

QUAKERS IN THIRSK MONTHLY MEETING 1650-75

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ABSTRACT

Primary Quaker source evidence of three clusters of Quakers, within Thirsk Monthly Meeting during the period 1650-75, is examined. There were groups in Kilburn, Wildon Grange, near Crayke, and Sutton-on-the-Forest. There is material that describes their sufferings for breaking the law by holding a meeting for worship. From this material some indication is found of their backgrounds, their families, and their contact with each other. Church and other records show that these Friends had a place in their local as well as in their Quaker communities. There was also contact with Friends travelling in the ministry. Friends such as Thomas Rowland, William Thurman and Mary Todd formed the backbone of the nascent Religious Society of Friends. They were pioneers ready to suffer for their principles and faith. They suffered, by distraint of money and goods and by imprisonment for their testimony to worship outside the established church of the day,

KEYWORDS

Yorkshire Quarterly Meeting, Thirsk Monthly Meeting, Kilburn, Wildon Grange, Sutton-on-the-Forest, meeting for worship, dissenters, sufferings.

This paper examines records about a group of Quakers in the first twenty five years of the history of the Religious Society of Friends in Britain. A recent major study of Quakerism by Adrian Davies¹ undertook an extensive study of Quakers in Essex. Davies emphasises that Quakers were part of the contemporary context of dissent, and found that there was tension between Quakers and the local community rather than Quaker isolation, because tolerant local communities saw the Quakers as harmless.² Davies' study is one of many that have examined this period.³ The sources examined here, which have not been explored before, give a picture of Quakers in the Thirsk area. These sources are

part of the mainly factual records of sufferings, subject to the errors and mistakes that occur in recording. Further work of compilation, analysis, comparison and contrast with other areas is needed to supplement this narrative and to interpret the material in a wider context. This interim cameo can serve as a contribution to the larger picture.

The present study investigates the area around Thirsk in Yorkshire and finds evidence that gives a slightly different emphasis from that of Davies. Membership of the local community is apparent, but, because the evidence comes from the account of the sufferings of Friends following their persecution for holding meetings for worship in their own homes, when forbidden to meet in towns, it shows that the sustained attempt in this area during the decade 1660-70 to prevent worship outside the Established Church did not prevent the holding of Quaker Meetings for worship in the area.

In the area north of York during this period, part of Yorkshire Quarterly Meeting, the administrative area for Quaker business was Thirsk Monthly Meeting. The original Quaker records of the sufferings of Yorkshire Friends,⁴ relating only to their sufferings, showing that there were clusters of Friends within the compass of Thirsk Monthly Meeting, gives evidence about their backgrounds only incidentally. The information for this paper comes only from the study of the sufferings of Friends persecuted for attending meetings for worship at times when they were forbidden. No previous interpretive work on this material has been found. This primary source is therefore a rich minefield of information that has not yet been fully examined. In addition to meeting together to worship God in simplicity and truth (the source for this study), separate lists show that the sufferings of Friends were caused by non-conformity, for absenting from the national worship, for not recognising the sacraments, refusal to pay tithes, refusal to swear, for marrying not according to national forms, for speaking to priests as moved of the Lord, and for other testimonies to the Truth.⁵ Research into this material is still needed and is likely to reveal that Friends who suffered for attending meetings for worship were among those who were persecuted for these reasons as well.

These Quaker records show that there were three periods of persecution in this period when local officials actively administered national legislation. First, at the time of the Restoration and the Act requiring an oath of allegiance 1660-61, Friends were imprisoned for holding a Quaker Meeting and for refusing to swear allegiance to the Crown. The Quaker Act of 1662 forbade assemblies of Quakers. It was a precursor to the main Clarendon Code, the series of laws that severely restricted the activities of all dissenters. Second, the Conventicle Act of 1664 strengthened the Quaker Act and applied its provisions to all dissenters. The Five-Mile Act 1665 forbade assemblies of dissenters within five miles of towns. This effectively meant that Quaker Meetings were forbidden in a market town such as Thirsk, the centre of the already established Monthly Meeting. Friends, therefore, met outside this boundary in places such as Kilburn, Wildon Grange and Sutton-on-the-Forest, though they were still prosecuted for infringing the Quaker Act. The passing of the second Conventicle Act in 1670 inaugurated a third period of persecution.

The journals, tracts and epistles that were written by George Fox and other leaders in this period give a vivid picture of their message and their experiences. The message often led to imprisonment, as well as to eager acceptance of it. This aspect of the early years of Quakerism is well documented and has been extensively researched. It is the purpose of this paper, not to cover ground that has been well covered elsewhere, but to discover what can be found about those Friends who were visited by the leaders and without whom there would not have been any movement. This study attempts to create a picture of those around Thirsk who suffered for meeting together to worship God in simplicity and truth.

Studies of the social and economic background of Quakers show that, although the proportion in different occupations varied according to area, they came from among those who earned a living from occupations in agriculture, retail and crafts, mainly in the middle of the economic and social groupings of the population. Although their strange customs tended to alienate them from others, their integration into their local communities varied according to circumstances, time and local conditions. Since their faith relied heavily on their own experience, education and literacy were encouraged so that Friends could learn by themselves from the printed word and share their faith with other seekers. These aspects of their background encouraged the characteristics that enabled them to be pioneers ready to suffer for their principles and faith.

Thirsk Monthly Meeting, from Northallerton in the north to Huby in the south, was one of 14 Monthly Meetings that formed Yorkshire Quarterly Meeting, and was contiguous to Richmond, Knaresborough, York, Malton and Guisborough Monthly Meetings. These Meetings originally were to care for the Quakers who were poor, imprisoned and suffering in their midst, to record all births, marriages and burials and to care for the needs of ministry in the Meetings. Friends within the area met to conduct this business together even though their worship took place in their own homes. Some who were appointed to attend Quarterly, General and Yearly Meetings met Friends from a wider area. In this way, Friends around Thirsk kept in contact with the wider fellowship of Friends throughout the county and country.

Thirsk was a market town in the predominantly agricultural area in the north of the Vale of York, just south of the Moors. It was within reach of other market towns around: Northallerton, Ripon, Easingwold and Helmsley. The main source of family income, both direct and indirect, was farming. Friends in Thirsk Monthly Meeting were part of the farming as well as of the Quaker community.

When Friends were prevented from meeting for worship in Thirsk, because of the Five-Mile Act, they met further afield. There were two groups who lived around Kilburn, south and east of Thirsk and east of Easingwold, in the shadow of the Sutton Bank in two parishes: one in Kilburn which lay in the diocese of York and another in Wildon Grange, which lay in the parish of Crayke in the diocese of Durham, though geographically between Kilburn and Coxwold and within the archbishopric. For instance, Valentine Johnson went before the Bishop of Durham when he was accused of holding a Meeting in his home in

Wildon Grange in 1665. A third group lived around Sutton-on-the-Forest, nearer to York than to Thirsk, but still within the boundary of Thirsk Monthly Meeting. Wildon Grange and Crayke lay between Kilburn in the north and Sutton-on-the-Forest, twelve miles to the south of Kilburn, which was just over five miles south east of Thirsk.

The parishes of Kilburn and Wildon Grange lay outside the normal county jurisdiction and within the archbishop's manorial jurisdiction, and so made prosecution by the usual civil authorities a more complex business. Crayke lay within the jurisdiction of the bishopric of Durham. It may be no accident that Friends, like other dissenting groups elsewhere, chose to locate their Meetings in 'peculiar jurisdictions', outside the normal administrative and judicial processes, where there was likely to be argument about who had the responsibility and the resources to enforce the law and to prosecute.

These Quaker records (see Table 1) list 60 Friends prosecuted for meeting together to worship God in simplicity and truth, who were discovered at meeting, 41 of whom can be identified in these three parishes. Twenty nine of these appear in the Church Court records as well because they offended the church authorities and suffered for being Quakers. The Church records list 58 others from these parishes who did not fulfil their church obligations, but these may not all have been Quakers, as they may well have been dissenters for other reasons.

Table 1: Records of dissenters.

	Church court records	Quaker records	Both	Total
Crayke	28	6	11	45
Kilburn	5	6	8	19
Sutton	31	0	10	41
Unassigned		0	19	19
Total	64	31	29	124

According to the Compton Census of 1676, which has no entry for Crayke, 124 in Kilburn and Sutton-on-the-Forest were identified as dissenters from populations of 326 in Kilburn and of 400 in Sutton-on-the-Forest.⁶ This represents an adult dissenter population of over 17 per cent of the total population, including children, of Kilburn and Sutton-on-the-Forest. Not all these were Quakers, but a good proportion of them are identified in the records of the church courts and in the records of the sufferings of Quakers.

Of the dissenters identified as Quakers, 34 in all were women (see Table 2), of whom 27 were presented before the Church Courts and 13 listed solely in the Quaker records, four of them unnamed wives of male Friends. Although we know of the Quaker affiliation of these women from the Quaker sources, Jane Tomlinson is the only person mentioned as a Quaker by the Church Courts. She was presented to the Courts for fornication with William Thurman, possibly as a consequence of contracting a form of marriage according to Quaker procedure outside of the Established Church. Other 'fornicators' may have

shared a similar experience. As in the case of Roman Catholic recusants, the churchwardens were more likely to present Quaker women than men to the Church Courts, suggesting that these women, all of them named, played an identifiable part in local life. The predominance of women's names in the records of the sufferings of Friends in Thirsk meeting suggests that women played a significant role on the life of the Monthly Meeting. The distinctive Quaker testimony to the equality of men and women before God and the willingness to accept vocal ministry from women in meetings for worship contributed to the appeal of the Society to women, even in this traditional lowland agrarian region of England.

Table 2: References to women

	Church court records	Quaker records	Both	Total
Named women	21	4	5	30
Unnamed women		4		4
Total	21	8	5	34

In addition to the statistical analysis, the records give some insight into individual experience. Among the Quakers in these three clusters was Thomas Rowland who had a house at Oldstead. In 1660 he was fined for being at a Meeting in his house, was tendered the Oath of Allegiance, refused and was committed to the Assizes with four others. Two years later he was sent to the Assizes for attending a Meeting in Valentine Johnson's house at Wildon Grange and in 1665 was sent to gaol for three months for attending a Meeting in Stuart Linley's house, also at Wildon Grange. In 1663 he was fined 4s 8d and pewter platters were distrained from him for refusing to take the sacraments for 'conscience sake'. The next year, two little salts and a pewter cup worth 5s 8d were distrained from him for the same offence. A year later, when he refused to pay for the repair the roof of Kilburn church, William Thurman and George Ellwood, churchwardens, took more pewter goods from him. While he was in prison in 1665, fifteen Friends were apprehended at his house and sent to gaol for three months. Subsequently, his wife, Ellin, and son, John, were fined with him for being at a Meeting in 1670. The Archbishop of York's Court Book of the Visitation in 1662-63⁷ and again in 1667⁸ show that Thomas Rowland was one of those admonished in Kilburn for 'not coming to church and receiving communion'. Later, information was drawn against him, which the churchwardens presented to the Archbishop of York, 'because he would not pay for the repair of Kilburn steeplehouse.' As a result he was cast into prison in York castle where he remained for one year and six months before he died in 1671.⁹ Thomas Rowland was persistent for over a decade in his refusal to abandon Quaker meeting despite the offence he caused both state and church.

Church, Quaker and secular records show that John Rowland, his son, joined his father in 1665 in dissent. He was committed to gaol for being at a Meeting in his father's house and at one in the house of Valentine Johnson at Wildon Grange. After his father's death, the church admonished him in 1674 for

not paying his assessments in Kilburn parish,¹⁰ for not coming to church and for not receiving the sacrament.¹¹ Using a mark instead of a signature, he witnessed the will of Susanna Parfitt, a spinster who died in 1675.¹² His will, also with a mark instead of a signature, was witnessed by William Thurman and records that he was to be buried in the churchyard.¹³ Apparently, John Rowland followed his father's religious persuasion without entirely severing links with the local community and the Established Church.

William Thurman, like John Rowland, maintained links with the Establishment as well as being active in dissent. He was involved in both the parishes of Kilburn and Crayke. The family name occurs often in the parish register of Crayke.¹⁴ Some entries in the record of the Archbishop's visitation are signed by him.¹⁵ As well as witnessing the will of John Rowland,¹⁶ he witnessed the will of Thomas Lockwood in 1661, in which he was described as a gentleman.¹⁷ He, with Jane Tomlinson, was admonished in the Visitation of 1662 for fornication.¹⁸ He may have used the Quaker marriage procedure to regularise his relationship, a position created because the priest did not marry him in church according to regulations of the Church. This Quaker procedure was established by this time and, indicating that there were also Quaker objections to Church procedures, the phrase 'marriage by a priest' was used to justify the Quaker disciplinary process when a Quaker was married according to Church regulations. In Crayke parish William Thurman was admonished for 'wilfully omitting observations during the time he was church warden'.¹⁹ In two Visitations, 1667²⁰ and 1674,²¹ he was admonished for not coming to church at Kilburn and for not receiving communion. Quaker records reflect this dual role. In 1665, with George Ellwood, he distrained pewter goods from Thomas Rowland who had refused to pay for the repair of Kilburn church roof, but in the same year he was fined for being at a Meeting in the house of the same Thomas Rowland and of Stuart Linley and was committed to three months in prison 'without bail or maincharge'. Five years later, under the Conventicle Acts, he was fined for being at Meeting. William Thurman, like many Quakers elsewhere, faced the tension between local and church responsibilities on one hand and persistent dissent on the other. His story shows the attempt of one man to live within the tension between Quakers and the local community. There is no evidence in these sources that suggest the motives for William Thurman's response to the tension, whether indecision of commitment or maintenance of village cohesion.

In Crayke parish, Valentine Johnson did not wrestle with this conflict of loyalties. Quaker records show that in 1662 Friends met at his house, Wildon Grange. Four men, including Valentine Johnson, were apprehended and sent to the Lord Lieutenant at Thirkleby where they were sent on to the assizes. In 1665, he attended a Meeting at the house of John Walker with eight others, but, though gaoled for three months, was set at liberty after seven weeks. The same year, fourteen Friends were apprehended when 'many Friends were drawn together' at his house near Crayke, and four of them given warrants by the bishop of Durham, within whose jurisdiction the parish of Crayke lay. He

committed a second offence the same year and was sent to gaol in Durham for six months with George Sallowfield. Neither church nor state succeeded in preventing him from holding Quaker Meeting in his house or attending Meeting elsewhere.

The Church also complained about George Sallowfield. In the 1667 visitation, he was recorded for not coming to church in Crayke, for not receiving communion and for refusing his children's baptism.²² Two years later, both he and his wife, Catherine, were recorded for not coming to church or receiving the sacrament at Easter.²³ Quaker records show that in the same period he went to gaol in 1665 for being at a Meeting in the house of Valentine Johnson, and for being at a Meeting in the house of John Walker, though he was set at liberty after seven weeks of a three month sentence.

In Sutton-on-the-Forest, parish records make several references to the births, marriages and deaths of the Todd family,²⁴ but the home of Mary Todd was the centre for Quaker Meeting. She was 'a poor and aged widow in debt', and was assessed for Hearth Tax in 1673 at one hearth.²⁵ In 1670, 'for permitting a peaceable and Christian meeting in her house for the worship of God', 'information was carried by some constables who had a warrant from Justice Driffield'. As a result, 'not leaving so much as a bed for her to lay down upon':

she had all that the officers could find taken and for no other causes but for permitting the people of God to meet together to worship the great and mighty God the creator of all whom all ought to worship fear and obey. Thus for righteousness sake his people suffer.

The record of the sufferings of Thirsk Quakers contains no other example of similar persecution. Mary Todd's daughters, Mary and Elizabeth, and son, John, and another unnamed son, were fined for being at the same Meeting in 1670, as were Christopher Thurman, Thomas Robinson, and a Michael Todd and his wife. Church records record that Mary Todd did not come to church with her husband, Michael, in 1667²⁶ (who had died by 1670, when Mary was recorded as a widow), and that in 1674, with several others, she did not come to church or receive the sacraments.²⁷ Perhaps her later poverty was a consequence of her Quaker steadfastness, because for ten years, Mary Todd had faithfully led her family in their dissent from the Church.

As they remained constant throughout persecution, these Quakers were more likely to be arraigned than others who associated with Quaker groups occasionally and less constantly. They also formed the local Quaker leadership, providing stability in a time of transition.

Although geographically separate, communication between these three groups was made not only by those attending the meetings of Yorkshire Quarterly Meeting and of Thirsk Monthly Meeting, but also by those Friends who were involved with more than one group. William Thurman attended Meetings in Kilburn and Crayke. Christopher Thurman attended those in Sutton-on-the-Forest though he paid Hearth Tax on two hearths in Crayke.²⁸

Matthew Dale was fined for Meeting in Kilburn, in Crayke and in 1670 outside this area at an unnamed place further east near Malton. The homes of Valentine Johnson, Thomas Rowland, John Walker and Mary Todd were places for Meetings attended by Friends, such as Stuart Linley, who also held Meetings in their own houses, or such as William Clarkson and John Lumley, who also attended Meetings in the houses of others, notably of William Chagos. Brian Peart was arrested for attending Meetings at the homes of both Valentine Johnson and Stuart Linley. Robert Buttery was fined for being at a Meeting at Thomas Rowland's house in Kilburn, although his home was in Sutton-on-the-Forest, the home village of Mary Todd, where the church records show that he did not go to church, did not baptise his three children²⁹ and did not receive communion with his wife Elizabeth.³⁰ Friends overcame the difficulties of distance so that they kept in contact with one another.

Distances of five or ten miles did not prevent these occasional, if irregular, contacts between fellow dissenters. The fellowship among the dissenting community gave strength and support during time of persecution. The Five-Mile Act and the Clarendon Code stimulated these Friends to take the action that enabled them to form a loosely knit community in this area. They were not concentrated in one hamlet, village or town. Although the area north of York that formed Thirsk Monthly Meeting in this period covered the area from Huby in the south to Northallerton in the north, these Friends appear to have lived within reach of others so that between ten and twenty could worship together, for instance in the home of Thomas Rowland. This geographical proximity, though not such that made them neighbours, nevertheless enabled them to uphold and support each other, in their common opposition to the prevailing expectations about religious practice held by the wider society.³¹ They formed a community that was not confined within parochial boundaries.

There was contact also with the wider Quaker fellowship. When George Fox travelled north from York in 1651:

I saw towards Cleveland that there was a people that had tasted the power of God: and I saw then there was a Seed... in that country and that God had humble people there... And the next day I came to Burraby [probably Borrowby, north of Thirsk].³²

William Dewsbury was arrested in 1653 in a house at Crayke where Friends were holding a Meeting. John Burnyeat, originally a Calvinist husbandman from Cumberland, visited Thirsk, Crayke and Malton in 1668. The people around Thirsk who welcomed these three visitors, made a favourable impression on George Fox. William Dewsbury was in his home county, and John Burnyeat visited the area even though his main ministry was in Ireland and North America. These visits indicate that Friends in these Yorkshire Meetings received Friends travelling in the ministry who brought news of and contact with the wider Quaker family. From the ministry of these visits, Quakers around Thirsk would have been encouraged in their steadfastness, stimulated in their spiritual

experience, helped in the organisation of their Meetings for church affairs and educated in the practices of Quaker discipline.

Friends who made their houses available for Meetings were the obvious targets for prosecuting magistrates. When apprehended they could be fined and/or sent to gaol. Stuart Linley was one of several including Valentine Johnson, Thomas Rowland, John Walker and Mary Todd. William Crosby held a Meeting in his home in 1670, was fined, refused to take the oath and was imprisoned. Alice Taylor, one of the women named in the Quaker records, held a Meeting in her home, was fined £20, as well as eleven kine and one hog, for contravening the Conventicle Acts. Isaac Linley, as well as being imprisoned for refusing the oath after being arrested for holding a Meeting in his house in 1660,³³ and being fined £20 for being at a Meeting with his wife in 1670, held a Meeting in his house in 1665 for which he was placed in gaol. To the west of Thirsk, but attended by some of the members of Thirsk meeting, William Chagos held a Meeting at his house in Ripon, on the other side of the river Swale.

The records suggest that families as well as individuals were involved in Quaker worship. Mary Todd's children joined her in defying the law. Thomas Rowland's son, John, joined his father in Quaker worship. Husbands and wives were involved together. Richard Smith was fined for being at a Meeting not only with his wife but also with his son. Furthermore, Quaker marriage practice brought them into conflict with the courts. Eighteen pairs of husbands and wives are recorded for not marrying in church, including William Thurman and Jane Tomlinson, who offended the Church by their fornication,³⁴ though not their fellow Quakers, if they married according to Quaker usage. Children also became involved in dissent when parents refused to baptise their infant children. George Sallowfield and John Walker, among the three families listed, placed their infant children in this position. Families, as well as individuals, formed part of the Quaker community developing within the villages.

Friends suffered a variety of penalties for breaking the law by meeting for Quaker worship. The length of gaol sentence, when indicated, was either three or six months. John Walker and eight others were gaoled for three months but set at liberty after seven weeks. Thomas Rowland received gaol sentences in 1660, 1665 and 1670, but, apart from the penalty on the Friends who worshipped in his house while he was in prison in 1665 and his death in prison in 1671,³⁵ the evidence gives no indication that he spent all, if any, of the time allotted in prison. Non-custodial sentences were fines or confiscation of property, sometimes both. Thomas Boulby was fined and had money, goods and a cow distrained, Richard Soulby money and a cow. Alice Taylor faced the loss of eleven kine and one hog for holding a meeting at her house. This type of punishment recurs in these Quaker records. William Thurman, lapsed churchwarden and imprisoned dissenter though he became later, was required as a churchwarden to take pewter and salts from Thomas Rowland. There is no record of what happened to the personal relationships or the pewter.

There is evidence of mutual support. Some Friends suffered on behalf of

others, though it is not clear whether this was offered or was imposed. John Deighton had the fines of others imposed on him. Richard Dobson and William Peart, as well as for their own offence, were fined for the poverty of another and Mary Todd was left with very little. The records show no pattern of the penalty being related to the nature of the offence. The economic and social standing of the Friends concerned as well as the predilections of the magistrates probably played a part in the decisions to arraign, sentence and execute penalties. Thirsk Friends were not alone in this. Friends here and elsewhere faced uncertain outcomes.

There is little evidence in these records of social and economic background. There are no references to occupation, trade, craft or other sources of income. William Thurman was described as a gentleman in the will of Thomas Lockwood.³⁶ Mary Todd was a poor widow in debt. That only three of many others in 1662 and only four also of many in 1665 were gaoled for meeting in the house of Valentine Johnson, may suggest that these were the most prominent of the group with some standing in the local community and/or the Quaker fellowship and were arraigned to encourage others. Prominence in either the local community or the Quaker community may have made them targets for attack.

Hearth tax levies give some indication of the size of house, if those Friends named in the Quaker records were those with the same name as being levied for Hearth Tax. William Clarkson, who was gaoled in 1665 for meeting at the house of Thomas Rowland, is possibly the same as the man who was levied Hearth Tax on three hearths in Thirsk,³⁷ showing a measure of prosperity. Thomas Jackson attended the same Meeting. He may have been one six Thomas Jacksons listed as paying Hearth Tax, the nearest to this area being at Crayke where the Hearth Tax levied was for two hearths.³⁸ Brian Peart, a wealthier man, was levied on six hearths for Thirsk.³⁹ Christopher Thurman was levied on two hearths in Crayke.⁴⁰ There was some variation in the size of the dwellings that attracted the tax. The resources of Mary Todd,⁴¹ with one hearth, a poor widow in debt, contrasted with those of Brian Peart, with six. Although there is no record of Hearth Tax levied on his property, the Quaker records show that Thomas Rowland's house at Oldstead had accommodation large enough for fifteen Friends to worship there while he was in prison in 1665. The difference in the amounts of fines and distrains levied may have been caused partly by differences in ability to pay, though Mary Todd's penalties do not indicate that this was a factor taken into consideration in her case. Nevertheless, the records show that the Quaker community included those with a wide variety of economic resources available to them.

The Quaker community established fellowship among its members during the time of persecution. Although persecution came from this local community, Quakers also co-existed with the wider local community which, chronologically at least, came before the former. Quaker commitment did not eliminate local civil ties or their part in a common agricultural community. Perhaps William Thurman's ecclesiastical backsliding, his civil disobedience and his family

connections with the village, enabled him to be a link between established and dissenter communities. Several branches of Thurman family recur in the parish records of births, marriages and deaths.⁴² William had family loyalties as well as Quaker ones. Mary Todd in Sutton-on-the-Forest had similar connections in her parish.⁴³

Some, but not all, of the Quaker names – Todd, Thurman, Rowland – appear in both Quaker and Church Court records. These are likely to have been the most prominent in the local as well as the Quaker community. Some names, like Benjamin Mason and John Simpson, who, with others, were arrested for being at meeting in the house of Thomas Rowland in Oldfield, appear in Quaker records but do not appear in the Church records. The Established Church possibly attempted to catch the ringleaders who were more prosperous in both Quaker and local communities and to ignore the poor. Some dissenter names appear in the Church Court but not the Quaker records. But these records do not identify the type of dissent, as do the records of Durham diocese, which refer specifically to Quakers, distinguishing them from Anabaptists and ‘popish’ recusants.⁴⁴ The turnover of names presented was large and may show that some early enthusiasts became lukewarm and reverted to their earlier allegiances. Overall, the evidence suggests that Quakers remained part of the civil community to which they belonged. The records do not show the extent of the continuing association but they do show that there was no complete separation in this period.

The Yorkshire records used in this study are only of those Quakers who suffered for being at Meeting, not of those who suffered for other reasons. This evidence is insufficient to make a detailed comparison with other studies of Quakers in their counties, especially in Essex,⁴⁵ and Cambridgeshire and Huntingdonshire.⁴⁶ Like Essex Quakers, these Yorkshire Friends ‘volunteered their property and homes for meetings’.⁴⁷ Other sources give the occupation and status of people who opened their homes for Quaker Meetings, – a butcher near Tiverton (Devon),⁴⁸ a priest near Weymouth (Dorset),⁴⁹ a master weaver in Norwich,⁵⁰ a linen draper in London⁵¹ – even some members of the Establishment – a sheriff in Nottingham,⁵² a constable near Scarborough,⁵³ and a mayor in Cambridge.⁵⁴ Davies found evidence that ‘the middling degree predominated’,⁵⁵ but there are many mentioned in the Yorkshire records, such as those, named and unnamed, who worshipped in the home of Thomas Rowland about whom no more than their names is known from the evidence. This part of Yorkshire was more rural than Essex, so that the occupations of Friends would appear in different proportions. It is difficult to envisage village life producing the social isolation of Quakers in Essex, though the activity of Quaker Meetings would do much to establish a Quaker community. Many of the characteristics found among Quakers in Cambridgeshire and Huntingdonshire⁵⁶ may be found in this part of Yorkshire, although the proportion of those involved, directly or indirectly, in agriculture might be higher. The view that ‘Quakers were cohesive among themselves but also within parish life by the 1670s because they were working with non-Quakers in the parish,’⁵⁷ seems true of these Thirsk Friends.

The records consulted for this study suggest that the evidence of the 124 named Quakers did not differ in any significant respect from the evidence about their counterparts in these other counties.

The Quakers in groups around around Thirsk were the people, like many others around the country, who formed the backbone of the nascent Religious Society of Friends. They met faithfully week by week for their newly established form of worship, lived in village communities with those of other religious affinities or none, maintained their testimonies, suffered for their principles and welcomed the leaders of the movement whenever they chanced to visit them. Without them, the new religious order would not have taken root. Use of the varied and diffuse material available has uncovered something of the experience of the local group as they witnessed throughout this period to the right and freedom to worship. For many this was a costly activity that formed the core of their lives.

This paper gives an additional insight into the religious persecution of Quakers in three periods during the first twenty five years and the indefatigable character of this particular community.

REFERENCES

1. Davies, A., *The Quakers in English Society, 1655-1725*, Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2000.
2. Davies, *The Quakers in English Society*, pp. 139, 214 and 223. See for instance: Cole, A., ‘The Social Origins of Early Friends’, in *Journal of Friends Historical Society*, 48 (1957), pp. 103-08, Frearson, M., ‘Communications and the continuity of dissent’, in Spufford, M., *The World of Rural Dissenters, 1520-1725*, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1995, pp. 286-337; Morgan, N. *Lancashire Quakers and the Establishment, 1660-1730*, Halifax: Ryburn, 1993; Scott, D., ‘Politics, Dissent and Quakerism in York 1640-1700’, unpublished Ph.D thesis, University of York, 1990; Stevenson, B., ‘The Social and Economic Status of Post-Restoration Dissenters 1660-1725’ in Spufford, M., *The World of Rural Dissenters, 1520-1725*, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1995, pp. 338-87; Vann, R.T., *The Social Development of English Quakerism, 1655-1755*, Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1969.
3. There are two original sources for information about the sufferings of Friends in this area, both on microfilm in the Borthwick Institute of Historical Research, York (BIHRY), from the originals in the Brotherton Library of the University of Leeds.
 - a. ‘Yorkshire Quarterly Meeting’s Record of Sufferings’ appears in volume 1 part 1, 1651-95 and volume 1, part 2, 1653-82. These two parts often refer to the same incidents. Information is taken from part 1, pp. 17, 36 and 38 and from part 2 pp. 11-38.
 - b. ‘Thirsk Monthly Meeting’s account of the sufferings of Friends’ appears in volume 1, 1660-1738 with information that does not appear in Yorkshire Quarterly Meeting’s record. This information appears between pages 5 and 15. Unless otherwise noted, the material for this study is taken from these sources.
- A printed source is Joseph Besse’s *A Collection of the Sufferings of the People called Quakers*, London: Hinde, 1753. This source copies but does not interpret what is found in the primary sources mentioned, but its reliability cannot be assumed. For instance, in Besse, in vol. 2, ch. 4, p. 134, many of the Friends named in the records above are placed in Skipwith, some 20 miles south of York. In the Yorkshire Quarterly Meeting’s records these names appear under the heading of Thirsk Monthly Meeting, as living in Thirsk, some 30 miles north of York, an entry following on from names associated with Skipwith. It seems likely that Besse merely omitted the

heading in transcription from the original so that Skipwith and Thirsk Friends were elided.

4. BIHRY 'Yorkshire Quarterly Meeting Record of Sufferings', vol. 1 pt 1, 1651-95.

5. A database giving sources of information about this group is attached to the dissertation 'The context and experience of Quaker worship in the early years 1650-1675 with some reference to Yorkshire' on which this paper is based and lodged in the Library of Woodbrooke, the Library of the Society of Friends and the Library of the University of York.

6. Whitehead, A., (ed.), *The Compton Census of 1676*, London, 1986, p. 570.

7. BIHRY Visitation Court Book of the Archbishop of York v. 1662-3/CB, fol. 509 v.

8. BIHRY Visitation Court Book of the Archbishop of York v. 1667/CB (a), fol. 72 v.

9. BIHRY Yorkshire Quarterly Meeting Record of Sufferings, vol. 1, part 2, p. 100.

10. BIHRY Visitation Court Book of the Archbishop of York v.1674/CB, fol. 416 v.

11. BIHRY Visitation Court Book of the Archbishop of York v.1674/CB, fol. 416 v.

12. BIHRY York Registry:Wills: Bulmer, vol. 56, fol. 247.

13. BIHRY York Registry:Wills: Bulmer, vol. 58, fol. 536.

14. BIHRY Parish registers: Crayke: 1558-1667 and 1667-1751.

15. BIHRY Visitation Court Book of the Archbishop of York v.1667/CB (a), fol. 66 v.

16. BIHRY York Registry:Wills: Bulmer, vol. 58, fol. 536.

17. BIHRY York Registry:Wills: Bulmer, vol. 44, fol. 258.

18. BIHRY Visitation Court Book of the Archbishop of York 1662-63/CB1, fol. 509 v.

19. BIHRY Visitation Court Book of the Archbishop of York v.1667/CB (a), fol. 67 r

20. BIHRY Visitation Court Book of the Archbishop of York v.1667/CB (a), fol. 72 v.

21. BIHRY Visitation Court Book of the Archbishop of York v.1674/CB, fol. 416 v.

22. BIHRY Visitation Court Book of the Archbishop of York v.1667/CB (a), fol. 65 v.

23. BIHRY Metropolitan Visitation Court Book. Diocese of Chester v.1669-70/CB, fols. 536 and 537.

24. BIHRY Parish Records. Sutton-on-the-Forest Register. 1665-71.

25. Hearth Tax List for North Riding of Yorkshire: Michaelmas 1673, (Ripon, 1991). part 2, p. 43.

26i. BIHRY Visitation Court Book of the Archbishop of York v.1667/CB (a), fol. 65 v.

27. BIHRY Visitation Court Book of the Archbishop of York v.1674/CB, fols. 408 v and 409 r.

28. Hearth Tax List for North Riding of Yorkshire, 1673, part 3, p. 24.

29. BIHRY Visitation Court Book of the Archbishop of York v.1662-63/CB1, fol. 492 v.

30. BIHRY Visitation Court Book of the Archbishop of York v.1667/CB (a), fols. 75 r and v.

31. Rather like the pacifists and conscientious objectors in the Second World War.

32. Smith, N., (ed.), *George Fox: The Journal*, London: Penguin, 1998, p. 63.

33. BIHRY Yorkshire Quarterly Meeting Record of Sufferings, vol. 1, part 1, p. 6.

34. BIHRY Visitation Court Book of the Archbishop of York 1662-63/ CB1, fol. 509 v.

35. BIHRY Yorkshire Quarterly Meeting Record of Sufferings, vol. 1, part 2, p. 100.

36. BIHRY York Registry:Wills: Bulmer, vol. 44, fol. 258.

37. Hearth Tax List for North Riding of Yorkshire: 1673, part 3, p. 21.

38. Hearth Tax List for North Riding of Yorkshire: 1673, part 3, p. 21.

39. Hearth Tax List for North Riding of Yorkshire: 1673, part 2, p. 24.

40. Hearth Tax List for North Riding of Yorkshire: 1673, part 3, p. 24.

41. Hearth Tax List for North Riding of Yorkshire: 1673, part 3, p. 40.

42. BIHRY Parish registers: Crayke: 1558-1667 pp. 75-79 and 1667-1751 pp. 4-10.

43. BIHRY Parish Records. Sutton-on-the-Forest Register. 1665-71.

44. University Library, Durham (ULD) Durham Diocesan records. Visitation Books, 1662-70, pp. 14-16.

45. Davies, *The Quakers in English Society*.

46. Stevenson, 'The Social and Economic Status of Post-Restoration Dissenters'

47. Davies, *The Quakers in English Society*, p. 79.

48. Smith, *George Fox: The Journal*, p. 170.

49. Smith, *George Fox: The Journal*, p. 175.

50. Whitehead, G., *Christian Progress*, London: Sowle, 1725, p. 24.

51. Penney, N., (ed.), *The First Publishers of Truth*, London: Headley, 1907, p. 163.

52. Smith, *George Fox: The Journal*, p. 41.

53. Smith, *George Fox: The Journal*, p. 364.

54. Smith, *George Fox: The Journal*, p. 166.

55. Davies, *The Quakers in English Society*, p. 146.

56. Stevenson, 'The Social and Economic Status of Post-Restoration Dissenters', pp. 338-87.

57. Stevenson, 'The Social and Economic Status of Post-Restoration Dissenters', p. 385.

AUTHOR DETAILS

John Woods was awarded an MA in History from York University in 2003 for a dissertation on 'The context and experience of Quaker worship in the early years 1650-1675 with some reference to Yorkshire'. After gaining a BA honours degree in History from Manchester University in 1952, he taught history in secondary schools before becoming Head of Friends School, Kamusinga, Kenya 1964-68 and then of Friends School, Saffron Walden, Essex, 1968-89.

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