

QUAKER WOMEN, FAMILY ARCHIVES AND THE  
CONSTRUCTION OF IDENTITY: ANALYSING THE MEMOIRS AND  
PERSONAL PAPERS OF ELIZABETH TAYLOR CADBURY  
(1858–1951)\*

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ABSTRACT

This article examines how Elizabeth Taylor Cadbury sought to define and perpetuate her family's religious identity and legacy through the production of privately published memoirs celebrating their Quaker heritage and the creation of a personal archive chronicling their contemporary lives devoted to religiously inspired social action. Taylor Cadbury constructed narratives which forged a connection between the Quaker ministry and philanthropy of her ancestors and the religious and social service of more recent generations as a means of consolidating a collective identity among her family. The article considers how Taylor Cadbury shaped her own identity in relation to the religious values of her female Quaker predecessors through the personal papers which she collected. By exploring Taylor Cadbury's efforts to preserve material recording her family's Quaker faithfulness, the article demonstrates the significance of family archives for sustaining Quaker kinship networks and understanding Friends' engagement with Quaker history during the early twentieth century.

KEYWORDS

Cadbury, women, kinship networks, heritage, legacy, ministry, philanthropy, service, personal archives.

INTRODUCTION

Recent studies have demonstrated the importance of Quaker family networks in shaping religious identity, mobilising business concerns and promoting public philanthropy.<sup>1</sup> However, the role of family archives in creating and sustaining identity and legacy among Quaker kinship networks deserves greater attention.<sup>2</sup> Scholarship has illustrated how the collection of papers conserving the spiritual heritage of Quaker families was fundamental for supporting family memory,

reinforcing the collective identity of Quaker kinship circles.<sup>3</sup> The preservation of religious legacy through the amassing of personal papers appropriated a material significance amongst Quaker families who embraced what Annemieke van Drenth and Francisca de Haan describe as an 'active and practical Christianity', expressing their Quaker faithfulness through social service.<sup>4</sup> For Quakers who engaged in philanthropic social action as a spiritual duty, the creation and preservation of documents recording their work 'serving the well-being of their fellow human beings' became a form of witness to their religious faith, a physical legacy of their lives serving God.<sup>5</sup> Sandra Stanley Holton has demonstrated that during the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries it was the Quaker women of the Priestman, Clark and Bright families who were responsible for assembling the Millfield Papers as a repository of diaries, letters and memoranda 'to provide a legacy of spiritual guidance for children and grandchildren'.<sup>6</sup> Her study reveals the agency of female Friends in the construction of family archives, raising questions concerning the extent to which their endeavours formed a means by which they shaped their identity and perpetuated the Quaker legacy of their kinship networks.<sup>7</sup> This article examines the biographical and editorial influence exerted by Quaker philanthropist Elizabeth Taylor Cadbury (1858–1951) over the construction of her family's history both in her privately published memoirs and her personal archive which forms a substantial sub-collection of the Cadbury Family Papers.<sup>8</sup> The article analyses how Taylor Cadbury sought to define her own and her family's identity and social activism in the context of Quakerism by circulating memoirs and correspondence which served to record and promote a shared familial heritage of Quaker ministry and philanthropy among her extensive kinship network.

#### ELIZABETH TAYLOR CADBURY (1858–1951)

Elizabeth Taylor was born in Peckham Rye in 1858, the second daughter of stockbroker John Taylor (d. 1894) and philanthropist Mary Jane Taylor (née Cash, 1833–1887) whose respective families could claim a strong Quaker heritage reaching back to the 'early generations of the Quaker movement'.<sup>9</sup> The Taylor family home was shaped by the sociability and permeability of Quaker domestic culture which Holton identifies served to create female identities which were 'simultaneously family-centred, outward-looking and publicly minded'.<sup>10</sup> Taylor Cadbury recalled that 'most Friends living in or visiting London' found their way to the Taylors' home.<sup>11</sup> Both the Taylors and the Cadbury family, which Elizabeth Taylor later married into, identified that philanthropic work supporting the social welfare of those less fortunate constituted a practical manifestation of their religious faithfulness, the enactment of social service forming 'their way of serving God'.<sup>12</sup> In 1888 Elizabeth Taylor married the widowed Quaker businessman and housing reformer George Cadbury (1839–1922), a distant relation of the Cash family and friend of the Taylors with whom she had forged a friendship over discussions on social questions and opportunities for effective public service.<sup>13</sup> Taylor Cadbury's marriage located her at the forefront of Birmingham's wealthy Nonconformist elite, affording her authority and influence in

philanthropic and municipal work promoting social welfare reform. She combined her maternal responsibilities to her six children and five step-children with enthusiastic participation in public socio-religious work in Bournville and Birmingham, concentrating particularly on activities supporting housing reform and promoting educational welfare provision.<sup>14</sup> Taylor Cadbury consistently identified that a religious imperative to social service formed the foundation of work towards welfare reform and emphasised the importance of cultivating 'the spiritual impulse' in religious, social and political life.<sup>15</sup> In 1903 she was involved alongside her husband in the establishment of Woodbrooke Quaker College founded in Selly Oak and later served as the first female President of the Federal Council of the Free Churches between 1925 and 1926. Tributes celebrating Taylor Cadbury's commitment to social action published following her death in December 1951 emphasised the spiritual basis of her public work, in the Quaker 'tradition of public service and practical idealism'.<sup>16</sup>

#### THE CADBURY WOMEN AND THE CADBURY FAMILY PAPERS AS A FORM OF LIFE-WRITING

Extensive work with the archives of the Cadbury family has uncovered how Cadbury women living during the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries self-consciously created and collected papers memorialising their own and their family's Quaker inheritance for the consumption of future generations.<sup>17</sup> Elizabeth Head Cadbury and her sister Ann Head collected obituaries and newscuttings to compile family histories of the Wheeler, Head, Cadbury and Warder kinship circle, situating themselves in relation to the Quaker heritage of their interconnected families during the late eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries.<sup>18</sup> Maria Fairfax (b.c. 1836), the daughter of Quaker cocoa magnate and philanthropist John Cadbury (1801–1889), produced an illustrated account of her childhood reminiscences through which she defined her identity with reference to her early life in the Cadburys' Edgbaston home.<sup>19</sup> However, the private publications and personal papers of Elizabeth Taylor Cadbury demonstrate the most sustained effort by a Cadbury woman to preserve and perpetuate Quaker family legacy. From the late nineteenth century until the end of her life, Taylor Cadbury amassed a vast archive of material recording her personal participation in philanthropic work and the charitable social service undertaken by the Taylor and Cadbury families, defining their social action as an expression of their Quaker faithfulness.<sup>20</sup> She also privately published two volumes of memoirs celebrating the Quaker inheritance of the Cash, Taylor and Cadbury families. *A Dear Memory: Pages from the Letters of Mary Jane Taylor*, printed in 1914, was followed in 1937 by *Historical Rhymes*, both featuring historical anecdotes recording her family's lives devoted to Quaker ministry and philanthropy.<sup>21</sup> These publications were distributed by Taylor Cadbury among her large kinship circle which, by 1948, encompassed over seventy grandchildren and great-grandchildren and an extensive cousinage of Quaker families of which Taylor Cadbury's son-in-law Bertram Crosfield remarked she formed 'the apex of the arch'.<sup>22</sup>

CONSTRUCTING AND PERPETUATING A QUAKER FAMILY HISTORY:  
ELIZABETH TAYLOR CADBURY AND *A DEAR MEMORY*

In the postscript to *Historical Rhymes*, Taylor Cadbury remarked that in writing family reminiscences 'I would like to link up the past with the present'.<sup>23</sup> Her comments demonstrate her commitment to preserving the Quaker heritage of the Taylor and Cadbury families for subsequent generations, an agenda which is evident both in *Historical Rhymes* and its predecessor, *A Dear Memory*. Taylor Cadbury's privately published memoirs provide reminiscences which forged a direct connection between her family's ancestral Quaker heritage and their family life in the early twentieth century which centred on philanthropic social action.<sup>24</sup> *A Dear Memory* was presented by Taylor Cadbury to recipients within her extended family as an edited collection of her mother Mary Jane Taylor's personal correspondence.<sup>25</sup> However, it is evident that the book formed the culmination of a wider genealogical endeavour undertaken by Taylor Cadbury to document and perpetuate the Quaker legacy of her kinship network. In the introduction to *A Dear Memory*, Taylor Cadbury remarked 'I realized that an opportunity had been given to me to introduce their grandparents to the younger generation'.<sup>26</sup> As Taylor Cadbury suggested, *A Dear Memory* incorporates life histories of both of her parents and was described by members of her mother's large family circle as forming 'an "invaluable record"'.<sup>27</sup> Yet the versions of her parents' life stories included by Taylor Cadbury in *A Dear Memory* were written from the perspective of the work's broader purpose to memorialise her family's Quaker heritage as a means of shaping the religious and social outlook of her wider kinship network.

The biographies of Mary Jane and John Taylor featured in *A Dear Memory* demonstrate that Taylor Cadbury sought to promote their Quaker genealogy through the production of this book, incorporating family pedigrees illustrating their connections to a dense kinship circle of Friends including the Cash, Lucas and Hayhurst families.<sup>28</sup> Taylor Cadbury situated accounts of her parents' lives within a narrative framework which emphasised the significance of Quakerism in defining the identity and legacy of their ancestors from the seventeenth century onwards. She described the lives of past generations of the Cash and Taylor families, drawing attention to their shared engagement with an interpretation of Quaker faithfulness expressed through public philanthropic work. Taylor Cadbury remarked on the marriage of her mother's uncle Samuel Lucas Hayhurst with his cousin Margaret Bright, commenting on Bright's endeavours in founding the British Women's Temperance Association.<sup>29</sup> She also described the work of her father's grandfather, Henry Taylor, 'to improve the lot of the sailor and minimize his risks at sea'.<sup>30</sup> In her account of her mother's father William Cash, Taylor Cadbury paid homage to his 'Christian and philanthropic character' by providing testimony of his work as Chairman of the National Temperance Society and as founder, director and trustee of the National Provident Institution.<sup>31</sup> By situating life stories of her mother and father in relation to the Quaker philanthropy of their predecessors, Taylor Cadbury depicted her parents' lives as a continuation of their ancestors' commitment to

religious social service. Her emphasis on what she described as her family's 'service of a religious and social character' is similarly evident in her biographies of her parents themselves.<sup>32</sup> Taylor Cadbury emphasised John and Mary Jane Taylor's expression of Quaker faithfulness through charitable works 'helping poorer neighbours', supporting temperance and promoting 'extended educational facilities for working men'.<sup>33</sup> Through her efforts to weave accounts of her parents' socio-religious activities into narratives of their ancestors' Quaker philanthropy, Taylor Cadbury ensured that her parents were portrayed as contributing to perpetuate the Quaker family heritage which *A Dear Memory* disseminated among her widening kinship network.

Taylor Cadbury remarked that the histories of the Taylor and Cash families which she recorded in *A Dear Memory* had been passed down to herself and her siblings 'with the idea that if we could really claim lineage with past "makers of history" we too must do something for our country in our own day and generation'.<sup>34</sup> Taylor Cadbury and her brothers and sisters engaged with this 'idea' through their active participation in humanitarian social action.<sup>35</sup> Moreover, they sought to memorialise evidence that their own generation shared a sense of religious obligation to social welfarism by producing tributes commemorating their public philanthropic achievements. In 1944 Taylor Cadbury and her sister Josephine Hoyland (b. 1869) compiled and circulated a memorial booklet celebrating the life of their deceased elder sister Margaret Graham (1856–1943). This booklet featured testimony from Sweden Yearly Meeting alongside accounts of Graham's work with the Chalfont House Settlement, the Friends' Service Council and the Westminster Women's Adult School.<sup>36</sup> Taylor Cadbury's concern to demonstrate that her own generation could 'claim lineage' with her Quaker ancestors is further evident in her editorial intervention throughout *A Dear Memory*.<sup>37</sup> In two 'Postscripts' featured at the end of this publication, Taylor Cadbury incorporated posthumous tributes to her recently deceased sister Janet Clark (1859–1908) and brother Wilfrid Taylor (1863–1913) through which she illustrated the active role played by her siblings in sustaining their family legacy grounded in Quaker faithfulness. Taylor Cadbury remarked on Clark's nursing work at the Victoria Hospital for Children and the Westminster Hospital, alongside her philanthropic endeavours supporting the Workhouse Infirmary 'and other Temperance and Philanthropic works'.<sup>38</sup> She substantiated evidence of her sister's philanthropy by emphasising her religious identity as a Quaker. Taylor Cadbury included an extract from a minute recorded by Yorkshire Quarterly Meeting which described Clark's life as 'a sermon more eloquent than words' which was 'so deep and so true that its influence for good...must be felt more or less throughout our borders'.<sup>39</sup> In the pages following her tribute to her sister Janet, Taylor Cadbury also incorporated an additional section entitled 'News from South Africa' in which she celebrated the life of her brother Wilfrid Taylor who had died only months before the publication of *A Dear Memory*.<sup>40</sup> Her account emphasised her brother's commitment to Christian business ethics following his move to South Africa in 1893. Taylor Cadbury remarked 'opportunities for making money quickly were not wanting, but not by methods he felt at liberty to adopt', commenting on her brother's 'brave, strenuous life'.<sup>41</sup> Taylor Cadbury's inclusion of postscripts commemorating the lives of her siblings demonstrates that, through the production

and circulation of *A Dear Memory*, she sought to entwine recent generations of her family into the collective memory of her kinship network rooted in their heritage of religious social service. By incorporating life histories of the most recently deceased members of her family circle into the Quaker family history presented in *A Dear Memory*, Taylor Cadbury endorsed the book's physical function as a record supporting the 'continuing life of family memory'.<sup>42</sup> Indeed, the currency of the life stories which were memorialised in these postscripts served to promote awareness among the book's recipients of their direct connections to their Quaker family heritage, encouraging their sense of responsibility for acting to maintain and perpetuate their religious legacy in their 'own day and generation'.<sup>43</sup>

SHAPING IDENTITY AND LEGACY THROUGH FAMILY HERITAGE:  
ELIZABETH TAYLOR CADBURY AND HER FEMALE QUAKER FOREBEARS

By locating herself in a position of responsibility for collecting, contextualising and circulating histories of her family's Quaker legacy, it is evident that Taylor Cadbury carved a role of authority for herself as her kinship circle's 'family chronicler'.<sup>44</sup> Taylor Cadbury did not incorporate a biography of herself into *A Dear Memory*, but her role as the author creating and conserving evidence of her family's Quaker faithfulness served to associate her directly with the Quaker heritage of her forebears. The act of preserving family papers became in itself a means by which Taylor Cadbury forged her own identity in relation to the Quaker legacy of her kinship network.<sup>45</sup> Papers which Taylor Cadbury collected in her personal archive reveal that she sought to define her religious identity with reference to the spiritual qualities of her maternal grandmother Elizabeth Pettifer Lucas Cash.<sup>46</sup> In the 'Postscript' to *Historical Rhymes*, Taylor Cadbury emphasised the significance of her grandmother in shaping her early experiences of Quaker worship. Taylor Cadbury suggested that her earliest memories of Quaker Meeting centred on her grandmother's ministry, remarking 'we loved listening to Grandmamma who had a beautiful voice and spoke with the curious "Plain-Song" lilt of the early Friends'.<sup>47</sup> Taylor Cadbury's comments in her memoirs connected her grandmother to the Quaker culture of 'early Friends', reflecting her efforts to shape familial identity with reference to Quaker heritage. Taylor Cadbury also preserved material situating her contemporary contribution as a minister of Warwickshire North Monthly Meeting as a continuation of her grandmother's Quaker ministry.<sup>48</sup> Alongside minutes recording her acknowledgment as a minister, Taylor Cadbury kept a letter from her cousin Hannah Cadbury (1830–1904), in which she remarked that Taylor Cadbury had inherited 'the gift of thy dear grandmother' for ministry.<sup>49</sup> Through her memoirs and personal papers, Taylor Cadbury defined her religious ministry in relation to her grandmother and, in turn, to the older generations of Friends with whom she associated her grandmother's style of ministry.<sup>50</sup> This illustrates her self-conscious endeavour to promote her own religious identity by claiming connection with her familial Quaker heritage.

Taylor Cadbury also preserved papers through which she portrayed her public work supporting social welfare as motivated and shaped by her mother Mary Jane Taylor's Quaker ethic of public service. She collected family correspondence

revealing her mother's efforts to encourage her children's participation in charitable work supporting social welfare, preserving letters in which Mary Jane Taylor explained her view that religious faithfulness was expressed through social service to less fortunate citizens.<sup>51</sup> These included letters which Taylor Cadbury received from her mother instructing her to undertake 'good works' in 'service for Christ' and describing philanthropy as a means to 'shine forth Praise'.<sup>52</sup> The presence of these letters amongst Taylor Cadbury's personal papers demonstrates her concern to locate her own philanthropic work in the context of her mother's Quaker social service, demonstrating how she sought to define her social activism with reference to her mother's practical interpretation of Quaker faithfulness.<sup>53</sup> This is further evident in the typescripts of public addresses written and preserved by Taylor Cadbury in her personal archive which celebrated her mother's shaping influence over her own philanthropic career. In an address entitled 'What do we mean by Social Service?', Taylor Cadbury remarked that the duty of 'service' born out of her mother's Quakerism had been upheld by Mary Jane Taylor as an 'incentive and ideal' for the Taylor children to follow.<sup>54</sup>

ENSURING THE FUTURE HERITAGE OF HER KINSHIP NETWORK:  
ELIZABETH TAYLOR CADBURY'S FAMILY CORRESPONDENCE

Taylor Cadbury's efforts to preserve evidence illustrating the close relationship between her own public social service and the Quaker ministry and philanthropy of her mother and grandmother demonstrate that she recognised the importance of personal papers as a means of shaping identity and perpetuating legacy within Quaker family networks.<sup>55</sup> Indeed, Taylor Cadbury did not only write family histories and collect papers belonging to her ancestors, but directed the distribution of correspondence promoting her own Quaker philanthropy and the humanitarian activism of her siblings and children among her extended kinship circle. Throughout the first half of the twentieth century, Taylor Cadbury wrote a weekly letter to her family described variously as the 'Family Letter', the 'Circular Letter' and the 'News Bulletin of the Family'.<sup>56</sup> Taylor Cadbury's letters offered only brief remarks about family relationships and social activities but provided a detailed record of her personal social welfare work and the philanthropic activities of her family, such as her sister Josephine's efforts to establish a hospital in India.<sup>57</sup> She also incorporated edited extracts from correspondence which she received from her children into these letters, such as accounts written by her daughter Marion Janet Cadbury (1894–1979) concerning her work serving with the Friends' Ambulance Unit during the First World War.<sup>58</sup> The emphasis in Taylor Cadbury's letters on her family's public service suggests that the circulation of these constructed narratives served to create a collective identity amongst recipients grounded in their shared religious social service.<sup>59</sup> Copies of these letters were preserved by Taylor Cadbury in her archive, alongside pamphlets, photographs, correspondence and testimonials recording her personal philanthropic activities.<sup>60</sup> This demonstrates their function to preserve for posterity evidence of her own public welfare work and the philanthropic achievements of her siblings and

children, Taylor Cadbury's family correspondence forming a means by which she promoted her family's legacy as Quaker philanthropists as an exemplar for future generations.

CONCLUSION: FEMALE FRIENDS,  
PERSONAL PAPERS AND QUAKER HISTORY

Memoirs and papers created and collected by Taylor Cadbury constitute a physical manifestation of her endeavours to shape the identity and legacy of herself and her family by demonstrating their responsibility for supporting the continuance of their Quaker inheritance. Comparison between Taylor Cadbury's memoirs and family correspondence illustrates the extent to which she acted as 'a collecting, selecting, interpreting omnipresence' in the construction of her family's history.<sup>61</sup> Taylor Cadbury presented her family's Quaker heritage in a manner consistent with the interpretation of Quaker faithfulness expressed through social service shared among her contemporary kinship network. This suggests that she engaged with the 'historical self-awareness' identified within Quakerism from the late nineteenth century onwards.<sup>62</sup> Alice Southern observes how the 'liberal boom in historiography' embodied in the Rowntree History Series emphasised 'aspects of early Quakerism which were most compatible with Liberal Quakerism', particularly Friends' 'emerging sense of public culture and civic responsibility'.<sup>63</sup> Scholarship suggests that Quaker historians depicted their ancestors in relation to notions of 'Christian citizenship' which have been identified as fundamental within Liberal Quakerism, constructing historical narratives which related Quaker history to where they envisaged the future development of Quakerism lay.<sup>64</sup> As the evidence above demonstrates, biographical accounts created by Taylor Cadbury which emphasised her ancestors' engagement with social welfare reform reflected the renewed emphasis on 'social concerns' within Quakerism at the turn of the twentieth century.<sup>65</sup> Furthermore, Taylor Cadbury actively created records which would form the Quaker heritage of her own generation, illustrating that Friends' 'historical self-awareness' during this period included efforts to trace Quaker history but also endeavours to shape future legacy.<sup>66</sup> Taylor Cadbury's memoirs and personal papers demonstrate that examining the family archives which Holton identifies were typically created by Quaker women contributes a valuable dimension to understanding Friends' engagement with Quaker history and family heritage.<sup>67</sup> Analysis of the Cadbury Family Papers demonstrates further scope to examine how male Friends participated in the development of a familial identity grounded in Quaker heritage. William Adlington Cadbury (1867–1957) accumulated documents relating to the earlier generations of the Cadbury family, producing and circulating printed schedules of family letters among his relations.<sup>68</sup> Furthermore, Caroline Bowden's research into the creation of obituaries celebrating the spiritual qualities of deceased women religious illustrates how diverse religious communities drew on evidence of their predecessors' religious values as a model for their contemporary lives.<sup>69</sup> It is evident that beyond comprising an inspirational record of religious service for their



descendants, the archival legacies assembled by individuals and networks united by their kinship connections and spiritual affiliation provide invaluable insight into the role played by religion in shaping identity and social action.

#### NOTES

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32. Cadbury, *Historical Rhymes*, p. 66.

33. Cadbury, *A Dear Memory*, pp. 21, 20.

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40. Cadbury, *A Dear Memory*, p. 449.

41. Cadbury, *A Dear Memory*, p. 449.

42. Holton, *Quaker Women*, p. 3.

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44. Holton, *Quaker Women*, p. 3.

45. Holton demonstrates the importance of such material in shaping female identity amongst 'successive generations'. See Holton, 'Family Memory, Religion and Radicalism', p. 158. See also Holton, *Quaker Women*, p. 3.

46. Van Drenth and de Haan, *The Rise of Caring Power*, p. 15.

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50. Cadbury, *Historical Rhymes*, p. 53.

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53. Cadbury, *Historical Rhymes*, p. 66.

54. Cadbury, 'What do we Mean by Social Service?'

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56. Holton, *Quaker Women*, p. 3. Taylor Cadbury refers to the family journal letter as the 'Family Letter' in 1912, the 'Circular Letter' in 1910 and the 'News Bulletin of Family' in 1942. See Elizabeth Taylor Cadbury's family journal letters, MS 466/1/1/15/3, CFP, BAHS.

57. There are numerous examples of this throughout Taylor Cadbury's family journal letters during the early twentieth century. See Cadbury, family journal letters, 1904–1905.

58. Extracts from Marion Janet Cadbury's correspondence feature throughout Taylor Cadbury's family journal letters written during the First World War. See particularly Cadbury, family journal letters, 1914–15.

59. Van Drenth and de Haan, *The Rise of Caring Power*, p. 15. For constructed narratives in accounts of public philanthropy, see Miller, R.A., 'The Missionary Narrative as Coercive Interrogation: Seduction, Confession and Self-Presentation in Women's "Letters Home"', *Women's History Review* 15/5 (2006), p. 753.

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