

Reconstitution of an Irish Quaker Meeting from Friend's Records—A Critical Appraisal

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Abstract

This paper presents the results of a very detailed assessment of the accuracy and reliability of the archival records covering a period of 236 years, from 1678 to 1914, for members of the former Newgarden and Carlow Meetings, located in County Carlow, as a prelude to creating a computer-generated artefact (called a Reconstitution Model) from the data. While it was clearly demonstrated that the sources have many shortcomings, they are diverse and when reviewed in a global sense it was often the case that shortcomings in one source were compensated for in another. The Model is an amalgamation of all sources of data (Quaker and non-Quaker) and, while the verification process revealed some possible deficiencies, they are not serious enough to invalidate the Model or conclusions generated from the Model. Thus it may be used with some degree of reliability as a tool to explore and elaborate on a range of issues pertaining to the Meeting. For purposes of illustration Meeting population dynamics are discussed and analysed together with probable reasons for its eventual failure. Since the records for the Carlow Meeting are fairly typical of those available for other Irish Meetings there seems to be no impediment to applying the methods and approach described in this paper to explore and compare the internal dynamics and demographics of other Meetings.

Keywords

Carlow, demography, Ireland, meetings, Quakers, records.

Introduction

Vann and Eversley (2002), using the technique of family reconstitution, have published detailed demographic profiles of the English and Irish Quaker populations in temporal contexts for the period 1650 to 1900. The information

needed for this exercise was extracted from Quaker registers of births, deaths and marriages (vital records) and established genealogies, following careful consideration and evaluation of the shortcomings and advantages of these data. Notably, the profiles derived for Irish Quakers are based on aggregative data with no attempt to distinguish urban from rural communities, despite identifying variations and differences in the profiles of Quaker communities residing in the northern and southern regions of England as well as in urban areas. Indeed, Vann and Eversley's data are selective, as their concern was to ensure that they had an adequate and reliable sample to work with rather than to compile comprehensive chronological lists of Quaker families for Ireland. However, as they grouped the early communities into four clusters based on geography and occupation it is clear that they suspected there might be variations in the profiles of Irish Quaker communities. These comprised a northern cluster, including such Meetings as Grange, Ballyhagan and Lurgan, whose Members had strong ties with the linen trade; a southern or rural cluster, located mainly in Leinster Province, which included the Meetings of Edenderry, Mountmellick, Moate and Newgarden, whose Members were mainly involved in agricultural activities; an urban cluster that included the cities of Dublin, Cork, Waterford and Limerick, the Members of which were mainly engaged in trade and commercial activities; and what they called an 'isolated small urban' cluster that included Meetings such as Wicklow and Carlow, whose Members engaged in a mixture of rural and urban activities (Vann and Eversley 2002: 47–48).

While one could take issue with the way in which Vann and Eversley subdivided Quaker Meetings, it is of little relevance here, as they do not pursue these clusters in the body of their work, essentially because they were worried that the subdivision of their data into smaller cohorts would dilute sample numbers to such an extent that it could affect the veracity of their results (Vann and Eversley 2002: 57). Nevertheless, in one isolated exercise in which they compared the results of a study of mean family size for the Lurgan Meeting with the data available for the aggregate Quaker population of Ireland they found a significant difference that could not be explained (Vann and Eversley 2002: 53).

More recently, Coutts (2012; 2013) has looked for and found evidence that suggests there might well be variation in the demographic profiles of Quaker communities in Ireland. This followed from a pilot study that involved a very detailed analysis of the demographic data available for members and descendants of the Newgarden (later Carlow) Meeting located in County Carlow, a rural context some 70 km south-west of Dublin. In this instance, a wider spectrum of Quaker information and data from non-Quaker sources was used to facilitate family reconstitution. The thrust of the exercise was to compare temporal demographic profiles for the Carlow Meeting with those derived by Vann and Eversley for the aggregate Quaker population of Ireland.

Having warmed to the possibility of variation, Coutts (2015a) proceeded to look at the possibility of demographic differences within the Meetings

themselves. Using the sources of data deployed for the pilot study he selected four late seventeenth-century Quaker families of similar socio-economic status and proceeded to develop and compare the demographic profiles of their respective descendants until *c.*1900. In so doing, he identified many similarities as well as significant variations that led him to question the mythology often promoted by outside observers, portraying as they do Quaker communities as collectively rigorous, patterned in word, dress and behaviour; in fact, he came to the conclusion that Friends' communities incorporated innovative and interesting individuals and behaviours that were anything but regulated.

The simple reconstitution models built from vital and vital-related records (called here 'vital models'), despite facilitating the generation of genealogical charts and demographic studies, have their limitations. One of the most serious is their inability to provide a reliable means of estimating population and population changes over time. This problem is illustrated schematically in Fig. 1. Irish Quaker society is shown collectively as a series of local Meetings that provided geographical and static contexts for an essentially dynamic population that migrated through these Meetings, sometimes moving away from Ireland to Meetings in other countries or abandoning the Society altogether to join the non-Quaker world. Again, while there was always some inward migration from the 'outside world', historically it was small by comparison with the outward drift. Compounding this picture is a mixture of urban, semi-urban and rural Meetings in Ireland with diverse and changing socio-economic environments, and, following on from the results of previous studies by Vann and Eversley and by Coutts, one assumes that they had Meeting-specific demographic profiles. Since Meeting populations were never static, if their internal dynamics are to be reliably scrutinised there is an obvious need to establish their temporal populations. Vital models alone cannot do this with any accuracy; vital records need to be supplemented and integrated with information about membership, residency and the movements of individuals. Such information is available from Friends' records inclusive of the Minutes of Meetings, registers of movement certificates, convincements, marriage certificates, Meeting histories and disciplinary actions. When all the available sources of data for each Meeting are incorporated into common databases, new entities emerge which we have called 'Reconstitution Models'. They are extremely versatile and can be used not only to generate demographic profiles but to explore much more intimate and personal issues relating to individual Meetings, such as membership, disciplinary profiles, selection criteria for appointees to select committees, population estimates and other aspects of Meeting governance.

The purpose of this paper is to illustrate how a Reconstitution Model can be constructed and utilised for the Newgarden Meeting in Ireland using the full range of data available, but this will be preceded by a comprehensive review of the limitations of the data. Here it should be emphasised that this model is confined to a consideration of members of the Society of Friends, in particular Members of the Newgarden Meeting, and does not include non-Quaker descendants.

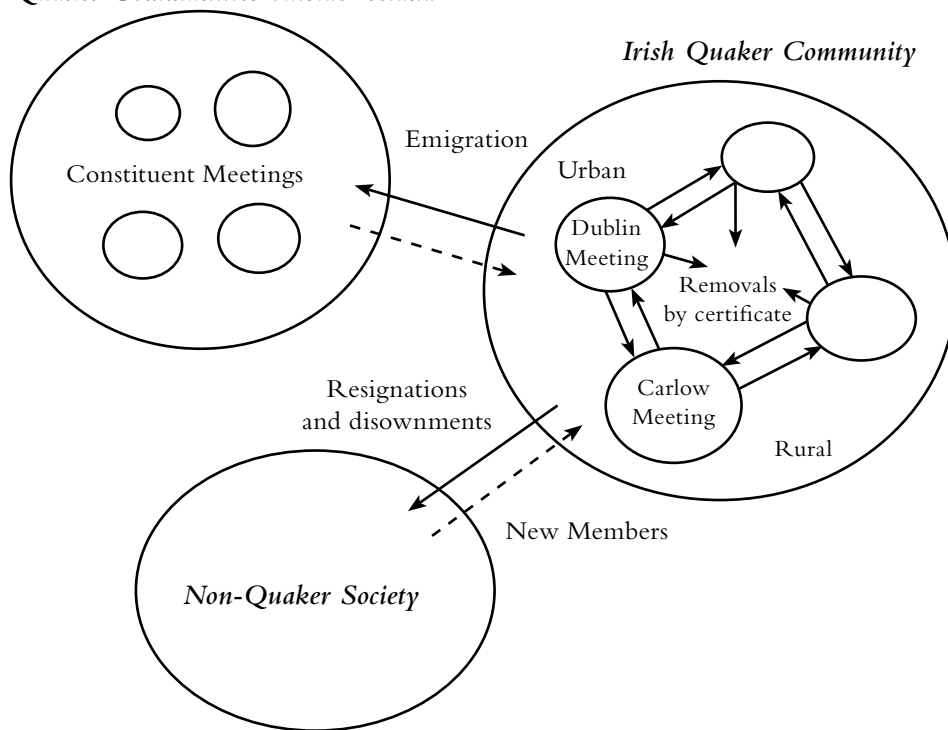
Quaker Communities outside Ireland

Fig. 1. A schematic view of Quaker Meetings in Ireland and population mobility

Nor is it our intention to present a history of the Newgarden Meeting, but we will illustrate how the model can be used to gain a better understanding of the Meeting's governance.

Definitions: 'Meeting Reconstitution', 'Models' and 'Membership'

'Meeting Reconstitution' in this context is defined as and includes membership, Meeting organisation, social and economic relationships between members, religious organisation and obligations, and financial and genealogical structures. The basic information required for Meeting reconstitution includes details of membership such as names of family members, births, deaths and marriages, arrivals and departures of members and membership of local Meetings. The major sources for recovering these data, plus other information pertaining to particular Meetings, are discussed below.

Reconstitution involves settling on some form of definition of 'membership': that is, who were 'Members' and who were entitled to be called 'Members'. This is a fairly controversial issue that has attracted much discussion elsewhere and is

avoided here.¹ One of the main objects of this paper is to identify persons who were Quakers, or persons who considered themselves to be members, and who were resident at one time or other within the compass of the Carlow Meeting, regardless of their original Meeting affiliations. It has been assumed that the children of a couple that married in good standing and were Quakers when their children were born were also members unless or until they resigned or were disowned. Conversely, children born before their parents became members have been classified as non-members unless there is evidence that they applied for and were accepted into membership. When women married it has been assumed also that they automatically became members of their husbands' Meeting. Lastly, despite their shortcomings, the data extracted—and in some cases sanitised—from the various registers have been used for this exercise. Persons who were clearly not Quakers or were not entitled to become members by birthright, despite their connections to Quaker families, are not included in this analysis.

The term 'Model' or more specifically 'Reconstitution Model' as used in this paper is defined as a computer-generated artefact created from a range of data selected only after rigorous assessment and available in the main from the Friends Historical Library in Dublin. The basic unit of the model is the temporal membership of the Meeting.

The term 'Committee' is used here to define the appointment of one or more persons by Business Meetings to perform specific tasks on behalf of the Meetings.

The Carlow Quakers

Newgarden, a village located some three miles from Carlow town, was the site of the first known Meeting for Worship in the region, 'settled' there before 1679.² Between 1716 and 1718 this Meeting was laid down and its members moved to worship at a new Meeting House in the town of Carlow. Newgarden and Carlow were the first of a total of nine local Meetings to be established in the region. These comprised, in County Carlow: Newgarden, Carlow, Kilconner, Philipstown and Tullow; and, in County Kildare: Newtown, Athy, Castledermot and Ballitore. Athy and Carlow lie on the river Barrow, flowing north–south, while the others are to the east of this line and all are less than 13 miles (20 km) from Carlow town: all within walking and riding distance of each other.

A summary history of each of the Meetings will be found in Butler (2004) and more recently Coutts (2016) has published more detailed histories of the Meetings from their foundations until *circa* 1730. Newgarden and Carlow were names used

1 E.g., Vann 1969a: 122ff, Homan 1939: 99ff. The distinction between 'convinced' and 'converted' members is the sticking point (Vann 1969b: 642). Whilst it is relatively easy to identify Quakers who were 'convinced' it is harder to tell who were 'converted'. The current study does not distinguish between the two categories.

2 The Meeting was established at the house of Ephraim Heritage earlier than 1679, when the Meeting first authorized repairs to the Meeting House (Newgarden MM 18.04.1679).

for the 'six-weekly', latterly 'monthly', Business Meetings, one for women and another for men, to which each of the nine local Meetings contributed members until they were laid down. Thus, up until 1716 the Business Meetings, consisting of nominees from Carlow, Athy, Kilconner, Castledermot and Newgarden, were known collectively as the 'Newgarden' Business Meeting. After the demise of the local Meeting at Newgarden the surviving Meetings as well as the newer Meetings of Ballitore, Newtown, Philipstown and Tullow provided nominees to what became known as the 'Carlow Business Meeting'. In 1914 the two surviving Meetings, Carlow and Ballitore, were laid down and their members were absorbed into the Dublin Monthly Meeting.³ Carlow Men's Meeting ultimately merged with the Women's Meeting c.1880. The earliest extant records are those for the Newgarden Meeting dating from 1678.

For the purposes of clarity, when the term 'Carlow Meeting' (abbreviated CM) is used in this paper it refers to all persons who were Members of the local Meetings still extant at the time. Notably, the Carlow Meeting was one of the smallest in Ireland⁴ and, having fewer members and with limited resources at its disposal, it may possibly represent an extreme scenario.

No documents, other than those generated by the Men's and Women's Meetings for business, are known to have survived from any of the local Meetings. Because of the relatively large size both of the town of Carlow and the Quaker Meeting House there, Carlow—rather than the other local Meetings—was also the venue for many of the Quarterly Meetings of the Province of Leinster.

Sources

It is widely accepted that Quaker records are among the best and most reliable church records for purposes of genealogical and demographic studies.⁵ In Ireland they include material that dates back to the mid-seventeenth century. The records are held in the Friends Historical Library Dublin and in Friends School, Lisburn, Co. Antrim (Ryan 1997: 24). The community in Ireland developed originally from English settlers in the aftermath of the Cromwellian civil war. Their records assumed unexpected significance after a large proportion of parish registers of other denominations, containing details of births, marriages and deaths, were lost during a fire that destroyed the Public Records Office in Dublin in 1922.⁶

The data in the two Irish repositories have been used extensively by genealogists and demographers for a variety of purposes, but principally for family

3 Dublin MM 15.04.1914.

4 Following Vann and Eversley (2002: 41 Fig. 2.6), of the 11 principal Meetings in Ireland only Lurgan Monthly Meeting was smaller.

5 Ryan (1997: 23); Vann & Eversley (2002: 8).

6 Ryan (1997: 23). The type and variety of resources available at the two Quaker institutions have been summarised variously by Harrison (1992: 24–40); Grubb (1937: 29–31), Webb (1906), Greeves (1948: 177ff); and Goodbody and Hutton (1967).

history. Genealogists have usually accepted Quaker sources at face value, but demographers, as of necessity, have looked at the data more critically, and discovered that there are imperfections and omissions that need to be taken into account. Eversley (1981: 60–62), while at pains to explain the advantages of Quaker data when compared with those available from Anglican and other registers, makes only passing reference to the limitations of the Quaker material. This omission was rectified by Vann and Eversley (2002: 11ff.) in a later publication which devoted a whole chapter to a discussion of the quality of the sources.

More recently Coutts (2012: 53–63), as a prelude to his study of the demography of the Carlow Meeting, had recourse to review some of the manuscript records for the Meeting. This revealed shortcomings and inaccuracies and led to a concerted effort to identify the limitations of the dataset. For the specific purpose of building a model based on Meeting membership, there still remains a need to assess the availability and reliability of the Carlow data.

Names of individuals and their affiliations to local Meetings can be extracted from the registers of births, marriages and deaths on the basis of residency, though these sources may not unequivocally identify local Meetings. As noted above, providing both bride and groom were married in accordance with Quaker usage it can also be assumed that their children were birthright members. The movements of individuals and families arriving to and departing from the ambit of the Meeting can be tracked through Removal Certificates, so that their periods of residency as Members of Carlow Meeting can usually be deduced. Likewise, termination of membership following death, resignation or disownment can be determined from entries in the Meeting Minutes, death registers and entries in the *Irish Quaker Historical Database*. Occupation and residency (by Townland) can sometimes be extracted from vital records, tithe records, wills and land memorials. The success of this approach will depend upon the reliability of the respective datasets, each of which is assessed below.

Minutes

For simplicity, the word ‘Carlow’ will be used to include the documents that arose in Newgarden because, in spite of the exact title and the change to a nearby venue, the Minutes of the two Meetings record events in a continuing sequence referring to the same individuals in the one region. However, the Minutes from each dataset have been referenced separately: for the Carlow Business Meeting they are abbreviated ‘Carlow MM’, those for Newgarden ‘Newgarden MM’. Men’s Meetings are recorded in ten volumes for the years 1678–1843, followed by Monthly Meetings in a single volume for 1873–1912. The Minutes from 1843 to 1873 have been missing for a very long period and were never catalogued in the Archive. Women’s Meeting Minutes for the period 1754–1880 are in four volumes.

Many pages are soiled, some are damaged and there are many instances where the ink has faded to near illegibility. The Minutes of the Meetings are written in many hands, and the quality of penmanship and English varies. Abbreviations

are commonplace and to read the Minutes it is necessary to work at learning the clerical shorthand. Consequently one could expect occasional errors in interpretation. There is a marked difference between the Men's and Women's Minutes when it comes to substance. The Women's Minutes are brief, often with little detail. This is particularly the case for the nineteenth-century Minutes, according to which the women seem to have had little more to do than read epistles, advices and Minutes from other Meetings. The Men's Minutes are much more rewarding and generally do deal with practical issues such as disciplinary matters, charitable projects, marriage arrangements and property administration. Both sets of Minutes contain numerous names of members and related information, such as representatives to the Quarterly Meetings and members appointed to various sub-committees and official positions.

Up until March 1763 the identities of the appointed representatives of the local Meetings to the Men's Meeting is never clear, but after that date the appointees are named. This enables the Meeting affiliations of many male members to be identified. The same system was introduced into the Women's Meeting in April 1786. Some time between 1843 and 1873 the Men's Minutes became more formalised via the numbering of agenda items, a system never adopted by their female counterparts.

In respect of the term 'membership', it is nowhere defined in the Minutes, but appears to encompass both adults and their children.

Membership Lists

Very few Carlow membership lists have survived. The first that is available for the Carlow Meeting is an inventory of 59 members belonging to the Men's Meeting for discipline detailed on the first pages of the 1743–51 minute book. Thereafter there are numerous references in the Minutes of the Men's Meeting to members being added to or removed from a 'list', the meaning of which is occasionally unclear, but which in general appears to refer to a list of members of the Men's Meeting.⁷ Next, at the rear of the 1751–66 Minute book there is an entry entitled 'Families of Friends' that enumerates 'Carlow 15, Kilconner 14, Newtown 12, Ballitore 18 and Athy 9', presumably the numbers of Quaker families resident at those locations and attending the local Meetings named. However, no family names are included. Up until the early nineteenth century there do not appear to have been any requests for detailed lists of members from the Quarterly or Yearly Meetings of Quakers, either occasionally or through the series of Queries that the Meeting was required to answer and submit to the Quarterly Meeting annually.

Following a period of decline in membership, in 1812 the London Yearly

7 E.g. Carlow MM 03.10.1753; 24. 07.1754; 20.07.1757; 19.11.1760; the book is an A4-sized volume with alphabetic leaves. Lists in various formats and for various dates have survived for other Meetings, including Dublin, Edenderry, Moate and Mountmellick.

Meeting recommended that each Meeting should keep an alphabetical list of its members and that the practice should be overseen by the Quarterly Meetings.⁸ Dublin Yearly Meeting adopted this recommendation, which was implemented by the Monthly Meetings through their respective Quarterly Meetings. Thus at Carlow April Meeting in 1814 approval was given to order a book for the purpose of keeping an alphabetical list of their members.⁹ This list receives almost no further mention in the Minutes until September 1841, when there is an entry that suggests that it was brought to the Men's Meeting in accordance with the Minutes of the Yearly Meeting.¹⁰ There follows a gap in the Men's Minutes of some 30 years, but from 1873 onwards, when they once more become available, the lists are mentioned periodically and provided the basis for a statistical return of members annually to Leinster Quarterly Meeting.

The 1814 List has survived and comprises two fascicules of alphabetically indexed pages.¹¹ The first runs from 1814 to 1882. The second, from 1865 to 1886, was evidently added when there was no more space for names under a letter in the first. The great majority of the entries give the dates of departure from the Meeting of named individuals: mostly on their deaths, but also by resignations, disownments and certified movements to and from other Monthly Meetings. The quality of the information varies; sometimes dates are given by year only, or by month and year, and there are instances where no dates are given for such events as certified removals. Inserted in the bound volume containing the two fascicules is a single page from a different book on which are listed the names of 45 members on 31 December 1886. It is the only surviving document that presents the Carlow membership at a particular date but does not include local Meeting affiliations. According to entries in the front of the book, the records were examined in 1829, 1831, 1838 and 1839.

Other potentially useful data pertaining to the membership of the Carlow Meeting (and reproduced in Table 2) have been extracted from the men's Minutes and suggest a decline in numbers during the late nineteenth century.

Birth, Marriage and Death Registers

The general shortcomings of Quaker vital records have been discussed in some detail by Vann & Eversley (2002) and those specifically for the Carlow Meeting by Coutts (2012). These authors discovered that there were two major problems associated with birth and death records. Firstly, submission of the data was voluntary and unvetted until early in the twentieth century, when strict rules came to be observed, and, consequently, Quaker records are far from complete.

8 London Yearly Meeting (1834: 137).

9 Carlow MM 08.04.1814.

10 Carlow MM 10.09.1841.

11 General List of the Members of Carlow Monthly Meeting Commencing 10th month 1814, Ms MM I M10.

Secondly, the recording and accuracy of items in the permanent records, when the data were submitted, were dependent on the diligence of the persons charged with the task.¹²

Birth, marriage and death data were recorded in local registers and copies were transmitted to the Quarterly Meeting for inclusion in Provincial Registers. In the 1850s these data were transcribed to National registers and in the twenty-first century were digitised onto the Microsoft Excel spreadsheets of the *Irish Quaker Database*. Aside from possible errors in the original data, and failure to transmit or even record information, every instance of copying raised the possibility that some of the data would be damaged or omitted.

Between 1811 and 1843 births, deaths and burials were recorded in the Men's Minutes, and this practice continues to be observed, although between 1873 and 1914 only four births were recorded. However, several years prior to 1811 in October 1803, the Men's Meeting had made it a requirement for members to submit details of births and burials directly to their Meeting and the Clerk was tasked to formally report them at the end of each session.¹³ These directions were not carried into immediate effect. The entries that are available provide an opportunity to compare dates in the Minutes with dates in the birth and death registers.

Since the protocol for marriages was elaborate, requiring the approvals of the respective Meetings of both brides and grooms and documented by marriage certificates signed by those who attended the marriage ceremonies, there should have been less room for clerical errors. All marriages should have been documented in both Men's and Women's Meetings and the persons assigned to preside over the weddings were charged with the task of preparing two copies of the marriage notes: one went to the Quarterly Meeting to be recorded in the Province Register, and the other was placed in the Meeting marriage book. However, there were serious lapses in recording. For example, it was reported to Monthly Meeting in February 1803 that no records of marriages had been made since 1795 and this led to an immediate review of the records.¹⁴

In addition to the marriage register, the Dublin Library holds copies of a number of marriage certificates for members of the Carlow Meeting. These are valuable documents because they were signed by most of the members present at the wedding and are therefore contemporary and confirmatory records of membership. Places of residence for bride and groom were normally cited in the certificates so that it is possible to determine the local Meeting of the groom

12 One of the yearly Queries from the Quarterly to Monthly Meetings asked 'Have births and burials been recorded?', an expression of concern that this task should be conducted diligently (rear of Ms. MM I A5 1751–1766).

13 Carlow MM 07.10.1803.

14 Carlow MM 10.02.1803.

(which would become that of his bride after marriage) as well as the local Meeting of the bride before marriage.

As well as family lists, the Dublin Library holds a number of useful genealogies, some relevant to the current study, compiled from the vital records by Thomas Henry Webb in the early twentieth century.

Disownments and Removals

Disownments and disciplinary actions against members, first recorded in Minutes, were listed separately in Registers of Disownments and ultimately transcribed to the *Irish Quaker Database*. The Carlow disownments register has disappeared, so the Minutes of the Men's and Women's Meetings are the major local source for this type of information.

One box and two bound volumes of Certificates of Removal exist, covering the periods 1700 to 1785, 1786 to 1833 and 1864 to 1883. When persons left the Meeting to travel to another location, whether permanently or temporarily, they were required to request a certificate from the Meeting which stated that they were in good standing and 'clear' of debts and other obligations that, unfulfilled, may have reflected adversely on the Society. Draft certificates were vetted and approved by the Meeting and, once finalised, signed by the clerks, who were required to forward them to the appropriate Meetings and record the transactions in the Minutes. Like marriage certificates, many were signed also by persons present at the Meeting, so that the documents bear witness to contemporary membership. Apart from simply nominating a destination, the certificates often contain valuable personal information. Incoming certificates were read and recorded at Meetings and members were nominated to advise the persons named in them that the certificates had been received. The dates of incoming certificates are rarely recorded in the Minutes and most of those that are mentioned date from the late nineteenth century.

Sufferings

Registers of Sufferings are useful sources of information for identifying members of the Meeting and for related socio-economic information. Quakers attached great importance to the accurate recording of sufferings, as it was always in their minds to seek redress from those responsible for inflicting them. The National Meeting (London) established a Meeting for Sufferings in 1676 and local Meetings were charged with the responsibility of recording sufferings, checking that they were accurate accounts and forwarding them periodically to the relevant Quarterly Meeting, where they were again edited and, once approved, sent on to the National Meeting (Greaves 1997: 359). The completed sufferings were read at each Meeting before being passed on to the Quarterly Meeting for registration.

Holme and Fuller (1672) record tithe collection in Queen's County for 1660, 1661, 1663 and 1669, as does Stockdale (1683) for the years 1671 and 1672, but no such records survive for Carlow or for the other counties within the

Men's Meeting. As with other Meetings, Carlow followed the instructions of the National Meeting and began collecting and recording the sufferings of its members. The first entry in the Minutes relating to this issue is for September 1686, when there was a request for Quakers belonging to each Meeting to 'bring in their sufferings by next Meeting without fail'.¹⁵ It is surprising that no mention of sufferings is made in the Minutes dating from 1678 to 1686, as some of the worst injustices against members were committed during that period. It is possible that the Meeting had not set up a recording procedure during that period, although this is unlikely. Given that there are records of sufferings for the Newgarden Meeting for 1660, then a jump to 1674 and thereafter a coherent series of yearly records, it would seem more likely that the sufferings were dealt with separately and recorded in a now lost book. No matter what the explanation, it is strange that there is no mention in the Minutes of events relating to the incarceration and persecution of three of its leading members in 1681: John Watson, Daniel White and Samuel Watson (Greaves 1997: 369ff).

It is not clear how and by whom details of sufferings were collected during the last quarter of the seventeenth century, although a Minute of April 1697 suggests that Friends were encouraged to record sufferings as they happened.¹⁶ However, evidence for the keeping of records exists in the form of a catalogue of the members' sufferings year by year from 1674 onwards in the National records and from 1692 in the Quarterly Meeting records. These records are listed by County rather than by Meeting. Members of the Carlow Meeting resided in Counties Carlow, Kildare, Queen's and Wicklow. It is therefore necessary to know the place of residence of those named in order to compile a list of the sufferings for the local Meeting.

A note in the Minutes for October 1698 is the first indication that some kind of recording system was in place. Edward Weston was ordered to purchase a book so that sufferings could be recorded.¹⁷ In addition, a number of members were appointed to draw up the sufferings for the Meeting and to forward them to the Quarterly Meeting; and in the following year the practice was adopted of appointing particular people from each Meeting to assume responsibility for collecting and editing sufferings.¹⁸ Two decades later a Minute of 16 July 1719 noted that, acting on a recommendation from the previous Quarterly Meeting, a search was initiated for '*The most ancient records we can find of the sufferings of Quakers in early times*', but whether this implies records earlier than 1698 is not clear.

15 Newgarden MM 15.07.1686. Minutes from the Newgarden Meeting have survived from late 1678.

16 Newgarden MM 27.02.1697.

17 Tithes do not appear to have been discussed in the early sessions of the Six Weeks Men's Meetings. The first mention of tithes in the minutes is in February 1678, when William Barcroft was taken to task for paying tithes through his landlord (Minutes of Leinster Province Men's Meeting 09.12.1677).

18 Newgarden MM 06.07.1699.

Since the records for each Meeting were recorded by persons appointed for that purpose and over a period of time, they were recorded by many hands. Consequently there is little uniformity in the presentation of the names of individuals and places. In general names appear to have been spelt phonetically and a degree of interpretation is sometimes necessary to identify reoccurring individuals. There is little difficulty in identifying the members of the Meeting, but there are challenges in respect of place-names. Some records are difficult to read because the manuscript pages are faded and some interpolation is required. In general, records of sufferings are much improved and were more consistent from around 1700 onwards, although they are not always complete. For example, those for the years 1714–18 for Counties Kildare and Carlow and for Queen’s County 1715–18 are absent from the National record.

From 1700 onwards sufferings are a regular item on Meeting agendas. The first reference to a reading of sufferings at a Meeting occurs on 26 January 1703. The task of collecting sufferings became more complex after the formal establishment of the Athy and Ballitore local Meetings. The Minutes give the impression that it was a chore for those appointed to carry out the task, charged as they were with encouraging compliance and collecting accounts of sufferings from members.

Wills and Other Sources

A number of wills that relate to members of the Carlow Meeting have survived and some of these have been published.¹⁹ They tend to contain valuable genealogical and personal information that can be used to evaluate the socio-economic status of individuals. Many letters and several diaries by Members have also survived and are held in the collections of the Dublin Library.²⁰ There are large numbers of land memorials relating to Members, their property transactions, marriage agreements and so forth in the archives of the Registry of Deeds, Dublin. Lastly, there are a number of useful secondary sources, such as Wight and Ruttly (1751) and Harrison (2008), and relevant genealogical information for a number of the Carlow families has been published in various volumes of the Sir B. Burke series entitled *Genealogical and Heraldic History of the Landed Gentry of Great Britain and Ireland*. Data from this miscellaneous group of sources were used to check and confirm relationships, although they have not been directly digitised.

Lists of Names and Addresses

This is a series of printed booklets held in the Dublin Library that lists Members and Attenders within the Carlow Monthly Meeting for the period 1873 to 1915. The lists give the names and addresses arranged by families. Attenders are persons who regularly take part in Meetings but have not applied for Membership. The Monthly Meeting at the time comprised Preparative Meetings of Kilconner,

19 Eustace (1956); Eustace and Goodbody (1957).

20 Goodbody (1962).

Carlow and Ballitore. In addition to identifying the Meeting affiliations of individuals, their places of residence are also cited. The lists also include a number of non-resident Members: persons who had moved permanently to other countries.

Methods

The first step in the process of reconstructing the Meeting is to identify its members and their local Meeting affiliations. The process began by creating a Member Database or Model from the following collections:

- The *Irish Quaker Historical Database* of births, marriages and deaths, compiled in the 1850s and transcribed early in the twenty-first century to a database in Microsoft Excel;
- Names extracted from sufferings manuscripts (Leinster Quarterly Meeting G 1 through G 3);
- Wills and land memorials;
- Names and life details extracted from the Minutes, disownment, marriage and removal certificates;
- Additional data from miscellaneous sources.

Software was developed to facilitate data collection and analysis. Dbase5 was chosen as the programming language, as it is a well-established and efficient package for database management. Its only drawback is that it will not run under the latest versions of the Windows operating systems.

Several databases (collectively part of the Reconstitution Model) were established to record basic information: a Members Database that included information such as the person's name, identity number (ID),²¹ date of birth, place of birth, marriage details, occupation, parents and date of death; a Sufferings Database (limited to records prior to 1724) that included dates of incursions, names of persons, goods taken and place of residence; a Minutes database used for recording persons mentioned in the Minutes and miscellaneous information from other sources that included date of minute or of an alternative source, name of person mentioned, local Meeting, whether Minutes were those for men or women and the source of information (coded). Other databases used for recording information from the Minutes included ones for births and deaths, sanctioned marriages, unsanctioned marriages, disciplinary actions, official appointments, membership status (removal certificates, applications for membership and resignations) and

21 Each person was given a unique identification number. This number was generated when the person's name was entered into a genealogical shelf package known as Brother's Keeper, used by PJFC to catalogue and record the names and details of Irish Quakers, their families and descendants.

appointees to committees. The numbers of entries in the various databases are summarised below:

• names mentioned in Minutes recorded in the 'Minutes' DB	30,254
• miscellaneous names & dates added to 'Minutes' DB	3,568
• births mentioned in the Minutes	128
• deaths mentioned in Minutes	140
• resignations, removals and membership applications	1,098
• persons cited for disciplinary reasons	376
• marriages mentioned in Minutes	362
• unsanctioned marriages mentioned in the Minutes	195
• Committees (men's and women's)	7,335
• Members Database	2,455
• Sufferings Database	9,059

The analytical stage of this project was undertaken in two stages: verification of the basic data followed by targeted analyses. Verification was also conducted in two phases. Given that the project involved in excess of 50,000 data entries, all by a single person, one would anticipate that there would be errors in data entry. Thus a series of programs was written to detect these types of error, a procedure complemented by manual checking of samples from the original data. Once verified, the next step was to examine the veracity and reliability of data themselves. Again, programs were written for that purpose. For example, marriage, birth and death dates mentioned in the Minutes were compared with those in the registers.

Once the verification stage was completed targeted analysis, such as Meeting reconstitution, was undertaken in three phases. The first phase involved constructing a new database that contained the history of residence of each individual member, including local Meeting affiliations (often more than one). The program written for that purpose analysed the basic information about the individuals encoded in the databases listed above, including dates and locations of births, marriages and deaths, details of removals, dates of resignations and disownments, applications to become members, movements between local Meetings, the status of the children of married couples and periods of involvement in the affairs of the Meeting. The program is designed to follow a number of lines of investigation and, when one line falters because of data issues, it continues with others until all possibilities are exhausted. It is a complex program and, to give some indication of what is involved, it takes approximately 30 minutes to run on a fast modern computer.

Where there is little or no information about local Meeting affiliations the

program examines a number of options: for children, it will look for the father's Meeting at date of birth and at the child's age at 18. For some fathers (and therefore for mothers) Meeting affiliations can be deduced from the birth data of their children. Meeting information can also be extracted where places of residence are known (from marriage details, life data, sufferings etc.) In cases where these are nominated in the relevant databases, but inaccessible to the reconstitution program, the local Meeting affiliation can sometimes be identified by consulting a map of the region and then adding the data to the reconstitution database.

The following is an example of how the program works. Consider the information available for Daniel O'Brien. He was born at Carlow on 23 June 1786, married on 5 January 1814 and had seven children, the last of whom was born 26 January 1832 at Carlow. The Minutes indicate that he was active between 1836 and 1842. His date of death is not known. Certificates of removal show that he went to Waterford in 1802 and returned to Carlow in 1811. Initially, then, the program would return that he was a resident member of the Carlow local Meeting from 1786 to 1802 and then from 1811 to 1842. However, because his date of death is not known, and his youngest child was born in 1832, an assumption was made that he would still have been alive when the child turned 18 years and was still a member at that age. In this case the program would upgrade the second period of residency to 1811–1850. His children are assumed to qualify for membership and have the same Meeting affiliations as himself. His wife Mary Greeves was not from the Carlow Meeting and it is assumed that she was a member from 1814, the date of her marriage, until her death in 1833. Thus the program would return Carlow as her Meeting for the period 1814–1833.

The second part of the analytical stage used the information compiled in the new database to erect a reconstituted chronologically based model of the Carlow Meeting and appropriate software was written for that purpose.

The third and final phase involved testing the veracity of the model by using it to predict membership for specific periods where membership was known from documented sources.

Model Building: Verification of Data

Errors in Transcription

More than 250 errors were made during data entry, and several misidentifications of individuals were discovered and corrected during the first phase of verification.

Births

Of 147 births recorded in the Minutes, 19 give names only, without dates. When the dates of the remaining 128 are compared with those in the *Irish Quaker Historical Database* 1.5 per cent are not recorded at all; of those that are recorded in both sources 92 per cent are the same and, where they differ, the maximum difference is 119 days. Birth dates were occasionally recorded in the Minutes for

applicants to the Provincial school: out of a sample of 31 entries, 27 have the same dates as those in the *Irish Quaker Database*, while the average difference, where the dates differ, is 15 days.

Deaths

For deaths, a total of 176 are recorded in the Men's Minutes, of which 9.1 per cent were non-members, 17 per cent were reported but with no date of death and 25.6 per cent have dates in the Minutes but none in the *Irish Quaker Historical Database*. Of the 94 cases where there are dates in both Minutes and the *Irish Quaker Historical Database*, 86 are the same.

Marriages

A total of 362 Quaker marriages (not including those who married out) are documented in the Men's and Women's Minutes and of these there are no marriage dates at all for 29 couples. Of the 51 instances where a marriage date is recorded in the Minutes 44 have the same marriage date as in the *Irish Quaker Historical Database*.

There are also factual errors in the marriage records. A precursor to marriage was an application to the Men's and Women's Meetings and the dates at which submissions were received were recorded in their Minutes. Marriages could take place only once the submission and vetting procedures had been completed, so the marriage dates must always post-date this process. In six cases, evidently the result of clerical error, this did not appear to be the case. Corrected dates were used in the analysis.

Discipline: Disownments for Unauthorised Marriages

Disciplinary actions against those members who married out as gleaned from the Minutes are compared with entries in the *Irish Quaker Historical Database* in Table 1. This illustrates an extreme case of the effect of the loss of a summary volume.

Table 1. Disciplinary actions taken in relation to marriage recorded in Minutes and the *Irish Quaker Historical Database*

	<i>Minutes</i>	<i>Irish Quaker Historical Database</i>
Married out	183	33
Forgiven	17	6
Penalty not clear	23	3
Disowned	143	24
Both members married by priest	7	7
Reinstated	12	

Removal Certificates

Since the Book of Certificates does not cover the whole period during which the Carlow Meeting functioned, there is a need to extract references to removals from the Minutes, which in turn raises the possibility of errors and omissions. A sample of 40 removal certificates was selected at random from the collections and the Minutes were successfully searched for comparable citations. Minuted references to all 40 persons were found, suggesting that removal information can be reliably extracted from the Minutes.

The 1814 'List of Members'

The 1814 'List of Members', besides cataloguing individual members, contains a great deal of ad hoc personal information including certificates of transfer, birth data and marriage records. Comparison of these data with those available from other sources serves to highlight recording inconsistencies. For example, there are 20 or so instances where removal certificates for members are cited in the List but there are no records (and therefore authorisation for the certificates) in the Minutes.²² Some ten dates of death and two dates of marriage are cited in the list, but are not found in the official registers. Again, at least one resignation and four disownments are cited in the List but not mentioned in the Minutes.

Model Building: Reconstituted Meeting Generated

The verification results confirm what one suspects: namely that a number of errors were made by the clerks in recording and registering data. On the positive side many of the errors are trivial, although some, such as the failure to record birth and burial events in the register, would affect the outcome of demographic analyses based solely on the latter. For purposes of this exercise birth, death and marriage dates were sanitised and corrected where possible, using available data from the National Register, the original family records and the men's and women's Minutes.

Using a sanitised database, a reconstituted Meeting was established as the first step towards creating a temporal–demographic model for the Carlow Meeting. The results are summarised in Table 2, which shows the temporal variation in member numbers for each of the local Meetings. The data for adults and children inclusive are presented in ten-year intervals. The totals across the columns seldom add up because persons who changed local Meetings within a particular time period are represented more than once. The 'totals' were derived taking into account periods when members were absent from the Meeting. Total membership is shown graphically in Fig. 2.

22 There are more than 20 additional certificates cited dated between 1844 and 1872, the period for which there are no men's minutes available and which are not mentioned in the women's minutes.

Table 2. Estimated numbers of Quakers who resided within the compass of the Carlow Meeting 1660–1910

Date	Males							Females								
	Carlow	Athy	Ballitore	Kilconner	Newtown	Castledermot	Newgarden	Totals	Carlow	Athy	Ballitore	Kilconner	Newtown	Castledermot	Newgarden	Totals
1660						5		5		1						1
1670		1				7	11	19		1				3	13	22
1680	1	15		2		13	34	62		3		5		6	35	47
1690	1	15		19		12	49	95		3		18		11	53	85
1700	2	8		34	2	24	46	113	1	3		22	1	22	53	101
1710	4	6	8	40		25	33	113	4	4	4	36		25	35	106
1720	31	6	24	44		18		122	23	3	14	44		16		99
1730	42	6	32	35		14		129	25	2	18	38	1	12		96
1740	37	8	24	34	4	6		109	29	2	25	45	1	3		104
1750	24	12	26	36	14	4		114	22	8	35	41	9	1		115
1760	23	18	30	33	16	2		121	27	8	39	26	11			111
1770	30	16	33	32	15	2		127	32	14	36	29	13			124
1780	32	16	31	32	15	2		128	32	14	37	30	4	2		119
1790	50	12	36	22		6		125	41	17	37	37		4		134
1800	42	9	26	18				94	56	10	35	25				126
1810	43	8	24	24				100	49	5	40	24				115
1820	44		25	16				85	65		49	27				141
1830	46		25	23				93	72		44	26				142
1840	40		33	21				94	60		58	24				142
1850	23		30	12				65	36		50	11				95
1860	15		25	8				49	16		35	12				62
1870	10		15	5				30	14		30	8				51
1880	12		14	6				32	16		24	4				43
1890	10			6				16	10		12					22
1900	7			4				11	8		8					16
1910	4			2				6	5		9					13

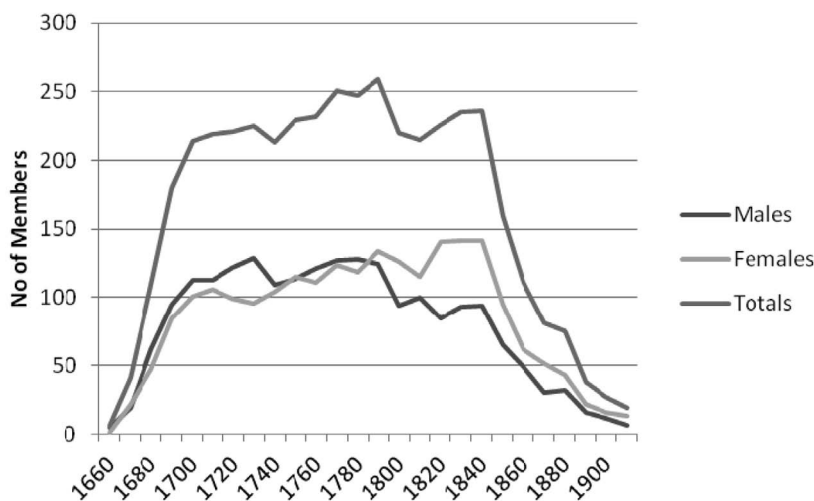


Fig. 2. Estimated total numbers of Friends resident within the compass of the Carlow Meeting 1660–1910 using data from Table 3

These data are in accord with the more formal documentary evidence outlined in the introductory remarks, namely that the early Meetings in the region were held in Athy, Castledermot and Newgarden. The first Men's Meeting was established at Newgarden but, following the construction of a Meeting House in the town of Carlow *c.*1700, by around 1717 all Newgarden members had taken to Meeting in Carlow, which became the most strongly supported local Meeting and gave its name to the Men's Meeting. Ballitore appeared in the early eighteenth century and attained a membership nearly equal to that of Carlow. A fifth seventeenth-century establishment was Kilconner, whose membership was compatible with those of Carlow and Ballitore in the eighteenth century but which had closed by 1890. Meetings at Newtown and Castledermot were small and had been laid down by the end of the eighteenth century.

The totals shown in Fig. 2 suggest steady growth until *c.*1700, followed by relative stability until *c.*1840, after which the numbers begin to decline. The male/female ratios are fairly consistent, with males slightly outnumbering females from 1700 to 1790, and significant imbalances appearing thereafter where females outnumber males.

Model Building: Verification

The precision of the reconstituted Meeting model needs to be evaluated before it can be used reliably to explore other aspects of the Meeting. In its most sophisticated form the software that was used to generate the membership model described above can also be used to identify or predict membership in

Table 3. Names of individuals itemised in the 1886 List of Members plus individuals not on the list but identified as members in that year (boldface) derived from the data that were used to build the reconstitution model

Surname	First name	Surname	First name
Browitt	Joseph S.	Morris	Susanna Maria [Removal certificate to Limerick 15.04.1888]
	Caroline		<i>continued</i>
	Mary Hannah	Pim	Lydia
	Deborah Sophia [Nee Bell, marr. Edward Browitt 15.12.1886]	Pattison	Sarah
	Edward	Shackleton	Sarah Edmundson
	Francis		[Mentioned in Minutes 1836–1910]
Baker	Susan		Elizabeth [died 30.10.1886]
Bell	Edward		Mary Rebecca
	Jane		[Died 1915, no resignat. or transfers]
	Frances Mary	Thompson	Thomas
	Albert Edward		Sarah Elizabeth
	James Frederic		Margaret Elizabeth
Cullen	Emma Jane		Gertrude
Chandler	Susan H		Frederic George
	Thomas	Tylor	Susannah
	Deborah [Died in 1911 at Ballitore, no resignation]	Williams	Margaret Ann
	Jane		John Williams
Cole	Eleanor		[Mentioned in Minutes 1883–86]
Graham	Jacob Whitfield	Walker	Eliza Jane
Graham	Jacob Whitfield jn	Webb	John Herbert
Haughton	Samuel Wilfred		Arabella
Morris	Isabella	Waring	Alfred W
	William R.		Albert
	Joseph R.		Joseph
	Edward		Maria
	Elizabeth Ruth		Mary Anna
	James [died 22.11.1886]		Joshua Lamb
	Henry [mentioned in Minutes 1837–1901]		Elizabeth Ruth
			Dora

any year between 1660 and 1914 and to provide printed lists of members for further analysis. Thus a first approach to verification was to utilise the 1886 List of Members for comparative purposes. As the List is dated 31 December 1886 the reconstitution software was configured to furnish a membership list for the period between 1 January 1886 and 31 December 1886.²³ The List, comprising 45 members, is reproduced in Table 3; all its members were successfully identified utilising the data incorporated into the newly constructed membership model. However, in addition to the 45 members in the List the model identified eight other persons (boldface in the table) who were members during that year. Two of the eight persons died during 1886 and, as the 1886 membership count was made at the end of the calendar year, they would not have been included, leaving a discrepancy of just six persons. The documentary evidence available for these individuals leaves no doubt that they were members in that year, which, in turn, suggests the 1886 count was incorrect.

A second approach to verification is to compare Member numbers cited in the Minutes with those derived from the Reconstitution Model. Most of the membership estimates given in the Minutes seem to have been reported in the first quarter of the year and it is assumed here that they refer to the membership of the previous year.

Numbers of members identified by the Reconstitution Model for the several years for which estimates are available in the Minutes are shown in Table 4. Notably, the sharp downward trend in membership during the last quarter of the nineteenth century, noted above, is confirmed, as are the consistent differentials between male and female Members. Otherwise the estimated numbers of members for each year are consistently higher than the totals cited in the Minutes. Since the names of members are not listed in the Minutes, the two datasets cannot be directly compared. However, the names of the members derived from the Reconstitution Model are known and have been analysed. Firstly, where yearly Notices are available the Members' names have been compared with those generated by the Reconstitution Model and in every case the former are all included in the latter. Secondly, the history of every person on the generated lists whose name could not be found on the relevant Notices was reviewed with the object of determining whether they were likely to have been Members during the years specified. The results suggested that all of the persons revealed by the Model were Members in the specified years, with no exceptions. Consequently the membership numbers cited in the Minutes are likely to have been underestimates. Membership revealed by the Model includes children, regardless of age, but whether the clerks included all children in their estimates is not clear. A brief reference in the Minutes to the inclusion of three under-aged members in their tally for 1886 is ambiguous, although it does indicate that some children were included.

23 The data from the 1886 List itself were excised from the model for this exercise.

Table 4. Numbers of members cited in the Minutes compared with numbers derived from the Reconstitution Model

Date of Minute	Number of members cited in Minutes			Number of members derived from the Reconstitution Model		
	No.	M	F	No.	M	F
10 March 1885	45			56	27	29
10 February 1887 ¹	45			53	23	30
4 March 1888 ²	41			49	21	28
7 February 1889	35			47	19	28
6 February 1890 ³	35	16	19	40	18	22
5 March 1891	29	14	15	39	17	22
17 March 1892	29	14	15	33	15	18
15 November 1906	20			26	11	15
21 March 1907	18	7	11	26	11	15
17 March 1909	17	7	10	20	7	13

Notes: ¹ Three under age at both Ballitore & Carlow. ² Including six practically withdrawn.

³ Including 17 practically withdrawn.

Despite the limitations of the verification process, it would seem that the Model does work and, at least in respect of membership, produce consistent, if not reliable, results. Assuming this to be the case, it can be utilised to explore other aspects of the Meeting.

The Model at Work

Variations in Numbers over Time

In the course of establishing the Model the steady growth and later rapid decline in membership was noted, as was a fairly consistent imbalances between the sexes. These data thus raise issues such as the cause of the imbalances between the sexes and the reasons for the failure of the Meeting. Aside from socio-economic factors, the key considerations in interpreting membership numbers include the size of the pool of children available from which adult members could be recruited, the rate of recruitment of new members from the wider population, the rate of resignations and disownments and movements of members to and from the Meeting. The death rate, if it changed significantly, say because of an outbreak of smallpox, could also affect total membership, though it is difficult to estimate because, compared with births, the relevant vital data available tend to be inconsistent.

One approach is to examine factors that affected the recruitment pool. It has been established elsewhere that first marriage family size of Quaker and related

families decreased significantly from an average of about seven in the period 1650–99 to approximately three during the period 1850–99 (Coutts 2013: Table 1). This has obvious ramifications for recruitment as the pool from which adult members could be drawn also shrank over time. Indeed, over the course of the history of the Meeting, from the early eighteenth century, very few new members were recruited from other faiths (see below) and membership was maintained almost exclusively by drawing from the pool of birthright members.²⁴ To examine this aspect more closely data from the Reconstitution Model have been used to generate percentage variations at 20-year intervals of the numbers of male and female members under ten years of age, under 18 years of age and over 18 years. The results are shown graphically in Figures 3 and 4 and the member numbers used to construct the graphs are summarised in Table 5. Notably, the calculations could be conducted only on individuals whose birth dates are known, so that the veracity of the results is dependant on the sizes of the samples that were drawn from the total populations identified for each of the time frames. The sampling levels are also summarised in Table 5 and, with the exception of the entry for 1909, all are above 50 per cent and mostly much higher, more than sufficient for the purpose of this exercise.

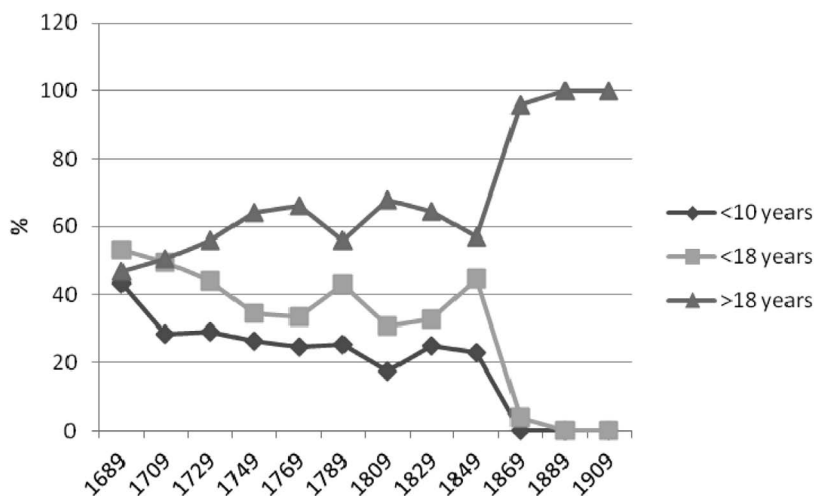


Fig. 3. Variations in % number of males 1689–1910

24 Vann's own analysis of English and Irish Quaker data (1969b: 641) led him to a similar conclusion, namely that, by the mid-eighteenth century, between 80 and 90% of conversions were derived from the children of members.

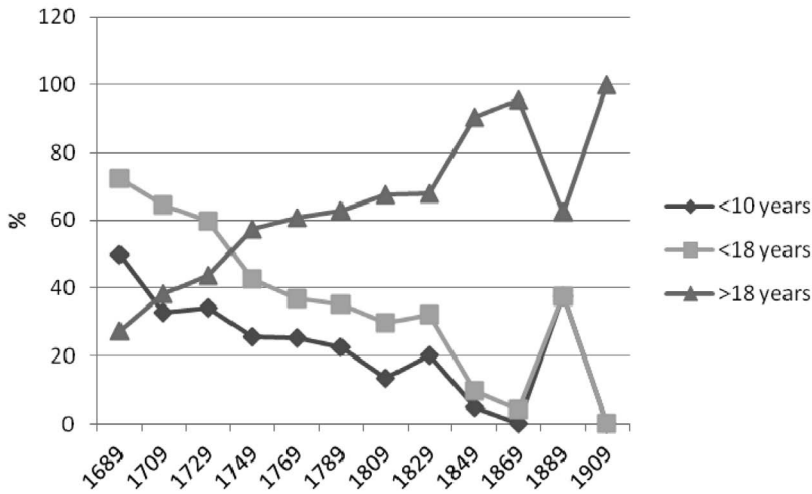


Fig. 4. Variations in the % numbers of females 1689–1910

Table 5. Numbers of Members in each time frame together with the sampling levels

	% Sampling level	Males	Females	% Sampling level
1689	74	54	53	83
1709	82	111	92	78
1729	80	133	97	88
1749	84	118	119	82
1769	86	128	123	77
1789	84	122	136	88
1809	93	99	122	84
1829	88	100	151	80
1849	93	75	107	82
1869	76	33	55	69
1889	50	18	22	55
1909	29	7	13	46

Key: 74 per cent means that 74 per cent of a population of 54 had birth dates.

These results clearly illustrate the steady decline in the numbers of children and teenagers, both male and female, from 1689, though the decline is more consistent and rapid for females than males. Conversely, there is a gradual rise in the representation of members over 18 years of age for females, with a period of a steep rise from about 1829. The trend is also upward for males, although

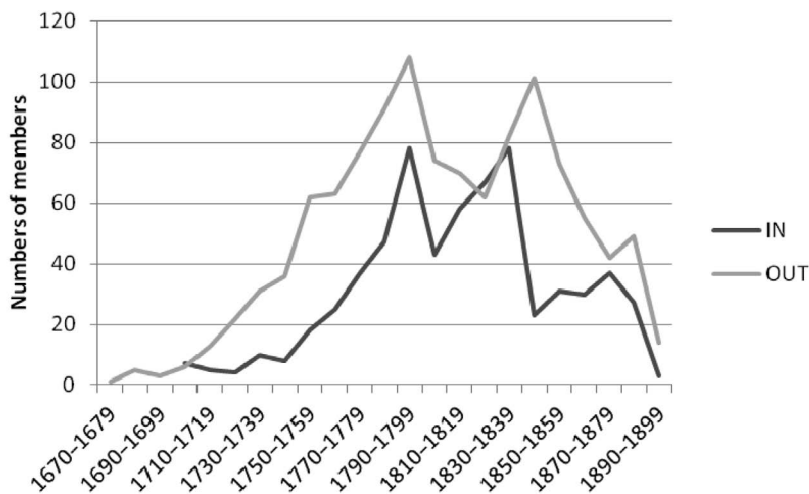


Fig. 5. Summary of the movements on Members (male plus female) in and out of the Meeting

percentages are fairly stable from 1729 until 1849, when they too increase quite dramatically. The graphs suggest that some kind of demographic transformation took place between 1709 and 1749, when the over-18-years cohort stabilised while the under-18 cohort continued on a downward path. Regardless of the reasons for these significant changes in demography, on the basis of these figures alone, without some kind of intervention to invigorate the recruiting process, the Meeting was always headed for collapse.

Details of other demographic factors that affected Meeting numbers are summarised in Table 6. Applications for membership and resignations were relatively few and had little effect on the overall numbers. However, applications for membership were dominated by women (80 per cent), as were resignations (67 per cent), with a net gain to the Meeting of only 20 persons, mainly women. Disownments (excluding those due to unauthorised marriages) bucked this trend, with slightly more men being disowned than women (57 per cent), but again the numbers are not large.

Figure 5 summarises the relationship between the 'In' and 'Out' factors and confirms that, with the exception of a brief period c.1820–29, 'Out' always exceeds 'In' by significant amounts, especially following the 'Out peak' in 1850–1859, for which there is relatively small 'In' compensation. There was a slight rally in the period 1870–79, but by that time the Meeting was already well on a downward path.

The dominant factor affecting residential membership was the 'removals'—movement in and out of the Meeting of persons recorded in transfer certificates. Overall, 569 transferred 'in', of which 85 per cent were women, and 749

transferred 'out', of which 77 per cent were women. Consequently, when all the evidence is taken into consideration, it was the residential and membership status of women that played the key role in determining total membership at any point in time.

Sex Ratios

The investigation of sex ratios is another example of how the Reconstitution Model can be used to explore Meeting issues. As noted in the foregoing, except for a few decades in the seventeenth century the sex ratios were not in parity, with males outnumbering females until the late eighteenth century and females slightly outnumbering males in the late nineteenth. While many reasons can be posited for the unbalanced sex ratios it is much harder to produce supporting evidence for them. Take the case where women outnumber men, as they do in the late nineteenth century. One might argue that females were more persuaded by their faith to stay on as members than their male counterparts, but this is difficult to substantiate and in any case is likely to be only part of the explanation. Some factors can be ruled out. Table 6 shows that male resignations during the late nineteenth century were minimal, as were male disownments for breaches of discipline (excluding marriage out). And, although 40 per cent of a total of 70 male marriages that took place during the period 1780–1910 or 62 per cent of 28 documented marriages between 1830–1910 were unauthorised (in most cases accompanied by disownment), the actual numbers involved were small. Nor can it be argued that the female numbers were bolstered by new arrivals because, from 1780 onwards, in general, more women were certified from Carlow than to it.

Elsewhere it has been shown that, on average, Quaker and Quaker-related women tended to live longer lives than males during the nineteenth century (Coutts 2013: 175 Table 20). Assuming this conclusion is tenable for Quakers alone, an hypothesis can be proposed to help explain the discrepancy between the numbers of men and women Quakers belonging to the Meeting, more particularly during the second half of the nineteenth century. If male members died earlier on average than their female counterparts then females would tend to remain in observation for longer periods of time, thereby enhancing their representation in the membership profiles. Using the Reconstitution Model, the membership was revealed for 1829 (a time when female membership had well outstripped that of their male counterparts—see Fig. 2). The life histories of a selection of individuals from this group were then followed until 1910, about the time the Meeting was laid down. Notably, dates of death for individual members are limited and consequently the data used to construct the profiles are assumed to be equivalent to random samples drawn from known populations.²⁵ The

25 The sampling level for a population of 92 males was 50% (meaning that there were dates of death for 46 out of 92 males) and for a population of 76 females it was 30%.

Table 6. Numbers of Members who left or joined the Meeting for various reasons

Period	Removals Inward		Removals Outward		Marriage Inward		Married Outward		Resignations		Disowned (Except over marr)		Membership by application		Disownment over marriage		
	M	F	M	F	M	F	F	M	F	M	F	M	F	M	F	M	F
1670–1679																	1
1680–1689																	3 2
1690–1699				1			1										3
1700–1709	2	7		1			1				3	3					
1710–1719	2	7	6	26			1				4	4			1	4	
1720–1729		4	4	13							5	2			3	6	
1730–1739	1	9	4	9							2	6			7	3	
1740–1749		8	4	7							5	7			4	9	
1750–1759	2	14	10	17	1		8				5	6			4	11	
1760–1769	5	20	3	17	1		5	1			7	11		1	7	11	
1770–1779	1	32	6	31		4	5		6	8					9	12	
1780–1789		35	2	55		4	3		3	11	3	1	6	2	13		
1790–1799		52	3	68		5	7		3	5	4		21	5	12		
1800–1809	1	35	1	37		2	5	1	2	4	5	2	2	4	14		
1810–1819	2	48	2	48		3	4			4	2	2	3	2	6		
1820–1829	12	50	10	36			6			3			6	4	2		
1830–1839	23	48	19	41		2	4	2	1	3	4	3	1	2	7		
1840–1849	3	19	24	49			6	1		10	1			4	6		
1850–1859	12	20	19	41			5		3	2	2				1		
1860–1869	7	21	17	28		1	2	3	2	1					1		
1870–1879	7	26	15	24	1		1						2		1		
1880–1889	4	22	14	20			2	1	1		1		1	4	2		
1890–1899	1	2	7	7													
1900–1909	1	4		3													
Totals	86	483	170	579	3	21	66	10	21	82	61	10	41	67	125		

Note: 'Removal' indicates transfer from or to another Monthly Meeting.

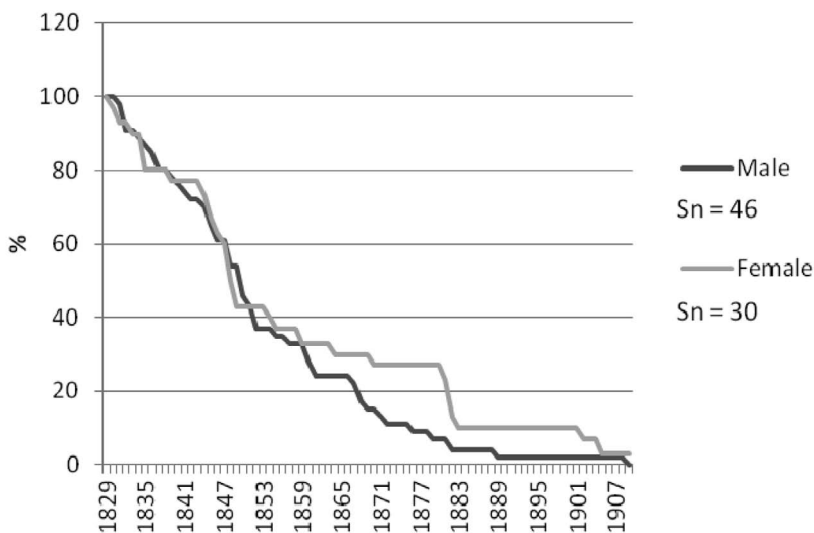


Fig. 6. Comparison of survival rates of males and females belonging to the 1829 membership of the Carlow Meeting

ongoing survival rates expressed as percentages of the original samples for males and females belonging to the 1829 membership are shown in Fig. 6 and indicate that in respect of the original samples initially females and males died in roughly the same proportions but, after the middle of the nineteenth century, the female members began out-living their male counterparts. By 1909 all male members of the original sample were dead, whereas three members of the female sample were still alive.

These data support the notion that females who remained in membership were likely to have remained in observation for longer periods than male Quakers during the late nineteenth century and consequently suggest that the death differential is likely to have been part or all of the explanation for the sex differentials between males and females during that period.

Isichei (1970: 167) has noted that in England women also outnumbered men during the Victorian period, but she attributes this disparity to the tendency of men to migrate and resign their memberships more frequently than their female counterparts. Referring to the results of the in-out analysis for the Carlow Meeting (Table 6), there is no evidence to support the idea that men were resigning their memberships more than women and, while some male Members did migrate during the nineteenth century, the same table indicates that more women were leaving the Meeting, on average, than men.

Quaker Governance

The Reconstitution Model can be used to explore a wide range of issues relating to governance of Meetings, and more particularly those relating to the committee system.²⁶ Meetings for Discipline or Business meetings were held first at six-weekly intervals and later monthly, with representatives from each local Meeting, although in the early days there were no restrictions on other members attending. However, Meetings could and were sometimes disrupted by undesirable interjections or disruptive behaviour, which led the Quarterly Meeting to issue recommendations to all Meetings relating to the qualifications necessary for men and women Friends to sit in Meetings for Business.²⁷ Thus from 1707 membership was restricted to Friends in good standing, as vetted and confirmed by a committee appointed for that purpose, before being accepted into membership by the Business Meeting. Business Meetings dealt with a wide variety of issues, including items from the Minutes of the Province Meeting, property matters, applications for marriage, money matters, disciplinary actions, collection and correlation of sufferings and certificates of removal and receipt thereof and the appointment of representatives to the Province Meeting, and on occasion recommended to the Province Meeting representatives to the Yearly Meeting. Sub-committees were an integral component of the management system.²⁸ Thus for the Carlow Men's Meeting for Business 5,714 committees are reported variously in the Minutes together with their attendant nominees and 1,621 for the Women's Meeting for Business. A total of 191 committee functions have been identified and these can be classified into ten categories (Coutts 2015a: Appendix 1). Many of the committees were set up for very specific non-repetitive purposes such as 'Search for missing documents', and 'Remove seats from Athy Meeting House'. Others were repetitive and ongoing, such as the appointments of representatives to the Monthly and Provincial Meetings. For purposes of illustration some aspects relating to nominees for the Meeting for Business will be considered here in more detail.

During the period 1760–1900 a total of 151 males and 180 females were nominated at one time or another to attend the Meeting for Business in an unpaid capacity.²⁹ However, nominations varied, as did attendance, and consequently some nominees appear in the Minutes more frequently than others. To examine the aspect of nomination (and by inference attendance) in more detail the period of membership P (in years) for each individual nominee was computed, taking into account his/her movements into and out of the Meeting. Since it is assumed here that a nominee would not usually be called upon to serve on the Committee

26 This topic is treated in considerable detail elsewhere by Coutts (2015a).

27 Newgarden MM 20.06.1707.

28 Isichei (1970: 70); Rathbone (1804: 14–18).

29 Nominees were appointed by members of the preparative committees for each sub-Meeting. These committees were comprised of members who had gathered together for worship and who became members of preparative Meetings at the close of worship.

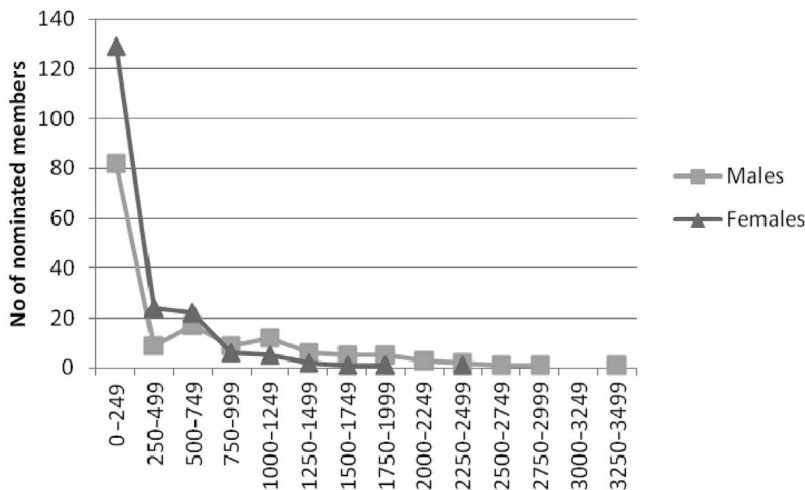


Fig. 7. Relative frequency of nomination to attend Monthly Meetings using RNs 1760–1900

before he was 18 years old, if the person was a birthright Friend and was resident within the compass of the Meeting before he turned 18 years, for this exercise his membership would commence when he turned 18 years old. The number of Meetings that he could have attended during his period of residential membership (R) was determined, as were the number of Meetings he was nominated to attend (A). The percentage number of Meetings, or nomination ratios (RN), was then calculated $((A/R) \star 100)$. This figure by itself can be very misleading, as a person resident within the compass of the Meeting for, say, one year could easily end up with an RN of 100 per cent, whereas other members who had served over longer periods of time, but with some consistency, could have comparatively lower RNs. To overcome this problem the RN has been scaled as follows:

$$\text{Scale Factor (SF)} = \text{RN} \star P \star 100 \text{ where } P = \text{no. of years residential membership}$$

The SF for all nominees is displayed graphically above (Fig. 7) and reveals that about 54 per cent of the male nominees have small values (< 250), reflecting minor nomination. It can be confidently assumed that the nominees with SFs in excess of 500 (40 per cent of the nominees) were responsible for ensuring continuity at Meetings and are likely to have been the most influential in making Meeting decisions.

The SFs for females show a completely different pattern, with some 74 per cent of the nominees falling below 250 and just 13 per cent above 500. This suggests that female nominees were drawn from a much wider spectrum of the membership than was the case for men and that multiple nominations were far fewer.

In total, 82 male and 23 female nominees have SFs in excess of 500, implying regular nomination over fairly long periods. For example, Richard Shackleton, who was nominated variously from 1763 to 1792, attending 103 of the 286 Meetings for Business that took place during that period, had an SF of 1837. The male individuals at the top end of the SF scale included members from some of the wealthiest and most influential families in the Carlow district, including the Duckett, Haughton, Lecky, Shelly, Shackleton and Watson families. In addition, 46 of the 82 (57 per cent) male nominees with SFs over 500 had been officers of the Meeting at one time or the other,³⁰ some in a number of capacities, compared with just 10 (12 per cent) persons out of the much larger group that had SFs of less than 250. Likewise, of the 23 women nominees with SFs exceeding 500, 20 (87 per cent) had also held offices at one time or other, whereas 33 per cent of the women who had SFs <250 had held offices. While the list of women who had SFs >500 includes nominees from some of the families mentioned above, in general they were drawn from a wider spectrum of members. There were 'poor' Friends among the Carlow Meeting membership until c.1885, after which the Meeting was able to report that there were no poor to support.³¹ None of those identified in the Minutes as 'poor' Friends³² were nominated to the Business Committees. Beyond the poor there were relative degrees of wealth, but the wealthiest members certainly fell into the high end of the SF spectrum. Consequently it is difficult not to draw the conclusion that wealth played a role in determining the ability if not the capacity of individual members to participate regularly in the governance of the Meeting. Moreover, it is likely that the differences between the male and female SF spectra may be attributed to the roles each sex played in Quaker society, women being charged with child rearing and domestic chores, and possibly affected by access to ready means of transportation, factors that may have limited the time they could spend on Meeting committees, compared with those relatively wealthy men who were able and had the time to devote to Friend's affairs. Nor was this phenomenon unique to the Carlow Meeting. Isichei (1970: 77), in her work on Victorian Quakers, noted that Meeting attendance and governance, especially at Quarterly and Yearly Meetings, tended to be the provenance of the wealthy and those who resided within the vicinity of Meeting venues. Indeed, elsewhere and in respect of English Friends she had concluded

30 For example, Edward Bell, Joseph Browitt, Jonathon Carleton, Thomas Chandler and Thomas Duckett, who had been appointed overseers; Thomas Chandler, John Haughton, Joshua Haughton, George Shackleton and Thomas Thomas, who had been appointed Clerk of the Meeting; John Waring, Alexander Shelly and Thomas Wright Elders; and Thomas Chandler, Joshua Haughton and Thomas Thomas Treasurers.

31 Newgarden MM 08.10.1885; 11.10.1888; 13.10.1892; 09 11.1897.

32 Several members received financial support from the Meeting during the period 1760–1885, including the families of James Chaytor and Samuel Fuller (Newgarden MM 07.04.1772); George and Mary Thornton (*ibid.*: 30.08.1780); Jane Stacey (*ibid.*: 23.4.1788); Joshua Webster and family (*ibid.*: 12.06.1807); and Arthur Church (*ibid.*: 06.06.1817).

that 'active participation in church affairs was largely the preserve of the leisured and prosperous' and that 'Quakers tended to take domination by a small group pretty much for granted' (Isichei 1967: 201).

Nor were nominees from both sexes all holier than thou. During the lifetime of the Meeting 28 per cent of the male and 8 per cent of the female nominees were brought before disciplinary committees, resulting in the disownment of 19 male and 9 female Members. Misbehaviour, particularly of so many male nominees, representing as they did their respective communities, could only have been perceived by the wider membership with considerable disappointment, possibly with long-term effects on morale.

Discussion

This paper set out to evaluate the reliability and utility of Quaker records held in the Friends Historical Library Dublin by selecting, as an example, those available for the Carlow Meeting and applying them to a particular exercise, the reconstitution of Meeting membership in chronological perspective. The major sources of information were identified, evaluated and corrected where possible prior to utilising them to compile a series of databases that in combination formed a Reconstitution Model.

This study has confirmed that the records are far from perfect. Mistakes have been made by the clerks in recording and transcribing data, so that the births, marriages or deaths of a significant number of recorded members are not known. There are instances where various data have been recorded incorrectly in the Minutes or transcribed wrongly in compiling registers or databases. Problems encountered included:

- Difficulties in identifying individuals and the locations of place-names mentioned in the various records;
- Inconsistencies between information contained in the various registers and those in Minutes;
- Lost or missing records;
- Paucity of membership lists.

In spite of this, it has been shown that a meaningful analysis can be made from the manuscript material. Many of the clerical errors are minor and would have only a marginal influence on the outcome of analytical studies. Missing data are more serious, but the work has shown that much can be restored: for example, a birth date can be deduced from the age of a person at death. Data on births, marriages and deaths, absent from registers, can be retrieved from Minutes or elsewhere. In any case, in most instances sufficient data are available to provide reasonable samples for analytical purposes.

By pooling all information available, a reconstituted membership model was created. Comparing names generated by the model with a list of persons said to be

members as of 15 December 1886, the model identified the majority of members on the list and added some names and details that were not itemised. Owing to incomplete or incorrect data pertaining to particular individuals in the original manuscripts, this type of model is likely to have shortcomings. Again, the results of the comparison of the two sources of data imply that some clerks may have failed to record membership accurately or completely. Consequently it is possible that the model will generate underestimates of membership.

The analysis produced at least one surprising result: Carlow was said to be one of the smallest Meetings in Ireland, but the membership numbers proved to be larger than recorded elsewhere, with over 220 members, including children, between 1700 and 1840. The build-up of membership was relatively rapid, as was its diminution. Growth of membership was very sharp, as it was in other Meetings in England and Ireland (Vann 1969b: 641), probably facilitated by the gradual relaxation of laws and attitudes that restricted and discouraged the expansion of nonconformist sects.³³ As Vann's membership analysis of the wider Quaker populations of Britain and Ireland suggested, there was a 'slow secular decline' in membership numbers that started in the mid-eighteenth century. The model not only provides ongoing updates of total membership numbers but progressively identifies the members of the local Meetings.

Three exercises were undertaken to illustrate how the model might be used. The first looked at the factors that may have caused the demise of the Meeting. The results suggested that it can be attributed, in the main, to a diminishing pool of children and teenagers from which adult membership could be recruited and an increasing tendency for members, particularly women, to marry out. The second exercise examined the disparity in the sex ratios during the late nineteenth century and the results suggested that they were due in part to the fact that women were living longer than men. The third exercise touched on governance, more specifically on the Members who managed the Meeting in an unpaid capacity. The results indicated that management was vested in a small number of individuals who tended to be drawn from the wealthiest Members of the Meeting.

The foregoing serves to illustrate a few of the analytical possibilities, aside from and in addition to family reconstitutions and formal demographic studies, that can be tackled using Quaker data. Once the limitations of the data are identified a reconstituted Meeting provides a starting point from which the embedded information can be extracted, analysed and rearranged to explore a range of social, economic and demographic questions. The database can be used, for example, to

33 Passage of the Act of Toleration in 1689, which allowed them to meet freely, was welcomed by Quakers (Greaves 1997: 366) while the Affirmation Act, passed in 1696, was more controversial. Indeed, matters concerning the taking of oaths and affirmations were not resolved satisfactorily for Irish Quakers until 1719, with the passage of the Act of Toleration in the Irish Parliament (Wight and Ruttly 1751: 283).

investigate topics such as Meeting discipline, Meeting finances, apprenticeships, charitable projects, committee works and all manner of demographic topics.

To date, detailed analytical studies of data available for meetings other than Newgarden have not been conducted and consequently there is a dearth of comparative data. In her account of the Quaker settlement of the Edenderry area – indeed, the only account of an Irish Meeting that contain analytical elements that are in some way similar to those deployed in the Newgarden study—Abbott (2004) has attempted to explain the process of colonisation and subsequent decline by identifying relevant economic and political factors and utilising the results of an analysis of some population and tithe data. However, the analytical aspect of her thesis is minimal, she makes no attempt to assess the veracity of the data and she makes a number of unqualified and anonymous assumptions when interpreting her data. While we can find no fault with her conclusions, this is a good example of a case in which a Reconstitution Model could have been deployed to further explore and develop the thesis and to provide it with reliable and authoritative quantitative support.

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