

THE BRYNMAWR EXPERIMENT 1928-1940
QUAKER VALUES AND ARTS AND CRAFTS PRINCIPLES

by

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ABSTRACT

This is a study of the social work of Quakers in the town of Brynmawr in South Wales during the depressions of the 1920s and 1930s. The work, which took place during the years 1928 to 1940, has become known as the Brynmawr Experiment. The initial provision of practical and financial relief for a town suffering severely from the effects of unemployment, was developed with the establishment of craft workshops to provide employment. Special reference is made to the furniture making workshop and the personnel involved with it.

The thesis attempts to trace links between the moral and aesthetic values of Quakerism and the Arts and Crafts Movement and explores the extent to which the guiding principles of the social witness project and the furniture making enterprise resemble those of the Arts and Crafts Movement of the inter-war years, 1919-1939.

All aspects of the Quaker work at Brynmawr were prompted by concern for social justice and upholding the dignity of each individual. These were also the concerns of John Ruskin and William Morris which motivated the formation of the Arts and Crafts Movement in the 1880s. The Arts and Crafts principles which persisted into the twentieth century in the craft communities of C. R. Ashbee and of Eric Gill, and in the craftsmanship of the Cotswold furniture makers, provides an Arts and Crafts context for the Brynmawr furniture.

It is argued that similarities between the aesthetic and moral principles of the members of the Religious Society of Friends (Quakers) and those of Ruskin, Morris and their followers establish a synonymy in which they are linked by a common integrity. It is further argued that as a social project arising out of and responding to the specific economic conditions of the time, the Brynmawr Experiment and its furniture making enterprise is, by virtue of such links with Arts and Crafts, a potentially unique Quaker social witness project.

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My interest in the Brynmawr Experiment was aroused by family association with the Quaker relief work before World War II and the Brynmawr furniture in their homes.

I was granted an Eva Koch Fellowship to study the subject at Woodbrooke, the Quaker Study Centre in Birmingham. The outcome of my research was 'Quaker Relief Work and the Brynmawr Experiment' published in *The Woodbrooke Journal* by Woodbrooke Quaker Centre in 2000. In the course of that study I discovered the significance for Quaker history of the individual Quakers most closely responsible for the work at Brynmawr and also that there was very little of their work collated into a consecutive record of the Brynmawr Experiment. My warmest thanks are due to Woodbrooke, its staff and fellow students for comfort, companionship and twenty-four hour access to the Library.

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ABBREVIATIONS

BYM	Britain Yearly Meeting
CDC	Coalfields Distress Committee
FCFU	Friends' Christian Fellowship Union
FH	Friends' house
FHME	Friends' Home Mission and Extension Committee
FHS	Friend's Home Service Committee
ICC	Industrial Crisis Committee
ICS	Industrial Crisis Sub-Committee
ILP	Independent Labour Party
IVS	International Voluntary Service
JTB	James T. Baily
LYM	London Yearly Meeting
LSF	Library of Society of Friends, Friends house
MfS	Meeting for Sufferings
NADE	Journal of the National Association of Design Education
NMAG/ NPTMG	Newport Museum and Art Gallery
NCSS	National Council for Social Service
QFP	Quaker Faith and Practice
SPS	Subsistence Production Society
SWCSS	South Wales Council for Social Service
SWMM	South Wales Monthly Meeting
UDC	Urban District Council
WSOC	War and Social Order Committee
YF	Young Friends

AUTHOR'S DECLARATION

At no time during the registration for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy has the author been registered for any other University award without prior agreement of the Graduate Committee.

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CHAPTER ONE

INTRODUCTION

In this study comparisons show that the principles of John Ruskin and William Morris, which influenced the members of the Arts and Crafts Movement, bore a strong similarity to those of the Religious Society of Friends (Quakers). These principles continued to guide the Arts and Crafts furniture makers, some of whom were Quakers, who were in business in the first half of the twentieth century.

The focal point of the thesis is Brynmawr, a small town in South Wales, which suffered the effects of unemployment in the economic depressions of the inter-war years, 1919-1939. Among the many endeavours to give help to those in circumstances of deprivation was a project known as the Brynmawr Experiment, initiated and led by Peter Scott, supported by other members of the Religious Society of Friends.

My interest in the subject was aroused by family experience of the economic Depression of the 1930s, and acquaintance with Friends who had been associated with the Quaker relief work at that time. The opportunity to undertake a period of research at Woodbrooke, the Quaker Study Centre in Birmingham, resulted in the publication of an introductory study of the Experiment¹ That study revealed aspects of the subject relevant to the Quaker concern for social justice which warranted further exploration.

Analysis of the Brynmawr Experiment showed it to have been a social witness project in the tradition of the Quaker concern for humanity which had motivated Quaker work since the seventeenth century.² This concern was put into practice throughout the following centuries by the provision of opportunities for occupation and employment by which dignity and self-respect of the individual could be upheld. This same concern was put into effect at Brynmawr with the setting up of craft workshops, one of which produced a commercially successful range of domestic furniture.

¹Pamela Manasseh, *Quaker Relief Work and the Brynmawr Experiment* (Birmingham: Woodbrooke Quaker Study Centre, 2000).

²'True godliness don't turn men out of the world but enables them to live better in it and excites their endeavours to mend it.' William Penn, 1682, *Quaker Faith and Practice*: 23.02.

The argument supports the proposition that, as an humanitarian and productive project sustained by those principles shared with the Arts and Crafts Movement, the Brynmawr Experiment holds a potentially singular place in the history of Quaker social witness by virtue of that correspondence.

A range of sources has been consulted which, for the Brynmawr Experiment, are both primary and secondary. For discussion of Arts and Crafts in relation to the Religious Society of Friends, and thus also to the Brynmawr Experiment, secondary material has been relied on.

PRIMARY SOURCES

Unpublished manuscripts

The collections of unpublished manuscript material relating to the Brynmawr Experiment are held at the Quaker library at Friends' House in London (LSF) and Newport (South Wales) Museum and Art Gallery (NMAG) with a small quantity at the National Museum of Wales, St Fagans. The whole content has been investigated.

Friends' House Library

Temp mss 508 at LSF contains the papers of Henry Ecroyd, both family records, and particularly documents 508.22-34, which relate to his employment as assistant to Peter Scott's chief accountant, book-keeping for the Brynmawr factories and the Subsistence Production Units (SPS).³ (See note 2 of the section *Notes on Sources and their use*, below). These documents concern, in the main, the period after 1934 in which responsibility for the Quaker work at Brynmawr was held by An Order of friends, henceforward referred to as An Order.⁴ The documents most relevant to the thesis are 508.22 and 508.23. Many of the documents in 508.23 replicate the Matt documents in the archive at the Newport Museum and Art Gallery which are referred to below. 508.28

³Temp. Mss. 508 22-34 LSF, London.

⁴An Order is discussed in detail in Chapter Four.

contains the reports of An Order which are also accessible on the open shelves. LSF also holds papers relating to John Dennithorne, who, while not closely associated with Brynmawr, was responsible for a Quaker settlement nearby at Dowlais, and whose archive contains the 1937 catalogue of Brynmawr furniture.⁵

With analysis of the Brynmawr Experiment it became clear that detailed research of the SPS would not be required for the thesis, so there has been no occasion to cite 508.24-32.

Minute Books

In response to Friends' concern for industrial relations and the social consequences of the General Strike in 1926, Meeting for Sufferings (MfS) appointed a small 'watching' group to observe political developments. From this group evolved several Friends' House committees of varying composition and authority and which were responsible for the initiation and development of the Quaker relief work at Brynmawr. As sub-committees to committees of MfS their reports were minuted by MfS, and subsequently paraphrased for reports to Yearly Meeting (LYM).⁶ The Industrial Crisis Sub-Committee (ICS) and the Coalfields Distress Committee (CDC) Minutes which range from 1926 until 1930 have been scrutinised. There has also been selective examination of the Minutes of the same years of Friends' Home Mission and Extension Committee (FHME) and of Friends' Home Service Committee (FHS) which replaced it, to follow up particular matters, and selective examination also of the Minutes of MfS and LYM, published as 'Proceedings,' when it seemed that a particular report might be important.

⁵Mss. Acc. 10798 LSF, London.

⁶LYM is now re-titled Britain Yearly Meeting (BYM). It is referred to in the thesis by the acronym appropriate to the period of the text. LYM/BYM gathers once a year. Meeting for Sufferings is its executive group which meets regularly in the interim.

Gwent Record Office

The Minutes of South Wales Monthly Meeting (SWMM) were searched for details of the membership of Brynmawr Quaker Meeting which was set up by Friends soon after their arrival there.

Newport (Gwent) Museum and Art Gallery

The Newport archive is identified as *Collection SCHST* and a note states that the whole accession 'was contained in two box files and comprises letters, notes, pamphlets, tapes and transparencies collected by Walter Lucas and Roger Cucksey for the display of Brynmawr Furniture at Newport Museum.' Numbers of the items within the boxes run from NPTMG:1994.62 – 180.45, with some of the sequence omitted. This provides information about the years in which the Quaker relief work began at Brynmawr and in which the craft workshops were set up. Further classification refers to the items of furniture held by the Museum.

The one time curator of the Newport Museum and Art Gallery, Walter Lucas, took an interest in the Brynmawr furniture and was responsible for much of this archive as he intended to display the furniture in an exhibition. There is no record of this proposed exhibition having taken place, and no proposed date. The relevant correspondence between Walter Lucas and Paul Matt, dated 1984, indicates clearly that the intended exhibition was to be at Newport and organised by Lucas. There is no further indication of a Newport exhibition, but a Brynmawr Furniture exhibition was held at St Fagans, the Welsh Folk Museum in Cardiff, in the spring of 1994 (see below). This was organised by T. Alun Davies, keeper of the Welsh National Furniture Collections there. In correspondence, Alun Davies referred to the furniture collection at Newport 'in the care of my colleague Mr Walter Lucas' but said that it was quite separate from 'our rather moderate collection.' There is no indication that there was collaboration for either the proposed Newport

exhibition or the actual one at St Fagans.⁷ (See note 1 of the section *Notes on Sources and their use* below).

Most significant for the thesis is the Matt-Lucas correspondence in which Matt gave information about his design and construction of Brynmawr Furniture and which is used in Chapter Six. This correspondence is catalogued as NPTMG: 1994.75 (GROUP). Explanation of the referencing of this correspondence is given in note 4 of the section *Notes and their use* below.

Brynmawr Furniture and catalogues

Interest taken by T. Alun Davies, at St Fagans, (see above), resulted in an exhibition of Brynmawr Furniture there in the spring of 1994. No catalogue was produced for this exhibition, but a number of explanatory panels formed a backdrop for the displays. Some of the furniture on show was held by St.Fagans⁸ with some pieces having been lent by private owners.

It is explained in Chapter Six that marketing the Brynmawr furniture in the 1920s and 1930s was through the medium of exhibitions held in the showrooms of sympathetic department stores and in Friends' Meeting Houses. No catalogue for the first years of production is held in the archives. In these years from 1928 Paul Matt made prototype pieces, his designs were made up by employees, trainees and apprentices. There is no information about the skill of these first employees. There is a catalogue of 45 items in February 1935, but no indication of how long it had been available before this date.⁹ The price list for the 1936 catalogue contains 72 items, now including a range of walnut and another of painted furniture.¹⁰ The ranges are discussed in Chapter Six.

⁷Personal letters from Alun Davies, undated but with ref TAD/epd. Replies were dated 14 May and 1 August 1984.

⁸St Fagans furniture collection: 40.82.1-2; F79.34.1-7; 1988.3a; F89.6. 1-9; F92.84.1-7; F93.2-5; F95.21; F97.1-2; F95.135.

⁹St Fagans, National Museum of Wales archive. No other reference available from the furniture department.

¹⁰NPTMG:1994:180.21.GROUP.

Otherwise extant Brynmawr furniture is in private possession, and with the exception of a few pieces, its whereabouts unknown. A few donated items are on display in the recently established Brynmawr Museum. Access to the Brynmawr furniture, held in storage at Tredegar House (Newport Museum), was given in 2005 by personal arrangement with the archivist, who allowed photographs to be taken. This furniture is uncared for, and no plans were in hand at the time of the visit, for repair and restoration. For the benefit of the archive, the importance of two items in particular in this collection was reported. These are firstly, the prototype sideboard, the first piece Paul Matt made at Brynmawr and which he said 'is interesting historically as showing the development of the panels which were the making of the Brynmawr furniture.'¹¹ Secondly, there are the two pieces of board of which he wrote 'through thick and thin, I hung onto what must now be the only two pieces of Australian walnut laminated board that are left in the world' which he donated to the Museum for use in Walter Lucas's proposed exhibition, above. These pieces are not catalogued in the archive.¹²

Paul Matt's personal papers comprise the correspondence with the curator referred to above, details of his family background and his reminiscences of his work as craftsman, designer and manager of the furniture enterprise at Brynmawr. His membership of the Religious Society of Friends followed from his experience of Quaker support for the men at Knockaloe camp in the Isle of Man where his father, Charles, was interned during World War I¹³ Paul Matt has described the philosophy which governed his furniture design, but at no place has he made reference to precedent for it nor of influence on his design beyond that of his father, from whom he learned his craftsmanship.¹⁴ In the correspondence of his

¹¹NPTMG: 1984.75 GROUP. Paul Matt to Walter Lucas, 14 January 1984.

¹² NPTMG:1984.75 GROUP. Paul Matt to Walter Lucas, 18 April 1984.

¹³At Knockaloe, Charles Matt, a master craftsman, was given the task of organising woodwork classes for the internees. This was instigated by James T.Baily and supported by Friends who were concerned for the well being of the men who were suffering from idleness and depression in their imprisonment. James Baily's work is discussed in Chapter Six.

¹⁴NPTMG:1994. 180.38.

latter years he showed his own respect for his work and his awareness that it was of some significance, as he tried to ensure that it was publicly acknowledged and cared for.¹⁵

Paul Matt's reminiscences give some evidence of the early days of the furniture factory, but only Mrs Dora Churchward is known to have made any comment on his work as manager and trainer of the apprentices, as described in an interview with Mr Lucas, recorded on cassette tape in the Newport archive (see above).¹⁶ These tapes include also conversations with Brynmawr residents, unidentified, who remembered the furniture making, and are of most value for the few comments about the training in woodwork given to the young apprentices.¹⁷

A serious drawback has been the lack of any record of the finances and general management of the Brynmawr factories. Helen Reynolds, the wife of Matt's successor, Arthur Reynolds, has referred to the fact that papers survived the fire that destroyed the furniture factory,¹⁸ but where they went and what happened to them after that cannot be said.¹⁹ Personal and office records of sales, profit and loss statements, purchase of materials, equipment, publicity, packaging and delivery would have given valuable insight into the management of the furniture making enterprise, and permitted the plotting of progress and the successes and failures of all the business ventures. After 1934 responsibility for the furniture factory was acquired by An Order and accounts were published in its Annual Reports as a legal requirement but run from 1936 only.²⁰

Cardiff Central Library

Brynmawr references held at this Library duplicate the printed sources held at Friends' House Library and Newport Museum and Art Gallery with only the catalogued

¹⁵NPTMG:1994.75 GROUP. Paul Matt to Walter Lucas, 27 June 1983.

¹⁶NPTMG: Box file, cassette 2b.

¹⁷NPTMG: Box file, cassette 2a.

¹⁸*The Friend*, 30 April 1937: 395.

¹⁹Helen Reynolds, Journal ?1933-4: 121, in private ownership of Garth Reynolds.

²⁰*An Order*. Annual Reports for 1936, 1937 and 1938.

Ministry of Labour document concerning the 'Industrial Conditions in certain Depressed Areas' produced in 1934 being of further interest, and unfortunately this was unavailable.

Buckinghamshire Record Office

A particular quest, was to the County Record Office in Aylesbury, to search for evidence of the meeting of Friends, and the identity of 'another small group,' at Jordans Meeting House in 1932 at which ideas for An Order were explored. The members of this other small group 'lived and worked in different parts of the country but shared the same ideas' and had 'established contact with the Brynmawr group through individual members.'²¹ The search revealed nothing of such a meeting, but local information was useful in showing that the Jordan Friends undertook a scheme for setting up 'village industries' in 1919.²²

Quaker Faith and Practice

To establish the source of the Quaker concern for social justice the published Yearly Meeting records were searched. A manuscript collection was made available to Friends from 1738 in response to their wish for 'a digest of the counsel on practice and government which was contained year by year in its epistles and other minutes and documents.' Its title was 'Christian and brotherly advices given forth from time to time by the Yearly Meetings in London, alphabetically digested under proper heads.' Its contents were revised and printed in 1783 with subsequent revisions and changes of title, all of which were consulted at Woodbrooke up to 1925 to establish the principle relevant to the period of the Brynmawr Experiment.²³

The index to the most recent revision (1995) of the above collections, *Quaker Faith and Practice (QFP)*, was used to find reference to, for example, arts, crafts, communities, simplicity, and other matters that might have proved relevant to the thesis. Quotations from

²¹*An Order. An Account of their Activities and Ideas* (Hereford: An Order, 1935): 10.

²²'History of Jordans Village.' Its Origins, Aims and Accomplishments' *Penn Pioneer and Jordans News-Sheet* 18 August, 1920: 2-4.

²³*Quaker Faith and Practice*, 1994: 612.

the original texts have been given where possible, but the text of *QFP* has been used where this was not feasible.

The title, the Religious Society of Friends, has evolved from the eighteenth century to common usage by the nineteenth, with the members being known as Friends, or Quakers.²⁴ Within the period of this study, however, there are documents and other references to the Society of Friends, omitting 'Religious'. Whichever name for the Society was used by the author has been used here.

The central committee Minutes referred to above detail the assistance given by the Religious Society of Friends in response to the distressing circumstances being endured by the families of the unemployed men in Brynmawr. A leading role was played by Joan Mary Fry, a weighty Friend,²⁵ who demonstrated her concern for social matters by taking responsibility for them from an early age. These same resources show also how Peter Scott, the key figure in the shaping and maintaining of the Brynmawr Experiment, undertook much Quaker committee work following his membership of the Religious Society of Friends in 1924. This is described in Chapter Four.

An approach to David Robson (senior), who had worked with Friends at the Maes-yr-Haf settlement brought the response that Peter Scott, the kingpin of the Brynmawr Experiment, 'is well worth researching – a truly practical visionary, who had a remarkable

²⁴Margery Post Abbott, Mary Ellen Chijioke, Pink Dandelion and John William Oliver Jr. (eds.). *The Historical Dictionary of Friends (Quakers)*. (Lanham, MD: Scarecrow Press, 2003): 241.

²⁵A weighty Friend is 'An individual in the meeting who is seen by others to have spiritual weight and whose insights are trusted. These individuals are often, but not always, in positions of leadership.' Abbott, *The Historical Dictionary of the Friends (Quakers)*: 296. 'The power to ascribe "weight" lies with the group', contributory factors being 'ministry in Meeting for Worship; business meeting contributions which can include specialist knowledge; responsibility and visibility; personal qualities; reputation.' Pink Dandelion, *A Sociological Analysis of the Theology of Quakers: the Silent Revolution* (Lewiston, New York: Edwin Mellen Press, 1996): 213.

As a young woman Joan Fry was a Poor Law Guardian, and 'emerged as a "public Friend" in her middle thirties'. Ruth Fawell, *Joan Mary Fry* (FHSC, 1959): 20. In the period of this thesis she was involved with Quaker relief services in Germany and Austria after 1918, with the settlements at Maes-yr-Haf and Dowlais, and the CDC and the unemployed of Brynmawr in the 1920s and 1930s. When the work of the CDC was concluded her interest in local allotments schemes was developed in association with John Robson, and which, with Government interest, became a national scheme. Joan Mary Fry, *Friends Lend a Hand* (London: Friends Book Centre, 1947). Her home was in Hampstead Garden Suburb, and she was a member of Golders Green Quaker Meeting.

gift for getting money from official sources.'²⁶ There are few relevant surviving manuscripts to explore with a view to composing a biography of Peter Scott. Local record offices have provided copies of relevant printed articles which, together with all the contemporary Quaker Minute Books in Gwent and Buckinghamshire Record Offices, and in Friends' House²⁷ have revealed no archive collections of Peter Scott's personal papers. There is sufficient evidence of Scott's activity at Brynmawr to provide some narrative, much being included in the Annual Reports of An Order, introduced below, advertising and fund raising appeals, and, more personally, his treatise, *Creative Life*.²⁸

It was difficult to decide how much importance to give to biographical information about Peter Scott. Margaret Pitt made it plain that he was a strong personality,²⁹ and one that Licia Kuenning would have recognised as a mythical hero, though of a later generation than the early Friends she referred to. She said that some of these Friends

have been turned into mythical heroes to represent the ideals and beliefs of one or another party in a later generation of Friends. They are quoted when the quote serves the speaker's purpose. They are ignored when what they said and did does not serve anyone's contemporary agenda.³⁰

In discussing a future for Quaker history H. Larry Ingle has given a list of topics within twentieth century Quaker history that 'need doing' among which are the names of Friends, whose lives 'lie unprobed.'³¹ Peter Scott is not one of those named and although he has been acknowledged in Quaker history his work has by no means been probed. Ingle remarked also that 'Quaker scholars seemed compelled to express their gratitude to the forebears in the faith by glossing over their foibles, ignoring differences that sometimes

²⁶David Robson in personal correspondence, 26 August: 1999.

²⁷Jordans FMH, in Buckinghamshire had conference facilities, which were frequently used by Friends in the period of the thesis.

²⁸Peter Scott, *Creative Life*, Tracts for our Times series, no.1, (London: Allenson, 1933).

²⁹Margaret Pitt, *Our Unemployed: Can the Past Teach the Present? Work Done with the Unemployed in the 1920s and 1930s*, (London: by the author, 1982): 37-41.

³⁰Licia Kuenning, *Understanding the Quaker Past* (Pennsylvania: Quaker Heritage Press. 2003): 1. <http://www.qhpress.org/aboutqhp/qpast.html>,(accessed 02/12/2005).

³¹Larry Ingle, 'The Future of Quaker History', *Journal of the Friends Historical Society* vol.58, no.1, (1997): 11.

soured relations between them.³² Much of the direction taken by the Quakers at Brynmawr resulted from the foibles of Scott, and while the thesis was not intended to be his biography, his responsibility was such that it seemed best to make an interim 'Peter Scott' chapter, which is Chapter Four.

Besides the need for certain biographies Ingle notes also an opening for examination of Quaker missions, and as the Experiment was the end result of a particular mission from which previously unremarked biographical details emerge, this project contributes to the closing of that gap and adds previously unreported material to Quaker social history.

Newspapers and Journals

The national press was interested in the Experiment, and several articles appeared in the *Manchester Guardian*, probably as a result of Peter Scott's skill in seeking publicity and inviting financial donations.³³ Similarly, he impressed *The Spectator*, which ran a series of articles in 1931 and floated an appeal to its readers for funds to be given at Christmas to the needy in Brynmawr.³⁴ Articles also appeared in contemporary social and economic Journals, and brought a more critical comment, which balanced the enthusiastic support for the Experiment given by the others.³⁵ Other source material concerning Brynmawr is, for the most part, in contemporary articles published in Quaker journals, and the correspondence in *The Friend*,³⁶ written by Friends from their personal experience of the work at Brynmawr.

³²Ingle, 'The Future of Quaker History': 4.

³³For example: 'The Brynmawr Experiment. Giving a Town New Life', *Manchester Guardian* 6 July 1931.

³⁴For example: 'Brynmawr – a Derelict Town and a New Life', *The Spectator* (12 December 1931).

³⁵For example: D. H. Robertson, 'An Economist Looks at Brynmawr' *The Welsh Outlook*, (August 1932) and Alun Burge, ' "A Subtle Danger"?: The Voluntary Sector and Coalfield Society in South Wales 1926-1939' *Llafur. Journal of Welsh Labour History*, Vol.7, (1998-99): 127-141.

³⁶*The Friend*, a weekly Quaker journal, is accessible to all Friends, who either subscribe to it personally, share copies or read it at their Meeting House. An independent Quaker publication, it carries news and reports, articles of topical interest, and has correspondence columns and personal advertisements.

The Friend was searched from May 1926 until the end of 1980 for articles, correspondence, obituaries and advertisements concerning Brynmawr. The articles generated correspondence and response in the journal and are referenced in the thesis where they have been quoted. The advertisements and articles showed how funds were raised for the projects with appeals for donations, and commentaries on the achievements at Brynmawr aimed at keeping Friends' interest in them alive. These appeared less frequently after 1932 when responsibility for Brynmawr matters lay no longer with Friends' House but with Peter Scott, and shortly after was assumed by An Order.

The journal, *Friends' Quarterly Examiner (FQE)*, described itself from its inception in 1867 as 'A Religious, Social and Miscellaneous Review conducted by Members of the Society of Friends.' A search of the General Index from 1867 to its end in 1900, with additional indexing in handwriting to 1912, showed a wide range of Friends' interest in their Society.³⁷ There is some reflection of contemporary problems with a concern for unemployment appearing in 1921 and 1922, and with consideration of the Society's position regarding social and industrial questions in 1927.³⁸ It also held articles concerning John Ruskin, though with little relevance beyond confirming the Society's growing interest in the arts.³⁹ This search for relevant comment was continued in *Friends' Quarterly* to date.

Community House at Brynmawr published a newsletter, *Towards a New Community*, edited by Peter Scott and intended to be issued quarterly, from 1937-1946.⁴⁰

³⁷General Index to the Friends Quarterly Examiner from 1867-1900 (London: West, Newman & Co., 1901).

³⁸Annie A. Thorp, 'John Ruskin', *Friends' Quarterly Examiner* 1897: 478-491.
Gladys M. Hall, 'The Problem of Unemployment and the Function of the Employment Exchanges,' *Friends' Quarterly Examiner* 1921: 250-256.

Charles R. Simpson, 'Unemployment. Causes and Remedies', *Friends' Quarterly Examiner*, 1922: 128-134.

B. Seebohm Rowntree and others, 'The Function of the Society of Friends with regard to Social and Industrial Questions,' *Friends' Quarterly Examiner*, 1927: 265-291.

³⁹William Graveson, 'John Ruskin,' *Friends' Quarterly Examiner* 1893: 421-432. This article is a review of W. G. Collingwood's *Life and Work of John Ruskin* published by Methuen in that year.

⁴⁰*Towards the New Community*. Issues 1937-1940 quarterly; 1941-46 biannually. Brynmawr Community House (1937-1946).

The collection held at LSF is incomplete (assuming that production was not intermittent) and there is no indication of to whom, or how, it was circulated. Before the war articles in *Towards a New Community* were concerned with the activities of the SPS and the Brynmawr Community Centre, but a change of format took place under a new editor, Bruce Campbell. This coincides with the closing of the Brynmawr furniture factory and Scott's new appointment as Rural Land Agent. Articles were occasionally contributed by both Peter Scott and his second wife, Richenda, but his personal connection with Brynmawr was less after 1941 and a new community was no longer anticipated.

Films

Two films have some relevance. *Today We Live* is a professionally produced film, with commentary depicting South Cerney in Gloucestershire, Pentre in the Rhondda Valley of South Wales and officials of the National Council of Social Service (NCSS).⁴¹ One of these officials is Paul Matt. If the date for the film given in the Archive is correct its relevance for the Brynmawr Experiment lies in showing Paul Matt talking with members of a South Wales NCSS Unemployed Club. The year in which Matt left Brynmawr furniture-making for employment with the NCSS thus seems to be in or by 1933, though there is no other confirmation of the date. *Brynmawr and Clydach Valley Industries Ltd. Gwalia Works, Brynmawr* is a 16mm cine film made by Ralph Clarke, a member of Scarborough Friends' Meeting. It is undated but likely to have been made early in the Experiment as it was produced to inform, and invite donations to the work.⁴² Brynmawr and Clydach Valley Industries Ltd (BCVI) was registered as a company in 1930.

⁴¹*Today We Live: a film of life in Britain*. Strand Films Co., Associated Film Distributors Ltd (1933). Producer Paul Rotha, directors Ralph Bond and R. I. Grierson with commentary by Howard Marshall. National Film and Television Archive ref.: Rhondda I, 431368. VHS copy by National Film and Television Archive, of the British Film Institute and in my ownership.

⁴²*Brynmawr and Clydach Valley Industries Ltd. Gwalia Works, Brynmawr*. 16mm cine film made by Ralph Clarke, a member of Scarborough Friends Meeting, (?1930-32). VHS copy in personal ownership.

Other printed primary sources

Margaret Pitt was one of the first Friends to live in the Quaker community at Brynmawr in 1928. A young woman, having joined the Religious Society of Friends about a year previously, ‘full of youthful enthusiasm, a sense of release, and idealistic socialism’, she volunteered to help with the relief work.⁴³ Over fifty years later, at a period of economic depression similar to that of the 1920s, she wrote of her experience at Brynmawr and of the work with the unemployed, posing the question ‘*Can the past teach the present?*’ in the title of her book.

Pitt’s correspondence in the LSF archive preceding the publication of *Our Unemployed* reveals the concern she had for accuracy in the preparation of her draft.⁴⁴ Her book contains the only published biographical material there is about Peter Scott beyond his obituaries and she was able to write from personal knowledge. Besides having worked alongside Scott at Brynmawr in 1929 she kept in contact with her Brynmawr friends throughout her life, including the Matts, the Churchwards and the Wilkinsons. She consulted others as well, and those experienced at reading Quaker documents will admire the way Pitt indicated Scott’s shortcomings without overt censure.⁴⁵

Published in 1934 was Hilda Jennings’ case study of Brynmawr.⁴⁶ This study, for which the basis was the information gathered from a survey of the town, was made in the years from September 1929 to August 1932. The purpose of the survey was to find information and assess it, looking for a solution to the unemployment situation that had brought distress and difficulty to the community.⁴⁷ Its significance for this thesis lies in the

⁴³Pitt, *Our Unemployed*: 8.

⁴⁴LSF. Temp Mss 508/23.

⁴⁵For example: ‘Peter felt his inspired schemes should not be curbed by anyone’ and ‘the leader of the Order [Scott] could be too powerful. Several members of the Order were dismissed in a way which seemed unjust, because they did not go along with Peter’s inspiration.’ Pitt, *Our Unemployed*: 38 and 40.

⁴⁶Hilda Jennings, *Brynmawr: a Study of a Distressed Area based on the results of the Social Survey carried out by the Brynmawr Community Study Council* (London: Allenson, 1934a).

⁴⁷Jennings, *Brynmawr*: v.

main for the unique survey procedure, the enquiries being in the hands of the people of Brynmawr themselves. Jennings's work, both in guiding the survey and collating the findings for publication, is that of an academic trained in social studies. Her personal philosophy is not apparent until her last chapter, 'The Ideal as Motive', where it becomes clear that she had an interest in the Experiment over and above her academic one. There, her writing style changed as she expressed with what reads as controlled emotion, her desire for society to find a sense of community. 'A common ideal inspired by some basic conviction, alone can raise the individual and the community above the level of apathy, opportunism and ignoble greed.'⁴⁸ This vision was then taken further in her booklet *The New Community*, also published in 1934, but after *Brynmawr*, and described in a Foreword by H. J. Fleure as

a confession of faith of one who has done hard labour in and for a distressed community, facing opposition and disillusionment and maintaining the belief that system and organization are of themselves feeble, and need the backing of personal friendships and loyalties if they are to effect anything.⁴⁹

Whether the reference to her work at Brynmawr here came from Jennings herself or from Fleure cannot be said, but it clearly suggests that the early years of the Quaker work at Brynmawr did not go smoothly.

In *Brynmawr* the description of the Experiment is confined to the penultimate chapter XIII, 'An Experiment in Reconstruction' which of necessity takes the discussion no further than the setting up and progress of the craft industries to the date of publication, 1934. By that time the unviable craft workshops had closed. The boot factory was prospering and the furniture factory, while well into production, was not yet at its most prolific and successful, as described in Chapter Three Herein. Jennings' work was sponsored by the University College of South Wales, supported and advised by Le Play House Society for Social Surveys, the Agricultural Economics Department of University

⁴⁸Jennings, *Brynmawr*: 234 -38.

⁴⁹Hilda Jennings, *The New Community* (London: Allenson, 1934b): 5.

College, Aberystwyth and authoritative local officials.⁵⁰ To organise and supervise the conduct of the survey Jennings lived in Brynmawr and worked cordially with Peter Scott, though her references to him personally are few.⁵¹

An insight into the way voluntary working parties helped the local voluntary labour in the reconstructive and building schemes at Brynmawr is given by John S. (Jack) Hoyland (1887-1957), Quaker academic, missionary to India and a prolific writer. In the period of the Brynmawr Experiment he took an active interest in promoting fellowship and social concern through schemes for work camps, particularly for young people. Two anecdotal books told of their projects and in spite of the anonymity of the venue which he called 'Moortown', he was clearly writing of Brynmawr.⁵² Of interest is the contribution of his 'Gang' of boy volunteers to the work parties of the International Voluntary Service, organised by Jean Inebnit at the invitation of Peter Scott.⁵³ These parties contributed to the voluntary work schemes at Brynmawr that cleaned and improved the appearance of the town and built the swimming pool.

Aspects of The Brynmawr Experiment are noted in the report made to the Pilgrim Trust, published in 1938 as *Men Without Work*, a comprehensive study of unemployment intended primarily to provide information by which the Trust could be guided to the best use of its funds.⁵⁴ Its examination of the use of leisure as a factor in reconstructing society

⁵⁰Jennings, *Brynmawr*: vii, 145 and 209, and Pitt, *Our Unemployed*: 18.

⁵¹Pitt, *Our Unemployed*: 18.

⁵²John S. Hoyland, *Digging with the Unemployed* (London: Student Christian Movement Press, 1934): 1.

The use of a pseudonym for a place is replicated in the Mass Observation research of 1936 into Bolton, which the enquiry named 'Worktown'.

⁵³Harry Perry, *50 Years of Workcamps: a Celebration*, (Leicester: International Voluntary Service, 1981): 6.

Service Civile was founded by Pierre Ceresole (1879-1945), son of the one-time President of the Swiss Confederation. He organised parties of international volunteers to work to restore by their physical labour the areas of Europe devastated by the warfare to 1914-1918, which was followed by other projects providing service through manual labour. The first of his workcamps in Britain was at Brynmawr, in 1931, where the United Kingdom branch of Service Civile, International Voluntary Service (IVS) was organised by Ceresole's assistant, Jean Inebnit.

⁵⁴ Pilgrim Trust, *Men Without Work: a Report made to the Pilgrim Trust* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1938).

included discussion of the Rhondda Valley in detail, and Social Clubs in particular, with brief mention of the Quaker settlement at Maes-yr-Haf. It made no reference to Paul Matt, who left the Brynmawr furniture factory for employment with the NCSS in South Wales as craft advisor to its Social Clubs.⁵⁵ Attention was given to special schemes by which voluntary societies worked to relieve the poverty brought by unemployment, and *Men Without Work* looked closely at the self-help agricultural communities of the SPS, but without mention of Peter Scott, who originated them.⁵⁶

The fullest, and official, accounts of the progress and achievements of the Brynmawr Experiment were written by Peter Scott and his staff and published in the *Annual Reports of An Order* from 1936 until 1938, noted above. It is clear from the emphasis laid in these reports on the progress of the developing units of the SPS that at this time Scott's interest in them took precedence over the boot and furniture making works which were by then established. This Order, confusingly, was not a Quaker body, but a group of Scott's closest supporters, some of whom were Quakers. The formation and significance of An Order is discussed in Chapter Four. These Annual Reports are also the medium through which Scott described his vision and hopes for a new social order which An Order was intended to pioneer.

Their willingness to put pen to paper for publication has provided Friends' consideration of the nature of the Society as it developed. As well as the discussion, qualification and resolution of issues in the Quaker quarterly and monthly journals and *The Friend*, there are the pamphlets and papers produced by the committees and their sub-groups which are cited when quoted in the text.

Of great value for giving extracts from meetings and conferences, subject by subject, is *Social Thought in the Society of Friends* which was published in 1932 by the

⁵⁵Social Clubs were set up both nationally and locally by both government and voluntary funded agencies. The Religious Society of Friends and individual Quakers were responsible for clubs in South Wales, in addition to those of the NCSS.

⁵⁶Pilgrim Trust, *Men Without Work*: 354-370.

Friends' Central Industrial and Social Order Council and which recorded something of the thinking that lay behind what was minuted at the meetings. It describes Quaker relief work undertakings since the General Strike in 1926, recognising that the War had alerted the Quaker conscience for social work. Its introduction lists its sources, and makes it plain that its conclusions were not definitive as they were published 'in the hope that [the paper] will stimulate further thought and action.'⁵⁷

A rich source for understanding the transition of Friends' good works from philanthropic and often paternalistic undertakings to the active pursuit of social justice is Joshua Rowntree's Swarthmore Lecture given at Yearly Meeting in 1913.⁵⁸ The first Warden of Woodbrooke College, Joshua Rowntree was closely associated with liberal Friends and the renaissance within the Society.⁵⁹ His lecture entitled *Social Service; Its Place in the Society of Friends* outlined the progress of the Society in this respect from when it was recognised as a responsibility by George Fox and the early Friends, whose work sprang from the belief that the 'worth of human life infinitely surpassed the worth of any earthly possessions.'⁶⁰

Quakers and the Arts and Crafts Movement

Scholarly interest in the principles shared by the Religious Society of Friends and the Arts and Crafts Movement was declared when a conference was held at Charney Manor in May 2008, entitled 'Quakers and the Arts and Crafts Movement.'⁶¹ Among the lectures delivered by Roger Homan and Pink Dandelion were those concerning art and the

⁵⁷*Social Thought in the Society of Friends* (London: Friends Book Centre 1932).

⁵⁸The Swarthmore Lectureship was set up by Woodbrooke College in 1907, to provide an annual lecture on some Quaker subject to inform Friends and the public about matters concerning the aims and principles of the Society.

⁵⁹Woodbrooke College, now Woodbrooke Quaker Study Centre, 1046 Bristol Road, Birmingham B29 6LJ, UK.

⁶⁰Joshua Rowntree, *Social Service: Its Place in the Society of Friends*, Swarthmore Lecture Series (London: Headley Brothers, 1913): 18.

⁶¹'Quakers and the Arts and Crafts Movement'. Conference at Charney Manor, Oxfordshire, 6-8 May, 2008. Lecturers were Roger Homan and Ben Pink Dandelion.

spiritual and moral values in Arts and Crafts, and Quakerism and the Arts and Crafts Movement respectively.

A search of *Friends' Quarterly Examiner / Friends Quarterly* from 1954 (the year in which the Quaker Fellowship of the Arts was founded) to 2008, *The Friend* and the *Journal of the Friends Historical Society* for the same period revealed no article relating to this relationship. However, the *Journal of the Centre for Quaker Studies / Quaker Studies*, searched from its first issue in 1995 to date, indicated that the Quaker Research Studies Association (QRSA) showed interest in 1998 in holding a conference on art, aesthetics and creativity. An article by Roger Homan, 'The Art of Joseph Edward Southall,' draws attention to the significance of his painting in the medium of tempera, as representing both art and craft.⁶² Southall himself had written for *Friends' Quarterly Examiner* in 1925⁶³ and Maxwell Armfield, RWS (Royal Watercolour Society) had comprised notes written to accompany an exhibition of Southall's work held in Birmingham, in 1945.⁶⁴

SECONDARY SOURCES

Histories of the Quakers which provide the historical background to Quakerism are the classic volumes of W. C. Braithwaite and Rufus Jones, a series complete by 1921.⁶⁵ John Punshon's *Portrait in Grey*, published in 1984, gives a history of Quakerism from its seventeenth century roots to the later years of the twentieth century concluding with 'a profile of the present.'⁶⁶ A different approach is made by Pink Dandelion, with particular

⁶²Roger Homan, 'The Art of Joseph Edward Southall.' *Quaker Studies* 5/1 (Quaker Research Studies Association, 2000).

⁶³Joseph Southall, 'The Graphic Arts in Education,' *Friends' Quarterly Examiner* 1925: 130-149.

⁶⁴Maxwell Armfield, 'Joseph Southall,' *Friends' Quarterly Examiner* 1945: 141-149.

⁶⁵W. C. Braithwaite, *The Beginnings of Quakerism* (Macmillan, 1912) and *The Second Period of Quakerism* (Macmillan, 1919). Rufus M. Jones, *The Later Periods of Quakerism* (1921, two volumes).

⁶⁶John Punshon, *Portrait in Grey: a Short History of the Quakers* (London: Quaker Home Service, 1984).

emphasis on Quaker theology and the diversity of world wide Quakerism.⁶⁷ More specific periods are studied by Elizabeth Isichei who devoted a chapter in *Victorian Quakers* to Quaker philanthropy.⁶⁸ Thomas Kennedy's research was directed to Quaker pacifism sited in the years 1860-1920, a period of considerable development in the history of Quakerism, and which immediately preceded the Quaker work at Brynmawr. This, with its examination of the Quaker 'renaissance' which is marked by a conference held in Manchester in 1895, provided the background to the Society's twentieth century concern for social justice which supplanted the philanthropic concern of the previous years.⁶⁹

A background to voluntary social work is described in *Voluntary Social Action: a History of the National Council of Social Service 1919-1969*.⁷⁰ Charitable assistance of many kinds has been provided for the needy by voluntary bodies for centuries. Sometimes working in co-operation with each other, sometimes rivalling each other, there was throughout a confusion of altruism.⁷¹ Public recognition of a need to co-ordinate these efforts had resulted in representatives of the many voluntary philanthropic groups being called together in conference in 1915.⁷² The first concern was to find a common approach to the problems of, and anticipated from, the war (1914-1918), but there was also recognition of a need for a permanent link between the numerous charitable agencies for the most effective use of their resources. For this, the National Council of Social Services (NCSS) was inaugurated in 1919.⁷³ Its remit was wide and comprehensive with the emphasis at first on the provision of opportunities for work in rural areas, with local

⁶⁷Pink Dandelion, *An Introduction to Quakerism* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2007).

⁶⁸Elizabeth Isichei, *Victorian Quakers* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1970): 212-257.

⁶⁹Thomas C. Kennedy, *British Quakerism: the Transformation of a Religious Community* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2001).

⁷⁰Margaret Brasnett, *Voluntary Social Action: a History of the National Council of Social Service 1919-1969* (London: Bedford Square Press).

⁷¹Brasnett, *Voluntary Social Action*: 2-15.

⁷²Brasnett, *Voluntary Social Action*: 15

⁷³Brasnett, *Voluntary Social Action*: 1.

councils within the local government areas to carry through its purpose.⁷⁴ As the numbers of unemployed increased the NCSS directed its time and resources to social problems, recognising particularly that for those without occupation and in poverty there was a need for companionship and a sense of being valued as part of a local community in addition to the need for financial help.⁷⁵ NCSS work through its South Wales Council of Social Service (SWCSS) is the local context for the Brynmawr Experiment and the work of Paul Matt. Matt was involved with the building of club houses and the promotion of social clubs, especially for the unemployed, from his arrival at Brynmawr in 1928, and when employed full time by the SWCSS after about 1934.⁷⁶ There was no official Quaker representation on the Council, though Sir Percy Alden, MP, vice-chairman of the NCSS, was closely involved with the post-war Quaker project for New Town (discussed in Chapter Three).

The Arts and Crafts perception has been considered entirely from secondary sources. The literature specifically concerned with Arts and Crafts, or arts and crafts, barely made reference to Quakers and their craft work beyond its social value, but what became clear was that the Arts and Crafts principles that emerged from the ideas and aspirations of John Ruskin and William Morris and which motivated the growth of the Movement, bore a strong resemblance to the principles which have guided members of the Religious Society of Friends.

Working from a basic knowledge of the Arts and Crafts Movement and the key books introduced below, it was clear that there was the need to examine the ways in which the term 'Arts and Crafts' has been used with a view to establishing a working definition for the purposes of the thesis. John Ruskin and William Morris, understandably though anachronistically, described as 'the two main founders of the Arts and Crafts Movement,'⁷⁷

⁷⁴Brasnett, *Voluntary Social Action*: 23-24.

⁷⁵Brasnett, *Voluntary Social Action*: 60.

⁷⁶NPTMG: 1994: 180.38

⁷⁷Elizabeth Cumming and Wendy Kaplan, *The Arts and Crafts Movement* (London: Thames and Hudson, 1991): 12.

had no contemplation of so doing and cannot be referred to for their use of the phrase. Artists and craftsmen, sympathetic with Ruskin's and Morris's ideals, proposed to show their work jointly and coined the phrase 'arts and crafts' which was adopted when their Arts and Crafts Exhibition Society was founded in 1888. From this flowed the aesthetic and social Arts and Crafts Movement of the late nineteenth century and its broad diversity of products.

The name of The Arts and Crafts Exhibition Society is invariably used in full, but less consistent is the use of the phrase 'Arts and Crafts'. It is used as an adjective as, for example, in 'Arts and Crafts theorists', 'Arts and Crafts ideals' and 'Arts and Crafts style'. It is also descriptive of 'the Arts and Crafts reformers', 'the Central School of Arts and Crafts' and 'the Arts and Crafts of the nineteenth century'. At times the phrase is used as a shortened form of 'the Arts and Crafts Movement'. The phrase is used herein as a comprehensive description of the ideals of Ruskin and Morris.

Information about the Arts and Crafts Movement to provide a context came from the books of Elizabeth Cumming and Wendy Kaplan,⁷⁸ Alan Crawford,⁷⁹ Fiona MacCarthy,⁸⁰ and the most recently published account of the Arts and Crafts Movement by Rosalind Blakesley.⁸¹ For the later period of the Movement Mary Greensted has edited a collection of writings, some of which are quotations from sources not easily accessed, in *An Anthology of the Arts and Crafts Movement: writings by Ashbee, Lethaby, Gimson and their Contemporaries*.⁸² There was no difference of opinion among them about the Arts and Crafts Movement being rooted in the ideas of Thomas Carlyle, Augustus W. N. Pugin,

⁷⁸Cumming and Kaplan, *The Arts and Crafts Movement*..

⁷⁹Alan Crawford, ed., 'The Arts and Crafts Movement. A Sketch' in *By Hammer and Hand: the Arts and Crafts Movement in Birmingham* (Birmingham Museum and Art Gallery, 1984).

⁸⁰Fiona MacCarthy, *British Design since 1880* (London: Lund Humphries 1982).

⁸¹Rosalind P. Blakesley, *The Arts and Crafts Movement* (London: Phaidon Press, 2006).

⁸²Mary Greensted, *An Anthology of the Arts and Crafts Movement: writings by Ashbee, Lethaby, Gimson and their Contemporaries* (Aldershot: Lund Humphries 2005).

John Ruskin and William Morris, but there is debate over the continuation of the Arts and Crafts Movement into the twentieth century. For this reason the Arts and Crafts Exhibition Society (still subsisting today) and the Arts and Crafts Movement are distinguished, and the term Arts and Crafts used here to represent the principles of Ruskin and Morris as previously stated. Discussion of the prolongation of the Arts and Crafts Movement has shown that for some the Movement came to an end with World War I, while for others it continued with a change to its character, craft production being still faithful to Arts and Crafts aesthetic principles, but no longer with the social concerns of the earlier years.⁸³

C. R. Ashbee's Guild of Handicraft at Chipping Campden was a short-lived, but almost entire exemplification of William Morris's vision for a society in which freedom to express individual creativity through joy in work and companionship could flourish best in a rural environment. It had, moreover, many similarities to the communities of Eric Gill who was 'very much in a Morrisian mould.'⁸⁴ Fiona MacCarthy's *The Simple Life* and Alan Crawford's *C. R. Ashbee: Architect, Designer and Romantic Socialist* provide the setting for the argument that the Brynmawr Experiment also exemplifies that vision and thus contributes to the prolongation of the Arts and Crafts Movement into the twentieth century.⁸⁵

The Brynmawr Experiment has not been researched to its end in 1940. It is scarcely known even among Quakers and the present residents of Brynmawr.⁸⁶ Those Quakers who know of it look on the Experiment as the honoured relic of a social justice project of 80

⁸³For example, Jennifer Harris, 'The Economics of Craftwork', *William Morris Revisited: Questioning the Legacy* (Whitworth Art Gallery Manchester, Crafts Council London and Museum and Art Gallery Birmingham, 2006):75; Crawford, *By Hammer and Hand*: 23.

⁸⁴Tanya Harrod, 'Paradise Postponed', *William Morris Revisited: Questioning the Legacy* (Whitworth Art Gallery Manchester, Crafts Council London and Museum and Art Gallery Birmingham, 2006): 9.

⁸⁵Fiona MacCarthy, *The Simple Life: C. R. Ashbee in the Cotswolds*. London: Lund Humphries, 1981 and Alan Crawford, *C. R. Ashbee: Architect, Designer and Romantic Socialist* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1985).

⁸⁶There has been a recent interest at Brynmawr in the output of the furniture factory which has led to the establishment of a small museum in the town, managed and supported by the voluntary efforts of some local residents. The Quaker contribution is acknowledged, but not developed. There is no longer a Quaker Meeting in the town.

years ago and it has been included in a panel in the Quaker Tapestry.⁸⁷ The period of craft production at Brynmawr was short, and although well publicised for advertising purposes and patronised by royalty at the time, knowledge of it has faded. There is little of the furniture in public view as most of the manufactured pieces were acquired for private use in Quaker homes, schools and Meeting Houses, and the homes of those sympathetic to the Brynmawr circumstances, until it was offered more commercially in the London showroom. This West End showroom had a life of several months only, from its opening in Cavendish Square in 1938 until it closed when Brynmawr Furniture Makers ceased production in 1939.

The Brynmawr furniture has not been examined and analysed. There is no major collection for study and this, together with the dearth of written material, is one reason why it has been given scant attention by design or furniture historians, with that of Roger Smith being, perhaps, the most significant.⁸⁸ What furniture there is that can be viewed is the only substantial, though scarcely accessible, testimony to the work of the Experiment.⁸⁹

The written record is scant because for Quakers, social work is a matter for action rather than record as Roger Wilson has noted:

The work has been done simply because Friends have felt it laid upon them to do it. While the operations were taking place, attention was concentrated on the job in hand, and when that was done, those doing it packed up and went back to their business, or teaching, or housekeeping, and were quickly much too immersed in the next thing to have time to ruminate. The work has been taken for granted, and has had the strengths and weaknesses of things that have come quite spontaneously.⁹⁰

For others, not Quakers, the work at Brynmawr was no more than one of many such attempts to bring relief to unemployed communities, less noticeable than those sponsored by more authoritative bodies such as the NCSS, and short-lived. This want of published

⁸⁷The Quaker Tapestry depicts Quaker history in a series of 77 needle worked panels which were begun in 1981 and, now complete, is on permanent exhibition in the Friends Meeting House, Stramongate, Kendal, Cumbria, LA9 4BH.

⁸⁸Roger Smith, *Furniture History. The Journal of the Furniture History Society*, vol. XXIII, (1987).

⁸⁹Small collections are held at the Newport (Gwent Museum and Art Gallery), the Welsh National Folk Museum, Cardiff and Brynmawr Museum.

⁹⁰Roger Wilson, *Authority, Leadership and Concern* (George Allen and Unwin, 1949): ix.

material confirms that there is an opening which this study fills with its recognition of a singular social experiment and its corollary, an unrecorded and otherwise virtually unrecognised range of furniture manufactured within that experiment. The study has made use of a considerable range of disparate sources.

Together these observations support the proposition that the Quaker work at Brynmawr in the inter-war years is not only singular in itself, but potentially unique in the history of Quaker social projects. There were many Quaker social projects to give aid to the unemployed in the inter-war years, contemporaneous also with the relief schemes of other agencies. All included some form of craft workshops, occupation or employment set within a vision for restructuring society and shaping a better world. There are, however, sufficient similarities of principle and motivation, of aims and ideas, of values and understandings shared by the Brynmawr Experiment and the Arts and Crafts Movement for the one to be regarded as of the other. It is that that makes the Experiment potentially unique.

Notes on Sources and their use

1 The tape recorded interviews

At the time when Walter Lucas, curator of Newport Museum, was anticipating an exhibition of Brynmawr furniture he and his colleague, Roger Cucksey, made tape recorded interviews with former apprentices in the Brynmawr works, (unnamed), and with Mrs Dora Churchward, widow of Graham, senior member of staff there who had been employed at Brynmawr in sales management in the later 1930s.

These three cassette tapes, undated, are not catalogued but are held in the box files NPTMG:1994.18. It seems likely that they were made at the time of Walter Lucas's interest in preparing for an exhibition, in the early 1980s. They were not prepared professionally and discussion flows between the interviewees as in normal conversation. There is no indication that the interviews were scripted, or otherwise rehearsed, though the interviewers seem to have prepared the questions to guide the conversation.

2 LSF Mss 508 22-34

Of this collection 508.22 is headed 'Personalities: Peter Scott' and 508.23, is headed 'Personalities: Donald Wilson'. Within 508.23 also is 'Personalities: Paul Matt'. Where the author or donor of a document has requested confidentiality or careful use of its information, the request has been respected and names and details of the personal relations between members of An Order, and other information therein have not been given where they have no significance for the thesis.

3 Quaker Minutes

Responsibility for the Quaker work at Brynmawr was not held by the same hands throughout, passing from the central committees at Friends' House into the control of Peter Scott and An Order. Information about the years in which Friends' House Committees were involved is found in the Minute Books and reports as noted in the text above.

As a member of the Religious Society of Friends I acknowledge sympathy with the writing and aims of the Quakers, and insight into Quaker ways, but I have aimed to analyse the evidence objectively. My experience of service to the Society in several capacities, has given familiarity with the Quaker business method. As this differs from usual business practice in some respects explanation is necessary to indicate these to the non-Quaker reader.

A Meeting's business is discussed as a part of a Meeting for Worship and a record made in Minute form at that Meeting. No votes are taken, a consensus of opinion is not looked for nor do the Minutes make reference to opposing opinions. If strong differences emerge in discussion the matter is not minuted, but referred to another occasion so that further thought might be given to it meanwhile. The function of the Clerk of the Meeting is to minute the 'sense of the Meeting', a spiritual discernment of accord among the Friends present, not necessarily of unanimity, and not a report of the discussions that preceded it.⁹¹

⁹¹*Quaker Faith and Practice*, 3.07.

Once made, it is understood that all are united in the Minute which is then the responsibility of all present and the Meeting as a whole.

The consequence for the reader unfamiliar with Quaker business, is the need to be aware of the nuances in the phrases used, not because they dissemble, but because the recording of the truth in love calls for a gentle literary touch by the Clerk.⁹² The reader should be aware also that in discussion some Friends may be more vociferous, and perhaps more influential, than others, and that the task of the Clerk is formidable. Nonetheless, the responsibility lies with the meeting for the accuracy of the Minute.

4 The Paul Matt archive

Most references in the thesis to Matt's furniture and work at Brynmawr are sourced in the Brynmawr archive at Newport Art Gallery and Museum, in collection SCHST: NPTMG1984.75.GROUP. This is a collection of 37 items, mostly letters which Paul Matt sent to Walter Lucas, curator at the Newport Art Gallery and Museum. The items are not referenced individually, so any quotations from the collection which are clearly Matt's original words are referenced as above, the only further identification being where a letter is dated.

The course of the enquiry

Knowledge acquired from the research indicated above enabled the course of the enquiry to be laid as follows, with the search for a latent association of Quaker values with Arts and Crafts precepts being explored in the following five chapters. A progression toward support for the proposition that the Brynmawr Experiment was unique among Quaker social witness projects is guided by the following questions. Can the Religious Society of Friends be shown to have shared the Arts and Crafts concern for social justice? Was Peter Scott a convinced Quaker whose ethical values motivated him in developing the Brynmawr Experiment as a Quaker project? Did a Quaker ethic and aesthetic relate the

⁹²Joan Fitch, *The present tense: 'Talking to our time'.* A discussion paper for Quakers, 1980: 52, quoted in Quaker Faith and Practice 10.22.

Brynmawr furniture to that of both Quaker and non-Quaker Arts and Crafts furniture makers?

Chapter summary

Chapter Two shows where there was common ground between the Quakers and the members of the Arts and Crafts Movement. An historical context for each shows how the moral values of Quakerism are rooted in the seventeenth century when the followers of George Fox gathered as The Children of Light, eventually to become the Religious Society of Friends. The background to the Arts and Crafts Movement lies in the principles of A. W. N. Pugin, John Ruskin and William Morris which were to influence the artists, designers and craftsmen whose aim was to unite in equal status as artist-craftsmen.

A clear development for the thesis required the inter-weaving of a number of threads. When it emerged that there is common ground supporting the argument on two counts, namely the comparable moral values of the Quakers with the Arts and Crafts workers and the integrity that governed the products of the Brynmawr Furniture Makers, it seemed practical to consider the furniture making as a subject distinct from the social theme. To ease the structure of the thesis the comparison of Arts and Crafts and Quakers on social justice and simplicity as an ethic are in Chapter Two with comparison of their aesthetic of simplicity, being in Chapter Six.

The ethical principles amount to a common integrity of honesty and truth, fairness and justice, respect for the dignity of man and the concept of simplicity as expressed in their work and lives. The object of their efforts was to create a better world, in which man's dignity was upheld through a just society, and in which the community, whether broad or narrow, took responsibility for living and working conditions in which man could achieve satisfaction and joy from his work, with the freedom and independence to develop his creative nature.

Chapter Three outlines the ways in which both Quakers and Arts and Crafts workers applied their principles in practice before World War I, and their concern to

reconstruct society after the war. In most cases, training in craft work was an ingredient of these projects. The value of craftwork is discussed, for both occupational and economic reasons, and of its particular relevance where there was severe unemployment.

The economic depression of the 1920s and 1930s and the consequent unemployment brought deprivation and misery to those in areas of heavy industry, and especially to the coalfields. Its effect on the mining valleys of South Wales was such as to lead Quakers to take measures to give physical and financial relief to the families of unemployed men, and the key figure, Peter Scott is introduced. The work of Scott and a party of Quakers who settled at Brynmawr is the first stage toward the making of the Brynmawr Experiment. The Quaker relief work and that of the craft workshops is then described.

Chapter Four gives biographical information about Peter Scott, who was responsible for the development of the Brynmawr Experiment. Scott's work at Brynmawr was influenced by his background, his ambition and his philosophy. The chapter describes his activity as a member of the Religious Society of Friends.

Chapter Five shows how Arts and Crafts principles continued into the twentieth century in the communities of the Guild of Handicraft, sited by its founder, C. R. Ashbee, at Chipping Campden in the Cotswolds, and the several communities of Eric Gill. The nature of the Arts and Crafts Movement changed with the development of the Design and Industries Association (DIA) and the individual craft studios of the 1920s and 1930s. Peter Scott's vision for a better world is described.

Chapter Six. Not only is there affinity between the Arts and Crafts Movement and the Brynmawr Experiment in their aims for society, but a key strand to the argument lies with the furniture making of each. In this chapter the importance of craft in Quaker history is explained and its practice shown in the Quaker furniture makers who worked in the Arts and Crafts tradition. Twentieth century Arts and Crafts furniture making is included with reference to the Cotswold Furniture Makers, Ernest Gimson, Ernest and Sidney Barnsley,

The link of the Brynmawr Furniture Makers to these is made by discussion of the furniture made by Paul Matt and Arthur Reynolds.

Chapter Seven. The chapter summarises the argument that relates the Brynmawr Experiment to Arts and Crafts. It indicates that further research might establish the Brynmawr Experiment to be not only a remarkable undertaking for the provision of paid employment for the unemployed, but also potentially unique in the history of Quaker social witness for having that relationship with Arts and Crafts. It suggests also that, while information about the management and production of the Brynmawr Furniture is scant, there is sufficient physical evidence to be studied in images and modest museum collections for compiling a contribution to the history of furniture.

CHAPTER TWO

THE PRINCIPLES SHARED BY THE RELIGIOUS SOCIETY OF FRIENDS AND THE ARTS AND CRAFTS MOVEMENT

The thesis is directed toward a conclusion that the Brynmawr Experiment is unique among the social projects of the Religious Society of Friends by virtue of its affinity with Arts and Crafts. If the following enquiries show that Arts and Crafts principles and the values of the Religious Society of Friends are similar, and provided that the Brynmawr Experiment can be shown to be a Quaker undertaking, then the focus of further enquiry moves to show an affinity between Arts and Crafts and the Brynmawr Experiment by dint of shared principles and values, both ethic and aesthetic. The first enquiry, which is the subject of this chapter, is to discover whether there is similarity in the moral values which inspired the founders of the Religious Society of Friends and the Arts and Crafts Movement. As explained in Chapter One, the phrase Arts and Crafts is used to indicate the principles derived from John Ruskin and William Morris which inspired the members of the Arts and Crafts Movement.

The Religious Society of Friends

Any similarity between the Quakers, whose values were laid over three hundred and fifty years ago and the Arts and Crafts Movement, formed by a group of artists and craftsmen about one hundred and fifty years ago, would appear unlikely. Yet each has developed from the insights of individual visionaries whose philosophies centred on a concern for humankind in social circumstances that they perceived to be corrupt. Neither Quakerism nor Arts and Crafts can be accounted for simply. Each has a range of constituents, with disparities, tensions and conflicts within, so that for John Punshon the Quakers 'are an interesting if not puzzling phenomenon'¹ and Mary Greensted has acknowledged the difficulty of defining the Arts and Crafts Movement.² Coherence of the

¹Punshon, *Portrait in Grey*: 1.

²Greensted, *An Anthology*: xii.

one with the other lies in their moral and aesthetic principles found in their historical roots and which Pink Dandelion has epitomised as a common integrity.³

In the mid-seventeenth century a small group of men and women followed the leadership of George Fox (1624-1691), who was drawn to dissent from the Church by disillusionment as he witnessed the failure of professed Christians to act in accord with their declared Christianity. The group gained strength and numbers in the political and religious confusion of the English Civil War and Oliver Cromwell's puritan republic which followed it (1649-1660). Reacting against the flaws of state as well as church, Fox and the Quakers were seeking an untainted Christianity and a just and equal society.

Unpopular with the establishment for his religious convictions, Fox was a public bane for his controversial views on society. His call to 'live in the Light', answering to 'that of God in everyone' made him critical of the conventions and broader social practices that governed trade and employment, the work of lawyers and doctors, and made him concerned for the care of the underprivileged and the education of children.⁴ He challenged authority and the status of those exercising it, refusing to doff his hat in respect when custom required and, with respect for the equality of all, addressed all social ranks as 'thee' or 'thou', terms usually reserved for intimates and inferiors.⁵ The numbers who joined him became an association, at first known as The Children of Light, later The Friends of the Truth and ultimately the Religious Society of Friends.⁶

In their earliest days Friends' interest in the relief of suffering was to look after their own. The original followers of George Fox, non-conformist and seeking to renew the spirit of Christianity that they believed to have been betrayed by contemporary churchmen, suffered punishment under the law for their dissent. Obligated to rely on each other for

³Pink Dandelion, 'Quakerism and the Arts and Crafts Movement' (unpublished lecture, Charney Manor, Oxfordshire, UK, 8 May 2008).

⁴John L. Nickalls ed., *Journal of George Fox* (London: Yearly Meeting of the Religious Society of Friends, 1952): 26, 35, 38 and 263.

⁵Nickalls, *Journal of George Fox*: 36- 37.

⁶Abbott, *The Historical Dictionary* : 233.

assistance for themselves and their families, their personal connections were moulded into related meetings and committees, which developed in the 1670s into a simple form of central organisation. Local Meetings were clustered within 'Monthly Meeting' and 'Quarterly Meeting' groups (geographical as well as calendar) with an annual 'Yearly Meeting' for all Friends. The executive body of the Yearly Meeting met monthly, and was known as 'Meeting for Sufferings' since its purpose at its inception was the care of those Friends who were suffering the punishment of imprisonment or distraint of their goods for their dissent. On their behalf, Meeting for Sufferings would petition the government to find redress or other relief, often speedily and to good effect.⁷

Fox recorded his religious convictions, travels, encounters and his life's work in his *Journal* (dictated in 1674-5 and first published in 1694) and this, together with his other writings, shows how he had 'built a personal faith of great strength and flexibility.'⁸ His message was spread by preaching and his epistle writing, but as the practice of the Quaker faith was without priest, creed or sacrament Friends felt the need for 'a digest of the counsel on practice and [their church] government which was contained year by year in [Yearly Meeting's] epistles and other minutes and documents.' Accordingly such was issued for circulation to Meetings in manuscript from 1738, and in printed form from 1782.⁹ In these digests, of various titles, is the guidance intended for all Friends directly, and in which are the roots of Quaker concern for all humankind, and the poor and needy in particular.

Intended not only for 1696, the year of the Minute, but for the future also, Friends 'who were endowed with plenty of outward substance' were 'tenderly advised to do good therewith . . . especially with regard to the poor; that the tokens of your charity may be

⁷*Quaker Faith and Practice*, 7.01.

⁸Punshon, *Portrait in Grey*: 44.

⁹*QFP*: 612. Revision and new compilations followed from time to time until the current volume, *Quaker Faith and Practice: the Book of Christian Discipline of the Yearly Meeting of the Religious Society of Friends (Quakers) in Great Britain* was published in 1995.

good precedents to generations to come.’¹⁰ In 1729 Friends were advised again to ‘exert their charitable assistance to the poor’ and in 1798 were requested to ‘be clear that a due proportion of their time and substance is spent in the relief of distress.’¹¹ By 1844 it was noted that just to support other charitable bodies was insufficient and ‘should not be substituted for the personal visiting of the poor in their own habitations, and the administering to their wants.’¹²

Fox himself urged Friends to provide for the ‘distempered’. He advised an almshouse and hospital for ‘all poor Friends that are past work.’ For all who were needy he proposed housing similar to hostel accommodation with retail outlets included and to be accommodation also ‘where widows and young women might work and live,’¹³ a remarkable suggestion at that time and for many years after, when widows and young women were not expected to live independently and provide for themselves in employment.

In subsequent years projects to assist those in need emphasised Friends’ understanding that, while immediate charitable relief was necessary, they should discover the reason for people being in need and work to remedy it, as advised in 1844.¹⁴ John Bellers had given a reason when he wrote in 1714 ‘the poor without employment are like rough diamonds, their worth is unknown,’¹⁵ and had already proposed a scheme for *A*

¹⁰*Extracts from the Minutes and Advices of the Yearly Meeting of Friends held in London from its first Institution*, 2nd edition, (London: W. Phillips, 1802): 10.

¹¹*A Selection from the Christian Advices issued by the Yearly Meeting of the Society of Friends held in London from its early establishment to the Present Time*, 6th edition (London: Edward Marsh, 1851): 210-211.

¹²*Extracts from the Minutes and Epistles of the Yearly Meeting of the Religious Society of Friends held in London from its first Institution to the Present Time relating to Christian Doctrine, Practice and Discipline*, 4th edition (London: Friends Book Depository, 1861): 63.

¹³Samuel Tuke, *Selections from Fox’s Epistles* (London: Marsh, 1848): 125.

¹⁴*A Selection from the Christian Advices issued by the Yearly Meeting of the Society of Friends held in London from its earliest establishment to the present time*, 6th edition (London: E. Marsh, 1851): 62.

¹⁵John Bellers, ‘An Essay towards the improvement of physick’ in George Clarke, ed., *John Bellers 1654-1725: his Life, Times and Writings* (London: Routledge and Kegan Paul, 1987): 204.

Colledge of Industry which carried the motto 'Industry brings Plenty'.¹⁶ In the twentieth century Peter Scott provided the remedy of employment with the Brynmawr Experiment.

A religious conviction that human life was sacred, of the worth of every individual, that education and employment enhanced that worth, and that all are equal, led Friends to philanthropy and politically, to socialism. Seventeenth and eighteenth century restrictions¹⁷ which prevented Friends from being employed in public service and academia, turned them to business and trade. Coincident with the developments of industrialisation, their enterprise resulted in wealth and the acquisition of capital. For the nineteenth century Quakers 'with plenty of outward substance' care for the welfare of others was a habit and an obligation. Through their occupation in trade and business, they became intimately aware of the circumstances of fellow workers. Elizabeth Isichei has reported that 'the importance of Quakers in Victorian England was quite disproportionate to their numbers . . . their most characteristic contribution to society lay in philanthropy.'¹⁸

The relative privacy of philanthropic acts turned toward a more public concern for social justice as individual Friends began to enquire into their social responsibilities. An informally constituted group, the Friends Social Union, gathered from 1904 and held discussions during the following Yearly Meetings on subjects of social significance. The outbreak of war in 1914 brought representations to Yearly Meeting which, in 1915, moved the interest from domestic social themes to include consideration that war was responsible for those social ills, culminating in the appointment of the War and Social Order Committee (WSOC) in 1915. The relationship between war and social needs had already been identified by John Woolman when he wrote in 1793 'may we look upon our treasures, the furniture of our houses, and our garments, and try whether the seeds of war have

¹⁶A. Ruth Fry, *John Bellers 1656-1725. His Writings reprinted, with a Memoir* (London: Cassell, 1935): 33.

¹⁷The Test Act and Corporation Acts (repealed in 1828) reserved entrance to many professions to Anglicans. This broad understanding was qualified by annual acts of indemnity for dissenters (Woodward 1949: 490). Restrictions at Oxford and Cambridge were not removed until 1971. Where oath swearing was required Quakers were disabled until permitted to affirm instead in 1886.

¹⁸Isichei, *Victorian Quakers*: xix.

nourishment in these our possessions.’¹⁹ The outcome of three years’ deliberation and consultation by the members of the WSOC produced a document of significance, *The Foundations of a True Social Order*. These foundations, reproduced in each revision of the books of discipline since 1918, set down social concepts for the guidance of Friends.

There was diverse opinion in the WSOC as to possible remedies for war, but fundamental agreement that competition in business was a factor in war making. Individual responses offered encouragement for profit sharing schemes and the founding of co-operative working colonies, and other propositions saw the abolition of profit making and competition as the solution. In its report to London Yearly Meeting the Committee gave assurance that the Eight Points of the Foundations ‘were not intended as rules of life but as an attempt to set forth ideals that are aspects of eternal Truth.’²⁰ Edward Grubb described the gathering of these Eight Points as ‘the first attempt that has been made for many years to set forth in connected outline, the special beliefs and practices of the Society of Friends and to show how they are vitally related to the central principle of the Inward Light.’²¹ Punshon found an over-simplicity in the Foundations and remarked also that while many Quakers turned with enthusiasm to socialism as the ‘logical outcome of Quaker social principles’ the Labour Party constitution, adopted in the same year that the Foundations were published, ‘went further than London Yearly Meeting and said that fraternity would not come until the goods of the earth were communally owned.’²²

Common ownership of ‘the goods of the earth’ would have been a concept difficult for the capitalist Quaker to embrace, especially when the fruits of his capitalism permitted the benevolence and promotion of the well-being of his neighbour that motivated him. Without addressing this dilemma directly, Grubb continued his exploration of the

¹⁹Phillips P. Moulton, ed., ‘A Plea for the Poor’, *The Journal and Major Essays of John Woolman* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1971): 255.

²⁰Proceedings of London Yearly Meeting, 1918: 80-81.

²¹Edward Grubb, *What is Quakerism?* (London: George Allen and Unwin, 1917): preface.

²²Punshon, *Portrait in Grey*: 239-241.

Foundations, above, with the effect of moving Friends forward smoothly from their participation in the world of Victorian philanthropy, described by Isichei as one of 'chaotic vitality'²³ to a recognition of the limitations of a small Society:

the efforts of individuals, alone or in co-operation with one another, are often found to fail: their field of work is too small, the necessary funds are not forthcoming, and an element of compulsion is often needed which the State alone can supply. The object aimed at can only be adequately secured through changes in the law, and through improved administration of the forces of society. So the Philanthropist becomes the Reformer.²⁴

With this Grubb closed the door to the singular visionary, but Peter Scott has proved to be the exception in so far as he was able to raise the funds and the Brynmawr Experiment achieved his object of providing paid employment, albeit shortlived through circumstances beyond his control (see Chapter Three).

Arts and Crafts

A hundred or so years after Fox had formed his group, the development of the mechanical and powered inventions of machinery that caused the industrial revolution of the mid-eighteenth century had inevitable social and economic consequences for the nineteenth century. Factory production offered employment which attracted workers to move from country to town. Urban development to accommodate both manufacture, business and labour created industrial cities and, in Greensted's words, 'The explosion of population, industry, scientific enquiry and commerce which characterised Victorian Britain brought numerous social problems in its wake.'²⁵ Resolving these problems was a matter of conscience and generated reaction against what was seen to be a debased society, and stimulated the principal individuals whose 'moral concerns' were responsible for the

²³Isichei, *Victorian Quakers*: 212.

²⁴Edward Grubb, *What is Quakerism?* (London: George Allen and Unwin, 1917): 157.

²⁵Greensted, *An Anthology*: 6.

Arts and Crafts Movement. Of these individuals 'A.W.N.Pugin and John Ruskin, [were] the two major influences on [William] Morris and thus the Arts and Crafts Movement.'²⁶

John Ruskin (1819-1900), the romantic theorist, and William Morris (1834-96), the practitioner theorist, are described as 'sage and mentor to the Arts and Crafts.'²⁷ Ruskin's influence on Morris has been described as 'profound and durable', and each contributed to the 'fundamental moral and social purpose [of the Arts and Crafts Movement whose] concern was not only for the end products but also for the society that shaped them.'²⁸

A. W. N. Pugin (1812-1852) is said to have 'provided the foundation from which the moral aesthetics of Arts and Crafts evolved during the second half of the [nineteenth] century',²⁹ and is primarily identified with the early nineteenth century Gothic revival and its moral implications. However, deeper roots of the 'moral and social purpose' of Arts and Crafts lie with Thomas Carlyle (1795-1881), historian and writer, who was contemporary with the developing industrialisation and was witness to its effects on the humanity of the working man. S. T. Glass sees Carlyle's inspiration as in his perception of the ideals of medieval society and his call for 'a recognition of the dignity that was due to labour, and preached the spiritual necessity of work for its own sake . . . in reaction against the modern age.'³⁰

Augustus Welby Northmore Pugin, a member of the Roman Catholic Church and a practising architect, turned away in practice from classical style toward a 'Gothic Revival [which] was in large measure a reaction to the Protestant forms which had proliferated

²⁶Annette Carruthers and Mary Greensted, *Good Citizens' Furniture: the Arts and Crafts Collection at Cheltenham*, (Cheltenham: Art Gallery and Museum in association with: London: Lund Humphries, 1994): 9-10.

²⁷Alan Crawford, ed., 'The Arts and Crafts Movement. A Sketch' in *By Hammer and Hand: the Arts and Crafts Movement in Birmingham* (Birmingham Museum and Art Gallery, 1984): 7.

²⁸Mary Greensted, *The Arts and Crafts Movement in the Cotswolds* (Stroud: Alan Sutton, 1993): 1.

²⁹Cumming and Kaplan, *The Arts and Crafts Movement*: 11.

³⁰S. T. Glass, *The Responsible Society. The Ideas of the English Guild Socialists*, Monographs in Politics series, ed., J. W. Grove (London: Longmans, Green, 1966): 6.

since the Reformation.’³¹ Believing that medieval Gothic architecture ‘reflected the order and stability of the Christian faith’³² Pugin epitomized the integrity of the artist, the merging of spirituality and conscience, which was a significant factor of the ‘aesthetic guided by morality and belief’ that Homan has explored in *The Art of the Sublime*. There he shows that Pugin was concerned for ‘the quality of social relationships’ and that ‘good architecture is a symptom of a good society and Pugin crusades to recover both.’³³

John Ruskin, the sage, though ‘never more than theorist and observer,’³⁴ viewed with concern the social conditions that industrialisation had brought to the working man and turned to the Middle Ages as Pugin had done, to find the remedy. By seeing ‘art, architecture and the decorative arts as the reflection of the social conditions in which they were made’ he ‘brought them within the scope of morality’, and deduced that the quality of art was related to the degree of happiness that the maker found in his work.³⁵ Things of beauty must therefore be the product of a happy worker.³⁶ With the further deduction that art is therefore the creation of the individual and that there could not, then, be creativity in things made by machine, his logic led him to denounce industrial production as being responsible for taking away the dignity and nobility of the working man, his freedom to be creative and to find joy in so doing.³⁷

³¹Roger Homan, *The Art of the Sublime: Principles of Christian Art and Architecture* (Aldershot: Ashgate, 2006): 88.

³²Cumming and Kaplan, *The Arts and Crafts Movement*: 11.

³³Homan, *The Art of the Sublime*: 149.

³⁴Charles Harvey and Jon Press, *William Morris: Design and Enterprise in Victorian Britain* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1991): 113.

³⁵Alan Crawford, *C. R. Ashbee: Architect, Designer and Romantic Socialist* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1985): 11.

³⁶In reflecting on ‘the inference that good stonework must be the product of a contented soul’ Homan has commented that Ruskin’s was a romantic perception, scarcely evidenced, and he remarked wryly that medieval church building was physically hazardous and that the soul of the mason could not always be contented. Roger Homan, ‘Art and Integrity: an anthology’, unpublished lecture, Charney Manor Quaker conference centre, 6 May 2008.

³⁷R. H. Wilenski, *John Ruskin. An Introduction to Further Study of his Life and Work* (London: Faber and Faber, 1933): 220.

Ruskin's considerable influence on William Morris was significant enough for Morris to say in his introduction to his Kelmscott Press reprint of Ruskin's *The Nature of Gothic*

the lesson which Ruskin here teaches us is that art is the expression of man's pleasure in labour; that it is possible for a man to rejoice in his work . . . and . . . unless man's work once again becomes a pleasure to him, the token of which change will be that beauty is once again a natural and necessary accompaniment of productive labour, all but the worthless must toil in pain.³⁸

Much has been written about William Morris to whom many descriptive nouns have been applied. Idealist, utopian, socialist, educationalist, medievalist, politician, business man, designer, manufacturer, craftsman, all within a cornucopia of interests and talents suggesting a restlessness of intellect and activity, and which were served by the paradoxical character of a dreaming realist. He too turned to the Middle Ages seeing the period as a time when the arts flourished in the hands of the creative craftsman, and set his vision of the good society in rural England within an overall conviction that 'the betterment of life [was to be achieved] through the revival of the handicrafts.'³⁹

After a period of architectural training Morris turned first to painting and then directed his artistic talents to the decorative arts. He became adept as designer and craftsman, applying himself to ceramics and stained glass, wall papers and textiles, printing and book design. In 1861 he set up the business of Morris, Marshall, Faulkner & Co (known as The Firm) for the manufacture and sale of such products, taking sole responsibility for the firm as Morris & Co in 1875. The business expanded with a move to workshops at Merton Abbey in Surrey. He then made his home at Kelmscott Manor in Oxfordshire and used its name for the printing and publishing Press that he established in 1891. Throughout, Morris was lecturing and writing, but

it was through his business enterprises that Morris realised his artistic ambitions, and through which he sought to raise awareness of the potential of the decorative arts . . . and demonstrated that there was a market for better-quality products which

³⁸Harvey and Press, *William Morris*: 21.

³⁹MacCarthy, *The Simple Life*: 23.

did not compete solely on price . . . and that industry had to concern itself far more with considerations of taste and quality.⁴⁰

Charles Harvey and Jon Press have found ‘the spirit of socialism’ lying in Morris’s utopian⁴¹ society, depicted in his *News from Nowhere*,⁴² which was one without mechanisation, ugly cities and mass production.⁴³ For him, ‘socialism was the bearer of a better life, in which inequality, material deprivation and excessive toil gave way to a regime which cherished comradeship, creativity and personal freedom.’⁴⁴

For a time in the 1880s, Morris was active politically, closely involved with H. M. Hyndman’s Social Democratic Federation, and following that, reluctant to stay with it as it appeared to move toward Anarchism,⁴⁵ he founded the Socialist League. Encapsulated in the Manifesto of the League were his principles for changes to the basis of society in which his ideals could be reached. Distinctions between classes and nations should disappear and property should be held in common. Systems of absolutism, constitutionalism and republicanism had all been tried and failed, and ‘certain incomplete schemes of social reform now before the public’ would not produce the changes he was seeking. Only equality and fellowship would change the social order, and only with political power in the hands of the working man would society approach socialism.⁴⁶

By the breadth of his interests, his energetic enterprise in creative and business matters, his mastery of a range of crafts, and the publication of his ideas, Morris achieved a

⁴⁰Harvey and Press, *William Morris*: 234.

⁴¹A plan for ‘an ideal commonwealth whose inhabitants exist under seemingly perfect conditions,’ originally propounded by Thomas More in 1515, (OED). More envisaged an ideal island community in which the inhabitants lived in perfect conditions and where there were garden cities, shared community work and handcrafts for mutual benefit, simple dress and lifestyle.

⁴²William Morris, *News from Nowhere; or, An Epoch of Rest* (London: Reeves and Turner, 1891).

⁴³Harvey and Press, *William Morris*: 199.

⁴⁴Harvey and Press, *William Morris*: 239.

⁴⁵Ray Watkinson, *William Morris as Designer* (London: Studio Vista, 1967): 26.

⁴⁶E. Belfort Bax and William Morris, *The Manifesto of the Socialist League* 2nd edition (London: by the authors, October 1885) www.marxists.org/archive/morris/works/1885/manifst2.htm, (accessed 19/05/2008).

reputation for high standards of quality in design and workmanship and a convinced concern for mankind and its society. In essence, Ruskin and Morris shared a basic concern that the individual should have the freedom to find and use his innate creativity in the conducive surroundings of a community conducted with respect for social justice.

Practising in the 1880s was a generation of young architects,⁴⁷ members of the Art Workers Guild, who absorbed Morris's principles, and worked actively toward Ruskin's desire for the unity of all the arts, in which artist, designer and craftsman would have equivalent status and eliminate the distinction between craft and the fine arts. A. H. Mackmurdo (1851-1942) had travelled in Europe with Ruskin, and with a philosophy that 'echoed those of both Ruskin and Morris' formed the Century Guild in 1882, for artists, designers and craftsmen to associate together.⁴⁸ These, with members of the Art Workers Guild, formed the Arts and Crafts Exhibition Society in 1886 to show their work and from which was coined the name of the Arts and Crafts Movement which developed from their association.⁴⁹ 'Although it was made up of many individuals and groups sometimes with conflicting opinions,'⁵⁰ central to the Movement was the concern of the members for social values and the quality of its products, to which may be added 'one of the great dreams of Arts and Crafts . . . to achieve the simple life, making useful things by hand, improving the world with one's integrity of purpose and enlarging the vision of other working people.'⁵¹

⁴⁷The reunification of fine art with design and crafts began with the 'free-thinking architects – Lethaby, E. S. Prior, Ernest Newton, Mervyn Macartney and Gerald Horsley' who formed the Art Workers' Guild in 1884. The Guild attracted designer-craftsmen into membership 'including Lewis F. Day, T. J. Cobden-Sanderson, George Heyward Sumner and W. A. S. Benson and Walter Crane.' Cumming and Kaplan, *The Arts and Crafts Movement*: 25-26.

⁴⁸Cumming and Kaplan, *The Arts and Crafts Movement*: 22.

⁴⁹ Cumming and Kaplan, *The Arts and Crafts Movement*: 25-26.

⁵⁰Harvey and Press, *William Morris*: 185.

⁵¹Fiona MacCarthy, *Eric Gill* (London: Faber & Faber, 1989a): 60.

The Arts and Crafts Movement

Geographically the Arts and Crafts Movement extended globally from Great Britain, into Europe and to the United States of America, though the thesis is directed only to the Arts and Crafts Movement in Great Britain. There is no precise conformation of the content of the Arts and Crafts Movement, no common style to its products, nor is it found in a clearly defined space in time.

It 'emerged in a recognisable form in the 1880s', the years 1880-1889 being those in which the philosophy of the Movement was set out in print through the writing of individuals,⁵² and is 'defined more by attitudes than style.'⁵³ It was at its most active and productive from 1890 to 1910, years described by Fiona MacCarthy as those in which 'The Arts and Crafts movement dominates the period . . . two decades of almost bewildering richness, both in terms of individual creative energy and also sheer range of design activity.'⁵⁴ An outline of the diversity of the movement's physical products is given by Rosalind Blakesley who describes the Arts and Crafts Movement as one of 'enormous intellectual ambition and often superlative artistic skill, encompassing everything from enamelled brooches to churches.'⁵⁵ Within its era the styles move through the Gothic revival of A. W. N. Pugin (1812-1852), the design for interiors in the numerous media of William Morris (1834-96), the distinctive features of the country-styled houses designed and furnished by Charles Annesley Voysey (1857-1941) and the simplicity of design of the Cotswold furniture makers Ernest Gimson (1864-1920) and the Barnsleys, Ernest (1863-1926) and Sidney (1865-1926). The diversity is so broad as to take within it products of any style provided that the production is subject to the moral values of Arts and Crafts. It is the integrity which governed the way things were made that gives Arts and Crafts

⁵²Greensted, *An Anthology*: 1.

⁵³Crawford, *By Hammer and Hand*: 18.

⁵⁴MacCarthy, *British Design*: 65.

⁵⁵Blakesley, *The Arts and Crafts Movement*: 7.

homogeneity and invites the inclusion of the furniture made at Brynmawr which is discussed in Chapter Six.

It is difficult to meld the numerous facets of the Movement, both ethical and aesthetic, into a comprehensive textual whole. When drawing attention to the many strands of the movement Ray Watkinson has advised that ‘when examined in terms of its constituent parts, [the Movement] sheds its misty mantle’ and that ‘the most useful way to deal with it is by picking out individuals and showing how they contributed to a surprisingly well-concerted general movement.’⁵⁶ The key individuals in this and following chapters are A. W. N. Pugin, John Ruskin, William Morris, C. R. Ashbee, Eric Gill, Ernest Gimson, and the Cotswolds furniture makers. To these the thesis adds Paul Matt and Peter Scott.

The ideal of craftsmen working in community was the vision of both Ruskin and Morris influenced as they were by the example of the mediaeval craft guilds.⁵⁷ The work of the medieval Guild craftsmen was conducted in communities, which while not imposing communal residence, were in identifiable localities, in clustered workplaces. Members were subject to the governance of the Guild which served the mutual interests of the membership by its responsibility for maintaining standards of craftsmanship through control of the training from apprenticeship to master, and with further control of their trading.

The Guild concept was fundamental to the bonding within the Arts and Crafts Movement. John Ruskin himself had projected an association in the early 1870s, the Guild of St George, to demonstrate how society might be improved in fellowship. He set up an experimental community at Totley, near Sheffield, with Quakers among the residents⁵⁸ which, however, was short-lived in the form originally conceived.⁵⁹

⁵⁶Watkinson, *William Morris as Designer*: 69.

⁵⁷S. T. Glass, *The Responsible Society*: 7-8.

⁵⁸Sheila Rowbotham and Jeffrey Weeks, *Socialism and the New Life. The Personal and Sexual Politics of Edward Carpenter and Havelock Ellis* (London: Pluto Press, 1977): 292.

From the Century Guild, founded in 1882 by A. H. Mackmurdo (1851-1942) for the purpose of reforming design,⁶⁰ and the Art Workers' Guild of 1884 (both referred to above), Arts and Crafts adherents motivated the formation of craft groupings, workshops, schools and guilds throughout the United Kingdom. MacCarthy describes these as 'very much the symptom of their time, the thinking person's protest in an age of increasing mass-production and a worsening environment.'⁶¹ Also symptomatic of the time were other movements, often with personal relationships within and attachments to Arts and Crafts, all with concern for society and the vision of creating a better world.

Edward Carpenter (1844-1928), influenced by Ruskin⁶² and William Morris,⁶³ was an example of one who put socialism into practice in an unconventional life-style. He had spent a few months at Ruskin's St George's Farm at Topley in 1880 before settling on a small holding at Millthorpe, near Sheffield in 1883.⁶⁴ He 'extolled the days of the "great guilds", when craftsmen produced things by their own instincts and inspiration and there was beauty in social life.'⁶⁵ Carpenter was one of the founder members of the Fellowship of the New Life (or New Fellowship) for which William Morris was the first Treasurer. The Fellowship, proposed in 1883 by Thomas Davidson, had a few hesitant years in which some members branched out to form the Fabian Society, but was re-activated in the 1890s by J. C. Kenworthy who was already involved with the English Land Colonization Society

⁵⁹W. H. G. Armytage, *Heavens Below. Utopian Experiments in England 1560-1960* (London: Routledge and Kegan Paul, 1961): 289-310.

⁶⁰Cumming and Kaplan, *Arts and Crafts Movement*: 22

⁶¹ MacCarthy, *The Simple Life*: 22.

⁶²Tsuzuki Chushichi, *Edward Carpenter 1844-1929. Prophet of Human Fellowship* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1980): 41.

⁶³Rowbotham and Weeks, *Socialism and the New Life*: 45;
Tsuzuki Chushichi, *Edward Carpenter*: 59-60.

⁶⁴Armytage, *Heavens Below*: 299.

⁶⁵Tsuzuki Chushichi, *Edward Carpenter*: 159.

and its plans for ‘a residential colony near London “for middle and lower middle-class people who were anxious to escape from the conditions of city life.”’⁶⁶

Arts and crafts architects Raymond Unwin (1863-1940) and his brother-in-law, Barry Parker (1867-1947), both being members of the Northern Art Workers Guild, were interested in the planning and development of new communities.⁶⁷ Influenced by Morris⁶⁸ Unwin was one of the early socialists wanting ‘not only a society in which there would be no exploitation but much more a society where everyone could create and in which life was beautiful.’

With Morris and Carpenter, Unwin

wrote and spoke of this socialism which by changing the conditions of labour and creating new forms of community would make possible a closer and more harmonious relationship to the external world. They wanted things to be made for need and not for profit. They wanted to democratise beauty and transform the texture of living. They sought to live out something of this future in the here and now.’⁶⁹

The ideals of Thomas Davidson and the New Fellowship influenced Ebenezer Howard whose aim was to ‘establish a heaven on earth’ with his vision for combining the best of town life with that of the country in Garden Cities. With the examples of the factory villages of William Lever’s Port Sunlight (from 1888) and the Quaker George Cadbury’s Bournville (from 1893) preceding it, the Garden City Association was formed in 1899. Also a Quaker, Joseph Rowntree’s 1901 development of New Earswick in York and Letchworth Garden City in 1902 were established, designed by Unwin.⁷⁰ In 1907 Unwin was also responsible for Hampstead Garden Suburb, where Joan Mary Fry and other Quakers from the North London Friends’ Meetings chose to live, and after World War I

⁶⁶Armytage, *Heavens Below*: 336.

⁶⁷A brief resume of the Arts and Crafts work of the partnership of the Quaker, Unwin, with Parker is given by Cumming and Kaplan, *Arts and Crafts Movement*: 55, 58, 62-64.

⁶⁸Rowbotham and Weeks, *Socialism and the New Life*: 48.

⁶⁹Rowbotham and Weeks, *Socialism and the New Life*: 72-73.

⁷⁰Armytage, *Heavens Below*: 341.

made their own proposals for a New Town. New Town is discussed further in the context of the ideals applied in practice in the following chapter.

The urge for a better life led to the conviction that it would be found by leaving the cities to seek it in their perception of the natural and simple ways of the country. Edward Carpenter had sought this life at Millthorpe, and C. R. Ashbee took his working community, the Guild of Handicraft, to Chipping Campden in 1902. Ashbee had been preceded in setting his workshops in the Cotswolds by Ernest Gimson and Edward and Sidney Barnsley, both enterprises being discussed in Chapter Five. For others the retreat ‘back to the land’ was closely associated with the movement for the Simple Life which ‘echoed both Carlyle and Ruskin’ and which Fiona MacCarthy has said was ‘never for the simple-minded.’⁷¹

Truth and simplicity

The concern held in common by the Religious Society of Friends and the Arts and Crafts Movement for a society which would conserve and promote respect for the dignity of man through equality was complemented by their accordant understanding of the core values of truth and simplicity. For the Religious Society of Friends Truth had ‘a theological dimension’ when used as reference ‘to God or the will of God . . . the Gospel of Jesus Christ . . . Christ or the Light of Christ’ but also, as truth, carrying the implications of honesty and integrity ‘manifested in human relationships.’⁷² John Punshon has demonstrated the coherence of Friends’ faith with daily life and work when considering how ‘the Testimonies⁷³ express the public, or political, aspects of the Quaker faith’:

I was attracted to the Testimonies as an ideal. I wanted to belong to a church which made the rejection of warfare a collective commitment and not just a personal option. I admired a simplicity, a devotion to equality, and a respect for

⁷¹Fiona MacCarthy, *The Simple Life*: 9-10.

⁷²Abbott, *The Historical Dictionary*: 286.

⁷³Quaker witness ‘which Friends speak of as “testimonies” connects faith with daily living.’ Abbott, *The Historical Dictionary*: xxii.

These testimonies comprise the principles that Friends have discovered and have expressed ‘in terms such as Truth, Equality, Simplicity and Peace. However, these are not abstract qualities, but vital principles of life.’ *Quaker Faith and Practice*: Introduction to 19.33.

others which reflected what I already knew of Christ. In a deceitful world I warmed to those who did not swear oaths and strove to tell the truth in all circumstances . . .

The Testimonies are ways of behaving but are not ethical rules. They are matters of practice but imply doctrines. They refer to human society but are about God. Though often talked about they lack an authoritative formulation.⁷⁴

Truthful and plain speech,⁷⁵ and the corollary of honest dealing was responsible for the success in business of Quaker entrepreneurs, but in governing daily communication also, if Friends were to 'live in the Truth' they were required to strip away 'whatever appeared to be superfluous'⁷⁶ and practice simplicity. This contributed also to Friends' commitment to minister to the needy, and was recorded in 1741 with the advice and comment to

"Let your moderation be known unto all men." Alas! it is a most melancholy reflection to observe that the very superfluities of the apparel of one person might sometimes be sufficient to clothe the nakedness of several fellow-creatures.⁷⁷

But while superfluity might once have been seen as a distraction to the spiritual life

Quaker simplicity

does not mean that life is to be poor and bare, destitute of joy and beauty . . . simplicity, when it removes encumbering details, makes for beauty in music, in art and in living. It clears the springs of life and permits wholesome mirth and gladness to bubble up; it cleans the windows of life and lets joy radiate.⁷⁸

Nor does it mean that items of furniture and clothing should be cheap nor of poor workmanship. 'There was nothing in the Quaker discipline that proscribed fine materials or sound workmanship or harmonious proportions.'⁷⁹ There is a regard for quality, for its own

⁷⁴John Punshon, *Encounter with Silence: reflections from the Quaker Tradition* (London: Quaker Home Service, 1987): 44-45.

⁷⁵'Our Yea is yea, and our Nay, nay. If we transgress our Yea and Nay, let us suffer as they do that break an oath.' John L. Nickalls, ed., *Journal of George Fox* (London: Yearly Meeting of the Religious Society of Friends, 1952): 484.

⁷⁶Abbott, *The Historical Dictionary*: 263.

⁷⁷*Extracts from the Minutes and Advices of the Yearly Meeting of Friends held in London from its first institution* 2nd edition (London: W. Phillips, 1802): 57.

⁷⁸*Faith and Practice: A Book of Christian Discipline, Philadelphia Yearly Meeting of the Religious Society of Friends* (Philadelphia, PA: Philadelphia Yearly Meeting), 1955.

⁷⁹Frederick B. Tolles, "'Of the Best Sort but Plain": The Quaker Esthetic' (*American Quarterly* XI no. 4 Winter, 1959): 499.

sake as showing respect for truth, and also because quality implies long life for an object and is thus good financial management. In his investigation of the Quaker plain style which is an ethic as well as an aesthetic, Collins has shown how it 'could be a costly process' and how other virtues such as being hard wearing and environmentally friendly might well govern the Quaker's choice of the costly.⁸⁰ Homan has reported a remark on Quaker simplicity proffered by the Clerk of a Friends' Meeting which had been passed by a member. "Typically Quaker: simple, plain and very costly."⁸¹

The nature of their simplicity has been the subject of Quaker comment from the Society's earliest days⁸² but has been acknowledged as 'the heart of Quaker ethics.'⁸³ The structure of the Quaker Meeting House has demonstrated from the first not only the concept of simplicity, but also the detachment of the Society from the churches of the conformists, which George Fox had referred to as steeple houses.⁸⁴ The earliest were built by local labour using local materials in vernacular style to a modest plan, built to accommodate a small number, all of which made it possible to observe the requirement for plainness. The selection of good quality stone and timber may also be interpreted as a mark of respect for their use and the worth of the construction it was to be used for, and thus also for the integrity of the craftsman. Lidbetter recorded

The fact that many Meeting Houses are still standing after two and a half (now three) centuries is a tribute to their good craftsmanship; they are usually as innocent of the damp proof course as their contemporaries and have the same sketchy foundations.⁸⁵

⁸⁰Peter Collins, "'Plaining': The Social and Cognitive Practice of Symbolisation in the Religious Society of Friends" (*Journal of Contemporary Religion* vol 11, no 3 1996): 282.

⁸¹Roger Homan, 'The Aesthetic of Friends' Meeting Houses.' *Quaker Studies* 11/1, Quaker Research Studies Association, 2006: footnote 3.

⁸²*QFP*: 20.27 – 20.30.

⁸³*Faith and Practice: Book of Discipline of the North Carolina Yearly Meeting (Conservative) of the Religious Society of Friends*, (Ahoskie, NC: North Carolina Yearly Meeting (Conservative), 1983), 7.

⁸⁴Nickalls, *Journal of George Fox*: 107.

⁸⁵Hubert Lidbetter, *The Friends Meeting House: an Historical Survey of the Places of Worship of the Society of Friends (Quakers), from the Days of their Founder George Fox, in the 17th century to the present day* (York: Sessions, 1961): 18.

The size of the later Meeting Houses has often increased to accommodate the greater number of Friends they were built for, and the style of some may have adopted classic lines in modest conformity with those of its surroundings.⁸⁶ Structural developments have come with time as practical facilities have been added but the internal accommodation has scarcely changed from the simple format of the earliest years. Modern chairs may have replaced original benches, but the only furnishing beyond the seating was, and usually is, the provision of a table for the Clerk of the Meeting. In relating the ethic with the aesthetic of the Friends' Meeting House Homan has shown that there is a 'symmetry and rhythm' within, which together with the lack of architectural embellishment, is intended to 'provide conditions conducive to worship. The overriding consideration is that of resting the spirit.'⁸⁷

While Meeting Houses have been well documented by Friends Hubert Lidbetter (1885-1996) and David Butler, there is little evidence about the furnishing of early Quaker homes. This is unsurprising in view of the Friends' testimony to simplicity, which would have made the contents of the home a matter of utility and unremarkable, and therefore unremarked. But home comforts and conveniences were to tempt, so that in 1911 London Yearly Meeting felt the need to remind Friends that

Christianity is tested, not only in the shop and office (in honesty and fair dealing), but also in the home. In the standard of living adopted by the homemakers, in the portion of income devoted to comforts, recreations and luxuries, in willingness to be content with simplicity, the members of a household, both older and younger, may bear witness that there is a Way of Life that does not depend on the abundance of the things possessed.⁸⁸

As within the Religious Society of Friends, ethic and aesthetic are correlated in Arts and Crafts principles. Pugin 'provided the foundation from which the moral aesthetics of Arts and Crafts evolved.'⁸⁹ His 'campaign against stucco and pomposity in building'

⁸⁶Homan, *The Art of the Sublime*: 93.

⁸⁷Homan, *The Art of the Sublime*: 95.

⁸⁸London Yearly Meeting Proceedings, 1911: 166-167.

⁸⁹Cumming and Kaplan. *The Arts and Crafts Movement*: 11.

was reflected in Philip Webb's design for Morris's home, Red House at Bexleyheath, where, built of the vernacular brick, 'the house is plain and functional, beautiful and homely with . . . simple solid structure and respect for materials.'⁹⁰ The Arts and Crafts architects who followed were to design with Pugin's rules of 'structural honesty, originality in design, and the use of regional materials or character'⁹¹ in mind and the principles were replicated in Arts and Crafts artefacts and furniture, though subject always to the individual interpretation that demonstrated their originality.

As mentioned in Chapter One a developing interest among Friends was recognized with a conference entitled 'Quakers and the Arts and Crafts Movement.' In their lectures Roger Homan and Pink Dandelion argued that the Arts and Crafts Movement held an integrity in common with the Religious Society of Friends, which is a focal point of this study of the Brynmawr Experiment. Homan drew out an association of spirituality with conscience which 'converged in a set of principles that included the integrity of the artist [and] high technical standards' which, while his thesis was then directed to the ecclesiastical buildings of particular Arts and Crafts architects, are equally applicable to the Quaker Meeting House and the craft work of the Brynmawr Furniture Makers, discussed in Chapter Six.⁹² In examining a selection of images to illustrate his theme, Homan argued that beauty cannot be immoral, and that the Arts and Crafts principles of honest representation, without deceit or unnecessary embellishment, is an element of integrity.⁹³

The morality of Arts and Crafts lies within the integrity with which the artists and craftsmen practised aesthetically the principles derived from the values of those who inspired the Movement and applied them to their daily life and work. Quaker integrity was

⁹⁰MacCarthy, *William Morris*: 155.

⁹¹Cumming and Kaplan, *The Arts and Crafts Movement*: 32.

⁹²Roger Homan, 'Art and Integrity' (lecture, Charney Manor, 6 May 2008).

⁹³Roger Homan, 'Spirituality and Morality in Visual Culture' (lecture, Charney Manor, 7 May 2008).

derived from the principles enshrined in the testimonies, applied in their daily life and work. This discussion continues in Chapter Five where C. R. Ashbee, described as 'both the most successful and the most enigmatic exponent of the ideology of the Arts and Crafts Movement' who 'in some ways . . . represents the highest common denominator of the Movement's thought'⁹⁴ and Eric Gill are compared with Peter Scott, who shaped the Brynmawr Experiment.

⁹⁴Lionel Lambourne, *Utopian Craftsmen: the Arts and Crafts Movement from the Cotswolds to Chicago* (London: Astragal Books, 1980), 124.

CHAPTER THREE

PRACTICAL APPLICATION OF THE SHARED PRINCIPLES

The Arts and Crafts and Quaker concern for social justice as it was applied in practice before World War I is evidenced here in outline. The means was by the provision of opportunities for productive occupation and paid work for unemployed persons. In most cases, training in craft work was an ingredient of these projects. The value of woodwork is discussed, for both occupational and money making reasons, and includes mention of its particular relevance where there was unemployment. In the inter-war years the character of craft practice was to move from its concern for society, with C. R. Ashbee and Eric Gill being exceptions, while the economic depression brought that of the Quakers very much to the fore.

Contextual information accounts for the effects of the depression and national efforts to alleviate the problems of unemployment. This precedes the argument as to whether Peter Scott and a group of Friends took Quaker principles to the derelict town of Brynmawr in what was to become known as the Brynmawr Experiment.

One of the earliest Quakers to put their concern for social justice into practice was John Bellers (1654-1725).¹ A Bristol cloth merchant and one of the first Quaker Fellows of the Royal Society, appointed in 1718, he was

a Quaker filled with that reforming zeal that drove the "First Publishers of Truth" to condemn the social inequities which then existed; inequities which scarred the personalities of those who suffered and those who condoned the suffering. Without exception his writings underline the essential unity between religious belief and earthly duty.²

Among Bellers's schemes was one to provide 'Profit for the Rich, a plentiful Living for the Poor and a good Education for Youth, which will be an advantage to the

¹Joshua Rowntree described Bellers as 'a most interesting link between the high pressure prophets of the first generation of Quakerism and the philanthropists of its quietest period.' Joshua Rowntree, *Social Service: Its Place in the Society of Friends*, Swarthmore Lecture Series (London: Woodbrooke Extension Committee, 1913): 49.

²George Clarke, ed., *John Bellers 1654-1725: his Life, Times and Writings* (London: Routledge and Kegan Paul, 1987): 16.

Government by the Increase of the People and their Riches,' set out in his *Proposals for Raising a Colledge of Industry of all useful Trades and Husbandry*, in 1695. This was presented to and approved by London Yearly Meeting in 1697, tested by the local meetings and finally approved in 1699, thus laying responsibility for similar provision on all Friends. His aims were

First, Profit for the Rich (which will be Life to the rest). Secondly, A plentiful living for the Poor, without difficulty. Thirdly, a good Education for Youth, that may tend to prepare their Souls into the Nature of the good Ground.³

He believed that

the present Idle Hands of the Poor of this Nation are able to raise provision and manufactures that would bring England as much treasure as the mines do Spain . . . regular people of all visible creatures being the life and perfection of treasure, the strength of nations and glory of princes.⁴

On this Braithwaite commented that 'in other words – the end [purpose] of wealth was the making of life.'⁵

Bellers' scheme was in advance of the socio-political group communities of the late seventeenth to early eighteenth centuries⁶ and his writings were influential on Francis Place, Robert Owen and Karl Marx.⁷ In his 'colledge' Bellers envisaged accommodation with community living, education and training in an apprenticeship programme. There was to be care for the old, the children, the sick and incapable, with self sufficiency through communal agricultural work, maintenance and the supply of fuel. The emphasis was on shared work for the success of the community. Friends were invited to finance the scheme,

³Clarke, ed., *John Bellers*: 53.

⁴Clarke, ed., *John Bellers*: 66.

⁵Braithwaite, *The Beginnings of Quakerism*: 577.

⁶For example the Philadelphians, the Behemenists, the Camisards, the Shakers, the Moravians, all of whom had origins, or close association at first with the Quakers.

⁷William H. Marwick, *Quaker Social Thought*, Woodbrooke Occasional Papers 2 (London Friends' Home Service Committee): 5; Punshon, *Portrait in Grey*: 110.

Francis Place 1771-1854 English political radical active in the years following the Napoleonic Wars. Robert Owen 1771-1858 Owner of New Lanark Mills, the purchase of which was backed by Quaker finance. Karl Marx 1818-1883. *Das Kapital* was published in 1867 in which he cited John Bellers. Abbot, *The Historical Dictionary of the Friends (Quakers)* (Lanham, MD: Scarecrow Press 2003): 24.

but in the event, only those in London responded by sponsoring what was in effect a workhouse, in Clerkenwell.⁸

While Bellers' scheme was imaginative and all-embracing but not achieved, Bristol Friends were prepared to adopt and use his ideas in a different way. In 1696 they set up a Workhouse, in its contemporary sense rather than with the Poor Law connotations of the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries to employ out-of-work weavers and give education to children.⁹

A panel of the Quaker Tapestry depicts 'The Great Hunger' of Ireland which followed the disastrous failure of crops, particularly potatoes, in 1846.¹⁰ British Friends responded to the poverty with measures of relief. The Central Relief Committee (CRC) co-ordinating the distribution of food and clothing recognised this as 'an emergency measure that would not change matters for the better in the long term. In fact, Quakers shared the prevailing view that the giving of gratuitous relief was ultimately bad for the recipient.'¹¹ They lent money to industrial undertakings like kelp processing, and 'provided jobs, such as the manufacture of cheap clothing set up by women Friends in Cork, early in 1847.'¹² Towards the end of 1849 James Ellis, a Quaker textile manufacturer in the north of England bought an estate in Ireland at Letterfrack, Connemara. He and his wife Mary settled there and with a scheme for developing the estate provided employment for local labour. Manual work was used for the draining and clearing of land, construction of roads, cottages, farm buildings and workshops. Ellis sold the estate after eight years through his

⁸The Clerkenwell scheme developed with several facets and venues, into a school, eventually to mature into the Friends' School at Saffron Walden. *The School on the Hill* (Saffron Walden: The Friends School, 2002): Foreword.

⁹Punshon, *Portrait in Grey*: 111.

¹⁰J. Ormerod Greenwood, *The Quaker Tapestry. A Celebration of Insight* (London: Impact Books, 1990): 153. The 77 needle-worked panels of the tapestry depict aspects of Quaker history and are on permanent display at the Friends Meeting house in Kendal, Cumbria.

¹¹Goodbody, Robin B., *Quaker Relief Work in Ireland's Great Hunger 1846-9* (Kendal: Quaker Tapestry Booklets, 1995): 22.

¹²Goodbody, *Quaker Relief Work*: 22.

ill health, but the village is still known as ‘the Quaker village’, and is a centre for craft work with an Institute of Technology and the Letterfrack Furniture College.¹³

A Quaker Meeting had been founded at Jordans, in Buckinghamshire in the seventeenth century. Its twentieth century members proposed that, with the acquisition of surrounding land, the site should be developed as a model village. The foundations of the first cottage were laid in February 1919, followed by workshops and an hostel.

Essential to the scheme was to be

the cultivation of village industries, not only those that which are customary for the maintenance of local needs, but others that will give scope for the growth of character, self-expression, and high standards of individual workmanship. These are principles that follow closely after the aspirations of Ruskin and Morris developing both the intelligence and character, making for a full and true personality.¹⁴

By 1921 Ernest Warner was able to record that ‘Jordans Village is an experiment.’ The industries, both begun and anticipated, included farming and small-holding, brick and tile-making, woodwork, boot-making and hand-loom weaving, ‘all controlled and financed by a company, Jordans Village Industries Ltd,’ with the residential tenants being shareholders.¹⁵

Arts and Crafts concern for the dignity and independence of the workman produced opportunities in craft making to counter the lack of employment in rural areas. Ruskin himself had sponsored ‘the uneconomic craft of hand-spinning on the Isle of Man during the 1870s.’¹⁶ In the 1880s cottage industries, both traditional and those recently encouraged through occupational classes, were supported by the Home Arts and Industries Association (HAIA) which had been founded in 1877 by ‘the private effort of a Mrs Jebb’¹⁷ was

¹³Sheila O’Donnell and John Tuomey, *Letterfrack Furniture College, County Galway*, <http://ireland.com/tesserae/000014.htm>, (accessed 5/09/2009).

¹⁴‘History of Jordans Village. Its Origins, Aims and Accomplishments’, *Penn Pioneer and Jordans News-Sheet*, 18 August, 1920: 2.

¹⁵Ernest Warner, *Jordans, a Quaker Shrine* (London: Friends Bookshop, 1921): 13-14.

¹⁶Cumming and Kaplan, *The Arts and Crafts Movement*: 19.

¹⁷‘Home Arts and Industries Association Exhibition’, *Rural Industries* winter 1936: 64.

formalised in 1884 by Mr and Mrs G. F. Watts 'to spread the knowledge and practice of good handicrafts and of those arts which make home beautiful with the intent that people should learn the twofold delight of making and enjoying beautiful things.'¹⁸ It was however, possible to earn from these crafts through the London showroom that the HAIA set up.¹⁹

Numerous craft industries with Arts and Crafts association were developed in the 1890s such as Maude and Joseph King's Haslemere Weaving industry in 1894 together with Godfrey and Ethel Blount's Peasant Arts Society in 1896, Harold Rathbone's Della Robbia Pottery, in Birkenhead, also in 1894, and Ruskin Pottery, near Birmingham, in 1898.²⁰

Mary Seton Watts (1849-1938), inspired by Ruskin and trained in art, was a strong supporter of the Home Arts and Industries Association. She pursued its interest in encouraging the arts of handicrafts, particularly in rural areas, where she had the intention of providing work particularly for women. These women contributed to her Arts and Crafts work in Compton, Surrey, culminating in the construction and refurbishing of the Watts Mortuary Chapel in 1895.²¹

A reference to the garden cities in the previous chapter gave a link between the aim of Ebenezer Howard (1850-1928) to create a 'heaven on earth'²² with that of the Quaker industrialists, Joseph Rowntree and George Cadbury whose suburbs of New Earswick in

¹⁸Home Arts and Industries Association, *Rural Industries*, summer 1936: 32.

¹⁹Cumming and Kaplan, *The Arts and Crafts Movement*: 21.

²⁰Other examples of craft works for providing employment opportunities include 1883 Ruskin Linen Industry at Windermere (1883), 1901 Luther Hooper's Green Bushes Weaving Houses and J. Radley Young's Hammer Vale Pottery (1901), the Saint Edmondsbury Weavers (1902), Romney Green's Haslemere Woodworking Industry (1904) and Miss Hay-Cooper and Miss Barnard's book binding studio. Organisations to co-ordinate and make sales included the Guild of Women Binders, and the Home Work Co-operative Ladies Work Society. Crawford, *The Arts and Crafts Movement*: 17.

²¹Veronica F. Gould, *The Watts Chapel: An Arts and Crafts Memorial* (Compton, Surrey: The Watts Gallery, 1993): 4-5.

²²John Milton's phrase, 'heaven on earth', (*Paradise Lost* Book 4: 208) has been used metaphorically to indicate a hope for an utopian future. W. H. G. Armytage entitled his book of utopian experiments in England *Heavens Below* (see bibliography).

York (1901) and Bournville in Birmingham (1907) respectively were built to provide good housing in a healthy environment.

The Arts and Crafts architects employed included the partnership of Barry Parker and the Quaker, Raymond Unwin, who were also responsible for planning the

While Howard's garden city of Letchworth was for general residence, that of Bournville was for employees in the Cadbury chocolate works. George Cadbury's model village development was for cottage style housing 'economically available at a rent of five shillings a week each,'²³ with gardens for growing vegetables, and where residents were encouraged to live a healthy lifestyle,

The end of World War I in 1918 raised the concern of both Quakers and the Arts and Crafts members for the rehabilitation of ex-servicemen and the reconstruction of society. Lucy Morland made a moral statement of what was desirable for a life to be worth living, but without suggesting how the economic essentials of living might be acquired. They were however, the elements of a new social outlook that occupied Quaker thought in the following years. That outlook

can be summed up in two words – *self-determination* and *co-operation*. *Self-determination* – the freedom for each individual to work out his own destiny, to develop to his full manhood. *Co-operation* – the voluntary merging of some personal and private liberty into that of the organised group in order to achieve a wider freedom.²⁴

More practical was the work of the Red Cross in its work for the war wounded and disabled men, providing both physical and mental rehabilitation together 'with training to become economically self-sufficient.'²⁵

A Quaker scheme for post-war social reconstruction emerged from a link with Percy Alden, MP for Tottenham until 1918. Alden, a leading figure in the British Institute

²³A. G. Gardiner, *Life of George Cadbury* (London: Cassell, 1923): 36.

²⁴Lucy Fryer Morland, *The New Social Outlook*, Swarthmore Lecture Series (London: Headley Bros. 1918): 32.

²⁵American Red Cross, *Persons with Disabilities and the American Red Cross*, www.redcross.org/museum/history/disabilities.asp, (accessed 30/08/2006).

of Social Service²⁶ and Vice-Chairman of the NCSS was well-acquainted with the Quakers. His article *Wanted: a New England*²⁷ reported the needs and hopes of the service men he had visited at 'the front'. These were for better living conditions on their return to civilian life, land they could cultivate, and an industrial system that would give education, leisure time and recreation. As a sitting MP, Alden was able to describe government plans for post-war housing, much on garden city lines, and went on to say how a small body of Friends had made proposals for a New Town which he asked Friends to support. It was not to be 'another communistic colony which stands out in isolation, and has not influence on the existing order', but was to eliminate the exploitation of labour, offer useful work in healthy conditions, house people in convenient houses with gardens and centre town life on a comprehensive and unified system of education and afford full facilities for all forms of recreation. This proposed New Town had its roots in a sub-committee of the Quaker War and Social Order Committee (WSOC). Eight Friends, including Joan Mary Fry, joined with other interested persons in outlining the plan for a town which they intended to go further than the fundamental domesticity of Letchworth Garden City, incorporating in fact, many of the considerations that the Quaker industrialists, Cadbury and Rowntree, had incorporated into their village schemes at Bournville and New Earswick respectively (matters introduced in the previous chapter).

More than the modern housing in pleasing surroundings of the proponents of the Garden City and Suburb, there was to be at New Town a civic centre with facilities for education and recreation, a community shopping complex to avoid the need for private retailers, and co-operative factories and workshops to provide employment for the residents and incoming craftsmen and other workers. In its promotional leaflet the proposals recognised that in pioneering a venture like this, interested parties were bound to want to know that the scheme was financially viable, but the primary concern for the

²⁶ NCSS headquarters were at Stapley House until 1928, a property owned by Percy Alden.

²⁷Percy Alden, 'Wanted: a New England', *The Friend*, 22 February, 1918.

promoters was for the enrichment of human life. Their belief was that the sharing of control and the rewards would 'secure for all a fuller opportunity for self-expression in life and work.'²⁸ Throughout appeared the concern for society, with the vision for a better world, in a community constructed toward the achievement of social justice. In the event, the New Town proposal proved impossible to achieve. The Friends were unable to acquire the piece of land they had earmarked for their new town, and with their Pioneer Trust those most involved in the New Town project took their experience to join with the developers of Welwyn Garden City. The principles remained and were to reappear at Brynmawr in its small handicraft industries and in the SPS which organised its mutual aid through agriculture and horticulture.

The Arts and Crafts Exhibition Society showed concern for ex-servicemen with their pamphlet *Vocational Training for Able-Bodied Sailors and Soldiers* which proposed that servicemen returning from the front should be given 'an intense apprenticeship of learning by doing.' It included a plan for such apprentices to be sent to live and work in small self-contained villages.²⁹

At the end of the war there was a climate of opinion that saw 'Handicrafts as a civilising influence: handicrafts as a means of healing the divisions of society.'³⁰ It was the practice of craftwork that played a major part in the rehabilitation of the unemployed men and women of the years of the depression (see below).

Discussion of the psychological consequences of unemployment for the individual occupied thirty six pages of *Men Without Work*³¹ and were examined together with the complementary problems of physical health and matters of independence and

²⁸H. Clapham Lander, *A Proposal for the Establishment of a New Town*, For private circulation, 1918: 4.

²⁹Douglas Cockerell, *Vocational Training for Able-Bodied Sailors and Soldiers* (London: John Hogg, for the Arts and Crafts Exhibition Society 1918).

³⁰Fiona MacCarthy, 'The Inheritance of Diffidence: Crafts in Britain Between the Wars'. In *Craft History One Celebrating the Centenary of the Arts and Crafts Exhibition Society*. (Bath: Combined Arts, 1989b): 32.

³¹Pilgrim Trust, *Men Without Work*: 143-179.

respectability, described as moral problems. This, though, was a fine distinction since these also contributed to the depression and despair of those without work which today are recognised as mental health matters.

In 1982 Margaret Pitt ended her book about Brynmawr with a question: '*How can we help as many people today?*'³² The question is very similar to that with which Jennings concluded her chapter on 'the extent and effects of unemployment' showing that in each case, the authors had concern to find a solution to an immediate problem. 'How then are the evil effects of unemployment to be counteracted? . . . How, moreover, are the non-material values to be restored to their due place in the minds and lives of men embittered and disillusioned by long years of unemployment and dependence?'³³ Jennings answered her own questions with one solution when, in a later chapter discussing the Brynmawr Experiment, she said 'Among the main objects kept in view in the development of the new industries have been the re-awakening of the spirit of craftsmanship, which was once so strong in rural Wales, and the release of personality in work which is not derogatory to human dignity'.³⁴

Hand wood crafting played a major part in the activities of the Woodcraft Folk,³⁵ of which there was a strong branch at Brynmawr, in the classes set up by the Rural Industries Bureau and the Occupational Clubs which were government initiated as reconstruction schemes through the NCSS. A lecturer to boys' club leaders explained the educational value of craft work, and of wood work in particular as:

Every piece of craftsmanship is the craftsman's solution of a problem which can be defined . . . wood is an intractable material, in the handling of which, knowledge of its character, its possibilities, limitations, strength and weaknesses, is needed, together with skill to handle the tools which shape it and intelligence to adapt it in the most advantageous manner.³⁶

³²Pitt, *Our Unemployed*: 56.

³³Jennings, *Brynmawr*: 148.

³⁴Jennings, *Brynmawr*: 213.

³⁵An organisation for young people as an alternative to the Boy Scouts as the Scouts were regarded by the founders of the Woodcraft Folk as too militaristic.

³⁶G. E. Marston, 'The Educational Value of Handicrafts,' *Rural Industries* winter 1933: 71.

A more recent writer on the concept of skill has made the same point:

when we speak of a carpenter's skill we are referring to the combination of his manual skill, in sawing, planing and so on, with his knowledge of different sorts of wood, different types of joint and so on.³⁷

Neither went as far as Romney Green who saw that while the art of the craftsman 'which is proximately an expression of the worker's intelligent interest in the material and process and purpose of his craft, is ultimately an expression of that pleasure in work and in life as a whole out of which this intelligent interest grows.'³⁸ But Paul Matt did. His instruction book was written with the purpose of helping 'those who wish to find joy in the work of their hands,' in which work they would discover 'the discipline and virtue of simplicity' and the satisfaction given by a well-made article with personal associations.'³⁹

As a postscript to these opinions of the value of woodwork the opportunity to practice it at Brynmawr brings a modest modification of its psychological worth with the query as to what other occupation could have served the community in accord with Peter Scott's ideas for its future. Although Joan Mary Fry emphasised that Friends' policy for the relief of human distress was 'to meet a need not met by existing organisations'⁴⁰ this obligation only to fill a gap in the provision of other agencies was also in accord with Scott's own independent personality in that he preferred to create something original and untried. But education through reading, discussion and lectures was well provided for by the settlements;⁴¹ to interest the men, occupations needed to be male-oriented, with the use

³⁷Charles More, *Skill and the English Working Class 1870-1914* (London: Croom Helm, 1980): 15.

³⁸Arthur Romney Green, *Woodwork in Principle and Practice* (Ditchling: Pepler, 1918), xi.

³⁹Paul Matt, *Woodwork from Waste*. The Work of Our Hands Series, no III (Oxford: Oxford University Press, date unknown, possibly 1935): introduction.

⁴⁰Joan Mary Fry, *Friends Lend a Hand in Alleviating Unemployment. The Story of a Social Experiment extending over 20 years, 1926-46*. (London: Friends' Book Centre, 1947): 11.

⁴¹Existing participants in social and educational schemes, on which the settlements were based, were the Welsh School of Social Service, the Welsh Housing and Development Association, the King Edward VII National Memorial Association, the Workers Educational Association, local Education committees, Welsh Drama Activities, classes provided by the University College of Swansea, the Federation of Boys Clubs, the YMCA and other such interested bodies. Their efforts to 'ameliorate the psychological effects of unemployment . . . included re-training, adult education, music and physical exercise, the relative benefits of

of tools giving an activity satisfying to the need for restoring masculine self-esteem⁴² and allotment holding and poultry keeping was already becoming the province of another Quaker department; it had to carry an element of usefulness to the home and family, and in Scott's vision its products had to be marketable. For him the prime purpose was the provision of employment. The latent bootmaking skills in the unemployed men at Brynmawr and the coming forward of Paul Matt with woodworking skills were matters of good fortune for the Experiment and not of foresight.⁴³

The Depression and Unemployment in the inter-war period, 1919-1939

The main factors concerning the economic background to the depression of the 1920s and the 1930s are widely available in general accounts of the economics of the period and, at the risk of over-simplification, there is no more than an indication here. The factors are a post-1918 boom followed by recession and subsequent slump in Great Britain, world-wide financial instability, the General Strike in 1926 and the Wall Street Crash of 1929. Less demand for British manufactured goods brought serious decline in the formerly basic industries of mining, textiles, engineering and ship building, with mining already seriously affected by its failure to modernise with technical improvements. Reluctance to mechanise meant that industry became increasingly uncompetitive as overseas production captured the markets, and the demand for coal decreased while that for oil increased. It was the economic consequences for British industry that led to the mass unemployment in the valleys of the South Wales Coalfield and the Quaker effort to relieve the distress of the families of the unemployed men of Brynmawr.

which have since been validated by research in occupational therapy.' Denis Linehan and Pys Gryffudd, *Bodies and Souls: psycho-geographical collisions in the South Wales Coalfield, 1926-1939*, www.ucc.ie/ucc/depts/geography/stafhome/denis/bodies.htm (accessed 09/02/05).

⁴²Female biased tool- equipped occupations were also available to women in the Experiment, with knitting, sock making and quilting enterprises. These were as commercial enterprises, though not necessarily as the work of women, but were unsuccessful whereas the successful ones were boot and furniture making.

⁴³ Neither Jennings nor Scott give any indication that bootmaking was considered as a possibility before Scott selected Brynmawr for his Experiment.

Where there is economic depression and consequential unemployment and social deprivation, one of the first casualties is the destruction of the self-respect of the unemployed.⁴⁴ The effect of the Wall Street Crash of 1929 and its social effects in the mid-1930s is commonly known as The Depression in the USA and Europe, and for Britain the 1930s have become known as the devil's decade. In this respect the 1920s are equally deserving of the description, with known figures of insured unemployed men peaking in 1921 at about 2.25 million. In 1932 the figures are estimated at 3.4 million. Butchart noted that this number is roughly one worker in six. The severity of the figure is shown by comparison with 1985 'when the number of unemployed reached 3.3 million out of a working population which comprised six million more people than that of 50 years before.'⁴⁵

Although there was a problem of unemployment in Britain throughout the 1920s and 1930s it was most acute in certain areas only, particularly South Wales, the North East of England, and Scotland. Other regions, especially London and the South East, were flourishing economically so that Piers Brendon has been able to note the paradox that 'the devil's decade spawned the affluent society.'⁴⁶

Unemployment in the coal industry nationally and in South Wales

Government had appropriated control of the coal mines as a wartime measure and retained control in the immediate post-war period. The central management was in the hands of a controller, advised by a board of equal numbers of mine owners and trade union representatives, the effect being that the miners gained experience of control and looked to the future for a nationalised industry. The trade unions had been widely consulted by the

⁴⁴ This has been represented in fiction and film, for example AJ Cronin's *The Stars Look Down*, George Orwell's *The Road to Wigan Pier* and the 1941 film *Love on the Dole*, from Walter Greenwood's book of that name.

⁴⁵ Ed Butchart, 'Unemployment and Non-employment in Interwar Britain' Discussion Papers in Economic and Social History no.16 (University of Oxford, 1997): 4-6.

⁴⁶ Piers Brendon, *The Dark Valley. A Panorama of the 30s* (London: Jonathan Cape, 2000): 165.

government in war time, and representatives of the Miners' Federation contributed to the overall management policies of the Coal Controller.

The recession of the early 1920s resulted in unemployment, but with the experience of previous years, in which unemployment was regarded as the norm, it was expected to fall again when industry made the anticipated usual recovery. Out of work miners were cushioned from this supposedly temporary unwaged period by a national unemployment insurance scheme introduced by Lloyd George's Liberal government in 1911. Funded by contributions from government, employers and employees, the scheme at first also anticipated the temporary nature of periods of unemployment by providing support for a limited period of 26 weeks and restricting the number of trades eligible to engineering, ship building and mining, those being the ones most predisposed to having to lay men off. In the immediate post-war period of full employment the government felt confident enough in 1920 to extend the scheme by stages, to include most lower-waged employees,⁴⁷ and shortly afterwards was to include financial benefit to the employee's family.⁴⁸ The intention of giving support during short-term unemployment due to natural forces in trade was frustrated by the consequences for employment of the financial crises of the late 1920s and the depression following the Wall Street Crash.

The political efforts of the Labour and the Conservative-dominated National governments of 1923 to 1935 failed to rectify the situation. There had been industrial unrest in the mining industry in the 1920s, provoked by the effects of falling wages. The mine workers were supported by the railway and transport workers in a Triple Alliance of their trade unions and the Trades Union Congress (TUC) called out all major industries on strike on 4 May 1926. This General Strike lasted until 12 May 1926 when it was ended by the TUC.⁴⁹ After the collapse of the General Strike the miners refused to return to work, and

⁴⁷Those excluded were agricultural labourers, domestic workers and civil servants.

⁴⁸A.J.P. Taylor, *English History 1914-1945* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1965): 148.

⁴⁹A group of Quakers took part in negotiations between employers and employees in attempting to bring about a settlement which is discussed later in this chapter.

remained 'out' for a further seven months until obliged to return and to work for lower wages and for longer hours.

There was already an accepted inevitability about unemployment when the world succumbed to economic depression at the end of 1929. It was to become mass unemployment as the figures of insured men out of work in the 1930s rose to over three million. They were dependent on the financial support they had insured for, collected from the Labour Exchanges. Those uninsured relied on the Poor Law assistance, and charity.

Hayburn comments that:

much more could have been done. There was on the whole little understanding of the problems of unemployment at government level . . . The depressed areas, far away from London, were often conveniently forgotten, or so it seemed, until the hunger marchers arrived⁵⁰. Only then was the National Government forced into action in an effort to keep the unemployed off the streets.⁵¹

The main employment in South Wales before World War I had been coal mining, and because of the importance of fuel during the war, the mines had prospered. The quality of the coal was exceptional, and its prices were high. Fifty percent of its output was exported, and represented forty percent of the total United Kingdom export of coal. The collier was fully employed on high wages and those who had become well off were able to buy a house. What could not be anticipated when he invested in property was that the consequence for an unemployed house owner would be that the ownership affected his entitlement to financial assistance as the capital value of his house was included in the Means Test that governed his benefit allotment.

Coal mining together with the other heavy industries, iron, steel and tin plate manufacture, occupied two thirds of those in insured employment. The concurrent decline of these industries added the metal workers to the numbers of unemployed. This decline

⁵⁰Ralph H. C. Hayburn, 'The Voluntary Occupational Centre Movement, 1932-39', *Journal of Contemporary History* no. 6, (1971): 157.

Organized by the National Unemployed Workers Movement, there were five national hunger marches to London between 1929 and 1936 'each involving between one thousand and fifteen hundred men and women, and also scores of other demonstrations and protest meetings throughout the country.'

⁵¹Hayburn, 'The Voluntary Occupational Centre Movement': 168.

was then reflected in dependent trades, and indirectly, from loss of spending power, in shops, so that by 1931 there had already been ten years of large scale unemployment in South Wales. In 1934 the area was recognised by the government as a Special (Depressed) Area, as were also West Cumberland, Tyneside and Scotland, where heavy industry and mining had been major areas for employment and suffered similarly.

On the initiative of the Archbishop of York the Pilgrim Trust was approached and financed for an enquiry into the unemployment situation in the early 1930s.⁵² Investigators were employed, and made their enquiries in a sample six areas, one of which was the Rhondda Valley. They identified inward looking characteristics in the inhabitants which they felt to have come from being geographically placed in communities bound round by mountains. This gave a strong sense of community in the villages and small townships, a reliance on family ties and disinclination to leave to find jobs in more prosperous areas. Even when the opportunity to go away from home for a period of training provided by government was offered, there was reluctance to take the opportunity. Some had never been away at all, others only knew mining, yet others said their mothers did not wish them to go. To these men leaving their 'sheltered valleys' to go to 'a strange land amongst possibly unsympathetic people appeared brutal.'⁵³

Through individual and group investigations the Pilgrim Trust reporters gave a significant commentary on the character of the local people. Beside a general sense of unease in the relations between mine worker and mine owner their sensitivity to a perceived grievance made them responsive to leadership and 'to preaching of any kind, political preaching included'. This may account for the numbers who joined in the open air meetings held in the Valleys by the Quaker missionaries in 1928 (see below). There had

⁵²*Men Without Work. A Report made to the Pilgrim Trust* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1938).

This lengthy report collates its findings in such a way that the details of the relevant sources of financial benefit are not presented as a comprehensive whole, but as appropriate to the particular paragraph or subsection.

⁵³William Noble, *Miners' Training Clubs*. Pamphlet reprinted from *The Contemporary Review*, September 1931: 7.

been, for the most part, high standards in personal, domestic and social life 'so that it would almost be truer to think of unemployment in Wales as a middle-class than as a slum problem.'⁵⁴ Much of the Pilgrim Trust enquiry was conducted through personal interviews and home visits, and reached a general conclusion that 'the economic level at which families were living in many homes visited was such as to cause nervous anxiety and, in some instances, physical deterioration.'⁵⁵

The Quaker, Horace Pointing (1891-1976) gathered letters from unemployed men in which they described their circumstances.⁵⁶ One man

An ex-miner (not named), married, with two children has been unemployed seven years. In that time, by special efforts he has had odd jobs lasting five months. When in the mines, he rose at 4.30 am and got home at 3.30 pm.

"The hours were so long because we had to travel quite a way and then walk in and out of the pit workings about four miles; returning home, the last ounce of energy spent, I was too tired to eat my dinner or to bathe. Consequently the first period of unemployment enabled a man to recuperate and get some colour in his cheeks, but after a while you begin to fidget; it starts to wear, and so do your clothes and you can't replace them. Then the next stage creeps on, so you start to press and patch. And bread and butter and cheese and jam don't seem to taste the same as they used to – and you find you have to begin to learn to repair boots and a dozen other things in the home. The wife sits down to try to make a shilling do the work of two, and the little boy hasn't any more Sunday clothes and you can't go out on Sunday. You have fits of depression; it sinks into your very vitals like a burning rod, and you begin to wonder – *Is all this right?* You read the newspapers and they too have taken on quite a different taste. You can't see any sense in it at all. I have come to the firm conclusion that no one cares a damn whether I work for another seven or seventy years. I have lost faith in all their preachings . . . When will men realise that one man is quite as good as another, so that all can work together to create and build and construct beautiful homes and environment, food and clothes, simply for the sake of doing it, for utility's sake – for man's sake?"⁵⁷

Unconsciously, in showing how enforced idleness affected himself, physically and mentally, his family and family life that kept them at home on Sunday, traditionally the day for Chapel and friendship, the despair for the future revealed yearnings for the very

⁵⁴Pilgrim Trust, *Men Without Work: a Report made to the Pilgrim Trust* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1938): 68.

⁵⁵Pilgrim Trust, *Men Without Work*: 101.

⁵⁶ Horace B. Pointing, ed., *Unemployment is Beating Us: is it Our Concern? A Series of Letters* (London: Young Friends Group, 1934).

⁵⁷Pointing, *Unemployment is Beating Us*: 28-29.

things that the Arts and Crafts Movement and the Brynmawr Quakers aspired to, equality, creativity and the satisfaction of working.

Financial assistance for the unemployed

The Labour Government (1929-31) and the following National Government, were reluctant to take action 'in the vain hope that the situation would suddenly improve.'⁵⁸ Some financial assistance was available through government schemes of National Insurance,⁵⁹ indicated here in outline only. The National Insurance Act of 1911 had provided income for insured workers when without work or in ill-health, limited to workers in the building, engineering and shipbuilding trades notably subject to fluctuating employment. This was extended by making benefit available to virtually all who were out of work. It was expected to provide temporary short term relief, and was based on the assumption that unemployment would run at four percent of the work force. The scheme was later extended to include benefit for the wives and children of the insured man. Four percent proved to be a serious underestimate as the numbers of unemployed moved into millions, and the special problems of the long term unemployed became apparent. It was the application of the insurance scheme in practice, relating as it did to the amount of benefit awarded to the collective 'means' of the whole family and its dependents, that displayed its inadequacy to bring the intended assistance.

The amount of financial assistance, referred to as the dole, was determined by a test of the family income, the Means Test.⁶⁰ Antipathy to the test was expressed in many quarters. There were objections from the families themselves, humiliated by its necessity and unfairness in its application, by some local authorities who regarded the conditions which governed the distribution of funds inequitable, and by the Churches which protested

⁵⁸Hayburn, 'The Voluntary Occupational Centre Movement, 1932-39': 156.

⁵⁹Norman Lowe, *Mastering Modern British History* (London: Macmillan, 1998): 314-316 and 320-324.

⁶⁰Robert G Errington, 'The Means Test', *The Friend*, 21 October 1932: 922-924. The article is a statement made by the author, a member of a Public Assistance Committee, as presented to members of the Friends Industrial and Social Order Committee. Errington explained the working of the Means Test, noted criticisms of its working and gives examples of those criticisms, as noted in the paragraph.

at the way it was administered. Individual observers criticised the discretion given to administering bodies to interpret the regulations governing the scheme and maintained that the premise on which the system was based was fundamentally at fault in assuming that the standard benefit rate was sufficient to support a family.⁶¹ These national and local sources of assistance worked both with and against each other, and as the Labour Exchange referred the applicant to the Public Assistance committee for assessment as to eligibility, which then referred him back to the Labour Exchange for the money, the application became subject to official discretion in interpreting the regulations, and thus varied from place to place.⁶²

The uninsured, in work or not, might qualify for the meagre Poor Law⁶³ assistance administered by local government. The working of the Poor Law, virtually unchanged since 1834, was examined by the Hamilton Commission which produced two reports in 1909.⁶⁴ Its recommendations for change were not enacted until 1929, so that at the height of the unemployment of the 1920s families in need were subjected to the investigations of the poor law officers of the locally elected Board of Guardians. Receipt of poor relief was regarded as shameful,⁶⁵ aggravated still by fear of the workhouse. Administrative changes in 1929 transferred the powers of the Boards of Guardians to county and county borough public assistance committees, but memories of the former system were long, and the perceived stigma of having to accept cash hand outs from the Relieving Officer remained.

⁶¹Errington, 'The Means Test': 922.

⁶²The author concludes his article with an appeal. 'What are Friends doing?' Errington, 'The Means Test': 924.

⁶³Originating with the 1601 Poor Law statute which laid responsibility for the provision of relief on the parish it remained virtually unchanged until the Poor Law Amendment Act of 1834. This organised parishes into groups with the responsibility for relief given to elected boards of Guardians, who raised and distributed funds and maintained workhouses.

⁶⁴R.C.K. Ensor, *England 1870-1914* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1949): 517.

⁶⁵I have a personal memory of myself, a working class child aged about 4 years in 1936, being hurried past a building labelled 'Relieving Officer' as a place to be shunned.

The local benefits administrators were allowed an element of discretion⁶⁶ which was applied to the advantage of the unemployed in Brynmawr where men were permitted at times to work while receiving their dole entitlement, in response to representations by the Community Council and the Quakers.⁶⁷ This did not satisfy everyone. The CDC Minutes of 31 October 1928 recorded that Brynmawr Town Council agreed to find work for unemployed men and paid their insurance stamps while the CDC paid them a wage. Provided the work amounted to, for example, the tidying of the open spaces in the town, there was no protest from traders, but where the Quakers promoted cobbling schemes, providing the materials so that volunteers could repair the family boots, there was an objection from the National Union of Distributive and Allied Workers. A deputation from the Union complained that the schemes for volunteers put the work in the hands of amateurs with consequent health risks, waste and the taking of work from the local trade, but they were not without sympathy as they suggested a voucher system by which the professional cobbler could do the work and be paid for it. The CDC replied that shoe repairing fell within the remit of the National Schemes of Relief Committee and is not mentioned again, perhaps because the inclusion of boot repair facilities in the government sponsored Clubs (introduced below) satisfied the union.⁶⁸

Charitable assistance of many kinds had been provided for the needy by voluntary bodies for centuries.⁶⁹ Sometimes working in co-operation with each other, sometimes rivalling each other, there was throughout a confusion of altruism. Public recognition of a

⁶⁶Henry Ecroyd, 'Subsistence Production in the Eastern Valley of Monmouthshire. An Industrial Experiment' *Llafur* III 4, 1983: 37.

Ecroyd described the legislation for its relevance to his article on the Subsistence Production Society (SPS), but the discretion applied to all recipients of benefit. The Unemployment Board 'encouraged its officers to interpret the rules generously.' The result of a test case before a Ministry of Labour adjudicator allowed SPS members to continue to receive their dole, subject to simple conditions, in the same way that volunteer workers on the Brynmawr town schemes were allowed a day's pay without their benefit being affected.

⁶⁷Noble, *Miners' Training Clubs*: 4. Originally negotiated for the work at Maes-yr-Haf, the arrangements were applicable also to Brynmawr, as noted by the CDC.

⁶⁸Minute 6, Coalfields Distress Committee meeting, 30 January 1929.

⁶⁹Brasnett, *Voluntary Social Action*: 2.

need to co-ordinate these efforts had resulted in representatives of the many voluntary philanthropic groups being called together in conference in 1915. Their first concern was for finding a common approach to the problems of, and anticipated from, the war but there was also recognition of a need for a permanent link between the numerous charitable agencies for the most effective use of their resources. A Joint Committee on Social Service worked in association with government representatives until, in March 1919, the National Council of Social Service (NCSS) was inaugurated.⁷⁰ Its remit was wide and comprehensive with the emphasis at first on work in the rural areas. As the numbers of unemployed increased, the NCSS directed its time and resources to the social problems, recognising particularly that for those without occupation and in poverty, there was a need for companionship and a sense of being valued as part of a local community in addition to financial help.⁷¹

Voluntary charitable bodies continued their interest in and support for the poor and needy, but their funds were for the most part insufficient for more than short periods, and the financial needs of mass unemployment were beyond their means. National fund raising, in particular the Lord Mayor of London's Mansion House Fund,⁷² stimulated by the deteriorating social circumstances and which was supported by government money, was able to raise and distribute cash and goods widely. Newspapers publicised the distress of the unemployed, ran appeals for help and initiated an 'adopt a town' scheme, through which Brynmawr was adopted by Worthing, in Sussex (see later). Local relief committees were organised with the guidance of the NCSS to gather and distribute these nationally raised contributions.

Apart from their interest in their own schemes, Friends were involved in those of other agencies. In 1928 Joan Mary Fry had been asked by Friends to represent them on the

⁷⁰Brasnett, *Voluntary Social Action*: 2.

⁷¹Brasnett, *Voluntary Social Action*: 68.

⁷²Fry, *Friends Lend a Hand*: 14.

local (South Wales) committee for distribution of the Mansion House monies.⁷³ She refused the first invitation, finding the competition for places so great, but accepted on a second invitation when 'public interest (had) largely subsided' and those who had joined first were retiring from it.⁷⁴ Her reluctance at first was not likely to have been from fear that the competition would have prevented her from contributing as she would have liked, or from modesty that permitted acceptance when there was no further competition. As a weighty Friend, and already something of a national figure through her involvement in mediating during the General Strike (above), supporting relief work from Friends' House, initiating the allotment scheme that was to be taken on by government agency⁷⁵ and serving on numerous other active committees she would have found it difficult at that time to fit another commitment into her busy life.

The social effects of unemployment

The Pilgrim Trust enquiries, introduced above, were made in representative towns across the country with a view to studying the social problems before proposing solutions. The report analysed the degrees of unemployment and the consequences for each classification. The main distinction was of the long term unemployed, defined as being out of work for more than a year within which there was no more than three days of continuous work. These men presented the greatest problem. Other classifications of unemployment included short term periods, casual work, and no work at all owing to disability and other health reasons.

One conclusion was that long term unemployment was self-generating, being in itself a bar to re-employment, that the consequences for the unemployed individual were not only physical, but also psychological and moral. The surveyors found the consequences to be having no will to work, with the loss of the security of a weekly wage being regarded as a loss of status, the humiliation of being dependent on benefits (even those of the

⁷³Fry, *Friends Lend a Hand*: 14.

⁷⁴Fry, *Friends Lend a Hand*: 15.

⁷⁵Fry, *Friends Lend a Hand*: 25.

insured man which he had contributed to himself), friction in the home, resentment at having to take responsibility for how a day would be spent, loss of friendship and association with work colleagues, and depression and apathy from having nothing to do. There was a certain amount of companionship between those who waited regularly at the Labour Exchange or simply hung about the streets, but this was no substitute for the fellowship of work colleagues. Quotations from families show how failure to find work had 'got them down', how their children got on their nerves, and how a man at home was humiliated by having a wife who brought in money from some domestic employment.⁷⁶ Self respect went as it became harder to maintain 'respectability', and as financial dependence on others meant the loss of privacy as to personal and family matters, the whole often resulting in ill health and nervous anxiety. Both groups of enquiry concluded that the provision of relief in the form of food and clothing, while essential where there was need, was not the answer. While the report noted how the details of work and domestic life differed between categories of age within and between categories of employment and unemployed, skilled and unskilled, the general conclusion was that 'Such a simultaneous onset of physical and psychological hardship can hardly help having serious results.'⁷⁷

Of the numerous facets to the effects of unemployment the outward, physical needs were tackled by the agencies, including the Quakers, in taking food and clothing to those in poverty. The moral and psychological aspects were assisted with schemes for activity to occupy and stimulate, nationally by the NCSS. While the purpose of the NCSS was to provide occupations, social activities and sometimes a training for future employment, the craft workshops enterprise at Brynmawr was designed to provide paid employment, and in this it was exceptional.

⁷⁶*Men Without Work*: 101, 143, 146-7.

⁷⁷*Men Without Work*: 149.

Referring to the traditional understanding that for over 350 years society had assumed a man to be responsible for supporting himself and his family⁷⁸ and had judged him accordingly, the reporters for the Pilgrim Trust recommended strongly that, while exceptional circumstances were making this difficult, any scheme to assist should not undermine this understanding. A working man's dignity lay in working for wages. A new principle had to be effected 'whereby a man is offered the chance to give as well as to receive.'⁷⁹ Barrie Naylor, the one time Warden of the Maes-yr-Haf settlement (see below) wrote about the work of the group of Quakers who were responsible for it and concluded that 'There is no one way of alleviating large-scale unemployment . . . If you want to help people you must show them how to help themselves.'⁸⁰ The problem had to be given dedicated attention by all agencies, Government, voluntary association such as clubs, trade unions, churches, and by individuals. For the most part there would need to be a personal involvement in time and money, in committees, in money raising and in seeking grant aid. What had to be found was employment, and if there was no job available, there must be given at least stimulus and hope. These were the principles that lay behind both the national provision of occupational clubs and the experimental work of the Quakers at Brynmawr.

Contemporary Quaker reports of the work of Friends in Brynmawr often concluded with an appeal for funds to support their efforts to take relief to the coalfields. Emma Noble and Peter Scott have been honoured as initiators and for their insight and determination. It was these qualities that encouraged central Quaker committees to authorise and support their undertaking, but their work must be placed within an ongoing general recognition of a need to give attention to social and health deficiencies, the consequences of deprivation through unemployment.

⁷⁸*Men Without Work*: 199-200.

⁷⁹*Men Without Work*: 200.

⁸⁰Barrie Naylor, *Quakers in the Rhondda 1926-86* (Chepstow: Maes-yr-Haf Educational Trust, 1986): 104.

National efforts to provide education and occupation

When the end of the war was in sight Government had contemplated the reconstruction of society, albeit with the status quo of 1914 in mind. It was conscious of an obligation to ameliorate social conditions, particularly as to housing and had appointed a Minister of Reconstruction during the course of the war. That Ministry was laid down in 1919 and replaced by a Ministry of Health,⁸¹ which included Housing matters in its brief. Social housing schemes were launched, with the onus of carrying them through placed on local authorities. In 1929 the Ministry made an industrial survey of South Wales under the guidance of Lord Portal, which encouraged the development of social settlements to mitigate the depression of the unemployed by providing occupations to interest and instruct them.⁸² However, government interest seemed more pragmatic than of conscience, and it was scarcely generously forthcoming in providing relief when the need became obvious to other agencies.⁸³

The NCSS, co-ordinating the long standing voluntary bodies, worked from a consciousness of the needs of local communities. The initiator, Captain Lionel Ellis, returned from war service intending to tap the sources and apply to reconstruction the willingness shown by volunteers in war time, promoting new areas of voluntary social work and administering the funding.⁸⁴ Soon after its inception 'in the field of education, councils [local branches of the NCSS] were developing new juvenile organisation committees; promoting federations of boys' and girls' clubs; securing playing fields and open spaces; planning social centres, citizens' institutes and to a lesser extent, choral and

⁸¹A. J. P. Taylor, *English History 1914-1945*: 129

⁸²Denis Linehan and Pys Gruffydd, *Bodies and Souls: psycho-geographical collisions in the South Wales Coalfield, 1926-1939*. <http://www.Ucc.ie/ucc/depts/geography/stafhome/enis/bodies.htm>, (accessed 09/02/2005): 2.

⁸³Linehan and Gruffydd, *Bodies and Souls*: 2.
Piers Brendon, *The Dark Valley. A Panorama of the 30s* (London: Jonathon Cape, 2000): 152-158.

⁸⁴Brasnett, *Voluntary Social Action*: 22.

dramatic societies.’⁸⁵ Through its committee membership it supported the Village Clubs Association which was particularly active in Wales and the National Home and Land League. Alongside its work was that of the Local Education Authorities with new powers to develop further (post-school) education, the Workers Education Association (WEA) with plans to set up classes in rural areas and the support of the Carnegie United Kingdom Trust for local public libraries. Carnegie Trust was responsible for financial support to these developments and the Rural Industries Bureau was ‘to help all those concerned with the revival and extension of rural crafts, standards of workmanship, marketing, prices and production.’⁸⁶

Educational occupation was provided in settlements, on the lines of those of the end of the previous century. The WEA set up one at Lincoln and provision for lectures and classes for the unemployed in the mining areas was made by the NCSS and the Carnegie Trust. It was beginning to be understood however that educational occupation needed to be supplemented by directing further voluntary work toward centres where there would be recreational facilities for activities such as billiards and badminton, physical training and football, music and drama and crafts.⁸⁷

At the Quaker educational settlement at Maes-yr-Haf, described below, William Noble initiated a scheme to provide work ‘which met with general approval.’ This general approval was from ‘public authorities or welfare committees’ and must have included that of the benefit agencies since the scheme provided ‘a day’s work each week at trade-union rates’ and for which the National Health and Unemployment books (the man’s record of his insurance contributions) ‘were stamped without deduction.’⁸⁸ To qualify, the work was

⁸⁵Brasnett, *Voluntary Social Action*: 25.

⁸⁶Brasnett, *Voluntary Social Action*: 35.

⁸⁷Mark Freeman, *Educational Settlements in Britain*: 3,
http://www.infed.org/association/educational_settlements.htm, (accessed 15/06/2005).

A comprehensive account of Quaker educational settlements to the date of publication is given in *The Friend*, 12 October 1923: 783-802.

⁸⁸Noble, *Miners’ Training Clubs*: 3.

to be of 'communal value' so with the co-operation of the local authority it would have been, for example, manual labour in parks and gardens. Friends at Maes-yr-Haf then expanded this scheme from the end of 1928 through the villages of the Rhondda Valley, which matured into clubs for single unemployed men.⁸⁹ A hot main meal was provided each day with the burden of the expense passed to the Lord Mayor's Fund. The Society of Friends had discussed the development of these clubs in South Wales and it was agreed that while the Quakers' central funds paid the administrative costs including the salaries of club leaders, the Mansion House Fund would maintain them and provide the meals and wages.⁹⁰ Noble's record of where his 52 clubs were in the Valleys does not include Brynmawr. Peter Scott, a member of the Maes-yr-Haf committee, would have had a hand in Noble's developments, and would certainly have benefited from the negotiations for financial agreements to enable the Brynmawr voluntary schemes to get going. Toward the end of 1929 the Lord Mayor's Fund decided that the scheme for the day's work should be ended, anticipating changes that were to come with a new Insurance Act in March 1930 which was to make dole money available to single men, and change the Poor Law administration. Noble's clubs were then run down as their purpose was satisfied by other means, and the NCSS developed its own clubs, the Voluntary Occupational Centres.⁹¹

From 1932 the Special Unemployment Committee of the NCSS, chaired by Dr A.D.Lindsay (who was, with others, already responsible for the Maes-yr-Haf settlement) set up regional councils to establish centres for the unemployed. 'By mid-1935, over one thousand centres for men, and more than three hundred for women, were in existence, with a total membership of more than 150,000.'⁹² The activities in these Voluntary Occupational Centres were many and varied, with a strong representation of craftwork,

⁸⁹Noble, *Miners' Training Clubs*: 4.

⁹⁰Noble, *Miners' Training Clubs*: 4.

⁹¹Noble, *Miners' Training Clubs*: 9.

⁹²Hayburn, 'The Voluntary Occupational Centre Movement, 1932-39': 160.

especially woodwork. There was a realistic bias, so that tuition in and equipment for shoe and furniture repairing, gardening, cookery and dressmaking gave self-help opportunities. Hayburn observed that as the members identified themselves with the growth of their clubs, taking responsibility for decorating and repairing the premises as well as joining in the activities, 'an atmosphere of good fellowship existed' and there was the satisfaction of achievement in something that had to be worked for rather than getting something for nothing.⁹³ The regional councils of the NCSS had the responsibility for promoting the setting up of occupational clubs and providing instructors. It was its South Wales branch that employed Paul Matt as woodwork instructor in about 1934/5 and for which employment he wrote his instruction book *Woodwork from Waste*.⁹⁴

Quakers in South Wales

In the early 1920s disputes between workers and employers in the coal mining industry were recognised by Friends as being unresolved and that 'It is quite possible for trouble to arise again.'⁹⁵ This anticipated trouble culminated in a General Strike which lasted from 3rd to 12th May 1926. Consideration of the industrial situation was the first item on the agenda at Meeting for Sufferings on 7th May. Negotiations between men and employers were at an impasse. Friends appointed a committee 'to watch events and, as way may open, endeavour to bring about . . . a meeting and take any other action that may help to bring peace.'⁹⁶ This Watching Committee was to become the Industrial Crisis Committee (ICC) in November 1926 with a membership which included Hilda Clark and Edith Pye who had been the organisers of post-war Quaker relief work in Vienna⁹⁷ and Joan Mary Fry. It was reorganised and renamed the Coalfields Distress Committee (CDC)

⁹³Hayburn, 'The Voluntary Occupational Centre Movement, 1932-39': 161.

⁹⁴Paul Matt, *Woodwork from Waste*. The Work of Our Hands Series, no III. (Oxford: Oxford University Press, date unknown, possibly 1935).

⁹⁵Minute 1, Meeting for Sufferings, 5 August 1921.

⁹⁶Minute 1, Meeting for Sufferings, 7 May 1926.

⁹⁷Sheila Spielhofer, *To Vienna with Love: Quaker Relief Work 1919-1922*. (Birmingham: Woodbrooke Quaker Study Centre, 1999): 6.

in September 1928, when its responsibility was in the main for the organisation and distribution of relief to the unemployed.

Political attempts to resolve the issues concerning this industrial crisis were controversial. The ICC met daily for seven days, and weekly throughout the next three months, as the urgency of the need for resolution was recognised. Its primary object was to bring the disputing parties, the mine workers, the mine owners and the Trades Union Council (TUC) together, and Friends' House was used for the consultations to which some Members of Parliament (unnamed) contributed. Individual Quakers acted as mediators at a high level, their involvement being unreported as it was conducted confidentially.⁹⁸

'Unfortunately', commented Joan Mary Fry, 'it seemed as if there was no member of the Government at that time who was sufficiently conversant with the industrial situation to give effective assistance,'⁹⁹ and the privacy undertaken has allowed Fry to give only a general account of Friends' participation in the negotiations.

While some Friends were involved in these negotiations the committee was also concerned with measures for giving relief to the unemployed men. The continuous involvement in committee and other meetings, the amount of travelling required and the correspondence generated shows not only the dedication of the committee members to Quaker work, but also makes plain that only Friends with both the time and the means could be the ones to give their service voluntarily. These same Friends were among those who took a lead in organising physical and financial relief to the unemployed families of the South Wales valleys and supported, from London, the Service Centre at Brynmawr that distributed it.

Yearly Meeting which met in May 1926 had considered the need for practical help, having heard many contributions from the floor on the effect of the industrial crisis on

⁹⁸Fry, *Friends Lend a Hand*: 9.

⁹⁹Fry, *Friends Lend a Hand*: 9.

individual families. It forwarded its request to Meeting for Sufferings asking for an active response:

The possibility of Relief work in this country being needed almost at once has been put before us. Friends are asked to send immediately full information of distress in their own districts to the Industrial Crisis Committee at Friends' House. We encourage the Committee to consider fully the question of relief and report to Meeting for Sufferings next week.¹⁰⁰

It was at that Yearly Meeting 1926 that Emma Noble was so moved by hearing of the hardships being suffered in the mining districts that, with the advice of Oxford Friends, Henry and Lucy Gillett who had already seen the conditions in South Wales, she went to the Rhondda Valley to see the situation at first hand.¹⁰¹ She reported her findings¹⁰² to the ICC, and an appeal went out to Friends immediately for gifts of boots, clothing, money and food for the needy. The money and parcels from both Friends and others who responded to the appeal were collected at and sent out from Friends' House, and Emma Noble returned to South Wales to help distribute the gifts. She was also instrumental in forming sewing and boot mending groups, where aside from the practical fulfilling of needs, the concept of self-help gave some sense of purpose to the unemployed men and their wives.¹⁰³

Emma Noble's concern, supported by Joan Mary Fry and other Quakers individually, broadened from taking immediate relief to consideration of the other needs of men who were obliged to be idle from loss of jobs. She and her husband William, together with the Gilletts at Oxford, and their friends Dr Lindsay, the Master of Balliol College, Oxford, and his Quaker wife, explored the possibility of setting up a social centre with the emphasis on adult educational activities. The outcome in 1927 was their plan for an Educational Centre in the Rhondda Valley to be overseen by the Nobles. Funds were sought and the Friends took on the lease of a large property, Maes-yr-Haf in Trealaw. The

¹⁰⁰Minute 55, Yearly Meeting Proceedings, 1926,

¹⁰¹Naylor, *Quakers in the Rhondda*: 20.

¹⁰²Naylor, *Quakers in the Rhondda*: 21.

¹⁰³Pitt, *Our Unemployed*: 2.

work at Maes-yr-Haf began, continued and continues as an educational settlement.¹⁰⁴ It was distinct from the Brynmawr Experiment, with the exception of links with Friends who took an interest in each, and most significantly in the appointment of Peter Scott to the Maes-yr-Haf Committee in 1928.

Depression and unemployment in Brynmawr

Brynmawr, with an adult population of 7,460 in 1929, is sited at the head of the valleys of South Wales.¹⁰⁵ The highest town in Wales, it has been described as 'unique in its location as well as its altitude.'¹⁰⁶ Its citizens and its neighbours saw it 'as a community unique in its life and influence and not to be confused or interchanged with those around it.'¹⁰⁷ Writing in 1934, Hilda Jennings remarked that in spite of the economic decline from the 1920s which had affected the standard of living and was responsible for the migration of many to find work, the town 'remains a community and still exerts its power over individuals through community attachments.'¹⁰⁸ However, unemployment and the consequent effect on the prosperity of the traders in the town were responsible for the social distress which drew Brynmawr to the attention of the Religious Society of Friends in 1928.

Brynmawr's own resources of iron ore and coal had been worked out in the nineteenth century, but coal mining remained the main occupation of its men, who travelled daily to work at some distance from Brynmawr in the mines in Tredegar, Ebbw Vale, and in the Eastern and Western Valleys. In 1921 sixty-three percent of Brynmawr working men were employed outside the Brynmawr Urban District.¹⁰⁹ Brynmawr men who

¹⁰⁴Barrie Naylor was Warden at Maes-yr-Haf jointly with his wife Sheila for thirty years from 1941. He described the settlement as 'a classical example of a small voluntary body working with the statutory.' Naylor, *Quakers in the Rhondda*; 9.

¹⁰⁵Jennings, *Brynmawr*: 59.

¹⁰⁶Janet Davies, 'Brynmawr – Then and Now' (*Planet* 51, June-July 1985):100.

¹⁰⁷Jennings, *Brynmawr*: 16.

¹⁰⁸Jennings, *Brynmawr*: 25.

¹⁰⁹Jennings, *Brynmawr*: 135.

worked in those pits were the first to be laid off when the mine owners found it necessary to reduce the numbers in their employ, preference being given to local men, especially those living in houses owned by the Mine Companies.¹¹⁰

There was little other employment in Brynmawr and in January 1927 the effects of the prolonged miners' strike were shown in the Labour Exchange figures of 1,898 Brynmawr men wholly unemployed together with 97 who were 'temporarily stopped,' which meant out of work for less than six weeks. In spite of the negotiated return to work, the figures did not reduce, so that in July 1932 there were still 1,669 wholly unemployed, but 252 temporarily stopped. In other words, men were still being laid off, and the total out of work differed by only a few from five years before. These were on record because they were the insured workers.¹¹¹ The National Insurance scheme is described above. No figures are recorded for those in uninsurable work, or who relied on casual hours of work. Nor are there figures for those who left school and had never been employed, who in these years grew into young men. The Ministry of Labour provided Juvenile Training Centres for school leavers aged 14, but to occupy them only up to age 18. They then joined the numbers of uninsured unemployed.¹¹² These, without training or experience were virtually unemployable. Some were given local work at the low wage relevant to their youth, and laid off when they became more expensive to employ. This had serious consequences for the family which lost the wages of the no longer employed youth, yet had to keep him without his contribution to the family budget. The Brynmawr Town Survey revealed that of those in the 14 (post school) -18 age group, 17 were employed while 87 were not, and never had been.¹¹³

¹¹⁰Jennings, *Brynmawr*: 137.

¹¹¹Jennings, *Brynmawr*: 137.

¹¹²Noble, *Miners' Training Clubs*: 3.

¹¹³Jennings, *Brynmawr*: 137-139.

Quaker relief work at Brynmawr

Because Brynmawr town funds to provide for the unemployed were exhausted Brynmawr Urban District Council (UDC) had approached Friends' House asking for help.¹¹⁴ As money had already been given for relief work in Rhondda and Ebbw Vale the Committee responded by granting £25 a week for two weeks to buy leather so that a cobbling centre could be opened to do boot repairs.¹¹⁵ Further grants were made and early in August 1928 a small group of Friends stayed in Brynmawr for three weeks, lodging with local families. This group included Peter and Lilian Scott, Elizabeth Painter, Robert Davis and Charles Wilkinson. On returning to Friends' House Scott reported that immediate relief was needed at Brynmawr and he was granted for the purpose, the funds remaining in the Quaker account for the Emergency Fund for the Aid of Enemy Aliens in Distress that had been raised for use in the war.¹¹⁶ More appeals for help were received and the committee recorded its hope that assistance would be forthcoming, and be 'supplemented by some Friends who might be willing to go and live for a time in South Wales and elsewhere.'¹¹⁷

What prompted this same meeting to decide a change of its name to the Coalfields Distress Committee (CDC) is not recorded, but the effect was that with the change the committee acquired the new capacity of reporting directly to Meeting for Sufferings. This allowed for action to be authorised more quickly, eliminating the need to report first to FHS, but additionally it gave an opportunity to declare its purpose as being mediation, conciliation and relief. This continued the emphasis that its predecessor had continually laid on its work being in giving relief, and made no reference to ideas for social reconstruction such as Scott had already proposed (discussed later in the chapter). It also

¹¹⁴Minute 132, Industrial Crisis Committee meeting, 26 July 1926.

¹¹⁵Minute 146, Industrial Crisis Committee, 6 August 1926.

¹¹⁶Pitt, *Our Unemployed*: 6.

¹¹⁷Minute 2, Industrial Crisis Committee meeting, 9 July 1928.

made possible the laying down of the committee when the need for relief had passed.

By October 1928 Peter and Lilian Scott and other Friends were resident in Brynmawr. So that they could administer Quaker relief on the spot, the CDC had rented 31 Alma Terrace for them for six months at £40 p.a. and furniture was lent by Friends. With five bedrooms the house was able to accommodate most of the group. They lived as family, with Lilian as homemaker. Numbers fluctuated, as volunteers gave what time they could and then departed, to be replaced by others. Margaret Pitt joined them in December 1928, by which time their relief centre 'was functioning efficiently, which must have taken a great deal of detailed planning, common sense and good fellowship.'¹¹⁸ While the Quakers worked alongside local people in the clothing centre Scott travelled the country speaking at meetings to describe the work and raising funds for Brynmawr. Friends' House made appeals to members for clothing, boots and money and 'second hand clothing came pouring in because of Peter Scott's untiring propaganda.'¹¹⁹

There was a special relationship between Brynmawr and the town of Worthing, in Sussex. Alice Denniss, a Quaker, was related to the Mayor of Worthing who arranged for Scott and others to speak at a public meeting there. The outcome was the 'adoption' of Brynmawr by Worthing.¹²⁰ The townspeople took an interest in those of Brynmawr, the civic dignitaries visited and supported funds which financed a Christmas party with gifts for the Brynmawr children, holidays in Worthing, and some employment for young girls in service there. Scott approached *The Spectator* which ran an appeal for aid for Aberdare in 1928.¹²¹ The appeal ran through 1931 and while requests for financial help ended in 1932, articles by Peter Scott and others kept the readers fully informed of the developing Brynmawr Experiment, the work in the Unemployed Clubs, training centres and with

¹¹⁸Pitt, *Our Unemployed*: 6.

¹¹⁹Pitt, *Our Unemployed*: 8.

¹²⁰Pitt, *Our Unemployed*: 8.

¹²¹An article by E.W. in *The Spectator* 12 December 1931 said 'Knowing what the readers of the *Spectator* had done for the town of Aberdare three years ago, Mr Scott asked me to visit Brynmawr and see for myself.'

allotment holders, well into 1934. With financial support from the Mansion House Fund which gave its resources most directly to South Wales and to Durham, there became less need for relief funding from Friends' House.

Between 1924, the year in which he joined the Religious Society of Friends and 1928 when he made his home in Brynmawr Scott's vision for community life evolved toward the activity that was to be the Experiment:

When the first immediate need for food and clothing with which to face the rigours of the climate were satisfied, some members of the group saw the necessity for a deeper help. The administration of relief had brought a whole train of evils, sapping the independence of the individual, helping to create jealousy, listlessness, and the tendency to rely entirely upon others in facing the difficulties of living. Hence there arose the idea of setting a derelict town to work to rebuild its own life on more healthy and active lines.¹²²

Brynmawr was found to be suitable for building the community envisaged because it was of manageable size, it was almost entirely derelict 'stranded in ugliness and desolation, with no apparent hope for the future' and the morale of those who had to rely on relief was low. Scott noted also that there was near uniformity of social class which gave him almost a clean sheet on which to design his 'new conception of democracy.'¹²³

There was no announcement that an experiment was to be undertaken and the first published use of the term 'Brynmawr Experiment' came as the heading to an article in the *Manchester Guardian*.¹²⁴ When making a news item of the progress of the craft workshops, described as 'an adventure in community building' the work was referred to as 'an unusual experiment.' Scott considered the work to be experimental but said that the word 'was not of our choice but came in time to be applied to the work, and none better has been found to interpret its outlook.'¹²⁵ The group would not experiment as scientists, nor as 'idealists trying to impose some Utopian scheme but as realists, taking things and people as they

¹²²Peter and Richenda Scott, 'The Brynmawr Experiment', *Welsh Review*, July 1939.

¹²³ Peter Scott, 'Community Building: The Brynmawr Experiment', *The Friend*, 20 March 1931: 252.

¹²⁴'The Brynmawr Experiment. Giving a Town New Life,' *Manchester Guardian*, 6 July, 1931.

¹²⁵ *An Order*, Annual Report 1937 (Abergavenny: An Order, 1938): 31.

are.’¹²⁶ They were to proceed with a survey of the town, encourage voluntary work schemes to tidy it, and start light industries.

The organising of a Town Survey to examine the conditions at Brynmawr was both experimental and innovative as the inquiry was conducted by inexperienced volunteers, residents of Brynmawr, as described below. The constituting of the Brynmawr Community Council emerged from the Town Survey, possibly initiated by Scott, but was not an experimental concept. What the Community Council then became responsible for, the voluntary work schemes, were not innovative as many towns had similar projects.

Truly experimental were the schemes for paid employment in workshop units, as was the Subsistence Production Society (SPS), both being Scott’s personal projects. These are often considered together as comprising the Experiment as they both fell within the authority of An Order, formed in 1934, but each Annual Report of An Order, from 1935 to 1938, differentiated between the Experiment and the SPS. It would not therefore be correct to include the activities of the SPS as part of the Experiment and they are not therefore discussed in the thesis in any greater length.

The Brynmawr Town Survey

Scott had indicated to the CDC that an investigation committee was meeting but there is no precise acknowledgment of responsibility for the idea.¹²⁷ Margaret Pitt said that Peter Scott, with others, decided to have a comprehensive social survey made of the town.¹²⁸ Hilda Jennings, the organiser of the survey and publisher of its findings said ‘it was decided to ask a local Committee to search out the facts.’¹²⁹ Scott, describing later his plans for his work at Brynmawr, said that the first step that would have to be taken would

¹²⁶*An Order* 1937: 32.

¹²⁷Minute 7, Coalfields Distress Committee, 31 October 1928.

¹²⁸Pitt, *Our Unemployed*: 18.

¹²⁹Jennings, *Brynmawr*: 200.

be to find the facts about the town 'which led us naturally to a Survey.'¹³⁰ There appears to be a general reluctance to claim personal responsibility or credit which makes it a truly collective idea. The most definite statement, that of Enid Wilson, is qualified as being hearsay as she was not living at Brynmawr until 1934. 'The group . . . decided to make a survey and start small industries.'¹³¹ Although the others quoted were writing a few years after the survey was made they were present when it began in 1929. Certainly Scott accepted no personal credit for the cumulative work at Brynmawr. A brief note in *The Friend* spoke of 'the success of Peter Scott's experiment at Brynmawr in self-help for unemployed men' and he insisted in a reply that the work was not due to one individual, but to a small group of people, most of whom had given up better opportunities to devote themselves to it.¹³² The idea for a survey seems simply to have emerged as Brynmawr undertook its own salvation and the Quakers explored their contacts.

The Survey, begun in September 1929 and finished by August 1932, was an unusual undertaking, possibly unique, carried out entirely by the voluntary work of some 150 Brynmawr people. Hilda Jennings was responsible for the planning and execution, with some professional help. How she came to be in this position is not known. Margaret Pitt described her as 'a well-qualified, tactful social worker, and an experienced leader of local committees.' She may have had an association with the University College of South Wales 'which sponsored the survey, and had help and advice from Le Play House Society for Social Surveys, and other academic institutions.' Scott made no mention of her by name in his reports, though Pitt says that Hilda Jennings 'seemed to integrate happily into the predominantly Quaker group at 31 Alma Street. She seemed to like and respect Peter,

¹³⁰Peter Scott, 'Community Building: The Brynmawr Experiment', *The Friend*, 20 March 1931: 252.

¹³¹LSF Temp Mss 508/23.
Donald and Enid Wilson moved with their family to live in Brynmawr in June 1934. However, although she was not at Brynmawr in 1929 to have a personal recollection of how the survey began, Enid Wilson was a close friend of Lilian Scott and may have been given the information as a matter of general knowledge. Equally, it could have been her own unfounded understanding.

¹³²*The Friend*, 30 June: 581 and 21 July 1933: 650.

sharing his outlook on many things, and she said he gave her a free hand with her work'¹³³ thus suggesting that Scott had no particular influence on the making of the survey once it had begun. Jennings' book *Brynmawr* was reviewed by Burleigh W. Fincken, a member of the CDC, who referred to 'the obvious faith and determination of that gallant little band (the Quaker group) of which Hilda Jennings has been a tireless worker,' yet noted that she herself revealed little of her own part in it.¹³⁴

The purpose of the town survey was to examine Brynmawr in historical and contemporary perspective 'in the hope of finding a basis for reconstruction.'¹³⁵ The Urban District Council (Labour party dominated) and the local Trades Unions resented the project and did not co-operate.¹³⁶ The volunteer surveyors, ordinary Brynmawr residents, were organised into eight committees, each to inquire into a different aspect of the survey. They asked questions and recorded the information given about the social and industrial history of the district, local politics and the responsibilities of the local authority, transport, communications, trade, churches and chapels, education and employment. Study of the findings did not produce the hoped for solution to the community troubles. What was revealed was that coal mining or any large scale industry as a substitute was not viable.¹³⁷

Brynmawr drew few conclusions and made no recommendations for follow-up work by which the community, having analysed its circumstances, might improve them. Jennings however noted that the community effort of making the survey had created a valuable community point of view.¹³⁸ It had resulted in the formation of the Community Study Council which served as a forum for discussion of the findings of the survey and

¹³³Pitt, *Our Unemployed*: 18.

¹³⁴*The Friend*, 20 July, 1934: 671.
Scott and Jennings collaborated in a paper *Social Work in the Families of the Unemployed* published by Le Play House in 1932.

¹³⁵Jennings, *Brynmawr*: v.

¹³⁶Pitt, *Our Unemployed*: 18.

¹³⁷Jennings, *Brynmawr*: 209, 216 and 226.

¹³⁸Jennings, *Brynmawr*: 203.

which had already started practical working schemes that had brought people together.

These she saw as the realisation of the aim of the survey which was

to find some unifying factor which would lift the life of the community onto a higher level . . . the ideal community in which every individual can have the best and fullest life and to which all contribute.¹³⁹

The practical work schemes which, for Jennings, epitomised the achievement of a sense of community, were concurrent with the conducting of the survey, the collation of the material and its preparation for publication. The Community Study Council, with Quaker guidance, comprised representatives of each of a number of the town committees, each concerned with a different area of activity.¹⁴⁰ Social welfare committees, continuing to give practical help in emergencies and organising the distribution of boots, maintained the Quaker responsibility for relieving distress that had been their first concern. Margaret Pitt was in charge of the Service Centre working with local women in sorting and distributing second hand clothing.¹⁴¹

One of the strongest of the Council's committees was for Town Development, which undertook the cleaning and tidying of the town as a stimulus for people to take an interest in its rehabilitation. It called a public meeting (soon after known as The Big Meeting), supported by the UDC and the local MP at which speakers encouraged the audience of 2000 to offer themselves for voluntary work.¹⁴² The Quaker group had some hesitation about this step as such a demonstration of 'revivalist fervour' through 'highly-charged Welsh oratory' was not within their tradition. Pitt described how in spite of the hesitations 'Peter and the group decided to go ahead with the idea' of co-operating in the Town Meeting.¹⁴³

¹³⁹Jennings, *Brynmawr*: 205.

¹⁴⁰Davies, 'Brynmawr – then and now': 102.

¹⁴¹Pitt, *Our Unemployed*: 8.

¹⁴²Pitt, *Our Unemployed*: 9.

¹⁴³Pitt, *Our Unemployed*: 19.

The volunteers got to work in organised teams to clean the streets, paint buildings, make gardens and plant trees and shrubs. The voluntary work 'gripped the imagination of the unemployed men' so much so that 'they persisted in their efforts against the fierce opposition of both trade unionists and communists.'¹⁴⁴ After a few months, the efforts became more ambitious, culminating by 1932 in the completion of a paddling pool and swimming pool, and soon after, the building and operation of a nursery school.

Of particular note is the contribution to the Brynmawr voluntary labour force given by the International Service Civile, the forerunner to International Voluntary Service (IVS), whose first work camp in England was held at Brynmawr in 1931.¹⁴⁵ Other volunteers were organised by Jack Hoyland from a central office at Woodbrooke, mostly senior boys from Friends' Schools, who camped at Brynmawr in their summer holidays,¹⁴⁶ but the greatest significance for Brynmawr was that most of the voluntary labour was carried through by the Brynmawr people themselves.

The craft workshops

While the town was actively working at the voluntary projects through its Development Committee, Scott turned to the provision of opportunities for employment. The CDC had already taken responsibility and organised fund raising, but while advertisements in *The Friend* invited financial support for relief measures and the

¹⁴⁴Peter and Richenda Scott, 'The Brynmawr Experiment', *The Welsh Review* 1 no.6 (1939):336. Hilda Jennings explains the opposition of the Trade Unions as voluntary work undermining the Unions' bargaining power. Her only reference to communism was to note that it was 'preached unremittingly by a few enthusiasts.' Initial reluctance to volunteer was from fear of losing the dole by doing voluntary work. This was overcome in a test case which reassured them that the town improvement scheme satisfied the requirements for qualifying for unemployment benefits. Jennings, *Brynmawr*: 24 and 207.

The Brynmawr Communist Party produced a document '*A Town on the Dole*', undated, but its references to the National Government place it within the period 1931-35. It refers to the Boot and Furniture factories with approval and is prepared to support it 'as being a concrete start to solving the difficulties of our Town.' The main thrust is emphasis on the social distress of Brynmawr and the short comings of the Labour Town Council. After members of the Communist Party had investigated the affairs of the Council and published its recommendations in this document, it concluded with the undertaking to 'co-operate with the Labour Party and Council, or any other organisation to remedy the position of affairs in Brynmawr.' '*A Town on the Dole*' (Brynmawr Communist Party, date unknown but within 1931-1935): 1, 4 and 21.

¹⁴⁵J. S. Hoyland, *Digging with the Unemployed*: 7.

¹⁴⁶J. S. Hoyland, *Digging with the Unemployed*: 28.

voluntary work schemes 'in the coalfields' the way the word employment was used indicated occupation to fill time rather than paid work. There is particular reference to the developing of allotments, which was to become the primary interest of Joan Mary Fry, and an indication that other schemes were providing work 'now.'¹⁴⁷ This may refer to the voluntary work schemes or, possibly to the knitting, weaving and craft workshops at Brynmawr for which there are no precise dates.

Noel Hyde referred to the small industrial units which began when the relief work ended in 1929. The intention was for variety, to provide work for as many people as possible and ranged through weaving, knitting, quilting and stocking making, poultry keeping and mining. These units were still at work at the end of 1931, but 'after three years of partial success and failure, the struggle for their survival is still acute.'¹⁴⁸

The two other enterprises, bootmaking and furniture making, were successful in remaining in business, though there are no figures by which to judge their financial success. Brynmawr Furniture Makers remained in production until it was decided to close it in 1940. The bootmaking company continued after that until it was eventually taken over and incorporated into a larger firm.

Bootmaking

The only industry ever within Brynmawr had been boot making and it was still active when Scott first visited the town. However it was losing trade and had closed with the owner's bankruptcy in 1926. As the provision of boots was one of the first calls on charitable relief, the unemployed bootmakers 'asked the Quaker group at Brynmawr if they could make childrens' boots for the Mansion House Fund' instead of the Fund having them supplied for Brynmawr from elsewhere. With skilled men available and a ready market, Scott considered that the industry could be re-started. An order from the CDC for 250 pairs

¹⁴⁷ Appeals for money and clothing were printed in *The Friend* regularly from November 1928 until February 1929, issuing from the CDC at Friends' House. After that appeals in *The Friend* were issued from Brynmawr, giving information of and inviting investment in the craft workshops.

¹⁴⁸G. N. H. (G. Noel Hyde), *The Brynmawr Experiment 1928-1933* (Brynmawr: Community House, 1934): 15.

for Maes-yr-Haf and 250 pairs for Brynmawr at 10s 6d per pair gave them a start 'in a very small room adjacent to a public house.'¹⁴⁹ After taking business advice and raising a loan of £500 it was possible to re-open the boot making factory, the Gwalia works, where the original machinery was still installed. Pitt reported that for the men and women employed there once again 'by concern, thought and effort, about 25 families were independent for a long period.'¹⁵⁰ The boot making enterprise stands aside from the Experiment in so far as it was not an original project of Scott's, and there was an element of outside control which steered it to his goal of becoming a co-operative.¹⁵¹ A more formal footing was introduced by setting up Brynmawr and Clydach Valley Industries Ltd. (BCVI) in 1930, 'to provide work on a co-operative basis for unemployed miners and others of the area, to raise capital and provide an efficient management committee of business men.'¹⁵²

In 1930 business arrangements were further formalised with the registration of BCVI as a company under the Industrial and Provident Societies Act, 1893. Appeals for donations and share capital had raised £6000. The intention was for the craft groups to develop as self-supporting units under the parent body, with each worker being a shareholder, eventually to register as separate companies. The capital was to be lent to be used for development, and on repayment to BCVI the workers were to control their companies with BCVI serving as a credit bank to help with further development. It was always intended that the industries

shall succeed as a commercial enterprise, and not as a charitable effort to relieve a little of the mass of unemployment . . . no skilled employee has been paid less than Trade Union Rates of Wages, and for the majority, slightly more than this has been the case.¹⁵³

¹⁴⁹Minute 4, Coalfields Distress Committee meeting, 30 January 1929, and Pitt, *Our Unemployed*: 25.

¹⁵⁰Pitt, *Our Unemployed*: 25.

¹⁵¹Scott intended the industries to function as co-operatives from the outset, with an advisory body of experienced business men to guide policy. The boot factory began under an internal committee of managers and workers in regular discussion. *An Order*, Annual Report 1936 (Abergaveny: An Order, 1937): 20.

¹⁵²Pitt, *Our Unemployed*: 24.

¹⁵³G. N. H., *The Brynmawr Experiment*: 22.

In 1936, when An Order was formalised (for which see Chapter Four), it arranged for BCVI Ltd to be replaced by An Order Holdings Ltd as the parent company.

Appeals continued to be made, both through advertisements, press articles, Scott's many public lectures, sometimes with the showing of a 16mm film made by Ralph Clarke of Scarborough. Exhibitions of Brynmawr products in Quaker Meeting Houses and in department stores continued and further contributions were invited by pages in *The Friend* showing how the money was spent.

It was the arrival of Paul Matt at Brynmawr that made the development of a furniture workshop possible.

Furniture making

At this time Matt, a trained carpenter and joiner, and a member of Wandsworth Quaker Meeting, was working in London with his father, Charles. Charles Matt, an immigrant to Britain from Pomerania (East Germany) before World War I had omitted to apply for British citizenship. Consequently he had been interned in the Isle of Man as an enemy alien during the War. It was there that he ran carpentry workshops to occupy the internees prompted and supported by Friends' House and specifically by the Quaker craftsman, James T. Baily. Quakers had arranged for Paul to visit his father, and it was this acquaintance that led both Paul and his brother to join the Religious Society of Friends.¹⁵⁴

After the War the independent furniture making trade was sluggish, suffering competition from the new furniture retailers like Cavendish Woodhouse, Times Furnishing and Great Universal Stores who were able to give 'never-never scheme' hire purchase terms, often with no deposit required and with 3-4 years credit.¹⁵⁵ Although Charles and Paul Matt ran a two-man business, there is no suggestion in the archive that Charles Matt,

¹⁵⁴LSF Temp Mss 508/23, Paul Matt's reminiscences: 1.

¹⁵⁵Pat Kirkham, Rodney Mace and Julia Porter, *Furnishing the world: the East London Furniture Trade 1930-1980* (London: Journeyman Press, 1987): 58.

with his own experience of Quaker relief work, was other than fully supportive of his son's intention to help with a Quaker scheme for relief.

Led by a concern to give what help he could to a distressed community Paul Matt's association with the work at Brynmawr came from hearing Joan Mary Fry speak about social conditions in the Welsh Valleys in 1928. He approached her, offering his help and was asked to assess the viability of a proposed scheme to use local timber in the Forest of Dean:

Very moved, I went up to her to ask if there was anything I could do. In her blunt Quaker way she asked 'What can you do?' 'Make furniture.' 'That's interesting, we have had an appeal to help with a scheme to use Forest of Dean timber. Will you go and assess it?' I found that scheme unrealistic but was invited to visit a group of Friends who had gone to South Wales to hold open air Meetings for Worship.¹⁵⁶

This scheme for a wood working enterprise in the Forest of Dean had been one of Scott's first ideas for providing work for the unemployed, and is discussed in Chapter Four. Joan Mary Fry's committee, the CDC, was showing reservations about commercial developments, which accounts for the request for a professional assessment by Matt. He found the scheme impractical but followed up the invitation to visit the group of Friends at Brynmawr. They 'very much felt that something more than distributions of food and clothing were required' and Matt joined the group starting work with 'a group of single men making specially designed poultry houses.'¹⁵⁷ This was not a Quaker project. The NCSS in South Wales was promoting poultry-rearing schemes to supply birds and feed to the unemployed to encourage some profit making co-operative production which necessitated also the provision of poultry houses. By working for the NCSS in these early days in Brynmawr Matt became known to its organisers in South Wales, and thus as a likely helper with their schemes. This connection matured into employment when he accepted the post of crafts organiser to the NCSS Unemployed Clubs in about 1934.

¹⁵⁶LSF Temp Mss 508/23, Paul Matt's reminiscences: 3.

¹⁵⁷LSFTemp Mss 508/23, Paul Matt's reminiscences: 4.

With Matt in residence in Brynmawr, Scott, having had no encouragement from the CDC for his wood working proposition as described above, was in a position to try again, and 'we then got hold of the only factory building in the town.' This, the Gwalia works, had been the boot factory 'that had lost its South African market.'¹⁵⁸ This presented Scott with the opportunity not only to bring the boot makers back to work in their original works, but made an area available in which Matt could develop small scale furniture making.

With a space, basic equipment¹⁵⁹ and materials supplied through Friends' funding and public response to national appeals, Matt's first task was to occupy and train school leavers. Progress would have been slow at first as he worked with the boys who were 'green from school at 14 . . . The boys' jobs were to brush up and clean, to boil up the glue and scratch the dowels. Then they were taught to use and sharpen tools, then to make packing cases before being put to the bench.'¹⁶⁰

In a tape recorded interview, Mrs Churchward, whose husband had been a member of the Brynmawr workshops management team, insisted that there were no unemployed taken in to the project at first, and that it did nothing for the unemployment situation at that time. The boys were joined before long by young men who had been to a government training scheme, though neither Matt nor Mrs Churchward has said how skilled they were. In these early days Matt was responsible for training them in furniture making but as the factory progressed towards commercial production 'craftsmen were imported to teach.

¹⁵⁸LSF Temp Mss 508/23, Paul Matt's reminiscences: 4. There is no information as to how they 'got hold of' the premises, but no doubt, in depressed times, the owners would have welcomed a tenant and a regular income from rent.

¹⁵⁹'A row of German beech cabinet makers' benches, a 'Universal' combined woodworking machine and a large power fretsaw.' Additionally there was a circular saw, the only piece of machinery in use at first, until the payment for the Mount chairs enabled them to buy the above. Paul Matt 'Further Notes to the Newsletter' given in personal correspondence by Colin Johnson, 18 August 2005.

Roger Smith described the use of the circular saw for cutting the rebates, and mentioned also a fret saw, used to cut 'chair legs and the like from solid wood.' Roger Smith, 'Utopian Designer: Paul Matt and the Brynmawr Experiment', *Furniture History. The Journal of the Furniture History Society*, vol. XXIII, 1987: 89.

¹⁶⁰NPTGM: 1994.180, Tape 2b, Mrs Churchward.

Paul couldn't do it all, he was the designer. The older ones then supervised the younger ones.¹⁶¹ The distinction between these men and the boys is demonstrated by the relationship between them. All were without experience, but each of the older ones who were to be trained had two boys working alongside 'and in time they also had helpers so we were able to keep pace with our growth.'¹⁶²

After the initial period of giving tuition Matt's main function in addition to the management was to cut and prepare the timber ready for the craftsmen to build the pieces. There were no plans or other drawings for them to follow, simply prototype pieces which the men would then measure and reproduce. His methodical preparation and precision in teaching is shown by his handbook, *Woodwork from Waste*. Although written after leaving Brynmawr to guide the club leaders and other instructors within the NCSS schemes who were to develop the craft with their members, it suggests that the Brynmawr apprentices would have been well taught.

The first large order was for over two hundred chairs for the new school hall at The Mount, the girls' Quaker school in York. Matt regarded this order as 'an ideal project for a group of young men.' The simplicity of the construction made it possible for one man to make the whole chair.¹⁶³ This, the first order, was possibly the only one which asked for the repetition of a piece in such number during the first years. The order was prompted by the sympathetic support of Quakers for the Brynmawr project. Money to buy the chairs, priced at £1 each, was raised from Friends, including Old Scholars of The Mount who donated the cost of a chair and 'whose names were beautifully carved on the front rails.' It was this order that 'set the Furniture Makers on their feet, and enabled machinery and equipment to be installed in the factory.'¹⁶⁴ The design of the Mount Chairs 'was later

¹⁶¹NPTGM: 1994. 180, Tape 2a, Mrs Churchward.

¹⁶²LSF Temp 508/23 Mss, Paul Matt's reminiscences: 5.

¹⁶³LSF Temp Mss 508/23, Paul Matt's reminiscences, 4; NPTGM: 1994.180, Tape 2b, Mrs Churchward.

¹⁶⁴Pitt, *Our Unemployed*: 26.

incorporated into the Brynmawr range, and became one of the best selling lines,¹⁶⁵ and was priced in the 1936 catalogue at £1.17s 6d.

There was no reserve stock held at the factory. The furniture was displayed in exhibitions and items were made to order, not with the intention of custom making, but from the immaturity of the enterprise, which thus resulted in a limited market. The first exhibition was held at the department store, David Morgan, in Cardiff in 1931. In the following years, Morgan's and other stores throughout Britain gave free show space with no profit to themselves from sales, not only to Brynmawr products but also to those of other enterprises and of the Rural Industries Bureau in particular.

The development of the Brynmawr furniture factory falls into three periods, recognising that while these are distinctly related to the persons of Matt and Reynolds, the progress of the factory was also related to the personal and overlying influence of Peter Scott and An Order which assumed control after 1934.

In the first period Paul Matt ran the factory alone, developing the furniture project, designing the pieces and training the young men. He was joined towards the end of 1931 by Arthur Reynolds who was employed as foreman under Matt's management. Matt and Reynolds worked together for some four years until Matt left Brynmawr. In this period Matt took responsibility for the design and preparation of pieces in the machine shop and Reynolds for the construction. The third period, in which Reynolds assumed the workshop management after Matt had left, sales developed commercially under the overall management of An Order but were to end in voluntary liquidation in 1940.

Mrs Churchward commented that both Matt and Reynolds were firm men to work for. She described Matt as rigid and formal, and Reynolds as a perfectionist.¹⁶⁶ Strong on quality control, Reynolds

¹⁶⁵NPTMG:1994.75.GROUP, letter from Paul Matt to Walter Lucas, 22 February 1987.

¹⁶⁶'He was a different kettle of fish from Reynolds. He was a loner – inhibited. His basis was set and could not be changed.' NPTGM: 1994.180, Tape 2b, Mrs Churchward.

kept them all on their toes, and inspected each item. He looked at the drawers of a dressing table, turned them upside down, because they should go in just as well that way up. Ten dovetail joints in a drawer. When he found a hairline of glue on one of them he said "This will fall apart" and it had to be done again. This perfection would not pay today.¹⁶⁷

In the same conversation, the men who, as boys, had worked under them commented 'Paul Matt was a hard man, and was training us' in the craft and quoted Matt as having said 'Any fool can use a machine . . . sweat ran.'¹⁶⁸ In personal correspondence David Robson said that Matt wasn't the easiest man to work for, 'being somewhat autocratic.'¹⁶⁹

Noel Hyde, 'who was artistic and an authority on furniture,'¹⁷⁰ was employed in a managerial position and took responsibility for the Brynmawr publicity. He described the factory in its second period:

[the furniture] department sells its products direct to the public. All the men are young and have been trained to a specialised method of construction. Exhibitions have now formed the main source of sales and are held periodically as occasion demands in large centres of population. Contracts have been obtained, from time to time, and the department has worked full time for two-and-a-half years (since 1931) without a break. It was not however, until the summer of 1932 that the first profit was shown, and although there have been short periods since when the department has not quite succeeded to pay its way, there is every possibility of it paying permanently and increasing the numbers employed.¹⁷¹

Already giving much of his time to working with the occupational Clubs, Matt's association with the furniture factory ended formally with his appointment as Crafts Organiser for the South Wales and Monmouthshire Council of Social Service, the local branch of the NCSS. The date of this appointment is unknown, but by deduction from contemporary facts, is believed to be in 1934.

¹⁶⁷NPTGM: 1994.180, Tape 2b, Mrs Churchward.

¹⁶⁸NPTGM: 1994. 180, Tape 2a, Mrs Churchward.

¹⁶⁹David W. Robson, personal correspondence, 26 August 1999.

¹⁷⁰Pitt, *Our Unemployed*: 26.

¹⁷¹G. N. H. (Noel Hyde), *The Brynmawr Experiment*: 20.

Scott referred to the year 1936 as a turning point, but with no further explanation than it being the 'completion of the first stage and the commencement of a new period of development.'¹⁷² A summary of the previous years would include his resignation from FHS in 1934, the formation of An Order in 1934 and the setting up of Order Holdings Ltd in 1936. With the weaker industries failing and the boot and furniture making industries becoming viable Scott had turned his interest to developing the Subsistence Production Society (SPS) with the first unit set up at Upholland, near Wigan in 1934. Brynmawr had been granted funding by the Special Areas Commissioner¹⁷³ and plans for building a new factory were in hand. It was a turning point for the Brynmawr Experiment, but it was also significant for Scott personally. His wife, Lilian, had died in a road accident in August 1935. 'Lilian looked after the ever-changing community [of Friends living at 31 Alma Street in Brynmawr] and helped to make us into a happy family group. I remember her with very warm affection and respect.'¹⁷⁴ Her death was traumatic for the whole Quaker group as the car in which she and Peter Scott were travelling when the accident occurred was driven by one of the Brynmawr Friends.¹⁷⁵

As the production of furniture increased more space was needed and an extension to the factory was erected while plans for a new factory were advanced. A fire destroyed the old premises in 1937,¹⁷⁶ but the extension was not lost so production was not completely interrupted. Rebuilding commenced and the new factory was opened officially

¹⁷²'To any who, in the future, may review the history of the Brynmawr industries, the year 1936 will probably appear as the turning point in its earlier narrative, for it marks the completion of the first stage and the commencement of a new period of development. This does not mean the solutions of difficulties – psychological, geographical, financial – which have continually beset the venture since its inception, but rather a consolidation of experience upon which the future may soundly be built.' *An Order*, Annual Report 1936 (Abergavenny: An Order, 1937): 46.

¹⁷³Ecroyd, 'Subsistence Production in the Eastern Valley of Monmouthshire: 37-38.

¹⁷⁴Pitt, *Our Unemployed*: 6.

¹⁷⁵LSF Temp Mss 508/23.

¹⁷⁶'The fire broke out near the engine room, but the cause is unknown.' 'The Brynmawr Fire', *The Friend* 30 April, 1937: 395. Noel Hyde had telephoned *The Friend* with news of the fire. It had broken out at about 6.30 p.m. and the factory was burnt out by 8.30. Part of the timber stock had been saved and 'happily it was possible to save all the office papers.'

in April 1938. Matt reported that for this there was a considerable investment in a multi-purpose machine of saw, planer and driller, new benches and kits of tools, followed by a spindle machine, multi-borer and belt sander.¹⁷⁷ In these last years, however, and in spite of the government assistance, there was a shortage of cash as the insurance money from the fire was insufficient for day to day recovery and a further £30,000 was needed through private donations. According to Mrs Churchward, in 1938 'four men from Birmingham,' not Quakers, put money in and tried to speed up manufacture with mass production methods, but before long wanted their money back.¹⁷⁸ This is the only reference to financial restraints at this time, and is seemingly unrelated to the success of the London showroom which Mrs Churchward said was doing well under the management of a former employee of Heal's London furniture store.¹⁷⁹ The Annual Report for 1938, which would not have appeared until 1939, gave a less rosy picture and indicated the effect of war preparations on the domestic scene.¹⁸⁰ Sales were down because 'Londoners were more interested in gas masks than in cupboards.' Exhibitions at Leicester, Birmingham and Olympia, the customary¹⁸¹ way of advertising and source of orders, did not generate enough sales to pay for themselves. The Report continued optimistically, reporting that orders were still coming in, and for prestigious suites, including library furniture for the University of Wales and dining furniture for the new Aberdare Hall in Cardiff, though

¹⁷⁷After I had gone they bought a spindle moulder which did a day's panels in minutes. Then what I was afraid of happened. They began to ask how can we use our expensive spindle moulder? One experiment was to lay strips of sycamore vertically on the front of a walnut sideboard. They carried this piece, I think, to about a dozen exhibitions but could not sell it. I do not know what happened to it.' Paul Matt to Roger Smith, 6 September 1984. Smith, 'Utopian Designer: Paul Matt and the Brynmawr Experiment' *Furniture History. Journal of the Furniture History Society* vol XXIII, 1987: footnote 18, page 93.

¹⁷⁸NPTGM: 1994.180, Tape 2b, Mrs Churchward.

¹⁷⁹NPTGM: 1994.180, Tape 2b, Mrs Churchward.

¹⁸⁰*An Order*, 1938: 42.

¹⁸¹Even with the opening of a showroom in London the production and distribution policy remained unchanged. Orders were taken at exhibitions, the showroom and from the catalogue which declared 'We sell and deliver our furniture direct from the factory to the home and no extra charge is made for carriage.' This showroom was opened in May, 1938 in Cavendish Square, in London's West End. *An Order*, 1938: 42.

doubtless these were governed by an element of loyalty to the reputation of the local factory, or to Wales.

The Brynmawr Experiment came to an end with World War II. It had lost its purpose to provide employment as the armed services and munitions work absorbed the able men, both employed and unemployed, and craft training was no longer required. The SPS closed and of the industrial enterprises that had been started in the early 1930s, only the bootmakers and furniture makers were still in business. An Order took the decision that Brynmawr Furniture Makers should go into voluntary liquidation, the reason generally understood to have been the failure of supply of raw materials from the continent. Paul Matt gave his account of the sequel to the decision to close:

When the War started, the committee running the Brynmawr Furniture Makers decided that people would no longer buy furniture, and so instead of letting things peter out, decided to go into voluntary liquidation. This was the more (*illegible*) as they were in a good financial position. First they had a sale of all completed furniture (in London). What happened at the sale might have warned them otherwise. When the doors opened there was a stampede to grab anything, in order to get something! Urgent messages were sent back to Brynmawr to finish anything saleable, even if unpolished! Even so a week's sale petered out on the second day. Then they sold all the machinery and the firm of Lucas took over the works for munitions.

About a month or so later the Board of Trade, as it was then called, told the Brynmawr Furniture Makers that they were the designated factory for making Utility furniture for the whole of Wales for the rest of the war. And now the company could make it, as materials were under licence, and no one else could. It was then too late to restart, but it would have given them a head and shoulders start after the war.¹⁸²

Matt regarded this as the ultimate mark of recognition of the quality of Brynmawr furniture, 'when it is remembered that Utility furniture was being made by Heals, Gordon Russell and other similar manufacturers' and that 'Utility furniture was years ahead of its time, designed by specialists.' His further comment was that 'Brynmawr furniture had a considerable influence on the design of Utility furniture.' Contracts to supply Utility furniture would have replaced the modest trade in domestic pieces and permitted the

¹⁸²NPGMT:1994.75.GROUP.

survival of the factory, the craftsmen then being employed in a reserved occupation¹⁸³ and not subject to call up into the services.

The eminent suitability of Brynmawr furniture for Utility production may be deduced from John Vaizey's introduction to the Geffrye Museum's exhibition of Utility Furniture of 1995¹⁸⁴ in which he discussed the principles that government set out for the control of furniture production. Utility furniture had to be modestly priced and of good quality. To achieve this there were to be standard designs 'which could be relatively easily checked, and which would by its simplicity avoid unnecessary use of raw materials and labour, and by its high quality give it a long and useful life.'¹⁸⁵ He continued 'It is at this point that the response to war time and post war shortages meets the century old movement to overcome the catastrophic consequences of industrialisation on design and taste.'¹⁸⁶ These, the principles to which Matt worked, are reflective of those of William Morris, and are demonstrated in Chapter Six.

¹⁸³Reserved occupations were those jobs of national importance, and took priority over military service, though workers in these industries were still able to volunteer for the armed forces.

¹⁸⁴*Utility: Furniture and Fashion 1941-1951* (London: Geffrye Museum Trust, 1995), 5-6. This publication gives a detailed history and chronology of the development of utility furniture, and the persons, designers and manufacturers involved in its production. There is no mention of Brynmawr Furniture Makers. Gordon Russell was closely involved in several capacities.

¹⁸⁵Vaizey, *Utility: Furniture and Fashion*: 5.

¹⁸⁶Vaizey, *Utility: Furniture and Fashion*: 6.

CHAPTER FOUR

PETER SCOTT, QUAKER

The previous chapter discussed the application of Quaker social concern for the needy with the provision and organisation of practical relief for the distressed people of Brynmawr. Here, that Quaker work is endorsed by an examination of the Quaker work of Peter Scott, who, considering that while the giving of goods and money was helpful for the time, stated it to be merely palliative, and was not contributing to the reconstruction of lives and of a derelict town that would fulfil the Quaker guidance to look to the cause of the problem. Focusing this chapter on the work of Scott, the key figure, has permitted the further construction of the history of the Experiment and confirmation of its Quaker values.

It was Peter Scott's vigorous personality and his sense of having a spiritually inspired mission to build a creative community that was the impetus for the Brynmawr Experiment which he intended to be archetypical for a new social system. When, with the approach of war in 1939, the end of the Experiment was anticipated, Scott and his wife explained how the aim at Brynmawr had been for

a new concept of society and of social relationships, where the local community is the central factor in men's lives, and where merely personal ambitions lose all meaning as the individual discovers himself to be a vital part of an organic whole, with a definite function to fulfil. The discovery of how to live the full life together is the underlying aim of the whole work.¹

Scott's concern came from his strong religious faith that he embedded in membership of the Religious Society of Friends and 'the whole (Brynmawr) undertaking was dominated by the personal vision of one man, Peter Scott'² While working in accord with the Quaker testimonies that he had embraced with his membership of the Society, Scott remained an independent idealist, confident of achieving his objectives in his own way. When the Quaker establishment became unwilling to give him the full support he

¹Peter and Richenda Scott, 'The Brynmawr Experiment', *Welsh Review* 1 no.6 (1939): 340.

²Gwen Lloyd Davies, 'Crafts and the Quakers at Brynmawr', *The Planet* 51 (June/July): 108.

sought, Scott continued without it, but shared his vision of a new society with his group, An Order (see below).

Peter Scott's reputation in the history of the Religious Society of Friends is of a visionary, an idealist, a passionate promoter of social justice and a man of action,³ yet the collection of material over many years with a view to constructing his biography has shown him to have been an enigmatic character, not least because there are puzzles that are insoluble. The archives contain no autobiographical material to assist.

Scott was born in 1890 at Prescott in Lancashire, his father described as confectioner and restaurant keeper, and with an older sister, Mary.⁴ Henry Ecroyd has recorded that Scott had studied architecture at Liverpool University but left before completion 'either for family reasons or on account of the First World War.' If he had started his studies at the customary age of 18 years it would not have been the coming of war in 1914 that caused him to leave University as he would then have been 24 years of age. If it had been the war that was responsible, then he had begun his studies later than customarily, and in either case there is a period of time and occupation unaccounted for in his formative years. His war service as an officer in the Royal Field Artillery would have given him training and experience in leadership, but with demobilisation he had, apparently, no employment to return to and had 'a succession of unsatisfactory short-term jobs.'⁵ Nor had he a religious affiliation, having rejected the church of the Plymouth Brethren in which he had been brought up, but contributing to his post war uncertainties, he 'sampled all sorts of churches' before joining the Friends Meeting in Birkenhead in 1924.⁶ He remained faithful to the Christian Biblical training of his youth,⁷ and found that

³ Henry Ecroyd, 'Peter Scott,' *The Friend* (10 March 1972): 277-279 and Edward Milligan, 'Peter Scott', *Friends' Quarterly Examiner* vol 12 (1921-22): 242-243.

⁴Public Record Office, census return 1891, RG12/3016.

⁵Ecroyd, 'Peter Scott': 277.

⁶Ecroyd, 'Peter Scott': 277.

⁷Henry Ecroyd noted that Scott's writing during the early days of the Brynmawr Experiment 'has a doctrinaire ring today'. 'Peter Scott': 277.

with no credal statement, employed priesthood nor set ritual Quaker practice was similar to the extempore worship of the Plymouth Brethren.

Aged 34 when he joined the Quakers, there had been time and experience in which his own ideas had developed and for him to have confidence in them. He had found sympathetic views in the Religious Society of Friends and a medium there through which his ideas could be expressed in action. Henry Ecroyd's report, quoted above, said that on sampling the Meeting for Worship and reading a Quaker pamphlet Scott said 'This is either completely right, or all religion is false.'⁸

What drew Scott to the Friends Meeting in Birkenhead in or before 1924, beyond the restlessness and seeking referred to above is not known, nor is there a date for his first visit to Meeting and subsequent inquiries about the Society, but a welcome into the meeting was assured. As a seeker, and with his personal characteristic of meticulous and thorough research,⁹ his wide reading would have acquainted him with the responsibilities of Yearly, Quarterly and Monthly Meetings and the books and pamphlets available at the time. *The Foundations of a True Social Order*, drawn up by the War and Social Order Committee (WSOC) and published in London Yearly Meeting Proceedings in 1918,¹⁰ were widely shared and discussed in Quaker journals and were included in the 1923 edition of *Christian Life, Faith and Thought in the Society of Friends*. These *Foundations*, described as 'the closest the Yearly Meeting ever came to an anti-capitalist stance'¹¹ would have either influenced Scott or confirmed his own ideals.

The *Foundations* set out the ideals of a brotherhood expressing itself in 'a social order . . . directed to the growth of personality,' of equality, of justice, of mutual service, of

⁸Ecroyd, 'Peter Scott': 277.

⁹Edward H. Milligan, 'Peter Scott', *Friends' Quarterly* 17 (1971-2): 242.

¹⁰*London Yearly Meeting Proceedings* (London: London Yearly Meeting, 1918): 80-81.

¹¹Pink Dandelion, *An Introduction to Quakerism*, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2007: 160.

‘spiritual force of righteousness, loving-kindness and trust . . . applied to industrial relations’¹² and are all ideals which Scott was to aim to establish at Brynmawr.

What reading had convinced Scott when he said ‘this must be right,’ is not known but considerations of the social order were to the fore in Quaker publications of the period and of the annual Swarthmore Lectures in particular. Joshua Rowntree had concluded that ‘social service is an integral part of the Christian life and cannot be separated without grave loss on either side’ and ‘if our service to our fellows is to be social, it must be proved by fellowship.’¹³ In 1918, towards the end of World War I, Lucy Morland built on the foundation for service laid by Rowntree, asking Friends ‘to consider what must be the Quaker attitude in face of the new social ideals that are emerging in this twentieth century, and particularly under the stress and shaking of the great war.’¹⁴ The Yearly Meeting Epistle of 1920 exhorted Friends to observe the effect on others of the economic and other privileges that some enjoyed which ‘in opening our eyes will abase our hearts. It will send us forth to break down the social and educational barriers and to abolish the servitudes, which mar the fellowship of the human family.’¹⁵ Carl Heath linked the principle of fellowship with the need for action in the following words. ‘The fellowship of believers is not a credal group, but a society of *doers of the word*, (his italics) of those whose aim is to make of the inward vision a standard of the practice of social life.’¹⁶ When writing later of his group, An Order, Scott described its ideas as including mutual relationships within a social order in which equality would permit ‘the full development of personality’ and

¹²*Quaker Faith and Practice*, 23.16.

¹³ Joshua Rowntree. *Social Service: Its Place in the Society of Friends*, Swarthmore Lecture Series, (London: Woodbrooke Extension Committee, 1913): 120.

¹⁴ Lucy Fryer Morland, *The New Social Outlook*, Swarthmore Lecture series, (London: Woodbrooke Extension Committee, 1918): 9 and 33.

¹⁵ Yearly Meeting Epistle 1920, *Christian Life, Faith and Thought in the Society of Friends, being the first part of Christian Discipline of the Religious Society of Friends in Great Britain*. London: Friends’ Bookshop 1923: 88.

¹⁶ Carl Heath, *Religion and Public Life*, Swarthmore Lecture series, (London: Woodbrooke Extension Committee, 1922): 76.

where in industry 'the true motive of work is as an expression of the creative spirit'¹⁷ which are not only Quaker precepts but also those of Ruskin and Morris, as described in Chapter Two.

Scott would have known also of the WSOC proposals to put its concern for social justice into the development of a New Town particularly since, once a member of the Society, he was invited to join that committee. Neither a garden city nor a factory village, New Town was to be a building project inspired by the example of Letchworth Garden City but with the addition of other social and industrial ideals and particularly that represented by co-operation or association within the community. Circumstances prevented the accomplishment of the project, but when the idea was first launched the basic conceptions were expressed by Howard Hodgkin, one of the New Town proposers, who described the scheme for Quakers to consider:

Various activities of a co-operative character are contemplated in field, factory and workshop, but it is also hoped that the town will afford a special opportunity for small handicraft industries, using little or no machinery, but giving scope for artists and craftsmen of independence and originality.

The town, however, is to be something more than just an industrial community based on sound and just economic laws. The aim will be not primarily to make profit but to enrich human life and this through association not in work only but in all departments of life . . . where the rewards of industry in all its forms, may be more equitably shared by those who contribute to their production and to secure for all a fuller opportunity for self-expression in life and work.¹⁸

Scott's progress from new member in 1924 to a position of authority in the Society in about two years was unusually speedy. Robert Davis, secretary to the Home Mission Committee, and peripatetic in his Extension visits to meetings, is likely to have come across him quite soon, at least through the meetings of the Young Friends groups, responsibility for which fell to the Home Mission Committee.¹⁹ Scott was an active

¹⁷*An Order: an Account of their Activities and Ideas*, (Hereford: An Order, ?1935/early 1936): 41-42.

¹⁸*Friends' Quarterly Examiner* 1918: 424-5.

¹⁹Half of Robert Davis's working life was with the Friends' central Home Mission and Extension, later Home Service, Committee, serving as Joint Secretary for 27 years. The testimony to his life says that 'he had the intuitive gift of seeing the right man or woman for the particular job or opportunity and the tactful approach to the one so picked out.' *Yearly Meeting Proceedings*, 1969: 167.

member of his own meeting, Birkenhead in Hardshaw West Monthly Meeting, where he joined the Young Friends Group. At the age of 34, Scott would have been older than most Young Friends, and his age may have endorsed his capacity for leadership in the eyes of the younger members. He accepted chairmanship soon after joining them. Robert Davis was a member in his own right of the Quaker Council for International Service, together with William Nicholson and Joan Mary Fry, and within the remit of the Home Mission Committee was the Penal Reform Committee. Scott was invited to join both these committees, and was co-opted onto the WSOC where Joan Mary Fry was already a member. Through these connections Scott had opportunities for speaking in public and outlining his ideas. These ideas may have appealed to Robert Davis to whom 'a project, wherein its sponsor could see hopefully that at least in one part there could be forward movement, might by him be welcomed'²⁰ and suggests that Davis was preparing to welcome and accommodate a Scott project.

It is clear that the Home Mission Committee was on the lookout for Friends prepared and able to give their service.²¹ The committee had been considering its own worth and reported to Yearly Meeting in 1924

One of the most urgent needs of the Society today is the discovery of more Friends who are prepared to give at some cost to themselves, time and thought to the spreading of truth. In this service we believe there is room for varied gifts and we hope that an increasing number of Friends may feel a call for their service in future years . . . Already many Friends are doing this work but we want to add to the number.²²

Whether Peter Scott was present at that Yearly Meeting and was encouraged further into greater activity cannot be said. However the Committee's report to Yearly Meeting the

²⁰Horace B. Pointing, 'Robert Davis,' *The Friend* (30 June 1967): 789.

²¹Without priests and with very few paid employees (who worked at Friends' House), the Society relied at that time on individuals to run the Society's business and other activities through voluntary service on committees. This service was considered also as the manifestation of the testimony to the intrinsic worth of each person, and nominating committees had, and have, the responsibility to seek out the latent talents of members so that they might 'develop and exercise their gifts to the glory of God' (*Quaker Faith and Practice*, 3.22). Today, most business is conducted by paid professionals at Friends' House, supported by the voluntary guidance of Quaker committee members.

²²Yearly Meeting Proceedings 1924: 41.

following year continued its call for Friends to give service, with the added encouragement of a measure of financial support for them:

We exist . . . to encourage a more widespread itinerant ministry and to assist individual Friends who are specially concerned for this work and help them find their right sphere of service. In some cases this involves setting Friends free for particular pieces of work and being responsible for part or whole of their maintenance.²³

In 1925 the name Young Friends (YF) had been substituted for that of the Friends Christian Fellowship Union (FCFU) which, from its founding in 1875, was intended to have a social function. Robert Davis had been a member since 1919. In those early years it was 'a meeting ground for many of the younger Friends who became involved in shaking Quakerism loose from its nineteenth century image and practice.'²⁴ Minutes of the meetings of the London Young Friends Group reveal the interest of the Group in hearing talks by weighty Friends, some of whom were later to play a significant part in Peter Scott's developing work. Speakers at their gatherings in the early 1920s included Joan Mary Fry, who was to chair the committees which supported the work at Brynmawr, James T. Baily, whose work with the interned Germans in World War I had demonstrated to the Matt family the Quaker ethic of service, and Robert Davis.²⁵ Davis was responsible for strengthening the relationship between the YFs and his Home Mission and Extension Committee (HMEC) and was in a position to recommend Friends as speakers to local YF groups. On moving to London and joining the London branch of YF, Scott met in the membership two who were to join him in his work at Brynmawr, Elizabeth Painter, whose contribution was to be from her dedication to the practice of the open air mission, and Paul Matt who was to develop the furniture factory. Also a Young Friend in his group at this time was Richenda Payne, historian and writer on Quaker subjects (sister of author Janet Whitney), and who was to become Peter Scott's second wife in 1938.

²³Yearly Meeting Proceedings 1925: 63-63.

²⁴Thomas C. Kennedy, *British Quakerism: the Transformation of a Religious Community* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2001): 286.

²⁵Minute 7, Young Friends Committee, 14 June, 1921.

In 1925 Peter Scott, together with Malcolm Warner, presented their meeting with a proposal for helping to rehabilitate men released from prison which was published in *The Friend* entitled 'Help For Discharged Prisoners.' Friends have long had a concern for the welfare of prisoners, rooted in their experiences of being imprisoned in the seventeenth century, through Elizabeth Fry and Stephen Grellett in the early nineteenth century, to those who nowadays work closely with prison authorities in educational and pastoral activities. Scott and Warner's scheme was designed to address the problem associated with unemployment after World War I, by which the general shortage of work meant that a job for an ex-prisoner was virtually impossible to find, and carried the risk that without work he would 'almost inevitably drift back to prison.'²⁶

While the outline of the proposals for this scheme was comprehensive it was clear that the primary purpose was the founding of a community. This was to be residential comprising two groups of workers, one of which, the helpers, would be part-time contributors to the community, with employment outside, paying for their accommodation and being involved in the main with recreational activities. The other group, the servants (in the sense of giving service) would be required to have a probationary period of training in the community, proving that they 'still felt the call' to serve, and that they could contribute to its work without remuneration. The number of ex-prisoners was limited to 'never exceed the number of servants', and there is a sense that the intention was to manifest a vision for a community, with the care and rehabilitation of ex-prisoners being the immediate and original purpose which distinguished it from others, from the pre-Reformation monastic houses to the anarchic Tolstoyan communities of the late nineteenth century as, for example, the Whiteway colony.²⁷ Scott and Warner's workers

²⁶Peter Scott, 'Help for Discharged Prisoners', *The Friend* (20 November 1925): 1030.

²⁷The Whiteway colony in Gloucestershire was set up in 1898 and is still in existence, 'a mature anarchist arcadia'. In 1921 one of the residents arranged and developed a Co-operative Handicrafts Guild the fortunes of which rose and fell until it was disbanded in 1930. Craft work continued with carving by Joy Evans, daughter of one of the first colonist families, her husband Peter's furniture, inspired by Gimson and the Barnsleys, and the metalwork of their son, Alan. Chris Coates, *Utopia Britannica Volume 1: British Utopian Experiments: 1325-1945*, Diggers and Dreamers, 2001:140 and 206.

would live a life of utter simplicity in material things; they would be fed, clothed and provided with pocket money; their old age would be provided for, also sickness, and their children would be educated. They would carry on the active work of the community . . . While everything in the community would be exceedingly simple, it would be as beautiful as possible. Great attention would be paid to the recreational side . . . groups would be formed for such things as dramatics, music, art, gardening and handicrafts.²⁸

There was little in the report about the ex-prisoners, who must have comprised a third group in the community, and for whose benefit the community was to exist. It suggested that the first men should be specially selected, though no criteria for selection were given, and that those on probation would also qualify provided they took residence in the community. It foresaw a wider selection later to include different grades of ex-prisoner, though again without indication of any way they were to be graded.

It is not surprising that Malcolm Warner, a member of Birkenhead Meeting, was drawn to share with Scott the ideas for rehabilitating ex-prisoners. His own experience included work in the Adult School Movement, with Young Friends and, in response to his concern about the social problems caused by housing difficulties, he had initiated a co-operative housing scheme at Willaston and had plans for setting up there 'a colony of people who would be mutually helpful.'²⁹

Following the Quaker process for the testing of a concern Scott and Warner put the scheme to their Monthly and Quarterly Meetings where, they reported, they were encouraged to 'lay their concern before Friends in the meetings throughout the country, and (we) will be glad to have opportunities of doing so.' There is no evidence of Meetings responding to this offer, but the article revealed Scott's deeper purpose, to work on his aspiration for society as a whole through the medium of care for the underprivileged:

It is possible that a scheme of this sort might be the stepping-stone to something far greater than merely a piece of social service, and result in a re-tapping of spiritual force. That arising out of it might come a body of people, many of them from the class to whom the gospel of Jesus has always made the biggest appeal, the despised, the so-called sinners, and the failures of the present social order. A body

²⁸Peter Scott, 'Help for Discharged Prisoners', *The Friend* (20 November 1925): 1030.

²⁹G. E. H., 'Malcolm Warner', *The Friend* (13 July 1928): 634.

of people to whom the existence of a "Love that is God Himself" had become a living reality and the realisation that the gospel of Jesus was that of redemptive self-sacrificing love, and that it is only by this means that the Kingdom of God can be brought about.³⁰

The writer was, however, convinced that 'The success or failure of a scheme of this sort rests almost entirely on the spirit with which it is run, and this in turn rests on the spirit of the people who run it.'³¹ Impractical and unsupported as the scheme was, its presentation showed the rudiments of Scott's future work and his hopes for 'a body of people' to work together for a better world. His vision for a community for ex-prisoners did not come about, but Scott brought together 'the body of people' when he organised An Order in 1934, which is described below.

Scott became more and more conspicuous among Friends. A fortuitous vacancy in the Friends' House office of the HMEC resulted in his being appointed to the secretariat as Assistant to Robert Davis in 1926.³² Offering Quakerism in new locations was a particular interest of Robert Davis and at the interview for the appointment Scott had made known his own interest in such extension work, acknowledging that the Committee was an effectual means for it.³³ The Committee reported how, when first learning of Friends, Scott had had 'to look up a directory to discover the nearest Friends' Meeting!' He had become 'impressed with the opportunities before the Society. Many seekers seem never to have heard of our existence.'³⁴ Scott's appointment was announced in the words

London Friends will hold out a hearty hand of welcome to Peter Scott, of Birkenhead, who last week accepted an invitation of the Home Mission and Extension Committee to join its secretariat. His name is familiar to us in the south, although he is as yet personally known to few. Among younger Friends in the north

³⁰Peter Scott, 'Help for Discharged Prisoners': 1030.

³¹ Peter Scott, 'Help for Discharged Prisoners': 1030.

³²This vacancy was not entirely fortuitous as there is evidence of a wish for the retirement of the current Assistant Secretary. Home Service Committee Minutes for 1925 show that changes to the Secretariat were deemed advisable and that 'possibilities' were explored. The Minutes reveal the unhappy consequences for the outgoing member of the Secretariat who was virtually dismissed, and for his family.

³³ Scott was already experienced in extension work as he had served the Young Friends as Visitations Officer.

³⁴A. S. G., Home Mission Committee Report, *The Friend* 9 April 1926: 298.

he has been a leading spirit since he joined our Society a few years ago. One of the men who went through the war and saw first hand what war really was. It was not just our peace testimony that drew him in but the deeper things for which we endeavour to stand and out of which our peace and other testimonies have grown. The fullness of what a fundamental experience means is what is needed pre-eminently in the work of an extension committee.³⁵

By 1926, Scott had added to his service, by nomination, representation of his Monthly Meeting at Meeting for Sufferings, and through this had the opportunity to become acquainted with representative Friends from all Monthly Meetings. His appointment to HMEC brought association with the members of other committees in his office at Friends' House and his remit to make visits on behalf of HMEC. Consequently his interests and oratory became known widely throughout the Society.

Peter Scott's personal wish for action, directed towards younger Friends, had been published soon after he joined the Society. In an article³⁶ he said

Each generation has to realise for itself its own beliefs. Quietly and steadily the work has been going on, a work, the strength and solidity of which is perhaps hardly realised and now the call comes to us, the youth of the Society. Are we ready?³⁷

He reiterated this call for action at the Young Friends AGM, just before the General Strike and the 1926 Yearly Meeting at which Emma Noble expressed her concern for the suffering in the South Wales coalfield (introduced in Chapter Three). At that AGM Scott referred to discontent within the YF Group, which, he said, seemed to be uncertain of its aims and objects. 'What after all, are we actually doing as Young Friends, either for our Society or for the world at large?' There was, he continued

a spirit of enquiry and a longing for spiritual experience which shall lead to creative action ... From such a spirit great things can possibly spring – that they may do so in these times of industrial crises and this world of spiritual unrest when an effort to apply the way of Jesus to the life of today was never more needed is our hope and prayer for the coming year.³⁸

³⁵'Welcome to London to Peter Scott', *The Friend* 2 April 1926: 268.

³⁶Peter Scott, 'A People to be Gathered', *Young Quaker Magazine*, May issue, 1926.

³⁷George Fox wrote of climbing to the top of Pendle Hill, in Lancashire, in 1652, where 'the Lord let me see atop of the hill in what places he had a great people to be gathered.' John L Nickalls, ed., *Journal of George Fox* (London: Yearly Meeting of the Religious Society of Friends, 1952): 104

³⁸London Young Friends Group AGM 14 April 1926.

Scott's extension work at Friends' House required him to travel, and following the interest in South Wales that Robert Davis had shown already, he made visits to the Forest of Dean and into South Wales. He reported to Meeting for Sufferings how a Friend, Arthur Williams of Monmouth Meeting, had already introduced Quaker Meetings into the Forest of Dean and where he (Scott) had found the colliers to be

a hardy, thrifty and thoughtful people . . . and whose forebears had been miners for generations. In Coleford (he) had met a group of men of an intelligent type who had been drifting away from organised Christianity. They were seekers. A meeting for worship had been held.³⁹

Scott reported to his committee on 'the marvellous work, the wonderful organisation and the co-operation that was being fostered among the people' and said that he was 'led to take up this work.'⁴⁰ This, and other such mission visits to the Somerset coalfields, was the stimulus for a group of Friends to conduct a week's campaigning in the Forest of Dean, based at Littledean. Meetings for Worship were held out of doors and Scott described them in the obituary that he wrote on the death of Elizabeth Painter, one of the first Friends to share these meetings with him:

Only those who took part in this group work can fully realise what it meant. The gathering of the group; the quiet time of waiting before setting out; the deep and increasing sense of fellowship; the preparation in the earlier part of the day by house-to-house distribution of handbills and the chalking of notices on the pavements announcing the meeting in the evening; finally the gathering in silent waiting at street corner or market place, out of which came the message.⁴¹

An unattributed article entitled 'A Quaker Adventure in the Forest of Dean', referred to the beginnings of a Quaker community there and mentioned how 'The first stirrings of this new life were evident before the industrial crisis of last year; the movement may be regarded therefore as a spontaneous one.'⁴² This article, which from the style of writing is surely Scott's, implies that his intention was to make plain in print that at this

³⁹*The Friend*, 10th September 1926: 803.

⁴⁰Minutes of the Industrial Crisis Committee, 31 August, 1926.

⁴¹Peter Scott, 'Elizabeth Painter', *The Friend* 28 August 1964: 1040.

⁴²'A Quaker Adventure in the Forest of Dean', *The Friend* 29 July 1927: 699.

time he and his fellow missionaries were primarily concerned with ministering to spiritual needs and that there was a distinction between that and the 'function of a religious society in regard to industrial and social questions' which had been a major discussion at Yearly Meeting in May 1927. His subsequent work at Brynmawr was to be from a spiritually inspired concern with industrial and social questions, but with this article he was beginning to distance himself from the ICC, having recently experienced lack of support for his proposal for a scheme for carpentry in the Forest of Dean using materials supplied by the Forestry Commission. Although Friends Home Service Committee (FHS), formerly HMEC, was prepared to support a Cinderford man with a grant of £15 to set up a sweet making business, the ICC had dismissed the carpentry scheme:

Peter Scott has put a great deal of earnest work into these investigations and some of us have been deeply interested in the possibilities he has outlined. Now gone beyond us to be taken up by any concerned for such a business proposition to whom Peter Scott is at liberty to hand over the information he has gathered.⁴³

Nonetheless, Scott's mission work was respected. 'Peter Scott has told us that he feels drawn increasingly to devote himself to the extension work of the Society, particularly in mining areas. We desire to encourage (him),' and his position as Assistant Secretary was to be reconsidered.⁴⁴ At the following meeting it was decided that Scott would in future be known as Joint Secretary with Robert Davis, with his salary increased to £350 p.a.⁴⁵

This encouragement led to the extension visit, described in the previous chapter, which resulted in Peter and Lilian Scott and other Friends moving to Brynmawr in the autumn of 1928 to distribute the funds and gifts organised by the CDC from Friends' House.

Since his first suggestion for a woodworking scheme (above) Scott had nursed his idea for twelve months and introduced it again to the ICS (which had replaced ICC)

⁴³Minute 3, Industrial Crisis Sub-Committee, 20 July 1927.

⁴⁴Minute 5, FHS Executive and Finance Committee Minutes, 1 March 1928.

⁴⁵Minute 5, FHS Executive Committee, 28 March 1928.

committee meeting of 9 July 1928.⁴⁶ The proposals were similar and once again were put aside by the committee until 'those working in the area could advise on the idea', but with no indication as to who 'those' might be.⁴⁷ He was convinced that while the practical relief was necessary, it was the provision of opportunities for occupation that would give the greater help, and he continued to consider constructive schemes. The ground work for progress toward these was laid when J. Theodore Harris visited Scott and reported to FHS 'fresh from his visit to Brynmawr' that there was a need there 'for some constructive schemes for the permanent betterment of the people.'⁴⁸ The CDC continued to have reservations about constructive projects saying that it wanted 'a carefully prepared report to discuss,' but Harris and Scott together must have been persuasive, for it appointed a Constructive Schemes Sub-Committee to 'explore the possibilities.'⁴⁹ Scott tried again to set up a scheme for carpentry and put to the CDC 'an interesting scheme for the manufacturing of furniture in Brynmawr' which was firstly to provide training. Still reluctant, the CDC passed the suggestion to its Constructive Schemes group requesting it to meet 'soon.'⁵⁰ It did so, but the CDC asked it to look again at the scheme:

We are most anxious to assist the concern of our two Friends⁵¹, but feel that more information is required especially as it seems to us that it would be not be feasible to unite the two schemes of a training centre and starting a business. We confirm our intention to assist in the training of craftsmen and if this can be carried out by some modification of the present scheme we shall be glad to help in the training of youths. We ask the Constructive Schemes Committee to investigate further and bring it again to our notice.⁵²

⁴⁶Minute 5, ICS Minutes, 8 July 1928.

⁴⁷Minute 8, ICS Minutes, 8 July 1928.

⁴⁸Minute 8, CDC Minutes, 3 October 1928.

⁴⁹Minute 8, CDC Minutes, 3 October 1928. The members of the Constructive Schemes Sub-Committee were J Theodore Harris, Horace Fleming, William Noble, Howard Diamond, William Hazelton and Peter Scott.

⁵⁰Minute 7, CDC Minutes, 30 January 1929.

⁵¹The two Friends are not identified, though one is clearly Scott. The other may have been J. Theodore Harris who had already reported the need for constructive schemes.

⁵²Minute 5, CDC Minutes, 6 February 1929. The scheme had been brought forward by Scott and Paul Matt.

Peter Scott appears to have become impatient with the committee's procrastination as three weeks later he recommended that further action should be postponed until 'a careful and expert survey has been made of the district,'⁵³ giving an indication of tension growing between him and the CDC. Pitt confirmed this, saying that

in 1929 the rift with the Coalfields Distress Committee developed, so Peter felt frustrated and the strain began to build up whenever Joan Fry visited. But Peter felt his inspired schemes should not be curbed by anyone and felt it right to follow his vision.⁵⁴

Further evidence of deteriorating relations between Scott and the CDC is shown when, for example, Scott asked for £100 repayment for what had been spent on Christmas gifts in Brynmawr and was requested to send details of the expenditure to the committee before the grant would be made. The manuscript Minute shows that the words 'documentary evidence' had been used first, and then crossed out.⁵⁵ Other examples also concerned financial matters. Scott received a gift of £200 from the town of Worthing to assist at Brynmawr which he forwarded to Friends' House with the request that the equivalent should then be sent back to him. The CDC finance committee reported that 'We have decided not to send this £200 until the matter has been discussed with Peter Scott.'⁵⁶ A CDC Minute then noted that those working in the field in the Rhondda (ie. not based at Friends' House) were not keeping proper accounts and should be helped to do so.⁵⁷ The auditor suggested that a member of the committee should visit them and explain his requirements to them (the following words 'and put all the accounts in order' were crossed out).⁵⁸ Relations also became strained between FHS and CDC. The finance group of the CDC noted that it lent money to FHS, and CDC asked for repayment at 3% instead of the

⁵³Minute 8, CDC Minutes, 27 February 1929.

⁵⁴Pitt, *Our Unemployed*: 38.

⁵⁵Minute 7, CDC Minutes, 16 January 1929.

⁵⁶Note from the CDC Finance group, 1 January 1929.

⁵⁷Minute 5, CDC Minutes, 30 January 1929.

⁵⁸Minute 2, CDC Minutes, 20 February 1929.

original 2½ per cent.⁵⁹ Responsibility for the sharing of the cost of running the Quaker house at Brynmawr was discussed, and agreement reached⁶⁰ but by June of 1929 the CDC had decided that it could not take 'ultimate responsibility' for the industrial 'experiments' at Brynmawr.⁶¹ It recorded a report, headed 'Private and Confidential', and presumably circulated among the CDC committee members, signed by its officers, Joan Mary Fry, Horace Fleming and William Hazelhurst, saying

We have considered sympathetically various schemes, but apart from allotments, possibly small holdings and poultry and miners training clubs, they do not contribute to the economic solution of the problem as a whole.

After very careful thought and with extreme reluctance we have to admit we have discovered no radical solution which can be applied through all districts by our committee.

In view of the foregoing and of the fact that the Government recently elected is committed to solving the problem of unemployment, we think that the time has come when the main part of our work as a relief committee shall be laid down.⁶²

From this point Scott loosened his contact with Friends' House, though he did not resign from FHS until 1934. Margaret Pitt indicated his reasons for choosing to work independently at Brynmawr when she stated clearly that he resigned

probably because he was too radical and his leadings took him further than the London based committee was prepared to back him. He wanted to avoid confrontation, so had to have things under his own control. By 1934 he had so many other organisations who had confidence in him that he was able to continue the work without official Quaker support and he continued for the next twenty years or so somewhat aloof from Friends' counsels.⁶³

By 1930, having been resident in Brynmawr for over twelve months, associated with the relief work, the Town Meeting and the voluntary work being undertaken by the community, Scott's energy was focused on the development of the constructive schemes

⁵⁹Minute 6, CDC Minutes, 6 March 1929.

⁶⁰Minute 2. CDC Minutes, 3 April 1929.

⁶¹Minute 8, CDC Minutes 1 May 1929.

⁶²This report is dated 30 June 1929. The statement quoted was followed by details of the obligations of the committee still to be discharged, and the CDC was finally laid down in December 1930. Its funds were transferred to the newly appointed Allotments Committee of which Joan Mary Fry was Clerk from 1931-1951.

⁶³Pitt, *Our Unemployed*: 38.

he had visualised, which matured into a number of craft workshops, described in Chapter Three. Once these were underway, his attention turned to another project, the creation of self-help agricultural schemes within the remit of the Subsistence Production Society (SPS). The several units of the SPS have made more impression on the non-Quaker world than have the Brynmawr workshops and have been discussed by the Pilgrim Trust as a special scheme in their report on the unemployment situation of the period, though with no acknowledgment of Peter Scott's part in it.⁶⁴ For reasons already noted in Chapter One, the SPS schemes are not examined further within the thesis.

To regularise the management of the Brynmawr Experiment Scott formed An Order of friends, an association independent of Friends' House and of the Religious Society of Friends. Some of its members were Quakers, some were not. It was formalised at a meeting at Llandogo in 1934⁶⁵ taking the form of a club with rules and purpose. Initiated by Scott, An Order was to take corporate responsibility for the commercial enterprise of the Brynmawr Experiment. Its formal constitution coincided with Scott having finally become detached from Friends' House by resigning from FHS and coinciding also with the formation of the SPS.

There is an intriguing background to the formation of An Order. In writing of its growth Scott, referring to 1928 when the Brynmawr Friends began to make plans for more constructive work which would at the same time enable them to put their convictions into practice, said that

during this same period another small group, the members of which lived and worked in different parts of the country but shared the same ideas, established contact with the Brynmawr group through individual members. In August 1932 the members of both groups and a few others met at Jordans (the Quaker Meeting House and Conference Centre in Buckinghamshire) in order to see what further effect could be given to the views that all now shared in common and how they might be communicated to others who were like-minded. It was here that the idea of the Order crystallised. Then as a result of a small gathering in Yealand (Friends Meeting House) in 1933 it became clear that the Order could not be established *in vacuo* and that it must be related to a practical piece of work, which in this case,

⁶⁴ Pilgrim Trust, *Men Without Work: a Report made to the Pilgrim Trust: 355-370.*

⁶⁵Pitt, *Our Unemployed: 39.*

meant the Brynmawr Experiment. It was in January 1934 that the final step was taken, when a few of those working at Brynmawr met at Llandogo.⁶⁶

This raises the questions to which no answer is yet found: What was 'another small group,' who were its members and which of its individuals knew of the Brynmawr group? More particularly, why was Scott not more specific?

The nature and construction of An Order were formulated by Scott, but there is no indication of any latent or premeditated scheme to form such a body when he first moved to Brynmawr. His conclusion was that 'the greatest opportunity for the creation of a better world' was in the 'areas where the breakdown of the old order was most complete' and he found that opportunity at Brynmawr. Those Friends who joined him were 'moved by a like compassion to share the life of a suffering community . . . disillusioned with the existing social and economic order and inspired by a Utopian vision.'⁶⁷

The numbers of Friends at Brynmawr fluctuated subject to the needs of the work and, because most of them were volunteer helpers, with time available according to their other commitments and unlikely to make a permanent move to the town. Pitt named the 'long-stay members of the group' as 'Peter Scott, leader; Lilian Scott (his wife), house-mother; Constance Butler, Peter's secretary; Paul Matt, unemployed clubs and furniture making; Charles Wilkinson, accounts etc; Hilda Jennings, survey; George Ready, accounts; Brian Hall, allotments' and herself. 'Elizabeth Painter was a frequent visitor.'⁶⁸

There is no early indication of an intention to form An Order, nor anywhere a suggestion that there was an inner circle, a nucleus for An Order, though there was undoubtedly a close relationship between those who in other associations might have been seen as disciples of a strong, personable and dedicated leader. The group was joined later by Graham Churchward, Donald and Enid Wilson, Noel and Margaret Hyde and Arthur

⁶⁶*An Order of friends: an Account of their Activities and Ideas*, (Hereford: An Order, ?1935/early 1936):10.

⁶⁷Henry Ecroyd, 'Subsistence Production': 35.

⁶⁸Pitt, *Our Unemployed*: 7.

and Helen Reynolds and later by a few others, including Eileen Thomas, to a total of about 13 adults and 8 children.⁶⁹

An Order formed up in 1934 with four members only.⁷⁰ In accordance with its rules and by deduction these would have been the Scotts and the Wilkinsons. When drawing up plans for An Order Scott decided that the membership would comprise a few 'carefully selected people.'⁷¹ To ensure that they were fully committed to it there would be a trial period 'to avoid the danger of bringing people too easily into the Order' and this accounts for the first membership of An Order being few. The Wilkinsons had already proved themselves by having been at Brynmawr for some time.⁷²

The members of An Order had to 'give themselves wholly' to An Order's work, without salaries. An Order's funds would give allowances according to needs, and on joining, those with resources would 'contribute to the funds of the Order any surplus above their needs.' The members would appoint a Leader who would hear the views of all members meeting together when important decisions were to be made.⁷³

Helen Reynolds, the wife of Arthur Reynolds (who succeeded Paul Matt as manager of the furniture makers at Brynmawr), has shown the extent of the commitment of the members to An Order through her account of their married life at Brynmawr of which she and Arthur were among the first membership.⁷⁴ Although the members agreed to receive a modest living allowance 'as they did not wish to be more affluent than the people they were trying to help' she said 'It was quite a hard struggle for me. I found that I had to look for the cheapest thing whenever I bought anything, in order to manage, and often to do without things which were almost (her emphasis) essentials.' The allowance of £4.10s

⁶⁹Pitt, *Our Unemployed*: 39.

⁷⁰Pitt, *Our Unemployed*: 39.

⁷¹Scott, *Creative Life*: 41.

⁷²Scott, *Creative Life*: 41.

⁷³Scott, *Creative Life*: 37-43.

⁷⁴Reynolds, Helen. Journal (being memoirs of her family life a Brynmawr in the 1930s): Chapter VI. In private ownership.

per week had to cover 10s per week rent, all household expenses, and pay for doctor and nurse when their babies were born, without the help of benefits. When the Scotts moved away from Brynmawr in the mid-1930s the Reynolds family found it impossible to manage as they then became responsible for giving the hospitality that had previously been the Scotts' until an increase of 10s per week was given.⁷⁵

Scott inspired Friends to go with him to Brynmawr in 1928 and Margaret Pitt, who joined them a few months later, 'regarded him as the definite Leader of the Group.'⁷⁶ He was accepted as leader by the members of An Order at its formation, they having understood the need for 'individual leadership in action coupled with group control.'⁷⁷ An Order was the medium through which Scott developed the business of the factories and of his SPS. Thereafter all his undertakings were carried on in the name of An Order, though in effect its members never had more than nominal responsibility for administration.⁷⁸ A curiosity is as to why the name 'An Order of friends' was selected, since with its connection with Brynmawr, it could only lead to confusion with the Religious Society of Friends. It is inconceivable that Scott could not have noted the ambiguity of 'friends' in this context although he always spelled it with a small 'f'.

The organisation of this group is the culmination of the achievement of Scott's vision for a better society, but also marks the deterioration of relations with his closest supporters and the decline of the spirit of his Experiment. Personal tragedy in the death of his wife Lilian in a motor accident on 3 August 1935 may have contributed to this.⁷⁹ 'Her

⁷⁵Helen Reynolds's Journal: 106 and 117.

⁷⁶Pitt, *Our Unemployed*: 37.

⁷⁷Scott, *Creative Life*, 42.

⁷⁸Ecroyd, *Subsistence Production*: 35.

⁷⁹'This sudden blow seems to have influenced his attitude to people and to his work in a subtle way: he certainly seemed to change.' Pitt, *Our Unemployed*: 7. Minute 6 of the Finance sub-committee of FHS Executive Committee recorded at the meeting of 4 June, 1936, that Peter Scott 'is in urgent need of a prolonged holiday and . . . plans are being made for him to go away. It is important to find the right kind of companionship. Peter Scott welcomes the proposal that Edgar Dunstan shall spend a fortnight with him early in July.'

absence impaired the cohesion of the group around him.’⁸⁰ His leadership was challenged by some members of An Order⁸¹ and he was aware that the advent of the Second World War would rectify the unemployment situation. The end of An Order was announced in a mannerly way:

There has arisen, spontaneously and independently, a conviction that the whole work was coming to mean more than the individual jobs composing it, that a new movement was growing, and that the small group to act as the spearhead of that movement (one of the ideas responsible for the formation of an Order of friends) was not so important, so necessary or so vital as the movement itself.

Therefore after careful thought, an Order of friends as such will disappear, by common consent. Each member of an Order will take his or her place in the movement as the needs of the work and the executive ability of the individual dictate.⁸²

After this report there is no further mention of ‘the movement,’ which now became the responsibility of individuals independently. As Scott concluded

Time will show whether the change we have in view will prove to have the significance for the work as a whole that is expected of it by those who are helping to bring it about . . . It will give the movement scope to grow naturally. It will take the emphasis from the leaven and put it on the loaf. It will depend more than ever before on the way in which each individual plays his part in the whole.⁸³

When the opportunity arose Scott took up employment as Rural Land Utilisation Officer for Wales (1940-47) for which he was awarded the OBE. From his new home near Abergavenny he was involved with several agricultural enterprises and his Quaker life remained dormant until he and his second wife, Richenda, joined Bangor Meeting in the 1950s.⁸⁴ Scott’s last project, developed with a group of Friends, was the formation of the Bray D’Oyly Housing Association which built a community of sheltered housing for the elderly where he and his wife lived until their respective deaths in 1972 and 1984.⁸⁵

⁸⁰Henry Ecroyd, ‘Peter Scott’, *The Friend*, 10 March, 1972: 77.

⁸¹LSFLSF Temp Mss 508/22.

⁸²*An Order of Friends*, Annual Report 1937, (Abergavenny: An Order of Friends, 1938), 19.

⁸³*An Order of Friends*, Annual Report 1937, (Abergavenny: An Order of Friends, 1938), 21.

⁸⁴Pitt, *Our Unemployed*, 41.

⁸⁵Pitt, *Our Unemployed*, 41.

This chapter began with an indication that the character of Peter Scott is to some extent unfathomable for lack of autobiographical material, to which is added an element of disappointment that the formal accounting for so interesting an undertaking as his work at Brynmawr is not coloured with a little personal informality. It is not possible to assess whether this dearth of personal record is from a modest self effacement, Scott's passion for 'doing' being more important to him than writing about it, or his desire for personal privacy beyond his public life. Equally possible would be the human factor that records were done away with when he and his wife moved into the limited accommodation of a retirement home, or by others after his death. There are only a few photographs of Scott publicly available, unusually few for so public a figure. In each he is within a group of others on formal occasions, with only one informal image, taken at a picnic.⁸⁶ His obituary published in the *The Friend* has no photograph, at a time when it was the editor's practice to include one.⁸⁷

Peter Scott, Quaker by conviction

Having shown in Chapter Three that the Brynmawr Experiment was initiated as a Quaker relief project, organised and effected by Friends' House committees, it remains to confirm that the following development of the craft workshops, the responsibility of Peter Scott, was equally 'quakerly'.

It would be difficult to fault Scott's religiosity, and weighty Friends have testified to his understanding of the spiritual life of a Friends' Meeting and of the Religious Society of Friends.

He enjoyed the spiritual quality of life, which was the ground of his being. His way was to wait for the light, let the spirit work – then action might follow . . . His ministry in Meeting was simple and clear – “it was worship breaking through into

⁸⁶The informal image, donated by Margaret Pitt, was taken in 1928-9. Also in the group are Connie Butler, Paul Matt and Lilian Scott.

One group photograph has the inscription 'at the old Brewery, December 1936, awaiting the arrival of King Edward VIII.' Photographic archive, LSF. Also in group are Eileen Thomas, Harry Taylor, Phil Bishop, Jim Forrester and Donald Wilson. Another is at the opening of the new furniture factory in Brynmawr, in 1937, filed in the St Fagans library archive.

⁸⁷Henry Ecroyd, 'Peter Scott', *The Friend* 10 March, 1972: 277.

words.” He cared deeply about the Society of Friends, and felt its insights could be as relevant to the needs of the present and future times, as they were in the past.’⁸⁸

Of Scott’s latter years Edward Milligan wrote

the whole of the Society of Friends continued to matter to him. He thought (and even worried) about it; he wrote (with increasing difficulty) about it; he talked about it; and (if one may dare to trespass upon the inner life of a man) he prayed about it.⁸⁹

Robert Davis used to remind Friends

that in early Quakers’ Journals a distinction was drawn between conviction and conversion and towards the end of his life he wrote: “Conviction may mean nothing more than intellectual acceptance of truth whereas conversion means a radical transformation of life at the deepest level, involving the emotions and the will as well as the mind.”⁹⁰

It is with this understanding that Scott’s commitment to the Religious Society of Friends is described here as ‘by conviction.’ When Scott, ‘without belief,’ was exploring the Christian worshipping bodies he found that the Religious Society of Friends was not only ‘completely right’ (see above) but also a body within which he could explore his vision for a better world, ‘a cautious visionary who mapped out the ground with deliberative care.’⁹¹ His commitment on joining the Society, which may have been reinforced in the early days of his membership by his zeal as a new comer, was not depreciated when, after the earlier years of the Brynmawr Experiment, his preference was to work without close association with Friends’ House. His enthusiasm was demonstrated by his willingness for service, and was happily coincident with Robert Davis’ evangelistic extension work, discussed above.

The Society of Friends that Scott joined was already concerned for the inequities in the structure of society and, through the WSOC (above), was searching for reasons and remedies. It does not detract from his integrity to note that he would also have had a

⁸⁸Pitt, *Our Unemployed*: 41.

⁸⁹Edward H. Milligan, ‘Peter Scott’, *Friends’ Quarterly* vol 12 1971-2: 242-243.

⁹⁰‘Robert Davis’, Testimony, *Yearly Meeting Proceedings* 1969: 166.

⁹¹Milligan, ‘Peter Scott’: 242.

pragmatic appreciation of the value of membership for achieving his own vision for society. Convinced of the principles that guide the Quaker way, he was also realistic in his attachment to a sympathetic Society which would honour his creativity in seeking to put his beliefs into practice. Elizabeth Isichei has noted that there were commercial and business advantages to be gained from the ready made network of contacts within the Society, and from the financial resources and reputation for integrity and respectability of the Victorian Quakers.⁹² These advantages would not have been dispelled by the 1920s, and Scott was very soon drawn into the network of contacts.

It is possible that Scott's values were already more than embryonic when he joined the Religious Society of Friends, having been formed from his personal experience, observation and wide reading.⁹³ His most intense exposition was in his treatise, *Creative Life*,⁹⁴ a ponderous document, in which he wrote of his conviction that the healing of a 'sick society' lay in replacing it with 'a complete life'. He acknowledged that what he was to outline in the document was not original thinking, but 'little' more than a co-ordination of the thought of others as partly worked out in experience.⁹⁵ (He does not make clear whether the experience is that of the others, nor of what he had found in working with his Experiment). There is passing reference to some other sources, but he names and quotes most frequently Howard H. Brinton's Swarthmore Lecture, *Creative Worship*, published in 1931 and John MacMurray's *Freedom in the Modern World*, published in 1932.

In the early 1930s MacMurray's most prolific period of writing and broadcasting for the BBC, Scott was preparing *Creative Life*, published in 1933. It followed his earlier published material which amounted to articles, reports and correspondence as publicity and fund raising for the Experiment. What followed *Creative Life* were the Annual Reports of

⁹²Isichei, *Victorian Quakers*: 128.

⁹³Pitt, *Our Unemployed*: 41.

⁹⁴Peter Scott, *Creative Life*. Tracts for Our Times series, no.1. (London: Allenson, 1933).

⁹⁵Scott, *Creative Life*: 2.

An Order, and articles describing the achievements at Brynmawr with restatements of their purpose. Although not intended as a marker *Creative Life* nonetheless appeared at a time when the boot and furniture making works were established and making progress and immediately before Scott's attention was directed to developing the SPS and forming An Order. It announced itself as Number One of Tracts for our Times of which 'It is hoped in due course to issue further pamphlets in this series in which the same approach will be suggested in other directions,'⁹⁶ but it seems to have been the sole issue in the proposed series.

In *Creative Life*, Scott demonstrated his thorough knowledge of Quakerism by including aspects which had become familiar to him as a member of the Religious Society of Friends and which were to have significance in his concept of living the complete life, though with little reference to them being so derived.⁹⁷ The Life would be achieved through 'vision, thought and action.' Scott's vision was of the regeneration of a society by building a community 'which would allow free scope for the creative spirit in man'. Therein would be provided

machinery for industry which would not exploit the individual for the private gain of anyone, but allow that same creative spirit to express itself and find satisfaction in so doing in the ordinary work of the world, to do this in no dreamy idealistic way but practically and efficiently.⁹⁸

The purpose of industry was 'to enable men to have not merely an existence but the full Life . . . be an aid to the fullest development of personality.'⁹⁹

⁹⁶Peter Scott, *Creative Life*: 45.

⁹⁷For example, 'faith . . . passes gradually into experience,' it does not 'consist in accepting any creed . . . we are not setting up a code of laws, either moral or otherwise . . . but are simply trying to understand the way Life works and to follow it.' He recommended the Quaker business method of finding 'the sense of the meeting,' though admitting the difficulty with it, as it depended on 'the right understanding of the method used.' He emphasised the need for 'a society which gives opportunity for the fullest development of the individual' for which community, 'or possibly a common life,' was necessary, encapsulated in a Community Council which should be 'a microcosm of the community . . . not founded on a representative basis . . . (but) where the various purposes would be integrated, so that the result would be something more than their sum total.'⁹⁷ This was a fair representation of the Brynmawr Community Council at this time.

⁹⁸Peter Scott, 'Community Building: The Brynmawr Experiment,' *The Friend*, 20 March 1931: 252.

⁹⁹Scott, *Creative Life*: 26.

The action was to be ‘extension work, practical work in new industrial and political experiments . . . by the permeating of existing organisations and communities and by the starting of entirely new experiments.’¹⁰⁰ The Life was to be a Fellowship (which, as he described it, closely resembled the Society of Friends) in which the members would adopt a ‘simple standard of life,’ and the action would lie with ‘an active service group to act as the spear-head of the movement.’ It was in this treatise that he named the spear-head An Order of friends.¹⁰¹

After a lengthy discourse on the history and failures of the industrial system, and writing while the Brynmawr workshops were still in their infancy, he said

Our problem can now be stated simply. Industry must be organised so that the real ability of each individual shall have full scope, the ordinary man doing his ordinary work without hurt to his self-respect, and for those gifted technically and also for the natural leaders, there must be the possibility of finding their proper place.¹⁰²

There is no conflict in Scott’s vision for the full life with the principles of the *Foundations of a True Social Order* (see Chapter Two) which set out Quaker ‘ideals that are aspects of eternal Truth.’ Among these is the hope to be led toward ‘a brotherhood which knows no restriction of race, sex or social class,’ expressed ‘in a social order which is directed . . . to the growth of personality’ with that growth not being ‘hampered by unjust conditions nor crushed by economic pressure.’¹⁰³ The *Foundations* themselves, presented to the Society of Friends as being ‘the direct outcome of our testimony to the individual worth of the human soul¹⁰⁴ were reflecting George Fox’s perception of ‘that of God in everyone.’¹⁰⁵

¹⁰⁰Scott, *Creative Life*: 37 and 45.

¹⁰¹Scott, *Creative Life*: 41.

¹⁰²Scott, *Creative Life*: 35-36.

¹⁰³*Foundations* i, ii and iii, *QFP*: 23.16.

¹⁰⁴*QFP*: introduction to 23.16, as presented to London Yearly Meeting in 1918.

¹⁰⁵Nickalls, *Journal of George Fox*: 263.

The chapter has shown the Experiment to have been Scott's endeavour to honour Fox's perception. It was short lived, occupying him for fewer than ten years of his life, and little of substance remained once the furniture factory closed and An Order was disbanded. Yet he remained ambitious for his vision. 'We see a new community, perhaps a new Brynmawr, risen from the wreckage of the old, built in new materials to a common plan, simple in the detail of its design, but comely in its entirety,'¹⁰⁶ confirming Edward Milligan's conclusion that Peter Scott 'was always exploring in the field beyond.'¹⁰⁷

¹⁰⁶Scott, *An Order* 1938:23.

¹⁰⁷Milligan, 'Peter Scott':243.

Edward Milligan applied to Scott this quotation of the words that Winston Churchill had used when writing of David Lloyd George.

CHAPTER FIVE

C. R. ASHBEE, ERIC GILL, PETER SCOTT AND THE ARTS AND CRAFTS VISION

In C. R. Ashbee, Eric Gill and Peter Scott may be found the Arts and Crafts vision for the making of a better world. Each had the authority of leadership that enabled them to take the vision into practice, and they are related by ideas, albeit with no acquaintance in common. MacCarthy has found that Ashbee and Gill 'were not dissimilar' and each worked in accord with Arts and Crafts principles, the one in community with his Guild of Handicraft at Chipping Campden in Oxfordshire, the other in his communities at firstly, Ditchling in Sussex, followed by Capel-y-ffin in the Welsh Black Mountains and finally at Piggotts in Buckinghamshire.¹ The distinction drawn previously between the Arts and Crafts Movement, the Arts and Crafts Exhibition Society and the use of the phrase Arts and Crafts is illustrated below as the Arts and Crafts Movement took a new turn and shed its overt interest in social justice. William Morris's concern for man in society continued in Ashbee and in Gill, providing a link between Morris and Scott. In Scott is reflected Morris's vision for a better society. In the Brynmawr furniture is Morris's aesthetic integrity and in the Brynmawr Experiment is a coherence with the Arts and Crafts Movement.

Charles Robert Ashbee (1863-1942)

Having described C. R. Ashbee as representing 'the highest common denominator of the thought' of the Arts and Crafts Movement Lionel Lambourne continued by describing the Guild of Handicraft at Chipping Campden as 'one of the most potent Arts and Crafts legends.'² This Cotswold venture, the establishing of a working community of skilled professional craftsmen at Chipping Campden outlined below, was short-lived in commercial viability, and occupied Ashbee for the few years of 1902 until 1908. In that

¹Fiona MacCarthy, *Eric Gill*, (London: Faber & Faber 1989a), 52.

²Lionel Lambourne, *Utopian Craftsmen: the Arts and Crafts Movement from the Cotswolds to Chicago* (London: Astragal Books, 1980): 124.

time 'it formed the most thoroughgoing expression of the radical beliefs of the Arts and Crafts Movement.'³

The Arts and Crafts Movement provided the contextual environment within which Ashbee could work out his ideals of social reform. He was less interested in the products of his Guildsmen than in the

standing of the craftsman . . . making room all the time for the precious Ruskinian freedom . . . For Ashbee more than for most Arts and Crafts men it was the workman's experience which set the standard, his sense of life outside workshop hours as well as at the bench.'⁴

A trained and practising architect, Ashbee had absorbed Ruskin principles while a student at Cambridge, in close friendship with Roger Fry (1866-1934) and Goldsworthy Lowes Dickinson (1862-1932). Fry's interest in art and the Arts and Crafts concern for the status of the decorative arts led to his founding of the Omega Workshops in 1913 as a showroom for professional artists and craftsmen.⁵ Both Fry and the historian, Lowes Dickinson, were associated with the writers and artists of the Bloomsbury Group and together with Ashbee had friendship with and admiration for Edward Carpenter (1844-1929).⁶ MacCarthy estimates that it was Carpenter, some years older than Ashbee, whose influence on him was the most significant.⁷ Edward Carpenter's

whole life presented an open revolt against this (Victorian) society; the two remedies he suggested were the commingling of "classes and masses" and the adoption of the natural modes of life still prevalent, as he thought, among the latter. In pursuit of these aims he hit upon the ideas of community, democracy and simplicity (which he threw) into the melting pot of his Socialism.⁸

³MacCarthy, *The Simple Life*: 90.

⁴Crawford, *By Hammer and Hand*: 12.

⁵Roger Fry was youngest brother of Joan Mary Fry, who was the Friends' House promoter of the Quaker relief work at Brynmawr in 1928.

⁶The Bloomsbury Group was 'a loosely knit association of writers, artists and critics which had an important influence on cultural and intellectual life in Britain during the early decades of the 20th century.' Members of the group included Clive and Vanessa Bell, Virginia Woolf and Roger Fry. *The Concise Oxford Dictionary of Art and Artists*, s.v. Bloomsbury Group.

⁷Fiona MacCarthy, *The Simple Life*: 17.

⁸Chushichi Tsuzuki, *Edward Carpenter 1844-1929. Prophet of Human Fellowship* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1980): 2.

Carpenter's socialism resembled that of Morris in the belief that turning toward the pastoral life, where living in tune with nature and reviving traditional rural crafts would bring 'a social rebirth, leading to a harmonious commonwealth.'⁹ He was 'a leading figure in the multitude of movements for reform which were getting under way in the early 1880s.'¹⁰ He put his ideas into practice with the purchase in 1883 of land at Millthorpe, near Sheffield, with similar purpose to Ruskin's in founding St George's Guild in 1875 (referred to in Chapter Two).

At Millthorpe Carpenter undertook manual farm work, lived simply, received and returned the visits of Ashbee, among many others, and discussed his ideas of comradeship 'now directly linked with his visions of a new society and Socialism.'¹¹ His political socialism brought him into association with William Morris in the Social Democratic Federation before Morris broke from it to form the Socialist League in 1884.¹² Carpenter was acquainted with the middle class radicals who joined him in the Fellowship of the New Life (introduced in Chapter Two) which proclaimed that a new way of living would bring the freedom of a society in which 'there would be no exploitation but much more a society where everyone could create and in which life was beautiful.'¹³

What Ashbee absorbed from these friendships strengthened the ideas that he had formed from his reading of Ruskin and which placed him 'so centrally in the Arts and

⁹G. R. Searle, *A New England? Peace and War 1886-1918* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 2004): 602.

¹⁰MacCarthy, *The Simple Life*: 18.

¹¹Tsuzuki, *Edward Carpenter* : 68.

¹²Rowbotham and Weeks, *Socialism and the New Life*: 42.

¹³Rowbotham and Weekes, *Socialism and the New Life*: 72.

The growth of socialism brought forward numerous groups with various approaches to the common object of working to remodel the social system. The means included pacificism, vegetarianism, self sufficiency and simple living (which was to take on the loose form of a Simple Life Movement, and related to the 'back to the landers' of the same period). These groups have been collated in detail by Chris Coates in *Utopia Britannica* (London: Diggers and Dreamers, 2001) and have much in common in principle with the Arts and Crafts Movement. Of these the Fellowship of the New Life survived from about 1883 to the early 1890s with membership including the founder, Edward Carpenter, Havelock Ellis and Edward R. Pease, a Quaker. As the Fellowship came to an end those members more politically active formed the Fabian Society with Edward Pease as Secretary and with George Bernard Shaw (1856-1950) and Sidney and Beatrice Webb (1859-1947, 1858-1943) among its members. The Fabians served as a passive intellectual adjunct to the developing Labour Party.

Crafts Movement.’¹⁴ While professionally engaged as an architect he took up residence at Toynbee Hall, the settlement in East London founded to bring rapprochement between the social classes, where he led groups of local working men in studying Ruskin.¹⁵ From these classes he developed a community of working men who met for reading and learning, a School for instruction in handicrafts and the Guild of Handicraft situated in Whitechapel. Guild members were those already skilled and experienced who worked alongside those who learned their craft in the Guild. They were designers of products too ‘as the ethos of the Arts and Crafts required.’¹⁶ Some had, moreover, absorbed the Arts and Crafts commitment to working in association to develop ‘a common Guild style.’¹⁷ Ashbee’s vision for a rustic community in which craftsmen could find joy and satisfaction in both work and fellowship materialised with the approaching end of his lease on the Whitechapel workshop and the need to find new premises.¹⁸

The choice of Chipping Campden as the location for a new base for the Guild was not made impulsively. Ashbee had ‘looked systematically at 30 far-flung districts’ before deciding that the town was suitable for several practical reasons, including easy availability of cheap cottages to rent.¹⁹ Some of his London Guild members visited the area, considered it and found it satisfactory, upon which the suggestion for a move was put to the vote of the rest. Some were unwilling to leave London, some were reluctant, but there were fifty Guildsmen’s families who made their homes at Chipping Campden in 1902.

¹⁴Alan Crawford, *C. R. Ashbee: Architect, Designer and Romantic Socialist* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1985): 19.

¹⁵Toynbee Hall, founded in 1884 in Whitechapel, London, was the first of the university settlements intended to bring the social classes together in fellowship and education. Toynbee Hall was the project of Canon Barnsley, husband of Henrietta Barnsley, who was responsible for promoting the development of Hampstead Garden Suburb, and with strong links with Arts and Crafts. Members of the Religious Society of Friends took leading roles in running Toynbee Hall.

¹⁶Crawford, *C. R. Ashbee*: 217.

¹⁷Crawford, *C. R. Ashbee*: 217.

¹⁸Lambourne, *Utopian Craftsmen*: 130.

¹⁹MacCarthy, *The Simple Life*: 31.

Emphasising the element of romance to the undertaking Lambourne described the ‘young apprentices on their bicycles . . . freewheeling down the Cotswold hills into the golden lanes’ as they transported themselves to their new homes.²⁰ Cottages and workshops were rented and the families settled into a lifestyle which MacCarthy describes as being of Simple Food, Simple Clothes and Simple Pleasures.²¹

The commercial work was undertaken in eight workshops, craft by craft and, as a community, the Guildsmen and their families pursued leisure activities of games, drama, music and swimming in the pool (built as part of Ashbee’s project), all of which they shared with the townspeople. ‘The life of the Guild, as it became established in its peaceful rural setting, formed the most thoroughgoing expression of the radical beliefs of the Arts and Crafts Movement.’²²

Ashbee’s work with his Guild of Handicraft at Chipping Campden was an idealistic episode of six years out of a long career. In Whitechapel the craftsmen in his handicraft school and Guild had produced a variety of craft products, including silver, metal and woodwork, and furniture, offered to the public for sale in a Gallery at the works, at Arts and Crafts Exhibition Society shows and at his shop in London’s West End. After Ashbee’s Chipping Campden years, which had ended with the voluntary liquidation of the Guild, descendants of the original families continued to conduct their crafts there. Ashbee maintained his architectural practice, travelled, lectured and wrote, and after World War I, held a government appointment in the Middle East for a few years.

Harvey and Press note that Ashbee ‘is often charged with naivety in his attempts to foster the spirit of the medieval guild system, and the Guild’s move to the Cotswolds . . .

²⁰Lambourne, *Utopian Craftsmen*: 130.

²¹MacCarthy, *The Simple Life*: 92-94.

²²MacCarthy, *The Simple Life*: 90.

away from its established clientele, is generally seen as a mistake . . . (but) his reputation, however, was considerable.²³

Although many craftsmen (and artists) of the period put forward (the) same theories and, to a greater or lesser extent, practised them, no one but Ashbee had attempted to develop the ideas of William Morris on so many fronts and in so ambitious a manner. No one else had the courage (and is it so surprising?) to push forward to its logical conclusion the idea that men are responsible for what they make and that workers should all, if possible, be artists; the idea that work and leisure should be almost interchangeable, and both should be enjoyed; the theory that everyone should do his share of manual labour, that workers should be thinking and that thinkers should be working; the idea that the best work is done in natural surroundings; the fundamental precept that good work will make good men.²⁴

MacCarthy sees the period of the Guild at Chipping Campden as

something unique in the life of England . . . It was an episode of unusual conviction, in its emphasis on aesthetic excellence and in its creation of a special kind of life-style, and in many ways it was a swan-song: such extraordinary optimism never came again.²⁵

Arthur Eric Rowton Gill

Eric Gill, also architect trained, had learned lettering from Edward Johnston at the Central School of Arts and Crafts, worked as calligrapher and letter cutter in stone and extended that to sculpture ‘a sphere into which the arts and crafts movement of William Morris and his followers had not only never extended, but had fought shy of and turned away from.’²⁶ He was a member of the Art Workers’ Guild, was elected to the Arts and Crafts Exhibition Society in 1905 and was based at first in Hammersmith, focal place of residence for many of the first generation of Arts and Craftsmen. MacCarthy has affirmed Gill’s affinity with Arts and Crafts. ‘For Gill to see himself as the heir to William Morris would have been quite natural. They had so much in common,’²⁷ though he was to become dismissive of the Arts and Crafts coterie as he worked in his self-made communities.

²³Charles Harvey and Jon Press, *William Morris: Design and Enterprise in Victorian Britain*. (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1991): 187.

²⁴MacCarthy, *The Simple Life*: 90.

²⁵MacCarthy, *The Simple Life*: 90.

²⁶Eric Gill, *Autobiography* (London: Jonathan Cape, 1940): 164.

²⁷MacCarthy, *Eric Gill*: 71.

Married in 1904, and with a growing family, he became ‘deeply implicated with (the Arts and Crafts Movement) and its dream to achieve the simple life. In his Arts and Crafts days he had learned ‘respect for spareness, purity, blatant honesty of structure,’ but ‘he had begun to get impatient with the theory of it,’ seeing ‘as indeed, Morris and Ashbee had done earlier that it was economically impossible for craftsmen to sell except to dilettante markets.’²⁸

Gill’s autobiographical words explain his affinity with Arts and Crafts.²⁹ In his early years, while working in an architects office

I became an agnostic and in a vague unattached way a socialist . . . and of course I read Ruskin . . . and Morris . . . my socialism was from the beginning a revolt against the intellectual degradation of the factory hands and the damned ugliness of all that capitalist-industrialism produced, and it was not primarily a revolt against the cruelty and injustice of the possessing classes or against the misery of the poor. It was not so much the working *class* that concerned me as the working *man* – not so much what he got *from* working as what he did *by* working.³⁰

He wrote of his work as a letter cutter. ‘I was making a little revolution. I was reuniting what should never have been separated: the artist as a man of imagination and the artist as workman.’³¹ He described his disdain for the art world:

I did not believe in Art or the art world. But of course I believed very much in the arts – with a small a and an s – whether it be the art of cooking or that of painting portraits of church pictures. But that’s a very different matter and puts the ‘artist’ under the obligation of knowing *what* he is making and *why*. It ranks him with the world of workmen doing useful jobs.³²

It was his integrity that caused him to criticise the Arts and Crafts Movement openly. ‘I didn’t escape from the Arts and Crafts Movement – of course I could not. But the time came when I had to crab it all the same.’³³ The criticisms, ‘two snags, and horrid

²⁸MacCarthy, *Eric Gill*: 60 and 93.

²⁹Gill’s reading of Carlyle, Ruskin and Morris is discussed by Malcolm Yorke, *Eric Gill. Man of Flesh and Spirit*, (London: Constable, 1981):60-65.

³⁰Gill, *Autobiography*: 111.

³¹Gill, *Autobiography*: 162.

³²Gill, *Autobiography*: 173.

³³Gill, *Autobiography*: 268.

and barefaced snags they were,³⁴ were that craftsman-made things were expensive, and could only be sold to the richer classes with the consequence that mass producers anticipated making their own sales by reproducing the designs presented at the Arts and Crafts Exhibition Society shows. In this respect the Arts and Crafts Movement was a failure and while ‘a select number of excellent craftsmen (were) making their so many hundreds per annum’ it had failed to raise the standards and conditions of the ordinary workman:

The only conditions necessary to enable the craftsman to do good work are security and a reasonable livelihood. Given them he will do good work because he wants to . . . Good workmanship and sound construction are the very foundations of Art – the first necessities. In fact, it may be said that Art, in the simple sense in which craftsmen understand it, is nothing more nor less than the exuberance, the overflowing of good workmanship.³⁵

Like Ashbee, Gill was drawn to the country. In 1907 he made a family home in his native Sussex, and soon after ‘I was able to shift the whole show, faithful apprentice and all, to Ditchling.’³⁶ There was no aim for creating a craft community but it was a ‘comprehensive effort to revive and live by pre-industrial values.’³⁷ The move was ‘a statement of intent, a gesture of defiance against the town-centred industrial system and mass production.’³⁸ He left Hammersmith having ‘made a mass of contacts. He knew almost everyone of interest and influence in the London art world and the radical-political coteries,’ and settled for twenty years into ‘that English arts and crafts world (of) Ditchling.’³⁹

Gill’s widening community at Ditchling began to take shape during World War I. He had converted to the Roman Catholic church, and with friends and associates, formed

³⁴Gill, *Autobiography*: 269.

³⁵Eric Gill, ‘The Failure of the Art and Craft Movement’, *The Socialist Review*, December 1909: 297 and 300.

³⁶Gill, *Autobiography*: 134.

³⁷MacCarthy, *Eric Gill*: 140.

³⁸MacCarthy, *Eric Gill*: 85.

³⁹MacCarthy, *Eric Gill*: 78 and 84.

the Guild of St Joseph and St Dominic, a guild of Christian and Roman Catholic craftsmen, 'who should be united not merely by a common desire to further the interests of their work but by the common acceptance of a rule or way of life.'⁴⁰ But the Guild community became a matter of common interest locally and when Gill felt obliged to leave Ditchling⁴¹ in 1924, it was because the privacy and reserve intended had become public and it was

unbearable . . . horrible . . . What we had thought of as a rather secret enterprise, and essentially a company of craftsmen living by their work and earning such reputation as they had by the quality of their goods, our clerical friends thought of as a public spectacle of Christian family life. Those who could bear it remained; ours and two other families fled to Wales.⁴²

Gill's move to the Black Mountains of South Wales, was unconnected with, but sited coincidentally close to Brynmawr, a place from which the 'young men had gone to the mines and were wandering unemployed in the Rhondda.'⁴³ Benedictine acquaintances had offered Gill the lease of a disused monastery at Capel-y-ffin, which, after inspection, he considered would be a 'weirdly exciting business . . . (and) . . . whatever the rest of the brethren might think, I was certain that this admirable fastness would make an admirable home for us.'⁴⁴ And so it did until, as the other families moved on, he left Wales and created another working community at Piggotts in Buckinghamshire. MacCarthy has summarised his ethos. 'In his attempt to relate art, sex and religion Gill went further than any philosopher of workmanship, Morris included, had ever been before.'⁴⁵ Throughout he had wanted to 'make a cell of good living in the chaos of our world' and, as he wrote a few months before his death, his hopes were 'that I have done something towards re-integrating

⁴⁰Gill, *Autobiography*: 210.

⁴¹Harrod suggests that Gill's Guild of St Joseph and St Dominic, which survived after Gill's departure from Sussex until 1989, was 'arguably the most successful craft community since Ashbee's Guild of Handicraft.' Tanya Harrod, *The Crafts in Britain in the Twentieth Century* (New Haven: Yale University Press 1999): 157.

⁴²Gill, *Autobiography*: 210.

⁴³Gill, *Autobiography*: 229.

⁴⁴Gill, *Autobiography*: 217.

⁴⁵Fiona MacCarthy, 'The Inheritance of Diffidence: Crafts in Britain Between the Wars,' in *Craft History One Celebrating the Centenary of the Arts and Crafts Exhibition Society* (Bath: Combined Arts, 1989b): 38.

bed and board, the small farm and the workshop, the home and the school, earth and heaven.⁴⁶

The form of the concept of community differed in Ashbee's Chipping Campden, Gill's Sussex, Wales and Buckinghamshire and Scott's Brynmawr. The Guild at Chipping Campden was entirely open to the town, with the guildsmen and their families spread apart in rented homes and workshops, business conducted in their shops in the main thoroughfares and their social and leisure activities shared with all. For Ashbee, 'his community became an exemplar of Carpenter's ideal of 'the simple life.'⁴⁷ The Gill communities were not absorbed into local life, and their work and business was conducted within the close community of family and colleagues where leisure time was shared within it, and the 'simple living' principles were practised. Scott's intention was broader. For him, the theory intended for a community came from the base aim of renewing a derelict town for the benefit of the indigent populace, and, in so far as this was achieved, it was through the work of the Community Council. His domestic community of Quakers remained that of a group bound by their membership of their Friends' Meeting within which they practised the simplicity of their Quaker testimony.

While both Ashbee and Gill found support in their communities, with Ashbee the more 'dependent on the people he felt were his own people,'⁴⁸ there is no sign that Scott felt other than entirely self-dependent. While he was prepared to acclimatise with the local populace, it was not his intention as Gill's, to self-develop a community, but because he saw Brynmawr to be the place to impose one and create a new way of life for its people. There was for each of the groups, however, an 'overflow of workshop into family relationships, which is such a fascinating and infinitely subtle side issue of the history of

⁴⁶Gill, *Autobiography*: 282.

⁴⁷Cumming and Kaplan, *The Arts and Crafts Movement*: 28.

⁴⁸MacCarthy, *Eric Gill*: 165.

Arts and Crafts in Britain.’⁴⁹ There was less of personal inter-relations at Brynmawr when An Order took responsibility for the enterprises and removed its headquarters to Hereford, though at least in its first few years the Quaker volunteers lived as family at 31 Alma Terrace. What was more comparable was the fellowship of the few families who were bound within An Order until they lost that closeness after the ‘crossroads’ of 1936, and Scott’s leadership was in doubt.⁵⁰

The dissolution of the Arts and Crafts Movement

For the thesis to move forward to being able to place the Quaker work at Brynmawr within an Arts and Crafts setting the next step is to examine its Arts and Crafts context.

The turning of the nineteenth to the twentieth century was also a turning point for the Arts and Crafts Movement. The first Arts and Crafts generation was fading away with the death of William Morris in 1896 and of John Ruskin in 1900. Kenton & Co had dispersed in 1892 as the members followed different courses. Of the second generation Ashbee, Gill and the Cotswold Furniture makers carried forward the Arts and Crafts principles while the Arts and Crafts Movement moved into decline and dissipation. Both Ashbee and Gill were aware of change. It was faltering in the pre-war years with Gill stating baldly in 1909 that it was discredited. ‘Far from even beginning to solve the problems it set out to solve [it] has merely aggravated the situation by putting the world on a false track.’⁵¹ It continued to wane with Ashbee remarking a few years after leaving Chipping Campden ‘We have made of a great social movement a narrow and tiresome little aristocracy working with great skill for the very rich,’⁵² to which MacCarthy has added her comment that he was ‘yearning back towards some sense of lost purity.’

⁴⁹MacCarthy, *Eric Gill*: 119.

⁵⁰This has been referred to briefly previously. The source falls within the documents that have been requested to be treated with care. Judgment of the importance of the matter for the thesis was difficult, but the decision to respect the request for care was made objectively on the balance of the evidence.

⁵¹Eric Gill, ‘The Failure of the Arts and Crafts Movement’: 290.

⁵²MacCarthy, *The Inheritance of Diffidence*: 35, quoting from Ashbee’s unpublished Journal of early June, 1915 King’s College Library, Cambridge.

Some years later he recorded 'The old buoyancy is broken,' with the examples of the death of Ernest Gimson, the closing of Roger Fry's Omega workshops and the end of 'the Private Presses.'⁵³

There is consensus of opinion that the Arts and Crafts Movement came to an end with World War I, having 'failed to attain its ambitious but contradictory goals.'⁵⁴

The battle for parity with the arts . . . had been won . . . but the victory had proved a hollow one . . . the more far-sighted members of the (Arts and Crafts Movement) realized that in the post-war years . . . their problems would be very different ones . . . the nettle of collaboration with industry would have to be firmly grasped.⁵⁵

The 1912 Arts and Crafts Exhibition had been a financial failure. Tanya Harrod notes that 'by 1913 there was the grim possibility of no funds for future shows.'⁵⁶

MacCarthy attributes this lack of success to changes in taste which she dates from the turn of the century, as preference for Ambrose Heal's furniture, priced within the means of the residents of the new garden suburbs of Letchworth and Hampstead, for example, took its place. Moreover, she said, 'with a proliferation of Arts and Crafts style products, the individuality was gone, the idea meaningless. The Arts and Crafts had lost their purity and mystery. The Arts and Crafts had, in fact, become a bit banal.'⁵⁷

When Eric Gill wrote of the discrediting of the Arts and Crafts Movement (see above) he accounted for it as being the result of the approval the movement had received which had reduced it to being 'a fashion for the "artistic"' and which was being exploited

⁵³MacCarthy, *The Inheritance of Diffidence*: 35, quoting from Ashbee's unpublished Journals of June, 1921, King's College Library, Cambridge.

⁵⁴Cumming and Kaplan, *The Arts and Crafts Movement*: 207.

⁵⁵Lionel Lambourne, *Utopian Craftsmen*: 202.

⁵⁶Harrod, *Crafts in Britain*: 22.

⁵⁷Fiona MacCarthy, *British Design since 1880*: 84.

It is necessary to be aware that the diversity of style regarded as becoming banal does not include all Arts and Crafts furniture because the work of the Cotswold furniture makers and of Ambrose Heal and Gordon Russell, all Arts and Crafts makers, were flourishing in the more up-market field (see below).

by firms like Liberty and Waring and Gillow who were only too eager to profit from reproductions of Arts and Crafts style.⁵⁸

Harrod places some responsibility for the weakening of the Arts and Crafts Exhibition Society, and the Arts and Crafts Movement ('which were in any case soon to be snuffed out by World War I'), on the membership, which was reluctant to adopt innovative ideas for keeping the movement alive.⁵⁹ Cumming and Kaplan see this reluctance as being embedded in the movement's inability to resolve the apposition of the conservative and the progressive, the craft culture and commerce, and the cost of the essential of quality which kept the products accessible only to the well-off.⁶⁰

Ashbee's Guild was 'an attempt to enrich the lives of working men through the values of art in the broadest sense' and 'as a vehicle of social reform (it expressed) . . . an anxiety to divert energies which would otherwise take the form of political action and class hostility.'⁶¹ For Gill the Movement's 'object was to raise the conditions of ordinary workers . . . and it has not even begun to do it.' What was beginning to do it was the growth of

a gigantic working class movement called Trade Unionism . . . the modern union has so far been forced to confine its energies to a demand for the just price and all that that entails . . . That gained, they can then demand, not merely the right to work, but the right to good work.'⁶²

⁵⁸Gill, "The Failure of the Arts and Crafts Movement": 290 and 297.

⁵⁹Harrod, *The Crafts in Britain*: 22.

The suggestion for opening a shop and introducing a classification of associate membership had not been accepted by the majority of the membership and 'This decision to reject a commercial role has rightly been seen as a turning point in the Society's fortunes.'

The Arts and Crafts Exhibition Society continued to function as a show case and a discussion forum and took a more positive approach to membership matters in the 1930s. Internal discussion had revealed some concern for the status quo, as a society specifically for handicraftsmen with others advancing the possibility that designers for machine production might qualify as members. Ideas for the future of the Society continued to be put through the 1940s, and although a dissolution clause was added to the constitution in 1973 it has not been invoked and the Society remains in existence. Meg Sweet, 'From Combined Arts to Designer Craftsman,' *Craft History One* (London: Combined Arts, 1988): 14-19.

⁶⁰Cumming and Kaplan, *The Arts and Crafts Movement*: 206-7.

⁶¹Alan Crawford, *C. R. Ashbee*, 1985: 421-22.

⁶²Gill, *Autobiography*: 297 and 299.

When Tillyard described the demise of the Arts and Crafts Movement as ‘a collapse’ it was because there were other means by which its purpose of social reform could be achieved. With the growth of political Labour from 1893 there was a change of direction for reformers.⁶³ They were now more realistic, as it seemed possible for them to achieve reforms that would result in a better world, rather than pursuing ideas for creating society anew. The effect was a separation between politics and handicrafts so that ‘the objects that craftsmen produced were seen less and less as embodiments of moral values.’⁶⁴

This separation lay behind the dissolution of the Arts and Crafts Movement which ‘could not and did not long survive the radical changes that took place in society as a result of the upheaval caused by the Great War.’⁶⁵

There is a glimpse of continuing activity recognised by Crawford so that he was able to say that the understanding that the Arts and Crafts Movement ended with the War was a half-truth ‘as a good number of workshops carried on,’⁶⁶ and worked with the ideals of truth to materials, simple tools and spontaneity.⁶⁷ Crawford has, however, made the distinction between the Movement and the Arts and Crafts principles by adding that ‘there were new workshops as well . . . (but these) were not pulpits, places for preaching about society; they were more simply workshops.’⁶⁸

The inter-war crafts scene prospered in the studio workshops in which the practitioner pursued his or her one craft. This new generation of workshops was of ‘the most distinguished craftsmen and women of the time . . . (which included) Bernard Leach, Michael Cardew, Katherine Pleydell-Bouverie, Phyllis Barron, Dorothy Larcher and Ethel

⁶³The Independent Labour Party was formed in 1893, affiliated with other groups in forming the Labour Representation Committee in 1900 which was renamed the Labour Party in 1906.

⁶⁴Tillyard, *The Impact of Modernism*: 38.

⁶⁵Crawford, *By Hammer and Hand*: 83

⁶⁶Crawford, *By Hammer and Hand*: 23.

⁶⁷Harrod, *The Crafts in Britain*: 152.

⁶⁸Crawford, *By Hammer and Hand*: 23.

Mairet.’ The link that brought these craftworkers together was the craft shops of, for example, Muriel Rose, the founder of The Little Gallery, and Philip Mairet’s New Handworkers’ Gallery, connecting craftsmen and women with a focus for comparison and discussion. Beside notable craftworkers such as these was a plethora of individual workshops carrying great emphasis on hands-on activity, but ‘an ambivalent attitude to skill. Spontaneity and vitality were more highly valued than technique.’⁶⁹ For many there was a dilettante dabbling, for others a conscious intention of earning through their production, but it was the preference for using the hands that distinguished the craft studios from those working with industry.

Any continuation of the Arts and Crafts Movement lay, for MacCarthy, in its metamorphosis into ‘a kind of crusade to improve the standards of design for mass production, led by the Design and Industry Association (DIA).’⁷⁰ For Harrod, similarly, there was a transposition to the DIA, whose ‘craft practice was increasingly eclipsed by the emerging design profession and by avant-gardism in fine art.’⁷¹

The nettle of industry (as quoted above) was grasped in 1915 ‘by the disaffected members of the Arts and Crafts Exhibition Society whose demands for a commercial arm for the Society had been rejected in 1913.’⁷² Their motive was to find commercial success for the crafts, which they saw to be dependent on a newly developed relationship between the designer and industry, on the Deutsche Werkbund mode (below).⁷³ MacCarthy comments that one effect of the founding of the DIA was to leave ‘the official craft world in baffled disarray’ as its leaders, especially Lethaby,⁷⁴ transferred their loyalties.

⁶⁹Harrod, *The Crafts in Britain*: 148.

⁷⁰MacCarthy, *British Design*: 85.

⁷¹Harrod, *The Crafts in Britain*: 28.

⁷²Harrod, *The Crafts in Britain*: 25.

⁷³Harrod, *The Crafts in Britain*: 25.

⁷⁴W. R. Lethaby (1857-1931) a founder member of both the Art Workers Guild and the Arts and Crafts Exhibition Society and Principal of the Central School of Arts and Crafts. was a close follower of Morris.

The DIA is summarised by Michael Saler as ‘an alliance of artists, industrialists, and educators dedicated to creating mass-produced objects that were simple, beautiful and affordable.’⁷⁵ Its forerunner, the Wiener Werkstatte, was set up in 1903 by Josef Hoffman and Kolo Mauser who had looked at Arts and Crafts in Britain. They had ‘particularly admired the Guild of Handicraft’ and the Wiener Werkstatte was ‘modelled on Ashbee’s enterprise.’ It was ‘half-Arts and Crafts, half commercial workshops.’ Those Arts and Crafts men who contributed to the formation of the DIA, for example Lethaby, Peach and Heal, ‘did not see this as a defection (from the Arts and Crafts Movement) . . . But there was a real change of belief.’⁷⁶ There was no longer a place for Ruskinian ideals for society and the self-fulfilment of the workman within it. The DIA ‘accepted the existing social organisation of British industry, with its hierarchy of designer and workman and concentrated its attention on the products’ with a view to commercial success.⁷⁷

Peter Scott, Arts and Crafts visionary

An outline of the significance of John Ruskin and William Morris for Arts and Crafts was given in Chapter Two. Blakesley gives a synopsis of John Ruskin’s writing which was most influential on William Morris and their Arts and Crafts followers.⁷⁸ Particularly important was Ruskin’s chapter, ‘The Nature of Gothic’ in *The Stones of Venice* for his antipathy to the development of an industrial system which caused him to look back to the Middle Ages for a more beneficial society. He claimed that era to have been a time when ‘the social structures . . . allowed the workman freedom of individual expression,’ a freedom that was stifled in the Victorian factory system that ‘dehumanised’ him, making of him no more than a tool, bored with the monotony, and with leisure time

⁷⁵Michael T.Saler, *The Avant-garde in Inter-war England* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1999): 63.

⁷⁶They may not have regarded it as defection themselves, but it appeared to be so to others. MacCarthy in *Craft History One* 1988: 35

⁷⁷Alan Crawford, ed., *By Hammer and Hand*: 23.

⁷⁸Blakesley, *The Arts and Crafts Movement*: 22.

that was detached from his employment. 'In that disconnection social neurosis lies.'⁷⁹

Equally concerning was the disconnection between the designer and the worker and

MacCarthy quotes from *The Stones of Venice*:

We are always in these days endeavouring to separate the two; we want one man to be always thinking, and another to be always working, and we call one a gentleman, and the other an operative; whereas the workman ought often to be thinking, and the thinker often to be working, and both should be gentlemen in the best sense.⁸⁰

She continues by referring to Morris 'having always insisted that Ruskin came at the right time . . . (in turning him) towards a perception of the damage to society this implied.'

At times Ruskin's discourses on 'organic' architecture (being a living organism), nature related to art and ornament, the essential of handwork as the 'barometer of a work's success,' the well-being of the worker so that the consequence would be good work, are 'so convoluting and meandering that (they) become(s) unintelligible, but he never lost sight of the need to integrate the *entire* human personality into the production of art.'⁸¹

With William Morris comes the expression of the import of fellowship and community life as the background for 'the most serious of subjects that a man can think of: "for 'tis no less than the chances of a calm, dignified, and therefore happy life for the mass of mankind.'⁸²

At home at the Red House, Morris's life as a young married man was always shared with friends for whom he played the 'reincarnation of the medieval host.'⁸³ At Kelmscott his love of the country, the neighbouring villages where medieval churches had been 'built . . . by the people, for the people,'⁸⁴ was to begin to bring out 'one of his most influential concepts, the ideal of the network of small ruralist communities . . . Here are the

⁷⁹MacCarthy, *William Morris*: 70.

⁸⁰John Ruskin, *The Stones of Venice* vol 12, 1853.

⁸¹Blakesley, *The Arts and Crafts Movement*: 25.

⁸²MacCarthy, *William Morris*: 419.

⁸³MacCarthy, *William Morris*: 157 and 162.

⁸⁴MacCarthy, *William Morris*: 314.

origins of garden cities.⁸⁵ Later the ‘concept of the ideal life in small communities, hazy when he first explained it in the early 1870s . . . clarified itself, becoming simultaneously more generous and perilous . . . much more far reaching in its implications.’⁸⁶ The communities would have individual character, limited only by ‘due social ethics and families will “melt” into the wider family of the community and of humanity.’⁸⁷ In the fellowship of these communities people would take pleasure in their work, and work would be something to look forward to rather than avoided,⁸⁸ for “fellowship is life and lack of fellowship is death.”⁸⁹ Morris had experienced the working of the fellowship ideal, ‘the working band of brothers’ of the Pre-Raphaelite Brotherhood, and carried it into Morris, Marshall, Faulkner & Co, and thence extended . . . into a more generalized vision of workshops and idyllic small-scale support systems on the lines of the medieval guilds.’⁹⁰

The Arts and Crafts men who were enthused by these ideas carried them into effect with the Century Guild, the Art Workers’ Guild and their Exhibition Society, introduced in Chapter Two, but it was Ashbee who ‘acted out most literally Morris’s scenario for the small community regenerated through the crafts.’⁹¹ and who ‘probably followed Ruskinian prescriptions more closely than any of his contemporaries, Morris included.’⁹²

Much of Peter Scott’s philosophy resembled Ruskin’s. His concern was for the generation of a society based on his conviction that there is the immanence of an absolute value in each human being, and for him ‘the sole motive force strong enough to achieve

⁸⁵MacCarthy, *William Morris*: 315.

⁸⁶MacCarthy, *William Morris*: 546.

⁸⁷MacCarthy, *William Morris*: 546.

⁸⁸MacCarthy, *William Morris*: 163.

⁸⁹Fiona MacCarthy quotes Morris’s *Dream of John Bull*, in *William Morris*: 549.

⁹⁰MacCarthy, *William Morris*: 590-591.

⁹¹MacCarthy, *William Morris*: 593.

⁹²Harvey and Press, *William Morris*: 187.

this was the creative life.’⁹³ Scott’s philosophy of ‘the creative life’ is reiterated here to conclude the chain of concern for the dignity of man which runs from Ruskin to the Friends at Brynmawr and which is a fundamental tenet of Quakerism. Ruskin’s insistence on activating man’s ‘thoughtful part’ is reflected in Scott’s concern for the rehabilitation of unemployed men which was directed to their well being within a creative society. Further reference from the Experiment to Ruskin is found in Ruskin’s ideal that education in craft would allow the householder and his sons themselves to find ‘pride and pleasure’ and ‘furtherance of their general health and peace of mind’ if they were to make some furniture for the home, and do also ‘a good deal of rough work, more or less clumsily, but not ineffectively.’⁹⁴

Scott’s vision was constant throughout his work with the Brynmawr Experiment from the conviction that the complete Life could be lived in a community ‘which would allow free scope for the creative spirit,’ (see Chapter Four), which he attempted to establish with the Experiment, to his admission that repairing the ‘crumbling structure of our civilisation’ would be slow, the aim was ultimately ‘the shaping of lives.’⁹⁵ The cumbersome style of *Creative Life* changed for a few pages in the 1937 *Annual Report*. The purpose was as serious, but he wrote with flashes of dreamlike images redolent of Morris’s *News from Nowhere*.⁹⁶

Fiona MacCarthy describes Morris’s *Nowhere*:

It is a place of communistic freedom, where men, women and children are equal, beautiful and healthy; money and prisons, formal education and central government have been abolished; the countryside has been reclaimed from industrial squalor and pollution.⁹⁷

⁹³Peter Scott, ‘Community Building: The Brynmawr Experiment’, (The Friend 13 December 1931):.

⁹⁴Simon Jervis, ‘Ruskin and Furniture,’ *Furniture History Journal* vol ix 1973.

⁹⁵*Annual Report* 1937: 33 and 35.

⁹⁶William Morris, *News from Nowhere; or, An Epoch of Rest* (London: Reeves and Turner 1891): 37.

⁹⁷MacCarthy, *William Morris*: 585.

Scott, having described aspects of his new community in which rebuilt derelict communities were restored, new villages built nearby, milk and vegetables from the villages exchanged for coal, timber and industrial products from the towns, where all would enjoy fresh air and health services, continued

Father will be free to take the family around the factory or farm, and neither uniformed commissionaire nor Farmer Giles with stick in hand, irascible, shall say them nay . . . “None of these things should be impossible,” I thought, as I walked from the valley up among the tips that fringed the brow of the hill. And in the evening sunlight I turned to look back upon that which was below me. I saw the long grey houses and the narrow streets, and I knew that now they could be built again . . . (and I saw) in the fields and on the hills around the older men were working leisurely . . . grass grew greener, sheep fatter, forest trees gave shelter from the winds, the scars of a past and thoughtless age were healed . . . and presently night fell and I knew that what I had seen was no more than a dream. But why should not the younger men and women produce (such as this) under changed conditions ?’⁹⁸

The report then reverted to the business like summary of the progress of the previous year.

The following year’s *Annual Report* which anticipated the closing of An Order continued to express the vision that had inspired the Experiment. While Scott stated that it was too soon to evaluate the achievements he emphasised ‘three things which have become steadily more clear during the ten years that the work has been going on.’ These are, in summary, community life ‘vital only in so far as it leads in the direction of harmony for all between the physical conditions of their life, the work by which they earn their living and their family, social and spiritual life,’ the necessity for the urge for finding this harmony to come from ‘within the living community’ and the necessity ‘to learn the lesson of waiting in patience for the new things to come.’⁹⁹

Peter Scott’s vision was entirely for a better world to be achieved by practical and pragmatic methods, and nowhere in his writing does he indicate an interest in nor comprehension of the theoretical shifts in the art world. Yet the outcome of his ideals which so closely resembled those of Ruskin and Morris, and the putting of Quaker

⁹⁸*Annual Report* 1937: 34.

⁹⁹*Annual Report* 1938: 33.

testimonies into action at Brynmawr made the Brynmawr Experiment an additional ingredient of the complexity of the Arts and Crafts Movement.

CHAPTER SIX

TWENTIETH CENTURY ARTS AND CRAFTS FURNITURE MAKERS

Having traced the shared principles of Arts and Crafts and the Religious Society of Friends in their care for social justice and the dignity of the working man and having shown them effected through the work of Peter Scott at Brynmawr, it remains to complete the theme by showing the affinity of the Brynmawr Furniture with Arts and Crafts by the respect for truth to materials, honesty in construction and fitness for purpose that guided its making. Frederick Tolles advised that ‘if one wishes to study the Quaker esthetic at the point where its integral relationship to Quaker life and thought is most clearly revealed . . . one will focus one’s attention on the minor arts,’¹ and of these Crawford said ‘at its height there were few kinds of Arts and Crafts work more important than the making of furniture.’² This chapter focuses on furniture making only, and especially that of Quaker furniture making in the first half of the twentieth century, to which Brynmawr Furniture Makers contributed. It shows how Quaker integrity was embodied in their craft. Some of the men introduced are already names with Arts and Crafts association, others are less well known and some unknown to the Arts and Crafts literature.

The furniture of the nineteenth century Arts and Crafts Movement was as varied in design as were all the Movement’s craft products of which ‘The visual style stretched from the extremely plain and simple, the box-like construction of the pseudo-peasant furniture . . . to the highly ornate, associative and symbolic Arts and Crafts artefacts, especially the metalwork.’³ Items were validated as ‘Arts and Crafts’ by being the products of those individuals who were stimulated by the ideals of John Ruskin and William Morris and those who followed as the first generation members of the Arts and Crafts Movement, referred to in Chapter Two.

¹Frederick B. Tolles, ‘“Of the Best Sort but Plain”: the Quaker Esthetic’. *American Quarterly* vol.x, no. 4 winter, (1959): 494.

²Crawford, *C. R. Ashbee*: 136.

³Fiona MacCarthy, *British Design since 1880*: 65.

However, Alan Crawford has found that within the diverse range of Arts and Crafts work the furniture was particularly symbolic of the essence of the Movement:

When the Movement was at its height around 1900 there were few kinds of Arts and Crafts work more important than the making of furniture. It seemed to express the mood and ideals of the Movement so tellingly. Impressive, solid and often austere, the tables and chairs, cabinets and mighty settles were a deliberate rebuke to the middle-class drawing rooms of late Victorian England . . . the frank construction and simply treated surfaces of Arts and Crafts furniture spoke of a preoccupation with honesty and natural materials . . . Set in the context of an Arts and Crafts interior, it carried hints, not just of new ways in art, but of a new way of living.⁴

Of the two who inspired the Movement, John Ruskin showed little interest in furniture and furnishing although, in the words of Simon Jervis, he ‘had a general or indirect influence on most developments in the decorative arts, at home and abroad, from the 1860s onwards.’⁵ Jervis continued with the conclusion that what he (Jervis) had ‘attempted to show [in his article ‘Ruskin and Furniture’] is that, if the focus is narrowed to one small area of the minor arts, furniture, there is little specific to be found in the way of teachings, or influence and that Ruskin was personally indifferent.’ Nor was he, with one or two exceptions, a designer. Jervis has, however, drawn attention to Ruskin’s practical bent in this respect. He ‘was proud of his contrivances in his library for economy of room and facility of reference, and the cabinets with drawings in sliding frames . . . are extremely ingenious and functional’.⁶

William Morris was responsible for some furniture design, guided by his opinion that ‘there was more to furniture than function’, a view which ‘dominated the furniture workshops of the Arts and Crafts movements from the 1880s onwards.’⁷ However, the furniture sold by Morris, Marshall, Faulkner & Co (1861-1875, and known as The Firm), was mostly designed by Philip Webb and the commonly most recognisable ‘Morris’ style

⁴Alan Crawford, *C. R. Ashbee*: 279.

⁵Simon Jervis, ‘Ruskin and Furniture’, *Furniture History Journal* ix 1973: 107.

⁶Jervis, ‘Ruskin and Furniture’: 100.

⁷Fiona MacCarthy, *William Morris: a Life for Our Time* (London: Faber and Faber 1994): 122.

is the rush seated Sussex chair, designed by Dante Gabriel Rossetti (1828-82) for Morris and Co.(1874-1940), the original Firm re-formed.⁸

A common factor is that the furniture of this period was for the most part, designed by architects, most of whom knew each other personally, having taken articles with senior professionals, or in association in the Arts and Crafts Exhibition Society. They shared an interest in unifying the work of artists with that of craftsmen and several undertook the designs for furniture for the houses they devised.⁹

The discussion in the previous chapter showed how, from the peak of Arts and Crafts activity at the turn of the century, there was divergence as the Arts and Crafts Exhibition Society continued its function as a showcase, the German Deutche Werkbund showed the way forward for designers to adapt to the needs of mass production, commerce, and industry. This led to the formation of the Design and Industry Association and thence to the ‘restructured . . . relationship between craft and industry.’¹⁰

Ashbee himself, the epitome of Arts and Crafts, had recognised that some of the work shown in the 1916 Arts and Crafts Exhibition Society show indicated stagnation and there was a need for stimulus.¹¹ The craft work practice became concentrated in the individuality of studio crafts, but ‘inter-war developments in handcraft ceramics or textiles were not paralleled in craft furniture.’ The work of the Cotswold furniture makers, Ernest Gimson, and Ernest and Sidney Barnsley shows how ‘in furniture the Arts and Crafts legacy was extended rather than disrupted.’¹² The thesis presents the Brynmawr Furniture as a further extension.

⁸Cumming and Kaplan, *The Arts and Crafts Movement*: 17.

⁹Most notable are A. H. Mackmurdo (1851-1942), founder of the Century Guild in 1882 and a friend of Ruskin, M. H. Baillie Scott (1865-1945), associate and friend of Charles Rennie Mackintosh (1868-1928), and C. A. Voysey (1857-1941), who designed a home for his friend the Quaker Arthur Simpson (1857-1922), himself a furniture craftsman.

¹⁰Cumming and Kaplan, *The Arts and Crafts Movement*: 98.

¹¹Tanya Harrod, *The Crafts in Britain in the Twentieth Century*: 25.

¹²Harrod, *The Crafts in Britain in the Twentieth Century*: 55.

The Cotswold furniture makers

Comino confirms the Arts and Crafts-ness of the Cotswold furniture makers.

‘Throughout their careers Gimson and the Barnsleys remained faithful to the principles of the Arts and Crafts Movement,’ with ‘the concern for quality . . . together with a novel approach to design based on clean lines and unadorned surfaces.’¹³ She also sees their ‘desire to revitalise traditional handicrafts and rural communities echoed in much of the current [1980] self-sufficiency philosophy of both craftsmen and environmentalists.’¹⁴

Crawford reiterates this with his observation that Gimson and Ernest Barnsley ‘seemed to typify so much of the spirit of the Movement, mixing the traditions of urban cabinet-making and country carpentry, taking the grain woods and the necessities of construction, and making out of them a new and sophisticated style of furniture for a refined and country-loving upper middle class.’¹⁵

Ernest Gimson’s training as an architect was with J.D.Sedding (1838-91) to whom he was introduced by William Morris, a friend of each. There he met Ernest Barnsley and his brother Sidney, who was training in architecture under Norman Shaw and associated with Alfred Powell and W. R. Lethaby. Gimson, Sidney Barnsley and others formed the firm of Kenton & Co in 1890, reflecting the intention of Morris & Co of 1875, to sell ‘furniture of our own design’ among other decorative items. Mary Comino has assessed the significance of Kenton and Co mostly

in relation to the subsequent careers of Gimson and Sidney Barnsley and, to a lesser extent, that of W. R. Lethaby, for Kenton and Company provided them with an opportunity to design furniture and to contemplate a future beyond the London-based architectural profession.¹⁶

¹³Mary Comino, *Gimson and the Barnsleys: “Wonderful Furniture of a Commonplace Kind”* (London: Evans, 1980): 8.

¹⁴Comino, *Gimson and the Barnsleys*: 8-9.

¹⁵Crawford, *C. R. Ashbee*: 279.

¹⁶Mary Comino, *Gimson and the Barnsleys*: 50.

Although Kenton and Co lasted for a short time only, it gave the experience that encouraged Gimson and the Barnsleys to set up workshops in the Cotswolds, firstly at Sapperton and then at Daneway House with the patronage of Lord Bathurst. The work and the relationship of the three developed, with Gimson and Ernest Barnsley in partnership, to be joined by Peter van der Waals as foreman, and with Sidney working separately and independently.¹⁷

The practical involvement of Gimson and the two Barnsleys in the workshops varied, but 'life in Sapperton before the First World War came very close to the ideals expounded by Morris and his circle.'¹⁸ In a tribute to Peter Waals in the catalogue of an Ernest Gimson exhibition at the Leicester Museums in 1969 Sir George Trevelyan, who was a pupil of Waals in the years 1929-1931, wrote about the Cotswold workshops and his observations show their Arts and Crafts bond.¹⁹ He described how a high standard of workmanship was assumed as a matter of course, how the quality of fine timber 'was given primacy of place' and observed that Gimson showed 'interest and delight in sheer honest construction in superlative woods used mostly in the solid.' Gimson worked closely with Waals and 'the association of these two men was an essential factor in the evolving of the Cotswold Tradition.' Trevelyan regarded Gimson as 'a leading figure in the Arts and Crafts Exhibition Society (and as) William Morris's spiritual successor' and there was 'absolute continuity' between the work of Gimson and Waals.' This continuity continued into the furniture making of Edward Barnsley, the son of Sidney, at least in his first ten years in practice. 'In his workshop he kept alive the ideals of the Arts and Crafts Movement into which he was born at the turn of the century.'²⁰

¹⁷Annette Carruthers, *Ernest Gimson and the Cotswold Group of Craftsmen: a Catalogue of Works by Ernest Gimson, Ernest and Sidney Barnsley and Peter Waals, in the collection of Leicestershire Museums* (Leicestershire Museums 1978): 5-7.

¹⁸Carruthers, *Ernest Gimson and the Cotswold Group*: 11.

¹⁹Carruthers, *Ernest Gimson and the Cotswold Group*: 14.

²⁰Carruthers, *Edward Barnsley and his Workshop: Arts and Crafts in the Twentieth Century*, (Oxford: White Cockade, 1992): back cover.

Carruthers' statements that Gimson and the Barnsleys were 'probably the most significant and influential of all the Arts and Crafts furniture designers'²¹ with 'elements of their Cotswold style seen in the work of many craftsmen of this century' permits a link from Ruskin and Morris to Brynmawr Furniture Makers. She continued 'but perhaps more important has been the general acceptance of the Arts and Crafts ideals of truth to materials, honesty of construction and fitness for purpose, the fundamental principles of Gimson's and the Barnsley's work,'²² These principles were applied in the making of the Brynmawr furniture.

Gordon Russell, furniture maker in the Cotswold town of Broadway, joined the DIA in 1920. Describing himself as a greenhorn he said 'I cannot say how much I owed to its early members,' naming among others Frank Pick, Ambrose Heal and Harry Peach, all influential on design in the inter-war period. His opinion of the Arts and Crafts Movement was 'how unfortunate it is that such a lusty and promising youngster never grew up . . . largely because its parents dissociated it from the main stream of the life of its own time.'²³ He dissociated himself from the Arts and Crafts principles that were sourced in the moralities of Ruskin and Morris, and did not have their distain for machinery. His own approach was to be experimental, and morally 'I felt very strongly that my generation, which had destroyed so much lovely work, had a constructive duty to perform; somehow or other we had to hand on to those coming after us good things of our own creation.'²⁴

²¹Carruthers, *Edward Barnsley and*

his Workshop (Oxford: White Cockade 1992): 17.

²²Carruthers, *Ernest Gimson and the Cotswold Group*: 16.

²³Gordon Russell, *Designer's Trade*, (London: George Allen and Unwin 1968): 33.

²⁴Russell, *Designer's Trade*: 117.

Quakers and art and craft

Friends were slow to come to an appreciation of fine art. Although there have been individual Quaker artists, musicians and poets,²⁵ the Society itself did not give corporate recognition to the arts within the Society until 1954 with the formation of the Quaker Fellowship of the Arts (QFA).

‘Of Quaker theory as applied to the (other) fine arts – to painting, sculpture, music, poetry and the drama – there is almost nothing to be said, for the early Friends banished them almost totally from their lives.’²⁶ Nicholson has referred to the writing of William Penn in the 1680s where ‘we find the first deliberately composed opposition of Friends to the arts of literature, poetry and plays in particular.’²⁷ These were regarded as serving the Church (and the Quakers were at the far end of the spectrum from Conformity) and the aristocracy (offensive to the Quaker view that all are equal). Friends thought the enjoyment of portraits and other images as self-indulgent and fiction writing as untruthful, as was the repetition by singers and actors of words in which they did not believe. These were described as ‘the lure of false lights’²⁸ and were a distraction from one’s duty to live in the Light.

There were writers, however, many whose correspondence was lengthy, who wrote letters, journals and spiritual autobiographies, and those who produced theological works were influential in defining the testimonies in these centuries.²⁹ Nor was there a shortage of

²⁵Nicholson cites Thomas Story, John Scott, Thomas Wilkinson, William and Mary Howitt, William Wood, John Opie and his daughter Amelia as examples of Friends who were ‘gaps in the fence’ of Quaker antipathy to the arts. Frederick J. Nicholson, *Quakers and the Arts: a Survey of Attitudes of British Friends to the Creative Arts from the Seventeenth to the Twentieth Century* (London: Friends Home Service Committee 1968): 63-85.

Tolles cites Edward Hicks, Benjamin West and Patience Wright. Frederick B. Tolles, “Of the Best Sort but Plain”: 489.

²⁶Tolles, *The Quaker Esthetic*: 489.

²⁷Nicholson, *Quakers and the Arts*: 7.
Both Nicholson and Tolles (above) give comprehensive accounts of the Quaker attitude to the arts.

²⁸Nicholson, *Quakers and the Arts*: 21. “The lure of false lights” is a reference to the practice of sea shore wreckers who would place lights on rocks to deceive ships, and plunder the vessels wrecked as a result.

²⁹Abbott, *The Historical Dictionary of the Friends (Quakers)*: 19.

literary material, and there was a culture for reading it. From the first, Friends have been assiduous and meticulous record keepers, such that it became ‘an integral part of Quaker life’, and with a confirmed interest in education (not always disinterestedly) and the training of their young people who, disbarred from the universities and the professions were destined for rural employments, and urban trade and business, ‘the print that flew off the Quaker presses is testimony to the literacy of the movement itself.’³⁰ Friends were less inclined to tolerate these antipathies through the nineteenth century, and the changing attitude was expressed in a cautious recognition in 1925 that there might be a place for the arts within the Society, but with the caveat that its place was secondary to the religious life.³¹

The Quaker attitude to art remained collectively ambivalent until the mid-twentieth century when the acceptance of a positive appreciation of the arts was confirmed by Robin Tanner, a Quaker and inspector for arts and crafts in primary schools. His words are significant also for indicating the way by which the Quaker ethic of simplicity has achieved its own aesthetic of a ‘refreshing, simple beauty’:

The history of the protest of early Friends against excess and ostentatious superfluity is fascinating. It is easy to ridicule their apparent denial of the Arts; yet it must be admitted that, certainly visually, out of it there was born an austere, spare, refreshing, simple beauty . . . What is hopeful is that in the Society there is no finality; we can laugh at ourselves and go on learning. As long as we are given to constant revision there is hope for us. Special pleading for the Arts is no longer needed. They are not viewed, as they once were, as a distraction from God. Rather they are seen as a manifestation of God.³²

Friends had found a clear distinction between the fine art they had deplored and craft on which they relied, discussed below, until the Quaker Joseph Southall (1861-1944) acknowledged the craftsmanship of the artist with his use of tempera for his painting,

³⁰James Walvin, *The Quakers: Money and Morals* (London: John Murray 1997): 46.

³¹This is a condensed account only, of the way the Society’s opinion moved from the ‘purity’ of the early Friends to the general acceptance of the arts in the mid-twentieth century. That development is fully explored up to publication in 1968, by Frederick J Nicholson in *Quakers and the Arts*.

³²*Quaker Faith and Practice: The book of Christian Discipline in the Yearly Meeting of the Religious Society of Friends (Quakers) in Britain* (London: Britain Yearly Meeting 1995): 21.29

involving as it did, several practical handworked processes in preparation of the medium before applying it. ‘The process of tempera painting is a craft. “Craftsmanship” was Southall’s watchword.’³³

A suggestion that art embraced craft then emerged within the ‘prolonged and vigorous epistolary discussion of 1954’ which was to result in the QFA.³⁴ It was suggested that Friends should form an association ‘to assist craftsmen and artists to develop true standards of integrity and provide a meeting place for the interchange of their ideas.’³⁵ There is a reflection here of A. H. Mackmurdo’s objects in founding the Century Guild in 1882 ‘putting into practice [the] Ruskinian idea of artists and craftsmen banding together.’³⁶ In the last half of the twentieth century Friends came to appreciate and enjoy the many faces of what *QFP* has described collectively as creativity, and are encouraged to be ‘open to new light, from whatever source it may come.’³⁷

In his comprehensive study Nicholson explored the development of the Quaker attitude to art, from the religious interpretation of ornamentation as an affront to their testimony to simplicity until ‘the fences fall’, which he identified as happening gradually from the mid-nineteenth century onwards,³⁸ yet he made a deliberate exclusion of crafts with the exception of the making of clocks and scientific instruments. These makers, he said, excelled with ‘economy of means, simplicity of style and soundness of material’ but in a footnote he directed the ‘reader who is interested in Crafts’ to Leslie Baily’s book, *Craftsman and Quaker*.³⁹ This is a misleading direction, since Baily’s book is not a

³³Roger Homan, *The Art of the Sublime: Principles of Christian Art and Architecture*, (Aldershot: Ashgate 2006): 100.

³⁴Nicholson, *Quakers and the Arts*: 116.

³⁵Katherine Nix-James, letter to *The Friend* 9 April 1954, quoted by Nicholson, *Quakers and the Arts*: 116.

³⁶Cumming and Kaplan, *The Arts and Crafts Movement*: 22.

³⁷*Quaker Faith and Practice*: 1.02.7.

³⁸Nicholson, *Quakers and the Arts*: 87-88.

³⁹Nicholson, *Quakers and the Arts*: 84.

discussion of Quakers and their crafts per se, but of the life and work of James T. Baily, a much respected Quaker craftsman, but without the critique of crafts that is implied. Nicholson's subject is so extensive as to justify him in excluding it from his own subject area.

There is no corporate Quaker attitude to craft. Such creativity would have been regarded as a norm, for things were needed and had to be made. Early Friends were at ease with manual work and working in crafts was only one of many forms of employment in trade and was thus unremarkable. What was crafted was made with respect to the testimonies to simplicity and truth and the public examples of their craftsmanship are in the building and carpentry essential to the provision of a place of worship.⁴⁰

Early Friends were employed in the essential trades which included blacksmithing, wheelwrighting, joinery and other such, with woodworking figuring highly. A number of the earliest followers of Fox, referred to as the Valiant Sixty, who left their homes to travel as preachers in the north west of England were yeoman farmers, husbandmen, and labourers, a draper, glover, miller, weaver, tailor, ex-soldier, shopkeeper, sugar importer, butcher, day-labourer, some school masters and several of the gentleman class. Of this group of travelling ministers, seven were women, one or two of whom were travelling with their husbands, the others spinsters of independent means.⁴¹ Tolles reported that following migration to Pennsylvania 'no fewer than seventy-eight master craftsmen are known to have been engaged in the woodworking trades alone before 1720, and of these all but a handful were of the Friendly persuasion.'⁴²

Quaker education in craft

The importance of education for both boys and girls was expressed by George Fox in 1668 who, during his travels, arranged the setting up of schools in which they could be

⁴⁰The construction and refurbishing of the Quaker Meeting House is discussed in Chapter Two.

⁴¹Donald Rooksby, *A People to be Gathered: Three Centuries of Quakers and their Place in the Social History of Northern England* (Colwyn Bay: by the author, 1995): 23-24.

⁴²Tolles, *'Of the Best Sort but Plain'*: 494.

trained in ‘whatsoever things were civil and useful in the creation.’⁴³ Joshua Rowntree remarked wryly that this ‘must have struck the teachers at least with some consternation,’⁴⁴ but education continued in importance as Friends ensured literacy by providing local schools or by educating their children at home.

Obviously concerned to ensure a Quaker environment to shelter their children from diversion beyond their precepts, Meetings took responsibility for approving, monitoring and where necessary giving financial support for apprenticeships. Such apprenticeships ‘were not restricted to humbler or artisanal skills . . . but spanned a wide range of occupations and activities, from shopkeeping to medicine.’⁴⁵ This education was therefore directed towards future employment in the selected occupation, and any craft training therein was associated with that. Mention has already been made in Chapter Three of the work of John Bellers in developing a community to assist the poor in Clerkenwell in 1702. While there remains discussion as to whether this community (the predecessor to the Friends School at Saffron Walden) was a workhouse or a school, his intention was that craftwork should be taught in a network of ‘Colledges of Industry’, which in effect were to be working communities with welfare and employment built in.⁴⁶

By the mid-eighteenth century concern to strengthen the Society in numbers and faith led Yearly Meeting to consider the need for the Society to examine the schools it was already responsible for and to consider the provision of a boarding school to accommodate the children of poorer Friends.⁴⁷ Consequently the establishment of Ackworth School in

⁴³Nickalls, *Journal of George Fox*: 520.

⁴⁴Joshua Rowntree, *Social Service: its Place in the Society of Friends*: 23.

⁴⁵James Walvin, *The Quakers: Money and Morals* (London: John Murray 1997): 48.

⁴⁶Farrand Radley, “The School on the Hill: Three Hundred Years of Friends School: a Four-Site Saga” *Three Hundred Years of Friends School Saffron Walden 1702-2002*, (Saffron Walden: The Friends School 2002): 6.

⁴⁷James Walvin, *The Quakers: Money and Morals*: 94. Walvin quotes *The Cupola* [Ackworth School Magazine] 1935, Fothergill Supplement, 4) which reports that ‘The issue was raised no fewer than twenty-seven times by the London Yearly Meeting between 1700 and 1740’.

1779, for the children of Friends not in affluence (the first, subject to the chequered history of Bellers's establishment from 1702 as it developed into Friends School at Saffron Walden) was followed by eleven others in England and four in Ireland in the late eighteenth and the nineteenth centuries most of which continue to flourish.⁴⁸ These, governed by Friends' committees, and intended for use by the whole Society as opposed to the small schools of the local Quaker Meetings, have the best recorded histories and are those whose records have best survived.⁴⁹ One further distinction may be made. Some were deliberately founded as 'labouring schools', concentrating on providing a practical education in agriculture, and manual work as well as crafts and housecrafts, in addition to general literacy. A yet further distinction was the founding of Sibford, Rawdon and Brookfield Schools to ensure the education and future employment of the children of Friends who were disowned by the Society for 'marrying out' (marrying a non-Friend) at the time of strictest discipline in the mid-eighteenth century.⁵⁰

No complete syllabuses are available, but Stewart shows that the general Quaker rejection of fine art was not applied in the boarding schools. Moreover while art was not a subject generally recognised in the non-Quaker schools until late in the nineteenth century Friends introduced it and drawing was commonly practised in their schools from the earlier years of the nineteenth century. It was followed by the introduction of painting, which however was encouraged only within the 'unwritten limits' of 'landscapes, painting sketches of the buildings, and illustrations of Quaker and biblical stories.'⁵¹ William

⁴⁸Friends' House Library Guide 7, *Quaker Schools in Great Britain and Ireland*.

⁴⁹ LSF Guide 7.

⁵⁰John Punshon, *Portrait in Grey*: 190. Marriage of Friend with Friend only was a practice which created its own problems when the nineteenth century Society was obliged to face a falling membership, and other facets of being in a low condition. Sanctions against marrying out were not discontinued until Yearly Meeting in 1859. Emphasising the compactness of the Society, and its consequences, Punshon has stated that 'by 1860 it had become clear to Friends in London Yearly Meeting that their Society was possibly in terminal decline' and 'the Society was small and closely knit, to a considerable degree a system of kinship with intimate social and business connexions superadded. Most members of the Society had been educated at one or other of the Quaker boarding schools.' Punshon, *Portrait in Grey*: 190.

⁵¹William A. C. Stewart, *Quakers and Education as seen in their Schools in England* (London: Epworth Press, 1957): 134-136.

Walker Dixon recalled the study of drawing at Wigton School around 1830 and reported that 'some of the boys were very good at drawing.'⁵²

The practice of craft was included in lessons at the Committee Quaker schools from the first, not always as a time-tabled subject, but where not, as leisure time activity.⁵³ It was as a matter of fact that craft work, especially of working in wood, would be included in general education. Workshops equipped with benches, tools and lathes were funded by Quaker donation. Woodworking was, in due course, supported by metal work and technical drawing, and other crafts were practised depending on the availability of instruction. The correlation of class room subjects with practical and manual ones in Quaker schools was commended by the state Schools Inspectorate early in the twentieth century as a principle of education.⁵⁴ The principle had been applied by Friends in accord with the advice of William Penn that knowledge learned should be useful 'consistent with Truth and Godliness, not cherishing a vain conversation or idle mind' because 'ingenuity, mixed with industry is good for the body and mind too.'⁵⁵ Two hundred years later this same philosophy governed Peter Scott's work at Brynmawr.

Quaker Arts and Crafts furniture makers

With the exercise of craft being so common among Friends it is not unexpected that some Quakers became furniture makers. Those working in the period before World War II had Arts and Crafts attachments, and to the names of Arthur Romney Green, Arthur and Hubert Simpson and Stanley Davies the thesis adds Paul Matt, Arthur Reynolds and

⁵²Rooksby, *A People to be Gathered* : 4.

⁵³Without making a detailed summary here, it is possible to say generally that from the time of the first established committee boarding schools to the earliest years of the twentieth century, the pupils travelled considerable distances to reach their schools. To return to their homes for frequent holidays was exceptional, often being impracticable, and so boarding school life required the pupils to be occupied for many hours beyond their time in the classroom.

⁵⁴Stewart, *Quakers and Education*: 137.

⁵⁵A convinced Quaker, Penn (1644-1718) was granted a colony in North America by Charles II as payment of a debt owed to his father, Admiral Sir William Penn, to be named Pennsylvania in his honour.

Bernard Aylward. There are currently individual biographical studies of Romney Green⁵⁶, the Simpsons⁵⁷ and Davies,⁵⁸ but no published collection of Quaker furniture makers together, so with the inclusion of Paul Matt, Arthur Reynolds and Bernard Aylward, the thesis serves as an introduction for such a compilation.

Each of the craftsmen of this chapter had experience of Quakerism through membership of the Religious Society of Friends, family connection, education or other association. The importance of the Quaker values of simplicity and honesty for their craft is evident in their writing and in their products as their integrity was transmitted to and realised in their work. It is in their published writings that the Quaker craftsmen revealed their compatibility with the Arts and Crafts ethic and aesthetic and the physical links between them are supported by a bond made through their working within Arts and Crafts principles. These principles are stated in the same words so often as to appear trite, but if these words are indeed the most descriptive, the risk of using the hackneyed phrase has to be taken. In summary these were to work in simplicity, with the integrity of truth to materials and honesty in construction and designing and executing with originality, producing items of use which were fit to effect the purpose for which they were made. In these and in social terms, concern for society, both the Arts and Crafts practitioners and the Quaker craftsmen were for the most part concerned for some reform to society so that the effect of working in craft was to enhance the dignity of the worker through the exercise of his creative skills and the pleasure that his work would bring him. This was the main motivation for the development of Scott's Experiment at Brynmawr.

⁵⁶Susan Elkin, *Life to the Lees: a Biography of Arthur Romney Green* (Christchurch: Natula Publications, 1998).

⁵⁷Eleanor Davidson, *The Simpsons of Kendal: Craftsmen in Wood 1885-1952* (Lancaster: University of Lancaster, 1978).

⁵⁸Hugh Wright, *Stanley Webb Davies 1894-1978: Arts and Crafts Furniture Maker* (Carlisle: Bookcase, 2006).

Arthur Romney Green (1872-1945)

Romney Green was born into a Quaker family, though according to his biographer 'his "religious" beliefs in adult life were consistently flexible.'⁵⁹ Some of his formative years were spent at a Quaker boarding school and through his employees, Stanley Davies and Eric Sharpe, both Quakers, he kept a Quaker connection. Green is a link from John Ruskin 'whose writings were (his) lifelong inspiration' and William Morris whose example 'was eventually to influence him so profoundly'⁶⁰, to Brynmawr. The link from Ruskin continues through the period in which Green lived and worked in Hammersmith, with its strong associations with Morris, his visits to Ernest Gimson at Sapperton, his training of Stanley Davies and so to Arthur Reynolds at Brynmawr who had worked for Davies. Susan Elkin⁶¹ has constructed Green's biography from mainly primary source material and has given a detailed account of his life, loves and venues, intimate domestic details and examples of his poetry. She supported her opinion of his importance as 'a descendant [metaphorically] of William Morris, disciple of Ruskin and maker in the Arts and Crafts tradition of Gimson and the Barnsleys' by association, in that two pieces of his furniture are 'important enough' to be on display in the Victoria and Albert Museum 'in the same gallery as furniture by Morris, Gimson, Sidney Barnsley and others.'⁶² She confirmed this by directing her reader to Green's prose writings to 'piece together so much of what he thought and believed', but failed to note that the findings were significant in identifying him as an Arts and Crafts furniture maker. The reader learns that he was 'broadly speaking "leftist", with an interest in finding 'radical solutions to the "social

⁵⁹Elkin, *Life to the Lees*: 5.

⁶⁰Elkin, *Life to the Lees*: 1.

⁶¹Susan Elkin's *Life to the Lees* 1998 is the first biography of Romney Green, for which she said she used primary source material almost entirely. She gives a bibliography as a final chapter entitled *Afterword on Sources* in which she itemises and describes in a general way the material she has referred to, but it is regretted that she has not given references for her quotations and other important factual information. She explains this in her concluding paragraph by saying '[I] have chosen not to clutter my pages with footnotes and continual tedious references, preferring to credit sources here in a more general way.'

⁶²Elkin, *Life to the Lees*: 128.

problem”” and having sympathy and understanding for those he described as ‘bottom dogs.’ For these he ‘favoured imaginative solutions – such as running workhouses as self-supporting co-operatives’ by which the bottom dogs could make a living.⁶³ In this Green, the subject of Elkin’s ‘virgin biographical territory,’⁶⁴ resembled Scott, also the subject of virgin biographical territory herewith, though Scott was no woodworker himself. These traits account for Green’s interest in working for the Rural Industries Bureau, taking skill training to unemployed men in the depressed areas of the 1930s.⁶⁵ She told that his view was that ‘children would learn far more effectively and readily if they were led to see a practical and joyful purpose in what they were doing,’⁶⁶ that he believed it to be ‘the responsibility of a craftsman to create beauty from natural resources’⁶⁷ and that his mathematical training was the source of his use of geometrical shapes as the basis of his design and construction.’⁶⁸

Strong evidence of Green being Arts and Crafts⁶⁹ comes from the first years of his career when he set up a small workshop and, as a self taught amateur, employed joiners and went into business as a furniture maker soon after the turn of the century.⁷⁰ His social and political interests led him to set up a branch of the Independent Labour Party (ILP) in

⁶³Elkin, *Life to the Lees*: 35.

⁶⁴Elkin, *Life to the Lees*: 135.

Writing in 1998 Susan Elkin described Arthur Romney Green as ‘an obscure country woodworker’ of whom few people had heard nationally ‘apart from the most serious students of 20th century furniture, the readers of Eric Gill’s letters and architecture buffs who knew vaguely that W. Curtis Green had a brother.’ Elkin, *Life to the Lees*: 127.

⁶⁵Elkin, *Life to the Lees*: 91.

⁶⁶Elkin, *Life to the Lees*: 13.

⁶⁷Elkin, *Life to the Lees*: 23.

⁶⁸Elkin, *Life to the Lees*: 23.

⁶⁹Elkin connects Green with the Cotswold designers. She reports that ‘Ernest Gimson’s visitor’s book at his Sapperton workshop in the Cotswolds shows that Green visited there in 1904 – presumably to learn.’ Elkin, *Life to the Lees*: 30. and 47.

Certainly as a self-taught craftsman Green was open to instruction, though apparently reluctant to admit his lack of formal training as ‘He later admitted that he had surreptitiously learned a lot from the men he employed without, he thought, giving himself away.’ Elkin, *Life to the Lees*: 22.

⁷⁰Elkin, *Life to the Lees*: 21.

association with William Beveridge, R H Tawney and Harold Murray. Murray's wife, Bertha (who was to leave him to live with Green) was a close friend of Roger Fry.⁷¹ In Hammersmith, in a workshop formerly used by Eric Gill,⁷² Green became acquainted with Cobden-Sanderson, who had worked closely with William Morris, with Douglas Pepler (who left the Quakers to become a Roman Catholic), Edward Johnston (from whom Gill learned calligraphy), Emery Walker (also a co-worker with Morris), Arthur Penty, the proponent of Guild Socialism, May Morris and Frank Brangwyn. The personal contact with Gill was continued as Green cycled to Ditchling several times to meet him, a distance of forty miles, and the Gills visited the Greens in Hammersmith. The connection was maintained as Green made furniture for both the Mairet and the Gill households at Ditchling.⁷³

An Arts and Crafts Exhibition Society member and a 'disciple of Ruskin' as observed previously, Green continued to exhibit furniture until 1935, for the most part chairs and tables.⁷⁴ His writings were published in *New English Weekly*, edited at that time by Philip Mairet and also in the *Burlington Magazine*, edited by Roger Fry.⁷⁵ When profits from the workshop were poor, Green would supplement his income by teaching, and it was his experience in both fields that brought him to collaborate with Eric Gill in writing *Woodwork in Principle and Practice*⁷⁶ of which, intended to be a three-part work, Volume 1 was written by Green and illustrated by Eric Gill, with Gill to write volume 2 and Mairet volume 3.

This collaborative assistance from Gill, for which Green says he was 'extremely lucky' must have been the provision of woodcuts for illustration. He said that he was

⁷¹Elkin, *Life to the Lees*: 32-33.

⁷² Elkin, *Life to the Lees*: 47.

⁷³Elkin, *Life to the Lees*: 61. Eric Gill is introduced in the previous chapter.

⁷⁴Elkin, *Life to the Lees*: 51.

⁷⁵Elkin, *Life to the Lees*: 57.

⁷⁶Arthur Romney Green, *Woodwork in Principle and Practice* (Ditchling: Pepler, 1918).

‘restricted to the use of woodcuts by my Editor’s respect and my own for the traditions of bookmaking’ and his luck in having Gill’s help was because of the ‘difficulty in most cases (is) to find a workman capable of the older method’ though there is no further indication as to what Gill was responsible for.⁷⁷ There is an element of possessiveness as Green justified the inclusion of ‘my illustrations,’ though of the 31 illustrations in 110 pages, only three appear not to be woodcuts, the remaining three therefore being Green’s own drawings.

At the time of writing the book Green was teaching ‘continuously and mostly full time from 1916-1928, which included two terms at the progressive school, Abbotsholme, while maintaining a workshop business at West Mersea.’⁷⁸ The production of his book may have been motivated by the need for a classroom textbook, though he characterised it by distinguishing it from the many available technical books by saying that ‘there is probably no living man who can speak with authority on the subject of principle and design in woodwork’ and that there was a demand ‘for some such authoritative statement.’⁷⁹

The year 1918 is significant as publication of *Woodwork in Principle and Practice* was only shortly before the Arts and Crafts Exhibition Society produced *Handicrafts and Reconstruction*.⁸⁰ This collection of a series of articles by members of the Arts and Crafts Exhibition Society establishment proposed a future for itself in applying crafts to the post-war situation. For Harrod, it reads ‘like the last gasp of the movements’s social philosophies.’⁸¹ There remained in that gasp a breath of those ideals which were to carry Arts and Crafts forward. Both documents were written during the last months of World War I, and anticipated a post-war period in which craft practice would make a positive

⁷⁷Romney Green, *Woodwork in Principle and Practice*: xvi.

⁷⁸Elkin, *Life to the Lees*: 61.
Abbotsholme School was founded by members of the New Life Fellowship, referred to in Chapter Two. Chushichi Tsuzuki, *Edward Carpenter 1844-1929. Prophet of Human Fellowship* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1980): 115.

⁷⁹Green, *Woodwork in Principle and Practice*: vii.

⁸⁰Arts and Crafts Exhibition Society, *Handicrafts and Reconstruction: Notes by Members of the Arts and Crafts Exhibition Society* (London: Arts and Crafts Exhibition Society, 1919).

⁸¹Harrod, *The Crafts in Britain in the Twentieth Century*: 28.

contribution to social reconstruction. Christopher Turner introduced the subject in his essay 'Agriculture and Craft' by saying that 'social and economic reconstruction will be our first and greatest problem when peace is achieved.'⁸² In *Woodwork in Principle and Practice* Green noted the hope that political reform and social reconstruction would end the labour unrest, seen to be the result of the industrial system, whereby the worker had lost pleasure in his work. He hoped that fear that war would bring a decline in civilised culture would stir a revival of interest in the living traditions of the artist craftsman.⁸³

For one who had not served an apprenticeship it is noteworthy that, in accord with the Arts and Crafts essayists of *Handicrafts and Reconstruction*, Green maintained that the ideal training for the craftworker was as an apprentice in an old-fashioned workshop. (He was himself training apprentices informally without having 'served his time' himself). Apprenticeship was preferable to a training in which the work was routine and automatic, whereby the worker had no opportunity to show initiative or originality while making items to a pattern made by a designer who was not a practical craftsman. His aim was to give the general principles of woodwork by the written word to make good the loss of teaching by example.⁸⁴ He regretted the loss of the medieval guild system which gave every man the chance to become a master by progressing through its hierarchy and its having been replaced by 'middlemen, designers and mechanics.'⁸⁵ The shortcoming of routine training, he argued, was reflected in the weakness of modern furniture [meaning factory made] that weakness being proved by the consumer's interest in the antique. That discerning consumer refused 'to be deceived by the products of the modern factory system, however "simple" or "aesthetic" on the one hand, and [is] no longer content with mere

⁸²Christopher Turner, 'Art and Agriculture', *Handicrafts and Reconstruction: Notes by Members of the Arts and Crafts Exhibition Society*: 69.

⁸³Green, *Woodwork in Principle and Practice*: x-xi.

⁸⁴Green, *Woodwork in Principle and Practice*: v.

⁸⁵Green, *Woodwork in Principle and Practice*: v.

reproductions of the past however plausible on the other.⁸⁶ Paul Matt was to say much the same some fifteen years later (see below).

Green's explicit instructions for elementary techniques and care of tools show how meticulous was his own workmanship. His discussion of the structural use of wood and how its natural qualities determine the design is an exposition of the Arts and Crafts doctrine of truth to materials. As he was writing for the beginner, he was at pains to describe the properties of wood, its strengths and weaknesses, its tangibility, the shrinking and warping effects of warmth and damp. The woodworker had to take all this into consideration as he determined how the wood should be cut, shaped and jointed, and thus consciously or unconsciously with experience, learned how the physical attributes of the wood contributed to the design.⁸⁷

Romney Green was elected to the Arts and Crafts Exhibition Society in 1926, in the same year as Edward Barnsley, and went on exhibiting into the 1930s. He continued to teach short courses locally, lectured to the Design and Industries Association in 1931, and was soon after, travelling the country for a two year period in the early 1930s on appointment by the Rural Industries Board (RIB) as Supervisor of Woodworking Shops for the Unemployed in the Distressed Areas for England and Wales. In this capacity he went to the Rhondda valley.⁸⁸ There is no reference in the Brynmawr archive to his services having been offered or used by the Brynmawr Furniture Makers, which was up and running at this time, although the RIB gave some assistance to the weaving workshop there.⁸⁹ This suggests that Paul Matt's competence in the woodwork shop had no need for such outside guidance, or it was perhaps unwelcome, with Matt being in control of workshop as his own

⁸⁶Green, *Woodwork in Principle and Practice*: vii-viii.

⁸⁷Green, *Woodwork in Principle and Practice*: Chapter 1.

⁸⁸Elkin, *Life to the Lees*: 97.

⁸⁹Pitt, *Our Unemployed*: 27.

master. Green found employment with the RIB unsatisfactory so resigned in 1943, and no successor was appointed.⁹⁰ At the same time as he had been teaching and travelling for the RIB, furniture production continued in Christchurch under Green's authority, where he trained and employed, among others, the Quaker craftsmen Stanley Davies from 1920 until 1923, and Eric Sharpe from 1921 until 1929.

Arthur W. Simpson (1857-1922)

Arthur Simpson was a member of the Art Workers' Guild and his son, Hubert Simpson, a member of the Red Rose Guild of Artworkers.⁹¹ The Museum of Lakeland Life which displays examples of Arthur Simpson's work states that the items 'witness his commitment to Arts and Crafts ideals'⁹² and 'Arthur W. Simpson was making and carving fine furniture . . . in the Arts and Crafts style.'⁹³

Eleanor Davidson has presented a comprehensive account of the furniture making Simpson family of Kendal for which, as a grand daughter of Arthur Simpson (AWS), she has had the benefit of her family records and much other unpublished material.⁹⁴ This biography has revealed the personal threads that connected Simpson physically with the Arts and Crafts Movement and she included numerous images of examples of his woodcraft.

Arthur Simpson's parents were Quakers, educated respectively at the Friends' schools Great Ayton and Ackworth, and they sent Arthur to Rawdon Friends' School. His early training was with a cabinet maker in Kendal, followed by an apprenticeship in woodcarving with Gillow's in Lancaster. Thereafter his work was essentially carving, though in periods of employment he gained experience of cabinet making and in teaching

⁹⁰Elkin, *Life to the Lees*: 100.

⁹¹Art Workers' Guild. Founded in 1884 by Arts and Crafts architects.
Red Rose Guild of Artworkers. Founded in 1920 by Margaret Pilkington.

⁹²Museum of Lakeland Life and Industry, www.lakelandmuseum.org.uk, (accessed 01/03/2007).

⁹³Hugh Wright, *Stanley Webb Davies 1894-1978*: 19.

⁹⁴Eleanor Davidson, *The Simpsons of Kendal*: v.

his craft. In 1885 he settled in his own furniture workshop in Kendal, gradually enlarged his premises and opened a showroom in Windermere in 1901 which he called The Handicrafts. His son Hubert was apprenticed to him in 1905 and took responsibility for the firm when his father became ill in 1920. Hubert therefore was the Simpson of Kendal contemporary with the Brynmawr Furniture Makers.

The Arts and Crafts of the Lake District originated with John Ruskin's presence, where his home, Brantwood, overlooks Lake Coniston. W.G. Collingwood (1854-1932), who had studied with Ruskin at Oxford, settled nearby and worked as his secretary until Ruskin's death and took a full part in local crafts activities. 'There is no doubt that it was Collingwood who introduced AWS to John Ruskin at Brantwood though there is no record of the precise occasion or whether there was more than one visit.' Nonetheless the acquaintance was sufficiently close for Simpson to attend Ruskin's funeral in 1900.⁹⁵

In the pre-war years Arts and Crafts exhibitions were held in the Coniston Institute. Davidson referred to this village institute as 'one of the tangible results of Ruskin's death', the inference being either that it was built with a legacy from or as a memorial to him. The exhibitions were 'largely steered by W.G.Collingwood' with one or two others, with the aim 'to provide a shop window for the craftsmen of Cumberland, Westmorland and North Lonsdale.'⁹⁶ C. F. A. Voysey (CFAV) was also a personal friend of Simpson, whose visit for tea was diared by the ten year old Hubert in 1899 and described by Davidson as 'the first firm evidence of CFAV visiting AWS, though it is believed that they had met at Arts and Crafts Exhibitions before this.'⁹⁷ Voysey, an Arts and Crafts architect whose houses often incorporated features of local country cottages, visited the Simpsons frequently where 'the whole family was in awe of him – everyone except AWS, who stood in awe of no man.' He worked with Voysey, and possibly with Baillie Scott, who were both

⁹⁵Davidson, *The Simpsons of Kendal*: 16 and 32.

⁹⁶Davidson, *The Simpsons of Kendal*: 17.

⁹⁷Davidson, *The Simpsons of Kendal*: 20.

responsible for buildings in the area, and conversely Voysey designed and supervised the building of the Simpsons' new house, Littleholme, in 1909.⁹⁸

There is, apparently, a surprising lack of friendship or even association between the Simpsons and Stanley Davies considering how much they had in common as Quakers. They were certainly known to each other and their years coincide. Arthur Simpson was in his business from 1885 which was continued by Hubert until he closed the workshop in 1950. Only a few miles away in Windermere, Stanley Davies had opened his workshop in 1923 where the Simpsons' showroom had been open since 1901. All were active members of the Religious Society of Friends, though not of the same Meeting or Monthly Meeting,⁹⁹ and all worked as independent furniture makers in Kendal and Windermere.

Davidson does not make clear for how long the Windermere showroom remained open, though its name 'The Handicrafts' was also given to the Simpsons' new premises in Kendal in 1922. Hugh Wright mentioned the Simpsons several times in his biography of Stanley Davies, mostly for comparisons of their work and once to note that an employee of Davies had learned his trade as a carver at Simpsons. Wright found only one written reference to provide a link between the two firms, and that, in 1940, was for the sale by Simpson of a wood preservative to Davies, for which he was given a 10% discount.¹⁰⁰ Perhaps there was business rivalry which distanced them. Hugh Wright is currently researching the life and work of Arthur Simpson and will, perhaps, explore this relationship further.

Elkin's research was with the benefit of unpublished material and Davidson had access to the family archive, but there is no Simpson publication for comparison with Green's. He was, however, a teacher of his craft, an exhibitor with the Arts and Crafts Exhibition Society and at the third Ideal Homes Exhibition in 1912 showed in a section

⁹⁸Davidson, *The Simpsons of Kendal*: 39.

⁹⁹Davies was a member of Cartmel Meeting within Swarthmore Monthly Meeting; the Simpsons were members of Kendal Meeting within Kendal and Sedburgh Monthly Meeting.

¹⁰⁰Hugh Wright, personal correspondence, letter undated, but my reply is dated 14 May 2007.

that 'aimed to educate the masses that the cheapest, factory produced article was not the criterion on which furniture should be judged.'¹⁰¹

Much of Arthur Simpson's leisure time was spent on his responsibilities toward a social scheme for a community intended at first as a colony for men and youths, then as a home for disabled soldiers of the Boer War, and ultimately as a home for epileptic boys on which he spent 'much time, energy and enthusiasm in their interest, and as with most of his enterprises, encouraged his family to become involved too.'¹⁰² Arthur Simpson's son, Hubert, was educated at a Quaker boarding school, apprenticed to his father and responsible for the firm after his father's death and was also a very active member of Kendal Friends Meeting.

Stanley Davies (1894-1978)

The biography of Stanley Davies is sub-headed Arts and Crafts Furniture Maker and describes Davies and his work as, in important ways, 'like the rest of the Arts and Crafts Movement.'¹⁰³ It is Davies the Quaker furniture maker who shows declares most clearly in print that Arts and Crafts principles guided his work, and is quoted below.¹⁰⁴

Stanley Davies was educated at the Quaker schools, Sidcot and Bootham, where his interest in wood craft was developed. It was practised further as a leisure activity while he was an undergraduate at Oxford, reading history. He spent three years with Romney Green which Wright stated as having been an apprenticeship, whereas Elkin wrote of his being a worker for Green. As Davies was considerably older than the usual age for apprenticeship, being 26 when he joined Green in Christchurch in 1920, he seems to have had a training comparable with that given to apprentices but without formal indentures.¹⁰⁵ This was of no

¹⁰¹Davidson, *The Simpsons of Kendal*: 24.

¹⁰²Davidson, *The Simpsons of Kendal*: 20.

¹⁰³Wright, *Stanley Webb Davies*: 121.

¹⁰⁴Stanley Davies, *A Woodworker Speaks*. Script of BBC radio talk, published as pamphlet in 1933.

¹⁰⁵He left school in 1912 and went to Oxford, but apparently left, aged 20, to work with the Friends War Victims Relief Unit once the First World War broke out. Four years later he worked in the family firm

consequence for the future as rather than continue in the trade as an employee, Davies went from Christchurch to set up his own business in Windermere in 1923. He is reported as having said in correspondence many years later ““In retrospect I almost worship Romney Green” and he continued to visit him in Christchurch at least once a year.’¹⁰⁶

Davies was in correspondence with Edward Barnsley. He had written to Barnsley in 1942 when he ‘said he had worked out his average income over 19 years in his similar workshop [similar to Barnsley’s] and found it was £115 per year, “hardly a living.”’¹⁰⁷

Writing of this suggested a longstanding acquaintance between the two with sufficient familiarity for them to discuss personal financial matters, a matter seldom shared with others, as a matter of etiquette, in those days. He revealed his respect for Arts and Crafts in his several expositions on his woodwork for publicity purposes, and in a radio broadcast for the BBC (see also below)¹⁰⁸ showed his awareness of the Arts and Crafts Movement.

Similarly, in his publicity leaflet *Fine Craftsmanship*, he defined his subject as

the making of things for everyday use under conditions constraining the worker to draw upon his own knowledge and reason, to exercise his own skill of hand and his own aesthetic discrimination [of which] the outcome will be things admirably suited to their purpose, varied to fulfil the opportunities of each situation, well proportioned, well made, alive with personality and instinct with beauty. In short the essence of fine craftsmanship is utility infused with individuality and touched with beauty.¹⁰⁹

He continued, describing craftsmanship as ‘an essential function of the human head and heart and hand’ which cannot ‘be submerged by a money grasping civilisation,’ and later expressed this again as ‘a quality . . . which stimulates your thought, your interest,

for two years and his anticipation of work with Gimson was frustrated by Gimson’s death in 1919. Wright, *Stanley Webb Davies*: 12-14. The informality of Green’s training of ‘apprentices’ is noted above.

¹⁰⁶Wright, *Stanley Webb Davies*: 18.

Elkin quotes Davies’s memories of working with Green at Christchurch. ‘My eyes were opened to a new and thrilling experience of the furniture maker’s art and I fell in love with the work I saw . . . At that time to be associated with Green was an education, inspiration, enlightenment and joy where something new was ever arising.’ Elkin, *Life to the Lees*: 66.

¹⁰⁷Carruthers and Greensted, *Good Citizens’ Furniture*: 60.

¹⁰⁸Stanley Davies, *A Woodworker Speaks*. Script of BBC radio talk, published as pamphlet, 1933: 2-4 and 6-8.

¹⁰⁹Stanley Davies, *Fine Craftsmanship*, (Publisher and date unknown, possibly early 1930s): 3.

and your curiosity because it is the work of a whole man, heart, hand and head.’¹¹⁰ For him ‘Good furniture is . . . a harmony of strength and slenderness, simplicity and elaboration, symmetry and diversity, but above all a living harmony.’¹¹¹ Davies allowed that elaboration does not negate simplicity, provided that it is applied sparingly with thought and sensitivity, thus conforming with his own principles of design, with the additional quality given ‘when the craftsman has put into it something of himself.’¹¹²

These moral values were stated again in an article in *Rural Industries* in 1937 and more firmly than in his publicity material of previous years:

Work is one of the blessings of life provided it is healthy, interesting and intelligent and affords an outlet for man’s creative faculties . . . whatever future conditions of industry may be they will be the outcome of the spiritual and psychological beliefs of the people. Therefore the faith we hold governs the material circumstances of ourselves and our children. That is why it is well worth while to think out and experiment with a system of industry that at the moment seems very far from realisation on a wide scale.¹¹³

It was in this same article that he related art to the joy to be found in work and reasoned why ‘craftsman industry is of great value to the community.’ A summary of the reasons he gave for this are that craftwork makes for happiness in work, ‘in which (the craftsman) can share with his Creator the thrill of creation.’ Art, which he had defined as ‘the expression of man’s joy in work, as Ruskin said’ thus becomes ‘an integral part of industry’ and the ‘spring from which flows a stream of new and sound ideas to nourish mechanical industry.’¹¹⁴

From his workshop in Windermere, Davies issued his pamphlet *This Woodwork* as a guide to his furniture, with illustrations of some pieces and their prices. He declined to issue a catalogue because each piece made was intended to be unique, though similar ones

¹¹⁰Stanley Davies, *A Woodworker Speaks*, (Script of BBC radio talk, published as pamphlet, 1933): 4.

¹¹¹Davies, *A Woodworker Speaks*: 3.

¹¹²Davies, *A Woodworker Speaks*: 9.

¹¹³Stanley Davies, ‘Is there a Place for Hand Industry Today?’ *Rural Industries. The Quarterly Magazine for Country Trades and Handicrafts*. Summer Number, 1937: 33.

¹¹⁴Davies, *Rural Industries*, Summer number, 1937: 33.

might be requested by a customer. What he extolled was the quality of the materials he used, preferring English oak, locally grown, for its 'lovely rich nut brown colour with a dark mottle,' showing his respect for the honest wood, undecorated, the beauty being in the wood itself. His preference also, subject only to the special requirement of the customer, was for a natural finish to the piece, so that an oiling or waxing would permit the quality of the wood to speak for itself. This related to his insistence that his work was executed in truth, which he defined by illustration of the absence of truth, for example, where carving is machine made and added to the finished surface and where veneering covers and obscures the details of construction. His truth was that of the Arts and Crafts furniture makers who deliberately exposed the joints and made a feature of them.¹¹⁵

Also of Arts and Crafts essence is his concern for the originality of each piece which was 'made for the purpose'¹¹⁶ being governed by the use for which the customer intended it and the wood which was 'carefully selected for the position it is to occupy.'¹¹⁷

In *A Woodworker Speaks*, a BBC radio broadcast, Davies informed the listener of three principles of woodwork. These were structural design, by which he meant the way in which an item was constructed and 'not by surface decoration which is unnecessary to the structure of the article,' fitness for purpose being 'suitable and convenient to use and each detail has reason for being there' and economy of effort stating that 'elaborate work is generally less pleasing than work that is simple and true.' For him 'Good art is not laboured in appearance, rather it must give the feeling of ease and simplicity, qualities that are only achieved by persistent work.'¹¹⁸ Several times Davies emphasised that to achieve simplicity the craftsman had to work carefully, deliberately and consciously. The need for

¹¹⁵Davies, *A Woodworker Speaks*: 6-8.

¹¹⁶Davies, *A Woodworker Speaks*: 9.

¹¹⁷Davies, *A Woodworker Speaks*: 7.

¹¹⁸Davies, *A Woodworker Speaks*: 8-9.

accuracy and care 'both back and front, inside and out' shows that simplicity is not achieved by doing the least by the easiest method.¹¹⁹

In this same broadcast he explained somewhat romantically how the activities in the workshop replicated those of nature:

Nature has her winter and summer, hard work and easy work; and we have our sawing and planing and also our light bench work . . . There is variety. There is opportunity of initiative. We can all put our best thought into our work and hope and believe that the care we lavish upon it and the pride we take in it may impress thereon a quality of personality and artistic value, something very different from the ordinary.

When writing of simplicity Davies related the design to the handwork principle on which he was so determined, and then drew his point back to the consequence that simplicity is good design because it is hand worked. Because handwork was costly, the cost was reduced by the simplicity of the construction, 'in the sparing use of curves, in the limitation of carving, in the tendency towards straight lines, all of which are influences making for good design.' He relied on Ruskin when explaining his own insistence on handwork by quoting him (though without reference) as follows. 'Ruskin said truly: "No machine yet contrived, or hereafter contrivable, will ever equal the fine machinery of the human fingers."' At that point Davies made a small recognition that machinery has its use in his craft, as it is necessary for making boards from logs, but his reservations related very specifically to his philosophy, first that 'one man should make one piece of furniture through all its processes' and that in a broader way machinery 'robs men of a delightful occupation.' Throughout these samples of his published material Davies insisted that there is joy to be found through the chance given by handwork for exercising 'skill, inventiveness and artistic ability' so work 'is a pleasure instead of a drudgery, and manual labour a noble occupation.'¹²⁰ By 1937 Davies had modified his position of strong opposition to the use of machinery in the working of the craft, though the matter was still contentious within the

¹¹⁹This meticulous attention to detail in his workshop would have been obvious to Arthur Reynolds, employed by Davies in the late 1920s to early 1930s. Reynolds also had this reputation for attention to detail. See footnote 130 in Chapter Three.

¹²⁰Davies, *A Woodworker Speaks*: 9-10.

craftwork world. The hand or machine argument was addressed in articles and correspondence in *Rural Industries* in the summer of 1937 with Stanley Davies contributing at some length, thus stimulating further response. In the opinion of the editor Davies had found a 'middle course in which a state of balance between machine and hand production is regarded as essential to a full development of our lives.'¹²¹ This middle course amounted to the naming of

what may be called 'craftsman industry' which, although perhaps using some machinery, is yet to be sharply distinguished from the industry of mass machine production, in connection with which the word 'craftsman' is meaningless . . . if machines can be used as an aid, without reducing the amount of skill that a craftsman must utilise in executing a job, they will do no harm and may economise labour.¹²²

James T. Baily (1876-1957)

James Baily (JTB) was son and grandson of wood craftsmen. He spoke of his father who

skilled as a cabinet-maker, was very jealous that a high standard should be maintained, refusing to lower it upon any consideration. Among my earliest memories are of playing with the chips and shavings in his workshop and later receiving my first lessons in tool use under his tuition.¹²³

Baily left school at twelve years of age and took 'lads' jobs, continuing his education in evening classes. On the death of his father he was guided and supported by an uncle into an apprenticeship in which he showed 'the same genius for woodwork as his father and grandfather before him.'¹²⁴ In those formative years he was aware of 'a great awakening of the British conscience. The mighty stirrings of opinion that then took place in the nation had a profound effect on my own thinking' and according to his biography, written by his son Leslie, he was 'increasingly conscious of the power of the words and example of such Socialists as William Morris (who was) doubly JTB's hero because he

¹²¹Editorial comment introducing article by Stanley Davies, *Rural Industries*, Summer number, 1937: 33.

¹²²Davies, *Rural Industries*, Summer number, 1937: 33.

¹²³Leslie Baily, *Craftsman and Quaker: the Story of James T. Baily, 1876-195* (London: George Allen & Unwin, 1959): v.

¹²⁴Baily, *Craftsman and Quaker*: 40.

was the greatest craftsman of that age.' Leslie Baily described his father's socialism as a sharing of

the Utopian dream of William Morris, that the people must recapture their inheritance, their creative genius' which, for those obliged to suppress that creativity by routine work 'might be taught the enthusiasm and ability to do so in their leisure.'¹²⁵

Baily's woodwork training took him into teaching and social projects rather than the workshop manufacturing of his father and grandfather. He left his Congregational Church religious background to join the Religious Society of Friends. A sponsored visit to schools in the United States advanced his views on the teaching of craft and on his return his experience in education was of value when he volunteered service to the Friends War Victims Relief Committee in World War I.¹²⁶ This was shortly followed by his acceptance of an invitation in 1915 from the Friends Emergency Committee to investigate the problems arising from the internment of civilian enemy aliens.¹²⁷ A particular concern of the committee was for the internees at Knockaloe Camp on the Isle of Man, where enforced idleness led to 'barbed-wire disease' (probably acute depression and certainly moral and physical deterioration) and often suicide of the prisoners.¹²⁸ Baily was to work with handicrafts there in the capacity of Industrial Advisor which 'came to cover a multitude of functions' and which included the development of wood working shops to provide occupation for the men.¹²⁹

¹²⁵ Baily, *Craftsman and Quaker*: 36, 51 and 66-67.

¹²⁶ Alfred Mosely, a City of London merchant, financed groups of educational 'investigators', known as the Mosely Commission. J.T.B's group reported to the Board of Education (among other suggestions) that craft work should be taken by each child in every school, and be correlated with other subjects. Baily does not give a date for this visit to the USA, but soon after his return J.T.B. was appointed in 1908 to introduce woodwork into St Alban's School 'the third oldest public school in the country.' Baily, *Craftsman and Quaker*: 78. This was followed in 1911 by appointment as handicrafts supervisor for the Kent Education Committee, and which included evening teaching at a Borstal institution, and leading adult education in prisons.

¹²⁷ To give a perspective, Knockaloe camp was accommodating 'thousands', the camp being 'as large as Salisbury or Chelmsford' [in 1959]. Baily, *Craftsman and Quaker*: 95.

¹²⁸ The Quakers' and others' work at Knockaloe is described in the comprehensive account of the relief work of the Friends Emergency Committee: Anna Braithwaite Thomas, *St. Stephen's House: Friends' Emergency Work in England 1914-1920* (London: Friends' Emergency Committee, 1921).

¹²⁹ Thomas, *St Stephen's House*: 68.

When it was found that a number of professional cabinet makers were interned at Knockaloe, they were allocated the use of two huts where their work was organised and supervised by Charles Matt. Matt was already a professional cabinet maker in London, but having neglected to take British citizenship when he settled there as an emigrant from north Germany, was interned as a civilian enemy alien. Both professional furniture making and the teaching of woodcrafts to amateurs went on under Matt's instruction at Knockaloe with materials and tools donated by Quakers, or searched out locally. W. J. Bassett-Lowke, a convinced pacifist and sympathiser with the Religious Society of Friends commissioned furniture for his new home, 78 Derrigate in Northampton from Matt's workshops in the camp.¹³⁰ As a founder member of the Design and Industries Association and much interested in the Modern Movement, Bassett-Lowke appointed C.R. Mackintosh as his architect, who also designed the furniture for the house.¹³¹

The strong Quaker interest in Knockaloe was shown by the frequent visits of James Baily and his continual contact with the relevant Quaker committees in London. These committees undertook the supply of tools and materials and subsequent sale of the products of the woodworking shops, and demonstrated Quaker concern to Charles Matt personally. Friends arranged for his son Paul to visit him in the camp with the lasting effect of bringing Paul into contact with Friends, whom he joined at Wandsworth Meeting after

¹³⁰Bassett-Lowke has a commercial reputation for scale model railways.

¹³¹This is a frequently repeated acknowledgment of C.R.M. as the designer of the furniture for 78 Derrigate made at Knockaloe under Charles Matt's instruction. Baily stated that the house was 'furnished with the beautiful Knockaloe furniture of Charles Matt and his colleagues, made to the designs of the world-famous architect of New Ways, Charles Mackintosh. Baily, *Craftsman and Quaker*: 102.

Paul Matt included with his Reminiscences a photograph of furniture 'designed by Charles Rennie Mackintosh, now in the Victoria and Albert Museum' made in the camp for Mr Bassett-Lowke.' NPTMG:1994.180.38. This should reassure the Museum of the provenance of the Hall Chair, as having been designed by Charles Rennie Mackintosh. The Museum has designated the display 'Probably made by interned German craftsmen on the Isle of Man, 1916'. The Museum's further designation is puzzling. 'The simple geometric lines of this chair suggest industrial production. They arose however out of a romantic rather than a practical response to mechanical technologies for it was made by traditional 'hand' techniques'. Victoria and Albert Museum, London. Twentieth Century Study Collection, Galleries 103-106.

the war, where there was 'a lively group of young Friends' and in due course influenced his offer to go to Brynmawr as a volunteer relief worker.¹³²

James Baily's Quaker work continued after the war with relief work in Germany and the rehabilitation of a large devastated area of France.¹³³ 'Wooden prefabricated houses were supplied for the homeless,¹³⁴ and *furniture was made for the French people by their 'enemies' in the Isle of Man.*¹³⁵ These are Leslie Baily's italics as he emphasised this irony.

This relief work, in which Charles Matt played an important part through the woodwork described above gives a foretaste of the relief work of his son Paul, ten and more years later. Paul too searched for sources of timber and constructed buildings in addition to the furniture making at Brynmawr, and his own ingenuity was directed to designs that were functional, not only in the home, but suited to the skills of his workmen (see below).

After a further period of Quaker reconciliation work in the Ireland of 'the troubles', James Baily returned to teaching as craft master at Ackworth Friends' School. He developed woodwork as a timetabled subject, eventually to be studied as a School Certificate Examination subject. The dates are not clear, but following his work in Ireland

¹³²NPTMG.1994.180.38.

¹³³Stanley Davies also gave service to the Friends' War Victims Relief Committee, building huts to accommodate French refugees. Wright, *Stanley Webb Davies*: 13.

¹³⁴When the urgent need for this furniture was reported to J.T.B. at Knockaloe, he and Charles Matt prepared designs to suit the tools and materials available in the prison camp, but at this period there was an acute shortage of timber: "I had to search the island for it. At Ramsey I found a small yacht-builder's yard where the owner was disposing of his stock. Then I heard that some trees had been felled and were lying about in the fields towards Foxdale. So it came about that farms and cottages in France were furnished with tables, cupboards, and sideboards fashioned by German and Austrian prisoners of war, and made from Manx wood. Some of the Knockaloe tailors made clothing for little boys in northern France, and their boots and shoes were also made in our camp workshops. The design of the furniture was unusual: it all folded flat, to take up the minimum cargo space. The Friends' relief services chartered a small cargo steamer which loaded the furniture, clothing and boots at Peel and carried them directly to a French port". Baily, *Craftsman and Quaker*: 110.

¹³⁵Baily, *Craftsman and Quaker*: 109.

in 1921, and for 14 years at Ackworth, it seems that he taught there from possibly 1922 until 1936. One of his pupils was Bernard Aylward, for whom he was 'a hero.'¹³⁶

Bernard Aylward (? 1908 - 2002) and Boosbeck Industries (1931-c.1935)

Bernard Aylward was born in Coventry to a politically active working class Quaker family and was himself 'an uncompromising radical'.¹³⁷ With the financial support of local Friends he was educated at Quaker schools, firstly Sibford and then Ackworth, where he was taught woodwork by James T Baily. Aylward trained as a handicraft teacher, which he taught at Bootham Quaker school in York,¹³⁸ and after World War II was appointed Handicraft Advisor in the West Riding Local Education Authority (LEA).¹³⁹ In 1954 he joined the Leicestershire LEA Advisory team where his interest in the development of handicraft and design in schools led to the establishing of an A-level examination in Design, and active membership of the National Association for Design Education, which he served as President.¹⁴⁰

The enterprise of this Quaker furniture maker, scarcely remarked by the Religious Society of Friends, complemented the work of the Brynmawr Furniture Makers by following a similar social concern for the provision of employment, though without the Brynmawr reputation for being experimental or inspired by a vision for the future.

In *Heartbreak Hill* the authors gave a hint of the influence of Brynmawr on the work for the unemployed in North Yorkshire. In 1931 when unemployment had hit the North East of England Major J. B. Pennyman, a local land owner, produced a scheme for a

¹³⁶Memoirs of Bernard Aylward, in private ownership, undated: 26.

¹³⁷NADE Journal no 9, 2002: 4.

Aylward described himself as being 'a very radical young bloke, a very red-hot socialist.' Malcolm Chase and Mark Wyman, *Heartbreak Hill: a Response to Unemployment in East Cleveland in the 1930s* (Cleveland: Cleveland County Council, 1991): 27.

¹³⁸Aylward memoirs: 30.

He wasn't happy at Bootham. He remarked "It was a *very* Public School and although Quaker, it wasn't my scene at all". He was therefore 'not a very reluctant volunteer' to go to Boosbeck. Chase and Wyman, *Heartbreak Hill*: 27.

¹³⁹NADE Journal no 9, 2002: 7.

¹⁴⁰NADE Journal no 9, 2002: 7-8.

collective small holding to give employment and rented a number of acres for it. He 'seems to have become familiar with some Quaker schemes, but was mostly inspired by a scheme initiated by students, at Brynmawr in South Wales.'¹⁴¹ The Pennyman archive does not reveal a specific reference to a visit to Brynmawr¹⁴² but Aylward said that Pennyman had seen the furniture workshop there.¹⁴³

While the land scheme occupied unemployed miners, there were other unemployed persons to be considered as well. Bootham Quaker school in York sent a party of boys to observe the land scheme at Boosbeck in the charge of the new crafts teacher, Bernard Aylward. A party of senior boys had already given their holiday time to work in Jack Hoyland's 'Gang'¹⁴⁴ on the voluntary projects at Brynmawr, cleaning up the town and building the swimming pool.¹⁴⁵ Having observed the work at Brynmawr Pennyman had put up more capital and started a co-operative project to make furniture. Aylward volunteered to run it and teach carpentry to the first six young men there, and was then employed at the same salary as he was paid at the school to join the Boosbeck project.¹⁴⁶ Aylward's salary was paid by Pennyman personally.¹⁴⁷ The original intention was to work the furniture industry as a co-operative based on a common fund but this changed to wage-paid employment as the business grew, and the number and age range of the men increased.

Aylward designed the furniture and other products of Boosbeck Industries, with Pennyman continuing to take an interest in the firm's progress. The designs resembled the Brynmawr furniture in their simple lines, unornamented, functional and built of natural

¹⁴¹Chase and Wyman, *Heartbreak Hill*: 7. The authors are mistaken in attributing the inspiration for 'a scheme' at Brynmawr to students. Student involvement there was as voluntary workers in the IVS or in Jack Hoyland's workcamps (see Chapter Three).

¹⁴²The archivist, Middlesborough Libraries, in personal correspondence, 21 May, 2003.

¹⁴³Aylward memoirs: 31.

¹⁴⁴John S. Hoyland, *Digging with the Unemployed* (London: Student Christian Movement Press, 1934): 1.

¹⁴⁵J. S. Hoyland, *Digging for a New England* (London: Jonathan Cape, 1936): 152-55.

¹⁴⁶Chase and Wyman, *Heartbreak Hill*: 27.

¹⁴⁷Chase and Wyman, *heartbreak Hill*: 29.

oak. In the same way that the Brynmawr suites were named after local Welsh villages the Boosbeck pieces were given local Yorkshire names. Aylward was as ingenious as Matt (see below) in designing, and equally concerned to produce pieces fit for purpose. A newspaper report described how 'he solved "that troublesome problem of the box-room and the provision of accommodation for the casual visitor" with a design for a full size bed, but only eighteen inches high, and a corner dressing table which fitted "full into a corner and is so fashioned as not to protrude and offer awkward corners, and yet has very welcome drawer space"'.¹⁴⁸ The newspaper reporter was most impressed by Aylward's consideration for children with a range of toy furniture, not dolls' house size, but made to scale for the average doll.¹⁴⁹ And for originality? A dining table whose top 'is covered with heavy black linoleum, which makes an admirable setting for silver and glass, and will, of course, offer stout resistance to stains.'¹⁵⁰

Orders came in and production kept up with them, though the business continued to be subsidised by Pennyman, but after three years, and as war appeared imminent, it was decided that Boosbeck Industries should close.¹⁵¹ Chase and Whyman suggested that this became necessary as 'the Pennymans had exhausted the list of friends and supporters who could be cajoled and persuaded to buy furniture.'¹⁵² Aylward had said 'We're not moving on, we're not getting any big orders, not developing (whether we could have coped with big orders, I don't know).'¹⁵³ Major Pennyman balked at the heavy investment needed to develop the firm, and so the decision to close was taken in 1937. The employees all found jobs because 'they had shown they were disciplined and used to working, they'd got a

¹⁴⁸*Cleveland Standard*, 23 November 1935: 4.

¹⁴⁹*Cleveland Standard*, 23 November 1935: 4.

¹⁵⁰*North-Eastern Daily Gazette*, 20 November 1935.

¹⁵¹Aylward memoirs: 33.

¹⁵²Chase and Wyman, *Heartbreak Hill*: 32.

¹⁵³Chase and Wyman, quoting Ayleard, *Heartbreak Hill*: 32.

skill,¹⁵⁴ but Aylward's closing comment on Boosbeck was 'the venture never made a profit or even paid the men a proper wage.'¹⁵⁵

Paul Matt and the Brynmawr Furniture

The period of furniture making at Brynmawr fell into three phases, though ill-defined by date. The first phase was of Paul Matt as manager of the furniture workshop at Brynmawr from 1928, then a few years in which Matt and Arthur Reynolds worked together as manager and foreman, and finally the period after Matt left in 1933 or 1934 in which Arthur Reynolds was solely responsible for the furniture production. The setting up of the factory and the furniture production are described in Chapter Three.

At first the workshop premises were two bays of the Gwalia Works¹⁵⁶ building in which bootmaking was being re-established, but with benches, tools and some basic machinery. This served the first few years in which the main object was to train young men to the trade. More serious considerations affected the design and construction of the pieces. An immediate problem was presented with the climatic conditions resulting from Brynmawr's geographical position. Matt said that as it was generally cold and damp these were 'almost impossible conditions under which to french polish, spray polishing had not by then been invented'¹⁵⁷. . . I soon realised that the complicated period designs I was used to¹⁵⁸ would not work here.' Moreover, 'so severe was the slump [that] our design had to be

¹⁵⁴Chase and Wyman, quoting Aylward, *Heartbreak Hill*: 32.

¹⁵⁵Aylward memoirs: 33.

¹⁵⁶Pitt, *Our Unemployed* 25.

¹⁵⁷NPTMG:1994.180.38. *Further Notes to the News Letter on the Background to the Brynmawr Furniture*: 8.

¹⁵⁸NPTMG:1994.180.38. *Further Notes*: 5.

Before moving to Brynmawr, Paul Matt was working with his father in their London cabinet making business. He accounts for their work with period reproductions as a continuation of the work Charles Matt had undertaken while interned at Knockaloe. There, he had been responsible for 'some pieces of furniture for some well known people to their suggestions which they wanted to match existing pieces, nearly all these were reproductions.'

One commission for the interned cabinet makers to execute was for items for the new Basset-Lowke home in Northampton to Charles Rennie Mackintosh designs and Paul Matt records that this was not the only order fulfilled at Knockaloe. He continued by describing the work he and his father undertook after the War:

so radically different that people wanted to buy it for its attractive appearance, simple and honest.¹⁵⁹ In addition, the designs had to be within the capacity of newly trained and inexperienced young men.¹⁶⁰ What then matured was a range of furniture, which with some additions, and after a few years in the hands of skilled workers, remained unchanged until the end of production in 1939.

With no explicit declaration of Arts and Crafts principles and having made no reference to Arts and Crafts furniture, as witnessed by the archive, Matt's designs demonstrate Arts and Crafts principles of truth to materials, honesty of construction and fitness for purpose. His furniture was simple in both design and construction. His material, at first oak, followed by the introduction of walnut, was used in its natural state, with the addition of veneered plywood where it best served his purpose.¹⁶¹ The furniture had no superfluous decorative additions. The lines were straight and clean, but bevelled, chamfered and tapered where he wished to express his design concept of the perfection of a sphere.¹⁶² These facets also brought reflected light to give life to the piece.¹⁶³ To continue to give the impression he was seeking he said that :

Our simple designs called for a simple protective polish.' For the oak we used a wax polish that brought out the beauty of the grain and for the walnut a transparent shellac polish that again enhanced the natural grain, all the time leaving the wood to speak for itself.¹⁶⁴

so when we were working on our own we continued to make articles for them. In one case it meant making a quantity of furniture for a very large country house so when we received enquiries it seemed natural to base the designs on what we were already doing, and there were beautiful examples among them. NPTMG:1994.180.38 *Further Notes: 5.*

¹⁵⁹NPTMG:1984.180.38: 4.

¹⁶⁰NPTMG:1984.180.38: 4.

¹⁶¹NPTMG:1994.180.30. *Further Notes: 8.*

¹⁶²NPTMG:1994.180.30. *Further Notes: 7.*

¹⁶³ NPTMG:1994.180.30. *Further Notes: 8.*

¹⁶⁴ NPTMG:1994.180.30. *Further Notes: 8.*

While this finish was the one most suited to the climatic conditions of Brynmawr, it was also considered most suitable because the furniture 'could be easily kept in good condition' and was also in accord with Matt's opinion of 'ordinary furniture [which] was so overlaid with stain and varnish the wood was lost, often with good reason.'¹⁶⁵ His basis was a solid wooden framework with inserted laminated panels where appropriate, or raised and stepped panels, with bevelled edges demonstrating his commitment to his model of the sphere. For Matt 'Brynmawr meant raised panels above all else.'¹⁶⁶ He regarded the bureau desk as the best example of his work as it incorporated all the pointers to his style and philosophy.¹⁶⁷

The differences from contemporaneous work which make Matt's furniture distinct lie in the fact that his pieces were designed with the inexperience of his workers and the restrictions of his workshop in mind. In addition, of first importance for his design was its marketability, for the success of the social aspects of the Brynmawr project was dependent on the sales.

Brynmawr Furniture Catalogues

There is no dated catalogue in the archives. There are dated price lists, the earliest available being for 1936, which does not conform entirely with the content of the catalogue, six catalogued items not appearing in the price list, yet with two in the price list which are not in the catalogue. As the catalogue is an expensively produced depiction of the furniture, one piece shown on a whole page, it seems likely that it was intended to

¹⁶⁵ NPTGM:1994.180.30: 4 -5.

Matt was severely critical of the factory furniture produced for the home market:

In the 30s the only furniture most people could buy was hard looking replicas of period furniture and by then the manufacturers had further debased it by substituting the lately produced tea-chest plywood, millions of square feet of which were being produced, for the figured solid wood panels . . . It is not surprising that when the depression of the 30s really began to bite, people gave up buying furniture that looked so unattractive, one of their first economies, in fact I believe it could not be given away. NPTMG.1894.75.GROUP.

¹⁶⁶ NPTGM:1994.75.GROUP: Matt to Lucas 5 June 1987.

¹⁶⁷ NPTGM:1994.75. GROUP: Matt to Lucas 5 June 1987.

serve for several years, with amendments to the ranges being made in the annual price lists, which served to up date the prices. A suggested date for the catalogue is 1935-6. The probability of this date is based on a) the departure of Paul Matt from Brynmawr in 1933-34, replaced by Arthur Reynolds, b) the presentation of painted furniture which Matt would not have countenanced, c) the inclusion of a range of nursery furniture, 'the Garth suite'. Reynolds' son Garth was born in September 1933, d) the development of management and commerce under the auspices of An Order, formally constituted in January 1934.

The first Brynmawr piece

Matt's ideas for furniture were developed and tried out in test pieces after a day's work with the club members (see Chapter Three) in the weeks before the workshop was under way. He described the circumstances under which he worked at first. 'I had experimented with a trial sideboard in the attic of the shop where the club was held. Broken windows meant brushing off blown snow in the mornings but it' . . . (the rest of the script is indecipherable).¹⁶⁸ He kept this prototype with him for the rest of his life¹⁶⁹ during which it was adapted to serve as a gramophone cabinet. It is now held in the reserve collection of the Newport Art Gallery and Museum, though its condition is poor.¹⁷⁰ The design went into production and a photograph of the first one produced for sale was used on the cover of a leaflet publicising the furniture being made under the auspices of BCVI. This dates the piece as in or after May 1930 when BCVI was registered, and before January 1934, after which furniture was made under the auspices of An Order. This sideboard design appeared in the catalogue, which is undated but was probably produced in 1936, as the Llanelly Sideboard, and the illustrations show a modification of the original

¹⁶⁸NPTMG:1984.180.38. *Further Notes*: 6.

¹⁶⁹Matt kept not only this, but other prototype pieces, for his own home.NPTMG:1984.75.GROUP.

¹⁷⁰NPTMG: 1984.10.

design with the number of protruding panels to the doors, originally three, having been reduced to two.

Matt's truth to materials and honesty in construction

We naturally started with oak as this is probably the most widely used furniture wood. We were also fortunate that our natural market place to buy our materials was Cardiff that had been the most prosperous Welsh town with its dock area full of palatial coal owners' offices who vied with each other with the furnishing of their headquarters. When the slump came the timber merchants had stocks of the most beautiful timbers and so extra well seasoned. A later bonus when we added walnut to our range was that Mosquito¹⁷¹ aircraft had been made in a neighbouring factory estate and the outer final skin of these machines was what is probably the finest laminated wood ever made and it was Australian walnut, a most beautiful wood and our timber merchant had supplied these factories and still held a stock of this wood! It was unlikely that any other walnut plywood had by then been made and no one was going to make it for us.¹⁷²

As with his original sideboard, Matt had cherished some of this Australian walnut ply, and carried it from home to home till eventually giving it into the care of the curator of the Newport Art Gallery and Museum, where it is now stored, though not catalogued.¹⁷³

The archivist has been informed of its significance. In his old age Matt expressed his respect for it:

Through thick and thin I hung on to what must now be the only 2 pieces of Australian walnut laminated board that are left in the world. Each is a standard 6 x 6 (feet). I refused to contemplate cutting up this lovely board for anything less than would justify it and there seems little chance of this now.¹⁷⁴

The use of walnut, which fortuitously was made possible by the availability of the Australian veneer, came about through association with the Misses Davies of Llandinau. Their interest in developing a cultural centre at Gregynog for the arts and music was coupled with their philanthropic patronage of local craft enterprise.¹⁷⁵ Matt was invited

¹⁷¹Matt may have meant Tiger Moth aircraft, as Mosquitos were not designed until 1939, taking the maiden flight in November 1940. Mosquito Aircraft Restoration, <http://www.mosquitorestoration.com/history.shtml>, (accessed 05/03/2010).

¹⁷² NPTMG: 1984.180.38. *Further Notes*: 8.

¹⁷³ NPTMG:1994. 75. GROUP. Letter from Matt to Lucas 18 April 1984.

¹⁷⁴ NPTMG:1994.75.GROUP. Letter from Matt to Lucas 18 April 1984.

¹⁷⁵The Davies sisters acquired Gregynog in 1920 with the intention of using it as a Welsh Arts and Crafts community. Among the proposed projects were to be furniture making workshops as training and post-war rehabilitation centres, the products to contribute to furnishing the house. Peter Waals was asked to

‘about 1934’ to furnish the new guest room and other bedrooms¹⁷⁶ but the ladies did not want oak furniture. Matt had considered the introduction of mahogany, but found ‘it was a very dead wood unless highly French polished’, which he had already dismissed because of the unsuitability of the climate, and also because ‘our simple working conditions’ were not sophisticated enough for the wood. A sample small multipanel cabinet in walnut was approved by the Misses Davies and the order fulfilled.¹⁷⁷

A fundamental feature of Matt’s furniture design was his interpretation of the concept of the sphere.

I decided that a sphere – an orange – is the most satisfying object to look at, so absolutely complete in itself. I decided that everything as far as possible should be so complete.¹⁷⁸

I started off by using solid panels, ends and doors, but to get the projecting effect I wanted was not able to groove them into the frames, so had to fix them in position by fillets fixed to both frame and panel. This was not commercially feasible and the break through came with the use of laminated hard wood panels.¹⁷⁹

The furniture industry’s method of using plywood panels was to follow its traditional practice of setting solid wood panels into a framework, which was to allow for the possibility of any swelling or shrinking of the natural material in spite of the fact that

advise on the proposal, but was doubtful of its viability as he saw no local craft tradition on which it could be built. In the event Waals was commissioned to supply a quantity of furniture ‘thus complementing the ideological outlook of both the sisters and their advisor . . . a more direct correspondence between philanthropy and furnishing may be drawn from the sisters’ patronage of the Brynmawr Experiment.’ Lindsay Shen, ‘Philanthropic Furnishing: Gregynog Hall, Powys’, *Journal of the Furniture History Society*, vol. XXI, 1995: 225-6.

¹⁷⁶Sir Henry Walford Davies (1869-1941), composer and Master of the King’s Music in 1934, was the first, with his wife, to use this guest room.

¹⁷⁷NPTGM:1994.75.GROUP. Letter from Matt to Lucas 27 June 1983.

¹⁷⁸NPTMG:1994.75.GROUP. Matt to Lucas, 5 June 1978.

¹⁷⁹NPTMG:1994.75.GROUP. Matt to Lucas, 14 January 1984.

¹⁷⁹ NPTMG: 1984.180.38: 4.

Plywood, made by bonding wood veneers in layers, the grain of each layer lying at right angles to the next came into use in the furniture industry in the early 20th century. Once the problems of suitable adhesives was solved, plywood was used as an alternative to solid wood for its properties of strength without splitting or shrinking, for the matching of finished surfaces since it was produced in large panels, and for reduced cost. R. Bruce Hoadley, *Understanding Wood: a Craftsman’s Guide to Wood Technology*, (Newtown: Taunton Press, 2000): 229-233.

Matt made anachronistic use of the term ‘laminated’. Although applicable to the steel industry since the mid-19th century the term did not come into common use in the wood industry until the 1940s when the bonding of veneers produced a high strength material for use in the aircraft industry (OED).

laminated wood does not shrink. Matt criticised this feature of their design for giving 'a negative effect' because the panels were thereby sunk within the framework.¹⁸⁰

Matt's intention was to create a positive look with projecting panels to counter 'the wholly depressing atmosphere of the whole area' and to improve the spirits of those depressed by unemployment.¹⁸¹ He was therefore obliged to solve a problem. He could not use solid wood panels to achieve his spherical look which he described as being the essence of Brynmawr furniture (see previously). It was more practical to make use of plywood. The conventional furniture trade had resolved the problem of the vulnerability of the edges of plywood by inserting its panels into grooves in a frame but this made impossible the raised and rounded profile that Matt wanted. His solution was to set a plywood panel in a recessed frame (as a picture sits on the rebate in a picture frame), the surfaces level. The plywood edges were thus protected from damage. The frame then 'could be bevelled so as to present attractive facets and the combined panel is then fixed in the piece of furniture.'¹⁸² He reported that 'The London Museum of Furniture congratulated us on being one of the first to use a new material [plywood] in its own right and not as a substitute.'¹⁸³ The commitment to a spherical appearance was further achieved by design detail. Matt described how

All our stretchers under a piece of furniture were narrower at the side where they joined the article [rather] than in the centre, where they had the heaviest part of the load that [they] were carrying. Again, the gallery that was fixed to the back edge of an article to stop anything being pushed off were (sic) all wider in the centre than at the sides, also giving a feeling of roundness. The bevelled projecting panels on the sides and on the front again added to this feeling of a spherical object. This gave us the bonus that there were no suites or sets. Each piece was an entity and could stand happily by itself and yet could always be added to.¹⁸⁴

¹⁸⁰NPTMG: 1984.180.38: 4.

¹⁸¹NPTMG: 1984.180.38: 4.

¹⁸²NPTMG:1984.180.38: 4.

¹⁸³ NPTMG.1984.180.38. *Further Notes to the News Letter*: 8.

¹⁸⁴ NPTMG.1984.180.38. *Further Notes to the News Letter*: 7.

Matt described his approach to construction in his booklet *Woodwork from Waste* which was not written until he had left Brynmawr to work as crafts advisor for the NCSS in South Wales. The booklet was to guide instructors to beginners as unskilled as his trainees at Brynmawr and some of the examples of suitable articles resemble those illustrated in the catalogues of Brynmawr furniture, giving a published account of the principles to which he worked.

In this booklet his emphasis was on simplicity of both equipment and materials so that there could be the satisfaction of achievement, and for those depressed by unemployment, a new standard of values. He referred to 'the discipline and virtue of simplicity' so that a high standard could be reached with the easiest of methods.¹⁸⁵ The interviewees in the cassette tape recordings reported that there were no mortice and tenon joints in Matt's pieces at Brynmawr. All his joints were dowelled, 'triple, double and single according to the piece of timber, and that he made the pegs by hand.'¹⁸⁶ However, as the men's skills developed and Matt was more confident of their ability, dovetailing was introduced. These joints were, however, limited in use and restricted to hard woods. His opinion was that mortice and tenoning was the only satisfactory method for making joints in soft woods.¹⁸⁷ His respect for his craft was shown when he referred to his raw material and 'its grand power of co-operation when treated kindly' and that in this way 'the underlying principles of design are discovered.'¹⁸⁸

Quaker interest in and support for the Brynmawr project enabled the furniture workshop to develop towards commercial viability. The first order for a quantity was for 250 chairs for The Mount, the Friends' School for girls in York (referred to in Chapter Three). These were not designed by Matt. Chairs were needed for the new school assembly

¹⁸⁵Matt, *Woodwork from Waste*. The Work of our Hands Series, no III. (Oxford: Oxford University Press, date unknown, possibly 1935): Introduction.

¹⁸⁶NPTGM:1994.180. 2b.

¹⁸⁷Paul Matt, *Woodwork from Waste*: 4.

¹⁸⁸Matt, *Woodwork from Waste*: Introduction.

hall which was designed by Hubert Lidbetter, the architect of Friends' House in London. In the late 1920s the school's Building Committee asked Lidbetter to design the chairs and to give the order to the furniture makers at Brynmawr¹⁸⁹ He replicated his design for the windows of the hall into the back of the chairs.

An example of Matt's consideration of fitness for purpose, ingenuity and originality

A special example of Matt's skill in providing a design to suit a purpose is with his fulfilling of the order of chairs for The Mount School, introduced in Chapter Three. These chairs were intended for use at an assembly of all the girls in the Hall, and Matt interpreted Lidbetter's design in the construction to accommodate all ages. He explained that

what the photo¹⁹⁰ cannot show is that each pair of rows of chairs is either ½ inch higher or lower than its neighbour on each side so that the senior girls at the back can look over the heads of the junior girls at the front. However, it needed a very good method of making the loose seats on the chairs to sort them out.¹⁹¹

By 'sort them out' Matt was supposing that the chairs would be put aside to use the hall for other purposes, which posed the difficulty of re-arranging the chairs in height order for assemblies. He gave no indication as to how this was to be achieved, nor that there was any way of distinguishing the different sizes to assist in sorting them. It was not done by different colours for the seating as they were to be all the same. However, there was thinking of a different kind behind the choice of seating as he explained:

The committee adopted my idea of weaving the loose seats with Chinese sea-grass, sea green colour and strong.¹⁹² The idea being also that if the seats needed repair or renovation it could be treated as craft work in the girls' social time. It made a comfortable seat and the only complaints ever heard came from duchesses who found an imprint of it on their coats, until it was brushed out again.¹⁹³

¹⁸⁹Pitt, *Our Unemployed*: 26.

¹⁹⁰NPTNG: 1994.180.31.

¹⁹¹NPTMG: NPTMG:1994.75 GROUP. Matt to Lucas 22 February 1987.

¹⁹²A Brynmawr man who had been one of the boys in the workshop told Mrs Churchward that 'doing the sea grass chair seats gave us blisters.' NPTGM:1994.180.2b.

¹⁹³There is no indication that these 'duchesses' are to be taken literally. If indeed duchesses, the reference may be to upper class patrons who bought from the exhibitions.

Matt's ingenuity was tested in his design for a table for the dais in the Mount Assembly Hall to complement the new chairs. Commissioned for the purpose, to give a centre piece to the stage when the Hall was used for Meeting for Worship and for lectures, a reading lectern was also needed. Matt described the way he incorporated the lectern into the surface of the table so that it could be removed when not needed:

It is possible to insert the two foot long support of the lectern, which has serrated saw teeth down one side of it to engage the stay that the raised trap door provides. If the lectern is lowered the stay is released and it goes down to the required height. When the lectern is completely removed, the trapdoor is closed and in practice is almost invisible.¹⁹⁴

The supply of furniture for The Mount was completed in 1932. The Mount chair was incorporated into the range and became one of the best selling lines.¹⁹⁵

Arthur Reynolds and the Brynmawr Furniture

After Matt left Brynmawr responsibility for the furniture factory passed to Arthur Reynolds, who had joined Matt directly from employment with Stanley Davies in Windermere.¹⁹⁶ Having worked for a man who declared his Arts and Crafts principles as clearly as did Davies, (see above) it is not surprising that Reynolds's son, Garth, has described the several influences which guided Reynolds as Arts and Crafts. Arthur's training and employment before moving to Brynmawr 'led him entirely along the styles of the Arts and Crafts Movement, principally those of Ernest Gimson and Edward Barnsley.'¹⁹⁷

Under Reynolds the range of furniture was widened and new features were introduced into the designs. Mrs Churchward gave an indication that changes were not

¹⁹⁴NPTMG: 1994. 75 GROUP. Letter from Matt to Lucas 22 February 1987.

¹⁹⁵NPTMG: 1994. 75 GROUP. Letter from Matt to Lucas 22 February 1987.

¹⁹⁶This move to Brynmawr may have come through personal invitation, or from knowledge of the opportunity at Brynmawr through the Quaker 'network'. There is no advertisement of a vacancy for foreman at Brynmawr in *The Friend* within a suitably relevant period. Davies was bound to have been familiar with Scott's enterprise at Brynmawr through the numerous articles in *The Friend* and other Quaker journals in the late 1920s and early 1930s. There appears to be no direct connection between Paul Matt and Stanley Davies.

¹⁹⁷Personal correspondence, letter from Garth Reynolds 9 October 1999.

made until Matt's departure because his personality, confidence and pride in his work were coupled with his being unprepared to deviate from his creations.¹⁹⁸ The interviewer tried with his questions to encourage her to establish that the furniture was radically different when Reynolds was in charge, but neither she nor the former apprentices also present, accepted this. She agreed that there were some changes to the furniture, but she did not see them as for the better or the worse, simply different. She allowed, however, that what was suitable for Friends and other sympathisers in the late 1920s was not as suitable for the wider commercial market when fashion and taste had moved on in the later 1930s.

Matt himself had introduced the use of walnut, (see above) and this with oak remained the basic timber throughout the production of furniture. What changes there were are attributable to Reynolds's management on the grounds that they would have been proscribed by Matt, the unbending autocrat of design.¹⁹⁹ Therefore, while dating of each new design is not possible, they are most likely to have been introduced in 1935, after Matt's departure.²⁰⁰ The 1936 price list itemises 'Examples of a new range of walnut furniture', thus indicating clearly that they were not designed by Matt. Reynolds was certainly responsible for the painted range of coloured furniture which Matt would not have countenanced.²⁰¹ For this, the basic timber was sycamore, with drawers lined with cedar. Either panels or whole pieces were painted in contemporarily named colours which included Marina blue and Margaret Rose pink.²⁰² The 1936 catalogue included a new range

¹⁹⁸NPTMG: 1994.180. Tape 2a.

¹⁹⁹There is agreement that Matt was immediately followed as designer by Arthur Reynolds 'who increased the range to his own designs, and with painted wood, but these did not have the elegance and simplicity of the earlier furniture and were never as successful.' (Alun Davies, furniture curator at St Fagans, seemingly relying on Mrs Churchward's remarks quoted above).

²⁰⁰Matt's marriage in Brynmawr in 1934 and his appointment to work for the NCSS in 1934/5 indicates the date of the introduction of new designs to have been 1935 and they appear in the 1936 catalogue.

²⁰¹NPTMG: 1994.180. Tape 2.
Mrs Churchward, whose husband was sales manager, reported that the painted furniture did not sell well. There were problems with producing it mainly because it was not easy to find a place clean enough in the factory to do the painting. It would seem therefore that such limitation on production was responsible for the painted furniture proving unprofitable, though it was still available in the 1939 price list.

²⁰²Marina, Duchess of Kent married in 1934; HRH Princess Margaret Rose was born in 1930.

of bedroom furniture, the Gwent group, and the Garth nursery suite was named for Reynolds's son who was born in September 1933.

Roger Smith maintains that 'Reynolds's designs are instantly recognized from those of Paul Matt by virtue of their heavier appearance and sweeping lines, giving them an altogether more characteristic 'Thirties' appearance.'²⁰³ There is an element of subjective interpretation here as to what is meant by 'heavier appearance'. Certainly it is not a reference to the physical weight, as a major criticism of Matt's larger solid oak pieces at least, is as to what they weigh. If heaviness is suggested by an appearance of density rather than delicacy, by the proportionate relation of constituent parts, by a squared regularity augmented by the addition of stepped panels, then some of Matt's designs qualify for this description but is not sufficient for comparison. The new design is the shaping to the legs and feet of the post-Matt walnut pieces. 'Sweeping' is a little exaggerated as there is no more than a modest curve which broadens towards the extremity. The curator at Newport has described this feature as 'pendant legged', while Matt, who disapproved of it, called it in retrospect, 'club footed.'²⁰⁴

In fact Matt may well have been mistaken in attributing the shaped leg to Reynolds and it is necessary to record doubts about Reynolds's responsibility for the innovative shape of the legs, though not possible to prove their truth. The doubt lies in a lack of information as to whether Matt was replaced as designer by Reynolds immediately on his departure from the factory. In correspondence with Margaret Pitt, Mr Lucas, the curator who was discussing the acquisition of Brynmawr furniture for the museum in Newport, hoped to acquire some of the pendant legged furniture 'attributed by Paul Matt to

²⁰³Roger Smith, 'Utopian Designer: Paul Matt and the Brynmawr Experiment', *Furniture History: The Journal of the Furniture History Society*, vol. XXIII (1987): 88-97.

²⁰⁴Matt made ascerbic reference to this feature in correspondence with Mr Lucas, the curator, explaining this difference between his work and designs that followed his. He said, 'I don't think I am the only one who does not consider the alterations for the better. Most people prefer mine to his [Reynolds's] later club foot design.' Writing from his retirement home residence he remarked, either jocularly or bitterly, that a neighbour had asked him to 'cut off the ball feet from her Parker Knoll chair, as she tripped and fell over them. As I was cutting them I thought "Shades of Arthur Reynolds."'

Reynolds. There seemed to be a question in his mind, as he quoted Matt, whose own records stated without fail that his successor was Arthur Reynolds and wrote disparagingly about the new designs. Pitt did not commit herself to confirming this, and as she had left Brynmawr some time before Matt, she would not have been conversant with the internal staffing details. She noted only that Paul Matt gave up his work at Brynmawr and so ‘Arthur Reynolds managed the factory.’²⁰⁵

Garth Reynolds, Arthur’s son and also a craftsman in wood, doubts that the newly shaped legs and feet were his father’s design.²⁰⁶ Reynolds was still subject to the constraints of the simple machinery at the Gwalia Works, prior to the building of the new furniture factory in 1938 and which might have inhibited the production of more sophisticated details. In the same correspondence Garth Reynolds identified an Art Deco influence in the painted bedroom furniture which was entirely post-Matt, and in doubting Arthur’s responsibility for the bell ended legs design, pointed out that the legs of the painted furniture were not shaped in this way.

So was a third party responsible for this innovation? There is one significant reference in the cassette tape recordings. The interviewer referred to ‘the flared foot’ and in the same sentence spoke of Arthur Reynolds, as if attributing it to him. One of the group then mentioned that ‘also they employed a designer from Bristol’, and after a little time for reflection, recalled the name of Les Hill who ‘took the place of Arthur Reynolds when he went upstairs.’ This indicates that Arthur moved from design and supervising the workshop to management, but without dates one cannot state with certainty that there was an interim appointment after Matt’s departure, nor, either, that the appointee was responsible for the bell shaping. Maybe for a time there was a transitory, though elusive, Les Hill responsible for the pendant shaped legs and while it seems that Arthur Reynolds

²⁰⁵Pitt, *Our Unemployed*, 26.

²⁰⁶Personal correspondence, letter from Garth Reynolds 9 October 1999.

did not design these, he was prepared to accept them as they remained in the range from their inception to the ending of production at the factory.²⁰⁷

A new style which Garth Reynolds identifies as his father's²⁰⁸ is illustrated in an unsigned article entitled 'Brynmawr Furniture' published in 1937.²⁰⁹ The article described and advertised some new ranges of furniture, though the images were of the pieces in the 1936 catalogue with one exception, the Castan Suite. This suite did not carry a Welsh name as was the Brynmawr tradition, and bore no resemblance to any other pieces, being entirely modern, with flush fronts to the doors and drawers, and without handles. It did not appear in either the 1936, nor the 1939 price list, so had a very short life in the range. There was also an image of a dining room suite in the Annual Report for 1936 (which would not have been published until the following year) which did not resemble any other Brynmawr furniture either, nor did it appear in those price lists. These designs had certainly moved away from the style of the Matt ranges, and perhaps the post-Matt management was more flexible in trying out new ideas and withdrawing them promptly if they proved not to be immediately popular.

Paul Matt and Arthur Reynolds

Both Matt and Reynolds were convinced Quakers and their support for the Brynmawr Experiment is undoubted, with Reynolds' perhaps stronger than Matt's, and with a difference. While Matt was dedicated to the craft of furniture making as a social service to the unemployed, continuing this commitment into his post-Brynmawr working life and further, into his retirement, Reynolds' dedication at the time was, as a member of An Order, to its vision. Matt was not a member of An Order. He was able to move away from the Experiment, possibly for personal reasons,²¹⁰ but was encouraged to take his

²⁰⁷NPTMG: 1994.180. Tape 2.

²⁰⁸Personal correspondence, letter from Garth Reynolds 9 October 1999

²⁰⁹*Towards Community No 2*. The house journal of An Order.

²¹⁰Mrs Churchward said that Matt moved to Cardiff when 'he had done his bit' at Brynmawr. Moreover 'there was a clash of personalities – a lot of people together like that, it was not surprising.'

skills into a wider field of social service with the NCSS. Reynolds remained at Brynmawr until the closure of the factory brought the Experiment to an end.

The chapter has shown that Paul Matt and Arthur Reynolds may be placed in the succession of Quaker furniture makers who worked to Arts and Crafts principles and within a twentieth century Arts and Crafts context. Further, as an enterprise, Brynmawr Furniture Makers linked handcraft with industry and commerce, as did Ambrose Heal and Gordon Russell. Heal, 'the first to bring the legacy of the Arts and Crafts Movement into 20th century industrial manufacture' and Russell 'whilst he always remained an Arts and Crafts man at heart and believed that the work of the past should never be ignored'²¹¹ addressed the 'dichotomy between craft and industry . . . a nagging problem for most of the (twentieth) century.'²¹² That dichotomy did not present the same difficulty for Matt and Reynolds. As skilled hand craftsmen, insistent on the highest standards of craftsmanship from both their apprentices and their experienced employees, benefiting from the use of basic machinery as it became available to them, their work was always aimed to achieve commercial success to ensure employment, the prime purpose of the workshop projects. Christopher Claxton Stevens opined that in the twentieth century 'the British Arts and Crafts legacy continued in only a few oases' which he named as Edward Barnsley in Hampshire, Peter Waals in Gloucestershire, Arthur Romney Green in Dorset, Stanley Davies in the Lake District 'and not many others.'²¹³ The names of Matt and Reynolds supplement those few.

NPTMG: 1994.180. Tape 2. The 'clash of personalities' might be related to differing views of furniture design, and more probably to the formation of the 'in-group' of An Order.

²¹¹Stevens, 'The Twentieth Century. Craft or Mass Production?' 298 and 321

²¹²Stevens, 'The Twentieth Century. Craft or Mass Production?' 295

²¹³Christopher Claxton Stevens, 'The Twentieth Century. Craft or Mass Production', in *The Intelligent Layman's Book of British Furniture 1600-2000*, Clive Edwards, ed (London: The Intelligent Layman, 2005): 291.

CHAPTER SEVEN

CONCLUSION

The aim of the thesis is to site a comparatively unknown Quaker project of social witness, the Brynmawr Experiment, in the years of the economic depression of the 1920s and 1930s and show by analogy that it could be sited also within the twentieth century Arts and Crafts scene. By arguing that the values of the Religious Society of Friends strongly resemble Arts and Crafts principles, establishing that the Brynmawr Experiment was supported and promoted by the Religious Society of Friends and conducted and developed by Quakers, it could, in consequence, be said to be linked with the Arts and Crafts Movement.

In John Ruskin and William Morris was the concern for the dignity of the workman that they considered had been damaged by the effect of industrialisation on society, affected as it was by poverty, the loss of individuality as factory work replaced the hand production of the craftsman, and loss of the freedom for a man to use his skills and creativity at will. They reflected on the medieval communities where, as they saw it, life was joyous and harmonious in peaceful rural settings, and their disciples in the Arts and Crafts Movement, sought to find something of that once more as they banded together in guild type associations and communities. For Quakers, a concern for social justice was fundamental to their faith and motivated them toward the relief of poverty and distress. As a member of the Religious Society of Friends, Peter Scott was active at Brynmawr in the relief of the distress that resulted from the unemployment of the 1920s and 1930s. That period of unemployment affected the whole well-being of the working man, and destroyed his dignity as industrialisation was considered to have done in the previous century. While many agencies were involved with providing for physical needs and arranging occupational opportunities for the unemployed, the Brynmawr Experiment is distinguishable for the organisation of craft workshops which provided both occupation and a measure of paid employment.

There is a suggestion throughout the thesis that, beyond its distinction for the provision of paid employment, there is also a potential for finding the Brynmawr Experiment to be unique among Quaker social witness projects. Further research into these may well establish that correspondence with Arts and Crafts is to be found only in the work of the Quakers at Brynmawr.

The inclusion of historical information has provided the context for both the Religious Society of Friends and the Arts and Crafts Movement. Research in the Quaker archives for the period of the Brynmawr Experiment has revealed not only the amount of relevant source material but the detail included in the meticulous record keeping. It has therefore been possible to piece together an account of the Brynmawr Experiment which has not previously been collated and, in this instance has shown something of the procedural workings by which Friends achieve their practical objects. The examination of committee minutes has revealed details, at times personal, even intimate, of the inter-Quaker family and other connections which have contributed to the construction of committee membership and to their activities. Wider research into Quaker social projects of the inter-war period and the key figures involved will help to fill the gap in the history of twentieth century missions and biographies identified by H. Larry Ingle, as mentioned in Chapter One of the thesis. The exclusion of any study of the Subsistence Production Society from the thesis has been accounted for, but would make for a rewarding investigation as the archive holds a strong record for it.

The Brynmawr furniture is discussed in relation to the Brynmawr project, and an indication given of the limited number of pieces accessible for examination. Closer examination of these and of the catalogue images by one with the professional expertise to comment on its design, construction and manufacture would make it possible to include a contribution about Brynmawr Furniture Makers to the history of furniture which till now has scarcely been acknowledged.

A link between the Brynmawr furniture and Arts and Crafts has been made here, not only because the Brynmawr furniture works was a constituent of the social witness project as a whole, but because in Paul Matt's furniture may be seen the truth to materials, honest construction and fitness for purpose that were the Arts and Crafts aesthetic precepts. What has been omitted is any discussion of the use of machinery in the Brynmawr workshops for comparison with Arts and Crafts. The Arts and Crafts debate of hand versus machine work is convoluted as opinions changed with experience and the needs of industry gained greater significance with the formation of the DIA which many Arts and Crafts men joined. At Brynmawr there was no opinion for or against a preference for hand work. If machinery was provided it was used, and only the extravagance of the 'men from Birmingham' in the last years of the Experiment and well after Matt's departure, earned his bitter disapproval (see Chapter Three).

The examination of the most significant figure for the Experiment, Peter Scott, has shown him to be a man of deep thought with the ability to communicate and encourage both personal and financial support in materialising his vision for reinvigorating the dereliction at Brynmawr. An outline of his background and formative years as a member of the Religious Society of Friends has shown him to be able in his determination to achieve his purpose, and his Quaker faith remained with him lifelong. It may therefore be said with confidence that because the care of the needy and the provision of opportunities for employment was accepted as a responsibility by Friends, Brynmawr Experiment was a Quaker achievement. What emerged unexpectedly from the research was that Peter Scott's philosophy that the needs for living a full life would be met in community correlates with those of William Morris, providing a further link between the Experiment and Arts and Crafts. But while the depth of Scott's religious faith is not challenged some question as to his total commitment to the Quaker way of practising it remains. On balance, his religious faith and concern for social justice serve to establish the 'quakerliness' of his major contribution to the more experimental aspects of the Experiment. More questionable is his

willingness to conform to Quaker practice as a member of a Society in which action is determined by the unity of the meeting, be it local or central Quaker meeting for business or one of the proliferation of committees. Questions that arise are as to his role of 'leader' of the group of Friends that accompanied him to Brynmawr. Was this self-imposed, or given in contradiction of Quaker practice by his group, 'starry-eyed' by the vision that his powerful personality and oratorical skills presented. These are Margaret Pitt's descriptive words, and it was she who accounted for Scott's detachment and 'aloofness' from Friends' House (see Chapter Four). Hints of his feet of clay have come from both Pitt and Mrs Dora Churchward as they referred to clashes of personality with Joan Mary Fry and Paul Matt respectively. An Order, Scott's version of the medieval guild, was both instigated and closed by him, with only nominal participation in its management by the 'friends' in the Order. Further examination of the original source material may help to find answers, but the thesis has shown that there are, apparently, no Peter Scott personal records. Posterity may have to leave a crucial question unanswered. Is Scott, philosopher and theologian, to be described as an opportunist who simply found in the Society a medium for applying his idealism?

The complementary principles and values of the Arts and Crafts Movement and the Religious Society of Friends and their application to the Quaker work at Brynmawr support the claim for the Brynmawr Experiment to be associated with the continuation of Arts and Crafts. This association gives a characteristic to the Experiment which has not been attributed to other Quaker social witness work.

APPENDIX

The appendix comprises a selection of images which illustrate the progress of the Brynmawr Experiment from 1928 until 1940.

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Let us make it clear to those who suffer that we are one with them, and do not mean to leave them to suffer alone.

THE PLIGHT OF THE MINERS

A National Emergency

WHOLE DISTRICTS in the mining and surrounding areas are becoming derelict—shops closing, shopkeepers hopelessly in debt, even public bodies unable to collect the whole of their rates.

MALNUTRITION is the medical word on the children's card; perhaps if it was called "starving" it would better describe the undergrown children, with their little sticks of legs and arms.

IN ALL mining districts the scale of relief is less than that of unemployment pay, and nothing whatever is granted to unmarried able-bodied men.

MONEY AND CLOTHING ARE URGENTLY NEEDED

Please send gifts, which will be gratefully acknowledged, to:

COALFIELDS DISTRESS COMMITTEE

(Chairman: JOAN MARY FRY)

FRIENDS HOUSE, EUSTON ROAD, LONDON, N.W.1

Clothing from the North of England should be sent to Friends Meeting House, Manchester.

THE HUMAN SIDE OF DISTRESS IN THE COALFIELDS.

NEED for a Sustained Effort.

THE desperate situation in the coalfields areas will call for the united and prolonged effort of all men and women of goodwill. When the misery and distress in which whole communities are involved are translated into terms of individual misery and suffering the situation is one which must claim the practical sympathy and support of every Friend reader.

HAVE YOU HELPED YET?

CAN YOU HELP MORE?

WE are seeking by personal and friendly help to bring hope to those who are nearly desperate.

Please send gifts of money and clothing, which will be gratefully acknowledged, to the

COALFIELDS DISTRESS COMMITTEE

(Chairman: JOAN MARY FRY)

FRIENDS HOUSE, EUSTON ROAD, LONDON, N.W.1

Clothing from the North of England should be sent to Friends' Meeting House, Mount Street, Manchester.

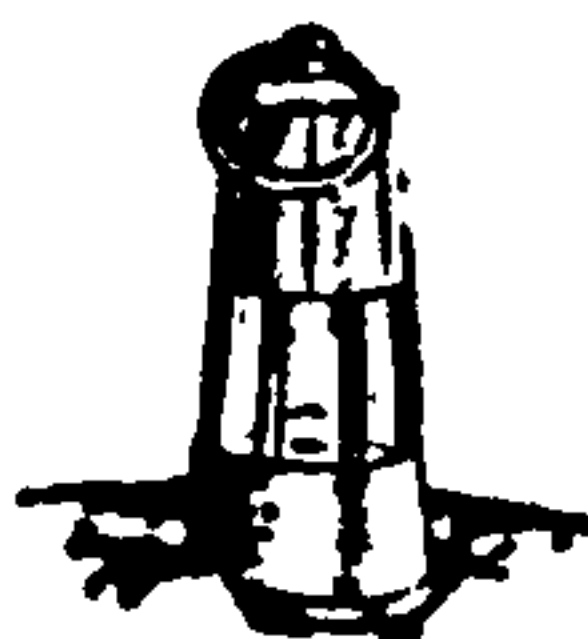


Figure 1. Appeals for support for the Quaker relief work at Brynmawr in November 1928

Sources: *The Friend*, 9 November, 1928: 1017.

The Friend, 23 November, 1928: 1063

CONTINUING AND INCREASING DISTRESS.

NOT WITHIN THE LIFETIME OF ANYONE LIVING HAS SOUTH WALES FACED A WINTER WITH SUCH APPREHENSION AND MISGIVING.

—*Times Correspondent.*

"HE agreed that the situation was too big and serious to be the subject of party controversy. It was, in its way, the most serious position that had occurred in this country since he had been in public life."

—*Mr. Neville Chamberlain.*

Friends have organised committees through which relief is being administered. Boot repairing centres have been established Allotments are being prepared, etc., etc.

WILL YOU SEND A CHRISTMAS GIFT?

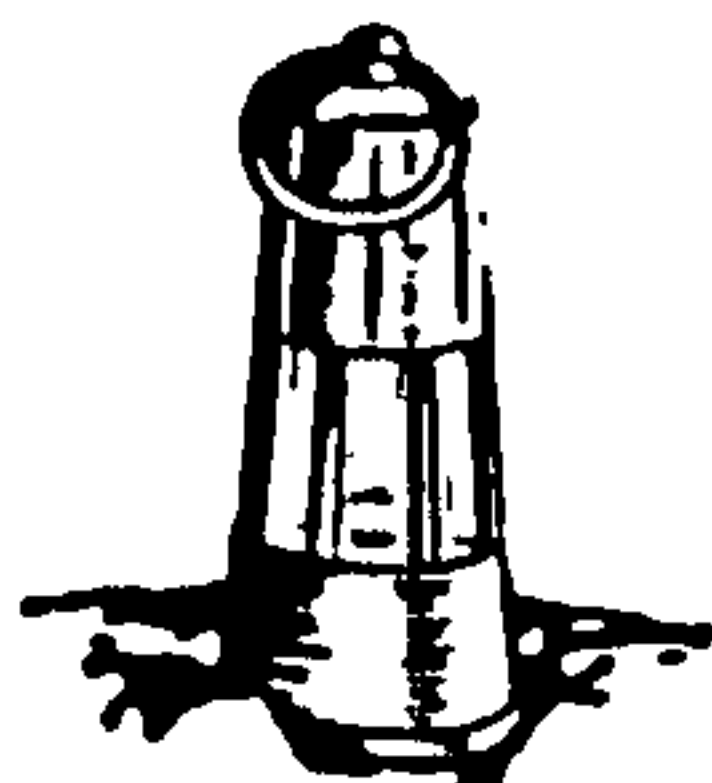
Please send gifts of money and clothing, which will be gratefully acknowledged, to the

COALFIELDS DISTRESS COMMITTEE

(Chairman: JOAN M. FRY).

ROOM F, FRIENDS HOUSE, EUSTON ROAD, LONDON, N.W.1

Clothing from the North of England should be sent to Friends' Meeting House, Mount Street, Manchester.



JANUARY 25TH, 1929.

83

THE FRIEND

RECONSTRUCTIVE SERVICE IN THE COALFIELDS.

OUR service in the Coalfields has never been confined merely to relief work. It has been concerned also with providing some work, especially for single men who are ineligible for relief, with the encouragement of schemes of public utility, the provision of allotments and seeds, of leather and necessary tools for boot repairing, etc., etc.

The needs of the people in distress are not only physical. It has been our endeavour to take help to them which shall express the fellowship of the givers.

WE NEED YOUR CONTINUED SUPPORT.

Clothing especially for men is urgently needed.

Please send gifts of money and clothing, which will be gratefully acknowledged, to the

COALFIELDS DISTRESS COMMITTEE

(Chairman: JOAN M. FRY).

ROOM F, FRIENDS HOUSE, EUSTON ROAD, LONDON, N.W.1

Clothing from the North of England should be sent to Friends' Meeting House, Mount Street, Manchester.

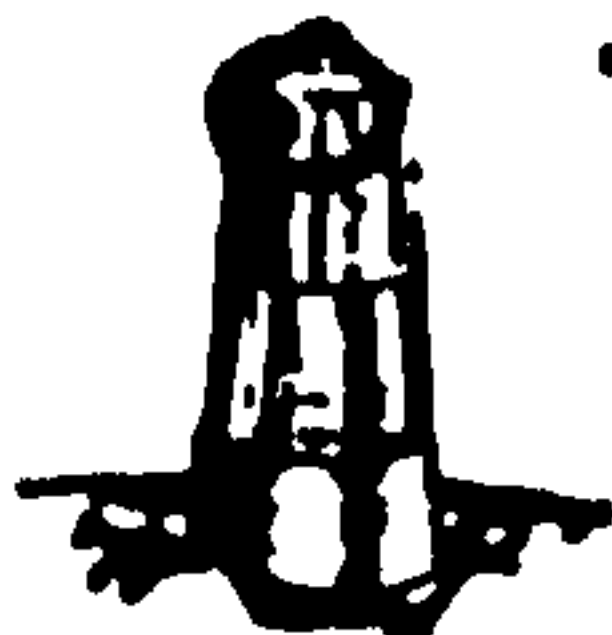


Figure 2. Appeals for support for the Quaker relief work at Brynmawr in December 1928 and January 1929

Sources: *The Friend*, 21 December 1928: 1181

The Friend, 25 January, 1929: 83

SERVICE IN THE COALFIELDS.

LOOKING BEYOND RELIEF.

IN the derelict coalfield areas there is now some prospect of immediate relief which shall bring to men, women and children the bare necessities of life.

Beyond relief there is needed other help which is no less fundamental and in its ultimate significance of even greater importance.

Our workers are looking beyond relief—giving some work immediately to single men, encouraging schemes of public utility, and helping to provide allotments and seeds, etc., etc.

HELP TO GIVE NEW HOPE TO THESE DISTRESSED PEOPLE.

WE NEED YOUR CONTINUED SUPPORT.

Clothing, especially for men, is urgently needed.

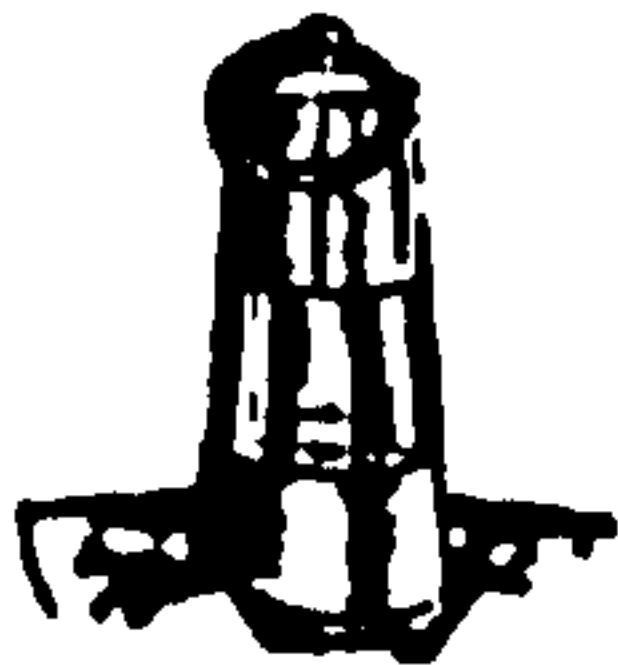
Please send gifts of money and clothing, which will be gratefully acknowledged, to the

COALFIELDS DISTRESS COMMITTEE

(Chairman: Joan M. Fay).

ROOM F, FRIENDS HOUSE, EUSTON ROAD, LONDON, N.W.1

Clothing from the North of England should be sent to Friends' Meeting House, Mount Street, Manchester.



PROVIDING WORK IN THE COALFIELDS AREAS.

THE policy of the Friends Coalfields Distress Committee has always been directed beyond physical relief.

The Committee is already responsible for financing several schemes which give employment, thus re-habilitating the men in their own self-respect and giving them an opportunity of contributing to the well-being of the community. It has initiated the development of allotments and the provision of seeds and is concerned with other schemes which are providing work now.

HOW MUCH DO YOU CARE?

Let the measure of your sympathy be the measure of your response.

Please send gifts of money and clothing, which will be gratefully acknowledged, to the

COALFIELDS DISTRESS COMMITTEE

(Chairman: Joan M. Fay).

ROOM F, FRIENDS HOUSE, EUSTON ROAD, LONDON, N.W.1

Clothing from the North of England should be sent to Friends' Meeting House, Mount Street, Manchester.

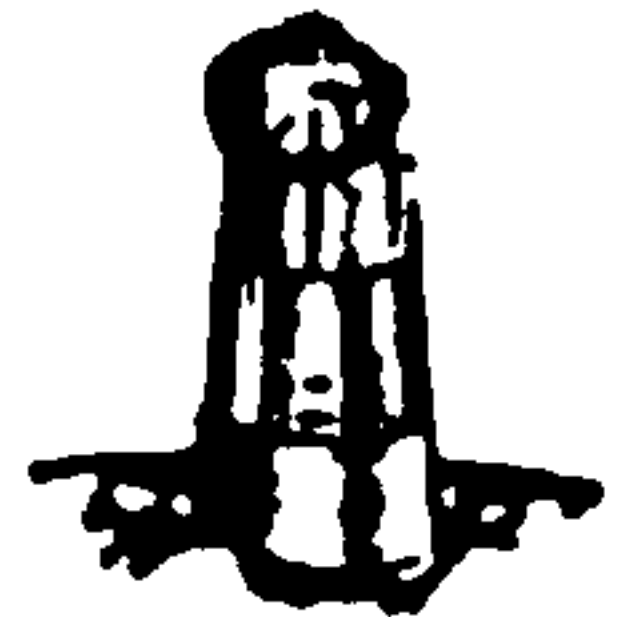


Figure 3. Appeals for support for the Quaker relief work at Brynmawr in February 1929

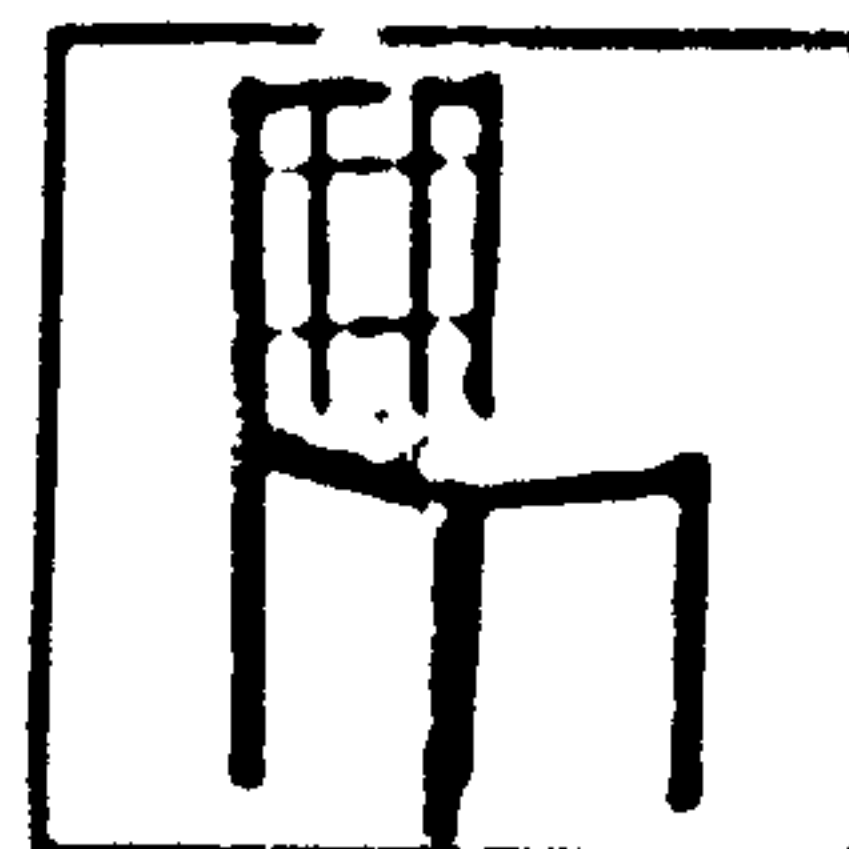
Sources: *The Friend*, 8 February, 1929: 123

The Friend, 22 February, 1929: 167

WHAT £6,600 CAPITAL HAS DONE NEW INDUSTRIES IN DERELICT TOWN



OVER 60 PEOPLE ARE NOW EMPLOYED
IN THE VARIOUS INDUSTRIES INITIATED
BY
Brynmawr and Clydach Valley Industries Ltd.



Bootmaking.

Bootmaking was the first industry to be started. Considerable orders have been obtained in open competition.

Coal Mine.

Coal of excellent quality is being obtained and satisfactory contracts for a large part of the output for the next six months have been obtained.

Hosiery.

Some 300 pairs of miners' stockings are being knitted per week.

Furniture.

Furniture of modern design in weathered oak is being produced.

Spinning.

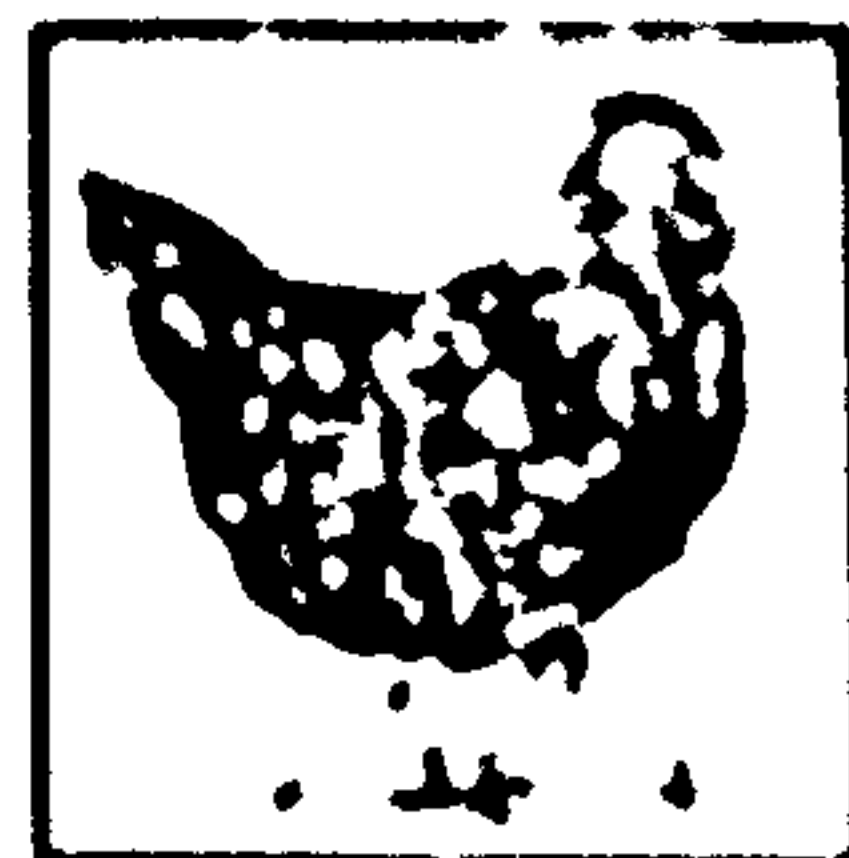
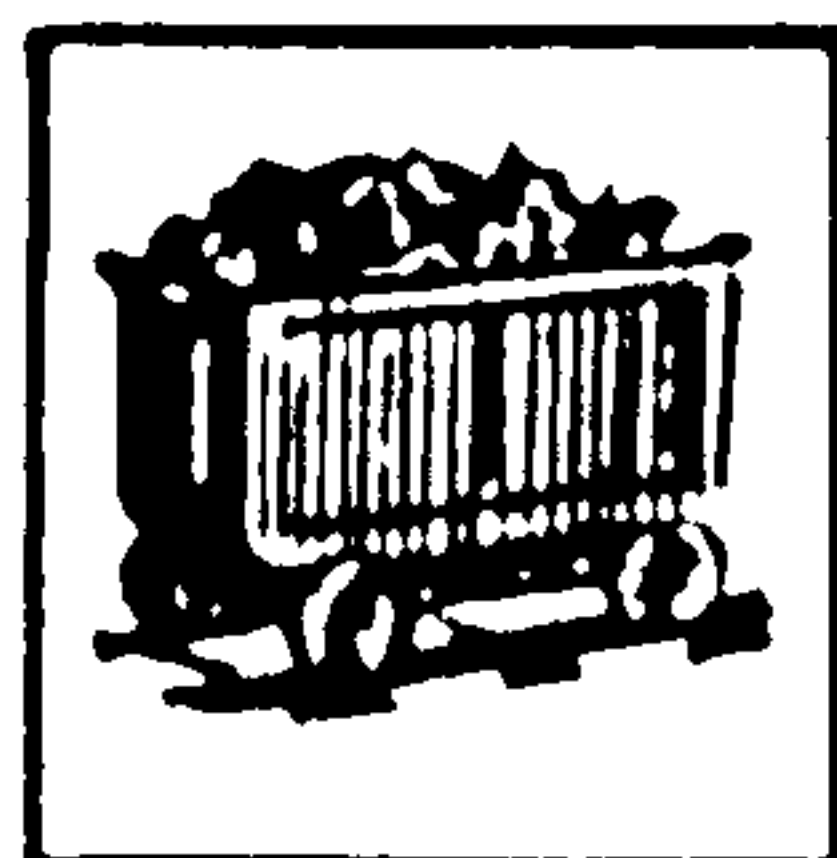
The wool is bought locally and dyed, carded, spun, woven and finished in our factory.

Weaving.

We are making a special tweed of pleasant design and exceptionally hard-wearing.

Poultry Keeping.

A number of people have been supplied with a poultry house, chickens, etc., and linked together co-operatively for the purchase of foodstuff and the sale of eggs.



FURTHER £2,000 CAPITAL NEEDED FOR DEVELOPMENT

COME TO THE
EXHIBITION

of the Society's Products to be held in

ROOMS 7, 8 & 9
FRIENDS HOUSE
EUSTON RD., LONDON, N.W.1

THURSDAY & FRIDAY
MARCH 26th to 27th, 1931
11 a.m. to 8 p.m.

Peter Scott will speak on THE STORY OF BRYNMAWR on Friday, March 27th at 6 p.m. Sir Wyndham Deedes, of the National Council of Social Service, has kindly consented to take the chair.

A short description of the work will also be given at 1.20 p.m. on both Thursday and Friday.



Committee of ...
William A. ...
George W. ...
Peter Freeman ...
Thomas ...
Harry M. ...
Peter ...

Secretaries: CHALMERS, WADDELL & CO.
Chartered Accountants,
26 Coleman Street, London, E.C.1

To the Secretaries, Brynmawr & Clydach Valley
Industries Ltd., 26 Coleman Street, London, E.C.1

(a) Please send me further particulars of your
work and the first Annual Report

(b) Enclose herewith £
as donation

Name _____

Address _____

Figure 4. Announcement of the work of Brynmawr and Clydach Industries Ltd achieved by March 1931 with capital raised from appeals

Source: *The Friend*, 27 March, 1931: 283



Figure 5. Some of the first Quakers to work at Brynmawr

Upper, left to right:
Connie Butler (later Wilkinson); Margaret Wates (later Pitt); Lilian Scott; Peter Scott;
Paul Matt.

Lower, left to right:
Elizabeth Painter; William Noble; John Dennithrne; Paul Matt; Noel Hyde.

Sources: Upper: photograph lent by Margaret Pitt
Lower: LSF Temp Mss 508/24

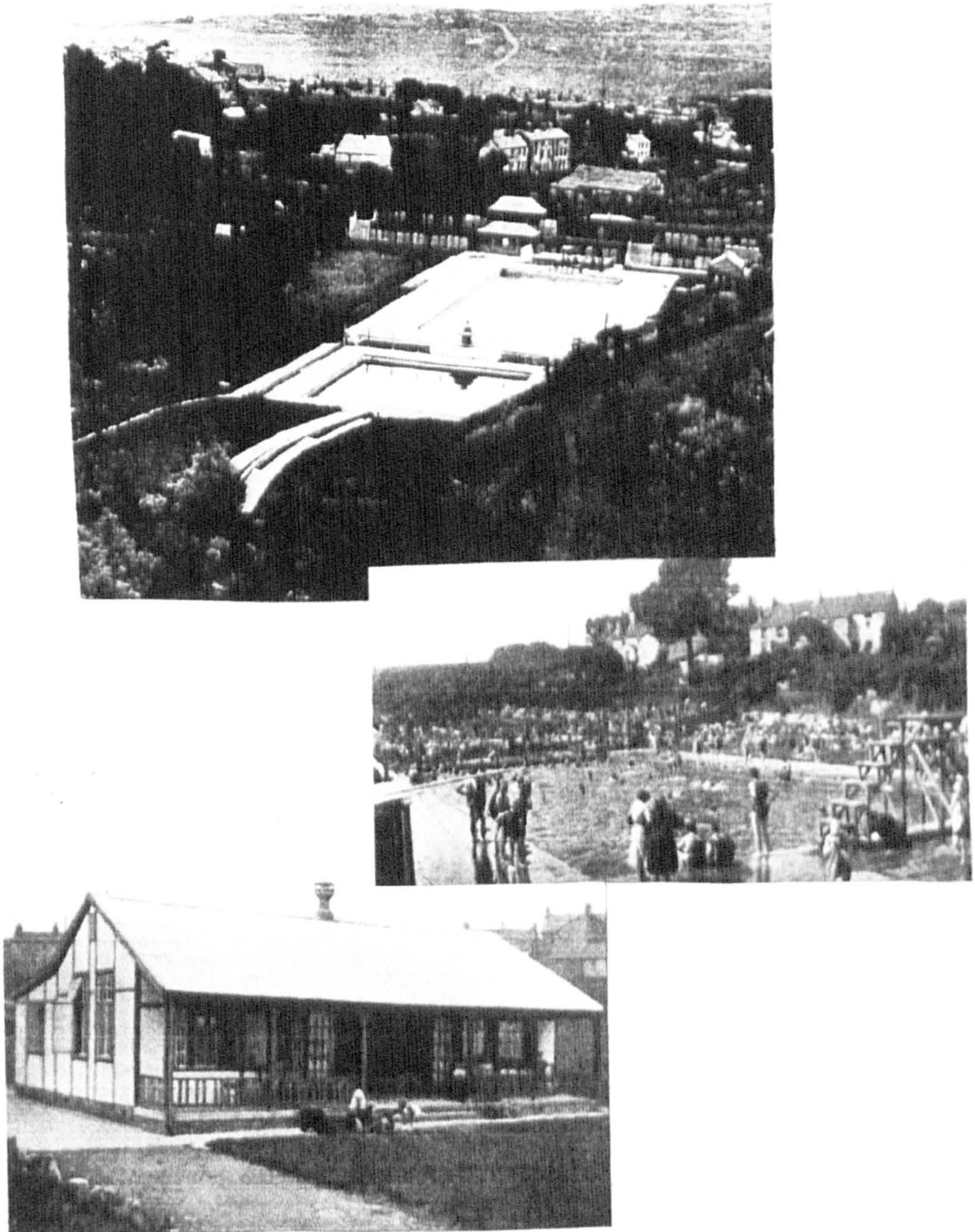


Figure 6. The swimming pool and the nursery school at Brynmawr built by voluntary labour

Sources: Upper: Annual Report 1937 (An Order of friends, 1937): 42

Middle and Lower: G.N.H., *The Brynmawr Experiment 1928-1933* (Community House, Brynmawr, 1934): 13 and 14

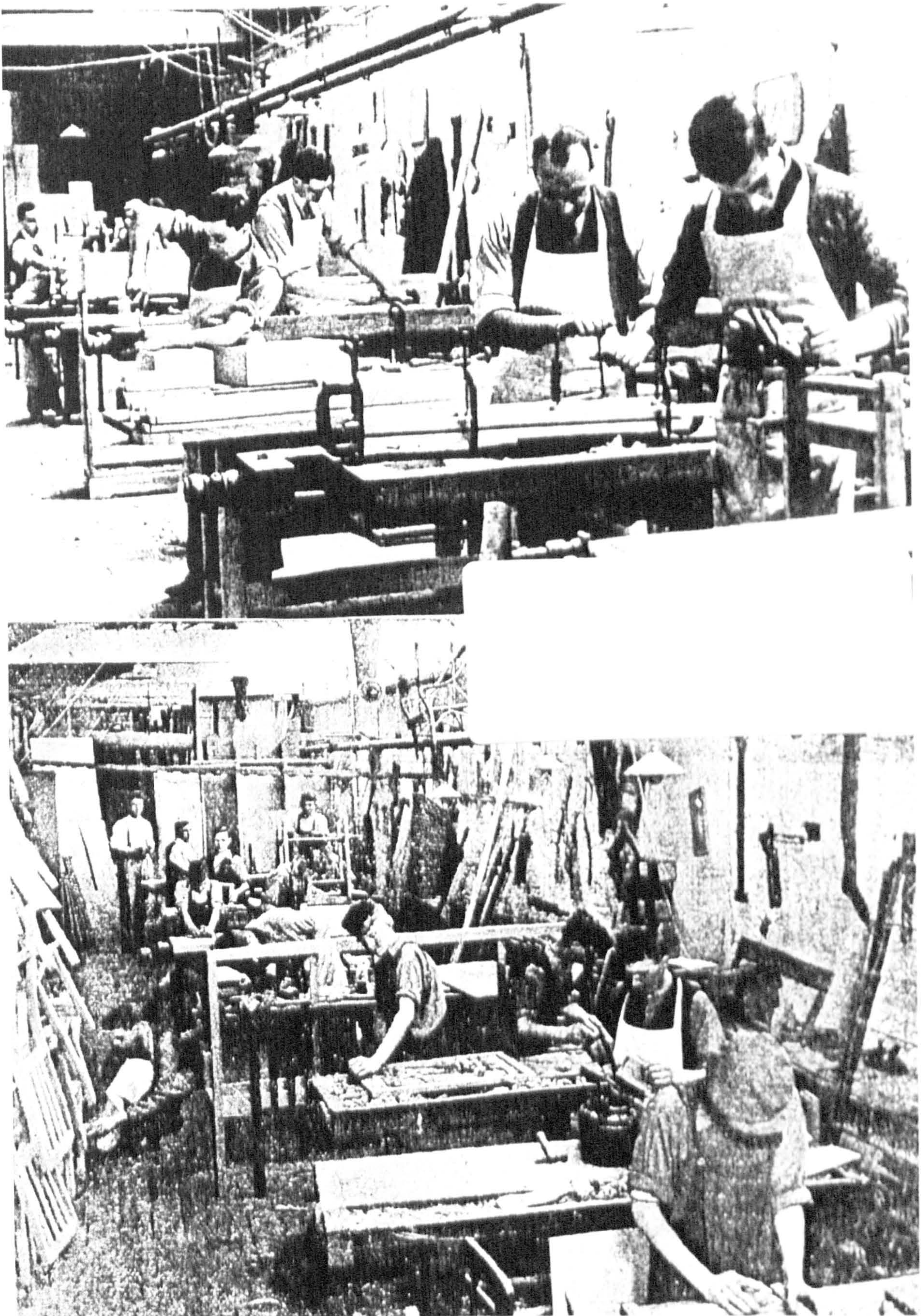


Figure 7. Carpentry shops in the furniture factory at Brynmawr

Source: An Order of friends. An Account of their Activities and Ideas (An Order of Friends, 1936): 19.

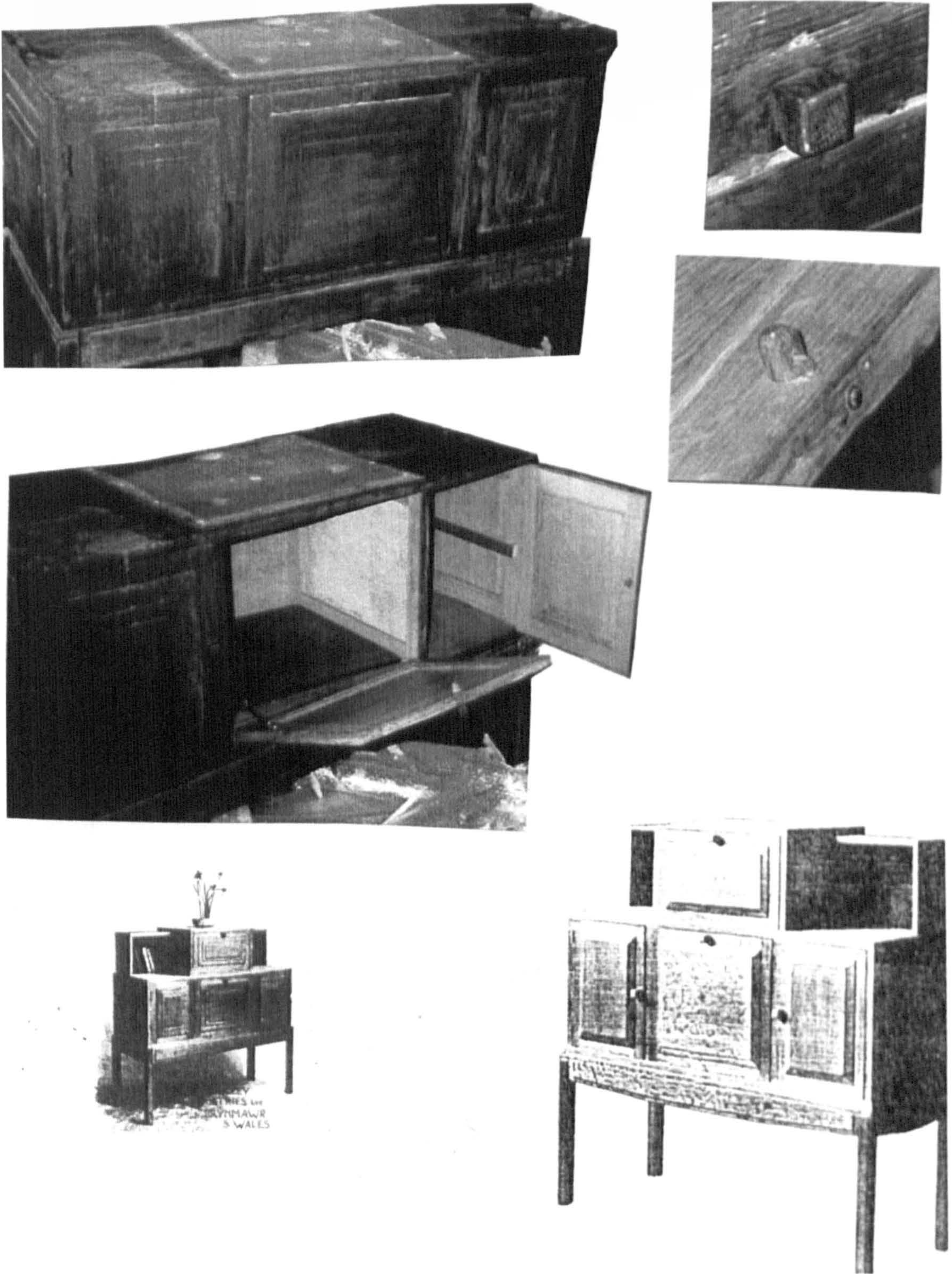


Figure 8. Paul Matt's prototype sideboard

Upper: The sideboard in store at present, showing the later adaptation to a gramophone cabinet. Detail is of the wooden knobs and catch on drop down door.

Lower: The original piece from the first advertising leaflet and as it appeared in later catalogues after modification.

Sources: Upper: Photographs by P. Manasseh

Lower left: NPTMG: 1994.180.42

Lower right: NPTMG: 1994.180.20.GROUP

Modern Welsh Furniture in Oak

by

**Brynmawr and Clydach Valley
Industries**

Design in Modern Furniture is a natural outcome of the demand, evident to-day in so many forms of Art, for simplification of outline and avoidance of superfluous ornament. It conforms, as all good design does, to essential requirements, while retaining beauty of line and proportion.

It is consistent with the desire, widespread to-day in all new forms of Life, to avoid shams and makeshifts, to escape from a blind acceptance of tradition, and, while respecting convention, to express that freedom of spirit and of imagination which is the keynote of all true Progress.

Figure 9. Early (undated) publicity leaflet for Brynmawr furniture

Source: NPTMG: 1994.180.20.38

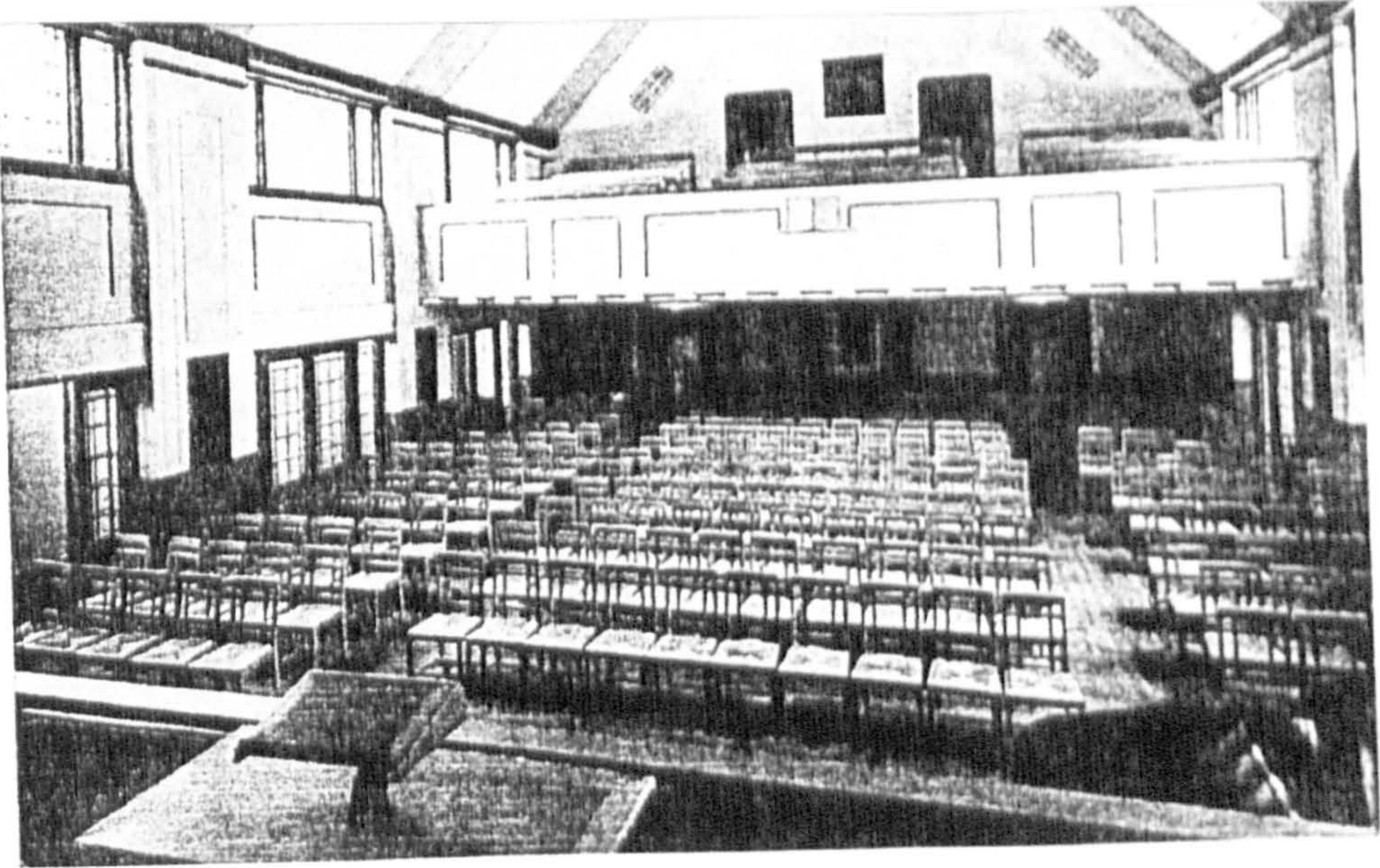
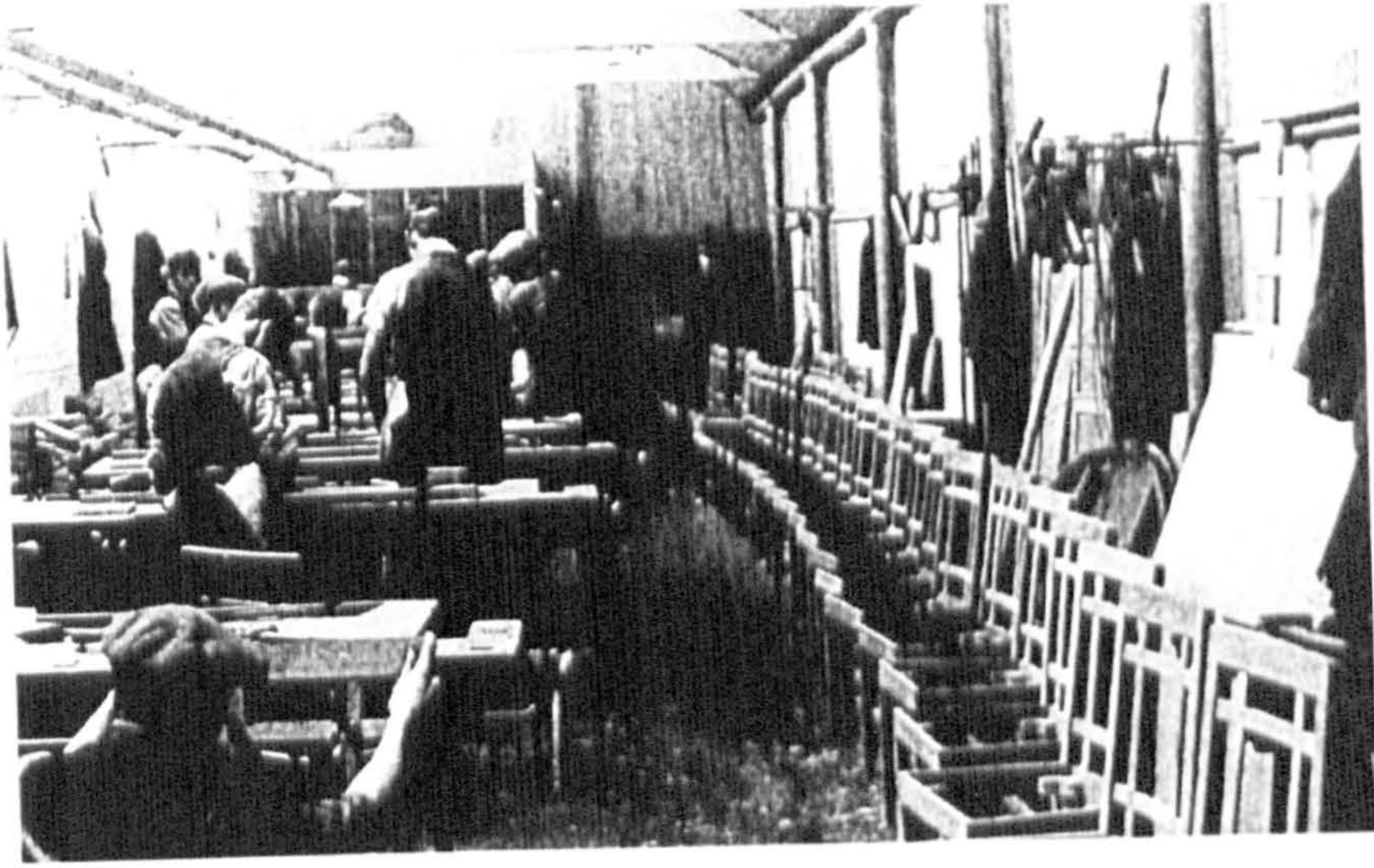


Figure 10. The Mount chairs for the new Assembly Hall at the Mount School, York in production at Brynmawr and in situ.

Source: Roger Smith, 'Utopian Designer: Paul Matt and the Brynmawr Experiment'. *Furniture History. The Journal of the Furniture History Society*, vol.XXIII 1987: Figure 2.s

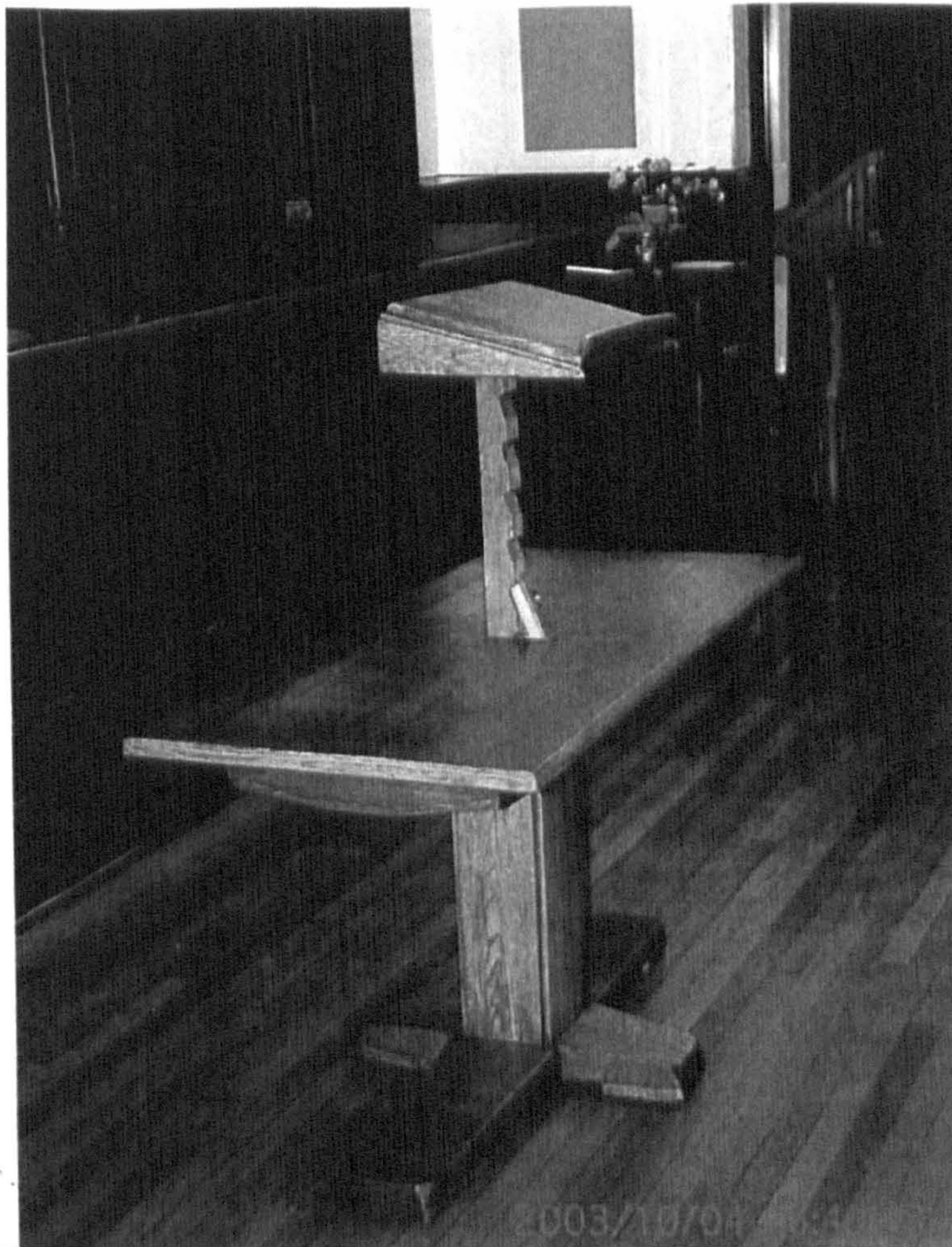


Figure 7. The Mount table and lectern, custom made at Brynmawr to complement the chairs illustrated above

Photograph by Paul Bowers-Isaacson

BRYNMAWR FURNITURE

OUR IDEALS

We exist to provide creative employment at not less than Trade Union Rates of Wages for men and boys who would otherwise be doomed to idleness and frustration.

We strive to produce beautiful furniture of high quality and good design.

We believe that good design is consistent with the desire—wide-spread to-day in all new developments of life—to avoid shams, makeshifts and meretricious ornament : to escape a blind acceptance of fashion or convention : and, whilst respecting tradition, to express that freedom of spirit and imagination which is the keynote of all true progress.

We believe that to be of good design an article must be supremely fitted for its purpose : the materials employed must express their natural qualities : a balanced harmony of line, colour and texture must be achieved.

Towards these Ideals our artist-craftsmen strive.

Figure 12. Advertising leaflet for Brynmawr Furniture, produced by Brynmawr and Clydach Valley Industries Ltd. It continues in Figure 13

Source: NPTMG: 1994.180.20.GROUP

DISTINCTIVE FURNITURE OF MODERN DESIGN AND A HIGH STANDARD OF CRAFTSMANSHIP

OUR IDEALS.

GOOD DESIGN is the fulfilment of these three conditions:—

First : The article produced must be supremely fitted for its purpose.

Second : The materials selected must be suited to their use; and the design such as to employ their natural qualities.

Third : A harmony of line, colour, texture, and the balance of masses must be achieved.

IT IS CONSISTENT with the desire, widespread to-day in all new developments of life, to avoid sham, make-shifts and meretricious ornament; to escape a blind acceptance of convention; and, whilst respecting tradition, to express that freedom of spirit and imagination which is the keynote of all true Progress.

TOWARDS THESE IDEALS OUR ARTIST-CRAFTSMEN STRIVE.

OUR PRODUCTS.

OAK FURNITURE. Our range of oak furniture for every room in the house embodies certain characteristic features of design and construction—such as the raised and framed panel—which make for strength and rigidity and, at the same time, display the natural beauty of the

[OVER

wood. This is enhanced by the waxed finish normally employed both in the natural colour of the oak and in a range of rich brown shades.

WALNUT FURNITURE. A range of pieces has been produced in the same spirit as the earlier oak furniture, but specially designed to display the qualities and characteristics peculiar to walnut. The finish adopted is the natural colour of the wood enriched by a wax polish which emphasizes the satiny texture and mellow colouring of the timber.

OTHER FURNITURE. A number of designs have been produced combining walnut with oak and walnut with sycamore; cedar and sycamore have been used together in the production of very charming painted nursery furniture.

CONTRACTS. We are also equipped for the preparation of furnishing designs and schemes for halls, churches, refectories, clubs and other organisations of such nature; and offer first-class furniture for these purposes at competitive prices. No charge is made for the preparation and submission of such schemes.

BRYNMAWR & CLYDACH VALLEY
INDUSTRIES, LTD.

GWALIA WORKS : BRYNMAWR : SOUTH WALES.

Figure 13. Continuation of Figure 12, Brynmawr Furniture leaflet



BRYNMAWR FURNITURE

THE NEW LOCAL
INDUSTRY

which is gaining a national reputation for
beauty of design, fine craftsmanship and
choice materials

BRYNMAWR FURNITURE

produced by local labour trained to a very
high standard by skilled craftsmen

BRYNMAWR FURNITURE

produced in three ranges — Oak, Walnut,
enamelled Sycamore and Cedar

*A permanent London Showroom, opened by
Mrs. Neville Chamberlain, is an indication
of the progress of this new local industry*

Write or call for illustrated catalogue

BRYNMAWR FURNITURE MAKERS Ltd.

Factory - GWALIA WORKS, BRYNMAWR
London Showroom - 6 Cavendish Square, W.1

Figure 14. Advertising leaflet for Brynmawr Furniture produced by Brynmawr Furniture Makers Ltd

Source: NPTMG: 1994.180.20.GROUP



Figure 15. Examples of Brynmawr Furniture

Source: NPTMG: 1994.180.20.GROUP

CLOSING DOWN

Our story has often been told. This is its final chapter. The Brynmawr Furniture Makers are closing their doors, and only what remains of their stock is now obtainable.

This Exhibition, therefore, is an opportunity which will never occur again. Those who have purchased in the past will be able to add finally to their Brynmawr possessions. Others, and many there are, who intended at some future date to purchase Brynmawr Furniture must **BUY NOW**. There will never be another chance.

Our prices remain the same in spite of recent substantial increases in the cost of materials. Not only is this Exhibition, however, a display of exceptional value in furniture—it has a historic significance in being the end of a great venture.

Those who purchase now will not only possess for years to come supremely good furniture, but also reminders of a unique chapter in Welsh industrial history.

**SO
ENDS
A
GREAT
VENTURE**

BRYNMAWR FURNITURE

1929-1940

Figure 16. Announcement of closing down of Brynmawr Furniture Makers

Source: St.Fagan's Reference Library: F98.5 (item not numbered).

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Brynmawr and Clydach Valley Industries Ltd. Gwalia Works, Brynmawr. 16mm cine film made by Ralph Clarke, a member of Scarborough Friends Meeting, early 1930s. VHS copy in author's ownership.

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