

A Note about the Author

WILLIAM SHEWEN

The following excerpt is from the preface to the 1826 edition of William Shewen's *Meditations and Experiences*.

"In pursuing the present valuable little work, it may be interesting to the reader to be put in possession of the following brief notice of the author, by George Whiting, who was personally acquainted with him. Advertising to the events of 1695, he says:

'This year died William Shewen, of London. He was a very serviceable man on Truth's account, several ways, and an elder in the church, of a sound judgement and understanding in the Truth, and had very clear openings in relation to the work of it; and, also, of Satan's wiles to hurt and hinder the progress in it, having had long experience of both, and therefore could advise and direct the Christian Traveller, how to keep in the one, and be preserved out of the Snares of the other; and wrote in peace with the Lord, and in unity with his people, the 28th of 3rd month, 1695, about 64 years of age.' From page 505 of George Whiting's *Memoirs*, 2nd edition."

William Shewen was born around 1631, nothing is known about his parents. He lived in London on the south bank of the Thames and was a member of Southwark Monthly Meeting. In 1656 his house in Bermondsey Street (at the sign of the two brewers) was one of the first meeting places of Friends south of the river, according to Norman Penney in his book, *First Publishers of Truth*. The index to *The Journal of Friends Historical Society* describes Shewen as a pin maker of Bermondsey, Surrey and

Enfield, Middlesex. In 1679 Shewen married Ann Raper with whom he had three children.

William Shewen was a member of Meeting for Sufferings in the 1670s and 80s and was appointed to deliver papers to the judges of assize, to attend Parliament in session and is signatory to a number of public documents and letters. He was one of those appointed to negotiate through merchants with the kidnappers of Quakers, held captive in Algiers, and to appeal for funds from Friends to ransom them. He acted as umpire in a dispute between Ellis Hookes (the first Recording Clerk) and the Quaker printer Andrew Soul in 1679/80 that resulted in official printing being taken away from Soul. There seems also to be evidence that he wrote letters for Hookes on behalf of the Meeting. In fact Shewen and Hookes (who came from the same area of London) seem to have been close - he was one of those given bequests in Hookes' will in 1681.

Shewen not only was an early convinced and a prominent member of the Society in London in the late seventeenth century, he was also the author of a number of tracts and books. In 1674 Shewen began quarreling in public with Jeremiah Ives, a Baptist. The quarrel escalated into an exchange of pamphlets that began Shewen's career as a writer. In Smith's *Descriptive Catalogue of Friends' Books*, there are ten entries for William Shewen, some of the works being reprinted up to the middle of the nineteenth century.