QUAKER STUDIES 9/2 (2005) [204-219]
ISSN 1363-013X

WOMEN IN THE QUAKER COMMUNITY: THE RICHARDSON FAMILY OF NEWCASTLE, C.1815-60

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ABSTRACT

The town of Newcastle in the early nineteenth century offered many diverse forms of entertainment and socialising for middle class men and women. Although the religious beliefs of Quakers excluded them from sharing in many of these activities, their faith offered them unique opportunities to participate in, lead, and challenge middle class lifestyle. Through examining the domestic, religious, and charitable conduct of the women of the Richardson family it can be seen how their understanding of society was mediated through religious beliefs that allowed them to challenge the role of the typical middle class woman.

KEYWORDS

Newcastle, Quakerism, philanthropy, gender, domestic, Richardson family

Newcastle in the early nineteenth century was a 'tremendously lively and varied community'.[1] Contemporary newspapers are littered with reports of grand balls, bazaars, theatre shows and circus performances. Descriptions of horse racing, boat week and winter festivals upon the frozen River Tyne highlight the freedom of access members of Newcastle society enjoyed to numerous cultural events.[2] The years between 1825 and 1840 saw the creation of a new town centre in Newcastle. Imposing public buildings and stylish housing complemented the *à la mode* Royal Arcade and shopping streets, as the town kept pace with the fashions and expansions of other major towns.[3] Yet, nominally at least, Quakers were excluded from participating in this community by their religious beliefs. Quakerism in the early nineteenth century was a religion in flux: predominantly middle class, but struggling to come to terms with the society around it. The retention of barriers to the world outside their religious community saw

Quaker membership dwindle to 14,000 in a period when the population of the country had more than doubled,[4] but by the 1820s it is said that many members had begun to adopt the patterns of consumption typical in many other middle class families.[5] Davidoff and Hall argue in *Family Fortunes* that by the early nineteenth century Quaker women had been 'transmuted' into following the 'respectable domesticity' of their middle class peers.[6] However, by looking beyond the nominal restraints of their faith and by examining committee reports, diaries, journals and family histories, one is struck not only by the variety and depth of Newcastle's Quaker community, but by the implicit challenge the consequences of their faith made to wider perceptions of gender. An examination of the Richardson women at home, at worship and within charitable and philanthropic activities questions not only their one-dimensional representation in academic literature, but further challenges the use of demarcations such as home and work, public and private.

Although the idea of spiritual equality allowed Quakers to develop a radical view of relations between the sexes,[7] the equality that was espoused was more apparent than real.[8] Until the 1870s the subordination of women within the structure of Quakerism would seem to have been taken for granted by many. It was only in the final decades of the nineteenth century that Quaker women and men, coinciding with a wider movement influenced by liberal notions of equality, spoke out as a majority against separate committees and meetings for worship.[9] The inequality behind separate Meetings can however be overstated. Whilst undoubtedly men had the final say in all aspects of Quakerism as an organisation, the structure of Quaker government was in the first instance designed to liberate for the service of the Religious Society of Friends the gifts of government that lay dormant within both women and men.[10] The prominence achieved by Quaker women in developing female networks dedicated to missionary work was itself reflected in the institution of separate women's meetings from the late 1670s.[11] Women were expected to act within their designated sphere, the boundaries of which were extended and contracted by their faith.[12]

Quakers were bound not only by their religion but also often through complex genealogical connections. Although the early nineteenth century saw many families apply for and enter into membership of the Quaker society, alongside numerous removals of membership, the committees continued to be dominated by 'birth right' Quakers. These families were generally middle class 'merchants, businessmen, manufacturers and bankers', an 'aristocracy of dissent',[13] who formed an elite leadership of the organisation and often intermarried. However, Nossiter, in asserting that 'exclusive marriage rules safeguarded the society's capital',[14] somewhat overlooks not only the sincerity of religious feeling amongst Quakers, but that dwindling membership in the nineteenth century was a consequence of members 'marrying out'. The relaxation of exclusive marriage rules might better be seen as a measure intended to safeguard Quaker capital.

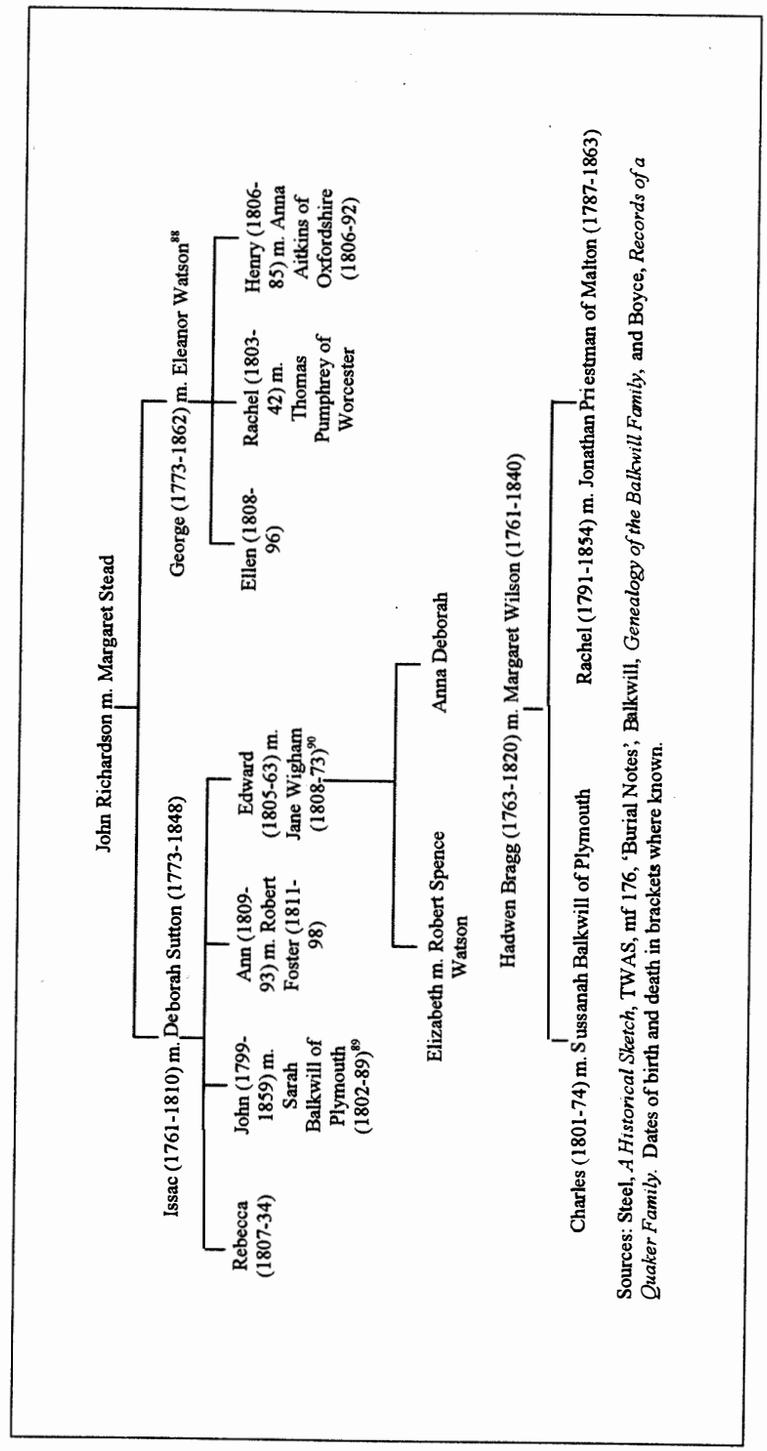
The Richardsons of Newcastle were typical of a wealthy Quaker family and connections through birth and marriage link them to the most prominent

female Quakers in Newcastle.[15] It has been calculated that members of their family, along with three other related family groupings, dominated the government of the Quaker society in Newcastle to the extent that they represented over 45 per cent of female members who held office during the nineteenth century.[16] In discussing the experiences of the Richardson women it becomes clear that Quakerism provided extraordinary opportunities for (wealthy) women to engage in the public sphere.

I

Although the culture of the middle classes in the early nineteenth century has often been associated with a glorification of domestic womanhood and the deterioration of women's public power,[17] such a connection can be called into question through examining the Richardson family and their associates. Although ideals of the perfect wife were evident within Quakerism, they were not to the detriment of a public role and did not uniformly depict women as 'retiring, quiet, gentle and submissive'.[18] Joseph Watson, the future father-in-law of Elizabeth Spence Watson (*neé* Richardson), contributed an essay entitled 'The Bride' to a book, the *Aurora Borealis*, published by Newcastle Quakers. The criteria set forth in this piece were that 'she [the bride] must be a woman whose virtues are the fruit of religious conviction; she must be modest without affection and cheerful without boldness; lively in person and accomplished in mind.'[19] John Bright is known to have expressed his 'great astonishment at the number of competent, clever women amongst Friends suitable to make excellent wives.'[20] On this evidence one would not conclude with Dunbar that in the nineteenth century husbands did not demand brains from their wives.[21] Anna Deborah Richardson would go further and blame the wives for not demanding it for themselves. In a letter of 1853, to her sister Elizabeth, she bemoans the 'disparity of intellect, and the narrow range of thought to which women habituate themselves... [which allows men to use them] as mere playthings.'[22] This reflects that the idealisation of female intellect by Quakers was seen not to be evident in the wider community of Newcastle.

The value placed upon female intelligence within the Richardson family is further evident when domestic duties are considered. At the beginning of this period many families who owned shops also lived above them, the proximity of trade and home bringing aspects of business within the scope of female domestic duties. Although it might be expected that the *en masse* movement during the 1830s of Newcastle Quakers, from above their place of business to the suburbs, and in particular to the street Summerhill Grove,[23] would have ended any formal or informal association the female members might have had with the family trade, this was not always the case. Margaret Bragg, a close friend of the Richardson family, 'to the end of her life [in 1840] continued the parental care she and her husband had exercised over the young men and apprentices



Sources: Steel, *A Historical Sketch*, TWAS, mf 176, 'Burial Notes', Balkwill, *Genealogy of the Balkwill Family*, and Boyce, *Records of a Quaker Family*. Dates of birth and death in brackets where known.

Figure 1: The Richardson family of Newcastle and Friends

employed in the [drapery] shop.'[24] The journal of George Richardson suggests further that female domestic duties were considered to entail close connections with the family business. Not only did his wife Eleanor engage in unpaid, informal connections with the grocer business, but whilst George was engaged on his frequent ministerial tours, especially during the 1820s and 1830s, Eleanor was left in sole charge of the trade.[25] Their first born son died an infant whilst George was on a journey to the London Yearly Meeting.[26] Whilst it was predominantly the older generation of Richardson women who were most closely associated with the business of their husbands, there existed a sense of joint responsibilities between husband and wife. When women felt the call to ministerial duties, which could take them as far as America or Canada, their husbands were expected to care for their children. Domestic responsibilities were not the sole preserve of the woman of the house: duties were shared between the sexes, although some families, in common with many middle class households, alleviated daily domestic work somewhat through the employment of servants, which was accepted within Quaker society, as long as the servants kept to simple rules and were extended the opportunity to attend worship.[27]

There did clearly exist expectations for Quaker women to live up to a feminine ideal and fulfil female duties, especially if young and unmarried, but this must be understood within the context of the numerous opportunities afforded them by their religion. Hannah Chapman Backhouse, a Darlington Quaker and friend of Rachel Pumphrey (*neé* Richardson), describes in her journal the guilt felt as she was reprimanded upon her return from a 'very pleasant day at Earlham... for leaving mamma, who was ill, though recovering.'[28] She describes further her understanding that 'a woman who cannot suffer the confinement of a sick woman, leaves unfulfilled one of her most marked duties, and can never be fit for a wife.'[29] Hannah goes on to pledge in a letter to her mother in June 1811, upon her marriage and moving into a new home that 'as housekeeper I think I fairly promise not to tarnish the glory of my ancestors.'[30]

Such pressures, which highlight that Quakers could not escape entirely the gender ideology of the early nineteenth century, are relieved somewhat when placed alongside other aspects of Quaker life, such as attitudes towards education, where their views could push on the limits of acceptable middle class behaviour. The tenet of spiritual equality and the absence of a permanent clergy suggested that all Quakers, regardless of gender, should receive a substantial education. Hannah Chapman Backhouse discusses in her journal the tuition she received in, amongst other subjects, Latin, geometry and art, as well as having enjoyed reading Locke.[31] A Quaker girl's education was not necessarily one dominated by practical domesticity. Although the type of education received differed between males and females, it was broad enough for Hannah Richardson and her sister, young cousins of George Richardson, to attend lectures at the Newcastle Literature and Philosophy Society, and bemoan their luck at not being in Newcastle to attend William Turner's lectures.[32] Opportunities to attend such lectures might however be irregular. The programme of lectures at organisations such as the Literature and Philosophy

Society were often very diverse and it is unlikely that many would have found interest in all of them, nor that they would have been comfortable at the most popular events. In 1844, a lecture and demonstration by William Armstrong was so popular that the only way Armstrong could enter the room past the crowds was by climbing through a window.[33] More formal educational opportunities, outside of Quaker organisations, were available to Quaker women and middle class females in general, towards the end of this period. For example, during the 1850s, Elizabeth Spence Watson (*neé* Richardson) attended the Newcastle School of Art under the tuition of William Bell Scott, later known as one of the pre-Raphaelites. The extensive education available to Quaker women throughout this period, often comprising a mix of home schooling, day school and boarding school, although not entirely uncommon among middle class women,[34] is distinctive amongst Quakers in that it could explicitly question the boundaries between male and female education.

As important as formal education was in the upbringing that Quaker men and women experienced, the influence of their surroundings was not necessarily as austere as has been portrayed; certainly sketches of John Richardson's three infant sons, drawn in 1831, surrounded by toys, building blocks and a rocking horse suggest a more typical middle class childhood than one might expect.[35] Whilst in some ways Quaker children may have had a typical middle class upbringing, the girls not only received a broader *formal* education at Quaker-run schools than many middle class girls of Newcastle where schooling opportunities in the early part of the century were limited, but both the sexes, if born into ministering households, 'watched and experienced their mothers preaching and were subjected to a conditioning which led them to accept women as essential workers within the organisation of the society' and as equals.[36] The stress on equal relations within society and marriage gave Quaker women a 'considerable power in deciding whether a marriage would take place',[37] reducing their susceptibility to becoming a 'mere plaything'. Although such influence in choice of marriage was not altogether unusual among middle class women, especially towards the latter part of the nineteenth century, having recourse to an accepted spiritual equality was.

Once a woman married, the home was not merely a space devoted to female domesticity and inertia. As recently discussed by Kathryn Gleadle, the home could be 'the site of informal discussion groups, political correspondence and ideological consumer choices.'[38] For Quaker women their home could be, and frequently was, a place of political activity. Jonathan and Rachel Priestman's home at Summerhill Grove was 'often the resting place of Ministers and others visiting Newcastle and not unfrequently [sic] large numbers of Newcastle Friends were there entertained.'[39] Rachel Priestman, like many other female Quakers around the country, politicised her home in sheltering 'Negro slaves who had taken refuge in this country'.[40] As in many other Quaker households in Birmingham and York, Jane Richardson banned slave grown sugar.[41] Margaret Bragg held an annual sale of books on behalf of the Book Society at her home, and the 'twenty to thirty members' of the female Sewing Meeting in pursuing

'its work of making clothes for the poor of Newcastle' met for three hours a week at each others homes.[42] The politics of domestic decisions were taken further by Rachel Pumphrey who, six months into her marriage, on a visit to the city, was influenced by the Edinburgh Temperance Society to the extent that on her return to Newcastle she 'took the silver spirit stand down to Reid's shop in Dean Street and got him to change it for dresser knives and forks.'[43] Meanwhile, Anna Richardson edited a number of journals from home such as *The Olive Leaf*, directed specifically at children, and for more general circulation *The Peace Advocate*. In 1839 she published information she had procured highlighting the religious persecution of Prussian emigrants, connected with the Lutheran Church, who had arrived in Newcastle on their way to America. This work met with 'an extensive sale', complimented by 'liberal subscriptions... which were the means of assisting another party of them to proceed to South Australia.'[44] Furthermore Anna helped lead public opinion within the wider Newcastle community through her promotion of free produce, encouraging the men and women of the town to buy products other than those produced through slave labour.

Although a number of these activities had their origins in 'female' concerns they also transcended the perceived limits of a domestic sphere. Responsibilities and concerns were shared. Fathers were as likely to care for their children as mothers and a shared interest of societal concerns did not necessitate the wives to take a feminised or diminished role: Henry Richardson's involvement in campaigning against slavery pales in comparison to his wife Anna's effective supervision of the British and Foreign Anti-Slavery Society and her production of *Monthly Illustrations of American Slavery*.[45] Such anti-slavery activity was replicated by Quaker women across the country.[46] The Quaker wife was certainly not the 'average Victorian middle class wife... forced to exist in an artificial dependence, sheltered from all reality other than the unavoidable realities of birth and death.'[47] Although Quaker women may not have participated in the multitude of events other middle class women enjoyed access to, such as fancy dress balls at the Assembly rooms and theatre productions, and were chastised, at least in the early part of the century, for attending card parties[48] and musical entertainment, they could find ample consolation in the diverse activities and extensive rights available within Quaker society.

II

The structure of worship, of weekly, Preparative, Monthly, Quarterly and Yearly Meetings, dominated the Quaker calendar, each with a male and female meeting. Quakers were expected to attend unless having good reason not to and Overseers were appointed to visit families, especially those of ill attendance, and report to the Meetings any problems they encountered. The pressure to attend and conform in worship and in lifestyle was great, although measures were

relaxed over the nineteenth century. Elizabeth O'Donnell has suggested that the women's Monthly Meeting served the purpose of taking women 'outside their usual sphere of home and family'.[49] This thought would only seem to hold for the handful of Newcastle Quakers who had no familial ties to the society. The dense familial connections among the elite of the Newcastle meeting, the close proximity of many Richardson and Quaker households, and anecdotal evidence as to the 'pleasant afternoons [the majority of Friends] spent [with family] after [the meetings]',[50] would suggest that formal religious activities were, for many Richardson women, an extension of the home and family sphere, rather than a diversion from it.

Whilst upper middle class and aristocratic women may have felt a sense of 'self validation' in 'taking on responsibilities...[different from those] of household management',[51] the responsibilities taken up by Quaker women often stemmed from expectations within the society, and in the case of preaching, when called by God to do so. When women took on roles within the society, speaking in public as Overseer or Clerk, they were not fulfilling a 'desire for status and occupation',[52] but succumbing to familial influence, expectations within the Quaker community that they would participate almost as a duty, and the pressures of being nominated for a role. Young women, from their late teens onwards, were often coerced by elder members into taking on a responsibility within the society as a process of integration. Rebecca Richardson recalled the great 'anxiety of mind' she felt before 'having to act as Clerk to the Preparative meeting' but recognised it was necessary to 'lend a helping hand in the maintenance of the discipline of our Society'.[53] Young women might also be requested to accompany Overseers as they visited heads of families in that area. Speaking in public and investigating the moral condition of members, a function performed by a male and a female Overseer, was accepted as being among the duties of a female Quaker: any anxiety felt would seem due more to nervousness than a feeling they were about to step beyond the parameters of their 'sphere'. There are numerous eulogies in *The British Friend*, as well as contemporary diary entries, praising female preachers for their work in the Society and of their 'very good sermons'.[54]

The Quaker 'elite' dominated positions within the Society and it was they who benefited the most through its structure. Although there was an early attempt by female Friends in Newcastle to integrate poorer members more fully into the society through a 'voluntary subscription to assist suitable women Friends whose circumstances are limited in getting to monthly and quarterly meetings',[55] few made the transition to holding an appointment within the society. Fewer still enjoyed the wealth and leisure to attend the Yearly Meeting,[56] a huge occasion in which worship formed the backdrop to socialising, shopping, match making, and a 'continuous round of tea and dinner parties'.[57]

Introductions at Monthly and Yearly Meetings often led to marriages, disadvantaging the poorer Quakers unable to attend and widen their social horizons.[58] Conventionally, Quaker marriages were to be quiet, sober occasions, in keeping with religious traditions and supervised by an Overseer who, having

previously investigated the suitability of the couple, would ensure the marriage to be a respectable occasion. However the invitation to the marriage of Thomas and Emma Pumphrey, of August 1858, printed on thick, cream-coloured card with gold trim, reveals not only the Overseer to be a relative but that the bride had been afforded a horse-drawn carriage for the small distance to and from the meeting house.[59] Earlier in the century, David Binns of Sunderland describes the wedding of Rachel Spence, in 1819, as having been:

> A very pleasant day and everything was comfortable. There was thirty nine to dine, forty eight to tea and near thirty to supper, besides servants... I think there was almost every dish, roast beef, veal, ham, ducks, fowl, salmon, pies of every description almost, and jellies, custard and a great many other articles.[60]

III

Women had a 'specific and recognised role in their society...[even if] it was restricted in its actual devolution of power;'[61] but within the dry, formalised setting of Quaker Meetings was a community bound by faith and family, though not necessarily by accordance to the letter of the Religious Society's laws. The Meetings introduced young women to a new social circle and gave them the opportunity to extend their influence to the structure of Quaker business. In their experience of formalised Meetings and procedure it has been argued that Quaker women were imbued with the skills that enabled them to act at the forefront of the feminist movement and that a line can be 'traced from early Quaker women leaders to... twentieth century feminism.'[62] The drawing of such parallels is beyond the scope of this discussion, but, in looking at the philanthropic activities of the Richardson women of Newcastle, it would seem mistaken to read into them proto-feminist aspirations. Inspiration would seem to stem from a sense of community[63] shared with their men folk and an aspiration to fulfil their duties as citizens of the Quaker society, rather than a desire to question the boundaries of respectable middle class womanhood. So too would it be mistaken to agree with Frank Prochaska's assertion that benevolence was especially important to Quakers as they were 'shut out from many of the ordinary sources of emotion' and that such activity served as 'an escape from boredom'.[64]

Although often represented as an insular, isolated community, philanthropic work brought Quaker women into contact with wider society where their influence could be felt. During the cholera outbreak of 1853-54, which killed 100 people per day in Newcastle at its peak,[65] Richard Lowry described that

> twenty eight graves were open at once in one church... men [were] digging graves perpetually – and the conduct of men [was] often disgraceful... the clergyman... [was] frightened out of his wits... he kept a bottle of brandy... to keep up his spirits.[66]

In contrast to this Quaker women such as Jane Richardson were 'fearless in visiting the worst houses and cheering those stricken with panic.'[67] Such visitations are even more remarkable when it is considered that the cholera outbreaks in Newcastle were centred around Sandgate,[68] a street that had become byword for an area, stretching from below the castle to the slums and chares [alleyways] strung east along the river, representing the worst of Newcastle's poverty and low-living. Its identification as a dangerous area was further enhanced by its reputation for political protest, from the 1740 Guildhall riots to the Queen Caroline demonstrations and Chartist disturbances. Sandgate was thought to have 'social characteristics of its own' and by mid century 'respectable people, having no occasion to visit it, scarcely know anything about it.'[69] *The Builder* journal claimed that 'Cologne has a bad name, Cairo has a worse reputation, but that part of Newcastle called Sandgate, must be allowed to exceed either City in stenches, filth, over-crowding, and pestilential ills.'[70] Sandgate as a separate geographic and mental area from respectable Newcastle, and 'decidedly the worst' part of town, was confirmed by a policeman, who reported his colleagues commonly called Sandgate 'the City of Sin'.[71]

Whilst the existence of specifically Quaker-run organisations, such as the Sewing Meetings, can for example, help explain the lack of Quaker participation in the Society for Clothing Distressed Females in Newcastle, the growth of philanthropic bodies in Newcastle during this period which did not replicate those of the Quakers led many in the Religious Society of Friends to offer their services to them.[72] Rachel Pumphrey began her prison visiting in 1827, seemingly under the influence of Elizabeth Fry's recently published book, *Observations of the Writing, Superintendence and Government of Female Prisoners*.[73] Anna Richardson was more explicit about the influence of Fry, and although she 'became a regular visitor... [from 1834, she found it] a mournful duty.'[74] Prison visiting was not merely a 'fashion of passing free time, but an engagement of self which involved the sacrifice of leisure and the development of expertise.'[75] In 1848 a leaflet was distributed in Newcastle from the Lady Visitors of the prison who:

> painfully felt the want of an Industrial school or Refuge, to which they might send the poor neglected little girls so often to be met with there, for food, shelter and Christian instruction. The number of ragged, miserable-looking girls, wandering in the streets and lanes of this large town, can hardly fail to strike even an ordinary observer. Shall such continue to be the pests and plunderers of society? Or shall an effort be made for their rescue from the life of wretchedness and infamy opening before them! Common humanity demands a favourable response.[76]

Through the work of the Girls Ragged School and the Sabbath School,

Quaker women came into contact with a broad cross-section of Newcastle society and afforded them the opportunity to take part in arranging activities for the children, which might still be frowned upon by Quakers earlier in the century, especially if performed for personal pleasure. There were yearly excursions attended by parents and children and more regular amusements that included sporting games, hymns and magic lantern shows.[77] Money for such excursions was often donated by wealthy local benefactors who suggested what activities should take place, such as in 1859 when William Armstrong gave £10 towards 'a pleasure trip' to include 'tea or other refreshments as well'.[78] Further to this the fund raising activities of such organisations could bring the Richardson women into close contact with the leaders of Newcastle society. In 1854 both Ann and Ellen Richardson presided at stalls in aid of the Ragged School Bazaar, alongside the Mayoress and the Marchioness of Bute: over £1600 was raised.[79]

Although the Ragged School was not specifically Quaker-run, the annual reports reveal not only the dominance of Quakers in its running but a desire by them for their fellow Quakers to contribute further.[80] Any involvement in philanthropic activities had to be balanced against other duties and was not a choice made out of boredom, but out of spiritual duty. That this duty was taken seriously can be seen in a letter in 1861 sent by Jane Richardson, on behalf of the Ladies Committee, to the Gentlemen's Committee of the Ragged School. Angered by the Gentlemen's Committee refusal to approve a candidate for an assistant teacher post with the Girls Ragged School who had been selected by the Ladies, they unanimously agreed upon a written protest:

> We beg to remind you that the Girls School originated with a few ladies, some of them members of the present committee – that for several years it was successfully conducted by ladies only – that the accounts were kept by a Lady Treasurer, and a large amount of subscriptions (which are still combined) obtained for the girl's school separately. Even after the funds were thrown together, the ladies retained the choice of their officers, and the general management of their own department. They worked, during that period, in harmony with the managers of the Boy's School, and members of your committee were ever ready to render kind and able assistance when required. While open to receive any friendly suggestions, and to be directed in financial and other important matters, the ladies would have much more satisfaction and pleasure if allowed to have the management of everything connected with the girls department, and they protest against the interference of the gentleman in household details so much more adapted to the sphere of woman. A committee which cannot act on its own responsibility is a mere cipher, and as such the ladies committee seems lately to have been held in having its decisions severed and its promises disregarded. The Ladies venture to request that this may be recorded on the gentleman's minute book for future reference.[81]

Wright asserts that marriage meant rescue from a 'depressing existence on the fringes of society, acting as unpaid companion, nursemaid or housekeeper to a succession of relatives',[82] though this would seem to be contradicted by the numerous charitable and philanthropic activities undertaken by Ellen Richardson, who never married. Although Ellen helped look after her father George after the death of her mother in 1846, this was not to the detriment of her spiritual duty. Ellen was practically involved in anti-slavery work, guided the general arrangements of the Royal Jubilee School for Girls as well as teaching there, before writing a book *The Principles of Training*. In 1860 she was requested by the City Council to organise and superintend St Mary's School, a task she performed without giving up any of her other duties.[83]

Alongside philanthropic activities, charitable occupations could entail a public and political element. Contrary to traditional assumptions political activity was not beyond the reach of Victorian women. Such activities, which formed part of this 'politics beyond parliament', might better be understood during this period in general as stemming partly from an Evangelical revival, but also from the heightened female interest in public affairs and the expansion of their public, philanthropic and political roles during and immediately after the Napoleonic wars; the nineteenth century can not be aligned with a 'depoliticisation of [women's] public activity' and nor can evangelicalism be said to have swept the gender frontier back into the private and domestic.[84]

Nationally, Quaker women were largely responsible for the petition presented to the House of Lords in 1833 demanding the immediate abolition of slavery.[85] On a local level, female members of the Richardson family raised funds to purchase the freedom of two slaves, organised agitation on behalf of West Indian slaves, and later in the century offered their assistance in Josephine Butler's fight against the Contagious Diseases Acts.[86] Newcastle Quakers were also concerned, during 1845, with the Anti-Corn Law League. Although evidence surrounding their exact involvement is scarce, Jane Richardson was a member of the Newcastle Ladies Committee.[87] They were no doubt aided in such activities by their familiarity with the business-like atmosphere of Quaker meetings. The experience of structure, and organisation Quaker women brought with them to philanthropic causes were instrumental to their success. The 'Ladies Minute Book' of the Ragged and Industrial school reads in a similar fashion to the records of Preparative Meetings and the influence of Friends such as Ann and Jane Richardson is clear. Such institutions mirrored Quaker organisation in terms of idealising a notion of equality whilst subsuming most of the women's decision making into the men's meeting, and in this way reflected to an extent the prevailing gender order in society. The reality of female influence was much greater than conventions would dictate and nor did such influence necessarily stem from domestic concerns: importantly it was often in tandem with male activity.

IV

Nominally equal, recognisably different, but distinguished as essential, women in fulfilling their duties in the Quaker community did not perform the activities men did not want to undertake, indeed there was much overlap; rather men and women performed the duties deemed most suitable to their sex. The concept of spiritual equality and its teaching from an early age meant in reality the only barrier to men and women performing the same tasks were wider societal norms, and more importantly, masculine procedures of religious activities. The influence of Quaker religion and procedure was a double-edged sword that pulled and pushed on the restrictions experienced by women, a friction that led to heated debate from the 1870s concerning equality within the Religious Society of Friends. Although lacking procedural equality, the women studied here were not tied to the private and domestic concerns of the home. In fulfilling spiritual duties alongside their husbands, brothers and friends the Quaker women of Newcastle, like Friends around the country, engaged in the wider community, politicised the home and blurred the demarcations between public and private as they did so.

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22. Richardson, J., (ed.), *Memoir of Anna Deborah Richardson with Extracts from her Letters*, Newcastle: privately published, 1877, p. 26.

23. See Pumphrey, E., *Summerhill Grove*, Newcastle: privately published, 1898.

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28. Backhouse, H., *Extracts from the Journals and Letters of Hannah Chapman Backhouse*, London: privately published, 1858, p. 3.

29. Backhouse, *Extracts from the Journals and Letters*, p. 11.

30. Backhouse, *Extracts from the Journals and Letters*, p. 36.

31. Although references to Locke, Rousseau, Ruskin and Robert Louis Stephenson can be found in some diaries, records of the Newcastle Meeting House library and its lenders would suggest pious reading matter was the norm, at least among older Quakers. See 'Catalogue of Tracts in Friends Library (Newcastle) 1824-1835', 1839, TWAS, mf 211.

32. Letter to Jonathan Priestman, no date (probably autumn 1812), in Boyce, A., *Records of a Quaker Family: the Richardsons of Cleveland*, London: S. Harris & Co, 1889, p. 104. See also Richardson, G., *The Annals of the Cleveland Richardsons and their Descendants*, Newcastle: Metcalf Ross, 1850.

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34. Perkin, J., *Victorian Women*, London: John Murray, 1993, p.32.

35. Balkwill, A., *Extracts from the Genealogy of the Balkwill Family of Plymouth and the Neighbourhood of Kingsbridge in Devon, with that of Families Allied to it by Marriage*, privately published, 1908, TWAS edition, containing miscellaneous newspaper cuttings, photos and sketches.

36. Wright, *Friends in York*, p. 33.

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39. Robinson, W., 'Recollections of Newcastle Meeting Sixty Years Ago' in Steel, *A Historical Sketch*, p. 61.

40. Robinson, 'Recollections of Newcastle', p. 79.

41. *The Annual Monitor for 1919-20* (1920), p. 287, obituary of Elizabeth Spence Watson.

42. 'Sewing Meeting', TWAS, mf 209.

43. Balkwill, *Genealogy of the Balkwill Family*, p. 53-54.

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45. Midgley, C., *Women Against Slavery: the British campaigns, 1780-1870*, London: Routledge, 1992, pp. 138-40.

46. See for example, Billington, L. and R., '"A Burning Zeal for Righteousness": women in the British anti-slavery movement, 1820-1860', in Rendall, J., (ed.), *Equal or Different: women's politics 1800-1914*, Oxford: Basil Blackwell, 1987, Midgley, *Women Against Slavery*, and Walvin, J., (ed.), *Slavery and British Society 1776-1846*, London: Macmillian, 1982.

47. Moore, K., *Victorian Wives*, London: Allison and Busby, 1974, p. xiv.

48. See for example, 13 July 1807, 'Minutes of Newcastle Women's Monthly Meeting', TWAS, mf 107, where it was requested that those 'thus assembled be persuaded to desist from such attendance [at card parties], which we believe would conduce to the peace of their own minds.'

49. O'Donnell, 'Woman's Rights and Duties', p. 216.

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51. Gleadle, K., *British Women in the Nineteenth Century*, Basingstoke: Palgrave, 2001, p. 52.

52. Anderson, O., 'Women Preachers in Mid Victorian Britain: some reflections on feminism, popular religion and social change', *The Historical Journal*, 21 (1969), p. 484.

53. Steel, *A Historical Sketch*, p. 124.

54. 'Diary of David Binns of Halifax while apprenticed to his Uncle in Sunderland 1817-24 and Autobiography 1799-1883', 15 February 1818, concerning Margaret Bragg, TWAS, accessions 1203/1.

55. 'Newcastle Preparative (Women's) Meeting, 1761-1878', 3 July 1798, TWAS, mf 194.

56. One notable exception is Ann Bainbridge, the housekeeper of Margaret Bragg.

57. Wright, *Friends in York*, p. 221. See also Robinson, M., *The Time of Her Life and Other Stories*, London: Swarthmore Press, 2nd edn, 1933.

58. See Appendix for marriages to Quakers not originally from Newcastle. For example Sarah Balkwill met John Richardson at a Yearly Meeting, see Notes Concerning Sarah Richardson, TWAS, 474/19.

59. See Balkwill, *Genealogy of the Balkwill Family*.

60. 'Diary of Binns', 16 September 1819.

61. Wright, *Friends in York*, p. 38.

62. Mack, P., *Visionary Women. Ecstatic prophecy in seventeenth century England*, Berkeley, CA and Oxford: University of California Press, 1992, p.9.

63. The community in the first instance would incorporate only Quakers, however spiritual beliefs would necessitate duties towards the poor in general.

64. Prochaska, F. K., *Women and Philanthropy in Nineteenth Century England*, Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1980, pp. 11, 139.

65. See Callcott, M., 'The Challenge of Cholera: the last epidemic at Newcastle Upon Tyne', *Northern History*, 20 (1984), pp. 167-86.

66. Quoted in McCord, 'Victorian Newcastle Observed', p. 240.

67. Steel, *A Historical Sketch*, p. 161.

68. See *Registry of Persons who have Died of Cholera, at Newcastle upon Tyne, from October 25 1831 to March 11 1832*, in TWAS library.

69. Anon., *Inquiry into the Condition of the Poor of Newcastle-upon-Tyne, from the Newcastle Chronicle*, Newcastle: Newcastle Chronicle, 1850, p. 22.

70. Quoted in Bryson, T., and Dawson, T., *Remarks by the Town Surveyor and Inspector of Nuisances, on an Article in the "Builder" Headed "condition of our chief towns – Newcastle on Tyne"*, Newcastle, 1861, p. 2.

71. Anon., *Inquiry into the Condition of the Poor*, p. 12.

72. See for example *The First Report of the Society for Clothing Distressed Females Intituted in Newcastle Upon Tyne, 1815*, Newcastle, 1816. For the increase of philanthropic bodies in Newcastle over the early nineteenth century see TWAS charity records.

73. See Richardson, *Gospel Labours*, p. 316.

74. Quoted in Steel, 'A Historical Sketch', p. 191.

75. Summers, A., 'A Home from Home: women's philanthropic work in the nineteenth century', in Burman, S., (ed.), *Fit Work for Women*, London: Croom Helm, 1979, p. 33.

76. Pamphlet, 'Appeal to the Public of Newcastle' contained within 'Newcastle Ragged and Industrial School; ladies minute book 1889-1909', TWAS, 174/19

77. See 'Friends Sabbath School (Reports and Misc. Letters)', TWAS, mf 209.

78. William Armstrong (later Lord Armstrong) to Margaret Armstrong, 23 February 1859, TWAS, df/a/11/14.

79. See pamphlet, 'Chronicle of The Ragged School Bazaar, held in the Assembly Rooms, Newcastle-Upon-Tyne, April 19, 20, and 21, 1854', Newcastle Local Studies Library, L377.7.

80. See 'Newcastle Ragged and Industrial School; ladies minute book, February 1855 to Jan 1873', TWAS, 174/16.

81. See 'Ladies minute book', TWAS, 174/16.

82. Wright, *Friends in York*, p. 56.

83. Steel, *A Historical Sketch*, pp. 199-200.

84. See Colley, L., *Britons: forging the nation 1707-1837*, London: Yale University Press, 1st edn, 1992, Gleadle, *British Women* and Vickery, A., *The Gentleman's Daughter: women's lives in Georgian England*, London: Yale University Press, 1st edn, 1998.

85. See Midgley, *Women Against Slavery*. Locally the *Newcastle Chronicle* reported, 18 May 1833, that although non-Quaker women contributed to the petition it was the Quakers who formed the backbone of support.

86. See Josephine Butler, *Personal Reminiscences of a Great Crusade*, London: H. Marshall & Son, 1898.

87. See pamphlet, 'National Anti-Corn-Bazaar, to be held in the Theatre Royal, Covent Garden, London, May, 1845', Newcastle Local Studies Library, L042.

88. Daughter of Joshua Watson, to whom George Richardson was apprenticed.

89. Sister of Sussanah Bragg (*neé* Balkwill).

90. Daughter of John Wigham, a close friend of George Richardson.

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