



# “Mocked, scoffed, persecuted, and made a gazeing stock”: The Resistance of the Religious Society of Friends (Quakers) in Post-Toleration South-East Wales c.1689–1836

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# EPI-REVEL

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"Mocked, scoffed, persecuted, and made a  
gazeing stock": The Resistance of the Religious  
Society of Friends (Quakers) in Post-  
Toleration South-East Wales c.1689–1836<sup>1</sup>

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During the 1640s and 1650s, a redefining of religious worship occurred which was supported by the growth of publishing and itinerant preaching. Welsh converts to Quakerism in the 1650s, who came from a variety of social backgrounds,<sup>2</sup> sought solace from the uncertainties of a world that had been turned upside down.<sup>3</sup> The Friends rejected many of the accoutrements of the parish church by creating a faith based upon simplicity and plainness, and upon their own spiritual experiences.<sup>4</sup> Their beliefs fundamentally challenged the accepted religious and social traditions of the communities in which they lived. For example, they did not believe in a consecrated building and a professional ministry; they refused to swear oaths; pay tithes or maintenance to the parish church; declined to remove their hats to social superiors, and adopted the use of 'thee' and 'thou' as the means of address. Thus, the radical religious doctrines proposed by this new breed of religious zealots in a variety of tracts, pamphlets and more directly their holding impromptu of religious services and discussions in markets, waste grounds and village churchyards enflamed an already tense situation. These actions proved to be provocative and led to persecution, yet like the early Christians whom they professed to emulate Friends were prepared to undergo physical suffering at the hands of the clergy and local magistrates.

As a community of believers, Quakers have consistently stood firm against the constraints imposed by the ecclesiastical and civil authorities. Many noteworthy studies examine the nature of persecution of this religious congregation and their dogged resistance to their oppressors in the period before the introduction of the Act of Toleration in 1689<sup>5</sup> Indeed, for many historians of Quakerism the full

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<sup>1</sup> The latter date represents the amalgamation of the Monmouthshire Meeting with the South Wales Monthly Meeting.

<sup>2</sup> For examples, see R. C. Allen, "The Society of Friends in Wales: The case of Monmouthshire c.1654–1836" (Ph.D. thesis, University of Wales, Aberystwyth, 1999, unpublished), ch. 2.

<sup>3</sup> For a stimulating analysis of the radicalism of this period, see C. Hill, *The World Turned Upside Down: Radical Ideas during the English Revolution* (Harmondsworth: Penguin, 1975).

<sup>4</sup> Helpful studies on the origins and doctrines of the Society are provided in W. C. Braithwaite, *The Beginnings of Quakerism* (London: Macmillan, 1912; York: Sessions, 2nd ed., 1981), *passim*; J. W. Frost, "The Dry Bones of Quaker Theology", *Church History*, 89 (1970), pp. 508–517; B. Reay, "Quakerism and Society" in *Radical Religion in the English Revolution*, ed. by J. F. Mc Gregor and B. Reay (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1984), ch. 6. The roles of George Fox and Margaret Fell are further examined in I. Ross, *Margaret Fell: Mother of Quakerism* (York: Sessions, 2nd ed., 1949); H. L. Ingle, *First Among Friends: George Fox and the creation of Quakerism* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1994).

<sup>5</sup> The study of British Quakerism has flourished since the late-1960s with a number of useful analyses on their persecution and survival as a religious community. See R. T. Vann, *The*

fury of persecution was witnessed in the pre-Toleration period, but it is important to stress that Friends were still distrained of their goods for many years after 1689. They were also excommunicated for non-attendance at church services, subjected to harassment by clergymen and the courts, and imprisoned for their refusal to pay tithes or supply the militia with substitutes. This paper will take account of the continued suffering of Friends in south-east Wales, and their dogged determination to uphold their religious convictions from the late-seventeenth century to the early decades of the nineteenth century.

## Quakers and Church leaders

### I. Quaker 'deviancy' and disturbing ministers

The provocative actions of Friends, which had been apparent in the years leading up to 1689, still infuriated clergyman after the Toleration Act had been passed. The very presence of Friends could arouse hostility and the label of deviancy could still be attached to Quakers in spite of their growing respectability in Wales. At a Quarterly Meeting in October 1697 there was an acknowledgement that, among the Quaker congregation, there were still members who behaved like "ranterers."<sup>6</sup> In this example, Friends condemned William Jenkins of Goetre for possessing a "very presumptuous blasphemous Ranting spirit."<sup>7</sup> Although the meeting was prepared to condone his actions, the damage was apparent as Jenkin's actions gave people "occasion to speak very hard of us and of ye truth."<sup>8</sup> Similar concerns were expressed on 24 July 1707 by the Society for the Promotion of Christian Knowledge (S.P.C.K.). They referred to the growth of the Quaker community at Llantrisant on the Glamorgan-Monmouthshire border following the return of John Bevan, a former Glamorgan Quaker landowner, from America. The local clergyman, Richard Harris, complained about these

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*Social Development of English Quakerism* (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1969); B. Reay, *The Quakers and the English Revolution* (London: Temple Smith, 1985); C. Horle, *The Quakers and the English Legal System, 1660–1688* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 1988); David Scott, *Quakerism in York 1650–1720* (York: Borthwick "Papers 80", 1991); Nicholas Morgan, *Lancashire Quakers and the Establishment 1660–1730* (Halifax: Ryburn Academic, 1993); S. Wright, *Friends in York: the Dynamics of Quaker Revival 1780–1860* (Keele: University of Keele Press, 1995); T. A. Davies, *The Quakers in English Society 1655–1725* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2000). The persecution of Quakers in south-east Wales is provided in Thomas Mardy Rees, *A History of the Quakers in Wales* (Carmarthen: W. Spurrell, 1925), chs. 3 and 4; M. F. Williams, "The Society of Friends in Glamorgan 1654–1900" (M.A. thesis, University of Wales, Aberystwyth, 1950, unpublished) ch. 1; Allen, "The Society of Friends in Wales", chs. 4 and 5; Christine Trevett, *Quaker Women Prophets in England and Wales 1650–1700* (Lampeter: Edwin Mellen Press, 2000), chs. 4, 5, and 7.

<sup>6</sup> The Ranter movement is discussed in A. L. Morton, *The World of the Ranters* (London: Lawrence and Wishart, 1970); J. F. McGregor, "Ranterism and the Development of Early Quakerism", *Journal of Religious History*, 9 (1977), pp. 349–363.

<sup>7</sup> Glamorgan Archive Service (hereafter G.A.S.), D/DSF/325 (no pagination), Quarterly meeting minute dated 6-8-1697.

<sup>8</sup> *Ibid.*

developments and, as a result, the S.P.C.K. agreed “to putt some of the Tracts ag[ains]t the Quakers in to the next packet that shall be sent to him.”<sup>9</sup>

Friends, however, continued to hold outdoor or “gathered” meetings at Monmouth, Newport, Pontypool and Abergavenny — market towns in Monmouthshire — and elsewhere in south-east Wales. In 1707, these meetings caused Thomas Andrews, the vicar of Trefddyn parish at Pontypool, to complain in an open letter that “for some weeks past [Friends had] taken a very Riotous Liberty of assembling in the open streets.”<sup>10</sup> Andrews also testified that in these meetings itinerant Quaker preachers simply resorted to verbal attacks upon the clergy rather than offering any new doctrines. He stated that “they invidiously and falsly reproach’d our Establish’d Worship, as Anti-Scriptural and Carnal; Our Ecclesiastical Discipline, as Tyrannical and Ungodly; and the Ministers of Religion, as Mercenary and Hypocritical, regarding more the handfulls of Barley, than the Good of Souls.”<sup>11</sup> Similarly in 1707, Andrews condemned the visit by Monmouthshire Friends to Barbara James, a sick clergyman’s wife. This visit, he argued, left her ranting for several days as her mind was corrupted into believing that those who received tithes or went to the parish church were in league with the devil.<sup>12</sup>

In the same year, Roger Jenkin of Llanfrechfa parish in Monmouthshire, was indicted “for a Ryot” with several Glamorgan Friends at the Quarter Sessions held at Cowbridge. Jenkin, along with John Bevan of Tref-y-Rhyg, Llantrisant, had held a meeting at the house of John and Priscilla How of St. Hillary parish in Glamorganshire, and were accused of not subscribing to the Declaration of Allegiance, holding an unlicensed meeting, and conducting an additional “illegal” assembly on the common.<sup>13</sup> The Friends were denied a copy of the indictment by the Quarter Sessions “unless they appeared in court and demanded it.”<sup>14</sup> The disturbance of ministers during their services had not ceased either. Thomas Andrews recorded that, although the Quakers professed meekness, it was a

sham and that for all their pretended meekness in turning t’other cheek upon an Inquiry, they can yet (occasionally) give me first blow, and, without any provocation, fly in the face even of the Constitution itself.<sup>15</sup>

<sup>9</sup> M. Clement (ed.), *Correspondence and Minutes of the S.P.C.K. relating to Wales 1699-1740* (Cardiff: University of Wales Press, 1952), p. 265.

<sup>10</sup> Thomas Andrews, *A Serious Expostulation with the People call’d Quakers: by way of a letter to a Parishioner of that persuasion at Pontypool* (London: 1708), p. iii.

<sup>11</sup> Thomas Andrews, *A Serious Expostulation with the People call’d Quakers: by way of a letter to a Parishioner of that persuasion at Pontypool* (London: 1708), p. iii.

<sup>12</sup> *Ibid.*, p. iv.

<sup>13</sup> Library of the Society of Friends, London, (hereafter L.S.F.), Meetings for Sufferings, vol. 18, p. 359. (Minutes dated 19-10-1707).

<sup>14</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>15</sup> Andrews, *A Serious Exposition*, p. iii.

He went on to comment that on 22 January 1707 his service at Trefddyn parish was disrupted by Christopher Meidel, a Norwegian Quaker,<sup>16</sup> Philip Mashman, another itinerant preacher, Roger Jenkins, Isaac Morgan, and other Monmouthshire Friends who made “several antick postures.” He was again disturbed while concluding his sermon by Meidel’s pronouncements on the nature of sin. Meidel suggested that pride, idolatry, whoredom and drunkenness were sins, but Andrews observed that “he taught us no new doctrine at that time, unless that it was absurd in men to bow at the name of Jesus, when Jesus was within ‘em.”<sup>17</sup> Andrews felt that the Quakers had “insulted the Constitution” because, although toleration had been granted, the government had not intended nonconformists to undermine the church’s authority or rant at the clergy during divine service.<sup>18</sup> In their defence, the Friends argued that the accusation of riotous assembly could not be substantiated as the Society “neither use force nor Arms, nor had any other Intent than to worship the Lord.”<sup>19</sup>

## II. Attacks on the Law and economic motives for persecution

Friends’ desire for equality and their attacks on the law, wealth and social status also drew hostility from prosperous members of the local community as well as from those who jealously guarded their social position. Complaints that the Quakers were contemptuous of the authority of magistrates are common in the period before Toleration and after.<sup>20</sup> As Geraint Jenkins has remarked the Friends:

aroused more hostility and fear than any other radical sect in this period. Their inflammatory language, outrageous codes of behaviour and bellicose postures made them much more than simply squalid nuisances. Churchmen and Puritans closed ranks against them because they feared that such dangerous malcontents would never rest until the world was well and truly turned upside down.<sup>21</sup>

Coupled with their attack on wealth was the onslaught on privilege waged by Friends. Implicit in the Quaker code of conduct was the assertion that no man

<sup>16</sup> For additional references, see L. S. F., *Minutes for Sufferings*, vol. 18, p. 126; H. J. Cadbury, “Christopher Meidel and the first Norwegian contacts with Quakerism”, *Harvard Theological Review*, 3, (1941), pp. 7–23; K. L. Carroll, “The First Publishers of Truth in Norway”, *Journal of the Friends’ Historical Society*, 53, 3 (1974), pp. 226–231.

<sup>17</sup> Andrews, *A Serious Exposition*, p. iv.

<sup>18</sup> Thomas Andrews, *A Modest Enquiry into the weight of Theodore Eccleston’s reply to a Serious Expostulation with the Quakers* (London: 1709), p. 53.

<sup>19</sup> Theodore Eccleston, *A Reply to Tho. Andrews’ letter to parishioner of Pontypool, called “A Serious Expostulation with the people call’d Quakers”* (London: J. Sowle, 1708), pp. iv–v.

<sup>20</sup> From May 1655, Quakers sent lists to Parliament suggesting appropriate magistrates. By 1659 they were asked to supply lists of people they thought capable of upholding the position of a magistrate. Unfortunately, only the Radnorshire list has been preserved among the State Papers. See N. Penney and R. A. Roberts (eds.), “Extracts from State Papers relating to Friends”, *Journal of the Friends’ Historical Society*, Supplements 8–11, 1910–13, p. 115.

<sup>21</sup> G. H. Jenkins, *Protestant Dissenters in Wales* (Cardiff: University of Wales Press, 1992), p. 38.

should adopt a superior attitude simply because of his social position, and as all men were equal in the sight of God, Friends refused to act with deference to those in authority. In keeping with this assertion they refused to “hat-honour” their social superiors or to address them according to their titles. This attitude, as the following Welsh ballad shows, was not confined to Friends, but it was one method adopted by them to distinguish between the honour accorded to God and that which men had usurped:

One day a learned bishop,  
In measured voice and deep,  
Pronounced the benediction  
Above his gathered sheep;  
And listening with attention  
To what his Lordship said,  
He noticed there a peasant  
His hat upon his head.  
The Bishop when he saw him,  
In anger did cry out,  
‘Now there, while I am speaking,  
Take off thy hat, thou lout!’  
‘I won’t’ the peasant answered,  
‘The merit must be small  
Of words that will not enter  
The brain through hat and all.’<sup>22</sup>

Examples of the refusal to remove hats are quite commonly recorded in Friends’ minutes as well as in the records of their adversaries. One of the fullest Welsh accounts was provided in 1741 by Thomas Lewis, a member of the Shirenewton Meeting near Chepstow in Monmouthshire. He commented that:

In a little time a small persecution did arise so that I was to appear before one of the Rulers of yt Country where I had been and it was at a Publick House where much people was and the custom of this country was to bow unto Idols, which I was not to do. Then he was in a rage, and thought to compell me; but thro’ mercy I feared him not which could kill the body. When he saw that he could not prevail

<sup>22</sup> “The Bishop and the Peasant” (Yr Esgob a’r Gwladwr). The original Welsh version given below was based upon the singing of Thomas James of Llanofor Inn, Pontypridd, and is provided in *Cylchgrawn Cymdeithas Alawon Gwerin Cymru*. *Journal of Welsh Folk Song Society*, I (1909), p. 27. The translated version was presented in *Cylchgrawn Cymdeithas Alawon Gwerin Cymru II*, 1910, p. 45; *Journal of the Friends’ Historical Society*, 9 (1912), pp. 171–172:

‘Fel ‘ry.doedd rhyw Esgob  
Mewn modd dysgedig iawn,  
Ryw dro’n cyhoeddi’r fendith  
Uwchben rhyw lannaid llawn,  
‘Roedd yno ryw hen wladwr,  
Tu fewn i’r adail fawr  
Yn gwrando’n brysur ddigon  
Heb dynu’i het i lawr.  
Yr Esgob hyn pan welai  
A waeddai maes yn hy  
‘Tyn d’het i lawr y drelin  
Tra yn fy ngwrando i’  
‘Na wna’ be’r dyn yn wrol  
‘Ni thal eich bendith fawr  
Os nad a’i mewn i’r menydd  
Heb dynu’r het i lawr.’

over me, he compelled the people to take off my hat, I believe that I had strength enough to bear it... afterwards I did talk with that same Ruler several times without any more reverence than Mordecay gave unto Hamar, and within his own private chamber where I drank without any bowing or crouching. I do earnestly desire that such who have a zeal for the House of God, that they take care not to Bow and crouch unto Idols [...].<sup>23</sup>

Friends' adoption of plain clothing and the acceptance of equality implicit in these actions also seemed to threaten the very foundations of social stability from the mid-seventeenth century onwards.

Evidence of Quaker deviance and radicalism, however, is far outweighed by the outlandish accusations made against them. It is possible to appreciate the contemporary fears given the growth of the movement and its scathing attacks on magistracy and ministry. Indeed, in the pre-Toleration period to be a Quaker was equated with being a miscreant, whether the Quaker was law-abiding or not. The importance of identifying Quakers with such deviant behaviour has not, however, been made clear. It is possible that by defaming Friends and making them into social outcasts in their own communities the popular mind would associate such measures as ridding the land of God's enemies.<sup>24</sup> In return for acting against his enemies God's favour would be bestowed, but if there was a tendency towards harbouring delinquents and the corrupters of God's law then He would exact retribution. Indeed, as Natalie Davis has suggested, the attacks on the Quakers represented a defence of "true doctrine or ridding the community of defilement."<sup>25</sup> Furthermore, it can be argued that as the Quakers created their own separate communities they were despised for their rejection of those rituals associated with births, marriages and burials. Thus, Friends were seen as not only attacking traditional social orthodoxy but also interrupting the accepted patterns of life.

The adoption of pronouns 'thee' and 'thou' when they addressed others, similarly aroused local antagonism.<sup>26</sup> Shortly after he became a Quaker in the late-1650s, Richard Davies from Welshpool in Montgomeryshire wrote that when he tendered the terms 'thee' and 'thou' to his employer:

she took a stick and gave me such a blow upon my bare head, that made it swell and sore for a considerable time; she was so disturbed

<sup>23</sup> G.A.S., D/DSF/353 (no pagination), monthly meeting minutes dated 28-10-1741.

<sup>24</sup> For those in authority the distinction between the actions of James Nayler and Quakers who refused to hat-honour or conform to church doctrines and obligations, notably on the issue of tithes, was certainly not clear. All such activities were classified as deviant.

<sup>25</sup> N. Z. Davis, "The Rites of Violence: Religious Riot in Sixteenth Century France", *Past and Present*, 59 (1973), pp. 61–65, and cited in Reay, *The Quakers and the English Revolution*, p. 77.

<sup>26</sup> See R. Darnell, "The Second Person Singular Pronoun in English: The Society of Friends", *Western Canadian Journal of Anthropology*, I (1970), pp. 1–11; R. Bauman "Aspects of 17th Century Quaker Rhetoric", *Quarterly Journal of Speech* 56 (1970), pp. 67–74; R. Bauman, *Let your words be few. Symbolism of Speaking and Silence among Seventeenth-Century Quakers* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1983), pp. 44–46; Reay, *The Quakers and the English Revolution*, pp. 44–45; M. P. Graves, "Functions of Key Metaphor in Early Quaker Sermons", *Quarterly Journal of Speech*, 69 (1983), pp. 364–378.

at it, that she swore she would kill me, though she would be hang'd  
for me; the enemy so possessed her, that she was quite out of order;  
though beforetime she seldom, if ever, gave me an angry word.<sup>27</sup>

The refusal by Friends to remove their hats while in church and to conform to traditional patterns of behaviour also continued in the eighteenth century, and must have raised considerable animosity in an age when deference and obedience were expected. For example, Thomas Birch of Trefddyn parish, in a deposition before Thomas Andrews in 1708, stated that Monmouthshire Friends regularly refused to hat-honour or 'properly' address clergymen or social superiors. Consequently, Andrews accused the Friends of disturbing the peace and produced two tracts entitled *A Serious Expostulation* and *A Modest Enquiry* in the vain hope of rescuing them from "their strong delusions."<sup>28</sup>

After this date, however, relations between the Quaker community and the authorities were certainly less frosty. Indeed, by 1743, Friends were warned by the Welsh Yearly Meeting to be more circumspect and diligent in their relations with the clergy and civil authorities:

In all manner of conversation let none be rash and forward in entering into disputes with any (preachers or others) but rather know your spirits truly seasoned with pure wisdom from God wch may reach to his pure witness in them for it is only as you keep humble in this you can be of service to them. Other wise you may do harm and beget in their minds a dishonourable esteem of that Truth you profess.<sup>29</sup>

In 1746, when Joseph Rule, a Quaker gentleman from Llanfair Isgoed parish near Usk in Monmouthshire, proposed a preaching tour through the 'West Country', Friends refused to grant him a certificate. They suggested that such a tour could damage their relationship with the authorities by bringing "Friends to blame by disturbing ye National way of Worship under whose mild Government we enjoy such liberty."<sup>30</sup> Therefore, leading members of the Society were cautious not to irritate the more influential sections of the community, as this would have jeopardised the cordial arrangements, which then existed between Friends and the authorities.

### III. Opening Shops on Sundays or holy days

The reluctance of Quakers to close their premises on Sundays or holy days nevertheless led to the appearance of two Pontypool Friends at the Ecclesiastical Court at Llandaff, Glamorgan. Elisha Beadles and Mary Rosser were excommunicated in 1706 for failing to appear at the court to answer the charge of having acted inappropriately on Good Friday in 1705. They made an appeal to

<sup>27</sup> Richard Davies, *An Account of the Convincement, Exercises and Services and Travels of that Ancient Servant of the Lord, Richard Davies* (London: 1710), p. 27; Rees, *The Quakers in Wales*, p. 48.

<sup>28</sup> Andrews, *A Serious Exposition*, p. 2.

<sup>29</sup> G.A.S., D/DSF/2, Yearly Meeting minute book, p. 671.

<sup>30</sup> G.A.S., D/DSF/354 (no pagination), monthly meeting minute dated 17-6-1746. Cf. Friends' denunciation of a fellow member, Thomas Williams of Llwyna, who they admonished several times in the 1750s for his 'ill-preaching'. *Ibid.*, minutes dated 6-12-1750, 7-2-1753.



the Archbishop of Canterbury to lift the excommunication order. It was quickly ascertained by London Friends that the two Monmouthshire members were illegally cited to appear before the ecclesiastical court. In both cases, the excommunication order hampered trade as many people took advantage to avoid paying their debts, and the Friends were unable to “sue ym for it while we lye under it.”<sup>31</sup> The London correspondents, acting on behalf of the Pontypool Friends, examined whether it was lawful to close shops on Good Friday “seeing that on the same day two markets were kept nigh to Pontypool”; exposed the contradictory instructions of the two informants; and questioned whether it was morally more justifiable to open shops on Good Friday than to allow the people to play nine-pins and for Revd. Thomas Andrews, the local clergyman, “to play with them (as reported) after he comes from saying or reading his service.”<sup>32</sup> Finally, Beadles later noted that Andrews wished to distance himself from the affair, and it was alleged that the clergyman had not occasioned the presentment:

whereas one of the wardens will take his oath that ye priest would not sign his p[re]sentm[en]t unless our names were in, withall saying yt if they would not present us, he would p[re]sent ym and yet how he looks to shuffle and make himselfe cleare from it, but he cannot.<sup>33</sup>

Moreover, as Beadles was a wealthy man, having inherited considerable land and property<sup>34</sup> as well as having married a daughter of a prosperous Quaker landowner and industrialist, John Handley, and had family ties with the influential Hanbury family, his social position in the local community would, it is presumed, have helped him and his co-religionists avoid such conflict.

#### IV. Tithes

A further source of contention was the refusal of Friends to pay church taxes. Quakers in the post-Toleration years were still forced to endure the rigours of the

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<sup>31</sup> L.S.F., *Meeting for Sufferings*, vol. 18, pp. 66, 85, 90, and 150. (Letters and minutes dated 9-2-1706, 10-3-1706, 24-3-1706, 27-7-1706); L.S.F., Craig Horle, “Transcripts of the original records of Suffering”, II, p. 253 (no. 669).

<sup>32</sup> L.S.F., Craig Horle, “Transcripts of the original records of Suffering”, II, pp. 255 (no. 673), and 256 (no. 674).

<sup>33</sup> L.S.F., Craig Horle, “Transcripts of the original records of Suffering”, II, p. 257 (no. 675).

<sup>34</sup> In 1695, his father died and he was left two parcels of land in Llangatwg Feibion Afel, and he later owned a copyhold estate in Pontypool, an estate called Ty Coch, the Lower House and other lands in Llanfihangel Ystum Llywern as well as owning goods worth a total of £ 691. 6s. 6d. at the time of his death in 1734. This sum included shop goods worth £ 350 and debts worth £ 70 owed from “sundry persons for shop goods”. See Public Record Office (hereafter P.R.O.), PROB 11/424. The will of John Beadles of Llanfihangel Ystum Llywern. Dated c.1695; National Library of Wales (hereafter N.L.W.), LL/1734/132. The will of Elisha Beadles of Pontypool. Dated 18 May; Gwent Record Office, D.361.0109.10, D.361.0113, D.361.0118. (Lease dated 25-26 June 1730); J.A. Bradney, *A History of Monmouthshire from the coming of the Normans into Wales to the present time*, 4 vols. (London: Mitchell, Hughes and Clarke, 1904–1933), I, p. 50.

law with their non-payment of the tithe.<sup>35</sup> The Yearly, Quarterly and Monthly Meeting minutes indicate that many Friends in south-east Wales were prepared to suffer distraint rather than capitulate to the tithe demands of their adversaries whom they believed to be “mercenary and hypocritical, regarding more the handfulls of barley, than the good of souls.”<sup>36</sup> A damning critique of the clergy and the collection of tithes was written in 1741 by Thomas Lewis of Shirenewton who stated that:

If a poor man have a few goats upon a free common they claim a share in them, if a poor widow have a couple of ewes and lambs they likewise claim a share in them, but if a weak one or Fatherless that lie upon a Bed of Straw perhaps with hungry Bellies (whilst Thieves and Robbers fare sumptuously every day) and any of them happen to meet any such poor Fatherless or any weak old Body in the way, it is much if they open their mouths unto them much less give them an Advice concerning their latter end [...]. I could never find that the said Thieves or Robbers do ever own any poor or such that are relieved by parishes while they are alive. But when they are dead and laid in the Grave then the Thieves and Robbers Cry out the Soul of our Dear Brother or Dear Sister here departed. O the Leaven of the Pharisees which is Hypocrisy! The Sons of Ely do exercise Lordship over the People! They put money at usury, and purchase Houses and Lands with the gain of oppressions.<sup>37</sup>

Thus, Quaker farmers continued to lose the most precious section of their crops and stock, the tradespeople their valuable items of cloth and groceries, while poorer Friends, such as widows, were distrained even of their kitchen utensils. It has been estimated that, in spite of the better relations which began to exist between Friends and the local authorities, between c.1690–1736 at least 1100 Friends had been prosecuted in the Exchequer Court on account of non-payment of tithes, and between c.1700–1740 over £ 167,000 had been taken in fines.<sup>38</sup>

One noteworthy case in the last years of the seventeenth century and in the early eighteenth century is that of Roger and Thomas Jenkin of Llanfrechfa parish who were subpoenaed into the Exchequer at the suit of Samuel Hodges, for a £ 5 annual demand. This had been made conditional upon both of them for six years.<sup>39</sup> As a consequence of the suit, both men were sentenced to imprisonment for failure to comply with the demand. Thomas Jenkin was committed to gaol in Abergavenny in Monmouthshire on 11 April 1698, while Roger was committed to the same prison three years later on 24 June 1701. They remained imprisoned

<sup>35</sup> For a wider discussion on the nature of tithe demands and their opponents in the post-Toleration era, see E. J. Evans, “Tithing Customs and Disputes: the Evidence of Glebe Terriers, 1698–1850”, *Agricultural History Review*, 18 (1970), pp. 17–35.

<sup>36</sup> Eccelston, *A Modest Enquiry*, p. 53.

<sup>37</sup> G.A.S., D/DSF/353, minutes dated 5-8-1741 (2nd paper).

<sup>38</sup> See W. C. Braithwaite, *Second Period of Quakerism* (London: MacMillan, 1919; 2nd ed., York: Sessions, 1979), p. 181; A. Lloyd, *Quaker Social History 1669–1738* (London: Longman, 1950), p. 101.

<sup>39</sup> The tithe was later proven by various depositions to be only £ 1.16.0. for the whole six-year period.

there until 31 April 1703. However, their ordeal was still not at an end as they were subsequently taken to Monmouth gaol where they remained prisoners for a further three years. On 15 May 1704 they were brought, under an act of Habeas Corpus, to Westminster and in the Court of the Exchequer they were committed to Fleet prison on 26 May 1704.

As if their ordeal had not been enough, the authorities committed them to an additional term in Monmouth gaol on 18 November 1707.<sup>40</sup> Entries in the Welsh Yearly Meeting minutes from 1707–1712 continually allude to the fate of these two Monmouthshire Quakers by stating that: “Thomas and Roger Jenkin remain prisoners yet.”<sup>41</sup> A sequence of letters from Roger Jenkin to John Whiting, a London Quaker correspondent, reveals his own fortitude and the unbending nature of the authorities towards him. On 4 June 1708, he commented that while given liberty by his gaoler he was seen by his “prosecutors solicitor” who threatened to have him immediately re-arrested. It appears that the gaoler had taken pity upon Jenkin and freed him, but the High Sheriff condemned the leniency shown by the gaoler and pronounced that Jenkin was “an escaped prisoner.”<sup>42</sup> By November 1708, he was again imprisoned along with his brother, Thomas.<sup>43</sup> The following October, Roger Jenkin remarked that, in spite of serious illness, he was “carryed [...] to Monmouth Gaole on a bed between two Horses,” and that his adversary’s solicitor threatened to “bring him up and his bed to London.”<sup>44</sup> Later references to Roger Jenkin in the Monmouthshire meeting minutes provide evidence that, even though he had suffered deprivation in these prisons, it was at least possible to survive incarceration. Upon his death in 1728, a testimony of his life included the terse sentence: “he was a faithful labourer in his day and suffered much for his testimony against tithes.”<sup>45</sup>

Another well-documented case concerns the prosecution of Joshua Williams in the court of the Exchequer in August 1705 by a suit of William Ketchmay, minister of Cwmcarnfan parish in Monmouthshire, for a forty shilling tithe demand.<sup>46</sup> William Ketchmay along with his attorney, Edward Ketchmay, and a bailiff, Arthur Ricketts, seized “all ye corn he had in the world”<sup>47</sup> and two cows between 17–22 August 1705. This amounted to over £ 30. The following month, the clergyman returned and sequestered hay and straw, leaving Williams without “the value of a Quarter of a Peck of any Corn for Bread for himself, his Wife and

<sup>40</sup> L.S.F., Meetings for Sufferings, vol. 18, p. 346. (Minutes dated 28-9-1707). The information was provided in a letter to John Whiting of London dated 19-9-1707.

<sup>41</sup> G.A.S., D/DSF/2, pp. 525, 528, 532, 538, 541, 546, 549, and 551.

<sup>42</sup> L.S.F., Meetings for Sufferings, vol. 19, pp. 80, and 96–97. (Minutes dated 4-4-1708 and 27-4-1708).

<sup>43</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 144. (Minutes dated 2-9-1708).

<sup>44</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 298. (Minutes dated 14-8-1709).

<sup>45</sup> G.A.S., D/DSF/2, p. 614.

<sup>46</sup> G.A.S., D/DSF/351 (no pagination), monthly meeting minutes dated 5-7-1705; L.S.F., Tract Box 78. The Suffering Case of Joshua Williams, 1705. The other expenses incurred in this and subsequent prosecutions are provided in L.S.F., Meeting for Sufferings, vol. 19, *passim*.

<sup>47</sup> L.S.F., Tract Box 78. A.46. The figures provided were: “20 covers of wheat, 6 covers of peas, 4 covers of oats.”

Family, yet he [Ketchmay] threatened to come again, and sweep away all he is worth in the World.”<sup>48</sup>

Clearly, the sequestration was far more than it should have been, as happened with most other tithe distrains. The chronicler of this particular case stressed this point quite strongly by reporting that false returns were often recorded for economic advantage and “to gratifie the Priests, tho’ it proves to the Ruine of sufferers.”<sup>49</sup> The main point of the sequestration was that it enabled clergymen to conduct a vicious campaign against Friends until they faced bankruptcy. Edward Ketchmay, the attorney and the clergyman’s brother, also expressed his intention of making a “Sacrifice of one of the Quakers.” Yet, in spite of being financially ruined, the fervour of Williams’s faith had not cooled and he issued a challenge to the minister of Cwmcarnfan:

if he [Ketchmay] can clear himself from being Unmerciful, Covetous or being an Extortioner, let him [...] and prove by the Holy Scripture, whether his Demands, Practice and Conversation, are like to a Minister of Christ, who said to his, *Freely ye have received, freely give*; but never sent his Ministers to Ruine honest and industrious People, for Non-payment of Tythes.<sup>50</sup>

By March 1706, however, the full extent of the distraint was evident. The Meeting for Sufferings recorded that the “priest has sett a sorry fellow to sell the remainder of his [Williams’s] goods,” and consequently the Quaker’s “grain being left open, some was devoured by swine and some stolen. That one of the two cows taken is dead and the other near dying being milch kine.”<sup>51</sup> The burden of distraint and subsequent subpoenas and imprisonment naturally bore hard upon Welsh Friends and emigrating to America as a method of escape often proved a powerful attraction.<sup>52</sup> In 1711, Joshua Williams, because of the suffering he had endured at the hands of tithe-owners, requested a certificate of removal and joined many other Quakers who had left Wales for Pennsylvania.<sup>53</sup>

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<sup>48</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>49</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>50</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>51</sup> L.S.F., Meeting for Sufferings, vol. 19, p. 56. (Minutes dated 22-1-1706).

<sup>52</sup> For details, see Rees, *A History of the Quakers in Wales*, ch.5; J. J. Levick, “John ap Thomas and his Friends”, *Pennsylvania Magazine of History*, 4 (1880), pp. 301–328; J. J. Levick, “The Early Welsh Quakers and their emigration to Pennsylvania” *Pennsylvania Magazine of History and Biography*, 17, 4 (1893), pp. 385–413; T. A. Glenn, *Merion in the Welsh Tract* (Norristown, Pennsylvania: Privately published, 1896; T. A. Glenn, *The Welsh Founders of Pennsylvania*, 2 vol. (Oxford: Privately printed, 1911–1913; Baltimore ed.: Clearfield Company, 2001); C. H. Browning, *The Welsh Settlement of Pennsylvania* (Philadelphia: William J. Campbell, 1912 and reprinted Baltimore: Genealogical Pub, 1967); H. G. Jones, “John Kelsall: A study in religious and economic history” (M.A. thesis, University of Wales, Bangor, 1938, unpublished), pp. 134–158; F. B. Tolles, “The Culture of Early Pennsylvania”, *Pennsylvania Magazine of History*, 81 (1957), pp. 127–137; A. H. Dodd, “The background to the Welsh Quaker Movement to Pennsylvania”, *Journal of Merioneth History and Record Society*, 13, 2 (1958), pp. 111–127; G. H. Jenkins, “The Friends of Montgomeryshire in the Heroic Age”, *The Montgomeryshire Collections, Journal of the Powysland Club*, 76 (1988), pp. 22, and 25–26.

<sup>53</sup> G.A.S., D/DSF/325, minutes dated 4-5-1711.

Although an appeal to Parliament in 1735 to minimise the effects of non-payment had been ignored,<sup>54</sup> the matter of tithes had, to some local extent, been acted upon. Elisha Beadles, the Quaker apothecary, had candles worth 9d. distrained for 8d. demanded in 1733. The magistrates, Capel Hanbury and Richard Lewis, were reluctant to grant the warrant and were not prepared to add extra costs involved in the distraint. Furthermore, the action took place upon a market day when several “country peoples” were among his customers in the shop at Pontypool, and “all of them seem’d very much concern’d at it.”<sup>55</sup> In 1734, in his answer to the local meeting enquiries on tithe payments, Jonathan Barrow reported that “one Parson Holland never troubled him for any of his demands.”<sup>56</sup> Similarly, in a minute from a Quarterly Meeting held at Pont-y-Moel on 2 October 1738, there are again signs of limited tolerance within Monmouthshire. Statements made by the clerk of that meeting suggests that “the Tithe Mongers shew themselves to be loath to trouble Friends, but yet they are for having it.”<sup>57</sup> The minute went on to add that one tithe collector, who had claimed his right to tithes, bore no animosity to Friends in spite of being called a thief by them.<sup>58</sup>

It would seem that the transition of Friends from a radical sect into a quietist denomination, and an awareness of their good neighbourliness and philanthropic work had some impact upon the local community. Indeed, the tithe collector mentioned above was recorded as having said to one Friend that he wished “all the parish was like thee.”<sup>59</sup> As a result, although tithes were still extracted as a matter of course, the heavy-handed tactics used in the seventeenth and early eighteenth centuries did not always accompany them. The growth of nonconformity within Wales, especially Methodism, must also have assisted in the taking of a more tolerant attitude against Quakers and their opposition towards tithes. Furthermore, family and communal ties between Quakers and non-Quaker families which had been torn apart during the early years of the Society were re-established. The entrepreneurial skills of leading Friends provided work for the local community while other members played a greater role in community affairs. As respect for individual Friends grew, the methods adopted to enforce payments of tithes were increasingly frowned upon and actions were taken to hamper the removal of distrained goods. In Joshua Williams’s case his neighbours refused to let the bailiff carry the distrained goods over their lands.<sup>60</sup> Yet the levying of tithes, especially against leading

<sup>54</sup> *Ibid.*, minute dated 5-8-1736. The petition was entitled: *An Application to Parliament for relief to our Friends in case of prosecution in ye Ecclesiastical, Exchequer and other courts for recovering tythes and other Ecclesiastical demands*; as a Bill it passed the first reading but failed at the next stage.

<sup>55</sup> G.A.S., D/DSF/352 (no pagination), monthly meeting minutes dated 19-1-1732/3.

<sup>56</sup> G.A.S., D/DSF/353, minutes dated 4-10-1734. Barrow did note, however, that the new warden was prepared to gather the tax.

<sup>57</sup> G.A.S., D/DSF/326 (no pagination), Quarterly Meeting minutes dated 2-8-1738.

<sup>58</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>59</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>60</sup> See L.S.F., Tract Box 78. A.46.

Quakers, continued up to and beyond 1800 as indicated in their records of suffering.

Tithe distraint had a twofold effect upon Friends. On the one hand, the recorded amount distrained from Friends for the non-payment of tithes continued at a constant level throughout the last quarter of the seventeenth century and early decades of the eighteenth century.<sup>61</sup> This caused hardship for a small band of prominent Friends who adhered closely to the discipline of the local meeting and whose dogged determination to oppose tithes may have dissuaded non-members from joining the Society. The issue of tithes also caused a crisis of conscience among many members who in the eighteenth century were increasingly failing to keep their testimony against payment,<sup>62</sup> or were at least neglecting to record their sufferings. Consequently, members who were distrained of their goods were increasingly drawn from the wealthier section of the Society, while less well-off members were conversely being counselled about opposition to such payments.

Throughout the minutes of Welsh meetings, including those in Glamorgan and Monmouthshire in the eighteenth century, there are references which reflect the inability of Friends to keep to the commands of the Society, especially on the issue of tithes.<sup>63</sup> In the 1690s, the Welsh Yearly Meeting minutes noted “a slackness” amongst Monmouthshire Friends in the testimony against tithe payment.<sup>64</sup> In 1705 the representatives referred to tithe payments made by Friends: “instead of being good examples to others, they endeavoured to weaken the hands of their brethren by conveing at neighbours and relations to pay for them, so by dark underhand dealinge do avoid the cross to the great exercise of the faithfull.”<sup>65</sup> In 1711, the Monmouthshire Quarterly Meeting also recorded that several Friends were “weak as to their testimony against tythes.”<sup>66</sup> The following year, after the issue had been discussed at the Welsh Yearly Meeting, Monmouthshire Friends gave a clear warning about the need to be faithful and the consequences if these instructions were not followed:

that such Pson or Psons who will continue to pay tithes to Priests or impropiators, after ye labour and tender advice [...] their collections shall be refused by ye Frds of this Meeting and they not

<sup>61</sup> Cf. evidence for England and Wales (including individual data for Lancashire, Lincolnshire, Somersetshire and Staffordshire) provided in Morgan, *Lancashire Quakers and the Establishment*, ch. 6., particularly useful are the tables provided in pp. 196 (table 3), 199 (table 5), and 290–291 (Appendix 5).

<sup>62</sup> G.A.S., D/DSF/325, minutes dated 27-10-1708-9, 3-11-1710, 4-5-1711, and 7-5-1714.

<sup>63</sup> For other accounts which show the various methods by which Friends connived at paying tithes or other ‘taxes’, see E. J. Evans, “‘Our Faithful Testimony.’ The Society of Friends and Tithe Payments, 1690–1730”, *Journal of the Friends’ Historical Society*, 52, 2 (1969), pp. 106–121; H. Forde, “Friends and Authority: a consideration of attitudes and expedients with particular reference to Derbyshire”, *Journal of the Friends’ Historical Society*, 54, 3 (1978), pp. 115–125.

<sup>64</sup> G.A.S., D/DSF/2, pp. 496, 510, and 513. Yearly Meetings minutes dated 29-1-1692, 6/7-2-1697, and 26-2-1698.

<sup>65</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 535–536. Yearly Meeting minutes dated 11-2-1705.

<sup>66</sup> G.A.S., D/DSF/325, minutes dated 2-11-1711.

admitted to Meetings for Business, and if after all this they shall persist in such their unfaithfulness and opposition, that then this Meeting may further proceed to give judgment for ye clearing of ye truth.<sup>67</sup>

Yet, even such clarity did not have the desired effect as later minutes still referred to the inability of Monmouthshire Friends to keep to the Quaker opposition to tithe payments. In one particular case in 1726, Joseph John of Trefddyn in Monmouthshire allowed his wife and her relations to pay tithes for him.<sup>68</sup> This failure to oppose tithe payments, Friends construed, was due to his “great indulgence” to his wife, and consequently led to a guilt-ridden conscience. Upon his deathbed, he was full of remorse and wished the deed to be undone. According to the narrative several “tithe-collectors” returned their share of the tithe “commiserating his condition [... or] in pity to his afflicted condition.”<sup>69</sup> The outcome was that Joseph John received a ‘divine pardon,’ his wife, Mary, became a more committed Friend, and their fellow members were given a salutary lesson in obedience. The narrative recorded that she was brought:

under a right sense of her error and wrong-doing, being not only grieved [...] but also resolved to bear a faithful testimony against the oppressive yoke of tithe for the time to come. And whereas before she absented herself from meetings for discipline, she now heartily joins her beloved sisters therein, and takes a part with them in those affairs of the church which concern the prosperity of the blessed Truth.<sup>70</sup>

Nevertheless, in 1742 Friends again had to remonstrate with Mary Jones, the widow of Joseph John, over the same issue of tithe payments. The clerk recorded that Mary “saw no hurt to her soul in paying tithe that she paid it not for fear of being deprived of her substance for God could take as much or more from her any other way.” The minute went on to describe that she paid the tithe “in compassion to ye officers to spare them some trouble.”<sup>71</sup> The monthly meeting would not accept this as a valid reason for payment and appealed for her to desist in the future.

In 1746, the Welsh Yearly Meeting felt that it was necessary to testify against underhand methods of payment suggesting that:

some places friends do not appear clear in their Testimony against Tithes, but that mean compliances and Evasions are made use of to shun the cross, it is our earnest request that none of us may permit nor suffer our servants much less order them to let the Tythe Gatherers know when we drive home our hay or corn [...].<sup>72</sup>

<sup>67</sup> *Ibid.*, minutes dated 2-5-1712.

<sup>68</sup> L.S.F., Portfolio MS. 24.194. The story of Joseph John’s affliction on account of tithes by Evan Bevan, dated 4-7-1726. See also John Rakenshaw, “Memoir of Evan Bevan”, *Friends’ Library*, 13 (1849), p. 177.

<sup>69</sup> Rakenshaw, “Memoir of Evan Bevan”, p. 177.

<sup>70</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>71</sup> G.A.S., D/DSF/353, minutes dated 4-6-1742.

<sup>72</sup> G.A.S., D/DSF/2, p. 684. Yearly Meeting minutes dated 1/3-2-1746.

Nineteen years later, the Welsh Yearly Meeting at Hay repeated the same message noting that that payment of tithes:

caused pain of mind to several of us in this our annual assembly to find that some among us should act so inconsistent with the Dignity of Truth as to leave the corn or hay in the field after the same has been markt.<sup>73</sup>

Moreover, by comparing the numbers of Friends who opposed the payment of tithes in Wales c.1682–1791, it becomes evident that the reduction in numbers of Welsh Friends’ suffering distraint as a result of non-payment was a sign of the decline in the movement. For example, between 1695 and 1737 the Welsh Yearly Meeting observed that for the years when the Monmouthshire ‘Sufferings’ were presented there was an average of at least three Friends refusing to pay tithes. The number of unrecorded “sufferings” distorts this low figure,<sup>74</sup> but it does compare favourably with the period after 1737. From 1738–91, there is usually a single entry, that of James Lewis of Llanelli on the Brecon-Monmouthshire border.<sup>75</sup>

In a comparison with the English counties, the distraint for non-payment in Monmouthshire was by the 1730s not substantial. (see tables 1 and 2). For example, between 1720–1729 Friends in this county were distrained on average £ 7 per year<sup>76</sup> in comparison with Lancashire (£ 279), Lincolnshire (£ 391.8), Somersetshire (£ 210) and, more significantly in terms of Quaker strength, the county of Staffordshire (£ 32.1).<sup>77</sup> This low figure certainly reflects the limited numbers of recorded Friends bearing testimony against tithes, which on average was between 2–3 male Friends and one widow in the 1720s. The limited number of distraints recounted in the minutes would suggest that only the more prosperous members were paying tithes. With their deaths, migration from Monmouthshire or disownment, the small number of Friends who composed the

<sup>73</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 841. Yearly Meeting minutes dated 30-4-1765 and 1/2-5-1765.

<sup>74</sup> There are additional entries in the local minutes and in the records of the London Meeting for Sufferings.

<sup>75</sup> See Allen, “The Society of Friends in Wales”, pp. 528–537 (Appendix C. Monmouthshire Tithe Distraints c.1682–1791).

<sup>76</sup> This figure is derived from information provided by the Yearly Meeting accounts c.1720–1727 (excl. 1721–1722 for which no data was supplied) and Monthly Meeting entries for 1728–1729 provided the following year. See D/DSF/2, pp. 153–154, 176, 189, 194, 199, and 201; G.A.S., D/DSF/352, minutes dated 8-2-1729 and 28-1-1730. The amount distrained, however, was consistent with that taken in the 1690s and the early eighteenth century. A comparison with other Welsh counties is difficult as there are large gaps in the accounts of ‘Sufferings’. Yet some Welsh counties did reflect the amounts being distrained during this period: Montgomeryshire (approx. £ 6 p.a.), Glamorganshire (approx. £ 8 p.a.), Carmarthenshire (approx. £10 p.a.). Others such as Pembrokeshire (£55 in 1723) most probably accurately reflected the tithes for such years.

<sup>77</sup> Morgan, *Lancashire Quakers and the Establishment*, p. 199 (Table 5). According to statistical data in the eighteenth century provided by Michael Watts, Staffordshire Quakers numbered 160 or 0.15 % of the total county population of 112,560 while the Monmouthshire Meetings could count on 90 members or 0.31 % of a total population for the county of 29,200. See M. Watts, *The Dissenters: From the Reformation to the French Revolution* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1978), p. 509 (Table XII).



Society were now bereft of enough significant members to be a threat to church authorities. In the period 1730–1739, the recorded average yearly amount distrained in the county was £ 6,<sup>78</sup> but between 1735 and 1736 a total of £ 3 was taken from three Friends, and in 1738 this figure fell to 6s. 2d. In comparison, Lancashire (£ 212.8), Lincolnshire (£ 219), Somersetshire (£ 220.7), Staffordshire (£ 36.2)<sup>79</sup> and other Welsh counties, notably Pembrokeshire, faced far higher distraints which in the years 1735–1739 varied from £ 43 in 1735, £ 22 in 1738 and £ 35 in 1739.<sup>80</sup>

Table 1. Tithe distraints of Friends in Wales, c.1720–1729

	1720	1721	1722	1723	1724	1725	1726	1727	1728	1729
Carms	£ 7-16	-	-	£ 11-7	£ 10-7-6	£ 11-10	-	-	-	-
Denb	£ 3-14	-	-	£ 9-11-6	£ 18-1	£ 20-19-3	£ 14-14	-	-	-
Flint	-	-	-	£ 3-14-3	£ 7-6-21/2	-	-	-	-	-
Glam	-	-	-	£ 13-13	£ 7-10	£ 4	-	-	-	-
Merion	£ 12	-	-	£ 7-15-10	£ 3-12-2	£ 5-4-6	-	£ 5-19-8	-	-
Monm.	£ 8-8-10	-	-	£ 7-10	£ 5-14-10	£ 17-3-	£ 5-11-	£ 11-9-10	£ 10-8-6	£ 8-11-
Montg	-	-	-	£ 27-17-7	-	-	-	-	-	-
Pembs	£ 45-2-2	-	-	£ 55-14-5	-	-	-	-	-	-
Rad	£ 22-12	-	-	£ 25-11	£ 12-7-6	-	-	£ 7	-	-
Shrop	£ 10-19-6	-	-	-	£ 6-5	-	-	£ 5-2-4	-	-

Table 2. Tithe distraints of Friends in Wales, c.1730–1739

	1730	1731	1732	1733	1734	1735	1736	1737	1738	1739
Carms	-	-	-	-	-	£ 15-6	-	-	£ 15-19-	-
Denb	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
Flint	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
Glam	-	-	-	-	-	-	£ 7-18-8	£ 6-8-6	£ 6-1-6	-
Merion	-	-	-	-	-	£ 6-18-2	£ 5-13	£ 6-4-2	£ 6-11	£ 7-16-6
Monm.	-	-	-	-	£ 13-16	£ 1-3-6	£ 2-12-6	£ 5-17-2	£ 6-2	-
Montg	-	-	-	£ 14-4-3	-	£ 15-9-11	£ 12-2-7	£ 10-3-6	£ 8-00-9	£ 10-1-9
Pembs	-	-	-	-	-	£ 43-2	-	£ 39-9	£ 22-16-4	£ 35-19
Rad	-	-	-	-	-	£ 14-3-	£ 46-5-6	£ 19-14-6	£ 7-19	£ 7-3
Shrop	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	£ 13-15	£ 14-15	£ 14-13

The small number of tithe demands made during the late seventeenth and eighteenth centuries would seem to suggest that Friends' testimony in Monmouthshire was far weaker than Quaker Meetings in England and in some parts of Wales (see chart). However, it would be far from fair to suggest that many Friends abandoned their testimony against tithe payments. Indeed, the denunciation of the subterfuge by Joseph John's family in 1726 is a clear illustration of Friends' anxiety to remain loyal to their beliefs. So how can the limited number of annual recorded testimonies be evaluated? It is probable that at their assemblies Friends received only a small percentage of the distraints which took place or recorded only those of significant distress. In other areas the respectability of Friends may well have persuaded ministers or 'tithe-mongers' to forego collections as happened to be the case reported by Jonathan Barrow in

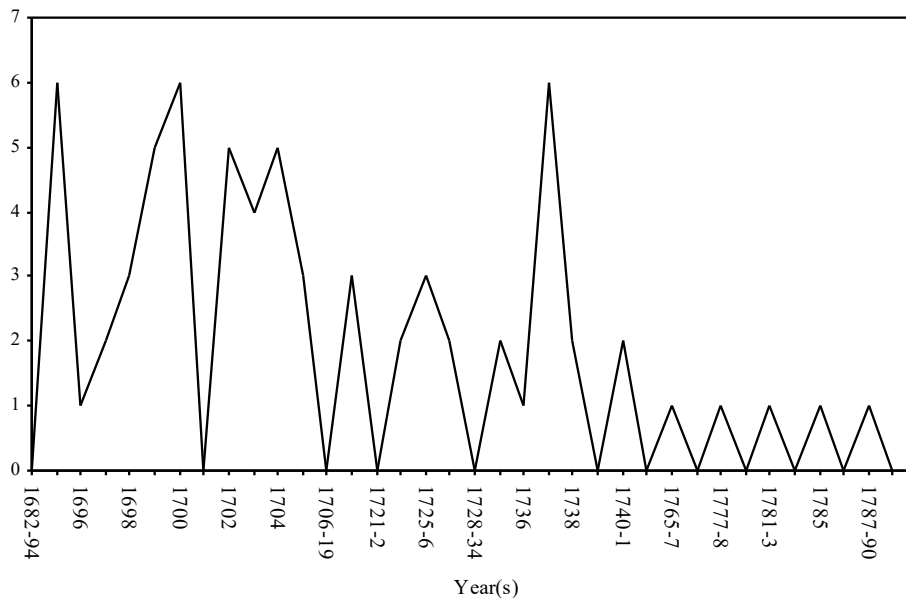
<sup>78</sup> G.A.S., D/DSF/2, pp. 227, 238, 244-5, and 254; G.A.S., D/DSF/353, minutes dated 2-2-1735.

<sup>79</sup> Morgan, *Lancashire Quakers and the Establishment*, p. 199 (Table 5).

<sup>80</sup> See G.A.S., D/DSF/2, pp. 230–231, 257, and 262–263; Cf. Montgomeryshire Friends who were distrained of goods valued from £ 14 to £ 8 (c.1733-9) and Radnorshire Friends from £ 45 to £ 7 (c.1735–1739). *Ibid.*, pp. 223–224, 228–229, 232–233, 238–440, 246–247, 250–251, 256, 258, 260–261, and 264.

1734. In the Pontypool area, there were also no recorded distraints for the late-seventeenth or the early decades of the eighteenth centuries. This may indicate that Quaker families in neighbouring parishes were protected from tithe demands by their non-Quaker relatives and by their association with the Hanbury family.

Monmouthshire Quaker Tithe Distraints 1682–1791<sup>81</sup>



Therefore, the use of the number of tithe distraints and the amount taken from Friends in the county as an indicator of the decline in membership needs to be examined cautiously. Nevertheless, during the mid-eighteenth century, with even fewer Friends recording their testimonies, a rapid decline in numbers of Quakers would have resulted in fewer statements of faith being provided.

## Quakers and the wider community

As already shown, although the worst years of persecution seemed to be over, Friends found that the post-Toleration period did not mean that they were free from abuse or imprisonment. Admittedly, the cases were fewer, but some of the lengths of imprisonment show that it was the clear intention of the clergy to harass Quakers. (see Table 3). Indeed, the death of John Merrick in Abergavenny gaol in 1700<sup>82</sup> because of his reluctance to pay tithes serves to illustrate this point, as does the imprisonment of John Bevan of the Tref-y-Rhyg Meeting. He was imprisoned in 1720, when nearly eighty years old, for the non-attendance at church.<sup>83</sup> The lengthy periods of imprisonment of both Roger and Thomas Jenkin in the early eighteenth century also shows the extent to which

<sup>81</sup> *Ibid.*, *passim*.

<sup>82</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 68; *Journal of Friends' Historical Society*, I (1903–1904), p. 83.

<sup>83</sup> G.A.S., D/DSF/2, p. 588. The Yearly Meeting held at Dolgellau, minutes dated 11/13-2-1721; Williams, "The Society of Friends in Glamorgan", pp. 86–87.

imprisonment was still a method of punishing Friends for their refusal to pay tithes.

Table 3. Monmouthshire Imprisonments c.1698–1760

Year	Name(s) of Quakers Imprisoned	Reason for Imprisonment	Length of time in prison
1698ff	Thomas Jenkin	Tithe default	over a 14 year period
1699-1700	John Merrick	Tithe default	Died in prison
1701ff	Roger Jenkin	Tithe default	over a 11 year period
?	William Roberts	Debt/Tithe default	-
1719	Edward John	Tithe default	under a year
1731-2	John Richards	Tithe default	1 year
1731-2	James Lewis	Tithe default	1 year
1760	Samuel Richards	Militia Act	3 months

Friends in south-east Wales were also occasionally punished for refusing to serve (or providing a suitable recruit as a replacement) in the militia.<sup>84</sup> In 1745, Nathaniel Beadles of Pontypool, in a letter to the Monthly Meeting, emphasised Friends' attitude towards the militia. He stated "I desire Friends to stand single towards God, yt in case ye Government for its preservation may think proper to call the militia, yt we ye Society of People called Quakers do not by any means take up arms."<sup>85</sup> Friends at the London Yearly Meeting reaffirmed his statement in 1759 and 1778.<sup>86</sup> There were, however, two local cases which illustrate how Monmouthshire Friends responded to the 'call to arms' and what punishments they received. In 1760 Samuel Richards, a thirty-six year old labourer from Llanfrechfa parish, refused to obey the notification to serve in the local militia. As the Quaker had no goods or property to distrain, his refusal to comply with the orders on grounds of conscience led to his imprisonment for three months. In a letter written to the London Meeting for Sufferings, Ambrose Williams of Pontypool gave some additional details of Richards's imprisonment.<sup>87</sup> Williams acknowledged that the term of imprisonment was three months but that it was not onerous, in contrast with the worst years of persecution, for Richards was not closely confined and "had liberty to go home often and to other places."<sup>88</sup> Similarly, in 1767 Henry Powell, a Grocer from Chepstow in Monmouthshire,

<sup>84</sup> Failure to take up civil offices could also result in fines in the post-toleration years. For example, in January 1707, James Lewis of the Redstone Monthly Meeting in Pembrokeshire was brought before the magistrates at the Quarter Sessions and indicted for refusing to serve as a high constable by affirming or supplying a deputy to act on his behalf. As a consequence he was fined 40s "being the sum usually given to such deputies" which Sir John Phillips, the recorder of the piece, believed was "rather too small a price". See N.L.W., Picton Castle MS. 577. (A legal notebook of Sir John Phillips).

<sup>85</sup> G.A.S., D/DSF/354, minutes dated 2-8-1745. This date refers to when the letters were written, however, the details are provided in a minute dated 5-12-1754 when Beadles was disowned.

<sup>86</sup> G.A.S., D/DSF/206-7. Militia case and counsel's opinion (c.1759 and 1778).

<sup>87</sup> G.A.S., D/DSF/164. Monmouthshire answers to Yearly Meeting enquiries dated 16-4-1760.

<sup>88</sup> L.S.F., Meetings for Sufferings, vol. 30, pp. 405, and 406–407. (Minutes dated 4-4-1760 and 1-8-1760).

was called to serve in the militia, but refused to obey the command or supply a replacement. For his refusal, he was fined £ 3.3s., and subsequently “four loafs of sugar” worth £ 3.15s. were distrained from his grocery by John Huggard, a high constable, and John Ablet, a petty constable.<sup>89</sup>

## Towards respectability

During the late-seventeenth and eighteenth centuries, there was also a perceptible change in the attitude of local communities to Friends. It was widely accepted that the years of persecution had not rid the land of dissenters as well as a realisation that the Quaker movement, undermined by the death or emigration of its leading exponents,<sup>90</sup> had withdrawn from its radical position. Moreover, on 10 January 1702, two Monmouthshire Friends, Thomas Wisdom of Malpas and John Harris of Christchurch, showed their loyalty to the monarchy by presenting evidence of an imminent Jacobite invasion.<sup>91</sup> In his journal the former Merionethshire Quaker, Hugh Roberts, who had returned from Pennsylvania to Wales in June 1698 had earlier commented that in the Castleton area, near Cardiff, there was “a great tenderness and brokenness amongst Friends and the world’s people and some Presbyterians, one of them being convinced.”<sup>92</sup> In 1719, local toleration was again in evidence when Elisha Beadles reported to the London Meeting for Sufferings that Edward John of Coedcernyw in Monmouthshire was released from prison after the magistrate’s wife had intervened and pleaded with her husband not to go to the Quarter Sessions to prosecute the Quaker.<sup>93</sup> Furthermore, after John Richards and James Lewis of Shirenewton in the same county were imprisoned in October 1731, Friends asked non-Quaker relatives to help dismiss the case against them. After the intercession of Colonel Morgan of the Tredegar Park estate in Monmouthshire, John Hanbury, Phillip Hanbury, Caple Hanbury and Major John Hanbury who had promised “to doe ye friends all ye services he can,” the two Shirenewton Friends were released from Monmouth prison in August 1732.<sup>94</sup>

Growing respectability in community life was coupled with a determination to keep their Society free of accusations of disrepute. Friends secured respectability by looking after their own poor and by educating their children, especially in the schools they established. This attitude can be illustrated by the contents of a

<sup>89</sup> G.A.S., D/DSF/2, p. 361.

<sup>90</sup> See Williams, “The Society of Friends in Glamorgan”, pp. 79–81, 83–84, and 92–98; Allen, “The Society of Friends in Wales”, ch. 9.

<sup>91</sup> Before Henry Herbert, the mayor of Newport, and Charles Williams, a justice of the peace, the two Quakers reported that they had met Thomas Morgan of Llanddewi Fach who informed them that he had been in the company of a former footman of King James II who had spoken of “a sudden invasion” to restore the throne to the Stuarts. See P.R.O., SP 32/13/11.

<sup>92</sup> See “Brief Journal of Hugh Roberts 1682–1702”, *Wales*, 3 (1896), p. 336.

<sup>93</sup> L.S.F., Meeting for Sufferings, vol. 23, pp. 2–3. (Minutes dated 30-8-1719); cf. John Kelsall’s appeal to George Lewis, Rector of Dolgellau, in 1722. See L.S.F., Kelsall MS. S.194.2, pp. 145–147. Letter to George Lewis, dated 14-7-1722.

<sup>94</sup> L.S.F., Meeting for Sufferings, vol. 25, pp. 83–84, 144, 153, 159, 178. (Minutes dated 5-9-1731, 19-3-1732, 23-4-1732, 7-5-1732, and 15-7-1732).

letter sent in 1735 by Evan Bevan, clerk of the Pont-y-Moel Meeting in Monmouthshire, to a London correspondent. In this letter, Bevan referred to poor relief and the attempt to enlist the help of Colonel Morgan and John Hanbury of Pontypool who were “disposed to Friends.”<sup>95</sup> Furthermore, the development of the certificate of removal and travel system meant that Friends were no longer subject to classification as vagrants and strangers within communities.<sup>96</sup>

In October 1735, such was the growing acceptance of Monmouthshire Friends that a Quarterly Meeting minute stated that “we are really much indebted to the Lord for this Peaceable Time, when we may meet together to serve him according to our consciences and none do molest us.”<sup>97</sup> Similarly, when Evan Morgan, a yeoman of Langstone, near Newport, died in January 1758, apart from the normal respect of members, it was suggested that he was “well beloved by his neighbours.”<sup>98</sup> This sentiment was echoed elsewhere in Wales. For example, William Thomas of Michaelston-Super-Ely observed in his diary in 1767 that Evan Evans of Tref-y-Rhyg was “a very Quiet sober man,” while Nathaniel Price, a former Methodist, was, in spite of his zealousness, a “sober, Quiet man of a life unblameable.” Another Friend, William Rees of Caerffili, was also regarded as “A Civil, Innocent man, and one that leaded a strict life.”<sup>99</sup> Moreover, by 1803, local toleration meant that an application for a licence for a Quaker meeting-house at Trosnant in Monmouthshire had simply become a formality.<sup>100</sup>

From these testimonies it is possible to suggest that in the eighteenth century Friends had gradually retreated from their ardent radical position where they “endured affliction” and were “mocked, scoffed, persecuted and made a gazeing stock,” and had become a respectable denomination.<sup>101</sup> There was certainly a wider acceptance of Friends and tolerance of their beliefs as time passed. The wealthier sections of the Quaker community interacted with their non-Quaker relatives and neighbours and several Friends took up civic responsibilities. Yet it would be wrong to assume that less prosperous members did not co-operate with the ‘world’s people’ as they collaborated with the local community in times of need, especially responding to natural disasters (*i.e.* floods or diseases). Friends’

<sup>95</sup> L.S.F., Portfolio MS. 26.78. Letter of Evan Bevan to William Foster, dated Pont-y-Moel 30-2-1735.

<sup>96</sup> Details of the system of removal and “oversight” are provided in Allen, “The Society of Friends in Wales”, chs 3, 6 and 7.

<sup>97</sup> G.A.S., D/DSF/325, minutes dated 6-8-1735.

<sup>98</sup> P.R.O., Society of Friends Registers (Monmouthshire), no. 677, p. 176; N.L.W., microfilm N.P.R. 44.

<sup>99</sup> See R. T. W. Denning (ed.), *The Diary of William Thomas of Michaelston-Super-Ely, near St. Fagans, Glamorgan, 1762–1795* (Cardiff: Publications of the South Wales Record Society, no. 11, 1995), pp. 181, 207, and 236.

<sup>100</sup> G.A.S., D/DSF/88. Meeting-house licence from the quarter sessions in Monmouthshire, c.1803.

<sup>101</sup> G.A.S., D/DSF/2, p. 535.

philanthropic endeavours, especially their response to the 'King's Brief,'<sup>102</sup> also strengthened their links with the wider community. Reciprocal business interests in the post-Toleration period further weakened the spirit of mistrust, which had existed between Quaker and non-Quaker. Consequently, this interaction gained for Friends a reputation as responsible members of the community rather than as the descendants of a radical sect.

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<sup>102</sup> These were royal mandates read out in the parish church or at local meeting ordering collections to be made for various misfortunes including fires, floods, shipwrecks, plagues and for the collection of funds for the establishment of hospitals. This system of charitable assistance, after complaints of abuse, was regulated by Parliament in 1705. See *An Act for the better collecting charity money on briefs by letters patents, and preventing abuses in relation to such charities* (1705); J. Cadbury, "King's Briefs", *Journal of Friends' Historical Society*, 3 no. 3 (1906), pp. 106–112; R. S. Mortimer, "Friends and Charitable Briefs", *JFHS*, 48 no. 5 (Spring 1957), pp. 267–284.