

Archives; Wigan & Leigh
The Edward Hall Diary Collection

Diary of John Needham

May 1784 – Dec 1785

EHC/60



Edward Hall, c.1932

Editor's Note

All diary transcripts have been produced with the intention of faithfully reproducing the text of the original manuscript exactly as it appears. All spellings and punctuation marks have been transcribed as they appear; where clarification was thought necessary by the transcriber, an explanation, current spellings or punctuation have been added in square brackets.

The diary of John Needham, Baptist minister, covering the period May 1784 – December 1785, is contained in a little stiff-backed pocket book and possesses features somewhat uncommon to the usual run of diaries, in that Needham uses the third party for many of his entries and in some instances adopts a cypher, for reasons best known to himself.

Very little information is available about him; the date of his birth is unknown and that of his death can only be surmised. According to Julian's Dictionary of hymnology, 'he was the son of John Needham, Baptist minister of Hitchen, who was probably responsible for what education he got in his youth. In 1750, Needham became co-pastor with John Beddome at the Baptist meeting house in the Pithay, Bristol. But two years later, Beddome, having retired through age, a violent controversy arose in the church with a regard to a continuance of the plan of co-partnership. As a result, Needham and a number of his friends removed to a Baptist meeting house in Callowhill Street, where Mr. Foot was pastor. For a time the two societies used the same building at different hours, but in 1755 they were united, with Mr. Foot and Mr. Needham as co-pastors.

It is known that up to 1774, this arrangement continued and it is known that in 1787, both Needham and Foot having died, the Callowhill Street church became extinct. But which of the two pastors was the survivor, is not known.

In the year 1768 Needham published Hymns Devotional and Moral on various Subjects, collected chiefly from the Holy Scriptures &c. Bristol; S. Farley 1768. These hymn numbers, 263 in all, and whilst none of them possess great excellence, several of them are of a pleasing and useful character. During the last 120 years, several have appeared in Non-Conformist hymn books and specially in those of the Baptists.

In an earlier publication, a sermon entitled 'National Deliverances' but little improved and soon forgotten, was published in Bristol in 1753. With regard to the diary, though entries are somewhat scrappy, they lift (somewhat, crossed out) the veil of obscurity, (referring mainly to – crossed out) detailing the personal affairs and movements of this itinerant pastor, who despite the precarious state of his Bristol connection, was (apparently – crossed out) not altogether poverty stricken, judging by some of the entries relative to his income. That the Callowhill Meeting House was no longer a source of income, is fairly apparent, in that Needham seems to have been (page 3) serving exclusively (added) the Baptist chapels situated in Lewins Mead

and Tucker Street, though frequently finding occasion to pursue his connection down at Plymouth. J.N. is more likely to be remembered for the curious glimpse he affords (us – crossed out) of a not overworked or underpaid Baptist Minister than for the hymns he gave to posterity.

May 26. 1784 – J.N. set out from Bristol, Friday May 21st 1784 and arrived at the Rev. Mr. Manning's in Exeter the evening of the same day or rather at 10 that night.

Sunday May 23. - J.N. preached for Mr. Manning at the New meeting: from Psalm 84 – The Lord God is a Sure Saviour.

Tuesday May 25 – J.N. preached the morning Lecture in the same place for Mr. Kenrick. Same day J.N. dined with Mr. Towgood.

Wednesday May 26 – Sent the Pulpit Cushion to Moreton with a few lines directed to Mr. Isaac.

Needham preached at Sidmouth on the following Sunday and at Moreton on the Wednesday, spending 2/6 at The White Hart at the latter place. A place in the Plymouth coach cost him 14/-.

Friday June 11. - Set out for Plymouth: went thro Newton Bushell & Totness: called upon Mr. Brinkam of Totness – dined at Ivy Bridge, 11 miles short of Plymouth; got to Plymouth a little before seven in the evening.

Saturday 12 June – Mr. Moore conducted me to Plymouth. 'Key & the Garrison. Had a fine view of Plymouth Sound. Walked in the evening to Stone House Hill. Flogging soldier.

Tuesday 15 June – J.N. took Rhubarb &c.

Thursd. 17 – Tamar River – Dr. Lombard – Lost Leather ye way to church – Gout – Scalded leg – ask Mrs Hamby.

18 Friday . Dined at Mr. Moore's – Afternoon, took a pleasant walk to Cat-down. Saw Edystone Light-House.

19. Sat. Mornng. West Hoe – Bathing. Afternoon at Mr. Edgcomb. Rain – Rough sea – but safe. Tea at Passage house.

Thursd 24. Left Plymouth at six in the morning & got to Exeter about 4 in the afternoon, by the way of Brint, Ashburton & Chudleigh. Fare of Diligence, 14sh.

Monday 28 – Walkd to St David’s Hill. Bought 100 pens 3.0. (of the quill variety, steel nibs, not coming in until the early part of the following century)

JULY

Friday 2. Dined at Mr Waymouth’s, afternoon at Mrs Merrivale – Ash Garden in ye Evening.

Sunday 4th – Preach’d mornng at Bow-meeting.

Tuesday 6 – Left Exeter – arrived at Bristol same eveng, about 9. With Mr Merrivale. Thanks be to God for health and journeying mercies.

Friday 9 – Paid to S. Mattock, (his housekeeper in Bristol) for monies expended by her for coal, provisions &c.....£2.7.2. N.B. S. Mattock has paid six shillings, advanc’d by J.N. on Grace’s Acct. - and a shilling paid for gloves.

Thursday Eveng. Jult 25 – Contents of J.N. Portmanteau. 8 shirts – 12 Neckcloths – 6 Cambrick Handkerchiefs – 6 Coloured handkerchiefs – 2 bands – 3 caps.

July 16. J.N. set out from Exon for Plymouth.

To Porter, for carrying Portmanteau	2d
Breakfast at Chudleigh	9d
Dinner at Ivy Bridge	2s
Drivers	2s
To ye Porter	3d

Friday July 16. J.N. left with S.Mattock 2 Bank notes of 5 guineas each & 8 guineas in cash.

AUGUST

Sunday 8th – Preach’d at Lower meeting, morning, from Thess: 5.18. In everything give thanks etc. Preach’d A’noon from Acts: 11.26. The Disciples were etc.

Friday 20 – Delivered six Elegies to Mr. Ben: Haydon and six to Miss White some days ago.

Monday 23 – A’noon at the victualling office.

Wed 25 – A’noon – went abroad the Blenheim.

Thurs 26 – Paid for ivory alphabet – 3s 6d.

Fri 27 – Attended the review.

SEPTEMBER

Sat 18 – Paid for washing linen and mending 1 pair of stockings – 1s 2d. A'Noon at Mrs Creeds who sent 1 bottle of Arrack (a spirituous liquor used in the preparation of punch).

Tues 21. Dined, a'noon & supped at Mrs Rayners. Chair'd home.

OCTOBER

Mon 4 – Set out for Exon & arrived at Mr. Towgoods about 5 in ye even'g. Breakfasted at Collumpton – din'd at Bridgewater. Drivers 2s, Breakfast 1s. Dinner 1s 6d. Grog 6d.

Oct 8th To mutton and Turneps – 1s 1d.

10 – J.N. at Limead in ye mornng: Preach'd at Tucker Street in th'aftern:

11. A gallon of rum from Captain Hensley.

Tu 19. To poor Davis. 1s.

Mon 25. N.B. It snowed hard in Bristol. Paid for a new hat 13s

Thurs 28 – Paid to Williams for covering my umbrella	7s
Paid R. Gowrey for shaving to Michaelmas	15s 12d

Gould for a pair of shoes	7s 6d
N.B. The shoes not fitting were sold to another person.	
Memdum - Left with S. Maddock, cash for housekeeping &c	£4. 14s
Cash to pay J.N. contribn. To the Anchor Society	10s 8d
Cash to pay for a pair of shoes when finished	7s 6d
	Total £15. 12d

Friday the 29th, J.N. set forth again, arriving safe to Plymouth (Laus deo) at half past 3 in the A'noon of the 30th.

NOVEMBER

2. Gave to Mr T—s Maids a fairing, half a crown to each
Paid Mr Fuge for a pistol tinder box – 2s 6d. Linen washd 8 ½ d.

Sat 6th. Presented a 5th Nov sermon to Mr John & Jon.

T--e

A protracted sojourn at Plymouth was devoted to attendance at Meetings, transcribing the whole of Enfield's Devotions and social visits to favoured members of the flock, with no untoward event to record or disturb the even currant of his stay, until the unfortunate of Mrs Gatcombe's washing (crossed out) 6-7th Jan.

1 and 2 notes on reverse.

1. The Anchor Society, taking its name from the anchor in Colston's coat of arms, was founded in 1768 by the Whigs. At first the intention was to hold an evening meeting once a month, with a supper costing 8d per head. In 1773 this charge was increased by 1s and later the suppers were abandoned.

C.R.H. Bristol Evening Post Nov 14th 1938.

2. The diarist liberally distributed the word, according to Needham, whether in the form of a Hyman or his 5th Nov Sermon, the full title of which latter is worth quoting.

NATIONAL DELIVERANCES, but little improved, and soon forgotten. A sermon preached at Callowhill, Bristol, Nov 5th 1733 by John Needham. Published at the earnest request of many who heard it. Bristol 1733 (price 6d)

As will be seen, it was still the rounds 30 years later.

JANUARY 1785

Friday 7th – Smart Frost. Mrs Gatchcombe robbed of linen left in the meeting house.

Wed 12th – dined at Mr. Robert Fuge's: was witness to his paying Captain Baker for freight – about £39. Mr Fuge had an add twopence of ye Captain.

Sat 22 – Paid to Mrs Gatchcombe the contributions of her friends to make up her loss - £1.11.6. Gave a Hymn Book to Mrs Bowles.

Sun 23rd – Gave one of my Hymn Books to Mrs T. Raynolds.

Mr. Dorwood insisted on paying for that I presented to him – 2s 6d.

FEBRUARY

Sat 19 – Hard frost Friday Morning. Do. Saturday. Do Sunday. Snow Sat Afternoon – pretty deep.

Wed 23rd – Mary Silk came to my house in Bristol.

Mon 28th – Smart frost – wind very high – from ye east. Kept for ye most part within. Transcribed from Carr.

MARCH

Sat 12 – Mending stockings – 6d. New wig brot.

Mon 14th – Frost. N.B. Saw the planet Venus about a quarter past 12 at noon, a little to the east of the Meridian.

Wed 16 – Weather relaxed. Paid Pardon for a new Peruke £1.11.6d (a wig) and paid for 2 India Handkerchiefs – 10s

Fri 18 – Mrs T. brought to bed of a daughter about 10 minutes before 8 in the morning. J.N. at Dock and Tor Point.

Wed 23 – Smartish frost. Paid Perry for seating breeches &c 2s 4d.

APRIL

M 4 – Set out for Exon. Porter 3d. Spent on the road – 9d Pecfors Boy (Quiery, Pickfords boy. 3D To a Poor Man of St. Sidewells 1s.

T.5. - Lodg'd the preceeding night at Mr. Toogood's. Breakfasted at Mr. Mannings. A'noon at Do. Oranges for Mr. Mannings chn, 3d. Dined at Mr. Nation's.

W.6. - Set out for Bristol. Pair fare. £1 4s. Porter for carrying Portmanteau, 3d. Arrived at Bristol about a quarter past seven, Laus Deo.

BRISTOL 1785

8. - Recd of Mr Abram. Davis half years interest on 3 Bridge. Tickets due the 24th Dec 1784. £3.0.0 Recd at Fowlers's Counter half a years interest on 24 Turnpike Tickets, due Dec. 1784. £30.0.0. N.B. Three of the tickets belong to Mrs Eliz. Fisher.

April 11 – Paid half a years window tax and house duty due at Lady Day.

Window Tax old Duty	0.5.8
House Duty	0.4.0.
New Window Duty	0.16.6
Total	9.16.2

Afternoon at Mr. Bannister's. Gave to Robt. Bernal's children 5s. Among them.

Tues 12 – Paid Mrs Fisher half a years interest on three Turnpike Tickets due Xmas 1784 at 5pr. Cent - £3.15.0

(Bristol Bridge and Turnpike tickets figure frequently in the diary, representing the bulk of Needham's unearned increment, apparently. An act of Parliament was passed

in 1760 to replace a smaller bridge and the new bridge was opened to traffic in September 1768, financed apparently by the issue of Tickets bearing interest and doubtless according their owners free toll.)

{ This section was written and then crossed out – A statement of accounts, under the title STATE OF THE BRISTOL BRIDGE ACCOUNT, published in 1786, has the following apposite entry under date 1760 -

‘To Cash from Subscribers for which Bridge Tickets were given £10,000.’

Tolls were paid upon the bridge for 25 years, until in 1793, public dissatisfaction at the charges so levied, found expression in what has been called the ‘Battle of the Oyster Shells,’ sufficiently bloody as to result in about 40 casualties, justified in the resultant of the tolls. It would be interesting to know at what date Needham’s financial interest in either the old or new bridge began and if it had any bearing on his direct reference to the bridge riots of 1749, in his 5th November sermon. }

13 – To Seeing Balloon. 1s.

15 – A’noon at Mr. Wright’s. Saw ye swallows for the first time this season.

Sunday 17 – Preach’d aat Tucker Street, morning.

M 18 – Paid for a Glass Fountain. 6d. After an unusual drought for this season, it began to rain this morning about 9, which continued for a few hours and prevented Mr. Dicker from ascending in his Balloon Boat as he had promised ye public. This night the two Miss Bearpackers lodged at my house. Many strangers in Bristol in expectation of seeing &c.

Tues 19 – Dined at Mr. Davies’s. Young Mr. Dicker ascended in a Balloon Boat about one quarter before four in the afternoon in the view of many thous. Spectators, many of which came from a great distance. The Balloon proceeded nearly in an eastern direction and descended abt 2 miles beyond Chippenham – about 25 miles in three quarters of an hour. J.N. caught a bad cold and sore throat/
(Ballooning was all the rage following Montgolfier’s first ascent in 1783. It even affected the fashions, with Nancy Woodforde’s ‘neat, genteel and pretty Balloon hat’, being accorded notice in her uncle’s diary in the year 1784.

Young Mr. Dickers effort was well publicised in the local Bristol newspaper, Felix Farley’s journal, commencing with an advertisement, under the date April 16th 1785.

AIR BALLOON

Mr Dicker presents his most respectful compliments to the Ladies and Gentlemen of Bristol, Bath and their Neighbourhood and assures them that he will positively ascend on MONDAY next, about one o’clock. He entreats those who intend honouring him with their company to procure tickets THIS DAY as it will prevent confusion at the doors.

The account in the issue of the Bristol Journal for the following Saturday, must have proved very gratifying to young Mr Dicker.

BALLOON INTELLIGENCE. Monday being the last day which was announced to the Public as that on which Mr Dicker's would be launched, the city was surrounded with strangers, from every part of the country for many miles around and some came 70 or 80 miles to view the aerostatic excursion.

Unpropitiously the weather proved wet and the aeronaut, after a few preliminary hops, got off on the following afternoon. Among the various impediments he found almost immediate occasion to jettison in order to remain aloft, was his bottle of brandy after drinking a small quantity of it. Thereafter, he and the account of him, ascended into the heights.

His descent at Chippenham nearly cost him his life and certainly cost him his balloon. Still, he was not more than thirty two minutes in going 26 miles and accordingly, on his triumphal return to the city, he was met by a 'band of musick and the populace took the horses from the carriage and drew it to hid lodgings with continued shouts of applause – followed by a dinner or two at the public expense.

Friends at Plymouth, whose behaviour to me has been such as can't fail of interesting me in their welfare and happiness.

Sun 24th – Much indisposed, did not go abroad

The state of the diarist's health must have been giving him cause for anxious thought, and under the date Tues 26th, he quotes an extract from a latter to a Mr. Watson of Bridgewater - 'As to protracting my stay in Plymouth for a considerable time beyond Midsummer, this will greatly depend on my health and on the situation of my Affairs.....I have sincere affection for my Friends at Plymouth, whose behaviour to me has been such as can't fail of interesting me in their welfare and happiness.'

Wed 27 – At Mr Davies's in ye A'noon. Call'd upon Mrs Bastable's daughter, seemingly in the last stage of consumption. Took rhubarb after I was in bed.

Sat. 30 – Rec'd of Mrs Marlot, for three parts of a Bristol Bridge Ticket, No 277, to make said Ticket (value £50), the sole property of Eliz. Murch, who is already possesst of a 4th part of said Ticket, £37.10. To 127 days interest due on three parts of the said ticket from Dec 24th 1784 to this day 10s3d. Total £38.0.3d.

MAY

Mon 2nd – S'Mattock owes to J. Needham for moneys laid out on her niece's acct. - £3. 15. 8 ½. Paid for a place in Excise &c. Dilly - £1.4s.

Th 5th – Paid Mr. Evans for a Berkley cheese Wt. 26lbs at 7d – 13.3d.

Frid 6th – Set out for Exeter abt. five, arrived a little after Eight at night.

7 – Dinner at Taunton yesterday, 4s 0d N.B. The Company treated 2 ladies. J.N. set out for Plymouth.

May 8 – Preach'd morn'g from Job 28. 28. And unto Man he said the Fear &c.

Tues 10 – Wrote to Mr. Edwd. Jefferies, desired him to purchase as much stock O.S.S. Annuities as £180 would procure. Sent him 2 bills.

Old Bristol Bank Bill.	£100	
Plymouth Bank Bill	£70	Total £180

Sat 14 – Paid for quarter pound sugar candy 3d.

Sat 21 – Corner cakes 4d.

Mond 23 - Mr. Tingcombe heard from Mr Watson who gave a more favourable Acct of his state of health.

JUNE

M 20 – Dined &c. at G.G. Street – milk 1d, cherries 5d.

W 22 – Paid for 2oz Magnesia – 10d
1 oz Tict. Rhubarb – 4d
Corner Cakes - 1d
Strawberries – 7d

Gave to Smith, Schoolmaster, one book of hymns.

JULY

M 4 – Dined &c at Mr. Jno. T—s. Cholick. Took Rhubarb.

M 11 – Crossing from Catdown 2d. A'noon at Mr. Langs at Catdown. N.B. Providentially escap'd being hurt by fall of a tile which fell very near me.

Sat 23 – Dined &c at G.G.S. Went to dock & saw the Medusa launched abt. qr. Past six.

AUGUST

M 1 – A'noon at Mr. Lake's, Plymouth Dock. Cakes 2 ½. Felt a troublesome pain this morning in my left hand.

Tu 2 - Pain in my hand this morning was acute, but considerably abated at noon. Mr. Moore thinks the swelling goutish.

Wed 3 – This morning hand much better. Had a good night. Laus Deo. Thunder storm yesterday began about a Quarter after four in ye A'noon and continued for 3 or 4 hours.

Mon 8 – Set out for Exeter at 6 o'clock morning. Got to Exon at about 3 in ye A'noon. Tea hour at Miss White's. Lodg'd at Mr.Mannings.

Wed 10 – Set out from ye London Inn Exon, for Bristol at 5 in ye morning. Got safe to Bristol between 7 & 8 in ye eveng, Laus Deo. N.B. left 8 books of devotion hymns with Mr. Tingcombe.

Thurs 11 – Began to shave again with K.Bowrey.

Tu 16 – Gave to Mrs Thomas, my washerwom. 1s. N.B. Mr Banister sent in 2 Galls of brandy.

Tu 25 – N.B. Set apart for Current Expenses £10 10s. Paid Stringer for a pair of double jointed spectacles 7s. Case 1s. Mending an umbrella 6d.

SEPTEMBER

Sat 5 – A good harvest day. Mr, Savery of Butcombe at my house. N.B. New coat and waistcoat bro't home.

Fri 9 – J. Needham walked to Frenchay, Returned in Mr. Lucy's chair (chair – a light chaise, usually found in parks and gardens)

12 - Settled with Thompson the Dove house Accts,
Window and house tax. £1.4.0
Lamp tax 0.3.4
Scavenger's Rate 0.2.0
Watch, one quarter 0.1.3
Fire for the Vestry 0.2.9
Balance paid to J.N. 0.14.2 Total - £2.7.6
J.N. abated ye odd 2d

T. 20 – Saw a Man of War launched.

W 21 – Recommended John Thorne to the Bristol Dispensary.

M. 26 – Lent to Robt. Bowrey on his note of hand - £20.

OCTOBER

Th 6 – A'noon at Mr. Lloyd's who gave me Wetstein's Greek Testament.

M 10 – Visited Mrs. Spencer, neat her end I believe.

Th. 13 – Paid for 17 Horsesloads of coal. 18s 5d

Fri 14 – Pd for 1 Gall rum. 10s. Rec'd 1 pair of gloves from funeral of Dr. Wrights Lady.

Tu 18 – Had a fire in ye best parlour. Wore new Shagg waistcoat for the first time.

S 22 – Mr John Fry Jnr at my house. -Terms for writing at home – Gentlemens – One Guinea pr month, 3 times in a week – One hour attendance at a time.

NOVEMBER

Fri 11. - Recd by Mr. Winne a letter from Mr Hawker with the prest of a sermon.

M 14 – Dined with the Anchor Society. Paid to the charity 10s 7d.

M 21 – M.Solke went to ye waiting School. Paid entrance 6d.

Th 22 – To 1 poor woman 6d. Gave Capt. Venn an order for 600 bricks. Gave Geo. King a dispensary note for his father.

DECEMBER

Fri 9 – Nil Notatione Dignum.

M 12 – Nile Notat. Dign. At home.

W 14 – Mr. Ash sent in 2 Galls. Rum at 8d and 1 Gall Raisin wine 4s.

M 26 - Christmas Boxes and donations.
Barbers apprentice 1s. Watch 1s.
Lampman 6d. Milkwoman 3d
Brewer 6d. E, Guner 1s.
A. Clysell 1s. M. Watts 1s.

The said E. Gunner &c. dines at J.Ns. Christmas donations of 5s each paid to Gunner, Watts, Clysell, Harper, Small and Taylor.

W 28 – Rec. Hatband, scarf and gloves for ye Funeral of Mr. Merlot. Robt. Bowrey had yesterday a Paralytic Shake.

Th 29 – J.N. indisposed. Bowel complaint. Paid Mrs Davis for 6 pounds of cheese 2s.

Fr 30 – Rested well last night – much better this morning. Laus Deo.
