They had the following children:

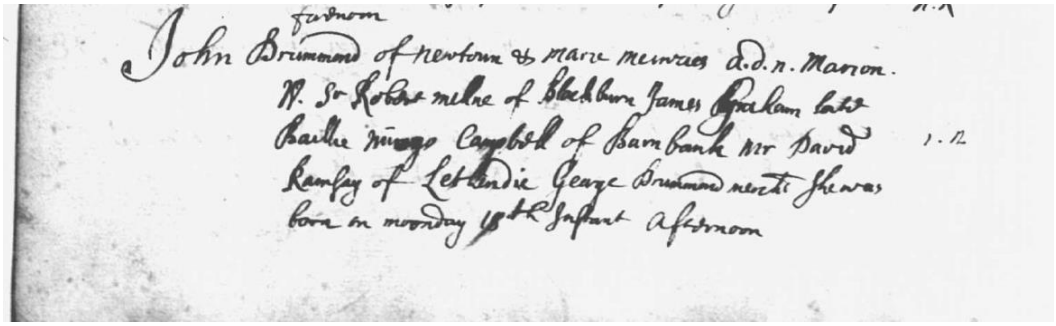
Margaret born 29th July 1682[82] (died in infancy)
William bap. 21st July 1683.[83] (died in infancy)
James born 16th August 1684[84] (died in infancy)
John Drummond, date not known (admitted as a burgess in 1701) [85]
Margaret born 6th April 1686.[86]
Elizabeth Drummond[87]
George born 27th June 1687[88]
Duncan, bap. 7th April 1690.[89]
Mary born 29th September 1692[90]
Marion born 15th May 1696[91]
Alexander born 18th January 1698[92]
Jean, born 4th September 1699[93]

There are no more children recorded as being born to John Drummond of Newton and Marie Menzies after that date. John Drummond died in 1707 as shown by a Testament-

[78] Douglas Watt, *The Price of Scotland: Darien, Union, and the Wealth of Nations,* (Edinburgh: Luath Press 2007) 65.
[79] The Red Book 860.
[80] The Red Book 857.
[81] The Red Book 860. At this time married women in Scotland retained their own name.
[82] www.scotlandspeople.org.uk, Old Parish Registers: Births 685/1 Edinburgh page 148 of 270.
[83] The Red Book 860.
[84] SP: Old Parish Registers: Births 685/1 Edinburgh page 257 of 270.
[85] The Red Book 866.
[86] The Red Book 866.
[87] The Red Book 866.
[88] The Red Book 860. This does not give his place of birth.
[89] The Red Bood 865.
[90] SP Old Parish Registers: Births 685/1 Edinburgh page 35.
[91] SP Old Parish Registers: Births 685/1 Edinburgh page 32. This is the first entry where the father is noted as John Drummond of Newton; the earlier entries record him as John Drummond, Merchant.
[92] SP Old Parish Registers, Births 685/1 Page 148
[93] SP Old Parish Registers: Births 685/1 Edinburgh page 257.

Dative and Inventory of part of his estate which was recorded in the Commissary Court in Edinburgh on 12th July 1707.[94] He would have been aged about sixty.

May Drummond could not therefore have been born in 1710. I argue that the child Marion, born on 15th May 1696, was the child known as May and is the subject of this work. The Red Book has Mary as the Quaker preacher but this is wrong.[95]



Old Parish Registers, Canongate, baptisms 19th May 1696

Further proof that Marion and May were one and the same can be found from an examination of the Sasine Registers for Edinburgh. These record the purchase of two properties in the name of Marion Drummond. The earlier of these is dated 7th December 1757 and describes the purchase by her of property in Canongate known as Bull's Land.[96] She is described as the 'sister of George Drummond one of the Commissioners of Excise in Scotland'. This building in the Canongate has been known variously as Bull's Close and May Drummond's Close. It was where she lived out her last years.

Bull's Close today (formerly known as May Drummond's Close), Canongate

[94] SP Edinburgh Commissary Court CC8/8/83, 229-231
[95] Red Book Vol. 3, 866.
[96] Sasine in favour of Marion Drummond dated 7th December 1757, NRS. RS27/150/288.

The Book of the Old Edinburgh Club adds to this that on her death the tenement was sold to Peter Lamont and the property then known as Lamont's Land.[97] It has now reverted to the name Bull's Close.

In the Biographical Dictionary of Scottish Women Paul Burton seems to have made the same connection for his entry is headed 'Drummond, May (aka Marion or Mariana).' [98] However he does not correct the date of birth, and all the other histories are clearly wrong. This appears to be a misconception arising in the early 20th century. A very early reference to her age appears in the diary of one John Kelsall who wrote in 1735 'Heard that a Scotch woman friend May Drummond of the family of the E. of Drummond, was convinced about three years ago and is now a Preacher, aged about 25.'[99] It is clear from this that he had not seen her, so his estimate of her age is only hearsay. She was in fact about thirty-nine at the time.

The Kelsall diary entry was published in the Journal of the Friends Historical Society in 1913. It was only after this date that references to her age appeared. It can therefore be assumed to be the source of the mistake, and no one till now has examined the actual Parish Registers. As a result, twentieth-century historians have formulated a misleading picture of May Drummond as a young woman. Mabel Brailsford in 1930 wrote of 'a bevy of stylishly dressed girls one of whom was a member of the first family in the city' attending the public meeting at which Thomas Story was speaking.[100] This is a gloss on what Story wrote in his journal. Nowhere does he refer to the dress of his new recruit. She goes on, somewhat lyrically, to suggest that May Drummond was 'immensely popular with companions of her own age, and the ringleader in many a mad frolic.'[101] In his 1950 history George B. Burnet repeated that she was twenty-one and a member of the 'smart set of the day.'[102] Historians using Burnet as one of their sources have perpetuated this error. Finding the truth of her birth gives a different picture.

She was aged about thirty-five when she joined the Quaker movement. This was not an impulsive girl rebelling against her family. She was a middle-aged woman, unmarried,

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[97] The Book of the Old Edinburgh Club, 12th vol. (1923), 120.
[98] Paul Burton, 'May Drummond,' *New Biographical Dictionary of Scottish Women*, 123.
[99] Extract from the Diaries of John Kelsall under date 8th of 4 mo. 1735. *JFHS* Vol. 10/4 (1913), 279.
[100] Mabel R. Brailsford, 'May Drummond', *Friends Quarterly Examiner, Vol. 64 No. 255* (London) 1930. 217.
[101] Mabel R. Brailsford, 'May Drummond,' 222.
[102] Burnet and Marwick, *Quakerism in Scotland* 153.

almost past child-bearing age, financially comfortable, but with limited options if she chose to conform to what society expected of her. However, unburdened as she was, she was free to make decisions about her life, and when an opportunity presented itself, she chose it with confidence.

She was born into an elite family whose men were important and influential. John Drummond of Newton was a merchant in Edinburgh, a burgess and a guild brother at a time when financial services and mercantile development were booming. In Scotland alone in the 1690s forty-seven joint stock companies were set up including the Bank of Scotland.[103] Drummond was one of the first directors of The Company of Scotland Trading to Africa and the Indies, set up by Act of Parliament in 1695. To be elected a director the candidate had to own at least £1,000 Sterling of company stock; fewer than 10% of shareholders met this condition indicating his relative wealth.[104] He is listed among the Lairds and not the Merchants, as he had by that time acquired the lands of Newton. According to Watt, Drummond was one of the most assiduous attenders at the Court of Directors meetings.[105] This project ended in disaster with the attempt to set up a trading colony at Darien in Panama in 1699/1700. The shares became worthless but recovered their value as part of the serttlement at the 1707 Union.[106] John Drummond died before payment but the shares were used to settle an unrelated debt.[107]

May's immediate family were pro-Hanoverian. Watt has noted that the first court of directors were men who had been supportive of William during the 1688-89 Revolution.[108] May's brother George led a troop of Edinburgh volunteers against the Jacobites in 1715 and again in 1745. If John Drummond who is described as 'a shadowy figure' had leanings towards Jacobism there is no evidence for this.[109] The family's kinship with the Duke of Perth mattered to May Drummond. She was known to make frequent references to 'my worthy cousin Perth.'[110] This enhanced her reputation in England, (one newspaper

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[103] Douglas Watt, 'The Company of Scotland and Scottish Politics, 1696-1701' in S*cotland in the Age of Two Revolutions, (*London: Boydell & Brewer 2014) 212.
[104] Douglas Watt, The Company of Scotland, 213
[105] Ibid 219.
[106] Douglas Watt, T*he Price of Scotland: Darien, Union, and the Wealth of Nations,* (Edinburgh: Luath Press 2007) 194.
[107] SP Testament-Dative of the estate of John Drummond, Edinburgh Commissary Court, CC8/8/83 231
[108] Douglas Watt, 'The Company of Scotland', 216.
[109] Douglas Watt, 'The Company of Scotland,' 217.
[110] Burnet and Marwick, *The Story of Quakerism in Scotland,* 162.

referred to her as 'the Hon Mrs Mary Drummond)[111] but may have caused problems later when the Duke of Perth came out for the Jacobite cause in the 1745 rising. In a letter written in 1746 May seemed to be defending herself when she said 'against the present establishment I never did nor never intend to say one word, either in publick or private, but people will tell lies concerning me.'[112]

The career of her brother George was launched at the age of Eighteen when he became aide to Sir John Clerk of Penicuik, one of the Commissioners who negotiated the terms of the union of the parliaments of Scotland and England and voted for Union in the Scottish Parliament as member for Whithorn. Drummond had an aptitude for figures and made many of the financial calculations on behalf of Scotland for the amalgamations of the two treasuries.[113] He was subsequently appointed Accountant-General of Excise for Scotland and held this post all his life, along with various other public offices. He was one of the founding directors of the newly formed Royal Bank of Scotland in 1727.[114] He was a Freemason and was elected Grand-Master in 1736.[115]

The Drummond family were active in local politics, several of them serving in various roles on the town council of Edinburgh; a cousin had been Lord Provost in 1685 when the Earl of Perth held the role of Chancellor. May Drummond's brother George was first elected as Lord Provost in 1725 and another five times after that. He was the driving force behind the founding of the new Royal Infirmary of Edinburgh in 1736, and in the development of the Nor'Loch area to make the New Town from 1753, though he did not live to see this completed.[116] He moved in the most influential circles of Edinburgh society. He was a friend of the poet Allan Ramsay.[117] He was an active member and in his later years Depute Governor of the Edinburgh Musical Society.[118]

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[111] Ipswich Journal, 4th October 1735.
[112] Letter to Amanda, dated Lancaster, 19th of the 5th Mo. 1746, 116, transcribed in *'A Collection of Letters, Dreams Visions and Other Remarkable Occurrences of some of the People called Quakers*. LSF MS Vol. S78.
[113] 'George Drummond' *Dictionary or National Biography 1885-1900.*
[114] NatWest Group.com/Heritage/people.
[115] David Brewster, *The History of Free Masonry,* (Cambridge University Press 2012) 150.
[116] Alexander Murdoch, 'George Drummond,' *ODNB* (2004)
[117] Burnet and Marwick, *Quakerism in Scotland,* 153.
[118] Jennifer MacLeod, *The Edinburgh Musical Society: Its Membership and Repertoire 1728-1797,* (PhD. Thesis, University of Edinburgh 2001), 39.

May Drummond's younger brother Alexander was appointed Collector of Customs at Greenock.[119] From 1744 he travelled extensively in Europe and the Middle East and became British Consul in Aleppo (now in Syria) from 1754 to 1756.[120] His letters home were edited by Tobias Smollett (at George Drummond's expense) and published in 1754 to enthusiastic reviews.[121]

This, in other words, was an important and influential family embedded in the mercantile, civic and cultural life of Edinburgh. However, with the death of John Drummond in 1707, the house of a busy merchant became the home of a widow in mourning with young children: Mary (15), May (11), Alexander (9) and Jean (8). This must have made a difference in their social lives. Marie Menzies had perhaps been accustomed to act as hostess to the men with whom her husband had business interests and this would diminish, if not actually stop. Their son John was admitted as a burgess of Edinburgh in 1701 which suggests that he was already involved in the running of the business. His date of birth is not known but it would appear he was the oldest surviving son and would therefore have inherited the lands of Newton. George Drummond married in 1707 and it is likely that the brothers took responsibility for the care and education of their young siblings.

Although the household income may have been diminished, they were still financially comfortable. I have been unable, despite extensive searches, to find the documentation for a will or trust settlement so it is possible John Drummond died intestate. The common law was clear on the matter, whether John Drummond left a will or not.[122] The heritable estate passed to the heir-at-law, in this case the oldest surviving son, John Drummond. The widow, Marie Menzies would be entitled to an income from one third of the estate, known as terce.[123] She would be entitled to one third of the moveable estate, if there was a will, or one-half if there was not, and similarly the children collectively would be entitled to one third or one half.[124] If John Drummond left a will or a trust settlement the arrangements may have varied from this but not in any substantial way. For the non-age children the funds would be held in trust.

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[119] Katherine Turner, Alexander Drummond, *ODNB* (2004).
[120] Katherine Turner, 'Alexander Drummond.'
[121] Alexander Drummond, *Travels through the different Countries of Germany, Italy, Greece and parts of Asia Minor*, (1754).
[122] W. David H. Sellar, 'Succession Law in Scotland: a Historical Perspective' in *Exploring the Law of Succession,* eds. Kenneth Reid and Marius de Waal, (Edinburgh University Press 2007) 50.
[123] Ibid 55
[124] Ibid 59.

We can glean something about it from family papers in the National Records of Scotland.[125] Robert Boyd, Writer in Edinburgh (i.e. a lawyer) was appointed as administrator for the widow and children.[126] Boyd died in 1725, and as late as 1758 George Drummond obtained appointment of Executor-dative *qua* creditor to Boyd for the recovery of £357 5s. 6d. Scots money, owing to George Drummond under the terms of the settlement and still in the hands of Boyd when he died. He was also entitled to another £57 5s. 6d. Scots in charges.[127] Further research may establish more detail, but it matters for the present work only inasmuch as it demonstrates that May Drummond inherited sufficient family money to be able to live independently, and to purchase property in the Canongate.

May's family money included interests in Jamaica. In the inventory of her estate after her death it was recorded that May Drummond had promised a creditor she would pay him 'as soon as her money from Jamaica came to hand'.[128] The source of these moneys was most likely a sugar plantation reliant on enslaved labour.[129] This would need further research beyond the scope of the present work.

Until recently historians have tended to ignore the lives of the near-invisible women of the 18th century. One searches in vain for them in James Buchan's *Capital of the Mind* and Alexander Broadie's *The Scottish Enlightenment* though these are useful for background.[130] There has now been an abundance of research, mainly by women historians. Amanda Vickery, writing of English women, reminds us that the country was relatively politically stable, allowing for the development of civil society.[131] She describes the extent to which many women had limited agency, being dependent on men, but nonetheless were able to shape for themselves useful and comfortable lives. In the Scottish

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[125] Papers of the families of Moray of Abercairney, Drummond of Blair Drummond, Home of Kinross, and Stirling of Ardoch. NRS, GD24/1/501

[126] Letter from John Bell to George Drummond dated 6th April 1765 NRS GD 4/1/501/70

[127] Testament-dative of Robert Boyd, SP Edinburgh Commissary Court, CC8/8/117,232.

[128] Testament-dative of May Drummond, SP Edinburgh Commissary Court CC8/8/124, 135

[129] Kate Phillips, *Bought & Sold: Scotland, Jamaica and Slavery,* (Edinburgh: Luath Press 2022); Stephen Mullen, 'Scots in the West Indies in the Colonial Period: A View from the Archives,' *Scottish Archives* Vol. 22 (2015), 7-16. George Drummond had frequent correspondence with plantation owners in Jamaica and received £1,500 from there for the new Royal Infirmary. GD24/1/501/17.

[130] James Buchan, *Capital of the Mind: How Edinburgh changed the world,* (London: John Murray, 2003).; Alexander Broadie, *The Scottish Enlightenment,* (Edinburgh: Birlinn Limited 2001).

[131] Amanda Vickery, *The Gentleman's Daughter: Women's Lives in Georgian England,* (Yale University Press 2003).

context Katherine Glover's work examines the lives of elite women who, as the century progressed were able to find roles for themselves in the constant round of sociability which involved both men and women.[132] I have drawn on her chapter on education though my summaries do not do justice to the depth of her research. In this respect also Rosalind Russell's thesis on the subject was helpful. [133] Her work covers the late 18th century but throws light on the period of May Drummond's girlhood.

Rosalind Carr has examined the restrictive role which gender played in educated circles, describing women as 'neither entirely absent nor fully present in Scottish Enlightenment culture.'[134] Her discussion of the Fair Intellectual Society prompted my own thoughts on this, as did the work of Derya Gurses Tarbuck.[135] Rosalind Carr takes a balanced view on the existence of an actual club, but the publication of the pamphlet demonstrates that women participated in the burgeoning printing revolution.[136] When we look at the broad sweep of reading which it was assumed an intelligent woman had access to, how could an energetic young woman look with equanimity on the opportunities for her brothers to study and discuss these works, opportunities which were denied to her? I hope with my identification of May Drummond as one of the members I have contributed something to the debate.

Katie Barclay and Deborah Simonton have edited a collection of essays on the lives of Scottish women of every class.[137] In this Rosalind Carr describes the power of aristocratic women who could and did exercise their power through running estates in the absence of their husbands and friendships with influential men.[138] Simonton's essay is on the subject of working women, and she has followed this with more work on the subject.[139] Her research shows that in the lower and middle classes many single women and widows

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[132] Katharine Glover, *Elite Women and Polite Society in Eighteenth-Century Scotland.* (Woodbridge: Boydell and Brewer, 2011) 81.

[133] Rosalind Russell, *Women of the Scottish Enlightenment: their importance in the history of Scottish Education,* (PhD thesis, University of Glasgow 1988).

[134] Rosalind Carr, *Gender and Enlightenment in Eighteenth century Scotland,* (Edinburgh University Press, 2014) 73.

[135] Derya Garses Tarbuck, 'Exercises in Women's Intellectual Sociability in the Eighteenth Century: The Fair Intellectual Club,' *History of European Ideas*, 41.3, (2015) 375-386.

[136] Rosalind Carr, *Gender and Enlightenment,* 80.

[137] Katie Barclay and Deborah Simonton, eds. *Women in eighteenth-century Scotland: intimate, intellectual and public lives.* (Surrey: Ashgate Publishing Limited 2013).

[138] Rosalind Carr, 'Women, Land and Power: A Case for Continuity' in *Women in Eighteenth-century Scotland: intimate, intellectual and public lives op cit.* 193-209.

[139] Deborah Simonton 'Work, Trade and Commerce', in *Gender in Scottish History since 1700* Ed. Lynn Abrams et al. (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press 2006) 201-234; 'Invisibility, Presence and Absence: Scottish Businesswomen in the Eighteenth and Nineteenth Centuries,' T*he Scottish Historical Review* Vol. CII, 259 (Aug 2023) 200-314.

worked, but there were also married woman working in their husband's businesses.[140] May Drummond would deal with many entrepreneurial women in shops and markets. Could she have worked? Her father was a merchant with international contacts, investing in many trading opportunities. It is unlikely that the widowed Marie Menzies, frequently pregnant and left with a young family could carry this on. May Drummond never married but it is unlikely a mercantile career would be considered for a daughter in polite society.

May Drummond belonged to the elite. Her brothers would be educated to operate fully in society, she and her sisters for the care of the home . The role of an elite woman was to be a good wife and mother, and to bring culture to the lives of men, and most of all to be helpmeet to aid men to achieve in the public sphere.

Her early education would be in the responsibility of her mother, and she would learn the useful skills as needlework, bakery skills, pastry-making, and household management and more elegant pastimes of drawing, painting, and music-making.[141] She would be taught to read. Her mother was of a generation where her reading was probably religious and this would colour what she taught her daughters.[142] The texts would involve bible reading, learning her catechism and, this being Scotland, memorising the psalms in the Scots Metrical Psalter.[143] This early submersion in religion seems to have stayed with her. Her later reading included various religious works.

As May grew older she probably attended private teachers in Edinburgh for different subjects.[144] She would be taught writing, which would include the skill of writing letters for every occasion. Several of the letters she wrote throughout her life still exist and it is interesting to see the difference between those letters where she used an amanuensis and those which she wrote herself. Those written for her are beautifully scripted, and correctly punctuated and spelt. Those she writes herself are badly spelt and, when she is obviously

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[140] Deborah Simonton 'Widows and Wenches: Single Women in Eighteenth Century Urban Economies' in *Female Agency in the Urban Economy: Gender in European Towns 1640-1830,* ed. Deborah Simonton and Anne Montenach (London: Taylor and Francis Group 2013) 93-115.

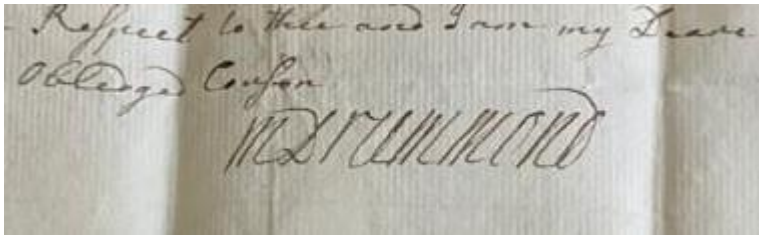
[141] Lindy Moore, 'The Value of Feminine Culture: Community involvement in the Provision of Schooling for Girls in 18th century Scotland', in *Women in eighteenth-century Scotland*, eds. Katie Barclay and Deborah Simonton, (Surrey: Ashgate Publishing Limited 2013) 108.

[142] Katharine Glover in *Elite Women* quotes two contemporaries of May Drummond, namely Elizabeth Mure (p.28) and Mary Somerville (p.52) who both said their mothers read little beyond the bible, sermons and newspapers.

[143] Published in 1650 and authorised for use in the Church of Scotland.

[144] Lindy Moore, 'The Value of Feminine Culture,' 99.

agitated, look as if they have been written with a splotchy quill. Her signature is large, as befits a self-confident woman.



Taken from a letter by May Drummond to her cousin John Drummond, dated 24th February 1736[145]

She would be taught arithmetic, possibly some book-keeping, history, and most probably French. She would also be discouraged from using Scots, and taught to speak and write in English. For social skills she would learn to dress well, and to converse on any subject. To acquire sufficient knowledge for this purpose there would be extensive reading.

Many newspapers, including The London Gazette, The Daily Advertiser and the London Evening Post were available. There were specifically Scottish publications. The Edinburgh Gazette began publishing in 1699 and the Edinburgh Evening Courant in 1720.[146] A cursory glance at all these newspapers shows the astonishing range of topics covered, with as much foreign reporting as local, shipping movements, commodity prices, gossip, crime reports, and many, many reports on the activities of the Kirk and of the Church of England. There were periodicals, some, like the Spectator and the Tatler short-lived, but the separate issues would be bound into a book, and take their place in the library to be preserved and reread. The Spectator was particularly valued as setting the standard of behaviour for polite society.[147] Some were specifically aimed at women, such as the Ladies Diary, first published in 1704 and the Ladies Journal, available from 1727.[148] These were published in London, but circulated widely.[149] Edinburgh had a thriving print culture.[150] Allan Ramsay (a friend of the Drummond family) had founded his circulating library in 1725. Novels were readily available. Katharine Glover demonstrates that books were readily available to

[145] NRS GD24/3/373
[146] Adam Fox, *The Press and the People: Cheap Print and Society in Scotland 1500-1785,* (Oxford: Oxford University Press 2020), 42.
[147] Katharine Glover, *Elite Women* 61.
[148] James Robert Wood, 'Periodicals and the Problems of Womens Learning' in *Women's Periodicals and Print Culture in Britain, 1690-1820: The Long Eighteenth Century* eds. Jennie Batchelor and Manushag N. Powell, (Oxford: Oxford University Press 2018)29; Jennie Batchelor and Manushag N. Powell 'Introduction', *Women's Periodicals and Print Culture,* 3.
[150] Adam Fox, *The Press and the People,* 98.

those who wanted them.[151] Mark Towsey writes about the practice among women of passing books round amongst themselves.[152]

May Drummond seems to have had a taste for serious works. Matthew Reilly has shown that she read the work by the 12th century Spanish author Ibn Tufayl which contained ideas in line with Quaker thinking. This was translated into English in 1708.[153] She was accused later of continuing to use this work in her sermons, after it had fallen out of favour with other Quakers.[154] We know she read *Characteristicks* by the Earl of Shaftesbury 'a work of philosophy in a polite mode.' published in 1711.[155] She quotes some of it (and disagrees with it) in the Bush-Hill letter.[156] She also quoted in one of her letters from a popular Quaker text William Penn's *No Cross, No Crown* [157].[158]

I would suggest that it was this type of education and her taste in reading that influenced May Drummond's style of writing and preaching. The publisher of her first religious tract could say that she has rather

> laid down Hints without any strict Regularity of Connexion, than tied herself down to a logical Method of Arguing, not being fond of that way, nor skill'd in any Language besides her Mother tongue.[159]

She had not, in other words, been educated in classical rhetoric which taught men like that publisher a logical presentation of ideas.

Commenting on her preaching Joseph Spence, then the Professor of Modern History at Oxford, who talked with her and heard her preach wrote in 1746 that she had 'Very good language; particularly full of metaphor, but pretty and well-managed ones.'[160]

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[151] Katharine Glover, *Elite Women* 53.
[152] Mark Towsey, 'I can't resist sending you this book'; Private Libraries, Elite Women and Shared Reading Practices in Georgian Britain', *Library & Information History,* 29:3, 210.
[153] Ibn Tufayl's *Hayz Ibn Yaqzan: Solitude and Understanding,* Hermitage Resources and Reflections www.hermitary.com/solitude/ibntufayl.html.
[154] Matthew Reilly, 'The Life and Literary Fictions of May Drummond.' *Eighteenth Century Fiction,* Vol.28, No. 2 (Winter) 2015/16, 292.
[155]John Closterman, 'Anthony Ashley Cooper, 3rd Earl of Shaftesbury'; ODNB.; *Characteristicks of Men, Manners, Opinions, and Times*, published in 1711 in 3 volumes by John Darby.
[156] See Chapter 4.
[157]May Drummond, Letter to Amelia, dated Lancaster, 19th May 1746, transcribed in 'A Collection of Letters, Dreams Visions and Other Remarkable Occurrences of some of the People called Quakers. LSF MS Vol. S78.
[158] William Penn, *No Cross, no Crown,* 1682, (York: William Sessions Book Trust, 1981).
[159] May Drummond, *Internal Revelation the Source of Saving Knowledge,* (London: Jonathan Nelson, 1836. Edition). preface vi.
[160] Joseph Spence, *Anecdotes*, *Observations and Characters of Books and Men*, Supplementary Anecdotes, (Cambridge University Press 2015) 346.

William Cookworthy, an influential Quaker who knew her well wrote in 1744

> As a preacher, her style is rather too learned, and some of her epithets rather swell too much. There is something, too, in the management & tone of her voice, when she exerts it, a little theatrical. She resembles Milton in being too free with technical words. But I really believe all this to be owing to her education, & not to any affectation or want of simplicity. She has a perfect acquaintance with the world, being what is called thoroughly well-bred.[161]

This last comment shows that her training as a young lady able to hold her own in society had worked. It is probable that when she reached an age to be launched into society, a sister-in-law would have taken this in hand, most likely George's wife. We do not know the marital status of her other older brothers. George's work and civic responsibilities took him on occasion to London.[162] The family had relatives there, and judging by the ease with which May Drummond was able to travel there later, it is possible that this was a journey she was accustomed to making from a young age.

In 1720 a pamphlet was published with, I would suggest, the involvement of May Drummond which gives us a glimpse of a woman struggling against the restrictions placed on her. A prominent feature of the period was the formation of societies for various purposes.[163] The men of the city could meet easily in taverns and coffee houses, and at professional events, and there were many, almost beyond counting, debating and discussion clubs.[164] There was no place for women in this milieu.[165] The pamphlet was entitled *An Account of the Fair Intellectual Club in Edinburgh*.[166] The publishers were J. McEuen and Co., Edinburgh and it was sold through their shop and also by T. Cox at the Amsterdam Coffee House in London.[167]

The author was anonymous and only signified by her initials M.C. Rosalind Carr has suggested that this club may not have existed and the pamphlet may have been a literary

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[161] Letter from William Cookworthy to Richard Kingston dated 1st August 1744. LSF Cookworthy Papers MS Box V4/1 p. 24.
[162] Alexander Murdoch, 'George Drummond.' *ODNB. (2004)*.
[163] Rosalind Carr, *Gender and Enlightenment* ,82.
[164] David D. McElroy, *The Literary Clubs and Societies of Eighteenth century Scotland 1700-1800,* (Ph.D thesis, Edinburgh University 1952).
[165] Rosalind Carr, *Gender and Enlightenment* 18.
[166] *An Account of the Fair Intellectual Club in Edinburgh: In a Letter to a Honourable Member of the Athenian Society there. By a Young Lady, the Secretary of the Club.* (Edinburgh: J. McEuen, 1720).
[167] *Fair Intellectual Club,* Front page.

invention.[168] Derya Tarbuck has traced contemporary material which treats the club as genuine.[169] The *Account* was a substantial piece of work, and if it was not genuine then it seems a very elaborate joke, or satire, by someone who never came forward to take the credit for it. However, imitation was common, and the choice of the 'Athenian Society' as the recipient of the work may hint at this, as there had been an invented Athenian Society in London with fictional reports.[170] If the pamphlet was an invention, the intention may have been good, as a protest against the exclusion of women from higher education.

It was addressed to the Edinburgh Athenian Society and purported to be an account of an association set up by young women in 1717 for the purpose of discussing works of literature. It was kept secret, but details of it were now being published (according to the Preface) because the fiancé of one of their number had learnt of the secret and was pressing them to make themselves known.[171] This elaborate reason for publishing may have been a conceit; perhaps some of them were genuinely wishing it to be known that they were the intellectual equals of men. M.C. writes that minutes were kept and all speeches, poems etc. kept with an index of matters discussed.[172] If such records ever existed they have not come to light. There was a charitable impulse: there was an entry fee of Ten shillings Sterling for the use of the poor.[173]

The women involved in this identified themselves only by their initials. M.C. is the secretary of the club. There is an M.H. identified by someone as M. Hamilton.[174] This name was handwritten on the copy of the pamphlet in the British Library from which modern facsimiles are taken. There is an M.B. tentatively identified as Bruce.[175] The preface is signed with two sets of initials: B.B. and M.D.[176] We do not know who B.B. was but I would venture to suggest that M.D. was May Drummond.

We can read back from the woman she became to the girl she was. Here was a clever young woman, growing up in a family of high-flying men: her brother George, established

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[168] Rosalind Carr, *Gender and Enlightenment*, 79.
[169] Derya Gurses Tarbuck, 'Exercises in Women's Intellectual Sociability in the Eighteenth Century: The Fair Intellectual Club', *History of European Ideas*, 41.3, (2015) 377.
[170] Johns, Adrian, *The Nature of the Book: Print and Knowledge in the Making,* (Chicago and London: University of Chicago Press 1998) 457.
[171] *Fair Intellectual Club,* Preface 1.
[172] Ibid 9.
[173] Ibid 8.
[174] Ibid 12.
[175] Derya Gurses Tarbuck, 'Exercises in Women's Intellectual Sociability,' 377.
[176] Ibid preface 4

in the civil service, elected to Edinburgh Town Council, treasurer for the city, and on the way to becoming Lord Provost; younger brother Alexander also working in the civil service but probably already planning his travels. She would see the young men of her acquaintance with a lively and sociable intellectual life from which she was excluded.

The club was apparently formed in 1717, at which time May Drummond would have been 20. Their aim was to:

> imitate the laudable example of some of our brethren, that make the greatest figure in the learn'd and polite world, in so far as we are capable and may reasonably be allowed, by entering into a mutual Compact and Agreement to act for the Interest and Improvement of one another, in our meetings.[177]

There were elaborate rules laid down. The number was restricted to nine, and the youngest anyone could join was fifteen, the oldest twenty, but membership could continue after that, terminating only on marriage or death.[178] The purpose was to read and discuss books. Reading lists are given: the Bible of course, particularly the psalms, *a Collection of divine Hymns and Poems, The whole Duty of Man, Bishop Tillotson's Sermons, Charon on Wisdom, Halifax's Advice to a Daughter, Lucas on Happiness.*[179] There was some lighter reading: The Tatler, Spectator, Guardian, and the Lady's Library. M.H. suggests only serious poetry and only tragedies when reading plays.[180] The members were not to neglect their study of French and Italian, and were to nurture their ability to write good English.[181]

This was followed up by another work which suggests that the Fair Intellectual Club was genuine. The women were involved in another publication by the same printer, *The Edinburgh Miscellany.*[182] This seems to have been a product of the Edinburgh Athenian Society but included some poems by women. In the introduction the editor wrote

> And for the Ladies, who have generously contributed to make up this Work, we are proud to declare, that, tho' they have sent us few of their Composures, they have sent nothing that is refuse. And therefore, while we publickly thank them for the Assistance already received, we beg they will continue to shine like the brighter constellations amongst Luminaries of a dimmer Aspect. The rest of that delicate

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[177] *Fair Intellectual Club 6.*
[178] Ibid 7.
[179] Ibid 18
[180] Ibid 23.
[181] Ibid 20.
[182] *The Edinburgh Miscellany: Consisting of Original Poems, Translations etc. by various hands, Vol.1.* (Edinburgh, J. McEuan 1720). This ran to a second printing, but there was never a second volume.

> Sex, will excuse us, tho we particularly thank the Fair Intellectual Club for the Poems they have been pleas'd to favour us with publick use. And we presume the ingenious Readers of their Performances will allow us to intreat them to send more to bespangle the second volume.[183]

There are five anonymous poems in the book which claim to be by members of the Fair Intellectual Club. Three are by 'H' and one by 'C'. The anonymity is not because of their gender: very few of the other pieces are signed. Rosalind Carr has suggested that these may be taken as proof that the club existed, but that it is also possible the poems were written by the same author as the pamphlet.[184] There are two poems by 'A Lady', not obviously both by the same person. This may suggest the net for contributions was widened beyond the Athenians and the Fair Intellectuals.

It is not clear how long the club existed. It is likely that the restrictions were too severe. As the membership married and had to leave they might have been difficult to replace. Young women of the period might have been reluctant to prejudice their marriage prospects by appearing to be too intellectual.

In 1731 May Drummond was thirty-four, past the age at which she might be expected to marry. As a woman, whole areas of society were closed to a her: she could not go to university; she could not join any of the professions, medicine or the law; she could not stand for political office; she had no constitutional role in the church. A single woman of her class could not live independently of the family home and in any event she may have been needed as companion to her mother, who died in 1736.[185] Literature spelled out for such women a melancholy life of 'blasted hopes and emotional failure'[186] Old maids were the butt of jokes and satire. Her younger sister Jean had married in 1726.[187] We do not know the marital status of her elder sisters. A count in the Red Book shows that by 1730 May had at least ten nieces and nephews. She could have settled into comfortable middle and then old age. She would have performed the role of spinster aunt, perhaps somewhat eccentric.

The first hint of a rebellious character may have come with the Fair Intellectual Society.

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[183] Quoted in David D. McElroy, *The Literary Clubs and Societies of Eighteenth-century Scotland 1700-1800,* (Ph.D Thesis, Edinburgh University 1952), 60.
[184] Rosalind Carr, *Gender and Enlightement,* 81.
[185] Gil Skidmore, 'May Drummond'.
[186] Amanda Vickery 'No happy ending? At Home with Miss Bates in Georgian England' *Persuasions: The Jane Austen Journal,* Vol. 27 (August 2015) 134.
[187] Red Book 866.

If, in setting up this club May Drummond hoped for a meeting of minds and discussion of serious matters, she would hope to find these when in 1731 she attended a public meeting at which the well-known Quaker Thomas Story was preaching. The result was that she left, some might say recklessly, the life society had mapped out for her. In Quakerism she found a community and a purpose. She used her education and the confidence instilled in her by her background to become a Quaker preacher, a role she fulfilled for the rest of her life.

CHAPTER TWO
Edinburgh Quaker Meeting

Many of the problems facing Quakerism in Scotland were similar to those in England, but some were peculiar to Scotland because of the power of the Church of Scotland. By the 1730s Quakers were one sect in a diverse religious culture, and had passed the peak of their membership and influence. It is possible to trace in minutes of meetings, comments from visiting Friends, and letters, the decline in Edinburgh meeting from its beginnings to its near-extinction in the 1770s. This chapter will examine this and May Drummond's part in it.

It helps to understand the procedure whereby May Drummond was disowned in 1765 to look at how Quakerism was organised throughout Britain. By the time she joined 1731 the basic structure had been in place for several decades. This structure was universal throughout Britain. The basic unit was the local meeting which could meet for worship anywhere at any time, though in practice it usually meant on the First Day i.e. Sunday. The men in this worshipping group held a business meeting once a month (Monthly Meeting) for the purpose of making practical decisions, for example about the Meeting House, burying ground, and financial matters.[188] Each meeting chose elders to look after the spiritual needs of the meeting.

A Quarterly Meeting was held with representatives from all the local meetings. Again it was only the men who attended. The Monthly Meetings sent representatives to Meeting for Sufferings, held in London. As its name suggests, its main purpose was to record those who had suffered for their faith, and to aid them and their families. Once a year, Friends from Scotland also sent representatives to London Yearly Meeting. It was there that matters of national interest could be discussed. London Yearly Meeting through a group known as the Second Day Morning Meeting also had control over what was published in

[188] Rosemary Moore, 'Seventeenth-century Context and Quaker Beginnings' In *The Oxford Handbook of Quaker Studies,* ed. Stephen W. Angell and Ben P. Dandelion, 13-28. (Oxford: Oxford University Press 2013) 25.

name of Quakers.[189] The movement was non-hierarchical. In theory everyone had an equal voice but in practice in many meetings, including Edinburgh, it was the men who exercised authority.

Quakers came early to Scotland. Part of the influx was with the army of occupation following the Wars of the Three Kingdoms 1642-51.[190] The earliest recorded Quaker presence in Edinburgh was in the early 1650s when meetings were held at the home of Colonel William Osborne, who was retired from the parliamentary army. The most detailed study to date of Quakerism in the Interregnum is that of R. Scott Spurlock.[191] Of particular interest is a document *The doctrines and principles of the priests of Scotland* written by some Scottish Quakers. This sets out the principles of Quakerism which have drawn the wrath of the Kirk.[192] Two of these in particular, the importance of the Inner Light, and a rejection of Baptism feature in the writing and preaching of May Drummond.

Under the Protectorate there was a measure of toleration but with the Restoration much of this toleration was removed. In 1661 the Scottish Parliament passed a Proclamation to the effect that meetings of 'quakers, anabaptists and fifth monarchy men' were forbidden to meet and magistrates and other officials were authorised to search any premises where meetings could be held, and imprison any persons who frequented such meetings.[193] It was effectively rescinded in 1690 following the accession of James VII and II.[194] Despite the promise of freedom of worship under this new regime, in 1695 the General Assembly of the Church of Scotland sitting in Edinburgh passed an 'Act anent Quakers'. By this Act the presbyteries, ministers and others in the church were to

> use all proper means for reclaiming them, and in case of their obstinacy, to proceed against them with the censures of the Church, and specially against the ringleaders that are traffickers for seducing of ithers.[195]

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[189] Trevett, Christine, "Not Fit to be Printed": the Welsh, the women and the Second Day's Morning Meeting *JFHS* Vol. 59 (2004) 115-44.
[190] Burnet and Marwick, *Quakerism in Scotland*, 18.
[191] R. Scott Spurlock, *Cromwell and Scotland: Conquest and Religion 1650-1660,* (Edinburgh: John Donald 2007).
[192] Ibid. 256.
[193] Proclamation against Quakers, Records of the Parliament of Scotland to 1707 ed. K.M. Brown. No. 1661/1/33.
[194] Act rescinding the laws for conformity, Records of the Parliament of Scotland to 1707, No.1690/4/118.
[195] Acts of the General Assembly of the Church of Scotland 24th December 1695, X – Act anent Quakers.

There has been little research into Quakerism in Scotland during the 18th century, most historians concentrating on England and the Colonies. As outlined in the Introduction, William F. Miller remedied this. In addition to his two articles on May Drummond he also wrote extensively about Edinburgh Meeting. A paper on Scottish Quakerism was published by the Rev. John Torrance in 1929.[196] In 1937 the Rev. George B. Burnet completed his thesis *The Rise, Progress and Decline of the Quaker Movement in Scotland.*[197] He later published this as *The Story of Quakerism in Scotland* 1650-1950. His essentially pessimistic view of Quakers was balanced in the latter by an Epilogue by William H. Marwick who brought the history up to 1950.[198]

Both Torrance and Burnet were writing from the point of view of ministers in the Church of Scotland who saw Quakerism as a failure. Both analysed the reasons for this, Burnet seeing this as a reaction against the attacks Quakers made on the institutions which the Kirk and the Scottish people held dear: pride in the Reformation; an educated and articulate ministry; the Sabbath; the Communion.[199] Torrance analysed it as the Kirk being too strong and sufficiently evangelical to satisfy the people, and the presence of a mystical element in Quakerism being at odds with the Scottish mentality.[200]

A more recent study was that of Paul Burton, who also wrote the biographical entry for May Drummond in the *New Biographical Dictionary of Scottish Women*. His sociological study of modern Quakers includes a short history of Quakerism up to the date of publication, but his interest is mainly in the 20th century.[201]

At the time May Drummond began to attend Quaker meetings the clerk of Edinburgh Meeting was William Miller (1655-1743), the head gardener at Holyrood Palace. He was nicknamed the Patriarch by his descendants and was the first of five generations of Millers active in the Quaker Meeting.[202] By the time of his death in 1743 he had a well-established and prosperous business as a nurseryman and seedsman. One report of his death has it that he rented a garden of a few acres 'and selling Ale (call'd the Quakers Ale) acquired a

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[196] John Torrance, 'The Quaker Movement in Scotland', *Records of the Scottish Church History Society* 3, (1929) 31-42.
[197] Presented for his Ph.D at the University of Glasgow, 1937.
[198] Burnet and Marwick, *Quakerism in Scotland,* Epilogue 194-202.
[199] Burnet and Marwick, *Quakerism in Scotland,* Chapter XXIX.
[200] John Torrance, The Quaker Movement, 41-42.
[201] Paul Burton, *A Social History of Quakers in Scotland 1800-2000.*(Lampeter: Edward Melton Press, 2007).
[202] William F. Miller, 'William Miller at the King's Gardens' *JFHS,* 107.

fortune of 5,000L'.[203] It would appear however that it was a son and grandson who were the brewers.[204]

In his will William Miller bequeathed moneys in trust for the maintenance of Edinburgh Meeting House, his sons George, William and Isaac to be trustees. In 1730 a new Meeting House to hold 600 had been built in Peebles Wynd, just off the Cowgate.[205] The minutes of the Quarterly Meeting records that the signatories for the purchase (i.e. the trustees) were, among others, William Miller, Junior and John Miller. [206] It was to this Meeting House that Thomas Story came to preach in 1731.[207] In that year he wrote to his friend Thomas Logan in Pennsylvania that 'Things remain well in Scotland . . .our Meetings being still crouded in Edinburgh.'[208]

In the 1730s it was William Miller's son, also William, (1684-1767) who had taken over the duties of clerk, treasurer and trustee. There were large attendances at the Sunday Meeting for worship including many of other denominations.[209] The minutes of the Quarterly Meeting attended by representatives from Edinburgh, Glasgow, Linlithgow and Kelso regularly recorded that 'For Edinburgh Meeting William Miller Junior gave account that their meetings were peaceable, and they generally in love amongst themselves and under no sufferings on any account.'[210]

Scots brought up in the Church of Scotland appreciated a good sermon and there was at least one eloquent preacher in the movement, Thomas Areskine (or Erskine).[211] He had joined Quakers round about 1717, and become active as a 'Publick Friend' i.e. one who travelled in the ministry. He was a brewer, a Baillie, and was married to a grand-daughter of William Miller, the Patriarch. He had a high profile in Edinburgh. Elizabeth Hudson, a travelling preacher from Philadelphia and her companion arrived in Edinburgh late one Saturday night in August 1749, and unable to find their lodgings, enquired at an inn for

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[203] The Gentleman's Magazine September 1743, 553.
[204] William F. Miller 'William Miller at the King's Gardens, concluded' *JFHS,* Vol. 2 No. 4 (1905) 129.
[205] David Mealand, 'A very brief account of Quakers in Edinburgh from 1653 to 1938' *Sesame* 12th November 2017. This meeting house was demolished in 1789 during the development of the New Town to make way for the South Bridge.
[206] Edinburgh Quarterly Meeting Minute of 6th May1731: NRS CH10/1/1
[207] Emily A. Moore, *Travelling with Thomas Story: The Life and Travels of an Eighteenth-century Quaker,* (Hertfordshire: Letchworth Printers Ltd. 1947) 225.
[208] Norman Penney, 'Logan—Story Correspondence: The Letters' *Bulletin of Friends Historical Association,* Vol.15 No.2 (Autumn 1926) 37.
[209] Edinburgh Quarterly Meeting Minute of 7th Feb. 1733. NRS CH10/1/1, 292.
[210] E.g. Edinburgh Quarterly Meeting Minute of 2nd May 1733 NRS CH10/1/1
[211] William F. Miller 'Thomas Areskine, Brewer, of Edinburgh' *JFHS* Vol. 5 (1909) 30-33

William Miller, whom they knew. No-one there did, but 'He told us he knew Mr Arisekin, the brewer.' Areskine sent his man to rescue the women from the inn, which they realised was in fact a brothel, and escorted them to their lodgings. Hudson recorded that the next day the women had 'two large good satisfactory refreshing meetings, the wings of Sovereign power being spread over that assembly to the melting of many hearts.'[212]

The financial accounts attest to a vigorous meeting. The account book has carefully recorded entries, month after month, from 1730 through to 1752.[213] Income is healthy and the funds were used for grants to indigent Friends, rent for the burying ground, repairs to the meeting house and the many payments for travelling expenses both for members of the meeting, and for visitors to help with onward travel. It is this last purpose which gives us the names of some of the women in the meeting.

I can trace no research into Quaker women in Scotland except for Lilias Skene of Aberdeen and May Drummond herself.[214] There are no membership records for Edinburgh, but there are a few names in the records. There is reference to the wife of William Miller, who preached in the open air with her son beside her for protection.[215] She may have been the Margaret Miller for whom the cost of travel to Montrose was met by the meeting in 1732 noted at £1 5/-.[216] There are several references to unnamed female Friends provided with a horse to travel to Kelso forty or so miles away which would be a stop on the way to England. The recipients for travelling expenses were mostly visiting preachers.

There were many women visitors across the years.[217] For example, in 1732 there was payment for stabling the horses of Hannah Hobson and her companion, and conveying them to Montrose the next day. There was stabling for the horses of Alice Routh and her companion in 1751 and Hannah Broughton and companion in 1764. In 1761 K.Payton and companion stayed for twenty-four nights. Phoebe Douglas was another visitor whose horse was stabled for two nights in May 1752. In 1735 the cost of travel 'to the North' was

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[212] Margaret Hope Bacon, ed. *Wilt Thou Go on my Errand?* 182/3.
[213] Edinburgh Monthly Meeting Minute Book No. 12 NRS CH10/1/2.
[214] Gordon DesBrisay, 'Lilias Skene' *ODNB* (2004).
[215] John Torrance, 'The Quakers Movement.' 86.
[216] Edinburgh Monthly Meeting Minute Book No. 12, NRS CH10/1/2.
[217] All the following information has been taken from Edinburgh Monthly Meeting accounts NRS CH10/1/12.

paid for Yorkshire Women Friends, unnamed. Pennsylvania Friends visited regularly, in 1734, 1744, 1745 (when they stayed eleven days) and 1749.

The names of the women who were members of the meeting are more elusive. As well as Margaret Miller, a Mary Ellerton is named several times. Apart from that there are only references to 'Women Friends.' The only woman named with any frequency is May Drummond, with a horse hired several times to take her to Kelso, and in the later years, a chaise. It is clear that she did not claim these costs in every year of her travels but there were times, as follows, when she did claim.

4th May 1734	charges £1 1/-
19th Aug. 1734	horse hire to Kelso 7s.8d.
13th May 1745	stabling horse 11 nights 10s.2d.
	Shoeing horse 1s.8d.
	Guide to Kelso and horse hire 8s.3d.
19th May 1746	Horse hire to Kelso 11s.2d.
5th May 1749	hire of chaise to Kelso 19s.6d.
9th May 1750	hire of chaise and other charges £2 1s.2d.
4th May 1751	charges 'in this country' £2 1s.2d.
25th July 1752	defraying her costs 'to the North' £2 2s.

Edinburgh Quaker Meeting began to decline in the 1750s. William Miller's carefully written records end in 1752 after which the accounts became less meticulous and are no more than rough notes written in different hands. Minutes of the Monthly Meeting were becoming scrappier and there were none between 1757 and 1764. This may have been because of the age of William Miller: he died in 1761 at the age of 87. An undated note records that Monthly Meetings were not being held because 'of the fewness of Friends.'[218] Meeting for Worship continued, but business was not being attended to in any formal way.

There is evidence of this decline from reports of visiting Friends. Catherine Payton, one of the most active of the travelling women preachers, found in 1752 that it was 'most distressing, a libertine spirit having carried away the youth, and an easy indifferent one prevailing amongst those farther advanced in years.'[219] She found Kelso much diminished and there was no longer a meeting at Linlithgow. Another Friend, Thomas Crewdson of Kendal wrote in 1756 of 'the wide and distant walking of some from the principle they profess'.[220] They found similar problems in the other meetings they visited.

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[218] Edinburgh Monthly Meeting Minute Book No. 13, NRS CH10/1/3
[219] William F. Miller 'Stranger Friends Visiting Scotland 1650-1797 Part IV', *JFHS,* Vol.13 No. 1 (1916) 6.
[220] Ibid. 6

There may have been a number of factors contributing to this decline. Edinburgh Meeting was not immune from a general malaise which was affecting the movement. In his 1859 survey of Quakerism John Stephenson Rowntree counted the numbers of marriages and births and found both to be falling. In the years 1700-1710 there were over 2,221 marriages but by 1810 the numbers had fallen to 955. [221] It was a similar pattern for births. While his numbers will not be totally accurate, owing to patchy records being kept, and refers only to England and Wales, the trend is clear.

Voltaire expressed it succinctly as early as 1733 after visiting England in the 1720s:

> Quakerism . . . . dwindles away daily in England. In all countries where liberty of conscience is allow'd, the establish'd religion will at last swallow up all the rest. …Their children, whom the industry of their parents has enrich'd are desirous of enjoying honours, of wearing buttons and ruffles; and quite ashamed of being call'd Quakers, they become converts to the Church of England, merely to be in the fashion.[222]

A major problem was the emphasis on endogamy. Anyone marrying out would be disowned, and many young people were lost.[223] Rowntree considered it the major cause of the decline in numbers.[224] Those seeking a spouse had a declining number of options, and this would be particularly true in Scotland with its much smaller Quaker population. There was opportunity to travel to other meetings and meet people, but the choice was still restricted. In Kelso for instance, by 1766 all the children of Charles Ormiston, a stalwart of the meeting, had married out, save for one daughter.[225]

At the same time the movement was becoming increasingly strict. Peter Collins has analysed how discipline was increased during the century as practice became increasingly codified and prescribed. The Queries were drawn up by London Yearly Meeting in 1738 as a set of questions for each meeting to ask itself regularly to ensure that they were still worshipping on the right lines and keeping good order within their meeting and in their lives. These were constantly updated. They began to concentrate on right action, with questions of belief

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[221] John Stephenson Rowntree, *Quakerism Past and Present,* 80.
[222] Voltaire, *Letters Concerning the English Nation*, publ. 1733, (Oxford: Oxford University Press 1994 edition), 25.
[223] Robynne R. Healey, 'Quietist Quakerism', 55;
[224] John Stephenson Rowntree, *Quakerism Past and Present*, 153.
[225] William F. Miller, 'Stranger Friends IV' 8.

being downplayed.[226] Richard E. Stagg in his examination of the way these Queries evolved has also noted that there was an increasing tendency to comply in a legalistic sense, in other words, the letter and not the spirit.[227]

The annual Epistles from Yearly Meeting were encouraging Friends to resist the 'allurements and temptations of this evil world' and 'a pursuit of earthly enjoyments.'[228] These included music, novels, theatre and art.[229] Friends were warned about 'the craft and subtilty of designing men, some of whom have published books tending to alienate the minds of men from the true and saving faith.'[230] The warnings went further in 1770 when they were advised against 'long and frequent conversation upon temporal matters.'[231] This of course was at the height of the Enlightenment. The emphasis was no longer on spiritual matters, but impinged on daily life to an extent that must have been difficult to comply with.

The Quakers could see their membership diminishing but seemed at a loss to know what to do about it. In 1740 the Epistle from Yearly Meeting exhorted Friends that they must not assemble 'in a mere formal and customary manner' but to 'wait in silence, with reverence and singleness of heart'.[232] Ten years later they could see

> That manifest lukewarmness and indifferency, which too many under our profession discover by their deportment in our religious assemblies, in a manner void of that gravity, devotion and reverence, which necessarily attend the worshipers of God in spirit and in truth.[233]

Spoken ministry had almost ceased. The early Quakers had no doubt that if they felt the urge to speak in meeting, that urge came from God. But later self-consciousness set in: was the urge from God, or from their own will? There was greater 'hesitancy and anguish.'[234] The Epistles from Yearly Meeting placed greater emphasis on the inwardly dwelling in silence. Self-censorship began to operate.[235] Even those whose purpose in

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[226] Peter Collins, 'Discipline: the codification of Quakerism as orthopraxy, 1650-1738' *History and Anthropology*, 13:2, 86.
[227] Richard E. Stagg, 'Friends' Queries and General Advice: A Survey of their Development in London Yearly Meeting 1682-1860'. *JFHS,* Vol.49 No.4 (1961) 218.
[228] 1740 Epistle, *LYM Epistles I*, 232
[229] John Punshon, *Portrait in Grey, 130.*
[230] 1750 Epistle *LYM Epistles I,* 269.
[231] 1770 Epistle, *LYM Epistles II, 3.*
[232] 1740 Epistle, *LYM Epistles I*, 231
[233] 1750 Epistle, *LYM Epistles I*, 268
[234] Robynne R. Healey, 'Quietist Quakerism', 50.
[235] Rebecca Larson, *Daughters of Light*, 38.

travelling was to preach found themselves inhibited. Elizabeth Hudson who travelled extensively on both sides of the Atlantic found herself on occasions unable to speak because she did not feel guided by the Holy Spirit.[236] Mary Peisley in her tour of Britain in 1749 often failed to speak in meetings in protest against what she saw as the sterility of many meetings.[237]

In Edinburgh there were no longer the rousing public meetings of the early part of the century, no preachers like Thomas Areskine or the Patriarch and his wife who drew crowds to Castlehill in the early days. Thomas Areskine is not mentioned in the minutes after 1750, and appears to have parted from Friends alleging that they had 'lost the kernel of religion and preserving the husks of external plainness'.[238]

May Drummond seems to have been absent from Edinburgh for most of the 1750s. The last payment for her expenses in Edinburgh's account book is in 1752.[239] She appears to have spent most of this decade in Bristol, the meeting there issuing her with Certificates in 1750, 1753 and 1758.[240] This suggests that she was resident there long enough to be considered a member of Bristol Quaker Meeting. The wording on each certificate is the same, that she was 'of a sober and orderly conversation whilst among us and in unity both as a Minister and a Member.'[241]

After 1758 she was spending more time in Edinburgh. She was then in her early sixties. She had a confidant in James Wilson in Kendal and wrote to him in 1758 to tell him she was back in Edinburgh but found the meeting there few in number.[242] A year later she was writing to him again (the spelling is her own):

> I see thou art Surpresed with Our practece of Ceeping the Dors of Meeting houses bard Or Locked in the tem of Worship, indeed I was fare from aproving of that practice when first Our freends in this place Showd a desire to have the company of non but Ourselves in meetings of Worshep, which was Long before Orders was given to the Dorceper to let none but ourselves in. After that order was given I did not see it my place to Contind.[243]

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[236] Margaret Hope Bacon, *Wilt Thou Go on my Errand,* 124.
[237] Rebecca Larson, *Daughters of Light,* 202.
[238] William F. Miller, 'Thomas Areskine, Brewer, of Edinburgh' 33.
[239] Edinburgh Monthly Meeting Minute Book No. 12, 25th of 5th mo. 1752. NRS, CH10/1/2.
[240] Second Day Morning Meeting index.
[241] Second Day Morning Meeting Minute 7th of the 11th mo.1750. LSF.
[242] Letter to James Wilson dated the Junbe 1758, LSF MS 334/1 No. 89.
[243] Letter to James Wilson dated 8th April. 1759. Quoted in William F. Miller, *Episodes II.*

It was always, since the very beginning of the movement, the practice that anyone who wished would be admitted into a meeting for worship; the doors should be barred to none. This was in order to welcome people of like mind, but also was a self-protective measure. If anyone could enter, including anyone in authority, this reduced accusations of plotting sedition.[244] Indeed, Yearly Meeting were encouraging meetings to welcome 'enlightened enquirers'.[245]

She wrote again to James Wilson from Westerhall, near Dumfries in April 1759 where she was staying with friends. When she left Edinburgh a month earlier 'our little meeting there Apeared in a better way.'[246] But she goes on to say that she 'believed it to be my place to Absent myself from them for some time.' Clearly matters by this time were not comfortable for her, but there is no evidence, in view of her regular absences, that she was complicit in the general decline of the meeting.

In 1764 the meeting appeared to rally under the care of the third William Miller (1722-1799), known as William Miller of Craigentinny. He was a grandson of the Patriarch, and was popularly known as the King of the Quakers.[247] An undated note records that though members were few in number Monthly Meetings would be resumed on the First day of every month. The first minute of the new Monthly Meeting records that the Trustees for the meeting house and burying ground were all deceased except for Charles Ormiston of Kelso. The minute also notes that the Queries were no longer being read in the Meetings for Worship because the book could not be found.[248] New trustees were appointed and the clerk obtained a copy of the Queries for the meeting's use. The loss of the book indicates that normal routines had been abandoned.

Subsequent minutes recorded only routine matters until February 1765 when the clash between May Drummond and the elders of the meeting came to a head, thus beginning the process whereby she was eventually disowned.[249]

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[244] John Punshon, *Portrait in Grey,* 64..
[245] 1760 Epistle *LYM Epistles* I, 316.
[246] Letter to James Wilson dated 2nd February 1759 LSF MS 334/1.
[247] William F. Miller, Note, *JFHS,* Vol. 11 No. 4 (1914) 193.
[248] Edinburgh Monthly Meeting Minute Book 13,29th of 7th mo. 1764 NRS10/1/3.
[249] Edinburgh Monthly Meeting Minute Book 13, 3rd of 2nd mo.1765 NRS CH10/1/3.

CHAPTER THREE

Her life in Quakerism

May Drummond was one of many Quaker women who left their homes and families to travel, preaching the Quaker message. This chapter will follow a chronological timeline and will bring out her dedication to the role across four decades, pulling together contemporary newspaper reports, letters and entries in commonplace books, commentaries written in her favour and satires written against her. By examining how the Second Day Morning Meeting dealt with her writing, we can see the control they tried to exercise over Quaker publications, and by defying them she showed the limits of their power. A detailed examination of events shows that her fame was at its zenith in the 1730s and then gradually faded, but she kept on travelling, until age defeated her. It was this, rather than the disownment which silenced her in the end.

The public meeting which brought her to Quakerism was held in the new Meeting House in Peebles Wynd. The visiting speaker was Thomas Story (1670-1742). He was by that time a popular preacher who travelled widely in Pennsylvania and Britain.[250] At an earlier meeting in Edinburgh in 1728 he recorded in his journal that the number of people attending was so great that the two rooms, the stair and the yard outside were crowded and 'not with a rude Rabble as in times past, but an intelligent People who received the Truth with sobriety and Attention.'[251]

It was some years after the 1731 meeting, by which time he knew May Drummond well, that Thomas Story wrote in his journal about their first encounter. He must have thought she brought a large contingent of the Edinburgh elite to hear him speak.

> [S]he and about thirty of her acquaintances being in the Meeting, I happened to speak some things among them; which they took notice of, and thought it was a contrived sermon in our way, so cunning (as they called it) that they could find no fault in it; but were ready to conclude I was a Jesuit, and that I had the sermon written in my pocket; whereas I never prepared anything to say in any Meeting in all my life-time hitherto. From that time this young woman became nearer and nearer to Friends, and came sometimes to our Meetings, till she found strength to own the Truth in a public manner, to the great surprize of her acquaintances, who

[250] Carla Gerona, 'Thomas Story' *ODNB* (2004).
[251] Quoted in Burnet and Marwick, *Quakerism in Scotland,* 152

> are generally of the greater and more polite sort of both sexes, and to the grief and trouble of her relations, who are all against her save only for a younger brother.'[252]

If it was May who made this challenge, and her history suggests that it was the sort of thing she would do, it shows that she already had some knowledge of Quakerism and would know that anyone giving ministry in a meeting spoke under the urgings of the spirit, and not plan it in advance. There would have been no shortage of reading material for her to learn. Pamphlets written by Friends were printed in their thousands for distribution by local meetings and by travelling preachers. It has been estimated that more than 3,700 titles were published by Quakers in the eighteenth century.[253] These would be distributed in Edinburgh. David J. Hall quotes a statement from Christopher Story in 1701 that on passing through Scotland he saw it as a fit opportunity to disperse some books.[254] There was also a decision in 1672 that Friends in Scotland would take four hundred copies of any book published in London and contribute to the printing costs.[255] It is likely that Thomas Erskine in his perambulations round the streets of Edinburgh would be passing out copies of various tracts.

It was not only the Quakers themselves who publicised their views. In 1724 the Caledonian Mercury, published in Edinburgh, devoted some ten pages across three editions to a '*Dialogue between the Clergyman and the Quaker.*'[256] This was a free-ranging discussion covering such topics as the importance of reason, the undesirability of Enthusiasm, and the need for the state to protect itself against 'Heresy, Schism, Prophaness and Irreligion.'[257]

May Drummond told friends that her family were against her involvement with Quakers, but in fact there had been an earlier involvement, albeit on a commercial basis. In 1682 James Drummond, 4th Earl of Perth and his brother John Drummond of Lundin purchased from William Penn part of his land grant in New Jersey, along with three Aberdeenshire Quakers, William Barclay, one of the foremost Quakers of the day, his brother David and his uncle Robert Gordon. Though the Drummond brothers left the development of the land

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[252] Emily E. Moore, *Travelling with Thomas Story: The Life and Travels of an Eighteenth Century Quaker,* (Hertfordshire: Letchworth Printers Ltd. 1947) 249.
[253] David J. Hall, 'Spreading Friends Books for Truth Service: the distribution of Quaker printed literature in the Eighteenth Century', *JFHS*, Vol. 62 No. 1 (2010) 4.
[254] Ibid 5
[255] Ibid 8.
[256] Caledonian Mercury 12th, 13th and 14th April 1724.
[257] Caledonian Mercury 14th April 1724.

to the Barclays their involvement provided trading opportunities for the extended Drummond family including John Drummond of Newton, May's father, and his brother Gavin, or Gawen. [258] John Drummond of Newton acted as one of the agents in Edinburgh who handled applications from tradesmen, craftsmen and others willing to emigrate to New Jersey. [259] Gavin Drummond emigrated to East Jersey. Their brother Robert held an interest in the land, bequeathing it to his son provided his son emigrate, otherwise the shares would revert to Gavin Drummond.[260] Other Quakers were involved with John Drummond of Newton in various ventures in the 1680s, including the Ormiston family of Kelso who feature in the present work.[261]

It may be that this old connection had lapsed, or had been forgotten by the early 1730s, and May's family's attitudes were influenced by those Quakers who were most visible in Edinburgh at the time.

The membership in Edinburgh probably consisted, as it did throughout the country, of small businessmen and artisans. As we have seen there was William Miller, head gardener at Holyrood, and a nurseryman, and his extended family. The most visible was the brewer Thomas Erskine (or Areskine). Typical of his actions was this report which the Drummond family would read in the local newspaper.

> Sunday at Noon, Thomas Erskine, Brewer in Pleasants, and chief Preacher 'mong the People called Quakers, made a religious Peregrination thro' this City: He made his first Station at the Bow-head, where he pronounced Woes and Judgments on the Inhabitants of the Good Town, if they did not speedily repent. Thence he walked to the Cross, where he recapitulated what he had evangelized by the way, and concluded with desiring the Auditory to remember well what he taught them; However, he gave them 40 Days to think on't.[262]

In June he was again in the streets, 'enforcing with a deal of Warmth, That the dreadful Day of the Lord was at hand.'[263] It is not difficult to imagine an ultra-respectable family being appalled that one of their number should be involved in this. It may have been Erskine of whom May Drummond wrote, when in a letter to a cousin she said 'I am

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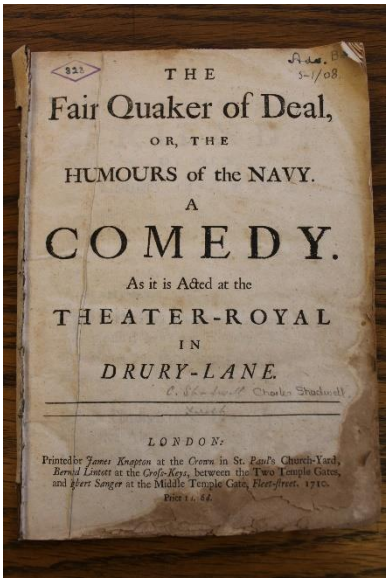
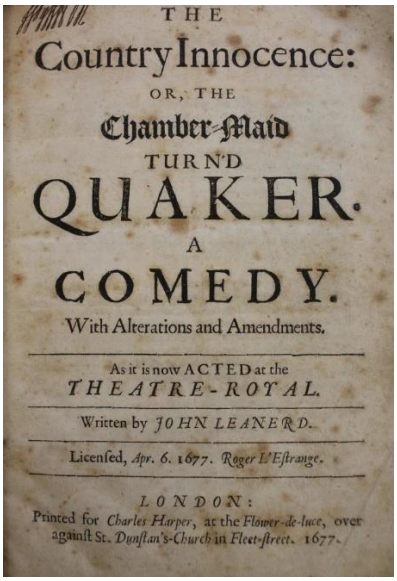
[258] Derrick Johnstone, *Scots Emigrants to East Jersey, 1682-1702: Motivations and Outcomes*, unpublished M.Phil. thesis, (University of Glasgow 2025) 21.
[259] I am obliged to Derrick Johnstone for drawing my attention to this.
[260] Red Book Vol. 3, 860.
[261] Derrick Johnstone, *Scots Emigrants,* 50.
[262] Caledonian Mercury 19th January 1736.
[263] Caledonian Mercury 28th June 1736.

afrayed the imodrat Appearance of sum at Edinburgh professing with us will Sour my near relacions. I regret that but cannot help such things.'[264]

In spite of small numbers the Quakers stood out. They were enjoined to divest themselves of anything vain or needless.[265] As a result they could be distinguished by their simple dress. The men wore black with plain buckles on their shoes. Broad ribbons on the hat and powdering of wigs or their own hair were discouraged.[266] This was not much different from the common dress of business men and 'sober people'.[267] More obvious were the women who wore dark colours and plain styles at a time when the fashions of the day were, in the words of Friends in Yorkshire Women's Yearly Meeting 'burdensome to the honest-hearted.'[268] Westmorland Meeting exhorted Friends to keep their apparel a 'modest colour becoming Truth, not looking after the many changes that are among the world's people, but, having good and serviceable fashions, to keep in them'.[269] They wore their hair plain and instead of elaborate bonnets adopted a close-fitting cap.

Some of the most popular plays of the day included Quaker characters often as a source of comedy.


THE
Fair Quaker of Deal,
OR, THE
HUMOURS of the NAVY.
A
COMEDY.
As it is Acted at the
THEATER-ROYAL
IN
DRURY-LANE.
LONDON:
Printed for James Knapton at the Crown in St. Paul's Church-Yard, Bernard Lintott at the Cross-Keys, between the Two Temple Gates, and Robert Sanger at the Middle Temple Gate, Fleet-street. 1710.


THE
Country Innocence:
OR, THE
Chamber-Maid
TURN'D
QUAKER.
A
COMEDY.
With Alterations and Amendments.
As it is now ACTED at the
THEATRE-ROYAL.
Written by JOHN LEANERD.
Licensed, Apr. 6. 1677. Roger L'Estrange.
LONDON:
Printed for Charles Harper, at the Flower-de-luce, over against St. Dunstan's-Church in Fleet-street. 1677.

[264] Letter to John Drummond dated 24th February 1736. NRS GD24/3/373.
[265] Emma J. Lapsansksy, 'Plainness and Simplicity' in *The Oxford Handbook of Quaker Studies,*(Oxford: Oxford University Press 2013). 335.
[266] William C. Braithwaite, *The Second Period of Quakerism,* (London: Macmillan & Co. 1912) 513.
[267] Joseph Phipps, Observations, quoted as fn. in William C. Braithwaite, *The Second Period of Quakerism,* London, Macmillan & Co. (1912) 516.
[268] Yorkshire Women's Y.M. June 1720, quoted in Braithwaite, *the Second Period of Quakerism,* 511
[269] Westmorland Women's Quarterly Meeting 4th Oct. 1706, quoted in Braithwaite 512.

The women in these plays were invariably stereotyped. Plain dress and an old-fashioned bonnet were sufficient to denote the character.[270] There was no actual theatre in Edinburgh until the Canongate Theatre was built in 1762[271] Before that the poet Allan Ramsay would mount unlicensed performances, or plays could be performed as part of a 'benefit night' within a musical setting. Companies of actors, then as now, would tour the country and they often performed their work at the Taylor's Hall.[272] Failing theatre attendance, the Edinburgh families could purchase copies of plays from Allan Ramsay and other printers for acting out in their own homes.

It is understandable that the family and friends did not take kindly to May Drummond's involvement. She was thirty-five years old and flouting all the conventions of her age and class. Her subsequent behaviour suggests that she revelled in her new role. She was joining a community where women were considered the spiritual equals of men. When she spoke in meeting she was listened to in courteous silence and this would be a heady experience for any woman. The Quakers themselves would welcome her, giving encouragement to the hope that her involvement might attract others.

May Drummond did not come to Quakers in a religious vacuum, but clearly there was something deeply unsatisfying in the message which the church was giving, even tempered by the growing civilising culture of Edinburgh. She would, however, have grown up with stirring stories of the active role of women in the previous century in defending the Covenant. Michelle D. Brock in her survey of these years brings out the intensity of this activity together with the ambivalent attitude of the men towards it.[273] Some of this covenanting activity was within the lifetime of May Drummond's mother, and while, by the time May was growing up, it may not have been mentioned in the pulpit, stories would be passed down through the generations of women. Quakerism too had its memories of courageous and martyred women.

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[270] Erin Bell, 'Stock Characters with Stiff-Brimmed Bonnets: depictions of Quaker Women by Outsiders c.1650-1800', *New Critical Studies on Early Quaker Women, 1650-1800.*ed.. Micheale Lice Tarter and Gill, Catie, Oxford: (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2018). 91.

[271] James Buchan, *Capital of the Mind: How Edinburgh changed the world,* (London: John Murray, 2003) 104

[272] E.g. Advertisement for *the Wonder, A Woman keeps a Secret'* in Caledonian Mercury, 19th March 1734; *Woman is a Riddle*, A comedy in rehearsal by the Edinburgh Company of Comedians. Caledonian Mercury 1st April 1731.

[273] Michelle D. Brock, ' 'She-zealots' and 'Satanesses': Women, Patriarchy and the Covenanting Movement', in *Gender in Scotland 1200-1800: Place, Faith and Politics,* ed. Janay Nugent et al (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press 2024).

After 1689 it appeared that such vigilance in protecting the faith was no longer necessary. Religion became a private matter. W.W.J. Knox's sweeping survey of the Scotswoman across three decades devotes one chapter to religion, covering the period from the Reformation to the present day. [274] He emphasises the 18th century Church's negative attitude to women, and this is what is brought out in other histories of the period. The active, in some cases violent, role of women in the patronage disputes of the 1730s tends to be overlooked.[275] This is touched on by Katherine Glover, who otherwise concentrates on the personal nature of the religious experience of women, in particular the importance of the Church in their social lives.[276] However Sarah Apetrei, speaking of Englishwomen, argues that religion gave women a strong sense of self.[277] Emma Major's research demonstrates that religion as exercised by women was seen as contributing to the national pride and unity, and thus they were held in higher regard.[278] Anne Stott has examined the role of women in the Church of England from 1700, and shown that there was additional scope for them in various dissenting religions.[279] There were fewer opportunities in Scotland: Quakerism was one such.

If, as I have suggested, May Drummond visited London with her brother, she would see these latter attitudes, individuality, patriotism, open-mindedness played out, and this would perhaps explain why she preferred to pursue her preaching career in England rather than in Scotland.

The earliest record of her ministering beyond Edinburgh Meeting was on 27th May 1733 when she preached at a meeting in Devonshire House, London, then the headquarters of the Quaker movement. The sermon was recorded by someone unknown who wrote a summary afterwards in a Commonplace Book.[280] She spoke of 'Envy, Hatred and Malice' and that Quakers who are guilty of these are not true Quakers. It was probably during this

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[274] W.W.J. Knox, *Women and Scottish Society 1700-2000,* (New York: Taylor and Frances Group 2021) 195.

[275] See for instance Henry R. Sefton, 'Presbyterianism' in *Religion,* ed. Colin Maclean and Kenneth Veitch op cit. p.130,, where he mentions women only in the context of witchcraft.

[276] Katharine Glover, *Elite Women* 135.

[277] Sarah Apetrei, *Women, Feminists and Religion in Early Enlightenment England,* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2010) 44.

[278] Emma Major, *Madam Britannia: Women, Church and State 1712-1812*, (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2011).

[279] Anne Stott, 'Women and Religion', in *Women's History, Britain 1700-1850*, Ed. Hannah Barker and Elaine Chalus, New York, Taylor & Francis Group 2005).

[280] *May Drummond's Opinion of Conscience and Account of the Quakers principals, delivered in her Sermon at Devonshire House, the 29th day of the 3rd mo. 1735.* Commonplace Book, LSF MS Vol. S487.

visit to London that a sketch by Jonathan Richardson was done.[281] She was back in Edinburgh by September.

She appears to have had a confrontational nature. We saw how she challenged Thomas Story and now she wrote to John Shaw, who was then the minister of South Leith Parish Church. This letter was dated 25th September 1733.[282] John Shaw had preached a sermon against the Light Within which was the term the Quakers used for the manifestation of Christ within everyone. This was a subject on which there was intense opposition in the Kirk.[283] She writes:

> Thou, confidently, on the 23rd of this Month, denied the Light within, and blamed those who adhered to it. Are not our Bodies said to be Temples for the Holy Ghost to dwell in? yet thou affirmest, where that Spirit is there is no Light.'

She asks him to 'lay aside the Cant which thou has learrn'd to call Divinity.' John Shaw must have talked to others about this letter for it became a matter of gossip. When in 1736 she decided to publish it along with her other writings she added a postscript part of which read

> A Report being spread over the Town, that the Contents of this Letter were so ridiculous it was not worth the Receiver's while to give an Answer, made me resolve to print it, more in Regard to Truth than false Censure.[284]

In February 1734 she read a paper to the Quarterly Meeting, entitled *Internal Revelation the Source of Saving Knowledge.* It began with an attack on others:

> I find it upon my mind, before the Lord; to mention the error of most of those people who seriously profess Christianity and are blindly led into it by their Teachers. It is denying the Appearance of Christ within, or the LIGHT, which he calls himself.[285]

The purpose of the Epistle, she wrote, is that out of love of mankind and regret for their unhappy error she would have it sent to all professors of divinity to warn them against 'teaching for Doctrine the Commands of Men.'[286] She goes on to attack that most

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[281] British Museum Drawing No. 1886/0111.24; www.britishmuseum.org,uk. See Appendix A for a discussion of this sketch.

[282] May Drummond, *Letter to One John Shaw, Minister at South Leith*, Published later with *Internal Revelation the Source of Saving Knowledge*. (London: Jonathan Nelson, 1836), 18

[283] R. Scott Spurlock, *Cromwell and Scotland: Conquest and Religion 1650-1660,* (Edinburgh: John Donald 2007) 257.

[284] May Drummond, *Letter to John Shaw,* 19

[285] May Drummond, *Internal Revelation the Source of Saving Knowledge*. (London: Jonathan Nelson 1836) 9. The paper itself is dated 28th of 11th mo. 1732-3 i.e. January 1733 which suggests she had been working on it for some time or may be a mistake.

[286] May Drummond, *Internal Revelation* 13.

fundamental ritual of all the Christian churches, baptism. She writes that until recently she was a member of the Church of Scotland but had given up their society and ceremonies. She had expected that someone would approach her to ask her reasons and to discuss the matter but no-one did. She issues a challenge. In Charity (her words) she assumes they have reason for this but promised that she would not refuse to attend their Assembly, Synod or Presbytery if called on to do so.[287] It seems this was ignored.

The Quarterly Meeting agreed this paper should be sent to the Second Day Morning Meeting in London 'for their examination and approbation to be printed, as also some have agreed that her letter to John Shaw be sent with it.'[288] Charles Ormiston of Kelso Meeting duly sent it to London. Control, some might call it censorship, of everything published in the name of Quakers was in the hands of three bodies, Yearly Meeting, the Second Day Morning Meeting, and Meeting for Sufferings.[289] Their purpose was to defend the integrity and existence of the movement and to answer hostile publications.[290] The members were all men, and it was becoming increasingly difficult for women to publish.[291]

When they received it the Second Day Morning Meeting in London appointed six of their number to read it and report back.[292] Two weeks later they reported that they had read the manuscript and were arranging for it to be copied and available for correction. The Friends appointed had to be reminded several times, but they eventually brought back the manuscript.[293] There is no record of what corrections were made. It was agreed that the corrected manuscript would be returned to Edinburgh with the recommendation that 'the Friends there may do therewith as they think fit.' As the letter to John Shaw had already been sent, it could not now be corrected, and their instruction was that it was not to be published.

Nothing more was done with this. By this time (early 1735) May Drummond would have had a great deal of contact with other Quaker women in London and also with those

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[287] May Drummond, *Internal Revelation* 15.
[288] Quarterly Meeting Minute 7th Day of 12th mo. 1733. NRS CH10/1/1
[289] Betty Hagglund, 'Quakers and Print Culture', in *The Oxford Handbook of Quaker Studies,* Ed Stephen W Angell and Ben Pink Dandelion, (Oxford: Oxford University Press 2013), 483.
[290] David J. Hall, "The fiery trial of their infallible examination": self-control in the regulation of Quaker publishing in England from the 1670s to the mid 19th century in *Censorship and the control of print in England and France 1600-1910,* ed. Robert Myers and Mihael Harris, (Winchester: St. Paul Bibliographies, 1992) 60.
[291] Trevett, Christine, "Not Fit to be Printed", 120.
[292] Second Day Morning Meeting minute 15th April 1734. LSF Vol. 14, 409.
[293] SDM minute 20th May 1734 LSF Vol. 14

visiting Edinburgh. These may have inspired her to launch herself as a 'Public Friend', i.e. one with authority to travel and speak at public meetings. To this end Edinburgh Meeting granted her a Certificate to travel in the ministry on 24th April 1735.[294]

Pamela Perkins has observed that in 18th century society it was understood that men travelled to gain knowledge and experience, women travelled for pleasure.[295] It is likely that May Drummond and her sisters had already experienced something of this travelling to visit fashionable beauty spots. A preaching tour lasting months would not be so leisurely. The way of life of these amazing women and its hazards has been well-researched by Rebecca Larsen and we have the first-hand accounts of many of the women themselves.[296] May Drummond did not have the hazards of crocodiles and swamps but travelling in 18th century England was not comfortable. She mostly travelled on horseback, as evidenced by the payments made by Edinburgh Meeting for the provision of a horse.

It is probable that her first venture into England as a 'Public Friend' was at Chester under the mentorship of Thomas Story. His journal records the events of the Yearly Meeting early in 1735 for Cheshire, Lancashire, Westmorland and Cumberland. He wrote that their public meetings

> Were exceedingly large, consisting of some thousands; for the Quarter Sessions of the Peace happening at the same time, all or most of the bench of Justices came, and many of the women, under the distinction of Ladies.[297]

At the end of the week, when the official Yearly Meeting was over, and most of the other Quaker preachers had left, Thomas Story, Joshua Toft and May Drummond stayed on to address 'a great multitude 'to the honour of the Lord, satisfaction of His people, and general satisfaction of the auditory.'[298]

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[294] Recorded in the index of the SDM minutes book, 30. According to the same record she was subsequently issued with certificates to travel by Edinburgh Meeting in 1737, 1742, and 1746.

[295] Perkins, Pamela, 'Tourist Sites and travellers: Women and late 18th century Scottish Tourism' in *Women in eighteenth-century Scotland: intimate, intellectual and public lives.* Eds. Katie Barclay and Deborah Simonton, (Surrey: Ashgate Publishing Limited 2013) 154.

[296] Larson, Rebecca, *Daughters of Light,* op cit.;. Margaret Hope Bacon, ed. *Wilt Thou Go on my Errand?* Op cit.

[297] Thomas Story, quoted in Emily E. Moore, *Travelling with Thomas Story,* 248.

[298] Ibid 249. It is at this point in Journal he describes his first meeting with her some years earlier.

The major event which drew her to public attention was an audience with Queen Caroline, the wife of King George II, in July 1735. It was a larger gathering than later newspaper reports would suggest. She reported this to William Miller in Edinburgh.

> I have been with the Queen at her desire; I got as kind a reception & in as affable a manner as thy Wife could have given me. I was in her dressing Room one hour, one quarter, and two Minutes, nobody being present but the Dutchess of Dorset, the two eldest Princesses, her Dresser and Pitt, Thomas Jackson & his wife, other two Ladies and myself. The Door was shut. We had a very solemn time, and in no place I was ever in had I more freedom to declare the Eternal Truth. The Queen was tendered to a great degree, & expressed her satisfaction to us & afterwards to others.[299]

This meeting made her famous. Thomas Chalkley, a prominent Quaker, in his Journal for the year 1735 wrote

> While I was in and about London, I was at eighteen meetings in that great City, at two of which I was with May Drummond, a virtuous young woman, who hath a good Gift in the Ministry, and had a gracious Opportunity of declaring her Convincement to our noble Queen Caroline (our great King George's royal Consort). The kind Treatment, and good Reception, she had with the Queen, spread so in City and Country, that many Thousands flocked to hear her.[300]

Reports began to appear in the newspapers. The first mention which I have been able to trace was dated 3rd July 1735, the tone of which suggested she was already becoming known.

> Yesterday the hon. Mrs. Gordon, a Scottish lady, said to be related to the earl of Perth, &c. having lately embraced the tenets held by the Quakers, preached at the Bull and Mouth meeting-house near Aldergate, where several ladies of quality, Sir John Gordon &c. were present to hear her; she is reckoned one of the best preachers of the sect.

And then there is added a correction

> D.A.– The name of this lady, as my brother dignifies her, is Drummond; who preached at Croydon on Sunday, where she was that whole day, and the next.[301]

On 4th July 1735 the London Daily Post reported that

> Mrs Jemima Patten, a famous Preacher among the Quakers in the North of England, hath been sent for from her Habitation in Yorkshire, to vie with the

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[299] William F. Miller, *Episodes* (Part I) 58. Andrew Pitt was an eminent Quaker. It was he who talked to Voltaire on the latter's visit to England. See Voltaire, *Letters Concerning the English Nation*, publ. 1733, (Oxford: Oxford University Press 1994 edition), 175, endnote 9.

[300] The Journal of Thomas Chalkley (1870). Harvard University Collection, www.archive.org. p.350.

[301] Grub Street Journal 3rd July 1735.

> celebrated Mrs Drummond, a Scotch Lady, who hath had the Honour to preach before the Queen, and is in great Reputation with the Quakers.[302]

This report was included in Wye's letter to the provincial newspapers but was enlarged somewhat in the telling.[303] His letter was used by the Caledonian Mercury which was printed in Edinburgh. It now read:

> Her Majesty has been pleased to order Mrs Jemina Patten, a noted Teacher among the Quakers in the North of England, to be sent for, as a Competitor with the famous Mrs Drummond, who held forth last Week at the Palace of Kensington with great Applause. The Court was greatly amused with her Performance, and expect more Entertainment when Mrs Patten comes up.[304]

I have been unable to trace a Jemima Patten and there is no record of such a meeting taking place. It may well have been an invention of a newspaper to titillate readers with the idea of two women doing battle. Rumour did not stop there. The next reference is on 10th July 1735.

> We hear that the famous preaching Maiden Quaker, lately arrived from Scotland, intends to challenge that great Champion of England, Orator Henley, to dispute with him at the Bull and Mouth upon the Principles and Doctrines of Quakerism at such Time as he shall appoint.[305]

Orator John Henley was a Church of England minister, who, thwarted of promotion, started his own church, the Oratory. Here he preached increasingly contentious sermons with 'peculiar elocution and exaggerated bodily and facial gesture.'[306] He was hardly ever out of the newspapers and was the regular focus for challenges from other preachers. It would be true to her character to challenge him. A woman who could challenge the Kirk would have no fear of an English clergyman. If indeed she did challenge him, it was never taken up.

That she was becoming popular is borne out by newspapers reports, even allowing for a bit of journalistic exaggeration.

> On Sunday last the famous Mrs Drummond preach'd at the Quaker's Meeting at Hertford, and on Thursday at Tottenham High Cross, at both which Places there was a vast Concourse of People of all Denominations; and wherever she preaches, there's such Crowds of People to hear her, as is almost incredible.[307]

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[302] London Daily Post and General Advertiser 4th July 1735.
[303] John Wye was one of several journalists in London who regularly sent out a summary of the news, both domestic and foreign to the provincial newspapers.
[304] Caledonian Mercury, Edinburgh, 8th July 1735.
[305] Daily Mercury, London 10th July 1735, 3.
[306] Graham Midgley, 'John Henley (known as Orator Henley)' *ODNB* (2004).
[307] Read's Weekly Journal or British Gazetteer, 2nd August 1735.

And again:

> Yesterday, the famous Mrs Drummond, preach'd at the Bull and Mouth Meeting House, before a great Number of People; and what was very particular, her Discourse was on Enthusiasm, which (to be fare) gave the Auditors great Satisfaction.[308]

In August she preached at two Quaker weddings.[309] At this time she was staying at Bush-hill, in north London, the home of Thomas Jackson and his wife. Thomas Jackson was a friend of Thomas Story.[310] Story stayed at Bush-hill at approximately the same time as May Drummond but it is not clear that their visits overlapped though he was certainly in London across the winter of 1735/6.[311] It was from there that he wrote to his close friend James Logan in Philadelphia. In a letter dated 20th February 1736 he first mentions May Drummond, describing her as 'of good capacity, a chearfull, affable deportment and ready wit.' In a later paragraph in the same letter he writes

> I have had some considerable enemies here, & by their means, some elsewhere, for their Envy has boyled very high, & even over, but as it is altogether unjust & without any real cause on my part, they have not succeeded in their attempts.[312]

When the Logan-Story correspondence was first published in 1851 the references to May Drummond and to Story's enemies in this letter were omitted.[313] The editor at the time may have thought this necessary to protect Story's reputation. During these years, 1733/36, he refers to May Drummond more often in his journal than to any other woman. We could speculate that he displayed obvious affection for her and this prompted gossip. He had been a widower for many years, and women found him attractive.[314] At least once before he was accused of impropriety with women.[315]

Although it was standard practice for a new preacher to travel with one more experienced it was the rule that a woman would travel with a woman, a man with a man. Only one of the same gender could be recognised as an official companion (and. have their expenses paid also), and the women could be assumed to be in spiritual sympathy with one another

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[308] Daily Post and General Advertiser, 7th August 1735.
[309] Grub Street Journal, 14th August 1735; General Evening Post, 21st August 1735.
[310] Emily A. Moore, *Travelling with Thomas Story* 260.
[311] Ibid 258.
[312] Norman Penney, 'Logan—Story Correspondence: The Letters' *Bulletin of Friends Historical Association,* Vol.15 No.2 (Autumn 1926) 53,54.
[313] Norman Penney, 'Logan-Story Correspondence, 51.
[314] Emily E. Moore, *Travelling with Thomas Story*.138.
[315] Ibid. 223/4.

and be able to uphold each other in spiritual as well as practical difficulties.[316] The journals of the travelling women form a record of a community within a community. The women were known to one another, and their steps often crossed. They shared hardships and formed a supportive network.

May Drummond seems to have travelled without a female companion. She stands out as singular in this regard. Nowhere in any of the reports do we see mention of one. Sometimes there would be an escort, or a groom. Whitby Meeting for instance recorded several payments for '2 guides & thear horses that came with May Druman.'[317] She may have decided on her travelling itinerary by choosing meetings to which she knew other Friends would be travelling. There is a record of a letter she wrote to Joseph Toft inviting him to accompany her on a preaching tour in Kent.[318] This suggests she may have been in the habit of linking up with others. We might suspect there was a person in the background who has disappeared from the record, except we have her own words which go some way to explaining why she travelled alone. In 1736 she wrote to Fanny Henshaw.[319]

> Be warn'd of one danger I beg thee, and that is; too much expectation of spiritual pleasure or fellowship with the members of that society which the principle itself joins us to – Israel must dwell alone.

Fanny must have named someone she confided in, for May goes on

> The Woman thou mentions to me I know not, nor have I any one for a companion in the manner thou speaks of. And from my knowledge of the advantages which I have had from abstracting myself from all mankind, I warn thee.

And after some words of spiritual encouragement she ends with 'I earnestly pray thou may be kept from confiding in any one, or making any one thy pattern, chuse for thy confidant the voice of Truth with thy own soul.'

While she was staying at Bush-hill with the Jacksons she wrote the tract *An Epistle to such as seriously profess Christianity* (The Bush-hill letter). It was dated 2nd August 1735. She attacks those who profess to be Christian but have not received true revelation: the use of

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316 Rebecca Larson, *Daughters of Light,* 120.
317 William F. Miller, 'Episodes II' 113.
318 William F. Miller, Episodes I, 59.
319 Letter to Francis Henshaw dated Bristol 11th Sept. 1736 quoted in *The Large and Small Notebooks of Joseph Wood, a Yorkshire Quaker 1750-1821,* transcribed by Pamela Cooksey, High Flats Quaker Meeting 2011, 9.11

reason is not enough.[320] It was now that she submitted three documents to the Second Day Morning Meeting with a request for permission to publish.[321] These were the letter to John Shaw (again), another entitled *An Epistle to the People of Scotland*, clearly an older document as it was dated 28th February 1733. The third document was the Bush-hill letter. There is no record of either of these two last documents being placed before Edinburgh Meeting for approval, which would have been the correct practice.

The Second Day Morning Meeting clearly had some difficulty with these and it was not until 31st January 1736 that they asked Thomas Story to communicate with her to see if she would 'acquiesce with them.' [322] They must have felt he had some influence. No further details are given but in February 1736 they recorded they were in difficulty with the Bush-hill letter and could not allow it to be printed as it stood, and that being the case May Drummond had withdrawn it.[323] This was the last of the matter as far as the Second Day Morning Meeting were concerned.

By September she was in Bristol with Thomas Story, Andrew Pitt and Samuel Brownas. Thomas Story noted in his Journal that at the regular Sunday morning meeting she was not present being 'not well in health' but that by the afternoon she had recovered sufficiently to be present when a larger public meeting was held at which she spoke and 'had a clear testimony for Truth.'[324]

The newspapers reported this meeting but failed to mention the other speakers.

> The Hon. Mrs Drummond, so much fam'd for her Rhetorick among the Quakers, held forth last Sunday and Tuesday se'nnight, at the Fryery Meeting in this City [Bristol], to a crowded Audience, among whom were several of the Nobility from the Hot Well; who for her peculiar Manner of Expression and good Sense, allow'd her to exceed all the Women Teachers of that Sect.[325]

And again

> The Hon. Mrs Mary [sic] Drummond's several Discourses in the Quaker Meeting, have been so much talked of, that great Numbers of different Persuasions continue

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[320] May Drummond, *Internal Revelation the Source of Saving Knowledge*: the Bush-hill Letter, 21.
[321] SDM minute 25th August 1735 LSF Vol. 14.
[322] SDM minute 31st January 1736. LSF Vol. 14.
[323] Do. 23rd February 1736. LSF Vol. 14
[324] Emily E. Moore, *Travelling with Thomas Story,* 259
[325] General Evening Post, 20th September 1735.

> their Curiosity to hear her. The Throngs have been so great, that several Supporters have been added to the Gallery, to prevent any Accident by its falling.
> On Monday there was a particular Meeting for the young Ladies only, when she exhorted them in such an affectionate and moving Manner, as drew Tears from the general Part of her tender Communicants; and herself was so struck with the Effect her Exhortation had over them, that she wept during most of the Time it held.[326]

Reports of that meeting must have spread, probably by letter from her listeners to their friends, because now we begin to find evidence that she was attracting admiration from women. One such young woman was Fanny Henshaw (1714-1793). Fanny Henshaw was struggling with her spirituality and particularly a feeling that God was calling her to serve Him. She seems to have focussed most of her longing on May Drummond. She says in one letter to a friend 'Her character charms my very soul, tho' I never had the happiness of seeing her person.'[327] Fanny tried to enter into a correspondence with her but possibly with limited success, as it was known that her family opened all her letters.[328] They did eventually make contact. One of May Drummond's letters to her has already been quoted.[329]

Another young woman had a poem published in December 1735 *On the noted and celebrated Quaker Mrs Drummond, By a young lady.*[330] This includes the verse

> Too long indeed our sex has been deny'd;
> And ridicul'd by men's malignant pride;
> Who fearful of a just return forbore
> And made it criminal to teach us more.
> . . . Redeem the coming age, and set us free
> From the false brand of Incapacity.[331]

The author is using as her inspiration a 1722 poem written by Elizabeth Thomas *To Almystres, on her Divine Works* addressed to the pioneer feminist Mary Astell.[332] Astell (1666-1731) published several works advocating education for women and more equal relationships within marriage.[333] Had May Drummond read Mary Astell? It is more than likely. These books went through several editions and if she did not find them in Edinburgh

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[326] Ipswich Journal 4th October 1735.
[327] Stephen Hobhouse, 'New Light on Fanny Henshaw's Convincement', *JFHS,* Vol. 29 (1932) 76, 79.
[328] Stephen Hobhouse, 'New Light on Fanny Henshaw's Convincement,' 82.
[329] Letter to Francis Henshaw dated Bristol 11th Sept. 1736 quoted in T*he Large and Small Notebooks of Joseph Wood* 9.11.
[330] *The Gentleman's Magazine,* September 1735*,* 555
[331] See Appendix B for the full text.
[332] Rebecca Larsen, *Daughters of Light*, 246
[333] Ruth Perry, 'Mary Astell' *ODNB* (2004).

they would be readily available in London. The woman who wrote the poem clearly knew the work of Mary Astell and was able to see May Drummond in the same light. It is possible that many women throughout the country reading the poem would have picked up the implicit reference to Mary Astell and even if they had never heard May Drummond speak, would have seen her as an example of a single woman of purpose and independence.

May Drummond's appeal was most likely to young women in families of the middling and upper sort who would have some education and access to ideas through books. If they were single either through circumstances or choice, their lives would be restricted, especially if they did not have some financial independence. Literature spelled out for such women a melancholy life of 'blasted hopes and emotional failure'[334] Old maids were the butt of jokes and satire. In the work *the Female Speaker* (see below) there is scorn for 'fifty Virgins all antique and old.' [335]

It is impossible to know how much of May Drummond's preaching conveyed what would today be regarded as feminist thinking. For all her freedom, and a public platform, there is no evidence that she ever pressed for rights in any sphere other than the religious. Phyllis Mack has pointed out that this freedom was still subservience to a greater authority i.e. the call from God.[336] One woman who would recognise this and agree was Fanny Henshaw, to whom there could be no greater calling. Fanny had declared her intention 'to live single.'[337] She wrote a poem in praise of May Drummond, the 'virtuous maid' whom she revered 'Who in obedience to thy Saviour's call, Thy country has forsook and kindred all.'[338]

May Drummond's name turns up again in poetry in 1736 in *Verses on several of the Quaker Teachers.*

> But see where gentle *Drummond* next appears

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[334] Amanda Vickery 'No happy ending? At Home with Miss Bates in Georgian England' *Persuasions: The Jane Austen Journal,* Vol. 27 (August 2015) 134.

[335] Anon. *The Female Speaker, or the Priests in the Wrong, being an Epistle from the celebrated Mrs. D—mm—d to Dr. St—b—g and Mr. F---st-r Occasioned by their dispute on the subject of Heresy.* London (1735) 18..

[336] Phyllis Mack, 'Religion, Feminism, and the Problem of Agency: Reflections on Eighteenth-Century Quakerism' *Signs: Journal of Women in Culture and Society* 2003 Vol.29 No. 1, 157.

[337] Stephen Hobhouse, 'New Light on Fanny Henshaw's Convincement' 77.

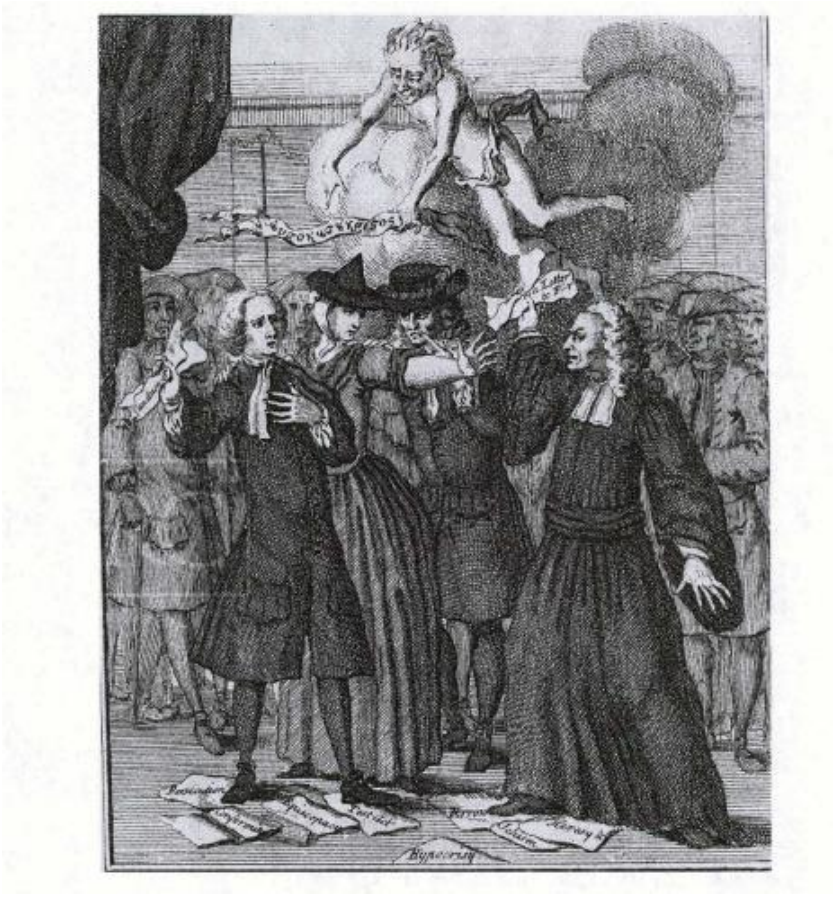
[338] Stephen Hobhouse, 'New Light,' 79. See Appendix B for the poem.

With sense and judgment far above her years.
From noble Caledonian blood she sprung;
And soft persuasion tipt her easy tongue![339]

Alexander Pope is believed to be referring to her when he writes

Let modest Foster, if he will, excel
Ten metropolitans in preaching well;
A simple Quaker, or a Quaker's wife
Outdo Landaff in doctrine – yea, in life.[340]

However, along with the plaudits came the satire. In 1735 a pamphlet uses her name and beliefs as a vehicle to ridicule churchmen.[341] Matthew Reilly in his study of all the publications surrounding May Drummond, suggests this was by Richard Savage, well known for his vicious satires.[342]



Frontispiece of *The Female Speaker, or the Priests in the Wrong, being an Epistle from the celebrated Mrs. D—mm—d to Dr. St—b—g and Mr. F---st-r Occasioned by their dispute on the subject of Heresy.*

[339] For the full text see Appendix B.
[340] Alexander Pope, *Epilogue to the Satires in Two Dialogues* (1738*).*
[341] *The Female Speaker,*. For a flavour of the text see Appendix B.
[342] Matthew Reilly, 'The Life and Literary Fictions of May Drummond', *Eighteenth Century Fiction,* Vol.28, No. 2 (Winter 2015-16) fn 299, 300..

The pointed hat was a familiar trope equating Quaker women without much subtlety to witches. Another was the man whispering in her ear, implying that she was only a mouthpiece. She is holding out a warning hand on a rather plump arm to keep apart two quarrelling ministers. The man on the right is Dr. Stubbing of the Church of England, and the one on the left Mr Foster, a Baptist preacher. Trampled underfoot are papers with headings including on Heresy, Persecution, Episcopalianism, Test Act, Hypocrisy. Their argument is about heresy.

The character May Drummond asks

> What is heresy? – we still may ask
> How to resolve, how arduous is the Task.[343]

She goes on to say

> Then by the Light within let it be try'd
> The Light within the best and surest Guide. [344]

Quakers do not entirely escape criticism in the poem, which also mocks women's belief that talking will solve any problem, but this is gentle compared with the vicious comments on various churchmen who are accused of increasingly lewd conduct. These are identified by their initials and, presumably were well enough known to be recognisable to readers of the time. Orator Henley also features.

We can pick up her movements in the following year, 1736, from newspaper reports. In April she delivered a eulogy at the funeral of Andrew Pitt.[345] In May she was one of a group of Quaker women in the gallery of the House of Commons listening to the debate on the Quaker Tithe Bill which was going through the House.[346]

The Bill stirred up considerable controversy, as it was seen as undermining the authority of the church, and as government interference in church affairs. The gist of the bill was to remove from the ecclesiastical courts the enforcement of the collection of tithes. There was the fear that when Quakers refused to pay, local churches would have the vexatious business of innumerable applications every year to the local magistrate courts. In the event

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[343] Anon. *The Female Speaker* 18
[344] Ibid 19.
[345] London Daily Post and General Advertiser, 22nd April 1736.
[346] Daily Journal, 13th April 1736; London Daily Post and General Advertiser 14th May 1736.

the Bill was passed by the Commons but fell when it was voted down by the Bishops in the House of Lords. In fact, we can see from the Epistles from Yearly Meeting that many Quakers were quietly paying the tithes although exhorted to suffer loss and suffering rather than do so.[347]

She was staying again with the Jacksons at Bush-hill and from there travelled in May to Hertford, Cambridge and Norfolk. In June she was in Norwich and spoke in the Meeting House in Gildencroft and then in the Meeting House in Goat Lane 'to numerous audiences of all Denomination, who were greatly pleased with her Performance.' [348] She then travelled on to Northampton.[349]

It was now in 1736 while staying in London that she defied the Second Day Morning Meeting and published her writings. She no doubt had the resources to pay for this herself. She must have abandoned *An Epistle to the People of Scotland,* which was not heard of again, possibly because she saw no point in publishing it in England, but she went ahead and published the other three, the Internal Revelation paper, the letter to John Shaw with the Postscript in full, and the Bush-hill letter, all under the umbrella title of *Internal Revelation the Source of Saving Knowledge*: *Candidly Recommended in Several Epistles,* the whole running to twenty seven pages.[350] This was in clear defiance, not only of the Second Day Morning Meeting but of any opinion which Edinburgh meeting might have in the matter.

After June there are no more reports of her for 1736 in the newspapers. She probably returned to Edinburgh as her mother died in that year.[351] She resumed travelling in 1737. A sermon she preached at the Salisbury Meeting House on 16th July 1737 provoked a correspondence in the Salisbury Journal.[352] An anonymous letter writer attacked her for her 'weak and inconclusive reasoning.'[353] More correspondence ensued. May Drummond wrote to the editor who apparently refused to publish her letter, in which she accuses the

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[347] E.g. 1730 Epistle, *YM Epistles I,* 187, and 1740 Epistle, *YM Epistles I,* 230.
[348] London Daily Post and General Advertiser 8th June 1736.
[349] Daily Gazetteer 17th June 1736.
[350] May Drummond, *Internal Revelation the Source of Saving Knowledge*: *Candidly Recommended in Several Epistles,* (London: Jonathan Nelson1736. HardPress Reprint.2019)
[351] Gill Skidmore, 'May Drummond' ODNB (2004). Alexander Murdoch, 'George Drummond', ODNB (2004)
[352] *Letters published in the Salisbury Journal* July and August 1737. (J. Smith, London) Vol.223/1/34667. LSF.
[353] *Salisbury Letters 11.*

first letter writer of having 'no Pretension to any Degree of good Manners' and being a 'Pretender to Wisdom or Philosophy.'[354] This entire correspondence together with one more letter by May Drummond reiterating her arguments was published in one pamphlet. Who was responsible for this is not known. There is no publisher named in the document and it is not clear whether it was the Salisbury Journal or some other printer. It may have been May Drummond herself who organised and paid for the publication.

In April 1738 she travelled to Ireland where she stayed about seven weeks, preaching at a number of meetings, the largest at Cork. She then went on to Limerick.[355] She spoke at a funeral, and subsequently attempted to do so at a wedding but the crowds were too great for her to be heard. She went on to Waterford. In Dublin she preached at the Meeting House in Meath Street and in the afternoon at Sycamore Alley 'to a very numerous Audience.'[356]

This visit to Ireland gave rise to another attack and defence. Oswald Edwards was a Baptist minister in Ireland known for his 'foul language' to the extent that he so reduced a major Dublin congregation that 'one pew could hold his congregation.'[357] He published an attack on May Drummond, and this prompted a pamphlet by another of her admirers.

> From Scotland a female of excellent Parts
> (Tho' unskill'd in Scholastical Logical Arts)
> Came hither to preach – but to preach without Hire
> This kindled Episcopal Anger and Fire,
> And rais'd a contention all over the Nation
> Concerning her skill in *Divine Revelation*.
> Multitudes crowded to hear her display
> Her thoughts on Religion her Language and way
> Of directing the wild Apprehensions of Men
> Where to find and possess the Philosopher's Stone
> ……..Without the assistance of Logical rules,
> Of Methods invented to wrangle in Schools..[358]

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[354] Ibid 12.
[355] Abraham Abell 'Friends travelling in Ireland' *JFHS,* Vol.10 No. 4 (1913) 239.
[356] Common Sense or The Englishman's Journal, 9th September 1738.
[357] Crawford Gribben, ' "Inexpressible horror": The Devil and Baptist Life Writing in Cromwellian Ireland', Church *History*, 89, (2020) 547.
[358] Anon. *A Letter from a Young Lawer to a Scholar in Trinity College; Or, Some Remarks on Mr Oswald Edward's jibing LETTER to Mrs May Drummond, the Famous QUAKER Preacher from Edinburgh.* (Dublin 1738). LSF SR 092.4 DRU/2438. See Appendix B. I have been unable to trace a copy of the original attack despite a search in the British Library.

She probably returned to Edinburgh for the winter, as she is recorded in January 1739 addressing the Meeting there.[359] Her travels began again in the summer of that year when she was once more in Ripon preaching at a public inn.[360] She then went on to Nottingham and in Derby where her audiences were as large and enthusiastic as ever.[361] In September she was in Gloucester at the Annual Circular Meeting of Quakers where she addressed them in exhortatory discourse. The newspaper reports tell of people of other denominations attending to hear her speak.[362] One report also notes that there was 'peaceable and orderly Behaviour … gratefully acknowledged by the several Speakers.'

There are signs that by this time she was becoming reconciled with her family, at least her brother George Drummond. A major project of his in those years was the building of a new Royal Infirmary for Edinburgh. Intensive fundraising had begun. In 1736 it was granted a royal charter and the building designed by Thomas Adam was opened in 1741.

May Drummond entered enthusiastically into the work of fundraising. The Caledonian Mercury carried a long report in October 1739 which must surely have pleased her family.

> Among many Instruments rais'd up by Providence for forwarding the ROYAL INFIRMARY of Edinburgh, the celebrated Miss May Drummond is among the most eminent. Having seen advancing, while she was here last Spring, this Work, which, when brought to Perfection, affords the delightful Prospect of 1000 distressed Poor being annually subsisted and finding Relief in it; as this could not fail to engage a Soul possest of the tenderest Sympathy for her Fellow Creature, she readily enlisted herself among its Promotors. And that no Time might be lost, on her Way to London she recommended a Collection for it in every Place she visited: Of which the Managers are made to hope they'll find the good Effects this Winter. One of her Friends at Newcastle, a Lady of distinguished Merit, has sent the Managers a Present of as much Window Glass as glaze all the building that's yet founded.[363]

The article goes on to list all the guineas which have been donated by individuals. She must have confidently pleaded the cause everywhere she went and clearly from the donations we can see that she travelled even more widely than the newspaper reports would suggest. A board in the entrance hall of the old Infirmary recorded the donations

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[359] London Daily Post 30th Jan. 1739.
[360] London Daily Post 23rd June 1739.
[361] London and County Journal, Tuesday edition 1739. (no date)
[362] Universal Weekly Journal 8th September 1739.
[363] Caledonian Mercury 16th October 1739.

which were made from the funds of various meetings. This listed a total of £372. 7s. 8d.[364] Not everything was listed; the Quarterly Meeting, Durham for instance, gave Twenty pounds, not noted on the board.[365] She kept a meticulous note of the names of individuals and amounts, and supplied these lists to the newspapers. One such list totals Seventy nine guineas, and another Fifty one pounds.[366] Only the names of the individuals are given so we cannot trace which meeting each came from.

This was a remarkable feat of fundraising by one woman. In a later generation the women of Edinburgh would have combined together to form an association for the purpose, but at this time there was no such avenue open to them. Jane Rendall's work has shown how excluded women were from associating before the last decades of the century.[367] No doubt the women of Edinburgh raised funds for the hospital from correspondents outwith the capital. May Drummond however extended her net over a wide area, using only her persuasive tongue to raise funds, much of it from people who were strangers to her and may not have had any connection with Edinburgh.

In 1740 she was again in London. In April she wrote to Joshua Toft in Harrogate suggesting that the two of them travel into Kent where there were few Quakers. She describes herself as wishing for 'Instrumental help on that Jurney, and none would better suit me than thyself.'[368] It is not known if anything came of this.

Her friend and mentor Thomas Story died in April 1742. He had been able to attend Yearly Meeting in London the previous year but then retreated to his home in Cumbria, where he died. He was buried in the Quaker burial ground at Carlisle.[369]

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[364] William F. Miller, Episodes (Part I), fn.55 quotes this board which read: "Fraternity of Quakers, 1739. London Quarterly Meeting £151.9s. Edinburgh £15 15/- Dublin £59 14s..8d. York £66 10s. Dublin £20, Cumberland £20, Chester £12 2s. Devonshire £15, Northumberland £11 2s. In all £372.7s.8d.

[365] Caledonian Mercury, 4th April 1740.

[366] Caledonian Mercury, 16th October 1739; Caledonian Mercury 4th April, 1740; Newcastle Courant 26th April, 1740.

[367] Rendall, Jane, 'Women's Associations in Scotland, 1790-1830' in *Association and Enlightenment: Scottish Clubs and Societies 1700-1830,* ed. Mark C. Wallace and Jane Rendall (Pennsylvania: Bucknell University Press 2020) 277-305.

[368] William F. Miller, 'Episodes I', 59.

[369] Emily Moore, *Travelling with Thomas Story,* 286; London Daily Advertiser 28th June 1742.

From occasional newspaper reports we see that she continued travelling through the next few years: to Lincoln,[370] and to the North of England.[371] In the winter of 1744 she was in the south of England. Newspapers no longer reported on her to the same extent, having other matters, war, politics, uprisings, and other religious excitements to fill their pages. It could be also that, the novelty having worn off she was no longer in demand for public meetings and was confining her preaching to visiting Quaker meetings, which the press were no longer interested in reporting.

She had rivals for publicity. The Wesleyan movement was growing. In the same newspaper that reports her presence at Ripon there appears an advertisement for a newly published pamphlet, price 6d.[372] This was about the foremost Methodist preacher of the time, George Whitefield. It was he who, along with John Wesley, was encouraging a religious revival throughout Britain. There had been an upsurge of revivalism in the American Colonies in the 1730s, known as the First Great Awakening. Jonathan Edwards' *Faithful Narrative of the Surprising Work of God* narrating the events of a mission in his native Boston had been published in Britain in October 1737.[373] As a result revivalism spread.[374]

The revivalists emphasised the sinfulness of their listeners and offered them salvation from Christ. The revivalist campaigns were accompanied by hysteria mostly but not exclusively among the women, speaking in tongues, fainting, with crowds refusing to disperse.[375] This was more to the taste of the press than the sedate meetings held by Quakers.

In August 1745 Prince Charles Edward Stuart led his rebel army to Edinburgh, one of his lieutenants being James Drummond, 6th Earl of Perth. George Drummond, May's brother, had raised a small volunteer force of infantry ready to defend the town against the rebels. Later he joined General Cope at Prestonpans to fight on the Hanoverian side. It has been

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[370] William F. Miller, Episodes (Part II), 42

[371] London Evening Post 11th August 1743.

[372] *A Compleat Account of the Conduct of that eminent Enthusiast Mr. Whitefield.* London Daily Post and General Advertiser 23rd June 1739.

[373] Jonathan Edwards, *A Faithful Narrative of the Surprising Work of God*, London 1737. (Reprint by Trumpet Press 2019)

[374] Mark A. Noll, *The Rise of Evangelicalism: the age of Edwards, Whitefield and the Wesleys*, (IIIlinois, Intervarsity Press 2003); James Robe, *A Faithful Narrative of the extraordinary Work of the Spirit of God at Kilsyth and other Congregations in the Neighbourhood near Glasgow, 1742.*

[375] Tucker Adkins, 'Open Fields, Stinking Bodies, and Loud Voices, Britishness and Religious Awakenings in Eighteenth-Century Scotland', *Scottish Church History,* Vol. 51 Issue 2 (October 2022)85-110.

suggested that May Drummond supported the Jacobites but no evidence for this was offered.[376] It is more likely she felt loyalty to her brother George, a staunch Hanoverian. She would also have been mindful of the Quaker attitude to violence and war, bearing in mind the pledge given by Margaret Fell to King Charles II in 1660 that

> All bloody principles and practices we do utterly deny, with all outward wars, and strife and fighting with outward weapons, for any end or under any pretence whatsoever.[377]

Combined with their pacifism, the Quakers were careful to show their loyalty to the ruling monarchs, the Stuarts at the time of this declaration, the Hanovers in the 18th century. Always suspect because of their refusal to swear an oath of loyalty as required by the various Test Acts, it went ill for them if they were suspected of supporting the Jacobite cause. It was at this time that May Drummond wrote in a letter to a woman known only as Amelia that 'Against the present establishment I never did nor never intend to say one word, either in publick or private, but people will tell lies concerning me.'[378] Perhaps Amelia had been hearing derogatory reports. Matthew Reilly has suggested that Amelia was Princess Amelia, the second daughter of King George II.[379] There is nothing intrinsic in the letter to suggest this. Amelia seems to have been writing frequently with questions, and May Drummond's tone is slightly impatient, but this would not be unusual in Quakers who would not consider it necessary to show deference merely because of a title.

It was in 1746 also, that in a neat reversal of the usual mode of reporting, the London Evening Post carried a report from Cork that Alexander Drummond, 'nephew to Mary Drummond, a celebrated Preacher among the People called Quakers' had been appointed ensign to Lord John Murray.[380] Lord John Murray was commander of the Black Watch. Who supplied the newspaper with this information? Alexander Drummond was the son of May's brother, George Drummond, and he was eventually to reach the rank of captain.[381] It is unlikely a young soldier would want himself to be referred to in this way. In fact,

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[376] Burnet and Marwick, *Quakers in Scotland*, 162.
[377] Margaret Fell, *Declaration to Charles II, 1660,* quoted in Quaker Faith & Practice, (2009 edition) 24:4.
[378] May Drummond, Letter to Amelia, dated Lancaster, 19th July 1746, transcribed in 'A Collection of Letters, Dreams, Visions and Other Remarkable Occurrences of some of the People called Quakers. LSF MS Vol. S78.
[379] Matthew Reilly, 'The Life and Literary Fictions of May Drummond' 309.
[380] London Evening Post 13th December 1746.
[381] The Red Book 863.

relationship to known pacifists might do him some harm. The only explanation is that May Drummond herself told a journalist of it, or she boasted about it and it was picked up.

This raises the question as to what extent she was her own publicist. Was it she herself who fed the newspapers with the reports of her movements? This is not impossible. It was her intent to spread the Quaker message and if she could use the burgeoning newspaper industry to do so, then she might have felt justified. Matthew Reilly has written of the power of the printed word which was used by both the Quakers and by their enemies.[382] She may have believed that the best service to Quakerism was to achieve maximum publicity for her preaching tours. This is of course speculation. Once she was reputed to be famous then publicity would follow naturally.

There are very occasional reports of her movements in the 1750s when she must have been living in Bristol for some of the time. Bristol Meeting issued her with Certificate of Removal in 1750 and 1752.[383] From there she travelled to Ireland again in 1753. A Quaker, Joshua Wight of Cork kept a diary and the entries for August reads:

> 27th 8th Mo. 1753
> . . . .I walked to Marybrook and dined with my cousin, Richard Newenham who was in the gout, where was our friend May Dromond who was much disordered with a cold.
> 6th September. This Afternoon our friend, May Drummond, went to Passage to take ship for Bristol, who have been on and about Cork for five weeks visiting several meetings as Kinsale, Brandon, Youghal but most of her time was in the City of Cork. She was a Scotch gentlewoman of note and had Education, who was convinced of the Principles of the People called Quakers & for many years have been a Preacher & many persons of Different Persuasions had a Curiosity to hear her, & gave her considerable applause. She was in Ireland about fifteen years ago & travel'd through several parts of the Nation and was Publick the time and before.[384]

There are very few reports in the following years. She was about sixty years old when she purchased a house in the Canongate in 1757 for her own residence, this property becoming known as May Drummond's Close.[385] Her health may not have been good. As we have seen from the Edinburgh financial accounts, by the early 1750s she was travelling by chaise instead of on horseback. In 1759 she was staying with Sir James and Lady

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[382] Matthew Reilly, 'The Life and Literary Fictions of May Drummond 312.
[383] Second Day Morning Meeting Minute book 243 and 292.
[384] The Diary of Joseph Wight, *JFHS* Vol. 21 No.1-4, (1924) 31.
[385] Disposition by Robert Bull in favour of Marion Drummond dated 7th December 1757, NRS RS27/150/288.

Johnston at their country seat of Westerhall, near Dumfries.[386] On the way there, she says, they had stayed for some time at the spa town of Moffat. In a letter she tells James Wilson that 'My state of health hath been better than for some years past than it ever was in England.' She goes on to say that she now has a bad cold so does not know when she will have the pleasure of seeing him.[387]

Looking back at her life, we can see that it was the audience with Queen Caroline that threw her into public prominence, but in addition to that there was an element of novelty about her. I have not been able to trace any other Scottish female Quaker who preached in England. The impression that she was of the nobility combined with, probably, a pleasing accent and handsome appearance, and her undoubted preaching skills all contributed. There has also to remain the suspicion that she herself ensured that her travels were documented in the newspapers.

At the end of the 1750s she seems to have settled in Edinburgh. Robert Chambers in Volume II of his *Traditions of Old Edinburgh*, when he concentrates on the Characters, was of the opinion that she was one of the most remarkable women that Scotland ever produced. He described her as 'Mrs May Drummond, the quakeress, celebrated by Pope, Spence and others.'[388] Someone who remembered her described her as

> a tall, handsome woman, who, when she moved in the streets, wore a black velvet tippet, over a cambret dress buttoned from her chin to her feet, and never raised her eyes from the ground.[389]

If the story had ended there she would have been remembered as one of a remarkable band of Quaker women who travelled in the ministry, and a woman of whom Edinburgh could be proud. Unfortunately, she had aroused the antagonism of the men in Edinburgh Quaker Meeting. As we have seen the meeting had declined badly but in 1765 they tried to impose discipline once more, with May Drummond as the focus of their attention.

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[386] Sir James Johnstone (1697-1772) had been an M.P. for the Dumfries Burghs until 1754: www.historyofparliament.org
[387] May Drummond, Letter to James Wilson dated 2nd April 1759. MS Box 10/11 LSF
[388] Robert Chambers, *Traditions of Edinburgh* Vol. II, Edinburgh (1825), 50.
[389] Ibid. 51.

CHAPTER FOUR

Disownment

We saw in Chapter 2 how Edinburgh Meeting was in a state of decline in the 1750s. May Drummond had absented herself for a time but in 1758/9 was back there. I have already quoted from her letters to James Wilson expressing her unhappiness about the state of the meeting. This chapter looks more closely at these letters. These are the only source we have for what the atmosphere in the meeting was like at this time, as no minutes were being kept. However the 1765 minutes relating to the silencing of May Drummond attest to the tension which must have been building up. If we read further in the minutes we can see something of the men responsible for the disownment.

We do not know how much support May Drummond received from others. None of the letters written to her have survived, and those written to James Wilson and others survive because they were kept by their families and given to the archives now housed in the Friends House library.

In her letter to James Wilson in June 1758 she wrote that he was one of very few people with whom she can be honest. She feels a unity with him and some few others. Speaking of herself in the third person she writes:

> Such who feed upon the bread of Life are subject to no Extremes, nor can they be, as by itt the Soul is Ceapt in the perfection of quiet, and Solaced, and to know our owne douty only is an Ancker to the unstable Soul, in itt every Pacion is cept within itts Due bounds. It was this ceapt May Drummond seriously quaet, while the tyed of Malice ran high against her and the Lyeing tung was permitted, for her probacion, to do itts worst. From the first of my Convincemint no aprobacion was Ever Soght by me; On the contrary I very well know that popularity never failes of having, the blasting breath of Invay to attend itt. The Extravagent incomioms att that time bestowd on me therefor was a warning of the reverse as have since fallen to my Share, yet my persecuters, are, all of them, and hath Ever been, Under the appelacion of friends; with all my heart I forgive there intencions to Injoure me, there bad practice hurts not me in any way, for in this world I count upon no inheritance as serten but tribulacion only. [390]

The ‘Malice’ seems to be based around accusations that she enjoyed too much the attention which her preaching had brought her. Some years after her death, a Quaker Joseph Wood

[390]May Drummond, Letter to James Wilson, June 1758. LSF, MS 334/1.

wrote of her in his commonplace book that 'Being so much followed had a tendency to lift her mind from that state of humble watchfulness in which alone preservation is witnessed.' [391] This must have been the general opinion at the time.

In defending herself in her letter to James Miller she recognises that the praises ('incomiums') which she had been receiving were short-lived. It seems to have hurt particularly that those who were now criticising her were the Quakers. In her next letter to James Miller dated 3rd May 1759 she continues to speak of the malice and envy directed towards her, but hopes that 'By Such baptesums we are made humble.'

As early as 1735 in her letter to Amelia she said 'people will tell lies about me', and warned her against being too trusting. She also said in that letter that there were those who were 'wanting an opportunity secretly to stab my reputation.'[392]

This might be dismissed today as paranoia, except that there is evidence that there was tale-bearing in the meeting. The minutes of Edinburgh Quaker Meeting for the next few years show several references as for example 'With regard to tale bearing and detraction it remains under the care of Friends.'[393] James Macpherson, guilty of this, one of the signatories of the letter to London (see below) acknowledged that he 'behaved inconsistently with the rules of the Society being mistaken and was sorry for it.' He promised to behave well in the future.[394]

This talebearing tendence seems not to have been peculiar to Edinburgh Meeting. We can look at the various Epistles coming from London Yearly Meeting, which reflect the concerns nationwide of those attending. As early as 1727 before May Drummond joined the Society there was 'a weighty concern' against 'talebearing, false reports, jealousies and evil surmisings.'[395]

The Epistle from Yearly Meeting for the year 1733, the year May Drummond preached in Devonshire House has a paragraph which begins

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[391] Joseph Wood, *The Large and Small Notebooks of Joseph Wood,* 7.10..
[392] May Drummond, Letter to Amelia dated Lancaster, 19th July1746,. LSF MS Vol. S78.
[393] Edinburgh Monthly Meeting Minute 16th May 1769. NRS. CH10/1/3
[394] Edinburgh Monthly Meeting Minute 24th February 1769. .
[395] 1727 Epistle, YM *Epistles I*, 178.

> We also think it proper to exhort Friends everywhere, to avoid all whisperings, backbitings, and talebearings, tending to blemish the reputation of any, or to sow discord, and create evil surmisings one of another.[396]

In 1760 there was once more a mention that they should 'guard against listening after, or giving any encouragement to reports tending to the prejudice one of another'.[397]

Not everyone was against her. William F. Miller notes that a younger brother of the clerk, by name George Miller was 'a partisan of hers.'[398] In the 19th century one of the Miller family (possibly the grandson of George Miller) was able to write that his grandmother retained a kind feeling towards her.[399]

In early 1765 matters seem to have come to a head. The Monthly Meeting minute of February reads

> In the first place the Queries were read, and friends cannot help observing great deficiencies in many particulars, one is at this time, thought worthy of our cogniscence and to be inserted here and we think it proper to send to her two of the Queries concerning Ministers and that she may see herself faulty and sensor'd by our meeting of Discipline, the Clerk of our Meeting is appointed to subscribe the said Queries. The following is a copy of what we sent to M-D- as the above Minute directs.
>
> I observe that thou can come to the meeting and stay away at thy pleasure however I can acquaint thee that we have far better meetings in thy absence than when thou art present – Thy conduct grieves me exceedingly I believe every servant in the families where thou visits report to their fellows that M-D- takes away bread, sugar etc. out of their master's and mistress's houses what the meaning of this is I cannot comprehend exactly if poverty is the cause I apprehend a better method might have been found out for relief if thou had applied to me for relief I would have assisted for one but if this Defection proceeds from covetousness that is worse than the other.
> And I have also to acquaint thee that friends in general and myself in particular are highly dissatisfied with what thou hath to offer in the meetings for we sincerely believe that thou in thy present situation has nothing to say from the Lord so that thy words are a great burden to us therefore I beg for the future thou may be silent in our meetings till the Doctrine and conduct correspond with the following Queries which were sent down from London to us.
>
> [Query No. 3] Are all ministers careful not to burden sensible friends of your own or other meetings with words void of life and power? And do they keep sound

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396 1733 Epistle, *YM Epistles* I, 200.
397 1760 Epistle, *YM Epistles* I, 316.
398 William F. Miller 'Episodes II' 111
399 William Miller, *Letter to John Crosfield dated 20th March 1843,* LSF, MS Vol. 214 Item 91.

> doctrine and the form of sound words in your ministry and do none come abroad without in the approbation of your own monthly meeting?
>
> [Query No. 5] Are all ministers and Elders careful to walk circumspectly and inoffensively in their lives and conversations that the truth be not reproached and dishonoured by their imprudent conduct?"
>
> This is all I have at present to lay before thee and I beg it may be received in the same care in which it is wrote for I wish thy Wellfare in every respect.
>
> Signed by William Miller
> Date Abbay the 3 day of the 2 month 1765.[400]

There was, of course, no opportunity for May Drummond to attend the meeting to defend herself and if anyone chose to defend her, this was not minuted. Several odd things stand out from this letter. One is the tone which makes it sound like a personal attack by William Miller with the other members being incidental. The other is the way the complaint about the quality of her preaching seems to take second place to the accusations of stealing bread and sugar. This latter seems to have come from servants' gossip.

There is no evidence that she was poor. She had some income from Jamaica. She owned two tenement properties in the Canongate, having bought a second one in 1760 which she let out.[401] An indication of her income can be gained from the rents which were being charged a few years later in 1769 when she was advertising for new tenants. For one she was charging an annual rent of £70, there was one at £32 and 'a house of three fine rooms, kitchen, and a garret storey, lately rented at £12.'[402] These figures suggest good quality accommodation, and may have formed the town houses of country gentlemen. In subsequent years she clearly did not lack funds as, after the events described here, she continued to travel, and also was able to pay printing costs of a tract she later published.

It might be that she believed herself to be poor. It may be that at the age of sixty-nine she was beginning to suffer a measure of forgetfulness. This seems to have been the prevailing belief in the wider Miller family, judging by later correspondence on the subject. In the early 1840s George Crosfield was writing his *Memoirs of Samuel Fothergill*. In the course of his research he wrote to Edinburgh meeting to enquire what was known there of

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[400] Edinburgh Monthly Meeting Minute 3rd April, 1765, NRS CH10/1/3 p.63.
[401] .Disposition in favour of Marion Drummond dated 23rd December 1760. RS27/157/84,
[402] Caledonian Mercury 24th April 1769.

May Drummond's history. The William Miller of the day replied on 20th March 1843. After giving a very brief half page summary of the events of her disownment he writes:

> I am rather inclined to believe from what I have heard from my Father regarding her that the Cloud which appears to have come over her in the latter days was rather the result of a decay of her faculties, than arising from moral depravity – I recollect his mentioning her being a regular visitor at his father's house when he was a lad, as he said his mother retained a kind feeling towards her.[403]

This reference to moral depravity is interesting. It seems too strong a term for the pocketing of some bread and sugar. A few years later in 1851 there appeared in an American publication *The Friend* an article about various Quakers of the past including an account of the life of May Drummond. The anonymous author describes her as 'a female of fine talents and commanding intellect…. who for the love of things of an intoxicating character [was] cast down from a state of respectability and honour, to degradation and shame.' [404] He subsequently adds

> Her fall is attributed to the love of opium, or some other intoxicating material, and this may have been induced through the use of it in sickness. Doubtless, there was a spiritual declension, in her, previous to that time, which the Great Head of the church could perceive, although to man it was little observable. . .
>
> Whoever, standing in the name of the Lord, so far departs from a close abiding with the openings of his Spirit, as to *affect eloquence*, and to seek to trim and adorn the matter given them to deliver; are on the brink of a precipice, from which nothing but Omnipotence can save them from falling. May Drummond fell! – and it appears that neglect and poverty became her portion.[405]

He does not give the source of his information. Nowhere in any of the contemporary material relating to May Drummond had there been any mention of opium or other addiction. Laudanum (a tincture of opium) or a common remedy Dover's Powders which also contained opium, were believed to be efficacious in treating many ailments and were easily available over the counter. Many who became addicted first had it prescribed for treatment of illness. Doctors generally failed to recognise its addictive qualities.[406] However by the mid-19th century its use in whatever form was recognised as an addiction and moreover was seen as an indication of moral failure. The piece written in 1851 has the air of being written to give a warning. It fits in with the Victorian narrative that 'neglect

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[403] William Miller, *Letter to John Crosfield dated 20th March 1843,* LSF, MS Vol. 214 Item 91.
[404] *The Friend,* (Pennsylvania, 1851) Vol. XXIV No. 9, 69
[405] *The Friend,* (Pennsylvania, 1851) Vol. XXIV No.11, 84
[406] John C. Kramer, 'Opium Rampant: Medical Use, Misuse and Abuse in Britain and the West in the 17th and 18th Centuries', *British Journal of Addiction* 74 (1979) 387.

and poverty' are the inevitable reward for addiction. The nuances of the problems between May Drummond and Edinburgh Meeting were lost.

If the problem was alcohol, excessive use was considered grounds for disownment and Friends were warned that

> As an excess in drinking has been too prevalent among many of the inhabitants of these nations, we recommend to all Friends a watchful care over themselves, attended with a religious and prudent seal against a practice so dishonourable and pernicious.[407]

However, it was not for alcohol addiction that she was censured. Joseph Wood, writing in 1797 had nothing worse to say about her than that she had become conceited with too much publicity and had lost her gift of preaching.[408]

Leaving aside the question of her mental state or addiction, how else had she offended?

The meeting, in common with many meetings, had become silent. This was reflected in various Epistles from Yearly Meeting. For example, that of 1740 exhorts Friends not to allow their preaching to become too formal but to wait in silence to 'feel your hearts influenced by [God's] power.'[409] Instructions such as this had an inhibiting effect. Friends became less sure whether their ministry was from God or from themselves.[410] At the same time there was evident increasing resistance to women ministering. Jean E. Mortimer quotes the Second Day Morning Meeting recording that 'it is a hurt to Truth for women Friends to take up too much time, as some do, in our public meetings, when several public and serviceable men Friends are present.'[411]

It is likely that May Drummond's ministry had become dull in reiteration. There is also the possibility that her preaching focussed on envy, malice and backbiting and she was saying things they did not want to hear.

It is also possible there was bad feeling between William Miller and May Drummond. They were both strong characters, and we can see that throughout her life she had

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[407] 1753 Epistle, YM Epistles I 273.
[408] Joseph Wood, Diaries 7.10.
[409] 1740 Epistle, YM Epistles I, 231.
[410] Robynne R. Healey, 'Quietist Quakerism, 1692-c.1805' 50.
[411] Jean E. Mortimer, 'Quaker Women in the Eighteenth Century: Opportunities and Constraints' 234. She does not give a date for this.

confrontational tendencies. It cannot surely be coincidence that in 1765 and possibly for some time before that there was a demand for a Women's Monthly Meeting in Edinburgh. The women throughout the movement had been agitating for the right to hold business meetings.[412] Some areas already had them, for instance Westmorland and Yorkshire, and May Drummond would know about them from her travels. In Edinburgh there seems to have been resistance to this. There was a minute in 1765 to the effect that William Miller would speak to his mother-in-law to take soundings about it, but nothing came of it.[413] It was not until 1791 that the first Women's Meeting took place.

To return to the narration of May Drummond's disownment. The letter was sent to her in February but clearly May Drummond ignored it, for the minute for the following Monthly Meeting records that

> M.D. having appear'd in words in the meeting (since the above letter was sent unto her) two several times; on the first instant of this month, the Clerk of the meeting sent her another letter, putting her to remembrance that friends could not unite with her, and therefore afresh desired she would be silent in our meetings.[414]

After this she left Edinburgh and travelled to London where she preached at Westminster meeting.[415] The Second Day Morning Meeting wrote to Edinburgh. Their letter is recorded in Edinburgh's minutes as follows

> Letter from Second day meeting of Ministers and Elders in London to our Monthly Meeting in this town.
>
> London the 14th day of the 4th month.(April) 1766
>
> Loving friend William Miller
>
> The morning meeting of Ministers and Elders in this city being informed that May Drummond has appeared as a minister, in divers of our meetings (much to the dissatisfaction of friends) desired me to write to thee to know how she stands with your meeting, please to favour with an answer soon directed for David Barclay Junior and will oblige they loving friends,
>
> Thomas Corbyn, John Hill. [416]

Edinburgh's reply was recorded in the same minute:

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[412] Mary Van Vleck Garman, 'Quaker Women's Lives and Spiritualities', in *The Oxford Handbook of Quaker Studies,* 237.
[413] Edinburgh Monthly Meeting Minute 29th Oct.. 1765 NRS CH10/1/3, 65.
[414] Edinburgh Monthly Meeting Minute 3rd May, 1766 NRS CH10/1/3
[415] Diary of John Grubb (1737-1784) quoted in *JFHS* Vol. 15 No. 3 (1918) 87
[416] Edinburgh Monthly Meeting Minutes 27th June 1766. P.67

> The following is an answer unto the above.
> To friends of the morning meeting of Ministers and Elders in London.
>
> Dear friends
> We are sorry to hear May Drummond hath assumed to preach in your meetings, it being quite irregular, she having no Certificate from us. And as you are desirous to know how she stands with our Meeting, we shall now acquaint you most of the friends of this meeting being quite burdened with her preaching and praying it appearing to them to be altogether dead, formal and without the true spring that can only make words efficacious. They could no longer bear it, without testifying to her their sense of it, so accordingly the monthly meeting appointed their Clerk to acquaint her with their sentiments concerning her public appearances which was done in writing (the 3rd day of the Second month 1765 and then recorded in the Monthly Meeting book) setting forth to her that her preaching and some parts of her conduct gave us great uneasiness, and that we could not at present receive her any longer as a Minister, therefore requested she might not presume to offer her words in our Meeting until her doctrine and conduct shall correspond with the following Queries to wit: [Here they recorded the Queries again]
> This Admonition she took offence at and absented from the Meeting about six months, and when she came back she sat in a seat below the Gallery and she continued to come now and then upon the first day in the forenoon, till she set out last for London without troubling us with her words; so in a few words the sense of this Meeting is that she is not at all fit to preach, neither can we receive her as a Minister, as she is now with you, you must judge what is necessary to be done, so we conclude with the salutation of our love unto you, and remain your loving friends.
>
> Signed in and on behalf of our Monthly Meeting held at Edinburgh the 27th day of the 4th month 1766 read and approved of by the same.
>
> William Miller, Samuel Leeds, James Macpherson, John Spalding, William Wallace, William Galbraith, Robert Melville, Miller Christy.

We have to surmise what happened next. It is likely that someone from the Second Day Morning Meeting in London spoke to May and admonished her in some way. In response she wrote a letter to them which she subsequently published.[417] In this letter she fights back. She speaks of a 'reputation blasted by invidiously false Reports.' This is her Vindication – a word she used several times – claiming that 'if any Man or Set of Men forbid such as are call'd upon by that Voice [to minister] then the Judgment of that Man or Set of Men is under a Cloud'. She is, she claims

> approved by God in our own Conscience is all the truly Devout wish or want. Undisturbed we are, when approved of him, tho' the whole Race of Mankind disown Unity with us.

[417] May Drummond, *To the Meeting assembled in the Chamber at Gracechurch Street, 11th July 1766.* (London: 1766). LSF,Vol.E /69/35430.

When we look at the signatories of Edinburgh meeting's letter to London, we can see that some of them were not above reproach. At the same time as May Drummond was being censured there is a minute that 'William Wallace has given acknowledgment unto this Meeting for the abominable adultery which he committed some years ago'.[418] The following year Miller Christy was admitting fornication but without any penalty.[419] This would normally have been grounds for disownment, but not in this case. We noted earlier that James Macpherson admitted guilt in tale-bearing and detraction. William Miller of Craigentinny stopped attending the Sunday morning meeting in the 1770s.[420] He set up another meeting on his own premises on the Sunday afternoon where he served refreshments.[421] He was disowned by the meeting in 1788 for marrying out and other irregularities.[422]

Despite her age (73) in 1769 she was not done with travelling. A letter she wrote in that year describes her travelling in Northumberland, Cumberland and Durham. [423] In this letter she is arguing against a proposed increase by the government in the maintenance grant for the Church of England.

However, it appears she was not welcome anywhere. There is a minute of Scarborough and Whitby Monthly meeting for May, 1769 which reads

> 9th of the 5th mo.: This meeting being informed that our friend May Drummond of Edinburgh, is now at Scarborough, and frequently appeared with them in her ministry without having a certificate and we understand is not acknowledged as a minister at home. This meeting therefore appoints Wm. Chapman, (clerk) Isaac Blackbeard and Stephen Procter to pay her a visit.[424]

It is not clear whether the objection of the elders was to her preaching or the fact she did not have a certificate to preach. Their next meeting records that they have not had an opportunity to speak to her, and there are no further entries.

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[418] Edinburgh Monthly Meeting Minute 5th July 1765.NTS CH10/1/3 p. 64.
[419] Edinburgh Monthly Meeting Minute 30th June 1767. NRS CH10/1/3 p.70
[420] William F. Miller, 'William Miller of Edinburgh, *JFHS*Vol.11 No. 4, (1914) 192
[421] Ibid 193
[422] William F. Miller, 'Notes on the Early records of Friends in the South of Scotland from 1656 to about 1790'. *JFHS*, *Vol. 1, No. 2 (*1904) 70.
[423] May Drummond, Letter to Lord Temple dated 5th August 1769, quoted in William F. Miller 'Episodes II', 110.
[424] Notes & Queries *JFHS* Vol. 6 No. 1, (1909) 3

In 1769 she was also seen in Sheffield. The grandson of the Joshua Toft with whom she often shared a platform wrote that he saw her in meeting there and that 'Her ministry was not then fully Approved by Friends.'[425] A letter dated 1770 from a Quaker who lived in Whitehaven wrote to his fiancée that he had 'been all day going about with that poor creature, May Drummond.'[426] She was now aged seventy-four and there are no more reports of her travels. She was settled in Edinburgh and entering the last years of her life.

[425] William F. Miller, 'Episodes II', *59.*
[426] Quoted in William F. Miller 'Episodes II', 111

CHAPTER FIVE

Her last years

There has been little written about what happened to May Drummond after the final rejection. There are however traces of her in the records and it is possible to piece together her last years. The records of the Commissary Court in Edinburgh hold an inventory, until now unexamined, of her possession at the time of her death, and this gives some indication of how she was living.

May's younger sister Jean (or Janet) died around 1764.[427] Her brother George died in 1766.[428] Her brother Alexander died in 1769.[429]

In her later years she was not totally forgotten by the world. A poem was published in 1773 written by the pseudonymous Clemene.[430]

> *On seeing a Picture of the once celebrated May Drummond (a Preacher among the Quakers) in the Character of Winter*
>
> O Thou, whose image, here portray'd,
> Wakes and inspires the plaintive muse,
> Attend! Behold the tribute paid;
> Not song nor tear can she refuse.
>
> Full justly has the artist plann'd
> In Winter's guise thy furrowed brow;
> And justly rais'd thy feeble hand
> Above the elemental glow.[431]

Clemene must have seen the portrait of May Drummond which forms the frontispiece of this work, and which has been attributed to Jonathan Richardson.[432] It is the only such portrait known to exist.

The writer of the piece in the Philadelphia journal *The Friend* which has already been discussed wrote that this portrait was painted towards the end of her life by someone who

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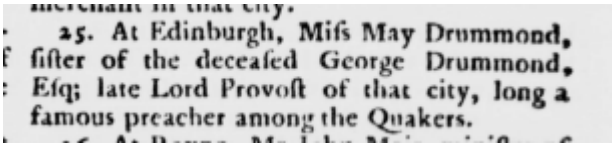
[427] The Red Book 288.
[428] SP, Old Parish Registers, Deaths, Canongate, 379 8th November 1766.
[429] Katherine Turner, 'Alexander Drummond' ODNB. (2004).
[430] The Town and Country Magazine, London, April 1773.
[431] For the full poem see Appendix B
[432] See Appendix A for a full discussion of this portrait.

'probably knew her well in the time of her prosperity' and now that 'she was exposed to the cold blighting winds of contempt, and of poverty' she was a suitable subject to illustrate the character of Winter.[433] This is a harsh sentiment and reflects both how May Drummond was remembered by subsequent generations, and the attitude of the mid-19th century.

May Drummond died on 25th February 1777 at the age of eighty.


25. At Edinburgh, Miſs May Drummond, ſiſter of the deceaſed George Drummond, Eſq; late Lord Provoſt of that city, long a famous preacher among the Quakers.

The Scots Magazine Feb. 1777

There is no record of a will, but an application for appointment as Executor-dative *qua* creditor was made by David Donaldson who is described as a Wright in the Calton. [434] A wright was a builder and it is likely he had done some repair work on one of her tenements. Unable to pay him, she signed a promissory note on 3rd January 1777 acknowledging her debt of £16. 10s. Sterling which she undertook would be paid with interest 'as soon as her money from Jamaica came to hand'. She had given him her gold watch in security.

An Edinburgh auctioneer did the valuation. The first item listed was the gold watch with a gold chain and a gilded hook, valued at £8. There follows a long inventory of every item in her house, even down to the paper bag with coffee beans at 3s. and the canister with tea, value 1s. Most intriguing is the item 'Eight bound books and some pamphlets 4s.' We could wish they had been named.

She had a fair number of gowns of corduroy, cambret and muslin and an old well-worn one of flowered silk. She had one good black cloak and several others. She wore an old red petticoat and stays. She had a pair of gilt buckles valued at 4s. though the shoes to which they would be attached had no value. Stockings and a flannel jacket, handkerchiefs and headcloths, gloves and old rags, everything is listed and valued.

There is no furniture listed. It may be that her relatives had removed this and other items of value. It is possible the auctioneer ignored what might have been family heirlooms. The

[433] *The Friend,* (Philadelphia 1851) Vol. XXIV No.11, 84.
[434] SP, Testament-dative and inventory of estate of May Drummond, CC8/8/124 folio 135 139.

only household items listed are two old-fashioned table spoons, and four teaspoons, total value 5s. There were two looking glasses with curved frames valued at £1 8s. The dressing glass with a shagreen case (value 2s.) may have been one she took with her on her travels. Finally there are three crosses valued at 15s. The total value comes to £17 16s. 3d. Sterling or £413 15s. Scots.

Although this looks like poverty to us today, it may not have been so then, nor may she have regarded it as such if she followed the Quaker tenets by living simply, without regard for the material things of the world. It could be she gave away all her money. It is also possible that her funds were held by trustees, for whatever reason. The income from Jamaica in particular may have come from a family trust but this is speculation. It is possible more information on her circumstances is buried in the muniments of some branch of the Drummond family.

She was buried in the family plot at the entrance to the graveyard at Canongate Kirk.[435] There are no headstones on the plot which is now a carefully tended area under grass surrounded by shrubs. On the wall is a plaque to George Drummond and others to later generations, but none to May Drummond.

There were no doubt many who mourned her passing. John Catchpool entered a poem into his Commonplace Book, though not written by himself.

To a Friend, May Drummond

Farewell dear Friend may Heavenly Truth
Our every step bear sway
And teach thy humbling feet to head
The new & Living Way. . .

But why should I expiate thus
Or more presume to tell
For my Design when I began
Was but to bid Farewell.
W-M-F-

What of her memory within Quakers? Those who knew nothing of the disownment would remember her as a fine speaker. In the 1790s the correspondence between Edinburgh and London was sufficiently known so that Joseph Wood could record it in his notebook. In

[435] Gil Skidmore, 'May Drummond,' *ODNB* (2004)

the next century she was set up as an example of someone who became too concerned with wordly praise and various calumnies were directed against her. Then her memory died. It was not until William F. Miller resurrected the whole story she became a subject of interest. Subsequently this has focussed on her disownment. It is the contention of the present work that this has skewed her memory and it is time to re-assess this remarkable woman.

CONCLUSION

The purpose of this thesis has been to examine the life of May Drummond, a remarkable Scotswoman, whose memory has been distorted by the story of one event in her life, namely her disownment by Edinburgh Quaker Meeting.[436] Some accounts praise her, for example Hobhouse.[437] Larson alone does not mention the disownment, focussing instead on the successful life.[438] Using all the available records this research set out to discover her whole life. Much that was hidden from earlier researchers has now as a result of digitisation become available and full use has been made of all the sources. A biography is in danger of becoming a recital of facts, but these are not enough to define a life. We have to connect up the parts, what else was happening in her life, her publishing activities, and her relationships. What has emerged from the biographical research is a much more complex understanding of her position relative to the Quaker movement north and south of the border and her position as a woman in Enlightenment Edinburgh.

It has been remarked that histories of notable Scots include very few women.[439] The recent New Biographical Dictionary of Scottish Women has remedied this, and revealed how neglected their stories have been. This has been particularly true of the Edinburgh Enlightenment period, in the histories of which one searches in vain for the women. Now modern researchers into the lives of women in eighteenth-century Edinburgh have drawn a picture of lives restricted by the belief that women had no place in the public sphere.[440] In contrast, the Quaker movement offered women a public identity and an opportunity to challenge some of the accepted roles of the time.[441] Until recently the lives of these women were overlooked, but now a wealth of research, outlined in the present work, has shown that these women were just as active in the work of the Society as their forebears. As Quakers regarded the spirituality of women equal to that of men, women could minister in meeting, and those with particular speaking talent could if they chose and were able, travel in the ministry, preaching in public.

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[436] William F. Miller, 'Episodes II'. Joseph Wood,vii. *Notebooks* 7.10. Mortimer, *Quaker Women*, 236.
[437] Stephen Hobhouse, *William Law and 18th c. Quakerism,* 73-75.
[438] Rebecca Larson, *Daughters of Light,* 254
[439] Rosalind Russell, *Women of the Scottish Enlightenment*, Preface.
[440] E.G. Barclay and Simonton, *Women in Eighteenth-century Scotland;* Carr, *Gender and Enlightenment*; Rosalind Russell, *Women of the Scottish Enlightenment,* 117.
[441] Mortimer, 'Opportunities and Constraints' 228.

The research presented here places her decision to convert to Quakerism within the restricted set of options that lay before her as an unmarried woman in eighteenth-century Scotland. The discussion in Chapter One covers her family history, demonstrating her position among the urban elite, and speculates on the life she might have led had she not made her decision to leave it. It also establishes an accurate date of birth that changes the previous perspective, demonstrating that she was not a young girl when she came to Quakers. Seeing her as a very young women has coloured the view of earlier historians, Brailsford for instance seeing her in terms of a madcap schoolgirl, Burnet as the leader of the 'smart set.' She was thirty-five years old, and had a lot to lose, the goodwill of family and friends, and her place in Edinburgh society. She made the decision to take control of her life. This may not have been all that surprising if, as I have suggested, she was already rebelling against the attitudes that excluded her.

In the Quietist period, increasing rigidity, which can be traced across the decades in the Epistles from Yearly Meeting and in the changing nature of the Queries, were making life difficult for members. Many Quakers found a middle ground of accommodating the needs of living in the world and protecting their own inner integrity and spiritual beliefs. Many could not, and the movement was declining. At the same time evangelically-minded men and women were travelling widely, often in hardship, to preach the Quaker message. May Drummond must have met them when they visited Edinburgh, and finding she had a talent for ministry, she became one such itinerant preacher.

Her travels are discussed in Chapter Three, pulling together evidence from many sources against the background of what was happening within the Quaker movement. The biographical approach adopted here reveal the extensiveness of her networks in England where she travelled widely and gained celebrity. The strength of these networks and the respectability of her status as an independent female preacher is evidenced by her significant fundraising efforts in support of the Edinburgh Royal Infirmary. She clearly formed comfortable working relationships with the male preachers who shared a platform with her. We see from the commonplace books and letters of her fellow-Quakers that she was highly regarded for her pleasant demeanour and skilful preaching.

However, it became evident in the course of these researches that there was an unpleasant undercurrent within the Society of backbiting and envy, mentioned in many Epistles from Yearly Meeting. Events suggest that May Drummond suffered some of this from

Edinburgh Quaker Meeting. There may have been several aspects that aroused resentment. The Society was keen on self-effacement. She was receiving publicity for herself rather than for the movement and fellow speakers ignored. Her too-obvious elite status may have grated. There was also the question of her relationship with Thomas Story, skirted round by his biographers. There was her questionable behaviour in travelling without a female companion, which would offend both society and the Society. There was also the open defiance in publishing her work against the express wish of the Second Day Morning Meeting.

The story of her disownment, thoroughly covered by William F. Miller, has been repeated here in Chapter Four but with an attempt at analysis, rather than look purely at the events. Some of it can only be speculation. Remarkably, she did not give up. Her letters, and published writings reflect a disillusionment with some of her fellow Quakers. As the chapter shows there were subsequent attempts to blacken her name. However, these would be known only to the Quaker movement. To the people of Edinburgh at the end of her life she was one of the local characters, a property owner recognised in the streets, and still a member of the elite. In Scotland she was always the sister of Lord Provost Drummond. All who entered the Royal Infirmary, a project that epitomised forward-thinking Edinburgh, would see the board attesting to her fundraising among the Quakers.

She has been written out of Scottish history. Her story was lost even to the extent that the modern works looking at the women of Enlightenment Edinburgh do not name her. Her name was blackened within the Quaker movement during her life and after her death.

Her life has appeared to be one of failure, the story of a woman whose hubris was her downfall. On the contrary as this work shows, her life was a successful one of travel, usefulness to the Quaker movement, and public and private esteem. She was an inspiration to other women. She freed herself from many of the restrictions imposed by society, and when Quakerism presented a new discipline, she rebelled against those parts of it she saw as unreasonable. Even when attempts were made to silence her, she fought back.

With the more balanced picture of her life which this work gives, she can be seen as a woman of whom Scotland can be proud, and an inspiring Quaker who deserves to take her place as such in the annals of the movement.

APPENDIX A

The portraits

We have few representations of 18th century Quakers and May Drummond stands out as unusual in this respect. The provenance of the two which exist will be considered here.

Early Friends considered that vanity of appearance evidenced by having an image made drew the mind away from God.[442] We have no pictures of early Quakers except for George Fox and William Penn. The National Portrait Gallery lists five portraits of Penn and seven of George Fox.[443] None of those of Fox is authentic, and those of Penn were done before he joined Quakers, or later in life.[444] A series of paintings of Quaker meetings in England in the late 17th century was done by the artist Egbert van Heemskerck.[445] Many of them showed a woman preaching. Opinions are divided on whether these were sympathetic genre paintings, or satires.[446] If there was satirical intent, this has now been lost, and these paintings are taken as genuine depictions of Quaker meetings and have been much reproduced.[447] The Friends depicted may have been recognisable at the time.

May Drummond is, as far as I can trace, the only female Quaker of her time who sat for her portrait. There are two actual images. There is also a cartoon which forms the frontispiece of the satire *The Female Speaker*, but the features are those of any woman and not the strong features depicted in the sketch and the painting.

The small sketch of May Drummond which is reproduced at the start of the introduction, measuring 163 mm. x 117 mm. is now in the British Museum. Their catalogue lists it as

> a Portrait of May Drummond, at her age of about twenty five (?) after a drawing by Ishmael Parbury(?)'; bust half-right, eyes to front, wearing black hood tied under her chin. Graphite on vellum.'[448]

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442 William Penn, *No Cross, no Crown,* Chapter XVII.
443 www.npg.org.uk.
444 Edwin B. Bronner, 'George Fox and William Penn: unlikely yokefellows and friends', JFHS Vol. 56 No. 2, (1991) 78.
445 Harry Mount, 'Egbert van Heemskerck's *Quaker Meetings* Revisited', *Journal of the Warburg and Courtauld Institutes,* 1993 Vol. 56 (1993) 211.
446 Ibid. 227.
447 Ibid. 210
448 British Museum Drawing No. 1886/0111.24; www.britishmuseum.org,uk.

There is an original inscription on the back, the italics being the British Museum comments on this.

> inscribed in graphite by the artist: Mrs Drummond, Quaker Prea[cher] .by I [Pa]rb[u]ry(?) (*much obliterated*) 2 Feb 17-3(?)
> *and in a later hand* "by Richardson"
> *with three lines apparently in shorthand (undeciphered).*

It is not clear whether Ishmael Parbury made a preliminary sketch, possibly when hearing her preach, and Richardson improved upon it. Parbury, a friend of Richardson, was a famous watch maker and a collector of fine art.

The sketch could have been done in either 1733 or 1743. It could not be earlier as she is wearing Quaker dress. It could not have been later, as Richardson died in 1745. The British Museum, or possibly one of the earlier owners has guessed at her age. The guess is of course wrong. She would be aged 36 when the sketch was done, if indeed it was done in 1733. We know she was in London that year. Her travels in the 1740s are not so clear and she may well have been in London in February 1743.

The provenance of this sketch is known. According to the British Museum notes on the webpage which reproduces the sketch it was found by his son in the studio of the well-known portrait painter, Jonathan Richardson (1667-1745). It then passed into the hands of the St Aubyn family who were collectors of paintings, prints and fine art. Lady Juliana St Aubyn died in 1856 and the collection was handled by the dealers Winstanley & Taylor.[449]

It next featured in Vol. 2 of the 1857 catalogue of Engraved British Portraits for A. E. Evans & Son.[450]

15306 **Drummond, Mrs. quakeress.** *See* **" Spence's Anecdotes" orig. drawing by J. Richardson; 8vo 10s. 6d.**

The size indicates that this is undoubtedly the same sketch. It is not known who bought it but it was owned by Joseph Hogarth in 1886 when he sold it to the British Museum.

[449] www.britishmuseum.org.uk/Juliana St. Aubyn
[450] Catalogue of Engraved British Portraits, A.E. Evans & Son vol. 2, (1857).

The history of the oil painting which forms the frontispiece of the present work is not so clear and there is uncertainty as to its whereabouts. It is undoubtedly a portrait of the same woman as the sketch and has traditionally been attributed to the same artist.

Jonathan Richardson was one of the most sought-after portrait artists of his day. He was known for his piety and religious connections.[451] He lived and worked in London, painting the great and the good. This portrait does not feature in any of the lists on-line of his work but this may be because it only once seems to have come on the market and not through any of the major dealers.

It was bought by John Lane of the Bodley Head publishers from a dealer in Barnstaple in 1917.[452] He understood it had come from the Drummond family in Devonshire.[453] It required cleaning and relining and had some holes but these according to John Lane did not interfere with what he called 'the remarkable features.' In searching for knowledge of the sitter he naturally asked the Quakers and Norman Penney, who was Recording Clerk at the time, supplied this.

John Lane also wrote to the National Gallery of Scotland seeking information. James M. Carr, who replied was unable to provide much additional information. He did wonder if the portrait was of George Drummond's fourth wife, who was a Quaker whom he married in 1755.[454] This is unlikely as her name was Elizabeth. James M. Carr tentatively agreed that the portrait has some of the characteristics of Richardson's work.

John Lane later wrote to Norman Penney that he was still waiting for the portrait to be returned from the restorers, after which he would send it to him with permission to have it photographed and reproduced.[455] The actual portrait remained in the possession of John Lane. The photograph is still in the library at Friends House and is the one which has been widely reproduced.

John Lane estimated the sitter to be about fifty years of age.[456] If the portrait was indeed by Jonathan Richardson, then this is probably correct. Richardson died in 1745 at which

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[451] L.C. 'Jonathan Richardson,' *Dictionary of National Biography* 1885-1900.
[452] John Lane, Letter to Norman Penney dated Aug. 1917. LSF 40.83.
[453] John Lane, Letter to Norman Penney dated 4th December 1917. LSF 40.83.
[454] John Carr, National Gallery of Scotland, Letter to John Lane dated 27th May 1918.LSF 40.83
[455]John Lane to Norman Penney dated Dec. 4th 1917.
[456]John Lane to Norman Penney dated Aug. 1917.

time May Drummond would be aged about 50. As far as its location in the West Country is concerned we know she visited Bristol often, and lived there for a time.

The woman in the portrait, in full Quaker dress including the green apron she habitually wore, is clearly the same woman as in the earlier sketch, but aged. Her cheeks are thinner, but she has the same direct look straight at us, and the same slight tilt of the mouth. This is a confident woman.

This would be the portrait about which Clemene wrote in 1775 *On seeing a Picture of the once celebrated May Drummond (a Preacher among the Quakers) in the Character of Winter.*[457] He talks of the 'Thy wrinkled cheek, and deafen'd ear.'[458] It is a cruel poem and we can hope that May Drummond, who was still alive when it was published, never saw it.

Who would commission such a portrait? If May Drummond herself did so, then she was clearly defying the prevailing Quaker mood. If someone else did so, say an admirer or a family member, she was clearly willing to sit for the portrait, and again this would be regarded with disapproval.

If we accept that Jonathan Richardson executed both works, then it is likely the sketch was done in 1733, and the portrait about ten years later, by which time she had aged. The only alternative, if the portrait was of her in much later life, is that it was done by Richardson's son, also named Jonathan, who was also a portrait painter.

The present whereabouts of this portrait are not known. I have been unable to find it recorded in any public collection so must assume it is still in private hands.

[457] The Town and Country Magazine, London, April 1773.
[458] See Appendix B for the full poem.

APPENDIX B

Poetry written to or about May Drummond

On the noted and celebrated Quaker, Mrs Drummond.
By a young lady

Hail happy virgin of celestial race,
Adorn'd with wisdom, and replete with grace.
By contemplation you ascend above,
So fill your breast with true seraphick love.
And when you from that sacred mount descend,
You give us rules our morals to amend.
Those pious maxims you your self apply,
And make the universe your family.
No more, *O Spain!* Thy Saint Teresa boast,
Here's one outshines her on the British coast,
Whose soul like hers views one Almighty end,
And to that centre all its motions tend.
Too long indeed our sex has been deny'd,
And ridicul'd by men's malignant pride,
Who fearful of a just return forbore,
And made it criminal to teach us more.
That woman had no soul, was their pretence,
And womans spelling past for woman sense.
'Till you most generous heroine stood forth,
And shew'd your sex's aptitude and worth.
Were there no more, yet you bright maid alone
Might for a world of vanity atone.
Redeem the coming age, and set us free
From that false brand of incapacity.
X.

The Gentleman's Magazine, September 1735, 555.

Verses on several of the Quaker Teachers

. . .
But see where gentle *Drummond* next appears
With sense and judgment far above her years.
From noble Caledonian blood she sprung;
And soft persuasion tipt her easy tongue!
When to heav'n's king she doth direct her pray'r,
Th'astonish'd multitude press close to hear;
And when she preaches, how the list'ning throng
Admire the melting musick of her tongue!
And while with ev'ry theme the maid complies,
She bids alternate passions fall and rise!

The London Magazine 1736; quoted in William E.A.Axon, JFHS 1908 Vol. 5 No.1

The following verses were written by Fanny Henshaw and may have been part of a letter intended to be sent to May Drummond, written at a time when Fanny was being prevented both by her guardian and her sister from joining the Quakers. The spelling is her own.

Hail, happy May, to whom a power is given
The world to teach, and tread the path to Heaven,
Who in obedience to thy Saviour's call
Thy country has forsook and kindred all.
Oh! Had too by thy example taught
Laid out my all this jewel to have bought,
I should not here have staid o'erwhelmed with Greif,
Absent from thee, and all dear Friends' Releif.

William Law, 'New Light on Fanny Henshaw's Convincement' 79.

A Letter from a Young Lawyer to a Scholar in Trinity College; Or, Some Remarks on Mr Oswald Edward's jibing LETTER to Mrs May Drummond, the Famous QUAKER Preacher from Edinburgh (Dublin 1738).

From Scotland a female of excellent Parts
(Tho' unskill'd in Scholastical Logical Arts)
Came hither to preach – but to preach without Hire
This kindled Episcopal Anger and Fire,
And rais'd a contention all over the Nation
Concerning her skill in *Divine Revelation*.
Multitudes crowded to hear her display
Her thoughts on Religion her Language and way
Of directing the wild Apprehensions of Men
Where to find and possess the Philosopher's Stone
The Stone that supported the Churches of old,
Which truly can mystical Scriptures unfold,
Without the assistance of Logical rules,
Of Methods invented to wrangle in Schools.
…

The Female Speaker, or the Priests in the Wrong, being an Epistle from the celebrated Mrs. D—mm—d to Dr. St—b—g and Mr. F---st-r Occasioned by their dispute on the subject of Heresy. London 1735.

From the remotest Bank of Northern Tay,
Or where Tweed's Stream in flow Meanders stray,
A Female Champion for the Truth I come,
Drove by the Spirit from my Native Home;
And know Thou* Man in Black, for all thy Spite,
That we She Saints not only speak, but write.
Cease then, ye Crew, against the Sex to bawl, *Orator H----nly
For, Railing, ye commence Old Women all.
Why should not Women teach? Ev'n ye agree
That the Male Sex can't talk so fast as we.
A Woman's Eloquence Mankind bewitches,
And Petticoats have greater Charm than Breeches.
Were Women in your House allow'd to speak,
The o'er-throng'd Seats and Benches soon wou'd break;
Each Maiden wou'd her natural Gifts improve,
(for Tongue and Spirit wou'd forever move.)
Your Belles cloath'd in white Gown, and neat Straw Hat,
To holding Forth wou'd change their idle Chat;
For Disputations shew themselves most able,
And make the Steeple-house a meer Tea-table.

Of all the Female Members 'tis most hard,
From use of Tongue alone to be debarr'd;
Ye grant us Charms, inward and outward Light,
And that to Kiss -- in Unity -- is right;
And sure no part doth more to us belong.
Than doth that harmless Particle the Tongue.

…
What Transport must the Female Speaker fire.
Her outward Woman shining neat, and clean,
With Cap close pinch'd, black Gown and Apron green.
(Tho' we should not to fleshly thoughts give room,
But the Glass tells me I the Dress become.)
…

On seeing a Picture of the once celebrated May Drummond (a Preacher among the Quakers) in the Character of Winter.

O Thou, whose image, here portray'd,
  Wakes and inspires the plaintive muse,
Attend! Behold the tribute paid;
  Not song nor tear can she refuse.

Full justly has the artist plann'd
  In Winter's guise thy furrowed brow;
And justly rais'd they feeble hand
  Above the elemental glow.

I gaze upon that well-known face,
  But ah! Beneath December's frost
Lies buried all its vernal grace,
  And every trace of May is lost.

Nor merely on thy trembling frame,
  Thy wrinkled cheek, and deafen'd ear
But on thy fortunes and thy frame,
  Relentless WINTER frowns severe.

Ah! Where is now the numerous crowd
  That once with fond attention hung
On every truth divine that flow'd,
  Improv'd, from thy persuasive tongue.

'Tis gone! – it seeks a different road;
  Life's social joys to thee are o'er;
Untrod the path to that abode
  Where hapless penury keeps the door.

Drummond, thine audience yet recall,
  Recall the young, the gay, the vain;
And, e'er thy tottering fabric fall,
  Sound forth the deeply moral strain.

For never, sure, could bard or sage,
  Howe'er inspired, more clearly shew,
That all, upon this transient stage,
  Is folly, vanity, or woe.

Bid them at once be warn'd or taught;
  Ah! No! – suppress th'ungrateful tale;
O'er every frailty, every fault,
  Oblivion, draw thy friendly veil!

Tell rather what transcendent joy
Awaits them on th'immortal shore
Is well they summer's strength employ,
And well distribute autumn's store.

Tell them, if virtue crowned their bloom,
Time shall the happy period bring,
When the dark WINTER of the tomb
Shall yield to everlasting spring.

CLEMENE
The Monthly Ledger, London, August 1773, 434

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Abbreviations:

BL	British Library
LSF	Library of the Society of Friends, London
JFHS	Journal of the Friends Historical Society
NRS	National Records of Scotland
ODNB	Oxford Dictionary of National Biography
SP	www.Scotlandspeople.gov.uk

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