

From the journal of Richard Davies (ca. 1669)

Before we parted with Roger Pritchard we appointed a meeting at his house, which was in Almeley Wootton.

The Lord helped us in our journey and we came there according to the time appointed and a large, sweet, comfortable meeting we had; I know not that any meeting had been there before.

I appointed another meeting to be held there; and in a few weeks after my return home I went accordingly.

The concern of that part of the county of Hereford was much upon me and I was often there and when the people of that village saw me come, they would say to one another:

"Come, let us go to Mr. Pritchard's, for we shall have prayers there tonight": and the house hath been soon near full of people.

A comfortable time we used to have together and many were gathered to the Lord in those parts.

As for Roger Pritchard, the Lord blessed him in his basket and his store, and his heart and his house were open to friends, and he built a fine meeting house at his own charge and also gave a burying place, and settled both upon friends for that service; and lived and died in love and favour with God and in unity with his brethren.

Say to the righteous, it shall go well with them.

Friends' Meeting House, Almeley Wootton Herefordshire

A Brief History

Richard Davies (with his friend, John ap John) made the first reference to Almeley Meeting in their travels about 1669. Roger Pritchard gave the meeting house, an adaptation of earlier cottage buildings, to Friends in 1672. Since then it has been used almost continuously by Friends.

Edward Pritchard, son of Roger, was one of the thirteen signatories of William Penn's 1682 Charter for Pennsylvania, and 'with his brother in law, William Eckley of Kimbolton, shared in Penn's Holy Experiment. Hanging inside the Meeting House is a record, presented by Governor Duff of Pennsylvania in 1948, of the link between Almeley and the founding of that state.

During the nineteenth century the Meeting was at a low ebb with only occasional meetings, but in 1881 there began a period of great activity with Mission Meetings, Bible Meetings, a Band of Hope, as well as the normal Meetings for Worship. An additional Meeting House was built 11/2 miles away at Woonton for some of these activities, and it was kept open for over 90 years. In 1882 and for the next 30 years Friends' Home Mission Committee provided a full time worker for Almeley.

In the early twentieth century many young Friends from the district emigrated, mostly to Quaker settlements in Canada. The withdrawal of the Mission worker helped the decline in activities, but there were enough members to keep the Meeting alive and again it recovered in strength.

By 1957 Almeley Meeting House was in a very poor state so extensive restoration was undertaken. Worm eaten and rotten wall timbers were replaced, dry rot eradicated, weather boarding removed to expose the timbers and a new foundation wall of stone was built all round. Replacement oak beams came from two nearby country houses which had been demolished. New oak benches and furniture were made by Arthur Reynolds of Ludlow.

The Meeting House remained one simple room until 1981 when an extension was completed to give a much needed children's room, kitchen and toilet facilities. The additional chairs were given by Pennsylvania Friends.

Repairs and alterations have hardly detracted from the original form of the Meeting House. The quiet simplicity and atmosphere of devotion has been maintained – a legacy of over three hundred years of Quaker worship in this ancient Meeting House, set in the peace and loveliness of the Herefordshire countryside.