

Research Note:
To What Extent Were Quakers Being Persecuted
after 1670?

Hannah Reeve
University of York, England

Abstract

Through the compilation of churchwardens' accounts and the minutes of York and Thirsk monthly meetings, the life of Isaac Lindley, a leading minister based in a rural village in North Yorkshire, will be explored. Through Lindley, this article will re-examine the extent to which the persecution of Friends continued after 1670. Unique insight will be offered on the turbulent interactions between parish office-holders and dissenters, and the article will shed light on the differing experiences of rural Friends and their urban counterparts. Friends such as Isaac Lindley were crucial to the survival of the Quaker movement and ensured meetings continued even in the most rural of dwellings, where opposition was often fierce.

Keywords

Rural Quakers, Coxwold, Wildon Grange, North Yorkshire, Churchwardens' Accounts, Isaac Lindley, Excommunication, Persecution, Parish Officers.

By the 1650s the Quakers had become one of several dissenting religious groups in York. The growth of the York Friends has been scrupulously recorded, giving a rich and detailed description of seventeenth-century York. Little has been done, however, to analyse the communities of Friends living outside the city in rural north Yorkshire. The focus has previously been on the urban experiences of those attending the early York Quarterly Meetings, with only brief references made to Friends living in the countryside. This essay, therefore, will look at the north Yorkshire parish of Coxwold to assess the extent to which these country Friends were being persecuted. The scope of dissent in Coxwold will first be established, before a detailed case study of Isaac Lindley, a Friends minister who

served a lifetime of persecution, will be explored. I will use a variety of rich sources that have not been studied elsewhere to demonstrate that Friends suffered persecution past 1670, a time when many historians have shown Friends to have been integrated within the local community. I will challenge this notion and instead show persecution to have been persistent and unrelenting: country Friends were still being imprisoned, excommunicated and economically ruined by local parish officers after 1670.

In recent Quaker studies historians have sought to re-examine the persecution of Friends. Finding a decline in persecution, Adrian Davies argues that the 1670s were the decade in which 'a form of toleration had been established', any sanctions imposed being lenient.¹ Bill Stevenson also concludes that, by 1670, the attitudes of those in the midlands 'had softened considerably', and alienation among parishioners had mellowed.² While both Davies and Stevenson find Friends to have been integrated into communities, their southern studies offer limited applicability to Friends in the north. Given Peter Collins' suggestion that those comprising the Quaker movement were largely living in rural northern areas, the propensity of historians to focus on the experiences of Friends living in the south is surprising.³ Even where historians have begun to look at northern areas, there is a tendency to prioritise the experiences of the city dwellers over the rural. Stephen Allott, for instance, focuses on the city of York's increasing reluctance to persecute urban Quakers, while life for country Friends is simply summarised as 'less well to do than those in the city'.⁴ More recently, David Scott has studied the experiences of York Friends and suggests that the easy-going relationships evident with the urban authorities were probably much less common in rural parishes.⁵ Where Scott leaves off, then, it becomes necessary to continue, giving further consideration to the Quaker communities living in north Yorkshire's countryside.

Friends from the parish of Coxwold, 18 miles north of York, met monthly at Thirsk, eight miles west of the parish.⁶ On a day-to-day basis, they gathered at neighbours' houses to discuss business and worship.⁷ Friends living in Coxwold

1 Adrian Davies, *The Quakers in English Society, 1655–1725* (New York: Clarendon Press, 2000), p. 186.

2 Bill Stevenson, 'The Social Integration of Post-Restoration Dissenters, 1660–1725', in Spufford, Margaret (ed.), *The World of Rural Dissenters, 1520–1725* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1995), pp. 360–87 (p. 362).

3 Peter Collins, 'On Resistance: the case of 17th century Quakers', *Durham Anthropology Journal* 16, no. 2 (2009), p. 11.

4 Stephen Allott, *Friends in York: the Quaker story in the life of a meeting* (York: Sessions Book Trust, 1978), p. 16.

5 David A. Scott, *Quakerism in York, 1650–1720* (York: Borthwick Publications, 1991), p. 23.

6 Borthwick Institute for Archives, MF 193, 'Lists and Maps etc of Meetings in Yorkshire 17th–19th Century' 1600–1800.

7 Allott, *Friends in York*, 10; Jack V. Wood, *Some Rural Quakers* (York: William Sessions Limited, 1991), p. 46.

also met in a hamlet called Wildon Grange, a mile and a half outside the village. This was one of ten hamlets surrounding the village, contributing regularly to the annual budget of the parish.⁸ Providing fox heads for a shilling, Wildon Grange was an important part of the parish and central to the overall maintenance of the church.⁹ While the annual collection of 13s 4d from those dwellings in Wildon Grange seems a small amount, the hamlet was comprised of only a couple of houses, home to a number of members of the Religious Society of Friends.

Taking the returns of the 1676 Compton census, a religious census that 'enumerated stubborn nonconformists', we can begin to establish the extent of dissent in Coxwold.¹⁰ According to the Compton census, the population of 'Cuxwold' in 1676 numbered 320 and, of that figure, four were considered 'papists', while eight were listed as 'other dissenters'.¹¹ Compared with neighbouring parishes, the 2.5 per cent described as 'other dissenters' seems to be typical;¹² neighbouring Kilburn, for instance, gives a return of nine dissenters out of the parish population of 326 (2.7 per cent).¹³ Nonconformity, then, seems to have been widespread in the Bulmer wapentake, with 52.6 per cent of parishes listing at least one person not conforming.¹⁴ While historians have argued that the Compton census exaggerates the number of dissenters, the return for Bulmer is comparatively low.¹⁵ The returns for the parishes of Alne and Crayke are missing, being under the jurisdiction of the Bishop of Durham; these peculiar dioceses were outside normal judicial jurisdiction, and consequently became a hotspot for Friends, as dissent was more likely to go unnoticed. Both Coxwold and Kilburn Friends regularly met in Crayke to reduce the risk of persecution, making it difficult to discern whether they would be included in the Compton returns for Coxwold or Crayke.

That the number of dissenters given for Coxwold and Kilburn is inaccurate seems likely given the returns of the hearth tax (1662–68),¹⁶ completed two years before the

8 Wood, *Some Rural Quakers*.

9 Wood, *Some Rural Quakers*.

10 Donald A. Spaeth, *The Church in an Age of Danger: parsons and parishioners, 1660–1740* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2000), p. 6.

11 Anne Whiteman, *The Compton Census of 1676* (London: Oxford University Press, 1986), p. 596.

12 Whiteman, *Compton Census*, p. 596.

13 Whiteman, *Compton Census*, p. 596.

14 Whiteman, *Compton Census*, pp. 596–97.

15 Alan Everitt, 'Nonconformity in Country Parishes', in *Land, Church and People: essays presented to Professor H. R. Finburg*, ed. Joan Thirsk (Reading: British Agricultural History Society, 1970), pp. 178–99 (p. 180).

16 Judith Hurwich, 'Dissent and Catholicism in English Society: a study of Warwickshire 1660–1720', *Journal of British Studies* 16, no. 1 (1976), pp. 24–58 (p. 38); Margaret Spufford, 'The Importance of Religion in the Sixteenth and Seventeenth Centuries', in *The World of Rural Dissenters, 1520–1725*, ed. Margaret Spufford (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1995), pp. 1–102 (p. 18).

Compton census. For the return of Coxwold, the total population is given as 214, while Kilburn is totalled at 285.¹⁷ In both parishes, it is probable that the returns are incomplete.¹⁸ If we compare it to the Conventicle returns of 1669, nonconformity in both Coxwold and Kilburn is apparent and seemingly prolific.¹⁹ Describing two conventicles in the north riding, the 1669 returns list those at Coxwold and 'Kilbourn' as about two hundred or three hundred in size.²⁰ While Alan Everitt's study of Kent suggests that the number of dissenters in the Compton census is exaggerated, in the Bulmer Wapentake it is likely to be underestimated.²¹ While there is no meaningful way of establishing the accuracy of the Compton census, or an indication of what was considered to fall into the category of 'other dissenter', the Coxwold churchwarden accounts are a rich source to be read alongside the census. Offering insight into rural living, the accounts also demonstrate consistent 'concern' over one parishioner in particular, Isaac Lindley.²²

Isaac Lindley was born and baptised in 1624, in the east riding parish of Langton, three miles south of Malton.²³ Where Langton parish records do not survive, the Friend's meticulous recordings enable a timeline of Lindley's early life to be constructed. Before leaving Langton, Lindley married Mary, and entries for their children appear in the early marriage records for the Friends.²⁴ Ralph was born in 1650, followed by twin sons, Benjamin and Joseph, in January 1652.²⁵ Somewhere between 1652 and 1655 the Lindleys moved 3 miles away to Scackleton, near Hovingham, where their fourth child, Richard, was born in October 1655.²⁶ At the end of 1655 the family moved to Coxwold, nine miles west of Scackleton, where two more sons were born.²⁷ Where Lindley's occupation is given he is simply described as an 'Ancient Minister'²⁸ responsible for spreading Quaker ideas.²⁹ There is a degree of uncertainty over when Lindley first started to be persecuted: Thirsk Friends originally dated the first incident relating to

17 Whiteman, *Compton Census*, p. 570.

18 Whiteman, *Compton Census*, p. 570.

19 G. Lyon Turner (ed.), *Original Records of Early Non-Conformity*, vol. iii (London: Fisher Unwin, 1914), p. 102.

20 Turner, *Original Records*, p. 102.

21 Everitt, 'Nonconformity in Country Parishes', p. 180.

22 Borthwick Institute for Archives, PR/COX 19, 'Coxwold Churchwardens' Accounts' c.1632–1688.

23 Joseph Smith, *A Descriptive Catalogue of Friends' Books or Books written by members of the Society of Friends* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1867), p. 125.

24 FindMyPast, 'England and Wales, Society of Friends (Quaker) Marriages 1528–1841', 2017, <http://www.findmypast.co.uk/>, accessed 15/03/17.

25 FindMyPast.

26 FindMyPast.

27 FindMyPast.

28 Smith, *A Descriptive Catalogue*, p. 125.

29 Kate Peters, *Print Culture and the Early Quakers* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2004), p. 22.

Lindley in the Book of Suffering as 1657, but later changed it to 1659.³⁰ If we look at the Yorkshire Quarterly Meeting minutes, however, it details an incident in 1657 in which Lindley disrupted the service at Coxwold church.³¹ Being ‘moved by ye Lord’ to go to the ‘steeplehouse’ of Coxwold, Lindley was hailed forth and preached to the congregation, before being put in the stocks for an hour.³² Committed to Ripon gaol for six weeks, Lindley was fined 5s by the Justices of Peace and was to appear before magistrates in Thirsk, Malton, Northallerton and Helmsley before being freed.³³

From 1659 Isaac Lindley begins to become a regular concern in the churchwarden accounts of Coxwold.³⁴ The first entry regarding Lindley is a payment to the constable, John Raigett, for £2 for his efforts ‘concerning Linlay’.³⁵ In the following year, churchwardens detail a further payment of £2 6s 2d to John Raigitt ‘concerning Isaack Linley’.³⁶ Henry Nicholson, sexton, and William Raper, merchant, both received 3d, while William Ward, a prosperous butcher, was awarded 5s 6d for helping with the churchwardens’ concern over Lindley.³⁷ In the same year Lindley was imprisoned in York castle for his refusal to take the oath of allegiance.³⁸ A total of 536 other Friends from across the city and county were being kept in various prisons for meeting together.³⁹ It was not until an assize held in February 1661 that some of the Friends were permitted to be released from the castle, with Lindley among them.⁴⁰ In a further incident in March 1662 Friends were gathered at the house of Valentine Johnson in Wildon Grange when ‘John Raigett called Marshall’ brought with him three soldiers with swords, muskets and ‘other weapons of war’.⁴¹ Threatening to set the house alight while one soldier blocked the exit, Raigett drew his ‘raiper’ and demanded to know the names of all the Friends at the meeting.⁴² In response, the Friends queried Raigett’s authority and asked to see his order.⁴³ Among the 18 Friends detained at the meeting,

30 Borthwick Institute for Archives, MF 192, ‘Thirsk Monthly Meeting: records of suffering’ 1660–1738.

31 Borthwick Institute for Archives, MF 164, ‘Yorkshire Society of Friends, Records of Sufferings vol. 1’ 1651–1695.

32 Borthwick Institute for Archives, MF 164.

33 Borthwick Institute for Archives, MF 164.

34 Borthwick Institute for Archives, PR/COX 19.

35 Borthwick Institute for Archives, PR/COX 19.

36 Borthwick Institute for Archives, PR/COX 19.

37 Borthwick Institute for Archives, CP.H.3264, ‘Cause Papers – Matrimonial (separation from bed & board – cruelty)’ 1676; Borthwick Institute for Archives, PR/COX 19.

38 W. Pearson Thistlethwaite, *Yorkshire Quarterly Meetings, 1665–1966* (Harrogate, 1979), p. 37.

39 Thistlethwaite, *Yorkshire Quarterly Meetings*, p. 37.

40 Thistlethwaite, *Yorkshire Quarterly Meetings*, p. 37.

41 Borthwick Institute for Archives, MF 164.

42 Borthwick Institute for Archives, MF 164.

43 Borthwick Institute for Archives, MF 164.

Lindley, along with three other Friends, were taken to the Lord Lieutenant at Thirkleby, three miles from Wildon Grange.⁴⁴ While the remaining Friends had their names taken, Lindley was to remain in prison for 37 weeks, before the next court of assizes took place.⁴⁵

Not long after Lindley's nine-month spell in prison, concerns over his behaviour were again raised. In 1665, alongside several other Wildon Grange Friends, Lindley and Elizabeth Nelson and Franc Rosse, two Papists, were being presented in the visitations.⁴⁶ Along with Valentine and Elle Johnson, George and Sarah Jenham and William Drake, the Lindleys were charged for being 'Quakers and not coming to Church'.⁴⁷ Both Isaac Lindley and George Jenham were presented again in the same year 'for not baptizing their children and not coming to church after childbirth'.⁴⁸ In the churchwarden accounts a warrant was paid for Lindley, suggesting that he did not turn up at the designated visitation presentment.⁴⁹ This seems plausible when we consider the entries for the Thirsk Suffering meeting minutes, when another Wildon Grange meeting, taking place at Lindley's house, was broken up.⁵⁰ Friends were gathered to wait upon and feel the 'sweet suordonings of his lore', and were sat 'middetaiting' when John Raigett entered with two men in a hostile manner, carrying a warrant.⁵¹ Isaac Lindley, Thomas Rowland, Brian Beart and William Turnham were all sent to Thirkleby, where Henry Frankland and Metcalfe Robinson (local Justices of Peace) met the four Friends, sent them to prison and refused them bail.⁵²

Events reached a head in 1669 for Isaac Lindley. In a letter to the society's founder, George Fox, Lindley details a failed attempt to set up a new meeting, ten miles from York.⁵³ While we do not know exactly where Lindley was trying to start a new meeting, it seems likely to have been in one of the parishes adjacent to Wildon Grange, where Lindley and his dissenting ways were known to parochial officers. Lindley describes the meeting being disrupted by the local priest and constable, having secured a warrant with Fox's name on it with the presumption that he would be attending the meeting.⁵⁴ Fox was not in attendance

44 Borthwick Institute for Archives, MF 164.

45 Borthwick Institute for Archives, MF 164.

46 Borthwick Institute, MF B 1838, 'Visitation of the Diocese of York – Court Book' 1662–1663.

47 Borthwick Institute, MF B 1838.

48 Borthwick Institute, MF B 1838.

49 Borthwick Institute for Archives, PR/COX 19.

50 Borthwick Institute for Archives, MF 164.

51 Borthwick Institute for Archives, MF 164.

52 Borthwick Institute for Archives, MF 164.

53 Isaac Lindley, 'A Letter to George Fox', in Fox, George (ed.), *A Journey or Historical Account of the Life, Travels, Sufferings, Christian Experiences and Labour of Love* (Oxford: Oxford University, 2nd edn, 1836), pp. 107–08.

54 Lindley, 'A Letter'.

at the meeting, however, but on his way to Whitby.⁵⁵ The ‘ravener’, assuming the Friends at the meeting were lying when they said that Fox was not present, proceeded to pluck Lindley down, abuse him and take him to a magistrate, where ‘he set me at liberty’.⁵⁶

The relative ease with which Lindley details being set free by the court is somewhat surprising. While Bill Stevenson describes the state and church actively prosecuting Friends, in rural Yorkshire the local parish officers were more likely than the magistrates to pursue the Friends.⁵⁷ This is further evident from a reading of Fox’s journal, where he describes a Justice of Peace at a York assize in 1669 who was a ‘well-wisher to friends’ and had been ‘tender and very kind to me from the first’.⁵⁸ In urban areas, Friends were shown leniency and persecution was becoming less tenable.⁵⁹ While Craig Horle argues that constables refused to execute warrants, Coxwold’s constable, John Raigett, consistently showed himself eager to persecute Friends.⁶⁰ A churchwarden in 1665 and overseer of the poor in 1675, Raigett contributed annually to the parish budget and signed off parish accounts. A prosperous figure, he paid for four hearths in the hearth tax in 1673, suggesting that he was relatively comfortably off.⁶¹ During a court case in 1672, however, his reputation was muddied when Anne York, whom he claimed to have been to bed with 20 times, accused him of sexual slander.⁶² Elsewhere, Raigett had been involved in breaking up other Friends’ meetings with the Crayke constable. In one case in 1665 Raigett disrupted a meeting at Valentine Johnson’s house, sending him to the Bishop of Durham, where he was committed to gaol for six months.⁶³ A man who had actively pursued the persecution of the Thirsk Friends for at least a decade, Raigett’s attitude toward the dissenters had not softened by 1670.

In 1671 an entry was made in the Coxwold churchwarden accounts relating to ‘ye olde churchwardens which they were behinde concerning the Quakers’.⁶⁴ Several similar entries were made in the accounts for 1673, where 1s was paid for ‘going to Easingwood to Mr Driffield for a warrant for the Quakers’ before another entry describes going ‘the second time to Mr Driffield about

55 Lindley, ‘A Letter’.

56 Lindley, ‘A Letter’.

57 Stevenson, ‘Social Integration’, p. 387.

58 Borthwick Institute for Archives, MF 164.

59 Scott, *Quakerism*, 29; David A. Scott, ‘Politics, dissent and Quakerism in York, 1640–1700’, unpublished PhD thesis (York: University of York, 1990), p. 14.

60 Craig W. Horle, *The Quakers and the English Legal System, 1660–1688* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 1988), p. 264.

61 The Ripon Historical Society, *Hearth Tax List for North Riding of Yorkshire: Michaelmas 1673* (Ripon, 1991), p. 43.

62 Borthwick Institute for Archives, CP.H.4601, ‘Cause Papers – Sexual Slander (Defamation)’ 1672.

63 Borthwick Institute for Archives, MF 164.

64 Borthwick Institute for Archives, MF 164.

ye Quakers'.⁶⁵ Keith Wrightson suggests that parish officers were reluctant to regulate offences, and Adrian Davies stresses that the presentment of Friends to church courts by parishes was rare.⁶⁶ The entries in the Coxwold accounts, however, point to a zealous body within the parish urging authorities to do something about the parish's Quaker problem. In the following year Isaac and Mary Lindley are once more being presented at the 1674 visitation, alongside their son Ralph and his wife Jane Lindley, as well as Valentine and Elle Johnson and their adult children, for not coming to church and receiving the sacrament.⁶⁷

At the same time as Lindley was writing to Fox in 1669, the churchwarden accounts begin to detail a peculiar pattern of citations and excommunication orders. From 1668 to 1680 the churchwardens were paying 8*d*, and sometimes more, for both citation and an excommunication each year.⁶⁸ Payments were made for going to the 'parrator' to secure the writ *de excommuni cato capicendo*.⁶⁹ The entries made for citation and an excommunication are frequently followed by a further payment of warrants for the Friends, or for going to see Mr Driffield about the Quakers.⁷⁰ These entries suggest that Friends were being excommunicated from the parish, with Lindley presumably among them. Where excommunication certificates do not survive for Coxwold, then, it becomes necessary to look at the bordering parish of Kilburn, where Lindley regularly attended meetings.

Previously imprisoned with Lindley in 1665, Thomas Rowland's life as an early Friend reflects a similar pattern of persecution. Throughout the 1660s Rowland was being presented in visitations for his refusal to swear the oath of allegiance, come to church or take the sacrament.⁷¹ A persistent attendee of Friends' meetings, and having hosted a few of his own, Thomas Rowland was excommunicated in 1671.⁷² Having refused to contribute toward the repairs of the Kilburn 'steeplehouse', information was drawn against Rowland and he was presented before the Archbishop of York, Richard Steern, where a writ *de excommuni cato capicendo* was issued.⁷³ Thomas Rowland was imprisoned in York castle for 18 months, where he died in 1671.⁷⁴ Excommunication of Friends rarely appeared in the Yorkshire Sufferings Meeting Minutes before 1670, but they became numerous thereafter.⁷⁵ Indeed, members of Richmond Monthly

65 Borthwick Institute for Archives, MF 164.

66 Keith Wrightson, 'Two Concepts of Order', in Brewer, John, and Styles, John (eds), *An Ungovernable People: the English and their law in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries*, (London: Hutchinson University Library, 1980), pp. 21–46 (p. 39); Davies, *Quakers*, p. 180.

67 Borthwick Institute for Archives, MF 164.

68 Borthwick Institute for Archives, PR/COX 19.

69 Borthwick Institute for Archives, PR/COX 19.

70 Borthwick Institute for Archives, PR/COX 19.

71 Borthwick Institute, MF B 1838.

72 Borthwick Institute for Archives, MF 164.

73 Borthwick Institute for Archives, MF 164.

74 Borthwick Institute for Archives, MF 164.

75 Borthwick Institute for Archives, MF 164.

Meeting experienced a similar pattern of persecution, where both Richard Robinson and John Fothergill found themselves with a writ of excommunication and were sent to gaol in 1678 for injuries committed against the ('so called') holy church.⁷⁶ Francis Driffield, the Justice of Peace in nearby Easingwold, appears in several cases where Friends were issued with excommunication certificates in the later part of the seventeenth century.⁷⁷ For instance, Christopher Stockton of Farndale was given a warrant of excommunication for not paying his tithes by Driffield and sentenced to York castle in 1674.⁷⁸ At the next assizes Stockton was released from prison, before being excommunicated once more three years later.⁷⁹ Excommunication, then, was the ultimate sanction the church courts could invoke, and was usually accompanied by a spell in prison.⁸⁰

On occasions in the 1670s where Friends were not excommunicated, a distraint of goods was issued. Adrian Davies suggests that the second Conventicle Act of 1670 reduced the imposition of fines and number of distraints, but the evidence for the Yorkshire Friends does not agree.⁸¹ For instance, Roger Hebden, a leading York Quaker, had a total of £21 15s taken from him in 1670, when he was found to be preaching and praying at a meeting at Richard Shipton's house.⁸² Isaac Lindley and his wife were both fined £20 for holding a meeting in their home in 1670,⁸³ while in 1671 Isaac Lindley, George Fallowfield and Josiah Cookson (both of the parish of Crayke) had goods of the value of £25 16s 8d taken from them for not paying their tithes.⁸⁴ The grandson of Isaac Lindley, Thomas Lindley of Wildon Grange, was sentenced to prison in Falconbridge with fellow Thirsk Friend, Thomas Batters from Sutton on the Forrest in 1689, for refusing to pay tithes.⁸⁵ As late as 1692, Isaac Lindley was imprisoned in York castle for non-payment of tithes 'by a comon pleas writt', and held there for three years.⁸⁶ Along with other notable Friends imprisoned in the castle, the York monthly meeting paid for Lindley's prison chamber rent for several years during his refusal to pay tithes.⁸⁷

Although historians have observed the decline in Friends' sufferings for the non-payment of tithes, the distraining of goods had serious economic

76 Borthwick Institute for Archives, MF 164.

77 Borthwick Institute for Archives, MF 164.

78 Borthwick Institute for Archives, MF 164.

79 Joseph Besse, *Sufferings of Early Quakers in Yorkshire 1652 to 1690* (York: Sessions Book Trust, 2nd edn, 1998), p. 138.

80 Barry Reay, 'Quaker Opposition to Tithes 1652–1660', *Past & Present* 86 (1980), pp. 98–120 (p. 115).

81 Davies, *Quakers*–, p. 170.

82 Borthwick Institute for Archives, MF 164.

83 Borthwick Institute for Archives, MF 164.

84 Besse, *Sufferings*, 134.

85 Besse, *Sufferings*, 169–70.

86 Borthwick Institute for Archives, MF 166, 'Prisoners' Chamber Rent' 1688–1698.

87 Borthwick Institute for Archives, MF 166, 'Prisoners' Chamber Rent'.

implications.⁸⁸ Nicholas Morgan's study of the Lancashire Friends makes it clear that there was an increase in the number of Friends involved in tithe-related cases.⁸⁹ In Yorkshire the number of Friends having their corn and hay removed increased steadily in the last quarter of the seventeenth century.⁹⁰ A Thirsk Friend, Andrew Vause from Sutton on the Forrest, had corn, hay, wool and rape taken from him up to the value of £3 every year for almost a decade.⁹¹ Another Thirsk Friend, John Robinson from Tholthorpe, had hay, lambs and corn worth £3 5s taken from him every year from 1683 to 1690.⁹² In an area reliant on agriculture, many of these Yorkshire Friends were small-scale farmers, and the economic impact of distrained goods was significant. In a petition made on behalf of 232 Friends imprisoned in York castle in 1684, Friends described impoverished workmen who were 'not able to keepe their farmes' and diverse tradesmen who had to 'leave off their trade' owing to the tithe farmers and constant imprisonment.⁹³ The poverty of some was so great that they appeared to have been 'bought up to Gaole' without a penny to their name.⁹⁴ The majority of Friends imprisoned were done so for their refusal to swear the oath of allegiance, as well as their refusal to attend public worship. In a similar case, Isaac Lindley's two sons, Richard and Joseph, were imprisoned at the Helmsley sessions in 1683 for refusing to worship at their parish church.⁹⁵ By 1687 a petition to free Friends detailed a case of a shopkeeper who had goods distrained up to the value of £70, which was 'totally breaking of a small trade'.⁹⁶ The Act of Toleration of 1689 was of little use to those being persecuted for tithe avoidance, and did little to ease Thirsk Friends' financial suffering.⁹⁷

Beyond the immediate effects of persecution, the suffering of Friends led to internal quarrels and caused long-term problems within monthly meetings.⁹⁸ In and out of prison, Lindley's children were unable to pay their debts or contribute financially to their monthly meeting in Yarm, Durham.⁹⁹ In 1681 twins Benjamin and Joseph Lindley were ordered to be at the next monthly meeting to find a way

88 Davies, *Quakers*—, 179–80; Hugh Barbour, *The Quakers in Puritan England* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1964), 232.

89 Nicholas Morgan, *Lancashire Quakers and the Establishment* (Halifax: Ryburn Academic Publishing, 1993), p. 196.

90 Borthwick Institute for Archives, MF 164.

91 Borthwick Institute for Archives, MF 164.

92 Borthwick Institute for Archives, MF 164.

93 Borthwick Institute for Archives, MF 166, 'Petitions to Judges etc' 1682–1810.

94 Borthwick Institute for Archives, MF 166, 'Petitions to Judges etc'.

95 Besse, *Sufferings*, p. 153.

96 Borthwick Institute for Archives, MF 166, 'Petitions to Judges etc'.

97 Borthwick Institute for Archives, MF 192.

98 Barry Reay, *The Quakers and the English Revolution* (Southampton: The Camelot Press, 1985), p. 114.

99 Durham County Record Office, SF/Da/MM/1/2, 'Stockton Monthly Meeting Minutes' 1687–1728.

to pay a £20 debt to John Wood.¹⁰⁰ They failed to attend the next meeting, and it was not until 1685 that the issue was resolved, with the twins paying a fifth of the debt.¹⁰¹ In a more serious case the twin's inability to pay John Walton in 1688 led Yarm Friends to order Isaac Lindley and his eldest son, Ralph, who were still living in Yorkshire, to help reach an agreement between the quarrelling parties.¹⁰² Further aggravated by the brothers' failure to attend meetings, a meeting was set at Richmond, where the matter risked 'damage and scandell' when it was proposed that the brothers be sued.¹⁰³ Although Scott identifies a change in early Quaker spirit as the cause of the decline in membership, internal disputes caused by external pressures also alienated Friends.¹⁰⁴ The repeated drunkenness of Joseph Lindley's wife, for instance, caused moral outrage, to the point where her 'wine past' was discussed at the Stockton General Meeting in 1689.¹⁰⁵ The persistent absence of the Lindley brothers from meetings throughout the 1680s caused great dissatisfaction among Friends, and they were continually ordered to attend meetings.¹⁰⁶ The monthly Thirsk meetings also experienced a decline in numbers. Samuel, Stephen and Grace Masterman were 'adult sons who renounced Quakerism' and were baptised in 1699, while Richard Scot in the parish of Sutton on the Forest was baptised as an adult, having been 'bred a Quaker'.¹⁰⁷ The conversion of Friends who belonged to families who had been imprisoned and heavily fined can be attributed in part to the continual persecution members faced, and may suggest one reason why the overall movement was in decline by the eighteenth century.

While historians have previously found constables, churchwardens and other office-holders to have been accepting of Friends after 1670, the evidence for the Coxwold Friends does not support this. Starting with a six-month spell in Ripon gaol in 1657, Lindley was imprisoned three times in York Castle, had numerous warrants out for his arrest, appeared in several visitations and was beaten at least once. In his refusal to attend church, receive the sacrament or baptise his children, Lindley riled the churchwardens. Mirroring Lindley's actions of dissent, the churchwarden accounts detail their concern over his behaviour and numerous attempts to have him arrested. I speculate that Lindley was one of many excommunicated from Coxwold in the 1670s. For those who were not excommunicated, the goods taken and fines exacted have been shown to have

100 Durham County Record Office, SF/Da/MM/1/2.

101 Durham County Record Office, SF/Da/MM/1/2.

102 Durham County Record Office, SF/Da/MM/1/2.

103 Durham County Record Office, SF/Da/MM/1/2.

104 Scott, *Quakerism*, p. 31.

105 Durham County Record Office, SF/Da/MM/1/2-; SF/YM/PM/1/1, 'Yarm Preparative Meeting Minutes' 1688–1762.

106 Durham County Record Office, SF/YM/PM/1/1, 'Yarm Preparative Meeting Minutes' 1688–1762.

107 Borthwick Institute for Archives, PR/SUT/F/2, 'Baptisms' 1665–1808.

had serious economic implications, raising questions as to the form persecution took against sects into the eighteenth century and the implications it had within the movement itself.

While this case study serves to contribute to the wider picture of Quaker persecution in the seventeenth century, further research is needed to establish why persecution lasted longer in rural dwellings and what shape it took. The mobility evidenced by Lindley, who lived in at least four parishes in his lifetime, may also prompt discussion on the extent of travel in the seventeenth century and shed light on how the message of the Friends reached remote villages miles from a major city. Such discussion will give a greater understanding of how a dissenting movement still in its infancy lasted when so many other seventeenth-century sects and cults petered out.

Author Details

Hannah Reeve recently graduated from the University of York, having completed an MA in Early Modern History. In September 2018, Hannah will begin reading for her PhD at Newcastle University, studying a thesis which will seek to explore routine repair and maintenance in seventeenth-century parish life.