

**THE EARLY QUAKER MOVEMENT IN STAFFORDSHIRE 1651 - 1743 :
FROM OPEN FELLOWSHIP TO CLOSED SECT**

Thesis submitted for the degree of Ph.D.
at the University of Leicester
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Denis Stuart

THE EARLY QUAKER MOVEMENT IN STAFFORDSHIRE

1651-1743 : from open fellowship to closed sect

This study provides a history of the early years of the Quaker movement in Staffordshire. It takes cognizance of research into the history of the movement generally and discusses how far Quakerism in Staffordshire supports or challenges the conclusions of modern scholars. A preliminary chapter outlines the local scene and the political and religious background out of which Quakerism emerged. The work of George Fox and other Quaker preachers in the county between 1651 and 1660 is examined in detail, together with their itineraries and preaching methods. An explanation of the subsequent spread of the movement locally is offered. Special chapters deal with the 'sufferings' of local Quakers for their defiance of the anti-dissent laws, their occupations, numbers, organisation, burial grounds and meeting houses. The history of each of the two monthly meetings in the county, is outlined and there is a chapter on local Quaker literacy. The development of Quakerism in Staffordshire is seen as the transformation of what was originally an open and informal movement into a closed and disciplined sect. The causes of this change are explained as the result of persecution and the need to control the individualistic interpretation of the 'Inward Light', the basic Quaker belief, if the movement was to survive. The sharp decline in the numbers of Friends is seen as the result of the effects of death, departure and disownment from what had become an endogamous sect, compounded by the abandonment of all efforts at local proselytisation.

The main primary sources used are the local Quaker archives in the Stafford County Record Office plus other material in the Friends' House Library in London and in Woodbrooke College, Birmingham. The main methodology was the use as a database of about 500 mini-biographies of early Staffordshire Quakers.

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List of main abbreviations used in notes to text

Besse, <u>Sufferings</u>	J. Besse, <u>A Collection of the Sufferings of the People called Quakers</u> , 2 vols (1753)
Braithwaite, <u>Beginnings</u>	W. C. Braithwaite, <u>The Beginnings of Quakerism</u> , 2nd edn (1955)
Braithwaite, <u>Second Period</u>	W. C. Braithwaite, <u>The Second Period of Quakerism</u> , 2nd edn (1961)
F.H.L.	Library of the Religious Society of Friends, Friends' House, Euston Road, London
Fox, <u>Journal</u>	<u>The Journal of George Fox</u> , ed. J. L. Nickalls (1952)
<u>J.F.H.S.</u>	<u>Journal of the Friends Historical Society</u>
L.M.M.M.B.	Leek Monthly Meeting Minute Book 1705 - 1737
Q.M.M.B.	(Staffordshire) Quarterly Meeting Minute Book 1672 - 1743
Q/SR	(Staffordshire) Quarter Sessions Records
<u>S.H.C.</u>	<u>Collections for a History of Staffordshire</u>
S.M.M.M.B.	Stafford Monthly Meeting Minute Book 1713 - 1783
<u>V.C.H. Staffs.</u>	<u>The Victoria History of the County of Stafford</u>
Vann, <u>Social Development</u>	R. T. Vann, <u>The Social Development of English Quakerism 1655 - 1755</u> , (Cambridge, Mass. 1969)

Place of publication here and in notes is London unless otherwise indicated.

INTRODUCTION : aims and methods.

Quakerism was one of the many religious movements which emerged in England in the first half of the seventeenth century. George Fox and the other early Quaker leaders believed that they had found the basis for a universal religion and that it was their divinely-inspired mission in life to propagate their 'message of truth' at whatever cost to themselves. In Staffordshire, as elsewhere in the country, they created a substantial body of believers whose faith sustained them through the persecution and repression which they encountered both before but particularly after the restoration of the monarchy in 1660. The movement survived the period of persecution, but it was at the cost of a radical transformation of its early aims and social character. What had begun, to use the stark formulation of one modern student, as a group of 'vagrant and naked preachers' ¹ with a rapidly expanding following, became, in the course of less than two generations, a closed sect, characterised by a sober and decorous piety and dwindling in numbers. Some of the original ideas of Quakerism, ultimately subversive of existing ecclesiastical and political authority and looking for immediate radical reform in all spheres of society, were in practice abandoned, and the movement became Quietist in character. Quakers did not withdraw from the world but from their expectations of immediately changing the world. Such has been the fate of many religious movements faced by persecution as they grew in numbers and appeared to the authorities to present a threat to the established order. Early Quakerism survived by becoming an institution, a church itself, just like the Church of England whose spiritual authority it challenged. It imposed a discipline on the potentially anarchic consequences of its doctrine of the

1 R. T. Vann, The Social Development of English Quakerism 1655 - 1755 (Cambridge, Massachusetts, 1969), Preface.

'inward light' of God within all individuals by which they would determine their behaviour; it lost much of its enthusiasm to proselytise, at least in Britain, among the unregenerate; and as the religious turmoil of the first half of the seventeenth century began to subside, Quakerism itself lost much of its original popular appeal. Perhaps the institutionalisation of the movement and the changes that followed were bound to occur. Braithwaite, the doyen of twentieth - century Quaker historians, thought so, and wrote that the Quaker movement, after two generations of vitality, had lost its vision. His analysis of the causes of this transformation has been extended and refined by modern research but not been seriously challenged. ²

This study seeks to provide a local illustration of the fundamental changes which took place within Quakerism between 1651, when George Fox came into the county, and 1743. Here in Staffordshire, as elsewhere in the country, what had begun as an open fellowship of seekers after truth had become, by the early eighteenth century, a closed and tightly disciplined institution, with a reducing membership. The local leaders had long realised, though they had not openly acknowledged, that the expectation of transforming the world, which the 'First Publishers of Truth' had brought with them into the county, was not only a dream but an impossible dream. They did not, however, entirely abandon the ideal. If the world could not be regenerated at least they could strive to offer a model in their own behaviour. Accordingly they gave themselves to the task of perfecting what was a spiritual remnant into a 'peculiar people'.

Up to the later nineteenth century most accounts of early Quaker history were centred on the figure of George Fox. Barclay began the process of re-assessment in

2 W. C. Braithwaite, The Second Period of Quakerism (1919; Cambridge, 2nd edn 1961, prepared by H. J. Cadbury), pp. 632-7.

1876 showing that Fox was not the sole founder of Quakerism and arguing that the movement had its origins in Continental mysticism.³ After 1900 a new phase in Quaker historiography opened, with the publication of the first issue of The Journal of the Friends' Historical Society in 1903. The Rowntree Series of Quaker Histories produced six major works between 1909 and 1921, four by Jones and two by Braithwaite.⁴ Jones followed Barclay in categorising Fox as a 'mystic', a view which has received less support from modern students; Braithwaite's works remain today the standard general histories, although they have been modified and supplemented by more recent research. Further interest in the history of seventeenth - century religious sectarianism was stimulated by the works of Christopher Hill, in particular those on Puritanism, based on his mastery of the vast quantities of pamphlet and other printed material produced after 1640, when press censorship had in practice broken down. Hill's work was made even more interesting, if also more controversial, by his Marxist analysis of the English Revolution.⁵ Lloyd's study of the social history of early Quakerism, published in 1950, was another seminal work in that it was based not only on the huge archive of Quaker manuscripts in the Library of Friends' House, London, but also made more extensive use of local Quaker archives throughout the country than most previous general histories had done.⁶ Research on the period has continued and since the 1960s new studies have been produced which have challenged

3 R. Barclay, The Inner Life of the Religious Societies of the Commonwealth (1876).

4 R. M. Jones, Studies in Mystical Religion (1909), W.C. Braithwaite, The Beginnings of Quakerism (1912) and The Second Period of Quakerism (1919), R. M. Jones, Spiritual Reformers in the 16th and 17th Centuries (1914), The Quakers in the American Colonies (1911) and The Later Periods of Quakerism (2 vols, 1921).

5 These include The English Revolution (1940), Society and Puritanism (1964), A Century of Revolution (1961), The World Turned Upside Down (1972), and many articles in learned journals.

6 A. Lloyd, Quaker Social History (1950).

some of the previously held opinions. Among these are the works of two American scholars, Barbour, who stressed that the indigenous sources of Fox's beliefs lay within the English Protestant tradition, and Vann, who examined the social structure of early English Quakerism and traced its development from a movement into a sect.⁷ The interest in the period generally and the Quakers in particular has not abated, and the Quakers have become one of the most intensively studied of the religious sects which came out of the period 1640 to 1660. A collection of essays produced in 1984, offering a synthesis of recent research on the sects which held radical views, including Baptists and Fifth Monarchy Men as well as Quakers, is provided by McGregor and Reay.⁸ Another recent collection of essays edited by Mullett embodies some of the latest research on George Fox,⁹ and includes a discussion of the evolution of Quaker attitudes to pacifism by Hill.¹⁰ The role and importance of Fox in the Quaker movement has been one of the topics particularly explored by modern scholars. Hill has argued that after 1660, when the Quaker leadership needed to survive in the hostile atmosphere of the Restoration period, there was a severe toning down of the more radical views they had expressed in their earliest tracts and pamphlets and that Fox's own Journal was later edited to focus on his role as founder and leader of the movement. It is now generally accepted that Dewsbury, Farnsworth, Nayler and Burrough had all arrived, more or less independently, at Fox's religious position, and that Fox was, at first, part of a collective leadership.¹¹ A new biography

7 H. A. Barbour, The Quakers in Puritan England (Yale, 1964); Vann, Social Development.

8 J. F. McGregor and B. Reay, Radical Religion in the English Revolution (Oxford, 1984); B. Reay, Quakers and the English Revolution (1985).

9 M. Mullett (ed.), New Light on George Fox: 1624-1691 (York, 1993).

10 C. Hill, 'Quakers and the English Revolution', in Mullett, New Light, pp. 22-35.

11 R. Moore, 'The Faith of the First Friends' (University of Birmingham, unpublished Ph.D. thesis, 1993), a systematic examination of Quaker pamphlet literature from 1652 to 1659, argues for a slightly more positive view of Fox's role as leader.

of Fox, by H. L. Ingle, providing a less hagiographical account than is sometimes found in older works, places Fox firmly in his Midlands local history context.¹² Among recent studies of detailed topics within the general history of early Quakerism is Vann and Eversley's computerised demographical study of Quakers in Britain and Ireland, based largely on the Quakers' registers of births, marriages and deaths. It examines such key factors in the determination of Quaker fertility rates as the confinement of Quaker marriages to within the Society, and the age at which Quakers married.¹³ Evans' study of the extent of Quaker 'sufferings' from distrains for non-payment of tithes, based largely on his work on Staffordshire, appeared in 1976,¹⁴ but some of his general conclusions have subsequently been challenged.¹⁵ Very recent studies of the motivation for, and general incidence of, persecution of Dissenters include Coffey's comprehensive survey.¹⁶ Braddick's seminal work on the development of the English state in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries includes a chapter on these topics.¹⁷

The enormous expansion of interest in local history which has taken place since the later 1950s has included a number of studies dealing particularly with early Quaker history in the Midlands. There is a small but growing number of university theses, listed in the bibliography to this thesis. While most local studies are the briefer treatments found in learned journals, Mullett, Davies and Spufford may be cited among those authors who have produced important longer treatments of particular areas elsewhere than the Midlands. On the basis of his study of

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- 12 H. Larry Ingle, First Among Friends (Oxford, 1994).
 - 13 R.T. Vann and D.C. Eversley Friends in Life and Death (Cambridge, 1992).
 - 14 E. Evans, The Contentious Tithe (1976).
 - 15 B. Reay, 'Quaker Opposition to Tithes', Past and Present 86 (1980).
 - 16 J. Coffey, Persecution and Toleration in Protestant England 1558 - 1689 (2000). His views are discussed in Chapters 2 and 3 of this study.
 - 17 M. J. Braddick, State Formation in Early Modern England c. 1550 - 1700 (Cambridge, 2000).

Lancashire Quakers Mullett has criticised modern sociological theories, formulated by Niebuhr, which categorise the changes within eighteenth century Quakerism as a classic example of the move from sect to denomination.¹⁸ Mullett argues that Quakerism retained 'too many features of the primitive sect to be described as a denomination and too many features of the denomination to be satisfactorily described as a sect'.¹⁹ Davies has examined the interaction of Quakers with other members of the local Essex community between 1655 and 1725 and, describing his work as a 'social history', has shown that, despite the hostility and violence which Quakers encountered, the extent of the fissure between them and the local communities within which they lived has been exaggerated. This, he suggests, is the consequence of over-reliance on records, particularly the Quakers' own detailing of 'Sufferings', which place excessive emphasis on conflict. His treatment also makes cautious use of sociological models of sectarian change but he, like Mullett, suggests that the conventional view of the progress of Quakerism from a sect into a denomination needs modification, and that the transformation was neither unqualified nor unilinear.²⁰ Margaret Spufford, working principally on Cambridgeshire, has correlated ideological divisions within a number of parishes with their socio-economic profile as revealed in such documents as hearth tax returns, her studies showing that Quakers were found at both extremes of the social scale.²¹ She has also recently prompted the writing of, and contributed herself to, a collection of essays

18 H. R. Niebuhr, The Social Sources of Denominationalism (New York, 2nd edn 1975).

19 M. Mullett, 'From Sect to Denomination? Social Developments in Eighteenth Century English Quakerism', Journal of Religious History 1984, 132, pp. 168 - 191.

20 A. Davies, The Quakers in English Society (Oxford, 2000).

21 M. Spufford, Contrasting Communities: English Villagers in the Sixteenth and Seventeenth Centuries (Cambridge, 1974).

on rural dissent in Buckinghamshire, Hertfordshire and Middlesex in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries, putting Quakerism into its local context. She shows, with convincing detail, the great importance of religion to the rural inhabitants, and argues that it is misconceived to equate the 'godly elite' only with the 'social elite'; she also demonstrates that rural labourers were much more literate than has hitherto been assumed, a topic examined, in relation to Staffordshire Quakers, in this study. ²²

Modern scholarship is paying more attention to a statistical approach to the study of the later seventeenth century. The publication of Whiteman's definitive edition of the Compton Census of 1676 has prompted a greater and more refined use of this source, and scholars like Spufford are correlating the evidence it provides with the nation-wide hearth tax returns of 1662 to 1689 to produce new, more informed studies of population generally and of the socio-economic status of the inhabitants of a number of localities. ²³ Another avenue of research currently being explored is the degree of social and economic integration existing between such sects as Quakers and the local communities in which they lived, based on an intensive examination of parochial, quarter sessions and other types of local records. This development is exemplified in Davies' study of Essex, already mentioned, and Ambler's examination of the parish communities of Lincolnshire. ²⁴

While seeking to take cognizance of the results of such recent research into the early history of Quakerism elsewhere and the new insights they might provide for the study of the early history of the movement in Staffordshire, this study nevertheless

22 M. Spufford (ed.), The World of Rural Dissenters 1520-1725 (Cambridge, 1995).

23 A. Whiteman (ed.), The Compton Census of 1676: a critical edition 1986).

24 R. W. Ambler, 'Churches, Chapels and the Parish Communities in Lincolnshire 1660 - 1900', in History of Lincolnshire IX (2000).

aims primarily to provide a general history of Quakerism in the county up to the mid - eighteenth century. It is the first full-length treatment of the subject and such a general survey may prove a useful basis for, or prompt towards, more detailed research on particular topics not possible within the limits of this study. Only the first three generations of the history of local Quakerism are covered. The chosen terminal date, 1743, marks the end of the earliest major source of information on Staffordshire Friends, the minute book of the Quarterly Meeting. Within this period the Staffordshire scene is examined to see how far it illustrates or departs from the modern sociological model which sees Quakerism changing from at first an open movement into a closed sect and later into a denomination. While an endeavour is made to view Staffordshire Quaker history against the background of broad, institutional change, the aim is also, by a close study of individuals, to give to Quaker history a 'local habitation and a name'. Conclusions based only on statistics derived from local records may, as Spufford points out, be misleading in so far as they depersonalise the subjects of the inquiry.

Answers to three questions of general application to the Quaker movement as a whole have also been sought from an examination of the local Staffordshire material. Does the early history of Quakerism in Staffordshire throw more, or any fresh, light on the mechanics of the original spread of the movement; can it help both to illustrate and to explain how, when and why the original open fellowship of believers changed into the closed, hierarchical institution of the eighteenth century; and lastly, to what extent does Staffordshire Quaker history suggest reasons for the sharp decline in the number of Friends generally in that century? To assist in finding answers to these questions, about five hundred mini-biographies of early Staffordshire

Friends have been compiled, and which provide the main database for this study.

Fifteen representative examples are reproduced in an appendix. There are three main conclusions. It will first be argued and demonstrated that the initial expansion of the movement in the county depended not only on the proselytising powers of the first itinerant Quaker preachers but on the existence of the family networks of the earliest converts in what was still a mainly rural area. This is a familiar enough thesis but it is not so frequently found applied to early Quaker local history, whose spread has sometimes been discussed solely on comments made in the itinerants' letters.

Secondly, the study will argue that the way in which relationships between the national leadership of the movement and the basic local administrative units, the monthly and quarterly meetings, and below these, the meetings for worship, were maintained, was of basic importance in the way the movement developed. Thirdly, the study will argue that during the eighteenth century there was an almost complete abandonment of local efforts at proselytisation, and that this, added to the other factors of death, departure and disownment of members for marriage outside the Society, resulted in a decline in numbers.

The sources used in this study are mainly local Staffordshire Quaker records, particularly the quarterly and monthly meeting minute books and other material in the huge Quaker archive deposited in the Staffordshire County Record Office.

Administrative records rarely tell the complete story and this is especially true of Quaker minutes where most often only the 'sense of the meeting' is summarily recorded. Nevertheless the course of Quaker history was in large part determined by the Friends' own concept of themselves, as individuals and as a society, and by the extent to which they were willing and able to implement the moral imperatives which they claimed animated them. To illustrate this, only Friends' own records, incomplete as they may be, can serve.

CHAPTER 1 THE SETTING

(i) The Physical Background

William Camden in his 1607 edition of Britannia, neatly summarised the main physical aspects of Staffordshire when he wrote :

The north part is mountainous and less fertile, the middle, watered by the river Trent, is more fertile, being clad with woods and having a mixture of cornfields and meadows, as is the south, which has pit coals and veins of iron, but whether to their advantage or disadvantage the inhabitants should know...

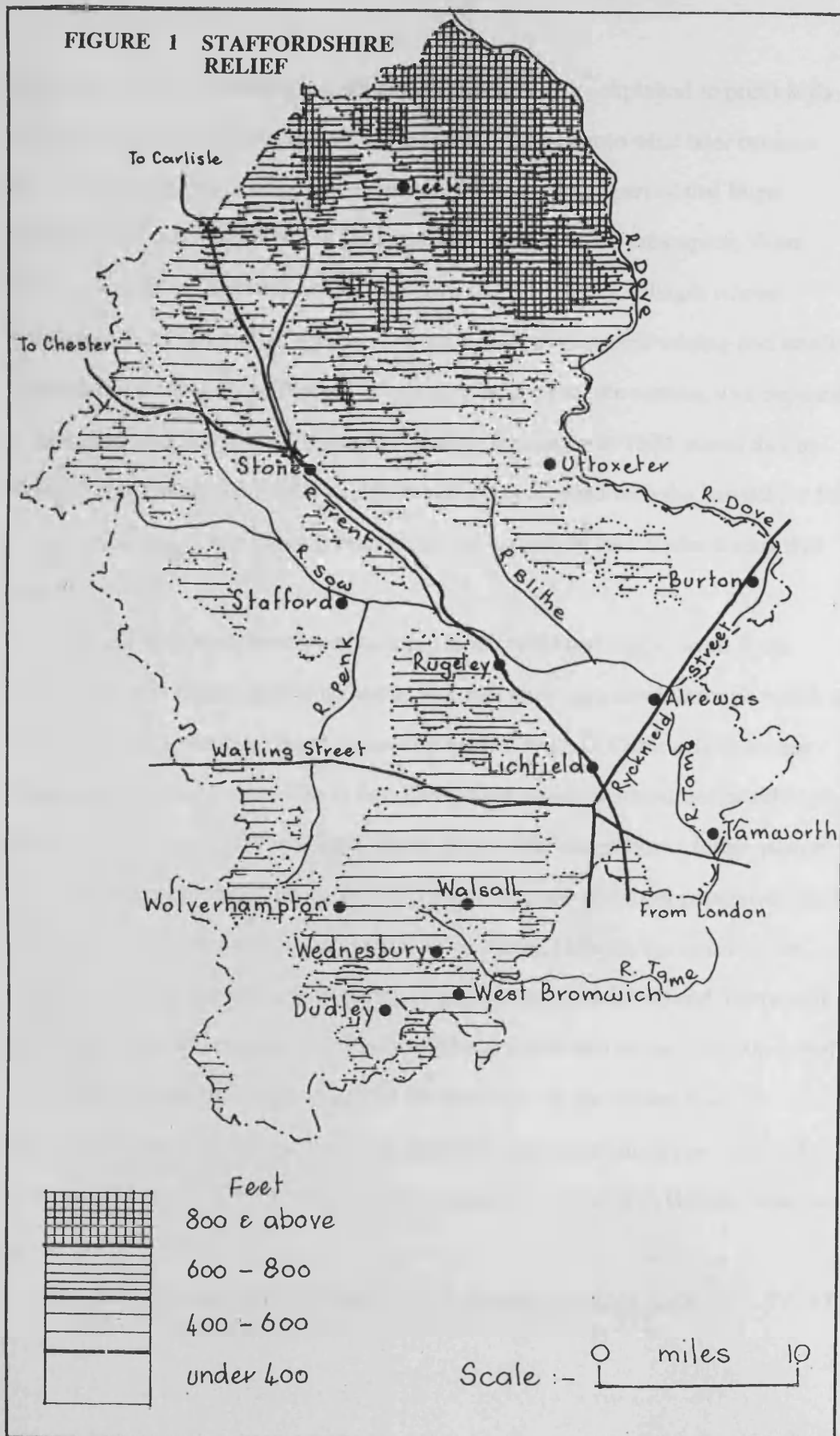
The county is 56 miles long and 38 miles broad at its greatest extent. Despite its compact oval shape it is not a natural, physical unit but has three main regions, whose history has been influenced by the underlying geological formations and the physical configuration. Unnavigable rivers and large areas of forest, river-plains subject to flooding and in the north-east, moorland, made the county relatively isolated and hindered early economic development. Only from the mid-18th century did an improvement in communications and technological advances make it possible for the inhabitants to exploit the county's considerable endowment of mineral resources, and bring about an increase in population, estimated to have been about 120,000 in 1665.¹

Figure 1 shows the relief of the county. In the south the county forms part of the South Staffordshire Plateau, mostly between 400 and 600 feet above sea-level, with a large wedge-shaped Carboniferous uplift, 23 miles long by six miles wide. Coal was being dug on Cannock Chase as early as 1298,² but it was not until the

1 D. Palliser, The Staffordshire Landscape (1976), p. 114; A. Whiteman (ed.), The Compton Census of 1676: a Critical Edition (1986), p. cxi, offers three different 'calculated totals' for the year 1676, based both on that return and on varying estimates of the numbers of persons under 16, the highest total being 114,973, and a 'revised total', based on baptism and marriage estimates, of 124,169.

2 M. W. Greenslade and D.G. Stuart, A History of Staffordshire (1965; 3rd edn, Phillimore, 1998), p. 19.

**FIGURE 1 STAFFORDSHIRE
RELIEF**



nineteenth century that the underlying coal-measures were exploited to provide the basis of the industrial development which turned the area into what later became known as the Black Country. The towns which later formed part of that huge industrialised conurbation which included Wednesbury, Wolverhampton, West Bromwich and Dudley, were, in the mid-seventeenth century, villages whose inhabitants lived mostly by farming eked out by a little part-time mining and small-scale manufacturing. Even Walsall, the most urbanised of the centres, was dependent on agriculture : a petition to the justices at quarter sessions in 1600 stated that in Walsall, time out of mind, local spurriers had always helped with the harvest for four or six weeks and agreed among themselves not to work at their trades during that period.³

In the middle of the county, running in a broad band east to west, is the Central Lowland region, generally about 350 feet above sea-level, through which the rivers produced an alluvial flood-plain. The name 'Trent', of Celtic origin, means 'trespasser', signifying a liability to flood. Flooding made communications difficult, in winter and spring sometimes making travel impossible but produced fertile pasture lands, and helped to make the region the most prosperous and most populated area in the county in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries. Here, in the centre of the county, were sited the towns of Stafford, Rugeley, Stone, Lichfield and Tamworth. The River Dove, which joins the Trent near Burton, was also prone to flooding and produced rich pastures which supported the economy of the market town of Uttoxeter. Below Nottingham, the Trent had been used for centuries as a navigable waterway and by 1712 the Trent Navigation had been extended to Burton. Upstream,

3 S. A. H. Burne, (ed.) The Staffordshire Quarter Sessions Rolls, Vol. IV. 1598-1602, William Salt Archaeological Society (1936), p. 232.

however, from that town there was no river traffic. Not until the nineteenth century did the vale of Trent, through which the Trent and Mersey Canal also flows, act as a means of communication, not merely for commerce, but for the spread of religion : from its original home in Mow Cop, near the source of the Trent, Primitive Methodism spread along the lower Trent valley as far as Hull. ⁴

The north-east region of Staffordshire is an extension of the Pennine Chain. It consists of a series of plateaux running in a south-easterly direction at a height of about 800 feet above sea-level but rising at Oliver Hill to 1,684 feet. A nearby village, Flash, claims to be the highest in England. The underlying rocks are Carboniferous and towards the Shropshire and Cheshire borders, extensive faulting made accessible the Potteries and the Cheadle coalfields, which provided the basis for the rapid development of the pottery industry from the later eighteenth century. In the Moorlands area, documented by this name since 1329, ⁵ the altitude makes for long, harsh and cold winters and a generally difficult environment and at the beginning of the seventeenth century a local rhyme about a village ran : 'Wootton under Wever, where God came never'. ⁶ The area was only thinly inhabited, the inhabitants engaging mostly in sheep and cattle rearing and dairy farming. Leek, with a relatively large population for mid-seventeenth century Staffordshire of about 2,000, was the main market town in the area. Wednesday was market day, when farmers came to the town to buy and sell their animals and trade in other goods, taking advantage of the occasion to exchange news and gossip before returning to their isolated upland farms.

4 J. D. Gay, The Geography of Religion in England (1971), p. 150, and Map 39 on p.305 shows the distribution of the movement in 1851.

5 M. W. Greenslade and N. J. Tringham, 'Leek', in M. W. Greenslade (ed.), Victoria County History of Staffordshire, IV (1996), p. 78.

6 Quoted in Greenslade and Stuart, Staffordshire, p. 17.

The itineraries of early Quaker travelling preachers nearly always included market towns, as these provided a main channel by which news of their radical religious opinions could be propagated and an audience quickly assembled.

Until the coming of the Trent and Mersey Canal, opened in 1777, the expansion of the pottery industry in the villages in the north-west of the county, was hampered by the necessity to use packhorses to transport the bulky raw materials into, and the manufactured articles out from, the area. Packhorse routes, some used to transport salt from Cheshire through the county from very early times, were still in use for this purpose in 1749. In that year a lawsuit showed the whole route of one such saltway running across the Moorlands north of Leek. It included a steep ascent up to the village of Morridge, possibly used by Quakers in that village on their visits to Leek.⁷ The remote and relatively inaccessible location added to their physical difficulties but also afforded a degree of isolation useful in times of persecution.

Further south in the county an old droveway used for driving Welsh cattle into the midlands, known as the Old Chester Road, followed part of the course of the former Roman road, Watling Street. By the eighteenth century it was much used by carts and carriages, and provided an alternative, for London and Chester coaches, to the route, now the A51, which followed the Trent valley. Another Roman road, Ryknild Street, which also followed the Trent valley after it turned north-east, was still used as an important link between Lichfield and Burton.

Travelling in Staffordshire, as in the rest of the country, in the mid- and later seventeenth century was possible, but it was tedious, arduous and sometimes

⁷ S. A. H. Burne, 'Roads', in M.W.Greenslade and J.G. Jenkins (eds), VCH Staffordshire, II (1967), pp. 278-9.

dangerous. Even that hardened traveller, Celia Fiennes, noted that near Penkridge the miles were long and the ways so bad that coaches required more horses than usual.⁸ After 1555 by law the maintenance of roads became the responsibility of the parishes through which they passed, a system as inefficient as it was unfair, because parishes had to support the cost of maintaining roads used by through traffic, and were often unable and unwilling to do so. Thus as late as 1662 at Darlaston, near Stone, the bridge carrying the main road over the Trent, was wide enough only for horses, and carriages had to ford the river, a passage always difficult and in times of flood, hazardous.⁹ Quakers in Staffordshire usually had to travel to their meetings for worship further than members of other religious denominations, and by the 1670s when the movement had become organised, they regularly undertook long journeys to attend their monthly and quarterly business meetings. The minute books occasionally refer to meetings cancelled because of weather conditions or to Friends unable to attend because of floods.¹⁰ If the venue was within walking distance this presented less difficulty than the longer journeys, which had to be undertaken on horseback. When eventually meeting houses were acquired, the stabling of horses was an important feature of their provision. Friends coming from a distance were probably accommodated overnight by their fellow members. What is remarkable, in view of the time required and the length of the journey, was the readiness of Friends to attend the Yearly Meetings of the Society in London, a trip requiring relays of horses or travel by coach over poor roads. Physical fortitude as well as religious conviction was a necessary attribute of the early Quakers in Staffordshire.

The county had been created, as a shire centred on Stafford, in the later tenth

8 C. Morris (ed.), *The Journeys of Celia Fiennes* (1968), p. 168.

9 Greenslade and Stuart, *Staffordshire*, p. 110.

10 Staffordshire Quarterly Meeting Minute Book 1672-1743, 5/5/1736.

or earlier eleventh century during the drive against the Danes. The original county was slightly larger than it is today and there was some early readjustment of the boundaries. The parish of Dudley was an enclave within Worcestershire and Dudley Friends were from the outset attached to Worcester Monthly Meeting. Tamworth provided another anomalous situation. Administratively, until 1889, it was divided into two parts, one in Staffordshire, the other in Warwickshire, and this was also reflected in Quaker organisation, some Friends being attached to Stafford and some to Warwick Monthly Meeting. Stafford was the county town where county local government administration was centred, the county justices held their quarter sessions, and the elections for two knights of the shire to sit in Parliament, as well as two members for the borough itself, took place. The inhabitants of the town consequently included a substantial number of professional people in addition to the normal complement of farmers, artisans, shopkeepers and unskilled labourers found in a rural market town. The size, importance and central location of Stafford within the county led to its becoming one of the monthly meetings of the Friends in the county, and the venue of most of their quarterly meetings for business. The first documented names of Quakers in the county are also associated with Stafford and as early as 1677 Quarterly Meeting appointed two local Friends to monitor the meetings of the assize courts for indictments of Quakers. ¹¹

The first itinerant Quaker preachers in the county in the early 1650s were generally successful in all regions of the county, including the villages of the southern region with their embryonic industrial elements, the more densely inhabited and wealthier central regions of the county and in the sparsely-populated and bleaker Moorlands. The reasons for this must now be considered.

11 Q.M.M.B. 8/8/1677.

(ii) The National Political Framework

Quakerism was born during the revolutionary decades of the 1640s and 1650s. In this period a growing rivalry and mutual mistrust between the Stuart monarchy and parliament came to a violent climax in war. The Civil War was in essence a political rebellion rather than the result of a social revolution, the outcome of a split in the governing class, when a large number of peers and gentry attempted to force a policy of moderate political and constitutional reform on the monarchy. There were, however, other deep-seated social changes in progress which were major contributory factors in the situation and without which the political conflict might not have escalated into war. Students of the period are not unanimous in their analysis of these changes or in the relative importance they assign to them as providing the social origins of the English Revolution generally rather than the immediate causes or catalysts of the Civil War. Hill in 1940 produced a Marxist explanation of the period, documenting a greater background of class hostility and economic hardship than earlier historians had acknowledged.¹² Tawney suggested, first in 1941, and then in subsequent articles, that the origins of conflict lay in the rise of a new class of gentry attempting to force its way into the political structure of the nation.¹³ Trevor-Roper in 1953 argued that courtiers, lawyers and monopolists formed a new class of rising gentry and that the older, smaller gentry, who were declining, came to lead the assault on, and finally to overthrow, the monarchy.¹⁴ Stone in 1965 postulated the idea that a decline in the power, authority and prestige of the aristocracy left both king and

12 C. Hill, The English Revolution (1940), and The World Turned Upside Down (1972; Penguin edn 1991).

13 R. H. Tawney, 'Harrington's Interpretation of his Age', Proceedings of the British Academy, 27 (1941), and 'The Rise of the Gentry, 1558-1640', Economic History Review, 11 (1941).

14 H. Trevor-Roper, 'The Gentry, 1540 - 1640', Economic History Review, Supplement 1, 1953.

church vulnerable when they began to implement unpopular policies and that this produced fault-lines in the traditional socio-political structure, leading to a general instability.¹⁵ In the English Revolution of the 1640s the earlier bonds of kinship, clientage and family loyalty had been loosened and Stone found that one aristocratic family in seven was divided, father against child or brother against brother.¹⁶ Other studies have emphasised the political conflict between local power elites and the central government and the religious conflict between puritans and Anglicans.¹⁷ Stone emphasises, however, that the pre-conditions that make revolution possible must be distinguished from the triggers, the personal decisions and sequence of accidental events which set off the revolutionary outbreak.¹⁸ Whatever the remoter origins or more immediate causes of the war, the consequences were momentous: the two middle decades of the century produced the greatest upheaval in English history: in those twenty years, the world, to use the title of Hill's book, was turned upside down. The episcopacy was abolished, the New Model Army exercised effective power for some years, the king was executed and a republic established, the House of Lords was abolished, and Parliament itself purged. In addition the Civil War provided the opportunity for the manifestation of radical social reformist movements and for the emergence of numerous religious sects. These included millenarians seeking a transformation of both church and state prior, as they believed, to the imminent second coming of Christ to earth. Anything seemed possible, argues Hill, at a time when both the values of the old hierarchical society and the new values of 'the protestant ethic' were being called in question.¹⁹ Early Quakerism exploited the

15 L. Stone, The Crisis of the Aristocracy 1558-1641 (Oxford, 1965).

16 L. Stone, The Family, Sex and Marriage (1977; Pelican edn 1979), p. 96.

17 A. Everitt, Change in the Provinces: the Seventeenth Century (Leicester, 1969).

18 L. Stone, The Causes of the English Revolution (1972), p. 37.

19 Hill, World Turned Upside Down, p. 15.

feeling of excitement engendered by the prospect of social, political and religious revolution in these tumultuous times. Such a national transformation was not, however, to materialise. Quite soon features of the old order returned: the Levelling movement was crushed, Cromwell came to power as Protector and became, in effect, king, while new Presbyter proved to be but old priest writ large. The millenarian sects, including the Quakers, were forced to look for the second coming of Christ within themselves rather than in society. When Cromwell died the army, under Monk, took the lead in restoring the Stuart monarchy and re-establishing the old order of things.

The history of Staffordshire during this period does not provide much evidence in support of any particular thesis to explain the immediate political causes of the outbreak of the civil war. There is little evidence of discontent at royal policies: Sir Walter Bagot in 1616 complained that the glass monopoly granted by the king to Sir Robert Mansell had driven his own glass works in Bagots Wood, near Abbots Bromly, out of business.²⁰ In 1636 the mayor and burgesses of Walsall protested against the levying of ship money,²¹ and in 1640 the Grand Jury at Quarter Sessions complained that the county had been overcharged on this account.²² But discontent at royal policies was not the same as armed rebellion, and when, in 1642, it came to the arbitrament of war, allegiances in Staffordshire were divided. No clear line based on social status, economic interest or family connection can be drawn between royalists and parliamentarians in the county. There was no one dominant, aristocratic family in the county, like the Cavendishes in neighbouring Derbyshire who took the lead

20 D. A. Johnson and D. G. Vaisey (eds), Staffordshire and the Great Rebellion, (Stafford, 1964), p. 16.

21 Greenslade and Stuart, Staffordshire, p. 71.

22 Johnson and Vaisey, Staffordshire, pp.19-20.

endeavoured to swing the whole county behind the king or parliament.²³ In general the Staffordshire nobility supported the king. Lord Paget of Beaudesert had started as a parliamentarian but later went over to the royalist cause 'out of conscience', as he explained in a letter to the House of Lords, and formed a regiment at his own expense which fought at Edgehill.²⁴ An exception to aristocratic support for the king was Robert Devereux, 3rd Earl of Essex, whose estates were at Chartley, between Uttoxeter and Stafford, who became parliamentary commander - in- chief. He was really a Londoner, however, and his influence in Staffordshire was not especially strong. Of the leading gentry in the county Sir Hervey Bagot, despite his father's complaints about royal monopolists, supported the king, and his estates at Blithfield were later confiscated by the parliamentary committee at Stafford. Sir Edward Littleton, of Pillaton Hall, a knight of the shire, who had received a commission from the king at the outbreak of the war, nevertheless played an important part in raising money to support the parliamentary cause but Sir Walter Wrotesley of Wrotesley, near Wolverhampton, was only a rather half-hearted supporter of the king. A few gentry families, including the Biddulphs, provided supporters for both parties.

There are a few examples in Staffordshire of 'rising gentry' who supported the parliamentary cause. Among these was Henry Stone of Walsall, a successful merchant, who was an enthusiastic parliamentarian and served on the Committee at Stafford. Although his claim to gentility was rejected by the heralds after the Restoration, he was representative of the members of that committee, which was composed mostly of merchants just moving into the gentry class and who developed close links with the parliamentary party. To postulate such a socio- economic basis as

23 A. Fletcher, The Outbreak of the English Civil War (1981; paperback edn, with corrections, 1985), p. 367.

24 D. H. Pennington and I. A. Roots, The Committee at Stafford 1643-1645 (Manchester, 1957, also published as Staffordshire Record Society, 4th series, vol. 1), p. xvii.

the main factor in support in Staffordshire for the parliamentary cause would, however, push conclusions derived from the evidence too far, and recent research has emphasised that there was no simple, pre-conceived alignment in the quarrel. There had been no rush in Staffordshire to take sides when war broke out in August 1642, although a few royalist activists began to fortify their houses and Dudley Castle and Lichfield Close were garrisoned for the king. Even after the battle of Edgehill had been fought, the sheriff, justices and grand jury at Stafford quarter sessions proclaimed that the forces that they were planning to raise were to suppress 'riots and unlawful assemblies' and the officers they appointed to command the county forces included men who later fought for different sides. Pennington, in the main research article so far published on this topic, argues that it was outside pressure and the exigencies of war that forced most men of influence, wealth or title in Staffordshire, even though they were pulled in different directions by political, economic or religious inclination, to support king or parliament.²⁵

At a lower social level most of the commoners who joined royalist or parliamentary forces were prompted to do so by the example or persuasion of local magnates and lords of the manor. Walter Kinnersley, of Loxley, near Uttoxeter, took four local men with him into the ranks of the parliamentary army.²⁶ Only in the Leek and Moorlands area is there an apparent example of spontaneous support among the common people for the parliamentary cause. In February 1643 a body of Moorlanders, led by a person of comparatively humble quality known as the 'Grand Juryman' and armed with birding guns, clubs and scythes, marched against the royalist garrison in Stafford, though without success.²⁷

25 D. H. Pennington, 'County and Country: Staffordshire in Civil War Politics, 1640-44', North Staffordshire Journal of Field Studies, 6 (Keele 1966), pp. 12-24.

26 Greenslade and Stuart, Staffordshire, p. 72.

27 Pennington and Roots, Committee at Stafford, p. lxii.

Religious conviction played some part in Staffordshire in choosing between king and parliament, in so far as there was the possibility of choice. Catholic families were inclined to support the king, who, with his wife Henrietta Maria, offered them more possibility of relief from the recusancy laws. Among Staffordshire Catholics who joined the royal army were the Giffards of Chillington and Colonel Lane of Betley, whose daughter, Jane, helped Charles II to escape after the battle of Worcester in 1651. Similarly, there are a few examples of Presbyterian gentlemen who supported parliament. Among these was Edward Leigh, of Rushall, who became a colonel and was a member of the Committee at Stafford which controlled much of the county on behalf of parliament. The Leigh family were, too, divided and Sir Thomas Leigh, of Stoneleigh, supported the king. On puritan attitudes in general over the whole country recent research is tending to argue that mainstream puritanism in the earlier seventeenth century was conservative in character and that it was Archbishop Laud's policies that alienated moderate puritans.²⁸ Puritanism, nevertheless, by its nature contained the potential for the challenge to secular authority and it gradually became the ideology of opposition to the Court. In Staffordshire as the war continued and economic and social disruption became more widespread so did the more militant aspects of puritanism develop.

Although the county was the scene of only one minor battle, at Hopton Heath, near Stafford, in 1643, it was an area of some strategic importance, lying between strongly held royalist and parliamentary regions, and was a number of times on the line of march of the royal army. In September 1642 royalist forces en route to Shrewsbury passed through Uttoxeter, where Prince Rupert burnt the houses of some who refused to join his army. In July 1643 Queen Henrietta Maria, bringing

28 R. Ashton, The English Civil War : Conservatism and Revolution 1603 -1649 (1978; Orion Books edn 1997), p. 101 and 110.

reinforcements to the king from the north, wrote from Walsall that her soldiers were weary with the bundles of plunder they were carrying. The king's army marched through the county en route to and from Chester, in the summer of 1645. Burton upon Trent changed hands half a dozen times as competing armies fought for the control of the town's strategically important bridge over the river Trent. Pennington states that the county's impoverishment brought by the disruption of trade and heavy taxation was not a permanent disaster,²⁹ but Burton suffered especially, more than many other Midlands towns, its staple industry, cloth manufacture, being virtually wiped out.³⁰

The county was peppered with rival garrisons which levied taxes on the inhabitants of the localities they controlled. Some areas had to pay twice over when the garrisons changed hands.³¹ Lichfield, which was a royalist stronghold for much of the war, was particularly affected and the cathedral suffered much damage. In May 1646, despite the king's instructions to capitulate, the garrison continued to fight on. The parliamentary commander, Sir William Brereton bombarded the cathedral and the central spire was destroyed. In his Journal George Fox recorded his reactions when he first saw the town in 1651.³² The Civil War and its consequences probably stimulated the growth of protestant dissent in Staffordshire, but it had already been manifesting itself since the early years of the seventeenth century.

(iii) The National Religious Background

Some students of the period have seen the religious upheaval of the middle decades of the seventeenth century as the real English Reformation, which had been

29 Pennington, 'County and Country', pp. 22 -3.

30 C. Owen, Burton upon Trent (Derby, 1994), pp. 50 -1.

31 Pennington and Roots, The Committee at Stafford, p. xxxi.

32 See Chapter 2 of this study.

delayed for over a hundred years. The changes in the Church of England dating from the 1530s, had been government-led, inaugurated by Henry VIII for his own reasons, political, financial and marital and intended as a break with the authority of the pope rather than as a repudiation of Catholic doctrine. After the swing to Protestantism in Edward VI's reign and the reaction in Mary's, came the Elizabethan compromise settlement. This corrected the worst abuses of the Roman Catholic church, and although the new prayer book embodied the essential doctrines of Protestantism it was moderate in tone and ambiguous in wording, and sufficiently Catholic in liturgy not to outstrip the pace of popularly - accepted change. Continuity within the old church was maintained by the substitution of the monarch for the pope as head of the church, an episcopacy and similar forms of clerical vestments. As before, there was no official toleration of dissent from the established theology and approved liturgical practice. The Reformation passed, therefore, in England in the mid sixteenth century, without any accompanying serious social or political ferment, and without that underlying dynamic of popular feeling that had provided Protestantism on the continent of Europe with its driving force. No charismatic national prophets emerged in England to lead the reforming movement. The situation did not last. In the later years of Elizabeth's reign and throughout the reigns of James I and Charles I protestant discontent grew, and the Civil War provided the opportunity for a long-delayed religious revival. The older dissenting sects, freed from official persecution at the hands of the ecclesiastical establishment, expanded vigorously. At the same time came an extraordinary upsurge of religious emotion, which manifested itself in the emergence of scores of sects, one of which was Quakerism.

The war had served to loosen further the traditional bonds of loyalty and

obedience to established authority, weakened by decades of political dissension. The execution of the king in 1649 was a traumatic event which shook the deferential society to its foundations. The challenge to the concept of the Divine Right of Kings was the product of a process of political evolution, but the nerve needed to kill the anointed secular representative of God could only have been sustained by people already possessed of, or searching for, an equally strong religious certainty. Thomas Harrison, of Newcastle under Lyme, in Staffordshire, one of the regicides, asserted at his trial in 1660 that what he had done had been done openly, 'in the fear of the Lord', and when his judges indignantly demanded 'Will you make God the author of your treasons and your murder?' they were in a sense correct. Strong in the conviction of their own moral rightness Protestant extremists dominated the Civil War and Commonwealth period. The organisation and power of the Church of England went into eclipse: the episcopacy was abolished, the church itself remodelled along Presbyterian lines and although in 1660 the Anglican church was restored with the monarchy, it never completely regained its former authority and independence of power.

Most of the sects which emerged in this period of turmoil were tinged with, and some pervaded by, the prevailing puritanism of the time, and this was true of the Quakers. Attempts to define puritanism and to assess its importance in the social, political and religious history of the period have become something of an academic industry. Puritanism had first emerged in Elizabethan England and was based originally on the sense of dissatisfaction felt by many with the half-way house of the Elizabethan settlement. Puritans desired to purify further the Church of England of its supposedly unscriptural forms, including the use of vestments, surplices, organs, the sign of the cross, ecclesiastical courts and hierarchies and other residues of Roman

Catholicism. It has been argued by Collinson, however, that behind the Elizabethan context of the term, in which puritanism could be defined merely as a demand for further, moderate reform of church doctrines and practice, there was a body of religious and moral values which had succeeded in converting much of English society in the earlier seventeenth century.³³ The Arminian movement, headed by Archbishop Laud, represented a school of theology more liberal than that of the strict determinism and predestinarianism of Calvinism, and this, it is suggested, provoked a revival of a puritanism with which was associated a radical ideology. It was this explosive compound of radicalism and religious fervour that prompted many recruits from the lower and middling classes to support parliament and at the same time terrified many of the nobility and gentry into support for the royalist cause.

The 'kill-joy' stereotype of puritanism still lingers to some extent but in the seventeenth century puritanism was a complex of opinions embracing widely differing and, indeed, wildly discrepant meanings. They ranged from a desire for a moderate reform of the established church to belief in a rigid doctrine of predestination and included numerous sects with apocalyptic views and expectations of a millennial rule of saints prior to a Second Coming of Christ and the Last Judgment. Many modern historians have focussed much research on the topic. Christopher Hill sees puritanism as an attempt to complete the work of the Reformation by giving the church a bourgeois-democratic character.³⁴ Recent scholarship tends to the view that the majority of early puritans were socially, politically and even religiously conservative, and were not set on a collision course with the monarchy and

33 P. Collinson, English Puritanism (1983), pp. 25 -39.

34 He developed these views in such works as Society and Puritanism in Pre-Revolutionary England (1969) and The World Turned Upside Down (1972).

episcopacy in general but with a particular king, Charles I and a particular archbishop, Laud.³⁵ Nevertheless most historians agree that it was religion that stimulated and fired revolution. Militant Protestantism gave a validation to rebellion at a time when politics and religion were inseparable and political issues were often phrased in religious terms. Some of the sects, especially the Baptists, were deeply politicised. One student has even argued that 'a Baptist apprenticeship was often an important stage in the making of a radical.'³⁶

The initial acceptance and the early spread of the Quaker movement may therefore be explained as a consequence of this combination of religion and radicalism. Many Quakers stopped paying their tithes at the same time as they were seeking for spiritual security or fresh conviction or religious illumination. The movement spread fast. It is impossible to arrive at any accurate total of the number of Quakers before 1661 but Braithwaite's estimate of 30,000 to 40,000 in England in that year is still broadly accepted.³⁷ The doctrines that Fox preached appealed to many already touched by puritan opinion, although there were differences between his message and that of most of the older puritan sects. Among these differences was the way in which the Bible was regarded. All puritans, including Quakers, accepted that the Bible was the word of God, but while most saw it as the sole source of authority, for Quakers it was the word of God as interpreted by man and they were prepared, when necessary, to re-interpret scripture according to the promptings of an 'Inward

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- 35 J. Spurr, Puritans and Puritanism (New York, 1992) provides a comprehensive survey of recent research while at the same time emphasising his own view that at the core of all puritan belief was the doctrine of a pre-destined elect of God.
- 36 B. Reay, 'Radicalism and Religion in the English Revolution : an Introduction', in J. F. McGregor and B. Reay (eds), Radical Religion in the English Revolution (Oxford 1984, paperback edn. 1986), p. 1.
- 37 W. C. Braithwaite, The Beginnings of Quakerism (1912; Cambridge edn 1981), p. 512. In a footnote there is a suggestion that there were upwards of 60,000.

Light of God' which was held to be within all men.

The origins of Quaker beliefs are still the subject of differences among historians of the movement. Rufus Jones linked Quakers with earlier groups, particularly Anabaptists, in his study of mysticism.³⁸ Later scholars including Henry J. Cadbury, who in 1981 edited the second edition of Braithwaite's The Beginnings of Quakerism and omitted Jones' introduction to the first edition, have questioned whether a close relationship did exist between Quakers and the Continental mystical sects. Nuttall also argued that the Quakers had an indigenous English puritan origin, seeing them as true Puritans who took their beliefs to a logical and desirable conclusion.³⁹ American historians continued the debate, and Durnbaugh argued that both Baptists and Quakers emerged from the same historical milieu and that to ignore the importance of cross-channel connections seems parochial.⁴⁰

There were sufficient similarities between the two sects for many contemporary commentators and critics to identify Quakers with Anabaptists. Both sects opposed the rite of infant baptism, the swearing of oaths, the payment of church tithes and, at least for later Quakers, military service. Both practised waiting in silence for the light of God within them to prompt to speech and decision. Anabaptists had first appeared on the Continent in the earlier sixteenth century, one of many groups which emerged at that time which sought to return to the primitive Christianity of the New Testament. The term Anabaptist, meaning re-baptism, was given to them by their opponents and clung to them, although their rejection of the rite of infant baptism was only one of their beliefs. It was based on their general conviction that all

38 R. M. Jones, Studies in Mystical Religion (1909), p. xxxviii.

39 G. F. Nuttall, The Holy Spirit in Puritan Faith and Experience (1946).

40 D. F. Durnbaugh, 'Baptists and Quakers - Left Wing Puritans', Quaker History 62, no. 2 (1973).

church sacraments were useless to the possession and experience of true religion, and they denied the saving power of baptismal water, categorising as pure superstition the assumption that before baptism a child was lost and was only saved by the action of a priest. They contended that no spiritual change could take place without voluntary choice. Finally, for Anabaptists as for Quakers, churches had no other function than to serve as places to meet for joint worship. The movement had spread rapidly in the Netherlands and neighbouring countries. In Munster in 1534 their pacifism turned to revolution, they seized control of the city and introduced a kind of communism and polygamy. It was soon savagely suppressed and the population put to the sword.⁴¹ Refugees are documented in England from 1534 and the movement became particularly strong in Kent. Their beliefs horrified the government and the Church of England and a royal proclamation of 1560 ordered Anabaptists to abjure the realm within 20 days on pain of imprisonment and loss of goods. The numbers of the sect diminished thereafter and it is suggested that it is unlikely that any organised Anabaptist movement survived into the seventeenth century.⁴²

The remnants of the movement may have merged with a native Lollardry to assume a radical puritan form during the English Revolution and become Baptists. Some modern American historians, however, are dubious about how far English Baptists derived from continental Anabaptism. Whatever the origins of the movement McGregor has demonstrated its general importance in the mid-seventeenth century. Baptists were the first to exploit the new freedom and cheapness of the press, they successfully evangelised in the New Model Army, and by 1660 had 250 churches, mostly in the south, the west and the Midlands.⁴³ The movement had earlier split into

41 N. Cohn, The Pursuit of the Millenium (1957), chapter 12 .

42 M. R. Watts, The Dissenters (Oxford, 1978), pp. 7-14.

43 J. F. McGregor, 'The Baptists : fount of all heresy', in McGregor and Reay, Radical Religion , pp. 25-63.

two groups. General Baptists rejected the idea of original sin and salvation only for the elect of God, believing in the salvability of all mankind, but Particular Baptists maintained the orthodox Calvinistic views on pre-destination. Both groups insisted on a congregational form of organisation, on the complete separation of church and state, both assigned wide functions to ordinary members, including lay-preaching, and both allowed women to serve as preachers and denounced tithes. They also practised total immersion, thereby earning themselves the nickname of 'Dippers'. The first General Baptist church is documented in 1612 and the first Particular Baptist church in 1616. The Civil War prompted an expansion of the movement and by 1644 there were up to 50 Particular Baptist congregations in the country. This expansion caused the authorities considerable alarm as it seemed to many to constitute a revival of Anabaptism with all its socially subversive doctrines.

Of all the dissenting Protestant sects Baptists exercised most influence on Quakerism. George Fox had been closely associated with the movement during his years of searching in the Midlands and London for a satisfying religious conviction, and indeed drew his first congregation from a 'shattered' Baptist group in Mansfield.⁴⁴ Apart from the doctrinal similarities of the two movements Quakers subsequently adopted a number of Baptist practices : Baptist 'messengers of the Church' to some extent served as model for Quaker itinerant preachers and Quakers followed their example of distributing relief to necessitous followers. Despite or perhaps because of these links and similarities the two movements were in deep competition as evangelistic movements. Baptists became the chief rivals of early Quakerism and in his Journal Fox frequently refers to them in depreciatory terms.

The Family of Love, or Familists, was another sect that may have influenced early Quakers and provided them with a few recruits. They too had originated on the

Continent and reached England in the middle of the sixteenth century. They rejected oath-taking, war and capital punishment and practised waiting in silence for an inner prompting before they spoke. Their founder, Henry Nicholas, from Munster, believed that his was the only true church and that his movement was God's latest revelation. According to some seventeenthth century writers they held antinomian views, arguing that by reason of the divine spirit within them they were above the moral law and could not suffer the consequences of sin. While they might transgress in the flesh, they believed, they were of the elect and their behaviour was thus irrelevant to the issue of their salvation.⁴⁵ Contrary to popular report, however, Familists had a lofty conception of personal morality, insisting on spiritualising this life rather than dogmatising about the next.⁴⁶ Again the similarities of the sect with Quakerism were many. They included waiting in silence, prescribing a simplicity of language, marriage only within their own membership, to be achieved by simple declaration before the congregation, the relief of their own poor, the belief that it is only with the spirit of God within that one can understand the scriptures, and an itinerating ministry. After an underground existence in the later years of Elizabeth's reign, the sect re-emerged in James I's reign and by 1627 was sufficiently numerous in London to be the subject of an attack in a sermon preached at St. Paul's. Their doctrines were stated to include the contention that every man could be inspired by light and illumination as much as Paul or any of the prophets had been, and that this inward revelation was more important than the scriptures. By 1648 there were numerous Familists in gaol, but despite this the sect had spread, although thinly, through twelve counties in England.⁴⁷ They were sometimes identified by contemporaries as Quakers and as late

45 L.F. Solt, Saints in Arms (1959), pp. 25-38, discusses their beliefs.

46 Jones, Studies in Mystical Religion, p. 447 ; A. Hamilton, The Family of Love (Cambridge, 1981), does not differ radically from Jones in his conclusions.

47 Braithwaite, Beginnings, p. 24.

as 1687 John Evelyn described them as 'refined Quakers'. Rufus Jones argued that Quakerism absorbed all that was valuable in the movement and that some Familists became Quakers or drifted into the ranks of Seekers or Ranters, two more of the movements which formed part of the religious background to Quakerism.⁴⁸

The Seekers are better defined as a movement or tendency of thought than as a sect, and McGregor points out that there is no one clear statement of Seeker belief.⁴⁹ Some of their ideas were shared by many who were dissatisfied either with the Church of England, like William Erbery, an army chaplain,⁵⁰ or with the rigid Presbyterianism that came to dominate in governmental authority during the Civil War and Commonwealth. Seekers were often found among those who nominally remained Anglicans and among the numerous religious sects. As their name implies Seekers were driven to a spiritual quest for a conviction that neither the beliefs nor outward forms and ceremonies of existing churches could satisfy. They read the scriptures and waited in prayer for further revelation from God, believing that no true church existed in what was at present an age of apostasy. They maintained that in time there would be a restoration of the church of the New Testament, brought by an apostle who would give visible demonstration, perhaps by the performance of miracles, of being sent by God. In the meantime there was nothing to do but wait. The term Seekers is first found in English in 1617.⁵¹ It came into public notoriety in 1646 with the publication of Gangraena, a hostile catalogue of the numerous contemporary sects and their beliefs.⁵² There is evidence that Fox felt an affinity with Seekers, that

48 Jones, Studies in Mystical Religion, pp. 447-448.

49 J. F. McGregor, 'Seekers and Ranters', in McGregor and Reay, Radical Religion, pp. 122

50 Hill, World Turned Upside Down, pp. 192-4.

51 Braithwaite, Beginnings, p. 25.

52 T. Edwards, Gangraena (1646), reprinted by The Rota, Exeter, 1977), Vol. 1, pp. 28-9.

they were a formative influence on his beliefs and that the movement provided some of the early Quaker itinerant preachers and numerous members. The first, strong, group of Friends at Balby, near Doncaster, derived from a Seeker community and the Quaker movement in the north centred originally on the group of Seekers at Preston Patrick in Westmorland who had first received Fox and his message in the summer of 1652. Ex-Seekers then helped in the expansion of Quakerism south. Braithwaite argues that it was the Seekers who had prepared the way for Quakerism in those areas where it was first readily planted.⁵³ McGregor disputes this thesis on the grounds that the attribution of Seeker was given by Quakers themselves in spiritual autobiographies or in testimonials written decades later, and which followed a conventional pattern of so describing their lives. He suggests that there was no sect of Seekers in revolutionary England, although there were many alienated individuals who could find no solace in contemporary churches or sects. He categorises them as lost souls 'anticipating wondrous events in the last few days, vulnerable to the charisma of a crackpot messiah or the solipsism of the divine inner light.'⁵⁴ There is no documentation of the use of the term in Staffordshire but one of the early Quaker itinerant preachers in the county was Thomas Taylor, classified by Braithwaite as a Seeker, who settled in the county in Stafford.⁵⁵

Not all Seekers became Quakers. Some became Ranters, a sect which shared with Quakers, a belief in an inward light but who, unlike Quakers, held to a rigid interpretation of the Calvinistic doctrine of predestination. Jones suggests that the sect 'fell into a vague pantheism which blurred distinctions between good and evil.'⁵⁶

53 J. F. McGregor, 'Seekers and Ranters', p. 129.

54 Braithwaite, Beginnings, p. 27.

55 Ibid., p. 80. See also Chapter 9 and biographical appendix.

56 Jones, Studies in Mystical Religion, p. 469.

They represented, among the new religious societies of the time, the most extreme form of revolt against authority, claiming religious sanction for all their practices. Most contemporary references to the sect, including those by Quaker preachers and writers, are critical and hostile. Their public image was one of adultery, fornication, drunkenness and blasphemy: Ingle, in his recent biography of Fox, cites some contemporary reports of spectacular manifestations of their behaviour.⁵⁷ In his Journal Fox makes numerous references to the sect, and he and other itinerant Quaker preachers encountered them a number of times in Staffordshire. One of the Quaker preachers, Richard Hickock, met a group of Ranters in Leek, and later wrote a pamphlet in which he stated that they held that 'nothing is sin if a man does not himself count it as sin'.⁵⁸ Although a few Ranter pamphlets appeared in 1650 there is little evidence of any sustained Ranter organisation.⁵⁹ They had no one leader although the movement produced a number of local prophets and messiahs, some of whom, together with their followers, were prosecuted under the flexible provisions of the Blasphemy Act of 1650. Ranter ideas were pervasive, and other sects, including the Muggletonians, were influenced by them.⁶⁰ McGregor, however, disputes the idea that the Quakers absorbed many Ranters into their movement, and argues that Fox and some of his colleagues had reason to fear that the antinomianism associated with the Ranters would affect their own movement. In his Journal Fox also frequently uses the term 'Ranter' to denigrate his opponents within Quakerism. The number of Ranters in the country generally, argues McGregor, was probably never as many as hostile observers suggested.⁶¹

57 H. Larry Ingle, First Among Friends (Oxford, 1994), p. 55.

58 Braithwaite, Beginnings, p. 392.

59 McGregor, 'Seekers and Ranters', p. 131.

60 C. Hill, B. Reay and W. Lamont, The World of the Muggletonians (1983), provide a full discussion of this sect.

61 McGregor, 'Seekers and Ranters', pp. 135 -9.

Millenarianism has a long history. In Christian Europe it found scriptural proof in the prophecies in the Book of Daniel and in the Book of Revelation. Numerous sects, including the Anabaptists, emerged in the sixteenth century inspired by a conviction of the imminent establishment of the rule of the saints to last for a thousand years, or for some shorter period, prior to the return of Christ to earth and a last judgement which would distinguish between the elect of God and those who were not to be saved. These ideas circulated in Elizabethan England, when many saw England as the elect nation destined to defeat the powers of darkness. They smouldered underground during the early Stuart period, then exploded when the Civil War broke out. The Catholic character of the Court and the Laudian reforms in the Church made it easy to identify the royalist cause with the papal Antichrist, and as Capp suggests in his definitive study of the Fifth Monarchy Men, the best known and most militant of the millenarian sects, that puritan preachers helped to transform the Civil War into a crusade.⁶² The execution of Charles I appeared to many as the beginning of the rule of the saints, and they were at first confident that the Rump of the Long Parliament, left after Pride's Purge of 1648, and which consisted mostly of members of the Independent sects, would begin to set up Christ's kingdom. The Rump abolished the House of Lords and the monarchy but had achieved little else when in 1653 it was dismissed by Cromwell. Its successor, the Barebones Parliament, most of whose members had been nominated by Cromwell and the army, was almost entirely composed of Independents and included 12 Fifth Monarchy Men, but Barebones, too, had done little when at the end of 1653 it surrendered its powers to Cromwell, and thereafter the Fifth Monarchy Men went into permanent

62 B. S. Capp, The Fifth Monarchy Men (1972), p. 229.

opposition to the Protector. The movement had emerged, argues Capp, as a reaction to fading rather than to rising expectations .⁶³ Fifth Monarchists formed a separate group only when it became apparent that the existing political authorities would not begin the inauguration of the rule of the saints. Capp dismisses most contemporary estimates of the numbers of Fifth Monarchists as speculative, and suggests it was an elitist movement with never more than 10,000 members. Its influence, however, was greater than its numbers suggest. The movement was essentially an urban and artisan phenomenon, its appeal relying on expectation of a social revolution and a redistribution of property. The movement was dominated by London, where there were 29 Fifth Monarchist groups compared to a total of 43 in the rest of the country. Their religious beliefs and practices were not much different from other 'gathered' churches, their members being drawn mainly from Baptists and Congregationalists, and they had deep internal divisions over such issues as infant baptism and predestination. After the Restoration there was a despairing attempt to overthrow the government in Venner's Rising in London in 1661, which had as its rallying cry 'King Jesus and the heads upon the gate'. The rising was easily crushed and the leadership was destroyed or scattered. A few Fifth Monarchist sectaries lingered here and there until the 1680s and thereafter the movement disappeared.

There were some similarities of behaviour and belief between Fifth Monarchy Men and Quakers: both objected to oath-taking, avoided the use of the pagan names of months and days of the week and both condemned antinomianism. A few Fifth Monarchy Men later became Quakers, but generally relations between the two movements were hostile, and Fox called them 'none of Christ's servants but the

63 Ibid., p. 58.

beast's and whore's.' ⁶⁴

It was from this maelstrom of political and social upheaval and religious diversity, difference and dispute that the Quaker movement emerged, born with Fox in the Midlands but deriving its earliest strength from the northern counties especially Yorkshire and Westmorland. It achieved spectacular results, and its numbers, counting men, women and children, may have reached, by 1660, as many as 60,000. It must have seemed to contemporaries, as one modern scholar has suggested, that the whole of England would turn Quaker. ⁶⁵ It was not in general an urban movement, although there were strong centres in London and Bristol. Every county was in some degree affected, some much more than others. The social origins of early Quakers have also been examined in a number of studies, and the general conclusion has been reached that, although there was some regional variation, in the main the membership was drawn from wholesale traders, artisans, yeomen and husbandmen, mostly of a 'middling sort of people' who were literate or less illiterate than most, with a varying minority of the labouring poor and a very small sprinkling of gentry. ⁶⁶ The argument that the earliest convincements came from levels of society above that of the labouring poor must not, however, be pushed to an extreme: Spufford has found evidence in Baptist records in Cambridgeshire that suggests that members of the rural labouring classes, including women, had come to Quaker beliefs, or to a position approximating to these, before the Quaker preachers arrived. ⁶⁷

64 G. Fox The Journal of George Fox (ed. J. L. Nickalls, Cambridge, 1952), p. 420.

65 H. Barbour, The Quakers in Puritan England (Yale, 1964), p. 92.

66 A. Cole, 'Social Origins of Early Friends', Journal of the Friends Historical Society, xlvii (1957) pp. 99-118, and R.T. Vann, The Social Development of English Quakerism (Cambridge, Massachusetts, 1969) provide modern discussions, more recently supplemented by B. Reay, 'The Social Origins of Early Quakerism', Journal of Interdisciplinary Studies, ix (1980). Chapter 6 of this study provides a discussion of this topic for Staffordshire.

67 M. Spufford, Contrasting Communities (Cambridge, 1974, paperback ed. 1979), p. 283.

Many early Quakers had, like George Fox himself, passed from sect to sect in their search for a new spiritual conviction, some beginning as Presbyterians then perhaps becoming Familists, Seekers, Baptists, Ranters or even Fifth Monarchy Men before they settled on Quakerism, and it is generally accepted among historians that most of the earliest Quakers were converted sectaries. This was helpful when the Quakers themselves began to proselytise: Vann suggests that sometimes the early itinerant Quaker preachers, before they came into an area, had lists of people most likely to be receptive to their message.⁶⁸ Such diverse sectarian origins also presented difficulties, and a kaleidoscope of beliefs militated against any coherent and agreed systematic expression of Quaker theology until the 1670s. There was, however, a central and accepted conviction - the existence of a divine light within all men - and that all were salvable, none was predestined to damnation. It was also accepted that the promptings of this inward light, described by Quakers as 'openings', were to be followed before the literal word of the Bible. Quakers were millenarians, too, in the sense that they expected there would be a thousand years of blessedness on earth before the Second Coming of Christ and the last judgement, but they laid greater emphasis on the belief that they had already experienced an inward, spiritual millenium. Most rejected conventional ideas about the Trinity. A few claimed the ability to work miracles and Fox himself kept a record of 150 cures he had effected. Quakers had at first no consistent system of social and political philosophy, but they inherited a strong tradition of anti-clericalism and objected strongly to tithes. They looked forward to some redistribution of wealth but they were not communists in the strict sense of the term. A very few were pacifists from the outset but there was no official declaration of an absolute pacifism in all circumstances until 1661.⁶⁹ With

68 Vann, Social Development, pp. 10 -11.

69 B. Reay, 'Quakerism and Society', in J. F. McGregor and B. Reay, Radical Religion, p. 153.

this diversified portfolio of religious belief and social reformist ideas, which varied from individual to individual, but all imbued with a burning conviction, the 'First Publishers of Truth', the original 60 to 70 Quaker itinerant preachers, set out from their bases in the north in the early summer of 1654 on their great enterprise to conquer the world. Among the many counties in which they achieved remarkable success was Staffordshire.

(iv) Protestant Dissent in Staffordshire before 1651.

It has been suggested that Quakerism in England grew in neglected rural areas where schools, churches and landlords had given least to the local population and which had been touched but not completely claimed by the older puritan sects, and that it first flourished among separatist groups on the fringes of urban areas where there was no strong puritan presence.⁷⁰ There is some, though not conclusive, evidence in Staffordshire to support this thesis: the main areas of early Quaker success in the county were in the Moorlands of the north-east and around the town of Stafford. Strong Protestant dissent in both these areas is documented in the earlier part of the seventeenth century, and certainly the provision made by the Church of England from the Henrician reformation up to the 1640s was meagre and defective. Lack of adequate financial resources was the main factor in the generally poor quality of the clergy in the 143 parishes in the county.⁷¹

The diocese had never been wealthy and the effects of the Henrician Reformation further reduced its income.⁷² Clerical stipends were in general

70 Barbour, Quakers in Puritan England, p. 92.

71 W. N. Landor, 'Staffordshire Incumbents and Parochial Records 1530-1680', Collections for a History of Staffordshire 1915, pp. xxx - xxxii. Of the 143 parishes about 18 were chapelries or extra-parochial.

72 L. W. Cowie, 'The Church of England since the Reformation', in M. W. Greenslade (ed.), V.C.H. Staffordshire III (1970), pp. 51-4.

inadequate: 75 of the livings in the county in 1604 were in the hands of impropiators, leaving only a meagre income for the incumbents, some of whom were forced to supplement their incomes by practising trades or professions. For example, at Leek the rectory was valued at £400 a year but the vicar received only £10; at Checkley the curate was described as practising physic rather than divinity. The evidence presented in a Puritan survey of 1604, although aimed at painting the worst possible picture of the church in England to the new king, James I, demonstrated the poor religious provision in the county, especially in the north. Here the parishes were large and badly provided for. Of the vicars, curates and lay readers in 20 parishes in the Leek and Moorlands area, nine were described as of low life and drunkards, four were non-resident and four of the curates were stated to be 'ignorant'.⁷³

The appointment of more vigorous Jacobean and Caroline bishops to the diocese led to some improvement in the quality of the clergy, but there is evidence of a growing volume of puritan discontent with the church in Staffordshire as the century proceeded. Puritan 'exercises', in which preaching predominated, are recorded in the Burton upon Trent area, and Edward Wightman, said to be a mercer of that town, had the unfortunate distinction of being the last heretic to be burned at the stake, suffering at Lichfield in 1612 for his unorthodox opinions. At his trial these are said to have included the rejection of infant baptism, the denial of the Trinity and making blasphemous prophecies about himself, a catalogue which suggests he had Anabaptist views.⁷⁴ John Ball, curate of the chapelry of Whitmore in the parish of Stoke upon Trent from 1610, who supplemented his scanty income by keeping a

73 A. Peel, 'A Puritan Survey of the Church in Staffordshire', English Historical Review, 26 (1911), pp. 338 -352 .

74 Bodleian Library MS., Ashmole, 1521 (B), 1-43.

school, was more than once jailed for his puritan opinions.⁷⁵ William Fenner, vicar of Sedgley, was ejected from his living about 1627 for similar views.⁷⁶ Francis Capps, vicar of Wolstanton, was accused in 1629 of refusing to wear the surplice and to administer communion to those who knelt to receive it.⁷⁷ Even Lichfield Cathedral itself was the object of active puritan hostility: in 1635 Lady Eleanor Douglas defaced the hangings of the altar with tar and water, apparently as a protest against their introduction.⁷⁸ There were other, less spectacular manifestations of puritan feeling in the county: an organisation within the Church of England, known as the Feoffees for the Purchase of Impropriations, raised money to buy a few impropriated livings in Staffordshire and installed ministers of puritan opinion, but the group was suppressed by the Crown in 1633. Strong puritan opinion existed in some peculiars in the county where episcopal or archidiaconal jurisdiction did not extend, one of which was Wolverhampton. In 1635, the Dean of Windsor, to whom St. Peter's church in Wolverhampton was appropriated, had invoked Archbishop Laud's authority and suspended the local minister, Richard Lee, who was an active puritan preacher. Six years later local puritans entered the church, broke down the communion rail which had been installed and dragged the altar out into the nave. Lee's suspension was one of the charges brought against Laud at his trial in 1644, and William Pinson, a local Wolverhampton attorney of puritan opinions, and also a victim of Laud's campaign against puritanism, was a witness at the trial.⁷⁹ Before 1640, therefore, there is

75 Landor, 'Staffordshire Incumbents', p. 258.

76 A. G. Matthews, The Congregational Churches of Staffordshire (1924), pp. 5-6.

77 Lichfield Joint Record Office, B/V/1/22, presentments at Bishop's Visitation 1629.

78 Cowie, 'Church of England', in V.C.H. III, p. 58n. She had millenarian views and likened Archbishop Laud to the beast from the pit in Revelation, xvii, 8. (See also Capp, Fifth Monarchy Men, p. 35).

79 Matthews, Congregational Churches, pp. 6-11, and A.K. B. Evans and R. H. Evans, 'Wolverhampton, St. Peter', in Greenslade, V.C.H. Staffs. 3, pp. 326-7.

evidence that a militant puritanism had manifested itself in a number of areas in Staffordshire, and this suggests that it was widely and deeply spread in the county.

The breakdown of authority which accompanied the Civil War provided the opportunity for greater expression of dissent and for open public worship by the older Protestant dissenting sects. Of these, Presbyterianism was the strongest in Staffordshire in 1651 when George Fox first arrived. Presbyterianism had its origin in Calvinism and placed strong emphasis on the doctrine of predestination. Presbyterians regarded their movement as a restoration of the apostolic model found in the New Testament. It was characterised by the acceptance of an equality between all ordained ministers who, elected by their congregations, assembled in a hierarchy of local and general synods which included a small number of lay members, and decided on all matters of doctrine and discipline. Unsuccessful in its efforts to capture the Elizabethan church from within, the movement had declined and, in the early seventeenth century, organised activity was largely confined to a few congregations in Warwickshire, Northamptonshire, in the area around Cambridge and in London.⁸⁰ With the approach of Civil War, however, the Presbyterian movement, increasingly provoked by Laud's endeavours to extirpate the church of its puritan elements, rapidly expanded. With the assistance of the Scottish army, obtained by the signing of the Solemn League and Covenant, Presbyterians gained control of Parliament and, in theory, though to a lesser extent in practice, established their church over the whole country. Their endeavours to exert a strict control over religious observance prompted Milton to the sonnet in which he begged Parliament to accept his charge that 'New Presbyter was but old Priest writ large'.⁸¹

80 Gay, Geography of Religion (1971), p. 124.

81 The Poetical Works of John Milton, 'On the New Forcers of Conscience under the Long Parliament' (Everyman edn, 1909), p. 452.

The earliest named individuals in Staffordshire who can be shown to have had Presbyterian opinions were two puritan divines, William Bradshaw and Arthur Hildersam. Bradshaw was preaching in the Burton upon Trent area by licence from previous bishops up to 1617, when he was silenced by Bishop Overall. Little more on Presbyterianism in Staffordshire is documented until 14 May 1642, when Presbyterians in the county had grown strong and confident enough to address Parliament in a petition entitled 'A Petition from the Knights and Esquires of the County of Stafford against Foreign and Domestic Enemies.' The petitioners begged the House of Commons to disarm the many Papists in the county and to order the church according to God's holy word 'by the assistance of an assembly of godly and learned divines.'⁸² In 1648, in response to an appeal from Presbyterian ministers in London, 36 ministers, including Francis Bowyer, vicar of Leek, and two schoolmasters from Staffordshire signed 'A Testimony to the Truth as it is in Jesus Christ', a manifesto of militant Presbyterianism. It gave full support to the profession of Presbyterian faith drawn up by the Westminster Assembly which had been appointed to reform the English Church, denounced universal toleration and condemned the 'sects, schisms and sub-separations' of Congregationalism. The signatories came from most areas of the county. During the Interregnum the number of ministers with Presbyterian opinions who obtained parochial livings in Staffordshire increased considerably: after the Restoration the 1660 Act for Confirming and Restoring Ministers resulted in the immediate ejection of at least eight ministers in favour of their sequestered predecessors. As a result of the Act of Uniformity of 1662 and other legislation, 44 incumbents in Staffordshire lost

82 Matthews, Congregational Churches , pp.16 -19 .

their livings after the Restoration, the majority being Presbyterians.⁸³ The movement also attracted a number of the county gentry, among whom was Edward Leigh, of Rushall, an active Parliamentarian, an M.P. for Stafford in the Long Parliament and a member of the Westminster Assembly.⁸⁴ Another Staffordshire M.P., John Swynfen, had shown his Presbyterian leanings in the Long Parliament and influenced the religious opinions of Lord Paget and Sir Thomas Wilbraham of Weston-under-Lizard.⁸⁵ A list of the local gentry, drawn up in 1662-3 when the government was concerned about reports of subversive meetings in the county, contained 34 names of whom certainly 27, and possibly 30, were Presbyterians.⁸⁶

There is no evidence of Presbyterians in Staffordshire becoming Quakers, but Baptists, of whom there were also many in the county, provided some of the earliest recruits to Quakerism. A possible reference to the sect is found in Ipstones in the Moorlands in 1644, when Captain John Garland and James Cockayne were examined by the local minister on orders from the Parliamentary Committee at Stafford. They were reported to have stated that infant baptism was anti-Christian, that without faith it had no force, and that the scriptures allowed every man to preach who had the ability. Such doctrines were not exclusive to Baptists, but there is evidence that the Baptist movement grew rapidly in Staffordshire during and after the Civil War. It was especially strong in Stafford in 1650 under its minister Henry Haggar, who wrote a number of pamphlets defending General Baptist doctrines.⁸⁷ In 1650 the military governor of Stafford, Colonel Henry Danvers, seems to have accepted Baptist principles, although after his election as member of Parliament for Leicester in 1653

83 R. Mansfield, 'Protestant Nonconformity', in Greenslade, (ed.), V.C.H. Staffs., III, p. 118.

84 Greenslade and Stuart, Staffordshire, p.71

85 Mansfield, 'Protestant Nonconformity', p. 119.

86 R. M. Kidson, Staffordshire Gentry 1662-1663 (S.H.C. 4th ser. ii), pp. 1-40

87 Matthews, Congregational Churches, pp. 32 -34.

he became a prominent Fifth Monarchy man and was subsequently involved in various unsuccessful plots and risings.⁸⁸ In 1651 Baptist groups in the Midlands, calling themselves 'Congregations of Christ' sent a letter to Cromwell urging him to reform the church. The signatories included men from Stafford, Walsall, Burton upon Trent, Lichfield and Berry Hill.⁸⁹ There are numerous other references in the post-1651 period which suggest that the Baptist movement in the county was widespread: a debate was held in 1654 at Harlaston near Tamworth between a Quaker itinerant preacher and some 'Great Baptists' who may have included Thomas Pollard, a Baptist minister in Lichfield.⁹⁰ In the same year William Tomblinson from Burton upon Trent was one of the signatories of another letter to Cromwell urging him to close alehouses, which the letter described as 'nurseries of wickedness'.⁹¹ The 1662-3 list of suspect gentry included three Baptists. Churchwardens' presentments did not usually differentiate between Baptists and Anabaptists, and at the 1665 visitation of Leek two Anabaptists were listed. Archbishop Sheldon's list of conventicles of 1669 also locates Anabaptists at Burton upon Trent, Caulton and Hanbury.⁹²

Fifth Monarchy Men, the most vocal and active of the Millenarian sects, are not documented in Staffordshire. There is only one local connection, Thomas Harrison, who came from Newcastle - under -Lyne and was one of the leaders of the movement. It is likely that he had gathered some local support but there is no evidence. Harrison was one of the regicides and was executed in 1661. Samuel Pepys attended the execution, which was performed with all the barbarity of the time, and

88 Capp, Fifth Monarchy Men, p. 248, Appendix I.

89 Matthews, Congregational Churches, p. 36.

90 Braithwaite, Beginnings p. 176.

91 Matthews, Congregational Churches, pp. 36 -7.

92 Ibid., pp. 89-90.

noted that on the scaffold Harrison was reported to have said that he was sure to come shortly at the right hand of Christ, to judge them who had judged him.⁹³ Like other millenarians Harrison argued that a reform of social behaviour was a necessary preparation for the Second Coming of Christ. He was one of the eleven major-generals appointed in 1655 to consolidate Cromwell's position after the Penruddock rising, who supervised the re-organised militia and acted as collectors of the 10% tax levelled on royalists, but also served as puritan 'gauleiters', official guardians of public morality, whose duties included closing unnecessary alehouses, suppressing horse-racing, cock-fighting, bear-baiting and shutting all theatres. The attempt to enforce a rigorous puritanism did not last long and the rule of the major-generals ended in 1656. Evidence of its effects in Staffordshire is scanty: in 1655 John Jackson, vicar of Lapley, petitioned the justices at Quarter Sessions to suppress the annual wakes held in many towns, maintaining that the time was spent in promiscuous dancing, tippling, gaming and wantonness, and that the Sabbath was profaned.⁹⁴

The presence of Ranters in the county is, however, suggested by a reference in Thomas Edwards' book Gangraena published in 1646. In this book, extremely hostile to dissenting sects, Edwards claimed that certain sectaries in Colonel Whalley's regiment stationed in Staffordshire, had been reported as saying that every spirit was of God, and that God was as much in hell as in heaven. Such pantheistic views were characteristic of the sect and Ranter views were widespread in the army. Fox, refers to Ranters near Leek in 1654⁹⁵ and there is a further mention of the presence of the

93 S. Pepys, Diary (1825; Everyman edn 1906), vol.1, p. 100.

94 Johnson and Vaisey, Staffordshire, pp.38 -39.

95 Fox, Journal, pp. 71-2.

sect in Basford, near Leek, in a letter of 1658 from Richard Hickock, an itinerant Quaker preacher, to Margaret Fell. ⁹⁶ It is impossible to say how strong the Ranters were in Staffordshire, or whether any of them became Quakers. Braithwaite claims that Quakerism supplied the needs of many who might otherwise have become Ranters. ⁹⁷

Only one mention of the Family of Love has so far been found for Staffordshire, also in Richard Hickock's letter of 1658. Muggletonians, another millenarian sect, founded by Ludowick Muggleton, who claimed to be one of the two witnesses of Revelation, xi, sent to seal the elect with the seals of eternal life and death, appear in the records of episcopal visitations, at Ilam, in 1668. ⁹⁸ They were, however, stronger in north-west Derbyshire, which lay next to the Leek and Moorlands area, ⁹⁹ and there were contacts between Friends in these areas. There is no record of the presence of Seekers, under that name, in Staffordshire.

The spread and depth of dissent in general in Staffordshire, was a product of the religious enthusiasm of the time, but was also influenced by other factors, of which the physical background of the county and contemporary social and political discontent have already been discussed. Local manorial history may have played some part. In an article in 1970 Everitt suggested that dissent could flourish in large country parishes, in fen and forest regions, in boundary areas and in decayed market towns where manorial control had diminished. ¹⁰⁰ In Staffordshire the acceptance

96 G. F. Nuttall, 'Early Quaker Letters in the Swarthmore MSS to 1660', (Typescript in Woodbrooke College Library, Birmingham, 439 MS. 1. 148).

97 Braithwaite, Beginnings, p. 22.

98 Lichfield Joint Record Office, B/V/1/75.

99 H. Forde, 'Derbyshire Quakers', (unpublished Ph.D. thesis, University of Leicester, 1977).

100 A. Everitt, 'Nonconformity in Country Parishes', Land, Church and People, ed. J. Thirsk, Agricultural History Review, 18 (1970), pp. 178-99.

and distribution of Quakerism, particularly in the Leek and Moorlands area , provides some evidence in partial support of the thesis: both Leek and Alstonefield parishes were large, the terrain was in many places as remote and difficult as were fen and forest elsewhere and manorial sub-division in the area was general. There had been no three-week manorial court held in Alstonefield since 1529, the manor of Horton was much divided by the seventeenth century, in Rushton Spencer five of the freeholders were joint lords of the manor and in Longnor half the township belonged to the freeholders.¹⁰¹

The importance of economic status as another possible determinant in the spread and distribution of dissent is still a subject of differing views among scholars. In one of the villages in Cambridgeshire which Spufford examined, the overwhelming majority of nonconformists were, judging by the hearth-tax returns, comparatively prosperous, and among these the four Quakers were the most well-to-do.¹⁰² On the other hand, in another village she found that the Quakers involved in the mass arrests of 1661 were predominantly female and poor. Spufford also found that dissent was a family phenomenon and could spread right through a community, on the basis of a kinship network, irrespective of differing economic and social divisions. Dissent bred dissent, and once it had taken hold in a community, religious fragmentation and the proliferation of sectarianism were likely to follow. How far Spufford's views can be supported by the evidence from Staffordshire is examined in later chapters in this study.

When the First Publishers of Truth came into Staffordshire in the 1650s

101 M. W. Greenslade, 'Alstonefield', in V.C.H. Staffordshire, VII (1996), pp. 6-7.

102 M. Spufford, Contrasting Communities, pp. 299-318.

they found, in many localities, a receptive audience, seeking spiritual guidance in those troubled times, both from within and outside the existing Protestant dissenting sects. The strength of dissent in Staffordshire before the Quaker missionaries arrived, whatever its sectarian character and causes, ensured that they would gain hearers, and their profound conviction and charismatic appeal persuaded many of these hearers to accept the Quaker message. Perhaps, as Braithwaite suggests, the northern accents in which some of them delivered their 'message of truth' may have made them appear to the crowds that gathered to hear them in the towns and country parishes of Staffordshire rather as the primitive apostles of Christianity had appeared to their listeners in Galilee, strange millenarian prophets with an extraordinary appeal. The First Publishers achieved an early success throughout the county, particularly in the Moorlands, and to a lesser extent in the Stafford region and the south of the county. Who these charismatic itinerants were, their numbers, and the methods they used in their successful evangelising are considered in the next chapter.

CHAPTER 2 FIRST PUBLISHERS OF TRUTH : Quaker itinerant preachers in Staffordshire 1651 - 1660.

George Fox was born in 1624 in Drayton-in-the-Clay (now Fenny Drayton) in Leicestershire, the son of a weaver. He was put to work to learn the trade of a shoemaker with a man who was also a cattle and sheep dealer. His father, of moderate Presbyterian opinions, later became an Anglican churchwarden. At the age of nineteen Fox experienced a religious conversion. For the next few years he wandered around, physically as well as mentally, seeking a faith which he could accept fully. Ingle has described Fox's local Leicestershire and Midlands background as an area 'honeycombed with religious nonconformists', and points out local connections with Lollardy.¹ He also discusses particular individual influences upon the young Fox, arguing for a local tradition of 'principled dissent' in Drayton-in-the-Clay derived from Anthony Nutter, an Anglican minister in the parish from 1586 to 1605 who had developed strong Calvinistic views. The Baptist communities which Fox encountered in London and elsewhere were also influential in forming his opinions. Ingle places Fox firmly in the context of the Civil War, much of which was fought out in the Midlands, and stresses the importance of the social upheaval and economic distress of the time in prompting Fox to adopt radical opinions as part of his religious message when he himself began to preach from about 1646. The Anglican ministers and Protestant dissenting pastors from whom Fox sought enlightenment were disappointing and he was disillusioned. The experience helped to bring him to one of his most important conclusions : neither a mere profession of belief - Fox repeatedly spoke scornfully of 'professors'- nor a university training seemed to him, as he

1 H. Larry Ingle, First among Friends (Oxford, 1994), p. 10.

explained in his Journal, to be enough to qualify men for the ministry, however learned they might be in the Scriptures.² He also differed from the main puritan position on the authority of the Scriptures: while Presbyterians, Particular Baptists and Independents generally accepted that the Scriptures were sufficient communication from God, that men had to look no further until Christ spoke at the second advent and that thus there was no need for further first-hand experience, Fox became convinced that the Scriptures were not enough, and that men could experience, personally, a divine light from God. This belief in an inward light, which offered an immediate relation with God and transcended the limitations of birth, education and occupation, became the core of Quaker belief. It was not a new concept: Rufus Jones puts Fox among the Mystics, arguing that the teachings of the Family of Love which in some respects resemble those of the Quakers, were an important influence at the time.³ Braithwaite also points out that the writings of Jacob Boehme, first published in English in 1644, and showing resemblances to Quaker beliefs, were also influential, and the latest editor of the Journal, Smith, suggests that Fox may have met Durand Hotham who had translated Boehme's works. Braithwaite argues nevertheless, that Fox had probably arrived independently at his beliefs, quoting approvingly from William Penn that Fox was an 'original and no man's copy'.⁴

Like Fox, all the early Quaker leaders such as Dewsbury, Farnsworth, Hubberthorne and Nayler, experienced some form of profound religious experience which is usually described as 'conversion'. It was a characteristic of puritanism

2 G. Fox, The Journal (1694; ed. J.L. Nickalls (Cambridge, 1952), p. 8. All subsequent references to the Journal are from this edition.

3 R. M. Jones, Studies in Mystical Religion (1909), pp. 428 - 48.

4 W. C. Braithwaite, The Beginnings of Quakerism (1912; Cambridge, 1981) p. 40 -1, and G Fox, The Journal (ed. N. Smith, 1998), p. xii.

generally at the time and of later religious movements such as Methodism, and usually took the form of an overwhelming sense of sin and of a consequent, everlasting doom which was suddenly lifted from their spirits by a joyful hope of salvation. Some Quakers, including Fox himself, came to believe that this experience by itself was insufficient, and tended to see what they termed 'convincement' as a necessary supplement to the original conversion. They saw the process not as a once-for-all influx of grace but as a continuing relationship with God. For most early Quakers, however, conversion was still an essential part of their beliefs: Francis Howgill wrote that a man who was convinced but not converted was still in a 'state of darkness'.⁵ Later, however, the emotional and physical symptoms that sometimes accompanied an individual's experience of conversion were frowned upon by the Quaker leadership and this attitude may have been one of the factors eventually diminishing the movement's general appeal.

There were at first no criteria or rules for membership. A Quaker was deemed to be such by his outward behaviour, which served to demonstrate his convincement. Like many sects Quakers came eventually to require of would-be members what in effect was a sort of novitiate, during which the novice had to observe a norm of behaviour. Not only was attendance at meetings required but also a strict obedience to prescribed modes of conduct, dress and speech. Permission to marry also required a letter from the monthly meeting to which the person belonged, confirming his or her acceptability to the meeting as a Quaker. Vann cites examples from Buckinghamshire where the local monthly meeting had to decide whether ten newcomers were really convinced Quakers or were merely attending meetings in order to be allowed to

5 R. T. Vann, The Social Development of English Quakerism (Cambridge, Mass. 1969), p. 40.

marry.⁶ Poor relief could be denied to anyone who claimed to have undergone a religious conversion but failed to demonstrate acceptable behaviour. Fox had always shown his scorn for people who merely 'professed' to a conviction without observing its results in everyday life: the experience of conversion could not be tested but convincement, shown by conduct, was obvious to see. The difference between conversion and convincement was not just one of semantics: it had important consequences. By the second generation of Quakerism the nature of the process of entry into the movement had changed: there were fewer spectacular conversions and an individual's conformity to the accepted standard of behaviour rather than a profession of conversion became the test of his faith. As a result Quakerism lost much of the apocalyptic excitement of its first years and, in so doing, probably much of its early popular attraction.

Fox's original message was to people, like himself, who sought a more satisfying religious experience than they had hitherto found. These included groups of people such as 'separated' or 'shattered' Baptists who had already left the established church but had not yet become or remained firm adherents of any sect. There was one such community in Skegby and Mansfield,⁷ which included Elizabeth Hooton, one of his earliest converts, and which became known as 'Children of the Light', a term used before by some continental Baptists and by a few Seekers. In the years between 1648 and 1652, however, Fox also adopted an approach that combined his religious message with an appeal to the social and economic aspirations of his audiences, who now included farmers, skilled workers, tradesmen and women. Although he rarely attacked the possession of riches, as such, but rather their misuse, it is doubtful whether all his earlier hearers appreciated the distinction. His

6 Ibid., p. 41.

7 Fox, Journal, pp. 43 -4.

denunciation of tithes also appealed to many in the Midlands. Ingle has detailed the long-standing opposition to the payment of tithes in the area.⁸ The economic hardships caused by the Civil War also added to local discontent and Fox was able to link this widespread feeling of discontent with an appeal to the growing numbers of those who dissented from the established church. Among those who listened to him were soldiers from Midlands garrisons, whose pay was often long overdue. Although he frequently met with opposition and violence from the church and local authorities, he attracted large gatherings to listen to his message. Soon Leicestershire, Northamptonshire, Nottinghamshire and Derbyshire gained the reputation of being 'infested' with his followers. Their religious emotion was so strong that it sometimes manifested itself in a physical way, when the convert's body was given to trembling and rolling. From this derived the nickname, 'Quaker', a term first found in a manuscript of 1647. In his Journal Fox attributed the first pejorative use of the term to Gervase Bennett, one of the justices before whom he had appeared in Derby in 1650 for disturbing a church service and who had sentenced him to six months imprisonment.⁹ The nickname stuck, and like others originally used as a term of abuse, acquired an honourable connotation.

Fox's success in the Midlands in the few years up to late 1651 was followed by even greater results in the north, in Lancashire, Yorkshire and Westmorland. At Sedbergh Fox first came into contact with a community of Westmorland 'Seekers' scattered around the area, who were already organised as a group of Separatists, some of whom had already come to religious convictions and practices not dissimilar to those of Fox. The meeting was mutually fruitful: Fox helped them to formulate their

8 Ingle, First among Friends, pp. 57 - 8.

9 Fox, Journal, p. 58.

inchoate opinions, while they provided him with a stable following. His most influential convincement was Margaret Fell, wife of Thomas Fell of Swarthmoor Hall, near Ulverston in the Furness district of Lancashire. Thomas Fell was a Judge of Assize, a member of the Long Parliament and Vice-Chancellor of the County Palatine of Lancashire. He never seems to have become a Quaker himself but Swarthmoor Hall became a base, financial and administrative, from which Fox and a band of preachers organised their mission to take the message of truth throughout the country and the world generally.¹⁰

Apart from Fox himself, the first of the itinerant Quaker preachers came into Staffordshire late in 1653 or early in 1654. The basic account of the work of the 'First Publishers of Truth' as they became generally known, is found at the end of the Staffordshire Quarterly Meeting Minute Book for 1672-1743. It is headed 'A Record of such Friends as first declared and published Truth in Stafford and Staffordshire as also what persons received their message and of such Friends as received them in the beginning etc'. It was compiled on the instruction of the quarterly meeting held on the 5th of the 5th month 1680 (Quaker dating) in response to a letter from the Yearly Meeting of 1676 and a reminder of 1/4/1680.¹¹ The quarterly meeting nominated twelve Friends, six from each of its two constituent monthly meetings, Stafford and Leek, to conduct the inquiry. They were instructed to report back to the next quarterly meeting to be held on 4/8/1680, which they did, and Peter Littleton, of

10 E. E. Taylor, The Valiant Sixty (1947; York 1988), provides a very general account.

11 Most of the returns made by quarterly meetings over the whole country were collated by Norman Penney and published in 1907 as Supplements 1 to 5 of the Journal of the Friends Historical Society under the title First Publishers of Truth. The Staffordshire section was initially based on a return made by Richard Morris on behalf of Staffordshire Quarterly Meeting and sent to the Meeting for Sufferings in London in 1720, which omitted some of the names and details. These were published in J.F.H.S. 32 (1935).

Stafford Monthly Meeting was deputed to record their reports. The importance of the 'Record' lies in its almost contemporary character. Less than thirty years had elapsed since Fox had first come in to the county and at least three of the Friends deputed to make the inquiry had become convinced Quakers in the mid - and later 1650s, and thus were able to give first - hand accounts of some of the early itinerant preachers. The names of the other nine nominees appear in various sources for the early 1660s and show them also to have been near contemporaries. The Q.M.M.B. 'Record' may therefore be accepted as a reliable, though not complete, guide to the earliest years of the movement in Staffordshire. The amount of information it provides is, however, not great. It may be supplemented by another document found in the Holdsworth MSS. which gives more information about Humphrey Wolrich, a local Staffordshire man who played an important part in early Quaker evangelising in the county.¹² For the years 1655 to 1660 a few other names of the earliest Quakers in the county can be found in another appendix to Quarterly Meeting Minute Book of 1672 -1743 entitled 'Friends' Sufferings for the Truth in Staffordshire '. More names of early Quaker converts are found in churchwardens' presentments at episcopal visitations in the county in the 1660s and a main source is provided by Besse's collection of 'Sufferings'.¹³ From 1672 the historical material is more abundant. It includes the minute book of the quarterly meeting which starts in that year and the minute books of the two monthly meetings which begin in the early eighteenth century.

The 'Record' states that in 1651 or 1652 George Fox came to Caldon 'in the moorlands parts' to a meeting of professors. The itinerary he followed on this first visit to Staffordshire, which was made on his release from Derby gaol in October

12 Also in J.F.H.S. 32, (1935), pp. 51 -2.

13 J. Besse, A Collection of the Sufferings of the People called Quakers (1753), vol.1, pp. 650 - 57.

1651, is not clear. Fox recorded in his Journal that he came to Burton upon Trent, where he convinced some people, then went on to Bushell Park, where he had a meeting. Bushell Park is probably the modern Bushton House, between Tutbury and Anslow, an identification more likely than that made by Penney in his edition of the Journal and which Nickalls followed.¹⁴ Bushton House is only half a mile away from Stockley Park, the home of Alice Bowman, where, on 8/5/1689, a Quarterly Meeting was held, and parts of Bushton House date back to the early 17th century. It is reasonable, in view of the evidence of earlier Protestant dissent in the district, to postulate the existence a group of people willing to hear Fox who had gathered there. Fox and his fellow itinerant preachers did not usually venture into completely unknown territory for their evangelising, but often relied on previous contacts in the area for accommodation and for help in gathering an audience. Fox's first visit to the county may therefore have been partially planned, in that he had an initial base to work from. The 'Record' does not, however, mention Fox's visit to Burton, and Fox himself makes no specific reference to Caldon in his Journal, stating merely that he 'passed through the country'. Caldon lies about 20 miles to the north of Burton. Whether Fox's memory or geography was at fault cannot be known: he dictated much of the Journal to amanuenses during his imprisonment in Lancaster gaol in 1664 and amended and added to it in Worcester gaol in 1674.¹⁵ Possibly the Friends who compiled the 'Record' did not know of the visit to the Burton area. Nor does the 'Record' say anything of his visit to Lichfield which follows immediately in the Journal. The passage describing this visit is one of the most famous in the book.

14 Fox, Journal, p. 70.

15 Ibid., pp. vii - viii.

Fox wrote:

'And as I was walking in a close with several Friends I lifted up my head and I espied three steeplehouse spires. They struck at my life and I asked Friends what they were, and they said, Lichfield, The word of the Lord came to me thither I might go...I went over hedge and ditch till I came within a mile of Lichfield. When I came into a great field where there were shepherds keeping their sheep, I was commanded of the Lord to pull off my shoes of a sudden; and I stood still and the word of the Lord was like a fire in me...and as soon as I came within the town the word of the Lord came to me again to cry, 'Woe unto the bloody city of Lichfield!'; so I went up and down the streets crying 'Woe unto the bloody city of Lichfield!' Being market day I went into the market place and went up and down the several places of it and made stands, crying, 'Woe unto the bloody city of Lichfield!' and no one touched me nor laid hands on me. As I went down the town there ran like a channel of blood down the streets, and the market place was like a pool of blood.'

In the next paragraph Fox asks himself why he had called Lichfield a bloody city, when the bloodshed which had occurred during the siege of Lichfield during the Civil War could not be charged to the town. Later, he continued, he came to know from 'ancient records' the story that in the Emperor Diocletian's time a thousand Christians had been martyred in the city, and that was why the word of the Lord came to him to go barefoot through the channel of blood in the market place that he might 'raise them up'. The bloodshed in Lichfield during the Civil War had been real enough but modern research has rejected the authenticity of the tradition of a Diocletian massacre: the story derives from a conjecture by Matthew Paris in the 13th century and the idea was later fostered by unsound etymologies.¹⁶

According to the 'Record' the next Quaker visitors to Staffordshire were an unknown man and woman, who 'declared and published Truth' in Stafford, the county town. They were followed by Miles Bateman, whose preaching brought him before

16 D. A. Johnson, 'The Place Name', in M. W. Greenslade (ed.), Victoria County History of Staffordshire, XIV (1990), p. 38.

the mayor, Walter Adeney, who had him whipped and put in gaol. Bateman's visit can be dated to between October 1653 and October 1654, during Adeney's period of office. Miles Bateman, a husbandman, of Tullythwaite, near Underbarrow, Westmorland, was one of the 'Valiant Sixty' the name sometimes given to the travelling preachers from Westmorland, Yorkshire and other parts of the north, who had set out in and after 1653 to spread their message throughout the country. Bateman was the son of a Quaker of the same name, and was one of the earliest Friends to evangelise in Ireland and Cornwall. He later turned apostate.¹⁷ The 'Record' states that while he was in prison Bateman was visited by Matthew Babb, of Stafford. Babb was not yet a Quaker, but the 'Record' goes on to say that he was later convinced by Humphrey Wolrich, from Newcastle under Lyme. Wolrich was an ex-Baptist who, the 'Record' states, while on his way to a Baptist meeting in Stafford, 'declared for the light against their darkness.'¹⁸ Wolrich was therefore the first, named, locally-born Quaker in Staffordshire. Both he and Thomas Wolrich, senior, possibly his brother, were among the twelve Friends nominated in 1680 to make the inquiry about the earliest Friends. He was an important figure in the early years of the Quaker movement in Staffordshire, and is the subject of special discussion later in this study. The example provided by Wolrich confirms that some of the earliest Quaker convincements were formerly Baptists. The 'Record' does not mention Miles Wennington, who, according to Besse, also visited Bateman in prison, protested to the mayor and was also whipped and gaoled.

The next preachers to come to Staffordshire mentioned in the 'Record' were Francis Howgill and Edward Burrough. Howgill, born in 1618 at Todthorne, Grayrig,

17 Braithwaite, Beginnings, p. 92.

18 See the biographical note on Wolrich in the appendix.

near Kendal, was a farmer who had been educated for the Anglican priesthood but became a Baptist, then an Independent and was convinced during Fox's visit to Sedbergh in June 1652. Burrough, born in 1633, was another of the Westmorland Seekers convinced by Fox in 1652. The first itinerant Quakers usually travelled together in twos or threes. Burrough and Howgill were the first of the travelling Friends from the north to preach in London, where they achieved considerable success.¹⁹ Their evangelistic methods were described in letters to Margaret Fell.²⁰ On Sundays they had usually first met quietly with known sympathisers, then they went to large, general gatherings, where, to use their own terminology, they 'threshed and ploughed among the world', and finally they held meetings with members of sects such as Baptists and Ranters. The pair then returned north to Swarthmoor, which had become a kind of missionary headquarters, but in midsummer 1655 were, according to the 'Record', in the 'south parts of Staffordshire'. The 'Record', by its own terms of reference, provides examples only of the initial meetings with receptive people in Staffordshire. Burrough and Howgill are stated to have gone to Comberford, a hamlet in the parish of Tamworth and the home of Francis Comberford, a justice of the peace who received them 'kindly'. As a gentleman and a magistrate he probably played a useful role in protecting early Quakers, and the 'Record' praises him as 'a valiant man for truth, who in time of persecution stood faithful'. Both Burrough and Howgill later suffered much for their faith; Burrough died in prison in 1662.²¹ Howgill, a prolific pamphleteer as well as a charismatic preacher, worked as a missionary over much of England and in Ireland and Scotland. He was finally imprisoned in Appleby gaol in 1664 where he remained until his death in 1668.²²

19 Braithwaite, Beginnings, pp. 159 -162.

20 F.H.L., William Caton MS 25, f. 35.

21 Taylor, Valiant Sixty p. 84.

22 Ibid. p. 87.

The next visitors listed in the 'Record' were Thomas Killam and Thomas Goodaire, who came to Lynn in the parish of Shenstone, north of Lichfield, where they were received by William Reading. Thomas Killam, of Balby, Yorkshire, was a member of the gentry class, and, like Comberford, had been on the commission of the peace. He was one of the group of Seekers in or near Balby who were convinced by Fox in 1651, had begun to preach in the north in 1653 and in 1654 was evangelising in the Midlands with Goodaire. Goodaire, from Selby, is stated to have been of the yeoman class.²³ The 'Record' assigns no date to their arrival in Lynn, but Braithwaite links Goodaire with Richard Farnsworth as campaigning in the North Midlands throughout the rest of 1654, and the visit of Killam and Goodaire may thus be dated to the end of that year.²⁴ Farnsworth is not mentioned in the 'Record' but in a letter he describes in vivid terms an encounter with Baptists at Harlaston, near Tamworth on 27th September 1654.²⁵ William Reading is also stated in the 'Record' to have received another pair of Quaker preachers, Thomas Taylor and Alexander Parker. Taylor, formerly the minister of the group of Seekers in Preston Patrick in Westmorland and convinced by Fox in 1652, is an important figure in early Staffordshire Quaker history and is discussed in more detail later in this study. Parker came from the Bowland area and is described as a husbandman and soldier.²⁶ He had been convinced by Fox in 1653 and became the latter's travelling companion for tours in the Midlands and elsewhere. The 'Record' goes on to state that Parker and Taylor had a meeting in Lichfield in Humphrey Beeland's chamber, and another manuscript source provides further detail of the mixed reception they received. They were

23 Ibid. p. 40, for these details of Killam and Goodaire.

24 Swarthmore MS 1/3.

25 Braithwaite, Beginnings, p. 176, quoting Samuel Watson MS. p. 44.

26 Taylor, Valiant Sixty, p. 41.

confronted by many 'rude and brutish people' but managed to preach unharmed, and there were others at the meeting who were 'very tender and much convinced.'²⁷ There are no more very early references to Lichfield, and subsequent meetings in the area centred on William Reading's house in Lynn in the parish of Shenstone.

The 'Record' continues with an entry concerning Richard Hickock, who came into the moorlands in the north of the county in the 10th month 1654 (December). Hickock was not one of the Westmorland 'Valiant Sixty' but the son of an innkeeper in Chester.²⁸ When and by whom he had been convinced is not known. He seems to have been the most successful of the early Quaker preachers in Staffordshire. He convinced many people in and around Leek and established meetings for worship centred on four people in the area, William Davenport, of Fould Farm in Leekfrith, a township in Leek parish, Matthew Dale of Rudyard, another township in the same parish, Thomas Hammersley of Basford in the parish of Cheddleton, and Richard Dale, also of Rudyard. There are two more paragraphs in the 'Record' concerning Hickock, the first of which relates how he attempted to address the congregation in Leek 'steeplehouse' (St. Edward's parish church) but was violently pulled down and his head broken; he was then taken out of the church into the graveyard and thrown off the wall into the street below, a fall which today would be over twelve feet. The second paragraph states that he continued to spread the Quaker message of truth for several years more, throughout England and also in Ireland, but that he eventually turned apostate and many people in the county who had been convinced by him 'turned back from the truth'. All three paragraphs in the 'Record' concerning Hickock

27 William Caton MS. iii, pp. 258-9.

28 Braithwaite, Beginnings, p. 392

are crossed through, a frequent practice with Quakers when an entry in a document was regarded as derogatory of the truth and showed the movement in a bad light. Hickock's initial experiences in Leek did not deter him from visiting the area again, and other Quaker documents provide further details of his work in Staffordshire: he reported to Fox in May 1656 that magistrates in Leek had stationed men with halberds at the door to prevent the townspeople coming to his meetings,²⁹ and in a letter to Margaret Fell of 6 April 1658 he wrote that his meetings in the county were attended by sometimes more than 200 people. He reported that he had had two meetings in Newcastle under Lyme, and had been twice in Leek among the Ranters; he had silenced them all by his arguments, except for one woman, a member of the Family of Love. He had also been to Uttoxeter where the Baptists were 'much dashed' to hear of great Quaker meetings in market towns and elsewhere.³⁰

Two more names follow next in the 'Record, the first that of James Harrison, who was successful in convincing many people in the Leek and Moorlands area and some in the Uttoxeter area. Harrison was one of a group of four Quakers who came into the north of the county in 1660 at Fox's suggestion.³¹ Little is known about him or his career as a Quaker. The second, Thomas Holme, is also stated to have convinced, among many others, Robert Mellor, of Whitehough, who heard him preaching in a bowling alley.³² Holme, originally a weaver from Kendal, had been convinced by Fox in 1652, and began his itinerating work in 1654. The date of his visit to Staffordshire is uncertain, but this may provisionally be assigned to 1654 or 1655, because in the latter year he was in Chester where he was imprisoned for

29 Swarthmore MS 4/208.

30 Braithwaite, Beginnings, p. 392.

31 Swarthmore MS 1/134.

32 J.F.H.S. 32, (1935), pp. 51-2.

walking naked through the city 'as a sign'.³³ A number of early Friends are recorded as having engaged in this spectacular practice, finding precedents for their action among the Old Testament prophets, citing the texts in Isaiah xx, 3 and Micah i, 8. They saw their gesture as symbolic of the time to come when all authorities would be stripped of their power. Braithwaite explains it as a product of their overwrought spiritual condition and points out that it illustrates the nature of early Quakerism, whose leaders did not think of themselves as founders of a new sect but as publishers of the truth that had come to them and whose duty it was to declare that message universally even in such an extreme manner. Fox did not condemn the practice until later. In 1656 Holme went to South Wales, where he became the chief apostle of Quakerism, but was back again in Staffordshire in the winter of 1659 - 60.³⁴

A few more names of preachers who were in Staffordshire in the first decade of Quaker evangelisation can be added from other sources. Richard Hubberthorne held meetings in Leek in May 1654 and again in 1660. Hubberthorne, of Yealand in Lancashire, described as a yeoman and soldier,³⁵ had been convinced by Fox in 1652, and began his missionary work almost immediately. He was in Congleton in Cheshire in December 1653 and came into Staffordshire soon afterwards. In May 1654 he reported to Fox on the success of the meetings he had held in the county. He wrote

'About Congleton and Leek there is a people drawing in where we have had some meetings and many high separates and strong oaks that ways are convinced by the power of truth...'

He urged Fox to send more preachers into the area as soon as possible but added a word of caution:

33 Braithwaite, Beginnings, p. 126.

34 Swarthmore MS 4/519.

35 Taylor, Valiant Sixty, p. 41.

'...some are not fit for the work of the Lord in these parts for they are a wise people...' ³⁶

Braithwaite glosses the letter to mean that Hubberthorne is suggesting that preachers of deep spiritual experience rather than great learning should be sent. Hubberthorne was again in the county in 1660, ³⁷ but there are no details available about that visit. He died of gaol fever in Newgate in 1662.

In 1660, at Fox's suggestion, Oliver Atherton and John Shield left Congleton in Cheshire and moved south-east into Staffordshire to 'get meetings up and down in the county' and in Stafford. They met James Harrison and Richard Hickock at Butterson, a village in the Moorlands, four or five miles from Leek, and held a meeting there. The next day they went to Ford, and on 7th to Grindon, two more villages in the neighbourhood. They then moved a little further south and held a meeting in Bramshall near Uttoxeter, where they reported that they encountered 'old professors that had long been convinced but came to little obedience'. They were successful there and after two days they moved back to the Moorlands to Ipstones where a meeting had been 'appointed' for them. From there they passed to Leek where Atherton preached and on to Basford where many of their hearers were 'Civil Ranters and Baptists'. They had now been joined by Richard Moore who spoke at the market cross, presumably that in Leek. Finally they moved west across the county to Eccleshall and on into Shropshire. They had been two weeks in the area. ³⁸

Fox's second visit to Staffordshire came in 1654. He wrote in his Journal that in that year he visited Thomas Hammersley at Basford and talked with Ranters and 'high professors'. Hammersley is one of the most important local figures in early

36 Swarthmore MS 4/1.

37 Braithwaite, Beginnings, pp. 124 -5.

38 Swarthmore MS 1/34. Letter from Atherton to Fell dated 17 December 1660, written from Shrewsbury Gaol.

Staffordshire Quaker history. Fox made a further visit in 1663 to Whitehough in the parish of Ipstones in the Moorlands where he had a 'large, blessed meeting', returned to Thomas Hammersley's house in Basford in 1667, where he established the county's monthly meetings. He was again in the county, at Hammersley's house and at Whitehough in 1669.³⁹ There is evidence that he visited Staffordshire again in 1678 on his way north from London to Swarthmoor. A letter dated 20th of 6th month 1678 headed 'Whitehough in Staffordshire', addressed to Friends of the quarterly and monthly meetings of Staffordshire, and initialled 'G.F.', warned against internal dissension.⁴⁰

Altogether 16 named itinerant Quaker preachers came into Staffordshire in the decade 1651 to 1660, and apart from the unknown man and woman who visited Stafford in 1653 or 1654 it is likely that there were other visitors whose names went unrecorded, especially in the centre and south of the county. They all appear to have been successful, and a few pieces of evidence concerning their methods of evangelising survive. In Leek and in other towns and often on market days they preached in the open air and occasionally found rooms in which to hold their meetings. At times they attracted crowds large enough to alarm the local magistrates. They ventured into such social venues as bowling alleys in the hope, apparently justified at least in one case, of persuading the players to consider the more serious matter of their ultimate salvation. The length of their individual stays in Staffordshire probably varied. Some visits seem to have been made in passing, but a sustained evangelistic drive probably lasted longer, to allow for news of forthcoming meetings

³⁹ Fox, *Journal*, pp. 181, 451, 513 and 534.

⁴⁰ Leek MSS (MS Vol. 330), pp.136 -7. The letter is also referred to in Minute 102 of the Staffordshire Quarterly Meeting held on 7/8/1678.

to be spread in an area and perhaps to include at least one market day, especially in winter. Atherton, Shield and Moore, as detailed above, stayed about two weeks in the Leek and Moorlands area in December 1660, using Ipstones as the centre for their activities and holding meetings day and night. ⁴¹

The approach used by the First Publishers in their evangelistic work was presumably adapted to the three main types of audience they attracted. They were local people generally, then members of rival sects such as Ranters and Baptists, and finally smaller meetings of those who had already been convinced of the basic truth of the Quaker message and who could be further guided. Of their style and the contents of their open - air extempore preaching little is known, and there are no printed versions of sermons known to have been preached in the county which can be dated to this decade. It is, however, likely, that the views expressed in the written tracts and pamphlets of the period produced by Fox and others, demanding a more just society, were often echoed in the public addresses of the First Publishers. Fox's pamphlet of 1659 addressed to Parliament and containing his 'Fifty-Nine Particulars' was the highwater mark, suggests Ingle, of this radical social and political element in Fox's thinking. ⁴² His demands included an end to penalties for non-payment of tithes, the acceptance of an obligation to eliminate poverty by confiscating church property, including glebeland, and to give it to the needy. There were also the usual puritan proposals to ban gambling, football, bear-baiting and similar pursuits. It is also likely that the extempore, open - air sermons contained vehement denunciations of the established church.

The language and style used by the early Quaker itinerants for both their

41 Swarthmore MS 1/134, Atherton to Fell 17 December 1660 .

42 Ingle, First Among Friends , pp. 177 - 9.

general evangelising and for their closer work with particular groups may be presumed to have been broadly similar to those of the surviving printed sermons. Only 74 Quaker sermons for the period 1671 to 1700 are extant, either in print or in manuscript, of which 11 are by George Fox. These sermons have recently begun to be researched in some depth and scholars have isolated a number of key metaphors, such as Light - Dark, Guiding Voice, Hunger - Thirst, Seed and Pilgrimage, which characterise the language.⁴³ Such simple, evocative and familiar images and metaphors had an appeal to the audiences to whom they were directed. Fox's Journal also provides a clue to the kind of language used by these early preachers. Fox originally dictated it, although there was some, perhaps even much, subsequent editing and revision. In discussing the style in which Fox's Journal is written, its latest editor, Smith, suggests that it bears comparison with that of extempore Quaker preaching and with Quaker pamphlets made powerful by repetition and much Biblical allusion.⁴⁴

Although the contents of the general evangelising addresses can only be speculated upon it seems likely that there was a growing emphasis on the spiritual message that Quakerism brought, rather than on the demand for radical social and political reform, although the illegitimacy of tithes probably remained a constant theme. In letters sent to Margaret Fell from travelling Quaker preachers in the first decade of their work in Staffordshire there are few direct references to contemporary economic problems. Recent research on the flood of pamphlets produced by Fox, Burrough, Farnworth, Howgill and others in the decade has shown that the content of these pamphlets altered considerably year by year, reflecting the Quaker leaders' reactions to the prevailing political situation during the Commonwealth and to the

43 M. P. Graves, 'Mapping the Metaphors in George Fox's Sermons', in M. Mullett, (ed.), New Light on George Fox (York, 1993), pp. 45, 55.

44 Fox, Journal, (ed. N. Smith. 1998), p. xxv.

new problems created by their own success.⁴⁵ A pamphlet of 1661, written by Humphrey Wolrich, one of the first Staffordshire Quakers, who had become an itinerant preacher himself, and campaigned in the county, in London and elsewhere, is possibly representative of the general tone and substance of his evangelising work at this time. It starts with a denunciation of the wickedness of London, where Wolrich had been active and where the pamphlet was published, and continues with a vehement attack on the Church of England and the Book of Common Prayer: 'What', he demanded, 'do ye think the great God dwelleth in a dead Temple made with hands?' There follows an assertion that Quakers were 'the Lord's people chosen for his peculiar treasure', a defence of their rejection of the pagan names of days and months, and a renunciation of the use of force and of plotting or fighting against any, 'for conscience' sake' which amounts to a declaration of pacifism.⁴⁶ This last point in the pamphlet was probably immediately occasioned by the recent rising of the Fifth Monarchy Men in London and the need of the Quaker leadership to dissociate themselves from the event.

As early as 1654 the 'Children of the Light', as they often called themselves, had begun to arrive at the belief that they alone were the true saints, whose task was to help prepare the world for the 'Second Coming' of Christ. Although technically the earliest Quakers were not millenarians who anticipated a thousand - year reign of Christ prior to the last judgment, from their pronouncements and the pamphlets which they wrote, it is not always possible to distinguish them from such groups as the Fifth Monarchy Men, with whom they were often popularly identified. By 1658 some of

45 R. Moore, 'The Faith of the First Friends', (unpub. Ph.D. thesis, University of Birmingham, 1993).

46 H. Wolrich, The Rock of Ages known and Foundation of many Generations discovered after the long and dark Night of Apostacy (1661).

the early fire of Quakerism was disappearing under the weight of what was becoming a mass movement. Estimates of the total number of Quakers in the country by 1660 vary widely, as a recent study shows, from 30,000 to 60,000.⁴⁷ Whatever the true figure, the tasks of servicing the movement were formidable and began to absorb more and more of the energy of the leaders.

Quakers exhibited a spectrum of beliefs concerning the doctrine of a Second Coming. Some, like William Dewsbury and Richard Farnsworth, held strongly to the belief that the kingdom of God had already arrived in the spirits of believers, others that it was still to come. Probably most Quakers believed that although the rule of Christ had already begun within themselves, a final consummation in the not too distant future was to be expected. As the first decade of Quakerism wore on, however, the leaders, in so far as the published pamphlets reflect their true convictions, had mostly ceased to worry about the last judgment and the resurrection, and their main concern had become the kingdom of God as manifested in what was now, in effect, a Quaker church. There was a final flurry of millenarian hope in 1659 with the fall of the Protectorate, and Edward Burrough, in particular, produced a crop of pamphlets for the occasion. By December of that year, however, as the rule of the saints failed to materialise, he was in despair. The rising of the Fifth Monarchy Men in January 1661, when slogans such as 'King Jesus, and their heads upon the gates' were used, was a disaster for Quakers. Many of them were arrested on suspicion of connection with the revolt. The year marked a milestone in Quaker history. Ingle argues that on the issue of the possible use of armed force to achieve a just society Fox had hitherto adopted a pragmatic line. Venner's Rising forced him and most of the leading Quakers of the

47 B. Reay, 'Quakerism and Society' in J. F. McGregor and B. Reay (eds), Radical Religion in the English Revolution (Oxford, 1984), p. 141.

time to an explicit declaration of their renunciation of the use of force to achieve the just society they envisaged. The 'Peace Testimony' they issued was not the same as the condemnation of the use of violence in any circumstances. The full acceptance of 'pacifism' for all Quakers was a later development. The year also marked the end for Fox and others of their hopes of realising their doctrine of a general perfectibility on earth as a political principle and by direct political means, a conclusion also echoed in Wolrich's pamphlet. It did not, however, put an end to their endeavours to achieve an individual perfectibility. The signs of such change within Quakerism had already become apparent by the middle 1650s: the restoration of the Stuart monarchy merely speeded up that process.

The year 1660 also marked the end of the first phase of early Staffordshire Quaker history. The state-enforced renewal of the monopoly of public religious worship by the Church of England brought a second phase, twenty or more years of official repression and persecution, to be detailed in the next two chapters of this study. The 'First Publishers of Truth' had, however, done their work well, and in the decade 1651-1660 established the Quaker movement in the county sufficiently strongly both in conviction and in numbers to survive the next two difficult decades.

The 'First Publishers' had achieved most success in the Leek and Moorlands area, where they gained an initial foothold and established a few centres, based on individual families living in the area, from which they could operate. They arranged special meetings with other religious groups including Ranters, and their success dismayed their chief rivals, Baptists. They reported back by letter to George Fox and Margaret Fell, who were prompted to send more preachers into what was obviously a promising area. Probably Hickock and his colleagues, like many field preachers both

before and after, indulged in a pardonable exaggeration of the size of the audiences at their general meetings, but it may be accepted that they attracted many hearers. Their itineraries and centres were not randomly chosen. By the last years of the decade, as Atherton's letter of 1660 quoted above demonstrates, some accommodation was often ensured beforehand, and once they had arrived, meetings of Friends and encounters with members of rival sects could be fairly quickly arranged. The initial spread of Quakerism depended on networks of relationships, connection and acquaintance within adjacent parishes. Braithwaite even writes of a Quaker 'intelligence department' operating in South Lancashire as early as 1655, which provided contacts and suggested locations which should be visited.⁴⁸ It was also through such channels, when the stimulus afforded by visiting preachers was restricted, that the movement in Staffordshire, as elsewhere, not only survived during the decade or more of persecution which followed the restoration of the monarchy in 1660, but continued to spread, albeit more slowly.

The red-hot evangelism of the First Publishers of Truth had initially attracted a varied throng of hearers, including the merely curious, the genuine searchers after conviction, the discontented and the dispossessed. Itinerant Quaker preachers continued to come to Staffordshire until the restoration of the monarchy in 1660 and the anti-Dissent legislation that followed restricted their movements. Despite the increased hazards, however, visits from outside did not cease completely. Apart from George Fox himself, who, as noted above, came to the Leek and Moorlands area three more times in the decade, in 1663, 1667 and 1669, there were at least two more itinerant visitors : William Fallowfield from Westmorland must have come to the

48 Braithwaite, Beginnings, p. 375.

county before 1666 because on 11th of the 7th month in that year he married Hester Brindley and settled in Leek,⁴⁹ and Thomas Taylor, also from Westmorland, settled in Stafford in this decade. Both Fallowfield and Taylor served as models to their fellow Quakers for their steadfastness under persecution, which included years in prison. There were probably other visitors, of whom no local evidence survives, but in general an itinerant ministry ceased to operate in the county after 1661. From among the Friends whom the First Publishers had convinced, however, local leaders emerged, able to arrange their own meetings and to sustain their faith for themselves.

It is now accepted by modern scholars that Fox was not the sole founder of Quakerism, and the evidence from Staffordshire shows that while his colleagues looked to him for direction they also reported to Margaret Fell. As early as 1912 W.G. Braithwaite, although he did not in the least undervalue Fox's importance, emphasised the early collective leadership of Quakerism,⁵⁰ and modern scholars have elaborated on this theme. Earlier biographical accounts of Fox diminished the importance, in the initial spread of Quakerism, of Friends such as William Dewsbury, John Camm, John Audland and Richard Hubberthorne. To this is added the argument that Fox's Journal, which is in effect his autobiography, presents a narrative of early Quaker history as the story of Fox building up the church, a story in which he likened himself to the early apostles, Stephen and Paul, bringing the Christian church into being out of first-century Judaism, and in which other Quaker leaders were presented as Fox's personal converts. This is not now believed to be an accurate account of what happened. Ingle summarises the modern view of Fox's Journal as controlling

49 Register of Births, Marriages and Deaths, F.H.L., London.

50 Braithwaite, Beginnings, p. 94.

the story of the past to help determine the way people in the future would act.⁵¹

Some scholars have concentrated on the changing political stance and toning down of radical social opinions adopted by Fox and other leading Quakers even in the first decade of Quakerism and which was continued after the Restoration: Christopher Hill has used the expression 'total rethink' to describe their reactions.⁵² In practice, Quakers abandoned hopes of achieving their aims of changing the social order and preparing for the millenium by political means, reversed their militant policy towards the state and avoided their earlier confrontational tactics. Fox had not originally wanted to create a sect, but rather to establish a fellowship of men and women guided only by an inner, divinely-endowed light. Circumstances, especially the persecution that Quakers encountered, determined otherwise. By 1660 the First Publishers of Truth were, in practice, building a church rather than expecting the imminent establishment of the New Jerusalem. An organisation grew, quite rapidly, with rules and conventions for individual behaviour overseen by monthly and quarterly meetings, which in turn were guided by 'Queries' and 'Advices' issued by the yearly meeting, centred on London rather than in the north of the country. The stages of this development in Staffordshire are detailed in a later chapter. First, however, it is necessary to trace the history of the persecution of Quakers in the county, an experience which was the main factor in changing the aims and the character of the movement.

51 Ingle, *First among Friends*, p. 265.

52 C. Hill, 'Quakers and the English Revolution', in *J.F.H.S.* 6 (1992), p. 174.

CHAPTER 3 'SUFFERINGS FOR THE TRUTH': the persecution of Quakers in Staffordshire 1651 - 1689

(i) Absence from Church, Refusing Oaths and attending Conventicles

In 1649 Fox interrupted a church service in Nottingham, was brought before the magistrates but released on a technicality. It was the first of his many confrontations with the authorities. Friends, because of their militancy and their refusal to hold their conventicles in secret are generally acknowledged to have borne the brunt of the anti-dissent persecution during the period up to 1689. Braithwaite quotes a total of over 20,000 sufferers by imprisonment and otherwise in England and Wales, 15,000 of whom belong to the Restoration period. Of these 450 died during, or as a result of, their imprisonment.¹ In his Journal Fox's descriptions of the barbarous condition of the eight different gaols in which he was incarcerated make grim reading. Staffordshire prisons were in general no better: Besse records that in the room in Stafford gaol in which Peter Littleton spent months in 1675, four men died of gaol fever.²

Some modern scholars suggest that while the Quakers' own records of sufferings are indispensable, they are uneven and should not be used alone as evidence. One of the fullest discussions of this topic for a particular locality is that by Davies for Essex.³ His study is not a general history of the Quaker movement in that county but an examination of the relationship of the Quakers to their local community. Davies' findings on Essex Quakers' sufferings broadly accord with those for Staffordshire. The statistics for both counties show that persecution was at its

1 W. C. Braithwaite, The Beginnings of Quakerism to 1660, (1912; Cambridge 1981), p. 52.

2 J. Besse, A Collection of the Sufferings of the People called Quakers (1753), Vol. I, p. 652.

3 A. Davies, The Quakers in English Society 1655 - 1725 (Oxford, 2000).

highest during periods of political crisis or instability, and intermittent in character.

The Blasphemy Act of 1650 made it an offence for anyone to assert that he was God or that the true God dwelt in men and nowhere else. Fox was imprisoned in Derby in 1650 under this act and arrested again for this offence at Carlisle in 1653, when, if he had been convicted, he would have faced the possibility of being hanged. In 1656 James Nayler was arrested after his allegedly blasphemous entry into Bristol, and suffered a barbaric punishment.

The elevation of the individual conscience rather than the authority of any church was at the core of the Protestant position and was a central tenet of a number of religious groups. Fox and his fellow Quaker evangelists, however, were the only group persistently and publicly to deny the validity of the Church of England. Their interruption of Anglican services brought them into high public profile and thus into direct confrontation with the ecclesiastical and state authorities. Quakers maintained that churches were not holy ground but merely places of stone, lime and wood - 'steeple houses' - to use their term. They denounced paid ministers as 'hireling priests', harangued congregations as they came out of church and sometimes entered the church during service time to proclaim their own 'Message of Truth'. This was an offence for which they could be prosecuted under an act of 1554 which prohibited the malicious disturbance of a preacher in his sermon or during the celebration of Divine service. Sometimes Friends endeavoured to abide by the law and waited until the sermon was over but in 1656 the Lord's Day Act was tightened and definition of the offence extended to disturbing a minister who was carrying out his duties and to causing any disturbance in a church on the sabbath day.

Richard Hickock's ejection from Leek parish church, in 1654, mentioned in Chapter 2 above, is the first recorded instance of a Quaker attempting to interrupt a

church service in Staffordshire. Two of his Staffordshire converts soon followed his example. In 1655 Richard Dale ⁴, aged about 70, of Rudyard in the parish of Leek, was brought before the magistrates for 'crying against the deceit of the priests' and was imprisoned for three weeks. ⁵ In the same year William Yardley of Dairy House, in the parish of Horton, was imprisoned for 'declaring the word of the Lord by way of Exhortation to the People in the Assembly in Leek steeplehouse and kept close prisoner for the time of nineteen weeks'. ⁶ Besse records that for seventeen of the nineteen weeks Yardley lay on the bare floor, as the gaoler would not allow him any straw. ⁷ The last recorded local instance of this offence was in 1664. An entry in the appendix on Friends' sufferings in the Quarterly Meeting Minute Book recorded that

Alice Bowman, of Alstonefield, was moved to go the steeplehouse where the priest and people were eating bread and drinking wine, and for speaking to the people she was brought before the justices so-called and sent to prison and at the quarter sessions was sent from the prison to the house of correction to remain there till the next sessions in which time she having a young child sucking at her breast it fell sick and died there.' ⁸

Denunciations of the Church of England were also made at public meetings. In September 1655 Thomas Hammersley of Basford in the parish of Cheddleton, was brought before the magistrates at Stafford Quarter Sessions for calling a meeting on Cheddleton Heath 'where might be discovered the deceit of the priests and the truth made manifest'. He escaped imprisonment, however, being released on an Exeat of Good Behaviour.⁹ So frequently did Quakers generally in England disturb church

4 Staffordshire County Record Office D 3159/1/1 Quarterly Meeting Minute Book 1672-1743, Appendix, 'A Record of such Friends as first declared and published Truth in Staffordshire'.

5 Q.M.M.B. Appendix, 'Friends' Sufferings for the Truth in Staffordshire'.

6 Ibid.

7 Besse, Sufferings, p. 650.

8 Q.M.M.B. 'Friends' Sufferings'.

9 Staffs. C.R.O. Q/SR, M. 1655, f. 2.

services that on 15th February 1655 the Commonwealth government issued a proclamation specifically directed against Quakers and Ranters, and in the following year passed an Act of Parliament which prescribed a penalty of £5 and six months in a house of correction for the offence.

Quakers, in common with some other Protestant dissenting sects, were conscientiously opposed to the swearing of oaths. They based their opposition on a text from Matthew v, 34, and William Penn summed up Friends' position in his aphorism 'People swear to the end they may speak truth; Christ would have them speak truth to the end they might not swear'. An Act of 1563 (5 Eliz. cap.1) had required all office holders to swear an oath testifying to the supremacy of the queen as supreme governor of the church. More serious was that the Act of 1609 (7 Jas. I, cap.6) required office holders to take an oath of allegiance to the king and to deny the authority of the Pope, with the possible sanction of praemunire, involving indefinite imprisonment, for failure to do so. There are no recorded instances of Staffordshire Quakers being debarred from taking office because of this Act, but there are examples elsewhere in the country of its enforcement.¹⁰ Quakers, brought to court for some offence, refused the oath. The first documented instance of this in Staffordshire is for William Reading of Lynn, in the parish of Shenstone. In 1656 he had been distrained of a cow and calf worth £3 5s. for refusing to pay a tithe demand for £1 10s. to the local minister, Gamaliel Dunstal. Summoned in 1658 to appear at the assizes he refused to swear, was fined and distrained of goods worth 27 shillings in order to pay the fine.¹¹

The first year of Charles II's restoration was initially one of hope and

10 A. Lloyd, Quaker Social History, (1950), p. 81.

11 Q.M.M.B. 'Friends Sufferings'.

expectation for Quakers, but the new king was dependent on the 'Cavalier' Parliament, which demanded the renewal of the Anglican monopoly of public worship.

Governmental intolerance was boosted by fear when, in January 1661, the Fifth Monarchy Men staged a military rising in London. A government proclamation was issued immediately, prohibiting meetings of Anapbaptists, Quakers and Fifth Monarchy Men, and justices were ordered to tender the Oath of Allegiance to all brought before them for assembling at such meetings. Within weeks the gaols over the whole country were filled and more than 4230 Quakers were imprisoned.¹² This was followed in 1662 by the so-called Quaker Act (14 Car. II, c.1) by which any person convicted of maintaining that oaths were unlawful, or who refused to take an oath, or who endeavoured to persuade others to refuse an oath, incurred increasingly severe penalties for repeated offences, culminating in transportation for life. Besse gives a figure of 183 persons in Staffordshire imprisoned in the latter part of 1660 and in 1661 for this offence.¹³

Offences other than refusing to swear oaths under which Quakers were often charged were numerous. Non-attendance at church had been a statutory offence since the Act of Uniformity of 1559 and the penalties which this could incur were extended by further acts of 1581, 1587 and 1591. During the Commonwealth period Quakers were also arrested and punished under the Vagrancy Act of 1597 and under an ordinance of 1644, which prohibited travelling on the Lord's day, offenders could be fined ten shillings or put in the stocks for eight hours. This ordinance was reinforced by an act of 1656 which forbade all 'vain and profane walking' on the Sabbath. The proclamation against Quakers and Ranters of 1655 had also included the provision that suspected Roman Catholics - a charge often brought against early

12 W. C. Braithwaite, The Second Period of Quakerism (1961), p. 9.

13 Besse, Sufferings, p. 650.

Friends - should be required to take the oath of abjuration and to deny the doctrine of transubstantiation. With the restoration of the monarchy the legal pressure on dissenters increased. Between 1661 and 1665 Parliament passed four acts, popularly known as the Clarendon Code, directed against dissenters in general and one specifically against Quakers, the Quaker Act of 1662. Most of the provisions of this Act were superseded by the Conventicle Act of 1664, which was directed against all nonconformists. By holding a seditious conventicle, defined as any assembly of more than five people gathered for the exercise of religion other than was allowed by the liturgy or practice of the Church of England, the act prescribed an increasing scale of penalties for repeated offences and culminated in the possibility of transportation overseas for life. The act lapsed in 1667 but was renewed by the Conventicle Act of 1670 which omitted the penalty of transportation but included a £40 fine for preaching at a conventicle, a £20 fine for the owner of the house in which the conventicle was held, and provision for the payment of informers, who were to receive one third of the fine imposed.

Fox believed in the 'redemptive workings of an aroused public opinion'¹⁴ and that by recording and publicising Friends' sufferings in letters, as well as by personal confrontation, the perpetrators might perhaps be brought to repentance. If they persisted in their evil doings there was nothing to do but to leave them to the judgement of God. In any case Friends would have done their duty to 'clear truth', that is, to carry out what they perceived to be their duty as prompted by the Inward Light of God, regardless of the cost to themselves. From an early date, therefore, Friends began to keep records of their sufferings and from 1660 the clerk of the Friends' central meeting in London, Ellis Hookes, compiled digests of the sufferings that were

14 Braithwaite, Second Period, p. 282.

reported to him from the various county quarterly meetings. In 1676 Yearly Meeting decided to establish a committee system to draw up a Book of Sufferings which could be presented to Parliament and which was to include sufferings which took place before 1660. Joseph Besse was appointed in 1726 to prepare a digest of all the materials available and his two-volume book, A Collection of the Sufferings of the People called Quakers 1650-1689, was eventually published in 1753. Chapter XXXI of Volume 1, pages 650 -657, deals with Staffordshire. Besse's information on the county can be supplemented by the appendix to the Quarterly Meeting Minute Book entitled 'Friends' Sufferings for the Truth' which runs from 1655 to 1680. Presentments to episcopal visitations and county quarter sessions records provide further information.

Besse's figures for Staffordshire Quakers' sufferings are summarised in Table 1.1. They show the number of recorded offences during the Commonwealth period to be six. The increase to 183 in 1661 is attributed to Friends' refusal to take the oath of allegiance. Of the total of 183 persons imprisoned for that offence Besse provides the names of about 40. Ten of the individuals named do not appear again in local records nor do any persons with the same family name as these. If this proportion is applied to the total of 183, it suggests that possibly a third of those who were arrested were deterred from attending subsequent Quaker meetings after their release. The 'round-up' of 1661 was probably a hit and miss affair which may have omitted some Quakers and included some people who were not.

Besse gives the locations of six meetings at which many Friends were arrested and the names of the occupants of the houses where the meetings were held. There were two at Ipstones, in the houses of Robert Fernihough and Joseph Taylor, one at Grindon in Richard Buxton's house, one at Field in William Davenport's house, one at Morridge in John Hall's house and the last at the house of Henry Fidoe at 'Midgbury',

**TABLE 1.1 SUMMARY OF ALL TYPES OF SUFFERINGS OF
STAFFORDSHIRE FRIENDS 1655 - 1690**

(Source: Besse, Sufferings)

Year	Number imprisoned and offence cited		No. of distraints imposed and offence cited	
1655	2	church service	-	-
	2	unspecified	-	-
1658	-	-	2	oath
1660	2	tithes	4	tithes
			1	levy
1661	183	oath	8	costs
	1	oath	-	-
	1(HC)	oath	1	tithes
1662	1	oath	-	-
1663	1	absence	2	absence
	1	-	-	-
	1(HC)	church service	-	-
1664	19	conventicle	1	oath
1665	-	-	1	tithes
1666	6	tithes	1	tithes
	-	-	10	conventicle
	-	-	2	absence
1669	5	oath	-	-
1674	2	conventicle	-	-
1675	5	conventicle	5	tithes
	11	tithes	-	-
1679	-	-	4	conventicle
1681	2	absence	11	tithes
1682	1	oath	8	tithes
	-	-	3	absence
	-	-	15	conventicle
1683	-	-	10	conventicle
	-	-	2	absence
1684	-	-	4	conventicle
1689	1	tithes	-	-
1690	-	-	8	tithes

Abbreviations: church service = disturbance of church service; tithes = non-payment of tithes; oath = refusal to swear on oath to speak the truth; levy = non payment of church levies; conventicle = attendance at unlawful conventicle; absence = non-attendance at Church of England services; HC = House of Correction

presumably a misreading of Wednesbury, where he was presented as an excommunicated Quaker at the episcopal visitation of 1663.¹⁵ The other five locations cited by Besse are all in the Leek and Moorlands area. Only four of the individual names, including that of Henry Fidoe, can be identified as belonging to persons living in the centre or south of the county, seven cannot be assigned to a specific location but the remaining 31 are from parishes in the more remote Moorlands region such as Grindon, Wetton and Alstonefield and some are in family clusters.

Besse's figures suggest that if 183 persons were steadfast enough to face imprisonment rather than to swear an oath in 1661 the movement was already firmly rooted in the county by that date. Moreover there were probably other Quakers in the county who did not have to face this test and whose names thus remained unrecorded. Although the evidence surviving from the south and centre of the county may be defective, the figures also point to the conclusion that in the earliest years the movement appears to have been stronger in the Moorlands area than elsewhere in the county.

Table 1.1 reflects the variation in statute-based persecution in Staffordshire after 1661. The Conventicle Act (16 Car.II, cap.4) of 1664 extended the 1662 Quaker Act to all nonconformists, a third conviction for attending a conventicle prescribing the possibility of transportation. In 1664 19 Staffordshire Quakers were committed to prison under this Act , described by Friends as the 'Act of Banishment'. In 1669 five Friends were imprisoned for refusing to swear an oath, then only one more imprisonment for this offence, in 1682.

15 Lichfield Joint Record Office, B/V/1/71, Presentments at the Episcopal Visitation, 1663, Wednesbury, shows him as an excommunicated Quaker.

Besse recorded no instances of sufferings between 1669 and 1674. These years included the issue of Charles II's Declaration of Indulgence of 1672 which suspended the penal laws against nonconformists and Roman Catholics and allowed the former to meet for worship, provided their meetings were free, open to all persons and had licensed teachers. Although Quakers were unwilling to admit the right of anyone to authorise or deny public worship, and sought no licences for preachers or meeting places, they did however submit the names of 491 Friends, then in prison, to the king in Council. The official release came on 3rd September 1672. It was a legally expensive time for the Quaker leadership which asked quarterly meetings whose prisoners had been released to contribute their proportion to the cost. This worked out, in Yorkshire, at 13s.6d. per prisoner.¹⁶ Staffordshire Quarterly Meeting Minute Book for 22/8/1672 records that a 'London Collection' had been brought in to the meeting although it does not state how much it was. Six Staffordshire Friends had been released, one after ten years' confinement and the other five after six years.

Official relief did not last long. The king, short of money, was forced to call Parliament in February 1673, and it challenged his power to dispense with legislation. The Declaration was cancelled in 1674, and this was followed by another drive to implement the anti-conventicle laws. Again Table 1.1 illustrates the effects in Staffordshire. The number of imprisonments for attendance at conventicles in 1674 was 2 rising to 5 in 1675. The Declaration nevertheless presaged an eventual relaxation of persecution and the ground won for toleration was not entirely lost, even by the issue of an Order in Council of 3rd February 1675 which directed that the penal laws should be diligently executed. The three - year respite seems to have afforded Friends a breathing space.

16 Braithwaite, Second Period, p. 84n.

Besse's figures show that imprisonments and distrains for non-payment of tithes continued. There was an upsurge in the numbers of distrains in 1679 and especially in 1682 and 1683 when, in these two years, 25 are recorded. The last recorded imprisonment of a Staffordshire Friend for refusing to take an oath was in 1682 and the last distraint for non-attendance at church in 1683.

The 'List of Friends' Sufferings' in the Quarterly Meeting Minute Book 1672 - 1743, which runs from 1655 to 1680, provides some check on Besse's figures and adds a little detail. It does not contain all the information which is found in his account, and there are numerous discrepancies between the two. In compiling his account of sufferings during the period Besse apparently had access not only to this list but also to other local information which the compilers of the 1680 list lacked. In general, nevertheless, the two accounts are similar, and the discrepancies explicable. For example, while Besse gives a global figure of 183 for the imprisonments of 1661, the 1680 list is more precise, recording that 35 Friends were imprisoned for refusing to swear in the 11th month 1660, 17 at the beginning of the second month 1661, another seven on the 25th of that month, a further 38 at the end of the month, and finally another mass arrest of 30 Friends in the sixth month, making a total of only 127, 56 fewer than Besse's figure. There are, however, no specific references in the Quarterly Meeting Minute Book list to Friends' sufferings in the south of the county in 1661, and this underlines the defective character of the available statistics.

Comparison of the sufferings recorded in the two accounts in the decade 1660 - 70 reveals further differences between Besse's list and the 1680 record. Thus Besse records 19 imprisonments under the 'Act of Banishment' in 1664, whereas the 1680 list details a total of 26. Some of the statistical differences may be attributed to the

compilers having assigned the same sufferings to different years. This, however, is not to be wondered at. Friends were often imprisoned, temporarily released on promising to appear at the assises, and then imprisoned again, when they did so appear, for refusing to swear oaths.

Besse's account is sometimes phrased more subjectively and he may have added a few details to make his account more telling on a generation of Quakers which was no longer suffering from the harsh persecution to which the earliest Friends had been subjected. When there is such a conflict between the information provided by the two different sources it seems safer to accept Besse's global figures but to rely on the earlier, near-contemporary account of 1680 for individual detail. It was compiled from the oral information provided by some of the Friends who had been among the sufferers. This conclusion is suggested by the use of a personal pronoun in the entry for 1674 concerning the arrest of Robert Mellor, John Hall and Joseph Taylor which reads 'upon an examination hereunto annexed without any notice of their proceedings against us.' All three of these Friends were still alive in 1680.

The Church of England sometimes invoked the state to punish non-attenders at church under more ancient laws. Usually such offenders were first cited to appear at the appropriate diocesan court, and if they failed to do so might incur the ultimate ecclesiastical sanction of excommunication. On Quakers, as for most Protestants, the spiritual terrors of excommunication, had, naturally, no effect. It was, however, possible for the local bishop to hand over a contumacious recusant to the secular arm of the state. It was a long, complex and expensive legal process, and was not much resorted to except occasionally to enforce payment of tithes. Moreover Quakers and other dissenters who failed to come to church were usually charged with the offence

of attending conventicles and refusing to swear oaths rather than being absent from church. The number of sufferings listed in Besse under this last heading is not therefore a particularly useful statistic of the incidence of persecution, as only a relatively few Quakers came before the secular courts on this charge. Besse cites three cases of imprisonment and nine cases of distrains levied for non-payment of fines imposed by the justices for this type of offence between the years 1655 and 1690.

In summary it may be said that the surviving statistics for Staffordshire are not absolutely accurate, but may be accepted rather as indicating general orders of magnitude. They demonstrate the mass imprisonments in 1661 for refusal to swear the oath of allegiance, and the sharp rise in the number of imprisonments for attending conventicles in 1664 when the Conventicle Act came into force. The figures also show the increase in 1674 and 1675 of imprisonments when the king's Declaration of Indulgence was rescinded and a massive rise in distrains for this particular offence in 1682 and 1683. They show that in Staffordshire, as elsewhere in the country, the incidence of judicial persecution varied considerably through time.

A separate source of information on names of early Friends and their location is provided by the presentments made by parish churchwardens at episcopal visitations. For Staffordshire volumes of presentments for the visitations of 1663, 1665 and 1668 have survived although key volumes for 1669 to 1679 are missing.¹⁷ The bishop's visitation was usually held every three years, and presentments concern not only matters connected with the parish church and its fabric and shortcomings of the clergy and the parochial officers, but also of moral offences of parishioners and non-attendance at church. The references to Staffordshire Quakers from the

17 Lichfield Joint Record Office, B/V/1/71.

churchwardens' presentments for 1663, 1665 and 1668 have been printed.¹⁸ They are useful for providing names, and sometimes specify the denomination and detail the offence. Although churchwardens were not always precise in their naming of dissenting sects, and there are a few doubtful Quaker attributions in the Staffordshire visitation books, in general they are broadly reliable for the information they do supply but as a statistical data - base for measuring local persecution of Quakers they are too sporadic and defective in their enumeration to be used. The presentments for 1663, 1665 and 1668 illustrate these strengths and weaknesses as historical sources. Thus in 1663, while Quaker records show considerable activity in the central area of the county, the presentments record only one location, Tutbury. The names of six Quakers in this parish are given, for four of whom no reason for the presentment is given, one is noted as not coming to church and one for not baptising his child. For the southern border of the county in 1663 four locations are listed, of which one, Middleton, is in Warwickshire. This may have been included because the Quaker listed was probably linked with the Friends at Drayton Bassett, about a mile and a half to the north. The presentment for Drayton Bassett itself listed one Quaker who had three children unbaptised; Kingswinford, in the west of this area, had three Quakers, one of whom was cited as having his children unbaptised; Sedgley, a few miles north of Kingswinford, had two Quakers.

The 1665 visitation is fuller and includes five locations in the north-east. In the parish of Horton, to the west of Leek, two Quakers, husband and wife, were presented; Butterson, about six or seven miles east of Leek, also presented two Quakers, again a husband and wife, who were noted as having a child unbaptised; at Wetton, a few miles east of Butterson, three Quakers were presented; at Grindon

18 G. Lyon Turner, 'Presentations of Quakers in Episcopal Visitations', Journal of the Friends Historical Society, 5 (1907), pp. 99 -102.

there were five, of whom one was stated to keep conventicles in his house, to have his children unbaptised and not to have paid his church levies; at Ipstones four married couples and one other Quaker were presented for not paying their church levies. A little further south, at Uttoxeter, four Quakers were presented, and another nine, including four married couples, at nearby Bramshall. One parish, 'Carswall', which Turner was unable to identify but which is probably Caverswall, nearer to the modern Stoke-on-Trent, presented one Quaker. On the southern border four parishes presented Quakers at the 1665 visitation, Drayton Bassett, which recorded one Quaker woman, West Bromwich two Quakers, a father and son, Kingswinford one, a widow who was already an excommunicant for absenting herself from church, and at Sedgley three persons described as 'Anabaptists and Quakers'.

The visitation of 1668 cites five Moorlands parishes in which Quakers appear, Leek, listed for the first time, plus Cheddleton, Butterson, Alstonefield and Grindon. Eight of the 21 Quakers named are noted as excommunicated, which indicates that presentments had been made at previous visitations. The relevant volume of excommunication books for the period 1661-1667, which might have provided more information, is also missing. The centre of the county is represented in the visitation by only one entry, that for the parish of Chebsey, east of Stafford, where two members of the Wolrich family were presented. There were only two parishes in the southern border of Staffordshire which made presentments to this visitation, Wednesbury, where five Quakers, including two married couples, were listed and Darlaston 13, all of whom were stated to be Quakers, 'standing excommunicate'. The Darlaston Quakers included four married couples, and one of the husbands is noted as having buried his child in his garden.

Presentments at episcopal visitations did not necessarily involve subsequent

action by the local or county magistrates, and the number of Quakers presented to the magistrates for non-attendance at church was small in relation to the numbers listed in the visitation records. Church incumbents probably did not expect presentments to boost the size of their congregations, but to warn their parishioners to attend regularly. Nor did they wish to admit their parishes had numerous nonconformists. Legal action was usually initiated only when incumbents were seriously disadvantaged by the loss of baptismal, marriage and burial fees, or were very zealous Anglicans.

England in the year of the passing of the Toleration Act - in which the word 'toleration' does not appear - was still a persecuting society. Quakers were harassed for opening their shops on a Sunday, not burying their dead at parish churches and for conducting their own funerals, not giving public thanksgiving after childbirth, not marrying in church, refusing Easter dues, and for keeping schools.¹⁹ Coffey has argued, however, that political and religious contingencies had, over the previous fifty years, effected what amounted to a transformation of attitudes.²⁰ The Puritan revolution had ensured that England would have a pluralistic religious culture, and Anglican persecution had met its match in dogmatic fundamentalism; Dissent now had a Protestant champion in William III; the early Enlightenment was promoting a re-interpretation of scripture and exposing the fallibility of ancient texts; the discovery of the New World was a blow to the literal interpretation of the Book of Genesis. Other factors included a rising prosperity, at least for some, the growth of large urban centres, especially London, where Dissent could flourish, and not least, the printing presses which helped to develop pluralism even if they also spread prejudice.

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- 19 M. Mullett, 'From Sect to Denomination? Social Developments in Eighteenth Century English Quakerism', Journal of Religious History, 132, 1984, pp.168-91, discussing early Lancashire Quakers.
- 20 J. Coffey, Persecution and Toleration in Protestant England, 1558 - 1689, (Harlow, 2000), pp. 168 -191.

Detailed study of persecution and toleration of Quakerism in the localities is influenced by the nature of the surviving records, whether Quaker, ecclesiastical or judicial records. Marsh, in a microscopic examination of an incident involving members of the Family of Love in a Cambridgeshire parish in 1609, has drawn attention to the 'fragility and partiality' of the paper sources available for researching the incident.²¹ Davies in his study of Essex Quakers has demonstrated the remarkable degree of social interaction between Quakers and their conformist neighbours in that county and argues that by the early 1670s antagonism towards Quakers had diminished dramatically, partly as a consequence of their own move towards greater accommodation with society.²² He argues that the picture presented by lists of sufferings is inevitably partisan and partial and that such documentary sources are, by their nature, necessarily biased in favour of conflict and dispute and cannot tell the whole truth about the relationships between Quakers and their contemporaries. It is necessary to distinguish between the everyday relationships between Quakers and their neighbours and their official relationships with authorities, both secular and sacred. Some of the local persecution which the early Quaker itinerants endured may have been prompted by mere xenophobia. When the First Publishers had left, some hostility towards their converts persisted, fuelled by their militant attitude, assumptions of 'election' by God and their frequent violation of traditional communal rites and customs. At the local level, however, and as time went on and Quakers proved themselves to be good and honest neighbours, even if possessed of odd quirks of behaviour, dress and speech, public opinion began to change. It is reasonable to presume that this in turn influenced the local magistracy, although they could be

21 C. Marsh, 'The gravestone of Thomas Lawrence revisited' in M. Spufford, The World of Rural Dissenters 1520 - 1725 (Cambridge, 1995), Chap. 5.

22 Davies, Quakers in English Society, pp. 216 - 223.

prompted to action at times of political hysteria or instability. As Braddick has recently pointed out, however, the state did not have the means to enforce religious uniformity. Powerful lay interests in the government of the church reduced state authority and provided the opportunity for considerable evasion of central directives. The influence of local dissenters and considerations of neighbourliness undercut the perception of a threat to society implied by the proliferation of sects listed in Edward's Gangraena. Before 1660 Protestant separatism had achieved an organisational basis beyond the control of ecclesiastical or secular authority. Religious pluralism had become a fact of life.²³

Many Anglicans defended their policy of persecution on the grounds that it was necessary to prevent sedition and promote order and decency in public worship, and some saw Protestant dissent as much a threat to political order as Popery. But in many localities there is evidence of local support for Quakers and mitigation of the penal laws. Even before 1689 Quakers in Staffordshire were, in practice, as the slender statistics and anecdotal evidence show, beginning to enjoy some measure of local toleration. For example a meeting house was acquired in the county town of Stafford and meetings for worship were held openly in the town a dozen years before the passage of the Toleration Act, although not without occasional attempts by local mayors to suppress them.²⁴ The sufferings of individual Friends, however, were often harsh and should not be minimised, either for the effects on the individuals themselves or on the local movement generally. What did not change, moreover, was the continued persecution which Quakers suffered from their objection to paying tithes and this feature, as it applied to Staffordshire must now be examined.

23 M. R. Braddick, State Formation in Early Modern England, c. 1550 - 1700 (Cambridge, 2000), p. 291.

24 See Chapter 7 of this study.

(ii) Tithes and Church Levies

Toleration of their public worship was officially permitted by 1689 but for long after that date Quakers continued to suffer for their adamant refusal to pay tithes. The practice of tithing, based on biblical injunctions and representing a tenth of the produce of the soil, had been introduced into Britain by the end of the fourth century A.D. Eventually, with the development of the parochial system, tithes were paid to the parish priest for the maintenance of the church fabric and the relief of the poor. 'Great' tithes, such as wheat and oats, were allocated to the rector, and in time rectorial tithes had often become impropriated to lay proprietors or appropriated to monasteries. Monastic rectors were required to maintain the chancel of the church and endow a vicar to reside in the parish and carry out the ecclesiastical duties, for which he received the 'small' tithes, an all-embracing term covering minor produce, even windfall apples, as well as usually holding glebe lands in the parish. Many monastic revenues from tithes fell into lay hands after the dissolution. By the eighteenth century tithes were mainly levied on land and by the end of that century most had been commuted into cash payments. Long before that, however, tithes had become divested of any mystical or charitable significance, were seen as increasingly anachronistic and had become a source of irritation and legal dispute. Church levies, often called 'Easter reckonings', weighed most heavily on the poor.

Acts of Parliament reinforced the church's claim to tithes. Contumacious persons who refused payment could be summoned before an ecclesiastical court and if they refused to appear could be handed over to the state by a writ of de excommunicato capiendo and imprisoned indefinitely until they paid. Tithe owners could also apply to local justices for a warrant to distrain the goods if custom could be cited. By a statute of 1696 two justices could issue a warrant where the demand was

not for more than £2. It was not until 1813 that an act of Parliament restricted the ecclesiastical courts' powers of excommunication on the issue of non-payment of tithes. In 1836 the Tithe Commutation Act abolished a large part of the system and payments in kind were commuted to a rent-charge based on the average of the last ten years' tithe yield.

The Quakers' objection to tithes, which they shared with some other religious sects, was based on their belief that such payments were founded on the ceremonial law of the Levitical priesthood and that this had been abrogated by the coming of Christ. They maintained that ministers of religion should receive no pecuniary remuneration for their ministry, quoting Matthew X, 8, in support. This position flowed from the central Quaker proposition, the doctrine of the 'Inward Light', which left no place for a man-made ministry or the necessity for a church and sacraments. For tithe-holders, however, whether clerical or lay, tithes constituted a part, and sometimes a major source, of their income. This was especially the case in Staffordshire. Evans used his examination of tithes in Staffordshire as the basis for his study of the system. He found that in 1832, of 131 parishes in the county, 42 were rectories, 34 were vicarages and 55 were perpetual curacies. Thirty-two rectors received more than half their income from tithes, and of these, 23 more than three-quarters. One third of all tithe owners in the county were lay impropriators.²⁵ These are nineteenth-century figures, but those for the later seventeenth, before the establishment in 1704 of Queen Anne's Bounty, are likely to have been similar and to have shown the local clergy in particular, to have been even more dependent on tithes. Staffordshire tithe-owners therefore made sustained efforts to exact their legal dues.

The first recorded instance of a Quaker being penalised for non-payment of

25 E. Evans, The Contentious Tithe (1976), p. 58.

tithes is for 1656 when William Reading, of Lynn in the parish of Shenstone, was distrained of a cow and calf sold for £3 5s. for an original demand of £1 10s. Table 1.2 summarises the information available for the period 1656 to 1680 found in an appendix to the Quarterly Meeting Minute Book for 1672-1743 entitled 'Friends' Sufferings'. It records 26 instances of distraint or imprisonment caused, in the first place, by a refusal to pay tithes. Besse's figures for such sufferings, between 1658 and 1690, total 31, so the two sources are reasonably coincident.

Table 1.2 illustrates that the value of the goods distrained was at first in excess of the sums actually demanded. Thus in 1665 Peter Littleton, of the parish of Haughton, was distrained of two bullocks worth £4 for an original demand of £1. After 1690, however, when quarterly meetings were required to send their annual record of sufferings to London and Friends had established what was in effect a legal department which could question outrageous distraints, there was not much complaint from Staffordshire Friends on this score. A note added to the 1694 list of sufferings sent to Yearly Meeting acknowledged that the distraints levied did not, as far as could be estimated, exceed the 'pretended dues' and Evans states that many vicars claimed less in tithes than was their right.²⁶ The table also demonstrates that distraints were confined to a few Friends, some of whom suffered severely: there are only 11 different names among the 26 sufferings listed. Peter Littleton provides an example again. His struggle with the local incumbent, Thomas Fletcher, lasted for more than 14 years and resulted in his imprisonment on three occasions. As always, global statistics, essential as they are, do not tell the full story.

A further deduction from the table shows that the Quakers who were distrained were fairly well-to-do farmers. Thus John Preston's distraints for tithes over

26 E. Evans, 'Our Faithful Testimony : the Society of Friends and Tithe Payments', J.F.H.S., (1969), pp. 106-121.

eight years averaged £2 annually. After 1690, when regular returns make analysis more possible, the burden of distraint fell on a relatively few Friends, most of whom were farmers. Distraints continued to be made on the same farming families for years. Distraints of members of the Timmis family of Keele are recorded regularly for over 70 years between 1690 and 1763, the Simpsons of Madeley appear from 1690 to 1733 and the Alsops of Ingestre from 1690 to 1727. The Shipleys of Loxley and Uttoxeter are the family with the longest record of sufferings, their names appearing from 1694 to 1849.²⁷ The table also illustrates that the degree of persistence exercised by local tithe appropriators or impropiators in attempting to exact their tithes was a decisive factor in the incidence of distraint suffered by Quakers.

Table 1.2 is not a complete list of sufferings from this cause in Staffordshire at the time. It covers only the north and centre of the county and the south and east are unrepresented. The Quarterly Meeting Minute Book list and Besse's collection are, however, all that survive for the first 35 years of the movement in the county. Only after 1690, when the Yearly Meeting in London required annual returns from all quarterly meetings, is the coverage more comprehensive. Thereafter the yearly records may be accepted as providing the raw data for more reliable analysis, and Evans accordingly based his study of the topic on these returns. They show that in the eighteenth century distraints of goods for non-payment of tithes continued to be confined to only a few families although the families affected changed over different periods.

For Quakers refusal to pay tithes was a moral obligation. On 7/5/1679, in response to an instruction from the Yearly Meeting, Staffordshire Quarterly

27 All details of Staffordshire Friends' sufferings after 1690 are extracted from Volumes 7 to 43 of the Books of Sufferings, F. H. L., London.

**TABLE 1.2 SUMMARY OF STAFFORDSHIRE FRIENDS' SUFFERINGS
FOR NON-PAYMENT OF TITHES 1655-1680.**

(Source : Quarterly Meeting Minute Book 1672-1743, appendix)

Year	Name	Demand	Distraint	Prison	Approp.	Improp.
1656	Wm. Reading	£1 10s	£3 5s		G. Dunstall	
1659	Rbt. Mellor	£4	cow £4			S. Finney R. Ransdole S. Finney
1660	Rbt. Mellor	4 nobles	horse 4 m.		-	
1661	Rbt. Mellor	16 tithes	2 kine £8			R. Bastorne J. Sheldon
	Hen. Bowman	-		19 mo.		
	Pet. Littleton	5s. s/tith.	-		T. Fletcher	
1662	Thos. Tunnicliff	tithes	horse & saddle			
1665	Pet. Littleton	£1	2 bull. £4		T. Fletcher	
1666	Pet. Littleton			3 mo.	T. Fletcher	
1671	John Preston	corn/hay £16 (8 y.)			Rbt. Phillips	
	Ed. Scotson	1s. s/tith.	shoes, kettle, pewter, 20s.		Wm. Ford	
1672	Pet. Littleton	tithes		8 mo.	writ <u>d.e.c.</u> T. Fletcher	
	John Till	tithes 2s.	pewter & bedding 45s.		D. Bayley	
1675	John Scot	s/tith.		(prison)		
	Pet. Littleton	tithes		(prison)	writ <u>d.e.c.</u> H. Archbold	
1677	John Till	tithes	wheat, oats corn, 30s			S. Webb
	Rbt. Timmis	tithes	barley, oats 30s.		M. Hill	
	Rbt. Timmis	tithes	wheat, 17s.		M. Hill	
1678	John Till	tithes	barley, peas, oats, 36s.			S. Webb

(cont.)

TABLE 1.2 (continued)

1679	Rbt. Timmis	tithes	barley,oats, peas, vetches, calf, goose,£4 3s.	W.Howion	
	John Hall	tithes	corn,hay 7s.8d.		A.Rooker (tf)
	John Hall	tithes	barley, peas, 17s.	Sanders	
1680	John Till	15s. lieu of tithes	milch cow	Rbt. Moss	
	John Till	tithes	barley,peas, oats, 25s.		S. Webb
	John Preston	tithes	hay,10s. wheat, rye oats, barley, 22s.	R. Phillips	
	John Hall	tithes	corn,hay, 20s.		A. Rooker (tf)

Notes: The noble was a gold coin originally worth 33.3p. Though superseded by the angel in 1464/5 the term was evidently still in use locally.

Sir Henry Archbold was chancellor of the diocese of Lichfield 1675--82.
(prison) = no term stated.

Abbreviations : Approp. = appropriator; bull. = bullocks; d.e.c. = de excommunicato capiendo ; Impropr. = impropiator; ma. = marks; mo. = months; tf = tithe farmer; s/tith. = small tithes; y. = years

Meeting agreed that every Friend should make a testimony or public witness against tithes. The making of such a testimony became, in practice, a condition of membership of the Society, both locally and nationally. The Yearly Meeting by this time was showing concern about some Friends' backsliding and reluctance to testify and there are hints that not all Friends in Staffordshire were 'clear' on this matter. As early as 1681 a Quarterly Meeting minute instructed Littleton and John Hall to speak to John Reading and others of Pipe Hill, one of the many out-townships

of Lichfield, concerning their testimony against tithes. Whether these individuals had not yet made the public testimony which was required or were not upholding it in practice and were actually paying tithes, is not apparent. As time went on, however, not all Friends in the county remained convinced of the immorality of paying tithes: the Yearly Meeting in 1718 noted the comment from Staffordshire, on its return of sufferings for the previous year, that there were a few members who were not clearly convinced of the unlawfulness of paying tithes.²⁸

Evans discusses a number of ways in which backsliding could occur. For example Friends who rented a farm from a landowner who also owned the tithes could pay both rent and tithe demand together. A minute of Yearly Meeting on 5/4/1693 warned against this and other practices and subsequently issued similar warnings to quarterly and monthly meetings to avoid such 'indirect ways and courses'. These could include payment in cash or kind arranged through neighbours, friends or relatives, with no questions asked by the tithe collector; Quaker creditors could arrange for debts which were owed to them, to be paid to the tithe owner. In practice, however, distraint of goods without a magistrate's warrant or other legal warning, was probably the most common method by which Staffordshire Quakers were tithed, although this cannot be documented. This had advantages for both sides: the tithe owner or tithe farmer obtained his tenth without recourse to the expensive procedures of the courts and the Friend could claim with a clear conscience that he had not connived at payment. It has been argued therefore that perhaps a majority of Quakers in the 18th century suffered little or no persecution or prosecution as a result of their refusal to pay tithes.²⁹ Not all scholars, however, agree with this.³⁰

28 Quoted in Evans, 'Our Faithful Testimony', p. 110.

29 N. C. Hunt, Two Early Political Associations, (1961), p. 64, note 2.;

30 N. J. Morgan, 'Lancashire Quakers and the Tithe, 1660 - 1730', Bulletin of the John Rylands University of Manchester 70 (1988).

Evans supports his conclusions by comparing the statistics of reported sufferings and legal prosecutions. He shows that of a total of 490 Quaker sufferings, by distrains or other means, for non-payment of tithes, recorded in the Friends' own returns during this period, tithe owners resorted to legal proceedings in only 35 i.e. 7.2% of the cases. Of this figure, 26 distrains were made by magistrates' warrant, six Quakers were brought to court and of these, three were imprisoned.³¹ The vast majority of reported distrains in Staffordshire in this period appear, Evans argues, to have been taken without legal authorisation. If any Staffordshire Friends did, however, connive at tithe-paying, they are not likely to have reported it. By the end of the seventeenth century, moreover, some tithe owners may have been wary of resorting to the magistrates in an attempt to enforce their legal rights. To obtain and execute a justice's warrant could be time-consuming and the outcome of any subsequent legal proceedings was always financially uncertain, especially as the Quakers, through the Meeting for Sufferings in London, had acquired greater competence in challenging cases brought to court. For the relatively small amounts often involved it was often not financially worthwhile for tithe-owners to resort to law and incur legal expenses.

Tithe paying by such devious methods, if this occurred, was probably a later development. Early Friends were firm in their commitment. Thus on 2/5/1688 representatives to Quarterly Meeting from Leek, Lynn, Stafford and Wolverhampton who had been delegated to enquire into the matter within their respective meetings reported that all Friends were 'clear and faithful according to their knowledge' concerning tithes and steeple house levies. There is no reason to doubt them. To tell the truth was a moral obligation on Quakers. Possibly there was an influx of recruits

31 Evans, 'Our Faithful Testimony', p.111.

into the movement following the passage of the Toleration Act in the following years which may have diluted the stern self-discipline maintained by earlier Friends, but a comparison of the number of Friends with the recorded numbers of distraints over the next few decades affords no convincing support for this hypothesis. There were approximately 130 Quaker households in Staffordshire in 1690,³² providing a core of seasoned Friends around which floated an uncertain number of less committed persons. In that year the number of sufferings for tithes reported to Yearly Meeting was seven and Table 1.3 shows that the average figure for the decade 1690 to 1699 was 7.4. Of all Quaker households in the county at this period, therefore, approximately only one in 16 reported suffering distraint of goods. The next three decades show only a slight rise in the numbers of sufferings reported. The incidence of distraints, whether by JP's warrant or taken without legal authorisation, varied from area to area, and local factors played a part in the level of suffering, but overall for the next three decades, as the table demonstrates, the decennial averages remained fairly steady. Only in two decades, 1710-19 and 1720-29, did reported sufferings reach 10 to 11. From 1730 there is a marked decrease, and only twice thereafter, in 1767 and 1771, did an annual total reach double figures.

The number of sufferings reported in comparison with the number of Quaker households bears out, therefore, the contention that the majority of Quakers did not suffer from persecution for non-payment of tithes. Whether these figures accurately reflect the number of distraints made on Staffordshire Quakers generally in the period 1690 to 1783 is less certain. They refer only to those distraints which were actually reported to the local monthly meetings.

32 Estimates of numbers and how these estimates were arrived at are discussed in Chapter 5.

TABLE 1.3 AVERAGE YEARLY REPORTED DISTRAINTS FOR NON-PAYMENT OF TITHES, STAFFORDSHIRE, 1690 - 1783 (by decades)

(Source : Books of Sufferings Friends House Library, London, Vols. 7 to 27)

1690-9	7.4	1740-9	4.1
1700-9	9.6	1750-9	6.3
1710-19	10.4	1760-9	7.2
1720-9	10.0	1770-9	5.6
1730-9	8.0	1780-3	4.0
		(4 yrs.)	

A closer study of individual sufferers than Evans was able to undertake in his more general statistical approach suggests the existence of other factors. Both the Quarterly Meeting Minute Book list of sufferings and the yearly returns show that throughout the period, tithes were largely imposed on the produce of the land. In any case town dwellers, even if they owned some agricultural produce, usually occupied tithe-free property. Table 1.4 lists the names of Staffordshire Friends whose sufferings were reported to Yearly Meeting for the period 1690 to 1739. There are 54 different names in the list, of whom only five or six were not farmers. Four of these, Toft, Lee, Davison and Lucas, came from Leek and appear in the list only in the decade 1720 -9. The table demonstrates that distraints fell almost entirely on a relatively few substantial Quaker individual farmers or farming families. John Alsop of Ingestre provides a striking example. In each of the first two decades of the period examined he suffered distraint ten times, making a yearly average of one. John Preston of Tixall had a similar record. John Hammersley of Cheddleton suffered most frequently from distraints between 1710 and 1729, and Thomas Wolrich of Shallowford between

1720 and 1739. The heaviest burden of distrains occurred in the central region of the county, one example of this being provided by the Shipleys of Loxley, near Uttoxeter.

Once a tithe owner or tithe farmer began to distrain a particular Quaker, the distrains tended to continue for some years. Why they ceased, whether through neglect by, or change of, tithe owners, or for some other reason, or possibly because distrains were not reported, is difficult and often impossible to ascertain. The detailed returns made to the Yearly Meeting usually include the names of the tithe appropriator or impropiator and often add the information that the latter was a tithe farmer. Farming out of tithes is a feature of the returns that has not yet been sufficiently examined for the early period of Quaker local history generally. The Staffordshire returns bear out what would be expected: where the tithes had been farmed out there was a greater likelihood of distrains being made. Tithe farmers were employed on a yearly basis, and sometimes acted for more than one impropiator. Thus in the Keele/Madeley area between 1706 and 1739 only four Quaker families, Simpson, Timmis, Huett and Holland are listed in the returns. There were only two local impropiators of the tithes, John Crew and Ralph Sneyd. They employed their own agents for only two years. On all other occasions they sold the tithes to tithe farmers, of whom 16 are named over the whole period of 33 years. Another example from a different area is that of Richard Morris of Rugeley. A rise in the number of distrains made on him between 1700 and 1739 suggests the arrival of a new tithe owner or tithe farmer endeavouring to gather his legally - sanctioned dues. The statistics are few, nevertheless, and the unknown factors involved numerous. Only by an examination of each locality in which Quakers were involved, closer than this study permits, might firmer generalisations be reached.

The consequences for Quakers of their refusal to pay tithes could be more

**TABLE 1.4 NAMES OF INDIVIDUALS DISTRAINED FOR
NON-PAYMENT OF TITHES, WITH DECENNIAL
TOTALS OF THEIR SUFFERINGS, 1690 - 1739.**

(Source: Books of Sufferings, Friends House Library, vols. 7 -27).

	1690-9	1700-9	1710-19	1720-9	1730-9
Hall, John (Shenstone),	10	4			
Hall, John (Wall)	8	3			
Hall, Samuel (Wall)	7				
Simpson, Richard, (Keele)	1	7	8	2	
Simpson, Richard, Jnr. (Keele)		5	2		
Simpson, John (Madeley)				4	3
Simpson, Samuel (Keele)			2		
Simpson, Margaret (Keele)				1	
Alsop, John (Ingestre)	10	10	9	7	
Preston, John (Tixall)	10	10	8		
Hammersley, Thomas (Basford)	3	1			
Hammersley, John (Cheddleton)		2	9	9	
Silvester, William (Fradley)	5	5			
Sylvester, Thomas (Fradley)	2	3			
Buckley, Thomas (Leek)	2				
Harrison, John, (Burntwood)	2				
Reading, William (Shenstone)	4				
England, John (Tamworth)				4	
England, Allen (Tamworth)				4	3
Wolrich, Thomas (Shallowford)	3	5	5	9	8
Ford, Hugh (Norton-in-Moors)	2	7			
Palmer, John (Doveridge)	1				
Shipley, Thomas (Loxley)	1	8	10		
Shipley, William (Loxley)				4	
Timmis, Richard (Madeley)		9	9		
Timmis, Richard, Jnr. (Tixall)			1	4	
Timmis, John (Tixall)				3	
Timmis, Hannah (Madeley)					1
Timmis, Joshua (Madeley)					3
Hall, Elihu, (Rocester)				2	5
Heath, Robert (late of Tean)	1				
Holland, William (Keele)		6			
Gratton, John (Leek)		4			
Whitaker, John (Leek)		1			
Hargreave, William (Rugeley)			4		
Huett, Ralph (Madeley)		2	5		
Godridge, Margaret (Alton)		2	1		
Godridge, Abraham (Chebsey)			1	4	8
Haywood, Thomas (Keele)			5		
Morris, Richard (Rugeley)		1	7	10	8
Morris, Moses (Rugeley)					2
Ball, William, (Shenstone)			1		
Firth, Edward, (Stafford)			1		1
Whitehead, Isaac (Rocester)			1		

(cont.)

(continuation of Table 1.4)

Toft, John, (Leek)				1	
Lee, Benjamin (Leek)				1	
Davison, Joseph (Leek)				1	
Lucas, Samuel (Leek)				1	
Hall, Daniel (Leek)				1	
Fisher, William (Colwich)				1	2
Fisher, Anne (Colwich)					1
Whiston, Samuel (Leek)					3
Ireland, Thomas (Mucklestone)					1
Nixon, John (Milwich)					3
Total nos. of names	17	20	18	21	15

(Wolverhampton)					
Sydern, Marmaduke, (Seisdon)	1				
Welch, George, (Willenhall)	1				
Stretch, Samuel (Hodfield)	2			no returns made	
Ker, William (Penn)	1				
Read, Joseph (Willenhall)	4	3			
Read, William, (Willenhall)		1			

severe than the financial losses incurred by distraint. John Bloor of Leek was imprisoned under a writ of de excommunicato capiendo in 1707, and similarly Richard Simpson of Keele in 1708.

Not all Friends were so steadfast, and tithe-paying remained a major concern of the local Staffordshire Quaker leadership. The subject is listed 20 times in the index at the end of the Quarterly Meeting Minute Book. As early as 1681 a minute had stated uncompromisingly that if a Friend's life and conversation were not the same as his testimony, he was to be dealt with accordingly. The two monthly meetings were constantly prompted by the Quarterly Meeting to bring in accounts of their members' sufferings and to update testimonies. There was an extra urgency of

tone in a minute of 7/5/1714 which stated :

This meeting having a great concern on them that Friends may be kept clear with respect to Tithes and Steeple-house Rates; do therefore desire that each Mo. Meeting may exhort their respective particular meetings to faithfulness in the above mentioned branches of our Testimony, and that each particular meeting may bring in their Sufferings to the Monthly Meeting and they the same to the Quarterly Meeting, in the winter.

Quarterly Meeting was, however, fighting a losing battle. In its annual report to Yearly Meeting on 8/21/1728 Quarterly Meeting recorded its hope that admonition of those who had not been 'steady' would prove effectual, while on 5/2/1731 the meeting recorded that the testimony against tithes was not 'fully maintained by all'. The minute continued

'and yet we have not much cause for complaint, for divers amongst us are truly concerned by advice and example in this particular'.

This minute, although attempting to be reassuring, implies that within the county membership three different levels of behaviour were found: there were those who did not maintain their testimony against tithes, those who had been paying tithes and, presumably after admonition had expressed themselves 'concerned', and the steadfast Friends who provided the proper example. There was a similar comment on 2/2/1733, when it was recorded 'there is some unfaithfulness in relation to tithes, though most are clear.' It appears as though Quarterly Meeting was taking, or being forced to take, a realistic attitude to the situation while maintaining the principle. Backsliders were not necessarily or instantly disowned while it could still be maintained there was hope that they would heed the exhortations of the leadership.

In 1733 Yearly Meeting issued a clear warning on the subject based on a report it had commissioned. Copies of the report were sent to all quarterly meetings, and this report was summarised in a Quarterly Meeting minute. After quoting from

epistles sent out by Yearly Meeting in 1675 and 1706 it recorded the meeting's unanimous agreement that any Friends who paid or received tithes were opposing the Christian testimony of Friends who had suffered and even died for this principle. It went on to instruct quarterly and monthly meetings to admonish any Friends, without respect of persons, who failed to maintain their testimony, and should they continue to do so, they were to be excluded from business meetings and from contributing to collections; if necessary, quarterly and monthly meetings were to proceed further and 'to give judgment to clear Truth as they shall be directed in the holy fear, counsel or wisdom of God'.³³ Despite this directive there are no recorded disownments for this offence in the local minute books or references to exclusion from business meetings. Presumably any offenders continued to attend meetings for worship and to be the recipients of advice and admonition in the hope that they would reform.

The figures in Tables 1.3 and 1.4 represent, therefore, only the remaining hard core of local Quakers, all committed anti-tithers. Reports sent by Staffordshire Quarterly Meeting to London in the decade 1733 to 1743 could thus give a general reassurance about the local situation in regard to payment of tithes; in 1734 the phrase used was 'not much cause for complaint', and in 1735 'things are generally well'. The report approved for submission to London on 5/2/1736 was slightly more revealing: it stated 'Our testimony against tithes, (tho' our sufferings are small,) we believe is well maintained.' The lists of sufferings sent to Yearly Meeting, from 1733 to 1743 show the highest annual number of named individual sufferers to have been 12, the lowest 3, and the average 6.3. There was no wide divergence from this last figure during the rest of the eighteenth century. When Staffordshire Quarterly

33 Q.M.M.B. 8/8/1733.

Meeting merged with Cheshire in 1783 sufferings for that year numbered six. and by 1836, the year of the Tithe Commutation Act, there were only three.

The statistics of sufferings for non-payment of tithes, as already stated, reflect the diminishing numbers of Quakers in Staffordshire. They also illustrate, however, the unchangeable inner conviction of those who remained. As membership of the Society dwindled in the eighteenth century and as hopes of the establishment of the rule of saints had faded to nothing, there was little that the Quaker leadership, national and local, could do except to continue their search for personal perfectibility by observing a strict code of behaviour, of which one feature was an implacable refusal to pay tithes. To report any suffering which had been experienced was an expression, and an assertion, of Quakerism. It did not matter that these sufferings were now slight in comparison with those experienced by earlier generations. Yearly Meeting might hold up as examples those earliest Friends who had been prepared to suffer fines and even imprisonment and death for their beliefs, but by the end of the second, and for most of the third, generation of Quakers the ultimate penalty of imprisonment for refusing to pay tithes had become much less likely. Over the whole of the country before 1696 yearly imprisonments for this offence, had sometimes averaged well over a hundred per year. By the 1720s and 1730s they had dwindled to three or less per year.

Although exhortations from the Yearly Meeting, frequently echoed in the Quaker literature of the time, reminding members of the steadfastness of early Friends, were no longer relevant to the immediate situation, and although the burden of restraint was not particularly onerous or any heavier than non-Quakers had to accept, nevertheless for Quakers the issue of tithes reinforced their conviction that they were a special people. As such they had to suffer whatever consequences might

stem from the outward manifestation of their divinely-endowed illumination.

Persecution for non - payment of tithes and levies was among the last forms of discrimination practised against Quakers. Without the assertion that tithes were unchristian, and without the effort to 'clear Truth' on this matter by refusing to pay them, Quakers would have had less reason to see themselves as a chosen people. Their realisation of the possibilities of a wider, social application of their conviction of an 'Inward Light' was still in the future.

CHAPTER 4 'IN GOSPEL ORDER' : the organisational structure of Staffordshire Quakerism 1667 -1783

Early Quakerism was characterised not only by a gradual coming to terms with contemporary political and social reality, but by the evolution of an administrative and hierarchical structure. The two processes, as Braithwaite observed, were more or less simultaneously implemented : how soon, he asked, would the vision of a new heaven and earth fade into the common light of day, and when would the preservation of a sect claim more attention than the propagation of a new way of life? ¹ This chapter examines the early history of Quakerism in Staffordshire and seeks to throw a local light on how and when this transformation of the movement was effected. There is too little surviving evidence to offer a confident answer to such a general question, although one or two dates stand out as milestones in a process that lasted a generation or more. The first of these is 1667 when Fox records in his Journal that at a general men's meeting held in Thomas Hamersley's house at Basford, near Leek, all things were settled 'in the gospel order' and the monthly meetings were established.

Apart from the natural desire of Friends to congregate for worship and mutual aid, the main factor making for a need for organisation within the movement was size. As the numbers of Quakers increased, so the necessity for some mechanism to control and discipline the movement became apparent. The rise in numbers was bringing an increasing diversity of ideas and behaviour among the converts. Initially Fox and his fellow leaders had rejected the idea of any ecclesiastical authority.

1 W. C. Braithwaite, The Beginnings of Quakerism (1912; Cambridge 1981), pp. 308 -9.

They asserted that no form of church government could claim divine origin and that the 'Inward Light' was sufficient guidance. This doctrine constituted one of the main appeals of Quakerism at the time, but had its own implosive possibilities. It was clear, from the earliest years of the movement, that God was speaking in many ways to different individuals, and that the message was being variously interpreted. It was not enough for Fox to argue that to the pure all things were pure and that the 'Children of the Light' would be sufficiently guided if they kept the image of God within them. How was it possible to determine which were authentic promptings or 'openings', as Fox called them, and which were false illusions? Modern historians of Quakerism agree that Fox's solution to the problem of ensuring a basic canon of Quaker behaviour and belief was to adopt the institution that William Dewsbury had already established in County Durham in 1653, the monthly meeting for business.²

Dewsbury had advocated that local meetings for worship were to choose 'overseers' who were to ensure that all Friends 'walked orderly', that is, observed unity of belief and of behaviour. Overseers also had other functions, which included sending representatives to the monthly meeting to discuss the financial needs of each individual congregation and also collecting money for Friends suffering hardship by imprisonment. Then, in 1656, the whole Quaker movement was threatened with disintegration by reason of the James Nayler incident. He and his followers had made a Christ-like entry into Bristol, the action was deemed blasphemous by the authorities and the legal repercussions of the case reached the level of parliament. Both the strong public and political reaction and deep divisions within the Quaker movement itself convinced Fox and his colleagues of the need to control such highly individual

2 Ibid., pp. 140 -3.

interpretations of the promptings of the Inward Light. They began to extend the system of monthly meetings to the whole country and in 1657, at a conference of all county representatives at Swarthmoor, Fox composed an epistle to be read in all meetings. It warned of the dangers of 'fretful minds', referred to apostate Christians, and emphasised the difference between preaching to 'the world' and to 'settled' meetings, the latter to be untouched by controversy. It was after the Nayler episode, argues Ingle, that on the issue of individualism versus authority within Quakerism, Fox came down on the side of authority.³ It is significant, moreover, that some Quaker pamphlets and letters were already using the word 'church' in referring to the movement, despite its overtones of hierarchy and of prescribed doctrines.

Fox and his colleagues issued other recommendations. They suggested that each meeting should keep a book of sufferings and also provide a burial place for their members so as to avoid the use of Anglican churchyards idolised as 'holy ground.' An early epistle laid down a procedure to be followed in marriage ceremonies. Quakers had often been identified as Ranters, whose public image was of a sect given to immoral sexual licence. When Parliament legalised civil marriages in 1653 this may have prompted Fox to action to avoid the public opprobrium which attached to Ranters. The procedures were designed to remove any basis for public allegations that Quaker couples were living in sin.

By 1669 a second tier of organisation had developed, the quarterly meeting. At first there was no clear distinction of functions between quarterly and monthly meetings. This is illustrated in Staffordshire in the first Quarterly Meeting Minute Book, where the earliest minutes contain insertions from 'men's meetings'. Quite

3 H. L. Ingle, First Among Friends (Oxford, 1994), p. 151-2, quoting from G. Fox, Works.

soon, however, quarterly meetings came to represent all the local bodies within a county, and eventually assumed a moral authority over the other groups below. They ensured that their constituent monthly meetings properly enforced Quaker discipline and that the 'advices' of a third tier of administration, the Yearly Meeting, which was evolving, were put into practice. Regional general meetings in the north of England had met annually in a single federation since 1656. Similar developments were, however, taking place in the south and south-east of England and by the end of the decade most authority, in the sense of the issue of advices and the power to settle disputes, was beginning to move away from the north and to be centred on London. The Yearly Meeting had begun about 1669 as a meeting of 'Public Friends' or ministers in London, and which advised the representatives of local meetings. Lloyd has argued that the development of its full authority was a consequence of the struggle for legal protection against persecution after 1675. Its first name, the 'General Meeting for Sufferings' and the name of the executive committee, the 'Meeting for Sufferings' testify to its origin as an ad hoc arrangement to meet a pressing need. ⁴

As early as 1660 an outline administration for the whole country had been sketched out but it was not until the later years of the decade 1660 -1670 that Fox, by then the leading figure in the movement, had been released from prison and was able to establish the organisation throughout England. In Staffordshire he settled two monthly meetings, Leek and Stafford, although they are not specifically named, and by 1672 a quarterly meeting was in existence . Both these types of meeting were, in Quaker terminology, 'meetings for business'. Meetings for worship had been established, or had evolved much earlier. The sketch maps dated 1654 in the

4 A. Lloyd, Quaker Social History (1950), p. 175. He also disputes the attribution to Fox of sole responsibility for the establishment of the organisational structure of early Quakerism

appendices to Braithwaite's first volume show Quaker meetings in four towns in Staffordshire, Leek, Newcastle, Lichfield and Tamworth.⁵ The general evangelising work of the 'First Publishers of Truth' in the county in the decade 1651-61, discussed in Chapter 2 of this study, resulted in the establishment of numerous settled meetings in much of the county. Little is known about these earliest meetings for worship except for their locations and the names of the occupants of the houses where the local Friends assembled. It may be presumed that meetings were held on the pattern of other, better-documented areas, town meetings being usually held twice on Sundays and on one week-day morning, meetings in villages fortnightly, and these latter often rotating between several venues. Possibly meetings in the more remote hamlets of the Leek Moorlands may have been held only once a month, allowing Friends from a wider area than the immediate neighbourhood to gather.

In the first two decades of the movement Quaker records refer to meetings for worship in Leek, Cheddleton, Butterson, Ipstones, Grindon, Wetton, Alstonefield and Waterfall. Besse's record of sufferings for 1661 shows that arrests were made at six meetings held in Friends' houses, five of which were in the Moorlands, and of these, three in the houses of Robert Fernihough, Joseph Taylor and John Hall, all in the same parish, Ipstones.⁶ In the north-west of the county there were small groups of Friends in Newcastle-under-Lyme, Keele and Caverswall, in the centre of the county meetings in Stafford and its neighbouring parishes of Bradley and Haughton. Further east there were meetings in Uttoxeter and nearby Stramshall, in the Burton upon Trent area and in Shenstone, south of Lichfield. After 1672, for a few years, the Quarterly Meeting Minute Book refers to regular quarterly collections from six meetings, Leek,

5 Braithwaite, Beginnings, following p. 585.

6 J. Besse, A Collection of the Sufferings of the People called Quakers (1753), vol. 1, p. 651.

MorrIDGE, Knutton (near Newcastle-under-Lyme), Stafford, Uttoxeter and Linn (in the parish of Shenstone), although these may have constituted also convenient administrative groups of Friends for raising funds for poor relief. There is no reference in the Quarterly Meeting Minute Book to meetings in the south of the county until 1679, although by then there was at least one meeting in the area, at Wolverhampton. The number of meetings for worship in the county which can be documented provides only a rough guide to the distribution of individual Quaker families, who were widely scattered around each location.

Churchwardens' presentments of Quakers at episcopal visitations during the decade 1660 - 1670, discussed in Chapter 3 above, also illustrate, though only to a limited degree, the distribution of Friends in the county. Besse's account of sufferings provides locations and names for three main areas where Quakerism was persisting, the Leek and Moorlands region, and around Keele and Stafford. His sources regarding Friends in Keele were especially illuminating. Thus for 1670 he recorded that two Friends from Keele, Vincent Heawood and his son William, 'for being peaceable in their own house sitting together with Friends to wait upon God', were charged under a warrant from a local magistrate, William Sneyd, with holding an unlawful conventicle, and were distrained of goods worth £4 10s.; Humphrey Morgan of Keele, also present at the meeting, was distrained of a cow worth £3 13s. Besse also noted, for the previous year, that five Friends were arrested by two apparitors at a meeting in the house of Thomas Hamersley, of Basford in the parish of Cheddleton. They appeared at Cheadle sessions and were imprisoned for refusing to take the Oath of Allegiance.

Besse has very little on the south of the county in this period but the list of conventicles in Staffordshire, collected by order of Archbishop Sheldon in 1669, shows the existence of Quaker meetings in this area. The list, summarised by

Matthews, includes some contemporary estimates made by parish incumbents and churchwardens of the numbers of Friends attending conventicles.⁷ Of the total of 45 houses listed for all the dissenting sects in the county, Sheldon cited eight as Quaker but failed to identify Bradley, near Stafford, where a Quaker meeting was held in the house of Francis Comberford, and the meeting in John Boddiley's house at Knutton near Keele.⁸ Sheldon's list, as amended, therefore, totals ten, but this is probably not comprehensive, because, as noted above, Friends sometimes used different venues in the same area.

Wherever meeting places were located, even during the worst period of persecution, the decade 1661-1671, their numbers make it clear that in Staffordshire the movement was not threatened with extinction. It may also be reasonably assumed that the number of offenders actually brought before the magistrates, presented at episcopal visitations or distrained for non-payment of tithes or church levies, does not represent the actual total number of totally committed Friends. Convinced Quakers in Staffordshire not merely managed to survive but probably increased in numbers, albeit totals were small. Such a situation might have been expected. The wave of religious feeling that had engulfed the whole country in the mid-century had not yet subsided, nor had the social conditions which helped to foster and spread this revival changed much. The history of religious persecution, moreover, suggests that unless persecution is sustained and accompanied by wholesale massacres, it merely creates martyrs and this can result in a reinforcement of religious conviction. The result of the intermittent persecution in Staffordshire was drastically to reduce the numbers of

7 A. G. Matthews, Congregational Churches of Staffordshire (1924), pp. 89 - 90.

8 Quarterly Meeting Minute Book 1672-1743, appendix, 'A Record of such Friends as first declared and published truth in Stafford and Staffordshire, as also what persons received their message and of such Friends as received them in the beginning, etc.' provides this information.

itinerant Quaker preachers and thus to inhibit the process of evangelisation and slow down the rate of expansion of the Quaker movement in the general community. What persecution did not do was to block its spread, which proceeded more slowly by means of a slower, quasi-osmotic process of expansion through local family networks. Braithwaite argues that the consequences of the reduction of the number of visits from itinerant preachers were not entirely disadvantageous. Quakers, thrown back on their own resources and by reason of their belief in an Inward Light, were better able to cope with the deprivation of help from outside than members of some other sects. Cut off from outside influences and leadership, local Quakers found their strength in congregationalism, their quiet meetings remaining centres of power and helping to nerve them to resistance to the authorities. Nevertheless Braithwaite goes on to argue that mystical movements, among which he classified Quakers, seldom have much institutional stability and need guidance from without if they are not to disintegrate by reason of their own individual interpretations of the 'light' within them, which in some cases might be called aberrations.⁹ The movement in Staffordshire continued to spread quietly, despite the fact that Friends' beliefs required them to make public demonstration of their convictions and rendered their conventicles more publicly obvious.¹⁰

Numerical expansion in the period was not confined to Staffordshire: a study of Quakerism in Buckinghamshire, Lancashire, Norfolk and Norwich shows that the number of Friends in these areas trebled between 1662 and 1669.¹¹ Two other factors

9 W. C. Braithwaite, The Second Period of Quakerism (1919; 2nd edn Cambridge, by H.J. Cadbury, 1961), pp. 247 -250.

10 R. T. Vann, The Social Development of English Quakerism (Cambridge, Mass. , 1969), p. 95.

11 See Chapter 5 of this study for a discussion of numbers of Friends in Staffordshire and elsewhere.

also aided Staffordshire Friends at this time. Firstly, as already suggested in Chapter 3, the attempts to repress Quakerism in the county were intermittent and often very localised, depending on the degree of zeal shown by local parish church incumbents and by magistrates; secondly, early Quakerism in Staffordshire was largely a rural movement, with Friends scattered widely rather than centred on towns, and the extra degree of isolation which this provided may have helped them to escape the continuous attention of the authorities. If, however, there was no threat of immediate extinction of Quakerism in the decade following the Restoration, there was perhaps a longer-term danger. The Friends' religious spiritual fervour could in time, like that of numerous other religious movements of the period, have diminished, and their numbers dwindled to a handful of isolated groups and have faded away altogether. Many, perhaps most, historians accept that Quakerism generally was saved from this possibility by the success of its leaders in re-establishing the organisational structure which had begun to evolve in the 1650s. There was a price to pay for this - the transformation of the movement into an organised church.

Braithwaite fixes on May 1666 as the decisive date in the foundation of a corporate leadership and a central authority in Quakerism. The change was not due to Fox alone. Indeed in May 1666 Fox was still in prison in Scarborough when Richard Farnsworth and ten other ministers issued an epistle which established the principle of an authoritative organisation. The epistle stated, in effect, that the individual guidance provided by the Inward Light of God within men had to be subordinated to the corporative sense of the movement as a whole and that this found its authoritative expression in the 'elders and members of the Church which keep their habitation in the Truth.'¹² Such a development, argues Braithwaite, was bound to come, simply to

12 Braithwaite, Second Period, pp. 247-8.

resist the divisive, indeed disintegrating effects not merely of persecution but also of 'spiritual vagaries', for the expression of which the doctrine of the Inward Light provided an opportunity, if not a justification.

Although Fox had no direct hand in the drafting of the epistle, he was in full agreement with it and his role in the practical implementation of its principles was vital. Ingle points out that Fox had long advised the setting up of monthly meetings to exercise disciplinary action. Some counties, Ingle states, including Leicestershire and Huntingdon, and to which Staffordshire may be added, had never established monthly meetings, and in some others, even in the north, they had fallen into disuse.¹³ On his release from prison, in September 1666, Fox set about reviving and extending the embryonic organisational structures of the 1650s. In the spring of 1667 he organised the monthly meetings in London and in the late summer of that year he started on his tour through the rest of the country. He arrived in Staffordshire, coming over the Peak from Derbyshire in the winter of 1667, to set up the two monthly meetings.

A fresh wave of persecution began in 1670 with the passage of the Second Conventicle Act. It continued throughout the next decade and for some years thereafter, with the authorities, ecclesiastical and secular, waging a sporadic war on Quakers. Staffordshire Friends continued nevertheless to hold their conventicles and Besse records that meetings for worship were held in Stafford in 1674, and that in 1675 five Friends, all of whom may be identified as living in the Leek and Moorlands area, were imprisoned for 'religiously assembling together.' Then there was a lull until 1682, when Besse records that the churchwardens of Keele swore before Justice Sneyd that an unlawful assembly had been held at a funeral of a Friend, and that

13 Ingle, First Among Friends, p. 222.

local Quakers had later suffered distrains of their goods. By this time, however, Staffordshire Friends were able to turn for help and advice to the organisation which had been set up in London.

An effective national organisation was not achieved easily. Many early Quakers were troubled not by the mechanics of the system but by the centralisation of authority that it brought. Farnsworth's epistle of 1666, laying down that when individual judgment conflicted with that of the leadership the latter should prevail, brought a reaction. At the national level this insistence on conformity drove many Quakers in the last decades of the 17th century into open separation, and deep divisions, associated with the names of Perrott and Wilkinson and Story opened within the movement. The relationship between individual freedom and group authority remained a long and often bitter issue within early Quakerism. Braithwaite, as stated above, takes a fairly realistic view of the development. Vann agrees that persecution resulted only in an increase in the number of Quakers but argues that it also had the consequence of making their organisation more rigid and imposing a more censorious discipline.¹⁴

The organisation which was established in Staffordshire dates officially from 1668. Leek Monthly Meeting covered the meetings for worship in the northern part of the county, from Derbyshire across to the Cheshire and Shropshire borders. Meetings in the centre of the county, comprising the areas around Stafford, Uttoxeter and Lichfield, formed Stafford Monthly Meeting. Some Friends in the Tamworth area were also attached to Stafford Monthly Meeting but from 1690 Tamworth was officially within Wiggins Hill and part of Warwickshire Quarterly Meeting. In the later seventeenth century Wolverhampton also became part of Stafford Monthly Meeting

14 Vann, Social Development, p. 95.

but most Black Country Friends were attached to Dudley, which was within Worcestershire Quarterly Meeting. In the early eighteenth century Friends at Chesterfield, in the parish of Shenstone, joined with Wolverhampton to form a third monthly meeting but the experiment was abandoned in 1705 as 'inconvenient'.¹⁵ This remained the structure until 1783, when, as a result of decline in numbers, Staffordshire Quarterly Meeting was united with Cheshire Quarterly Meeting.¹⁶

By 1672 the Staffordshire Quarterly Meeting was in existence but it had been evolving for some time before. It held its first recorded meeting at Whitehough in the Moorlands parish of Ipstones, probably at the house of Robert Mellor, the leading Friend in that immediate area. The choice of venue is significant, suggesting that at this time the Moorlands Quakers were the most numerous and active Friends in the county. Venues of the early quarterly meetings changed, either for members' convenience or possibly to avoid observation by the local authorities or informers. Locations at Whitehough, Basford and Gratton near Leek were also used but it was not until 1696 that a quarterly meeting was held in the town of Leek itself. In the remainder of the county the earliest quarterly meetings were held once or twice in Lynn, Chesterfield, Tean, Chartley, Stockley Park near Tutbury and Wolverhampton, but most meetings were held in Stafford. After 1700 that town provided the main venue except for an occasional visit to Leek, Uttoxeter and Wolverhampton.

The composition of the monthly and quarterly meetings was a factor of major

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- 15 Q.M.M.B. 2/5/1705. The proceedings of the quarterly meetings for the earlier history of the movement in Staffordshire are found in two minute books, the first running from 21/11/1672 to 4/8/1743, and the second from 1743 to 1783, the latter also containing the minutes of the newly-named Stafford and Leek Monthly Meeting to 1800. There are surviving minute books of Stafford Monthly Meeting from 1713 to 1783 and Leek Monthly Meeting from 1705 to 1737.
- 16 Dates are those of the Official Meeting Records, Friends' House Library.

importance in the history of Quakerism, and one which has not always had its proper share of academic attention. George Fox had originally recommended that only seasoned and weighty Friends 'in the power and spirit of God', as he wrote in his Journal,¹⁷ should attend the men's monthly meetings. It is unlikely that the earliest Friends at the meetings for worship level made judgments on the spiritual condition of those they wished to represent them and in practice they probably selected themselves by the regularity of their attendance, their record of steadfastness under persecution and their strict adherence to testimonies against tithes and the swearing of oaths. Early organisation was not pyramidal in the sense that attendance at either monthly or quarterly meetings was confined to appointed representatives. Anyone willing and able to do so could attend and in Staffordshire unnamed Friends continued to attend business meetings well into the eighteenth century. The minutes of the quarterly meetings illustrate this. Thus the minutes of 7/5/1712 list the names of two Friends attending from Stafford Monthly Meeting, but this is followed by the words 'and some more' while the names of two Friends from Leek were followed by 'etc.' Such entries occur on a number of occasions. Possibly these other Friends present were, in effect, only observers, or were there for some special reason, such as approving a proposed marriage or reporting on some matter. There is no reason in the minutes, either explicit or which can be deduced, for these extra, anonymous, attendances. In practice decisions continued to be made by senior Friends. Majority voting was not used and it was the duty of the clerk of the meeting to ascertain and record the sense of the meeting. If he was unable to do this, a decision would be deferred until a greater degree of agreement could be achieved. This was sometimes a lengthy process,

17 G. Fox, The Journal of George Fox, (1694; ed. J.L. Nickalls, 1952), pp. 527 -8.

taking months or even years if a controversial or momentous issue was concerned.

To what extent the laws forbidding the holding of conventicles affected attendance at quarterly meetings in Staffordshire is difficult to ascertain. No lists of names of persons attending the meetings were recorded in the quarterly meeting minute book until well after toleration came to be legally acknowledged. Listing began on 8/5/1700 but continued only sporadically until 6/11/1706, after which date names of attenders were regularly recorded. However a total of about 65 different names of Friends may be tentatively deduced from references in the minutes as having attended at least one quarterly meeting per year between 1672 and 1706. Comparison of the names and numbers of probable attenders before and after the Toleration Act of 1689 suggests that the Act did not make much difference in practice to attendance at quarterly meetings. Thus William Fallowfield of Leek was probably present for at least one quarterly meeting for 13 of the 18 years between 1672 and 1689, and also for 13 of the 18 years between 1690 and 1707; John Alsop of Ingestre, near Stafford, seems, from the wording of the entries in the minute book, to have attended quarterly meetings for 10 years before 1689 and for 17 years thereafter; Robert Kingston of Billington in the parish of Bradley was present on occasion for seven years before 1689 and for six thereafter. The figures suggest that a large measure of toleration of, or at least indifference to, Quaker meetings, existed in practice among local magistrates and Anglican church ministers before the Act of 1689. This development has already been discussed in more detail in a previous chapter. On the other hand attendances at quarterly meetings, sometimes held at varying venues, were not so public or provocative a violation of the law as the holding of regular 'First Day' or week-day meetings for worship in a restricted local area. The changing climate of political opinion was therefore, probably not a decisive

factor affecting attendances at monthly and quarterly meetings for some years before 1689. This makes judgments on the effect of the passage of the Toleration Act, based on comparisons with attendance figures prior to and after the Act, more speculative.

With the regular recording of attendances in the quarterly meeting minute book in the new century more statistical evidence is available. Table 2 below summarises the results. Before assessing these, however, some discussion of the physical factors involved in attending is necessary. For those who had to come a long distance, for example from Leek to Stafford, a distance of about 25 miles, an overnight stop was essential. The Quarterly Meeting Minute Book says nothing about accommodation but it is likely that those Friends who could not return home on the same day stayed the night with other Friends. Bad weather could also cause difficulties. On 5/5/1736 floods prevented Richard Morris of Rugeley from attending at Stafford. Friends were hardy, however, and there is no appreciable difference between summer and winter attendance figures to be discerned. Friends who lived at a distance came on horseback and the provision of adequate stabling was always important when a meeting house was being acquired or built. The most important effect of topography upon the local movement was, however, the amount of time required to make the journey to and from the quarterly, and, to a lesser extent, a monthly meeting venue. Except for Friends living anywhere except in the immediate area, two full days, sometimes even three, might be required. This had consequences for the social composition of meetings because it meant that only men with the necessary time and resources could afford to attend regularly.

There were exceptions, one of whom was William Fallowfield of Leek, already mentioned above. He was one of the longest serving members of the Quarterly Meeting, his first attendance probably having been made in 1673 and his

last recorded attendance in 1718 in Stafford, made just a year before his death at the age of 80. The Quarterly Meeting Minute Book shows him to have attended 25 of the 46 meetings between 1706 and 1718. At first an itinerant preacher, he had settled in Staffordshire. His record as a convinced Friend, which included spells of imprisonment, gave him considerable influence in the movement, as evidenced by the number of duties he was appointed by Quarterly Meeting to perform. He was not, however, particularly well -off. ¹⁸ John Alsop of Ingestre and John Preston of Tixall, however, both of Stafford Monthly Meeting, and likewise with long attendance records, were, on the contrary, judging by the value of distrains imposed on them, fairly prosperous farmers and are more representative of the general social composition of the members of the earlier quarterly meetings. Among other longest-serving members was Samuel Radford, of Leek Monthly Meeting, whose name first appears in the local Quaker records in 1688. He made 43 attendances out of a possible total of 74 meetings between 1707 and 1725. The frequency and regularity of his attendance and the many tasks to which the Minute Book shows him to have been assigned suggests that he was also among the leaders of the local Staffordshire movement. Most of the frequent attenders at quarterly meetings also took their turn at attending the Yearly Meetings. William Fallowfield went to London on 11 occasions between 1679 and his death in 1718, and Samuel Radford eight times between 1695 and his death in 1725. Attendance at these yearly meetings involved, with the travelling, at least a week away from home. The majority of the early representatives were farmers but by the end of the century one or two more manufacturers and business men were beginning to play an active role in the local movement. Two

18 Leek Monthly Meeting Minute Book 6/1/1706-7 records that he and his wife Esther were given two old houses and the attached croft.

families may be singled out to exemplify this feature. Charles Osborne, from Wolverhampton, who had made a small fortune in manufacture and finance, brought the Wolverhampton meeting into closer participation with Staffordshire's affairs. In 1698, not long after his convincement as a Quaker, he started attending quarterly meetings and between 1706 and his death in 1729 attended 30 quarterly meetings out of a possible 51, and 13 yearly meetings out of a possible 22. The Toft family, button makers, appear in Leek Quaker records by 1707. They became dominant figures both in Leek Monthly Meeting and in the Quarterly Meeting. John Toft attended at least one and very frequently all four quarterly meetings every year between 1707 and 1727 and his brother Joshua had an almost similar record.¹⁹

Although numbers of Friends in Staffordshire fell sharply as the eighteenth century proceeded, attendance at quarterly meetings increased slightly. Table 2 shows that total attendance figures rose from an average of 5.3 in the first decade to 6.0 in the third. Averages provide an overall picture but are slightly misleading because they do not show the statistical importance of a few individuals and families. For example the minute book shows that of the Leek representatives to quarterly meetings in the first half of the eighteenth century John Toft, his brother Joshua, and Joseph Davison, the schoolmaster at Leek, provided most attendances. Similarly John Alsop, Thomas Wolrich, Richard Timmis and Richard Morris of Rugeley, represented Stafford Monthly Meeting for many years at quarterly meetings. Morris had the best record, attending 75% of all the meetings between 1706 and 1736. He probably acted as clerk of the meeting for much of the period, judging by the handwriting in the

19 The role which Osborne and Toft played in their local monthly meetings is discussed in later chapters.

minutes. Though the figures are too small to rely on completely they show that although overall membership of the Society in the county was decreasing, the leaders of the movement were slightly increasing their attendances at business meetings. There is little reason to doubt, therefore, that the influence of such committed Quakers militated against any reconsideration of Quaker aims and attitudes within the local movement, even if any such ideas may have been burgeoning in the minds of younger Friends. At that period in the history of the Quaker movement probably any radical rethinking could not have been expected. That the decline in numbers was a matter of

TABLE 2 ATTENDANCES AT STAFFORDSHIRE QUARTERLY MEETINGS 1706 -1738 (by decades)

(Source : Staffordshire Quarterly Meeting Minute Book 1672 -1743)

Decade	Leek			Stafford			Both
	Average	Highest	Lowest	Average	Highest	Lowest	Average
1706 -16	4. 3	8	2	6. 4	10	3	5. 3
1717 -27	4. 9	9	3	6. 8	13	4	5. 8
1728 -38	4. 0	7	2	8. 1	11	3	6. 0

(Figures are for named attenders only).

regret for local leaders is evidenced in the minutes, but the smaller the movement became the tighter they held together as a sect and the more determinedly held fast to their traditional beliefs, whatever the numerical consequences.

The table shows that in the eighteenth century attendances at quarterly meetings by representatives of Stafford Monthly Meeting were higher than those of Leek. To some extent this may be attributed to the location of the venue. During the

32 years between 1706 and 1738 the number of quarterly meetings held at different venues was as follows : Stafford 102, Leek 11, Uttoxeter 6, Wolverhampton 5.

Wolverhampton ceased to serve as a venue after 1720, possibly reflecting the decline of the Quaker movement in that area, although Charles Osborne continued to attend at Stafford until his death. The distance to be travelled to Leek, especially in winter, was not the only or main factor in Stafford's pre-eminence as a venue for quarterly meetings. The convenience of the town as a commercial and judicial centre and its central position in the county may have been additional reasons. There is no evidence of any dissatisfaction at the choice of venues in the minutes, although, as pointed out earlier in this study, Friends' minutes record only consensus decisions and not any conflicting arguments.

The personal links between the Yearly Meeting in London and the local quarterly and monthly meetings in Staffordshire normally ensured that the 'advices' issued by the Yearly Meeting were readily implemented locally. The only reference to any local Staffordshire dissent from its recommendations concerned affirmation. The Affirmation Act, which became law in May 1696, allowed Quakers to affirm, rather than swear, in civil, though not in criminal, cases. The Yearly Meeting as a whole had accepted the wording of the Act, which included the phrase 'in the presence of Almighty God', but many Quakers, including some in Staffordshire, were dissatisfied. Staffordshire Quarterly Meeting therefore instructed its representatives to Yearly Meeting, if called upon, to state that :

'...our general voice is (as touching giving our evidence in matters of Law, and courts of Judicature) that we cannot find freedom to pass a general form, to be followed by all of us, touching such evidence, wherein the Power or Presence or Fear (with the name) of God is used, or wherein the sacred name of God is used'.²⁰

The Act was renewed, without modification, in 1702, and discussions at Yearly Meeting continued for years without unanimity or consensus being reached. In 1711 Staffordshire Quarterly Meeting, acting on advice from London, instructed five senior Friends to approach the county's members of Parliament for help with modifying the wording in the Act, and to report their answers to other Friends, who were to put them in a suitable form for Richard Morris to take to London. No agreement could be reached among Staffordshire Friends, however, and in 1715 Quarterly Meeting sent a letter to London expressing its concern about the heated debates which the issue was causing locally.²¹ The Act, due to expire in 1715, was made perpetual in that year and extended to Scotland and the Plantations in that year, but its wording remained unchanged. Some Friends were imprisoned for refusing the affirmation but there is no record of this occurring in Staffordshire. In 1722 a new bill was drafted which omitted all reference to God, and passed into law despite strong opposition in the House of Lords. Hitherto - dissatisfied Friends were granted a form of words which they could accept. The Act was made perpetual in 1749 and the few remaining exceptions to the use of an affirmation as an alternative to an oath were removed in 1833.

Another issue which engaged Quarterly Meeting's decision-making powers on a number of occasions was the role of women in the county organisational structure. In contrast to the attitude of such other sects as Independents, Presbyterians and Baptists in the mid - seventeenth century, George Fox, from the outset, had preached the equal worth of women and men in administrative activities. From the earliest years of the movement women had participated in organising poor relief, visiting the sick, administering funds, keeping registers of births and in 'liberating' young people

21 Ibid., 8/8/1711 and 7/2/1715.

for marriage, that is, ensuring that they had no prior marital commitments and had 'walked orderly' for a reasonable period of time. Despite fierce opposition from many Fox had succeeded in establishing quarterly and monthly meetings for women over a wide area of the country. In Staffordshire women's role in the earliest years of the movement is little documented, although they are cited frequently in churchwardens' presentments at episcopal visitations as wives or widows failing to attend church. There is no information on what hardships they and their children experienced when husbands or fathers were imprisoned or distrained. They normally attended meetings for worship held in their neighbourhood. Although the earliest surviving minute book, that for Leek, dates only from 1708²² women's meetings for business had been established as early as 1673. In that year it was agreed to hold a women's meeting once every three months or 'when they find possible', and a women's monthly meeting in Stafford was also settled, to be held on the same day as the men's monthly meeting.²³ In 1693, however, a proposal to establish a women's meeting at Tamworth was not approved.²⁴ When, in 1707, Quarterly Meeting agreed that the Womens' Monthly Meeting at Stafford should be continued this may have been despite problems of poor attendance. It was extremely difficult for most women to leave their household duties and make lengthy journeys to attend business meetings, and there may also have been male opposition.

The original form of organisation in Staffordshire survived until 1783, when a decline in numbers forced a general re-structuring in the north Midlands area. Any detailed discussion of these later developments is outside the scope of this study and only a brief chronology is appropriate. In 1783 Staffordshire Quarterly Meeting was merged with Cheshire Quarterly Meeting and Stafford and Leek Monthly

22 Staffordshire County Record Office, D 3159/3/2.

23 Q.M.M.B. 8th month 1673.

24 Ibid., 3/5/1693.

Meetings were united with Uttoxeter to form the Staffordshire Monthly Meeting. In 1854 a new Quarterly Meeting of Staffordshire, Warwickshire, Leicestershire and Rutland was created. Within Staffordshire itself there were numerous closures and re-openings of meetings for worship in the nineteenth and twentieth centuries, and these are briefly referred to in subsequent, relevant chapters in this study. The outstanding feature of the nineteenth century in the north of the county was the rapid development of the six Potteries towns and a Quaker meeting was first established there in 1831.

The organisation which George Fox did so much to establish in England generally after 1667 and in Staffordshire officially in 1668 was an enduring one, well suited to the purposes which he and his colleagues had in mind and to meet the problems which the movement was encountering. Subsequent chapters in this study will endeavour to show how local meetings for worship were helped, their isolation reduced, guidance offered in the administrative or other problems which beset them, legal help provided for victims of persecution and financial assistance generously given when necessary. Early Quaker national organisation never produced a distant bureaucracy. The movement was too small, anyway, for this to occur. The same men, or some of them, who attended the weekly meetings for worship were also members of the monthly and of the quarterly meetings and they also took their turn to go to the yearly meetings in London. The lines of communication between London and the remotest hamlet in the bleak Staffordshire moorland area of the north-east always remained open, restricted only by time and distance, and provided a two-way flow of information and contact. Without such an organisation, Quakerism in Staffordshire, as suggested above, might have disappeared. There was a price to pay, however. Membership of the movement came to require a strict conformity to a prescribed pattern of outward behaviour, including what seems to the modern Quaker to be relatively trivial matters such as dress and speech-patterns. Friends had to make

public testimonies against the payment of tithes and church levies and against the swearing of oaths, and they had to accept the possible consequences of their defiance of the law, including imprisonment, distraint and exclusion from public office. Moreover they had to marry within the movement, a restriction which gravely hindered recruitment.²⁵ The movement in Staffordshire survived, but dwindled in the eighteenth century to a mere handful of members. The discipline exercised by monthly meetings through local elders and overseers was not oppressive, in the sense that every opportunity was given to erring Friends to amend their ways, but it was nevertheless persistent, and in the end was a factor in a slow but sustained haemorrhaging of numbers. What Quakerism in Staffordshire, as in most areas in the country generally, had lost was the expansive, almost intoxicating urge of the early Friends to 'publish Truth' everywhere throughout the world. The early vision of a universal mission was replaced by an attempt to eliminate 'disorderly walking', sometimes, as Doncaster pointed out, defined by an 'advice' on the length of a cuff or the colour of a cravat.²⁶ At the end of the second decade of the eighteenth century, hardly two generations after the First Publishers of Truth had come into the county, the missionary impulse was flickering only sporadically; by the end of the period dealt with in this study it was reduced to the repetition of a formula included in written annual reports.

The organisation of Quakerism took place within the period of persecution from which all Dissenters had suffered. Baxter acknowledged that Quakers suffered the most severely.²⁷ Some Baptists and a few Congregationalists had endeavoured to evade the law by meeting in groups of less than five, a stratagem much scorned by

25 A detailed discussion of this is found in later chapters in this study.

26 L. H. Doncaster, Quaker Organisation and Business Meetings (1958).

27 R. Baxter, Reliquiae Baxterianae (1696), quoted in M. R. Watts, The Dissenters (Oxford, 1978), p. 228.

Quakers, but these movements, too, had their quota of sufferings, even martyrs.

Bunyan spent twelve years in Bedford gaol although he put his enforced leisure to good use by writing Grace Abounding and the first part of Pilgrim's Progress.

Presbyterians suffered too, although they always regarded themselves less as a separate community than as an alternative national church, and some had practised occasional conformity to the Church of England services, without outrage to their consciences, from the earliest days. When the Declaration of Indulgence of 1672 allowed Dissenters to license meeting houses, Presbyterians provided 939, Congregationalists and Independents 458 and Baptists 210 of the total licences recorded.²⁸ After toleration was achieved and as the eighteenth century proceeded all the old Dissenting sects encountered problems similar to those faced by Quakers, including numerical decline.²⁹ Most Dissenting leaders also complained of a spiritual falling - off among their members, as Bunyan had foreseen when his pilgrim came to the hill called Lucre, beyond which lay Doubting Castle. The Dissenting sects mostly displayed a tendency, though this was sometimes thwarted, to the growth of a centrally controlling organisation which reflected the changes in their nature which time was bringing.

These general processes of change have been defined by some recent historians as the transformation of the 'sect' into the 'denomination'. The original terminology derives from scholars such as Wilson and Niebuhr.³⁰ They defined the sect as often making near-totalitarian demands on its members' lives, asserting a claim to an exclusive possession of the truth, sometimes emphasised by prescribing

28 G. Lyon Turner, Original Records of Nonconformity (1914), Vol. III, pp. 732 - 6.

29 Watts, Dissenters, chapter IV, provides a comprehensive summary of all these developments and numerous examples.

30 B. Wilson, Patterns of Sectarianism (1967); H. N. Niebuhr, The Social Sources of Denominationalism (New York, 1975).

distinctive forms of dress and behaviour, requiring marriage only 'within the tribe' and seeking either to reclaim a reprobate world or to attempt to withdraw from it as far as possible. Niebuhr claimed that the sect in this unbending, original form could last only for a generation and he further argued that the second generation, consisting largely of children brought up within the sect, usually lacked their parents' conviction and any comparable emotional commitment. Denominationalism was defined by Wilson in terms which included a formalisation of admission procedures, the growth of a professional ministry, a diminished fervour, a stress on the education of the young in the principles and practices of the group and a decreasing emphasis on evangelisation outside the movement, all these features being often accompanied by the growing prosperity of a dwindling membership.

The application of this sociological model to Quakerism in Staffordshire must not be pre-dated. It has been suggested in this chapter that the earliest organisational developments within Quakerism generally were the outcome of persecution and the need to control individually wayward interpretations of the 'Inward Light'. This was accomplished fairly soon and by the end of the first generation of Quakerism, the 'primitive' movement, originally unorganised and open-ended, had become a sect. The development of an organisation is a feature of expanding groups and tends to grow by its own impetus. In the last decades of the seventeenth century, at the Yearly Meeting level, came a purging or resignation of schismatics who could not accept the trend to authoritarianism within the Quaker movement, and the organisation, so refined, served to sustain and expand its sectarian character. A central feature of Yearly Meeting policy was the repeated attempts made to ensure that Quakers married only within the Society. At the local Staffordshire level it succeeded. The local membership became increasingly endogamous as the analysis of the Leek Monthly Meeting membership in 1735, discussed in a later chapter, shows. It bears

out Vann's estimate that by the mid-eighteenth century between 80 and 90 per cent of Quakers were themselves children of Quaker parents. There were a few local developments which may be seen as moves towards denominationalism. Staffordshire produced a handful of 'Public Friends', and in this way contributed to the slow growth of a quasi-professional, though unpaid, ministry; membership regulations were with difficulty evolved and codified; there was a stress on the education of the Quaker young to the almost total exclusion of efforts to recruit from the wider world. By the terminal date of this study, however, Quakerism in Staffordshire was still much more of a sect than a denomination. In this respect Isichei's contention that Quakerism generally did not become a denomination until much later and that there was no straight linear progression towards this conclusion, seems true for the history of Staffordshire Friends.³¹ The sociological categories of 'sect' and 'denomination' are useful for describing general developments, but do not fit easily into the early local scene up the mid - eighteenth century. In this respect Staffordshire bears out the findings of scholars in other areas, including those of Mullet for Lancashire.³²

31 E. Isichei, 'From Sect to Denomination in English Quakerism', British Journal of Sociology, 15 (1964).

32 M. Mullett, 'From Sect to Denomination? Social Developments in Eighteenth Century English Quakerism', Journal of Religious History, 132 (1984).

CHAPTER 5 HOW TRUTH PROSPERS : numbers of early

Staffordshire Quakers, 1651 - 1743

It is not possible to arrive at accurate totals of the numbers of the earliest Quakers in Staffordshire. At first membership in a formal sense did not exist : Friends were recognised by their attendance at meetings, by their acceptance of Quaker doctrinal principles and by their behaviour, which included using prescribed forms of speech and of dress. Only towards the end of the eighteenth century were official membership lists regularly compiled. For Staffordshire the earliest list of members' names is that for Leek Monthly Meeting and for one year only, 1735. ¹ The official registers of births, marriages and deaths, now housed in the library of the Society of Friends in London, include some people who had only been temporary or casual attenders and some of whom had left the movement or been disowned. While they are indispensable the registers are most effectively used to check and supplement names found in other sources, both Quaker and non-Quaker, where these exist. Records of 'sufferings' are one of the best sources, as Vann points out, for tracing the strength and composition of local Quaker communities. ² Staffordshire Friends' sufferings are well documented and have been enumerated in Chapter 3 of this study. Friends' quarterly and monthly meeting minute books, title deeds and numerous other types of locally held records provide a source of family names, although mostly for the period after 1672. Non - Quaker sources include churchwardens' presentments at episcopal visitations, especially useful for the decade 1660 -1670, probate records and county magistrates' quarter sessions rolls. Such materials by their nature cannot provide a complete enumeration of all Quaker families in the county : not every

1 Staffordshire County Record Office D 3159/3, notebook headed 'List of Names of Families belonging to Leek Mo. Meeting 1/3/1735.'

2 R. T. Vann, The Social Development of English Quakerism, 1655 - 1755 (Cambridge, Mass., 1969), p. 94.

Quaker family name is cited in the local records of sufferings and not every Quaker family had a member who came before any church or judicial authority or was mentioned in any minute book. It may be assumed, however, that most family names would show up somewhere over a period of time such as ten to twenty years and the registers can be used for checking and filling omissions. Davies underlines that registers must be used with caution, and much cross-checking with other sources is necessary to avoid double counting and confusing the identities of persons with the same christian and surname who lived in the same locality.³ Watts offers comparisons of figures derived from the registers with those from the Evans MS of 1715 - 1718 and episcopal visitation returns.⁴ He provides the only published estimate of Quaker numbers in Staffordshire in the early eighteenth century, basing his calculations on a sample of Quaker surnames from the burial registers. He found that there were ten congregations and 170 'hearers', defining that term as the maximum number of people, including children, who attended the meetings or who would be interred in the burial ground. 'Hearers' cannot be precisely equated with the unit of calculation in Table 3.1, that is males or females who can be confidently identified as heads of Quaker families. Nevertheless the figures in the table are broadly consonant with Watts' estimate for Staffordshire.

No attempt has been made to use numbers of heads of families as a basis for estimating total Quaker numbers, including women and children. Such a procedure requires the use of a multiplier. Recent work on the Compton Census of 1676 suggests a figure of between 3.7 and 5.2 as a mean household size for the majority of

3 A. Davies, The Quakers in English Society 1655 - 1755 (Oxford, 2000), pp. 156 - 7.

4 M. Watts, The Dissenters (Oxford, 1978, paperback edn 1985), pp. 509.

places listed in that census.⁵ The wide range of figures obtained by the use of these multipliers renders the exercise of less value than restricting the count to heads of families. Davies' estimate of the total number of Quakers in Essex in the decade 1655 - 1664, a county with a population of about 120,000 and roughly comparable with that of Staffordshire, was 1,283.⁶ This total divided by four or five would give between 256 and 320 households, a figure higher than the number of identified families in Staffordshire. It is unwise, however, to compare totals for the two counties, which had very dissimilar topographical, urban and economic characteristics. Davies' figures are nevertheless useful for comparing trends in Quaker numbers in Essex and Staffordshire.

For this study about 460 names of heads of households in Staffordshire have been identified for the whole period between 1651 and 1743. A marriage entry in a register, backed by evidence of children born to the father, who is normally assumed to be the head, is accepted as a first piece of evidence of the existence of such a family, even if more than one family lived in the same house. Male heads are assumed to continue as such until their death but widows are included when there is no evidence of any other head. Single, named male or female adults without children and apparently living alone are also included. Further tests of the existence of a separate family can sometimes be confirmed by a reference in records of sufferings, and separate distraint for non-payment of tithes or church levies is presumed to be sufficient evidence to distinguish Quakers of the same name who cannot otherwise be singled out. Finally attendance at a monthly or quarterly meeting is also used as supporting evidence, especially when the terms 'senior' and 'junior' are added to

5 T. Arkell, 'A method for estimating population totals from the Compton census returns', in K. Schurer and T. Arkell (eds), Surveying the People (Oxford, 1992), p. 98.

6 Davies, Quakers in English Society, p. 158.

TABLE 3.1 NUMBERS OF NAMED STAFFORDSHIRE HEADS OF FAMILIES 1651 - 1743

(Sources : Official Registers of Births, Marriages and Deaths, F.H.L., Local Staffs. Minute Books, Presentments at Episcopal Visitations, Probate Records, County Quarter Sessions Rolls)

Period	Leek MM	Stafford MM	County total	
1651 - 60	-	-	(19)	
1661 - 71	-	-	(135*)	
<hr/>				
1672 - 89	82	76	158	
1690 - 1707	75	61	136	
1708 - 25	87	59	146	
(1735 only)	39	-	-	
1726 - 43	66	36	102	
<hr/>				
	Leek PM	Stafford PM	Uttoxeter PM	Total
1809	13	4	3	20

* This figure includes those 44 names listed by Besse out of the total of 183 for the county who he states were imprisoned in 1661. If this total were included the figure would be increased by 139 unnamed persons to 274

Uttoxeter, Chesterfield and Wolverhampton names are included in Stafford MM

names and eventually the senior Quaker dies. The application of these tests in defining what constitutes a separate Quaker family possibly produces an underestimate of the actual totals but when consistently applied the procedure can determine numerical trends of the local Quaker movement even if accurate totals cannot be arrived at.

Table 3.1 summarises the figures for Staffordshire Quaker families obtained by these methods. The table divides the period 1651 - 1743 into six spans of time, the first two of ten years each, followed by four periods of 17 years each. Using this method lessens the possibility of error which could be involved in taking particular and possibly unrepresentative years. The year 1689 is chosen as the starting point for the first of the 17 year periods in order to attempt to establish what effect the Toleration Act of that year had on subsequent local Quaker numbers.

The first figures in Table 3.1 testify to the paucity of the information available for the decade up to 1661. Only 19 individual names can be found of the hundreds of local people who were attracted to the movement in the first ten years of its history. It is, however, probable, that many of the 183 persons mentioned by Besse as having been imprisoned in 1661 for refusing to take the Oath of Allegiance had become convinced Quakers before that year.⁷ Besse named only 44 of the 183, and if all the other, unnamed Quakers were added, and assuming they were all heads of households, the number of families in 1661 - 1671 would be 274. A line is drawn in the table after this date to distinguish it from later periods when the numbers are more reliable. The table also includes the official membership figure for 1809 to show the continuing numerical decline of the local movement in the eighteenth century.

7 J. Besse, A Collection of the Sufferings of the People called Quakers (1753), vol. 1, pp. 650 -1.

The 19 names found up to 1661 in no way represent the actual situation. If the claims of such early itinerant preachers as Richard Hickock, cited in Chapter 2 of this study, may be believed, hundreds of people attended the original open - air meetings of the First Publishers of Truth. How many of these subsequently became Quakers in any meaningful sense of the word is impossible to say. Besse's figure of 183 persons imprisoned in 1661 is impossible to check as his sources have not survived, but probably not all Friends were rounded up and required to take the oath, there may have been some who did so swear, and within Besse's total there may have been a few adherents of other sects, such as Baptists, who also objected to oath-taking. Even with these caveats, however, the figures suggest that by 1661 the movement had a considerable following throughout the county, particularly in the Leek and Moorlands area, where most of those whom Besse named were located.

Of the 44 individual names listed by Besse 14 do not appear subsequently in any Quaker records. Although this is negative evidence it does suggest that possibly up to one third of the people who were imprisoned were deterred by the experience. In general, however, the persecution inflicted under the legislation of the early years of the Restoration, popularly known as the Clarendon Code, which aimed to crush or at least curb the growth of dissent, was a failure. Studies made in other areas of England show that the net result of the anti - dissent laws over the whole period 1661 to 1689 was merely to increase the numbers of Quakers. Davies found that 600 new Friends were added to the Quaker movement in Essex between 1665 and 1674 and another 452 between 1675 and 1684. ⁸ Fletcher describes the impact of the Conventicle Acts in Nottinghamshire, despite the presence on the bench of such partisan Anglicans as Robert Thoroton, as minimal. ⁹ Hurwich arrives at a figure of

⁸ Davies, Quakers in English Society, p. 158.

⁹ A. Fletcher, 'The Enforcement of the Conventicle Acts 1664 - 1679', in W. J. Shiels (ed.), Persecution and Toleration (Oxford, 1984), pp. 240 -3.

2000 dissenting households, both Catholic and Protestant, in Warwickshire in the early 1680s.¹⁰ Most detailed studies find that throughout the country, particularly in rural areas, there was little systematic enforcement of the anti - dissent laws, although localised campaigns were sometimes waged by particular justices of the peace.

The evidence from Staffordshire prompts a similar conclusion. The persecution of the first Restoration decades failed to destroy the local Quaker movement although it may have restricted its growth. The number of Quaker family heads in 1689, as Table 3.1 shows, totalled 158. This is probably an underestimate of the actual figure, but represents only those who can be identified as committed Quakers. It may also be assumed that there was an unquantifiable body of 'hearers', interested enough to attend meetings for worship but not necessarily sufficiently zealous to risk arrest by the authorities. They would have boosted the public impression of the size of the Quaker movement.

In 1669 Archbishop Sheldon instituted an enquiry into the numbers of Protestant dissenting conventicles in the country.¹¹ Bishops were required to provide particulars of each parish in the dioceses under the headings Sects, Numbers, Quality, Heads and Teachers. The returns for Staffordshire are summarised in Table 3.2. The enquiry found that in the archdeaconry of Stafford, which with some minor differences corresponded geographically with the administrative county, dissenting conventicles of all denominations were being held in 24 different locations and that at least 41 persons were allowing their houses to be used as meeting places for these gatherings. The parish incumbents who made the returns failed to name the particular sect in about a dozen cases and identified eight as Quaker. From local sources

10 J. J. Hurwich, 'Dissent and Catholicism in English Society : a study of Warwickshire 1660 - 1720 ', *The Journal of British Studies* 16 (1976 -7).

11 A. G. Matthews, *The Congregational Churches of Staffordshire* (1924), pp. 89 - 90, provides a convenient summary of the details for Staffordshire.

TABLE 3.2 QUAKER CONVENTICLES IN STAFFORDSHIRE IN 1669**Listed and identified in Sheldon's Report**

Location	Occupant of house	Numbers
Cheddleton	Thomas Hammersley	30
Ipstones	Robert Mellor	20
Bramshall	Francis French	20
Dilhorne	George Amery	5 or 6
Horton Head	William Yardley	100
Leek	William Davenport	30
Haughton	Peter Littleton	-
Shenstone	William Redding	-

Listed in Sheldon, identified from Quaker records

Knutton	John Boddiley	-
Bradley	Francis Comberford	-

(Sources : A.G.Matthews, Congregational Churches of Staffordshire
Staffs. Q.M.M.B. 1672 - 1743).

two more of Sheldon's conventicles can be identified as Quaker.

Sheldon's list, although not comprehensive, affords some evidence of the distribution and numbers of Quakers in Staffordshire in 1669. Attenders at the six conventicles for which Sheldon provides a figure total 205 or 206. It is evident that Sheldon's figures offer only a general estimate, and presumably they include women and children. In any case the numbers cited depended on the care which the incumbent or his churchwardens exercised in compiling the return, and how far they were the result of a single or of a repeated count, or even of a general impression.

In Sheldon's report Staffordshire is ranked 15th of 31 English counties in terms of Quaker conventicles. Staffordshire is to be most fairly compared with its neighbouring counties : Cheshire had 22 Quaker conventicles, Leicestershire 11, Warwickshire 5, Derbyshire 3 and Shropshire 1. Despite its relatively small population Staffordshire had, therefore, with Leicestershire, the second largest number of Quaker conventicles in the region. Possibly this high count was a result of the number of itinerant preachers who had travelled to Swarthmoor Hall using the main London to Chester road which ran through Staffordshire. The existence of an established base to work from was another factor. George Fox came twice to Thomas Hammersley's house at Basford in the parish of Cheddleton, in 1654 and 1667, during which latter visit he established the monthly meetings in the county.¹²

Knutton near Newcastle under Lyme and Bradley near Stafford were not identified in Sheldon's list as Quaker conventicles, and these exemplify the difficulties which incumbents experienced in reporting on the movement. Friends' meetings were often held at different venues, on a rota basis, partly for convenience and possibly to avoid too obviously courting trouble with the authorities, even though the meetings were held publicly and the movement never went underground. Another difficulty for local incumbents was that Quaker meetings were not organised on the basis of Anglican parishes. Friends took no notice of parish boundaries in their attendance at meetings, and this affected the accuracy of the returns made in Sheldon. Thus the 100 Quakers who were cited as attending William Yardley's house in the parish of Horton probably included Friends from the large neighbouring parish of Leek. The notable omissions in Sheldon's list are Stafford and Uttoxeter. One possible explanation is

12 G. Fox, Journal (1694; ed. J. L. Nickalls, Cambridge, 1952), pp. 43 - 4.

that local Friends were holding their meetings in nearby villages when the returns were being compiled, Stafford Friends meeting in Bradley and Uttoxeter Friends in Bramshall. Otherwise the explanation may lie in the non-survival of the documents or, less likely in this case, in negligence on the part of the compilers.

Of the eight conventicles in Sheldon's list six are in the Moorlands area. There are none listed in the south of the county, although Quakers were located in that region. Possibly the movement had not yet developed sufficiently to form stable meetings for worship. Another supposition is that the local compilers of the report failed to distinguish Quakers from other dissenting groups, such as Anabaptists and Brownists, who are listed. The term 'Nonconformists' is mentioned twice and used to define groups in Sedgeley, Hanbury and Newborough. These were areas where congregations clustered around former ministers; 17 of the 'heads' or 'teachers' named by Sheldon had been ejected from their livings earlier in the decade.¹³ In the south of the county Presbyterians were the largest of the denominations, being particularly numerous in Burton, Walsall, Wednesbury, Darlaston and Sedgeley.

One source of information about the dissenting sects generally in Staffordshire in 1672, the licences for houses and teachers issued under the Declaration of Indulgence of that year, contains nothing on Quakers, who refused to acknowledge the right of any state or ecclesiastical authority in matters of religion. In 1672, however, the Staffordshire Quarterly Meeting Minute Book begins to provide names and from 1707 the names of attenders are regularly listed. The earliest surviving minute book for Leek Monthly Meeting runs from 1705 to 1737, but although it does not list attenders many names can be found in the entries. Stafford Monthly Meeting Minute Book runs from 1713 to 1783 and from the outset lists attenders. In addition

13 R. Mansfield, 'Protestant Nonconformity' in M. W. Greenslade (ed.), Victoria History of the County of Stafford, III, p. 20.

to these sources a list of the names of the members of Leek Monthly Meeting in 1735 survives and provides an extra test of the acceptability of the totals in Table 3.1.

Although this document covers the membership only for one year, it is reasonably consistent with the figure of 66 shown in the table which spans the 17 year period from 1726 to 1743, and validates the enumeration procedures adopted. It also provides some information on family size and household composition.

The figures in Table 3.1 show the numerical decline of the local Quaker movement in the eighteenth century. The down - turn probably began in the decade 1720 - 1730 . Toleration in 1689 may have brought , as Braithwaite suggests, a temporary 'great flocking to meetings ' but he acknowledged that his examination of the registers of births, marriages and deaths did not support the idea of any permanent increase. ¹⁴ He argues that certain areas in England, for example Yorkshire and Cumberland, made recoveries after the years of persecution . Extensive emigration to America in the closing years of the seventeenth century and the deep schism in the movement brought by the Wilkinson - Story controversy and other divisive issues, produced a diminution in numbers. Table 3.1 demonstrates the decline in Staffordshire. By the end of the period under review, the total number of committed heads of families, 102, was only two thirds, possibly even considerably less, of what it had been two generations earlier.

Chapters 8 and 9 of this study include an examination in detail of the haemorrhaging of the membership of the two monthly meetings, Leek and Stafford. Some general reasons for this decrease may immediately be offered. The decline in numbers was the result of the interaction of two factors, the wastage and losses

14 W. C. Braithwaite, The Second Period of Quakerism (1919; 2nd edn Cambridge, prepared by H. J. Cadbury, 1981), pp. 462 - 496.

resulting from death, departure and disownment, and the lack of recruitment from the 'external constituency' from which the early organisation had recruited its members and a consequent over - dependence on the 'internal constituency', particularly on the children of existing members, which might have replaced these losses. This has been a characteristic of the Protestant churches in modern Britain : Gilbert observed a similar phenomenon in his study of Anglican and Nonconformist denominations in England in the later nineteenth century. ¹⁵ In the first decade of Quakerism in Staffordshire many people had flocked to the general meetings held by the First Publishers of Truth from the north. In the second decade the earliest converts had continued to spread the 'message of Truth ' among their relations and neighbours. In the last decade of the seventeenth century fresh convincements and immigration into the county are revealed by a continual dribble of new names into the local Quaker records. Before 1730 recruitment from the wider non-Quaker society was diminishing. The local movement drew increasingly, both for its fully committed membership and for its leadership, on the children of existing members. Nor could numbers be maintained from the reservoir of casual attenders, only half - committed to the basic beliefs espoused by the leadership and to its full implications for individual behaviour, which Quakerism, like many religious movements in their earlier history, contained. This source was beginning to dry up, and the general process of renewal through such recruitment was too small to replace the numbers lost by natural wastage. Only a new recruiting drive could have stemmed the numerical decline but this was beyond the reach of the local leadership. By the second decade of the eighteenth century Quakerism had lost most of the Pentecostal enthusiasm of the

15 A. D. Gilbert, Religion and Society in Industrial England (1976), pp. 198 - 205.

First Publishers of Truth and the earliest converts : apocalypse had failed to occur and Quakerism, to survive at all, had to adapt to, and evolve a strategy to cope with, the religious, social and political realities of the time.

Missionary work continued, some of it directed at spreading the Quaker message in new areas, but this was more often undertaken overseas than in England. The Toleration Act had released a flood of new, proselytising energy, but this was not effectively directed at 'labouring in the world'. In Staffordshire a handful of 'Public Friends' emerged, who obtained the approval of their monthly meetings to travel around. There are no reports of their journeys, and they seem to have confined their itineraries to visiting established Quaker groups. Occasionally Public Friends from other areas came to Staffordshire, and there are occasional reports, later in the century, of well - attended general meetings. There was, however, no convincement to report as a result of such meetings. Indeed there is little evidence of a wish in the leadership to revive the fervid proselytising of earlier generations in the county. The annual reports made by the Quarterly Meeting to the Yearly Meeting in London, although formally acknowledging the duty of spreading the Quaker message of Truth, suggest rather a mood of resignation to what was happening. In 1736 its report stated

'although (by mixed marriages, the removal of some and the decease of others), our numbers are greatly reduced, there still remains a concern upon the minds of divers for the promotion of Truth'.¹⁶

That concern was not translated into action : the 1742 report stated that there had been no convincement that year. Convincement meant the acceptance of the truth of Quaker teachings. But even when a person was convinced this was only a first step to full acceptance into a meeting. From the earliest days Quakers had distinguished

16 Staffordshire C. R. O. D 3159/1/1 Quarterly Meeting Minute Book 1672 - 1743, entry for 5/2/1736.

between convincement and conversion, the latter requiring a continuous demonstration of the operation of the light of God within them. Fox had castigated mere 'professors' and Francis Howgill had written that a man might be convinced but if he was not converted he was still in darkness. The difficulty was how to judge that such conversion had taken place. It could only be measured by an individual's external behaviour, by his attendance at meetings for worship, by his adherence to the various testimonies required of Friends regarding tithes and oaths and by his adoption of the prescribed forms of dress and speech. The judges of such conformity were the elders and overseers of the monthly meeting, and the value which they placed upon it was an important factor in the numerical decline of the movement. There is no apparent deviation among the Staffordshire Friends who attended the monthly and quarterly meetings from the standards required by, and the models set by, the Yearly Meeting. It could hardly have been expected. As pointed out in Chapter 4 the men who attended the Yearly Meeting were the same men who carried out its policies at the local level.

By 1743 Friends in Staffordshire had become, numerically, a tiny sect, confining their activities to preserving the strict behaviour of its members and maintaining the select character of the movement. They were not necessarily lesser men than those of the first generation of Quakers, but they were different. Their inspiration was not the same as that of Fox and the earliest itinerants and their converts. Once the urgency to proselytise that derived, at least in part, from the element of millenarianism that had originally animated them, the core belief of Quakerism, the 'Inward Light', as Niebuhr argued, could not sustain into later generations that overwhelming missionary impulse that had prompted the First Publishers of Truth to seek to conquer the world.

Perhaps the change in Quakerism was as inevitable as anything in history can be inevitable. The later Quaker movement never developed a professional ministry able and willing to 'labour in the world'. The potential talent was there, among the Public Friends who emerged in most areas, including Staffordshire. But, as Braithwaite pointed out, to throw the burden of evangelism on the whole body of Friends seriously weakened the church for extensive work.¹⁷ The consequence was that Quakerism moved to a semi-Quietist role, emphasising conformity to a prescribed form of outward behaviour as a criterion for membership. The strictness with which these criteria were enforced varied from county to county. What happened in Staffordshire will be examined in later chapters.

17 Braithwaite, Second Period, chapter XXII.

CHAPTER 6 MIDDLE SORTS OF PEOPLE : occupations and social class of early Staffordshire Quakers, to 1743.

The social and occupational structure of early Quakerism has been the subject of much research from which varying conclusions have been drawn. Braithwaite argued that although the original Friends were drawn principally from the trading and yeoman classes, with a sprinkling of merchants and a few gentry, they also included a significant proportion of labourers and artisans. He maintained that until the Toleration Act of 1689 the proportion of manual workers within the movement increased. Sheldon's list of conventicles of 1669 in describing Quakers abounds in depreciatory terms such as 'inconsiderable fellows' and 'vulgar sort' and even allowing for a considerable political and religious bias by the compilers at local level when they were asked to comment on the 'Quality' of those who attended conventicles, nevertheless leaves the impression that the bulk of Friends were from the lower classes. Braithwaite's own analysis of extant Middlesex convictions under the first Conventicle Act of 1664, most of which relate to Quaker meetings, produced the following figures : gentry 5%, tradesmen, masters etc. 29.6%, artisans and seamen 59.8% and unskilled labourers 5.4%. He also cited his analysis of 250 Quaker marriages which took place in London in 1680, which argued that up to 1689 the Quaker movement was in far more vital touch with the people than in subsequent years and that thenceforward it was marked by a rise from lower - middle class obscurity to an upper - middle class 'oppressive respectability'.¹

Since Braithwaite wrote early Quaker occupations have been studied in a number of localities. Cole in 1957 looked at Quakers in Lancashire, Gloucestershire, Buckinghamshire, London and Bristol. He found that in Lancashire the movement

1 W. C. Braithwaite, The Second Period of Quakerism (1919; Cambridge, 1961), pp. 460 - 2.

was strongest among what he called the independent 'petite bourgeoisie' : over half its adherents were occupied as husbandmen, weavers, tailors, shoemakers and leather workers; in Gloucestershire commercial and industrial pursuits were well represented, while in agriculture there was a preponderance of yeomen over husbandmen, reversing the proportions of the population at large. In general, in the areas which Cole investigated, Quakers in agriculture were heavily outnumbered by those in trades and handicrafts. ² Vann in 1969 analysed the occupational background of samples of Quakers in Buckinghamshire, Norfolk and Norwich. He dismissed any semi-Marxist ideas that the 'corporate aspirations of the petite bourgeoisie' played any part in the origins of Quakerism. He suggested that occupations such as wholesale trading, clothiers and drapers, which involved travelling around the country, exposed members of these groups to new religious ideas and was thus an important factor in determining the original social composition of the Quaker movement. The core of support, he claimed, came from yeomen and wholesale traders and they supplied the local leadership. He also suggested that the numbers of gentlemen in the early days of the movement tended to be under - estimated, but that thereafter the numbers of the landed gentry who were Quakers diminished. He added the caveat that the data was too limited and the samples statistically too small to allow for more than impressionistic deductions about the social origins of early Quakerism.

Reay in 1980 underlined the observation that the different criteria, classifications and time -spans used by different scholars necessarily brought different results. ⁴ Using Vann's methods of analysis he examined the social origins of

2 A. Cole, 'The Social Origins of Early Friends', Journal of the Friends Historical Society, 48 (1957), pp. 99 - 118.

3 R. T. Vann, The Social Development of English Quakerism, 1655 - 1755 (Cambridge, Mass., 1969), pp. 47 - 86.

4 B. Reay, 'The Social Origins of Quakerism', Journal of Interdisciplinary History, 11 (1980), pp. 55 - 72.

Quakers in Somerset, Cheshire, Essex and Colchester. He found fewer gentry and rather more husbandmen, artisans and retailers than Vann had allowed in the areas he had researched. In his analysis of the hearth tax returns, usually accepted as a rough standard-of-living index, Reay found considerable regional variation. Thus in Cheshire there were substantial yeomen assessed at only one hearth, whereas in Somerset and Essex a return of one hearth was normally a guarantee that the occupant was poor.

These studies are useful for comparison with the conclusions reached for Staffordshire. Little is known about the many people who flocked to hear the First Publishers of Truth in the county : of the 19 names which can be found for 1654 to 1660 to only eight can an occupation be assigned. There were two gentlemen, three substantial farmers, one of whom was described as a yeoman, two husbandmen and one shoemaker.⁵ The evidence is thus far too scanty for anything save an impressionistic view to be drawn.

There is more information available for the decade 1661 - 1671 but first the nature and level of acceptability of the sources of this information, and the possibility of bias, must be examined. In any area the character of the local economy provides the major influence on the composition of a religious movement. In the second half of the seventeenth century Staffordshire was primarily an agricultural county. In the moorlands region grasslands farming predominated; pottery manufacture in the north-east was still only a small industry, largely restricted to Burslem where cylindrical pots were made in which to transport butter and cheese to the London markets from the arable region centred on Uttoxeter; mining for coal and ironstone was found in a number of areas but the 'Black Country' in its modern connotation did not exist. The

5 Evidence for the identification of occupation and status of some of these is provided in the representative biographical notes in an appendix to this study.

central region, focussed on the county town of Stafford, with well - watered land suitable for both corn and pasture, was the richest part of the county. Market towns had their usual range of craftsmen, traders and merchants and there was more than a sprinkling of lawyers and legal officials in the county town. It is only to be expected that Staffordshire Quakers would be broadly representative of an agrarian economy.

Most Quaker occupations in Staffordshire have to be derived mainly from local Quaker records, particularly lists of sufferings, minute books, and title and trust deeds, supplemented by occasional references to occupations found in churchwardens' presentations at episcopal visitations and in county quarter sessions records. The registers of births, marriages and deaths held in the Friends' House Library in London occasionally provide occupational information, but they are not always reliable. Thus Walter Pixley is cited as a shoemaker, which suggests a skilled but fairly humble craftsman whereas in fact he was a man of some means. Among the main sources of early Quaker names are the records of sufferings, which yield information on the regularity, character and value of distraints imposed on Quakers for non - payment of tithes and church levies. The evidence from this source suggests that the majority of committed early Quakers in the county were farmers, but as shown in Chapter 3, farmers were often the only occupational group thus penalised and sufferings inevitably have an agricultural and socio-economic bias. All the early leaders of the Quaker movement in Staffordshire, including Robert Mellor of Whitehough, Cornelius Bowman of Alstonefield, John Alsop of Ingestre and John Preston of Tixall, are identified as farmers from the records of sufferings. The identification of a few early Quakers as craftsmen can also be misleading. In addition to Walter Pixley of Uttoxeter mentioned above, Humphrey Wolrich of Newcastle - upon-Lyme is also described as a shoemaker. He was an itinerant preacher for many years and his designation as shoemaker is as misleading in his case as in George

Fox's. The occupations attached to Quakers are not always sure indications of socio-economic status. Thomas Brindley of Leek, presented by the churchwardens in the episcopal visitation of that town in 1666, and described as a blacksmith, may have followed that occupation, but in the hearth tax of the same year some one of the same name is shown as having three hearths. If they are one and the same man, then Brindley was among the better-off members of the community.

Commerce is not represented in identified Quaker occupations until the last decades of the seventeenth century. Elihu Hall, of Longnor, who first appears in the local Quaker records in 1689, was a mercer. Charles Osborne, of Wolverhampton, became a Quaker in 1684. He had been a soldier but turned to manufacturing tobacco boxes. His son, also called Charles, is described as ironmonger but this term did not then have its modern retail shop connotation. Many Quakers in what became known as the Black Country were involved in the iron industry. They included Henry Fidoe and Richard Parkes, but both of these were members of Dudley Meeting which was not attached to Staffordshire Quarterly Meeting.⁶ The relative absence of manufacturing and commercial Quakers from the records of the Staffordshire part of the Black Country is presumably explicable in terms of the pull of Birmingham.

Wherever they were found Friends won an early reputation for probity in business, which they were usually able to combine with business acumen: Walvin quotes a hostile reference to Quakers in 1697, about Friends being 'Grip'd by Mammon as hard as any of their Neighbours'.⁷ Not all Quakers were commercially successful, however. The outstanding example of this in early Staffordshire Quaker history is Edward Frith or Firth, of Stafford. He was a prominent member of Stafford Monthly Meeting and of the Quarterly Meeting from 1717. He would today be

6 J. Ede, The History of Wednesbury (Wednesbury, 1962), pp. 202 - 3.

7 J. Walvin, The Quakers: Money and Morals (1997), p. 2.

described as an entrepreneur, but his commercial skills were evidently not sufficiently well - honed to prevent his becoming bankrupt in 1737.⁸

Despite these local examples of commerce and manufacture Walvin's comment that for the earliest Quakers the richest seam remained rural is true also for Staffordshire. Non -agricultural occupations to be found among local Friends in the first 50 years of the movement are relatively few. From the 1720s a few more can be found but they still only comprised a small part of the total. Thus of 14 names of sufferers reported for the year 1728 only three were not farmers, Joseph Davison, the Quaker schoolmaster in Leek, Benjamin Lee, also of Leek, who had 'iron taken out of his shop worth 3s.9d.' and John Toft, a button manufacturer of Leek, who had pewter worth 6s. seized.⁹ Records of sufferings are, as already pointed out, necessarily biassed towards farmers as sometimes the only Quakers who were distrained for non - payment of tithes. A further distortion arises from the fact that the evidence of occupations derived from the quarterly and monthly meeting minutes is weighted towards the more prominent figures in the movement. There are no lists of attenders at weekly meetings for worship, either in town or country. The available information thus tends to concern what Vann calls 'governing elites'. He says of Buckinghamshire Quakers that their business meetings were attended by 'gentlemen, rich yeomen and wholesale traders'.¹⁰ Watts points out that it was the practice for business meetings to be held during the hours of daylight and that this restricted attendance to those able to leave their work during the day.¹¹ It was not until the nineteenth century that

8 See biographical note in Appendix A. The bare details in the local minute books of his disownment for bankruptcy, almost a sin in Quaker eyes, reveal little of the effect this must have had on the local movement.

9 Staffordshire C. R. O. D 3159/2/18 Record of Sufferings.

10 Vann, Social Development, p. 118.

11 M. Watts, The Dissenters (Oxford, 1978; paperback edn 1985), p. 356.

the changing character of Quakerism enabled more people to attend business meetings. This development is underlined by Butler's study of meeting houses, which shows that lighting was not generally introduced until that later period.¹²

The gentry never played a numerically strong part in Quaker history. By the later seventeenth century, and thus within the terminal dates of this study, the distinction between the prosperous yeoman and the gentleman was becoming blurred, and was sometimes less a matter of heraldry than of public image. When gentlemen did become Quakers, however, they were often of local importance to the movement, and as locally influential people or as magistrates could offer leadership, based on social position as well as conviction, together with some protection, to local Friends. Vann points to the role of one or two men of wealth and influence in providing a base for operations for the First Publishers of Truth.¹³ In Staffordshire only two gentlemen, in the legal meaning of the word, can be positively identified among the earliest converts to Quakerism. These were Thomas Hammersley of Basford, near Leek,¹⁴ and Francis Comberford of Comberford, near Tamworth, later of Bradley, near Stafford.¹⁵ Vann discusses the idea that Quakerism ceased to attract further converts from the gentry after 1670 because Quaker discipline actually prohibited much of the life-style to which they were accustomed, and discouraged further recruiting from this class. He concludes, however, that the main explanation for this feature of early Quakerism was that non-conformity to the religion as established by law constituted a disadvantage for gentlemen with any political ambition.¹⁶ It seems reasonable also to

12 D. M. Butler, The Quaker Meeting Houses of Britain, (1999), Vol. II, p. 901.

13 Vann, Social Development, p. 14.

14 D. H. Pennington and I. A. Roots, The Committee at Stafford 1643 - 1645, (Manchester, 1957), p. 157, cites him as gentleman.

15 R. M. Kidson (ed.), 'Staffordshire Gentry 1662-1663', in Staffordshire Historical Collections 4th Series, vol. III.

16 Vann, Social Development, pp. 77-8.

suppose that the original levelling and radical social views of Fox and his fellow preachers alarmed the gentry class, despite exceptions like Judge Fell of Swarthmoor. The evidence from Staffordshire is insufficient to make any informed comment based on Vann's suggestion, but the total number of Staffordshire gentlemen who became Quakers is unlikely to be anywhere near the figure of 7% which Vann found in Buckinghamshire and Norfolk.¹⁷ A likely reason for this is that, in Staffordshire, Presbyterianism had already creamed off those members of the local gentry who were sufficiently discontented with the teachings and provision of the established church to look elsewhere for their spiritual guidance. The Presbyterian movement was less radical in its social views than were Quakers. Numerous early Presbyterians attended both Anglican services and Presbyterian conventicles and the movement could thus more easily accommodate members of the gentry class.

Vann also suggested that after 1670 converts to Quakerism were of a lower social class than the earliest Friends, and the easing, though not cessation, of persecution after 1672 may have contributed to an influx of artisans and unskilled labourers into the local Quaker movement. Some quantitative evidence on the point for Staffordshire can be derived from the hearth tax returns of 1662 to 1689. These returns are not only useful for estimating population size but can also serve as a rough index to an individual's class and economic situation. The tax was levied annually at the rate of two shillings for every fireplace or stove in a house. Persons exempt from the tax included those who were too poor to pay poor and church rates, those in receipt of poor relief, occupants of houses worth less than 20 shillings a year, inmates of hospitals and almshouses, and occupants of industrial hearths, with the exception

17 Ibid., p. 77-8

of smiths' forges and bakers' ovens. The acts were highly unpopular and their implementation was hampered by evasion and the corruption or negligence of local officials. New checks were introduced into the processes of assessment and collection, and a special class of collectors, called 'chimney men', was created. From 1663 the names of all householders, whether taxable or not, had to be returned. Farming out was tried after 1666, abandoned in 1668 and tried again with more success in 1674 and 1675. The tax was finally abolished in 1688.

The hearth tax assessments for 1666, one of the least unreliable of the series, have been transcribed and published for all five of the Staffordshire hundreds.¹⁸ Totmonslow Hundred has been selected for analysis in this study as being most representative of Quakers in Staffordshire in the decade 1661-1670. It covered most of the area within the compass of Leek Monthly Meeting plus the Uttoxeter part of Stafford Monthly Meeting, and thus not only included regions of different economic characteristics but also two market towns, Leek and Uttoxeter. The assumption underlying the use of hearth tax lists for social analysis is that the size of a man's house, as measured by the number of hearths it contained, is an indicator of his wealth and status. It is usually accepted that those exempt from the tax may be classed among the very poor and those with only one hearth, as poor. Howell suggests that a total of below three hearths indicates an economic situation below the comfortable level,¹⁹ but this seems pessimistic because in some areas occupants assessed at only one hearth can be shown to have been yeoman and men of substance. Those persons assessed at two hearths are generally assumed to be above the lowest poverty level, occupants of houses assessed at from three to five hearths are classed among the

18 Staffs. Hist. Coll. vols for 1921, 1923, 1925, 1927 and 1936 (Staffordshire Record Society, formerly the William Salt Archaeological Society)

19 R. Howell, Hearth Tax Returns (1970, No. 7 in 'Short Guides to Records' ed. L. Munby, Historical Association).

**TABLE 4.1 1666 HEARTH TAX ASSESSMENTS, TOTMONSLOW
HUNDRED, STAFFORDSHIRE (by constablewicks)**
(Source: S.H.C. 1925)

Name of Constable -wick	Numbers of assessments							Total
	n.c.	1 h.	2 h.	3 h.	4 h.	5 h.	6+h.	
Horton	85	137	28	14	5	4	8	281
Leek	131	180	51	32	18	7	9	428
Bradnop	23	50	23	6	3	-	-	105
Cauldon	13	10	2	1	-	1	-	27
Cheadle	84	79	18	14	8	3	1	207
Draycott	28	24	9	8	1	-	1	71
Caverswall	47	100	24	9	6	9	7	202
Butterton	21	27	4	-	-	-	1	53
Grindon	34	52	9	4	2	2	1	104
Wetton	6	35	5	2	-	-	-	48
Ellaston ¹	-	51	10	4	3	-	2	70
Rocester	15	87	20	7	2	-	5	136
Alton	104	274	49	22	13	1	7	470
Kingston	17	18	3	5	2	-	3	48
Bramshall	8	12	7	3	-	-	1	31
Field	1	10	2	-	-	1	1	15
Gratwich	5	10	4	-	-	-	-	19
Oakover ²	7	10	3	2	1	-	3	26
Uttoxeter	112	183	82	34	18	5	8	442
Cheddleton	31	78	26	11	5	2	5	158
Madeley/H ³	2	25	5	1	4	2	2	48
Crakemarsh	18	22	12	3	1	-	2	58
Tean	29	41	11	5	1	-	1	88
Leigh	45	23	7	-	-	4	24	103
Mayfield	14	34	6	8	3	2	-	67
Great Yate ⁴	8	17	6	2	-	-	1	34
Alstonefield	184	103	30	5	1	-	1	324
TOTALS	1058	1687	459	206	95	39	74	3618
(%)	(29.2)	(46.6)	(12.7)	(5.6)	(2.6)	(1.1)	(2)	(100)
QUAKERS	4	18	2	6	1	-	2	34
(%)	(11.8)	(52.9)	(5.9)	(17.6)	(2.9)	-	(5.9)	(100)

Notes: 1 No non-chargeable assessments listed; 2 Cited as Oakover, Ilam and Casterne Constablewick; 3 Madeley Holme; 4 Cited as Greatyate and Musden Constablewick.
n-c = non-chargeable

'middling sort' and those with six or more hearths may be described as affluent. Reay uses a different set of categories for his analysis of samples of four hearth tax returns for four different years for Cheshire, Somerset and Essex. He placed those assessed at two and three hearths together, describing them as living in modest but comfortable houses, those with four or more hearths as prosperous, and there was a top category of those with eight or more hearths.²⁰ With slight modification this seems to be a more appropriate classification for Staffordshire.

Table 4.1 provides a summary of the 1666 hearth tax return for the whole of the hundred, with the Quakers who can be identified in the hundred also listed for comparison. The results of making such a comparison must remain doubtful because the number of Quakers, 34, less than 1% of the total number of households, looks suspiciously small for that area, which was one of the most active Quaker localities in the county. In so far as the data may be accepted it shows that there were fewer Quakers in the three lowest categories (non-chargeable, one hearth and two hearths) than in the hundred as a whole, but comparatively more in the higher categories (three to five and over six). The analysis shows that nearly two-thirds of all early Quakers in the area were within the poorest sections of the community, defining this category as those listed as non-chargeable plus those assessed at only one hearth. Four Quakers, 11.8% of their total, were so poor as to be exempted from paying the hearth tax. The percentage of two-hearth Quakers is less than half that for the whole hundred but prosperous Quakers with three or more hearths are twice as many as those in the hundred generally. These differences could prompt to a conclusion that Quakers were among the better-off members of the community, except that again the figures are so small as to cast doubt on any conclusion. What the figures can do is to offer general

support, at least for this part of Staffordshire, for Braithwaite's contention about the presence of a substantial element of poor people in the early Quaker movement. There were however, rather more well-to-do Quakers, defining these as being assessed at three or more hearths, than in the population of the hundred generally. The proportion of affluent Friends possessing six or more hearths is the same as for the whole hundred.

Table 4.2 lists the names and assessments of all householders in the 1666 hearth tax return who can be securely identified as Quakers. They are also grouped according to Reay's classification, and, as already stated, of these 64.7% may be described as poor, possessing no or only one hearth, 5.9% as modest but comfortable, 23.5% as well-to-do and 5.9% as affluent. The last two categories are the significant ones. Nearly 30% of Quakers in Totmonslow, one of the poorest of the hundreds, could be described as middling to wealthy, compared to only 11.4% of the hearth tax payers as a whole. The governing elite of the local Friends at this very early period in Staffordshire Quaker history came mainly from this group and included William Yardley, Thomas Brindley, Francis French, Walter Pixley and Thomas Hammersley. There is a little evidence from the Quakers' own sources on the point on particular individuals. William Yardley has already been shown in Chapter 2 of this study to have been a prominent early Quaker leader, and his assessment at six hearths suggests that he would have been able to accommodate the large conventicle of 100 which Sheldon listed in his house in 1669. They probably met in a barn. Thomas Hammersley of Basford and Francis French of Bramshall, also held conventicles in their houses. Much depends, in assessing the social status of early Quakers, on the date and span of time period chosen for research. The picture changed over the years, and it was probably not until the earlier eighteenth century that Staffordshire Quakers were, in general, becoming of the 'middling sort'. There is no evidence, however,

**TABLE 4.2 QUAKER HOUSEHOLDS AND THEIR HEARTH TAX
ASSESSMENTS IN TOTMONSLOW HUNDRED, 1666**

Name	Constablewick (+ hamlet if different)	Hearths	Identification
Gent, William	Horton	6	RS 1655
Brindley, Thomas	Leek	3	EV 1668
Finny, John	Leek (Lowe)	1	EV 1668
Davenport, William	Leek (Lowe)	2	EV 1668
Lownes, Widow	Leek (Leek Frith)	1	Q 19/11/74
Brindle, Randle	Leek (Leek Frith)	1	EV 1668
Dale, Richard	Leek (Tittesworth)	1	EV 1665
Dale, Randle	Leek (Tittesworth)	2	EV 1668
Finny, Thomas	Bradnop	n-c	EV 1668
Allcocke, William	Bradnop	1	RS 1676
Rowley, Thomas	Caverswall (Hulme)	5	EV 1665
Amree, George	Caverswall (Forsbrook)	1	EV 1668
Hall, John	Grindon	1	EV 1665
Hall, Humphrey	Grindon	1	EV 1665
Titterton, William	Grindon	3	EV 1668
Buckston, Richard	Grindon	1	EV 1665
Addams, Richard	Grindon	n-c	EV 1668
Oliver, John	Grindon	3	Besse 1661
Taylor, Joseph	Alton (Ipstones)	3	Besse 1661
Hall, John	Alton (Ipstones)	1	Reg. 1661
Torr, Thomas	Wetton (Ecton)	1	EV 1665
Hall, John	Wetton	1	EV 1665
Smith, Simon	Rocester (Waterfall)	4	Besse 1661
Grindy, Thomas	Rocester (Waterfall)	1	Besse 1661
French, Francis	Bramshall	6	EV 1665
Clowes, William,	Bramshall	1	EV 1665
Wedgwood, Richard	Bramshall	1	EV 1665
Sherratt, Thomas	Field (Middleton)	1	EV 1663
Pixley, Walter	Uttoxeter	3	EV 1665
Foster, Abraham	Uttoxeter	1	EV 1665
Hamersley, Thomas	Cheddleton (Basford)	3	EV 1668
Mellor, Robert	Alstonefield (Beresford)	1	EV 1665

Distribution of Hearths	Quakers	All Totmonslow
Non-chargeable + 1 hearth	22 (64.7%)	2745 (75.9%)
2 hearths	2 (5.9%)	459 (12.7%)
3 to 5 hearths	8 (23.5%)	340 (9.4%)
6+ hearths	2 (5.9%)	74 (2.0%)

Abbreviations: RS Record of Sufferings, Q Quarterly Meeting Minute Book, EV Episcopal Visitation, Besse Collection of Sufferings, Reg. Registers of Births, Marriages and Deaths (Friends' House Library). Name spellings modernised.

comparable to that of the hearth tax assessments by which to make any statistically-based judgement for this later period, and the conclusion must be based on the evidence of sources which generally only provide the names of the local leaders.

That there was a range of social class within early Staffordshire Quakerism is apparent from the the hearth tax returns of 1666. Like most people, Quakers of whatever rank tended to marry within their own social group but the absence of comprehensive data makes it impossible to quantify this. By the second or third decade of the eighteenth century numbers had diminished and the range of choice of possible matrimonial partners was increasingly restricted. There is no solid evidence, however, that either male or female Friends married above or below them, or that any such unequal social matches produced strains within the local movement. In later chapters marriages within the two monthly meetings are examined, and such evidence of social status and occupation as survives suggests that 'middling sort' Quaker men married 'middling sort' Quaker women. Marriage within the same income group possibly combined with the requirement of marriage only within the sect to reduce even further the dwindling numbers of Staffordshire Friends.

CHAPTER 7 EARLY QUAKER BURIAL GROUNDS AND MEETING HOUSES IN STAFFORDSHIRE

Burial Grounds

Fox and his fellow Quakers rejected any idea of consecrated burial grounds, holding that one place was no more holy or nearer to God than another. From the earliest years they urged Friends to provide their own burial grounds fenced off to distinguish them from the 'Sodomites, Egyptians and Canaanites' and these were sometimes obtained long before permanent meeting houses could be, or were, established. An epistle issued by a conference at Skipton in 1653 recommended local meetings to provide a burying-place for their dead 'as a testimony against the superstitious idolising of those places called holy ground'.¹ A meeting of elders at Balby in 1656 advised meetings to keep records of those who died in the Lord and to conduct burials 'according to scripture and not after the custom of the heathens'.² The austerity of Quaker burials sometimes provoked contemporaries to indignation and this reaction prompted Fox to write :

'And you all say that we bury like dogs because we have not superfluous and needless things upon our coffin and a white and black cloth with scutcheons and do not go in black and hang scarfs upon our hats and white scarfs over our shoulder and give gold rings and have sprigs of rosemary in our hands and ring the bells. How dare you say we bury our people like dogs because we cannot bury them after the vain pomps and glory of the world?'³

The Yearly Meeting in the eighteenth century continued to issue exhortations concerning burial grounds and customs, advising against feasting and superfluous provision. Friends have no particular veneration for burial grounds and apart from

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- 1 Quoted in A. Lloyd, Quaker Social History (1950), p. 2.
 - 2 W. C. Braithwaite, The Beginnings of Quakerism (1912; Cambridge edn 1981), p. 313.
 - 3 G. Fox, 'An encouragement to trust in the Lord', Journal of Friends' Historical Society 10 (1918).

considerations of space and modern public health requirements, Quaker burial grounds have displayed no special interment features, other than the use of headstones, to prompt archaeological investigation . To leading early Quakers headstones smacked of human pride and vanity and in 1717 the Yearly Meeting denounced the practice of erecting them and their inscriptions as a 'vain custom' . They directed the removal of existing tombstones and the ending of the practice for the future. ⁴ Not all meetings complied with the advice and it was repeated in 1766, prompting Staffordshire Friends in 1767 to report that the custom of setting up gravestones had not been used by them. ⁵ There are surviving Staffordshire examples in the Uttoxeter and Stoke-on-Trent burial grounds but these date from the nineteenth century.

In the earliest years of the movement, before Friends acquired their own burial grounds, they were sometimes forced to make use of the Anglican parish churchyard, as entries in local parish registers record. Being unbaptised and often excommunicate, deceased Friends were not eligible for the full burial service and the registers sometimes record an unceremonious interment, using phrases like 'tumbled in the ground.' ⁶ If there was a special plot for Quakers and for similar burials with shortened rites, it was often on the north side of the church. To avoid this, many early Friends were buried on their own property, in a garden or orchard. Such interments deprived Church of England ministers of their customary fees and although burial fees were required neither by common or canon law, in most parishes custom sanctioned the payment of a fee to both parson and churchwardens, and the incumbent

4 Quoted in Yearly Meeting, Rules of Discipline (3rd edn 1834), p. 7, (Friends' House Library).

5 Staffs. Record Office D 3159/1/2, Quarterly Meeting Minute Book 1743-1783, entry for 7/5/1767.

6 D. J. Steel, Sources for Nonconformist Genealogy (1973), pp. 671 - 682.

could sue under common law if he could prove such was the case. There was no legislation, prior to the Burial Acts of the nineteenth century, governing the place of interment, and burial in consecrated ground was a right rather than a requirement. Apart from three classes of persons listed in the rubric of the burial service of the Church of England - the unbaptised, the excommunicated and the suicide - parishioners had a common law right to be buried in the parish churchyard or burial ground. Faced by Quakers who denied the validity of the Church of England and refused burial in the 'steeple-house yard' and who on conscientious grounds refused to pay any customary fees, ministers sometimes made efforts to enforce the customary payments and even intercept Quaker burials. Besse in his Collection of Sufferings provides a vivid example of this in the parish of Keele in the 12th month of 1682.

' An honest woman of Keele, who feared the Lord, being dead, her husband and relations intended to bury her in a burying-place of Friends about ten miles from thence; but the priest of the parish, named Thomas Walthall, sent to the woman's husband a threatening message, that if he did not forthwith pay him his demand for fees, he would arrest the corpse and cause them to bury her in a ditch. He also said...that he had rather see all the heretics hanged than lose one sixpence by them...' ⁷

The incident was probably unusual. Not all Anglican ministers adopted such a mercenary attitude and Friends had a tendency to demonise their antagonists. It is also suggested, moreover, that sometimes local parishioners were horrified by the idea of even Quakers being buried in unconsecrated ground. Davies argues that Quaker burial practices challenged the rules and customs which regulated and gave cohesion to the rhythms of daily life and that this was a major cause of local antagonism. ⁸

Three or four interments in private gardens or backyards in Staffordshire are documented, but there were undoubtedly many others in the earliest period that went

7 J. Besse, A Collection of the Sufferings of the People called Quakers (1753), Vol. 1, pp. 653 - 4. He cites a 'letter' but gives no names.

8 A. Davies, The Quakers in English Society 1655 - 1725 (Oxford, 2000), p. 42.

unrecorded. The Friends' registers record the burial of John Nicken in 1674, at Lynn, in the parish of Shenstone, and as this is the only reference to the site in the registers it was probably an individual garden interment. William Reading or Ridding, also of Shenstone, was presented at an episcopal visitation in 1663 for burying his wife in his hemp-yard, and Matthew Babb, of Stafford, in 1665, for having 'buried Boore's child in his backside'.⁹

From the beginning of the movement Quakers were exhorted to keep careful records of their burials, although some of the first records were inevitably lost during the period of persecution. In 1669 the Yearly Meeting approved recommendations, presumably written by Fox, to quarterly and monthly meetings, which included one on the provision of burial grounds and of books for registering births, marriages and burials. The system was overhauled in 1774, when printed forms were instituted, and all meetings for worship had to return names of persons buried to their local monthly meeting, which once a year sent all burial notes to Quarterly Meeting. Under the Act of 1840 all Quaker registers were surrendered to the Crown Commissioners but copies were made and these are now in the Library of the Society of Friends in London. There were more burials in the very early days than are actually recorded, and frequently no place of burial is quoted. Sometimes burial registers were begun only when Quakers acquired their own graveyards, although occasionally some entries were made retrospective. In 1678 the Six Weeks Meeting in London agreed that Friends should comply with the Second Act for Burial in Woollen passed in that year, but left the matter of the accompanying oath to the discretion of local monthly meetings, who sometimes submitted affidavits to the local authorities.¹⁰

9 Lichfield Record Office, B/V/1/71, Shenstone, 1663, and B/V/1/72, Stafford, 1665.

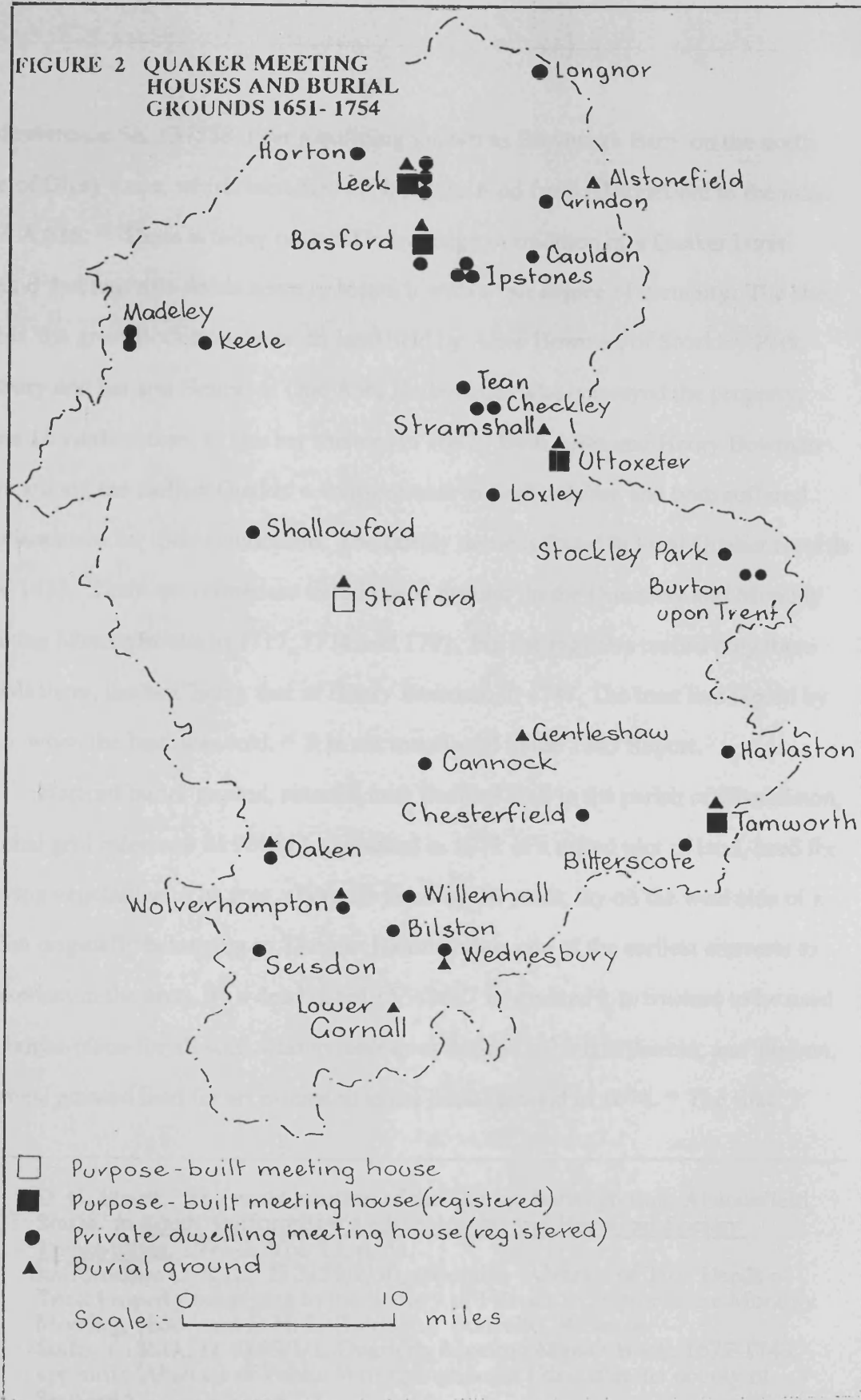
10 J.F.H.S. 17, no. 4, (1921), 'Burials in woollen'.

The history of Quaker burial grounds in Staffordshire has already been traced.¹¹ The varied sources allow for a fairly comprehensive account of their establishment and location.¹² The sites, together with those of meeting houses, are plotted on Figure 2 below. There are, within the borders of what was originally the administrative county of Staffordshire (excluding Dudley), 14 burial grounds in the accepted sense of the term, that is, graveyards other than places of a few individual family interments on private property. Seven of the burial grounds are or were attached to Quaker meeting houses which were either specially adapted from previous buildings or purpose-built. These were Leek, Stafford, Stoke-upon-Trent, Tamworth, Uttoxeter, Wednesbury and Wolverhampton. The other seven, not so attached, though sometimes close to houses or barns used for meetings for worship, were at Alstonefield, Basford in the parish of Cheddleton, Gentleshaw in the parish of Longdon, Lower Gornall, now part of Dudley, Oaken in Codsall parish near Wolverhampton, Shallowford in the parish of Chebsey east of Stafford, and Stramshall near Uttoxeter. Most of the separate burial grounds were the gift of Staffordshire Friends, or the land was sold to Friends at a low price. Extra land was often purchased or bestowed subsequently. All burial grounds were managed by nominated trustees who were replaced as necessary, although, in time, one or two trusts lapsed through neglect and disuse.

Alstonefield burial ground, in the parish of Alstonefield, is located at national

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- 11 D.G. Stuart, 'The burial grounds of the Society of Friends in Staffordshire' in South Staffordshire Archaeological and Historical Society Transactions, 12 (1970-1), pp. 37-48.
- 12 These sources include the Official Registers of Burials, supplemented by local tradition and knowledge, Church of England parish registers, large scale maps such as those accompanying the Tithe Commutation Act of 1836 or Inclosure Acts, which sometimes include terms such as 'graveyard piece' or 'holy ground', and the Society of Friends' Report on Burial Grounds, produced in 1843.

FIGURE 2 QUAKER MEETING
HOUSES AND BURIAL
GROUNDS 1651- 1754



grid reference SK 137558, near a building known as Bowman's Barn, on the north side of Gipsy Lane, which branches off from the road from Alstonefield to the main road A 516. ¹³ There is today no local knowledge or tradition of a Quaker burial ground but two title deeds serve to locate it with a fair degree of certainty. The site, called 'the great Botlestone' was on land held by Alice Bowman of Stockley Park, Tutbury and her son Henry, of One Ash, Derbyshire, who conveyed the property, about 16 yards square, to Quaker trustees in 1687. Both Alice and Henry Bowman were among the earliest Quaker convincements in Staffordshire and both suffered imprisonment for their convictions. The family name is found in local Quaker records until 1833. There are references to the burial ground in the Quarterly and Monthly Meeting Minute Books in 1717, 1774 and 1791, but the registers record only three burials there, the last being that of Henry Bowman in 1747. The trust had lapsed by 1813 when the land was sold. ¹⁴ It is not mentioned in the 1843 Report.

Basford burial ground, situated near Basford Hall in the parish of Cheddleton, national grid reference SJ 988513, consisted in 1971 of a raised plot of land, used for growing vegetables. The area, about 20 yards by 10 yards, lay on the west side of a garden originally belonging to Thomas Hammersley, one of the earliest converts to Quakerism in the area. By a deed dated 15/9/1667 he granted it to trustees to be used as a burial-place for all such who in their lives desired to be laid therein, and his son, Thomas, granted land for an extension to the burial ground in 1674. ¹⁵ The first

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- 13 D. G. Stuart, 'The exact location of the Quaker burial ground, Alstonefield, Staffs.' in South Staffordshire Archaeological and Historical Society Transactions, 1971-2, Vol. 13, p. 51.
 - 14 Staffordshire C. R.O., D 3159/2/50, appendix 'Abstract of Title Deeds of Trust Property belonging to the Society of Friends in Staffordshire Monthly Meeting, 1836' and F. H. L. (London), portfolio 14, no.78.
 - 15 Staffs. C. R.O., D 3159/1/1, Quarterly Meeting Minute Book, 1672-1743, appendix 'Abstract of Public Writings amongst Friends in the county of Stafford.'

documented burial was that of Robert Mellor, of Whitehough, in the neighbouring parish of Ipstones, in 1684. At the funeral was the notable Quaker preacher John Gratton, who was released from Derby gaol to attend the ceremony. He and other Friends were later fined by the magistrates, although local feeling was hostile to the informers.¹⁶ At least 19 members of the Hamersley family were buried in Basford, the last recorded interment there being that of Mary, wife of John Baddeley, potter, who was buried in 1828.¹⁷ The registers record a total of about 139 burials. By the time of the 1843 Report the graveyard was no longer in use.

Gentleshaw burial ground, in the parish of Longdon, was conveyed by Thomas James, husbandman, to three Quaker trustees by a deed dated 15th October 1695.¹⁸ The deed describes the plot as, by estimation, 17 yards by 16 yards, taken from a close belonging to Thomas James and adjoining Shaw Lane. The Tithe Map and Apportionment for the parish of Longdon of 1843 shows a plot of land called 'Graveyard Piece' at grid reference SK 15451175. During the eighteenth century the burial ground ceased to be used although a few references exist in the quarterly meeting minute books to the custody of the deed by which the original grant was made. A minute of Stafford Preparative Meeting of 27/3/1791 states that the property had been forfeited for want of renewal of the trust. There is no record of names of any persons buried in the plot, but it is possible it was used by members of the meeting for worship at Chesterfield and Lynn in the parish of Shenstone.

Leek burial ground lies on the north side of the meeting house at Overton Bank, Leek. It was probably used from the time that Friends first acquired the

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- 16 A. G. Matthews, The Congregational Churches of Staffordshire (London, 1924), pp. 81-2, quoting Journal of the Life of John Gratton (1779), p. 105.
 17 Staffs. C. R.O., D 3159, Miscellaneous Papers, 'Account of the Hamersley Family buried at Basford'.
 18 Q.M.M.B. appendix, 'Abstract of Public Writings'.

Overton Bank property, in 1693, but the earliest reference to a burial there is in the registers, which state that Phoebe Stretch was buried there in 13/12/1705 -6. The last recorded burial was in 1954. The 1843 Report gives the dimensions as 72 feet by 70 feet, the graves being four or five deep in a dry, bedrocky subsoil. Five lime-trees in the north and west sides of the burial ground date from the 1790s. The registers list the names of about 240 persons buried at Leek up to 1837, the highest recorded in the county, but other local Friends were probably buried at Basford before the Leek burial ground became available.

A Quaker burial ground may have been sited in Grosvenor Road, Lower Gornall, formerly in Sedgley parish and part of the old administrative county of Staffordshire but later within Dudley. Dudley Friends' registers record the interment of Joseph Payton on 3/6/1678 'among Friends at William Corbett',¹⁹ meaning presumably that the burial was on Corbett's property. There are references in Wednesbury parish register to earlier burials of members of the Fidoe family, iron merchants of Wednesbury, in the same spot. These include Joseph Fidoe, who died on 6/3/1678, Margaret Fidoe, who was buried in woollen at Gornall on 1st December 1696 and Samuel Fidoe, also buried in woollen, on 10th November 1678. There are, however, no direct references in Staffordshire Quaker records to the Lower Gornall burial ground and it seems to have been used only for a relatively short period of time. The tithe apportionment map of 1845 shows the existence of a plot called 'Graveyard' at grid reference SO 921907 but this may refer to an area in which bodies of victims of the fighting during the Parliamentary attack on Dudley Castle during the Civil War were interred. Wednesbury Quakers were attached to Dudley meeting and do not

19 A. Rollason, Non-Parochial Registers of Dudley (1899), p. 16.

therefore come within the main scope of this study.

Oaken burial ground is mentioned in the Wolverhampton parish register where the burial of Jane, wife of William Southwick, at 'the Quakers' place' near Oaken, is recorded for 27th April 1691. This may have been part of the property of Richard Chandless or Chandler who in the following year offered a parcel of land to Quarterly Meeting as a burying-place.²⁰ A deed of gift dated 4/9/1695 conveyed the property to Jonathan Frith of Birmingham, George Welch of Willenhall and Marmaduke Syddern. It gives the dimensions as 23 yards by 14 yards, and locates it as adjoining the dwelling house of Richard Chandless and the common street of Oaken.²¹ In the Tithe Award of 1841, plot 149, 10 perches in extent, is stated to be in the ownership of Quaker trustees. The O.S. grid reference is SJ 857027. In 1971 it was a plot fronting on Middle Lane and maintained as a lawn.

Shallowford burial ground is sited at O.S. grid reference SJ 872292. It is about 12 yards square and marked by a clump of trees in a field on the north side of the unclassified road from Shallowford to Chebsey, about half a mile from Norton railway station. It is shown on the O.S. six inch map XXX SW of 1901 as 'burial ground'. Shallowford, in the parish of Chebsey, was a private burial ground used by Quaker families, Wolrich and Kent, who lived on the property. It did not belong to Staffordshire Friends, hence the absence of any title deeds. By 1880 the property had passed into other hands, but Friends paid for a fence to be erected around it and there are references in the minute books to occasional visits of inspection, and to payments of ten shillings per annum for the fence to be kept in repair. In 1900 it was hedged around and a notice board erected bearing the words 'The Society of Friends Burial

20 Q.M.M.B. 4/5/1692 and 3/8/1692.

21 Ibid., 'Abstract of Public Writings'.

Ground about 1850'.²² In 1938 Friends decided to remove the notice board and in view of the difficulty of access to the burial ground, to abandon their concern in the matter. In 1971 an application was made for the burial ground to be scheduled under the Ancient Monuments Acts of 1913, 1931 and 1953. The registers show ten burials at Shallowford, all from the Wolrich and Kent families. The 1843 Report states that there had been only one burial there in the preceding ten years. The last recorded burial was of John Kent on 3/5/1871. In 1997 Shallowford was not a listed site but existing legislation provided for its protection.

Matthew Babb of Stafford by a deed dated 5/7/1668 granted a burial ground to Quaker trustees for a nominal sum of 13 shillings.²³ The property is described as a parcel of land 10 yards long and seven yards broad lying near the house of Matthew Babb in Foregate Street, Stafford; on 17/3/1680 his son, John Babb, gave another piece of the Fore Street property of similar dimensions as an extension to the burial ground, and a third grant was made by the Babb family in 1725.²⁴ The 1843 Report describes the graveyard as 'fronting the Meeting House, walled in, 35 yards by 10 yards wide, on a dry soil, the graves five feet deep.' There had been only five interments in the preceding 10 years. The registers show that 86 burials had taken place up to 1837. The last interment was that of Mary Halden in 1890, who had left the interest on £20 to be used for the upkeep of the burial ground. A corrugated iron hut, for use as a mission hall, was built over the burial ground, but this was demolished in 1957.²⁵ The burial ground is now used as a car park by Friends.

22 Staffs. C. R.O., D 3159/2/5, Meeting for Discipline, 2/12/1915.

23 Q.M.M.B. 14/11/1668.

24 *Ibid.*, appendix 'Abstract of Public Writings'.

25 M. W. Greenslade with D. A. Johnson and C. R. J. Currie, 'The Borough of Stafford', in Victoria History of the County of Stafford VI (1979), p. 253.

The history of Friends in Stoke - upon - Trent begins after the terminal date of this study but to provide a comprehensive account of the burial grounds in the county a brief summary follows. Friends and attenders in the area had been informally meeting for worship since 1821 and were known as Penkhull Meeting, which was considered to be part of Leek Preparative Meeting. They were acknowledged as a settled meeting in 1830 and in 1836 the name was changed to Stoke and the meeting became independent of Leek.²⁶ In 1832 Friends bought the chapel in Thomas (now Aquinas) Street which had been originally erected by Independents in 1823, and converted it for use as a meeting house.²⁷ The purchase included 300 yards of ground attached to the chapel, and Friends used part of the area as a burial ground. The 1843 Report described the burial ground as being 20 yards by 10 yards, on a stiff marl, walled round, and containing six graves at a depth of six feet. Up to 1951 there were between 50 and 60 burials. In 1951 the Stoke Meeting House was abandoned in favour of a new building in Priory Road, Newcastle, and in 1954 was sold to the British Red Cross Society. Friends retained the burial ground, however, which was last used in 1951 for the interment of Sarah Louise Watson, who left a legacy of £4 2s. for its upkeep.²⁸

Stramshall burial ground, in the parish of Uttoxeter, was sold to William Heath of Kingsley on 3rd September 1671 by Thomas Scot and his son John. It is described as a parcel of land lying in the overend of a certain croft called the Overcroft in Stramshall in length 20 yards and breadth 12 yards.²⁹ Another abstract of the deed states that the property abutted on the east and north side of the overcroft

26 Cheshire/Staffordshire Quarterly Meeting Minute Book, 10/12/1830.

27 B. Young, 'Protestant Nonconformity', in J. G. Jenkins (ed.) Victoria History of the County of Stafford VIII (1963), p.284, and D. M. Butler, Quaker Meeting Houses of Britain (1999), p. 562.

28 Stuart, 'Burial Grounds', p. 45.

29 Q.M.M.B. appendix, 'Abstract of Public Writings'.

of which it was part, and on the south side on the lane commonly called the Hollow, and that it was used by 'the people of God (that by the world go under the name of Quakers) for a burying place.'³⁰ There are numerous references in the Friends' minute books to the burial ground in the very early eighteenth century, among which is one in 1714 when permission was given for the grass to be cut but not to be grazed upon. This suggests that by this date it may have been superseded by the Uttoxeter meeting house graveyard. In 1886 Redfern, a local historian, wrote that before 1700 Friends were buried in what became the south-west angle of the field in which Stramshall church stands, and that recent road-widening had revealed some lead coffins in the area known as 'Quakers' Bit.' Redfern gives the grid reference of this site is SK 076358, on a plot sited alongside the unclassified road from Stramshall to the main A50 road.³¹ A later local informant places it on the south side of the road outside the fence marking the boundary of Hill House Field.³² The burial ground is not mentioned in the Friends' registers or in the 1843 Report.

Tamworth burial ground was attached to the meeting house, built in 1753,³³ which was situated behind the house today numbered 101 Lichfield Street. Tamworth meeting was discontinued in 1852 and the premises leased to various bodies and individuals. The leasehold was bought out in 1957, and the graveyard maintained as a lawn.³⁴ Tamworth meeting was in turn attached to Stafford Monthly Meeting and to Wiggins Hill Monthly Meeting, the Staffordshire registers recording one burial and the Warwickshire registers 19. The last recorded burial was that of Deborah Shilton, which took place on 7/11/1827.

30 Stuart, 'Burial Grounds', p. 45.

31 N. Redfern, The History of Uttoxeter (1886,), p. 246.

32 Stuart, 'Burial Grounds', p. 45.

33 Q.M.M.B. 3/5/1753.

34 Stuart, 'Burial Grounds', p. 46.

Uttoxeter burial ground lies on the south side of the meeting house, which itself stands behind a dwelling house in Carter Street, Uttoxeter. It was part of the original gift of Robert Heath to Friends in 27/1/1700 before he emigrated to America. He stipulated that part of the ground was to be set aside for a burial ground for Quakers.³⁵ The burial ground is rectangular in shape, the 1843 Report stating it was 17 yards by 9 yards with graves at a depth of six feet in a dry gravelly soil. In the early twentieth century it was levelled and laid out as a lawn with a garden border. Two small gravestones, each 24 inches by 18 inches square, were visible in 1971, lying flat on the ground, inscribed SAMUEL BOTHAM BORN 1 MO. 1758 DIED 12 MO. 1828 (a mistake for 1823), and HARRISON ALDERSON OF BURLINGTON NEW JERSEY U.S.A. DIED 7 MO. 27TH 1871 AGED 71 YEARS. Two plans of the burial ground, one undated but possibly of the early eighteenth century, and the other dated 1886, have survived among the local Quaker records.³⁶ The latter shows 43 graves laid out in three rows (plus one smaller which was attached to the plan in 1960). An accompanying schedule gives the names of 32 Friends buried there plus a reference to seven unnamed members of the family of Joseph Summerland. The earliest burial recorded in the schedule is that of John Botham 1807, and the last that of Emily Lilian Suffolk, who was buried in 1970. The registers record 50 burials at Uttoxeter prior to 1837.

Although Wednesbury lay within Staffordshire, the Quaker meeting was never part of Staffordshire Quarterly or Monthly Meeting, being linked from the earliest days of the movement with Warwickshire and Birmingham. A burial

35 Q.M.M.B. appendix, 'Abstract of Public Writings'.

36 Staffs. C. R.O., D 3159/2/54.

ground was established next to the meeting house in Lower High Street on what had been a hemp-plot, by Henry Fidoe in his will of 1700.³⁷ The first burial is mentioned in the Wednesbury parish register for 2 September 1701. It states that Thomas Robboston, of Darlaston, was put 'into a pit that was made in the yard adjoining the Quakers' meeting house in the parish of Wednesbury', and the register records five other burials in similar terms. The Friends' registers for Warwickshire contain only two references, that of Richard Parkes who died in 1707 and the other of John Fidoe who died in 1793. By the latter date the meeting house was no longer used by Friends as a regular place of worship and the burial ground had become disused. The 1846 Tithe Map and Apportionment shows the total area of the premises to be 24 square perches, in the ownership of Samuel Lloyd. In 1849 the South Staffordshire Railway Company bought the major part of the property for its cutting for the Walsall to Dudley Port link. The line came close to the burial ground and it is suggested that this prompted the removal of the bodies for interment elsewhere.³⁸

Wolverhampton burial ground was a plot 16 yards by 14 yards adjoining the meeting house in Lower Lichfield (later Westbury) Street. In 1704 Robert Hill and his wife had Joan granted to Quaker trustees two dwelling houses to be used as a meeting house, and the attached land was to be used for 'dead bodies or carcases of all such persons who shall die in the parish of Wolverhampton aforesaid in the profession or religion called Quakers, to be buried there if desired without fee, reward or satisfaction otherwise than the charge of the grave.' Carberry (formerly Carribee) Street was cut between the meeting house and the burial ground at some time before

37 Library, Quaker Meeting House, Bull St., Birmingham, DUD F 10.

38 F. Hackwood, Newspaper Cuttings vol. 5, p. 34, Wednesbury Public Library, and C. Jones, H. Clark and E. Turner, Wolverhampton Quakers 1704 - 1988 (Wolverhampton, 1989), pp. 3, 12.

1840. Care of the burial ground was then given to occupants of a cottage on the opposite side of the road, but Friends' interest in the site waned and eventually the occupants of the cottage claimed ownership of the plot. The revival of Wolverhampton meeting in 1896 prompted Friends to seek to recover the property and this they eventually achieved. In 1905, with the building of a new meeting house in Horsman Street, Friends gave the burial ground to Wolverhampton Corporation to be preserved as an open space. This, as Butler points out, was an agreeable solution to the problem of what to do with disused burial grounds in urban areas.³⁹ The area, sited at the junction of Broad Street and Westbury Street, measures 16 yards by 14 yards. A plaque in the wall records the gift of 1905. Another meeting house, in Summerfield Road, was erected in 1969.⁴⁰

Meeting Houses

Quite early in their ministry Fox and his colleagues had distinguished between open-air meetings for general evangelising work and smaller meetings, then held in the houses of persons already convinced. A letter of 1652 from Fox and Richard Farnsworth stresses the need for preachers holding meetings in 'unbroken places' and working with other Friends 'strong in the Truth' to leave most of those already convinced in their own meeting place.⁴¹ The earliest open air venues were not always abandoned: Braithwaite records that Friends in Pardshaw, Cumberland, met four or five times during the winter in different houses but continued to resort to Pardshaw Crag for twenty years more until a meeting house was built at the foot of the ridge.⁴²

39 D. M. Butler, The Quaker Meeting Houses of Britain Vol. II, (1999), p. 906.
 40 Jones, Clark and Turner, Wolverhampton Quakers, pp. 9-12.
 41 Braithwaite, Beginnings, pp. 133-4.
 42 Ibid., p. 120.

There is no evidence of such a practice in Staffordshire, although the Leek and Moorlands area has a high altitude and its topography is not unlike that of Cumberland. There is one reference to open-air meetings in Staffordshire: in 1655 Thomas Hammersley, one of the earliest converts held a meeting on Cheddleton Heath. Although they risked arrest and severe penalties under the government proclamation of 1661 and the Quaker Act of 1662 Friends refused to hold their meetings in secret. They pioneered the method of open violation of the law, on grounds of conscience, and by offering passive resistance only. In London Samuel Pepys commented, on 7th August 1674, 'I saw several poor creatures carried by, by constables, for being at a conventicle. They go like lambs, without any resistance. I would to God they would either conform, or be more wise and not be caught.'⁴³

Informality characterised the early arrangements for meetings. The use of private houses both for weekly meetings for worship and for monthly and quarterly business meetings was normal in Staffordshire well into the eighteenth century. But such informality had its drawbacks. The death or imprisonment of the owner of the dwelling house could sometimes deprive Friends of their meeting place. An example of what could happen is provided from a reference in the Quarterly Meeting Minute Book of 7/5/1712. The death of William Hall of Chesterfield, in whose house meetings had been held, gave Quarterly Meeting cause for concern and they ordered Friends to renew their endeavours to find a suitable building in Lichfield. Before the passing of the Toleration Act in 1689 there could also be extra - legal risks in using private houses for conventicles; not only the persons present at a conventicle could be prosecuted but the householder, even if the room was hired, could be presented at Quarter Sessions and faced the possibility of a heavy fine. Moreover for business

43 S. Pepys, Diary (1825; Everyman edn 1906), p. 508.

meetings private houses were often too small. The need for meeting houses used only as such was obvious from the earliest days of the movement, and even in the decade of the most severe persecution, 1662 to 1672, Friends were beginning to buy houses or barns and to convert them into meeting places. In this practice they were handicapped by the provisions of the Second Conventicle Act of 1670 which allowed the authorities to seize and 'disfurnish', that is, pull down, meeting houses. Quakers accordingly hit on the device of putting in a poor member of the Society as an occupying tenant with a lease, so that the building became legally a dwelling house. An example of this is found in Stafford in 1682 when the Quarterly Meeting instructed Stafford Monthly Meeting to find someone who could officially own the building which they were using as a meeting house. ⁴⁴

On 15th March 1672 Charles II exercised his dispensing power in ecclesiastical matters to suspend all the penal laws against Nonconformists and Roman Catholics. The royal proclamation authorised meetings in allowed places and with approved teachers if such meetings were open and free for anyone to attend, although Roman Catholics were granted this relief only for their own private houses. Pressure from Parliament caused the king to cancel the declaration in March 1673. Although Quakers did not acknowledge the right of any authority to affect their meetings it afforded them and other dissenters a welcome breathing space, and the ground gained was never wholly lost afterwards. Thus the first recorded meeting house in Stafford dates from 1674. It was the conversion of an existing dwelling house, as were most of the early meeting houses. The first purpose-built meeting house in Staffordshire, that at Leek, was not erected until 1695, after the Toleration Act of 1689.

44 Q.M.M.B. 3/5/1682.

The Toleration Act exempted Protestant Dissenters, excluding Unitarians, from the penalties attaching to public worship other than in the parish church. They had, however, to register their meeting houses with the bishop of the diocese or archdeacon of the archdeaconry, or with the justices of the peace at the general or quarter sessions for the county, city or place where the meeting houses were sited. Wykes points out that Quakers, in contrast to their refusal to seek licences under the 1672 Declaration of Indulgence, were the most active of the Dissenters in registering their meeting houses after 1689.⁴⁵ He argues that leading Quakers were anxious to avoid being excluded from the Act which overcame their scruples about oaths and subscriptions by allowing them to affirm and declare their acceptance of the scriptural truth of the Bible. It was part of the process of compromise with the state. Donaldson, writing in 1960, found no Quaker registrations until 1695, both in Leek.⁴⁶ She suggested that the returns were possibly incomplete and recently fresh evidence has come to light. It is an unofficial list entitled 'The Names of the Houses which are Licensed for the Exercise of Religious Worship,' and was apparently compiled by local dissenting ministers. From internal evidence Atherton has dated it to 1690 or 1691 suggesting that it refers to registrations made at the quarter sessions between 1689 and 1691, the records for which have not survived. Atherton concludes that the Protestant dissent in Staffordshire in the 1690s was 'widespread, confident, assertive, dynamic and expanding'.⁴⁷ This expansiveness did not, however, continue for long

45 D. L. Wykes, 'Friends, Parliament and the Toleration Act', Journal of Ecclesiastical History 45 No. 1 (1994).

46 B. Donaldson, 'The Registration of Dissenting Meeting Houses in Staffordshire, 1689 -1852', in StaffsHist. Coll. 4th series, III (1960).

47 I. Atherton, 'The Early Registration of Dissenters' Meeting Houses in late Seventeenth Century Staffordshire', in J. R. Studd (ed.), Staffordshire Studies Vol. 2, 1999, citing Lichfield Record Office Ex D and CB/A/12ii.

especially in the case of the Quakers.⁴⁸

The entries concerning Quakers in the 1690 -1 list read:

'The Places hereafter mentioned are the Places of the Quakers Several Meetings.

One at Wolverhampton.

One at Chesterfield in the Parish of Shenston

One at Harlison (Harlaston) in the Parish of Clifton

One at Burton super Trent

One at Bitterscote in the Parish of Tamworth

One at Uttoxeter

One at Robert Heathes in the Parish of Checkley

One at John Halls in the Parish of Ipstones

One at John Mellors of Whithow (Whitehough) in the same Parish

One of George Howards of Ford in the Parish of Grindon.

One at Basford in the Parish of Cheddleton

One at the town of Leek

One at Richard Simpsons at Maghills (Meghills) in the Parish of Keel

So far Quakers.'

These total 13, but the next section of the document, not headed 'Quakers', contains eight names of which certainly three and probably four can be identified as Quakers from Friends' own records. They were George Welsh of Willenhall in the parish of Wolverhampton, Marmaduke Siddon (Syddern) of Seisdon (parish of Trysull), Robert Chadley (probably Chandler or Chandless) of Oaken in the parish of Cotsall (Codsall), and Widow Corbett of Cannock.⁴⁹ The total number of Quaker meeting houses registered soon after the passage of the Toleration Act was thus 17. The list shows, broadly, the geographical distribution of the Quaker movement in Staffordshire at the time. There were six in the south of the county, five in the central region and six in the north. The list does not, however, include every meeting house

48 A. Crockett and K. D. M. Snell, 'From the 1676 Compton Census to the 1851 Census of Religious Worship: Religious Continuity or Discontinuity?', Rural History 8/1 (1997), discusses the changing local geography of old dissenting nonconformity, and the discussion is continued in K. D. M. Snell and P. S. Ell, Rival Jerusalems : the Geography of Victorian Religion (Cambridge, 2000).

49 Books of Sufferings Vol.7, p. 537, (F. H. L.); Q.M.M.B. 2/2/1688, 4/5/1692 and appendix 'Abstract of Public Writings' 4/9/1695.

in the county, one notable omission being that in Stafford, the county town.

There is no evidence of any objection among Staffordshire Friends to the claim, implicit in the 1689 Act, to authority over freedom to worship. On 8/8/1689 Quarterly Meeting instructed William Fallowfield of Leek and Humphrey Wolrich of Stafford to get the several meeting houses in the county recorded and to obtain certificates. All the later registrations were made with the Clerk of the Peace and not with the bishop of Lichfield, so it is reasonable to accept that these 17 earliest registrations were also made with that official. Why Stafford did not appear on the list of licensed Quaker meeting houses is not apparent; if it had been registered it is difficult to imagine that the compilers of the 1690-1 List would have omitted it.

The later registrations of Quaker meeting houses after 1695 are listed below in Table 5, in chronological order, and all meeting houses are shown on Figure 2 above. The table shows that between 1695 and 1757 another 18 registrations were made, again with the Clerk of the Peace and not with the episcopal authorities. There were two in the Black Country area, Bilston and Wednesbury, seven in the central region, Loxley, Tutbury, Chebsey, Uttoxeter, Alrewas, Burton upon Trent and Tamworth, and nine in the north, of which two were in Madeley parish in the north-west corner of the county and the remaining seven in the Leek and Moorlands area. Again Stafford is missing, but a registration was at some time made, as an entry in the Quarterly Meeting Minute for 1722 shows. It reads, 'the record of Stafford meeting house as entered in the Sessions is lodged in Edward Frith's hands'.⁵⁰

The pace of new registrations declined markedly in the eighteenth century. Between 1689 and 1691, in the first three years of official toleration, there were 17 registrations, in the 20 years between 1695 and 1714 there were 13 and in the next 43

50 Q.M.M.B. 14/6/1722.

TABLE 5 SURVIVING OFFICIAL REGISTRATIONS OF QUAKER MEETING HOUSES IN STAFFORDSHIRE, 1695 - 1757

(Source : Donaldson, 'Registration', S.H.C. 4th ser. III)

Date	Name of Person in whose name registered	Location cited	Other information in the registration
1695	Thomas Bulkley	Dunwood, p. of Leek	house
1695	-	p. of Leek	house
1696/7	Thomas Yardley	p. of Horton ¹	house
1697/8	Charles Osborne	Bilston	house
1697/8	Thomas Shipley	p. of Loxley ²	house
1700	Henry Fidoe	Wednesbury	house, lic'd for Quakers
1700/1	Richard Bowman	Stockley Park, p. of Tutbury	house
1700/1	John Wilcockson	Cauldon	house, reg'd for Quakers
1703	Thomas Wolrich	Shallowford, p. of Chebsey	house, reg'd for Quakers
1705/6	Samuel Radford	Bottom, p. of Leek ³	house
1705/6	Walter Pixley	p. of Uttoxeter	new b'lding, reg'd for Quakers
1706/7	Thomas Silvester	Fradley, p. of Alrewas	house, reg'd for Quakers
1713/14	John Whittaker	Rowley Gate, p. of Leek	house, reg'd for Quakers
1723	Samuel Jesse	Burton upon Trent	dw'll'g. house reg'd for Quakers
1723	Elijah Hall	Longnor p. of Alstonefield	dw'll'g house reg'd for Quakers
1730	John Timmis	Stonylow p. of Madeley	dw'll'g house reg'd for Quakers
1731	John Simpson	Long Low, p. of Madeley	dw'll'g house reg'd for Quakers
1757 ⁴	-	Tamworth	new b'lding reg'd for Quakers

- Notes :
- 1 wrongly identified as Norton in the Moors
 - 2 Loxley is in the parish of Uttoxeter
 - 3 Also cited as in Cheddleton. By 1735 the family lived in Botham Hall, p. of Ipstones
 - 4 Butler, Quaker Meeting Houses , gives this date as 1754.

years, to 1757, only five. The meeting houses registered in and after 1695 did not necessarily replace those made earlier but rather supplemented them, although in time there were changes, as older venues faded away with declining numbers of Friends. The number of new registrations is not an accurate index of expansion in the movement generally or of numbers, but only of a changing geographical distribution. Moreover, as Braithwaite pointed out, meetings held in private houses often rotated between three or four places in a particular area, the same Friends merely meeting in different venues.⁵¹

When new purpose - built meeting houses were erected, their central situation made them more convenient, though not necessarily more comfortable, venues, and this too was a cause of the diminution in the number of new registrations of private houses. There was another disadvantage. The weekly 'first-day' meeting for worship in the catchment area of a purpose-built meeting house had the effect, eventually, of reducing the number of weekday meetings held in private houses and confining meetings for worship to Sundays. By 1712 and again in 1713 Staffordshire Quarterly Meeting deemed it necessary to remind Stafford Monthly Meeting of its duty to promote such weekday meetings.⁵² Extra meetings for worship, additional to a fixed, weekly attendance at an established venue, have often been a feature of new religious movements: in the mid- and later eighteenth century John Wesley promoted this activity as part of his Methodist revival. The diminution of the numbers of such weekday meetings, a sign of spontaneous spiritual fervour in the membership, marked the changing character of Quakerism in Staffordshire.

The erection of four purpose-built meeting houses in Staffordshire, Leek,

51 W. C. Braithwaite, The Second Period of Quakerism (1919; Cambridge edn 1961), p. 562, n.2.

52 Q.M.M.B. 7/5/1712 and 13/2/1713.

Uttoxeter, Stafford and Basford, within the period covered by this study, was both a sign of the growing confidence and maturity of Friends in the county but also a feature of the institutionalisation that was beginning to characterise the Quaker movement. It was becoming more like the Anglican church that it had denounced than the free assembly of kindred spirits which the 'Children of Light' had originally been. The architecture of the county's purpose-built meeting houses also reflected changes in the movement, and the ways in which building and maintenance costs were met had important consequences. There were no directives from the Yearly Meeting on how Friends were to build their meeting houses and all the local buildings, not merely in Staffordshire but in nearly every county, were locally designed and remained within the local vernacular. Lidbetter could find no room for references to any Staffordshire meeting houses, but they are included in the survey of Protestant Nonconformist architecture in the Midlands by Stell.⁵³ They are, however, comprehensively discussed and analysed in Butler's comprehensive study of Quaker meeting houses throughout Britain.⁵⁴ To this a little more information, derived from local Quaker sources, may be added. Quaker meeting houses were uniformly plain and without decoration, and those in Staffordshire answer to this description. The Basford meeting house, indeed, is little more than a barn of the type found throughout the Leek and Moorlands area, and although Stell insists it was purpose-built, needs no special attention. Leek, Uttoxeter and Stafford meeting houses are larger, as would be expected of their urban location, and have features which show more

53 H. Lidbetter, 'Quaker Meeting Houses 1670 - 1850', Architectural Review April, 1946; C. F. Stell, Inventory of Nonconformist Chapels and Meeting Houses in Central England (1986).

54 Butler, Quaker Meeting Houses Vol. II, pp. 557 -566 .

sophistication. All three of the town meeting houses were originally oblong in shape and internally they follow the accepted Quaker lay-out of the time. Without the need for altar, pulpit, vestry or any other features dictated by liturgical requirements, they display the normal interior features, wooden benches in rows, a 'stand' or elders' bench at one end, and a gallery, sometimes called a loft, at the other. No pictures or other forms of internal decoration were allowed and it was not until after 1860, more than a hundred years outside the terminal date for this study, that the Society of Friends began 'to re-examine its own inheritance and to reconcile the artistic impulse and the Inward Light'.⁵⁵

Leek was the earliest of the purpose-built meeting houses to be registered. Friends had met in private houses in Leek parish and in its neighbouring parishes before, in 1693, they bought, for £37 10s. a piece of land and various old buildings on Tranter's Croft, situated on Overton Bank in Leek. This was the property of the two daughters and heiresses of Gervase Gent. By a deed dated 20th March 1694 the purchasers established a trust declaring that the property was to be for the use of the poor and for building a meeting house. A house was erected on the site and registered for Protestant Dissenters in 1695. On 20/7/1697 the trustees declared by another deed that the rents of the six cottages attached to the property were to be used for the relief of the poor, subject to the direction of the monthly meeting.⁵⁶

The building was of dressed stone and alone of the purpose-built meeting houses in the county probably had two storeys from the outset. A gallery is mentioned

55 C. Wakeling, 'Friends, Religious Society of', in J. Turner (ed.), The Dictionary of Art (1996), vol. 11, pp. 785-6.

56 Account of Charitable Trusts of Warwickshire, Leicestershire and Staffordshire Quarterly Meeting, 1895' (Quaker Meeting House, Bull Street, Birmingham records), p.18, also Cheshire C. R.O. Papers relating to Property 1807-1823, Staffordshire Monthly Meeting, and Staffs. C. R.O. D 3159/2/50, 'Abstract of Title Deeds'.

in 1708.⁵⁷ There were mullioned windows on at least three sides, and possibly also on the fourth, east side, which was later rebuilt. This type of window is found in two other buildings in the town of the same period and suggest there was a local survival of this architectural feature.⁵⁸ Later additions to the site included a new stable block, a 'house of ease' in 1770⁵⁹ and an east extension in 1794, with a new porch and staircase wing. At some time iron columns were inserted to support the roof.⁶⁰ The house was occupied by Jacobite rebels in 1745, who used it as a slaughter house but no structural damage was caused. A plan with a drawing of the meeting house as it was in 1944 was made by Hughes⁶¹ but the account of the architectural history of the building has now been thoroughly revised by Butler.

The first mention of a meeting house in Stafford is found in 1674. By that year the Friends had acquired a house adjacent to the burial ground, presumably part of Matthew Babb's property, and it was agreed to adapt the lower rooms for meetings.⁶² A month later there was a further decision to harden the entry and to spend £30 for the use of the kitchen and stable and to enlarge the meeting room by eight feet. William Cox, a Friend, agreed to buy the remainder of the house and set it in tenantable repair and Peter Littleton, who was one of the leading members of the meeting, agreed to rent this for £6 10s. a year. Possibly these provisions were made to ensure that the

57 Staffs. C. R.O. , D 3159/3/1, Leek Monthly Meeting Minute Book 1705-37, entry for 5/6/1708.

58 N. Pevsner, *Staffordshire* (1974, Penguin Buildings of England Series), pp. 171-2, points out this feature in the vicarage, dated 1714, and in Haregate Hall, dated to the seventeenth century.

59 Staffs. C. R.O. D 3359/Condlyffe, draft deed, cited in N. Tringham, 'Protestant Nonconformity', in M. W. Greenslade (ed.), *Victoria County History of Stafford VII* (1996), p. 144.

60 Butler, *Quaker Meeting Houses*, vol. II, p. 559.

61 J. R. Hughes, 'Historic Meeting Houses of the Society of Friends in Staffordshire', (1945) MSS, illustrated, F. H. L.

62 All subsequent references in this paragraph are from Q.M.M.B. unless otherwise stated.

meeting house could not be legally pulled down under the terms of the renewed Conventicle Act. On 10/4/1675 it was agreed to double the size of the stable, and by 9/7/1675 Friends had raised £31 16s. Names of 20 subscribers are listed, the highest subscription being £5 from John Alsop of Ingestre and the smallest, 5s., from Mary Sharrat of Stafford. John Alsop was repaid the £30 he had originally laid out. He and 14 other Friends also subscribed a further total of £4 18s.5d. towards the cost of the building and the repair of the stables. As an extra precaution against legal action, Quarterly Meeting on 3/5/1682 instructed Stafford Monthly Meeting to agree upon the name of a person who could claim the meeting house was his private property 'in case of suffering.' The architectural character and interior lay-out of this building can only be conjectured, but presumably the conversion was to the normal Quaker building style of the time. In view of the early references to the establishment of women's meetings, the building was possibly divided into two chambers, with side entry and end stand, distinguished as Type B by Butler in his analysis of early plan types.⁶³ The location of the meeting house on the whole site, which was later enlarged, is equally conjectural, but it might have been where the cottages shown on Hughes' plan of 1944 stood, further back from the main road than the later meeting house.

A new meeting house was built in 1730 -1 on land probably adjoining the burial ground in Foregate Street where the old meeting house was sited. This property, 47 yards by 9 yards, had been bought for £12 on 25/1/1725,⁶⁴ and Quarterly Meeting in its annual report for 1730 to Yearly Meeting announced the completion of the building. The total cost was £144 17s.11d., which was met as follows:⁶⁵

63 Butler, *Quaker Meeting Houses*, pp. 890 -1.

64 *Account of Charitable Trusts*, 1895.

65 Staffs. C. R.O. D 3159/2/1 Stafford Monthly Meeting Minute Book, appendix. Details of the costs of materials are also given.

	£	s	d
Sale of old meeting house	40	-	-
John Alsop's legacy	40	-	-
Christian Penford	2	2	-
Edward Frith	8	-	-
Richard Morris	8	-	-
Moses Morris	8	-	-
Thomas Wolrich	5	-	-
Richard Timmis	4	-	-
Abraham Godrich	4	-	-
Leek Meeting	10	-	-
Father of old John Alsop	10	-	-
John Fowler	1	1	-
Elihu Hall	2	2	0
John Shipley	1	1	-
	143	6	0
Allowed for additional bill	1	11	11
Total	144	17	11

Repairs to the building were made in 1746, 1757, 1759, 1779 and 1782 but no major additions are recorded until the substitution of new windows, described as 'unfortunate', in the nineteenth century.⁶⁶ The new meeting house was oblong in shape and built of brick. Like the first meeting house it was of Butler's early Type B lay-out, that is, a simple oblong plan with a separate women's chamber and a front entrance. It was not entirely without decoration: the building account mentions 'parging', i.e. pargetting, and the pedimented doorway seems to have been part of the original. Architecturally, therefore, the building demonstrates a stage up from the bare simplicity of the older meeting house. Its cost, four times that of the former meeting house, also reflects the higher financial standing of local Friends in 1730: three quarters of the total came from legacies and the substantial subscriptions of local

66 Some Notes on the Society of Friends in Stafford to Commemorate the Bicentenary of the Meeting House in Foregate Street, 1730-1930 (Stafford, 1930), collected and arranged by H. L. E. Garbett, William Salt Library, Stafford.

Friends. The interior lay-out of the meeting house, shown in Hughes' drawing of 1944 and Butler's of 1999, included a gallery, front seating for the elders and an overseers' bench. When these were installed is not documented but Pevsner's comment that the panelling is original suggests that these features were part of the earliest furnishings.⁶⁷

The later history of the meeting house is outside the terminal date of this study and may be only briefly summarised. A small piece of land adjoining the burial ground was bought in 1758. Subsequently a dispute arose about the ownership of 'Stafford Garden' as it was known, which was eventually settled in the assize courts in Friends' favour. The building was extended in 1892 by the addition of a room at the back, with toilets and a kitchen, for mission work. Friends from all over the country contributed to the cost, £150, subscribers including members of the Cadbury and Lloyd families. This feature was replaced, as a mission hall, by a building of corrugated iron, costing £400, sited on the burial ground in front of the meeting house, with 'total aesthetic disregard'.⁶⁸ It was demolished in 1957.⁶⁹

The meeting house in Carter Street, Uttoxeter, a new building standing near the house of Thomas Bennett, was registered by consent of Walter Pixley for Protestant Dissenters at Epiphany Sessions, 1705/6. This is the present meeting house. The land had originally been given to Friends by Robert Heath, of Tean, before his emigration to America. On 27th March, 1700, he had conveyed to Friends 'a messuage house in Carter Street, Uttoxeter, for use as a public meeting house for the worship of God, together with the land belonging to it for a burial ground'.⁷⁰ A yearly

67 Pevsner, *Staffordshire*, p. 246.

68 Butler, *Quaker Meeting Houses*, vol. II, p. 561.

69 M. W. Greenslade, D. A. Johnson and C. R. J. Currie, 'The Borough of Stafford', in *V.C.H. Staffordshire*, Vol. VI, p. 253.

70 Q.M.M.B. appendix, 'Abstract'.

sum of £1 7s. out of the income from the other premises on the site, which were leased to tenants, was to be used for the provision of 'Public Friends of the Ministry', that is, visiting preachers who might come to Uttoxeter. Four Friends, John Alsop (of Stafford), Richard Bowman (of Leek) and Thomas Shipley and Walter Pixley (both of Uttoxeter), were nominated as trustees, which is presumably why Walter Pixley was named as the owner of the land when the building was registered.

The Carter Street property was about 70 yards in depth by 11 yards wide, and consisted of two plots of land, with a dwelling house fronting the street on the larger plot and three cottages on the smaller plot. The total cost of the meeting house was £51 13s.9d. Of this sum, £37 5s. was raised by contributions from the monthly meetings, Stafford giving £10, Leek £10 5s., Uttoxeter Friends themselves £10, and £7 came from Chesterfield Meeting for Worship.⁷¹ The remainder was met by a loan from Walter Pixley, which was to be repaid from the rents and profits coming from the property.⁷² When Pixley died the arrangement was continued with his son, Walter, but in 1712 Samuel Radford took over the debt⁷³ and in 1722 it was found necessary to sell a small part of the property to finish paying off the loan.⁷⁴ It was only by 1724 that the debt had been fully repaid.⁷⁵

The meeting house is described by Pevsner as a plain brick cottage of the early eighteenth century. Butler's conjectural plan of the building in 1705 shows a side entrance between two windows. There were considerable alterations in or about 1770,⁷⁶ and the suggested plan for the building as it was at that time shows an entrance in the east gable wall. The original building had a loft, with separate access,

71 Q.M.M.B. 8/2/1706.

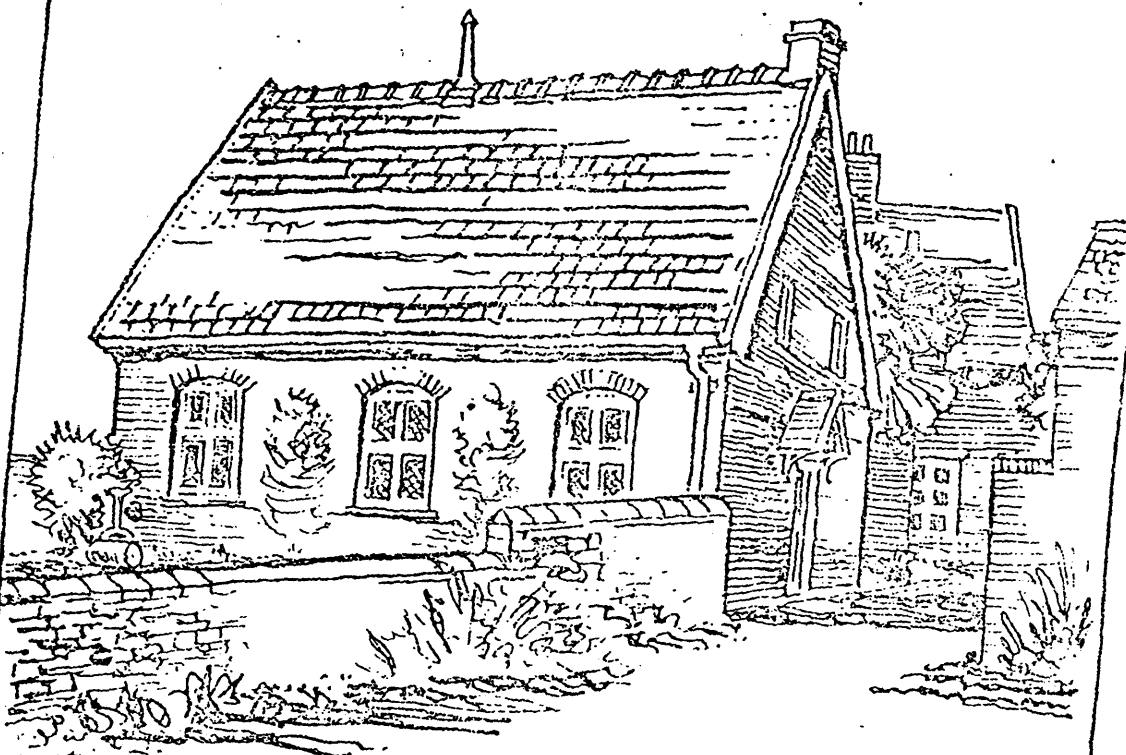
72 Ibid., 7/8/1708.

73 Ibid., 6/8/1712.

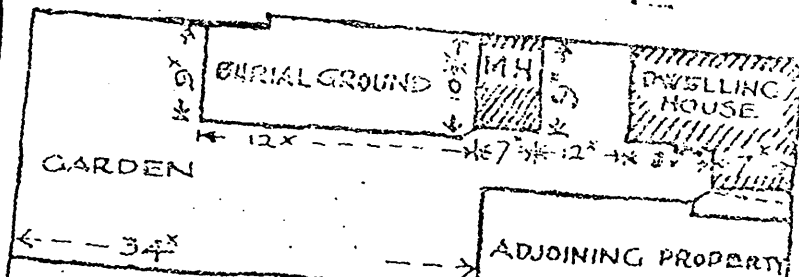
74 Ibid., 2/5/1722.

75 Ibid., 6/5/1724.

76 Account of Charitable Trusts, 1895.



THE HISTORIC MEETING HOUSE OF THE
SOCIETY OF FRIENDS · UTTOXETER · STAFFORDSHIRE



ROUGH
BLOCK
PLAN
NOT DRAWN
TO SCALE
DIMENSIONS
ARE ONLY
APPROXIMATE
J.R. HUGHES
CARDIFF
28.9.1944

but this disappeared after the 1770 alterations. Iron columns to support the gallery were probably added in this year, and the gallery had shutters which could divide it from the rest of the building. The windows, topped by segmental brick arches, probably also date from this period, but the diamond-shaped lead glazing may be later. At the west end was the elders' stand. The religious census of 1851 gives the floor area as 450 square feet with seats for 85 people and the gallery as 135 square feet with seats for 25 people. Extensive restoration work was carried out after 1958 with the aid of money raised by an appeal to the Society of Friends generally, and to which the Historic Churches Preservation Trust made a contribution.⁷⁷ Much of the 1770 woodwork had to be replaced by local oak during this restoration.

The whole site underwent changes during the course of the Uttoxeter meeting's history. Hughes' rough sketch plan of 1944 shows the general lay-out in that year. The property extends southwards from the Carter Street frontage, which is occupied by a dwelling house lying behind the meeting house, and behind which lies the burial ground. Part of the property had been sold in 1811 but this was bought back in 1966.

The other meeting houses in Staffordshire were built subsequent to the terminal date of this study and only a brief chronology for these is appropriate. Tamworth meeting house was built in Lichfield Street by 1753. It was demolished soon after, but Butler depicts it as a simple rectangular building, with a burial ground behind.⁷⁸ The meeting house in Thomas Street, Stoke on Trent, with a burial ground to the side, was adapted from an existing building of 1823. It was sold in 1954 and subsequently demolished. Friends had moved in 1951 to a new meeting house in

77 D. G. Stuart and W. Eric Kent, The Quaker Meeting House, Uttoxeter (Keele 1976), provides a summary and also deals in detail with the history of the attached dwelling house and its occupants.

78 Butler, Quaker Meeting Houses, p. 563.

Newcastle under Lyme and remained there until 1988 when it was sold and the meeting returned to Stoke to a converted building in Miller Street.⁷⁹ The Wednesbury meeting house, in Lower High Street, was an adaptation of an existing building acquired in 1700 and few details survive.⁸⁰ The first meeting house in Wolverhampton was probably rented, the next, in Broad Street, was a conversion of two houses given by local Friends, Robert and Joan Hill, in 1704. It was lost in the late nineteenth century, and a new meeting house was built in 1902 and yet another in 1969.⁸¹

Staffordshire cannot fairly be compared with its neighbouring counties in respect of the number, style and costs of the meeting houses constructed before 1743, because of the differing sizes, topography, levels of economic and urban development and populations of these counties. Derbyshire perhaps offers the best source for comparison and Butler lists seven meeting houses in that county built or converted before 1743, the same number as he deals with in Staffordshire. The building accounts which survive for meeting houses in the east and west Midlands counties generally reveal costs which are considerably greater than those for Staffordshire. This reflects the relatively poor economic position of the county in the later seventeenth and earlier eighteenth centuries. By the time Staffordshire gathered economic momentum by reason of its industrial development in the Black Country and the Potteries, Quakerism in the county had begun to decline numerically. Moreover it had lost much of its original missionary inspiration and the need to acquire more meeting houses had diminished.

As regards architecture, the three purpose-built meeting houses in

79 *Ibid.*, p. 562.

80 *Ibid.*, pp. 564 -5.

81 *Ibid.*, pp. 565 - 6.

Staffordshire, Leek, Uttoxeter and Stafford, for which alone sufficient information survives to make a judgment, may be firmly placed within the local vernacular style, and were sited in small, provincial, market towns. No purpose-built meeting houses of the attractive appearance found elsewhere, for example that at Come-to-Good, near Truro in Cornwall, with its thatched roof, ever existed in Staffordshire. The austere appearance of the 1695 Leek building reflects the local topography of the Moorlands, while the Uttoxeter meeting house of 1705 was not much more than a cottage. The 1730 Stafford brick-built meeting house to some extent reflects the character of the county town as it was at that date, and shows some slight movement towards a more 'polite' appearance. In interior lay-out and furnishings all three meeting houses, however, illustrate the development of a hierarchical structure within the Quaker movement. As far as can be deduced, from the outset they had elders' benches or 'stands' as did the majority of meeting houses after the Toleration Act, and a separate women's chamber. Uttoxeter had originally a side entry with possibly a gable entry in addition, but in 1770 the side entry was blocked up to suit the somewhat doctrinaire insistence, to use Butler's term, on the customary lay-out. The changes and additions that were made in later years to suit the additional social, educational or other functions which the meeting houses came to perform, cannot be discussed in this study. Interior furnishings always remained plain, cold and uncomfortable. There was no general introduction of any form of heating until the nineteenth century. Lighting was not such a problem for Quakers, who held most of their meetings in the day.

Staffordshire meeting houses also illustrate the various methods of financing the costs of acquiring and adapting dwelling houses and of building new ones which were practised in the early period of Quaker history. Individual collections were

made, other monthly meetings within the quarterly meeting were also asked to subscribe, loans were made by wealthier local Friends who were repaid, over the course of years, from rents of dwelling houses on the site, which were often leased to Friends. The land on which the meeting houses stood was usually given by Friends and the initial building costs thus reduced to paying for labour and materials. Even so, property had sometimes to be sold to pay off the remaining debt. Only later were national appeals issued.

There is no surviving local evidence on the nature of the meetings for worship in Staffordshire during the period under review and any generalisations must be based on accounts from elsewhere in the country or on later references. Usually the bulk of the congregation generally participated little in the meetings, which were not 'services', but sat and waited for elders or occasionally the travelling, visiting 'minister', seated in the front and facing them, to speak if and when prompted to do so by the light within them. Nevertheless, despite the apparently austere nature of their meetings, Staffordshire Friends felt the need to congregate for worship. It may be presumed that Friends not only derived spiritual satisfaction from the prolonged period of silence and introspection, but that the weekly meetings had become a habit, part of a life-style which gave them reassurance and offered comfort in their human condition. Before and after meetings, moreover, there was also the opportunity for those social contacts and for the mutual encouragement which are also essential ingredients in a religious movement.

CHAPTER 8 FRIENDS IN THE MOORLANDS : Leek Monthly Meeting and its membership 1651-1743

(1) The initial spread of Quakerism in the area

The earliest information about Quakerism in the north-east of Staffordshire consists of bare and often imprecise references to locations together with a few names. By about 1672, when the Quarterly Meeting Minute Book begins, the various meetings for worship in the area were grouped, for administrative purposes, into two named meetings, Leek and Keele, together forming Leek Monthly Meeting. The 'First Publishers of Truth' had achieved considerable success. They had established or prompted the emergence of numerous groups of Friends not only in Leek and its parish but also in more distant and less accessible locations in the Moorlands area. Local Quakers met in their own homes to worship on Sundays and weekdays. After 1660 the visits of the Quaker itinerant preachers to the Moorlands were severely curtailed but did not altogether cease. Fox himself made three more recorded visits to the county in the first Restoration decade. In 1663 he came to Whitehough in the parish of Ipstones where he narrowly escaped arrest; in 1667, at a meeting in Basford, the home of Thomas Hammersley, he settled the organisation of the Staffordshire monthly meetings, and he passed through the county in 1669, en route to Cheshire and Ireland, although on this occasion there is no comment in the Journal.¹ A final visit to Staffordshire came in 1678, again apparently to Whitehough, from where he issued a letter warning against dissension among Friends.² Another itinerant preacher, William Fallowfield, had arrived in the area by 1666.³

1 G. Fox, The Journal (1694; ed. J. L. Nickalls, Cambridge, 1952), pp. 451, 513 and 534.

2 F. H. L., London, Leek Mss (MS VOL 330) pp. 136 -7, and Staffs. C. R.O. D/3159/1/1, Quarterly Meeting Minute Book, 7/8/1678.

3 See also biographical note in the appendix to this study.

There were probably other visits, which have not been recorded, and which were perhaps of short duration, made by Friends travelling to and from Swarthmoor. After 1660, however, the further spread of the Quaker movement in the north of the county assumed a new character and depended on a different mechanism. The 'threshing meetings' held by Hickock and other First Publishers of Truth in the Leek and Moorlands area had been attended by great numbers of people who were attracted by the exciting 'gospel' which the itinerants preached rather than by the practice of silent worship which Quaker leaders enjoined. When, after 1660, such meetings were no longer possible, or too fraught with danger, the local expansion of the movement came to depend much more on the new converts being able to recruit new members for themselves. Their own, immediate families provided the most obvious recruiting ground, and beyond this, others from within their local kinship network. Conviction of the truth of the Quaker message was now transmitted through the local community in a plant-like process of osmosis. Although the spread of the movement was necessarily slower than before, it probably made for more steadfast recruits.

Robert Mellor, of Whitehough in Ipstones, provides an example of the spread of Quakerism in this way. Mellor had heard Thomas Holme preaching in a bowling alley in Leek in 1654, presumably attempting to persuade the players to turn their minds to less frivolous matters. He was so affected that he took Holme back to his house in Whitehough,⁴ where his wife Elizabeth also became convinced.⁵ They brought their son John up in the Quaker faith, and their house at Whitehough became a centre of the local movement: Fox wrote of a 'large and blessed meeting' he held there in 1663, and Sheldon reported a conventicle of 20 Quakers in 1669. Mellor's steadfastness under persecution inspired respect and probably brought more

4 Journal of the Friends Historical Society, 32 (1935), pp. 51 - 2.

5 She was excommunicated, together with Mellor, at the episcopal visitation of 1665, (Lichfield Record Office B/V/1/72).

recruits. His refusal to pay tithes, even when this resulted in repeated distraints and imprisonments, probably enhanced his influence in a locality which was mainly inhabited by poor upland farmers. In Alton constablewick, in which Ipstones parish was situated, 22% of all households assessed for the hearth tax of 1666 were so poor as to be exempted from the tax completely, and another 58% were assessed at only one hearth, which would place them amongst the poorest inhabitants.⁶ Judging by the value of the distraints levied on Mellor for non-payment of tithes, for example in 1658 a cow worth £4 being seized for an actual demand of £1 6s. 8d. and in 1660 goods worth £15 10s. for a demand of £3 9s.4d., he was a farmer of some substance.⁷ Indeed, his son John was described in 1691 as a 'yeoman', a term of fluid definition in the later seventeenth century but generally denoting a person, usually a farmer and possessed of freehold land, classed above a husbandman but below a gentleman.⁸ As a fairly prosperous farmer, Mellor would have been held in some esteem in the locality and thus have been better able to persuade people to follow his lead.

More important, however, than the general local prestige of a new Quaker convert in spreading the 'message of truth' in his locality, was the nature of rural society in the later seventeenth century. It was a patriarchal society, and the conversion of the head of the household, as in Mellor's case, or of a senior member, usually led to the enrolment of his immediate family in the Quaker movement. The Leek and Moorlands parishes were characterised by a network of kinships which had developed for at least the previous hundred years. The names Mellor, Dale, Davenport and Hammersley can be found in the area since at least the early sixteenth century.⁹ By the mid-seventeenth century families with these names were scattered over much

6 See Chapter 6.

7 J. Besse, A Collection of the Sufferings of the People called Quakers (1753), Vol. 1, p. 650.

8 M. Campbell, The English Yeoman (1983) discusses this in Chapter 2.

9 A. Kettle, A List of Families in the Archdeaconry of Stafford 1532-3 (1976, Collections for a History of Staffordshire, 4th ser. vol. 8), pp. 29 -42.

of north-east Staffordshire. They were often of widely differing income levels, but as Spufford has found in her studies of the period, Dissent was frequently a family phenomenon and could spread through a network of related families regardless of economic disparities between them.¹⁰

The Dale families of Leek and its neighbouring parishes provide another illustration of the way in which Quakerism expanded. Richard Dale of Rudyard was one of the four named individuals whose conversion can be assigned to the efforts of the itinerant preacher Richard Hickock on his first visit to Leek in 1654.¹¹ He provides an example of a religious convert, filled with a sudden revelation of the possibility of his salvation, seeking to spread the good news brought by a charismatic evangelist and to emulate his actions. Although he was 70 years old he followed Hickock's example and went to Leek parish church where he 'denounced the deceit of the priests' at a church service.¹² He was arrested and spent three weeks in gaol. The experience did not diminish his ardour for his new-found beliefs, he remained a staunch Quaker and in 1665, a year before his death, was excommunicated for not paying church levies. Dale's kinsman Matthew Dale, also of Rudyard, the second of Hickock's converts, had a meeting settled at his house.¹³ He too brought his immediate family with him into the Quaker movement, as evidenced by an episcopal visitation of 1668 when both he and wife were excommunicated. The Quaker message proved contagious and by 1689 there were Dales attached to the Quaker movement in Helswoodend and Tittesworth, both in Leek parish, and in Cheddleton parish immediately to the south. In all about half a dozen different

10 M. Spufford, *Contrasting Communities*, (Cambridge, 1974), p. 299.

11 Q.M.M.B. appendix, 'A Record of such Friends as first declared and published truth in Stafford and Staffordshire'.

12 Q.M.M.B. appendix, 'Friends Sufferings for the Truth'.

13 Q.M.M.B. appendix, 'A Record'.

families of that name in the area in and around Leek are found in the local records.

A third Hickock convert of 1654 was William Davenport of Fould Farm in the township of Leekfrith in Leek parish. Meetings were held at his house by 1661 and Sheldon recorded a conventicle of 30 Quakers there in 1669. Like Mellor and Dale, Davenport remained staunch under persecution. He was excommunicated, together with his wife, in 1668, fined for being present at a conventicle in 1675 and in 1681 was imprisoned on a writ of de excommunicato capiendo for absence from church.¹⁴

Thomas Hammersley was the fourth of Hickock's converts.¹⁵ He may be the Thomas Hammersley of Berry Hill, one of the signatories of a letter sent to Cromwell by Baptists in 1651,¹⁶ although the Hammersley who was converted by Hickock in December 1654 lived in Basford in the parish of Cheddleton. A Thomas Hammersley, 'gentleman', of Botham or Bottom in Cheddleton parish, is referred to in a land dispute during the Civil War.¹⁷ Hammersley's earlier Baptist connections are possibly confirmed by the reference in Fox's Journal about his visit to Basford, which took place soon after Hammersley's conviction. Fox states that he met 'Ranters and high professors' there, and this suggests that he had assembled some of his former Baptist colleagues to meet Fox.¹⁸ Hammersley, like Hickock's other converts, immediately adopted a militant posture towards the established church, and early in 1655 called a general meeting on Cheddleton Heath where he denounced 'the deceit of the priests'. Called before the magistrates he was released on an exeat of good

14 Staffs. C. R.O. D 3159/3/3, 'Record of Sufferings'.

15 Q.M.M.B. appendix, 'A Record'.

16 A. G. Matthews, Congregational Churches of Staffordshire (1924), p. 36.

17 D. H. Pennington and I. A. Roots, The Committee at Stafford 1643 - 1645 (Manchester, 1957, published in association with Collections for a History of Staffordshire, 4th series, Vol. 1), p. 127.

18 Fox, Journal, p. 181

behaviour.¹⁹ He, like Davenport, subsequently suffered both distrains and imprisonments for his beliefs. In 1669 his house in Cheddleton was listed by Sheldon as a conventicle at which there were 30 Quakers.²⁰ It was in this house that in 1667 George Fox began the formal organisation of the Quaker movement in Staffordshire by establishing the two monthly meetings. In the same year Hammersley gave part of his property in Basford to Friends for use as a burial ground. He continued to play a prominent role in local Quaker affairs until his death in 1684 when his son, also called Thomas, carried on his local leadership role. He in turn was followed by his son, John, who frequently figures in the distrains for non-payment of tithes listed between 1703 and 1728.

William Yardley was possibly another of Hickock's converts of 1654. There is no documentary evidence to support this contention but the fact that Yardley also interrupted a church service in 1655, for which he spent nineteen weeks in prison, is suggestive.²¹ Yardley's career as a Quaker illustrates another aspect of the history of the spread of the movement. For any further growth beyond the limits of the family and kinship connections, which was a relatively easy and a first and natural method of extension, the Quaker movement needed converts willing and able to appeal to a wider, as yet unconvinced, and sometimes hostile, audience. This required not only a depth of conviction that motivated them to 'labour in the world', at whatever personal cost both to themselves and to their families, but also needed some evangelistic skills. These included an ability to express their beliefs effectively in words and in ideas which could appeal to their hearers, and, as a primary requisite, a level of literacy sufficient to read and to quote from the Bible. Such skills were necessary also for the further guidance and instruction of those who already claimed to be possessed

19 Staffs. C. R.O., Q/SR M.1655, f. 2.

20 Matthews, Congregational Churches, p. 89.

21 Q.M.M.B. appendix, 'Friends Sufferings'.

of the 'Inward Light', because it was essential, as Fox stressed, to turn a mere profession of 'convincement' into the reality of conversion as expressed in a pattern of everyday behaviour and in strict adherence to the Quaker testimonies. Yardley possessed the necessary attributes for such a role in the local Quaker community. He was literate and had impeccable credentials by reason of his steadfastness in the face of persecution. He was also a man of considerable means, the tenant of Dairy House, the largest house in Horton Hay in the parish of Horton, ²² for which he was assessed in the 1666 Hearth Tax at six hearths, and thus able to survive the financial penalties which he incurred as a Quaker. Excommunication at the episcopal visitation of 1665 obviously had no effect upon him and his house was listed as a conventicle in Sheldon's list of 1669 where it was stated to have 100 Quakers. There were no immediate recorded repercussions following upon this report but in 1675 Yardley was cited before quarter sessions for 'preaching and teaching' and fined £20. The evidence, as for all the earliest Friends, is not great, but it is sufficient to suggest that the Quaker duty to 'publish Truth' provided both motivation and opportunity for men such as Yardley to acquire the confidence to speak and to preach in public, if they did not already possess it. The history of Protestant dissent generally shows that it was able to foster the development of local and lay preachers without whom dissenting movements could not have spread so quickly or so widely. In the Leek and Moorlands area Methodism and particularly Primitive Methodism, found and tapped a reservoir of native talent which enabled them to evangelise the region with considerable success and with remarkable speed for such a rural area. In the parish of Horton, specifically, where Yardley had lived a hundred years before, both Wesleyan and Primitive Methodism prospered. ²³ It was a feature of later Quakerism that the

22 N. J. Tringham, 'Horton'. in M. W. Greenslade, (ed.), Victoria County History of Staffordshire, VII (1996), p. 67.

23 Ibid., p. 76.

movement did not fully exploit, at least within Britain, the potential evangelistic talents of its members. The 'Public Friends', also called travelling ministers, who were persons given a certificate by their local meetings to visit other areas, preached mostly to established Quaker groups. Although there are occasional references in the Staffordshire minute books to making provision for such visiting Friends there is no record of their local activities in the period to 1743.

The Brindley family of Leek provides a final illustration of the spread of Quakerism through family networks which continued throughout the early years of the movement in Staffordshire. In 1661, John Brindley had been one of those imprisoned for refusing to take the Oath of Allegiance. Thomas Brindley senior and Walter Brindley were presented as a 'Quakers not coming to church' at the episcopal visitation of 1665. Thomas Brindley, junior, a blacksmith, was excommunicated in 1668. It is reasonable to suppose that the arrival in Leek in 1665 of William Fallowfield, an itinerant Quaker preacher from Westmorland was also a stimulus to the acceptance of Quakerism within the Brindley family network because Fallowfield married Hester Brindley in 1666 and settled in Leek. By 1677 William and Sarah Brindley, of the neighbouring parish of Ipstones, were also Quakers.

Quakerism spread throughout the Leek and Moorlands area mainly by such family and kinship connections. Although the region was sparsely populated, and in places, environmentally harsh, it became the local stronghold of the movement. Of the 40 or more Quakers named by Besse in 1661 who suffered imprisonment for refusing to take the Oath of Allegiance, at least 17 came from this area, which also had five of Sheldon's list of eleven Quaker conventicles. Leek Monthly Meeting had one semi-urban location, in an easier topographical environment, in the neighbourhood of Newcastle-under-Lyme. Here the meetings for worship centred at first on Knutton and, before the end of the century, on Keele. In the town of Newcastle itself Quakerism did not properly take root. It was ecclesiastically

within the parish of Wolstanton, had been strongly Parliamentary in the Civil War, and during the Interregnum men of Presbyterian persuasion were appointed to the curacies.²⁴ The strength of local Presbyterianism may have been one reason for the inability of the Quaker itinerants to establish the movement strongly in the town, although at first Richard Hickock claimed he had received a favourable response. He reported to Margaret Fell in 1658 that when he came to Newcastle people had flocked to hear him, that they had been forced to 'confess to the Truth' and that he argued with the mayor and with the priest, who endeavoured to hinder him.²⁵ Hickock was followed in his proselytisation in Newcastle by Humphrey Wolrich, himself a native of the town, but there is no evidence concerning the latter's success or lack of it.²⁶

Local Quakers in the area were found mostly among the farming community. There was, however, one skilled artisan among them, Vincent Heawood, a carpenter, of Keele. There is no evidence concerning Vincent Heawood's initial conviction and the first mention of his name in the Quaker records is in 1666 when he and his son William were distrained of goods worth £3 10s. for attending religious meetings.²⁷ He was cited again in 1670 as the occupant of a house in which an illegal conventicle was held and fined £20. He was unable to pay the fine and the magistrates ruled that the other Quakers present would have to pay it.²⁸ Vincent's son, William, was also fined £20 for a similar offence in 1679, smaller fines on subsequent occasions, and he suffered frequent distrains for non-payment of tithes at the hands of the local impropiators, the Sneyds of Keele Hall.²⁹ The family name continues to appear

24 B. Young, 'Protestant Nonconformity' in J. G. Jenkins (ed.), V. C. H. Staffs., VIII, p. 56.

25 Matthews, Congregational Churches, p. 39, quoting Swarthmore MSS, iv, 208.

26 Wolrich is discussed in Chapter 9 of this study and his career is outlined in the biographical appendix.

27 Besse, Sufferings, p. 651.

28 Staffs. C. R. O. Q/SR E. nos. 1-7.

29 Besse, Sufferings, p. 653 - 4, and 'Record of Sufferings' 9th month 1683.

in lists of sufferings until the later 1720s. The core of the early Quaker meeting in the Keele area was formed by the Heawoods together with two other families, the Simpsons and the Morgans. Richard Simpson is recorded by Besse in 1659 as offering to go to prison in place of other Quakers then so confined.³⁰ The Simpson name appears in 1682 and 1683 in the record of sufferings for non-attendance at church, and in the list of distraints for non-payment of tithes until 1725. The nature and value of the goods distrained shows the family to have been farmers of some means. Humphrey Morgan of Keele and another Humphrey, possibly his son, together with his wife Katharine, were distrained of goods for attending religious meetings in 1666 and 1679.³¹ William Morgan, son of Humphrey Morgan junior, was imprisoned for five months in 1676 on a writ following a sentence of excommunication. In 1682 he successfully appealed against a fine of 40s. imposed for attendance at a conventicle, apparently on a technical illegality in the recording of the conviction.³² The incident shows that by this time the Quaker movement had acquired sufficient legal expertise at the national, now London-based, level, to be able often to assist and guide local Friends in challenging local magistrates' decisions.³³ Another family which later became prominent in the Keele meeting was Timmis. The name first appears in local Friends' records in 1679 when Richard Timmis, of Aston in the parish of Maer, was distrained of goods for non-payment of tithes. Another family of the same name lived in the neighbouring parish of Madeley and in the early eighteenth century regularly suffered distraints at the hands of Edward Mainwaring, the local tithe impropriator.

By 1672 an administrative system had evolved for financing poor relief in the

30 *Ibid.*, Vol. 1, Preface.

31 Besse, 'Sufferings', p. 651.

32 *Ibid.*, p. 654.

33 A. Lloyd, *Quaker Social History* (1950), pp. 89 - 93, examines this development and the work of the 'Meeting for Sufferings' as a pressure group on government in the ten or so years prior to the Toleration Act.

area covered by Leek Monthly Meeting. Meetings for worship in the area, which were still held in private houses, were grouped into three centres which made collections for the local Quaker poor and occasionally for national Quaker charitable causes, a provision called by Friends the 'Service of Truth'.³⁴ Leek meeting covered all the meetings for worship in the parish of Leek, Morridge meeting included Friends in the parishes of Ipstones, Butterton, Caldon and Grindon and, in the west, Knutton, covered Friends in Wolstanton, Madeley, Keele, Stone and Maer parishes, although, by the 1680s Knutton had been replaced by Keele. Reliable totals of the number of Friends in all these areas before 1672 cannot be arrived at. For the period 1672 to 1689, however, as shown in Table 3.1 in Chapter 5, about 68 separate households have been identified.

The Toleration Act had resulted, in 1690 -1, in six registrations of local Quaker houses as meeting places for worship.³⁵ There were two in Ipstones in the houses of John Hall and James Mellor, one in Grindon belonging to George Howard, Thomas Hammersley's house in Basford in Cheddleton parish, one in Leek, the owner or occupant of which was not named, and one in Keele in the possession of Richard Simpson. These were all registrations of private houses. It is probable that some Friends continued to hold meetings in houses which were never registered, but in practice there was little likelihood that these Friends would have been prosecuted even if their meetings still officially contravened the law. Fear of persecution for

34 See also Chapter 10 below on this topic and D. Stuart, 'Service of Truth : Quaker Poor Relief in Staffordshire to the Mid-Eighteenth Century', P. Morgan and A. D. M. Phillips (eds), Staffordshire Histories: Essays in Honour of Michael Greenslade (1999, Staffordshire Record Society and the Centre for Local History, University of Keele).

35 I. Atherton, 'The Early Registration of Dissenters' Meeting Houses in Seventeenth Century Staffordshire', J. R. Studd (ed.), Staffordshire Studies, Vol. 11, 1999, citing Lichfield Record Office Ex D and CB/A/ 12 ii. See also Chapter 7 of this study.

worshipping elsewhere than in the established church had, in practice, been generally lifted. After 1691, as some Quaker families died out or departed from the area, the numbers and location of meeting places gradually changed. Between 1695 and 1753 there were a further nine registrations of meeting houses in the Monthly Meeting area, four in the parish of Leek, one in the neighbouring parish of Horton, two in the more distant locations of Alstonefield and Caudon, and two in the Keele area. All but one of the names under which these houses were registered were of families who had been Quakers before the passage of the Toleration Act in 1689. These were Yardley, Wilcockson, Radford, Whittaker, Hall, Timmis and Simpson. Only one, Bulkley or Buckley, was from a post-toleration and newly-recruited family. Toleration brought nevertheless an immediate increase in numbers. As Table 3.1 in Chapter 5 above shows, the figure of 68 Quaker families in the 17-year period 1672-1689 rose to 83 between 1690 -1707. These figures, as already pointed out, apply only to the names of Quaker families which for some reason or other appear in local minutes or lists of sufferings or other sources. There is no means of knowing how many 'attenders' came regularly or occasionally to Quaker meetings now that the threat of legal prosecution had been lifted. The increase in the number of identified, and presumably committed, Quakers after 1690, just over 22%, was nevertheless substantial though relatively short - lived.

The erection, and the registration in 1695, of the purpose-built meeting house in Leek, sited centrally in the north-east of the county, marked, in one way, the climax of this early phase of Leek Monthly Meeting's history. The acquisition of a central meeting place - in the case of most dissenting sects the building of a chapel, replacing the often inadequate and inconvenient accommodation in private houses or hired rooms - has been, for many such religious groups a sign of success. The effort made to find the finance necessary for its erection and for its subsequent maintenance and

often extension, has usually led to a feeling of pride and sense of achievement , and stimulated further efforts to spread the movement. No such feelings or response can be documented for early Leek Quakers although no Monthly Meeting Minute Book survives before 1705. The only administrative recognition of the new meeting house was the holding of the Quarterly Meeting of 6/5/1696 in Leek, which broke an unbroken six-year run of 24 meetings at Stafford. For early Quakers a meeting house was a convenient venue for a meeting and called, officially at least, for no more recognition than adequate financial provision. Private feelings are not recorded.

By the early eighteenth century there is another observable, if still slight, change. Hitherto the majority of attendances at business meetings had been made by farmers or husbandmen, but in 1702 the name Toft first appears. The Tofts were button makers who prospered as that manufacture developed in Leek in the later seventeenth and in the earlier eighteenth century. When they first joined the Leek meeting is not known, but they soon came to play a leading role locally. John Toft, junior, first represented Leek at a Quarterly Meeting in 14/2/1707. While, however, the numbers of those with non-agricultural occupations began to increase, there is no evidence of any change in the leadership's views on discipline within the movement. The insistence on marriage only within the movement was stronger than ever, and new leaders like the Tofts, even if they came from a different socio-economic group, were apparently just as demanding that there should be no 'disorderly walking' in the local movement.

The boost to recruitment afforded by the Toleration Act lasted for less than 20 years. In 4/2/1709 Quarterly Meeting instructed its representatives to Yearly Meeting to report that there had been no increase for some years past. The wording of the minute makes it clear that the local leadership drew a distinction between those who merely attended their meetings and those who by their testimonies and behaviour

were obviously committed Quakers, stating that 'some seem to have some convincement in them'. In 1711 Leek Monthly Meeting revived the practice of appointing two senior Friends to visit members 'in relation to Truth's affairs', a practice that had apparently fallen into disuse. They reported immediately that all was in order, but later minutes nevertheless reflect an increasing disquiet in the minds of the local leadership. This was expressed in 3/5/1718 when the meeting recorded its wish to give further consideration to the matter of people 'coming amongst us that we do not esteem as members of our Society'. On 4/7/1718 William Fallowfield and Joseph Davison were instructed to draw up a 'General Caution which may take off the calumnies and reproaches which may ensue by such (people) frequenting our meetings but not yet esteemed members of us and not walking orderly nor according to our profession'. It is clear that by this date the leadership was determined that membership of the movement should be confined to a spiritual elite who could be recognised by its outward behaviour and adherence to the Quaker testimonies. There was nothing unusual in this attitude; most religious denominations demand or expect observance of a code of behaviour by their followers but in practice they often remain content with what is, in effect, a two-tier membership, the first of people who merely attend services, the second of those in full communion. Quakers in the early eighteenth century were unwilling to accept this compromise. Their reluctance to accept anyone who did not 'walk orderly', however admirable as a manifestation of their deepest inner beliefs, was a major factor in the numerical decline of the movement.

Discipline and Disorderly Walking.

In 1669 George Fox, probably with the approval of the Yearly Meeting of ministers in London, issued a paper of 'Advices' which defined the powers, duties and functions of monthly meetings. In practice these 'Advices' were rules to be observed. They included, among numerous other provisions, the supervision of Friends'

behaviour and marriage. Senior Friends were to be appointed to visit and reprove members who were leading a disorderly life, defined as pursuing pleasure, drunkenness, gaming, falling into debt, womanising, slandering and tale-telling. Friends who had been married by a priest were to be visited, and if, after four visits, they remained unrepentant, they were to be reported to the local quarterly meeting, which could draw up a paper stating the offender's 'disunity with truth'. This constituted the official disownment of the offender. The Advices were in part an agenda for the behaviour of the 'Saints', as Fox sometimes called Friends. The machinery for enforcing such behaviour was usually a visitation by two or more 'elders' or senior Friends from the monthly meeting. Persistent efforts were made by these visitors to reason with the backsliders and to persuade them to make a public avowal of their contrition. Disownment was a last resort, and a great deal of patience was always exercised.

There is no evidence to show how far the first generation of Quakers in Leek lived up to Fox's high expectations. By the earliest years of the eighteenth century, however, not every Friend was able or willing to exercise the desired self-control. Table 6.1 below lists the names, with dates, of offenders mentioned in the Monthly Meeting Minute Book between 1705 and 1743 together with the nature of the offence and the outcome, if recorded, of the inquiry. Of the eleven offenders listed, five were disowned, five showed repentance in some way and there was no recorded decision in one case. Excessive drinking was listed as the offence in three instances, disorderly walking in four. The dates of the recorded offences indicate a weakening of discipline as the century proceeded. The minute book shows a 20-year gap between the first and second offences recorded, and then there were ten recorded offences in the 16 years between 1726 and 1742. The numbers recorded do not constitute a great indictment of human frailty. Under the pressure of being publicly cited nearly half the number of offenders presumably mended their ways or expressed remorse, and

escaped disownment. Disownment, however, although it involved immediate public humiliation, did not necessarily mean permanent exclusion. There is evidence that some disowned Friends were eventually re-admitted. Disownment depended on the nature of the offence. Quakers were more forbearing of offences such as excessive drinking, provided the offender kept to his promise and mended his ways, than of marriage outside the Society. John Hall, who had fathered his illegitimate child on Sarah Clowes of Cheshire was disowned.³⁶ Six years later he sent a letter of repentance but the meeting held on 3/4/1742 still refused to re-admit him because he had married 'out'. This was the greatest offence. 'Disorderly Walking'

TABLE 6.1 REFERENCES TO MISBEHAVIOUR BY LEEK FRIENDS

1705 - 1743

(Source: Leek Monthly Meeting Minute Books)

Date	Name	Offence	Outcome
5/10/1706	TAYLOR, John	Assisted Wm. Ford in marriage (out)	Sent letter of remorse
4/6/1726	SIMPSON, Sam.	Disorderly walking	Had ceased to offend
4/4/1730	HAMERSLEY, John	Excessive drinking	Disowned
11/2/1731	RADFORD, John	Disorderly behaviour	Acknowledged his offence
4/9/1731	RADFORD, Thomas	Disagreeable conversation	Disowned
7/8/1731	DAVISON, John (jun.)	Excessive drinking	(no further mention)
6/10/1733	BOWERS, Henry	Excessive drinking	Promised amendment
5/12/1735	HALL, John	Fathered illegit. child	Disowned
7/5/1737	HALL, Amos	Irregular conduct	Sent letter of remorse
6/5/1742	WALMSLEY, Hannah	Disorderly walking and dissolute behaviour	Disowned
6/5/1742	FERNIHOUGH, Martha	Disorderly walking and dissolute behaviour	Disowned

36 Staffs. C. R. O. D 3159/3/6 , Book of Disownments, 1/2/1736.

was an omnibus term. Yearly Meeting references of the early eighteenth century offer a number of meanings such as failure to maintain 'circumspection' and 'humility' before the Lord', not pursuing a right conduct or being 'busybodies'. In Staffordshire it most often meant that the Friend had married someone of another persuasion and before a 'priest' and in church. This usually involved disownment after the long and sorrowfully -followed procedures of the Monthly Meeting had been completed. Thus Martha Fernihough, listed in the table above, had been married before her case was brought to the attention of the Monthly Meeting. What the extra charge of 'dissolute behaviour' levelled against her meant is not apparent, but it suggests a pre-marital sexual liaison.

The prohibition of marriage with someone outside the Society dated from the earliest days of Quakerism. George Fox believed that such marriages quenched the 'Inward Light' and buttressed his opposition to such marriages by Biblical references. He accepted that non-Quakers were the spiritual equivalents of the Hittites, Jebusites and others of the text of Deuteronomy vii. 3. 'Do not mingle your seed with the world who calleth yourselves the people of God', he exhorted.³⁷ Fox's view of marriage was, in consequence, an apocalyptic one: it could only be undertaken by two persons who were already redeemed and who believed their intended marriage to be the true command of God. This insistence on marrying within the spiritual tribe was not unique to Quakerism. Early Baptists accepted the principle. For a Quaker who could not find a partner within the movement the prohibition presented a severe dilemma. If he or she persisted in a determination to marry someone not of Quaker persuasion there was no option but to be married by a 'priest'. Such an action, moreover, denied the basic belief of Quakerism, that the message provided by the 'Inward Light' was supreme.

37 Lloyd, Quaker Social History, p. 57. quoting Swarthmore MSS. vol. V, 43.

In the earliest days of the movement Quakers intending to marry had been urged to seek the advice and approval of senior Friends beforehand. By 1667, when monthly meetings had been generally established in the country, such consent was a requirement. In an endeavour to avoid marriages 'out' appropriate procedures had been formalised. Parties wishing to marry reported their intention to their local monthly meeting, which then appointed Friends to investigate the couple's 'clearness' from any previous marital engagement and to ensure that there was no known obstacle to the union, such as a first cousin relationship. Widows and widowers had to satisfy the visitors that any children by a previous marriage would be provided for. Letters from both sets of parents signifying their approval of the marriage were required and an intending partner from some other area had to supply a certificate from his or her own monthly meeting testifying to their satisfaction with the intended marriage. Finally a member of the monthly meeting was appointed to attend the marriage ceremony to ensure that it was conducted in an approved manner.

An example from Leek of this procedure is provided by the case of Isaac Whitehead and his intended bride, Susannah Millner, who came from a different monthly meeting. On 5/5/1716 Whitehead indicated to Leek Monthly Meeting his intention to marry Susannah and produced certificates from her parents and his mother indicating their consent. Joshua Toft and Jonathan Buxton were appointed to investigate Whitehead's 'clearness from other women' and to report to the next meeting. On 30/6/1716 Whitehead declared his continued intention to marry Susannah and produced two more certificates, one from Susannah in 'her own hand' expressing her 'oneness' with him in the offer and another from her own monthly meeting testifying that she had appeared before them and that they were satisfied with her as a Friend. Leek then agreed that the pair could proceed with the marriage when Susannah's monthly meeting gave them liberty to do so, and instructed Joseph

Davison, master of the Quaker school in Leek, to draw up a certificate to be signed at the next First Day meeting.

The complex procedure involved in a Quaker marriage, originally formulated by Fox and Margaret Fell, emphasised the fact that in the marriage ceremony no human authority was necessary. The couple were not joined by a priest or indeed by the Quaker meeting, but declared their union in the presence of an assembly of the righteous who were merely witnesses. The marriage had, as it were, been made in heaven. The care taken beforehand to ensure that both partners were Friends and were free of previous marital commitments was partly to avoid any public obloquy and moral condemnation for their practice of marrying without reference to church or state. It also had a legal background. The Barebones Parliament of 1653 had made a civil marriage before a justice of the peace compulsory and Quakers had six years to establish their own procedure before civil registration was abolished at the Restoration. Quaker marriages were conducted with full publicity and required a solemn contract, but they were not in strict conformity with the law until 1661. In that year the legality of a Quaker marriage was challenged but the judge at Nottingham Assizes ruled that it was lawful and all subsequent attempts to invalidate Quaker marriages proved unsuccessful. By Hardwicke's Marriage Act of 1753 Quakers were exempted from the statutory requirement that all marriages should be celebrated in the parish church of one of the parties, in 1836 they were given statutory sanction to solemnise marriages and by an Act of 1847 all Quaker marriages prior to 1846 were validated provided both parties had been Friends. This final limitation was lifted by acts of 1860 and 1872.

The numerical effects of marriage outside the Society compared with approved marriages may now be considered. The Leek Monthly Meeting Minute Book and other local Quaker sources record a total of 52 approved marriages for the period 1705 to 1737. In 14 cases one of the partners came from a different monthly

meeting, and of these, seven husbands came from outside the county. The presumption is that the couple returned to the husband's home county, and any children produced by the marriage would thereby have been lost to Staffordshire. Assuming that all the women were of child-bearing age and that all the parties remained Quakers and lived in the locality, there remains a total of 45 recorded marriages over the 32 year period which presumably would have produced children and added to the number of Quakers in the Leek area. The list of members of Leek Monthly Meeting drawn up in 1735 shows that the average number of children per family under the age of 12 at that date was 2.5. This figure does not take account of any older children who may have already left the area.

Against the potential additional increase in local Quaker numbers deriving from approved marriages must be set the loss incurred by disownments of Friends for marrying non-Quakers. Table 6.2 below shows that the numbers of marriages 'out' recorded in Leek Monthly Meeting Minute Book totalled by ten-year spans. It is apparent that the numbers of such marriages had nearly trebled by the end of the period being studied. The total of 36 marriages 'out' was only nine less than the net total of 45 approved marriages. Added to this would have been unquantifiable factors. Not all children might have become committed Quakers and not all might have remained in the locality. It is unlikely, therefore, that without further recruitment from outside earlier membership levels could have been maintained.

Disownments for marriage outside the Society must now be examined in more detail. When a report of disorderly walking was brought before the Monthly Meeting, Friends were appointed to investigate the allegation and report their findings at the next meeting. Most often the visitors found that a marriage had already taken place; the Quaker partner, knowing that he or she would not be allowed a Quaker marriage ceremony, had been married in a church by an Anglican minister. The Monthly

**TABLE 6.2 LEEK MONTHLY MEETING : NUMBERS OF
RECORDED MARRIAGES WITH NON-QUAKERS 1705 -
1744, BY TEN YEAR PERIODS**

(Sources: Leek M.M. Minute Book, 1705-1737, Quarterly Meeting
Minute Book 1672-1743, Book of Disownments)

1705 - 1714	5
1715 - 1724	5
1725 - 1734	12
1735 - 1744	14
Total	36

Meeting's reaction was to require the offender to make a public declaration of remorse and write a letter of self-condemnation expressing his or her own contrition and regret. If this was done the letter was then copied into a special book used for that purpose. If the offender refused to offer such an apology, or if the visitors deemed him or her to be insufficiently remorseful, then disownment followed and this too was recorded in the special book for this purpose.³⁸ A Friend was sent to the person concerned to read out the paper of denial, and this was followed by a public reading of the document at the next First-day meeting for worship. Such public proclamation of the offender's 'disunity with Truth' as Friends termed it, was, however, taken only after long and patient endeavours to persuade him or her to admit error and to express remorse in public for having brought 'Truth' into disrepute.

Table 6.3 provides the details of disownments within Leek Monthly Meeting for the period being studied. It shows that of the 36 individuals named, who were equally divided between male and female, 28 or nearly 78%, were disowned, four sent letters of remorse and there is no record of the outcome in another four cases.

38 Staffs. C. R.O. D 3159/2/25 Book of Disownments, and F. H. L., Leek MSS (MSS Vol. 330).

TABLE 6.3 RECORDED MARRIAGES OF LEEK QUAKERS TO NON-QUAKERS OR TO PERSONS NOT APPROVED, 1705 -1743

(Sources: Leek M.M. Minute Book, 1705-1737, Quarterly Meeting Minute Book 1672-1743 and Book of Disownments)

Date	Name	Outcome
2/6/1705	WHITAKER, John	Sent letter of remorse
6/4/1706	STRETCH, Anne	
5/10/1706	FORD, William	
3/9/1709	FINNEY, Sarah	Disowned
3/5/1712	BOTHAM, Jane	Disowned
4/9/1714	MELLOR, Phoebe	Sent letter of remorse
2/12/1715	FINNEY, John	Disowned
1/3/1718	BOTHAM, John	Sent letter of remorse
2/4/1720	FORD, John	
3/6/1721	FORD, Hugh	
1/12/1721	SIMPSON, John	Sent letter of remorse
6/3/1725	TIMMIS, Josiah	Disowned
2/7/1725	BLOOR, James	Disowned
7/6/1729	DALE, Hannah	Disowned
7/6/1729	FINNEY, Elizabeth	Disowned
5/12/1729	HAYWOOD, Mary (widow)	Disowned
3/10/1730	DAVENPORT, John	Disowned
5/6/1731	MARSH (TAYLOR), Alice (widow)	Disowned
4/8/1731	DALE, Mary	Disowned
3/12/1731	ROWLEY, Martha	Disowned
5/5/1733	SIMPSON, Thomas	Disowned
1/9/1733	TAYLOR, Sarah	Disowned
6/12/1734	REYNOLDS, Thomas	Disowned
5/12/1735	DAVENPORT, John	Disowned
6/11/1736	BOTHAM, Mary	Disowned
2/4/1737	BOWERS, George	Disowned
6/8/1737	HALL, Richard	Disowned
27/10/1737	BULLOCK (TAYLOR), Martha	Disowned
27/10/1737	BOWERS (RADFORD), Mary (widow)	Disowned
27/10/1737	HEWET, Benjamin	Disowned
1/2/1740	GODWYN, Mary	Disowned
30/4/1741	BOWERS, Hannah	Disowned
30/4/1741	WHISTON, Hannah	Disowned
30/4/1741	LEA, Elizabeth	Disowned
30/4/1731	WOLFE, William	Disowned
30/4/1731	BLOOM, John, junior	Disowned

(dates refer to Minute Book or other entry not to date of marriage;
former name in brackets)

Two cases may be cited to illustrate the procedures. John Whitaker of Gratton was reported to Leek Monthly Meeting on 2/6/1705 to have 'married with a Young Woman of the World.' William Fallowfield and Samuel Radford were instructed to visit him to see if he was willing to 'condescend to clear Truth' by writing a letter condemning himself for this action. His reply, read on 7/9/1705, expressed his remorse for marrying contrary to the advice of his parents and for giving cause to have 'Truth evil spoken of.' He was not formally disowned, but presumably his behaviour and adherence to the prescribed testimonies concerning tithes and levies were watched. A John Whitaker attended the Quarterly Meeting of 1715, and it is likely that this was the same John who had married 'out' ten years before. The second case is that of Sarah Finney, daughter of Thomas Finney of Rudyard, who had been a Quaker as early as 1665. She was reported on 3/9/1709, to have been married by a priest to Charles Walmsley, a non-Quaker. The Monthly Meeting decided that 'this meeting cannot esteem the said Sarah Walmsley (now by marriage) as one of us'. Forty years later, however, in 1749, both Sarah and her husband were in receipt of 12 pence poor relief, due to age and infirmity. This suggests that she had been readmitted and that she and her husband were deemed suitable for relief. The case indicates that provided the principle of marriage only within the Society was acknowledged, that 'Truth' had been 'cleared' by a formal denial, an eventual return of the offender, though after an indeterminate period of years, was possible. The practice of disownment shows that Quakers were concerned with the public image of their movement, not in any modern political sense but because they believed it to be their duty, as chosen people, to present a spotless, saintly image to the world.

Acknowledgement of their wrong-doing by Leek Friends who married outside the Society did not, however, occur frequently. More than three-quarters of those who did marry into the 'World' made no confession of remorse. It was unlikely that

they would do so. It is difficult to believe that most Friends who had undertaken such a marriage would have been willing to suffer the embarrassment of a public condemnation and in effect to disavow their new partner. In most cases their alienation from the Quaker movement proved permanent.

By the opening years of the eighteenth century marriage 'out' was a widespread phenomenon which was agitating the whole Quaker leadership. The Yearly Meeting now began to require annual reports from all quarterly meetings on how its advices on the matter were being carried out locally. Thus on 6/12/1706 Leek Monthly Meeting received a letter from Staffordshire Quarterly Meeting requiring a report on how it had proceeded 'against Young People who have lately gone to take wives of the world's people'. No specific mention of the problem was made in Leek's reply.

The problem of marriage 'out' was in fact a vicious circle. As the numbers of Quakers began to decline generally it became increasingly difficult to find partners in marriage who would meet with the approval of the local monthly meeting. This produced more disorderly marriages and more disownments. Quaker widows provided a special problem. Unable to find another partner of suitable age within the local movement, some married again, sometimes to a man who was not a Friend. Mary Haywood, widow of Thomas Haywood of Keele meeting, provides an example. She was reported on 2/8/1729 to have been married, before a priest, to a non-Quaker and to have moved to Cheshire. On 5/10/1729 Monthly Meeting instructed Jonathan Toft to draw up a paper testifying against such actions and for 'clearing Truth' to be sent to both Leek and Keele, to be read out at a First day meeting. When Keele failed to return the paper promptly, a letter was sent to John Timmis, one of leading figures in the Keele meeting, and on 2/2/1730 a reply was received from Keele that the paper of denial had now been read out. In six of the seven monthly meetings at Leek up to that date the matter of Mary Haywood had been the only item of business recorded.

Disorderly marriages included marriage to a first cousin, expressly forbidden to Quakers. Josiah Timmis of Keele Meeting was disowned on 4/12/1726 for this offence, but was eventually re-admitted: an entry in the Quarterly Meeting Minute Book for 28/1/1738 recorded a report by Leek Friends that his conduct had been such that there was hope they could withdraw their testimony of denial against him. The process of reconciliation had taken 12 years.

There was, then, no discernible change in the views of the second and third generation of Leek Quakers regarding disorderly marriages. If anything their determination to keep the movement clear in this respect seems to have hardened. An entry in the Quarterly Meeting minutes for 4/8/1743 summarises the attitude of Friends on the issue. The minute quoted from an epistle received from Yearly Meeting, ran :

'we earnestly beseech and exhort you to watch diligently over the Flock of God and to deal in due time, and in a spirit of Christian love and tenderness, with all such as walk disorderly among you, in order to reclaim and restore them by brotherly admonition and counsel; and where, after patient waiting, you find that your continued labour of love hath not had the desired effect, you neglect not to testify against and disown such persons and thereby prevent the reproach and dishonour which may be brought down upon our holy profession.'

Disorderly marriages were a factor in the numerical decline of Leek Monthly Meeting which continued after 1743. The evidence of the 1751 visitation, bears out the general pattern and rate of decline. The report listed only 24 Quaker families in the area covered by Leek Monthly Meeting, one in the parish of Butterson, one in Horton, 20 in Leek, one in Keele and 1 in Madeley, and the whole congregation numbered between 20 and 30.³⁹ Quakers in Cheddleton were mentioned although no figures were given. The 1772 visitation, however, stated there were three Quaker families in

39 Lichfield Joint Record Office, Primary Visitation Returns, B/V/5.

that parish, which would make a possible total of 27 families in 1751, a figure which accords sufficiently well with that derived from Quaker sources.

Leek Monthly Meeting in 1735 : a profile.

The survival of a list of the members of Leek Monthly Meeting compiled on 1/3/1735 allows a partial social and demographic analysis to be made.⁴⁰ It provides the names and family and household composition of the Leek membership in that year and also makes possible comparisons of names and total membership in 1735 with those of earlier periods. Why the list was compiled is not stated, but possibly it was drawn up to assist in the administration of local poor relief, the responsibility for which had been assumed by members of the Toft family. For many years the issue of who was responsible for the relief of poor 'unsettled Friends' had been debated by Yearly Meeting, and the compilation of the 1735 document may have been undertaken in that context, perhaps in connection with the definitive ruling on this topic in 1737.

The statistics provided by the document are summarised in Table 6.4. They provide only a snapshot of the composition of the Monthly Meeting at one point in time. It is reasonable, nevertheless, to accept that the 1735 list provides the basis for a broadly reliable picture of Leek Monthly Meeting Quakers at that period. It confirms the conclusion, reached by examination of other sources, that a serious decline in numbers had occurred over the previous 30 years: the total membership in 1735 was only half of what it had been at the beginning of the century. There had been some influx of new blood but of the 43 different names in the 1735 list, 24, or not quite 56%, are of Quaker families found in the records before 1690. Death, departure from the area and disownment accounted for the other 44%.

The 1735 list also suggests that the age structure of Friends in Leek Monthly

40 Staffs. C. R.O. D 4812/2.

Meeting was changing. The document gives the ages of 92 of the total of 153 members of the monthly meeting: eight (8.6%) were over 60 years of age, 15 (16.3%) were between 40 and 60 years, 39 (42.3%) between 13 and 40 years, and there were 30 children (32.6%) under the age of 12. The statistics are too scanty to be wholly acceptable, and more research on the demographic character of the local movement needs to be done. The document, however, sounds one ominous note. Opposite the names of four members of the Simpson family, two aged 18 and two aged 16, were the words 'all gone', apparently added later to the document. Despite the great attention which Friends paid to the bringing up of their children in their

TABLE 6.4 MEMBERSHIP OF LEEK MONTHLY MEETING 1735

(Source: Staffs. R.O. D/4812/2, 'A List of the Names of the Families (that is Parents, Children and Servants) belonging to the Mo. Meeting at Leek, taken the 1st day of 3 mo. 1735. Their ages as near as well could be collected.'))

	No. of Families	Nos. of Individuals			Average no. of children resident at home, per family
	(No. of Pre-1690 names in brackets)	Adults	Children 12 or less	Total	
Leek Meeting	39 (19)	104	22	126	2.5
Keele Meeting	6 (5)	17	10	27	2.5
Total of Monthly Meeting	43 (24)	121	32	153	2.5

faith, a haemorrhaging of numbers in the younger generation was taking place.

In six cases the head of the household was a widow. In general the

membership was reasonably well-to-do, and six households had servants living in. There were a few poor widows and a handful of 'problem' families. The document indicates that local Quakers operated a sort of 'care in the community' system for widows or orphans. Each of the two separate Toft households included a widow, who, presumably, as far as age or infirmity permitted, worked in some domestic capacity. Joshua Toft's household included three young children named Ford, who were too young to have been apprentices in his button manufacturing trade and were presumably being cared for until they reached apprenticeship age, a method often used in the case of Quaker orphans.⁴¹

The 1735 document does not list any occupations but for 15 of the total of 31 male heads of households occupations can be derived or deduced from other sources. There were eight farmers and probably more among those names for which no evidence of occupation can be found, two button manufacturers - the Tofts - one shoemaker, one nailmaker, one blacksmith, one ironmonger, and one draper. Thus although farming still provided the livelihood of the majority of Leek Quakers, over the years there had been a slight increase in the number of Friends engaged in commerce or who were skilled artisans.

The erection of the meeting house in the town of Leek in 1695 had slowly changed the routine of the local movement. Meetings for worship were now more centralised. As the century proceeded the movement had begun to resemble an Anglican church in its arrangements for its meetings for worship. In 1721, as an experiment for the summer season, it was decided to hold two meetings for worship on Sundays, the first at 10.30 in the morning for both 'country' and 'town' Friends and

41 See Chapter 10 for a full discussion of this topic.

the second at three o'clock in the afternoon for town Friends only.⁴² About one third of the members lived outside the town, and presumably these Friends walked or rode into Leek. These arrangements made it possible for most of them to return home before dark in both summer and winter, although Friends living at greater distances possibly stayed overnight.

The monthly meetings for business added to the demands made on Friends' time as analysis of the entries in Leek Monthly Meeting Minute book and the Quarterly Meeting minute book shows. Judged by the names of those members who appear in some active role in the monthly meeting and by the frequency of their attendance at quarterly meetings, the local leaders were fewer than half a dozen. Of these, John and Joshua Toft were among the most active. John had responsibility for keeping the poor relief accounts from 1726 to 1731 and again from 1737 to 1753. Joseph Davison, the schoolmaster, probably acted as clerk of the meeting as he is frequently instructed to write letters. Cornelius Bowman and Robert Mellor, descendants of two of the earliest Quaker families, are frequently mentioned, especially in connection with visitatorial duties. Between 1730 and 1735, however, no one from Leek attended the Yearly Meeting in London, and this suggests that the administrative centre of gravity of the Quaker movement in the county as a whole had moved to Stafford.

The main business of the monthly meeting concerned the maintenance of discipline. Thus in the twelve months from 7/6/1735 to 5/6/1736, a typical year at this time, of a total of 27 entries in the minute book, 11 dealt with mixed marriages and disorderly life and conversation. These included the marriage 'out' of Thomas Rhenolds, referred to in half a dozen meetings, a letter from John Davenport asking

42 N. J. Tringham, 'Protestant Nonconformity', in M. W. Greenslade (ed.) History of the County of Stafford, Vol. VII, 'Leek and the Moorlands' (1996), p. 143.

for reinstatement after his marriage 'out' of five years previously, references to 'foul reports' concerning John Hall and to John Simpson who had 'not been clear in his life and conversation' and, finally, a report on Charles Hall's disorderly conversation, excessive drinking and his keeping company with someone not of the Society. The only other matters discussed or decided upon concerned only the relief of the local Quaker poor and appointments of representatives to attend Quarterly Meeting.

The minutes of Leek Monthly Meeting do not present a comprehensive picture of the local movement in the first half of the eighteenth century and to judge a religious movement only on the basis of references to its backsliders is misconceived. There is no reason not to believe that the majority of the Quakers in the Leek area were God-fearing people and deeply committed to Quaker principles. Equally there is no evidence that the local leadership ever discussed the possibility that the decline in numbers might be halted by a fresh evangelical drive. The impression is that they had no interest in spreading the 'message of truth' as their early predecessors had so successfully done. They did not lack the talent to do so: there are references to one member, Joshua Toft, who was not only the principal local speaker, according to the 1751 episcopal visitation, but obtained a certificate to visit other areas on three occasions.⁴³ The minutes show that the local Quaker leaders were preoccupied with any actions by members of the meeting which would bring 'reproach' on the movement. Only by 'clearing Truth', for which public disownment or self-condemnation was necessary, could Quaker leaders feel they were maintaining their reputation in the eyes of the world and at the same time satisfy their own deepest religious convictions. The Quaker movement in Leek had, by 1735, narrowed into a sect. The change to a more outward-looking denomination lay in the future.

43 Thus on 3/4/1736 a minute records that Joshua Toft returned the certificate he had received for his last journey about which he expressed his satisfaction.

CHAPTER 9 STAFFORD MONTHLY MEETING TO 1743

(i) The Constituent Meetings

Stafford

After the visit of Miles Bateman, which may be dated to between October 1653 and October 1654, there are no recorded visits to the town of Stafford by Quaker itinerant preachers from the north until after 1660. The next documented visitor was Humphrey Wolrich, from Newcastle-under-Lyme, a former Baptist who may have been convinced by Richard Hickock.¹ Wolrich completed the convincement of Matthew Babb, living for some time in Babb's house. He not only preached in the streets but harangued the congregation in the local 'steeple house', St. Mary's Parish Church, an offence for which he was imprisoned. He succeeded in convincing some of his relations in Shallowford, in the parish of Chebsey, one of whom was his nephew Thomas Wolrich. From 1658 Wolrich spent much time in London but returned to Staffordshire a number of times during the course of a career as preacher and pamphleteer. Thomas Taylor, another itinerant preacher arrived in Stafford in 1662. His local activities were severely curtailed because he was very soon imprisoned in Stafford gaol for refusing to take the Oath of Allegiance, and remained there for ten years, although he was occasionally released for short periods. He was allowed to write books and even to teach children, and his proselytising enthusiasm remained undiminished. From the window of his cell he could address the passers - by and his sermons included strictures on the iniquities of the townspeople in pursuing such frivolous activities as bowling and theatre - going.²

Quakerism in the Stafford area offers some support for Barbour's contention

¹ See biographical notes in appendix.

² Ibid.

that the early movement flourished most on the fringes of urban areas where Puritanism had been strong.³ Apart from Matthew Babb only one or possibly two more names of Friends can be found for the town of Stafford itself up to 1660. In that year John Beech, was charged at quarter sessions with holding a conventicle in his house.⁴ In the next decade the predominantly rural location of early Friends of Stafford meeting becomes even more apparent. John Alsop, farmer, of Ingestre, a parish to the east of Stafford, is mentioned in 1661.⁵ Also in that year Peter Littleton, of the parish of Haughton, is cited in the earliest local list of sufferings as having been distrained by the local priest, for non-payment of 'small tithes, Easter Reckonings, smoke penny, garden and such-like things'.⁶ Littleton was the most prominent of the early local Quakers in the area and Sheldon's list of conventicles of 1669 shows that meetings were held in his house in Haughton.⁷ Sheldon's list also includes, but does not identify, the denomination or the 'Head' of the conventicle in Bradley, a parish about five miles south-west of Stafford. This was the meeting held in the house of Francis Comberford, one of the few gentlemen in Staffordshire known to have become a Quaker. He was also a justice of the peace. He had moved to Bradley from Comberford near Tamworth, where he had originally been convinced, some time between 1655 and 1662.⁸ The meeting in Bradley included Comberford's family and at least one of his servants, Thomas Erps.⁹

3 H. Barbour, The Quakers in Puritan England (Yale, 1964), p. 92.

4 Staffs. Record Office Q/SR 1660/1, no. 28.

5 Journal of the Friends Historical Society, 32 (1951), where he is stated to have obtained Humphrey Wolrich's release from prison.

6 Staffs. C. R.O. D 3159/1/1 Quarterly Meeting Minute Book, appendix, 'Friends Sufferings for the Truth in Staffordshire'.

7 A. G. Matthews, The Congregational Churches of Staffordshire, (1924), p.90.

8 Q.M.M.B., appendix, 'A Record of such Friends as first declared and published Truth in Stafford and Staffordshire, as also what persons received their message and of such Friends as received them in the beginning, etc.'

9 Register of Births, Marriages and Deaths, Friends' House Library, London.

An appendix to the first Quarterly Meeting Minute Book listing early Friends' sufferings provides more Stafford names. In 1671 Thomas Wolrich, Peter Littleton, James Kendall of Stafford, John Till of Burston in Stone parish and Edward Scotson of Eccleshall, were imprisoned for several weeks by Sampson Birch the mayor 'because they would not promise to meet no more to worship God in Stafford.' The incident shows that whatever the consequences to themselves they conceived it to be their moral duty to 'publish Truth' in Stafford by holding public meetings in the town. Three more names derive from a reference to contributions to the burial ground in Stafford which was acquired in 1668.¹⁰

Only 14 names of Stafford Friends in the first two decades of Quaker history in the county can be confidently identified, but there were undoubtedly others whose names have not survived. From 1672, however, more evidence survives. On 22/8/1672 the Quarterly Meeting instructed John Till of Whitgreave (father of John Till of Stone) and John Preston, a farmer from Tixall, four miles east of Stafford, to see to the necessities of poor Friends in the area.¹¹

The Declaration of Indulgence of 1672 gave Quakers a temporary respite from persecution and six Stafford Friends, Taylor, Thomas Wolrich, Littleton, Scotson, Till and Kendall were released from prison, the first after ten and the remaining five after about six years.¹² Friends in Stafford meeting were emboldened in 1674 to acquire a house which they fitted up as a meeting-place. This was to serve the local meeting

10 Q.M.M.B. 2nd month 1674.

11 See Chapter 10 of this study for the history of local Quaker poor relief.

12 J. Besse, A Collection of the Sufferings of the People called Quakers (1753), Vol. 1, p. 652. As Chapter 3 of this study demonstrates, Besse's information, and the dates he supplies, cannot always be completely reconciled with the details in the 'Friends' Sufferings' listed in the Quarterly Meeting Minute Book, although the differences can be explained.

until Friends acquired a purpose-built meeting house in 1730.

The relaxation of official persecution in 1672 was short-lived. In the town of Stafford the incidence of prosecution for holding illegal conventicles depended to some extent on the attitude of the mayor of Stafford, and the pressures put upon him from government or from the church. Local popular opinion, however, was not always as hostile to the Quaker movement as were the authorities. When in 1671 Sampson Birch, the mayor, attempted to indict local Quakers as rioters, the Grand Jury at the assizes threw out the case, presumably because the charge was manifestly ridiculous. Later juries, however, upheld charges when these showed clearly that current law had been broken. Thomas Ward, mayor in 1674, imprisoned a local Friend for preaching and John Martin, mayor in 1675, executed a writ of de excommunicato capiendo on Peter Littleton, brought at the instance of the local vicar of Haughton, Thomas Fletcher. Littleton was imprisoned and nearly died in Stafford gaol of prison fever. Meanwhile John Preston, John Alsop and other Friends continued to suffer distrains of their corn and hay for non-payment of tithes.

Despite these pressures, the local meeting grew, albeit slowly, and new names appear in the records. John Babb, son of Matthew Babb, who had died, made an additional grant of land to the burial ground in Foregate Street, Stafford; Joshua Nickins also of Stafford, is mentioned in the Quarterly Meeting Book in 1675, and in 1683 was fined for attending a conventicle; Edward Frith of Stafford Green had joined the meeting by 1685. At Bradley Mary Comberford continued to hold meetings in her house after her father died, and among the Quakers who gathered there were Thomas Somerford and his wife Dorothy, John Paddy, Mary Sherratt and Robert Kingston. The Quaker presence in Eccleshall, hitherto represented by the

Scotson family, had been augmented by 1675 by John Heacock of Slindon, John Davis, who was in receipt of poor relief from Quarterly Meeting and by John Smith. In Hopton, in St. Mary's, the parish in which Stafford lay, and which had been the scene of a Civil War battle in 1643, William Norris, a well-to-do farmer, had joined the local meeting by 1674. He contributed generously to the costs of the meeting house and left a legacy of £5 for the poor when he died in 1677.¹³

About 23 different family names can be identified over this period 1672 to 1689 and there were probably more who received no mention in the available records. By the time toleration was officially granted the meeting was already on a firm basis. A central meeting house had been acquired, a strong and respected leadership maintained an effective discipline both by example as well as precept, and an organised system of poor relief had been established.

Uttoxeter

Friends in Uttoxeter and its surrounding parishes constituted a separate meeting within Stafford Monthly Meeting. About 16 names are recorded in the decade 1661 to 1671 and presumably some, if not most, of these had been convinced earlier. The area was largely dependent on dairy farming and most Quakers whose occupations can be identified were farmers. They included Thomas Duce and Humphrey Wall, both of Doveridge, a village near Uttoxeter but actually in Derbyshire, and both are described as yeomen.¹⁴ Some names of Quakers attached to Uttoxeter meeting for worship can be found in the presentments at the episcopal visitations of the decade. These include Walter Pixley, who had been convinced

13 All references in these last paragraphs are from the Quarterly Meeting Minute Book or its appendix 'Friends' Sufferings'.

14 Q.M.M.B., appendix, 'Abstract of Friends' Deeds of Trust'.

before 1665, in which year he had been cited as a Quaker.¹⁵ He was stated to be a shoemaker, but there may have been an element of romanticising in this description, perhaps in imitation or emulation of George Fox. Pixley was no humble cobbler. In the 1666 Hearth Tax return he was assessed at three hearths and in 1674 he contributed £2 towards the cost of the Stafford meeting house.¹⁶ He was imprisoned for some time for attending an illegal conventicle and it is believed that William Penn interceded with Charles II to obtain his release.¹⁷ Other Friends who lived in the town of Uttoxeter and who were cited in the 1665 visitation return were Thomas Barrett, Henry Flemming and Abraham Foster, all three of whom had previously been excommunicated. Most other Friends in the area were, however, located in the parishes surrounding Uttoxeter. John Scott, described as yeoman, was a farmer in Creighton, a hamlet then included in Uttoxeter parish. Francis French's house in Bramshall, is cited in Sheldon's list of conventicles in 1669 as having 20 Quakers, and this location, rather than Uttoxeter, was probably the main centre of the local movement in the first 20 or 30 years of its existence. The 1665 presentment lists the names of five different Quaker families living in the Bramshall area, Francis French himself and his wife Mary, William Clowes, Richard Wedgwood and his wife Mary, Matthew Watson and his wife Jane, and Jane Rushton. Under pressure from the authorities possibly a very few local Friends, whose names appear only once in the records, may have wavered. John Scott was one of these. He had been imprisoned in 1661 for refusing to take the Oath of Allegiance¹⁸ but a second indictment at Stafford Assizes in 1672 brought his compliance. He confessed to this 'sin', as he

15 Lichfield Joint Record Office, B/V/1/72. G. Lyon Turner's transcription of his name as Ripley, in his list of presentations in the J. F. H. S. 4 (1907), p. 100, is a misreading.

16 Q.M.M.B. (Men's Meeting) 9/7/1675.

17 M. Howitt, Martha and Mary (1877), p. 5. This is of doubtful authenticity.

18 Besse, Sufferings, p. 651.

described it, in a letter of self - condemnation.¹⁹ Otherwise there is no evidence to show that the earliest Uttoxeter Quakers did not all stand firm against the laws concerning conventicles, oaths and church tithes and levies.

The Toleration Act brought two early registrations in the area in 1690 - 1, one in Uttoxeter, where the occupant of the house is not named, and another at Robert Heath's house in the parish of Checkley.²⁰ The earliest documented member of the local Heath family to become a Quaker was William Heath of Kingsley, who was committed to prison in 1669 for refusing to take the Oath of Allegiance.²¹ Meeting house registrations were a sign of the continuing activity of the local meeting but did not produce any permanent increase in the total number of Friends. The number of family names remained much the same, somewhere below the 20 mark, until the 1720s, some names disappearing and others coming in to replace them. Of the newcomers into Uttoxeter meeting the Shipley family were the most important. They had come into the area by about 1680 when Thomas Shipley married Dorothy Palmer of Doveridge.²² He soon became a leading figure in the meeting. In 1697 his house was registered as a meeting house,²³ and he was imprisoned for non-payment of tithes in 1699.²⁴ He, with Walter Pixley, regularly represented Uttoxeter at Stafford Monthly Meetings and also attended quarterly meetings. For much of the mid- and later eighteenth century the Shipley family and their marital connections, the

19 Leek MSS, (MS Vol. 330), F. H. L., 10th October 1672.

20 I. Atherton, 'The Early Registration of Dissenters' Meeting Houses in late Seventeenth - Century Staffordshire' in J.R. Studd (ed.), Staffordshire Studies, Vol. 11 (1999), p. 66.

21 Besse, Sufferings, p. 652.

22 Lichfield Joint Record Office B/C/7, Marriage Bond 29th May 1680 between Thomas Shipley of Duffield, Derbyshire, and Dorothy Palmer of Doveridge.

23 B. Donaldson (ed.), The Registrations of Dissenting Chapels and Meeting Houses in Staffordshire, 1689 - 1852 (Staffs. Historical Collections, Fourth Series, Vol. III (1960).

24 Staffs. C. R. O., D/3159/2/18 Record of Sufferings.

Summerlands,²⁵ kept the local meeting in being by providing the bulk of the membership.

The opening of a purpose - built meeting house in Carter Street, Uttoxeter, in 1705, on land given by Robert Heath, has been regarded as a milestone in the history of Uttoxeter meeting.²⁶ No mention of this appears immediately in the local monthly or quarterly minutes, presumably because it was not thought appropriate to pay too much attention to a mere meeting place. The erection of a centrally - placed meeting house may, however, have immediately strengthened local morale, attracted new members and increased attendances at weekly meetings for worship. Any such consequence, however, did not result in a permanent increase in local membership and by 1743 the number of separate families in Uttoxeter meeting was no more than nine. In the perspective of national Quaker history the erection of meeting houses may be seen as a local example of the growing institutionalisation of the movement. The purpose-built meeting house tended to centralise worship into what was in effect a non-consecrated church and also strengthened the local leaders' authority. This was emphasised by the interior plan of the Carter Street meeting house, laid out in a way which by the early eighteenth century had become the norm, with an elders' bench facing the remainder of the pews. Moreover paying for the initial building costs and financing the continuous maintenance costs probably served to focus members' attention even more on themselves and further enhance the inward-looking character of the movement and its increasingly Quietist nature.

Chesterfield, including Burton upon Trent, Lichfield and Tamworth

Burton upon Trent was never separately represented at Stafford Monthly

25 Stafford Monthly Meeting Minute Book 14/4/1737 provides the earliest reference, recording John Summerland's marriage to Rebecca Shipley.
 26 The meeting house is treated in detail in Chapter 7.

Meeting but was loosely attached for administrative purposes to Chesterfield up to the mid-eighteenth century. It is appropriate, however, to start with Burton as the first recorded Quaker centre in Staffordshire. George Fox came to Bushton House, near Tutbury, a village four miles north-west of Burton upon Trent, in 1651, and the earliest group of Friends in the area centred on the parish of Tutbury. No names of local Friends are known until 1663, when at the episcopal visitation of that year, the churchwardens presented a number of persons for not coming to church or for other offences. Three of these, Thomas Ford, and Ralph Buxton of Tutbury and William Woodcocke of Tatenhill, a parish to the west of Burton, were cited, or from later evidence may be identified, as Quakers.²⁷ Not far from Bushton House and also situated in Tutbury parish is Stockley Park, which by 1689 was occupied by the Bowman family, a branch of which provided the earliest Quakers in Alstonefield in the Leek moorlands. Friends in the neighbourhood of Stockley Park were sufficiently numerous to warrant the holding of a quarterly meeting there on 6/8/1689. Little further evidence concerning early Friends in the Burton area survives. A meeting house was registered there in 1690 -1, although in whose house is not known.²⁸ Changes in the venues of the local meeting or meetings for worship are suggested by an entry in the Quarterly Meeting Minute Book for 2/11/1698-9 where it is recorded that it was agreed to spend 18s. on fitting up the house of Samuel Jesse of Burton upon Trent as a meeting house.

In the first three decades of the eighteenth century Jesse seems to have been

27 L.J.R.O. B/V/1/71. Nathan, William and Richard Hodgson might also be included in this list, as this family name appears in later Quaker records. The form in which the churchwardens made their presentments sometimes makes for uncertainty in transcription and their denominational identifications were not always accurate.

28 Atherton, 'Early Registration of Dissenters' Meeting Houses', p. 65.

the leading local figure in Burton, with the families of Hodgson and Clare occasionally mentioned in the Friends' registers. In 1713 Samuel Jesse attended Stafford Monthly Meeting representing Chesterfield and he did so again in 1718. On four occasions in this period Stafford Monthly Meeting authorised general collections within its four constituent meetings to reimburse Jesse for money he had laid out 'on charitable account' ²⁹ and in 1723 Jesse's house in Burton was registered as a meeting house. ³⁰ If this was an endeavour to boost local morale in view of failing numbers it did not succeed for very long : in 1730 Quarterly Meeting decided that Burton Friends should henceforward attend Uttoxeter meetings once a month as 'the meeting formerly held at Burton and since then at Stockley Park are (sic) ceased , the Friend that dwelt there being removed'. ³¹ By 1748, outside the terminal date of this study, an effort had been made to revive the meeting in the town and a room had been rented. This lasted only for a few years, and in 1754 Stafford Monthly Meeting authorised the holding of four meetings a year in the town, presumably as a concession to the few remaining Friends. Thereafter references to Burton disappear from the minutes and it was not until the twentieth century that a meeting in the town was re-established.

Friends of Stafford Monthly Meeting in the whole of this south-eastern area of the county were centred on the hamlets of Lynn and Chesterfield in the parish of Shenstone. Quakerism failed to establish itself early in the cathedral city, perhaps because of the power and overwhelming presence of the church and of zealously anti-Dissent deans of the cathedral. Friends' failure to find a meeting house in Lichfield has been detailed in Chapter 7. The strength of the movement in this area was

29 S.M.M.B. 9/12/1713, 14/12/1715-16, 13/9/1716 and 10/7/1717.

30 Donaldson, 'Registrations of Dissenting Chapels', p. 119.

31 Q.M.M.B. 6/5/1730.

found in the substantial farmers who worked the rich, well-watered countryside. The first documented Friend in the locality, and probably the first Quaker convert in the area, was William Reading, a husbandman, of Lynn, in the parish of Shenstone, who was assessed at two hearths in the 1666 Hearth Tax return. The family had a dissenting background: in 1636 Thomas Riddinge had been cited as excommunicate by the churchwardens at the episcopal visitation of Shenstone of that year.³² Anglicanism in Shenstone was weakened during the Commonwealth period by the presence of a vigorous Puritan vicar and there was also an Independent congregation in the parish.³³ Against such a favourable background it was likely that Quakerism would take hold in the area and William Reading was convinced by the two 'First Publishers of Truth', Thomas Killam and Thomas Goodier, probably at the end of 1654.³⁴ He suffered much for his convictions. His was the first recorded distraint of a Quaker in the county, when, in 1656, he had a cow and calf sold for £3 5s. for a demand by Gamaliel Dunstall, priest, of £1 10s. for tithes. He was arraigned at the county assizes in 1658 and because he would not swear had goods taken from his house and sold for £1 7s.³⁵ In 1663 he was presented by the churchwardens for not coming to church and for burying his wife in his hemyard, and there were further presentments in 1665 and 1668.³⁶ Reading's house became the focal point of the local movement, and was cited as a conventicle in Sheldon's list of 1669. In 1671 it was stated that a meeting of more than 30 people had been held there.³⁷ Finally, in or about 1675, Reading

32 L.J.R.O., B/V/1/57, Shenstone.

33 N. Tringham, 'Faith Outside The City', in P. Morgan (ed.), Staffordshire Studies (Department of Adult and Continuing Education, Keele, 1987), p. 107.

34 Q.M.M.B. appendix, 'A Record of such Friends as first declared and published Truth in Stafford and Staffordshire.'

35 Q.M.M.B. appendix, 'Friends Sufferings'.

36 L.J.R.O. B/V/1/71-2, 75.

37 Staffs. C. R.O., Q/SR E. 1671, no. 5.

was sent to prison for some unrecorded period.³⁸ Eventually he did display some human fallibility. He condemned himself publicly in a letter to Monthly Meeting in 1680 for committing 'ungodliness' with his maidservant.³⁹ There is no record of disownment by the Society for this action and possibly his public confession averted such an outcome. His name, however, disappears from the minutes, and by 1682, the congregation's name, as shown in the Quarterly Meeting Minute Book, had changed from Lynn to Chesterfield. Whether this change of venue was the consequence of Reading's having compromised himself in Friends' eyes is not apparent.

Members of the Reading family in Pipehill and Woodhouses, both families headed by men of some means, also became Quakers.⁴⁰ In the last two decades of the seventeenth century, however, most references found in the Quarterly Meeting Minute Book which concern Friends in the area are to members of the Hall family. William Hall of Chesterfield and John Hall of Wall by this time had become the leading figures locally. William Hall's name first appears in the local records in 1679 when he represented Lynn at the Quarterly Meeting. He was one of nine Staffordshire Friends who signed a petition to the local members of Parliament in 1684 requesting relief from the laws under which they were being persecuted⁴¹ and it was probably his house in Chesterfield which was registered as a meeting house in 1690 -1.⁴² He was a well-to-do farmer, judging by his assessment at four hearths in the 1666 Hearth Tax and the nature of the goods taken when he was distrained for non-payment of tithes. When he died in 1712 local Friends lost the venue for their meetings.⁴³ The

38 Q.M.M.B. appendix, 'Friends Sufferings'.

39 Leek MSS. (MS. Vol. 330), 25/10/1680.

40 Tringham, 'Faith Outside the City', p. 109.

41 Besse, Sufferings p. 657.

42 Atherton, 'Registrations of Dissenters' Meeting Houses', p.65.

43 Q.M.M.B. 7/5/1712

Quarterly Meeting instructed local Friends to look for a suitable building in Lichfield but their endeavours were unsuccessful. Chesterfield meeting never recovered fully from the blow. The meeting was occasionally represented at Stafford Monthly Meeting by Richard and William Palmer, but by 1718 the absence of representatives from Chesterfield at quarterly and monthly meetings had prompted Quarterly Meeting to order Richard Morris to write to them to 'stir them up'.⁴⁴ Richard Palmer of Lichfield, who was a cooper, provides an example of Quaker participation in local community affairs. In 1716 he was chosen as constable by the court of Lichfield manor, refused to take the oath required and had to pay for a substitute, choosing his cousin, Henry Palmer. Richard also left money in his will of 1720 not only to the poor of Chesterfield meeting but also to the poor of St. Mary's parish in Lichfield.⁴⁵ These incidents suggest that the early Quaker sense of sectarian separation from the community was beginning to fade and move towards what modern sociological historians describe as denominationalism, characterised by a greater breadth of outlook.⁴⁶ The Sylvesters, of Fradley in the parish of Alrewas, were another Quaker family in the Chesterfield meeting. William Sylvester suffered distraint of hay corn and wool in 1682 and 1690 and represented Chesterfield at the Quarterly Meeting of 7/2/1701. Thomas Sylvester, possibly William's son, was an even more active Friend, witness the registration of his house as a meeting house in 1707.⁴⁷ This was the high point of their association with the movement and thereafter their observance of Quaker principles and high standards of personal behaviour wavered. In 1710 Thomas Sylvester confessed to having defiled his maidservant and then to have married her by a priest and in 1711 Mary Sylvester, another member of the family,

44 Q.M.M.B. 7/2/1718.

45 Tringham, 'Faith Outside the City', p. 110.

46 See the concluding chapter of this study for a discussion of this point.

47 Donaldson, 'Registration of Dissenting Chapels', p. 117.

married a young man who was not a Quaker.⁴⁸ The family name subsequently disappears from the local minute books.

A third recorded example of marriage 'out' in the Chesterfield Friends' history is provided by William Ball, who in 1713 expressed remorse for his action in a letter to Stafford Monthly Meeting.⁴⁹ The letter makes it clear that he had been disowned. A William Ball attended the monthly meeting in 1714 and again in 1722, but if this is the same person, his rehabilitation was unusually rapid: acceptance back into the Society usually took some years of exemplary behaviour and attendance.

Joseph and Allen England, possibly sons of John England, who may have occupied a mill on the River Tame on the west side of Tamworth, then seem to have become the local leaders. The name England first appears in 1714, when both Allen and John England attended Stafford Monthly Meeting. Allen England became a regular attender at monthly and quarterly meetings. At least four separate England families belonged to Chesterfield meeting, and when three of these emigrated in the 1720s it was a serious loss. Lewis England, his wife and seven children left for America in 1722, and they were followed in 1723 by John England and his wife and by Joseph England and his family. Their destination was stated as Maryland.⁴⁹ The entry in the monthly meeting minute book concerning Lewis England also illustrates the practice of Friends meeting in each other's houses in rotation when there was no convenient centrally situated meeting house. The minute states, 'they had a meeting kept at their house (in its course) to this time'. The remaining Chesterfield Friends had already suggested to Stafford Monthly Meeting that they should build a new meeting house in Tamworth, although nothing came of it immediately.⁵⁰

48 Leek MS. (MS Vol. 330), pp. 163 and 165.

49 Stafford Monthly Meeting Minute Book 11/7/1722 and 14/1/1722-3.

50 Ibid., 14/6/1722

The division of the town and parish of Tamworth between Staffordshire and Warwickshire, meant that Quakers in the area were also divided. Since 1670 some Friends had been attached to Wishaw Monthly Meeting, in Warwickshire. Two of the First Publishers of Truth, Edward Burrough and Francis Howgill, had evangelised in Comberford, a hamlet three to four miles north of Tamworth, in 1655.⁵¹ The episcopal visitation returns of the 1660s show that within a decade of their coming the movement had spread to a number of parishes in the area. In 1663 George Collins, Humphrey Smith and Elizabeth Deckye of Drayton Bassett, and Alice Wright of Elford were presented as Quakers.⁵² By 1690 -1 Friends in the area were sufficiently numerous to register a meeting house in Bitterscote, a hamlet in Tamworth parish.⁵³ The number of women attending the meetings there prompted local Friends to propose to Quarterly Meeting that they set up a (separate) women's meeting, but this, for reasons unstated, was not agreed.⁵⁴ There was another registration in 1690 -1, in Harlaston in the parish of Clifton, but the name of the Friend whose house was so licensed is not known.⁵⁵ The pattern of growth was similar to that of Staffordshire generally, that is, in the parishes around a market town rather than in the towns themselves and early Friends failed to establish a meeting house either in Lichfield or in Tamworth. A suitable house in Tamworth was eventually acquired in 1751 and registered in 1757. It was too late. The meeting there did not long resist the general process of decline in the later eighteenth century.

51 See Chapter 2 of this study.

52 L.J.R.O. B/V/1/71.

53 Atherton, 'Registrations of Dissenters' Meeting Houses', p. 66.

54 Q.M.M.B. 3/5/1693.

55 Atherton, 'Registrations of Dissenters' Meeting Houses', p. 65.

Wolverhampton

There is no record of any of the First Publishers of Truth spreading their message in Wolverhampton itself, but by 1661 the Quaker movement had already taken hold in the area generally. Besse states that John Chandler was one of those Quakers who offered to go to prison in place of those already under confinement.⁵⁶ The presentments made at the episcopal visitations of the 1660s show that the movement had spread widely in those towns which later became part of the Black Country. The 1663 return contains numerous names, but most of these early Quakers in this list became attached to Dudley meeting. Darlaston was a strong centre of dissent generally and Sheldon lists three conventicles in that parish in 1669, although he does not identify them. One of these seems to have been a Quaker meeting, because Hinckes, named as one of the 'heads' in the parish, appears in the records of Quaker sufferings.⁵⁷

From the outset Staffordshire Quarterly Meeting had included the Wolverhampton area within its compass, as an entry in the minute book for 2/12/1673 shows. Wolverhampton Friends were, however, slow to commit themselves officially to Stafford and it was not until 1681 that Wolverhampton Friends agreed to join Stafford Monthly Meeting.⁵⁸ Their attendance was erratic, however, and occasionally Quarterly Meeting found it necessary to prompt them to greater regularity. Friends from Stafford and Leek Monthly Meetings contributed towards the cost of buying

56 Besse, Sufferings, Vol. 1, Preface. Chandler was the first Quaker of that name in the area, and was probably related to the Chandlers of Perton, a hamlet in Tettenhall parish. Richard Chandless, with a variant spelling of the family name, provided the burial ground at Oaken.

57 Q.M.M.B. appendix, 'Friends Sufferings for the Truth', states that a Thomas Hinckes, together with Thomas Wall and John Dibble, both of Wolverhampton, was imprisoned in 1675 under a writ of de excommunicato capiendo. Hinckes was in prison for ten weeks, Wall for nine weeks and Dibble for seven months.

58 Q.M.M.B. 4/5/1681.

premises in Wolverhampton for conversion into a meeting house and a building was acquired. It proved, however, to be unsuitable.⁵⁹ Possibly in an effort to promote closer connections the quarterly meeting of 3/11/1687 was held in Wolverhampton and thereafter Wolverhampton names appear slightly more frequently in the quarterly meeting minutes. Among the Wolverhampton Friends were Marmaduke and Henry Syddern, of Seisdon in the parish of Trysull, five miles south-west of Wolverhampton. Henry Syddern was one of the two Friends appointed to represent Staffordshire at Yearly Meeting in 1691. Personal links may have helped to strengthen Wolverhampton's ties with Stafford, when, in 1691, Elizabeth Syddern married Edward Firth of Stafford Green.⁶⁰ There were two registrations of meeting houses in 1690 -1, the first in Wolverhampton itself, although of whose house is not known, and the second in Marmaduke Syddern's house in Seisdon.⁶¹ This did not improve Wolverhampton Friends' attendances at quarterly meetings and in 1695 and again in 1696 they were urged to be more diligent. Connections with Stafford were, however, strengthened by Charles Osborne, son of a Bilston curate. Some time after his father's death in 1684 he had become a Quaker, and settled in Wolverhampton.⁶² He remained an active member of Staffordshire Quarterly Meeting for the next thirty years. His house in Bilston was registered as a meeting house in 1697,⁶³ he regularly attended monthly and quarterly meetings and represented Staffordshire at Yearly Meeting on a number of occasions. In 1710 he obtained a certificate from Quarterly Meeting to visit Quaker meetings in north Britain as a 'Public Friend'. His death in

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- 59 See Chapter 7 of this study for further discussion of the history of the Wolverhampton meeting house.
 60 Register of Births, Marriages and Burials in Friends' House Library, London.
 61 Atherton, 'Registrations of Dissenters' Meeting Houses,' pp. 65 and 67.
 62 G. Mander (ed.), *The Wolverhampton Antiquary*, Vol. 1, no. 6 provides some details of Osborne's life.
 63 Donaldson, 'Registration of Dissenting Chapels', p. 111.

1729 robbed the Wolverhampton meeting of much of its vigour. His son, also called Charles, married 'out' in 1725, and although he sent a letter of repentance it was another example of the loosening of discipline in the second generation of a Quaker family. After the death of Charles Osborne, senior, the family name ceases to appear in the local records, but Osborne's son -in-law, John Fowler, and a grandson, Henry, maintained the Quaker presence in Wolverhampton. John Fowler, a draper, amassed a small fortune, removed to Worcester in 1758.⁶⁴ Henry, described as a 'tepid' Quaker, married and moved to Horton near Leek.⁶⁵ Regular meetings ceased to be held in Wolverhampton and it was not until the mid-nineteenth century that Quakerism in the town revived.

(II) 'Not of our Profession' : Marriage outside the Society in Stafford Monthly Meeting, to 1743.

Table 3.1 in Chapter 5 shows that between 1672 and 1689 there were 76 identifiable separate Quaker families within Stafford Monthly Meeting. By 1707 the figure had dropped to 61, and to 36 by 1743. It has already been argued that the fall in the numbers of Staffordshire Friends was caused by the failure of the movement to replace the losses incurred by death, departure and disownment. The third of these factors, disownment for marriage to a non-Quaker, can be illustrated in detail from the history of Stafford Monthly Meeting. Table 7.1 below lists the numbers of such marriages in the first 40 years of the movement from 1672 then by decades from 1713. Table 7.2 names those Stafford Friends who married 'out'. Their numbers

⁶⁴ S.M.M.B. 25/4/1758.

⁶⁵ G. Mander, Wolverhampton Antiquary, Vol. 1, p. 6, where he is so described and Vol. III, p. 56, where it is stated he died in 1783 and was buried in the Quaker burial ground at Basford.

are too small to be completely reliable as the basis for generalisation but it suggests that the years from 1725 to 1734 were a crucial time. Men and women Friends, urgently seeking partners and not able to find them within the Quaker movement, were encouraged, by the example of others, to defy the traditional prohibition on marriage 'out'. Of the 20 recorded marriages 'out', nine were of female Friends, eleven

**TABLE 7.1 STAFFORD MONTHLY MEETING : NUMBERS OF
RECORDED MARRIAGES TO NON-QUAKERS 1672 - 1743.**

(Sources : Quarterly Meeting Minute Book 1672 - 1743,
Stafford Monthly Meeting Minute Book 1713 - 1783, Leek MS (MS
Vol. 330), F. H. L.)

1672 - 1712 (40 years)	9
1713 - 1724	4
1725 - 1734	7
1735 - 1744	-
Total	20 (of whom males 11, females 9)

were of men. Possibly male Friends were better able to face the consequences of their action than females. For women, conformity to paternal authority was greater than for men, and for most women there was little prospect of any career outside marriage. If they failed to find a husband within the Quaker movement, the pressure to marry 'out' was considerable.

The principles governing action to be taken over persistent 'disorderly walking' had been laid down in the earliest days of the movement. In 1654 William Dewsbury wrote a letter, counter-signed by George Fox, to the general meetings in the West Riding of Yorkshire, charging that persistent disorderly walkers were to be

cast out until they repented.⁶⁶ There was no formal membership of the Society until later, so that all that could be done was to refuse to recognise the delinquent as a true Friend. The alarm of Friends over the marriage of one of their members to someone who was not a Quaker had a double basis. It was a blow, as they conceived, to their public reputation. They insisted that they had to 'clear Truth', in this case not observing the prohibition of marrying outside the Society, and to do this the offender needed to make a written acknowledgement of his or her wrong - doing, to be read out at the next First Day (Sunday) of the local meeting for worship. If the offender complied then formal disownment did not always occur. If however he or she did not write such a letter of repentance and remorse, or the letter was deemed not to show sufficient contrition, then a member attending the monthly meeting was delegated to write a formal letter expressing the meeting's 'disunity' with the offender. This letter had to be read out at the meeting for worship and a copy made in a special 'Book of Disownments' kept for this purpose. The second reason for Friends' attitude to disorderly marriages was their concern for the welfare of the transgressor, who, they believed, had jeopardised the possibility of his or her own ultimate salvation by marrying someone who was not a Quaker. Only after a genuine repentance and by the mercy of God could such salvation be hoped for.

Table 7.2 lists all the marriages outside the Society that have been recorded. Of the 20 persons listed 13 sent or promised letters of repentance or remorse, six were or remained disowned, and there is no information on one. Only three are recorded for the seventeenth century. At least five were second or third generation descendants of the earliest Quakers. The case of George Godrich, of Doveridge, a parish in Derbyshire whose Friends attended Uttoxeter meeting, the earliest of the

66 W. C. Braithwaite, The Beginnings of Quakerism, (1912; 2nd edn Cambridge, 1981), pp. 140 -1.

**TABLE 7.2 STAFFORD MONTHLY MEETING : NAMES, WITH DATES
AND OUTCOME, OF FRIENDS MARRYING OUTSIDE THE
SOCIETY 1686 - 1743.**

(Sources : Quarterly Meeting Minute Book 1672 - 1743, Stafford
Monthly Meeting Minute Book 1713 - 1783, Leek MS (MS Vol. 330),
F.H.L.)

Date	Name	Outcome
9/6/1668	GODRICH, George	Letter of self-condemnation
17/10/1672	HOLLAND, William	Letter of self-condemnation
2/5/1688	TURNER, Philip	
13/4/1710	CAWN, Nathaniel	Disowned
13/8/1710	SYLVESTER, Thomas	Letter of remorse
17/1/1711	BRADLEY, Jane	Letter of remorse
10/5/1711	SYLVESTER, Mary	Disowned
-/10/1714	BALL, William	Letter of remorse
14/7/1714	ALSOP (SEATON), Elizabeth	Disowned
10/1/1718	FRITH (FERNIHOUGH), Mary	Letter of remorse
9/6/1720	FRITH, Joseph	Promised letter of remorse
22/5/1722	SHIPLEY, Thomas, junior	Disowned
9/11/1724/5	MALSON (WARRILOW), Christian	Letter of remorse
9/9/1725	OSBORNE, Charles, junior	Letter of remorse
3/8/1726	JUXON, Thomas	Letter of remorse
9/3/1727	MARSON, William	Letter of remorse
11/9/1729	FRENCH, Francis	Letter of remorse
6/5/1729	STEVENSON (ADDISON), Ruth	Letter of remorse
8/10/1730	PRESTON, Mary	Disowned
7/11/1733	FISHER (DEVELL), Anne	Disowned

(Dates are those given in the entry in the source and not to the actual date of marriage.
Maiden names of females are followed by married names within brackets if known.)

individuals recorded as marrying 'out', may be cited as representative. He had married a non-Quaker in 1668. There is no record of his disownment or re-admittance but six years later he wrote a letter of remorse in which he confessed that he had sinned in going to a 'hireling priest' to be married and condemned himself for 'giving occasion to the wicked to be glad'.⁶⁷ What had happened to him between 1668 and 1674 is not known. Presumably he eventually faced up to what must have been the embarrassing return to meetings at Uttoxeter and by his letter of repentance and subsequent behaviour and regular attendance at meetings, was re-accepted. His name appears again in the Quarterly Meeting minutes for 1674 and in the following year he subscribed £1 10s. to the cost of the meeting house in Stafford.⁶⁸

Disorderly marriages recorded in the monthly meeting between 1713 and 1743 were only half the total of approved marriages, which numbered 40. Of these six were to male Friends who came from outside Staffordshire who may be presumed to have taken their wives home with them. Even so, such approved marriages were nearly 75% more than those disapproved. By themselves, therefore, disorderly marriages cannot account for the overall decline in numbers of Friends in the county. Departures from the area were another factor. One Friend who went to London, which acted like a magnet for Quakers seeking a living, was Thomas Pixley. He apparently acquired some government post and faced the special difficulty presented by the Abjuration Act of 1702, which required office -holders to take the Oath of Abjuration, pledging support for the Hanoverian succession. Pixley, living in London in 1714, appears to have taken the 'substance' of the oath. His action came up for consideration by Stafford Monthly Meeting which recorded the view that they were grieved that some Friends who so conformed were contradicting 'the ancient principle of not disputing

67 Leek MS (MS Vol. 330), F.H.L., p. 144 .

68 Q.M.M.B. 8/8/1674 and 9/7/1675.

authority, nor questioning forms of government or being busybodies, etc.' His case was further referred to Quarterly Meeting, who decided that those who did so conform were 'overforward, unwary or hot -spirited.'⁶⁹ The scanty evidence suggests that there were two inter-twined issues : the Monthly Meeting's ambiguous statement illustrated Friends' concern not to be embroiled in the dangerous political situation of the time, brought about by the death of Queen Anne on 1 August 1714, the rivalry of Whig and Tory factions in government and Parliament, and the possibility of an attempt to restore James III, the Old Pretender, to the throne. The Quarterly Meeting's words voiced the doubts of some about taking even the substance of the oath.

Emigration to America was another factor in the decline in the number of local members. The Stafford Monthly Meeting Minute Book records 13 departures from within its area in the 30 years between 1713 and 1743.⁷⁰ The number does not seem to be very large but with total membership shrinking its effect was heavy. The crucial demographic consequence was the loss of younger people. Judging by their dates of birth many, perhaps most of the departing families included women of child - bearing age. William Shipley, of Uttoxeter meeting, who left for Pennsylvania in 1725, provides a typical example. He himself was 28, his wife Mary was 25 and he had three children aged seven, four and two.⁷¹

In conclusion it may be said that by the third decade of the eighteenth century and probably earlier than that, recruitment into Stafford Monthly Meeting was too low to sustain the earlier level of membership. The number of new family names appearing showed that recruitment from outside the Society had become a mere dribble. The expansiveness of the earliest days was over. While Quakers had always

69 S.M.M.M.B. 14/7/1714 and 12/8/1714.

70 A list of families emigrating to America recorded in the minute book is in an appendix to this study.

71 S.M.M.M.B. 9/1/1725.

required marriage within the Society the constricting effects of such a policy had at first been offset by fresh recruitment. By the eighteenth century Stafford Friends had become an endogamous sect, drawing its adult membership from the children of existing Quaker families and unable to replace the natural wastage caused by death and departure out of the county and the extra haemorrhaging caused by disownment. Only a new missionary drive in the outside world could have halted the decline, but such a policy was beyond its contemporary vision. Quakerism had lost the appeal, both millenarian and socially radical, which it had enjoyed in its earliest days. Membership of the movement now depended on a formula encapsulated in a system of public testimonies and outward practices with its central plank the prohibition of marriage outside the Society. The movement generally had become institutionalised and the local leadership in Staffordshire was content to follow the national pattern, preserving its exclusivist character by policies which militated against recruitment from outside.

The socio-economic character of Stafford Monthly Meeting changed a little with the entry of such business men as Osborne, but most of the leaders continued to come from long-established Quaker farming families, able to afford the time and money to attend monthly and quarterly business meetings and take their turn in attending Yearly Meeting in London. Son succeeded father with no apparent change of outlook. The Alsops of Ingestre provide one example of a dynasty of local Quaker farmers, from the convincement of the first John Alsop before 1661 to the third of that name who died in 1728. The Prestons of Tixall are another example. As time went on both families suffered defections from their number, in each case a daughter, who, unable to find a suitable local husband, married 'out'. Those few individuals who earned their living from trade or commerce who joined the movement proved equally as conservative in outlook as their farming fellow - Quakers. Edward Frith exemplifies this element. He was one of the signatories of the testimony drawn up in

1722 against his own sister, Elizabeth, which disowned her for 'folly, extravagance and wantonness'. ⁷²

There were other instances of the younger generation rebelling against the constricting regulation of their lives by the traditional mores of Quakerism, but such examples of disorderly behaviour were few. There is no evidence to suggest that the majority of local Quakers did not continue to accept and uphold their ancestors' principles, attending their weekly meetings for worship, dressed in the sober garb that had become a sort of Quaker uniform. Genuine, humble devotion, as Spufford remarked, leaves little trace in the records of the time. ⁷³ Often the local historian is its only chronicler, and the humdrum and ordinary routines of life are seldom susceptible of quantification. Most Friends pursued the 'noiseless tenour' of their way, as far as the evidence or lack of it suggests, leading a socially acceptable and God-fearing life. Custom, as William James pointed out in another context, had become the fly-wheel of their society. The minutes of the monthly meeting show that the local movement was stagnating. Analysis of the 24 entries in the minute book from the seventh month of 1739 to the sixth month of 1740, a typical year, shows little or no business being conducted except for the routine recording of collections of poor relief 'stock'. For 15 of these meetings there was not even a record of the names of those attending. The sole entry for the meeting held on 24/4/1744 sums up the prevailing condition of Stafford Monthly Meeting at that time :

' This place and time we should have had something of, or in the name of, a Monthly Meeting, but there is only John Hargrave and Richard Morris, besides Jas. Heacock.'

What they had not lost, and what the Quaker movement never lost, was a concern for the welfare of their poorer members, the topic to be discussed in the next chapter.

72 Leek MS (MS Vol. 330) p. 174, 10/2/1722.

73 M. Spufford, 'Can We Count the 'Godly' and the 'Conformable' in the Seventeenth Century ? ', Journal of Ecclesiastical History 36, No. 3, (1985).

CHAPTER 10 'SERVICE OF TRUTH': EARLY QUAKER POOR RELIEF IN STAFFORDSHIRE

(i) The General Background

When Quakerism emerged in the mid-seventeenth century it was generally accepted that the poor were intended by God to be a permanent feature of society but that it was a Christian duty, for which there was apostolic precedent, to relieve poverty. George Fox wrote trenchantly to Parliament in 1659 urging that all income derived from manorial fines and the profits from glebe-lands should be given to the poor, and that churches, abbeys and even Whitehall itself should be turned into almshouses.¹ A few Quakers wrote on the causes and possible treatment of poverty. Thomas Lawson advocated the establishment of parish 'undertakers' to act as a sort of job-centre and John Bellers argued for the setting up of 'colleges of industry', an idea which later won the praise of Karl Marx in Das Kapital.² Fox and his colleagues were frequently accused of being Levellers, and Brailsford wrote that some of their pamphlets would not have been out of place in the Levellers' political programme.³ Hill and Reay have argued that the Quakers of the decade 1650-1660 were much more radical than they became after the Restoration and that this extremism caused much of the contemporary hostility which they encountered. Both authors point to the editing out of the social and political militancy of the Quakers' earliest writings as the movement struggled to survive in the age of persecution.⁴ Davies has suggested, however, that this aspect of Quakerism has been misinterpreted, and that the driving

1 G. Fox, To the Parliament of the Commonwealth of England (1659).

2 T. Lawson, An Appeal to Parliament concerning the Poor (1660) and J. Bellers, Proposals for Raising a College of Industry (1695).

3 H. N. Brailsford, The Levellers and the English Revolution (1975), pp. 639 - 40.

4 C. Hill, The World Turned Upside Down (1975), chapter 10, and B. Reay, The Quakers and the English Revolution (1985), parts 1-3.

force of Quaker concern for the poor was religious, not social or political. The principles they adumbrated were of millenarian inspiration, necessary to prepare the world for the second coming of Christ. Wealth was not inherently evil but it could divert men from their true purpose on earth which was the glorification of God and could lead to conspicuous display, which in turn led to avoidable poverty for others. It is unlikely that Friends contemplated the end of hierarchy and social divisions on earth because the poor were part of God's creation. What Quakers did acknowledge was that poverty, like riches, could limit a man's spiritual potential.⁵

From the earliest days Quakers provided for the relief of their own poor. A document issued by a meeting of Elders and others in 1656 included recommendations on supplying the needs of widows and orphans and admonishing Friends who could work and did not. It broadly reflected currently prevailing ideas on the treatment of poverty as embodied in legislation. Acts of Parliament in 1597-8 and 1601 had made parishes legally responsible for the relief of the poor by requiring them to appoint parish overseers empowered to levy a poor rate. They were to set the able-bodied to work, bind poor boys and girls to apprenticeships and provide suitable dwelling places for the destitute. If the parish could not raise sufficient funds other parishes could be rated in support. All begging was prohibited. Two more Acts authorised the erection of workhouses, defined the law of charitable trusts and encouraged private charity as an essential supplement to national legislation.

The restoration of the monarchy brought further legislation. The Act of Settlement of 1662 empowered justices to remove strangers from a parish unless they rented a tenement of £10 or more or could find security to discharge the parish of any expense it might incur in their relief. Even a temporary stay (a provision which was

5 A. Davies, The Quakers in English Society 1655 - 1725 (Oxford, 2000), pp. 65 -70.

particularly enforced during the depressed years of the 1690s) required a newcomer to produce a certificate from his last legal place of settlement agreeing to take him back if necessary. The 1662 Act was probably a panic reaction, rushed through Parliament at the request of a few wealthy parishes in and near London, who feared an invasion of paupers. If strictly executed the Act would have ended much mobility of labour and severely hindered harvesting. In practice it was not fully implemented, but accounts of overseers rushing unmarried pregnant women over the parochial boundary to prevent their offspring gaining such a settlement, and other contemporary anecdotal evidence, cannot be entirely ignored.

The number of needy persons in the mid- and later seventeenth century was at times enormous. In the 1670s it was perhaps as much as a third of the total population. A study of Warwick in the middle decades of the century shows that a poor harvest could double the number of the so-called settled poor in need of relief.⁶ The Civil War had exacerbated the problem of poverty. Trade had been disrupted, bands of unpaid soldiers roamed the Midlands, or, quartered in towns, provided a responsive audience for Fox's radical views.⁷ The underlying long-term cause of poverty was, however, population increase, which outstripped the demand for labour and produced a fall in real wages. Throughout the seventeenth century population figures for Staffordshire were rising. Whiteman, in her analysis of the national returns known as the Compton Census, of 'Conformist', 'Papist' and 'Nonconformist' households in 1676, has offered two estimates of the Staffordshire figures, 84,313 and 114,973.⁸ The difference between the two estimates arises from the use of

6 A. L. Beier, 'Poor Relief in Warwickshire 1630-1660, Past and Present 35 (1966), pp. 77-100.

7 H. L. Ingle, First among Friends (Oxford, 1994), traces Fox's movements through the Midlands at this time.

8 A. Whiteman (ed.), The Compton Census of 1676: a critical edition (1986), pp. ciii - cxxx.

different multipliers to convert the basic data into total numbers of persons, and different estimates of the number of children under 16. By 1701 the population of Staffordshire is suggested in one of the most recent estimates to have been 124,000, which represents a rise of 32% from Whiteman's lower figure.⁹

To the classes of 'deserving poor' recognised by the state - widows, orphans, the insane, the infirm, the aged and the victims of fire - Quakers added another category : those, with their families, who had been made poor by the oppression of their persecutors through imprisonment, fines, distrains or deprivation of work. Quakers were just as progressive in the constructive character of their assistance to the able-bodied poor as was the state system . They made loans of money as well as providing stocks of materials to those members whose trade or business had collapsed through no fault of their own.

A major problem which Friends encountered by the beginning of the eighteenth century was the disparity in the financial burdens borne by different congregations resulting from their varying economic circumstances. The costs of poor relief were frequently increased for particular areas by the influx of poor Friends in search of work. The question of who was responsible for the relief of unsettled Quakers led at times to dispute. It was not until 1737 that the Yearly Meeting agreed a set of rules concerning 'settlement' for the whole movement. By 1740 all meetings had a common system of poor relief, with a definition of membership and a body of contributors to a permanent fund for pensioners and for occasional needs.¹⁰

9 A. D. M. Phillips, A Map of the County of Stafford by William Yates, 1775 (Staffordshire Record Society, 4th series, vol. 12, 1984), Introduction, p.iii.

10 The general topic is discussed in A. Lloyd, Quaker Social History (1950), chap.iii, and the problems posed by the movement of poor Friends in search of work in C. F. Carter, 'Unsettled Friends : church government and the origins of membership', Journal of the Friends Historical Society, 51 (1967), pp. 143-153.

No records of Quaker poor relief in Staffordshire exist before 1672 and even after that are scanty until well on into the eighteenth century. It is impossible therefore to make valid comparisons between the state system and the Quaker for this earliest period. Early parish overseers' accounts exist for many parishes, but the only published discussion of a particular area is that for Gnosall, a parish in the west of the county.¹¹ Fowkes' definitive study of the topic, still unpublished, based on a sample of the 15 most reliable and complete set of overseers' accounts, starts only in the middle of the eighteenth century and is thus outside the terminal date of this study.¹² In any case the two systems differed substantially. Parish relief in theory provided for all the poor, while Friends' provision extended mainly to their own members. Parishioners were legally required to pay to the poor rate, and this usually included Quakers unless they made special arrangements with the overseers. As the eighteenth century proceeded total Quaker numbers decreased and those who remained came mostly from socio-occupational groups less likely to fall into need.

(ii) 'The Poor are sufficiently supplied' : early Quaker poor relief in Staffordshire.

By 1672 the collection of money for the relief of poor Friends in the county was organised. The Quarterly Meeting Minute Book shows that six areas, Stafford, Uttoxeter, Knutton, Leek, Morridge and Lynn were making collections but the Quarterly Meeting authorised payments of regular pensions and recorded, on a quarterly basis, the amounts paid to each individual. This system continued until

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- 11 S. A. Cutlack (ed.), *The Gnosall Records, 1679 to 1837. Poor Law Administration*, Collections for a History of Staffordshire (1937).
 - 12 D. Fowkes, 'A study of perceived differences in the pattern of poor relief expenditure in Staffordshire in the second half of the eighteenth century', (unpublished Ph.D. thesis, University of Keele, 1995)

1677, when responsibility both for collection and disbursements, probably for reasons of administrative convenience, passed to the two monthly meetings, Leek and Stafford. The quarter ending 22/2/1673 is typical of entries in the minute book for this earliest period. Collections from the six centres were as follows : Stafford £1 0s.8d., Leek £1 1s.10d., Lynn 6s.6d., Uttoxeter 6s.6d., Knutton 8s.6d., and Morridge 7s., making a total of £3 0s.10d. The collections provide a rough indication of the relative numerical strengths of the different areas at that time. Seven disbursements, each covering the whole quarter were recorded, as follows : Henry Aldridge 10s., Henry Lakin 10s. Samuel Carrington 15s., Elizabeth Meate 14s., Grace Wales 3s. Joan Rider 4s. and Rebecca Shelley 2s.6d. In one or two of these cases it is possible to suggest reasons why the recipients had fallen into poverty. Henry Aldridge lived in the central area of the county. The registers show that his family was eight in number and that four of his children were under 15. Thus a large family and a loss of work, for whatever reason, suggest themselves as possible reasons for his falling into need. The record of his pension, approximate 10d. a week, ceases in 1676. If the Henry Aldridge who wrote a letter of self-condemnation in 1691 was the same person, it suggests that he was, for some reason, disowned and ceased to receive any relief.¹³ Henry Lakin, from the same area, had six children. His pension varied in amount, once diminishing to 5s. for the quarter, and this shows that poor relief payments were linked to a recipient's changing circumstances. An entry in the Quarterly Meeting Minute Book refers to William Reading, the leading figure in the Lynn meeting, who seems to have acted as the distributor of relief in the locality, receiving another 4s. to dispose of, which hints at distress in the area. After 1675 neither Lakin nor his family, receive further mention in the records. Another male pensioner, Samuel

13 Quarterly Meeting Minute Book 1672-1743, entry for 5/8/1691

Carrington, came from Wetton, part of Leek Monthly Meeting, situated in the high north-east region of the county. He had been a Quaker since before 1665 when he was recorded as an excommunicant in the episcopal visitation for that year. In or before 1679 he fell into dispute with his co-religionists and was disowned.¹⁴ Later he may have been reinstated, because the register refers to his burial in Alstonefield in 1696.

For women the illness and death of a husband were the most frequent causes of poverty. An example is provided by Joan Rider, of Blackshaw Moor, Leek. She received a pension varying between 5s. and 2s.6d. a quarter in 1672 rising to 10s. in 1674. This suggests that her husband had fallen ill, was able to resume work occasionally and died in 1674, but there is no means of confirming this. In the following year the Quarterly Meeting instructed Moorlands Friends to arrange for her son to be apprenticed.

There is insufficient evidence to offer valid comparisons between parochial and Quaker poor relief in that early period. The parish overseers' accounts for Gnosall for 1681 show that parochial expenditure was, naturally, on a totally different scale. In 1681 ten persons received weekly pensions in that one parish compared to the total of nine Quaker pensioners found, between 1673 and 1678, for the whole northern and central region of the county, comprising over 60 Anglican parishes. Either there were few Friends at that period seeking relief or if they were in need they did not seek or obtain help. The amounts paid were only broadly of the same magnitude : Gnosall pensioners received between 4d. and 8d. weekly, but two received additional support, in one case the payment of a year's rent, in another the gift of a pair of hose worth one shilling. Quakers received between 2¹/₂d. and 1s.3d a week, and there is no record of any other payments in cash or kind.

14 Staffs. C. R.O. D 3159/2/25, Record of Disownments, 29/9/1679.

The distribution of Quaker relief was normally in the hands of senior, well-to-do Friends, who laid out what money was immediately needed and were subsequently reimbursed. At the Quarterly Meeting held at Creighton, near Uttoxeter, on 22/8/1672 John Till of Whitgreave and John Preston of Tixall, both substantial farmers, were instructed to see to the necessities of Friends in Stafford Meeting and to bring in an account to every quarterly meeting. Their role was not dissimilar to that of parish overseers, although their administrative area of poor relief covered a much wider area than a single parish.

The Quarterly Meeting also looked after Friends in prison. They paid for their keep, bedding straw, gaolers' fees and other necessities. Thomas Taylor, one of the first itinerant preachers in the county, who was serving an indefinite sentence of imprisonment under a writ of praemunire, received money on a number of occasions. His wife Margaret, presumably left without means to live on, was also assisted.¹⁵

Collections for the poor recorded in the Quarterly Meeting Minute Book equalled or slightly exceeded recorded disbursements on 13 occasions. Between 1676 and 1677 Friends collected £10 7s.1d. over the whole area then covered by the Quarterly Meeting and disbursed the same amount. Any excess was added to 'stock', and was normally only a shilling or two. Stock was also used occasionally for more general purposes. On 2/12/1673 the account recorded that 1s. was spent on the carriage of books and 10d. on half a strike of oats for Friends' horses 'on the public account'. Whether Friends in Staffordshire also made gifts in kind, as they did in other areas, is uncertain because no evidence exists. Lloyd argues, with respect to other areas, that such gifts were preferred to grants of money and that this helps to explain the relatively small amount of money recorded in Friends' accounts.¹⁶

15 Q.M.M.B. 21/5/1674, 3/5/1676 and 8/8/1676.

16 Lloyd, Social History, p. 34.

Lloyd also suggests that Quakers sometimes accepted parish relief, but points out that in 1679 the Six Weeks' Meeting in London declined parish contributions. In so far as Quakers relieved the parishes of any financial responsibility for Quaker poor the overseers sometimes did not impose the poor levy on individual Friends and there are instances of local Friends offering security to parish overseers against any liability they might incur over incoming Friends.¹⁷ Again no evidence of such arrangements has so far come to light for Staffordshire.

Possibly for administrative convenience the Quarterly Meeting decided on 8/11/1677 that each of the two monthly meetings, Leek and Stafford, were henceforward to raise their own money to relieve their own poor. They could, however, if need arose, apply to the Quarterly Meeting for extra financial assistance, an instruction which echoed the legal provision for parishes. Regular detailed information on poor relief then disappears from the Quarterly Meeting Minute Book and the failure of any early monthly meeting minute books to survive means that there is little documentary evidence on Quaker poor relief for nearly the next thirty years. Summing up the earliest period of Quaker poor relief in Staffordshire it does not appear from what evidence survives that the burden of poor relief was a very heavy one, but that it is likely that there was more local, informal relief which went unrecorded.

The first surviving Leek Monthly Meeting Minute Book dates from 1705, and that of Stafford Monthly Meeting from 1713. Both contain a few references to poor relief but no detailed statistics. A few removal certificates survive for Leek as early as 1709. Probably separate accounts of poor relief at this time were kept, but if so, these have not survived. Much information is found in the accounts of Joshua and John

17 *Ibid.*, pp. 35 and 46.

Toft of Leek, but these date only from 1721 to 1753.¹⁸

Towards the end of the century, particularly in the depressed 1690s, Quakers generally in England had been encountering the problem of poor Friends moving about in search of employment and before they could find work, applying to the local meeting for financial assistance. The easier, ad hoc arrangements that obtained in earlier years could no longer cope with the harsher economic realities of the late seventeenth and early eighteenth centuries and there were disputes, sometimes bitter, at local and national level, about who was responsible for 'unsettled Friends'. The problem was particularly acute in London and in some of the larger towns in the country. Eventually the Yearly Meeting in London evolved a concept of a notice of removal which did not involve the transfer of membership, and which retained the obligation on the original meeting to assist a poor Friend who had moved elsewhere in search of work. An agreement reached in 1710 and 1711 more or less followed the principles of national legislation. Friends who wanted to move had to obtain a certificate of removal from their home meeting. Apprentices and servants with such certificates could obtain a settlement in a new meeting after one year of service. Friends who did not contribute to collections could obtain a settlement only after three years. Necessitous people would be assisted to return home, and the new meeting was under no obligation to afford relief if they refused to do so. These decisions did not, however, solve the problem, and internal wrangling between meetings continued. It was not until 1737 that the Yearly Meeting was able to arrive at a generally agreed statement of rules governing settlement. It was then decided that all Friends should remain members of the meeting within whose area they were dwelling in 1737

18 Staffs. C. R.O. D 3159/3/7 and D 3159/3/9.

except pensioners who had been relieved by any other meeting in the past year and who were to be deemed members of that meeting.

Both Leek and Stafford followed the national guidelines on certificates, but the local problem was never as serious as elsewhere in the country in such cities as London. Industrialisation and urbanisation in Staffordshire were slow to develop in the eighteenth century. The Quaker meeting in Wolverhampton faded out by the 1730s, and, on the whole, problems of poverty and its relief for Friends in the southern part of the county did not directly affect Staffordshire Quarterly Meeting. In the north the rapid growth of the pottery industry was still to come. By the time that industrialisation might have presented problems connected with poor relief the Quaker movement in the county had dwindled into numerical insignificance.

In the period covered by this study, there was not a great deal of movement of Friends into or out of the county. Leek Monthly Meeting Minute Book records a letter received on 2/4/1710 summarising the new recommendations reached by that date. Briefly, it stated that Friends coming into the area had to have a certificate of good behaviour. If they had no such certificate they were to be accepted but Leek was to write to their former meeting to ask about their behaviour and that meeting was to reimburse Leek for any charges incurred for the next four years. A few certificates of removal were both issued and received by Leek meeting. A copy of that for Hannah Whittaker, née Woolrich, of Rowley Gate in the parish of Horton, who moved to Nantwich Monthly Meeting after the death of her husband, John, in 1715, has survived. It illustrates the care bestowed on issuing such certificates. It was signed by Joseph Davison, the schoolmaster of the Quaker boarding school in Leek and counter-signed by Phebe Mellor, daughter of the Welsh Quaker John ap John and wife of John Mellor of Ipstones. Equally as much scrutiny was given to the Quaker

credentials of those who came into Leek from elsewhere. These included Isaac Whitehead, who brought a certificate dated 7/6/1712 from Evesham Monthly Meeting, Ann Low with a certificate from Manchester dated 19/3/1713 and Thomas Heawood, who brought one from Middlewich dated 29/2/1715.

By and large it was the traditional causes of poverty, widowhood, illness and seasonal local unemployment compounded by large families which included numerous young children, which continued to operate in Staffordshire and caused the costs of poor relief to rise. The local Quaker movement was, however, able to cope. Within the county itself the system of poor relief seemed to have been operated flexibly between the two monthly meetings. Thus when Elizabeth Simpson's father, John Simpson, of Keele, died in 1739, and her mother in 1741, it was Stafford Monthly Meeting, not Leek to which Keele belonged, which allowed her 18d. per week. When in 1747 she went to live with her sister in Leek, Stafford continued to support her and pay her house rent. As late as 1763 she received £1 19s. a quarter in relief and in the same year, 6s.8d. for clothes. Another example of successful early collaboration, this time with Friends in Dudley, the Worcestershire enclave within Staffordshire, is provided by the case of Anne Oakes. She came originally from Staffordshire, had been widowed, and had moved to Dudley. Staffordshire Quarterly Meeting agreed to pay 1s.6d. a quarter towards her upkeep, but in 1688 Dudley Friends informed them that this was not proportionate to their expenses, and Staffordshire agreed to pay another 3s. per quarter to her allowance. Everything seems to have been amicably and quickly settled.

A few references in the Leek Monthly Meeting Minute Book from 1705 plus the Toft accounts from 1721 provide a fairly comprehensive picture of poor relief within the Leek area for the first four decades of the eighteenth century. The cost of

caring for the local Quaker poor did not rise much in the first decades of the eighteenth century. There is only one regular recipient of a pension recorded, Margaret Phillips, who in 1711 received 4s. a month. In 1716 her allowance was 5s. a quarter but in addition Leek Monthly Meeting paid the rent for a room she occupied in Joshua Dale's house, amounting to 14s. for a half year. She died in 1720. A second pensioner, Daniel Dale, son of the Joshua Dale in whose house Margaret Phillips was living, received 4s. a month from 1715. Joshua Dale himself received occasional payments of a few shillings. The overall balance sheet for Leek Monthly Meeting from 1713 to 1714 revealed a slight deficit of expenditure over receipts. Collections totalled £5 5s.7d., of which Keele contributed 13s.4d. Payments to the poor totalled £3 8s.11d. but there were other expenditures on stabling and fodder for the horses of 'travelling Friends', and meeting house maintenance costs which were also paid out of the money collected every month and total disbursements came to £5 11s.11d. The deficit was covered by a balance brought forward from the previous year.¹⁹ Usually receipts were slightly more than expenditures in the early years of the eighteenth century.

By 1737, under the Tofts' competent handling of the accounts, a system of quarterly contributions had long been established. Fifteen named contributors gave a fixed sum, presumably according to their means, the amounts varying from the 3s. each of Robert Mellor, John Toft, Joshua Toft down to 6d. from Margaret Whiston. Keele Friends, not individually named, gave 1s.6d. between them, which suggests that a sharp decline in the active membership of that meeting had occurred. The total income for a year amounted, with a few minor contributions, to £5 5s. Disbursements totalled £3 13s.2d. which left a balance of £1 11s.10d.

The balance sheet, satisfactory immediately to any treasurer, nevertheless

¹⁹ All figures quoted up to 1721 come from the Leek Monthly Meeting Minute Book and after that year from the Toft accounts.

presents a slightly misleading picture of the overall financial situation of Leek Monthly Meeting at that time. Most extraordinary and non-local expenditures were met, at least in part, by the fruits of the generosity of past generations of Quakers. Leek meeting owned five properties from which rents were received. The largest of these was a farm at Ford in the parish of Grindon, consisting of a dwelling house and 24 acres, which had been left in trust for poor Friends by George Howarth in 1694.²⁰ By the mid-eighteenth century interest and rents from these legacies and properties normally brought in an income of about £12 a year. Over the years a substantial reserve had been accumulated and this acted as a cushion against unexpected expenditures. Thus John Toft was able, in 1751, to carry forward a credit balance from the previous year of about £130. Despite the shrinking number of members the meeting was able not only to support those of its local members who fell into need, but to meet any abnormal demands and make contributions to national causes. Without such a reserve the costs of poor relief for members of Leek Monthly Meeting could at times have been considerably greater than receipts from current collections.

Documentary sources similar to Toft's have not survived for Stafford Monthly Meeting, perhaps because each of its four constituent meetings, Stafford, Wolverhampton, Chesterfield and Uttoxeter handled its own finances and only reported, rather irregularly, to the Monthly Meeting. In 1713 to 1714 Stafford's total monthly collection from its members was about 4s., as was Wolverhampton's, while Chesterfield and Uttoxeter each recorded 1s. 4d. After about 1720 figures for Uttoxeter and Chesterfield cease to be recorded. Wolverhampton last reported a

20 Q.M.M.B. appendix, 'Abstract of Writings of Trust', Staffs. C. R.O. D 3159/2/58, Howarth Charity, traces the later history of the trust up to its sale in 1901.

figure, of about 5s. a month, on 13/6/1728, although there are occasional general references to their collections being continued. The figures, where they exist, suggest that there were not many pauper Quakers in Stafford Monthly Meeting. It was fortunate that this was so. As in Leek, the heaviest charges incurred by the meeting were for regular pensions, paid to poor widows with children. An example is provided by the family of John Garland, of Wall, part of Chesterfield Meeting. He died in or just before, 1728, leaving, apparently without sufficient means of support, a widow, Sarah, and a daughter, also called Sarah, who was also a widow with two children. All the family were apparently living in one house. Their pension, which was paid to Widow Sutton, rose to 8s. a month, and for the eight months from 11/5/1732 to the beginning of the 2nd month 1733 the total charges for the family's upkeep were £5 4s., a figure in itself in excess of the annual total of collections in the monthly meeting. The pension was paid by Allen England, of Tamworth, whose family was now one of the only two surviving from the former Chesterfield meeting. To reimburse him for his outlay special collections were made, Stafford contributing £2 10s., Wolverhampton 3s., Uttoxeter 8s., Elihu Hall of Leek 10s., and England himself and Joseph, his brother, £1 4s. between them. Widow Sutton's pension continued to be paid at this rate and by this means for five years, although on one occasion the bill was met by a legacy from Thomas Wolrich of Shallowford. Friends had also begun inquiring, in 1733, about apprenticeships in Birmingham with a member of the Garland family, for Sarah Sutton's two children. Then, in 1734, the Monthly Meeting expressed a concern about the younger Widow Sutton's conduct. A minute recorded a warning that if her character was 'irreputable to her profession' the payment of the pension would stop.²¹ The payments did in fact continue for another two years then

21 Staffs. C. R.O. D 3159/2 , Stafford Monthly Meeting Minute Book 13/6/1734 .

they ceased. There is no evidence that Sarah Sutton had made another marriage, this time to a non-Quaker, but this was not an uncommon step for a widow to take. The story demonstrates that Staffordshire Friends were willing, when necessary, to meet heavy costs of supporting poor fellow members but it also suggests that such relief was dependent on the recipient remaining a practising Quaker.

Bequests similar to those in Leek had also been made by Friends of Stafford Monthly Meeting. Thus John Alsop, the earliest Quaker of that name, who died in 1678, left £10 by his will for the use of poor Friends. As was usual with such bequests the money was lent to other Friends, who paid interest on it. The accounts were strictly scrutinised and the borrower changed every few years. Thus in 1715 Edward Frith paid in £2 10s., the interest due for five years on Alsop's legacy, equivalent to a rate of 5% per annum. By his will of 1728 John Alsop, a son of the original John, left to poor Friends the interest on £40. Over the whole area of the county covered by the Quarterly Meeting there were in all seven bequests of money for the use of the poor made between 1672 and 1743.²²

Staffordshire Quakers did not confine themselves to the relief of their own local poor. They were expected to contribute to national charitable causes, particularly the regular appeals known as the 'London Collections'. As early as 1672 Friends sent £3 2s. 9d. to Yearly Meeting, and another appeal, only six months later, realised £3 18s. 1d. Most of the money went to the 'Public Service of Truth', which included missionary work overseas, the costs of campaigning by the Society's lawyers to secure the release of Friends from illegal imprisonment, the relief of prisoners and various other activities. There were also special appeals for money to ransom Friends held

22 Q.M.M.B. Appendix, 'Abstract of Friends Trusts' for references in this paragraph.

captive by Barbary pirates, and Staffordshire Friends always responded to these. These collections, continued throughout the whole period covered by this present study. One surviving account of 1740 provides details of individual contributions made by Leek Friends, which totalled £15 3s., the amounts given ranging from 6s. to £1 16s. Of the 18 contributors to the National Stock in this year, 16 also paid to their own local Monthly Meeting poor collections.²³ Nor, as pointed out above, did the relief of their own poor absolve Friends from the requirement to pay local parish poor rates, sometimes as individuals, more often as meetings. Thus on 15/2/1752 John Toft recorded in his accounts the payment of 3s. 6d. for a 'Poor Lunes new tax'. Friends also occasionally responded to national non - Quaker appeals for help: in 1742 Quarterly Meeting recorded their view that Friends had not been 'defective', within their own parishes, of contributing to an appeal following a disastrous fire in Wellingborough.²⁴

There were numerous similarities and differences, as already suggested, between parochial and Quaker systems of poor relief. Some of the similarities become more apparent within the local Staffordshire scene towards the end of the period covered by this study. Fowkes in his detailed study of the topic in a number of sample parishes in Staffordshire in the second half of the eighteenth century, points out that the most consistent characteristic of poor rate expenditure was the payment of pensions to the aged, to widows, to orphans and to the long - term sick. He calculated that such payments comprised two-thirds of their total expenditure.²⁵ This was also, as stated earlier, the main item in Quaker poor relief and the proportion was almost exactly the same. Toft's accounts show that in 1751 about 65% of his expenditure was

23 Staffs. C. R.O. D 3159/3/7 John Toft's Accounts.

24 Q.M.M.B. 28/10/1742.

25 Fowkes, 'A study of the perceived differences in the pattern of poor rate expenditure in Staffordshire', Chapter 7, 'Pensions'.

on pensions, and the remaining 35% on medical and funeral services. Fowkes also found that parish relief payments to third parties, for example to cover doctors' fees, funeral expenses and lawyers' fees, took about 20 % of the net poor rate. Toft recorded occasional expenditures on legal fees and travelling costs but generally these were subsumed under the different, general monthly meeting, account. In any case they were not very large, and Quaker administrative expenses were generally considerably lower, in proportion to actual relief payments, than those of the parish overseers, who had also legal settlement costs, county rates, etc. to pay. It is impossible, however, to make any valid per capita comparisons between the two systems.

There was another parallel in poor relief provision by the Anglican parish and by the Quaker movement. In most parishes local charities had been established providing for distributions of bread and other items at special times in the year. As these were usually organised through the church, such seasonal distributions could depend on the recipient's attendance at church and in this respect the local Anglican ministers sometimes exercised a denominational exclusiveness of their own, in some ways similar to that practised by Quakers.

Other parallels and contrasts between the state and the Quaker systems of relief lay in the settlement certificate system. Both systems normally issued a certificate addressed to a particular named parish or meeting. The Quaker system not only concerned the possibility of the migrant seeking poor relief but also made such relief dependent on his credentials as a Quaker. This also applied to Friends who emigrated to the New World. Thus the certificate issued to Joseph Taylor on 3/3/1711 was addressed to the 'Monthly Meeting of Men and Women in Philadelphia, America or elsewhere whom it may concern'. It testified that he had been brought up

by his parents in the 'way of Truth', expressed the meeting's belief that, as far as they knew, he was clear from women as regards marriage, and their hopes that he would continue to grow in his 'degree of Grace'. The non-Quaker system, in contrast, had to do with only the eligibility to pay and preventing migrants from obtaining a settlement in a new parish. A parish overseer's certificate was usually to a particular named parish.

The greatest difference between parochial and Quaker provision, as already stated, lay in the very different numbers of poor for whom the two systems provided. While parish overseers had a statutory duty to care for all the poor in their parishes Quaker relief was confined to the handful of needy Friends within the area covered by their own monthly meetings. No nation-wide system of poor relief in the later seventeenth and in the eighteenth centuries could reasonably have been expected to match that provided by a small religious sect for its members.

The conclusions from this examination of Quaker poor relief in Staffordshire up to the mid - eighteenth century may now be summarised. The conditions imposed by the 1710 rules on obtaining a settlement applied in practice only to poor Quakers. Friends who moved into a new area and who contributed to collections for the poor automatically became members of their new meeting. Making such contributions became synonymous with membership of Friends' monthly meetings for business, and were for fixed amounts. These contributions, together with the legacies of previous generations of Quakers, and if necessary help from other meetings, provided the finance for an organised system of social security for needy and deserving Friends. It operated successfully in Staffordshire because the number of Friends who fell into poverty was small, and those who remained, as total numbers dwindled, were usually fairly well- off. Moreover legacies and income from property covered a part of the

costs which were incurred. Even so the demands made upon Quaker members were considerable. Frequent contributions to national collections were also expected. The local leaders themselves acted as quasi -parish overseers, distributing the relief personally and immediately laying out the money, interest - free, only later being reimbursed. The relief afforded to needy individuals was as generous as, and often greater than, that afforded by parish overseers. It was only to be expected that Quakers would restrict the direct provision they made to those persons of their own profession of whose conviction they were satisfied. Even when the recipients of their relief departed from the code of behaviour that was demanded of them, the local leadership tried patiently to win them back, nor was their charitable provision too abruptly ended. From the beginning of their movement Quakers had been aware of the effects of poverty, not only upon the physical but also upon the spiritual well - being of most people. They never lost that concern. It remained a vital element in the corpus of their convictions, and prompted them not only to palliative measures of relief but also to seek to make constructive provision for the few poor people who remained in the movement by the mid - eighteenth century. It was a concern that was to demonstrate itself in a wider social sphere in the next century, for example during the Irish famine of 1847-51, and in a variety of other ways.

CHAPTER 11 'THE NATURAL TONGUES AND ARTS': Early Quaker Literacy in Staffordshire

In 1700 the Yearly Meeting started to require annual answers from the quarterly meetings on whether local Friends encouraged their children in frequent reading of the scriptures, went to Quaker schools rather than to others where they might be corrupted and whether the poor children of poor Friends were taught a trade. ¹ These questions reveal much about the attitude of Quakers to the education of their children as it had developed in the 40 or 50 years since the movement had begun. Fox's belief that a university education did not of itself qualify a man for preaching the gospel did not mean that he played down the value of schooling generally, but while he claimed that he was not against schools teaching children the 'Natural Tongues and Arts' he also urged that this was not enough and that all men must come also to the 'spiritual school of Christ'. ²

The anti-Dissent legislation of the Restoration period hampered, though it did not prevent, the spread of Quaker schools. By the Act of Uniformity of 1662 it became compulsory for all schoolmasters to conform to the Anglican church. This was reinforced by the Act of 1665 which imposed penalties on persons who kept a school within five miles of a corporate town without first taking the oath set out in the Act. Despite these legal prohibitions by 1671 there were 15 Quaker boarding schools in the country. This was, however, a totally inadequate number to meet the demand and many Friends sent their children to non-Quaker schools. From 1690 the Yearly Meeting began to issue Advices against this practice and urged quarterly meetings to

1 Staffs. C. R. O. D 3159/1/1, Quarterly Meeting Minute Book 1672-1743, appendix.

2 G. Fox, 'A Demonstration to the Christians in Name' (1679), in his Gospel - Truth Demonstrated (1706), quoted in A. Lloyd, Quaker Social History (1950), p. 167.

make provision for Quaker schoolmasters and mistresses. On 7/8/1695 Staffordshire Quarterly Meeting decided to acquire a schoolmaster and at the next quarterly meeting it was agreed to offer a salary of £10 per annum for one year only, but that the schoolmaster would be free to supplement this by what he could obtain by teaching the children of persons who were not Friends. Either the size of the salary, or the dangers attached to being an unlicensed schoolmaster, or both, may have been factors in delaying an appointment and in the following year the salary offered was raised to £15. It was not until 1696, however, that with the help of Gilbert Thompson, Staffordshire's London correspondent, a suitable candidate was found, and in 1697 Joseph Davison was appointed as resident schoolmaster in Leek.³ In 1698 a further agreement was made that if his salary should fall short of £15 a year, a collection would be made throughout the county to make up that total.³ Davison's start was not very promising. He was summoned to the ecclesiastical court in 1699 for teaching without a licence, failed to appear and was imprisoned in Stafford gaol for contempt. Friends attending Yearly Meeting in London were instructed to obtain legal advice on whether the writ could be challenged and he was released after about nine months.⁴ In 1701 he was again imprisoned on the same charge and once more the Quarterly Meeting paid for legal aid to obtain his discharge.⁵ In 1707 and 1711 his salary was increased by £3 a year, presumably because he did not have enough Quaker pupils to provide him with an adequate income.⁶

There is no evidence on the number of pupils in Davison's school, or how many were not of Quaker parents and there is only one reference to fees charged. On

3 Staffs. C. R.O. D 3159/1/1 Quarterly Meeting Minute Book, 1672 - 1743, entries for 4/11/1696 and 4/5/1698.

4 Staffs. C. R. O. D 3159/2/18 Record of Sufferings, 20/12/1699.

5 Q.M.M.B. 7/2/1701.

6 Staffs. C. R.O. D 3159/3/1, Leek Monthly Meeting Minute Book, 6/1/1706 -7 and 5/2/1711.

5/6/1714 Leek Monthly Meeting recorded its decision to pay 10s. for the schooling for one year of Joshua Dale whose family was in receipt of relief, but whether this sum excluded boarding and was just for instruction is not certain. The only mention of the school's curriculum is in a Quarterly Meeting report of 1728 to the Yearly Meeting when it was stated that there was a grammar school at Leek where 'youth' were boarded and taught 'writing and accounts'.⁷ Thereafter there are only perfunctory answers to the yearly queries. When Davison died in 1747, by then a prosperous man, the school died with him.⁸

The establishment of the school in Leek in 1697 was too late to have made any contribution to the level of literacy of the first generation of Staffordshire Quakers who must have acquired the skill to read and write from elsewhere and much earlier. Wrightson has pointed to the marked advance in educational opportunity and the growing demand for education at all levels of society and generally throughout the country during the period. He cites a figure of 52% of all parishes in the diocese of Coventry and Lichfield between 1595 and 1642 as having a schoolmaster at some time or other and 24% with schoolmasters continually.⁹ In Staffordshire itself, by the mid - seventeenth century there were eleven endowed grammar schools, spread over the whole county.¹⁰ Smith's study of subscription lists and licences for schoolmasters in the Lichfield and Coventry diocese in the seventeenth century shows that there was considerable other educational provision available for those with the means and motivation to take advantage of it. For the years between 1600 and 1640 he found 35 locations in Staffordshire with unendowed schoolmasters, including half a dozen

7 Q.M.M.B. 8/2/1728.

8 M. W. Greenslade, 'Leek and Lowe' in Victoria County History of Stafford, Vol. VII, Leek and the Moorlands (1996), p. 162.

9 K. Wrightson, English Society, (1982, paperback edn.), p. 186.

10 M. W. Greenslade and D. Johnson, (eds.), V.C.H. VI, 'Schools', pp. 149 -181.

in the moorlands region in the north-east of the county.¹¹ For the period 1660 to 1700 he found 54 locations with such schoolmasters, 19 of which were also listed in the earlier period and 35 in new locations. He points out that while it cannot be assumed that all places enjoyed a continuity of teaching, some locations are regularly listed. Leek provides an example of this, appearing in the lists 12 times during the century. Within the Lichfield diocese, Smith concludes, the wide spread of educational opportunity points to an increasing rate of literacy in rural areas, and he suggests that by the end of the century lay schoolmasters were able to make a living without the benefit of a fixed endowment. He attributes this to a growing demand for instruction in reading, writing and accounts, behind which lay religious and economic influences, the puritan ideal of a Bible-reading society and a need for more literate artisans as the processes of trade and industry grew more complex.

It is also probable that there were more schoolmasters than the diocesan subscription lists record. O'Day instances the defective character of the return of schoolmasters in the triennial visitation of the Lichfield and Coventry diocese in 1639, and argues that licensing of schoolmasters was spasmodic and more concerned to exclude Roman Catholic recusants and Protestant dissenters than to obtain accurate lists of all schoolmasters.¹² Her research applied to the earlier seventeenth century, but for the period after 1660 Spufford suggests that the Church had difficulty in enforcing its licensing procedure.¹³

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- 11 A. Smith, 'Private schools and schoolmasters in the Diocese of Lichfield and Coventry in the seventeenth century' *History of Education*, 5 no. 2, (1976), pp. 117 -126. The Moorlands schoolmasters were in Alstonefield, Blore, Butterton, Grindon, Leek and Rushton Spencer.
 - 12 R. O'Day, 'Church Records and the History of Education in Early Modern England 1558 - 1642 : a Problem in Methodology', *History of Education*, 2 no. 2 (1973).
 - 13 M. Spufford, *Small Books and Pleasant Histories* (1981), p. 19.

The quality of the instruction afforded probably varied widely. Most of the endowed grammar schools in the county included Latin in their curriculum. Dame schools sometimes provided little more than instruction in the letters of the alphabet, but Spufford has adduced evidence from Cambridgeshire that although such schools are scarcely mentioned in the records they played a more important role in teaching reading than hitherto has been thought.¹⁴ Schoolmasters in the unendowed country schools also varied in their qualifications. They included some parish curates who augmented their often meagre stipends by this means. A few readers of public prayers, often found in the chapelries without a permanent incumbent, were also licensed and a few laymen were also schoolmasters.

Different sources have been used, with varying degrees of success, in attempts to quantify literacy in England in the period under review. One major field for analysis is the Protestation Returns of 1642. Spufford, summarising recent work done by Schofield and Cressy on this topic, suggests that there was an absolute minimum reading public of 20% of men in the least literate areas in the country in that year. She also argues that many boys, even below the social level of yeomen, began to learn to read below the age of seven, at which age they were usually sent out to work. To measure literacy, she concludes, only by the ability to sign, ignores the fact that reading was a more widely diffused skill than writing, a skill that was sometimes acquired after that of reading, even by professional people: Gregory King could read the Bible at the age of four but his father did not teach him to write until he was seven.¹⁵ Spufford's work on the parish of Eccleshall, in Staffordshire, cites convincing evidence of literacy among the poorer classes. She claims that despite Eccleshall's being one of the poorest rural populations known about so far in England,

14 M. Spufford, (ed.), The World of Rural Dissenters (Cambridge, 1995), Chapter 1, 'The importance of religion', pp. 67 - 8.

15 M. Spufford, Small Books, p. 22.

it was remarkably literate. A local shopkeeper stocked dozens of books, primers or prayer books which were also used as school textbooks, and horn books, the last sometimes inscribed with the Lord's Prayer or the Creed. The local bishop noted that there were five women schoolteachers in the parish.¹⁶

Nevertheless, as Schofield argued, the ability to sign one's name is the only standard and direct measure by which to judge the literacy skill of large numbers of people in the pre-industrial period.¹⁷ Based on this premise a study of the parish of Yoxall in Staffordshire used all the wills and inventories surviving in an endeavour to quantify local literacy and included not only the testators of wills but also the witnesses to the wills and the appraisers of the goods and chattels of the deceased. Of a total of 299 names in all these categories found in the 30 years between 1659 and 1688, 27.4% signed their names and 45.1% made marks, the remainder being classified as 'uncertain'. In the 20 years between 1689 and 1700 there was a total of 143 names of which 49.6% were signatures, 34.9% marks and 15.3% 'uncertain'.¹⁸ The trend is apparent : the number of literate persons in Yoxall, a typical agricultural parish in east - central Staffordshire, increased rapidly in the second half of the century. By 1700, allowing for a proportion of the 'uncertain' category, the study suggested that over half the people involved in the drawing up of wills and inventories - testators, witnesses and appraisers - were able to sign their names. This represented somewhere between 13% and 20% of the total adult population, not just of men, of the parish.

The statistical evidence of literacy derived from wills and inventories cannot

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- 16 M. Spufford, 'Poverty Portrayed' in Staffordshire Studies, 7 (1995) (ed. R. Studd, University of Keele), pp. 46 - 51.
 - 17 R. S. Schofield, 'Dimensions of Illiteracy 1750 - 1850', Explorations in Economic History, 10 (1972 - 3).
 - 18 D. Stuart (ed.), A Social History of Yoxall in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries (Department of Adult Education, University of Keele, 1990), p. 75.

confidently be applied to Quakers because relatively few Staffordshire Quaker wills were taken to the ecclesiastical court for probate. There were a number of reasons for this. Wills could be, and were, made without the necessity of being proved, although these lacked the force of law. Secondly, Quaker executors faced the problems, before the Affirmation Act of 1696, of swearing oaths of administration, although this requirement was sometimes evaded with the connivance of officials.¹⁹ Another device was to appoint non-Quaker executors who had no scruples in swearing the oath. Davies' study of Essex shows that over 80% of the witnesses to Quaker wills between 1660 and 1700 were not Friends.²⁰ Finally Friends were supposed to ensure that, before their decease, their legatees had amicably agreed on the division of any inheritance. More acceptable global statistics of early Staffordshire Quaker literacy must, therefore, be sought in sources other than wills. The value of the study of the Yoxall wills lies in the fact that it offers a figure for a rural parish in central Staffordshire which might serve as a norm for similar areas in the county. It may also be presumed that since literacy was tied to social status and income level, Quakers would have had a level of literary skill probably higher than the figure of between 13% and 20% found for the total adult population of Yoxall.

Reliable evidence on Quaker literacy in Staffordshire is found in the local minutes of the Quarterly and Monthly Meetings. They show that most Quakers who attended the business meetings of the local movement were literate and were not

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- 19 H. Forde, 'Friends and authority: a consideration of attitudes and expedients with particular reference to Derbyshire' in *J.F.H.S.* 54, 3 (1978), pp. 117 -8. Dr. Forde shows how non-Quakers could be chosen as executors or as substitutes to attend the court and serve as administrators.
- 20 A. Davies, *The Quakers in English Society 1655 -1725*, Oxford (2000), p. 202.

merely able to sign their names but had developed literary skills. The first Quarterly Meeting Minute Book, which runs from 1672 to 1743, is a contemporary document, and not a later fair copy, and was written up immediately from notes. This was also the case with the Leek Monthly Meeting Minute Book, which begins in 1705 and the Stafford Monthly Meeting Minute Book which begins in 1713. Who was the first clerk of the Quarterly Meeting in 1672 is not certain but it was probably Peter Littleton of Haughton. The handwriting of the earliest minutes is similar to that of the 1680 Record of the First Publishers of Truth in the appendix to the minute book, which from internal evidence may be attributed to Littleton. It is not a scholarly, copy-book script but in rather a sprawling hand. The vocabulary is wide, however, the grammar is good and there are even suspension and contraction marks in the script. That Littleton did much of the secretarial work is well documented. On 5/5/1675, for example, he was instructed to correspond with Ellis Hookes, secretary of the weekly national executive committee in London, and there are many other references to his being appointed tasks involving advanced clerical skills.

The administrative work involved in running the quarterly and monthly meetings was considerable and did not fall solely on whoever was acting as clerk. Such tasks as drawing up lists of sufferings, recording testimonies against the payment of tithes, registering births, marriages and deaths in the special books kept for this purpose, keeping poor relief accounts and signing removal and marriage certificates were allocated to most members of the quarterly meetings. Active membership of Quarterly Meeting clearly pre-supposed a high degree of literacy. Of the 36 named men who attended the Quarterly Meetings between 1672 and 1689, at least 25 can be shown to have been required to undertake tasks requiring reading, writing and numeracy skills. Thus John Alsop, of Ingestre, a farmer, was made

responsible in 1675 for recording the sufferings throughout the county and sending them to London,²¹ and may have acted as clerk after 1686 when Littleton seems to have given up the job. Another example is William Fallowfield of Leek Meeting who was instructed to write to a Friend concerning George Howard's writings.²²

Fallowfield was, however, one of the First Publishers of Truth and had settled in the county by 1666, so presumably had obtained his education elsewhere. Humphrey Wolrich, from Newcastle-under-Lyme, wrote a number of pamphlets.²³ His nephew, Thomas Wolrich, helped to record local Friends' testimonies against tithes in 1679.²⁴ John Baddeley and William Yardley from Leek Meeting were among those Friends ordered, in 1673, to prepare lists of sufferings to be sent to Yearly Meeting.²⁵

Sources other than minutes also yield evidence of literacy: George Godrich in 1668, John Scot in 1672, and William Reading in 1680 signed letters of repentance.²⁶ The evidence, therefore, of a high degree of literacy among Staffordshire Quakers attending quarterly and monthly meetings is overwhelming. There were probably some illiterate Quakers whose names would not normally appear in minutes unless they were in receipt of poor relief or had been brought to the attention of the monthly or quarterly meeting for some other reason. Only one recorded instance of a Friend unable to write, however, is to be found. This was Robert Kingston of Billington in the parish of Bradley, who was allowed the use of £10 during the year and made his mark on the receipt.²⁷

21 Q.M.M.B. 5/5/1675.

22 *Ibid.*, 11/11/1681.

23 See biographical notes in appendix.

24 Q.M.M.B. 6/8/1679.

25 *Ibid.*, 21/8/1673.

26 Leek MS. (MS Vol. 330), F. H. L., pp. 140, 144 and 149.

27 Q.M.M.B. 6/11/1678.

Literacy was not confined to men, although, as Houston points out, boys' education more often went on to include writing.²⁸ A number of the earliest women Friends were also literate. A women's meeting existed in Stafford as early as 1673 and there must have been some members able to read and write in order to keep minutes. In the earliest surviving record, the Leek Women's Monthly Meeting Minute Book, which begins in 1708, a number of different hands are evident.²⁹ Women's signatures are also not infrequently found on certificates of 'clearness' or of 'orderliness in life and conversation' given to Friends who wished to marry. Thus in 1715 Phebe Mellor signed, with Joseph Davison, a certificate for Hannah Whitaker.³⁰

It is not possible to document where and how such early Staffordshire Friends had obtained their literary skills. Whether they attended any of the grammar schools in the county, or got instruction from an unlicensed schoolmaster, is unknown. For those Quakers who had sufficient means and the motivation to pay the fees, and for some who were fortunate enough to live near a free school, opportunities for acquiring basic or even more advanced literary skills were not lacking. Before the end of the seventeenth century, however, probably the vast majority of Quaker children seeking education in Staffordshire either went outside the county, attended non-Quaker schools or were taught at home. Indeed it is likely that even after 1697 this remained the case. As shown earlier in this chapter there were not enough Quaker pupils to provide Joseph Davison, the Leek schoolmaster, with a living from this source alone. For most poor Quaker children, education was thought of in vocational terms and assumed to be provided for by an apprenticeship in which a little literacy would be acquired by experience.

28 R. A. Houston, 'The Development of Literacy : Northern England, 1640 - 1750', *Economic History Review*, 2nd ser. 35 (1982).

29 Staffs. C. R. O. D 3159/3/2.

30 MS. letter in personal possession.

Tuition at home was probably a more important factor in Quaker education than has hitherto been suggested. The study of literacy in the parish of Yoxall suggests that instruction of junior members of a family was sometimes provided at home by a literate parent or other relation or friend, either formally or informally. Literacy often ran in families, one generation passing on its skills to the next and this was probably the case with many Quaker families. Moreover, instruction at home by peripatetic schoolmasters, licensed or unlicensed, was always a possibility. Any Quaker misgivings over schooling by non-Quaker teachers could be overcome by maintaining supervision of the instruction given. Parents could ensure that Quaker educational principles were maintained, and that their children did not lose the 'plain language' or acquire the 'pride and vanity' that attendance at non-Quaker boarding or day schools might entail.³¹

For the second half of the period under examination in this study, after 1689, and through to the middle of the eighteenth century, it may be presumed that local Quaker literacy rates, already high, rose even more. The social and occupational composition of the movement began to change and the leading Quaker families came more and more from social classes above the level of the unskilled labourer and to include a few well-to-do Friends from commerce and manufacture. It was a country-wide phenomenon. Ambler has found that even in such a predominantly agrarian county as Lincolnshire, Quaker affairs were passing increasingly into the hands of a town-based elite.³² In Staffordshire there was not the same drift from the countryside into the towns. Numbers were in any case dwindling and, with a few exceptions, the

31 W. C. Braithwaite, The Second Period of Quakerism (1919; Cambridge 1961), p. 535.

32 R. W. Ambler, 'Churches, Chapels and the Parish Communities of Lincolnshire 1660-1900' History of Lincolnshire IX, (Lincoln, 2000), pp. 39 - 45 and 92 -99.

Friends who remained were reasonably comfortably off financially. This was reflected in the language and handwriting of the minutes of the Quarterly and Monthly Meeting minutes. By 1743, when this study ends, the carefully-formed handwriting and the formal language of the Quarterly Meeting Minute Book are in marked contrast to the sprawling hands and simpler vocabulary of the early years of the movement.

One thing had not changed. For all early Quakers the uses of literacy, apart from fulfilling purposes involved in earning a living and in the administrative business of the quarterly and monthly meetings, were mainly religious and not recreational. The tools of literacy were to be employed on godly not merry books. The main book was the Bible: the Quakers were puritans and puritans were the people of the Bible. Fox, although he was prepared when necessary to argue that the 'openings' he received by reason of the Inward Light might override scriptural texts, nevertheless constantly verified these 'openings' from the scriptures. His doctrinal treatises are often catenae of relevant passages and instances from scripture. Likewise for most Quakers the Bible was their basic source of morality, prophecy and information. It is probable that most early Quaker families in Staffordshire possessed a Bible. Certainly for many non-Quaker families it was often a family heirloom, bequeathed in wills or listed in probate inventories. Bibles, valued at between 1s. and 2s.6d., appear in some of the Yoxall inventories of the second half of the seventeenth century.³³ The possession of a Bible is likely to have prompted the owner and his family, particularly if they were Quakers, not merely to wish for the skill to read but also to have helped provide a first means, given the aid of some literate person, of acquiring this. Cressy has suggested that ownership of a Bible cannot be taken as proof of literacy or as

33 Stuart, Social History, p. 78.

evidence of a habit of reading and that it sometimes fulfilled a number of quasi-magical purposes.³⁴ Spufford, however, disagrees, citing abundant evidence that the Bible was read even by rural labourers.³⁵ In addition to the Bible many Friends owned, and also had access to other books, all of them of a religious nature. These were mostly of Quaker authorship and publication. A list of those books or authors mentioned in the Staffordshire Friends' minutes up to 1743 is in Table 8 below.

Some individuals from the two Staffordshire monthly meetings bought their own copies of the published works of Quaker authors. Fox's Doctrinals was a popular choice. So was Barclay's Apology, and when a new edition of the Apology was proposed in 1734, Quarterly Meeting members subscribed for 26 copies and in the following year for a further, unspecified number. Even more in demand were the works of John Gratton, perhaps, in part, because he lived in neighbouring Derbyshire and not infrequently came to Staffordshire: on 4/2/1720 Quarterly Meeting ordered 44 copies of his writings. In the same year Staffordshire Friends' subscriptions for the proposed printing of Sewell's History numbered 19 in all, three from Wolverhampton, 11 from Stafford and five from Leek.³⁶ Both Leek and Stafford Monthly Meetings operated a lending library in their areas, and between 1705 and 1716 the Leek minutes record the names of 15 different members who had borrowed the 'Public Books'. The readers included the names of two women, Hannah Hamersley and Mary Armitt. In 1724 Elizabeth Morris, wife of Richard Morris, of Stafford

34 D. Cressy, Literacy and the Social Order (1980), p. 51. Even in the late twentieth century a possible instance of such beliefs lingered. In West Cornwall one suggested cure for a ganglion on the underside of the wrist was to hit it with a family Bible. Perhaps weight, however, was the decisive factor in the persistence of this tradition.

35 Spufford, Small Books, p. 30.

36 Staffs. C. R. O. D 3159/ 2/1, Stafford Monthly Meeting Minute Book 13/7/1720.

**TABLE 8 BOOKS AND AUTHORS MENTIONED IN
STAFFORDSHIRE QUAKER MINUTE BOOKS 1672-1743**

G. Fox	<u>Journal</u>
G. Fox	<u>Doctrinals</u>
G. Fox	<u>A Collection of many Select and Christian Epistles of George Fox</u>
(none given)	<u>New England Judged</u>
J. Naylor,	<u>Collections</u>
	<u>Vindication of Women Preaching</u>
R. Barclay	<u>An Apology for the True Christian Divinity (1692)</u>
	<u>Statute Book</u>
	<u>Abstract of Acts of Parliament</u>
G. Whitehead,	<u>Journal</u>
	<u>A Reply to the Answer to Robert Barclay's Apology</u>
A. Arscott	(no title given)
J. Fallowfield,	<u>A Controversy Book</u>
	<u>Protestant Flail</u>
J. Wyeth	<u>Switches for the Snake in the Grass</u>
A. Rigge	(5 books, not named)
J. Besse	(Transcript of volumes 6 and 7 of <u>Sufferings of the People called Quakers</u>)
J. Gratton	(Collection of his writings)
T. Taylor	(Collection of his works)
W. Sewell	<u>History of the Christian People called Quakers</u>
W. Penn	<u>Works</u>

Monthly Meeting, subscribed to a copy of William Penn's Works. ³⁷ Leek Friends' lending library had a stock of 200 books in 1736. ³⁸

Quarterly Meeting purchased the 'Public Books', for the later part of the period under examination, from Sowle, the main Quaker printer in London, and then shared them between the monthly meetings. One copy of every book purchased was kept in the meeting house in Stafford, and was available for borrowing. ³⁹ Although

37 Q.M.M.B. 5/8/1724

38 Staffs. C. R.O. D 3159/Toft - Chorley Memo. Book.

39 Ibid. , 3/5/1699.

Stafford Monthly Meeting Minute Book contains very few references to books there seems no reason to doubt the existence of as avid a readership in that meeting as in Leek, as their subscriptions for copies of Sewell's History , already referred to, demonstrate.

The Quarterly Meeting kept a censorious eye on the books that they ordered or which were sent to them, unordered, by the printer. Thus on 7/11/1694 the meeting decided that the books by George Keith should be kept in private hands until it was agreed they should be distributed. ⁴⁰ On 5/8/1696 the meeting ordered that the printer was to send no more 'controversial books' unless instructed to do so. The instruction demonstrates that Staffordshire Quarterly Meeting normally followed the line of the 'Advices' issued by Yearly Meeting in which Staffordshire's representatives had themselves participated. ⁴¹

Lloyd estimated that two and a half million books were produced by the Quaker press in the first 50 years of the movement. He further suggests that the availability of such literature helped to mould the character of, and set standards for, individual Quakers. ⁴² More recently it has been argued that the two main executive committees of the Yearly Meeting, the Second Day Morning Meeting and the Meeting for Sufferings by controlling the printing and distribution of Quaker publications, stifled religious debate within the movement. ⁴³ Braithwaite had

40 Keith on his return from America in 1694, had become the centre of deep controversy at Yearly Meeting in London over the strictness of the discipline he advocated and over his establishment of a separatist congregation in Pennsylvania. He was subsequently disowned.

41 See Chapter 4 of this study for a discussion of the relations between the Staffordshire Quarterly Meeting and the Yearly Meeting in London.

42 Lloyd, Quaker Social History , p. 154.

43 T. O'Malley, 'Defying the powers and tempering the spirit: a review of Quaker control over publications 1672 - 1789 ', Journal of Ecclesiastical History , 23 (1982).

foreshadowed such a presumption. He argued that as early as the end of the seventeenth century the Quaker leadership was seeking to inculcate prescribed ideas and an approved way of life, and that the education they offered was not education in the higher sense of the word. He concluded, sombrely: 'The large-hearted Publishers of Truth, rich in knowledge and experience, died and authority passed into the hands of smaller men who permeated the Society with pettier conceptions.'⁴⁴ Whether such a restriction of mental outlook contributed to the decline in the numbers of Staffordshire Quakers, or had other constricting effects, it is impossible to say. If it was a censorship of what Friends should read it was a self-imposed one: most faiths create their own blinkers. Later Quakers were to throw them away.

44 Braithwaite, Second Period, pp. 536 - 8.

CHAPTER 12 A PECULIAR PEOPLE : summary and conclusions

The first chapter of this study maintained that the immediate origins of Quakerism lay in the heated religious and political condition of England in the earlier seventeenth century. It argued that the movement drew on both native and continental sources for some of its ideas and practices, including local traditions of Protestant dissent and north European millenarianism, but was also shaped by the personalities and religious experiences of its earliest leaders, among whom George Fox became pre-eminent. The beliefs to which they had arrived, after much spiritual turmoil, went far beyond the current puritan demands for a reform of the established church. All existing churches, they held, belonged to a present 'age of apostasy'. They conceived their movement to be a fellowship of men and women guided in their whole lives by an 'Inward Light', which God had bestowed on all men and they saw it as their moral duty to spread their 'message of truth' throughout the world, at whatever cost to themselves. They were also millenarians in their expectation of a period of the 'rule of the saints' which would prepare mankind for the second coming of Christ and the last judgement.

Between 1653 and 1660 the Quaker movement, led by 60 or so charismatic evangelists, the 'First Publishers of Truth' as they became known in later times, spread rapidly through much of England Wales and into a few areas in Scotland and Ireland. These itinerant preachers achieved a considerable degree of success in Staffordshire, particularly in the north-east moorland region of the county. Although they attracted support from a wide socio-economic spectrum of local society their opposition to the authority of the church at a time of growing Protestant dissent in the county and the church's demands for tithes won them much support in the countryside. The early local leadership of Quakerism in Staffordshire was composed chiefly of substantial farmers.

Quaker views on the necessity for social reform generally, although never systematically developed, also alarmed the state authorities. Already singled out as beggars and imprisoned as blasphemers and disturbers of church services in the Commonwealth period, Quakers bore the brunt of the persecution that came with the restoration of the monarchy in 1660. Thirty years of persecution based on anti - Dissent legislation followed. Although the Act of Toleration of 1689 brought relief from the penalties of attending illegal conventicles, distrains of goods and occasional imprisonments for non - payment of tithes continued.

The Quaker movement survived. For this survival there were a number of reasons. They included Friends' own steadfastness in the face of imprisonment, sometimes in barbaric conditions, and despite the severe financial penalties which they incurred for refusing to swear oaths and for holding illegal conventicles. Secondly such persecution was intermittent, and often not whole-heartedly enforced at the local level by magistrates and constables. As Braddick has pointed out the state lacked the professional bureaucracy necessary to implement a continuous policy of persecution and state pressure for the rigorous enforcement of anti - Dissent laws tended only to operate at times of political crisis or instability. Thirdly, as recent scholars including Spufford and Davies have demonstrated for Essex, Cambridgeshire and elsewhere, despite their special doctrinal beliefs many, and perhaps most, Quakers remained socially integrated with their local communities, performing their customary economic roles and not infrequently serving in some parochial office. Ties of kinship and neighbourliness also operated to mitigate the hostility caused by Quaker violation of traditional parochial customs such as those involved in burial of deceased persons, and a degree of toleration, based on greater familiarity with Quaker eccentricities, gradually emerged. Meantime the movement at the central, London

level, evolved an agency, the Meeting for Sufferings, which could offer legal advice to local quarterly meetings to enable them to challenge in detail, and through the courts, the many infractions of the strict letter of judicial procedure which accompanied the enforcement of the anti-Dissent laws. This made magistrates and would-be litigants such as tithe owners more wary of initiating legal proceedings. The main reason for the diminution of official hostility to the Quakers was, however, a modifying of their confrontational postures towards governmental and ecclesiastical authority. Before 1689 the movement was acquiring a Quietist character and appeared to the established political and social order to constitute much less of a threat.

This departure from the militancy and enthusiasm of the First Publishers and their earliest converts was part of the price the Quaker movement had to pay for its survival. Fighting, through the law courts, technical illegalities in the implementation of anti-Dissent laws implied accepting the state's authority rather than merely ignoring it as irrelevant and stoically enduring whatever consequences followed. Quakers came to accept in practice that if they were to survive in society as a religious organisation they had to adjust their behaviour to that society. But even if they were forced to make concessions to the fact that they lived in what was still an apostate world, Quakers also needed to demonstrate that they were a distinctive people, to hold fast to their basic beliefs and to their conception of their own special role in the working out of God's purposes. This they sought in part to do by developing outward patterns of behaviour, speech, dress, even deportment, by which to manifest their separate nature and to symbolise their inner conviction and beliefs. They also adopted policies which sought to preserve the inner purity of the movement from the contagion of the world even while they remained an active and participating

part of that world, and there was no Amish - like attempt to withdraw physically from an unregenerate society. Nevertheless these changes amounted to a radical transformation of the original movement. The whole process may be summarised as the evolution of Quakers from an open - fellowship into 'a peculiar people', a term used in Deuteronomy 14. 2 to describe the Israelites as a people picked out by God 'above all other nations'.

The history of many religious movements shows that they also undergo deep changes by the second or third generation of their existence, sometimes even earlier. One characteristic feature of such change is that the saints and geniuses among the founders of a movement are succeeded by more ordinary mortals. This was acknowledged by both Braithwaite and Rufus Jones. In discussing this development, however, Rufus Jones suggested that it is a mistake to see these later leaders as 'epigones', less distinguished successors of an illustrious generation. What had happened in the Quaker movement, he argued, was that their aims and aspirations had changed. By the last decades of the seventeenth century the Quaker leadership was attempting, not, like the First Publishers of Truth, to conquer the whole world, but to fashion a 'little Zion' out of a few people who, by reason of their recognition of a divinely - endowed inner light, believed themselves to be as glorious as mortals can be. Even to achieve this more modest aim, however, required that Quakers should accept an externally imposed discipline. Their core belief, the 'Inward Light', postulated the freedom of the individual to act according to his or her own interpretation of the 'openings' or 'movings' received from God. In fallible human beings this conviction could and did produce widely different patterns of behaviour and was potentially a disintegrative force within the Quaker movement. Early manifestations of its explosive possibilities, in the mid and later 1650s, convinced Fox

and most of his colleagues of the need to subordinate this individual freedom of interpretation to the collective insight of the whole movement as embodied in its leadership. He was instrumental in developing a national organisation which was at once both controlling and supportive.

It is with this analytical framework in mind, based on the latest research by scholars, that the early history of Quakerism in Staffordshire has been examined. There is no evidence that it does not fit into the pattern suggested. There are some distinctive local features : the occupational structure remained mainly rural and the local leadership was predominantly composed of fairly well-to-do farmers for much of the period studied. No schismatic individuals emerged, and there are no hints in the local records that quarterly and monthly meetings ever challenged the authority of the yearly meeting. A special chapter in this study examined the organisational links between Staffordshire and London in terms of actual individuals. There are a number of references to disputes between individuals involving some of the earliest converts but whether these involved discontent with the changing character of the movement cannot be documented. The Quaker movement in Staffordshire, like much of the rest of the country generally, experienced a sharp decline in numbers of members in the eighteenth century. The Act of Toleration of 1689 had brought a temporary upward surge in membership numbers but in the longer run the increase was not sustained. Death, departure and the disaffection of younger generations with traditional practices and constrictions imposed on behaviour were factors in this numerical decline, apparent in Staffordshire a generation later. The insistence on the principle of endogamy and the disownment of members who married outside the Society of Friends was also a major factor in its numerical decline. This decline continued into the nineteenth century, and Staffordshire Quaker attendances at the time of the

ecclesiastical census of 1851, as Snell and Ell have shown, were among the lowest in the country.

Analysis of the figures of marriage both within and outside the Society in early Staffordshire does not pinpoint the practice of endogamy as the sole cause of numerical decrease. More statistical research, deploying a computer - based genealogical reconstitution of local Quaker births, deaths and marriages from 1689 to about 1730, and inappropriate for inclusion in this general history, needs to be done before more confident conclusions on the effects of a doctrinal insistence on marriage 'within the tribe' can be arrived at. This study suggests that the main cause of the decrease was the total abandonment, at a relatively early date, of any further attempts to proselytise among the unregenerate and ungodly of the wider world, attempts which might have replaced the losses in membership which time was bringing.

There was, within the movement, a potential reservoir of men and women willing and able to serve as home missionaries. In Staffordshire the Quarterly Meeting minutes reveal the emergence of a handful of 'Public Friends', talented men and women able and willing to travel and preach. They appear to have confined their attention, however, to visiting established Quaker congregations in other parts of the country. In any case the nature of Quaker meetings for worship was not conducive to mass recruitment from outside. A church whose services exalted long periods of silence as a condition of receptivity to the intimations of God was never likely to attract adherents in the less auspicious and increasingly competitive conditions of the eighteenth century. The Wesleys exploited fervid preaching, music and singing in their successful establishment of Methodism, and their movement was able to produce a large body of local preachers to consolidate the initial evangelisation. In Staffordshire, Methodists proselytised successfully in the expanding populations of

the coal-pits and iron-works of the Black Country and the pot-banks of Stoke upon Trent. These were contexts within which Quakerism in the eighteenth century lacked the incentive to seek to work actively. The Quaker movement, by reason of its belief in personal revelation and individual response, its early transformation into a sect, and its hesitant transition to a confident denomination, did not produce anything resembling the professional ministry, the flexible organisation and the thousands of local preachers which Methodism evolved.

After the initial success of the First Publishers of Truth and the slow spread of the movement, which continued for little more than a generation thereafter, Quakerism stagnated. To discuss in detail the later, nation-wide reasons for this lies largely beyond the chronological remit of this study. The success of Methodism proved that from the mid - eighteenth century it was possible to find a new religious constituency, not only among the dark satanic mills but also in many regions of the countryside. By then, however, it was too late for Quakerism to renew its original evangelistic enthusiasm. It had retreated into itself. More or less tolerated by the state and society, and more or less resigned to the condition of the world in which they lived, their hopes of the immediate establishment of a rule of saints frustrated, early Quakers consolidated themselves into a 'peculiar people'. They had not lost their inner convictions but these were now manifested not in proselytisation but in personal dress and speech. The sober garments they prescribed for both men and women signified for them a condemnation of ornamentation as a sign of human pride and vanity but they suited ill with an age of rococo. Their belief in the essential equality of all men, expressed by using forms of speech which avoided terms which could be interpreted as deferential, contrasted sharply with the prevailing hierarchic social order of eighteenth century England.

The Quaker inner light was temporarily dimmed. It was never extinguished. By the beginning of the nineteenth century, Quakers began, in Staffordshire, as elsewhere, to transmute their revelation and interpretation of the promptings of the 'Inward Light' into action for the good of the community in general. At the national level the movement pioneered anti - slavery, prison reform and pacifism, and participated in a variety of philanthropic causes. These are the activities for which, today, they are best known and are universally admired. At the local level, including Staffordshire, they found scope to engage in voluntary work in the social and educational sphere. It was to be a second spring.

APPENDIX A. BIOGRAPHICAL NOTES ON SELECTED EARLY STAFFORDSHIRE FRIENDS

This selection provides examples from the database of nearly 500 biographical notes on early Staffordshire Quakers compiled for this thesis. It aims to exemplify most of the outstanding features of Quakerism in the county up to the mid-eighteenth century. It thus includes notes on Friends whose careers illustrate early evangelical fervour, who became local leaders, Friends who represent the predominantly agricultural character of the membership, and who show the entry of a commercial and manufacturing element into the membership. There are examples of Friends who sustained their conviction under persecution, who were recipients of poor relief, and of Friends who were disowned for marrying outside the Society. The sources used are those listed in the bibliography with any necessary special references added to the entry. The spelling of surnames follows that most frequently used in the original records but Christian names are modernised.

Abbreviations used : b/g burial ground; c. circa; d. died; d.e.c. de excommunicato capiendo; dist. distrained; DNB Dictionary of National Biography; DQB Dictionary of Quaker Biography; ht. hearth tax; FHL Library of the Religious Society of Friends, London; JFHS, Journal of Friends Historical Society; LMM Leek Monthly Meeting; m. married; m/h meeting house; par. parish; t/f tithe farmer; QM Quarterly Meeting; SMM Stafford Monthly Meeting; SHC Collections for a History of Staffordshire; YM Yearly Meeting.

COMBERFORD, Francis (c. 1612 - 1677), of Comberford, par. of Tamworth, later of par. of Bradley; of SMM; gentleman, J.P; m. Margaret dau. of Sir Thomas Scrymsher of Aqualate; 1655 convinced with wife and daughter Mary by Edward Burrough and Thomas Howgill; 1662 described as Quaker with estate worth £200 and 'parts enough to do mischief' ; by 1670 had moved to Bradley, and in this year was fined £20 for holding a conventicle. His dau. Mary, (d.1700), was also fined for attending conventicles in 1684 and 1685 . (SHC 4 ser. ii).

DALE, Daniel, (c. 1696 -1749), son of Joshua Dale, of LMM; 1708 -9 his apprenticeship discussed with Samuel Goostry who required premium of £5 10s. and two suits of clothing but agreed to give him two suits at expiry of term; 1714 went blind and father received 4s. a month towards his upkeep; 1715 sent to eye specialist in Worcester at LMM's expense; 1717 £1 paid to a doctor to treat him; by 1728 able to maintain himself but 1749 LMM paid his funeral expenses of £1 12s. 0^{1/4}d.

FALLOWFIELD, William, (c.1639 - 1719), of Leek; born Westmorland, and became itinerant preacher; in Staffs. by 1666 when he m. Hester Brindley and settled in Leek; 1675 fined 5s. for attending conventicle, 1681 imprisoned for over two years on writ d.e.c. for not attending church, 1688 fined £20 for speaking at Robert Mellor's funeral; 1679 travelled with John Gratton; 1673 - 1718 frequent attender at Staffs. Quarterly Meetings; attended YM in London five times between 1686 and 1715; had 'differences' (unspecified) with William Yardley and Humphrey Wolrich, those with latter eventually settled in 1688; 1689 he and Wolrich instructed to get m/houses in county registered; 1697 executor of George Howarth's will; 1706-7 granted house and croft for life by Leek MM. Buried Leek b/g. (Gratton, J., Journal).

FISHER, Anne (b. 1711), of Wolseley Park, par. of Colwich, dau. Edward Fisher; 1732 dist. corn and wool valued £1 by T. Crisp, t/f; Before 13/9/1733 m. Devell, not a Quaker; 1733 SMM instructed Richard Morris to draw up letter of disownment, which he reported he had read to her and that she took it 'without offence but did not appear dissatisfied with state she was in or manner of her marriage'. No further references.

FRITH/FIRTH, Edward, of Stafford Green (1685 - c.1747), son of Edward and Hannah F.; engaged in commerce; 1717 m. Mary Buxton; 1719 dist. 2s. by William James t/f, and 2s. by William Dearle, priest, 1735 barley worth 8s. by Philip Seckerson, 'servant to impropiator'; regular attender at SMM from 1713 - 1737; minor disciplinary and administrative tasks undertaken included 1715 warning to Jane Heacock of consequences of keeping company 'out'; 1717 letter of condemnation to own sister Mary on her marriage 'out' to Samuel Fernihough, (she offered a written testimony of remorse); 1721

drawing up removal certificate for William Fradsall, Thomas Graisle and William Nixon to Pennsylvania; letter of disownment to his own step-sister Elizabeth for her 'folly, extravagance and wantonness'; 1727 ensuring that marriage of Samuel Summerland and Esther Pixley was 'accomplished in orderly manner'. Major administrative tasks included 1718 handling local poor relief accounts, 1720 procuring new deed for Stafford m/h, 1733 financial responsibility for building accounts for new Stafford m/h. 1737 withdrew from membership of local meeting and ceased to act as London correspondent; 1738 stated to have become bankrupt, having disregarded advice given him; public testimony made of his and his wife's disownment.

IRELAND, Thomas, and family, (c. 1683 - before 6/8/1737), farmer, of Mucklestone (Keele meeting, LMM).; m. Alice Simpson 1725, 5 children. Quaker by 1729 when dist. corn worth 20s. by Rand. Butters under rector of Mucklestone, and again 1732 by Thomas Preston t/f, corn worth £1 10s. 1737 in distress through illness and 20s. spent on him ; d. same year; widow Alice had £3 3s.8d. disbursed on her account, and she received £2 12s. every half year from 1744 to 1753; by 1756 in care of Phebe Smith who received 22d. a week until 1758 when Alice died. 1745 her son John d. aged 11, and LMM spent 16s.10d. on his funeral. Alice, daughter, born 1733, mar. 'out' in 1766 and disowned. Thomas, son, apprenticed on 2/1/1752 to Simon Liefot, shoemaker, who agreed to pay him 4d. a week for first year rising to 14d. in sixth year, apprenticeship to be void if Liefot left Leek, or failed in business, or did not pay his wages; 1752 LMM informed he had left his master.

MELLOR, John, (c. 1652 - 1717/8) of Whitehough, par. of Ipstones, younger son. of Robert Mellor; yeoman of LMM. 1689 m. Phebe, (died 1734) dau. of John ap John; children incl. Phebe (m. out 1714 and their dau. m. Sir Brooke Boothby of Ashbourne Hall), Elizabeth b.1691, Catherine b. 1694, Hannah b.1699 (died infant). 1675 fined 5s. for attending conventicle; 1685 dist. 6 oxen and 2 kine worth £28 for non-payment of tithes. 1687 trustee for land given by Alice Bowman for b/g in Alstonefield; 1693 feoffee of George Gent's grant of land for Leek m/h; 1694 executor of George Howarth's will. 1708 appointed visitor for discipline. In will bequeathed £20 to poor Leek Quakers.

MORRIS, Richard, (c. 1663 - c. 1743), son of Richard M. of Rugeley SMM. Mar. (1) Esther..(?).. (d. 1708, two daus.) and (2) in 1711, Elizabeth Garland (d. 1739) of Mansfield. Sufferings incl. dist. of between 4s. and £1 7s.4s. for non-payment of tithes, at hands of Thos. Holland, Wm. Holland, Richard Holland and Francis Wood and Henry Briley, t/fs, from 1710 - 1741. Important administrative role in SMM and frequent attender at QM for which he probably acted as clerk, as also did his brother, Moses (d. 1739); occasionally attended YM in London, and in 1743, at age of 80, excused himself from such an attendance.

OSBORNE, Charles, (d. 1729), born Bilston, son of curate (who d. 1684); served in army 1684 ; manufacturer of tobacco boxes. Mar. with at least two children, Jane and Charles. Convinced after father's death and before 1697 when his house in Bilston registered as m/h. Later settled in Wolverhampton, which he represented at SMM; regular attender at QM in which he was a major figure, and occasional attender at YM. 1710 given certificate by SMM to travel as 'Public Friend'. His son Charles mar. 'out' 1725. His son-in-law John Fowler, a draper, made fortune, moved to Worcester and Wolverhampton meeting faded out.

PIXLEY, Walter (bur. Uttoxeter 1718), shoemaker , of Uttoxeter (SMM); 1675 mar. Christine Alsop of Ingestre, at least five children. Excommunicated as Quaker 1665; c.1680 imprisoned. 1666 assessed at three hearths in h/t; 1675 gave £2 towards cost of Stafford m/h; 1705 made loan of £14 8s. 9d. towards cost of new Uttoxeter m/h of which he was trustee; represented Uttoxeter regularly at SMM; 1697 attended YM; 1707 - 1715 represented SMM at QM seven times; 1706 mention of differences (unspecified) with John Alsop and 1707 both ordered to accept the judgement of Charles Osborne. Quarrelled with son Walter, who died 1706, leaving numerous debts; urged to assist his son's family because he had never given him his 'child's part' as he had to other children.

PRESTON, John, (c.1631 - 1721), of par. of Tixall, SMM, farmer. Convinced by c. 1663. 1674 subscribed £2 10s.to cost of Stafford m/h, 1675 subscribed 10s. to

b/g. 1671 first recorded distraint by Ralph Phillips, priest, corn and hay eight years at £2 per annum; from 1690 to 1716 regular yearly distraints to local priest or t/f averaging £2. Attended SMM frequently, last attendance 1716 at age of 89; attended QM occasionally; administrative tasks included 1679 and 1688 reporting on 'cleanness' of SMM members on payment of tithes; 1693 Oaken b/g papers to be lodged in his hands. Children included son John, distrained for non-payment of tithes from 1713. 1730 Mary, possibly a granddaughter, mar. 'out. '

TAYLOR, Thomas, (1618 - 1682), born Skipton; educ. Oxford; licensed to preach; lecturer in Richmond, Yorks.; c. 1651 curate in Preston Patrick, Westmorland; convinced by Fox 1652/3 at Swarthmore, and resigned living. One of First Publishers of Truth, accompanied Fox to Lancashire; 1653 - 5 and 1657 - 8 imprisoned in Appleby, and later in York, Leicester, and Coventry; from 1662 ten years in Stafford gaol on writ of praemunire; wife Margaret rented house in Stafford; occasionally allowed out; taught children, wrote books and preached to passers-by from his cell window on the iniquities of bell-ringing, bonfires, maypoles, dancing, theatre-going, etc. 1672 released under Declaration of Indulgence; 1679 fined £20 for preaching at house in Keele. Received financial help from local meeting while in gaol, as did wife Margaret (d. 1682). Collected works published 1697 under title Truth's Innocency and Simplicity showing through Conversion. (DNB, DQB, Swarthmore MSS).

TOFT, John, (c. 1683 - 1768), son of John and Ann T. of Haregate, Leek; button manufacturer LMM. Educated in Church of England but became convinced Quaker before age of 20 and served as 'minister' for upwards of 60 years (Toft MSS, Friends' House Library). 1716 mar. Martha Whitehead. With brother Joshua played leading role in affairs of LMM, his tasks including the administration of local Quaker poor relief. Sufferings were for relatively small amounts of pewter and mohair worth between 2s.6d. and 16s., from 1710 to 1733. Served as trustee for Geo. Howarth's charity from 1718 and for Leek m/h from 1737. Bur. Leek b/g.

WOLRICH, Humphrey (c. 1633 - 1707), shoemaker, of Newcastle-under-Lyme; mostly associated with SMM. 1654 convinced by Rich. Hickock while going to Baptist meeting in Staffs; preached in Staffs. and convinced numerous relations in Shallowford and elsewhere. 1658 imprisoned in London; 1659 baptised woman convert in London, (action not condemned by Fox); imprisoned again 1661 for keeping hat on before Lord Mayor. Wrote number of pamphlets including A Declaration of the Tender Mercies of the Lord, The Rock of Ages Known, and A Visitation of the Captive Seed of Israel. 1661 imprisoned in Staffs. for refusing to swear oath of allegiance; in prison wrote "An Address to the Magistrates, Priests and People of Staffordshire"; 1662 imprisoned in Chester Castle; 1665 excommunicated, together with wife Margaret, at episcopal visitation of Newcastle -under-Lyme; 1671 fined 5s. for attendance at conventicle in Vincent Haywood's house in Keele in 1670, plus £3 share of Haywood's fine which latter was unable to pay. Involved in disputes with other Friends including 1672 signed letter of self-condemnation in London for his 'forward zeal against John Abraham', 1673 differences with William Yardley and William Fallowfield, 1677 wrote letter condemning himself for accusing both of making men's meetings 'a cloak for bad things'. 1680 one of Friends appointed to produce account of First Publishers of Truth in Staffs. 1682 informed upon by churchwardens of Keele for preaching at funeral, and fined £20 by Justice Sneyd, refused to take oath and imprisoned. He d. London July/August 1707.

YARDLEY, William, (1632 - 1693) of Dairy House, par. of Horton, LMM. 1663 mar. Jane Heath ; 1666 assessed at six hearths in h/t . 1654 convinced by Richard Hickock ; 1655 imprisoned 19 weeks for interrupting church service in Leek; 1665 excommunicated at episcopal visitation; 1669 conventicles held in his house; 1675 fined £20 for preaching at conventicle. 1673 mention of 'differences' with William Fallowfield and Humphrey Wolrich. 1681-2 emigrated with wife and family to Pennsylvania where he was bur. on 9/5/1693. 1691 house of his son Thomas in Norton-in-the-Moors registered as m/h.

**APPENDIX B. EARLY STAFFORDSHIRE QUAKER EMIGRANTS TO
AMERICA 1677 - 1743 recorded in local Quaker archives**

(Sources : Staffs. C. R.O. D 31591/1 Quarterly Meeting M.B. 1672 - 1743;
D 3159/3/1 Leek Monthly Meeting M.B. 1705 - 1737; D 3159/2/1,
Stafford Monthly Meeting M.B.; D 3159/2/26 Correspondence Book ;
D 3159/3/5 Removal Certificates)

1677	Dankworth (Dungworth), Richard
1681/2	Yardley, William , wife Jane and family
1687	Moore, Mordecai
1700	Heath, Robert, wife Susannah and five children Till, William and Rosamund Dilworth, Ann
1701	Armitt, Richard, and Sarah Stretch, Hannah and Sarah
1703	Stretch, Peter, wife Margery and family
1711	Taylor, Joseph
1721	Frith, Anne
1722	Graisley, Thomas and father and mother England, Lewis, wife and seven children England, John and family England, Joseph and wife Nixon, William and family
1723	Tilburne, Richard
1724	Shipley, William, wife and family
1726	Shipley, Thomas

APPENDIX C. A NOTE ON QUAKER DATING

The 'Old Style' (Julian) calendar began the New Year on 25 March. The calendar became increasingly divergent from the solar year and in 1582 Pope Gregory XIII ordered the use of a reformed 'New Style' calendar which began the year on 1 January and omitted ten days in October 1582. It was not until the mid-eighteenth century that in Great Britain and Ireland the adoption of the 'New Style' (Gregorian) calendar was implemented by Chesterfield's Act, 24 Geo. II, c. 23, passed in March 1751. The Act decreed that the following 1 January should be the first day of 1752 and that eleven days, between 2 September and 14 September, should be omitted from the calendar. From the beginning of the movement Quakers had abandoned the old pagan names of months and days, substituting 'First Month' for March, 'Second Month' for April, 'First Day' for Sunday and so on. Although under the 'Old Style' calendar the last seven days of March were reckoned as belonging to the new year, Quakers reckoned the whole of March as 'First Month'.

For convenience of reference all dates in this study cited from original Quaker manuscripts are shown as they are written. Even before 1752 local scribes varied slightly in practice, occasionally indicating the 'New Style' by a subscript or superscript figure.

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- D 3159/2/25 Records of Disownments
- D 3159/2/26 Correspondence Book 1701-1838
- D 3159/2/47-8-9-50 Property Deeds
- D 3159/3/1 Leek Monthly Meeting Minute Book 1705 - 1737
- D 3159/3/3 Record of Sufferings
- D 3159/3/5 Certificates of Removal
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