Radical religion and the background to the development of the Quaker movement in the area of Pendle, the Ribble Valley, Craven, Westmorland and the Yorkshire Dales c1570 to 1652

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Abstract

This thesis explores the social, economic and religious background of the independent religious community which developed across Westmorland, the Yorkshire Dales and north Lancashire in the years before 1652. This was the year when George Fox was introduced to the community at a historic meeting at Firbank Fell, near Sedbergh, in Westmorland. While this meeting is recognised as perhaps the most transformative event in the early history of the Quaker movement, the importance of the community and the individuals Fox met has been overlooked. The historical focus has always been on the activity of George Fox not on the people he met. But this was an established radical group, whose character had been strengthened by years of hardship, isolation and persecution, which had come together to form a simple church to worship God in the way they wished. There was no conversion at the feet of George Fox, this was instead a mutually beneficial meeting of like-minded people.

In the following chapters I will explain how strength of character and an independent frame of mind developed, how radical puritanism and education shaped the lives of the people, how a closed isolated society opened in the 1640s during the civil wars to radical religious and political ideas, fermented within the ranks of the armies of Parliament. It was through an informal network of like-minded religious radicals, that George Fox became aware of the community in Westmorland and the Yorkshire Dales. This thesis outlines the importance of the network, its radical nature and the involvement of soldiers in the Parliamentarian army. It explains how Fox was introduced to the members of the network during his travels around Yorkshire and the significance of his meeting with the ‘olde preist’, William Boyes, who provides a direct link to religious radicalism across the area over a period of forty years. George Fox’s decision to travel to Westmorland was formed by these events, his journey was planned, it was not accidental.
Declaration

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Introduction

In the spring of 1652, George Fox climbed to the top of Pendle Hill in north-east Lancashire. From here to the west he could see across Lancashire to the Irish Sea. Looking to the north, the Yorkshire Dales extended westward to Westmorland. Later in his Journal, written between 1673 and 1677, Fox said that standing there he had a vision when, ‘ye Lorde lett mee see a toppe of ye hill In what places hee had a great people [to be gathered]’. His search for the ‘great people’ took him through the Ribble Valley and the Yorkshire Dales to the town of Sedbergh, then in the county of Westmorland. Here he met a religious community which had separated itself from the established church, renouncing its authority, ritual and ceremony. Following that first meeting the embryonic Quaker movement was transformed. From their base in Westmorland, the newly convinced Quakers quickly spread their message throughout England, so effectively that by 1660 it has been estimated that there were ‘between thirty-five and forty thousand … possibly sixty thousand’ Friends.

After leaving home at the age of nineteen in 1643, George Fox had travelled around the East Midlands meeting separatist and independent religious groups. Nightingale identified 1647 as the year Fox ‘began his Mission’; the year he met ‘the professors at Duckenfield and Manchester’, who ‘were in rage’ and ‘could not endure to hear talk of perfection or of a holy and sinless life.’ By 1652, Fox had become a

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3 Benjamin Nightingale, Early Stages Of The Quaker Movement In Lancashire, (London, 1922), p. 10. In 1647, Manchester was a strongly Presbyterian area.
powerful radical preacher with a forthright manner which led to him being jailed in 1649 and 1650 for interrupting church services. Although he had a growing number of followers, referred to as Friends, the number was still small, and he was not yet seen as the leader of a religious movement. A feature of his travels around the East Midlands was their unplanned nature. But in 1652, this all changed. In late 1651 and early 1652 he travelled into Yorkshire and began a co-ordinated tour of the county. In the spring of 1652, he set out from West Yorkshire on the journey that would take him across the Pennines to Pendle Hill, through the Ribble Valley and the Yorkshire Dales to Sedbergh. The decision to make this journey was pivotal to George Fox and the Quaker movement. Unlike his earlier movements this journey was not random, his route was not accidental, it was planned and co-ordinated.

So why did Fox make this journey? Why was Fox in the area around Pendle Hill on his way to Westmorland? Why was the meeting of Fox and the community in Westmorland so transformative? Why was it that, after travelling around the midland counties of England for nine years with minimal success, Fox was able to convince a significant number of people of the right way to worship God and live a full and rewarding life? Fox’s religious belief and skill as a preacher had matured during his years of wandering, his preaching was both powerful and influential, but why did he make such a dramatic impact in Sedbergh, Westmorland and the Yorkshire Dales? Was there something in the fresh fell water? Probably not. There was however, a very well established separatist religious community, the product of a society with a long history of isolation, a society which had suffered periods of

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4 In 1649, Fox was imprisoned when he interrupted a church service at Nottingham. In 1650 at Derby he interrupted another church service and was imprisoned accused of blasphemy for ‘claiming to be united with Christ’. Rosemary Moore, *The Light in Their Consciences, Early Quakers in Britain 1646 – 1666*, (Pennsylvania, 2000), p. 10.
great hardship, a society which had learned to be independent and self-sufficient and one which had embraced a radical form of the Protestant religion.

In *The Quakers and the English Revolution*, Barry Reay described the coming together of Fox and the community as follows: ‘So the birth of the Quaker movement was less a gathering of eager proselytes at the feat of a charismatic prophet, than a linking of advanced Protestant separatists into a loose kind of church fellowship with a coherent ideology.’ The community had grown and developed over a period of time, shaped and formed by the geography of the region and by the social, economic, political and religious history of the area. Its formation was organic, it grew and developed, there was no specific beginning and there was not a single leader.

This thesis investigates the background to that religious community focusing on the social, economic and religious history of the people and the area from the second half of the sixteenth century to 1652. The area of Westmorland, north Lancashire and the Yorkshire Dales was isolated geographically, socially, economically and religiously, and life could be harsh and unforgiving. The way of life of the people had been fashioned by the environment and by adversity. By 1652, however, their lives had been transformed through the influence of Puritanism and through increased literacy and educational provision. The relaxation of censorship opened individuals to a wider range of influences as did the turmoil of the 1640s and the civil wars. People were enjoying the freedom to think and behave without some of the old constraints of authority. Out of this changing society grew a separatist

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religious community which believed that people had the right to be free to worship God as they wished, not as they were told. In this work I will explain how and why this separatist religious community came to exist and why it was pivotal to the transformation of the Quaker movement. An integral part of the story is how George Fox became aware of this community. I will demonstrate that the people he met in Yorkshire in early 1652 were instrumental in this and that it was because of their information that Fox planned and executed his journey to Sedbergh. There was no eureka moment in 1652 for the separatist community when George Fox arrived in Sedbergh. The meeting and the subsequent transformation of the Quaker movement, as this thesis will show, had been years in the making.

The history of the Quaker movement has invariably been written from the point when George Fox arrived in Sedbergh and the first meetings at Sedbergh and Firbank Fell. It begins with the convincing of the men and women who would leave their homes and families to travel around England preaching. Where consideration has been given to the period leading up to 1652, historical analysis has focused on the travels and activity of George Fox, relying on the details outlined in his Journal. As I will discuss later in this thesis, this is a self-censored record. In First Among Friends, Ingle describes the Journal as ‘a shambles’, ‘a sprawling account of mystical experiences, encounters with opponents, travels into practically every corner of the country, and aggressive attacks on opponents’.

Rosemary Moore’s view is that the Journal does not mention incidents likely to ‘discredit Friends’ and that it plays down the role of important Friends. In the same way the Journal fails

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to acknowledge the importance of the community Fox met in Westmorland and the Dales. Meeting this community was hugely important, it was transformative, and the key to this transformation was that the ground had already been prepared for George Fox. If we are to understand how this transformation occurred, and who was involved, we must look beyond Fox’s work and deeper into that community, their shared history and the events that had shaped their lives and beliefs. This thesis addresses this important gap in the early history of the Quaker movement and in doing so adds a critical new dimension to the historiography of this religious community. Fox saw a ‘great people [to be gathered]’, but it was not a community looking for a leader, it was the coming together of two parts that would make a movement.

Scope and methodology

My approach in this thesis is to focus on the social, economic and religious history of Westmorland, the Yorkshire Dales and north Lancashire, and the people from that area who joined with George Fox and the Quaker movement in 1652. This approach differs from other histories of the Quaker movement in that, while there is a strong emphasis on the development of radical Protestantism, this thesis does not attempt to analyse in detail the religious views of the early Quakers. I identify key individuals who were leaders of the independent religious community in the area piecing together their inter-relationship with changing ideas and significant events to follow their trajectory towards the Quaker movement. Where possible I use their own works, letters, sermons, pamphlets, biographies and testaments, to explain and develop the picture. I use the works of influential leaders, thinkers and theologians, particularly those of radical Protestants, identifying their relevance to the changing
ideas and religious development of the community at the centre of this study. Histories and first-hand accounts of radicalisation during the civil wars explain how new ideas were transmitted and religious practice changed. I use this information to explain how the independent religious community evolved and developed, to identify important and influential individuals and to explain the reasons why George Fox made the crucial decision to make the journey to Westmorland in 1652.

When George Fox arrived at Sedbergh he met an established, independent religious community which had separated itself from the established church and developed its own form of religious worship. Following their meeting with George Fox they were integral to the shaping of a national movement with an organisation and a dynamism unmatched by other radical religious movements of the period. In order to explain why this was we must understand the community as it was in 1650 - 1652, understand how it had evolved and how it had gained its strength and cohesion. In this thesis I analyse and explain the historical background that helped its creation. I explore the social history of the area, identifying how the economic structure of day-to-day existence changed, and the importance of the relationship between landlords and tenants. I also explore how the relationship between local society and authority evolved: legal authority as represented by the law, the courts and the monarchy, and religious authority of the established church, the Church of England.

This history was instrumental in creating the environment where an independent community could exist, but it was the events of the 1640s, the civil wars and the Cromwellian government, that reinforced both their independence and beliefs. There were two key issues which shaped the future of the community. The first was the
raising of northern regiments to fight on the Parliamentarian side during the civil wars and the execution of military activity across the area. The second was the relaxation of censorship which gave individuals the freedom to express alternative views on religion and politics and led to a proliferation of pamphlets and treatises from radical groups and individuals. There was also a significant increase in the number of religious sects. Assimilating these ideas reinforced the views and approach to religion of the members of the independent religious community, strengthening their belief in the right to worship God as they wished. The right to liberty of conscience, would be a defining objective, on which they believed Oliver Cromwell and Parliament would deliver.

When George Fox travelled into Yorkshire in 1651 – 1652 he was introduced to individuals who had been active in the northern regiments and were seeking religious reform. He met people who were part of a like-minded, informal network based on relationships formed during the civil wars and he was introduced to the independent religious movement that existed across North Yorkshire. It was through these contacts, I argue, that Fox became aware of the community in Westmorland and the Dales and it was with their guidance that he undertook the journey that would take him to Pendle Hill and to Sedbergh. I will examine and explain how involvement with the northern regiments of the Parliamentarian army, particularly those of John Lambert, was instrumental in this process of radicalisation. I will also explain how connections within the informal network guided Fox’s decision to travel from West Yorkshire, via east Lancashire, Pendle Hill, the Ribble Valley and the Yorkshire Dales to Sedbergh.
Poverty, hardship and social change

Joan Thirsk, in her books and essays on agriculture, innovation and rural life during the sixteenth and early seventeenth centuries explained how agricultural activity varied across England according to regional geographic conditions. Her work provides a comparison of agricultural activity, its viability and prosperity and gives an indication of how some areas were able to benefit from innovation during the sixteenth century. Historians have added to this body of work with more detailed local studies. Angus Winchester, R. W. Hoyle, Jonathan Healey and Andrew Appleby have all identified the difficulty presented by the geographic conditions in Westmorland, north Lancashire and the Yorkshire Dales. The area was remote, economically under-developed, lacking in natural resources, a predominantly pastoral area with a poor soil and a high rainfall that severely limited agricultural development. To Sydney Pollard these features identify the area as economically marginal while Sean Jennet went as far as including the area as one of England’s ‘deserts’. The contrast to the midland and southern counties of England where a better climate supported a more diverse agricultural economy was considerable.

Local studies by Wrightson and Levine of the village of Terling in Essex, Bruce

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Campbell and Mark Overton’s study of Norfolk farming and W. G. Hoskins on the Leicestershire farmer in the seventeenth century demonstrate the difference.\textsuperscript{11}

Climatic conditions, particularly the high annual rainfall and cold winters were such that agricultural crops could not be grown on any commercial scale and it was impossible to keep large numbers of dairy cattle over the winter months. Geography and climate determined that keeping sheep was the most viable agricultural activity and from that grew a reliance upon the sale of wool and on the production of woollen cloth. The domestic textile industry provided an important secondary income and was particularly useful as all family members could contribute to the production process. John Swain outlined the importance of this domestic industry in the north of England. Its importance in Westmorland was recorded by G. Elliot and to the economy of north-east Lancashire by Mary Brigg.\textsuperscript{12} Harsh winters and poor harvests could be hugely damaging to the local economy, a situation which could lead to famine and starvation and one which the isolation of the area made it extremely difficult to relieve.

The way of life in these upland areas was precarious, exemplified by records of major increases in mortality rates. These increases have been identified and


documented although there has been a debate about whether the cause was famine or plague. Andrew Appleby has identified three specific periods, 1587 - 1588, 1596 – 1598, and 1623 - 1624, where mortality was at crisis levels in Cumberland and Westmorland.\(^{13}\) Crisis levels in Lancashire were documented by C. D. Rogers in *The Lancashire Population Crisis of 1623*.\(^{14}\) In both these investigations the authors concluded that famine was the direct or the underlying cause of each event. R. W. Hoyle argued that famine and high mortality were a direct cause and effect in his study of the crisis in east Lancashire between 1622 and 1624. Jonathon Healey makes the same point in his study of the crisis in Westmorland.\(^{15}\) John Swain gave four reasons for advancing the view that famine was the cause; the absence of a seasonal mortality, the wide geographical area covered suggesting a single epidemic disease was unlikely, evidence of poor harvests, and a clear and pronounced depression in the textile industry.\(^{16}\) Events such as these leave lasting memories in individual, family and social histories, influencing views and behaviour through generations. In this work I argue that geographical isolation, the problems of, and economics of, simply surviving and the experience of repeated periods of famine and high mortality were important factors in the development of an independent society.

**Landlords and tenants**

During the sixteenth and early seventeenth centuries problems continually arose concerning the ownership and tenancy of land. R. H. Tawney saw this as a conflict,
between the landowner who was seeking to maximise his revenue from rents and the tenant.\textsuperscript{17} This was a ground-breaking study when it was first published in 1912, but historians now understand this relationship in a more complicated, nuanced way.\textsuperscript{18} Angus Winchester argues that the character of a landscape is important in determining an area’s identity and can only be ‘understood in the context of patterns of land tenure which generated a sturdily independent rural society in the early modern period’.\textsuperscript{19} Although Winchester was referring to Cumbrian history, this idea of an independently minded society is important. This was a view developed by Sydney Pollard who identified the strength of character needed to survive in these harsh conditions.\textsuperscript{20} In \textit{Quakers in Puritan England}, Hugh Barbour identified this independent attitude as an important characteristic of the earliest Quakers in Westmorland and the Dales and it is an idea that is central to this thesis.\textsuperscript{21} Survival in a harsh environment encouraged self-reliance and economic problems arising from disputes over land tenure, leases, rents, charges, and enclosure reinforced this independent attitude. One of the results was, I argue, the acceptance of radical religious ideas which in turn led to the development of the independent religious community across Westmorland and the Dales.

In Westmorland, Craven and the Yorkshire Dales the relationship between landlord and tenant was strained throughout the sixteenth and the first half of the seventeenth centuries. The earls of Cumberland, and their family, the Cliffords, were the source

\textsuperscript{17} R. H. Tawney, \textit{The Agrarian Problem in the Sixteenth Century}, (London, 1912).
\textsuperscript{18} Jane Whittle, \textit{Landlords and Tenants in Britain, 1440 – 1660, Tawney’s Agrarian Problem Revisited}, (Woodbridge, 2013).
\textsuperscript{20} Pollard, \textit{Marginal Europe}, p. 86.
of particular discontent throughout the whole of the period as John Breay explained in some detail in *Light in the Dales*.\textsuperscript{22} In the 1530s tenants were tearing down the earl’s enclosures across Craven. As Keith Wrightson showed in *Earthly Necessities*, Hoskins in his study of Leicester farmers and Parker in ‘The Agrarian Revolution in Cotesbach 1501 – 1612’, this was not unique to the Dales. Similar localised enclosure disputes arose across England throughout the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries although they varied in their nature and intensity.\textsuperscript{23}

The Cliffords, however, compounded the problems. Intent upon raising as much rental income as possible, they manipulated land ownership to facilitate charges for changes to tenancy agreements and attempted to increase rents. These actions and the enclosure of common land were some of the reasons behind local people’s involvement in the Pilgrimage of Grace rebellion in 1536 – 1537.\textsuperscript{24} Fifty-three men from Westmorland were executed for their part in the rebellion.\textsuperscript{25} Disputes between the Cliffords and their tenants over tenant rights, rents, charges and enclosure continued including a legal dispute following the death of the third earl which continued for over fifty years before it was resolved in 1657.\textsuperscript{26}

Disputes with the Cliffords and other landowners placed huge burdens on tenants. Eviction was a common. Lord Wharton evicted tenants to build a deer park at

\textsuperscript{25} Breay, *Light in the Dales*, p. 19.
\textsuperscript{26} Breay, *Light in the Dales*, pp. 111 – 160.
Ravenstonedale, Westmorland, and the financial burden placed on poor tenants was considerable. As with the response to tragedy my argument is that these problems were character strengthening and another driver in the building of an independent way of life.

**Doctrine of judgements**

Human disasters such as famine can result in dramatic change, both on a personal level and within society as a whole. Roger Brearley, the religious radical and founder of the Grindletonians, left Grindleton to move to Kildwick in 1623. In a poem, *Of Christian Libertie*, probably written in the mid-1630s during his time as vicar at Burnley, Brearley says he was a changed man. It is possible that his experiences of famine and death between 1622 and 1624 were reasons for this change. Alexandra Walsham has shown that Protestants believed natural disasters were the results of God’s anger and displeasure, ‘calamitous happenings that wrought environmental havoc were interpreted as telling evidence of divine anger’. This doctrine of judgements, where catastrophe was accepted as the judgement of God on a sinful society, has been identified as a reaction to harvest failure in work by John Walter, Keith Wrightson, and Steve Hindle. The argument that famine was the result of God’s anger was a powerful one; one that could be used to chastise church congregations. Turning to the established church for relief of their suffering,

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27 Roger Brearley (Breirly), ‘Of True Christian Libertie’, in, ‘A bundle of soul-convincing, directing and comforting truths: clearly deduced from diverse select texts of holy Scripture, and practically improved, both for conviction and consolation. Being a brief summary of several sermons preached at large by that faithful and pious servant of Jesus Christ, M. Rodger Breirly minister of the gospel at Grindleton in Craven’, (London, 1677), Chetham’s Library, Manchester, MS Rr. 2.3.
for safety and protection would have been an understandable reaction, but if people believed that the church did not understand their suffering then it would not be a surprise that people looked elsewhere, to other religious movements, for that safety and comfort.

During the 1640s and 1650s it was not unusual for people to change their religious allegiances, moving from the established church to a more radical movement, perhaps then moving to another, or back to the established church. One individual who followed a complex route from movement to movement was William Dewsbury, who was drawn to ‘Presbyterianism, Congregationalism and Anabaptism’ before he became a very influential Quaker.\textsuperscript{30} Not everyone followed a similar course, but Dewsbury demonstrates how there was fluidity in religious views and forms of worship. When researching the background of individuals and radicalism in Westmorland and the Dales, dissatisfaction with the established church is an important aspect of religious life that I address.

\textbf{Puritans preachers and teachers}

During the years of war and the early years of the Commonwealth more radical political and religious views were openly discussed and circulated in printed pamphlets, books and sermons. This thesis examines the impact of increasing educational provision and literacy among the local population in my study, and how educational provision and delivery may have shaped their religious outlook. This is particularly relevant as the earliest Quakers very quickly adopted print publications to spread their message. In her book \textit{Print Culture and the Early Quakers}, Kate

\begin{footnote}{Geoffrey Nuttall,} \textit{The Holy Spirit in Puritan Faith and Experience}, (Oxford, 1946), p. 136.\end{footnote}
Peters suggests the earliest Quakers were well educated, outlining how they made zealous use of the printing press to produce pamphlets and printed tracts.  The majority of the earliest Quakers must therefore have been well highly literate, many having attended grammar school, but very rarely university.

Print was used to send out different messages. Publishers were key players in the production process. They were barometers of taste as it was in their commercial interest to provide the market with works customers wanted and ones which would attract new readers. Ecclesiastical authorities and reformers used print to promote conformity and propaganda. Publications included diatribes against the papacy, treatises, official handbooks and homilies, in addition to thousands of bibles. At the same time vocal critics of the established church used print to wage an intellectual crusade against ‘popish’ ideas, and especially against Arminianism and Laudianism within the Stuart church.

The ‘middling sort’ (the yeoman farmer and the more educated shopkeepers and merchants), were becoming more politically aware and Green identifies a connection between their social development and publications that sold steadily. He explained that works were targeted at the reader; more advanced works to the educated, abbreviated and simplified works to those less educated and elementary works to those with limited skills. There was a trend for these to be publications demonstrating Protestant commitment, a prominent role for charitable and ‘improving’ works, and a greater degree of tolerance towards those of other

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The literate ‘middling sort’ was no longer satisfied with conformity and propaganda of the published works of the established church.

The relaxation of the censorship of printed works during the years of the civil wars and the Commonwealth was important in enabling the spread of new ideas. Throughout the Tudor and Stuart period print censorship had been enforced by the Stationers’ Company, the printing trade regulatory body, although as with radicalism and the Civil War there has been considerable debate as to its effectiveness. There are several alternative views. Christopher Hill thought that censorship in the period was an exercise of thought control designed to prevent the circulation of dangerous ideas among the masses. Cyndia Clegg argued that the Stationers Company was ineffectual and dysfunctional, riven by personal agendas and mismanagement, and Sheila Lambert that, for the Company, censorship was primarily an economic matter which they used to restrict printing, publishing and bookselling to its own members. For whatever reason censorship had been ad hoc, subject to the diligence of those administering it and had been used by the state to repress views they objected to or promote those they favoured.

From 1641 there was an, ‘explosion of unlicensed printing’, and ‘a flood of pamphleteering’. To many historians this sudden expansion had a revolutionary

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33 Green, Print and Protestantism, pp. 579 - 580.
impact, to others it was a time of literary and linguistic innovation, and to some it was a symptom of a public expressing its political and social differences. An example of this was the emergence of printed political petitions which changed the form of political lobbying. The expansion of unlicensed printing and pamphleteering must have had a significant impact on the independent minded, educated and literate society of Westmorland and the Yorkshire Dales. The circulation of works by radical religious and political activists would have increased as restrictions were lifted, discussion of the subject matter would have been more widespread while the opening of society during the years of the civil wars would have introduced many more people to a wider spectrum of radical views. Central to this thesis is the importance of the independent religious community spread widely across Westmorland and the Dales in 1652. Exposure to more radical thinking, reading alternative religious views, debating and questioning established ways of thinking, particularly during the years of the civil wars, helped to reinforce their own belief in their right to enjoy religious independence.

Laurence Stone believed that in 1640 the people of England were better educated than ever before. It is however necessary to qualify what is meant by an educated population. During the sixteenth century, the number of grammar schools in the present study area had increased. In the early sixteenth century grammar schools already existed at Whalley (originally connected to the Abbey), Skipton (founded 1492), Giggleswick (1512), Sedbergh (1525), and Kendal (1525). In the second half of the century new schools were endowed at Clitheroe (1554), Colne (1558), Burnley

(1559), Kirkby Stephen (1566) and Kirkby Lonsdale (1591). These schools were for the sons of local gentry and the wealthier yeoman families to study a curriculum of classical language and grammar, religious instruction and some basic mathematics to prepare them for university. Although many grammar schools were ‘free’, funded through philanthropy and charity, social conditions meant that only the pupils whose parents could afford to send them there actually benefited. For the overwhelming majority, the children of labourers, husbandmen, shopkeepers and the less wealthy yeomen, the opportunity for education ceased when they were deemed to be of an age when they could earn money through their own labour, usually at the age of seven or eight.  

David Cressy also identified that the growth in educational provision had stagnated towards the end of the Elizabethan era and that by the beginning of the seventeenth century there was a belief among some conservative thinkers that education bred social disruption and political sedition.  

However, it did not mean that children were illiterate because they were unable to attend grammar schools, although it does raise the question as to how literate they actually were. The measurement of literacy levels in the period is extremely difficult, most assessments being made on the basis of the number of people able to sign their name. Through an examination of the number of witnesses who were able to sign their name when making depositions to ecclesiastical courts, making wills, applying for marriage licences and subscribing to protestations and declarations in the diocese of Norwich, Cressy identified that in the first half of the seventeenth

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century illiteracy was widespread but unevenly distributed.\textsuperscript{41} He observed that in a hierarchical society, where educational opportunity was limited and where in many occupations there was little need for literacy, the social structure of illiteracy was not difficult to understand. Illiteracy was lowest among the gentry, while at the level of the labourer, husbandman, bricklayer and thatcher it was between 80\% and 98\%.

This method of measurement does not however give the full picture because as Margaret Spufford’s research showed, writing was a skill which was learned after reading. While children who went to school at the age of six learned to read, only those who stayed at school beyond the age of seven learned to write, and most children of that age were expected to work to help provide for the family.\textsuperscript{42} The ability to read was therefore more widespread throughout society than the ability to write.

Cressy states that there was a noticeable recovery in educational provision during the reign of King James I (1603 – 1625). Yeomen, tradesmen and craftsmen appear to have benefited most from this improvement, to the point where, at the start of the civil wars, yeomen of school age in the 1630s were more literate than ever before.\textsuperscript{43} The yeomen were less literate than the gentry, but they represented an upwardly mobile group where literacy was far more useful in their economic and social life.\textsuperscript{44}

\textsuperscript{41} Cressy, ‘Levels of Literacy’, pp. 1 - 23.
\textsuperscript{43} Cressy, ‘Levels of Literacy’, p. 20.
\textsuperscript{44} Cressy, ‘Levels of Literacy’, pp. 7 – 8.
It was this social group, yeomen, merchants and the better off shopkeepers, the ‘middling sort’, that are said to have provided most converts to the Quakers.\textsuperscript{45}

If grammar school places were limited and access restricted, improved educational provision for the bulk of the population was through local schools funded by bequests where communities paid teachers, often the local preacher, curate or a poorly paid schoolteacher.\textsuperscript{46} David Farr suggests that John Lambert’s early schooling may have been at a school established at Kirkby Malham under the provisions of his uncle’s will, where the local minister was also the schoolmaster.\textsuperscript{47} The existence and development of these schools therefore helped to improve literacy which was further improved by developments in the family. Margaret Spufford identified the key role of women, who, she says, were responsible for teaching the youngest children, those too young to work or go to school, to read.\textsuperscript{48}

Within Westmorland and the Yorkshire Dales, Protestant and Puritan schoolmasters and preachers were responsible for much of the increase in educational provision. I will show that many of the teachers and preachers in the area were the products of the more radical colleges at Oxford and Cambridge which promoted Puritan thinking. Former pupils who were successful graduates of these colleges endowed scholarships to the same college reinforcing the links. The links were further reinforced when preachers and teachers educated at these colleges returned, or were sent, to the area. This process ensured that children attending schools were being

\textsuperscript{46} Stone, ‘The Educational Revolution’, p. 42.
educated within a Puritan environment. The history of the provision of education in the area is thus integral to understanding the community and is an important part of this thesis.

**Puritanism in the north-west of England**

The north-west of England was perceived throughout the sixteenth century as one of the ‘dark corners’ of the country, where attempts to establish the Protestant religion had been slow and ineffective.\(^49\) In 1574 the Privy Council described this area as ‘the very sink of Popery’.\(^50\) Christopher Haigh explained in detail the difficulty experienced by the authorities in implementing religious reform in Lancashire and how reform was only partially effective in the dioceses of York and Chester. Haigh said the diocese of Chester had a history of questionable governance, where administration had been lax, with too much tolerance of older priests who did not follow instructions to implement the Protestant Reformation. At the end of the sixteenth century support for Catholicism remained extensive, maintained by many of the leading families in the area who continued to exercise great influence within churches, schools and society.\(^51\) Records of this period and the early years of the seventeenth century show an increase in the number of Catholic recusants, of students training at European Catholic seminaries and of returning priests being protected from the authorities by local families.\(^52\) One example was at Burnley

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\(^{52}\) Haigh, *Reformation and Resistance*, pp. 269 – 294. Haigh says that ‘there was a considerable expansion in recusancy after 1578’, providing figures for visitations from 1590, when 534 recusants were recorded in Lancashire, to 1630, when 3433 were recorded. p. 269. He goes on to explain the difficulty in corroborating these numbers.
Grammar School, sponsored by the influential Catholic Towneley family, where the headmasters were known for sending pupils to Catholic seminaries.\

While toleration of Catholicism was widespread and Catholic families were very influential, it would be wrong to assume that there was little support for Protestantism across Westmorland, north Lancashire and the Yorkshire Dales. During the sixteenth century through the work of preachers and teachers, Protestantism and the more radical Puritanism, became well established. A. G. Dickens said that there was continuity of radicalism within the diocese from the beginning of the sixteenth century. The idea of continuity within families and across areas was supported by Adrian Davies in *The Quakers in English Society*, and by Christopher Hill but their view is not universally accepted. In *The World of Rural Dissenters*, Nesta Evans said her research demonstrated that dissent did run through families but Patrick Collinson in the same book said there was little evidence to support the idea of continuity over time. In this thesis I demonstrate that within the diocese of York there was a continuity of radicalism from c1570, through the Grindletonians to the Quakers in the 1650s. Ronald Marchant has identified the Puritan preachers operating across the diocese, recording how radicals were regularly brought before the church courts. The sixteenth-century radical Giles Wigginton, the vicar of Sedbergh, was prosecuted and dismissed by the established church. John Wilson, a preacher at Skipton and Kildwick, and Alexander Horrocks,

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vicar at Kildwick, feature in church court prosecutions as does Roger Brearley, the founder of the Grindletonian movement, who was curate at Kildwick in the 1620s and was prosecuted in 1616 and 1627.\textsuperscript{55}

Two individuals who are important to this thesis had connections to Kildwick and Brearley. One was John Webster, who described himself as a Grindletonian and is an important link between individuals and issues later in this thesis, followed Brearley as curate at Kildwick. The second is Thomas Taylor, an extremely important leader of the independent religious community in Westmorland and the Dales that George Fox met in 1652. He was born and lived four miles from Kildwick when both Brearley and Webster were curates there.

This thesis demonstrates that familial connections played an important role in the spread of Puritanism across north-east Lancashire, the Ribble Valley and the Yorkshire Dales. Robert Halley and R. C. Richardson identified this development in the sixteenth and early seventeenth-centuries, with Richardson giving background details of many of the preachers, identifying familial connections. Christopher Haigh and Francis Raines in his history, \textit{The Vicars of Rochdale}, both show how important family links connected Puritan preachers and educators.\textsuperscript{56} The detailed family-trees prepared by Thomas Dunham Whitaker identify complex family connections but they also show that simple categorisations of families as Catholic or

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Protestant can be unhelpful. William Whitaker (1548-1595) from Burnley was a leading Elizabethan theologian appointed Master of St. John’s College, Cambridge in 1586, a college I identify as central to the increase in the number of radical puritan preachers and teachers in Westmorland and the Dales. Whitaker was the nephew of Alexander Nowell (1507–1602), from Read near Burnley, Dean of St. Paul’s from 1560. When Alexander’s mother, whose family was from Rochdale, remarried, it was to the Catholic Charles Towneley of Burnley. These inter-family relationships were complicated. The persistent Catholic recusant, John Towneley, was put into the custody of Dean Nowell, his half-brother, to see if he could induce him to reform. He failed.

Puritan families were central to the increase in educational provision. In Westmorland Roger Lupton, the provost of Eton, established scholarships to St. John’s College, Cambridge, for boys from Sedbergh School. Alexander Nowell helped fund scholarships at Brasenose College, Oxford, for thirteen Protestant boys from Middleton School as well as for boys from Whalley and Burnley. Middleton School was supported by the Assheton family which provided the vicars of Middleton and Slaidburn in the Ribble Valley. The Puritan preacher Richard

58 Haigh, Reformation and Resistance, p. 260. Roger Nowell, the great nephew of Alexander Nowell, was the magistrate who prosecuted the Pendle Witches in 1612. There were a number of possible reasons for the prosecution, one of which could have been the persecution of recusant Catholics. For more on the Lancashire Witches and the Pendle Witch Trial: Robert Poole (Ed), The Lancashire Witches: Histories and Stories, (Manchester, 2002); Thomas Potts, The Wonderfull Discoverie of Witches in the Countie of Lancaster, (London, 1613), in James Crossley, Potts’s Discovery of Witches in the county of Lancaster, (Manchester, 1845); Rachel A. C. Halstead, The Pendle Witch-Trial 1612, (Lancashire, 1993); Edgar Peel & Pat Southern, The Trials of the Lancashire Witches, A Study of 17th Century Witchcraft, (Newton Abbot, 1969).
59 Haigh, Reformation and Resistance, p. 162; Raines, The Vicars of Rochdale.
Midgley, who helped found Rochdale Grammar School, was vicar of Rochdale, which bordered on Middleton. Appointed Queen’s Preacher in 1599, he was a travelling preacher responsible for moderating at Puritan Exercises (meetings of preachers for training, discussion and debate) throughout the county. I argue that both Richard Midgley and his son Joseph were highly influential in Roger Brearley’s religious training and radicalisation.60

**Grindletonianism**

The Grindletonians have been identified as a sect of nonconformist Christians, followers of the preacher Roger Brearley (1586 – 1637). They were named after the village of Grindleton in the Ribble Valley, adjacent to Pendle Hill, where, between 1615 and 1623, Brearley was the curate. He was born in Rochdale, educated at Rochdale or Middleton School, and attended church at Rochdale where the vicar would have been the radical, Joseph Midgley, son of Richard. The Grindletonians have been identified as an antinomian religious sect with significant local support and strong links to, and influence on, other radical groups such as Anabaptists, Familists, Diggers, Seekers and Quakers.61 In The White Wolves, a sermon preached at St. Paul’s Cross, London, in 1627, Stephen Denison condemned them as ‘Grindletonian Familists in the North’, one of the ‘heretical seducers’ threatening the authority of the Church and Scripture.62 Their notoriety has its basis in a series of charges brought against Brearley at the York High Commission in 1616 by a number of local people. The charges themselves have not survived in the records of the High

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Commission, but documents in the Bodleian Library list the ‘fifty erroneous propositions’ arising from his preaching. One of the main accusations was of arguing that the Spirit took precedence over the Word and Scripture. In *Blown by the Spirit*, David Como’s study of Puritanism and, ‘an Antinomian Underground in Pre-Civil War England’, he devotes a complete chapter to the Grindletonians, where he put forward the case that they were an important and wide-spread sect. Other works by Nigel Smith, D. B. Foss and Justine Darling have discussed their relevance, influence and importance, as does Christopher Hill. However, Geoffrey Nuttall said that many of Brearley’s views were not uncommon among radical Puritans. Although the evidence that they were a wide-spread movement is inconclusive, their existence and their notoriety is clearly indicative of the existence of radical beliefs and activity in the area. An investigation into the extent of this radicalism is important, as is an examination of any links between the Grindletonians, Brearley and the early Quakers.

Christopher Hill said that the Grindletonian movement, ‘antedated [Brearley] and certainly survived him’. This thesis advances the debate on the extent of Brearley’s influence and the nature of Grindletonianism. While I question suggestions that Grindletonianism was a direct precursor of the Quaker movement, I am clear that Brearley, his followers and Grindletonianism played an important role in the development of radical Puritanism in the area. In chapter four I argue that it

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was knowledge of Roger Brearley and Grindletonianism that led George Fox to the area around Pendle Hill where he hoped to meet Grindletonians living near Grindleton and Clitheroe. In his personal testimony of conversion, dated 1657, the Quaker, Thomas Barcroft, who lived near Grindleton, thanked Brearley and other Grindletonians for helping him find his inner light which led him to the Society of Friends. In the history of the Quaker movement George Fox’s visit to Pendle Hill is noted only for the vision he experienced having climbed the hill, why he made the journey to Westmorland via Pendle Hill is an overlooked but important part of the history of the Quaker movement.

**From Seekers to Quakers**

Radical Puritanism was well established across Westmorland and the Yorkshire Dales when, during the 1630s, the Archbishop of Canterbury, William Laud, led a movement to eliminate radicalism and reassert the authority of the Church of England. Believing that Laud intended to re-introduce ‘popish ceremonies’ and prevent religious reform, Parliament rejected his proposals. Accused of treason in 1640 he was executed in 1645. Laud’s actions and the subsequent disputes severely diminished the authority of the established church, a situation which was compounded during the disruption caused by the civil wars and by the relaxation of censorship. Religious radicals were able to speak freely, publish pamphlets, books and sermons and advocate the right to freedom of worship. The 1640s saw a proliferation of religious sects and it was during this period that the independent community across Westmorland and the Dales was established.

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67 Testimony of Thomas Barcroft, Swarthmore MS Vol. 351 fol. 174r.
The nature and number of religious sects in the period has been the subject of some debate. In his 1627 sermon, *The White Wolves*, Stephen Denison identified a large number of sects, divisions, he said, of the Family of Love that were set upon destroying the established church.\(^69\) In *Gangraena*, published in 1646, Thomas Edwards identified numerous errors and heresies promoted by sectarian groups.\(^70\) Richard Vann said that in 1646 there were an estimated 199 different sects in England.\(^71\) However, it is doubtful that many of the reported sects actually existed.

J. F. McGregor said many sects were imaginary inventions of critics of radical ideas, while Michael Braddick said that there were probably more Catholics than sectarians in London.\(^72\) J. C. Davis argued that the proliferation of named groups hid the fact that there was little of substance to distinguish one group from another.\(^73\) In the view of Geoffrey Nuttall, however, one important consequence of the belief that sects were widespread was to focus attention on the demand for liberty of conscience and freedom of religion.\(^74\)

One body of sectarians has been defined by historians as Seekers, however, they cannot be identified as a religious movement with a clear organisational or leadership structure. It is accepted among historians that as the established church


\(^{70}\) Thomas Edwards, *Gangraena or a Catalogue of Discovery of many of the Errours, Heresies, Blasphemies and pernicious Practices of the Sectaries of this time vented and acted in England in these four last years*, (London, 1646).

\(^{71}\) Vann, *The Social Development*, p. 7.


lost its authority a movement developed which attempted to restore the church to what they believed was its original, primitive model. This was a church without hierarchy, ritual and ceremony, a church in its simplest form which was fundamental to the Puritan idea of establishing a godly society. Richard Baxter, the seventeenth-century theologian, identified six different groups of Seekers but, as with the identification of sects, he condemned such radical beliefs as a threat to the church. Historians, including J. F. McGregor and Christopher Hill, agree that there was no sect of Seekers, just individuals alienated from the established church having rejected every form of organised worship. Fundamental to the existence of these simple churches was the right of individuals to freedom of worship and liberty of conscience, reforms that Puritans expected to be implemented during the Commonwealth following the civil wars.

Central to this thesis are the people of the religious community in Westmorland and the Yorkshire Dales who met George Fox in 1652. Champlin Burrage identified them as Seekers, adding that many became Quakers believing that George Fox had been sent by God. In chapter three I explain how this group developed. An independent religious group of individuals who believed in their right to freedom of worship, who had rejected the established church and formed their own simple church. Their actions and activity reflected many of the ideas of radical religious

35 The people called Seekers are identified with the millenarian ideas of 1640s; that Christ would establish a thousand-year reign of the saints on earth before the Last Judgement. In order for this to happen the church had to revert to its earliest most primitive form which the established church with its hierarchies, customs and ceremony visibly did not. Seekers, therefore, withdrew from, and were opponents of the established church and are characterised as waiting for new apostles or a charismatic spirit to ‘fire the hearts of all believers’ and establish the millenarian ideals. There are no Seeker manifestos and there were no established organisations. McGregor, ‘Seekers and Ranters’, pp. 122 – 123.
thinkers of the 1640s, for example William Erbery, William Dell and John Saltmarsh, who, as I will explain were very influential during the civil war. Leaders did emerge in the community, Thomas Taylor, an ordained priest, was perhaps the earliest, followed by laymen John Audland, Francis Howgill and Thomas Camm, all of whom would become leading Quakers following their meeting with George Fox. The strength and belief of these individuals and those who made up the community was such that this was a mutually beneficial meeting of like-minded individuals, not as Burrage suggests a conversion at the feet of George Fox.

The Way To Firbank Fell

The 1640s were defining years for the people who formed the independent religious community across Westmorland, north Lancashire and the Yorkshire Dales. The diminished authority of the established church enabled them to worship as they wished and encouraged an expectation that liberty of conscience and freedom of worship would be made lawful after the civil wars. Involvement in the civil wars, initially supporting the Northern Association Army and then the New Model Army, introduced individuals and communities to more intense religious radicalism and, for the first time for many, very radical political ideas. The extent of political radicalism within the New Model Army can be seen in the work of Austin Woolrych, Michael Mendle and Samuel Glover on the Putney Debates, debates held by soldiers, including Levellers, to discuss a radical new constitution. Haller, George Drake, Ian Gentles and Timothy George have all documented how Puritan preachers were

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active supporters of the Parliamentarian cause and how they used religion to strengthen soldiers’ resolve before battle. In chapter four I explain how important and effective this was. I also identify members and leaders of the independent religious community in Westmorland and the Dales who were soldiers in the armies of Parliament who later became Quakers.

A very important section of this thesis, explained in chapter four, concerns the establishment of what I refer to as an informal network of like-minded individuals involved directly with the armies of Parliament, particularly the northern regiments under the command of John Lambert. This network included men who would become leading Quakers, James Nayler and William Dewsbury, officers close to John Lambert, the Grindletonian John Webster, and members of the independent religious community in Westmorland and the Dales. This thesis adds to our knowledge by explaining how this network came to exist and how it was through an introduction to its members that George Fox became aware of the extent of religious radicalism across Yorkshire and Westmorland and of the community based around Sedbergh. George Fox’s journey from west Yorkshire to Sedbergh was planned carefully, taking him to the centre of Grindletonianism and, via members of the informal network, through the Dales to Sedbergh.

Histories of the early Quaker movement have overlooked the importance of the ‘olde preist’ who met George Fox when he was travelling in Yorkshire. I argue that this

man was William Boyes, the perpetual curate at Goathland in north Yorkshire, although there has been some debate as to his identity. Boyes, I will explain, was a long standing religious radical who knew Roger Brearley, had been a radical preacher through the 1620s and 1630s, and knew of Thomas Taylor and the radicalism of the community in the Dales in 1652. The meeting with Boyes is vital in explaining how and why George Fox decided to travel to Westmorland, an explanation which adds to our understanding of the early history of the Quaker movement.

**Religious radicalism and military activity**

John Lambert is an important link between religious and political radicals in the Parliamentarian army during and following the civil wars and my thesis examines the significance of his tolerance of, and support for, radical causes among the men under his command. William Erbery was a chaplain to Lambert’s regiments, James Nayler was a regimental Quartermaster and many of the men George Fox met in Yorkshire and on his journey through the Dales were former soldiers under Lambert’s command. Some of these men, like Nayler, would be among the earliest Quakers while many other former soldiers would be convinced during the 1650s. Lambert was a Major-General in the New Model Army, a close advisor to Oliver Cromwell, an important political radical and a strong republican.

David Farr explains that Lambert, after the death of his father, had a Puritan upbringing and education in the household of Sir William Lister, of Thornton-in-

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Craven. Although the nature of his religious belief is unknown, John maintained a closeness to Puritanism through his marriage to Sir William’s daughter, Frances, who had a considerable influence on her husband throughout his adult life. There is also the possibility, which I investigate in chapter four, that Frances was sympathetic to the Quakers. An investigation of the familial relationships of the Lamberts demonstrates once again how it is dangerous to rely on religious stereotypes when studying an individual’s relationships and behaviour. Sir William’s wife, and Frances’ mother was Mary Belasyse, daughter of Sir Henry Belasyse and sister of Thomas Baron and Viscount Fauconberg. During the most difficult times of the 1640s and 1650s, the Listers and Lamberts maintained close ties to the Belasyse family who remained Royalists, fought for the King during the civil wars and were sympathetic to the Catholic religion. This relationship would prove to be of great advantage to him after the Restoration.\(^8\)

As the civil wars progressed and permanent, professional regiments were formed in the Parliamentarian army, John Lambert’s regiments absorbed men from local militias which had previously disbanded and reformed as circumstances required.\(^9\) Bringing together men from north-east Lancashire and Yorkshire reinforced what were already well established links between families in Kildwick and Burnley, where Roger Brearley had been appointed vicar in 1631. After 1652, the Quaker movement would quickly establish roots in east Lancashire with followers in

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Burnley and particularly the villages on the road to Skipton, including Foulridge, where Thomas Barcroft lived. One of the key contributions of this thesis is identifying for the first time the link between radicalism in the military, the Puritan preaching of men like Brearley and the earliest Quakers in this region.

The nature of radicalisation

Given the centrality of radicalism in this thesis, it is essential to acknowledge the debate among historians as to the impact, influence, relevance and even the existence, of radical movements in the period. Christopher Hill advocated the importance and relevance of radical movements during the civil wars, the Commonwealth and the early years of Cromwell’s governments.\textsuperscript{83} Hill believed radical groups, particularly the Ranters, Levellers and Seekers, represented popular lower-class movements, which presented a direct alternative to the existing ruling elite. He also said that, ‘the published opinions of the Quakers gave plenty of grounds for regarding them as political radicals in the 1650s.’\textsuperscript{84} Barry Reay argued that the early Quaker movement was important in understanding the social and political context of the English Revolution and the advent of the movement had political repercussions which were actually negative in that they generated hostility and stimulated political conservatism which in the end resulted in the restoration of the Stuarts.\textsuperscript{85}

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\textsuperscript{84} Hill, \textit{The World}, p. 307, p. 195.
Hill’s view of radicalism and revolution has been significantly revised by a number of historians who argued that there was political consensus until the King resorted to arms to resolve his conflict over funding with an increasingly assertive, but fundamentally conservative, Parliament. They also said that English Protestantism was united and that radicals represented only a minority on the periphery of the religious debate.\textsuperscript{86} Under this interpretation the Quakers are not seen as a popular radical movement, the argument being that the Anglican Church was the only truly popular religious authority.\textsuperscript{87}

The conflicting views are clear when we consider the revisionist opinion of the existence and relevance of the Ranters as a radical group. In \textit{Fear Myth and History}, J. C. Davis argued that while the Ranters were an interesting phenomenon they could not be called a movement or a sect as they were not identifiable as a group with shared beliefs or practices.\textsuperscript{88} Davis argued that seventeenth-century sources used to justify the existence of a Ranter movement were unreliable, being based primarily on the views of people who condemned outright the beliefs and activities of religious independents.\textsuperscript{89} To the revisionists the Marxist revolution within the Civil War never happened, or at best was a failed revolution, and the ‘eventual quiescence of Quakers was a symbol of defeat’.\textsuperscript{90} Both Hill and Champlin Burrage say Ranters

\textsuperscript{86} Cust and Hughes (Eds.), \textit{Conflict in Early Stuart England}, p. 3.


\textsuperscript{88} J. C. Davis, \textit{Fear, Myth and History: The Ranters and the Historians}, (Cambridge, 1986).

\textsuperscript{89} Davis, \textit{Fear, Myth and History}, pp. 126 - 137.

\textsuperscript{90} Davis, \textit{Fear, Myth and History}, p. 133.
became Quakers but, if this was the case it was after 1652 and is outside the scope of this thesis.  

The nature of radicalism is central to many of the issues around the formative influences of the people who became the earliest Quakers. Explaining how political and religious radicalism played a part in influencing the attitudes and beliefs of these people is an essential part of this thesis. The debate as to whether Ranters became Quakers and the nature of the politics of the movement concerns the period after 1652. It is important that a distinction is drawn between pre- and post- 1652 and the meetings at Firbank Fell and Sedbergh. As I say in this thesis, the independent religious movement in Westmorland and the Dales prior to 1652 was a religious movement. While liberty of conscience and freedom of religion required political change, I have found no evidence linking the members of that movement to any radical political group identifiable as Ranters, Levellers or Diggers before 1652.

**Thesis structure**

The first chapter of this thesis explores the social and economic history of Westmorland and the Yorkshire Dales during the second half of the sixteenth and the first half of the seventeenth centuries, a period of great hardship. It is my argument that isolation and harsh geographical conditions combined with social and economic problems to create an independent, self-reliant way of life. I explain why the system of land tenure and the issue of tenant rights was an important issue from the Pilgrimage of Grace in 1536 – 1537, to the protracted legal disputes with the Clifford

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family which were not resolved until 1657. These disputes were the cause of severe financial hardship to a wide cross-section of the population.

An important section of this chapter is devoted to the impact of poor harvests, periods of famine and exceptionally high mortality rates. I deal with three periods when mortality rates were at crisis levels discussing how these disasters would have affected the local people and their relationship with the church, where the interpretation of disasters as God’s judgment on a sinful society was common. I explain how problems of reduced demand and falling prices of wool exacerbated the problems of both tenant farmers and landowners. The increasing influence of the yeoman in the period of my study is very important. I demonstrate this by a study of the Barcroft family of Foulridge, in north-east Lancashire, who prospered during the first half of the seventeenth century. I argue that it was increasingly influential, independently minded, local yeomen farmers and merchants who were responsible for the appointment of Roger Brearley as curate at Grindleton and at Kildwick. The Barcroft family and the Currers of Kildwick are particularly interesting as they directly connect Roger Brearley and the Grindletonians with radical Puritanism across Craven and the Yorkshire Dales, the Parliamentarian army during the civil wars and the Quaker movement.

Puritanism, preachers and education are the topics covered in chapter two. One of the most important arguments in this thesis is the history and continuity of radical Puritanism across the area of Lancashire, the Yorkshire Dales and Westmorland. In this chapter I explain how, during the second half of the sixteenth century in the diocese of York, Puritanism became established through the appointment of, and
particularly the toleration of more radical Puritan preachers. Not only did they effect religious change, but the influence of the Puritan preachers extended into education and the school system. Education played an important part in the establishment of Puritanism and Puritanism was key to the expansion of educational provision. I explain how growing support for independent religious views led to the establishment of the independent religious community in Westmorland and the Dales. This is the group that met George Fox in 1652 and is central to this thesis. Throughout the chapter I identify individuals who shaped the development of radical religion and education both nationally and locally and highlight individual preachers to demonstrate how they influenced the history of both religion and education in the areas of Craven, Sedbergh and Kendal.

Chapter three examines the decline in the authority of the Church of England, the rise in religious sects, the establishment of a separatist community across Westmorland and the Dales and the importance of liberty of conscience and freedom of religion. I examine how the rise, relevance and importance of religious sects was debated in the seventeenth century and is viewed by historians. I explain my opinion that the identification of sects in the seventeenth century was both questionable and a way of condemning radicalism. This chapter also shows how the radical separatist movement in Westmorland and the Dales developed into a dynamic community under the stewardship of Thomas Taylor. Taylor, I argue, was central to the establishment of the group which would continue to strengthen under the leadership of John Audland and Francis Howgill. All three would become leading Quaker preachers.
I also highlight the importance of the radical religious preachers, John Saltmarsh, William Dell and William Erbery, explaining why their ideas, particularly the right of individuals to enjoy the freedom to worship as they wished, were so influential. I use the works of John Webster to demonstrate how there was a continuity from the ideas expressed by men like Brearley, through the works of preachers like Erbery to the beliefs and practices of the community led by Taylor, Audland and Howgill. This community adopted the ideas of the radicals setting up a simple church, one without ceremony or hierarchy.

In chapter four I explain the importance and relevance of radicalisation within the ranks of the armies of Parliament in the north of England, initially the Northern Association Army and then the New Model Army, particularly the regiments under the command of Major-General John Lambert. I outline how morale was strengthened within the Parliamentarian regiments by Puritan preachers and the adoption of Puritan worship and practices, and how this radicalised environment facilitated the rising from the ranks of untrained radical preachers. One such untrained preacher was James Nayler.

The final section argues that Nayler was part of an informal network of like-minded religious radicals which included preachers and serving or retired Parliamentarian soldiers. When George Fox travelled into west Yorkshire it was at the house of Lieutenant Roper where he met the ex-soldiers James Nayler and William Dewsbury. From here I argue that Fox travelled through Yorkshire meeting members of this network, learning of the extent of religious radicalism across Yorkshire. One of the people he met was an old priest. I suggest that this man was
William Boyes, curate at Goathland, a priest well known throughout the diocese of York, a man who would have known of Thomas Taylor and the independent group in Westmorland and the Dales, and, crucially, the man who appeared in May 1627 alongside Roger Brearley before the High Commission at York accused of organising prohibited ‘exercises’, regular meetings of preachers where they informally discussed and debated questions of theology. I suggest that it was following these meetings that Fox decided to travel to Westmorland, via Pendle Hill and Grindleton, along a route through the Dales meeting other members of the informal network, predominantly ex-military men. In later years the Quaker movement would establish its pacifist position but in 1652 there was a very strong link to soldiers who had retired or were still serving in the Parliamentarian army and many of these men would become Quakers.
Chapter One: A Century of Hardship

Financial hardship and natural disasters

If we are to understand the people George Fox met we must explore the social, economic and religious history of the area through the second half of the sixteenth and the first half of the seventeenth centuries. In this chapter I investigate social and economic problems which impacted on the local population, the consequences of which were felt and remembered by families for generations. One of the central issues is the very divisive relationship between tenant farmers, struggling to survive in a harsh environment, and their landlords who sought to maximise their income from their landholdings. Charges levied by landowners on changes in tenancies, attempts to raise money by enforcing changes to tenancy agreements, and attempts to increase income by enclosing common land, played a very important role in defining the increasingly fractious relationship between tenant and landlord. This relationship was also crucial in defining the attitude of the local population to the authority of both the State and the Church.

Famine would also impact heavily on the local population. The area was subject to several harvest failures which had disastrous consequences for a poor agricultural economy. This chapter investigates three periods of crisis mortality, 1587 – 1588, 1596 – 1598, and 1623 – 1624, events which were of such significance that they must have had a formative influence in a society where religion was very important. Many in the clergy believed that famine and other catastrophic events were divinely ordained. While some Protestants had begun to question divine intervention in such events many still believed that the root cause of the crisis events was that God was
punishing a sinful society. Poor harvests were not unique in this region in this period but, in comparison to other areas of the country, they could be devastating to the local population and economy of Westmorland, the Yorkshire Dales and north Lancashire. The problems arising from poor harvests are important issues in my study.

I also investigate how the textile industry developed providing an additional source of income for many families some of whom were able to prosper, particularly the yeoman farmers who became wool and textile merchants. As the textile industry grew, and while many merchants prospered, those dependant on the land and sheep, both tenants and landowners, struggled when harvests were poor and there was a decline in the price and market for wool. The struggle was simply to survive for poor families in a difficult farming environment. Poor harvests that led to famine and mortality crises, financial disputes with landowners, disruption in the markets for wool and textiles, and the increasing influence of the yeoman farmer and merchant would all play a part in shaping the attitude of people in the area towards authority, and to the church.

While the issues discussed in this chapter are relevant across the whole region of my study, this chapter is separated into two main sections; the first focused on north-east Lancashire and the Ribble Valley and the second focused on Westmorland, Craven and the Yorkshire Dales.

Economic hardship around Pendle and north-east Lancashire

Lancashire and Westmorland, at the end of the sixteenth century, were two of the poorest counties in England.2 The economy of the north-west, including the Ribble Valley, the Forests of Bowland, Pendle and Trawden, and the bordering areas of Craven, the Yorkshire Dales and Westmorland, was agricultural, predominantly pastoral farming. High ground, poor soil and high rainfall were conditions that severely limited agricultural development. Much of the area was remote and travel and communications were slow and difficult. Conditions were hard for the local farmers, surviving on economically marginal land where productivity was low in an area which was susceptible to poor harvests. It was possible through management of the land to bring marginal areas into more productive use, as in west Lancashire and west Yorkshire.3 In Westmorland and the Dales, however, this was only possible on the periphery of the area and, as it entailed enclosure of common land, it was not popular. While the inability to develop land is a disadvantage, Sydney Pollard argued that adverse conditions could bring out hidden human qualities.4 He said the people of the area had to exercise their ingenuity to make the best of their circumstances.5

In Pollard’s view the customary rights of tenants, particularly the holding of land by ‘customary tenure’, were a source of strength as it was difficult for large landowners to increase rents and change tenancy terms.6 It was a common belief among the

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local population that changes in land ownership, land management and to tenant rights threatened their way of life; threats which were resisted with a ‘tenacity’ matched ‘by the vigour with which the landlords sought to’ impose change.\(^7\)

Throughout the sixteenth and the seventeenth centuries the behaviour of local landowners gave rise to some incendiary issues.

At the beginning of the sixteenth century the Forests of Bowland, Pendle and Trawden were the property of the Duchy of Lancaster and had been Crown lands since the accession of Henry IV to the English throne in 1399. A significant change took place in 1507 with the disafforestation of the area. Henry VII had intended to lease the Forest of Pendle in parcels to Thomas, Earl of Derby and James Stanley, Archdeacon of Richmond, for 21 years. However, the Steward, without authority, had granted tenants copyhold leases. This became apparent when the servants of Stanley attempted to collect rents from the tenants who challenged their authority. Confrontations led to some tenants being thrown off their land. In order to reconcile the tenants, the King ordered the Steward of Blackburnshire to resolve the issue, which was done by confirming the existing leases. Copyhold leases, issued by copy of court roll according to local custom, were granted for life or for a number of years at a higher fixed rent, fixed in perpetuity, with fines (charges) on changes of tenancy or death fixed at one year’s rent.\(^8\) Although the Duchy had secured a significant increase in rents the terms proved to be an exceptionally bad piece of business by its officers. The significance of the agreement was to effectively grant the copyholder a freehold with tenure at a rent fixed in perpetuity and a low charge on a change in

\(^7\) Pollard, *Marginal Europe*, p. 97.
tenancy. Through the sixteenth century while rents remained fixed, price inflation provided the copyholders with a real increase in income.

The copyholder tenants of the old forested areas could not therefore be arbitrarily evicted, and the local custom was traditionally one of primogeniture. Equally as the rents and fines on transfer were fixed, the tenant was not in a position to be rack-rented by increased rents or entry fines. Although the custom was for the eldest son to inherit land it was also the custom that the wife of the testator was automatically entitled to one third of his personal estate, his children were entitled to a further one third leaving one third to be disposed of as he saw fit.\textsuperscript{9} It was not uncommon for a father during his own lifetime to pass on part of his land to his son, or for a father to require that on his death his younger children received an interest in a portion of land until their maturity. Neither was it uncommon for the testator to have granted cash amounts to his children during his lifetime, either to younger sons to purchase land or set them up in a business, or as dowries to daughters.\textsuperscript{10} The consequence of these practices was to encourage the sub-division of land holdings either to fulfil the terms of the will, or to raise the cash required to transfer the personal estate to members of the family. As the sixteenth century progressed many copyhold properties were repeatedly sub-divided making them less sustainable despite the low rent and the fact that price inflation had provided a real increase in income.\textsuperscript{11}

The problem of survival on smaller plots was exacerbated by poor harvests when many tenants were faced with starvation and/or disease. Although records are poor

\textsuperscript{9} Swain, \textit{Industry Before the Industrial Revolution}, p. 74.
\textsuperscript{10} Swain, \textit{Industry before the Industrial Revolution}, p. 74.
for the period, those available for the chapelries of Colne and Newchurch in Pendle suggest that between the mid-sixteenth and the mid-seventeenth centuries the population doubled. The difficulties of the many were an opportunity for the few. Sales and mortgaging of property became more frequent enabling wealthier tenants to increase their own land holdings for use within the family, or to sub-let at a higher rent.

The Duchy had made several attempts during the century to increase its income by letting parcels of wasteland, granting leases for new mills and for rights to minerals. It also attempted to prevent the sub-division of holdings by creating an order that prohibited tenants to sell or sub-let their holdings. The penalty if the terms of the order were broken was the seizure of the holding by the Steward. It appears that the decree was not enforced as there are no records of confiscations in the court rolls.

In 1607, the Duchy took a much more decisive step and started legal proceedings against the tenants claiming that the copyhold tenancies had been granted illegally as the land was really an assart. The justification for such a claim one hundred years after disafforestation had begun was very tenuous, but the tenants’ case was hindered by a lack of clarity in the use of the term ‘leases’ in the original documentation. This has been called ‘legal chicanery’ but the tenants agreed to pay twelve years rent as a composition to confirm their leases, which was paid in 1609.

The dispute and the size of the payment may have been a contributing factor to social tension in the area and to one of the most notorious witch trials in England.

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12 Swain, Industry before the Industrial Revolution, p. 19.
13 Swain, Industry before the Industrial Revolution, p. 60.
14 Assarting was the clearing of forest land for agriculture. It was illegal to assart a Royal forest.
15 Swain, Industry before the Industrial Revolution, p. 61.
1612 at Lancaster, in what became known as the trial of the Lancashire Witches, ten people from Pendle were found guilty of causing death by witchcraft and executed. A number of those accused were old and/or disabled and had survived either through begging or by exploiting their reputations as people with magical powers, selling healing potions and charms. Among the charges were a number of causing death by using these magical powers to place curses on people who had refused them charity.\textsuperscript{16} As early as 1584, Reginald Scot said that there was a direct connection between poverty and those accused of witchcraft.\textsuperscript{17} Keith Thomas and Alan Macfarlane have both hypothesised that many accusations of witchcraft arose through the refusal of charity to a beggar who responded by muttering curses. The belief was that the curses were acts of witchcraft and the cause of a subsequent death.\textsuperscript{18} Refusal of charity was however only one of a number of issues behind the accusations in the case of the Pendle Witches.\textsuperscript{19} What is clear is that in the Pendle area the very difficult economic situation must have been compounded by financial problems arising from the composition dispute. It is therefore a possibility that one of the first things that suffer at this time of increased financial hardship was charitable giving, hitting the poorest people in the region hardest and increasing social friction. Unfortunately the only record of the trial is that by Thomas Potts, the

\textsuperscript{16} A number of people accused were from families who survived by begging. Thomas Potts, ‘The Wonderfull Discoverie of Witches in the Countie of Lancaster’ (London, 1613), in James Crossley, \textit{Potts’s Discovery of Witches}, (Manchester, 1845).

\textsuperscript{17} Reginald Scot, \textit{The Discovery of Witchcraft}, (London, 1584), edited by Brinsley Nicholson, (London, 1886), pp. 5 – 6. Scot’s objective was to prove that a belief in witchcraft and magic was merely a superstition encouraged by the Catholic Church. He argued that persecution of those accused of witchcraft was un-Christian. His views were controversial and were condemned by King James I of England, King James VI of Scotland, in his book \textit{Daemonologie} (1597).


\textsuperscript{19} Evidence from the trial of the Pendle Witches suggests that the defendants may have been attending a Catholic mass. Poems said to have been spoken at the meeting were heavily laced with Catholic devotional references. Halstead, \textit{The Pendle Witch-Trial}, pp. 33 – 35, 47 – 52.
clerk of the court at Lancaster, which contains little information on the backgrounds of the accused.\textsuperscript{20} Neither have any records of the overseers of the poor survived.\textsuperscript{21} It is therefore impossible to know if the old, blind Demdike and Chattox together with their families depended on the poor law and charity for their survival.

Officials of the Duchy, no doubt encouraged by successfully securing the fine in 1607, sought to review the fines levied on inherited copyholds where the level of fine was not documented. The Duchy also determined that all copyholds on demesne, waste or common lands were illegal, that tenants had to pay in order to confirm their leases and offered to lease the commons to allow enclosure.\textsuperscript{22} This appears to have been a step too far by the Duchy. The tenants refused to deal with the appointed Commissioners and to pay the fines assessed by the Steward which they said were arbitrary and assessed at a far greater rate than was customary. The tenants said they would only pay their usual fines of one years’ rent. In 1618, the Copyholders were told they had to pay forty years rent to confirm their leases, plus the overdue fines, plus a charge assessed on every acre of wasteland that was to be enclosed and improved. The dispute continued through the 1620s. The Act of Parliament confirming the agreement was delayed during the Civil War and was not passed until 1650. The Act was declared illegal at the Restoration and it was not until 1662 that an Act was passed confirming the leases and acquitting the tenants of any further payments.

\textsuperscript{20} Robert Poole, \textit{The Wonderful Discovery of Witches in the County of Lancaster: Thomas Potts Original Text Modernised and Introduced by Robert Poole}, (Lancaster, 2011).
\textsuperscript{21} Swain, \textit{Industry before the Industrial Revolution}, p. 84.
\textsuperscript{22} Swain, \textit{Industry before the Industrial Revolution}, p. 61.
Half of the charge was payable in 1619 - 20 and the consequences of finding twenty years rent immediately must have been considerable for many tenants. Records show that even the gentry of the area were behind in paying their rents throughout the 1620s, including a member of the Towneley family, one of the most influential families in the area. The difficulty of raising the money was compounded by a bad harvest in 1621 – 1622, followed by famine in 1623. This dispute led to significant anger and disaffection towards the Duchy and the King and may have been one reason why the area strongly favoured Parliament during the Civil War. The local Parliamentarian forces were led by the Presbyterian Shuttleworths of Gawthorp near Burnley. Evidence that will be outlined in chapter four, clearly connects members of these forces with those of Major-General John Lambert whose regiments had a reputation for radicalism and members of which had close connections to the Quakers.

The experiences of the population of the Forest of Bowland were very similar to those of Pendle and Trawden following disafforestation; the details of the composition disputes were the same, as was the problem of sub-division of holdings. By the 1580s, the population of Bowland had increased significantly as new people arrived, encroaching on the unenclosed wastes and the poorer land on the higher ground. The Steward of the manor did not discourage this as those who had encroached were granted copyhold tenancy on payment of a fine and the agreed

23 Swain, Industry before the Industrial Revolution, p. 64.
24 Rodgers, The Lancashire Population Crisis, p. 22.
By 1587, the situation was such that the freeholders and copyholders of the village of Grindleton (on the edge of Bowland and in the Ribble Valley close to Clitheroe and Pendle) petitioned the Duchy’s authorities. They claimed that, ‘Grindleton is lately greatly increased in buildings and dwelling houses and thereby much more populated’, it was, ‘in no sort able or sufficient to maintain the said freeholders and copyholders’, and, ‘much poverty does daily increase’. The petition succeeded and the common, Smalden, close to Grindleton, was enclosed, the new land apportioned according to the amount of land already held. This almost doubled the enclosed area but was not popular with everyone. The poorer commoners received only small allocations while the under tenants were allocated nothing and neither group was compensated for the loss of their access to the open common. The cost of enclosure and the lime and manure required to improve the common land was also beyond the means of many who had received an allocation. Their only recourse was to sell their allocation to wealthier neighbours. A study of land transactions in the area shows an upward trend of transfers through the sixteenth century peaking during the 1580s, coinciding with the time of the hardship claim and the enclosure at Grindleton. Another peak, between 1610 and 1629, coincided with the time of the composition dispute and the 1623 famine. While the larger landowners and copyholders benefited from the enclosures, price inflation and the premium they enjoyed between the rents they paid and received, the poorest in the community saw little benefit and suffered the most.

For most families therefore, and especially for the landless and those with very small parcels of land, a second income was essential. Sheep farming became increasingly important through the sixteenth century. In the 1530s the Abbot of Whalley accepted lambs and wool as payment in kind for the tithes due. The Halmote Court records of Clitheroe show that fines were levied on a regular basis for the overstocking of sheep on the common pasture. By 1590, the Shuttleworths of Gawthorpe near Burnley must have been keeping between 1,000 and 1,500 sheep judging by the quantity of wool their records show they collected. The wool produced however was not of a very high quality being short and coarse, suitable only for producing a coarse woollen cloth called Kersey. By the beginning of the seventeenth century, a majority of homes in Colne were involved in weaving, carding, combing and spinning yarn while in the forest areas homes supplemented their income by preparing and spinning yarn, occupations particularly suitable for children and the old. Weaving and the preparation of the yarn had become important domestic industries vital to the finances of the family.

Mary Brigg in her history of the Forest of Pendle in the seventeenth century, portrays the area as an, ‘industrious and prosperous community’. John Swain takes issue with this view arguing that her conclusions were drawn from analysing wills and

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inventories, sources which were ‘socially selective’. What Mary Brigg’s research did show was how the life of the yeoman farmer had improved and how this could be seen in the houses they built and the lists of household and personal items detailed in their wills. Copyholders who had been able to keep their lands intact benefited significantly from the differential between the rents they charged their tenants, which had increased steadily, and those they paid to the Duchy, which remained fixed. In 1535 - 1536, on one copyhold in Pendle the income from tenants was £16 11s 4d. By 1685, the income had risen to £115 4s 8d. The rent paid by the copyholder to the Duchy remained at £10 13s 4d throughout the whole of this period. A similar situation was enjoyed by freehold landowners throughout the country who enjoyed the benefits of higher prices for their produce and higher rents from their tenants. In the richer agricultural areas of the midlands and the south the benefits were more pronounced than in northern pastoral areas. In Pendle, even the wealthier copyholder sought a second income, invariably as a dealer in wool and/or as a textile merchant, marketing the kersey cloth produced by the tenants.

The growth of the domestic textile industry provided an economic lifeline for many of the poorest whose farms were too small to support them. Conflict between landlord and tenant had exacerbated financial hardship for many but had created opportunities for others. This was particularly the case for those yeoman farmers who were able to increase their land holdings and to begin trading in wool and textiles. Their increasing wealth, enabling them to improve their houses and educate their children, and social status were features of the period. It must be remembered

36 Swain, Industry before the Industrial Revolution, p. 95.
38 Wrightson, Earthly Necessities, p. 186.
however, that the social and economic progress of the minority was not truly representative of the wider population where there was extensive poverty and where life for many was extremely precarious.\textsuperscript{39} The section of this chapter detailing the causes and effect of famine demonstrates how precarious the life of agricultural workers could be.

\textbf{The rise of the yeoman farmer}

The increasing influence of yeoman farmers, merchants and traders is an important aspect of the early seventeenth century and of this thesis. Of the ‘Valiant Sixty’, the men and women from Westmorland and the Dales who are identified as the first Quaker preachers, the majority were yeomen, merchants and schoolmasters.\textsuperscript{40} In \textit{Marginal Europe}, Sydney Pollard explained how life in an economically marginal area like Westmorland and the Yorkshire Dales provided opportunities which yeomen were adept at developing.\textsuperscript{41} He argued that ‘a high degree of initiative …was forced on people living in marginal areas’ through problems created by the natural environment and their isolation. That they had to be ‘industrious, flexible, self-reliant, hardy [and] active’.\textsuperscript{42} He said these qualities explained how people living in marginal areas managed hardship and yet were able to develop opportunities which, ‘could be, at times,…,at the cutting edge of economic and social advance[s]’.\textsuperscript{43}

\textsuperscript{39} Swain records that as late as 1664 hearth tax records show that 26% of Pendle households were exempt on the grounds of poverty and that in 1660 63% of households had an income of less that £5 per annum. Swain, \textit{Industry Before}, p. 95.
\textsuperscript{40} Earnest Taylor, \textit{The Valiant Sixty}, (London, 1947), p. 43.
\textsuperscript{41} Pollard, \textit{Marginal Europe}, p. 97.
\textsuperscript{42} Pollard, \textit{Marginal Europe}, p. 127.
\textsuperscript{43} Pollard, \textit{Marginal Europe}, p. 268.
One family to prosper was the Barcroft family of Foulridge, near Colne. They are an example of how a yeoman farming family could, by developing a secondary business, increase their landholdings, wealth and social status. They are also important to this thesis because two members of the family provide a rare but direct link between Roger Brearley, the Grindletonians and the Quakers. In chapter two, I explain the importance of Brearley and the Grindletonians in the radical Puritan traditions of Craven and the Yorkshire Dales, and in chapter four their significance in the decision of George Fox to travel to Westmorland via Pendle Hill.

In 1575 the changing economics of land ownership led to the absentee owner of the Manor of Foulridge selling off the land in parcels. William Barcroft, of Barcroft near Burnley, bought for his two younger sons, Thomas and Henry, 75 acres, a messuage called Noyna, and a fifth share of the local mill.\textsuperscript{44} Henry died without heirs and the property, having passed to Thomas, was at the beginning of the seventeenth century in the possession of Thomas’s son, Ambrose.

In his will dated 1641, Ambrose referred to himself as a yeoman, an indication perhaps that he considered himself to be primarily a farmer. But the will also provides evidence that he had been successful in business as a wool merchant as he left legacies to his children of £440, much of which was in goods. The legacies included £160 in ‘money and goods’ to a younger son Paul who had been apprenticed to a wool merchant in York. By 1641 Ambrose had, ‘alreadie conveyed and assured’ his ‘Anciente messuage lands tenements and hereditaments in

\textsuperscript{44} Emma Ten Broeck Runk, \textit{Barcroft family records: an account of the family in England and the descendants of Ambrose Barcroft, the emigrant of Solebury, Pennsylvania}, (Philadelphia, 1910), p. 96. A messuage is a property together with its outbuildings, gardens, orchards and the adjacent lands appropriated to its use.
ffoulridge,’ to his eldest son Thomas, who was then aged 34, had been married for 13 years and had five young children. The will also demonstrated a very important feature of this and future generations of the family, the fact that fathers lived well into the maturity of their sons. This was crucially important as the property and land were insufficient to support multiple families, a situation which forced sons to develop their own secondary income.

That Thomas was in business as a wool merchant in his own right during his father’s lifetime is evidenced by letters in the family records from a wool merchant, Lawrence Smith of London. It is also clear that wool merchandising continued to be a family business. In 1647, Thomas’s eldest son, also called Ambrose, was apprenticed to his uncle Paul, by then a merchant in his own right at York. At this point three generations, Ambrose senior, his sons Thomas and Paul, and his grandson Ambrose, were all alive and active in the wool trade. As each generation was able to establish itself in business with an independent income before the death of their father, estates did not have to be broken up and assets liquidated to provide bequests to younger siblings. Wealth could be retained within families facilitating the social progress of the increasingly wealthy yeoman to the status of gentleman. The younger Ambrose was to demonstrate this.

45 Lancashire Record Office, Preston, DDB 62/147, Will of Ambrose Barcroft; Runk, Barcroft family, pp. 124 - 126.
Ambrose junior married the daughter of Sir Henry Thompson of York, a wealthy merchant, and by the 1660s he had his own property in Foulridge paying hearth tax on three hearths while his father Thomas was paying tax on six. Records show that Ambrose’s business in wool was very successful. Trades of increasing value and weight enabled him to generate enough income to purchase property in his own right without the need for mortgages. His father had acquired eight acres of land in Foulridge in 1648, increasing their holding to 83 acres, but Ambrose bought a further 92 acres in Foulridge and Trawden while his father was still alive. By the 1680s Ambrose was resident at Noyna, indicating that his father had died and that he was in possession of his father’s land. He continued his land acquisitions adding a further 31 acres in his and his son’s name, increasing his social status as a landowner. In 1681, his status was confirmed when he was appointed one of the two High Constables of the Hundred of Blackburn. His influence was acknowledged in 1692 when he agreed to write, on behalf of the local minister who was seeking to obtain a parish for his son, to the Archbishop of Canterbury, John Tillotson, who Ambrose described as, ‘my ancient acquaintance and lesson-fellow at Colne schoole for severall yeares’. By 1692 on the death of Ambrose, the head of the family had progressed in three generations from yeoman farmer to gentleman and High Constable. The family’s investment in the wool trade over the generations was key to increasing their wealth, it enabled them to acquire more land and to increase their social status and importance. Their success, evidenced by the appointment of Ambrose as High

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49 Lancashire Record Office, DDB64/3, The Memorandum Book of Ambrose Barcroft.
Constable, exemplifies how prosperous yeomen could enhance their position in society and elevate themselves to the status of gentleman.

Religion also played a very important role in the lives of the Barcroft family. The wording of the will of Ambrose senior (1574 – 1648), written in 1641, is strictly Puritan although we know nothing further about his beliefs.\(^{50}\) His eldest son Thomas, born in 1607, is remembered for his Quaker beliefs and his testimony of convincement written in 1656.\(^{51}\) This is particularly interesting as it identifies him as having been a Grindletonian, a member of a radical Puritan group, followers of the preacher Roger Brearley (1586 – 1637), named after the village where he was curate between 1615 and 1623. Grindletonians were identified and condemned by their critics as Anabaptists, Familists, Diggers and Seekers, and in many studies as early Quakers.\(^{52}\) The beginning of Thomas’s testimony says:

> I have had in tymes long since past sweet society and union in spiritin the days of the shimmering light under the ministry of Brearley, Tenant and some more whose memories I honour, called then by the proffessors of the world, Grindletonians, Antinomians, Heretics and Sectaries and such like names of reproach.\(^{53}\)

\(^{50}\) Lancashire Record Office, Preston, DDB 62/147, Will of Ambrose Barcroft; Runk, Barcroft family, pp. 124 - 126. There has been an extensive debate among historians over the use of the term Puritan. In this work I am using the term in a simple form to identify Puritans as Protestants who expressed great dissatisfaction with the established church and episcopacy but who did not separate from it. For a summary of the debate on the use of the term Puritan see, Richard L. Greaves, ‘The Puritan-Nonconformist Tradition in England 1560 - 1740: Historiographical Reflections’, Albion: A Quarterly Journal Concerned With British Studies, Vol. 17, No. 4, (Winter, 1985), pp. 489 - 486.


\(^{53}\) Swarthmore MS Vol.351 fol. 174r.
Thomas Barcroft would have been a young boy when Brearley was curate at Grindleton which suggests that other adult members of the family were also followers of Brearley as they had to journey approximately ten miles to hear his sermons. Thomas would be one of only a handful of individuals who would identify themselves as a Grindletonian. Central to the views of Brearley and the Grindletonians, was the importance of the Spirit over the Word, a belief which provides a direct link with the beliefs of the Quakers. Whether Grindletonianism could be called a movement, with an extended network of supporters, is still debated and is a topic covered in chapter two.

The third son of Ambrose, and brother of Thomas, was William, born in 1612. William is also of interest as the family records identify him as a major in Cromwell’s army who went to Ireland in 1648 – 1649. In Ireland he and his family were among the earliest Quakers, and William’s son John became one of the leading Quaker preachers in the country. To date it has been impossible to verify whether William was a Major in Cromwell’s army as no records of a Major Barcroft have been found in the records of the army of the Northern Association, New Model Army, or of the army in Ireland. The connections between the Quakers, the Grindletonians and the New Model Army are links in a network of individuals whose relationship, views and beliefs are important in my research and which I examine in more detail in chapter four.

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The increasingly influential Barcroft family embraced new ideas, including more radical Puritan views, and in chapter two I argue that, although there are no records to show who appointed him, Roger Brearley was employed by a similarly independently minded community when appointed curate at Grindleton. The village of Grindleton was known to host itinerant radical Puritan preachers, the chapel was small, and the post of curate was poorly paid. It is my view that the appointment of Brearley was a determined act by the local community, particularly yeomen, copyholders, freeholders and traders, who were demonstrating their separation from a traditionally conservative local parish church dominated by the Sherburne (Shireburn) family of Stonyhurst, one of the leading Catholic families in Lancashire.

While there was a financial divide between tradesmen/yeomen in the community and the poorest farmer/textile worker, it is interesting to speculate that they shared a common purpose. It is possible that the tradesmen/yeomen of the village led a mini rebellion against the local church, having been introduced to Puritanism by radical preachers like Brearl. Support from the poorer villagers, who saw the opportunity to demonstrate their independence from the local gentry and the church, would have strengthened their resolve. The way of life of the tradesmen, yeomen farmers and the poorer members of society would have been much closer than to that of the wealthy landowner, the successful merchant, or the social elite. It is possible, therefore, but still merely speculation, that in Grindleton the increasingly better educated yeomen provided the intellectual leadership, and the money, behind the decision to appoint Brearley as curate of their local chapel. A small shift in local social dynamics reflected changes in the wider society.
Similarly, when Brearley moved to Kildwick, near Skipton, the successful yeoman farmers and merchants, the Currer family, were instrumental in his appointment as curate. A Puritan family they had acquired the lordship of the manor of Kildwick plus lands at Baildon and Ilkley, to the east of Kildwick, and at Skipton and Gargrave to the west. Henry Currer was a churchwarden at Kildwick when Brearley was curate.\(^57\) It was also a group of independently minded individuals who would form a separatist religious group which established itself across Westmorland and the Yorkshire Dales; the group which would meet George Fox in 1652 and which is the subject of chapter three of this thesis. The rise of the independent yeoman family had an empowering effect among many communities.

**Hardship and disputes in Westmorland, Craven and the Yorkshire Dales**

In the areas of Craven, the Yorkshire Dales and Westmorland land ownership, rents and tenant rights were a toxic issue. Westmorland was a very poor county, a fact demonstrated by the parliamentary taxation records during the Civil Wars and Interregnum when the assessment for the county was one of the lowest in the country at £63. By way of contrast two of the highest assessments were £2,574 for Devon, and £3,106 for Norfolk.\(^58\) Agriculture was again limited by geography and climate; with harsh winters, limited areas of pasture and meadow, large areas of high ground with poor soil, high rainfall and a short growing season. Dairying and sheep were the predominant and most profitable activities as the growing conditions limited the

\(^{57}\) Robin Greenwood, *Some Background Notes on the Parish of Kildwick in the West Riding of Yorkshire during the Tudor and Stuart era with special reference to Kildwick in the 1642-1649 civil war and 1660 Intercrregnum*, (private publication, 2005), pp. 21 – 33.

production of grain crops, especially corn. Large numbers of cattle could not be kept
over the harsh winters with the result that not much more dairy produce was
produced than was needed to meet local demand. Sheep were important but they had
to be a hardy hill country breed and the resulting wool quality was poor, considered
to be some of the worst in the country.\textsuperscript{59} Most farms were small. A 1579 survey of
his North Craven estates for the earl of Cumberland shows that in the village of Long
Preston 35 tenants farmed a total of 110 acres.\textsuperscript{60} Between 1605 and 1638 the
average size of a yeoman farmer’s land holding in the Kendal area was 24 acres,
supporting little more than subsistence farming. In Westmorland the local custom of
gavelkind inheritance, where land was divided equally among all sons in a family,
led to continual subdivision of property making the situation worse. In \textit{The
Pilgrimage of Grace in the Lake Counties}, Scott Harrison gave Grasmere as an
example of this when he said, ‘By 1574 Grasmere was scattered into wretched
parcels left after generations of subdivision’.\textsuperscript{61}

One of the largest, wealthiest and most influential landowners throughout Craven,
the Yorkshire Dales and into Westmorland was the earl of Cumberland, a title held
by the Clifford family based at Skipton Castle. Throughout the period of my
research, up to 1660, land tenure in the area was subject to disputes between the
Cliffords and their tenants. These disputes put a great financial burden upon tenants
and would lead to many years of hardship and discontent. Henry Clifford, the first
Earl of Cumberland, was very well connected having been educated with the future

\textsuperscript{59} Swain, \textit{Industry before the Industrial Revolution}, p. 110.
\textsuperscript{60} Tony Stephens, ‘The Earl of Cumberland’s survey of North Craven 1579’, \textit{Journal 2010, North
April 2019.]
\textsuperscript{61} Harrison, \textit{The Pilgrimage of Grace}, pp. 7 - 11.
King Henry VIII. He used this connection to further his political and legal authority. Appointed Warden of the March in 1534, Clifford was responsible for protecting the border with Scotland. Local men had to provide military service to protect the border and were required to equip themselves at their own expense. In return they expected certain favours, including financial exemptions, lenient manorial dues, and free access to the commons.62 Clifford was not lenient. Many men therefore remained loyal to Lord Dacre, the previous post holder, who was stronger militarily and understood the value of maintaining customary rights. Clifford’s ineffectiveness in exercising his military role created a vacuum in local authority throughout the area which became increasingly lawless.63 The Earl was also following a policy of enclosure to improve the land on his estates, a policy not popular with his tenants. In 1535 at Giggleswick, in Craven, his tenants tore down his enclosures and in 1537 they did the same at Kirkby Stephen in Westmorland. Also in 1535, at Airton near Skipton, tenants had attacked the enclosures of an associate of Clifford, John Lambert, in defence of their right to use the commons.64 In many places enclosures were not a problem, but tenants objected to the policy of enclosing commons seeing this as an attack on their traditional rights, particularly as the intention was to parcel up the land and let it at rents far higher than was customary.65

The question of rents and gressums, entry fines and general fines, were major issues for the tenants.66 Clifford was trying to offset the cost of improving his lands by

63 Harrison, The Pilgrimage of Grace, pp. 24 - 42.
64 Bush, ‘The Tudor Polity’, p. 55; (A direct descendant of John Lambert was Major-General John Lambert of the New Model Army and a close associate of Oliver Cromwell.)
66 Gressums were entry and general fines (charges). An entry fine was a charge levied by the landlord on transfers of tenancy. General fines were charges payable on changes in the landlord.
increasing his income through higher fines on transfers and by enclosing land to
lease at increased rents. In Craven in 1499, gressums were approximately a quarter
of the annual rent, by 1579 they were roughly ten times the rent. Clifford
particularly angered his tenants by exploiting his ability to manipulate land
ownership, creating situations where he could claim a general fine. In 1536 - 1537,
this anger was one of the reasons behind the involvement of many of Clifford’s
tenants in the Pilgrimage of Grace.

The Pilgrimage of Grace, 1536 - 37, was one of the most important rebellions of the
Tudor period, when the whole of the north rose against Henry VIII. Although the
rebellion is remembered as an attempt to defend the Catholic religion and prevent the
dissolution of the monasteries it was in fact made up of several separate risings each
with differing religious, political and economic objectives. There has been
considerable debate over the nature of the rising in the Dales, Lancashire,
Westmorland and Cumberland, which has been referred to as a rising ‘of a poverty-
stricken rabble…. who wished to put an end to gentlemen’. It is generally agreed
among historians that the causes of the rebellion in this area differed from those in
other areas of Yorkshire and Lincolnshire. In Hugh Barbour’s opinion the tenants
across Westmorland and the Dales rebelled in protest against rising rents, tithes and
absentee priests. It is not my intention to enter into a detailed analysis of the issues

67 Stephens, ‘The Earl of Cumberland’s survey’.
68 Harrison, The Pilgrimage of Grace, p. 2.
69 C. S. L. Davies, ‘The Pilgrimage of Grace Reconsidered’, Past & Present, No. 41, (1968), pp. 54 -
76; M. H. & R. Dodds, The Pilgrimage of Grace and the Exeter Conspiracy, (Cambridge, 1915); C.
Haigh, ‘The Last Days of the Lancashire Monasteries and the Pilgrimage of Grace’, Chetham Society
3rd Series, Vol. XVII, (Manchester, 1969); R. R. Reid, The King’s Council in the North, (Wakefield,
1975).
70 Barbour, The Quakers, p. 75.
behind or the sequence of events during the rebellion but there are aspects which are very relevant to my study.

The problems of border protection and the issues of rents, fines and enclosure, were compounded by poor church governance and dissatisfaction over the method of tithe payment. These problems were exacerbated by poor harvests in 1536 and 1537.\textsuperscript{71} The problem with the Church was that many of the church benefices, particularly the wealthiest, were held by absentee or pluralist clergy and many vicarages had been appropriated to distant monasteries; the manor of Ravenstonedale was held by the Gilbertine order at Walton near Beverley in the East Riding of Yorkshire.\textsuperscript{72} A direct result of this was the poor quality of the local clergy; inadequately trained curates who had to deputise for absent priests. The dissatisfaction over the payment of tithes was such that in many places the Church had leased the right to tithe to local landowners, such as Clifford, which angered the population who considered they were paying corrupt and wealthy laymen not the Church.\textsuperscript{73} A rumour that spread through the area that closure of the monasteries would be followed by closure of some local churches and the appropriation of all church valuables by the King’s agents simply made matters worse.\textsuperscript{74} Those individuals from Westmorland and the Kendal area who joined the Pilgrimage of Grace amended the Pilgrim Oath, sworn by all the rebels, to include a commitment to uphold ancient customs and a statement that all church tithes should be voluntary.\textsuperscript{75} Those in Cumberland produced a

\begin{itemize}
\item \textsuperscript{71} Harrison, \textit{The Pilgrimage of Grace}, p. 47.
\item \textsuperscript{72} Breay, \textit{Light in the Dales}, p. 38.
\item \textsuperscript{73} Harrison, \textit{The Pilgrimage of Grace}, pp. 55 - 60.
\item \textsuperscript{74} Harrison, \textit{The Pilgrimage of Grace}, p. 72.
\item \textsuperscript{75} David Boulton, \textit{Early Friends in Dent}, (Sedbergh, 1986), p.17.
\end{itemize}
proclamation that condemned the practices of landlords in raising fines and enclosing land and demanded a promise not to commit ‘unlawful’ acts.76

There is, therefore, some basis to support the argument that this was a rising ‘of a poverty-stricken rabble…who wished to put an end to gentlemen’. However it can also be argued, as Harrison concludes, that rather than being a radical demand for change, the revolt in this area was more reactionary in that people were trying to protect their traditional values, where those values were held to be particularly important.77 What is clear is that for the rebels there was an inseparable link between their socio-economic problems and religious grievances. The disputes over rents and fines, the threat of enclosures, and an objection to the payment of tithes were crucial issues which, combined with the perceived threat to local churches, could be seen as threats to their way of life and their security. However, to view the rebellion as reactionary in that people did not want change may be a rather patronising view. Although the rebels may have wished to reverse changes in religious practice, to suggest that people did not want socio-economic change and were happy with their poverty is hard to believe. When considering radicalism in all its forms in the area through to the Restoration there is a good argument to say that people were seeking a radical solution to their problems.

Objections to rents and enclosure were not issues confined to this area. Throughout the country during the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries there were local disputes, often violent, against the policy of enclosing land, particularly common land.78 It

77 Harrison, The Pilgrimage of Grace, pp. 132 - 133.
was the poorer farmer with the small acreage who relied on grazing on the common lands that suffered most. Even in the better agricultural areas the poorest were able to produce little more than they needed to feed their families, a situation that was made significantly worse during the series of bad harvests during the 1590s. Faced with inflated food prices and increasing rents large numbers were forced off the land and many faced starvation, and with starvation invariably came disease.\(^79\)

In the north landowners were enclosing common land to increase their income by grazing sheep, an exercise that forced the smaller farmers to give up their livestock. Some gave up their land becoming landless labourers employed at the will of the large landowners while others sought an additional source of income, a direct result of which was the development of the domestic woollen textile industry. Elsewhere in the country enclosure led to migration from rural to urban areas, especially London. In some areas whole villages were cleared to make way for enclosures in what was the beginning of the process of the transformation of the agricultural economy. During the Midland Rising in 1607, at Cotesbach in Leicestershire, the home county of George Fox, local unrest over enclosures reached a point where it was reported that 5,000 people protested tearing down the fences and hedges.\(^80\) In Westmorland, north Lancashire and the Dales there were no large urban areas to migrate to or to provide a market for what limited products were available, and in the years of bad harvests the majority of the population was subject to extreme deprivation.


As I have already noted in Westmorland and the Dales the climate, the natural geography and the poor soil meant that pastoral farming was the main occupation. In other areas of the country farming was not such a marginal activity. Towards the end of the sixteenth century Leicestershire was one of the most heavily cultivated and densely populated counties in the country. Compared to the average yeoman’s farm of 24 acres in Kendal, the Leicestershire farmer of 1600 was farming an average of 40 to 45 acres, most still operating the open-field farming system with sheep, cattle and pigs. The enclosure process here was also a move by landowners to increase their income, specifically by creating more pasture to increase the numbers of sheep, cattle and pigs destined for the London market which was growing rapidly and was by far the largest in the country. Although enclosure was widespread and had resulted in the disappearance of a number of villages and hamlets, by the beginning of the seventeenth century the open-field system with mixed husbandry was still widely practiced.81

When comparing Westmorland and the Dales to areas closer to London than Leicestershire the difference in the economics of farming is even more marked. In a study of the village of Terling in Essex, Keith Wrightson and David Levine said that by the late sixteenth century, most land in the area, ‘was held in large units by leasehold and let at market rents. Copyhold tenure remained as a minor element in landholding’. One of the results of this was that the holdings of copyhold land were too small for the landlords to make any concerted effort to increase rents and fines as they had in Westmorland. 82 The land here was good and the agricultural economy

82 Wrightson & Levine, Terling 1525 – 1700, p. 20.
was driven by the area’s proximity to London. In the report Wrightson and Levine identify the main agricultural activity as grain production, but say that the village was more than able to feed itself and that subsistence was, ‘not the main concern for any but the smallest’.\(^{83}\) It was also the case that in years of bad harvests the small farmer ‘might be forced to dip into savings or else fall into debt’.\(^{84}\) Whatever problems the villagers of Terling had to contend with they were in a far better economic position than the people of Westmorland and the Dales.

In the years following the Pilgrimage of Grace the activities of the major landlords in Westmorland continued to create significant unrest and hardship for the local population. In a report to Thomas Cromwell after the rebellion had been crushed, the Duke of Norfolk commented on the distressing poverty in the area and severely criticised the local landlords accusing them of over taxing their tenants through rents and fines.\(^{85}\) In many ways the problems increased after the rebellion. One of the landlords at fault in addition to Clifford was Thomas, Lord Wharton, who was one of the men responsible for hanging seventy-four men involved in the rebellion. In the years that followed he purchased and leased land previously owned by the dissolved monasteries, significantly increasing his landholding in the Dales and Westmorland. He restored a deer park in Ravenstonedale, ordering tenants to leave, and when they did not, had them imprisoned. He built Wharton Hall where he had the village pulled down and built a new deer park forcing the tenants to contribute money, material and labour to build a wall nine feet high around the park.\(^{86}\) John Breay

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notes that, ‘This ruthless treatment of the tenants was remembered bitterly against the Wharton family for over two hundred years’. 87

Of the seventy-four men hanged, fifty-three came from Westmorland, including twenty-three from the parish of Kirkby Stephen, and a number from Dent, Sedbergh, Kendal, Pardshaw, Little Musgrave and Mallerstang, all areas which would become centres of the earliest Quaker movement in 1652. Among the family names were ones that would feature among the first Quakers; for example, Edmonston of Little Musgrave. 88 William Edmundson, a Parliamentarian soldier and the first Quaker leader in Ireland, was from Little Musgrave. As Breay said the deaths of these men would have been bitterly resented and would have remained in the memory of families for many generations. It is my contention that issues such as this were part of the conditioning of the people of the area, a conditioning which created a fertile environment in which radicalism flourished.

By the 1570s the estate of the third earl of Cumberland, George Clifford, included eighty manors and three castles. He was the largest landowner in Craven, and in Westmorland he owned or leased four forests, eighteen manors and two habitable castles. He was, however, an adventurer who financed a fleet of ships and expeditions against the Spanish. After several successes his fortunes changed when, in 1597, he provisioned a fleet of twenty ships for an expedition to the Azores which proved to be a disaster. He lost a huge amount of money and in order to pay his creditors he began selling and mortgaging manors and estates. In 1598, he conveyed

87 W. Nicholls, History and Traditions of Ravenstonedale, (1877), quoted by Breay, Light in the Dales, p. 41.
88 Breay, Light in the Dales, p. 19.
all his Craven estate to three local gentlemen but reserved the right to recover them at a later date. By the time of his death in 1605, his debts totalled £40,000. Earlier, in 1591, he made a settlement whereby on his death all his Craven and Westmorland lands would pass to his brother Francis and his male heirs. His daughter Anne was to receive a settlement totalling £17,000. However, the Craven and Westmorland estates had been granted by the monarch to his predecessors and the ‘heirs of his body’. This meant that George could not settle the estates on his brother. According to law his daughter Anne should have inherited. Anne’s mother Margaret, acting as her guardian, claimed her daughter’s inheritance and began legal proceedings which were to last for the next fifty years. This family dispute resulted in great financial hardship for many of the estate’s tenants.89

When Margaret died in 1616, the court case was unresolved and as neither party was willing to compromise, the King decided he was going to settle the dispute himself. In 1617, he awarded the estates to Francis and his heirs. Anne was awarded an increased portion of £20,000 payable in 1619, the additional amount to be paid only if she accepted the decision. The estates were to revert to Anne if Francis’s son Henry died without male heirs. Henry did die without male heirs and Anne finally received the estates in 1643 but was unable to return to Skipton until 1649 after the civil wars.90 Francis had to raise the initial amount of £17,000 by 1619. The estates in Craven had returned to the Clifford family in 1605 and in order to raise the amount Francis began selling several manors in Craven. He also sold property in London and along the Scottish border. But these sales only raised £2,000, and

89 Breay, Light in the Dales, pp. 111 - 113.
90 Breay, Light in the Dales, p. 113, pp. 117 - 119.
Francis decided to raise the balance of £15,000 from his tenants in Westmorland.91 The amount payable to Anne was based on the value of the estates he received, but Francis was unwilling to dispose of, or mortgage further property and placed the burden of raising the balance due onto his tenants via a one-off charge.92 His action may have been the norm for the period, but it was a cynical demonstration of power and authority that was guaranteed to anger his tenants, an anger that would be remembered for generations.

It had been the King who personally decided the dispute, and the amount to be paid, so there could be no appeal against the judgement. Francis used his position and authority to impose the financial burden upon his tenants who had neither been consulted nor agreed to it. It took six years to raise the money creating much distress and hardship. In later court documents tenants said that raising the amount left them impoverished and financially ruined. Many had to sell their land, cattle and sheep and in some cases, if unable to raise the sum demanded, the Earl ordered families to be driven from their property. When Anne took possession of the estates in 1649, local courts had not been held for six years and rents and fines were overdue and outstanding. Not only did she go to court to claim the outstanding amounts, she demanded an additional general fine over and above what other Lords in Westmorland claimed.93

91 George, Francis’s father, had been forced to raise money by selling his right to gressums payable by his tenants in Craven. (Stephens, ‘The Earl of Cumberland’s survey’.) The burden of raising the £15,000 fell mainly on the Westmorland tenants.
92 Chancery practice was that both lord and tenant had to accept the decision in land tenure disputes. The tenants had not, however, been consulted. When they petitioned King James he commanded them to agree to the fines ‘and come not to me with your petitions’. Breay, *Light in the Dales*, pp. 119 –120.
93 Breay, *Light in the Dales*, p. 113, pp. 120 - 124. In depositions made in the 1650 – 1651 Chancery case between Lady Anne Clifford and her Westmorland tenants, a number of tenants gave evidence of having to sell their livestock and leave their farms.
Poor harvests, famine and crisis mortality

These disputes between tenants and landlords must have caused a great deal of distress and resentment, creating an animosity which was to last for a very long time. However, the problems that nature would inflict were far more devastating. The countries of the British Isles suffered a number of demographic crises during the later years of the sixteenth century, particularly during the 1590s when there were four successive years of harvest failures. England and Wales were not generally vulnerable to famine on a large scale, but the upland areas of the north and west were, and Westmorland and Cumbria were the worst-affected counties. In fact there is clear evidence that the north of England suffered several crisis events. In a study of mortality rates in Cumberland and Westmorland, Andrew Appleby identified and studied three periods, 1587 - 1588, 1596 - 1598 and 1623 - 1624, where mortality was at crisis levels. Michael Drake produced a study of parish registers in the West Riding of Yorkshire and clearly identified crisis mortality levels in all parishes in the same years. C. D. Rogers led an investigation into the crisis in Lancashire producing a report, *The Lancashire Population Crisis of 1623*. In all three investigations the authors concluded that famine was the direct or the underlying cause of each event. Investigating the crisis in east Lancashire in 1622 – 1624, R. W. Hoyle found clear evidence that poor harvests in 1621 and 1622 were the cause of famine and the resultant mortality crisis.

97 Rogers, *The Lancashire Population Crisis*.
The main source of information on death rates is parish registers but these records are incomplete or missing altogether for the sixteenth century. In many cases when they do exist there can be gaps of months or even years. It is also rare for these early registers to provide an indication of the cause of death. However, while incomplete they do allow for the identification of trends in the numbers of births, marriages and deaths over time or across areas. The reasons for the crisis levels is harder to determine; it could have been infectious disease or famine.

Appleby’s investigation identified the first mortality crisis in Westmorland during the winter of 1587 – 1588. He justified using the term ‘crisis’ by producing figures which showed that in some parishes the monthly number of recorded deaths was up to three times the average. In other parishes the figures were twice the average. Appleby outlined the methodology of his investigation and provided a detailed reasoning for his conclusion that the most likely cause was not plague, generally considered to be the main cause of crisis mortality, but an epidemic of typhus. In the process of his investigation he examined the causes of disease, the seasonality of occurrence, the method of transmission and the age of those most affected. He also examined agricultural records, identifying periods of poor harvests and monitored prices for grain, wool and other products. His conclusion was that, although it was unusual for an infectious disease to be widespread over so large an area, the most likely cause of the crisis was typhus and that the most likely underlying reason was famine. One important piece of evidence that he used to support his argument was that in parallel to the increase in deaths there was a corresponding decrease in
baptisms.\textsuperscript{99} One of the reasons for such a fall in numbers could have been amenorrhea, a condition caused by malnutrition.\textsuperscript{100} The connection between famine and infectious disease has been well documented; diseases such as typhus are described as resulting from undernourishment.\textsuperscript{101}

It is also clear that these crisis levels were not restricted to Cumbria and Westmorland. The parish register of Burnley in north-east Lancashire shows that in the fifteen-month period, January 1587 to March 1588, the number of burials was 192. This compares to an annual average of 53 during the period 1581 to 1585. The records for Burnley show that one person in twelve died, due, it was reported, to starvation following a complete failure of the corn crop.\textsuperscript{102} At Whalley in the Ribble Valley the annual figure for 1587 was 182\% of that for 1586.\textsuperscript{103} The figure for Kildwick, near Skipton in Craven, for 1587 was 202\% of that for 1586.\textsuperscript{104} In Yorkshire, the number of burials in Halifax rose from 219 in 1586 to 736 in 1587, while at Dewsbury, Rothwell and Leeds the rate rose by 304\%, 451\% and 182\% respectively.\textsuperscript{105} It was not unusual for urban areas to record unusually high figures in one year, as in Carlisle in 1597, when one third of the population died from plague.\textsuperscript{106} But plague was typically a problem of urban areas, where a population

\textsuperscript{99} Appleby, \textit{Famine in Tudor and Stuart England}, pp. 95 - 108; Appleby, ‘Disease or Famine?’, p. 413.
\textsuperscript{100} Appleby, \textit{Famine in Tudor and Stuart England}, p. 9. Amenorrhea; an interruption of the female menstrual cycle that makes conception impossible.
\textsuperscript{102} W. Bennett, \textit{The History of Burnley}, p. 75; William Farrer, (Ed.), \textit{The Registers of the Parish Church of Burnley in the County of Lancaster1562 to 1653}, (Rochdale, 1899).
\textsuperscript{103} www.lan-opc.org.uk/Whalley/index.
\textsuperscript{105} Drake, ‘An Elementary Exercise’, p. 432.
\textsuperscript{106} Breay, \textit{Light in the Dales}, p. 105.
living close together made transmission easy, while the high levels of 1587 - 1588 clearly occurred over a wide area of the rural north.

The second crisis period of 1596 - 1598 was, Appleby said, different in that it was not as seasonal as the earlier period. It extended from late 1596, through 1597, and in some areas into 1598. The years 1594 to 1597 were terrible throughout England and across much of northern Europe with four successive harvest failures. Food prices increased, wheat, barley, oats, rye, peas and beans were all extremely expensive, and demand for non-essential manufactured goods fell. Conditions for the labouring poor were desperate. It was the upland areas of the north and west, where the agricultural land was more marginal, where there was a dependence upon imported grain and where the transportation of supplies was difficult, that there were famine conditions. Appleby is specific that the available information again points to famine as the cause of the 1596 - 1598 crisis. It was reported that in Newcastle in 1597, people were starving and dying in the streets, while the Barony of Gilsand in Cumberland was reported to be ‘in complete decay’ because of famine. An analysis of the parish registers of Westmorland and Cumberland show that at the height of the crisis the burial rate in many parishes was up to four times the normal figure.

The Cambridge Group for the History of Population and Social Structure produced a study of baptisms, burials and marriages for 382 parishes in England covering the years 1581 to 1640, this showed an increasing death rate and a decreasing conception rate in the period 1596 – 98. These rates were lower than those reported by Appleby

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who felt that the sample used by the Cambridge Group had a bias to southern
parishes and that as a result the average calculated for the period underestimated the
death rate in the north. 110 His view was that there was a lower rate in the south
where the crisis was far less severe. In the history of Terling, Wrightson and Levine
confirm this when they said that apart from ‘poor wayfaring strangers found dead in
the yeomen’s barns, the overall effect of the harvest disasters…is muted’. In the
south with the better climate, a more diverse agricultural industry and proximity to
the London markets, ‘other famous dearths likewise seem to have little effect on the
life chances of the villagers’.111

The figures for the area around Burnley, Craven and the Ribble Valley show
increased burial rates, but not to the same level as in Westmorland and Cumbria. At
Burnley the rate in 1597 was 250% of that for 1596, and it remained high in 1598.112
The 1596 figures for Kildwick are 191% of the 1595 level, they remained high
through 1597 and 1598 before reverting in 1599 to the 1595 level.113 In the West
Riding, the figures for the parish of Leeds and the Wapentake of Morley, which
included the registers for Halifax, Heptonstall and Bradford, show that the number of
burials in 1597 was twice the average for the period 1590 – 1594.114

The crisis of 1623 appears to have been different from the earlier ones in that it hit
hardest the upland areas of Cumberland, Westmorland, Lancashire and Yorkshire,
most particularly those areas dependent upon the textile industry. The Rogers study

110 Appleby, Famine in Tudor and Stuart England, pp. 135 - 137.
111 Wrightson & Levine, Terling 1525 – 1700, p. 46.
112 Farrer, (Ed.), The Registers of the Parish Church of Burnley.
113 Brigg, (Ed.), The Parish Registers of St. Andrew’s Kildwick.
said that in 1623 the south of England appeared to be largely unaffected but that from Nottinghamshire northwards it was a year of crisis. He also found that the average figure for the number of burials in Lancashire gave a misleading impression of the impact on the county. Total burials for 1623 were 7,970 compared with 3,741 for 1622, and 2,896 for 1624. However, the figures for individual parishes showed that the north and east of the county were hardest hit while the areas to the south, south-west and the bordering areas of Wirral and Cheshire appear to have escaped lightly.\textsuperscript{115} The death rate in the West Derby Hundred in the south-west of the county was under 25 per 1,000, while in the north and east rates were over 75 per 1,000. In east Lancashire, the number of burials recorded at Colne in 1623 was 136, compared to 60 in 1622.\textsuperscript{116} At Burnley the number rose to 148 from 66.\textsuperscript{117} In the Ribble Valley parish of Mitton, including Grindleton, the number rose from 19 to 46, while at Ribchester it increased from 57 to 186.\textsuperscript{118} When these numbers are considered in relation to the size of the local population their significance is revealing. At Altham, near Burnley, 57 deaths were recorded among an estimated population of 230, a death rate of almost 25%.\textsuperscript{119}

The Rogers study highlighted the fact that the highest death rates were in areas between 600ft and 1,000ft above sea level, with an average rainfall of 40inches per annum, and that it was just as dangerous to live in sparsely populated areas as it was in towns. It was the location which was important.\textsuperscript{120} In a report published in 2010, R. W. Hoyle argued that historians had paid too little attention to agricultural

\textsuperscript{115} Rogers, \textit{The Lancashire Population Crisis of 1623}, p. 10.
\textsuperscript{116} www.lan-opc.org.uk/Colne/index.
\textsuperscript{117} Farrer, (Ed.), \textit{The Registers of the Parish Church of Burnley}.
\textsuperscript{118} www.lan-opc.org.uk/Mitton/index. www.lan-opc.org.uk/Ribchester/index
\textsuperscript{119} Rogers, \textit{The Lancashire Population Crisis of 1623}, p. 10.
\textsuperscript{120} Rogers, \textit{The Lancashire Population Crisis of 1623}, p. 11.
problems caused by the weather as the cause of the 1622 – 1623 crisis. Using data on agricultural production and prices taken from the records of an estate in east Lancashire, Hoyle demonstrated how a poor harvest in 1621 was followed by a second in 1622, and that continuing wet weather made it difficult to sow crops ready for the 1623 harvest.\textsuperscript{121} He was categorical that 1622 was the first year of two successive harvest failures, and that in both ‘1622 – 1623 and 1623 – 1624, there was a massive shortfall in the supply of staple foodstuffs’ and that it was ‘the cheapest grains that saw the greatest price increases’. The famine and resulting mortality crisis were the direct result of an agricultural catastrophe and a complete collapse in the availability of food.\textsuperscript{122}

In 1623, Roger Brearley left his position as curate at Grindleton for a similar position at Kildwick. Unfortunately, there are no contemporary records to give an insight as to the reasons why he left, neither does Brearley provide an explanation in any of his surviving sermons or published documents. I have argued that he was appointed and supported by the local community which was now in a crisis which Brearley may have found hard to deal with. At the same time there was a clear and direct threat from famine and related diseases to the survival of his own family. A diminished congregation and the risks to his family could have been behind his decision to move. The possibility must also be considered that what he had seen and experienced had challenged his belief and faith in God. This is however, simply conjecture, but it is hard not to believe that the crisis of 1622 – 1623 had a direct and lasting impact on Brearley. I will discuss Brearley in more detail in the following

\textsuperscript{121} Hoyle, ‘Famine as agricultural catastrophe’, p. 978.
\textsuperscript{122} Hoyle, ‘Famine as agricultural catastrophe’, pp. 1000 – 1001.
chapters, but it is noteworthy that neither at Kildwick, nor later when vicar at Burnley, was he as controversial as he was during his time at Grindleton.

In Westmorland and Cumberland, Appleby concluded that all the evidence for crisis mortality in 1623 again pointed to starvation as the cause. In this year the parish register of Greystoke explicitly stated that the cause of death of a number of poor and destitute people was starvation. Appleby went on to say that in the area, ‘it appears from the burial figures that 1623 was more terrible than in 1597’, and that ‘never again was there a similar demographic crisis in the two counties’.123 Highlighting the extent of the crisis, he said that all the available registers for the area showed mortality levels at between two and four times the average.

In other northern counties the crisis was less significant. At Morley in Yorkshire, the figures for 1623 were almost double the average for the period 1615 - 1619, but although those for Leeds were higher than average they were not at crisis levels.124 Appleby noted that although the number of burials in Halifax did not quite double, the number of baptisms fell considerably, reversing the population growth of earlier years. He also said that in only 12 of the 59 parishes sampled in the West Riding did mortality levels double. Only in Lancashire did levels approach those of Cumberland and Westmorland.125

Both Rogers and Appleby said that the crisis of 1623 had no impact on large areas of the south of England. In the history of Terling there is no record of any crisis due to

famine during the 1620s. Wrightson and Levine calculated that the population of the village increased by 75% between the mid sixteenth and the mid seventeenth centuries. As the population grew there had been a change in the demographic structure of the village including a significant increase in the labouring population and a marked change in the distribution of wealth. Although there had been years of poor harvests, particularly during the 1590s, and periods of shortages and deprivation there was no evidence of death due to starvation. There were years where the number of burials increased sharply, as in 1625 when one person in twelve died, but in this case the cause was plague. Despite an increase in the number of the labouring poor famine, ‘seems to have been of no significance in the demographic history of Terling’. 126

In areas of Westmorland, Lancashire and parts of Yorkshire the problems arising from the agricultural crisis of 1623 were compounded by problems in the local wool and textile industries. Problems in the market for locally produced wool had a major impact on a population already faced with food shortages and high food prices. Legislation introduced in the sixteenth century during the reign of Edward VI, designed to promote English textile manufacturing, prohibited the export of raw wool, a move which enabled the English manufacturing industry to flourish. A successful lobbying campaign by the Woollen Guilds then led to Parliament placing the buying and selling of wool under the control of Staplers, wool merchants. In the north, buying and selling had been in the hands of local brokers who were willing to transport the wool long distances to the manufacturers. The Staplers, however, refused to do this, especially as the poor quality of the northern wool made it an

126 Wrightson & Levine, Terling 1525 – 1700, pp. 43 - 46.
unattractive and unprofitable product. Farmers were also forbidden from storing wool for more than one year. The result of this elimination of free trade was a fall in the demand for, and price of, northern wool which was disastrous for the local farmers. In 1619, under pressure to address the problems of the farmers, the Privy Council broke the monopoly of the Staplers, once again allowing the buying and selling of wool by local brokers.¹²⁷

With the increased supply of English wool and the fall in prices, the cloth trade appeared to be prospering. The industry had benefited from the increase in the population during the sixteenth century creating a demand for the cheap kerseys produced in north-east Lancashire and west Yorkshire. At the same time overseas sales had increased, particularly to the Baltic countries where kerseys were exported to pay for imports of corn, and the cost of production had been kept down. The system of sub-dividing copyhold tenancies had resulted in many becoming too small to support a family, forcing them to find a second income. In a pastoral farming area, it was not easy to find additional paid farm work especially as there was increasing competition from an increasing population, a situation which had the effect of forcing down wages.

The increased demand for kerseys was therefore a benefit to the producers, allowing more families to turn to the activities of carding, combing, spinning and weaving to make a living.¹²⁸ Demand had also grown because of a thriving export trade particularly for undyed kerseys to the Baltic countries. However, following the

¹²⁷ Elliott, ‘The decline of the woollen trade’, pp. 112 – 119.
implementation of the disastrous Cockayne Project of 1614 – 1617, sales to these countries fell dramatically. Sir William Cockayne’s plan was to increase profitability and customs duty by exporting dyed and finished kerseys. To facilitate this, he persuaded James I to grant him a monopoly on the export of cloth. A resulting prohibition on the exporting of white cloth was devastating for the producers in areas of Lancashire and Yorkshire where much of the production was for the export market. The project was a financial disaster for merchants and producers, contributing considerably to the decline in production through the 1620s and 1630s.129 The situation was exacerbated when the Dutch, an alternative market to the Baltic, banned the import of cloth. Problems increased with disruption to trade during the Thirty Years War and by the devaluation of foreign currencies, through competition from rival producers in Prussia and Silesia, and the imposition of high customs duties at home and abroad. The combined effect of these events was particularly serious for the poorest of the cloth producers in east Lancashire and west Yorkshire. In the Pendle area of Lancashire wills in the 1620s and 1630s show a significant reduction in the amount of textile equipment owned, particularly of the poorer testators. While the better off dealers had more resources to help them survive their profits were severely reduced and they even had to sell cloth at a loss.130

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129 Sir William Cockayne who was governor of the Eastland Company, a group of merchants set up to develop trade with Sweden and the Baltic in competition to the Hanseatic League’s dominance of trade, devised a plan to export dyed and dressed English cloth. As part of the project he persuaded King James I to grant him a monopoly on textile exports, which resulted in a ban on the sale of white cloth. The scheme failed dramatically; Cockayne and his partners could not finance the purchase of cloth and store it until it could be sold. The project collapsed in 1617, depressing the English cloth trade throughout the 1620s and 1630s.

130 Swain, Industry Before the Industrial Revolution, pp. 142 - 144.
The consequences of the combination of events in 1623 must have been dramatic in the textile producing areas of Lancashire and Yorkshire. The harvest of 1621–1622 had failed, there was an increase in the number out of work, food was scarce, prices had risen and the wages of those who did have work remained, at best, static. The source of a second income, textile manufacture, was no longer profitable. It was also the period where the copyholders of Pendle Forest had to find the money to pay twenty years rent to the Crown, agreed in 1618, for the confirmation of their copyholds, the certainty of the entry fines and the new annual rent.\textsuperscript{131} In Westmorland, the tenants of Francis Clifford had had to raise the £15,000 he needed to pay Anne Clifford. Once again it was the poorest who suffered most as the copyholders passed on the cost via higher rents to their sub-tenants. All these issues hit the poorest hardest and it was they who suffered the highest rates of mortality. The Barcroft family are a good example of how the wealthier yeomen do not appear to have suffered to any great extent.

In Westmorland the situation was probably worse. Although not as dependent upon textile production, the economic effects of the problems of the wool producer and the textile manufacturer were disastrous. For the farmer there was the added problem that large urban areas were too far away to be viable markets for lamb and mutton. By 1618, wool producers were claiming the wool trade had virtually ceased.\textsuperscript{132} Production of a coarse cloth called ‘cottons’ was centred around Kendal and had been profitable as late as 1607 when cloth was sent to ‘all parts of England’. By the 1620s however, Kendal was said to be ‘no less penurious than populous’.\textsuperscript{133} As only

\textsuperscript{131} Swain, \textit{Industry Before the Industrial Revolution}, pp. 142 - 144.
\textsuperscript{132} Elliott, ‘The decline of the woollen trade’, p. 114.
\textsuperscript{133} Appleby, \textit{Famine in Tudor and Stuart England}, p. 86.
a small proportion of the wool produced locally was woven in the area the bulk of it was sold to the producers of Lancashire and West Yorkshire. With the textile crisis of the 1620s the price of wool collapsed even further.

The people of Cumberland and Westmorland were therefore in the same position in 1623 as the people of Lancashire. They had suffered the failure of the harvest, they had to endure low wages, food shortages, high food prices, enclosure of common land, and many of the tenants were burdened with demands from the landowners for higher rents. This was particularly true for the tenants of Francis Clifford who were forced to raise an additional £15,000 over and above the usual rents and fines to pay his niece Ann’s settlement. The background to each of the three main mortality crises were very similar, almost all the issues related to the precarious nature of farming in an area where agriculture was very susceptible to the vagaries of the climate. It cannot be denied that the crises caused by famine or infectious disease and the financial burdens placed on families by their landlords had a deep and lasting impact on the people of these areas.

While the greatest hardship was among the poorest in society the problems of the period had a significant impact on the old gentry families whose income was derived from land. The Clifford family and the Crown found it difficult to increase their income when much of their land had been leased out at fixed rents for long periods and the enclosure and improvement of land was expensive. At the end of the sixteenth century and the beginning of the seventeenth, the growth of the textile trade provided the landowner with the opportunity to increase the number of sheep and profit from the sales of wool. However, as the quality of the wool was poor it was at
the margins of profitability and when conditions in the markets turned against them profits disappeared. This was the case from about 1610 and especially during the 1620s. The result was that many of the older landowning families disposed of an increasing proportion of their land holdings, particularly to the yeoman farmer. The Barcroft family exemplified this, acquiring land when the Manor of Foulridge was sold, prospering as yeoman farmers and wool and textile merchants, acquiring further land as their wealth increased. In the Skipton area the Currer family were also yeomen farmers who had prospered. A Puritan family they acquired land from gentry families and by 1623 owned the lordship of the manor of Kildwick plus lands at Baildon and Ilkley, to the east of Kildwick, and at Skipton and Gargrave to the west. They would be influential in the church at Kildwick and in the appointment of Roger Brearley as curate.

The economic difficulties of a gentry family

John Lambert, the future associate of Oliver Cromwell and Major-General in the Parliamentarian army, plays an important part in my thesis. In chapter four, I explain how, during and after the civil wars, he allowed, even encouraged, radicalism within the northern regiments of the Parliamentarian Army under his command. I also explain how religious radicals with close links to Lambert and his regiments would establish an informal network of like-minded individuals who would be instrumental in the decision of George Fox to travel to Westmorland in 1652. In this case study I explain how his father, unlike the Barcrofts and Currers, did not prosper. The family’s difficulties and the consequences would be very influential in determining John’s future in the military and his political activity.
The Lamberts came to prominence in Craven at the beginning of the sixteenth century when John’s great-grandfather, also called John, acquired property in the Calton area near Skipton. He was a lawyer, listed in the household of Wolsey and was Steward of Henry Clifford, the first Earl of Cumberland. His position as Steward saw him acquire the manor of Airton and it was when he looked to enclose part of his holding that his tenants rioted, tearing down his fences and hedges. Established among the gentry of the area he was appointed Vice-Chancellor of the County Palatine of Lancaster, Receiver of the Lord King of the County of Lancaster, and one of the King’s Customers of Kingston upon Hull. In 1543 he was appointed Secretary of the Council of the North. Prior to the dissolution of the monasteries, Lambert, through his position as Steward of the Priory Courts, leased the holdings of Bolton Priory in Malham, Airton, Scotsthorp, Otterburn and Hellified, areas adjacent to his property at Calton. This put him in the perfect position to acquire the freehold, which he did a year later when the priory was dissolved. John’s grandson Benjamin married the daughter of Lord Clifford and firmly established the family’s gentry status. Benjamin’s father, also called John, remarried after the death of Benjamin’s mother, and the first son of this second marriage was Josias, the father of John the future Major-General. Benjamin inherited his father’s estate in 1596 and by 1597 he possessed the neighbouring manors of Airton, Calton and Kirkby Malham. In 1598 on Benjamin’s death Josias inherited the estate from his half-brother but the nature of the inheritance and the terms of Benjamin’s will led to a family dispute, legal action and financial problems.

135 Farr, John Lambert, pp. 8 - 11.
Josias was faced with legal claims on his inheritance from the daughter of Benjamin and other branches of the family which he had to defend. Under the terms of Benjamin’s will he had to make payments to his four brothers-in-law. He also went to court in an attempt to reduce the fine he had to pay on the crown lands he had inherited. These were all problems putting a strain on the family finances. Wool had been the source of much of the family’s wealth, but with the decline in the market for, and price of wool, by the 1620s, Josias was in serious financial difficulty. On his death in 1632, his estate had been sold or let on long leases and his son John, born in 1619, inherited only ‘Calton Hall and those lands in the wydowes Jointure’, which provided an income of only around £30 per year.\textsuperscript{136}

In anticipation of his financial collapse Josias had entered into an arrangement with friends who had agreed to provide for his son’s education while he was still a minor. On the death of his father, John was taken under the care of Sir William Lister of Thornton-in-Craven, a leading Puritan who supervised and probably paid for his education. This relationship would be extremely important in shaping the future of John Lambert, his role in society, his politics and his views on religion. In 1638, John married Frances, Sir William’s daughter. Frances would play an important role in her husband’s affairs during the 1650s, which is evident from some of her surviving letters to family, friends and associates of her husband.\textsuperscript{137} During the 1640s and 1650s, Major-General John Lambert became a close associate of Oliver Cromwell, operating at the centre of government he was known for his radical political views. He was also, albeit indirectly, at the centre of a network of

\textsuperscript{136} Farr, \textit{John Lambert}, pp. 11 - 12.
\textsuperscript{137} Farr, \textit{John Lambert}, p. 16.
individuals who were closely connected to, and involved in, radical political and religious movements. In chapter four I explain how this network would influence George Fox and play a part in his decision to travel from west Yorkshire, through the Ribble Valley and the Yorkshire Dales, to Westmorland. Although his personal religious views are unclear, Lambert advocated freedom of religion, an idea vigorously promoted by the Quakers. In her letters, Frances shows that she was friendly with radicals and with individuals who would become Quakers.  

**Interpreting great hardship**

One of the most important issues throughout this thesis is the attitude of individuals to religion and their response to the authority of the established church. At times of great hardship individuals looked to the church for support, and, when faith was so important, to the Bible to find an explanation for their suffering. Many people saw a deep religious significance in natural disasters, accepting the doctrine of divine providence, that God’s will was the source of such events. These traditional views were, however, changing. Some people attributed catastrophic events to the ‘haphazard operation of fortune’ or to fate, while others promoted astrological or demonic explanations. Preachers countered these arguments by saying that ‘whatever the secondary cause of events, their first author was the Almighty himself’ whose actions were a consequence of ‘flagrant impiety’.  

What had previously been accepted as miraculous events, events beyond human control, for example famine or devastating floods, were seen as the acts of a wrathful God chastising and punishing a sinful world. God was issuing a warning which must be acted upon and

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Providentialism provided a spur to reformative action that showed contrition to an angry God. Preachers who identified the root cause of God’s anger as a society continuing to indulge its sins, for example gluttony, breaking the Sabbath and drunkenness, called on their congregations to repent and reform their behaviour. They also targeted nonconformity and adherence to Catholicism as reasons for God’s anger, arguing that the established church was the only true church.

Recent research has demonstrated a divergence between the providential punishment argument of preachers and theologians and the written records of local communities. In many cases descriptions of disasters in local records, rather than identifying them as a punishment, focus on more secular themes, for example the heavy rain before a flood, while continuing to acknowledge ‘God as the primary cause and nature as His instrument’. This suggests that the recording and interpretation of events had much to do with the audience at which they were aimed. The condemnation and threats of the most vehement preachers may have been counter-productive. While many people continued to believe in divine punishment for sins committed, some Protestants began to distance themselves from these views, a result perhaps of a growing ‘cultural gulf between an educated elite and their ‘credulous’ and ‘vulgar’ social inferiors’.

To prevent God’s punishment, the more fervent preachers called on their congregations to repent their sins and magistrates to prosecute the sinners. In 1596, the Puritan preacher John Udall published a number of sermons in which he pointed

142 Walsham, The Reformation and the landscape, p. 356.
out that the state could not deal with and prevent disasters if it did not deal with their true cause, sin.\(^ {143}\) The Protestant theologian, William Gouge wrote about the doctrine of judgements in *God’s Three Arrows; plague, famine, sword* in 1631, saying that God sent his judgements to turn men away from sin and to persuade them to repent.\(^ {144}\) For many preachers one of the sins to be repented was nonconformity.

In 1599, Richard Leake, the preacher at Killington near Kendal, published four sermons he had given to his congregation where he introduced the concept of God’s wrath to his readers by saying:

> It pleased God by the space of two years together, to give our country (in the North parts of this land) a taste of his power in judgement, being provoked thereunto by our manifold enormous sinnes: he visited us with many and grievous sicknesses, as first with the hot fever, after, with the bloodie issue, and lastly most fearfully with the extreame disease of the pestilence, inflicted upon many, and shaken at all in our whole countrie.\(^ {145}\)

Interestingly Leake said that the greatest sin was in failing to administer the ‘holy Sacrament the Supper of the Lorde’ correctly:

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\(^ {144}\) Walter & Wrightson, ‘Dearth and the Social Order’, p. 28.

Truly I am perswaded, that one of the greatest and capital crime, that hath puld these plagues upon our countrie, and hath made us a talke in the mouthes of the people of other countries, is the grievous and monsterous prophanation of this holy Sacrament the Supper of the Lorde, being for so long a time so horribly prophaned, both of pastor and people.\textsuperscript{146}

Leake went on to criticize the administering of the sacrament to everyone without ‘separation of the unholy from the holy, the prophane from the sound professor, the dogs and the swine from the sincere and the sanctified’.\textsuperscript{147} These were the views of a committed Puritan minister who was telling his congregation that their suffering was the result of God’s wrath being visited on them because of the level of nonconformity in their society. In saying this Leake also expressed his concern over the level of nonconformity he believed existed in his parish and which he saw as a serious threat to the authority of the established church.

It is possible that the sermons of preachers like Leake were counter-productive in that their promotion of an angry God who was ready to exact punishment ran counter to an individual’s expectation of a caring church and a loving God. Richard Leake may, inadvertently, have encouraged some members of his congregation to seek comfort elsewhere in a less authoritarian, but possibly more radical, religious movement or sect. In chapter two I explain how Puritanism and religious radicalism became established in Westmorland, the Yorkshire Dales and north Lancashire. It was an area where radical views became more popular, where many individuals

\textsuperscript{146} Leake, Four Sermons, p. 42.
\textsuperscript{147} Leake, Four Sermons, pp. 42 - 48.
moved away from the established church forming their own independent separatist group out of which the Quaker movement grew.

Summary

In the sixteenth century north Lancashire, Westmorland and the Yorkshire Dales could be a harsh and unforgiving area. It was high fell country, susceptible to high rainfall and long cold winters, isolated with a scattered population the area was some distance from larger centres of population. Most of the farms were small and what grain crops and dairy production there was, was only enough to meet the needs of the local population. The economy of the area was dependent upon sheep, particularly the wool produced which maintained the small domestic textile industry and was sold into the larger textile producing areas of Yorkshire and east Lancashire.

At the end of the sixteenth and beginning of the seventeenth centuries the local harvests failed leading to three periods of famine and famine-related disease which led to crisis mortality rates. Disruptive weather conditions led to harvest failures across the country but the three periods in question hit Westmorland and the Dales particularly hard. Unlike other areas of the country which were closer to larger population centres and had a mixed farming system, a series of failed harvests devastated local food production. Because of their location the people of Westmorland and the Dales were unable to purchase produce from elsewhere, the cost of transportation would have been a considerable additional burden. Coinciding with severe problems in the market for their wool and in the textile industry in Yorkshire and east Lancashire, the third occasion in 1623 – 1624 was a particularly
disastrous event represented by an extremely large increase in the number of recorded deaths.

Financial problems arising from the actions of major landowners, particularly the Clifford family, increased the financial problems of the tenant farmers resulting in many having to give up their tenancies. For those families in this position their lives were extremely precarious as problems in both the farming community and textile industry meant there was little chance of alternative employment. These landlord and tenant financial disputes continued for many years and evidence suggests that they lived long in the memory of the local population. In the 1620s therefore, there were many families that had been devastated by famine, disease, high mortality rates and by the consequences of the landlord and tenant disputes. Situations and problems like these were not easily or quickly forgotten, they would be remembered, colouring and influencing family and an individual’s actions and attitudes to authority over several generations. While the poorest in society suffered the most, the economic problems of the wool industry had consequences across society as evidenced by the difficulties experienced by the father of John Lambert. John Lambert will be an important person in the later chapters of this thesis.

Not all families suffered in the same way, some of the more affluent were able to prosper. I have used the Barcrofts as an example of a yeoman family that grew in wealth, social standing and influence during the seventeenth century. They were typical of the increasingly influential families that embraced education and new ideas, including more radical Puritan views. The increase in educational provision during the second half of the sixteenth and first half of the seventeenth centuries was
hugely important in the development of Puritanism and is a subject I will deal with in more detail in the following chapter. It was more independently minded, and wealthier, yeomen who, I have argued, were responsible for the appointment of Roger Brearley at Grindleton, and more certainly at Kildwick. Clearly, he was popular at both churches and it is interesting to speculate that, despite the difference in their economic and social situation, the prosperous yeoman and the poorer farmers and textile workers shared a common preference for the Puritan way of worship.

Suffering and hardship left a legacy on a community that shaped their views and attitudes for generations. In north Lancashire, Westmorland and the Yorkshire Dales, failed harvests, famine, disease, tenancy and financial disputes left deep scars. In many ways those in authority were responsible for compounding the suffering of the poor, and these same individuals or institutions were either incapable of or were unwilling to provide relief to those who suffered. In these circumstances it would be understandable if within the poorer sections of society there was an antipathy towards and an indifference to authority which extended over generations. Added to this, was the increased economic significance of yeomen who were changing society and the increasingly important and influential Puritan movement that was challenging the position of the established church.

It was also a group of independently minded individuals, led by preachers, yeomen and schoolmasters, who would form a separatist religious group which established itself across Westmorland and the Yorkshire Dales; the group which would meet George Fox in 1652 and which is the subject of chapter three of this thesis. The rise
of the independent yeoman family had an empowering effect among many communities.
Chapter Two: Puritans, Preachers and Teachers

In 1652, George Fox climbed Pendle Hill. Situated between Clitheroe in the Ribble Valley and Burnley in north-east Lancashire it is the largest hill in the area. Why did Fox and his companion Richard Farnworth visit that area in 1652? Rosemary Moore said that Fox’s route had been planned in advance, ‘so that he might meet people likely to be sympathetic to his opposition to the parish ministry’.¹ A group with such views had its roots near Clitheroe. The village of Grindleton, close to Clitheroe and Pendle Hill, was the home of the Grindletonian movement led in the early seventeenth century by Roger Brearley. Brearley, who had been the curate at Grindleton between 1615 and 1623, was known for his preaching skills and radical views, particularly for his emphasis on the importance of the spirit over the Word. Many of the views attributed to Brearley would predate those of George Fox and be close to those expressed by the Quakers after 1652.

Although Brearley died in 1637, one of his followers, John Webster, lived in Clitheroe in the early 1650s. Webster said that he had converted to Grindletonianism when, following in Brearley’s footsteps, he was curate at Kildwick, a village near Skipton.² During the early 1650s, Webster expressed views that were extremely critical of the established Church and its organisation, views that were close to those of the early Quakers. He was not the only person living in the area who remembered

Brearley. Thomas Barcroft lived just a few miles away and when in 1657 he professed himself a Quaker, he said he had been a Grindletonian, remembering with affection the preaching of Brearley.⁴ There is a strong possibility therefore, that a Grindletonian movement persisted in this area long after Roger Brearley’s death and that it was members of this group, and Webster in particular, that Fox set out to meet.

Why are groups like the Grindletonians relevant to the origins of the Quaker movement? The early movement in the north had deep roots, established well before the arrival of George Fox and his inspirational preaching. Fox was able to reach a section of society that had a deep-seated dissatisfaction with the established church, its ministers and its organisation. This dissatisfaction had been fostered over many years by radical preachers who had left their mark in the community; from the Lollards of the fourteenth century to radical Puritans of the sixteenth and early seventeenth centuries.⁵ A number of historians of popular religion have expressed the view that a thread of radicalism continued to run through popular religion across those centuries, but this is not a universally accepted view.⁶ It is my contention that Fox’s success in 1652, when a significant number of people in Westmorland, the Yorkshire Dales and north Lancashire were ‘convinced’, was because he tapped into

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4 Lollards were a political and religious movement dating from the mid-fourteenth century. They were followers of John Wycliffe (c.1320 - 1384), a philosopher, preacher, theologian and Bible translator who was critical of the splendour of the Catholic Church, much of its doctrine and the privileges of the clergy. He advocated translating the Bible into English, completing his translation from the Vulgate in 1382. Dickens, Lollardy and Protestants; Spufford, The World of Rural Dissenters; Christopher Hill, ‘From Lollards to Levellers’, in Rebels and Their Causes: Essays in Honour of A. L. Morton, edited by Maurice Cornforth, (London, 1978), pp. 49 – 62.

an underlying thread of long-standing disaffection and radicalism. In this chapter I add an important new dimension to this debate documenting clear evidence of continuity of Protestant radicalism in north Lancashire, the Yorkshire Dales and Westmorland from the Pilgrimage of Grace, 1536 – 1537, to the emergence of the Quakers in 1652.

My research does not attempt to cover the period before the Pilgrimage of Grace. Instead I focus on the years 1536 to 1652, to investigate the development of radical Protestantism across the area. The development and continuity of radicalism through that period was due to the efforts of an informal network of committed individuals, preachers, teachers, academics and theologians. This chapter centres on the work of a number of these individuals; it is about people and therefore has a bias towards biographical detail. It also explores the crucial importance of education, the increase in educational provision through grammar schools and local schools, and how links were created and developed between universities, the centres of Puritan ideas and thinking, and local preachers and teachers. Over the period in question the work of these individuals prepared the ground for George Fox and the Quaker movement.

The first section of the chapter explores the importance of education to the development of Puritan ideas. Education was the cornerstone on which Puritanism developed and on which continuity of radical ideas was established. The following two sections will examine the influence of important radical preachers who establish

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Quakers referred to being convinced rather than converted. George Fox was convinced he heard Christ ‘directly and inwardly without the mediation of text or minister’. Fox and the early Quakers were ‘convinced of the authenticity of this experience and its universal application’. Stephen W. Angell and Pink Dandelion, Eds., *The Oxford Handbook of Quaker Studies*, (Oxford, 2013), p. 1.
Protestantism across the area of my study. I will explain how they were supported by influential individuals in government and persecuted by high ranking officers in the established Church, and how links were established across generations. Dividing the area on geographical lines section two covers Craven and the background to the Grindletonian movement. The third section focuses on Sedbergh in Westmorland where the preaching of George Fox had such an immediate impact. The fourth section of the chapter examines the links between preachers, teachers and universities, explaining how an informal network of individuals introduced and reinforced Puritanism and how they ensured it became established across the area.

In the fifth section I investigate the establishment of Protestantism and Puritanism in Kendal identifying the importance that educated yeomen and merchants played in this. Finally, I explain how an independent radical religious group developed in Westmorland, and how the strength of this group and their call for freedom of worship became a concern to local preachers.

The issue of continuity of radicalism over time is important to this study. The nature and degree of radicalism changed over time; radical ideas were far more radical in the 1640s than in the 1580s. My argument is that the religious radicalism practised by the independent community in Westmorland and the Dales in the 1640s was not new, it had its roots in the radicalism of the previous one hundred years. In his study of Protestantism in the diocese of York, A. G. Dickens said that from the earliest days of the Reformation, ‘Lollard and continental Protestant notions were more widely disseminated…. than it has hitherto been customary or indeed possible to suppose’. He went on to say that the Reformation was not an imposition of a foreign doctrine by intellectuals and the monarchy but that the ‘foreign seed fell on a ground
prepared for its reception’. Studies of religion in other areas of the country have been undertaken in an attempt to demonstrate a continuity of radicalism from the Lollards to the Quakers, but they have failed to provide conclusive evidence. Margaret Spufford studied the visitation records of Ely in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries to see if they revealed any trace of earlier nonconformity. Her conclusion was that these records taken in isolation could not be a reliable guide to the opinions of the laity as they were very much the edited opinions of the churchwardens who provided the information to the examiners. Nesta Evans conducted a survey in the area of the Chiltern Hundreds. She found that family names recurred among religious sects and so concluded that dissent did descend through families. However, Patrick Collinson commenting on this work said that there was little evidence to prove there was demonstrable continuity from the fourteenth-century Lollards to the seventeenth-century radical sects. Adrian Davis, investigating the history of Quakers in Essex, said that literary evidence from contemporary seventeenth century authors supported the idea that there was continuity, citing critics of the Quakers who likened them to sects from earlier periods. He quoted a commentator saying, ‘the new movement was but ‘several old Errors, now revampt’’. Having identified that the Quaker movement was strongest in the parishes where Lollardy had taken hold, Davis concluded that a pattern of geographical continuity was clearly evident. My own research clearly identifies a

7 Dickens, Lollardy and Protestants, pp. 242 - 245.
11 Davies, The Quakers in English Society, pp.130 – 131.
continuing thread of religious radicalism across Westmorland, the Yorkshire Dales and north Lancashire between 1536 to 1652.

**Education – Establishing Puritanism**

The introduction of religious reform throughout the area of my study had been slow, resisted by many of the leading gentry families who retained, and in many cases actively promoted, the Catholic faith.\(^{12}\) Hugh Barbour stressed this when identifying the weakness of the established church across the whole of north Lancashire, Cumberland, Westmorland and the Yorkshire Dales. He described the northern parishes as hopelessly large, served by ‘absentee or pluralist priests living outside the parish’ and poorly trained curates; an area where, in ‘all periods the clergy of the area were known as the most ignorant in the nation’.\(^{13}\) His view was that it was poor religious and educational provision which allowed ‘Quaker roots to [grow] strongest’ in Westmorland and the Dales.\(^{14}\) However, as I will demonstrate, Barbour underestimated the extent to which Puritanism became established and the importance of Puritan preachers and teachers in the spread and development of education.

To combat the threat of Catholicism the dioceses of York and Chester had supported active preachers, many of whom were committed Puritans, allowing them considerable latitude in the radical nature of their beliefs and in their preaching. Both secular and religious authorities from the beginning of the reign of Elizabeth I supported Puritan preachers and teachers in the area. This was through an informal

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\(^{13}\) Barbour, *The Quakers*, p. 80.

network of influential individuals, preachers, theologians, men in senior
governmental positions and teachers, all of whom had close connections to radical
thinkers in the universities of Oxford, and most particularly the promoters of ‘new
thinking’ at Cambridge. It was at Cambridge, where theological studies and debate
over doctrine became dominant, that Puritanism developed as an academic
movement through the teaching of theologians like Thomas Cartwright, and it was
through the network of Puritan promoters, preachers and teachers that it was carried
to the parishes.15

Education and educators were a crucial part of these networks. One of the most
significant aspects of the early Quaker movement was the way in which the early
leaders and preachers used print to communicate not only to the population at large
but to figures of authority in government and the established church. The growth in
literacy following the introduction of the printing press and the increasing number of
printed Bibles, books, pamphlets and broadsheets was a feature of the sixteenth
century, and it was among the class of yeomen where this was most evident and
significant. Measuring the actual levels of literacy in the Tudor and Stuart periods is
extremely difficult. Historians have used, for example, marriage licenses,
Protestations and Hearth Tax records to measure literacy levels.16 Sasha Roberts
said that the limitations of the sources for the history of reading were considerable;

they are fragmented and incomplete, and tracing patterns of change was ‘difficult beyond very broad generalisations’.\textsuperscript{17} David Cressy found that using depositions was the ‘most rewarding’ in quantifying the change in the number of individuals who were able to sign their own name. Identifying and discussing the difficulties in adopting this as a measure he said that; ‘the imprecision, though alarming, does not seriously jeopardize the inquiry since we are more interested in the progress and relative performance of different social groups than in absolute levels’.\textsuperscript{18}

Cressy identified that levels of literacy varied according to economic and social status, the highest levels of skills being among the clergy, lawyers and teachers as required by their professions, and the gentry. Yeomen, merchants and shopkeepers were identified as the second most literate group. He argued that, ‘the yeomen of Elizabethan and early Stuart England were a thrusting, dynamic group, working hard, amassing land and profits … A group pursuing upward mobility needs all the advantages it can muster, and literacy was surely useful to the yeomen in their economic affairs as well as their social aspirations’.\textsuperscript{19} This is an important observation for my study as an analysis of the first group of Quaker preachers, the \textit{Valiant Sixty}, shows that 54 were men of whom 46 were gentlemen, yeomen, husbandmen, schoolmasters, shopkeepers or merchants.\textsuperscript{20} Also relevant to my study is the observation by Margaret Spufford in her study of seventeenth-century autobiographers, that those ‘who do bother to describe their social backgrounds were drawn mainly from just those groups in rural society which were most literate, had

\textsuperscript{17} Roberts, ‘Reading’, pp. 10 - 11.
\textsuperscript{18} Cressy, ‘Levels of Illiteracy’, p. 2.
\textsuperscript{19} Cressy, ‘Levels of Illiteracy’, pp. 2 – 7.
\textsuperscript{20} Taylor, \textit{The Valiant Sixty}, p. 43. Taylor’s listing of the ‘Valiant Sixty’ includes sixty six names of which twelve were women.
more educational opportunity and also provided most converts to Quakerism than any other in some areas’. The yeomen, husbandmen, schoolmasters and merchants, of the ‘Valiant Sixty’ were extremely adept in the use of the printed word. One of the most striking features of the early Quaker movement is their ability to use letters, pamphlets and books to spread their message, question authority and to communicate between themselves. They were quickly able to create an effective organisation to coordinate their activities, to take control of the printing and publishing of material and to manage its distribution. These people were educated and literate.

The improvement in literacy and education among the yeomen, husbandmen and merchants was a direct result of greater educational opportunity, facilitated through an increasing number of schools across north Lancashire, the Yorkshire Dales and Westmorland between 1530 and 1640. Pollard identified the area as one with a high degree of literacy, an area where the increase in schools after the Reformation was linked to a ‘perceived need to induce godliness’. One of the driving forces behind this increase and a corresponding increase in the number of university entrants was the need for an educated clergy to promote the Protestant religion and the Protestant need for active preachers. Many of the new schools, particularly Grammar Schools, were endowed, and many existing Grammar Schools were re-endowed, through the charity of wealthy merchants, academics or statesmen who were keen to promote both education and Protestantism. The schools were increasingly staffed by university educated schoolmasters who would prove to be key influencers in

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22 Pollard, Marginal Europe, p. 113.
religious and social issues and who would develop important links between schools and university colleges; links that were extremely important in spreading Protestantism and Puritanism from the universities to towns and villages.

However, the reality of this increased provision was not as liberating as the increasing number of Grammar Schools suggests. The better schools were not free, fees had to be paid, and education was a matter of improving opportunity and not simply of social mobility. There was an increasing provision for early age learners at local, parish or country schools, often run by the local curate, preacher or an educated individual where learning to read was the prime objective. Other local schools took children, usually for a small fee, teaching them the rudiments of English, mathematics and keeping account of finances. The Grammar Schools provided the highest quality education, at the highest cost, preparing students for a university or Inns of Court education. Networks were created between benefactors, schools, school teachers, university colleges and tutors over the second half of the sixteenth century, particularly during the reign of Elizabeth I. The influence exerted by these networks was crucial in establishing an environment where educated individuals were encouraged to question the role and ceremonies of the established church and to adopt more radical Puritan and separatist views.

**Craven: Puritans, radicals and the Grindletonians**

The background and career of Roger Brearley demonstrates how Puritan preachers were promoted, tolerated and protected by a network of well-connected individuals,

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preachers, theologians and teachers. While attempts were made in 1616 by a lay member of the local parish church to brand him and his followers as heretical antinomians it is clear from the records that most of the accusations made against him in the courts of the diocese of York were no different to accusations made against many other Puritan preachers. This places him firmly within the Puritan world at the beginning of the seventeenth century. However, some of the views attributed to him and his followers locate them equally firmly as radicals, views which link them to other religious sects, specifically independent groups referred to as Seekers, and the Quakers. By investigating Brearley’s background and views I will demonstrate how he was both a product of the Puritan environment and a radical influencer on future generations.

He was appointed curate at Grindleton in 1615 when he was 29 years old and an experienced preacher. There are several instances recorded which indicate that he was an impressive preacher who could have a dramatic impact on those who attended his meetings. William Aiglin wrote a poem extolling Brearley in which he said: ‘great and mighty store of wise and learned multitudes / of men came hasteing to that place apoynted.’

Aiglin called Brearley an inspirational preacher; ‘out of his mouth a fyere flame did flye’. A note in the 1619 Visitation record of Giggleswick, a parish near Settle approximately twelve miles to the north of Clitheroe, observed that ‘many opto

26 William Aiglin was ordained in Derry, Ireland in 1622. Between 1635 and 1642 he was vicar at Huntington, where he was admonished for preaching without a licence. In 1660 a William Eglin was curate at Heptonstall, Yorkshire. Marchant, The Puritans and the Church Courts, p. 224. William Aiglin, ‘Verses made upon the death of this aforesaid Author Roger Brierley by William Aglin: minister’, Lambeth Palace Library, London, MS. 3461, pp. 235 - 236.

Grindleton and neglect there own’. People clearly travelled many miles to hear Brearley preach.28 The biographer of Thomas Shepherd, a Cambridge student during the 1620s, said he had been, ‘utterly at a losse which way to take’, in religion. He was advised to, ‘go to Grindlestone and hear Mr. Brierley’, where people were, ‘wont to find mighty possessing, over powering presence, and work of the Spirit when they heard him’.29 Similarly, Richard Baxter, the Puritan theologian, writer and leading nonconformist, writing about heresy said he had a, ‘godly friend’, who lived near Grindleton and, ‘went once among them, and they breathed on him as to give him the Holy Ghost’, for three days following his family, ‘perceived him as a man of another spirit, as half in ecstacy’.30

In the Archbishop of York’s Visitation of 1615, Brearley, along with Richard Tennant, Nicholas Waddington and Thomas Armistead, was accused of preaching without a licence at the church in Gisburn and of refusing to produce one when required. He was also accused of baptizing a child there in the absence of the vicar without using the sign of the cross.31 In the same year, at Grindleton, he was accused of not wearing the surplice, not reading the Book of Common Prayer and not receiving Holy Communion at his parish church.32 Initially excommunicated, he was absolved on the archbishop’s order.33 These examples of Brearley’s nonconformity are neither unusual nor extreme. In many cases the actions of nonconformity were a rebellion against what Puritans saw as, ‘a hated relic of

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28 Borthwick, Vis 1619 CB fol. 58r.
31 Borthwick Institute, Vis 1615 CB fol. 69v, 70v.
32 Borthwick Institute, Vis 1615 CB fol. 82.
The accusation of neglecting the Book of Common Prayer was not unusual. Archbishop Neile of York made this clear in 1633, saying it was neglected and abused as if the preacher was not bound to the prescribed form. Refusing to wear the surplice or using the font in baptism and refusing to use the sign of the cross in baptism were however considered by church authorities to be against the teaching of the Bible.

The accusation against Brearley of not attending his parish church for communion may have arisen from Puritan opposition to genuflection, as they believed that kneeling for communion had no foundation in Scripture and refusing to kneel was by far the most common expression of lay Puritanism. The refusal to attend may, however, have reflected a deeper division in the local society. The chapel at Grindleton was in the parish of Waddington where the ‘chaplain should do fealty to the vicar of Mitton’. The Sherburne family of Stoneyhurst, one of the leading Catholic recusant families in Lancashire, were the patrons of the church and vicar at Mitton. The inference from this situation is that both the churches at Waddington and at Mitton would have retained a strong Catholic emphasis. Brearley and members of his congregation may have refused to attend the parish church as a direct protest against its authority and at being forced to participate in aspects of a service they were very much against. It is probable that it was this breakdown in

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38 Frederick George Ackerley, *A History of the Parish of Mitton in the West Riding of Yorkshire*, (Aberdeen, 1947), p. 24. Waddington had been set up as a separate parish in 1438. Mitton was considered to be the mother church and all inhabitants were bound to make their offerings at Mitton on All Saints Day, Christmas and Easter, contribute to the repair of the church and all were required to go to the church at Mitton on Good Friday.
relationships which led to the more serious charges being laid against Brearley and his congregation, charges which would make Brearley and the Grindletonians known to the wider world.

Who appointed Brearley to his position at Grindleton in 1615, and on what terms, is not recorded, but it was a common practice for independently minded yeomen with Puritan sympathies to appoint a curate of their own choosing who would be independent of the local parish church and vicar. The suggestion that this is what happened with Brearley is supported by the records that do exist. Parish records show that a chapel had existed at Grindleton ‘from an early date’ but without parochial status and that as late as 1654, the stipend of the curate was a meagre £5, ‘the interest on money raised for its use’. The money raised, the capital sum on which the interest was payable, would have been provided by the wealthier members of the Puritan congregation, local yeomen, husbandmen and merchants. Brearley could have become known and made a name for himself on the local preaching circuit. A young, intelligent, forceful and persuasive preacher, he may have impressed villagers when preaching at ‘Hell Fire Square’ in Grindleton, known as such ‘because of the ranting preachers who spoke there’. It is therefore possible that Brearley was appointed by local Puritans in defiance of the parish church authorities and this rupture led, in 1616, to Brearley and members of his congregation facing serious charges at the York High Commission. Charges based

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40 Richardson, Puritanism in North-West England, pp. 138 - 139.
41 John W. Parker, Ed., The Parish Registers of Waddington, Yorkshire (1599 - 1812), (Wakefield, 1930); Whitaker, A History of the Original Parish of Whalley, p. 506.
42 Parker, The Parish Registers of Waddington.
on accusations made by the holder of the advowson of Waddington parish church, John Bannister.\textsuperscript{44}

The charges themselves have not survived in the records of the High Commission, but a document among the Rawlinson manuscripts in the Bodleian Library lists ‘fifty erroneous propositions’ arising from his preaching upon which the charges were based.\textsuperscript{45} These ‘propositions’ are the first record of the supposed radical beliefs which led to the accusation of antinomianism and the identification of the sect of Grindletonianism. The first of the fifty refers to the primacy of the spirit, ‘A motion riseing from the spiritt is more to be rested in, than the word it selfe’, as does the second, ‘It is a sinne to believe the word, as it is the word, without a motion of the spirit’.\textsuperscript{46} Such spiritual enlightenment enabled a person to be transformed, ‘That after a man hath assurance, of the forgiveness of his sinnes, he can never doubt againe’.\textsuperscript{47} When a believer had this assurance they would experience such a feeling of inner happiness, ‘That they cannot have more joy in heaven, then they have in this life by the spirit’,\textsuperscript{48} so that, ‘The Christian assured can never commit a grosse sinne’.\textsuperscript{49}

The ‘erroneous propositions’ also contain a clear challenge to the authority of the church as in, ‘That a man having the spirit may read, pray, or preach without any

\textsuperscript{44}Marchant, \textit{The Puritans and the Church Courts}, p. 233. An advowson is the right to present a nominee for an ecclesiastical benefice or church living.
\textsuperscript{46}Como, \textit{Blown by the Spirit}, p. 482.
\textsuperscript{47}Como, \textit{Blown by the Spirit}, p. 482.
\textsuperscript{48}Como, \textit{Blown by the Spirit}, p. 485.
\textsuperscript{49}Como, \textit{Blown by the Spirit}, p. 482.
calling whatsoever’,\textsuperscript{50} and, ‘A minister unsanctified cannot either convert or confirme’.\textsuperscript{51} They also suggest a disregard for learning; ‘Grace being wrought in the heart the spirit abolisheth all former knowledge, and they bidd away all scripture knowledge’,\textsuperscript{52} and, ‘They hould it a sinne to chatechise the ignorant for knowledge is an hinderance to grace’.\textsuperscript{53} There is also a clear accusation of a misguided reverence for Brearley, ‘That there is as much difference betwixt Mr Bryerley’s preaching and other mens, as betwixt salvation and damnation’,\textsuperscript{54} and, ‘That the Ark of the covenant is shutt up and pinned within the walls of the Grindleton chapel’.\textsuperscript{55}

A key accusation made by Bannister was that the ‘propositions’ contained an assertion of the primacy of the Spirit in matters of religious and scriptural authority, a view that was alien to both the established church and many Puritans. The implication arising from these ‘propositions’ is that the Grindletonians, having accepted their own spiritual enlightenment, believed they were in a position of sanctification placing them beyond that available through the church or from Scripture. To date no earlier or contemporary record of Brearley’s sermons, or other printed works, published by or on his behalf, have been discovered.

There is little documentary evidence of Roger Brearley prior to the York visitation records. We know that he was born at Marland near Rochdale in 1586, into what appears to be a well-established yeoman family with good local connections. His father termed himself ‘husbandman’ but on his death he was called a yeoman by the

\textsuperscript{50} Como, \textit{Blown by the Spirit}, p. 484.  
\textsuperscript{51} Como, \textit{Blown by the Spirit}, p. 483.  
\textsuperscript{52} Como, \textit{Blown by the Spirit}, p. 482.  
\textsuperscript{53} Como, \textit{Blown by the Spirit}, p. 483.  
\textsuperscript{54} Como, \textit{Blown by the Spirit}, p. 485.  
\textsuperscript{55} Como, \textit{Blown by the Spirit}, p. 484.
overseers of the inventory of his estate.56 Brearley’s sister Mary married Gabriel Gartside of Rochdale, a gentleman and a wool draper who was twice Deputy Steward of the Manor.57 His brother Abel was ‘a well-to-do woollen draper’ and Parish Clerk of Rochdale.58 A second sister Alice married Robert Doughty a clergyman who from 1623 to 1663 was the highly regarded Master of Wakefield Grammar School.59 The records also show that Roger himself owned land from which it is likely he earned a reasonable income which no doubt enabled him to take the lowly paid post at Grindleton.

_The Survey of the Manor of Rochdale_ records that in 1626, ‘Roger Brierley; clerke holdeth to him and his heirs for ever’, through a deed granted by his grandfather, ‘all that close called Castle Hill Carr’, over an acre of land with an annual value of 12s.50 Interestingly the survey also details land at ‘Marland Hamlett’ held by Henry Ratcliffe, listing his tenants including, ‘Div closes ar[able] mead[ow] and past[ure] in ten[ancy] Roger Brierley join[ing] on South East on Rich[ard] Brierley and extends to River Roch containing’...90 a[cre] with an annual value of £30. Richard Brierley had 27 acres in his own name while there was a further 65 acres, ‘in Brierley’s occp’, or, ‘in tenure of said Brierley’, together worth £24 1s 4d per year.61

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58 Fishwick, _The History of the Parish of Rochdale_, p. 230.
59 Matthew Henry Peacock, _History of The Free Grammar School of Queen Elizabeth at Wakefield, Founded A.D. 1591_, Written in Commemoration of the 300th Anniversary of its Foundation (Wakefield, 1892), p. 123.
61 Heath, _Survey of the Manor of Rochdale_, pp. 15 – 16; There are a number of ‘Brierley’s’ in the various records of Rochdale, but it seems certain that this record is referring to the same, ‘Roger Brierley, clerke’, who held land from his grandfather and whose family had lived and farmed at Marley.
If, as this suggests, Roger held the tenancy of land in his home village, it is probable that he was sub-letting and in receipt of a reasonable income.

Nothing is known of Brearley’s childhood or where he was educated, but it is clear that he was from an established yeoman family that would have been able to provide the fees for him to attend Rochdale Grammar School. Here the local vicar Richard Midgley, a staunch Puritan who was ‘one of the firmest promoters’ and founders of the school, may have been the schoolmaster.62 Alternatively, Brearley could have attended Middleton Grammar School, four miles from his home, where the vicar Edward Assheton, was also a leading Puritan preacher and a member of one of the most important and influential families in the county. While the proximity of these schools suggest Brearley received a Puritan education there are no records of him furthering his education at a university or of his ordination. However, it may have been a connection to influential local preachers, like his local vicar Midgley, that provided a route to Brearley becoming a preacher.

When Dr William Chadderton was appointed Bishop of Chester in 1579, the diocese was, ‘poorly endowed, monstrously large and administratively unmanageable’ and one of his first actions was to introduce a series of monthly public Exercises.63 At these Exercises ‘grave, godly and learned ministers’, would preach and all ‘parsons, vicars, curates, readers, and schoolmasters within the deanery of Manchester’, were commanded to attend.64 They proved to be a great success so much so that the Privy Council, seeing this as a way of promoting Puritanism and combating Catholicism,

encouraged the introduction of similar events elsewhere in the county, appointing as moderators leading Puritan clergy from the Manchester deanery. Richard Midgley was one of the key nonconformist moderators of the Exercises in east Lancashire. A Puritan educated at St. John’s College, Cambridge, he was appointed vicar of Rochdale in 1561 where he ‘was instrumental in the conversion of thousands of souls’. In *The Vicars of Rochdale*, Raines said his ‘fierce and fiery eloquence was almost omnipotent,’ and that he, ‘found active supporters in men of high birth and literary attainments at a distance’. Charged on more than one occasion with not wearing the surplice, not perambulating and neglecting to observe holidays, he had the support of the churchwardens in 1595 when they refused to say whether he used the sign of the cross at baptisms. In 1588 he was appointed to the Commission of Causes Ecclesiastical within the Province of York. When he resigned as vicar of Rochdale, Richard Vaughan, the Bishop of Chester, appointed him as one of the four Queen’s Preachers for Lancashire, a role specifically designed to spread Protestantism and convert Catholics.

When Richard Midgley resigned as vicar in 1595 his son, Joseph, a graduate of Emmanuel College Cambridge, was appointed to replace him. Raines refers to Joseph as a strict Puritan; a ‘remarkable man possessing a mind of greater activity than power embracing all the theological opinions and crude notions of his father’, but who maintained them, ‘with far more pertinacity than judgement’. He goes on to say that although a stern Puritan, Midgley was more Presbyterian in some of his

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66 Raines, *The Vicars of Rochdale*, p. 3.
67 Brook’s Puritans, Vol. 11, p 164, quoted in Raines, *The Vicars of Rochdale*, p. 52.
68 Raines, *Vicars of Rochdale*, pp. 52 - 53.
69 Raines, *Vicars of Rochdale*, p. 57; Richardson, ‘Puritanism in the Diocese of Chester’, p. 78.
70 Raines, *Vicars of Rochdale*, p. 55.
views having little respect for diocesan episcopacy. At the visitation of 1598 he was presented for not wearing the surplice, for the service being shorter than allowed in the Book of Common Prayer, ‘by reason of sermons’, for not reading the Queen’s injunctions, not perambulating the parish, allowing people in the parish to eat flesh in Lent, and not calling the children to be catechized.\(^{71}\)

At the Hampton Court Conference in 1604, when a proposal was made that some, ‘honest and painfull ministers’ who had been successful in converting Catholics, should be excused wearing the surplice and using the sign of the cross the ‘vicar of Ratesdale’ was specifically mentioned. Whitgift, the Archbishop of Canterbury, condemned the idea because Midgley had a reputation for, ‘unseemly and unreverent usage of the Eucharist, dealing the bread out of a Basket, every man putting in his hand and taking out a peece’.\(^{72}\) In 1605 an Ecclesiastical Inquisition charged Midgley and his congregation with additional errors, including, that communion was celebrated sitting, that the vicar had refused to observe the order of communion, and that he had allowed an excommunicate in the church for a service.\(^{73}\) Archbishop Bancroft, who had been appointed Archbishop of Canterbury on Whitgift’s death, deprived Midgley, deliberately appointing as his replacement a conforming vicar who would put the parish in order.\(^{74}\) Midgley left the established church calling it the ‘Scarlet Lady of Babylon’ and was treated as a separatist. He practised as a doctor in Halifax and became a Presbyterian before returning to the established church before his death.\(^{75}\)

\(^{71}\) Raines, *Vicars of Rochdale*, pp. 68 - 69.


\(^{73}\) Raines, *Vicars of Rochdale*, p. 72.

\(^{74}\) Richardson, ‘Puritanism in the Diocese of Chester’, p. 78.

\(^{75}\) Cited in Raines, *Vicars of Rochdale*, p. 74.
How Roger Brearley spent the years to 1615 is unknown, but when appointed curate at Grindleton, he was able to provide a satisfactory licence when accused of preaching at Gisburn without one. The Midgleys, father and son, must have been a significant influence on a young godly Brearley, and they may have been responsible for his appointment as curate at Grindleton. In 1599 when appointed Queen’s Preacher, Richard Midgley was 69 years old, and was expected to travel the county preaching and moderating at Exercises when travel in Lancashire could be difficult. Would not the employment of a keen young assistant with a private income have been extremely beneficial to both the elderly Midgley and an aspiring Brearley? Midgley had married into the Assheton family and worked closely with Edward Assheton, vicar of Middleton. Together they were moderators of the monthly Exercise at Padiham, close to both Grindleton and Burnley. All clergymen and schoolmasters were required to attend the monthly Exercise in their own deanery where they would hear a sermon, write a review and, led by the moderators, discuss what they had heard. It was an opportunity for the Puritan clergy to meet, strengthen their personal ties and organisation and it was a meeting where an educated, persuasive speaker could make his name as a preacher.

Perhaps it was at these Exercises that Brearley’s preaching ability came to prominence which, aided by his good connections, led to him receiving his preaching

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76 Borthwick Institute, York, VIS 1615 CB fols. 69 - 70; Marchant, The Puritans and the Church Courts, p. 233.
77 Richardson, Puritanism in North-West England, p. 66n; Richardson, ‘Puritanism’ (Unpublished thesis), p. 100, p. 194. Richardson notes that the Exercise at Padiham began in the 1580’s and that the network of Exercises ended in the 1590’s. However, Exercises did continue as is witnessed in The Journal of Nicholas Assheton of Downham, Ed. F. R. Raines, (Manchester, 1848), p. 28, when Assheton refers to the Exercise being held at Downham in 1617. Downham is a village very close to Pendle Hill and Grindleton.
78 Richardson, Puritanism in North-West England, p. 65.
licence from the Bishop of Chester. Although the increased number of graduates had improved the quality of the clergy not all vicars were preachers and parts of the area remained poorly served. The appointment of non-graduate licensed preachers was a way of improving the situation by providing more curates. The suggestion that his connections helped advance Brearley is perhaps mirrored in the appointment of Abbidas Assheton as vicar at Slaidburn in 1615. This was approximately the same date that Brearley became curate at Grindleton which was also in the manor of Slaidburn. Assheton was a member of the Middleton family, becoming vicar there in 1619 on the death of Edward Assheton.79

The Midgleys and Brearley were not isolated examples of Puritan propagandists. While in Grindleton and later at Kildwick Brearley was part of the Craven Exercise organised by Christopher Shute, vicar of Giggleswick, (1576 – 1626), and chairman of the governors of Giggleswick Grammar School where he also served as headmaster (1615 – 1619). Shute had been appointed a member of the York High Commission in 1594. In the same year he was presented at the Visitation for not using the sign of the cross in baptism, he was ordered to ‘preach a sermon in his parish church declaring his approbation and liking of the Book of Common Prayer’.80 Identified as ‘the pre-eminent leader of a flourishing and sometimes radical Puritan tradition in Craven’ he was for many years an influential figure in the drive against Catholicism and the promotion of a preaching ministry.81 In 1616 Shute and a number of other local clergy were listed as witnesses in the case against

78 Raines, The Journal of Nicholas Assheton, p. 103.
79 Marchant, The Puritans and the Church Courts, p. 22, p. 278.
Brearley at the York High Commission. Thomas Brooke, ‘minister of Gargrave’, was another witness. He was in 1626, when curate of Ripponden near Halifax, accused before the Chancery Court by the vicar of Halifax and ‘wiser’ inhabitants of Ripponden, of preaching erroneous doctrines and neglecting the Book of Common Prayer.\(^{82}\)

The views of men like Brearley and Brooke were protected by Shute and by the Archbishop of York, Tobie Matthew, who had a clear policy of toleration of radical preachers. Matthew, archbishop from 1606 to 1628, had a reputation for concerted action against recusancy and success in the promotion of Protestantism. He faced the problem of recusancy in large areas of the diocese and took immediate action. Using the High Commission as his tool, he increased the prosecutions against Catholics, imposing heavy fines on Catholic gentry and employing Calvinist clergy in an attempt to convert obstinate recusants. He also took direct and effective action against separatist groups, citing the leaders who refused to conform in the church courts and prosecuting lay members of separatist congregations. Matthew was himself a preacher, a supporter of preachers, an active promoter of Exercises and a man who undertook and encouraged preaching throughout his diocese.\(^{83}\) It is clear that neither Brearley nor his congregation were considered a separatist threat, otherwise Matthew, given his past actions, would have taken sterner measures.

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\(^{82}\) Marchant, *The Puritans and the Church Courts*, p. 234.

The congregation of the church at Kildwick, near Skipton, had a reputation for employing and supporting radical preachers long before they appointed Roger Brearley curate in 1623. It is likely that the Currer family were responsible for Brearley’s appointment; they had become the most influential family locally, acquiring land in Kildwick and around Skipton plus the lordship of the manor of Kildwick. The family had been connected to the local church for over forty years. In 1582, Anna Currer, the daughter of Henry Currer of Kildwick, had married the vicar Alexander Horrocks. Horrocks, appointed in 1572, was a non-graduate local man and a confirmed nonconformist. In 1586 – 1587, he was prosecuted by Edwin Sandys, Archbishop of York, for allowing John Wilson, a native of Kildwick, to preach at Kildwick church. Sandys, known as a ‘conformist Reformer’ who described Puritan preachers as foolish young men who sought to overthrow the established church, was prosecuting Wilson, who he described as an arrogant Puritan, for preaching at various churches without a licence and for departing from the Book of Common Prayer. Wilson insisted he had a licence but admitted that he had not worn a surplice on occasions when the minister was absent. He denied using a ‘prayer of his own’ saying that the law allowed him to omit parts of the service when preaching, as this was ‘better than reading…and more profitable than saying service … I think we are not bounde so straitely to the booke that we must follow it in every letter, sillable and worde’. Wilson said he was a doctor and that he had been called by the minister and people of Kildwick ‘who did earnestly intreat mee to teach and instruct them’. Sandys sent Wilson to prison. At a second hearing

84 Brigg, The Parish Registers of St. Andrew’s Kildwick, p. 82. The vicar at Kildwick when Brearley was appointed, Christopher White (1623 - 1624) and his successors William Bennet (1624 - 1627) and John Gifford (1628 - 1631) were appointed by Christ Church, Oxford. They were pluralists and did not live in Kildwick.
85 Marchant, The Puritans and the Church Courts, p. 20, p. 292.
he refused to admit to the ‘heinous and odious’ things he was charged with and was sent back to prison. At his third hearing he agreed to exercise no ministry in the province of York but refused to read the confession prepared for him. In 1587 he was in London where he was called before Archbishop Whitgift to answer accusations of seditious doctrine arising from sermons he had given. His comments were said to include:

4) Idoll Minister are priests in name, not in deed.
5) The sinne of Idoll, Idle, and non-resident ministers is hated and cursed ‘to the third and fourth generation.
7) They are covetous and are in the ministry for greed.
8) They love the benefice more than the people.
14) It is lawful to bring their ministry into contempt publicly and privately.
19) By the worde of God it is necessarie for every severall congregation to have a severall preaching paster.

Wilson insisted that charges 4, 5, 7, and 8 were all true, justifying point 14 by saying that they are ‘the greatest plague and destruction of our church’, and point 19 by saying this was ‘based on the text’. Wilson was a Puritan preacher promoting views that would be repeated by the Quakers some sixty years later. He said explicitly that it was the local people of his home parish of Kildwick who had asked him to preach and teach there and it was where the local congregation would in 1623 appoint Roger Brearley as curate.

86 Albert Peel, The Second Parte of a Register, Being a Calendar of Manuscripts under that Title Intended for Publication by the Puritans about 1593, and now in Dr Williams’s Library, Vol 2, (Cambridge, 1915), pp. 221 - 224.

87 Peel, The Second Parte, pp. 228 - 229.
Kildwick would remain a local centre of radicalism through the 1620s and the 1630s, providing crucial continuity in the area. Between 1634 and 1637, following Roger Brearley, the curate was John Webster. In 1637, Webster was cited in the Chancery Court of York for making a clandestine marriage, for which he was suspended, although a later record says, 'Dismissed previously’, without giving any reason.88 In 1653, Webster, while condemning the church, episcopacy and those who dismissed him, gave a clear indication that it was while he was at Kildwick that he became a Grindletonian:

For after the Lord about eighteen years ago, had in his wonderful mercy brought me to the sad experience of mine own dead, sinfull, lost, and damnable condition in nature and fully shewed me the nothingness, and helplessness of creaturely power, wither without or within me, and graciously led me forth to witness with the Prophet David. This no sooner appeared in me and others whom it pleased the Lord to reveal his Son in, but the power of Babel in the Ministers of Satan transforming themselves into ministers of righteousness, then in the Episcopal and Prelatical form, poured forth all their malice and spite against the truth, and against all those in whom he appeared: then throwing dirt upon us and hotly raging in performance against us, in and under the terms

of Puritans, Separatists, Grindletonians, and Antinomians.89

Born in 1610/11 at Thornton-on-the-Hill, Coxwold, Yorkshire, his later published work and medical career identify him as an educated man. He referred to Cambridge as though he had studied there, but no record of him being there has been found.90 During the Civil War, Webster was closely connected to the Parliamentarian army based in Lancashire and Yorkshire. In one of his publications he described himself as ‘late Chaplain in the Army’,91 while in another he said he was a surgeon in the Parliamentarian regiment of Colonel Shuttleworth.92 In 1647 he was intruded, probably by the Presbyterian Shuttleworth, to the position of vicar at Mitton in the Ribble Valley, the parish church to which the chapel at Grindleton was connected. In chapter four I will explain that when George Fox visited the Pendle area in early 1652, it was to meet people like Webster and other Grindletonian sympathisers.

There is a further interesting link to Kildwick. Thomas Taylor was born in 1617/18 at the village of Carleton-in-Craven some four miles from Kildwick where during his youth he is very likely to have heard both Roger Brearley and John Webster preaching. He and his brother Christopher would be ordained vicars in the Church of England, but both would renounce the Church and become Quakers. Thomas gave up his position as vicar at Preston Patrick, denouncing the Church’s hierarchical nature and ceremonial practices. He had a leading role in expanding the radical independent religious group which grew in importance across Westmorland

89 Marchant, The Puritans and the Church Courts, p. 290.
91 John Webster, The Displaying of Supposed Witchcraft wherein it is affirmed that there are many sorts of deceivers and imposters and divers persons under a passive delusion of melancholy and fancy, but that there is a corporeal league betwixt the Devil and witch is utterly denied and disproved, (London, 1677).
and the Dales and from which many members, including Thomas, met and were convinced by George Fox in 1652. Although there is no record of Brearley, Webster or the Taylor brothers ever meeting, their proximity in time and place and the similarity in religious views suggests that both Thomas and Christopher Taylor drew some influence from the Grindletonian influenced congregation at Kildwick.

Establishing a direct thread of radicalism from the fourteenth century to the seventeenth is beyond the scope of this work, but I believe that there is clear evidence here of a continuity of radical Protestantism in and around the Craven area, from the 1570s, with Wilson and Horrocks, to Brearley and Webster in the 1630s, through to the Quakers in 1652. This continuity was established within communities; the individuals discussed were not operating in isolation, they were trained, appointed and protected by like-minded people within the church and wider society.

**Sedbergh: Establishing Puritanism**

In the area of Sedbergh, North Yorkshire and Westmorland there is ample evidence of the continuity of radical Protestantism, evidence linking religious independence, separatism and the Quakers. When Archbishop Whitgift had banned John Wilson of Kildwick from preaching in London also on his list was the name of Giles Wigginton, vicar of Sedbergh. Wigginton would be a thorn in the side of John Whitgift, first when Whitgift was Master of Trinity College Cambridge, and later when he was the Archbishop of Canterbury. A radical Puritan, Wigginton had close links with other radicals and radical publications that attacked Whitgift personally
and for his governance of the Church. He was constantly persecuted and repeatedly
imprisoned by Whitgift.93

Giles Wigginton had entered Trinity College, Cambridge in 1564, under the
patronage of Sir Walter Mildmay, treasurer of Queen Elizabeth I, Chancellor of the
Exchequer from 1566 and founder of Emanuel College, Cambridge. Graduating BA
in 1569 and MA in 1572, he established a reputation for his scholarship in Greek and
Hebrew, but his Puritanism and ‘controversial wit’ angered Whitgift, the Master of
Trinity at the time, who, Wigginton believed, ensured that he would not be offered
any college offices or preferments.94

The 1560s was a time of great change in the university, where the beginning of what
was to become the Puritan movement was taking shape at St. John’s College and
Trinity. At St. John’s specifically, Puritans were becoming more influential and
vociferous and it was here that ‘doctrinal controversy’ became a dominant issue.95
In 1565 at St. John’s College most of the students went to the chapel without
surplices as a protest against an impending instruction by Archbishop Parker,
Archbishop of Canterbury, that the surplices must be worn in church and that the
gown and square cap be worn when clergy were outdoors. There developed a
struggle for control within the University between conformers and radicals, which by
1570 was exemplified by the dispute between Thomas Cartwright, a Fellow of
Trinity, and John Whitgift, the Master. Whitgift was strongly Protestant but, as an
administrator and disciplinarian, he was angered by the disorder engendered by

Biography*.
Puritan agitation. Cartwright, who had been elected to one of the most prestigious positions at Trinity, the Lady Mary Chair of Divinity, was a radical Puritan who attacked the institutions of archbishops, bishops, deans, archdeacons and chancellors in the church. He advocated that all ministers should be attached to a specific congregation and that congregations should be involved in the selection of the minister. Cartwright was demanding that the church hierarchy should be swept away and be replaced by a Presbyterian model; a church run by elders elected by the congregation and organised on the basis of a federation of individual congregations with a graduated series of representative assemblies at local, regional and national levels. Whitgift successfully imposed his authority, first depriving Cartwright of his chair and then in 1572, depriving him of his Fellowship.

These disputes and debates must have been very formative for Wigginton who was clearly a supporter of the radical movement, referring to Cartwright as ‘a principle pillar of the church’. In a letter to his patron Mildmay dated 5 October 1585, Wigginton clearly places himself among the radical element at Cambridge, saying of Whitgift:

his chief adherants, schollars, and friends, procured and encouraged by him to molest and trouble me, namely for wearing my hatt instead of a square capp, and for not

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97 Peel, The Second Parte, p. 240.
wearing a surplice when I went to the chapple, for speaking
against nonresidents, stage playes, and popery or prelacie
and such like matters. 98

Wigginton had been appointed vicar of Sedbergh in 1579, placed there by his
college, but he was soon being criticised for his radical Puritanism by Archbishop
Sandys, who in 1581 said that Wigginton, ‘laboureth not to build, but to put down,
and by what means he can to overthrow the state ecclesiastical’. 99 In 1584,
Wigginton was invited to preach at the church of St Dunstan-in-the-West in London.
On hearing this Whitgift, who was now Archbishop of Canterbury, issued an order
during the night forbidding Wigginton to preach and instructing him to appear the
next day at Lambeth Palace. When he appeared Wigginton was asked to take the ex
officio oath to answer charges that had not yet been made and when he refused he
was jailed for nine weeks. On his release he was forbidden to preach in London and
the south and instructed to return to Sedbergh. In 1585, when twelve charges were
made against Wigginton in the church court by an informant, the Bishop of Chester,
on Whitgift’s instructions, deprived Wigginton of his ministry at Sedbergh.

Wigginton was again in London in 1586 where he continued his attacks on church
authority. He said:

I preached diverse sermons in sundrie churches, never praying
for, nor praising, any prelate, nor any part of their prelacy,
dealings or proceedings, but… praying and preching…

against antichrist, and against all popish prelates and usurpers such as had no warrant from Gods [Word] to deale in his church and yet did Tyranniz and overrule the same… that God would send and establish true pastors, teachers, elders and deacons with wholl righte government of Christ in every severall congregation of his church.¹⁰⁰

Wigginton was clearly advocating the Presbyterian style of church governance over the episcopal form. Aligning himself with the views promoted by Cartwright, Wigginton said, ‘concerning the present controversies of reformation (especially against prelacye) because I take it to be the maine pillar of pestilence in the church of God and commonweale’.¹⁰¹ Apprehended by one of Whitgift’s pursuivants Wigginton was taken to Lambeth Palace where he again refused to take the oath and was taken to the White Lion prison at Southwark. He said that while he was there the keeper, ‘by the Archbishop’s strict charge, so loaded me with irons, confined me in close prison, and deprived me of necessary food, that in about five weeks, I was nearly dead’.¹⁰² On his release from jail Wigginton was once again instructed by Whitgift to return to York but this time illness forced him to remain in London. Whitgift again demanded Wigginton appear before him at Lambeth and when Wigginton failed to do so Whitgift sentenced him to ‘deprivation and degradation’ from holy orders, this was despite the intervention on Wigginton’s behalf by the earls of Warwick and Huntingdon.¹⁰³

¹⁰¹ Peel, The Second Parte, p. 247.
After recovering from his illness Wigginton returned to Sedbergh where he was ‘repulsed and driven from the pulpit at Sedbergh church’ by the new vicar Edward Hampton.\textsuperscript{104} Despite his problems with Whitgift and the Archbishop of York, Wigginton claimed he still commanded a strong following in the parish and he continued to preach:

\begin{quote}
I have preached ever since, that is, Saboth dayes one after the other in my house continually with a reasonable assemblye of faithfull people and twice I have preached in the church yarde where once also I have ministered the sacrament of Baptisme and both the sacraments I ministered in my house besides.\textsuperscript{105}
\end{quote}

The actions of the intruded vicar Edward Hampton also indicate that Wigginton was still able to draw large crowds even though he was excluded from the church. Wigginton said of Hampton:

\begin{quote}
He troubles the better sort of the parish…. citeinge about 140 of them to appeare in diverse places at Yorke, Manchester, and Chester distant from Sedbergh about 50, 60, and 80 miles, onely for hearing me preach etc. of which number the greater part have already bene excommunicated for not appearing upon their first sermon although the most of them sent diverse
\end{quote}

\textsuperscript{104} Peel, \textit{The Second Parte}, p. 248.  
\textsuperscript{105} Peel, \textit{The Second Parte}, p. 248.
messengers to answer for them.\textsuperscript{106}

Although these are the words of Wigginton, which may exaggerate the level of the support he actually enjoyed, the response of Whitgift to Wigginton continuing to preach clearly indicates that Wigginton remained a problem at Sedbergh. Whitgift was clearly angry and he instructed the Archbishop of York to issue a notice to ‘all justices, mayors, sheriffs, bailiffs, constables, and all other her majesty’s officers and subjects, within the province of York…to apprehend him and commit him to the castle of Lancaster’\textsuperscript{107}. Arrested at Boroughbridge, near Harrogate in North Yorkshire, while on a journey, (notably not at his home in Sedbergh), by a pursuivant from the archbishop, Wigginton was taken to Lancaster jail where he said he was treated worse than ‘felons, condemned prisoners…or the recusant papists’\textsuperscript{108}.

It is clear from a letter that Wigginton wrote to his patron Sir Walter Mildmay that neither the time he spent in jail nor the actions of the Archbishops of Canterbury and York changed or diminished his views on the state of the English church, its clergy and its organisation. Written while Wigginton was in jail at Lancaster, it asks for Mildmay’s assistance, ‘as God shall direct you, whereby I may be delivered out of the hands of my cruel enemies.’\textsuperscript{109} There is also a plea to Mildmay to use his influence; ‘to further…the godly reformation of this our English church’, ‘for the restraineinge if not suppressing of all prelates and others who trouble any

\textsuperscript{106} Peel, \textit{The Second Parte}, p. 251; MS Register, p.770, quoted in, Brook, \textit{The Lives of The Puritans}, p. 422. Unfortunately, no records have been found in the cases heard at the consistory court of York for the period around 1585/6 to confirm Wigginton’s claim. Little survives of the records from the Archdeaconry of Richmond for this period; Borthwick Institute for Archives, May 2016; David Boulton said the excommunication of 140 of Wigginton’s congregation suggested that this was one of the biggest separatist groups in the north of England, Boulton, \textit{Early Friends in Dent}, p. 19.

\textsuperscript{107} MS Register, p.767, quoted in, Brook, \textit{The Lives of The Puritans}, p. 421.

\textsuperscript{108} Brook, \textit{The Lives of The Puritans}, p. 421.

\textsuperscript{109} Brook, \textit{The Lives of The Puritans}, p. 421.
Christians…especially of the ministrie’, and the ‘appointment of learned and godlie pastors…in every congregation…with the utter abandoning of all blind guides and bare reading ministers’. The letter provides further evidence of the animosity of the church towards Wigginton’s congregation, and it also notes, no doubt with some satisfaction as the letter was to one of the most influential men in the land, a threat directed at ‘Lords and gentlemen’ who show Wigginton some support. Wigginton writes that the Bishop of Chester had:

told my flock they were rebellious and seditious, and,
following Wigginton, would be hanged, and making some
of them believe that my fault in preaching to them was very
haynous and that certayne Lords and gentlemen were not
well advised in heareinge me to preche being suspended.

It is not clear when or how Wigginton was released from prison but in December 1588, he was once more in London and was again arrested and brought before Archbishop Whitgift at Lambeth Palace, this time upon suspicion that Wigginton was the author of what became known as the Marprelate Tracts. These works were a humorous attack on the church, episcopacy and, particularly, Whitgift who described them as ‘vile, seditious and intolerable’. Accused of being the author

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110 Peel, The Second Parte, p. 239; Brook, The Lives of The Puritans, p. 422.
111 Peel, The Second Parte, p. 252.
112 Marprelate Controversy; brief but well-known pamphlet war (1588 – 89) carried on by English Puritans using secret presses which were carried around the country in an attempt to maintain secrecy. They attacked the episcopacy as “profane, proud, paltry, popish, pestilent, pernicious, presumptious prelates,” and advocated a Presbyterian form of church administration. The author, who signed himself ‘Martin Marprelate gentleman’, is believed to be Job Throckmorton. Collinson, The Elizabethan Puritan Movement, pp. 391 - 396; William Pierce, An Historical Introduction to the Marprelate Tracts: A Chapter in the Evolution of Religious and Civil Liberty in England, (London, 1908).
Wigginton refused to incriminate himself or anyone else but was found guilty and as he had ‘at sundry times, and divers ways shewed [his] contempt of our ecclesiastical authority’, he was again sent to jail.\textsuperscript{113}

An activist in the Puritan movement’s attempt to reshape the church in England, Wigginton was well connected to some of the leading individuals in the movement, including Thomas Cartwright and John Field.\textsuperscript{114} The letter Wigginton wrote to Sir Walter Mildmay in which he outlined the persecution he experienced at the hands of Archbishop Whitgift was reportedly sent to Field at Field’s request and is believed to be the basis for the first of the Marprelate Tracts, \textit{The Epistle}.\textsuperscript{115} The church authorities made a concerted effort led by Richard Bancroft, canon of Westminster, chaplain to Whitgift and the future bishop of London, to identify the authors of these ‘Tracts’. The search uncovered evidence of Presbyterian style meetings and synods where Puritan preachers had discussed drafts of \textit{The Book of Discipline}, the blueprint for a Presbyterian Church organisation.\textsuperscript{116} In 1589 - 1590 a number of preachers were brought before the Court of High Commission where, after refusing to take an oath, they were imprisoned. Thomas Cartwright was also jailed. Wigginton was still in prison and became a conduit between Cartwright and a group of fanatics led by William Hacket, a situation which led Wigginton to be branded deranged.\textsuperscript{117}

\textsuperscript{113} Brook, \textit{The Lives of The Puritans}, pp. 423 - 426.

\textsuperscript{114} John Field was a radical Puritan who wanted to introduce Presbyterianism, a greater emphasis on preaching and to purge what he considered to be Catholic tendencies in church practises. He is believed to be the author of some of the Marprelate Tracts. Patrick Collinson, ‘Field, John (1544/5? – 1588)’, \textit{Oxford Dictionary of National Biography}, Oxford University Press, 2004; online edn, Jan 2008 [http://www.oxforddnb.com/view/article/9248, accessed 2 June 2016]


\textsuperscript{116} \textit{The Book of Discipline} outlined important doctrinal issues and established regulations for church governance. Collinson, \textit{The Elizabethan Puritan Movement}, pp. 101 - 120.

In an account of the Hacket affair written in 1592, Richard Cosin is quite adamant that Wigginton was a fellow conspirator with Hacket, Coppinger and Arthington. Cosin was a lawyer employed by Archbishop Whitgift to prosecute Cartwright and his Puritan and Presbyterian friends, and the intention of Conspiracie for Pretended Reformation was to disgrace and condemn the Puritan movement and brand Hacket and his friends, including Wigginton, as insane. Wigginton was described as, ‘a man… whose zeale neuer came behind knowledge, not bold-hardie forwardness at any time went after discretion in him’. Cosin goes on to say that Wigginton and Hacket were close friends, ‘their great acquaintance and familiaritie may appeare by a letter sent from Hacket unto him…and by his [Wigginton] lending unto Hacket ten pounds’. In the letter Hacket asks Wigginton to ‘make my sound heart known to master Cartwright’. Cosin accuses Wigginton very specifically of being the leading Puritan preacher encouraging Hacket’s wild ideas:

Had they not had their Cabinet Preachers, their table-end teachers, their Guides of fasts, &c. that teach, pray for, &
attend extraordinarie callings by visions, dreames, revelations,
& enlightnings? Was not Giles Wigginton & some others unto

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Cheapside: The Hacket Conspiracy’, Historical Magazine of the Protestant Episcopal Church, Vol. 42, No. 3, (September, 1973), pp. 293 - 317. William Hacket was from Oundle, Northamptonshire, where he reputedly developed a friendship with Giles Wigginton. Hacket was obsessed with the plight of Cartwright and in 1591 he made plans to obtain Cartwright’s release from jail as a prelude to a political coup where Elizabeth I would be deposed. When their plans came to nothing his co-conspirators Edmund Coppinger and Henry Arthington proclaimed Hacket as the long-awaited messiah. Hacket was condemned to death and executed, Coppinger committed suicide. Arthington made a full written confession which was used by his accusers against the Puritan and Presbyterian movement.


119 Cosin, Conspiracie for Pretended Reformation.
them as Thomas Muncer, & Phiser were to the Germanes, men of supposed great austeritie of life, holinessse, favour with God, resoluteness in his cause, singleness and uprightnesse of heart? Did not Wigginton resolute them, by examples he gathered, touching extaordenarie callings in these days, by reason of the great waste of this Church of England?¹²⁰

In evidence on the affair taken by Richard Bancroft and Matthew Sutcliffe, dean of Exeter, Wigginton confessed that he had written and published pamphlets that were to be distributed before the action planned by Hacket and his co-conspirators.¹²¹

Although Hacket was a deluded and dangerous man with a very dubious background, it is likely, particularly if his plans were known by Whitgift, that he was not a great danger, and that the affair was used by Whitgift as part of his determined effort to attack Puritans such as Cartwright. Information on the relationship and the nature of any co-operation between Hacket and Wigginton is limited, and relies heavily upon the work of Cosin, Bancroft, and Sutcliffe. In ‘Tumult in Cheapside’, John Booty takes the view that there was a conspiracy by a group he calls the ‘Lambeth circle directed by Whitgift in which Cosin and Bancroft were two of the chief agents’.¹²² He goes on to say that Hacket’s plans were known by people in government and that no action was taken to stop him, suggesting that they let him go

¹²⁰ Cosin, Conspiracie for Prended Reformation, p. 86.
¹²¹ Richard Bancroft, Daungerous positions and proceedings, published and practised within this iland of Brytaine, under pretence of reformation, and for the presbiteriall discipline, (London, I 593); Matthew Sutcliffe, An aniswere to a certaine libel supplicatorie, or rather defamatory, and also to certaine calumnious articles, and inter- rogatories ... to the slaunder of the ecclesiastical state, (London, I592); Matthew Sutcliffe, An answere unto a certaine calumnious letter, (London, I595); Matthew Sutcliffe, The examination of M. Thomas Cartwrights late apologie, (London, I596).
on in the hope that they would catch more important individuals, such as Cartwright.

Booty also says that the ‘Lambeth circle’ were taking the fight directly to the Presbyterian Puritans and that they ‘seized upon the least shred of evidence to prove that the Puritans were seditious not merely zealous for religion’.  

Alexandra Walsham has a similar view saying that the *Conspiracie for Pretended Reformation* which had been exposed was merely a ‘polemical construct’ and that the authors had spun a ‘dense web of distortion, exaggeration and untruth… around the truth’. She goes on to say that the affair has been, ‘interpreted as preposterous, irrational and absurd’, but that Wigginton ‘became embroiled… up to his eyes’.  

Patrick Collinson says, ‘it was Wigginton who… luring Hacket into a wild perversion of Puritanism which ran into separation and even millenarianism’. Sheils is more equivocal, saying, ‘the extent of Wigginton’s knowledge and involvement…remains obscure’, but the fact that a pamphlet he had written, *The Fools Bolt* (1591), was distributed by Hacket and the conspirators meant that the authorities were able to implicate him in the conspiracy. The author of Wigginton’s biography in *The Lives of the Puritans*, is much more complimentary saying that, ‘Wigginton’s character and memory have suffered great injury’, particularly by the accusation that he was ‘brainsick’, and that, ‘the reader will easily perceive the injustice and falsehood of this representation’. Whatever the extent of Wigginton’s involvement what is very interesting is that he was never prosecuted

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125 Walsham, ‘Frantick Hacket’, p. 35.
126 Collinson, *Richard Bancroft*, p. 139
for any involvement in the affair. This fact alone indicates that he was a target rather than a conspirator and that he was influential and did have friends in high places, for example Sir Walter Mildmay and Lord Burghley. A further piece of evidence suggests he enjoyed the protection of Lord Burghley. Edward Irving Carlyle in his biography of Wigginton said that he was actually restored to his living in Sedbergh around 1592 at the instigation of Lord Burghley, although Sheils said that his appeal to Burghley was rejected. Alexandra Walsham said he seemed to have been restored, justifying this view by reference to a letter Wigginton wrote in 1594 asking Lord Burghley to recommend the suit of two of his friends living in Sedbergh.

Given Whitgift’s history of dealing with Wigginton, and the accusations and evidence provided by the Archbishop’s own lawyer, it is hard to understand why no legal action was taken against Wigginton, unless he had some protection. What does appear to be clear is that in the last quarter of the sixteenth century Wigginton was a leading Presbyterian Puritan with excellent contacts among the leaders of the movement and the critics of ecclesiastical authority. He was a constant antagonist of the Archbishop of Canterbury, John Whitgift and it appears he was close to, if not one of, the authors of the Marprelate Tracts. However, his place in history has been tainted by his relationship with Hacket and his co-conspirators, although this

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132 British library (BL), MS Lansdowne 77, fo. 159r, quoted by Alexandra Walsham in, ‘Frantick Hacket’, n. 29, p. 36.
relationship was defined, and its extent may have been exaggerated, by his enemies. What also appears to be the case is that in his parish of Sedbergh he had a following of parishioners who were willing to risk the ire of the church authorities, even to the point of excommunication.

Schools: The Puritan connection

The Puritan influence on education in Westmorland, the Yorkshire Dales and Craven is an important part of this work. Unfortunately for my study of individuals connected to the Quaker movement there is hardly any information on the educational background of the earliest leaders from this area. Individual testimonies provide little information. In Thomas Camm’s testimony concerning his father, John Camm, born and living at Camsgill, Preston Patrick, there is no information on his educational background. Thomas says that, ‘As far as his Parentage and Education, I shall not say, much more than it was honest and of good report, as any of that degree in that part of the Country’. In the same work Thomas says of another early leader, John Audland, also of Camsgill, that ‘his parents and kindred of good repute’. It is hard therefore to discern anything about the type of education received by these early Quaker leaders, other than to identify through their printed works, letters and testimonies that they were educated and literate. However, it is very likely that the schools at Sedbergh, Kirkby Stephen, Ravenstonedale, Orton, Kendal and Kirkby Lonsdale, all of which had a solid Protestant or Puritan background, would have been involved in the education of those leaders born in Westmorland.

The need for an educated clergy to promote Protestantism was one of the driving forces behind the increase in educational opportunity during the sixteenth and early seventeenth centuries. Lawrence Stone, when contrasting Catholic and Protestant views on education and literacy, said, ‘Protestantism was a culture of the book, of a literate society…[which]…stressed reading of the Bible and the works of the Protestant Reformers’.

From the Reformation, the state and the church took steps to control teaching in schools to prevent the spread of Catholic influence. Legislation was introduced requiring the teaching of religion, and in 1563, with the introduction of the Church of England’s Thirty Nine Articles, independent teachers had to be licensed by the bishop of the diocese.

At the grammar school students had a curriculum of classical languages, Latin and Greek, grammar, mathematics and religion. Boys were the focus for educational achievement particularly at the grammar schools where, although there were a few exceptions, girls were not allowed to study. This did not mean that girls were not educated; there was a pride taken by parents in the ability of their daughters to read and write, but invariably they were educated separately and rarely beyond a primary level.

The connection between schools and universities was close. Giles Wigginton had been appointed vicar at Sedbergh in 1579, placed there by his Cambridge College, Trinity. In a similar way, the master of Sedbergh Grammar School was appointed by

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135 Stone, ‘Literacy and Education in England’, p. 78.
136 Nigel Wheale, Writing and Society: Literacy, print and politics in Britain 1590 - 1660, (London, 1999), p.46. The Thirty-Nine Articles defined the doctrine of the Church of England and its relationship to Calvinist doctrine and Catholicism. A series of documents had been revised, refined and reissued since the first Ten Articles produced in 1536.
138 Wheale, Writing and Society, p. 48.
St. John’s College, Cambridge. A school had been founded at Sedbergh in 1525, funded by the income from land held by the chantry, where the schoolmaster was a chantry priest appointed by St. John’s. The school was re-endowed as a grammar school in 1551. In 1527, Dr Roger Lupton, a native of Sedbergh and provost of Eton, endowed six scholarships to St. John’s for students from Sedbergh School. As part of this arrangement it was agreed that where possible the master at Sedbergh would be appointed from among the Lupton scholars.139 These scholarships and the connection to St. John’s would be hugely influential in the development of both Protestantism and education in and around Sedbergh. This influence was in place before the appointment of Giles Wigginton as vicar. Any suggestion therefore that Wigginton was a maverick preacher, isolated in a remote parish in a conservative religious area is contradicted by the reality that Wigginton was going into a parish where Protestantism was already well established. That Puritanism became the preferred form of religious worship in the area was a direct result of the deepening relationship between the school and St. John’s College.

In 1560, John Knewstub, a native of Kirkby Stephen, entered Sedbergh Grammar School where he gained a Lupton Scholarship and, in 1561, entry to St. John’s College.140 Knewstub quickly emerged as a supporter of the Puritan movement and Thomas Cartwright, and was among the university students who protested against wearing clerical vestments. He became well known for his preaching, particularly in opposition to the Family of Love, serving on a commission appointed to investigate

their activities in the diocese of Norwich. In 1579 he was appointed vicar at Cockfield, Suffolk, where he became one of the leaders of the Puritan movement in East Anglia. In circumstances like those of Wigginton, Knewstub was among a group of anglian clergy who were suspended when they protested against Archbishop Whitgift’s attempts to enforce clerical conformity. His suspension was only temporary and, as with Wigginton, he was quickly reinstated through the intervention of Lord Burghley. When Bancroft was actively trying to expose the activities of the Presbyterian movement, Knewstub and his circle of like-minded preachers in East Anglia were among those investigated. Believed to be involved in drafting the Millenary Petition, Knewstub was one of the Puritan representatives at the Hampton Court Conference, called in January 1604, by James I, to discuss requests for reform set out in the Petition.

The Knewstub family were small farmers in and around Kirkby Stephen, where their children would have attended the local school. In 1556, Edward Mynese had been appointed master at the school in Kirkby Stephen. Although records show that it was not endowed as a grammar school until 1566, a school had existed there for a number of years. Mynese was a Protestant who had been master at the school at Ravenstonedale where he had been placed by Robert Holgate, Archbishop of York

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(1545 - 1554), as part of Holgate’s plan to spread Protestantism in the area. It is probable that John Knewstub was taught first by Mynese at Kirkby Stephen before transferring to Sedbergh Grammar School where the master was Robert Heblethwaite. A fellow of St. John’s, Heblethwaite had been master of the chantry school from 1538 and remained master of the grammar school until 1585. The transfer of pupils from other local schools to Sedbergh so they could take advantage of the Lupton Scholarships was not unusual. The links between the schools at Ravenstonedale, Kirkby Stephen and Sedbergh were strong, as were the links to St. John’s College; links which were well established by the mid-sixteenth century.

Two other graduates of St. John’s College and Sedbergh Grammar School played important roles in the history of the area after 1600. John Corney, who graduated MA in 1593, was appointed vicar at Orton in 1595, a neighbouring parish to Kirkby Stephen, and Sedbergh. In 1618 he was involved in the purchase of the advowson and the rectory estate of Orton and its transfer to twelve feoffees (trustees) in trust for the landowners of the parish. From this point any new vicar had to be elected by the landowners. Breay refers to this as a ‘very Genevan form of election’: a form of democratic selection favoured by Calvinists, Presbyterians and Congregationalists. Corney was also very involved in the legal action on behalf of the tenants in their legal case against the Crown in the 1620s. In an attempt to raise revenue the Crown claimed that the historical rights of tenants due for service in protecting the border with Scotland were void following the union with England and took action to force the tenants to repurchase their rights. A paper prepared a few years earlier by

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146 Breay, *Light in the Dales*, Vol. II.
Corney claiming that the rights of the tenants did not depend upon border service had already been accepted by the courts which prevented the Crown’s case from continuing and in 1625, the Star Chamber decided the case in favour of the tenants.¹⁴⁷

A successor to Corney as vicar of Orton, George Fothergill, was also a graduate of St. John’s and Sedbergh. A native of Ravenstonedale, he was vicar between 1643 and 1662, when he was deprived under the Act of Uniformity. During the Civil War there were periods when Fothergill, a Presbyterian and Parliamentarian, was removed from office when the local area was under Royalist influence. Fothergill, the staunch Presbyterian, was also one of the main local opponents of the Quakers. In 1652 he was responsible for the arrest of the Quakers James Nayler and Francis Howgill after they had held a meeting in Orton. Interestingly these two men were at the house of a nephew of John Knewstub, also called John, when they were arrested. The parish of Orton was also the birthplace of George Whitehead who would become the leader of the Quaker movement on the death of George Fox.

Unfortunately, it is difficult to identify scholars at Sedbergh in the second half of the sixteenth and early seventeenth century. In the *Sedbergh School Register 1546 – 1909*, Richard Jackson said that he found compiling the Register for the early years ‘peculiarly disappointing’ as the records were very limited, consisting mainly of students who went to university to study for the Church. He said the Registers had been lost and that he had to use the university admission books, of which St. John’s

had been particularly useful because it did name the school that students had attended.\(^{148}\) The loss of the earliest Registers is disappointing because the majority of the students passing through the school would have been sons of the local gentry, and sons of the wealthier local yeomen farmers and merchants. Information on these students would have enabled a fuller understanding of the impact of the education received at the leading local school, particularly in relation to the earliest Quakers.

In *History of Sedbergh School 1525 – 1925*, Henry Lowther Clark used the available information to show that seventeen men became fellows of St. John’s during the time Heblethwaite was Master. He also said that during the tenure of the succeeding Master, John Mayre (1585 and 1623), seventy six boys went to St. John’s and during the tenure of Gilbert Nelson (1623 – 1646), seventy two pupils entered, with sixteen receiving fellowships.\(^{149}\) The detail of this information appears to contradict that of Richard Jackson, and the numbers quoted appear to be rather low given that there were six Lupton Scholarships available. However, whatever the accuracy, Clarke is confirming the close connection between the school and St. John’s.

Clarke’s history of the school is very much a celebration of tradition, religious conformity and monarchy. In this sense it is very much a Victorian retrospective. He is particularly scathing about the Masters in place during the Civil War years, the Commonwealth and the Protectorate, criticising Nelson’s successors, Richard Jackson and James Buchanan, saying they were incompetent and that neither brought credit to the school allowing it to fall into disrepair and disrepute.\(^{150}\) When referring

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to the biography of an old boy of the school Clarke says that, ‘we need not hesitate
after the evidence… to declare that Sedbergh was on the side of the Royalist
cause’. There is no ambiguity in his view, and he does not distinguish between
the school and the area. However, a closer look at the history of both the school and
the area during the years 1640 to 1660 produces a view of a much more diverse
society, typical of communities that were split between the causes of Parliament and
the Crown. The school at Sedbergh would have contained pupils from both camps in
the conflict and the appointment of the schoolmasters during the period would have
been a political decision, both these points show how education was influenced by
religion and politics. In the following chapter I will provide evidence that during the
years of conflict there was considerable support in the area for Parliament and its
army and that this support was a crucial element in the politicisation and
radicalisation of some of the community who would go on to become religious
independents and Quakers.

The fact that Sedbergh Grammar School had such close links to St. John’s and
was able to offer the Lupton Scholarships is likely to have made the school
particularly attractive to families with Puritan sympathies, especially in the later
years of the sixteenth century. It was one of the features of the period that parents,
wherever possible, would send their children to schools, particularly grammar
schools, which reflected their religious persuasion. A notable example of this is
the education of two of John Knox’s sons who were educated at Richmond
Grammar School in North Yorkshire. L. P. Wenham in his History of

151 Clarke, History of Sedbergh, p. 48.
152 John Knox, c1514 – 1572, was a Scottish preacher and theologian who is credited as being one of
the founding fathers of puritanism and nonconformity. A great anti-Catholic crusader he was the
founding father of the Scottish Reformation and Presbyterianism. He married Margery Bowes who’s
Richmond School, said that it was ‘hard to believe that John Knox would deliberately place his sons in an atmosphere uncongenial to his uncompromising views’.  

Similarly, the choice of the university and college reflected a family’s religious persuasion and family connections. The influence of Cambridge University was particularly strong not only in Westmorland but across the Yorkshire Dales and north-east Lancashire. In 1587, William Whitaker was appointed Master of St. John’s College. Born near Burnley, Whitaker was the nephew of Alexander Nowell, dean of St. Paul’s from 1560 to his death in 1602. Whitaker was a graduate of Trinity College, Cambridge, where he would have been a student at the same time as Wigginton. Although he adhered to the establishment, he was a friend of Lord Burghley and John Whitgift both of whom pressed for him to be Master at St. John’s. Whitaker demonstrably sympathised with the more radical Puritans, including supporting Thomas Cartwright and providing covert support for radicals. When restructuring St. John’s, Whitaker was responsible for establishing the college on the lines of a Puritan academy and, although he denied it, he clearly allowed the college to be used for a Presbyterian synod which Cartwright attended. During his time as Master, Whitaker succeeded in maintaining the college as a centre of Puritanism and radical ideas without himself being a radical. Although he died in 1595, some of his views and ideas could be found in the Puritan proposals put forward at the Hampton Court Conference in

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Whitaker’s friend, Laurence Chaderton, who married Whitaker’s wife’s sister, became the first Master of Emmanuel College when it was founded in 1584 by Sir Walter Mildmay. Chaderton was born at Chadderton, in Lancashire, between Oldham and Middleton. Born a Catholic he became a confirmed Puritan at Cambridge. Collinson described him as the ‘pope of Cambridge puritanism’. He was, along with Knewstub, one of the Puritan advocates at the Hampton Court Conference.

Alexander Nowell, dean of St. Paul’s and uncle to William Whitaker, was born at Read near Burnley. A staunch protestant he was master of Westminster School and obtained a preaching licence from Edward VI’s government. On the accession to the throne of Mary he went into exile moving to Strasbourg and then Frankfurt. Nowell was a supporter of Calvinists and of advanced religious opinions but he was not a radical, a point confirmed by his signing the warrant issued for the arrest of Thomas Cartwright in 1573. He was a generous supporter of education. He re-endowed the grammar school at Middleton, advised on the founding of the grammar school at Rochdale, he provided scholarships to Oxford for students from Middleton and/or Burnley and was a benefactor to Emmanuel College.

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These men were important and influential in the development of Puritan thought and education. They were part of an effective informal network of like-minded individuals, Nowell, Whitaker, Cartwright, Field, Chadderton, Burghley, Mildmay and Wigginton which would extend to Puritan schoolmasters and vicars across Westmorland the Yorkshire Dales and north-east Lancashire. I have already identified Richard Midgley and his son Joseph, the vicars of Rochdale, both of whom I have suggested may have been a big influence on Roger Brearley. They were both clearly part of this network. Richard was one of the founders and Master of Rochdale Grammar School. Christopher Shute, was another, described as the leader of the Puritans in Craven, he was both master and governor of Giggleswick School. An advocate of exercises in Craven, Shute promoted links to Clitheroe and Colne in Lancashire, and, having been commissioned to preach at Kendal, made extended trips to Westmorland.157 John Webster was Master and a governor at Clitheroe Grammar School. At Kendal the master of the local free Grammar School, founded in 1525, was to be appointed by the vicar and corporation of the town.158 The vicars, appointed from Trinity College, were for many years Puritan and Presbyterian as were the religious sympathies of influential members of the council.

Puritan teaching and education were not restricted to well-endowed grammar schools, they extended into small villages and local schools where a preacher, curate or licensed schoolmaster taught a small number of boys to university

level. The school at Burnsall near Skipton was typical. The Rector from 1619 to 1653 was Richard Tennant who was close to Roger Brearley. In 1615 he, along with Brearley, Waddington and Armistead, was accused of preaching at Gisburn without a licence. In 1627 he was again accused with Brearley of organising and attending gatherings to discuss theological issues, meetings that had been banned by the Archbishop of York in an anti-Puritan purge. When called as a witness in a case involving a similar group at York, Tennant was described as an unreliable witness because he had recently been charged by the court for ‘assertions and opinions which he held tending to the sect called Grindletonians and deeply suspected of Familism’. Tennant as Rector was a trustee of the local Grammar School founded in 1605. The records of admissions to St. John’s during the 1630s show a number of boys being admitted from the school at Burnsall, three in 1634/5, referencing a Mr Mason who was probably the schoolmaster at the time. If Mason was the schoolmaster he is likely to have been a Puritan curate or preacher closely allied to Tennant, with a personal connection to St. John’s.

Close to Burnsall was Kirkby Malham the home of John Lambert, the future Major-General, whose education is likely to have begun at the local school founded by his uncle where the licenced schoolmaster was the local minister Nicholas Walton, a Puritan. Exact details of his further education are not known in detail but what is known is that on the death of his father his ongoing education was supervised and probably financed by Sir William Lister of 159 Stone, ‘The Education Revolution’, p. 46.
160 Marchant, The Puritans and The Church Courts, p. 46.
Thornton-in-Craven, the head of one of the leading Puritan and Parliamentarian families in Yorkshire. David Farr, who has conducted an extensive investigation into Lambert’s education, believes that Lambert went to Trinity College in 1630 at the same time as two of Lister’s sons. A John Lambert was admitted in that year although there is no proof it was the future Major-General. Recorded as the tutor of John Lambert was a Mr. Hall, a graduate of Trinity who between 1640 and 1646 was the vicar of Kendal. It is not clear how strong Hall’s religious views were, but Farr suggests, based on a study of Hall’s surviving published sermons, he had strong Puritan sympathies and was a reformer rather than a supporter of Archbishop Laud.163

It is quite clear from the information available that Puritan influence in schools throughout the area I am investigating was extensive, although it was by no means universal. For example Burnley Grammar School, where Thomas Whittaker was Headmaster from 1602 to 1625, retained a strong Catholic bias.164 Whittaker’s eldest son Thomas became a Jesuit priest, he was executed in 1646, while his younger son was ordained in 1638 and became head of the Catholic seminary Lisbon College.165 What this study of education has demonstrated is that Puritanism had extensive support throughout the area, despite there being widespread residual support for Catholicism, particularly among leading gentry families.

164 Bennett, The History of Burnley, Part II, pp.144 - 146.
165 www.churches-online.org.uk, St Mary’s Burnley Parish History, Parish Priests
Kendal: ‘A Protestant island in an unreformed sea’

Sedbergh was part of an area where Protestantism had become established; a pocket of Protestantism within a larger area of Catholicism. Eleven miles away to the west is the town of Kendal, referred to as ‘a Protestant island in an unreformed sea’ it would become a centre for the early Quaker movement.\(^{166}\) Kendal was part of the diocese of Chester where according to Christopher Haigh, lax ecclesiastical administration ensured that the foundations of Catholicism remained, maintained by recusant clergy.\(^{167}\) The origins of Puritanism in Kendal are unclear but by the 1550s there was a change and clear indications of Protestantism among particular sections of society began to appear. One of the first noticeable changes is shown in the will of Thomas Wilson, a member of a family of prosperous merchants, which deviates from earlier wills from the area in that there is a request for a funeral sermon, an indication that the deceased was used to hearing preaching sermons.\(^{168}\) The date of this will coincides with the appointment of two Protestant preachers as vicars at Kendal, James Pilkington in 1550 and Nicholas Assheton in 1551. Both were Cambridge graduates who embraced reform. Pilkington was a fellow and former Master of St. John’s who had been an exile in Basle, Switzerland, during the reign of Queen Mary. From 1561 to 1576 he was the Bishop of Durham, well known for his support of Protestant reform and the promotion of education.\(^{169}\) Assheton, who succeeded Pilkington, was vicar until 1562. He was a member of the same Assheton family of Middleton near Rochdale who were closely involved in the Puritan

\(^{167}\) Haigh, *Reformation and Resistance*, p. 278.
\(^{168}\) Clark, ‘Kendal’, p. 142.
movement and with Middleton Grammar School. In both cases these were protestant reformers and their appointment at Kendal supports the view that this was a transformative period in the town’s religious culture. The Boke of Record of Kirkby Kendal shows a particularly protestant flavour to the local bylaws and regulations from the same period and later, by the 1580s, indicates that this had become a ‘strongly Puritan corporation restraining the excesses of the godless masses’. 170

The Boke of Record is interesting as it shows that there appears to have been a division between the members of the corporation and the general public, particularly on social issues. While many of the actions of the corporation demonstrated their Puritan restraint, in 1575 they were issuing orders in an attempt to reduce the incidence of alcoholic excess at various gatherings and in 1577 prohibiting games for money. The Boke also shows that they were faced with demands to reinstate the Corpus Christi plays. The council’s puritanical disapproval of such plays and related celebrations is made clear in the Boke, but it appears that they were forced to give way to public pressure and reinstate them. An interesting anecdote which dates from this period suggests that sections of the community had little regard for religion and were not regular church goers. It also highlights the contrast between book-based education of Protestants and the visual spectacle of Catholicism. An old man ‘asked if he had never heard of the saving grace of Christ’ was said to have replied, ‘I think I heard of that man you spoke of once in a play in Kendal called Corpus Christi play, where there was a man on a tree and blood ran down’ . 171

170 Richard Saul Ferguson (ed.), The Boke off record or register containing all the acts and doings in or concerning the corporation within the town of KirkbyKendal, (Kendal, 1892); Clark, ‘Kendal’, p. 145.
The Boke also shows that the Puritanism of the town was very much down to the backing of a group of local educated yeomen and merchants. Kendal in the sixteenth century was the market town central to the most important economic activity of the area, the sale and distribution of wool and locally produced textiles. It was this activity that linked Kendal to Manchester, the largest, the most economically developed and the most Puritan town in Lancashire. Manchester was the centre of the growing textile trade of east Lancashire and had extensive links with market towns across Lancashire and the north-west. Its merchants had a very well-developed trading relationship with the markets in London, many maintaining permanent offices or factors there, and with the important ports of the country through which they conducted their import and export business. London was not only of huge economic importance it was as great an influence in religion and merchants were known to use their visits to hear the sermons of well-known, and sometimes controversial preachers, and to collect religious books, Bibles and broadsheets.\textsuperscript{172}

In many ways Manchester became a regional version of London. As London extended a complex pattern of religious and commercial relationships across the country, so Manchester spread its influence across the north-west. In Puritanism in North-West England, Richardson identifies that in Lancashire there was, ‘a remarkable correlation between the map of the distribution of puritanism and that of the network of market towns’; of the thirty-one in the county in the period, twenty-one exhibited puritan sympathies in either the clergy or the laity.\textsuperscript{173} Puritanism was

\textsuperscript{172} Clark, ‘Kendal’, p. 142.
\textsuperscript{173} Richardson, Puritanism in north-west England, p. 13.
strongest in the east and north-east of the county, the area between the river Ribble and the border with Yorkshire, including the towns of Middleton and Rochdale where the Puritan Midgleys and Asshetons were very influential and where Roger Brearley was born and educated. Across the county border in Yorkshire, Halifax was the market town central to the local wool trade. It was a town and area that had close links to the Puritan areas of Lancashire and, as it dealt in the same quality of wool as was produced in Westmorland, with Kendal.

Manchester and Halifax were not the only areas where Kendal merchants developed strong economic and social connections. The records show that in the 1520s two Kendal men were in litigation with Spanish traders over a consignment of woad, a staple of the textile dyeing industry. In the 1540s a Kendal merchant was involved in an action with the mayor and sheriffs of Bristol over a consignment of cloth and in the 1550s twenty-five Kendal chapmen were registered to trade at the Southampton Cloth Hall. Merchants travelling the country would pick up news and gossip in the towns and cities including radical views on religion. The news and information collected would be passed on to family and friends and no doubt the sermons that they had heard would be discussed at the church and meetings of church members. The carriers of goods to and from Westmorland were an integral part of the information system and they would bring items such as Bibles, books, pamphlets and letters for clients or for sale. The 1578 inventory of a Kirkby Lonsdale cloth merchant contained, ‘a psalm book, ‘a Byble and other Eynglyshe boks’ and a good selection of Latin classics’. In this way Puritan ideas spread around the country, carried to remote areas like Westmorland and the Yorkshire Dales and became

\[174\] Clark, ‘Kendal’, p. 142.
established among merchants and their families in the market town of Kendal. Religious views were slower to change in the surrounding farming areas where individuals were more isolated and in many cases were tenants of, and more reliant on, established gentry families who retained more conservative religious views, or even retained the Catholic faith.

The name of one Kendal merchant that appears regularly in the Southampton Cloth Hall records of the mid-sixteenth century is that of Wilson. Thomas Wilson, the man who made a specifically Protestant will in the 1550s, was a member of this merchant family. Another member of the family also called Thomas Wilson, a graduate of St. John’s College, Cambridge, was an exile in Frankfurt, Germany during the reign of Queen Mary (1553-1558). He was an exile at the same time as two notable Protestants born in Cumberland, Edwin Sandys and Edmund Grindal, and as James Pilkington, the vicar of Kendal in 1550.¹⁷⁵

Members of the same Wilson family reappear in the Boke of Record throughout the second half of the sixteenth century as leading Puritan members of the town council, including the group of councillors responsible for the initiative to reduce the overindulgence in alcohol at social gatherings and to prohibit gambling. The Boke

shows that the Puritan element of Kendal society was composed of educated yeomen and successful merchants who had taken up positions on the town council and as churchwardens of the parish church. Under a charter of 1575 Kendal was to be governed by one Alderman and twelve burgesses. William Wilson, of the same family and a ‘chapman’ (a merchant), was the leading burgess of the town, he was made Alderman in 1583, a Justice of the Peace in 1591 and again Alderman in 1593.\textsuperscript{176}

Visitation records from the 1570s show that the presentations made by the churchwardens are comprehensive and have a very strong Puritan influence. As well as criticising sellers of food and drink and shopkeepers for continuing to trade during church services, they complain of ‘two groups of fornicators and one of adulterers’.\textsuperscript{177} Given that the population of the area around the town remained conservative in their religious practices, that the churchwardens were critical of the behaviour of the townsfolk and that the Puritan council had been obliged by public demand to reinstate the Corpus Christi plays, it seems certain that the Puritan group in the town represented a minority of the people.

The vicars of Kendal who followed Assheton do not appear to have been very distinguished, until the appointment of Ralph Tyrer who was vicar from 1592 to 1627. In 1602 Tyrer published \textit{Five Godlie and Learned Sermons, Preached at Kendal}, which he dedicated to the Alderman John Smith and to the ‘Senior Burgesse’, William Wilson. In his dedication he is particularly complimentary,

\textsuperscript{177} Borthwick Institute BI V 1578-9, quoted in Clark, ‘Kendal’, p. 148.
praising the council for its Puritan zeal and the work done to establish Kendal as a leading market town:

as your towne is famous thorowgh the most partes of this
land, for your great trading…so your fervent zeale and
fruitfull obedience unto the word, were as faithfully showne
heere & as famously knowne elsewhere, to your owne
co[m]mendation and consolation of others. 178

The importance of the merchants and yeomen to the culture of Puritanism within the town council and the church was diminished by the economic depression that the area suffered with the decline of the wool trade. In Chapter 1, I discussed the terrible crisis mortality, disease and famine, which were a consequence of the failure of harvests during the 1580s, 1590s and in 1623. These disasters were exacerbated by the decline in the wool and textile industry which hit the area at the end of the sixteenth century, and particularly hard after 1614. In, ‘Kendal, the Protestant Exception’, Clark says that by the 1630s, the economic decline of Kendal and the surrounding area had reduced some of the wealthiest merchants ‘to beggary’. 179

With their financial decline went their political and religious influence, with more conservative elements taking control of both the town council and the church.

As the political and religious leadership became more conservative the ‘godly’ Puritan element of society may have lost control and influence, but it appears certain that they retained their religious radicalism, although they appeared to have

178 Wilson, ‘Ralph Tyrer’, p. 77.
179 Clark, ‘Kendal’, p. 150.
expressed their beliefs in a quieter and less public manner. The next time the Wilson family appear in the local records they are no longer members of the established church but are convinced Quakers. A change in the politics of religion in the dioceses of York and Chester made life difficult for Puritans during the 1620s and the 1630s. Tobie Matthew, Archbishop of York from 1606 to 1628, had been a supporter of Puritan preachers, however, during the later years of his tenure jurisdiction in his diocese had become lax. In 1627, a new administration was introduced that transformed the High Commission and initiated a more anti-Puritan policy. In his book, The Puritans and the Church Courts in the Diocese of York, Marchant is clear that the aim of this revised policy was to mount an attack on radical Puritans and, ‘it was only a matter of time before their nonconformity itself was to be suppressed’. This process was reinforced when, in 1632, Richard Neile was appointed Archbishop of York. Not a great academic, he was appointed because of his considerable administrative ability and his commitment to the divine right of monarchy and episcopacy, and his support of the Arminian party, led by the future Archbishop of Canterbury, William Laud.

180 John Somervell, Isaac and Rachel Wilson, Quakers of Kendal 1714 - 1785, (London, 1924); Clark, ‘Kendal’, p. 150.
181 Marchant, The Puritans and the Church Courts, pp. 45 - 47, p. 50.
182 Marchant, The Puritans and the Church Courts, p. 53. William Laud (1573 – 1645), Bishop of London in 1627, Chancellor of Oxford University in 1630, and Archbishop of Canterbury in 1633. As Archbishop of Canterbury he was determined to rebuild the power and wealth of the church and the clergy, he was particularly hostile to Puritan nonconformity and felt Presbyterians were as bad as papists. Anthony Milton, ‘Laud, William (1573 – 1645)’, Oxford Dictionary of National Biography, Oxford University Press, 2004; online edn. May 2009. [http://www.oxforddnb.com/view/article/16112, accessed 12th April 2016]. According to Arminianism, salvation is achieved through the combined efforts of God and man. Salvation is available to those who, of their own free will, choose to cooperate with God and accept his grace. Man not God therefore determines who will receive salvation. According to Calvinism, salvation is accomplished by the Father, who chose a people, the Son, who died for them, and the Holy Spirit, who brings the elect to faith and repentance and to willingly obey the Gospel. The entire process is the work of God and it is God alone who determines who will receive salvation.
The pressure on Puritan preachers in Yorkshire was quite possibly one of the reasons why Roger Brearley left Kildwick to move to Burnley in Lancashire. No doubt Brearley came to understand the vulnerability of his position in 1628, when a new vicar, John Gifford, was appointed at Kildwick and the following entry was made in the parish register, which Brearley and all the churchwardens had to sign and acknowledge:

The Articles agreed upon by the Church of England for the avoiding of dissension and difference in points of religion were acknowledged and approved and publiquely reade in the p’sh Church of Kildwick in Craven by John Gifford 15th June 1628.\(^\text{183}\)

The entry demonstrated the vicar’s determination to ensure adherence to the form and order of the prescribed service. However, Richardson says that the attempt to bring the area into line with the ‘Laudian south’ was late and ‘far less impressive than was expected’. Puritanism had been allowed to grow and the ‘dividing line between conformity and nonconformity had been left so deliberately vague that no relatively sudden reversal of policy could successfully uproot it’.\(^\text{184}\)

The 1630s became a period of conflict within the church between Archbishop Laud and his followers whose views on control, ceremonies and episcopacy were rejected by the Calvinists, Puritans and Presbyterians. This conflict was an integral part of the struggle between King Charles I and his critics. The success of


the Parliamentarians in the resulting civil war led to the defeat of Laud and his attempt to force adherence to his form of episcopal control and administration. In its place Parliament moved to impose a Presbyterian form of church governance. For many Puritans the Presbyterian system, where appointed elders were responsible for the governance of a local congregation which was in turn part of an area presbytery and a regional or national assembly, was too structured and hierarchical to be acceptable. Many in and around Kendal, Sedbergh and the Yorkshire Dales rejected Presbyterianism preferring to adopt a more basic form of organisation that they believed replicated the nature of the early Church.

**Freedom of Religion: Seeking a Way**

A third way, the Independents, rose to prominence between 1640 and 1660. They believed in a ‘primitive’ church where organisation was determined at the local level; a church without a hierarchy, either political or religious, at local, regional or national level. They did not believe in an episcopacy of Bishops and Archbishops, or in the Presbyterian classis system, but they did believe in ordination of ministers and a structured church organisation. Supporters of the Independent movement rose to prominence during the Civil War, the Commonwealth and the Protectorate. They were particularly strong in the Parliamentarian and the New Model Armies where Independents held many high offices; including in their number Oliver Cromwell. The Independent movement would later become known as Congregationalists. One aspect of their

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185 Classis. The system of church governance through local assemblies of clergy and lay elders of equal status.

186 Independents advocated that each individual, properly organised congregation had the right and responsibility to organise its own affairs without reference to any other ecclesiastical or secular body. The Independent Church became the Congregational Church.
belief, which is very relevant to my study, is that they were advocates of the right of non-Catholics to enjoy liberty of conscience and freedom of religion. In addition to the Independents (Congregationalists), there was another group of religious independents, often referred to as Seekers, who strongly promoted their right to enjoy freedom of religion. It was one such group based in Westmorland and the Dales which would meet George Fox in 1652 and transform the Quaker movement. The rise and increasing influence of this group would cause consternation among clergy in and around Kendal.

The early radical Puritan preachers, including Giles Wigginton, had advocated the Presbyterian system of church governance, and by the 1640s this was the system preferred by much of the Puritan movement. With a majority of Puritans in the Long Parliament, which met in 1640, a move was made to restructure the Church of England by convening an Assembly consisting of theologians and parliamentarians who were empowered to find a way of bringing the English Church closer to the Scottish Church by adopting a Presbyterian system of governance. The theologians, who favoured the Presbyterian system, were in the majority on the Assembly but no agreement could be reached with the Independents who, although a minority, exerted a great influence because of their connections to the military. Parliament did eventually introduce the Presbyterian system but because of the dispute with the Independents who refused to adopt the system, Parliament effectively lacked the power to implement the change. Lancashire was one of the few counties to produce a Presbyterian scheme and make some efforts to implement it. Schemes were also produced in Westmorland
and the West Riding of Yorkshire, but these were never approved or implemented.\textsuperscript{187}

The resulting confusion led to a situation where ecclesiastical authority was significantly compromised, enabling separatists and sects to operate with impunity and with official sanction.\textsuperscript{188} This confusion was also evident at a local level where disputes took place between the different factions. As the Presbyterians gained more authority nationally the local council at Kendal regained its Puritan majority with the town council pledging its allegiance to Parliament and Presbyterianism. In August 1642, a petition was presented to Parliament by the ‘Gentry, Ministers and Commonality of the Barony of Kendall’, which clearly stated this allegiance. In the petition they thanked Parliament:

\begin{quote}
for your endeavours to preserve the true reformed Protestant Religion without mixture or composition against those subtle Innovators that have long laboured to hinder and caluminate the power and practice thereof.\textsuperscript{189}
\end{quote}

In the early 1640s, Henry Massey was appointed vicar at Kendal. Elected by the Fellows of Trinity College, Massey, a convinced Presbyterian who had been

Lecturer at Kirkby Lonsdale, said that Westmorland was ‘rotten, because the honest party had so little influence and following in it’.\textsuperscript{190} He had the patronage of Philip Wharton, 4\textsuperscript{th} Baron Wharton, whose estate covered an extensive area of Westmorland and the North Riding of Yorkshire.\textsuperscript{191} Massey is interesting because during the 1640s he wrote a number of long letters to Lord Wharton in which he is very critical of the religious community around him in Westmorland.\textsuperscript{192} In one of his early letters to Wharton in August 1642, he is particularly critical of the local Royalist gentry and clergy about whom he says:

\begin{quote}
the gentry of or Westmorland and or Clergy generally have base thoughts and words of the Worthies in pliament wch I presume is one cause of the bakwardnes of some able and otherwise honest men.\textsuperscript{193}
\end{quote}

He also gives an indication of the growing influence of radical preachers mentioning specifically Thomas Taylor, a preacher who would become the leader of an independent religious community, often referred to as ‘Seekers’, that spread from Kendal across the Yorkshire Dales to Richmond. It was this community that George Fox met at Sedbergh in 1652 and it was from within that group that many

\textsuperscript{190} Nightingale, The Ejected of 1662, p. 879.
\textsuperscript{191} Philip Wharton, 4\textsuperscript{th} Baron Wharton, a leading support of Parliament in the House of Lords, appointed Lord Lieutenant of Lancashire and Buckinghamshire, he favoured the political Independents in Parliamentarian but did not agree with the prosecution and execution of the King. He was an adviser to Oliver Cromwell. In 1660 he actively supported the return of Charles II. Sean Kelsey, ‘Wharton, Philip, fourth Baron Wharton (1613 - 1696)’, Oxford Dictionary of National Biography, Oxford University Press, 2004: online edn, Jan 2008. [http://www.oxforddnb.com/view/article/29170, accessed 6 Jan 2016]
\textsuperscript{192} Letters to and from Lord Wharton are held in the Rawlinson MSS at the Bodleian Library, the University of Oxford. The letters from Henrie Masy were transcribed by, and quoted in, Nightingale, The Ejected of 1662, pp. 877 - 928.
\textsuperscript{193} Nightingale, The Ejected of 1662, p. 880.
early Quakers came, among them several of the important leaders, including Thomas Taylor himself.

In a letter to Lord Wharton dated December 1646, Henry Massey, the committed Presbyterian, displayed his concern that Wharton was encouraging Independent and Puritan radicals, specifically Thomas Taylor:

I am bold to write once agayne concerning errours & schism beginning in these ptes, it is observed that Yor Lorp. Hath a cheife hand in it… At end of Somer last Mr Taylour and myself being with Yor Lorp… Yor Lorp pmised not to shewe Yor selfe in any measure whereby he might take encouragement to psist, yet since that Yor Lorp hath written 2 lettrs to Mr Branthwaite [the Mayor of Kendal] & he the Comittee in behalf of Mr Taylour wch sounds not well, for he abuses Yor honour & blemishes it, by making Yor Lorp a patrone & ptectour of his errour & odd opinions.194

In the same letter Massey says, ‘for if they must have librty of conscience to disorder the Church of Christ, why should not othr men have the like librty to keepe & pserve peace & truth’. This appears to be a direct reference to the dangers he perceives from the demands made by radicals to be allowed to worship in the way they wished.

Taylor’s views, particularly his refusal to baptise his children at the font or sign them with the Sign of the Cross, appear to have caused quite a controversy in and around Kendal. Robert Barrow says that in 1650, at the ‘Kendal Parish Steeple-house’, ‘three priests’ appeared to dispute with Taylor over the sanctity of ‘baptising infants by scripture’. In his Testimony Barrow says that the priests could not master Taylor who won the ‘dispute’ and that, ‘some of the Hearers run up Kendall-street crying, Mr Taylor hath got the Day! Mr Taylor hath got the Day’. An ‘Outcry [which] grieved the Priests’. Thomas Taylor was undoubtedly one of the leaders of the independent community, but he was not the only one. Their number included John Audland, Francis Howgill and John Camm, all of whom had rejected Presbyterianism and would become Quaker leaders. It was this community of separatists which George Fox met when he went into the area in 1652.

**Summary**

There was a long history of radicalism running through popular religion in the area. It is clear that from the earliest days of the Reformation Protestantism was embraced by significant sections of the population. From the accession of Elizabeth I the Protestant church increased its support of radical preachers in a deliberate attempt to establish Protestantism in what was believed to be a region with strong and enduring Catholic sympathies. This proved to be a double-edged sword for the established church. I have explained how the Church and educational provision were interconnected and demonstrated the close links which local preachers and schools from across Westmorland, the Yorkshire Dales and north Lancashire had with

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Cambridge University. It was there that theological studies and debate over doctrine became dominant and where Puritanism developed as an academic movement and it was from there that Puritanism was introduced to the area by preachers and teachers. While the Church’s actions succeeded in establishing Protestantism many preachers were Puritans and their willingness to challenge the Protestant elite and the Episcopal form of church governance led to conflict between the preachers and, particularly, the bishops and archbishops of the established church.

The importance of the connection between schools, university and the church cannot be overemphasised. One of the drivers behind the increase in literacy was the Protestant, and particularly the Puritan, desire to read, discuss and debate the words and content of the Bible. The increase in the number of schools, the endowment and re-endowment of grammar schools and the appointment of the masters who taught at grammar and local schools was directed by this Protestant desire to read and understand the word of God as written in the Bible. The isolation of the area and the weak governance of the dioceses of York and Chester meant that the local preachers and congregations enjoyed a freedom in religious practice at odds with that set out by church authorities. This freedom extended to the provision of a Puritan education. When, during the 1630s and 1640s, the Church endeavoured to re-establish their authority it was too late. Many people, literate and educated, rejected the impositions which ensued and actively sought a different form of church governance, one which was simpler, more democratic and less autocratic. These people, the separatists, would support the call for legislation to allow freedom of religion, an issue which would be of great importance to many activists during the Civil War, the Commonwealth and the Protectorate, and which became a key
demand of the Quaker movement. The leadership and the relevance of the separatist congregations to the early Quaker movement will be explored in the following chapter.
Chapter Three: Freedom of Religion: From Seekers to Quakers

By the 1630s, Puritanism was well established across north Lancashire, Westmorland and the Yorkshire Dales. Radical Protestantism had become an integral part of local society through the work of preachers and teachers who had spearheaded the expansion of literacy, education and links to universities. Puritanism was the preferred choice of many congregations who had rejected the formal ceremonial practices of the established Church. When the Church of England, led by William Laud, Archbishop of Canterbury, attempted to re-establish its authority to ‘rebuild the economic power of the church’ their policies were rejected by large sections of society.\(^1\) Puritans believed Laud intended to reintroduce ‘popish ceremony’ and considered his actions a great threat to church reform.

Parliament rejected the attempted reforms, impeached Laud on charges of high treason, and instead proposed the adoption of the Presbyterian system of worship and organisation.\(^2\) This in turn was rejected by large sections of the population and freedom of religion, the right to worship as an individual wished, became a very important issue during the civil wars of the 1640s.\(^3\) Religious radicals intensified the call for freedom of religion and liberty of conscience. Encouraged by the disruption

\(^1\) Milton, ‘Laud, William (1573–1645)’, ODNB.
caused during the civil wars and the relaxation of censorship, they were able to speak freely, and to publish their ideas in pamphlets, sermons and books. There was also an increase in the number of religious sects and independent religious groups intent on following their own forms of organisation and worship.

It was in this milieu that a separatist group became established across north Lancashire, Westmorland and the Yorkshire Dales. This separatist group had its roots in the Protestant radicalism of the area and in the expansion of literacy and education, it was fuelled and encouraged by the arguments of religious radicals promoting the need to get closer to God through simpler forms of worship without the need for hierarchical organisations and elaborate ceremonies. It was also the group that George Fox met at Sedbergh and Firbank Fell in 1652. In this chapter I explain why understanding their background and history is a vital element in the story of why that meeting was so transformative for George Fox and the Quaker movement. In doing so I will add to our understanding of that historical event. Explaining their background and evolution as a group adds perspective to the transformation of the movement and provides an explanation as to why that meeting had such an impact on history.

I examine how the breakdown in the authority of the Church of England during the 1640s, created a situation where individuals became less restrained in exploring their own personal relationship with God. Specifically, I investigate the development in the Yorkshire Dales, Westmorland and north Lancashire of a separatist community the members of which have been called Seekers. My focus will be on individuals who were leaders of this group, those who would be among the first Quaker leaders:
men like John Audland, John Camm, Francis Howgill and Thomas Taylor. I will explain how this community developed, the background and influence of its leaders, the importance of freedom of religion, the way in which its beliefs and organisation differed to the established church and the extent to which these differences identified them as a radical separatist community. In doing so I place the community in the context of the published works and views of leading separatists who promoted religious change and were identified by many as Seekers. My purpose is to establish that when George Fox met and spoke to the meeting on Firbank Fell in 1652, he was speaking to a well-established community of separatists who had withdrawn from the mainstream church and established their own organisation and practices. At that meeting, where Fox claimed there were more than one thousand people, they had gathered for a regular monthly meeting, they had not come specifically to hear George Fox.4

The Established Church and the rise of sects

The diminution of the Church’s authority during the 1640s facilitated the rise of the Independent movement, the proliferation of radical religious groupings and sects, and an increase in the number of separatist communities which sought to create their own form of religious organisation. Identification of different groupings through the names they were given at that time can be difficult. The terms used can be confusing as are the descriptions of their aims and objectives. It is clear however that in Westmorland and the Dales a separatist community existed in 1652.

Liberty of conscience and freedom of religion were key issues among the separatists in Westmorland and the Dales. It was an issue which was at the heart of their community; the right to organise in a way of their choosing, to choose their leaders and the form of worship without having to conform to a centrally controlled and authoritarian church organisation. In this they were part of a group described as Sectaries. To the mainstream English church and society in general, separatist sects were closely aligned with political radicals and were seen as a threat to social order.\(^5\) Geoffrey Nuttall said that a feature of the sects was that their demand for liberty of conscience forced consideration of the subject ‘even upon those who found it abhorrent’.\(^6\) The demand for liberty of conscience was a ‘claim to be free to submit to the governance of God rather than any other authority’, and this was a threat to all forms of authority, the church, the law, Parliament and monarchy.\(^7\)

The identification and the perceived problem of sects was not new. In 1627, in a sermon at St. Paul’s Cross, Stephen Denison, the strongly Calvinist lecturer at All Hallows-the-Great, London, condemned the, ‘Grindletonian Familists in the North parts of England’. To Denison the Grindletonians were one of many ‘Wolves’ that sought to destroy the Church of England. He identified, ‘Popish Wolves… Arminian Wolves… Anabaptist Wolves… Rosey-crossie Wolves’, and ‘Familisticall Wolves’. He classed the ‘Familistical Wolves’ as either, ‘the Castalian order…Grindletonian Familists…Familists of the Mountains…Familists of the Vallyes…Familists of the Scattered flocke…Familists of Caps’.\(^8\) Although it is

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\(^7\) Davis, ‘Religion and the Struggle for Freedom’, p. 515.

doubtful whether many of these sects existed, Denison identified and condemned them all as divisions of the mystical sect the Family of Love. Of those that did exist, for example the Grindletonians and the Scattered Flock, links with the Family of Love are rather tenuous. They were a group within the established church who met separately at irregular intervals believing that the church was in a ‘Wilderness estate’ which could not be improved until messengers, prophets, had been sent from God. They did not baptise and were waiting patiently for better times.

In ‘The Antecedents of Quakerism’, Champlin Burrage suggested that in all probability it was among the Scattered Flock that the silent meeting first developed. He identified the Scattered Flock as Seekers expressing the view that ‘there was nothing new in the beliefs and customs of the Quaker leaders’, and that, although some remained Seekers, many became Quakers seeing Fox and the Quaker leaders as being sent from God. Burrage also linked the more disaffected members of the group with the radical political group of the 1650s called the Ranters. While the Quaker movement would attract members of other radical religious and political sects after 1652, in my examination of the background to that first group of Quakers in Westmorland and the Dales, I will explain that there is no evidence of their leaders having any direct connection to any of these groups.

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9 The Family of Love was a mystical religious sect founded by a German, Hendrick Niclaes in the sixteenth century. They were Anabaptists who believed nature was the ruler of all things not God. They avoided prosecution for heresy by not openly promoting their views, continuing to attend church and showing respect for authority. Some of their beliefs, denial of the Trinity, refusing to baptise, refusing to take an oath, and denying all churches and sects, were reflected in the beliefs of other sects hence the tendency, as with Denison, to group together any number of sects as Familists.


The fear of sects, religious extremists and political radicals was very real in society at the beginning of the 1640s, but it is unclear how many groups there actually were. In 1641 a pamphlet was published identifying ‘no lesse than 29 Sects [in London] ….of which there is but one, which are not most damnable and wicked’. Richard Vann said that in 1646 there were an estimated 199 different sects in England. J. F. McGregor said that many were ‘fanciful denominations such as Libertine, Divorcist and Soul-seeker… inventions of hostile observers’. He identified many as ‘phantom sects’ created in the search for heretics in a ‘confusion of spiritual speculation’. Michael Braddick commented that in 1641 there were fewer sectarianists in London than Catholics. He said that in 1644 there were thirty-six known separatist churches in London but it was difficult to know how many actual separatists there were. Some churches represented no specific denomination having ministers with ‘little education in divinity’ and it was groups like this that caused the most concern. In 1646, Thomas Edwards, a church minister in London, published Gangraena a ‘catalogue…of the errours, heresies, blasphemies and pernicious practices of the sectaries…in England in these four last years’. This was an extensive work in three parts totalling 800 pages in which he catalogued the excesses of religious radicals and sects from around the country. Once again, as with Denison’s assertions, there must be significant doubts as to the veracity of Edwards’s claims; this was probably another case of invention by a hostile observer. However, Michael Braddick said that Gangraena was important because it debated

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12 Anon, A Discovery of 29 Sects here in London, all of which, except the first are most Develish and Dammable, (1641), p. 2; quoted by Vann in, The Social Development, p. 7.
15 Braddick, God’s Fury’, p. 151.
16 Braddick, God’s Fury’, p. 344.
17 Edwards, Gangraena.
fundamental questions and provided a view on the politics that was dividing
Parliament in 1646.\textsuperscript{18}

In ‘Religion and the Struggle for Freedom’, Davis said that the names applied to the
groups and sects by commentators in the 1640s disguised the fact that there was little
to distinguish between many of them, particularly when considering their internal
discipline, orthodoxy and conformity.\textsuperscript{19} Despite the suggested proliferation of sects
there were only a few religious groups and denominations that were significant in
relation to their numbers and their influence. In addition to the traditional Puritans,
the Presbyterians and the Catholics, the most important groups were the
Congregational Independents, the Baptists (General and Particular), the Fifth
Monarchists, due to their influence during the Commonwealth and Protectorate, and
the gathered churches which included the groups referred to as Seekers. Of these
Philip Baker estimated that the Baptists were the largest denomination in the 1640s
and 1650s.\textsuperscript{20} By 1651, however, it was the Congregational Independents, who had
the support of Oliver Cromwell and the army, who were in the ascendancy in
Parliament. Cromwell was able to ‘establishe(d) a Congregationalist church
settlement to replace England’s abolished episcopal and discredited Presbyterian
ecclesiastical regimes’.\textsuperscript{21} One of the key religious issues supported by
Congregationalists was the right for individuals to enjoy liberty of conscience.

\textsuperscript{18} Braddick, \textit{God’s Fury}, p. 447.
\textsuperscript{21} Sarah Gibbard Cook, ‘The Congregational Independents and the Cromwellian Constitutions’,
parliamentarians, the Westminster Assembly of Divines, had been appointed by Parliament to
p. 138. In 1646 the Presbyterian system was chosen but was never fully adopted being introduced
Congregationalists, members of sects and separatist communities, including that in Westmorland and the Dales, expected Cromwell to implement this reform through legislation in Parliament.

The separatists in Westmorland and the Dales

It is doubtful whether there actually was a co-ordinated national movement or sect that could be identified by the name Seeker. Richard Baxter in *A Key For Catholics*, identified ‘six sub-divisions or sects’ of Seekers describing them as a threat to the Protestant Church, saying, ‘among whom I have reason to believe the Papists have not the least of their strength at this day’. However, Baxter provides nothing to substantiate his view and his ‘six sects’ are another example of phantom sects created to justify his argument. It is therefore, better to consider Seekers as individuals, who may or may not have been a member of a likeminded group, who were connected in their dissatisfaction with existing forms of religious worship, but who were not connected in a widespread organised religious movement. This is a view argued by J. F. McGregor when he says that ‘there was no sect of Seekers in revolutionary England’, just alienated individuals who could find no comfort in existing churches or sects and were ‘anticipating wondrous events’. Christopher Hill identified Seekers as individuals who questioned ‘the value of all ordinances, of all outward forms, of all churches even’. He went on to describe ‘such men’ as having rejected all sects and all forms of organised worship. Individuals who

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came to this view were looking to re-establish the church in its most primitive form, identifying themselves with the church established by the apostles, not as it was in its current form and without its organisation and ceremonials. In this there was a ‘millenarian anticipation’ of the revolutionary age’, when the Holy Spirit would ‘renew and …remake the inward man’.

What identified individual separatist groups from the mainstream denominations and other gathered churches was their rejection of any form of organisational discipline, orthodoxy and conformity, and the fact that many individuals had tried more than one of these denominations before they joined a separated religious group. William Dewsbury, one of the first Quaker leaders, in *The Discovery of the Great Enmity of the Serpent*, gave an account of his personal search for God:

my sorrow and misery was so great, it constrained me to run
to those of the world called Ministers and Professors…to ask
them what I might do to be saved…none told me…then I
heard there was in Scotland a reformed church…where I
found nothing but formality…I returned back to England…
and went amongst those…called Anabaptists and
Independents…but could not join them…I was armed
with patience to wait in his counsel groaning under the body
of sin…until it pleased the Lord to manifest his power to free

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me which was in the year…1651.  

The crisis in the established church and the growth of new denominations and sects enabled individuals to explore which church, denomination or sect was closest to their own individual religious view. For many none did. These people felt that religion was too organised, too centralised and too authoritarian and they believed that the organisation, ceremony and ritual should be swept away and that the church should return to its earliest and simplest apostolic form.

Individuals who have been identified as leading propagandists of these views, and been identified as Seekers, include William Erbery, John Saltmarsh, William Dell, Thomas Collier, and even John Webster. Hill widened the group of propagandists by including, the poet and writer John Milton, the Leveller William Walwyn, the religious controversialist and founder of Providence, Rhode Island, Roger Williams, and Oliver Cromwell. However, none of these actually identified themselves with, or as members of, any sect of Seekers. Some forcefully rejected any link. John Saltmarsh rejected the accepted Seeker view of waiting for messengers from God as a ‘desert wilderness condition’, because, he said, Christ was already in individuals waiting to be revealed. McGregor described these individuals as being doctrinally diverse, but said they shared a ‘common inability to find that comfort or allegiance to a particular church and to some degree a millenarian belief that an age of greater

27 William Dewsbury, The discovery of the great enmity of the serpent against the seed of the woman, which witnesseth against him where he rules, both in rulers priests and people: whose hearts are now made manifest in this great day of the Lords power, (London, 1655), pp. 16 – 18.
28 Johnson, ‘From Seeker to Finder’, p. 301.
30 John Saltmarsh, The Sparkles of Glory, or some beams of the Morning Star Wherein are many discoveries as to Truth, and Peace, (Printed by Giles Calvert, London, 1648), p. 218.
religious understanding was at hand’. These individuals and their views are important. They are part of an informal network which I have established connects them with the separatist congregation that existed in the 1640s in Westmorland and the Dales, and with the companions of George Fox when he arrived there in 1652, specifically William Dewsbury and James Nayler.

Although it is difficult to know how many separatists or separatist groups there were, we do know that by 1646 there was a well-established separatist group active in Westmorland and the Dales. At that date, Henry Massey, the Presbyterian vicar of Kendal, was complaining about the activity of Thomas Taylor, the young curate at Preston Patrick, near Kendal. Massey wrote to Philip Wharton, 4th Baron Wharton, of his concern that Taylor, ‘abuses Yor honour and blemishes it’, complaining of the ‘errours & schism beginning in these ptes’, and commenting that, ‘for if they must have librty of conscience to disorder the Church of Christ, why should not othr men have the like librty to keepe & pserve peace & truth’. Massey considered Wharton a fellow Presbyterian, a view reinforced by the fact that Wharton had been one of the Presbyterian advocates at the Westminster Assembly. However, demonstrating the fluidity of religion and politics, Wharton supported the Independents in Parliament. This caused some concern to the staunch Presbyterian Massey who accused Wharton of allowing too much license to the ‘errours & schism’ of Taylor.

Thomas Taylor was a serious and committed Christian. His brother Christopher, also an ordained minister, wrote that in his youth Thomas had a ‘Sence of Sin upon

him’, and for several years he ‘was exercised under the Spirit of Bondage and great Fears, lest he should miss Eternal Salvation’. In this state, Christopher said Thomas had become ‘a true Seeker and Inquirer after the best Things’, that he was in a ‘State of Integrity and Simplicity’ and that ‘he was accounted by many…to be a Religious Consciencious young Man’.  

There are no records describing the early religious influences of the two brothers but it is interesting to speculate that in their youth they may have been influenced by Roger Brearley and Grindletonianism.

Born at Carleton-in-Craven, it is probable that both Thomas (born 1617/18) and Christopher (born 1614/15) would have known Roger Brearley when he was curate at Kildwick, a village four miles from Carleton, from 1623 and until he moved to Burnley in the early 1630s. Brearley would have been well known in the area following the accusations made against him in the High Commission at York in 1617 and his leadership of the Grindletonians. One of the witnesses called in 1617 was William Currer, a member of one of the most influential Kildwick families, and it may have been Brearley’s radicalism that led to his appointment. In 1628 one of the Churchwardens was Henry Currer. Following his appointment in 1623, we do know that Brearley’s activities continued to cause the authorities at York concern. In 1627, he and several other preachers were called before the High Commission to answer charges of holding and attending conventicles. Once again nothing came of the charges, but it was clear that the authorities were making concerted efforts to

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34 The date Brearley left Kildwick is unknown. His first appearance in the Burnley church records is in 1634.
36 Marchant, The Puritans and the Church Courts, pp. 45 - 47.
reduce the influence of radical Puritans. Brearley must have been aware of the vulnerability of his position, particularly in 1628 when the vicar of Kildwick made the following entry in the parish register which Brearley and the Churchwardens signed:

The Articles agreed upon by the Church of England for the avoidinge of dissension and difference in pointes of religion were acknowledged and approved and publiquely reade in the p’sh Church of Kildwick in Craven by John Gifford 15th June 1628. 37

It is likely that Brearley’s position was compromised further in 1632 when Richard Neile, a supporter of Laud, was appointed Archbishop of York. It was between 1632 and 1634 that Brearley left Kildwick to move to Burnley in Lancashire, in the diocese of Chester. How much influence Brearley and the Grindletonian movement exercised in the area can only be speculated on, but a comment made by John Webster who followed Brearley as curate at Kildwick in 1634, suggests that the congregation supported radical views.

The records of the Chancery Court of York show that in July 1637, Webster was suspended when cited for making a clandestine marriage. The record goes on to say, ‘22nd September, Dismissed previously’. 38 The wording suggests that Webster had already been dismissed from his position as curate when he undertook the

38 Marchant, The Puritans and the Church Courts, p. 290.
clandestine marriage and that his licence as a preacher was then suspended. It is not clear therefore when or why he was dismissed but he provided an explanation in the introduction to *The Saints Guide* where he said, ‘after the Lord about eighteen years ago, had in his wonderful mercy… led me forth to witness with the Prophet David’. 39 The reference to ‘eighteen years ago’ clearly places his ‘experience’ to his time as curate at Kildwick. He implies that it was from this time that he was identified as a Grindletonian saying that he and like-minded others were subject to a concerted attack by the authorities. If this was so and there was an active group of radical Grindletonians, the church authorities under Neile would have been keen to eliminate them as any radical group were considered a threat to orthodoxy. Unfortunately, the records of the York High Commission for the period October 1634 to May 1638, are missing. It is therefore impossible to identify if there was a concerted effort to prosecute Webster and other Grindletonians in this period and the real reason for his dismissal will remain unknown.

It would not, therefore, be surprising if during the adolescence of two religious young men, Puritans considering a career in the church, they were influenced by Puritan radicalism effectively on their doorstep. On graduation from Oxford and ordination into the Church of England, Thomas took up the position of lecturer in the parish of Richmond in North Yorkshire. This was a strongly Puritan community where preaching exercises had been held since the 1580s, and where both the masters of the local grammar school and the vicars were established

Puritans with nonconformist views. This was the school to which John Knox sent his sons.\textsuperscript{40}

The date of Thomas Taylor’s arrival at the church at Preston Patrick is unknown, but it must have been in the early 1640s, because by 1646 Massey, the vicar of Kendal, was complaining about his influence. It was here at Preston Patrick that Thomas’s reputation as a committed and radical Puritan grew. He refused to baptise his own children and to accept his stipend from the church. He believed that preachers should be elected by the community and that the preacher should accept only the payment that the congregation was willing to give:

being a sencer and Conscientous man denyed to receive his maintainance by yt antixtan and popish way of Tyths, so became aminster to a people yt were seprated from ye common worshipe, then at Preston Chapell in Westmorland aforementioned and tooke for his Mainteainance only wt his hearers was willing frely to give him.\textsuperscript{41}

He has been described as a ‘most interesting and learned man’, with an ‘intense hatred of bells, bonfires, maypoles, dancing and other amusements’,\textsuperscript{42} who was, ‘greatly beloved and esteemed by his Congregation’.\textsuperscript{43} In a testimony written

\textsuperscript{40} Richardson, ‘Puritanism’ (Unpublished thesis), pp. 113 - 114.
\textsuperscript{41} An extract from a handwritten manuscript concerning Early Friends in Westmorland presented to the Society of Friends Yearly Meeting in 1709; Quoted in, Norman Penney, The First Publishers of the Truth, p. 253.
\textsuperscript{42} Breay, Light in the Dales, p. 38.
\textsuperscript{43} Penney, The First Publishers of the Truth, p. 253.
after Thomas’s death, a fellow Quaker from Kendal, Robert Barrow, wrote that Thomas was:

a Seeking Man… a Man of an Honest Life, and Clean Behaviour and in his Preaching and Judgment was more Refined than the rest of his Neighbouring Priests and many of his Hearers… which Priests Nicknamed… Roundheads and Puritans, and many of those so called came frequently from the next Parish and Town of Kendall to hear him.44

It is clear from Thomas’s actions, refusing infant baptism and refusing to accept his stipend, and through the observations of Barrow and the quote from The First Publishers of the Truth, that by the second half of the 1640s he was the leader of a well-established and active separatist congregation. There is also evidence that separatist communities were not limited to the Preston Patrick area of Westmorland, in fact they existed across the Yorkshire Dales, extending the forty-five miles through Swaledale to Richmond.

In addition to being the leader of his community in Westmorland Thomas was highly regarded in the parish of Richmond. A series of letters from the separatist congregation in Swaledale and Richmond to the congregation at Preston Patrick demonstrate this. The first, ‘Swaledale Paper No. 1’, dated February 1650, is ‘an epistle from an unnamed body of persons, addressed, ‘for our deare Christian freinds

in and about Preston Patrick.’’ It thanks the Preston Patrick community for agreeing to share the services of, ‘our beloved brother Mr. Taylor, so far forth as an equal consideration’. Although they had hoped Mr Taylor would be able to reside with them, they understood they could only expect to share his ministry. They make the point that they believed Taylor would provide ‘a wide service in places ‘as far remote from us as we are distant from you’”; an interesting comment which gives a clear indication of the extent of the separatist community in the area. The letter includes confirmation that Taylor had given up his church living and that the community at Preston Patrick provided him with a salary of £50 a year. The Swaledale group said that they would be able to provide £20 per year towards his salary. They also said that while Preston Patrick ‘has some other ministry’ in Swaledale and Richmond they were ‘weak ones and have not any to administer a word of comfort to the weary soule’.  

During the following year something in the life of Thomas Taylor changed because by 1651 he had relocated to Richmond where the congregation appointed him a public lecturer and provided his salary. Letters, ‘Swaledale Papers 2, 3, and 4’, show the change in the arrangement and that the community at Richmond were having difficulty providing Taylor’s salary. They make a plea to Parliament to provide maintenance for a national minister even though there was already one in Richmond. There is no definitive explanation as to why Taylor relocated. In The Valiant Sixty, Earnest Taylor says that Thomas had resumed the practice of infant baptism much to the displeasure of the community in Westmorland. This was

47 Taylor, The Valiant Sixty, pp. 24 - 25;
despite the fact that in 1650, at Kendal parish church, Thomas had argued against infant baptism in a dispute with three other ministers. A dispute which he was said to have won, ‘Hearers run up Kendall-street crying, Mr Taylor hath the day’.\textsuperscript{48} In ‘Testimony Concerning Thomas Taylor’, Robert Barrow hints at domestic issues as an explanation, saying, ‘his Wife being a pretty high Woman, having Six young Children, and nothing else to live on’.\textsuperscript{49} The result of Taylor’s relocation was that the Westmorland group were left in the hands of two laymen, Francis Howgill and John Audland, who Taylor had allowed to preach at Preston Patrick, and it was they who were leading the community when George Fox met them in 1652.\textsuperscript{50}

From the information that we have it is certain that through the 1640s, certainly from before 1645, there developed a separatist community across Westmorland and the Yorkshire Dales. They were led in the first instance by a minister, Taylor, who had effectively been chosen by the community, who gave up his benefice and was paid only what the community provided, a minister who ‘would not baptise his children at the font or sign them with sign of the cross’, a minister who allowed lay men to preach in his church. This was a community that had withdrawn from all forms of church governance: episcopal, Presbyterian, Congregational and Baptist.\textsuperscript{51} By 1652, with Taylor at Richmond, Francis Howgill and John Audland were the ‘chief preachers’ to a group that ‘met in General Meeting once a month at Preston Patrick’, a meeting to which the congregation ‘came from a wide area which included Sedbergh, Hutton, Grayrigg, Kendal, Under-barrow, Preston Patrick, Yealand and

\textsuperscript{50} Braithwaite, \textit{The Beginnings of Quakerism}, p. 82.
Sometimes the meeting would sit in silence at other times there would be religious discussions or ‘fervent prayer’. This separate community was described by Thomas Camm in a ‘Testimony concerning John Camm and John Audland’:

[in Westmorland near Kendal] a People ripe to be gathered who…were separated in measure from the Worlds Worship and empty dry Forms of Religion, in many things, and met together…having several that were become Teachers amongst them, but the chiefest John Audland and Francis Howgill.

John Audland was born at Camsgill near Kendal to ‘parents and kindred of good repute’. A linen draper he lived near Preston Patrick and was twenty-two years old when he met George Fox in 1652. He must have made a great impression on his companions; a young man with no training who was one of the leading preachers and teachers of the community.

Thomas Camm said of him:

That amongst a Society then gathered, or separated from the common National Way of Worship he became an eminent

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52 Braithwaite, ‘The Westmorland and Swaledale’, p. 3.
56 John Gough, *History of the People called Quakers from their first rise to the present Time*, (Dublin, 1789), p.83.
Teacher, and highly esteemed of amongst them, and not only so but many times he would have gone to Chappels, or the Parish Steeple-house…and there would have Preached and abundance of People was taken and affected with him, and in great Multitudes would have flocked after him.\textsuperscript{57}

Francis Howgill was an older and more experienced preacher. Born probably in 1618 near Grayrigg, Westmorland, possibly the son of a yeoman although little is known of his family background. He appears to have had a college education and entered the established church being appointed as minister in the village of Colton, then in north Lancashire but now in Cumbria.\textsuperscript{58} In his own words he was troubled by his religion from an early age:

\begin{quote}
I am one who have obtained mercy, after a long and sore travel, and tossed up and down in great tempests, but at last entered into everlasting rest.\textsuperscript{59}
\end{quote}

He said that ‘from twelve years old… I did fall into strictest worship’, and that he was so ‘sober and serious’ that his fellows ‘began to revile me’. From the age of fifteen he travelled ‘after the most excellent sermons’, becoming, ‘acquainted with eminent Christians (so called)’. Although he was appointed minister at Colton he was unhappy:

\textsuperscript{57} Camm, ‘Thomas Camm’s Testimony’, p. 23.  
\textsuperscript{59} Francis Howgill, \textit{A lamentation for the Scattered Tribes, Who are exiled into Captivity, and are now mingled among the Heathen, and are joined to the Oppressor, and refuses to return}, (London, 1656,) p. 1.
often I did obey contrary to my will, and denied my will but
they told me, this was legal to obey out of fear, and that was
slavery; but where there was evangelical obedience (as they
called it)

He left the established church finding that, ‘there appeared more beauty in those
called Independents’, only to discover that while they ‘pressed separation…it was
but in words’. Leaving the Independents, he joined with Anabaptists, but again ‘I
saw the ground was the same… they separated themselves and made another
likeness’. Howgill goes on to say that, ‘I saw all the teachers of the world… all in
deceit who did not abide in Christ… I dissented from their judgment… And so I
waited’.60 This is a good description of the difficulty that many people experienced
as they moved from denomination to denomination in search of one in which they
were happy in their own personal faith. Howgill did not find this until he met
George Fox, when he noted that, ‘not only I but many hundreds more’ found some
comfort in the separatist community.61

The monthly meeting supervised by Howgill and Audland was not small and
insignificant. When Fox went to the famous meeting at Firbank Fell on Sunday 13
June 1652, it is claimed that there were ‘more than a thousand people gathered to
hear Francis Howgill…and John Audland’ who were preaching in the morning.

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60 Francis Howgill, Some Account of The Exercises of Francis Howgill In His Search After The
George Fox spoke in the afternoon after lunch.\textsuperscript{62} The ‘thousand people’ attending the meeting had not come to hear George Fox who on that day was unknown to all but a handful of people there. The people had gathered to listen to Audland and Howgill, and the size of the meeting was a testament to the strength of that separatist community.\textsuperscript{63} As was the way of separatist groups lay people could address their meetings and Fox took the opportunity that was presented to him.

To what extent this separatist congregation was influenced by Grindletonian ideas is impossible to say. That there was a link between Thomas Taylor, Roger Brearley and John Webster from their days at and near Kildwick appears to be clear, albeit circumstantial. Unfortunately, there are no documents, sermons, pamphlets or letters, which can be attributed to Thomas Taylor dating from the 1640s which would give an indication of his personal beliefs and religious influences. A feature of most of the testimonies of the earliest Quakers is that they were written several years after their convincement and contain very little information on their early life, work, education or religion. Seventeenth-century commentators believed there was a direct link between Grindletonian ideas and the Quakers but there is little direct evidence to confirm this. Roger Williams, founder of Providence, Rhode Island who was a leading separatist with strong views on toleration, many of which were close to those of the Quakers, was in fact a great critic of the Quaker movement and

\textsuperscript{62} Ingle, \textit{First Among Friends}, p. 83; It was Fox who identified the size of the gathering in his journal saying, ‘It was Judged there was a [bove a] thousand people’, Penney, \textit{The Journal of George Fox}, p. 43.

\textsuperscript{63} There must be some doubt about the actual number. There was clearly a large number even allowing for some inflation in the figure given by Fox.
George Fox. He clearly believed there was a direct link, calling both John Camm and Francis Howgill Grindletonians. In a book published in 1676 he said:

I say as to the Protestant Professors and Confessors, the Quakers are but a new upstart party or Faction risen up little above 20 years since in the northern parts of England, Lancashire etc. Tis true, tis probable they are the Offspring of the Grindletonians in the same Lancashire about two years before, who held those two grand Points (though many wicked paths of Doctrine and Practice were amongst them).

In 1657 the Quaker Thomas Barcroft drew a parallel between his convincement and his earlier Grindletonianism when he said that it was Roger Brearley and other Grindletonians who helped him find his inner light which led him to the Quakers.

Separatist ideas and Liberty of Conscience

While it is difficult to know the religious beliefs of the separatist group in Westmorland during the 1640s, we can safely assume that they, like Thomas Taylor, did not believe in infant baptism, were against tithes, the payment of stipends to

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65 Hill, The World, p. 67; The German scholar Theodor Sippell suggested that John Camm was a Grindletonian, Theodor Sippell, Zur Vorgeschichte des Quakertums, (Giessen, 1920); The preface to A Bundle of Soul-Convincing Directing and Comforting Truths, a summary of some of the sermons of Roger Breirly, Chetham’s Library, Manchester, MS Rr.2.3, is signed J. C. This is believed to be Josiah Collier not John Camm, Oliver Pickering, Josiah Collier of Yeadon (1595 – 1677), West Riding Grindletonian and Disciple of Roger Brereley, Borthwick Paper 127, (York, 2017).
66 Roger Williams, George Fox Digged out of his Burrowes Or an Offer of Disputation On fourteen Proposalls made this last Summer 1672 (so called) unto G Fox then present on Rode-Island in New-England, by R. W., (Boston, 1676), p. 42.
67 Testimony of Thomas Barcroft.
parish priests, episcopacy, Presbyterianism and church ceremonies. The fact that they had put into practice many of these beliefs, and allowed non-ordained lay preachers like John Audland to speak at and lead their meetings, clearly places them among the radical separatists represented by men like William Erbery, John Saltmarsh, William Dell, Thomas Collier, and John Webster. From the published works of these individuals we can identify views and beliefs which are likely to have been held in common with Taylor, Audland, Howgill and the separatists. We can also see a direct connection to views held by Brearley and the Grindletonians, as these were listed and identified in the accusations made against them in 1617.

Erbery, Saltmarsh, Dell, Collier and Webster were also chaplains in the Parliamentarian army active in the north of England and against the Scots. It is most likely that it was through involvement in the Parliamentarian army, particularly the regiments of Fairfax and Lambert when operating in the north of England, that the religious radicalism of the separatists in Westmorland, north Lancashire and the Yorkshire Dales was encouraged and enriched through interaction with these independent chaplains. The relationships that developed during the Civil War are examined in the following chapter.

The ideas and views on separatism, religion and the Church as expressed by Erbery, Saltmarsh, Dell, Collier, Webster and the Grindletonians are accepted as being representative of the views of separatist groups throughout the country. While many of these views were close to those of the early Quakers, the denial of the authority of the Church, of ministers, including Independents and Presbyterians, of ceremonies, sacraments, tithes, and the belief in the imminence of God, there are notable differences that would become evident during the 1650s. However, during the
1640s, the arguments promoted by these activists may have influenced and directed the ideas of men like Thomas Taylor, Francis Howgill, John Audland and John Camm.

As I have noted in chapter two, the only record providing any details of Grindletonian beliefs is a document among the Rawlinson manuscripts in the Bodleian Library. This contains the ‘fifty erroneous propositions’ recorded as the alleged beliefs of the Grindletonians which were the basis of the accusation of antinomianism made in the High Commission at York in 1616, against Roger Brearley and members of his congregation at Grindleton. What can be discerned from this document is that Grindletonian beliefs were very like those of the separatists of Westmorland. The key accusation contained in the ‘propositions’ is that the Grindletonians believed that the Spirit took priority over the word of the Bible, the scriptures, and that having received God individuals were able to live without sin and could attain heaven on earth. They were accused of denying the authority of the church and episcopacy, and of the significance of ordination by allowing lay people to preach in church. Specifically, the accusation was that they believed, ‘That a man having the spirit may read, pray, or preach without any calling whatsoever’, and, ‘A minister unsanctified cannot either convert or confirme’. While not explicit in any published documents from the 1640s, allowing lay people to preach in their meetings supports the view that the Westmorland separatists had a similar view as to the importance of the Spirit. Those allowed to preach need not be ordained but they were men ‘having the spirit’.

68 Como, Blown by the Spirit, p. 484.
69 Como, Blown by the Spirit, p. 483.
William Dell, who during the early 1640s was chaplain to Sir Thomas Fairfax, lieutenant-general in the Northern Association Army and commander-in-chief of the New Model Army, expressed the view that congregations should elect their own minister, emphasised the importance of the Spirit, and believed that water baptism was unnecessary. He believed that the ‘true Church’ was ‘as the Apostles and Believers in their time began’ and that it had ‘power to meet together into a communion of Saints, though it be without and against the consent and authority, of the powers of the world’. He said that this church had the ‘power to meet together’, that it had the right ‘to appoint its own outward orders’ without the ‘pain of secular punishment or Church censure’. He also argued that the ‘Church hath power to choose its own Officers’ because ‘the Ministry of the New Testament, being the Ministrations of the Spirit, is common to all that have received the Spirit’, and that officers should be chosen ‘out of the flock of Christ, and nowhere else’, especially not ‘only out of Universities’ where ‘Antichrist was bringing in humane learning, instead of the Spirit’.  

Although his views were close to those of the Quakers who would later republish his work, Dell was not a supporter or follower. He did not support the idea that the Spirit had precedence over Scripture and considered the Quaker views too radical.

John Saltmarsh was born in Yorkshire in 1612. He graduated MA from Magdalen College, Cambridge, in 1636 and took the position of rector at Heslerton, in the East Riding of Yorkshire, in 1639. Saltmarsh appears to have held conventional religious

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views until, in 1643, he resigned his position arguing that tithes were unchristian. Between 1645 and 1646, he was rector at Braysted in Kent where he refused to take his £200 annual income accepting only what his congregation provided. His radical views first came to prominence when he argued that the reforms proposed by the Westminster Assembly of Divines, the people chosen by Parliament to reform the English church, did not go far enough. He said that all English people had an interest and a role to play in the process of reformation. Saltmarsh was a strong supporter of Parliament during the Civil War. On leaving his position at Braysted he was appointed chaplain to Sir Thomas Fairfax, commander of the New Model Army, where his radical views became more strident. When, in 1647, Parliament moved to disband the army Saltmarsh feared that its intention was to limit political and religious reform. He supported the army’s refusal to disband arguing that it still had a role to play in ensuring democratic freedoms, including liberty of conscience and freedom of religion, and gave his support to one of the more radical groups in the army, the ‘Levellers’, who were pushing a republican agenda.71

John Saltmarsh was an active supporter of lay preachers arguing that neither a university degree nor ordination were required to be a minister. He was extremely critical of episcopacy, Presbyterianism, bishops and ministers and was a great supporter of liberty of conscience and freedom of religion.72 He promoted the importance of the spirit and of free grace, the supremacy of grace over law, where he ‘aimed to liberate men and women from the formalism, the legal calculations of


72 Pooley, ‘Saltmarsh, John’. 
covenant theologians'. In 1645, he published *Free Grace: Or The Flowings of Christ’s Blood Free To Sinners*, the story of an individual struggling with the question of predestination. Saltmarsh’s conclusion was that, as Christ’s death was for all, God had in effect pardoned the sins of individuals, which meant that they did not have to resort ‘to Puritan regimens of religious exercise’. In other words, redemption was not achieved through merit. Many people viewed Saltmarsh’s argument as antinomian, believing it undermined the belief in God’s role in the process of redemption and that he was saying everyone could sin. Interestingly, Douglas Gwyn cites, as an example of the confusion the book engendered, a letter from Dorothy Howgill, the wife of Francis Howgill, to George Fox in 1652. In the letter she says that when reading *Free Grace*, before she was convinced, she had been led astray, believing that ‘Free Grace’ meant, because redemption was available to all, sinners were allowed to sin. This is an important anecdote because it shows that the works of men like Saltmarsh were being read by the members of the independent community in Westmorland and the Dales during the later years of the 1640s.

In the *Sparkles of Glory*, published in 1647, Saltmarsh outlined what he saw as the basic flaws in an established church, arguing that in Scripture there was nothing defining how a model church should be organised. He did not believe in formal church organisations arguing that the future of Christianity lay not in churches but in the Spirit. He said that the true reign of Christ is spiritual, that Christ reigned in everything and His return would not be in a physical form but through the bodies of

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74 Gwyn, ‘John Saltmarsh’, pp. 8 – 12.
believers. Of the Spirit he said, ‘the truth is, Christ is in all his in Spirit and truth, and as the eternall seed; and his fulnesse is already in the Saints, or all true Christians’. 75

However, in Sparkles of Glory, Saltmarsh is very critical of the separatist argument that they were waiting for the time when the Holy Spirit would ‘renew and… remake the inward man’: 76

to wait in any such way of Seeking or expectation, is Antichristian, because there is no Scriptures to warrant any such restauration, or expectation of administrations: and that all such waiting is that desert wildernesse-condition prophesied on by Christ; that is, waste and barren as to Spirituall things. 77

Saltmarsh’s work was widely read among early Quakers. The Quaker leader William Penn recommended that he be read by young Quakers, and he influenced Richard Farnworth, one of the earliest followers of George Fox. 78 Saltmarsh’s views on the importance of the Spirit was a ‘precedent for later Quaker understanding’ and ‘his sense of Christ’s return known through the Spirit strongly anticipates the core of Fox’s seismic preaching in 1652’. 79 What his view of, and level of support for, Fox and the Quaker movement would have been are, however, unknown as Saltmarsh died in 1647.

76 Johnson, ‘From Seeker to Finder’, p. 301.
78 Braithwaite, The Beginnings, p. 544; Reay, The Quakers, p. 16
William Erbery was a clergyman who was well known for his radical Protestantism, criticism of church hierarchy and Presbyterian ministers:

How many men are made poor, by making a few Ministers rich?

Therefore there is but little good done by the greatest Ministers this day in England and Ireland; their whole work is in calling men to Church, not to Christ, in converting Saints, not Sinners, alas man it is not the Gospel, but thine own gain thou most lookest after.  

He was very critical of the system of tithes saying it was a form of church oppression:

For my part I follow the old, and profess, that I can see yet nothing in Tithes but gain of oppression, continued and kept up merely by Ministers, and Church-Members, who being men of power this day, might easily prevaile to remove this and many other oppressions.

Let no Independent Pastor, nor Presbyters, professing themselves Ministers of the Gospel, dare to meddle any more with Tythes, nor a Trade of Teaching.

81 Erbery, The Testimony, p. 53.
A staunch supporter of Parliament during the Civil War, during which he was chaplain to John Lambert, he was known for his support of the army which he said had the right to act in politics as he believed it was ‘a more effective instrument of God’s will than parliament’. Known as ‘the champion of the Seekers’, he was a writer and preacher on radical social and religious issues who advocated increased taxation on landlords and the wealthy to provide welfare for the poor who he said were oppressed by both the church and the law:

There be many of these in this Land, like the Assyrian, many oppressing Laws, and Courts; but Clergy-men and Common Lawyers are the chiefest oppressors therein; the one by their legal tyths and teachings; the other by their tedious Suits and tricks of the Law, oppress and plague the Souls and states of Men; besides, the Prissoners and the Poor have heavy oppressors, and are Chief among the oppressed.

In addition to attacking the oppression of the Church he attacked ministers saying they were nothing more than merchants who preached for money, ‘none will preach

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85 Erbery, The Testimony, p. 42.
now under a hundred pound a year, teaching is turned to a meer trade’.  

He also condemned the university training of church ministers:

I pray consider is it according to the order of the Gospel, that Pastors should leave their own Church-fellowships, and turn fellows of Colledges?  Is it according to the Gospel that Pastors should become Princes and Presidents, Deans and Doctors?  Is not this a Secular employment?  And this in the hands of Spiritual men, is but the instruments of a foolish Shepherd.  

Erbery believed in the importance of the Spirit, saying that God was in everyone, ‘Christ in us is God manifest in our flesh as in his’, that, ‘Every Saint in the Spirit, freed from Church-forms, or not embondaged to partiality, can easily interpret that Test’, and that there was ‘no need of Churches or Ministers when God shall be our Church’.  

He said, ‘darknesse and divisions hath been caused by not knowing ‘Christ in the Spirit, nor understanding the Mystery of Christ’, that, ‘outward worship is but an earthly thing’.  

When Erbery died in 1654, it was John Webster who edited and published Erbery’s Testimony, and a great deal of evidence can be drawn from the published works of Webster indicating that Erbery had been a huge influence.  In October 1653, Webster

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87 Erbery, ‘A Scourge For The Assyrian, p. 55
took part in a ‘Dispute’ at All Hallows, Lombard Street, London, ‘on a little Treatise that I had published’, where he and William Erbery argued against a Presbyterian, an Independent and a Baptist. Criticised by an unnamed author in the weekly magazine, *Mercurius Politicus*, he published his rebuttal, *The Picture of Mercurius Politicus*. In this he not only responded to the critic, but went some way to providing more background to his beliefs. When accused of changing his beliefs he says, ‘I would have you know, that I neither am, nor ever was Cavalier, Presbyterian, nor turn-coat’. He goes on to say, ‘the Dispute was in a Steeple-house, or Meeting-place, built of lime and stone; now in what language your Learning can call that a Church I know not’. He justifies this comment by saying, ‘Did the Apostles or primitive Saints ever call the Meeting-places a Church?’ Webster had also been criticised for saying that only God could ordain ministers not man, but he is critical of his opponents for refusing to debate this point with either him or Erbery. One of his disputants, critical of Webster’s views on the importance of the spirit, called him a ‘Deceiver’ because the ‘Scriptures were to be understood literally’.  

In June 1653, Webster had been preaching at All Hallows, attacking the church, the clergy and their system of education. In a series of sermons, he stressed the importance of the spirit saying that God will only be revealed to a person when that person accepts God into their soul, that God will not be revealed by third parties such as priests who have been appointed by man not by God, who are preaching for money and who have learnt from books, not directly from God. He attacked the

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90 John Webster, *The Picture of Mercurius Politicus or Some of the Falsities and Mistakes, mentioned in his Intelligence of the twelfth of October, concerning the Dispute in Lumbard street Detected and Disproved*, (London, 1653), pp. 3 - 6.
clergy for deliberately misleading their congregations into believing that they can reach God by following the edicts and practices of the church and its ministers:

And therefore all those who claim an Ordination from man, or by man, that speak from the spirit of the world from wit, learning, and human reason who preach for hire, and make merchandise of the souls of men; I witness they are all Baals Priests, and Idol-Sheperds, who destroy the sheep, and are Theeves and Robbers, who came not in by the door of the Sheepfold, but climbed up another way; And are the Magitians, Sorcerers, Inchanters, Soothsayers, Necromancers, and Consulters with familiar spirits, which the Lord will cut off out of the land…  

He also used his sermons to attack the traditional educational process and training of priests for the ministry:

My beloved Bretheren, if Men were but come to the Sight of the Light, and were able to stand in it, and walk in it, they would not go forth (as they do) in their own name, and having furnished themselves by their Study, and their Books, and by their borrowed Matter; but all this is because they have no Light in them…

they can go to University, and there lay the Foundation, and

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they can have the laying on of the Hands of the Presbytery,
and they can study Authors, and they have Wisdom, Parts and
Eloquence of their own; and thus they come furnished, and
are (as they think) able Ministers of the Gospel: Alas, poor
Souls, Christ calls these no other but Thieves and Robbers. 92

In *Academiarum Examen, or the Examination of Academies*, he argued against
universities teaching languages as the basis for the understanding of scripture, saying
that instead they should promote experimental learning including alchemy,
astronomy, natural philosophy, chemistry and medicine. 93

In *The Saints Guide*, Webster expresses millenarian views similar to many
separatists and the early Quakers; looking to the establishment of a godly society that
would restore the church to its original form, as represented by the true saints the
apostles, not the established church as it then existed. 94 Published in 1653, it was in
the introduction (dated 28 April 1653) where Webster made his observation about
seeing the light eighteen years earlier, of the Grindletonians and their persecution. In
this work, he dealt with several issues under the following headings: ‘Of Humane
Learning’; ‘Of the Calling and Enabling of Ministers’; ‘Concerning the Law’; ‘Of
the Wages and Maintenance of Ministers’; ‘Concerning the power of Magistrates in
Spiritual Things’. 95 In the section ‘Concerning the Law’, Webster said, ‘By this
word law, I understand a Light discovering what should be done, and what ought not

93 John Webster, *Academiarum Examen, or the Examination of Academies*, (London, 1654).
94 Millenarianism was/is the belief in the imminent Second Coming of Christ leading to a thousand-
year utopia and a Godly society.
95 Webster, *The Saints Guide*, (1653).
to be done, commanding the one and prohibiting the other. Webster argues that the ‘internal spiritual law’ is the law of God, ‘therefore the Gospel, not the law, is the Believers Rule and Guide’, and this is the law that had to be obeyed in precedence to any other.96 Views like this were provocative and it is interesting that in the third edition, published in 1699, Webster’s introduction is dated 28 April 1666 and excludes the whole section, ‘Considering the Law’. This could have been an error but, because in the 1660s Webster presents himself as a model establishment figure, it was more likely deliberate revisionism on his part.97

In the 1653 edition his views on the role of magistrates are clear, they should not have any authority over spiritual matters:

The Civil Magistrate hath not any positive power to punish any man, or restrain any, for their light, judgment, conscience, opinion or way of worship, if so be they act or speak nothing that is distractive or destructive to the Civil power, or tending to the breach of the peace, or to injure another.98

He argues that it should not be the role of the Magistrate to ‘weed forth’ blasphemies and heresies, and the Magistrate ‘pretending to be the judge of the consciences of men, doth usurp the place of God’:

That whatsoever a man's opinion or way of worship be
(if he live Peaceably amongst men both in word and work,
and faithfully and Obediently towards the Civil Power) the
magistrate ought (without Respect to his judgement, of way
of worship) to protect and defend him, and not at all
intermeddle with him in regard to either.\(^99\)

Webster was also accused of ‘knocking down Learning’ in his sermons, but in The
*Picture of Mercurius Politicus* and the *Saints Guide* he clearly states it is the
teaching of theology in universities as the basis for an educated clergy that he is
against, not learning itself.\(^100\)

While we cannot be sure of the religious views of the separatist community in
Westmorland and the Dales, those expressed by Webster may be representative. His
views were radicalised firstly by his connection to Grindletonianism and then
through his connection with the northern regiments of the Parliamentarian army,
particularly that of John Lambert. In 1648, he described himself as surgeon in the
regiment of Colonel Shuttleworth, and then on the title-page of the 1653 edition of
the *Saints Guide* as, ‘late Chaplain in the Army’.\(^101\) From the records we know he
was connected to Lambert’s regiment in 1648 and it is very likely that it was through
this connection that his relationship with Erbery developed. Neither was it a

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\(^{100}\) John Webster, *The Picture of Mercurius Politicus*, p. 8.
\(^{101}\) Antonio Clericuzio, ‘Webster, John (1611 – 1682)’, *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography*,
(Interestingly, this reference is excluded in the later third edition.)
coincidence that Erbery and Webster were in London in 1653 preaching and promoting many of the ideas and principles of the early Quaker movement at the same time as Quaker leaders from Westmorland.

The Quakers believed in spiritual millenarianism, proclaiming that Christ’s kingdom on earth was being built, but that Christ’s second coming would be spiritual, within individual men and women, not corporeal. That this was spiritual did not preclude the fact that a battle was taking place with the powers on earth, the final battle being the conflict between the Quakers, who had received God spiritually, and ministers of the church who were representatives of the Antichrist. They believed that their doctrine of achieving the inner light fundamentally undermined the need for a professional preaching ministry, formal religious worship and teaching. They also argued that Magistrates should have no authority over spiritual matters. To this end, they undertook a sustained programme of pamphleteering and a concerted effort to publicise their views through the presence of Quaker preachers in London who specifically targeted members of the Barebones Parliament.102

William Erbery was not himself a Quaker, but had he lived beyond 1654, he may well have become convinced. Although this is only conjecture, both his wife Mary, and daughter Dorcas, were convinced Quakers within a year of his death. Both mother and daughter were influential activists in south Wales and the south-west of England and Dorcas played a very important role supporting James Nayler when in 1656, he rode into Bristol emulating Christ’s entry to Jerusalem.103 Imprisoned at

102 Peters, Print Culture, p. 214.
103 Roberts, ‘Erbery, William (1604/5-1654)’
Exeter in 1656, Dorcas said that she had died in the harsh prison conditions and that it was James Nayler who brought her back to life. Nayler denied this but it was used in evidence against him when, following his ride into Bristol, he was accused of blasphemy.  

However, John Webster’s views changed considerably. Following the restoration of the monarchy in 1660, he reconciled with the Anglican Church, recanted his radical views and established himself as a doctor in Clitheroe. In 1671, he published *Metallographia, or An History of Metals*, a major scientific work on the sources and uses of metals.  

In 1677, he published *The Displaying of Supposed Witchcraft*, a work highly critical of traditional demonological views. His dedication in the book is interesting as it contradicts his earlier views on Magistrates. It reads, ‘To his Worshipful and honoured Friends……his Majesties Justices of the Peace and Quorum in the West-riding of Yorkshire’.

Webster also contradicts the arguments he so strongly made in 1653 on the importance of the Spirit over the Word:

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Dorcas’ brother and sister, Mordechai and Lydia, were also convinced Quakers. Trevett, ‘William Erbery and His Daughter’, pp. 40 – 42.

105 John Webster, *Metallographia: or, an history of metals*, (London, 1671); Clericuzio, ‘Webster, John (1611 – 1682)’.

106 Webster, *The Displaying of Supposed Witchcraft*, pp. 2 – 3. On the title page Webster identified himself as ‘Practitioner of Physick’. In 1676 the book had been given the authoritative approval of Sir Jonas Moore, mathematician, Surveyor General of the Ordnance, astronomer, and Vice-President of the Royal Society. Moore was born in 1617 at Higham on the east side of Pendle Hill. His brother was said to have been bewitched to death by one of the Pendle Witches prosecuted and condemned at Lancaster in 1612. It is likely that the Webster knew Moore and possible that the now conformist Webster aspired to membership of the Royal Society.
That the Scriptures contain in them all things necessary

to Salvation, Is so clear a truth, that none but those that

are wilfully blind can deny it.\textsuperscript{107}

He also criticises radicalism and individuals promoting radical ideas because they lead to ‘dangerous errors’, and suggests that people should rely instead on the collective wisdom of the church. \textsuperscript{108} One of the interesting aspects of the book is Webster’s suggestion that during the Civil War he and many others were led astray by ‘Men that were of the greatest acquired endowments’ when ‘wild and extravagant’ interpretations of Scripture were made. He is especially critical of the Quakers:

Neither is it safe for a man to rely upon his own single acquired parts, be they never so vast or great; because in the most ages, the most pestilent Errors and damnable Heresies have been vented and maintained by Men that were of the greatest acquired endowments. And that it is often as vain to presume upon having the guidance of the Spirit, as are the other two, is manifest in the late times of Rebellion and Confusion; where every Man pretending the Spirit, made such wild and extravagant expositions of the Scriptures, as few ages have known before; and is still kept up by the giddy troop of Fanatical Quakers, and the like.\textsuperscript{109}

\textsuperscript{107} Webster, \textit{The Displaying of Supposed Witchcraft}, p. 41.
\textsuperscript{108} Webster, \textit{The Displaying of Supposed Witchcraft}, p. 138.
\textsuperscript{109} Webster, \textit{The Displaying of Supposed Witchcraft}, p. 138.
The views he expressed here were radically different to those in the *Saints Guide* and those he set out in his sermons at All Hallows. They demonstrate the change in society between 1650, when many sought radical change, and a more equal and godly society, and post 1660 following the restoration of the monarchy. The fact that a Quaker, Thomas Lowson, had tried to persuade Webster to join them demonstrates how close his earlier views were perceived to be to those of the Quakers and perhaps explains why in 1677 he was at pains to condemn them.\(^\text{110}\)

**Summary**

The breakdown in the authority of the Church of England during the 1630s and 1640s gave individuals and groups the opportunity and freedom to worship in ways that had previously been prohibited. Believing they had been freed from the restraints of an authoritarian, hierarchical and dictatorial Church, many Puritans took the opportunity to explore simpler and more personal forms of religious worship. Combining in groups some believed they could recreate a simple Church, replicating what they believed was the first form of devotional practice and worship as set out in the Bible. The group I have identified in Westmorland and the Dales developed in this way. Contemporary commentators, critical of the radical movement reported a proliferation of such groups, identifying them as dangerous radical religious sects and a serious threat to the established Church. There is a great deal of doubt about the actual number of these sects, but, importantly, the debate that took place is indicative of the level of fear that radical political and religious groups engendered in large sections of society.

\(^{110}\) Clericuzio, ‘Webster, John (1611 – 1682)’. 

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The move to different forms of worship was encouraged by members of the radicalised Protestant elite, in and out of Parliament, and was further encouraged by political radicalisation fermented in the regiments of the New Model Army. The activities of radical groups, specifically the Ranters, Levellers and Diggers, heightened tensions in society and soldiers of all ranks were involved in the debates on political change. With the relaxation of censorship radical religious and political individuals were free to debate the rights of the individual, the role and authority of government and the law, and the place of religion and the Church in society.

In books and pamphlets radicals were able to present their interpretation of scripture and discuss different ways of worshiping God. The demand for freedom of worship and liberty of conscience was common to both political and religious radicals but were considered dangerous and subversive threats to society. Liberty of conscience was seen not only as a challenge to the authority of the Church of England, but also, because all were interlinked, the law, the role of magistrates and judges and the authority of the landowning gentry. The freedom to worship as they wished was, however, essential to the chosen way of life and religious worship of the independent group led by Thomas Taylor, John Audland and Francis Howgill. This separated them from local society and identified them as separatists.

Whether they or the Grindletonians could be called a sect is questionable. The Grindletonians were followers of one charismatic preacher, were restricted to a small area of Yorkshire around the parishes where he was curate and their identification as a sect very much in the eyes of their critics. Brearley and the Grindletonians were
representative of the long-established preference of many Puritans to worship as they wished. They were continuing resistance to the authority of the established Church which had existed in the area certainly through the sixteenth century, if not earlier. The independent religious group established during the 1640s in Westmorland and the Dales continued this tradition of resistance. Thomas Taylor, John Audland and Francis Howgill, led their community in denying the episcopal hierarchy and ceremony of the Church of England. They led them in the adoption of a simpler form of organisation and way of worship and, importantly, in a different way of reading and interpreting Biblical text. As a group they were clearly successful, extending their influence across the Dales from Kendal to Richmond, and their presence and numbers created consternation among the local parish priests.

While it is difficult to know their personal views and beliefs during the 1640s due to a lack of documentary evidence from that period, I have shown that they followed many of the ideas and practices of radical thinkers such as John Saltmarsh, William Dell and John Erbery. Through the example of John Webster, I have shown the relevance of connections and networks, demonstrating how he was a direct link between Grindletonianism, Thomas Taylor and William Erbery. Although some of my connections may be circumstantial, dates, proximity and common beliefs are testament to the concentration of religious radicalism in Westmorland and the Dales during the 1640s. In the following chapter I explain how this informal network of like-minded individuals expanded through their involvement with the northern armies of Parliament. It was an introduction into this network that led George Fox to Audland, Howgill and the community in Westmorland in 1652.
Chapter Four: The way to Firbank Fell

Individuals in the independent religious community in Westmorland and the Dales had been brought up in, and imbued with, a culture of independence and self-reliance. During the civil wars and the early years of Cromwell’s government, they were introduced to a wider world of religious and political radicalism. For many, involvement with the northern army of Parliament, the Northern Association Army, and regiments of the New Model Army was transformative. In this chapter I argue that they were influenced by political and religious radicals in the ranks of the army, including other separatists, Independent chaplains and preachers, who were actively spreading ideas of religious and political change. Through interaction with these radicals the separatists of Westmorland and the Dales were encouraged to believe in the possibility of both political and religious change.1 Out of this milieu an informal network of like-minded individuals, religious radicals, preachers and soldiers developed. I will explain how it was through an introduction to individuals living in Yorkshire, Lancashire and Westmorland who were part of this network that Fox was led to the independent community in Westmorland, and to Firbank Fell in 1652.

After a brief explanation of what I mean by an ‘informal network’ I begin the first section by outlining how the people of Westmorland and Yorkshire became involved with military units formed in the north during the dispute between King Charles I and Scottish Covenantors in 1639, known as the Bishops’ War. The demands made

1 After the first meeting with George Fox the leading Westmorland members of the Quaker movement undertook an extensive lobbying exercise through preaching, pamphlets, letters and meetings to persuade parliament and Cromwell to change the law to enable liberty of conscience and freedom of worship. Their arguments were mirrored by many of the like-minded radical individuals within the informal network. This was a significant change in their activity and behaviour and indicated that they believed change could be achieved.
by the King and the disastrous military campaign only succeeded in turning the local population against the monarchy. I will explain how this animosity developed into widespread support for Parliament in its subsequent dispute with the King. In the next section I argue that the establishment of the Northern Association Army at the start of the Civil War brought together men from across the north creating an environment where radical political and religious ideas developed. I identify individuals who were involved and would be influential in the development of the independent religious community in Westmorland and the Dales and, in 1652, be among the first to be convinced.\(^2\) When the Northern Association Army was incorporated into the New Model Army, John Lambert’s regiments retained their northern core. I explain how Puritan beliefs and practices were used as an important motivational factor for the troops, how there was a belief that the Parliamentarian army was doing God’s work and how it was within this environment that a network of the Godly developed. John Lambert, born and brought up in the Yorkshire Dales, was a central figure as a facilitator in the development of this network. Having risen to command the Northern Association Army by 1650, he was a Major-General in the New Model Army and, for a period, one of Oliver Cromwell’s closest advisers.\(^3\) It was his support for political radicals and, although he was not religious, his toleration of religious radicalism within his regiments which encouraged individuals to come together to seek political and religious change. One of the important

\(^2\) Quakers referred to being convinced rather than converted. George Fox was convinced he heard Christ ‘directly and inwardly without the mediation of text or minister’. Fox and the early Quakers were ‘convinced of the authenticity of this experience and its universal application’. Angell & Dandelion, *The Oxford Handbook*, p. 1.

\(^3\) In 1653 Lambert accompanied Cromwell to Westminster Palace where Lambert presented the sword of state to Cromwell as he was installed as Lord Protector. In 1657 lambert resigned his commands having refused to take an oath of loyalty imposed by Parliament and having led the army’s objection to the proposal to give Cromwell the title King. Farr, *Lambert*, p. 1; Farr, ‘Lambert, John’, ODNB.
preachers Lambert supported was William Erbery, a religious radical who influenced many of the earliest Quakers.

In the subsequent section of the chapter I explain how military connections played an important role in determining George Fox’s travels around Yorkshire in 1651 and early 1652. James Nayler, the future Quaker leader, served in the New Model Army having been involved with the Northern Association Army from its formation. A religious radical, Nayler came to prominence as an enthusiastic and dynamic preacher when serving with John Lambert who, demonstrating a level of trust in Nayler, appointed him his regimental quartermaster. Having left the army in 1650, Nayler and another former soldier, William Dewsbury, were part of a small group who met George Fox at the house of Lieutenant Roper near Wakefield in the winter of 1650/1651. It was following this meeting that Nayler played an important part in introducing Fox to other individuals sympathetic to radical views who were connected through military service and living in Yorkshire. One of the most important meetings during this period was with William Boyes, an old man and an experienced preacher who, I explain, was a direct link to Roger Brearley, Grindletonianism and the independent radical group in Westmorland and the Dales. The introduction into the network of ex-military men was a turning point for Fox. I argue that it was an introduction into this network and the meeting with Boyes that led to Fox deciding to travel to Westmorland.

The journey George Fox undertook is worthy of re-analysis and I do this in the final section of the chapter. The story of George Fox’s climb up Pendle Hill and his vision of a ‘great people [to be gathered]’ is a cornerstone of the history of the
Quaker movement. While this is recorded by Fox in his *Journal* and repeated in innumerable histories and commentaries on the genesis of the movement, little, if any, analysis has been made as to why Fox was in the area. This suggests that the historical orthodoxy is that Fox being in the area around Pendle Hill was incidental to the story of his journey. Rosemary Moore in her history of the early Quakers, *The Light in Their Consciences*, suggests that there was a plan behind the route taken. She says that ‘Fox was not wandering at random. He planned his journey to meet…. sympathetic people and separated church groups’. However, there is no further detail or analysis as to why Fox’s planned route took him from west Yorkshire, through the Pendle area and to some of the most inaccessible areas of the Yorkshire Dales, or who were the sympathetic people and the separated groups he hoped to meet there. David Boulton suggested that Fox’s route was determined by a wish to meet sympathetic members and ex-members of the military, but he provides no explanation as to why it took him via Pendle Hill. By addressing these issues this thesis adds an important piece in the jigsaw of early Quakerism and throws new light on the groundswell of radical belief at community level in the area that was such an important element in both George Fox’s journey and the subsequent events in and around Sedbergh.

George Fox’s journey to Westmorland was planned. It was not accidental that his route from west Yorkshire passed by Pendle Hill and took him through the Yorkshire

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Dales avoiding the easiest and most travelled routes. I have prepared two maps. The first map, Appendix One, identifies the two routes George Fox could have taken from Burnley, having crossed the Pennines, towards Clitheroe. He would have been able to climb to the summit of Pendle Hill from either of these routes. The second, Appendix Two, identifies the alternative routes he could have taken through the Yorkshire Dales from Calton to Sedbergh. I will re-examine George Fox’s activity and contacts in the weeks before he travelled to Westmorland, explain how he became aware of sympathetic individuals and the separated group living in the Dales and explain the importance and relevance of the route chosen. This re-examination of the background to a key moment in history will be an important addition to the historiography of the early Quaker movement.

**An informal network**

During the Commonwealth and Protectorate people began to enjoy an increasing freedom to think and voice radical political and nonconformist religious views. There was an expectation among many people that Cromwell would deliver both political and religious change. Among those who sought these changes were the members of the independent religious community across Westmorland and the Dales. They, I argue, became part of a wider, predominantly informal network of like-minded individuals during the years of civil war and the turmoil of the 1640s, a network that included radical preachers and soldiers in the Parliamentarian army. By their very nature, informal networks of individuals can be large and complex, but they are transient, constantly changing, restructuring, renewing and dissolving.
Made up of friends, and friends of friends, a network can expand exponentially. No matter how large or small, simple or complex, it is in a state of constant change. Ideas, beliefs and responsibilities change as people marry, start a family or die. Relationships dissolve or grow as people change their views, their religion, their politics, or as their economic condition or social status changes. Changes can also be driven by conflict, by social or economic disruption, by flood, famine, disease or other natural disasters. Ann Hughes explored one such informal network in her study of the diary of Thomas Dugard, ‘an obscure provincial’, who built up ‘a broad interlocking circle of friends and acquaintances which covered a large part of England’. This demonstrated the fragility intrinsic to an informal network as views or radical opinions are challenged by events which threaten an individual’s social or economic situation.

A good example of an informal network in action is in the description of a group of people referred to as Ranters, considered to be some of the most radical individuals of the 1640s and 1650s. Christopher Hill, while outlining the radical nature of the views expressed by individuals called Ranters, said that there ‘is no recognized leader or theoretician of the Ranters and it is extremely doubtful whether there ever was a Ranter organisation’. J. F. McGregor’s view was that it was ‘a sensible conclusion that while there were advocates of practical antinomianism called ‘Ranters”, Ranter authors ‘were not spokesmen for a sect or movement’. Barry

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8 The rule of 6 demonstrates how quickly connections grow. Six friends each with six friends equals 36 connections, repeat six times and this results in a total of 280,000 connected people.
Reay described them as ‘a loose body of individuals’, and Bernard Capp as ‘a number of groups, some loosely linked’. The descriptions here are of a loose informal organisation of like-minded individuals, similar to the informal network that I will argue involved the independent religious community in Westmorland and the Dales.

The informal network that I suggest existed was complex, made up of people who may never actually have met; made up of people, predominantly men, who had similar or shared experiences; of people who struggled with their own spirituality, leading them to explore increasingly radical religious groups or sects; of people who saw inequality throughout society and sought redress through law reform or radical politics. One of the many products of this interactive network was George Fox meeting the independent community in Westmorland and the Dales, and the foundation of an organised Quaker movement. Many other more structured groups, social, political and religious originated in this milieu. Levellers and Diggers were more organised than the Ranters and equally politically radical. The Fifth Monarchists were one of many extreme Puritan sects that came to prominence, while the more established Congregationalists increased their influence in Parliament. The structure and organisation of these groups was significantly different to the network I identify.

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By examining this informal network and a re-evaluating George Fox’s journey from West Yorkshire to Westmorland and Firbank Fell, this chapter adds new insights to the historical understandings of the early Quaker movement and demonstrates that the separatist society Fox sought and found was crucial to its foundation. The meeting of the separatist group and Fox was transformative. Fox was an inspirational preacher and leader but the individuals in, and the leaders of, this separatist society were a crucial element in the formation of a great religious movement and it is important that their contribution is fully appreciated. In his earlier journeys Fox had met similar groups without the same success. While it can be argued that in 1652 other separatist societies existed elsewhere in the country and had Fox met them first the result would have been the same, that argument underestimates the importance of the separatists in Westmorland and the Dales in the foundation of the Quaker movement.

**Called to arms**

The 1640s saw two civil wars, war with Scotland and rebellion in Ireland. It was a period of great change, of social division, hardship and distress, where large numbers of men moved around the country developing friendships and connections with like-minded individuals from outside their own local area. It was also a period in which radical political and religious ideas spread rapidly, particularly within the ranks and leadership of the New Model Army where there was widespread support for liberty of conscience and freedom of religious worship.13

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In Westmorland, the Dales and Lancashire political allegiance was divided during the civil wars, as was the case throughout England. Social status did not define political allegiance and many communities and families were divided by their support for the King or Parliament. In Westmorland, most of the local gentry families favoured the King, while yeomen farmers, merchants and the Puritan and Presbyterian clergy generally favoured Parliament. Philip Wharton, 4th Baron Wharton, a Member of Parliament who owned a large estate around Kirkby Stephen, was an exception among the gentry. He was a leading supporter and advocate of the Parliamentarian cause whose involvement during the early days of military conflict would have drawn in men from his estate and the surrounding area.\(^{14}\)

The corporation of Kendal exemplified widespread community divisions. In 1640, Gervase Benson, a notary public and commissary of the archdeaconry of Richmond, was elected to the corporation of Kendal. In 1644 he demonstrated his Parliamentarian sympathies by inviting Parliamentarian forces from Lancashire to enter Kendal. Later that year, following the Scottish invasion of Cumbria which brought the area under Parliamentarian control, he was elected Mayor. Although he was known as Colonel Benson in 1645, when he was in command of the local forces in Kendal, the extent of his military experience is unknown. In 1648, during the second civil war when the royalists were in the ascendency, he was driven out of Kendal but returned later that year following parliament’s victory. Benson and his associates then took their revenge by removing royalist supporters from the corporation when they refused to swear the declaration of loyalty to the

Commonwealth. In 1652, Benson became a Quaker, being convinced by George Fox at a meeting at Benson’s home in the week before Fox addressed the meeting at Firbank Fell. During 1652 and 1653, Benson was advocating Quaker views in public debates and was involved in a pamphlet war with the local corporation and clerics. As the opposition to the Quaker movement in Kendal became more vitriolic, Benson was removed from the corporation. Later in this chapter when I re-examine the reasons for George Fox’s journey to Westmorland I will explain the relevance of his meeting with Gervase Benson. It was not accidental, but part of a co-ordinated plan set out by Fox and his supporters.

The border area between England and Scotland was first involved in military action in 1639 during the first Bishops’ War with Scotland. The Scots had been angered by King Charles’s attempt to reform the Scottish Calvinist church and in response, they implemented the Scottish National Covenant which bound them to maintain the Presbyterian doctrine and system of church governance. The Covenanters became the dominant political and religious force in Scotland. The King’s response to the Covenant was to plan a military campaign against the Scots. In 1639, there was no standing army in England and the King’s plans were severely restricted by lack of finance. The trained bands of the northern border counties, which had traditionally been responsible for defending the border with Scotland, were mobilised providing around 4,000 men. They were however considered to be the ‘worst and weakest’ in

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15 All municipal government officials were required to make the declaration as set out in the Oath of Engagement, 1649.
16 Ingle, First Among Friends, p. 82.
the country. Henry, Lord Clifford, as Lord Lieutenant of the northern counties and governor of Newcastle, was responsible for mobilising the trained bands of Craven and Westmorland, a task he proved to be totally unfit to undertake. The King replaced Clifford, ordering Sir Ferdinando Fairfax to move from Yorkshire to Carlisle where on his arrival he found that Clifford had provided ‘neither arms, powder, match nor wages and very little food’.19

As I outlined in chapter one, Francis Clifford, Earl of Cumberland, Henry’s father, had caused a great deal of distress among his tenants in Westmorland when he raised £15,000 to make a payment to Anne Clifford in 1620. The King had ordered Clifford to make the payment, effectively sanctioning the raising of the money from the tenants in what was a cynical demonstration of power and authority. In 1636 and 1637, the Crown had extended the charging of ‘ship money’ to the counties of Cumberland and Westmorland.20 In those two years Westmorland alone had to raise £2,400. In a small county, which was one of the poorest in the country, raising such an amount was not achieved without a good deal of difficulty and distress.21 Given the history of discontent with both Clifford and the King, and the conditions under which the trained bands had been mustered, armed and provisioned, it is very likely that support for the King among a large section of the local population would have

20 Ship money was a tax raised to cover the cost of transporting timber for the building of a large naval vessel. The tax was controversial. Originally raised by Elizabeth I to cover the cost of a navy it was reintroduced under Charles I. After a trial period during which only coastal counties were charged in 1635 it was extended to all counties. The tax was controversial and was declared illegal by Parliament in 1641. Henrik Langelüddeke, “I finde all men & my officers all soo unwilling”: The Collection of Ship Money, 1635–1640, Journal of British Studies, Vol. 46, No. 3 (July, 2007), pp. 509 - 542.
21 Breay, Light in the Dales, p. 29.
been at a very low point in 1639. In his history of the Bishops’ Wars, Michael Fissel says that because of the ‘mentality of separateness’ in the area, ‘the armies of the Bishops’ Wars were more safely recruited outside the borders’. This ‘mentality of separateness’ was reinforced by the deliberate imposition of financial hardship, the consequences of which would have increased disaffection with the King and sowed seeds of radicalism that were later harvested by the separatist community during the 1640s.

The politics surrounding the King’s military objectives may also have reduced the number of men from Westmorland involved during 1639 - 1640. When the King ordered the raising of trained bands in Yorkshire he intended to use them to supplement royal troops in Northumberland and Durham, but at the gentry’s own expense. There were strong objections to this policy. A petition was raised by Deputy Lieutenants of Yorkshire, militia colonels and fifty gentlemen, in which they asked the King to reconsider his policy arguing that it would have a ruinous effect on the county. Compounding the King’s problems, there were several influential Puritans from across the northern counties who had some sympathy for the Scottish Covenanters. These sympathisers included Philip Wharton, Lord Wharton, with the large estate at Kirkby Stephen in Westmorland. In 1640 he was one of the signatories of a petition, raised by twelve peers who were said to have had secret negotiations with the Scots, which asked the King to summon a new Parliament. When, in 1639, he was ordered by the King to raise a regiment from his

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22 Fissell, The Bishops’ Wars, p. 192.
Westmorland estate, Wharton failed to do so agreeing to pay £500 in lieu. While there was not a clear demarcation between the gentry in their support for or against the King, or sympathy with the Scots, political manoeuvring at this time was the precursor to the development of a strong Parliamentarian faction across the north, particularly in Yorkshire, which would be very important in the lead-up to the first civil war.

At the beginning of the first civil war, many Parliamentarian supporters in Westmorland and the Yorkshire Dales joined the regiments of the Northern Association Army, commanded by Ferdinando, Lord Fairfax of Denton, near Otley in West Yorkshire. Officers under Ferdinando included his son, the future commander-in-chief of the New Model Army, Sir Thomas Fairfax, and John Lambert who would become a Major-General in the New Model Army, a leader of the military faction in government and a close associate of Oliver Cromwell. It was the forging of new friendships among men who joined these regiments that enabled the development of the friendship networks that spread and developed as units disbanded, reformed and moved around the country. Several of the regiments in the Northern Association and New Model armies became hot-beds of radicalism and for many individuals it would have been the first time that they had been introduced to radical political and religious ideas and to the radical movements that sprang up in the period. While it is clear, particularly from personal testimonies and letters, that many of the earliest Quaker leaders had at some time been soldiers in the Parliamentarian army the records of the period are limited. While there has been extensive research into the records of the officers in the Northern Association they

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24 Kelsey, ‘Wharton, Philip’, ODNB.
are sparse for officers below gentry status and if there were comprehensive lists of soldiers recruited they have not survived.25

A complication specific to the Quakers is that many of their testimonies of convincement were written years after the events they described, and they provide very little information or detail of their early life, education or activities prior to their convincement. This problem is compounded because after the Restoration in 1660, and the persecution that followed, the Quaker movement restructured itself and repudiated overt political activity. During the 1650s, fear of Quaker radicalism grew amongst a large section of society, particularly Members of Parliament. Advertising one’s connection to the radical politics of the army prior to the Restoration, or to the ideals of republicanism, would not have been a wise move after 1660.26 It is therefore likely that the testimonies written after 1660 were carefully edited to avoid references to connections with earlier radical movements.

Distancing itself from remnants of military radicalism and avoiding any possibility of being accused of involvement in, or connection to, any threatened rebellion was important for the reshaped movement. This means that documentation published in


I am interested in the military service of the earliest Quakers, those in Westmorland and the Dales in 1652. It is known that a significant number of officers and soldiers became Quakers after 1652. Richard Vann said that ninety-five Quakers had served in the Parliamentarian army, while Barry Reay said there were many more. In 1657 General Monk dismissed forty Quaker soldiers the majority with over fourteen years’ service. Reay, The Quakers and the English Revolution, pp. 18 - 19.

the early years of the Quaker movement is extremely important in providing an insight into the beliefs, views, aims and objectives of the earliest Quakers. This is particularly the case when looking at their political aims and objectives in the years after 1652.

George Fox’s *Journal* is itself an example of how the early history of the Quaker movement was reshaped. Dictated to his son-in-law, Thomas Lower, while in Worcester jail, it is accepted that *The Journal* was written in the years between 1673 and 1677. At this point in time Fox was looking back twenty years to the events of 1652 from the perspective of a refocused religious movement. Fox was editing his own history, eliminating details which were no longer relevant in the 1670s. While it is accepted that the *Journal* autobiographically records his life and travels and is a ‘classic of religious literature’, it is clear Fox deliberately edited out events and individuals. In *First Among Friends*, Ingle describes the *Journal* as ‘a shambles’, ‘a sprawling account of mystical experiences, encounters with opponents, travels into practically every corner of the country, and aggressive attacks on opponents’. He also says that Fox ‘calculatedly wrote minor dissidents out of his movement’s history or reduced their roles’. Fox had written an earlier record of his travels up to 1664 known as the ‘Short Journal’ which differs from the more comprehensive *Journal* and demonstrates the editing process undertaken. Braithwaite in *The Beginnings of Quakerism* says the ‘Short Journal’ should be more correctly called ‘a book of his early suffering’. He also says it is inaccurate in chronological sequence

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29 Ingle, *First Among Friends*, p. 250.
and details.\textsuperscript{32} Rosemary Moore says that when checked against other sources the *Journal* is generally correct but when compared with the ‘Short Journal’ there appears to be ‘a softening of the passages likely to offend’. She also says that the *Journal* does not mention incidents likely to ‘discredit Friends’, that it plays down the role of Elizabeth Hooton, that Fox’s account of the convincement of Naylor, Dewsbury and Farnworth differs from their own, and it plays down the active participation of Friends in pre-restoration politics.\textsuperscript{33}

This process of editing could explain why there is no explanation as to why Fox was in the Pendle area in 1652, who he intended to meet and who he did meet. I have suggested that Fox was seeking members of the Grindletonian community, specifically John Webster. It is possible therefore that the exclusion of any reference to such an intention, or any subsequent meeting, in the records of Fox and Webster was deliberate. Although Webster’s views in his published works from the period 1652 to 1655, clearly express a close affinity to those of the Quakers, he subsequently repudiated any connection to the movement, referring to them as fanatics.\textsuperscript{34} In the 1670s it was not in the interests of either party to recall a meeting or a close affinity.

**The Northern Association Army**

In 1642, in response to the earl of Newcastle being appointed to lead the King’s northern army, Ferdinando, Lord Fairfax, as the highest-ranking Parliamentarian in

\textsuperscript{32} Braithwaite, *The Beginnings of Quakerism*, p. 535.
\textsuperscript{33} Moore, *The Light*, pp. 229 – 230. Elizabeth Hooton became a follower of George Fox after meeting him in 1647. She devoted the rest of her life to the Quakers, dying in Jamaica in 1672 on her third visit to the New World. Moore, *The Light*, pp. 6 – 7.
\textsuperscript{34} Webster, *The Displaying of Supposed Witchcraft*, p. 138.
Yorkshire, was given command of Parliament’s forces in the north. An experienced soldier and leader he was immediately in a difficult position, facing a larger and better financed Royalist army. He was able to call upon men from the industrial area of west Yorkshire, which had suffered badly from the problems in the wool trade, and the disgruntled yeomen and farmers from the Pennines and the Dales. While the economic and fiscal policies of the King and his supporters were important in rallying support for the Parliamentarian cause, the King compounded the problem through his overt policy of recruiting Catholics, which further increased support for Parliament among Protestants. Fairfax was also able to recruit an officer corps from wealthier yeoman farmers, merchants and minor gentry, many with strong religious views who were committed to the Parliamentarian cause and could finance the raising of their own companies and troops. Finance would continue to be a problem; the Northern Army was consistently denied funds by Parliament, which used its resources to finance the army in the south. Fairfax had to rely on the commitment of his soldiers and officers whose pay was low and intermittent, but he was strengthened by bonds of solidarity that developed under him and his lieutenants’ leadership, specifically his son Thomas Fairfax and John Lambert.

John Lambert became a crucial figure in the development of radical movements within the military, not because he was an activist himself, but because of his apparent toleration of radicals and activists who were connected through service in the regiments under his direct command. He was at the forefront of the political rise of the leaders of the New Model Army and his influence and patronage were extremely important to those who sought to implement radical political change. His

toleration of, and support for, men with radical views were crucial in establishing an environment in which such views could be openly discussed and developed. 36 While there is no evidence to suggest that Lambert himself had radical religious views he was a friend to many men who did, and it has been said that his wife Frances may have been an early supporter of the Quakers, a view I will discuss later in this chapter. 37 Many of the earliest Quakers in my study were linked to the informal network of radical thinkers which developed around the military units under Lambert’s command, and I argue that it was via this network that Fox was made aware of the independent and separatist community in Westmorland, Lancashire and the Dales.

The north of England was involved in military activity from the beginning of the Civil War in 1642. Initially, for the purposes of this study, there are two centres of interest. Westmorland and Yorkshire. In Westmorland, as a leading supporter of the parliamentary movement, Lord Wharton was involved in its military activity from the very beginning. In February 1642, he was appointed Lord Lieutenant of Lancashire, and of Buckinghamshire, and was in command of a regiment of foot and a troop of cavalry in the army of the earl of Essex at the battle of Edgehill in October of that year. The regiment contained many men drawn from his Kirkby Stephen estate and the surrounding area and for many the battle was their first experience of large-scale warfare. Unfortunately for the men concerned, Wharton displayed a complete lack of leadership. He and his regiment were one of a number, ‘ignominiously swept from the field’, when charged by the cavalry of Prince Rupert.

He was afterwards accused of cowardice and of hiding in a sawpit by Prince Rupert, an accusation that earned him the nickname ‘Sawpit Wharton’.

None of the biographies or testimonies of the early Quakers from Westmorland record if they served in Wharton’s regiment. It may be that some of the older separatists and early Quakers, for example John Camm and Gervase Benson, who we know had some military service, were there at Edgehill with Wharton. Wharton was a convinced Puritan who, as I noted in chapter three, supported the Independent movement in Parliament and the radical separatist Thomas Taylor, the curate at Preston Patrick, to the distress of Henry Massey, the Presbyterian vicar of Kendal. His religious convictions and high profile may have attracted a significant number of like-minded recruits, while the violence, death, disarray and disorganisation they witnessed may have left a lasting impression. These experiences could have influenced the separatist views on religious and political freedom that developed through the 1640s.

The second area of interest centred around Yorkshire, where the Parliamentarian army of the Northern Association under Ferdinando, Lord Fairfax, faced a Royalist northern army under the command of the earl of Newcastle. Despite being numerically smaller and less well financed, Fairfax’s forces successfully resisted those of the earl in Yorkshire during 1642 – 1644, preventing them from moving south to join the King’s army. During these years John Lambert became

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increasingly influential through his military prowess. Having joined Fairfax in 1642 with no military experience his rise was rapid. By 1644, at the age of 25, he was a colonel leading a force of cavalry at the Battle of Marston Moor, following which he was sent to take the surrender of the Royalist city of York. In 1647 he was appointed commander of the Parliamentarian army in the north of England.40

In 1642 Lambert was one of several leading Puritans from Craven and the Yorkshire Dales who served under Lord Fairfax, including members of the Lister families of Thornton-in-Craven and Gisburn, and the Currer family of Kildwick. Lambert’s brother-in-law, William Lister, the oldest son of Sir William Lister, was killed at Tadcaster at the beginning of the conflict in 1642. Hugh Currer was a close associate of Lambert, serving under him in and around Craven, as was Hugh’s younger brother Henry who in 1646 was appointed governor of Skipton Castle. Hugh and Henry were the sons of Henry Currer of Kildwick, a radical puritan who was probably instrumental in the appointment of Roger Brearley as curate at Kildwick in 1623.41 From the earliest days of the civil war, men from Craven and the Dales were being recruited to the parliamentarian cause despite Skipton and its castle being strongly Royalist.

Lambert was effectively the leader of the Parliamentarian forces in Craven from the beginning of the civil war. In early 1643, he led the siege of Skipton Castle and recruited for Fairfax around Craven and in the Yorkshire Dales. The earliest records of officers in the army of the Northern Association clearly show that Lambert was

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40 Farr, ‘Lambert, John’, ODNB.
also recruiting men from Westmorland.\textsuperscript{42} Edward Briggs, from Westmorland, began his service with Lambert in Craven in 1643, becoming a captain and by 1645 he was commander-in-chief of the Westmorland foot.\textsuperscript{43} James Bellingham of Levens in Westmorland was quartered at Rylstone near Skipton in 1644.\textsuperscript{44} While these men were officers their recruitment suggests that men from Westmorland were also being recruited into the lower ranks of Lambert’s regiments. One name of interest is that of Captain William Tennant of Chapel House, near Conistone, between Kettlewell and Skipton in the Dales, who served with Lambert between 1643 and 1645.\textsuperscript{45}

The Tennant family was an established family in the Craven area around Giggleswick, Burnsall and Kettlewell, with connections to both Grindletonianism and the Quakers. They had acquired an estate around Kilnsey occupying Chapel House which was for many years the home of the vicar of Burnsall. In 1615, Richard Tennant was accused along with Roger Brearley of preaching at Gisburn without a licence and of refusing to produce one when required.\textsuperscript{46} He took over the Burnsall parish in 1619, sponsored by his father, and was rector there until 1653. The connection to Chapel House suggests a close family relationship between William and Richard, but while William was fighting for Parliament, Richard was fined £70 in 1649, for ‘adhering to royalists’.\textsuperscript{47} George Fox said in his \textit{Journal}, that when travelling from Pendle to Sedbergh in 1652, he stopped at the home of James Tennant at Scarhouse in Langstrothdale, who he convinced and who ‘lived and died

\textsuperscript{42} Jones, ‘The War in the North’, Appendix 1, Officers under Lord Fairfax 1642 to 1645.

\textsuperscript{43} Jones, ‘The War in the North’, p. 374.

\textsuperscript{44} Jones, ‘The War in the North’, p. 370.

\textsuperscript{45} Jones, ‘The War in the North’, p. 405.

\textsuperscript{46} Borthwick Institute, Vis 1615 CB fol. 69v, 70v.

in the truth’. Langstrothdale is a few miles north of Conistone and Burnsall, and the local geography strongly suggests that William, Richard and James were members of the same family.

Following the battle at Tadcaster on 7 December 1642, Lambert was involved in the attack on Leeds led by Sir Thomas Fairfax on 23 January 1643. In what appears to be a contemporaneous record of the attack it is interesting to note a reference to a James Nayler. The report says, ‘they got to the water-side and hid them in a little lane (James Nayler one of the dragooners being first)’. We cannot be certain but by naming him specifically the writer gave a clear indication that this was the same James Nayler that would become a soldier, quartermaster and preacher in John Lambert’s regiments. The same James Nayler was a close associate of George Fox and a very important leader of the early Quaker movement. Nayler was with Lambert between 1648 and 1650, when his regiments operated in Westmorland and fought in Scotland alongside Cromwell. Nayler would become a central figure in an extended informal network of like-minded individuals; religious and social radicals who came together during the civil war and interacted with the separatist community in Westmorland. I will argue that Fox’s meeting with Nayler in 1652 led to a significant change in the pattern of Fox’s travels and that he was instrumental in persuading Fox to travel from West Yorkshire to Westmorland. In doing so Nayler played a crucial part in the genesis of the Quaker movement.

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Another of the earliest followers of Fox, William Dewsbury, was also part of the extended network and was probably party to the decision to travel to Westmorland. He was, with Nayler, one of the early recruits to the Northern Association Army. Born in east Yorkshire, Dewsbury was apprenticed to a clothier based near Leeds. Like many people of this period, including George Fox, Dewsbury struggled with his religion; he found it difficult to find any form of religious worship or ceremony that gave him spiritual satisfaction. In *The Discovery of the Great Enmity of the Serpent against the seed of Woman* (1655), written while incarcerated in Northampton gaol, Dewsbury gave an account of his life and his struggle with his faith, explaining how he moved from one form of religion to another before he was convinced. He explained that one of the reasons for his move to Leeds was because, ‘my sorrow and misery was so great it constrained me to run to those of the world called Ministers and Professors’. But he found no comfort there, ‘which added to my sorrow, telling me to believe in Christ, I knew not where he was’. In his *Journal* Fox made a similar observation; ‘I had forsaken the priests…left the separate preachers also…for I saw there was none among them all that could speak of my condition’. Dewsbury, failing to complete his apprenticeship, at the beginning of the civil war entered the service of Parliament. As with Nayler, he would have joined the army of the Northern Association that drew many men from the clothing districts of West Yorkshire.

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53 William Dewsbury and Joseph Stor, *A Discovery of the ground from whence the Persecution did arise, and the proceedings of those that were Actors in it, in Northamptonshire, against the Servant of the Most High God William Dewsbury, whom they have cast into Prison for the Word of God, and for the testimony of Jesus Christ*. (London, 1655), p. 11.
It is unclear how long he served. Some suggest that it was only for a short period.\textsuperscript{54} However, in \textit{The Discovery of the Great Enmity of the Serpent}, there is an indication that he served a longer period. He describes at some length how disappointed he was with his comrades, finding ‘as much ignorance of the Gospel as in those I had been with’. He then says he went to Scotland because he ‘heard there was in Scotland a reformed church’, but ‘found nothing but formality’ and returned to England where he ‘went among Anabaptists and Independents… but I could not join them’. It was at this point in 1651 that he said, ‘And the word of the Lord came unto me and said put up thy sword into thy scabbard…then I could no longer fight with a carnal weapon against a carnal man….and caused me to leave the army’.\textsuperscript{55} The implication of this statement is that Dewsbury’s army service would have been similar in length to that of James Nayler, taking him from Yorkshire to Scotland with John Lambert.

It also suggests that Dewsbury and Nayler had known each other for several years which gives us a greater insight into their first meeting with Fox at Lieutenant Roper’s house in 1652, when both were convinced.

Nayler and Dewsbury were not the only people involved in the Parliamentarian army at the end of the 1640s who were amongst the earliest followers of George Fox. As I have already noted, many testimonies and biographies of the earliest Quakers were written years later, only referring briefly to periods of military service or omitting reference to them completely. We do know however, that a number of those who were leaders of the independent community and the early Quakers in Westmorland, in addition to John Camm and Gervase Benson, were also involved in the military.

\textsuperscript{55} Dewsbury, \textit{The Discovery}, pp. 15 - 18.
Specifically, they were with the forces of Cromwell and Lambert in Scotland up to 1650 and involved in the battle of Dunbar.

Although there is no record in any biography or in his published works, we can place Thomas Taylor, the founder and original leader of the independent community in Westmorland and the Dales, with the Parliamentarian Army, in Scotland in 1650. In the State Papers, Domestic, September 1650, there is a record of a commission being awarded to Thomas Rippon to be major of four troops of dragoons, which also shows that a Thomas Taylor was appointed ‘Minister’. Rippon was from the Lancaster area, he was mayor of the city in 1653–54, and would have raised his troops from the surrounding area. Preston Patrick, where Taylor was based was within that area. In his Journal, George Fox implies that Rippon became a Quaker in 1652, being convinced at the same time as Gervaise Benson. It is however doubtful that Rippon was convinced or remained a follower for very long. What is clear is that between 1650 and 1652, Rippon was close to the independent community and that it is very likely that it was Thomas Taylor, the leader of that community, who was appointed chaplain to his troops.

Another of the early Quakers who was in Scotland with the Parliamentarian army in 1650 was Richard Hubberthorn. Born in northern Lancashire he ‘was of good parentage and liberal education’ and was said to be a captain in the army where he was known for ‘a zeal for promoting righteousness’ and where he, ‘preached occasionally to the soldiers and others’. Fox recorded that when Hubberthorn was

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convinced he became a ‘faithful minister’ at the same time as Camm, Audland and Howgill.\(^5\) Hubberthorn served in the Parliamentarian army from 1648 and he was in Scotland at Dunbar and later at the battle of Worcester.\(^6\) Also at Dunbar were the brothers John and Thomas Stubbs, who quit the army in 1652/53, and were listed among the ‘Valiant Sixty’, the first ‘missionaries of Quakerism’.\(^7\) Robert Barwick of Kelk in the Dales had been a Cornet under Lambert, he became a Quaker and died in prison having refused to take an oath.\(^8\) Captain Alexander Heblethwaite, who lived close to Dent, near Sedbergh, also served with the northern Parliamentarian army. From a minor gentry family, he classed himself as a yeoman in his will, Heblethwaite was convinced by George Fox in early 1652. He was a committed Quaker who was jailed several times because of his beliefs and his opposition to the payment of tithes.\(^9\) Individuals who had served in the northern armies of Parliament were central to the informal network into which George Fox was introduced and which would lead him to Westmorland in 1652.

William Edmundson, born at Little Musgrove in Westmorland, was an experienced soldier who was present at both the battles of Dunbar and Worcester. He became a Quaker and on leaving the army he settled in Ireland where he founded the first Quaker meeting and became the leading preacher and organiser on the island.\(^10\) Edmundson and the Irish connection also provides an interesting link with the

Grindletonians. He became a close friend and neighbour of William Barcroft, a Quaker and another former soldier, said to have been a major in Cromwell’s army, who also moved to Ireland. Originally Barcroft was from Foulridge, near Colne, in Lancashire, close to Pendle Hill and Grindleton. It is very likely that William Barcroft had been a Grindletonian, like his brother, Thomas, also a Quaker, who in his Testimony, said:

I have had in tymes long since past sweet society and union in spirit in the days of the shimmering light under the ministry of Brearley, Tenant and some more whose memories I honour, called then by the proffessors of the world, Grindletonians, Antinomians, Heretics and Sectaries and such like names of reproach.

William Barcroft’s son John, who became a very influential and highly respected Quaker preacher, said that the first Quaker meeting he attended at the age of four was at the home of William Edmundson. The connection between Edmundson, with his relationship to Westmorland and the army, and Barcroft with his connections to the Grindletonians and also to the army, exemplifies how the informal extended network linked individuals, the army, independent religious communities, Grindletonians and George Fox. In the next section of this chapter I explain how

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65 Runk, Barcroft family records: p. 128; LG/3 Barcroft, ‘Barcroft Family Notes,’ pp. 11 - 13; Franklin, Joseph Barcroft: Journal of the Friends Historical Society, III, pp. 11 – 12; I have been unable to find any record of Major Barcroft in records of either the Northern Association Army or the New Model Army.
this network developed and why it was such an important part of the decision-making process that led George Fox to Firbank Fell.

**Establishing a godly network.**

It would be wrong to believe that there was a single centre around which the network developed, although it could be argued that there were events and people who were more central than peripheral. These events included the civil wars and one of the individuals was John Lambert. In relation to Lambert and the Quaker movement, his importance to the promotion of radical religious views is not because of his own religious commitment. While he is said to have had no religion, he developed a broad religious outlook, accepting that a diversity of beliefs could be accommodated in the right political framework. From the earliest days of achieving military rank and responsibility it appears that Lambert was aligned with religious and political Independents.\(^68\) Between 1645 and 1652, he appointed a series of Independents as chaplain to his regiments, the first being Arthur Bramley, a sectarian lecturer who served between 1645 and 1647. The second, William Erbery, was appointed in 1647.\(^69\)

‘God’s party’

The Parliamentarian cause was divided into several factions, but the two most important were the Independents (including the Congregationalists and the Separatists) who were characterised as the ‘war party’, and the Presbyterians who were the ‘peace party’.\(^70\) In Parliament the Presbyterians held sway, but, although

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\(^69\) Laurence, *Parliamentary Army Chaplains*, p. 194.

\(^70\) Jones, ‘The War in the North’, p. 149.
they were fewer in number, within the army, particularly the senior officers of the New Model Army, it was the Independents who were in control. Like Lambert, from the beginning of the Civil War, Oliver Cromwell aligned himself with the Independents and their importance and influence grew as Cromwell took control of the Parliamentarian military machine.\textsuperscript{71} The religious Independents advocated liberty of conscience and freedom of religion, the complete separation of church and the state and were strongly opposed to the Presbyterian form of church governance.

Independents believed that the Saints should be able to come together in fellowship. The Saints, as described by William Erbery, were ‘they in whom Christ is revealed…the same God and Father being in our flesh as in his will raise us up to the same glory of Christ risen’.\textsuperscript{72} The Saints would gather together to worship, forming individual ‘gathered churches’, and, as the influence of the religious independents grew, it became common for soldiers in the New Model Army to gather together in groups of varying size for prayer and scripture study. Impromptu praying aloud was encouraged, and it became the practice to allow regular preaching by anyone who felt they had a calling. Fast days and days of humiliation were organised, and the singing of hymns and psalms when marching into battle was popular and encouraged. These activities helped to reinforce religious conviction among all ranks, creating an ‘esprit de corps which is almost unparalleled in the history of modern warfare’.\textsuperscript{73} Clearly day-to-day religious practice was important, but it was not the formal practice of the established, organised churches, it was informal, more

\textsuperscript{71} Haller, ‘The Word of God’, pp. 15 – 33.
\textsuperscript{73} Drake, ‘The Ideology of Oliver Cromwell’, p.265.
spontaneous and personal, and had the effect of galvanizing bonds of comradeship and loyalty.\textsuperscript{74}

There was a widespread belief among the soldiers that they were carrying out God’s work. Independents, including Cromwell, believed that God’s will was exercised through the work of men, and to Cromwell his military success clearly showed that he was an effective instrument of God. It was this view that reinforced the idea among the men of the New Model Army that they were ‘God’s party’.\textsuperscript{75} In the more actively religious regiments the all-pervading view of doing God’s work must have directly influenced the religious views of the less devout. Conversion may be too strong a description for the change that individuals experienced, but for many, immersion in this environment changed their views on religion. An environment was being created where freedom of expression could flourish, and it was this environment that acted as an incubator of radical religious and political views. This freedom, and the radical ideas it helped to spawn, played an important and influential role in the politics of the 1650s.

**John Lambert**

From the age of twenty-two, John Lambert was fully immersed in the military. The bonds that develop between men who share the hardship, pain and loss, particularly


in conflict situations, can be close and long lasting. The importance of the shared experiences of Lambert and men under his command cannot be over emphasised. In this context Lambert’s own apparent religious ambivalence and his belief in freedom of choice, enabled him to maintain close ties with the Catholics in his extended family while at the same time developing strong and lasting relationships with both radical Protestant and politically radical soldiers, many of whom would eventually become Quakers. In the same way Lambert’s political views, which led him to advocate military rule, were formed and shaped by his military experience and the attempt by parliamentarian Presbyterians to abolish the New Model Army, after they failed to effectively control it.\textsuperscript{76}

For Lambert, 1647 was a pivotal year. It was the year when he became increasingly involved and influential in defining the political policies of the army and its views on parliamentarian governance. It was also the year he was made commander of the army in the north of England, which was still technically separate from the New Model Army. Lambert had become heavily involved in disputes between the army and Presbyterian parliamentarians who seemed determined to provoke a confrontation to reinforce their authority. Unrest was increasing within the ranks of the army over their treatment by Parliament and Lambert was prominent in the fight for improved benefits. He led officers to refuse to serve in Ireland until their demands for payment of arrears, regular pay, allowances for the wounded, and indemnity, for all ranks, had been satisfied. He also demanded that there be no impressment for service in Ireland.\textsuperscript{77}

\textsuperscript{76} Braddick, \textit{God’s Fury}, p. 480.
\textsuperscript{77} Farr, \textit{John Lambert}, pp. 49 - 50.
Lambert was also one of a committee of officers who prepared *A Vindication of Officers*, a document which was to be presented to Parliament, in which both officers and soldiers expressed their anger at being branded enemies of the state when all that they were demanding was that Parliament addressed their legitimate demands. The protests of some groups were far more radical and vociferous. A pamphlet, *A New Found Stratagem*, was circulated by officers in Lambert’s regiment, accusing ‘false, traitorous and deceitful men in both Houses of Parliament’, who had combined with ‘proud covetous Priests’ of wishing to ‘dominate’ and ‘inslave’ them, and it was only ‘this army’ that could save them. Lambert also called upon each regiment to outline their grievances in writing which were then presented to Parliament by a committee of officers only for them to be rejected. A group of serving Presbyterian officers objected to the list of grievances, accusing Lambert of personally manipulating the regimental returns to exaggerate the content. Over fifty subsequently resigned their commissions.

In the summer of 1647, Lambert was selected as one of five army commissioners appointed to negotiate with the Commissioners of Parliament in a move where they sought to exercise their increasing authority and remove their main Presbyterian opposition in Parliament. In July 1647, a document, *Heads of the Proposals*, was produced which outlined the basis for a constitutional settlement with the King. While there has been a debate about who drew up this document, politicians or senior army officers, there is a very strong argument in favour of it being the work of

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78 Anon, *A New Found Stratagem Framed in the Old Forge of Machivilsme, and put upon the Inhabitants of the County of Essex. To Destroy the Army under his Excellency Sir Thomas Fairfax.* (London, 1647), p. 9.
Commissary-General, Henry Ireton, and other senior officers, prominent among them being John Lambert.\textsuperscript{80} At this point, regiments of the Northern Association Army mutinied against their Presbyterian commander Sydenham Poynts and Lambert was appointed in his place.

It is unlikely that Lambert played any part in the mutiny, but he had remained close to officers and men in the north, particularly the leaders of the mutiny, including John Hodgson who had served with Lambert. His links to the mutiny’s leaders were well known and noted by Anne Overton, the wife of Colonel Robert Overton, who in a letter to Cromwell said that Lambert would not have been accepted if there had been a fair election, but ‘the present fraternity of agitators carie itt’.\textsuperscript{81} Lambert quickly set about restructuring the northern army on similar lines to the New Model Army and, with the start of the second civil war, prepared to meet an expected invasion from Scotland. From 1648, through to the battle of Worcester in 1651, much of his time was spent campaigning in North Yorkshire, Westmorland, Scotland and the border region. He was therefore away from London and was not directly involved in the discussions amongst the senior officers who outlined the army’s plans for the second war, or in the decision to put Charles I on trial, beginning the process that would lead to his execution. Lambert was not a regicide. He did not sign the execution warrant. Yet documents exist that show he gave his support to \textit{The Remonstrance of General Fairfax and the Council of Officers} that outlined the intention of the New Model Army to try the King as an enemy of the people. \textit{The Remonstrance} was a radical document prepared by the army in opposition to

\textsuperscript{80} Farr, \textit{John Lambert}, pp. 57 - 62.

\textsuperscript{81} BL. Add. Mss 18979, fol. 252, quoted in, Farr, \textit{John Lambert}, p. 65.
Parliament’s attempts to make a treaty with the King. A letter was prepared expressing support for the *Remonstrance* which was signed by Lambert and officers ‘close to him’, including Robert Lilburne, Adam Baynes, John Hodgson, William Siddall and John Hatfield. Lilburne and Baynes were particularly close to Lambert and both were seen to be very sympathetic to the Quaker movement. Hodgson and Siddall both became Quakers after 1652.

**William Erbery**

In 1647, when John Lambert was selected as an army commissioner and the *Heads of the Proposals* was written, Lambert’s army chaplain was William Erbery. Erbery was a Cambridge educated Welshman who had established a reputation as a radical protestant with strong support for the New Model Army and its role in reforming society. Well known for his opposition to episcopacy and the church hierarchy

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82 *The Army Remonstrance, 1648*, proclaimed the sovereignty of the people under a representative government. It proposed a set of constitutional reforms which included Parliament setting a date for its own dissolution to be followed by annual or bi-annual Parliaments elected under a reformed franchise, and a written constitution. The document was heavily influenced by Leveller policies. When Parliament refused to consider the *Remonstrance* and was close to agreeing a treaty with Charles I, the army prepared to march on London and Commissar-General Ireton began the series of events which led to the dismissal of Members of Parliament in what is known as Pride’s Purge.


84 Robert Lilburne. Born in co. Durham, he was a leading radical in the New Model Army. He was governor of Newcastle, (1647), deputy Major-General to Lambert in Yorkshire, Durham and the north. He served in the north through 1647 - 1649, defeating Royalist forces at Wigan in 1648, before joining Lambert and Cromwell at the battle of Preston and serving with them at Dunbar. He was made commander-in-chief of the army in Scotland in 1652. He was a committed opponent of the King, supporter of the army, the protectorate, and supported Lambert militarily and politically throughout the 1650s. A consistent advocate of toleration of separatist groups, he supported the Baptists before becoming a Quaker. A regicide he was tried and found guilty of treason in 1660, but his sentence of death was commuted to life in prison. His brother was John Lilburne, the Leveller leader who became a Quaker at the end of his life; Barry Coward, ‘Lilburne, Robert (bap. 1614, d. 1665)’, *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography*, Oxford University Press, 2004; online edn. Jan 2008 [http://www.oxforddnb.com/view/16655, accessed 11 Jan 2016]; Adam Baynes was an officer in Lambert’s regiment. He became Lambert’s financial agent and owed his wealth and status to Lambert’s patronage. Baynes was clearly sympathetic to and spoke in defence of James Nayler when he was prosecuted. He displayed a disregard for Presbyterians and was regarded as a friend of Quakers. He was also in regular correspondence with Quaker officers and with John Lambert’s wife Frances; David Scott, ‘Baynes, Adam (bap. 1622, d. 1671)’, *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography*, Oxford University Press, 2004; online edn, Jan 2008[http://www.oxforddnb.com/view/article/1777, accessed 11 Jan 2016]; BL, Baynes correspondence, Add. MS 21417 - 21427.
Erbery had been cited in the court of high commission while a young vicar in Cardiff. He gave up his living to travel around the south of Wales and the west of England as an itinerant preacher advocating independency and condemning the established church. Known as ‘the champion of the Seekers’, he was outspoken in his support for the poor, denouncing the system of church tithes and the role of the courts, saying that, ‘Clergy-men and Common Lawyers are the chiepest oppressors therein’.

At the beginning of the Civil War, Erbery became chaplain to the regiment of Robert Devereux, 3rd Earl of Essex, where he became a regular contributor to theological disputations, enhancing his radical reputation. In 1647, he transferred to the service of Lambert where his preaching was said to delight ordinary soldiers who held him in high esteem. After the surrender of Oxford to the Parliamentarian army, Lambert had been made governor and Erbery spoke in several disputations in the city, opposing the doctrines of the Presbyterian ministers sent to the university by Parliament to preach to the scholars. Condemned by the Presbyterian ministers, he was forced to leave Oxford.

He was a staunch supporter of the Parliamentarian army which he said had the right to act in politics, as he believed it was ‘a more effective instrument of God’s will than parliament’. Erbery was Lambert’s chaplain for only a short period in 1647, but his influence was extensive. In chapter three I identified a widespread separatist religious community in Westmorland and the Yorkshire Dales, where the members believed in and practised many of the views expressed by Erbery. They had dispensed with the ceremony, hierarchy and episcopacy of the established church, they were against the imposition of tithes and objected to what they believed was the oppression of the

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86 Roberts, ‘Erbery, William (1604/5-1654)’.
87 Brook, *The Lives of the Puritans*, p. 187; Roberts, ‘Erbery, William (1604/5-1654)’.
magistracy. This was a community which had grown out of hardship, one which had learnt to survive through their own effort and hard work and one where an independent lifestyle had grown out of isolation.

In Westmorland and the Dales family histories, records and traditions were oral records passed from generation to generation. Information, particularly about local matters, was passed by word-of-mouth and stored in the memory with all the subjectivity implicit in personal recollections. While local histories remained unwritten the memory of older family members was crucial to establishing both family and local traditions, including the memory of actual and perceived hardship.\(^9^9\) A strong sense of identity is rooted in local history and memory validates people’s interpretation of history which in turn determines their view of the present.\(^9^0\) Problems from the sixteenth century would have been well known within families, including disputes with the church, magistrates, the monarchy and harsh landlords. Famine, starvation, disease and high mortality would have been firmly in the memory of many as the suffering continued through the early decades of the seventeenth century. In the 1640s financial, social and economic problems were exacerbated by the civil wars; ‘Young men who had served Cromwell and Lambert at Dunbar, Preston and Worcester … returned to the fellside farms to find great want’.\(^9^1\) The threat of history repeating itself was real for many tenant farmers who were living under the threat of financial ruin as the countess of Pembroke continued to conduct a vigorous case against them in Chancery.

William Erbery, the champion of the poor, the critic of the courts, the established church and the payment of tithes, was preaching directly to the people of the separatist religious community. The success of Cromwell and the Parliamentarian cause offered the opportunity for social, economic and religious change. The preaching of men like Erbery and the arguments of radical activists suggested change was within reach and must have given the separatists hope, perhaps the expectation, that change was coming. In 1647, although he may not have toured the area preaching, Erbery was speaking to the soldiers of the northern army and it was they who took the message home to the towns, villages and valleys of Westmorland and the Dales. The separatist religious group that had grown there supported the Parliamentarian cause, expecting that a reformed society would bring liberty of conscience and freedom of worship.

The search for a personally satisfactory way of worshiping God had led to the growth of a large and actively independent religious community, formed, moulded and enfranchised by their social, religious and economic history. George Fox came into this environment galvanising many of the religious independents with his religious convictions, his message of trust in God, his vision of religious freedom and of personal salvation. In the following section I examine how the informal network created during the 1640s led Fox to Firbank Fell, Westmorland, in 1652.

**Transformative meetings and a new direction for Fox**

In the winter of 1651, George Fox travelled into south Yorkshire. Ingle, in *First Among Friends*, said that Fox, ‘gave no indication that he sensed anything different
about the land and he certainly did not know what was in store for him’. It was therefore, during the next few months when Fox was travelling around Yorkshire that he made a series of contacts, convincing several key followers, that proved to be transformational in the birth of the Quaker movement.

Fox probably travelled the short distance from Nottinghamshire to Yorkshire to meet a group of Seekers in the Balby area, now a suburb of Doncaster. From here Fox went to the area around Wakefield where he said, ‘James Nayler lived, where hee & Tho: Goodyeere was convict & Will: Dewsbury’. At Balby, Fox had convinced Richard Farnsworth. Now at Stanley he had convinced Nayler and Dewsbury and these three men would travel with Fox over the following crucial weeks. From a letter written in 1654, we know that Nayler had accompanied Fox when he left Wakefield travelling into North Yorkshire, where one of their first meetings was with a former officer in the New Model Army, Richard Pursgrove.

The convincement of James Nayler was a turning point for George Fox. Over the following days and weeks, Nayler introduced Fox to a network of individuals who were, or had been, soldiers in the regiments of John Lambert’s northern army; individuals who were likely to listen to George Fox and be receptive to his radical religious ideas. Although there is no documentary evidence of this, and Fox did say he visited John Leeke who had visited Fox when he was in Derby prison, the subsequent events support my argument that Nayler had a significant influence over

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92 Ingle, First Among Friends, p. 72.
94 This was probably at the house of Lieutenant Roper at Stanley, north of Wakefield; Nickalls, The Journal, p. 73; Penney, The Journal, Vol. I, p. 16.
95 Swarthmore, MSS iii, 6.
Fox’s subsequent movements. George Fox had for years travelled from town to town, area to area in what was clearly an unstructured and unplanned way, after his first meeting with Nayler he undertook a planned and structured journey which would lead him to Westmorland.

**James Nayler**

James Nayler was a key intermediary for George Fox in 1652, and, until his disgrace in 1656, one of the Quaker movement’s most important, influential and charismatic leaders. Born near Wakefield in 1618 into a farming family, we know that in 1643 he was a farmer, married with three children, but otherwise we know little of his family, education or his religious views. Gough suggests his family were of yeoman status, describing him as a ‘man of excellent natural parts’, saying he ‘had received a tolerable education in his native language’. The suggestion that he had some education is supported by the fact that he was a very impressive and eloquent speaker, and a very able writer.

In 1643, Nayler enlisted in the cavalry troop of Captain Christopher Copley, a unit raised in west Yorkshire and part of the Northern Association Army. He fought with Copley’s troop throughout the northern campaign, including at the capture of Leeds, under Thomas Fairfax and then James Lambert. Copley appointed Nayler Quartermaster of his troop in 1644 and when they came under the direct command of Lambert in 1647, Lambert appointed Nayler to the same position. Records show that Nayler was in attendance at Lambert’s Council of Officers in 1647/48 and at the

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meeting in 1648 where Lambert and his officers sent their letter supporting *The Remonstrance of General Fairfax and the Council of Officers* that outlined the intention of the New Model Army to try the King as an enemy of the people. These records put Nayler at the heart of the radical group of officers under Lambert’s command including those who would become Quakers, Hodgson and Siddall, or would demonstrate sympathy to the Quaker movement, Baynes and Robert Lilburne. They also indicate that Nayler was well regarded by John Lambert. In 1656 Lambert acknowledged their friendship when Nayler was brought before Parliament accused of blasphemy. Lambert said:

> It is matter of sadness to many men’s hearts, and sadness also to mine especially in regard to his relation sometimes to me. He was two years my quarter-master, and a very useful person. We parted with him with great regret. He was a man of a very unblameable life and conversation, a member of a very sweet society of an independent church.

There are no records that give us an indication of the religious views Nayler held before he joined the army, but reports of an encounter in 1650, after the battle of Dunbar, tell us that he had become a powerful and charismatic preacher:

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99 Robert Lilburne’s brother was John Lilburne, the Leveller leader who became a Quaker at the end of his life; Neelon, ‘James Nayler’, p. 31.
100 Damrosch, ‘Nayler, James’, *ODNB*; In October 1656, Nayler who was by then one of the most significant Quaker preachers, entered Bristol on a horse in what was said to be an imitation of Christ’s entry into Jerusalem. He was found guilty and his conviction proved to be a significant turning point for the Quaker movement.
A person of some note, who had been an officer under
Oliver Cromwell, related...the following anecdote:-

‘After the battle of Dunbar...I observed, at some distance
from the road, a crowd of people, and one higher than the
rest...I sent one of my men to see and bring me word...
[when he didn’t return] I sent a second, who staid in like
manner, and then I determined To go myself. When I came
thither, I found it was James Nayler preaching to the people;
but with such power and reaching energy, as I had not till
then been witness of...I was struck with more terror by the
preaching of James Nayler, than I was at the battle of Dunbar...
The people there...cried out against themselves, imploring
mercy, a thorough change, and the whole work of salvation
to be effected in them.'102

It is unlikely that this would have been a single example of Nayler’s preaching and
his ability to hold the attention of a crowd. It is likely that he practised these skills as
one of the leaders of the prayer and scripture study groups popular among the
Parliamentarian soldiers, and as one of Lambert’s captains, lieutenants, troupers,
pastors and ministers allowed by the council of Edinburgh to preach at the ‘Eist
Kirk... being the speci all kirk and best in toun’.103 The obvious power of Nayler’s

102 John Barclay, Diary of Alexander Jaffray, Provost of Aberdeen, One of the Scottish
Commissioners of King Charles II and a member of Cromwell’s Parliament: To which are added
103 D. Laing, Ed., John Nicoll A Diary of Public Transactions and other occurrences, chiefly in
Scotland from January 1650 to June 1667, (Edinburgh, 1836), p. 68
preaching at Dunbar suggests that when George Fox first met Nayler in 1652, he was meeting an experienced and clearly charismatic preacher. The meeting with Fox also had a profound effect on Nayler. When under examination at Appleby sessions, Nayler explained how, after leaving the army, he had returned home to the family farm. He left to take up a life as an itinerant preacher when he heard a voice commanding him to leave both his home and family.104 The meeting with Fox was transformative for Nayler; once convinced his life had new meaning, a direction and a purpose. During the following four years James Nayler became a leading preacher, a charismatic leader and a prolific and persuasive writer in the Quaker movement.

James Nayler had a long record of service in the Northern Association Army and the New Model Army. He had been part of John Lambert’s Council of Officers and was clearly well known among both the rank and file soldiers and the officer corps. My argument is that Nayler’s influence is evident in the route Fox took, and the individuals he met, as he travelled around Yorkshire; individuals who had strong connections to the northern army and James Lambert’s regiments. Following the meeting with Pursgrove, Fox and his companions who now included Pursgrove, went to the home near Beverley, of Sir John Hotham, who Ingle said was also an officer in the New Model Army. Fox said he was well received here, indicating that he used Hotham’s home as a base, returning there several times as he travelled around the area, including a visit to York.105 Fox then relates how he met Luke Robinson, a JP, MP for Scarborough, and a member of Oliver Cromwell’s Council

105 Ingle, First Among Friends, p. 75.
of State. Unlike most Justices of the Peace who had no time for Fox or his views, Robinson spent time discussing and debating with Fox and provided him with some protection while in the area. Robinson was a friend of James Nayler, speaking in Nayler’s defence when he was prosecuted by Parliament in 1656, as did John Lambert. 106 While he was in the area Fox also describes how he conducted a ‘great meetinge’ at the home of Colonel Robert Overton, a leading independent and republican who had served alongside Lambert and Fairfax. 107 I am suggesting that behind these meetings can be seen the influence of Nayler.

The ‘olde preist’

It was while preaching in the same area of Yorkshire around Pickering and Malton, that George Fox met a priest who I will argue was an important source of information on the history of religious independence in the area around Yorkshire and the Dales, and specifically on influential individuals and current local activity. In the Journal, Fox refers to an ‘olde preist’, to ‘Mr Boys’, and to a preacher who called Fox his ‘brother’. 108 As is the case with much of the Journal further details are missing making it hard to identify precisely ‘Mr Boys’, the ‘olde preist’. Having considered priests with similar names practising in this area of Yorkshire and the possibility of a connection to a former student at the University of Leiden in Holland, Stephen Wright suggested that the ‘olde preist’ was either ‘Thomas Boyes, churchwarden, or Roger Boyes, both of Lockton’, or alternatively ‘William Boyes of Goathland’. 109 I will argue that the priest was almost certainly William Boyes,

Perpetual Curate at Goathland in North Yorkshire, who can be directly linked to Roger Brearley and the Grindletonians.

William Boyes was a well-known radical preacher who had been brought to the attention of the church authorities as early as 1620, when he was called before the High Commission to be admonished, told to reform his manner and behaviour and to correct his errors in religion. In May 1627, Boyes was one of several Puritan priests before the High Commission at York accused of organising regular meetings of preachers, exercises, where theological issues were discussed and debated. One of the other priests accused and brought before the High Commission on the same day in May was Roger Brearley. Most of the records of the prosecutions were subsequently destroyed but those that exist indicate that the authorities believed there was an organised group of Puritan preachers, from across the diocese of York, who were meeting to debate arguments that the church considered heretical, blasphemous and which they argued could promote schism. Brearley’s case was dismissed while Boyes agreed to reform his errors.

In his Journal, Fox observes that Boyes was very well known and respected by the communities in North Yorkshire and there is clearly an implication that an affinity developed between the two men as they travelled together for several days around the area. While they were together it is certain they would have discussed the nature and form of religious worship and the practises of the area. Although he had been prosecuted for non-conformity, and refused to accept tithes, Boyes still preached in a

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110 Marchant, The Puritans and the Church Courts, p. 41.
111 Marchant, The Puritans and the Church Courts, pp. 45 – 49.
church where he invited Fox to speak, an invitation Fox refused.\textsuperscript{112} It is almost certain, I would suggest, that Boyes would have told Fox about the large independent religious group that was based across the northern Yorkshire Dales, about Thomas Taylor their former leader who was now a lecturer at Richmond, and about Boyes’s own historical connection to Roger Brearley and the Grindletonians. He would have also explained that Grindletonians were still active around Clitheroe and the Craven area, where John Webster, former curate at Kildwick and a professed Grindletonian, was now vicar of Mitton, a doctor who had been both a chaplain and a surgeon in the Parliamentarian army.

The convincement of James Nayler and the meeting with William Boyes were crucial events that were turning points for George Fox. Nayler and Boyes introduced him to a network of like-minded individuals that existed within the communities of northern Yorkshire, the Dales and Westmorland, linked by their religious independence, their service in the Parliamentarian army and their experience of radicalisation. I suggest that these meetings were transformative for Fox; they were instrumental in opening for him a new vista, one he would famously describe following his visit to Pendle Hill.

**Pendle Hill**

Returning to West Yorkshire, Fox attended another meeting at the home of Lieutenant Roper where Nayler, Dewsbury, Goodyear, Richard Farnsworth and Thomas Aldam were all present. Fox said this was a ‘great meeting of many

\textsuperscript{112} Penney, *The Journal*, Vol. I, pp. 25 – 28. Fox believed that a church building was not the house of God. When invited into the church Fox said, ‘ye steeplehouse was exceedinge much painted and I tolde him…the beast had a painted house’, and that he was not there, ‘to holde uppe these temples’. Penny, *The Journal*, p. 28.
considerable men… that those great men did generally confess and believe that this Truth must go over the whole world'.\footnote{Penney, The Journal, Vol. I, p. 37; Nickalls, The Journal, p. 100.} I argue that it was at this meeting that Fox and his followers decided to travel to Westmorland. It was here they agreed on the route to be taken, through the Dales, via Clitheroe, exploring the network of like-minded individuals Fox was now aware of and the contacts Nayler and Dewsbury had made in the army.

From Wakefield, Fox says he went to ‘High Tounde’, which Nickalls identifies as High Town, an area close to Liversedge on the road to Halifax. He then went towards Bradford where he met Farnsworth and the two men would have continued westward along the valley of the eastward flowing Yorkshire river Calder, and the westward flowing Lancashire Calder. This route would take them from Halifax, to Burnley, via Sowerby Bridge, Hebden Bridge, and over the moor from Heptonstall,
or along the river via Todmorden, well-established packhorse routes between the textile areas of Lancashire and Yorkshire. There is a very good reason why Fox took this route, it would take him to Clitheroe and Grindleton where I suggest he intended to meet with what remained of the Grindletonian community, and John Webster.

The way to Clitheroe from Burnley would have taken him round Pendle Hill (Figures 1 and 2), via Sabden or Barley, where from either village it is a steep climb to the top. It was from the top of Pendle Hill that Fox said, ‘ye Lorde lett mee see a toppe of ye hill In what places hee had a great people [to be gathered].’

The map of the Pendle area, Appendix One, shows the location of Clitheroe and Grindleton and the routes Fox could have taken around Pendle Hill having arrived at Burnley after crossing the Pennines.

Unlike on any of his earlier travels around the country, Fox’s Journal gives no details of any discussions, meetings, or preaching undertaken on his journey across the Pennines or while he was in the area round Pendle. This is strange as Fox took every opportunity to preach, and the north-east of Lancashire through which he had travelled was socially and economically very similar to west Yorkshire. The local economy was based on subsistence farming, the sheep and wool trades, and although there were influential Catholic families, the area around Burnley, Marsden (now Nelson) and Colne was predominantly Protestant. This should have been a fertile ground for Fox. Very early in 1653 Quaker meetings were being held in the area and a vibrant Quaker community was soon in place around Marsden, where a Meeting House still exists. It does appear therefore, that Fox was travelling with a purpose.

and was not delaying his progress by spending days exploring the area. If he had he would surely have found sympathetic listeners, for example John Barcroft, the former Grindletonian who lived at Foulridge, near Colne, who with his brother William would become Quakers.

**John Webster**

Travelling via Clitheroe and Grindleton gave Fox the opportunity to see if there was a residual Grindletonian community and to meet John Webster who, in 1652, was the most notable professed Grindletonian living in the area. There is clear evidence that in 1652 Webster was a religious radical with views that were very close to those of the separatists, and that he was an active supporter of the Parliamentarian cause. During the 1640s he had been closely connected to the Parliamentarian regiment of
Colonel Richard Shuttleworth based at Gawthorpe Hall near Burnley, a few miles from Clitheroe. On the title-page of the 1653 edition of the *Saints Guide* he described himself as ‘late Chaplain in the Army’, although this is the only reference to him holding such a position. Further evidence for this is circumstantial, but in 1647 he was intruded to the position of vicar at Mitton in the Ribble Valley. In *The Displaying of Supposed Witchcraft*, he said he had been a surgeon in the Parliamentarian regiment of Colonel Shuttleworth.

When the Scots threatened to invade the north of England in 1648, the Shuttleworths raised a regiment in support of Cromwell and John Lambert, and Webster was involved. In a court action of 1657, a farmer from Pately Bridge accused Webster of taking a horse without authority in 1648, when he was taking medical and military supplies to Lambert’s forces based at Barnard Castle. Evidence that Webster knew and was known to Lambert comes in a letter to Lambert from Webster in 1657 when Webster asks for Lambert’s assistance in proving he was acting with the necessary authority when charged with taking the horse. The letter is short, clearly between men who knew each other, Webster signs as, ‘Faithfull friend and humble servant’. It is likely that Lambert did intervene on Webster’s behalf as the court case did not proceed. Webster would dedicate *Academiarum Examen*, published in 1654, to Major-General John Lambert. He says he had sent a draft a few years earlier, ‘and your Honour was then pleased to judge it worthy of your view and

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117 John Webster, *The Displaying of Supposed Witchcraft*.
consideration’. In the dedication Webster praised the work of Lambert and the army, and clearly acknowledged Lambert’s support in resisting the formality of Presbyterianism and the established church:

That seeing divine Providence hath made you (with the rest of those faithfull and gallant men of the Army) signally instrumental, both in redeeming the English Liberty, almost drowned in the deluge of Tyranny and self interest, and also unmanaclesing the simple and pure truth of the Gospel, from the chains and fetters of cold and dead Formality, and of restrictive and compulsory Power, two of the Greatest blessings our Nation ever enjoyed…

The evidence is clear that in 1652, Webster was an activist seeking radical change in society and religion. He was well acquainted with John Lambert, and he was very close to William Erbery. After Erbery’s death, Webster edited *The Testimony of William Erbery* (1658) in the introduction to which he said, ‘Be patient therefore Brethren until the coming of the Lord, as for this friend, his memory will be pretious in the hearts of many’. It is also very likely that he was known to James Nayler. When taking medical supplies to Lambert’s regiment in 1648, Nayler was the regimental quartermaster for whom the supplies were probably destined. It is

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120 Webster, *Academiarum Examen*, p. A2. A critic of the way the clergy were educated and the role of the universities, he promoted experimental learning which he said should include alchemy and natural magic, criticised the learning of languages as a means to understanding scripture and promoted the idea that scripture could only be properly understood when a person had the Spirit of God within them.


122 John Webster, ed., *The Testimony of William Erbery*. 

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therefore entirely possible that Fox was seeking out Webster at Clitheroe in 1652. Neither is it surprising that in his Journal, Fox makes no mention of Webster. As I have already noted, Fox’s Journal was written between 1673 and 1677, and Webster had by 1673, renounced many of his earlier views and relationships. In 1673, there was absolutely no reason for Fox to connect himself in any way to Webster who had never been a convinced Quaker and was now so critical of the Quaker movement, of radicalism and radical movements.

Through the Dales to Westmorland

When Fox left the Pendle area he did not take the easiest route to Westmorland, which would have taken him through Settle and Clapham along the route of what is today the A65. Instead he travelled directly north into the less accessible areas of the Dales, through the area around Malham into Langstrothdale (Figure 3), on to Garsdale and then to Sedbergh. (A map of the alternative routes I suggest George Fox could have taken through the Yorkshire Dales from Calton to Sedbergh is contained in Appendix Two.) One description of the way into Dentdale from Craven was via ‘a steep and stony path connecting to a packhorse and drovers route’, ‘a wyld and morishe contree… being in the mounteynz, so that in wynter tymes ther can nothing passe’. This would not have been a route normally taken by travellers new to the area, it was through high, barren, lightly populated country, and this suggests that once again he chose the route quite deliberately. The area was isolated,

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123 In 1675, James Ogilby, ‘Cosmographer and Geographic Printer’ to King Charles II, produced the Britannia atlas a collection of 100 strip maps of roads linking major towns in England and Wales. Plate 88 in the collection details the route from York to Lancaster passing through Skipton and Settle along what is today the A65. The route detailed in the map, and described in the attached text, was well known and clearly marked in 1652 and would have been the obvious route for Fox to take from Clitheroe to Sedbergh.

hard to access and navigate, conditions which, as I described in chapter one, meant that life could be hard and unforgiving. It did however mean that the local population enjoyed what Ingle described in *First Among Friends*, as ‘a natural liberty… free of outside control whether from church or state’. Although this is a slightly romanticised description, it does identify the independent religious community that had developed across the Dales and Westmorland, and that Fox and his travelling companion Farnworth, ‘seemed to be searching for such groups’.125 This was not a random search. Fox was seeking out the members of the separatist community he knew lived in the Dales and, specifically, men who had served under Lambert and Cromwell in the north and Scotland; people who he believed would be sympathetic to his views and men who were likely to know of, and be known to, James Nayler.

Figure Three: Langstrothdale.

125 Ingle, *First Among Friends*, p. 81.
After leaving the Ribble Valley, the first location mentioned by Fox in his *Journal*, was the home of ‘one Tennants’ who ‘was convict & his family & lived dyed in ye truth’.\textsuperscript{126} This was Captain William Tennant, who was an experienced officer in the Parliamentarian army, serving with Lambert at the same time as James Nayler. William was one of the extended Tennant family living around Coniston and Langstrothdale, which had a direct connection to Roger Brearley and Grindletonianism. Richard Tennant, vicar at Burnsall, had been prosecuted alongside Brearley in 1615 for preaching without a license, and was one of the preachers prosecuted at the High Commission at York in 1627, along with Brearley and William Boyes.\textsuperscript{127} It is quite likely that when Fox and the ‘olde preist’ Boyes, were travelling together, any conversation concerning Brearley and Grindletonianism would have included a reference to Richard Tennant.

There is also the intriguing possibility that Fox could have met with the family of John Lambert. The Lambert family home was at Calton, near Kirkby Malham, very close to the route Fox would have taken from the Ribble Valley to Langstrothdale. Frances, John Lambert’s wife, was from an influential Puritan family, the Listers of Thornton-in-Craven, who had little sympathy for the Laudian established church, or the Presbyterians. Speaking in 1649, Oliver Cromwell said of Frances:

\begin{quote}
Mrs Lambert…is a Woman, not very faire I confess, but of as large a Soule, and as full of the Spirit as any I ever yet met with: I professe I never knew a woman more
\end{quote}

\textsuperscript{126} Penney, *The Journal*, p. 41.
\textsuperscript{127} Marchant, *The Puritans and the Church Courts*, p. 45, p. 283.
endowed with those Heavenly blessings of love, meeknesse, 
gentlenesse, patience and long suffering … Shee had 
within her a soule, a devoutsweete soule.128

Farr says that ‘in 1652, [John] Lambert was the second most powerful man in England’, and that the influence of Frances ‘should not be overlooked’ as she clearly ‘played an influential role in her husband’s affairs’.129

While we cannot be sure of Frances’s religious beliefs, the evidence in letters that do exist suggests she favoured the more radical wing of Puritanism. Frances was particularly close to the family of one of John Lambert’s closest associates, Adam Baynes, a former officer in the army of the Northern Association who had served with Lord Fairfax and Lambert.130 Baynes had married a cousin of John Lambert, Martha Dawson, and a close relationship developed between Martha, her family, and Frances Lambert.131 As with John and Frances Lambert, it is difficult to be certain of Adam Baynes’s religious beliefs. In letters in the Baynes family archive we see Adam consulting Frances on religion and his ‘devotiones’, indicating that Frances’s religious views were highly regarded and influential. There are other letters in the archive indicating that both Adam and Frances were on good terms with Quakers and were sympathetic to ‘those of radical and Quaker leanings’.132 Adam Baynes was certainly against ‘high-kirk’ Presbyterianism and the established church,

128 Aaron Guerdon, A Most Learned, Conscientious, and Devout-Exercise; held forth the last Lords-day, at Sir Peter Temples, in Lincolnes-Inn-Fields; By Lieut-General Crumwell, (London, 1649), pp. 4 - 5.  
129 Farr, Lambert, p. 112, p. 16. 
130 Scott, ‘Baynes, Adam, ONDB. 
131 Farr, Lambert, p. 97. 
refusing to baptise his children and arguing against tithes and the professional ministry. He was the cousin of the Quaker, Captain William Siddall, and close to many other soldiers and ex-soldiers in Lambert’s regiments who became Quakers, particularly John Hodgson, Amor Stoddart and John Leavens. In 1655 he was said to be, ‘loving to the Friends’. In 1656 he urged Parliament to be lenient to James Nayler.

There is also an interesting record in the Note Book of the Rev. Thomas Jolly, where he recorded a meeting he had in the summer of 1676 at the Calton home of ‘Mtes Lambert’, a few months before she died. He records her as ‘being almost carried away by the Quakers’, but then says, ‘the Lord was pleased to bless my endeavours for the turning of the scales and for the fixing of a weak and wavering spirit’. This affiliation to the Quakers may have extended to other members of the family. In a journal documenting his travels around the Westmorland and the Dales in 1688, John Gratton recorded meetings with fellow Quakers in the Craven and Skipton area, including at ‘Lady Lambert’s’. This was twelve years after the death of Frances and must refer to the wife of her son John, who continued to live at Calton. While none of this is sufficient to suggest Frances or others in the family were close to

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134 Farr, Lambert, p. 172.
135 Scott, ‘Baynes’.
136 Thomas Jolly was an independent preacher who became a leading Congregationalist and who lived and worked in the Ribble Valley in the second half of the seventeenth century and was known for his conflict with the church and subsequent persecution. The Note Book of the Rev. Thomas Jolly (AD 1671-1693), Extracts from the Church Book of Altham and Wymondhouses (AD 1649-1725), and An Account of the Jolly Family of Standish, Gorton and Altham, Ed., Henry Fishwick, (Manchester, 1894), p.30.
137 John Gratton, A Journal of the Life of the Ancient Servant of Christ, John Gratton, Giving an Account of his Exercises when Young and how he came to Knowledge of the Truth, and was thereby raised to Preach the Gospel as also his Labours, Travels and Sufferings for the same, (London, 1720), p. 121.
becoming Quakers, it does indicate that in 1652, when Fox was close to the family home, there was enough evidence of sympathy to the more radical Puritan views of the independents to encourage Fox to visit. However, once again it is unlikely that Fox would record any such meeting. When Fox was writing his Journal, Lambert was a prisoner, constantly suspected of harbouring republican ambitions, and it would not have been in the interests of Fox, or the Quakers, to suggest that there was any connection to Lambert, or to his republican ideals.

Continuing his journey, Fox travelled through Langstrothdale, past Dodd Fell (Figure 4), and, via either Dentdale or Hawes, on to Garsdale, along the road that ran from Sedbergh to Richmond.\footnote{Appendix Two, Map of the suggested route from Calton through Langstrothdale to Sedbergh.} Recorded in his Journal, the route he chose took him to meet men notable for their service in the northern regiments of the Parliamentarian army. First, he called at the home of Major Miles Bousfield where
‘hee and severall more received mee there & some were convinced’.\textsuperscript{139} It was perhaps here that Captain Alexander Heblethwaite, who lived close by at Dent, and ‘did much to champion the cause of the Quakers’, was convinced.\textsuperscript{140} William Edmundson who met Bousfield in Ireland would question Bousfield’s commitment, saying, ‘He was a great talker of religion, but an enemy and stranger to the cross of Christ’.\textsuperscript{141}

Leaving Bousfield and Garsdale, Fox went to the house, at Brigflats near Sedbergh, of Richard Robinson, who David Boulton identified as an ‘army veteran’.\textsuperscript{142} It was Robinson who took Fox to a meeting at the home of Colonel Gervase Benson, at Borat near Sedbergh, where, Fox recorded, ‘ye people was generally convict: & this was ye place [that] I had seen people comeinge foorth in white raiment’.\textsuperscript{143} Fox stayed at the home of Benson, visiting the local fair at Sedbergh during the week, where he first met Francis Howgill, and on Sunday to a meeting of the independent religious community at Firbank Fell (now commemorated with a plaque, Figures 5 and 6).\textsuperscript{144}

The monthly meeting supervised by Howgill and Audland was not small and insignificant. When Fox went to that famous meeting on Sunday 13 June 1652, he claimed that there were ‘more than a thousand people gathered to hear Francis Howgill….and John Audland’.\textsuperscript{145} The ‘thousand people’ attending the meeting came

\textsuperscript{139} Penney, \textit{The Journal}, p.41.
\textsuperscript{140} Boulton, ‘Militant Seedbeds of Early Quakerism’, p. 8.
\textsuperscript{141} Edmondson, \textit{A Journal of the Life}, p. 11.
\textsuperscript{142} Boulton, ‘Militant Seedbeds’, p. 8.
\textsuperscript{143} Penney, \textit{The Journal}, p.42.
\textsuperscript{144} Penney, \textit{The Journal}, p.42; Ingle, \textit{First Among Friends}, pp. 82 - 83.
\textsuperscript{145} Ingle, \textit{First Among Friends}, p. 83; Penney, \textit{The Journal of George Fox}, p. 83.
from a wide area around Sedbergh, Kendal and Preston Patrick, and was an indication of the size and strength of the independent community. They had not come to hear George Fox who on that Sunday in June was unknown to all but a handful of people there. The people had gathered to listen to Audland and Howgill, and as was their practice they allowed other non-ordained lay preachers to speak, and Fox took the opportunity that was presented to him.

Summary

As I have demonstrated, George Fox’s arrival in Westmorland was not accidental. Meeting James Nayler and the ‘olde preist’, William Boyes, were turning points in Fox’s journey, turning points that led him to Westmorland. In Westmorland, north Lancashire and the Yorkshire Dales Fox met a community that was profoundly religious; a community that, like him, had rejected the form and authority of the

146 Braithwaite, ‘The Westmorland and Swaledale’, p. 3.
established and Presbyterian churches. It was a community with a culture of independence and self-reliance that sought the right to worship God in their own way. It was the strength of the community, built on the culture of independence and self-reliance that gave the early Quaker movement its strength, commitment and energy.

By 1652 a great deal had changed for the people of the independent religious community in Westmorland and the Dales. The civil wars had ended their social and religious isolation. Having suffered many years of financial hardship at the hands of landlords and the monarchy, animosity towards King Charles I had increased during the Bishops’ Wars and the imposition of the ‘ship money’ tax on Westmorland. From the beginning of the first civil war most of the Puritans in the area supported Parliament and Puritanism would play an important and influential role in galvanising the resolve of soldiers in the armies of Parliament. Soldiers were encouraged to discuss religion and the Bible, and acts of faith became increasingly important in establishing comradeship, commitment and belief, particularly before battles. Encouraging these activities radical preachers and chaplains, like William Erbery, were promoting a different, simpler, more democratic form of worship. Empowered by these preachers and the new freedoms individuals believed the right to worship as they wished, freedom of religion, would be delivered by Oliver Cromwell and his government. As military activity criss-crossed Westmorland and the Yorkshire Dales these ideas and freedoms were carried to the local population through daily interaction with military units and by returning soldiers. Within the ranks of the northern regiments of both the Northern Association Army and the New Model Army, under the command of Major-General John Lambert a political radical
who gave tacit support to religious radicalism, an informal network of like-minded religious radicals developed. Among those close to, and trusted by, Lambert was James Nayler, an experienced soldier who became a dynamic radical preacher. Through his service and his position as regimental quartermaster, Nayler would have known, and been known by, many other like-minded religious radicals. In 1652, it is my view that it was Nayler who introduced George Fox to this network of ex-military religious radicals living in Yorkshire. Crucially, it was while traveling across Yorkshire that George Fox met the ‘olde preist’, William Boyes. Boyes knew the history of religious radicalism in the area. He had known Roger Brearley and knew of Grindletonianism and he would have known that Grindletonians, for example John Webster, still lived in the area around Clitheroe. He would also have known of and been acquainted with Thomas Tayler and the extensive independent community across the Dales. It was these connections and this information that directed Fox across the Pennines towards Sedbergh via Pendle Hill, Grindleton and the Yorkshire Dales.

While the members of the independent community in Westmorland and the Dales had political grievances arising from what they believed was social, financial and religious persecution, what brought them together, and together with George Fox, was their religious belief. Some individuals in that community, particularly those who had been active members of the most radical units in the Parliamentarian army, must have been aware of the political grievances and revolutionary ideas espoused by the militant political groups of the late 1640s, the Levellers and the Diggers. There is, however, no evidence that any of the earliest Quakers in Westmorland and the Dales had been involved with these groups. It was after 1652, when as Quakers
they actively sought liberty of conscience and freedom of religion and the social and political change that was required, that their objectives aligned with some of those of the earlier radical groups. The demand for the political change needed to implement religious freedom was viewed as a huge threat to society by the gentry, landowners and many MPs who condemned the Quakers and refused to implement freedom of religious choice. Religion and politics were inextricably linked, and confusion was easily spread. The fact that years later both John Lilburne, the leading Leveller, and Gerrard Winstanley, the leader of the Digger movement, would become Quakers refreshed the idea of the Quakers politicisation. They became Quakers because of religion, not politics, no doubt having experienced the same kind of personal religious struggle that William Dewsbury and many like him described. Similarly, the relationship of individual Quakers to the political radicals known as Ranters and the views they espoused was a question of debate during the 1650s, but again there is no evidence to link them to the earliest Quakers in Westmorland and the Dales.

Quakers would be described in a pejorative way as Ranters, but this was usually a way of condemning both the Quaker movement and individual members.


CONCLUSION

In the research for, and preparation of this thesis one of the major problems has been the lack of reliable documentation detailing the early lives and religious views of the leading members of the independent religious community in Westmorland and the Yorkshire Dales who became Quakers. Personal testimonies were written after individuals became Quakers, many on their death years later. The lack of published documents or manuscripts from before 1652 has meant that I have had to be careful with documents created after 1652. Written by Quakers after their convincement, while they give us an idea of some of their pre-Quaker activity and views, they are written from the perspective of convinced Quakers. It would have been ideal if we could have read what their religious and social views were in documents written before they met George Fox. In the same vein diaries, documents and letters written during the years of the civil wars would have been hugely valuable. One of my concerns has been assuming what was written after 1652 reflected views held before 1652. It is outside the scope of this thesis, but a continuation study of the leaders and members of the independent community in the years between 1652 and 1656, and their position within a rapidly developing movement would add greatly to our understanding of the beginning of the Quaker movement.

In 1652, at Sedbergh in Westmorland, George Fox met a large and well organised radical religious community which had formed a simple church having dispensed with the customs, ceremonies, structures and organisation of the Church of England. The central argument of this thesis is that history and historians have overlooked the importance of the people who made up that community in the transformation of the
Quaker movement. To support my argument, I have undertaken a rigorous historical analysis of the social and economic background of the local communities in north Lancashire, Westmorland and the Yorkshire Dales and their connection to the development of radical religious belief and practice. This study demonstrates that their strength of character, resilience and independent nature, were products of their social, economic and religious history, a history defined by struggle and radical Puritanism, which entitled them to be recognised as partners of George Fox. They were not simply ‘eager proselytes at the feet of a charismatic prophet’. ¹ Their views and independent attitude were nurtured by religious and political radicals who enjoyed the freedom to speak out without censure during the civil wars and the governments of Oliver Cromwell. I also argue that it was through an introduction into an informal network which developed during the years of civil war, which included members of the independent community, preachers and soldiers who had served in the Parliamentarian armies, that George Fox made the decision to travel to Westmorland. The route he took from West Yorkshire was planned and co-ordinated. This work presents, for the first time, a comprehensive picture of the community that George Fox met and an explanation of the events that led to his decision to make the journey to Westmorland.

In, *The Light in Their Consciences*, Rosemary Moore said there were four main factors in the early success of the Quaker movement, two of which were, ‘the quality of some of the individuals who joined the movement’, and the movement was able to put down deep roots in the north.² While both statements are true what is

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unacknowledged is the substance, history and strength of the community Fox met. It was from the community’s strength that the deep roots grew. The historical focus has always been on the events of 1652 and individuals, not on the community.

George Fox began this in his *Short Journal* and *Journal* with his focus on events and on the individuals he met. He identifies the significance of the meetings he attended at Firbank Fell, Sedbergh and Kendal, but fails to provide the background to those meetings or the nature of the community that was holding them. As I noted in chapter four, the *Journal* is accepted as being in many ways unreliable, particularly in the way events are edited and the way it plays down the role of important Friends.3

Other historians have followed a similar path. Gough’s *History of the People called Quakers* (1789) focuses on individuals without identifying the importance of the community. Braithwaite, in his history of the early days of the movement, *The Beginnings of Quakerism*, identifies ‘the important community of seekers which had its centre at Preston Patrick’, without explaining the significance of the community and its history.4 The same is true of William Sewel’s, *The History of the Rise and Progress of the Christian People called Quakers* (1725), Ingle’s, *First Among Friends, George Fox and the Creation of Quakerism*, (1994), and Penney’s, *The First Publishers of the Truth* (1907).5 Barry Reay said, ‘Fox’s powerful *Journal* dominates our view of early Quakerism: we tend to see things through Fox’s eyes’. He describes the beginning of the Quaker movement as ‘a linking of advanced

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4 Braithwaite, *The Beginnings of Quakerism*, p. 27.

Protestant separatists into a loose kind of church fellowship with a coherent ideology.’ However, by discussing the social and religious environment across the nation during 1640s and early 1650s, Reay’s perspective is on the birth of a national movement, not on its local beginning. The focus of *Light in the Dales*, and *Early Friends in Dent*, is on the Yorkshire Dales but they do not draw together the pre-history of the Quaker movement in the area. Even when historians have suggested there was a strong Quaker movement before 1652, or that it developed independently of Fox, as in, ‘A Suppressed Chapter of Quaker History’, by Winthrop Hudson, or, ‘The Antecedents of Quakerism’, by Champlin Burrage, there is no identification of the community in Westmorland and the Dales. This thesis goes deeper than these works, concentrating on the socio-economic and religious issues in the local area as they affected the people of Westmorland and the Dales and their importance within the community that gave birth to the movement.

I have summarised my thesis in four sections. ‘A people’s history’, summarises my argument that the history of the earliest Quakers in Westmorland and the Dales is a social history. I explain how important their social and economic history is when seeking to define their character, how the increasing influence of yeomen changed society and how disasters set people to question their religious beliefs. In, ‘A culture of radicalism’, I summarise my argument that the establishment of radical Puritanism in a period when the established church was in decline contributed hugely to social change, particularly through education which developed and reinforced the

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7 Breay, *Light in the Dales*; Boulton, *Early Friends in Dent*.
independent attitude of the local people. ‘A godly network’, identifies for the first time how connected individuals created and nurtured an institutional presence for Puritan radicalism through their preaching and teaching. It was out of this social and religious environment that the independent religious community, crucial in the transformation of the Quaker movement, came into existence across Westmorland and the Dales. ‘The importance of the military connection’, summarises an important contribution to the historical record which has been poorly acknowledged and largely censored from Quaker history; the identification of the formative influence military service had on those individuals who became the first Quakers, and the role played by a network of military veterans in George Fox’s decision to travel from Yorkshire to Westmorland.

**A people’s history**

In chapter one, I explained how in the sixteenth century the high fell and moorland country could be harsh and unforgiving and that it was one of the poorest areas of the country. The economy relied upon farming, particularly the management of sheep and the production of wool, with a small amount of dairy and arable production, but only enough to meet local demand. If they had dairy or arable produce to sell the cost of transportation to the nearest centres of population, over the difficult roads, made their goods too expensive. When adverse weather conditions led to the failure of the harvest it was hard for those families with the smallest farms to survive the following winter as they struggled to store enough food for themselves or their cattle. If they had the money to buy produce, once again their isolation meant that, even if it could be sourced, the cost of transportation made it too expensive. In other areas of England, particularly in the midlands and the south, with a better climate, more
productive land and a location closer to larger towns and to the largest market, London, farming communities were more prosperous and better able to survive poor harvests. 9

Self-reliance and resilience were essential to survival in the north and these characteristics were tested many times. When harvests failed in consecutive years the consequences were devastating. I have highlighted two periods, 1587 – 1588, and, 1596 – 1598, when consecutive failures led to famine, disease and to crisis levels of mortality across Westmorland, the Craven Dales and north-east Lancashire. Occurring twice within ten years the effect on families must have been traumatic. It was not simply the number of deaths within a family that was traumatic it was the fact that many families also lost their farms and their livelihoods, thereby increasing the number of people that fell into poverty. The only work for the able-bodied was as agricultural labourers but this was in a market where supply greatly exceeded demand.

Deteriorating relationships between tenants and landlords often made difficult situations far worse. When tenants were unable to pay their rent, many landlords were quick to end the tenancies with little regard for the welfare of the families they evicted. As I explained in chapter one, there were regular disputes extending over many years arising from landlords’ attempts to increase rents, through their manipulation of the terms of tenancies to increase charges and by their enclosure of common land. Poor families shouldered a greater financial burden as a result of these actions and once again many lost their tenancies and their homes. The anger

9 Wrightson & Levine, Poverty and Piety.
and resentment felt by the tenants must have been considerable and it was not forgotten generation after generation.

The legal dispute between King Charles I and his tenants in Lancashire and the fact that he was seen to be complicit in the decision by Anne Clifford to impose excessive charges on her tenants compounded resentments against the monarchy. The execution of rebels following the Pilgrimage of Grace had not been forgotten. Disaffection towards both landlords and the Crown was, therefore, long standing and firmly embedded in the memory of generations of tenant farmers. The cumulative effect of famine, death, financial and legal disputes, the loss of homes and livelihood combined to reinforce the belief that to survive people had to be self-reliant and that they had to stand up to the injustices imposed on them. This was character building. When, during the 1640s, people were faced with the choice of radical change under Parliament and Oliver Cromwell, or remaining loyal to King Charles I, it was not surprising that they overwhelmingly supported Parliament.

It is particularly unfortunate that because of the lack of original documentation we do not hear the voice of women. It would have been hugely beneficial if family papers, diaries or journals had been available to give us the views of women on their own, their children’s and their family’s struggle to survive famine, disease and high mortality rates. This is especially the case because we know that after 1652 women played a very important role in preaching and organising the Quaker movement. Ann Audland (later Ann Camm), Mabel Camm and Elizabeth Howgill, wives of three of the earliest leaders, were three of the twelve women listed among the sixty-six Friends identified as the ‘Valliant Sixty’. They were important and active
preachers who travelled widely spreading the Quaker message, clearly strong women who would have had an important story to tell of their early lives. Phyllis Mack, Naomi Pullin and Christine Trevett are three of the increasing number of historians who have produced insights into the lives and social interactions of Quaker women. These are, however, based on their lives after 1652 and tell us little about their lives before they became convinced Quakers. In this thesis I have referred to the family unit but believe women were central to keeping families and social groups together, in bringing up and educating children and in the development of the strength of character and resilience which I have said was such an important aspect of local community. There remains a great deal of historical research to be done exploring the role of women in a changing society during the period I have been studying.

This socio-economic history of the people of Westmorland and the Dales was hugely important in the pre-history of Quakerism; it was a key factor in determining the character and attitude of the group of local people who separated from the established church to form their own simple church. The increasingly independent views of yeomen exemplified a change in social attitudes. Famine led to starvation, disease and exceptionally high mortality which in turn led to confused views on religion. My argument is that these factors changed and strengthened the character of the people who were crucial to the transformation of the Quaker movement. This

thesis, through its focus on the people, adds to our knowledge and understanding, placing them beside George Fox at the centre of the transformation process.

A culture of radicalism

Religion, particularly the spread and adoption of radical puritanism, played a huge part in social change across Westmorland and the Dales. Animosity towards the Church of England was longstanding and widespread. Among the complaints raised by the rebels from Westmorland and the Dales during the Pilgrimage of Grace, were several relating to the appointment and role of priests and the payment of tithes, but little changed during the second half of the sixteenth century. Many of the church benefices, particularly the wealthiest, had been appropriated by distant monasteries and were held by absentee or pluralist clergy. As a result, the quality of local clergy was very poor, particularly where inadequately trained curates had to stand in for absent priests. The payment of tithes continued to be a problem which was compounded by the practice of the Church leasing the right to collect tithes to local landowners. This angered local people who believed they were being forced to pay corrupt, wealthy laymen, like the Cliffords, and getting nothing in return from the Church. The insensitive behaviour of the Church only succeeded in alienating their congregations and reinforcing the division between landowners and tenants.

During the sixteenth century the Church of England had been slow in implementing religious reform in the area. One of the most successful ways of achieving this proved to be through increased educational provision, and education was the catalyst for social change. In chapter two I emphasised the importance of education in the development and spread of Puritan ideas across Westmorland and the Dales.
Reading and writing were encouraged, not merely among those who were expected and could afford to go to grammar schools and university, but among the population at large who were encouraged to read the Bible. Specifically, I identified how, across Westmorland and the Dales, new schools were opened, existing schools were re-endowed and links to the universities of Oxford and Cambridge were strengthened, leading to an increase in the number of trained teachers and preachers living and working in the area. David Cressy said one of the sections of society that benefited most from this educational expansion were yeomen, merchants and shopkeepers.\textsuperscript{11} They are also that sector of society I identified in chapter one who played such an important role in spreading radicalism across Westmorland, north Lancashire, Craven and the Dales, particularly in the appointment of radical preachers, as in the case of Roger Brearley at Grindleton and Kildwick. An increase in educational provision and literacy was not unique to Westmorland and the Dales, but the link I have made in this thesis between education, yeomen and radicalism is central to the distinctive culture of radicalism that developed in the area. Education empowered the individuals who would form the independent religious community. The strength of my argument is exemplified by the fact that of the 54 men and 12 women identified as the ‘Valiant Sixty’, 44 men and 6 women are recorded as, or are the wives of, yeomen, husbandmen, schoolmasters, shopkeepers, or merchants.\textsuperscript{12}

The Puritan approach to religion was personal and inclusive with individuals and groups encouraged to discuss scripture. This was hugely different to the approach of the Church of England, which retained its episcopal hierarchy, ceremonies and

\textsuperscript{11} Cressy, ‘Levels of Illiteracy’, pp. 2 – 7.
\textsuperscript{12} Taylor, \textit{The Valiant Sixty}, p. 43. Taylor’s listing of the ‘Valiant Sixty’ includes sixty-six names of which twelve were women.
practices, an insistence on elevating the role of the priest and discouraging discussion of scripture. Puritanism changed this. People were more questioning and less willing to accept the imposition of social and religious authority without question. This change was the foundation on which the independent religious community I have identified was built and it was through discussion and questioning that more radical ideas began to be adopted. By explaining the important role radical Puritanism had in social change and in the lives of the people who formed that independent community, I have increased our understanding and knowledge of their place in the area’s religious history and the background to their meeting with George Fox.

A Puritan network and religious independence

Puritan preachers had, during the last quarter of the sixteenth century, established a Puritan network across the area which continued to develop into the seventeenth century, one which would grow and expand as the authority of the established church diminished. The identification of this network and its relevance to the beginning of the Quaker movement is an important addition to our knowledge of the history of radical religion in the area. In chapter two I identified several preachers who played a significant part in establishing Puritanism in Westmorland, Craven and east Lancashire. Giles Wigginton, the radical vicar at Sedbergh, whose reputation I suggest was destroyed because he was not afraid to criticise the Church of England, was imprisoned and had his licence to preach withdrawn. He returned to Sedbergh to preach unlicensed, claiming he enjoyed considerable local support. Importantly, his story clearly indicates that in and around Sedbergh there was popular support for religious radicalism. Wigginton had built up a strong following of people who
preferred his radical preaching, much to the dismay of the more conformist preacher who replaced him and who admitted that Wigginton drew large crowds.\textsuperscript{13}

In the Craven area there was a strong Puritan community led at the end of the sixteenth and beginning of the seventeenth centuries by Christopher Shute. He was a pre-eminent radical Puritan, vicar of Giggleswick in Craven, Master and Governor of Giggleswick School, who was licensed to preach at Kendal and was a regular visitor to Westmorland. He was also the leader of the Craven exercises at which Roger Brearley, the leader of the Grindletonian movement, played an active part.

Brearley and Grindletonianism are an important part of this history. I am not identifying them as direct precursors of Quakerism but as a very important part of the thread connecting radical belief and a network of individuals that would lead to the Quakers. We have no record of where Brearley received his religious training, but I have suggested that it was through an association with the radical Puritan preachers, and vicars at Rochdale, Richard Midgley and his son Joseph. An association with Richard, who as a Queen’s Preacher in Lancashire organised the exercises in the area, may have been Brearley’s introduction to Grindleton. His appointment as curate was, I argue, the result of the ground-swell of radicalism and a choice made by the local population, influenced by increasingly important local yeomen, who wanted a more radical form of worship than that available at the churches at Waddington and Mitton, both of which maintained strong Catholic links. It is probable that the charges Brearley faced before the York High Commission in 1616, arose from conflict between the churches at Grindleton and Waddington. The

\textsuperscript{13} Peel, \textit{The Second Parte}.  

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charges, ‘fifty erroneous proposals’, have defined Brearley’s teaching and
Grindletonianism, particularly the emphasis placed on the importance of the spirit.
During the 1620s Brearley was appointed curate at Kildwick where radicalism was
not a new phenomenon. Alexander Horrocks, appointed in 1572, got himself into
trouble for allowing the controversial local radical Puritan priest, John Wilson, to
preach at Kildwick without a licence.

The work of radical preachers like Wigginton, Horrocks, Wilson, Shute and the
Midgleys must be acknowledged for its crucial importance in establishing
Puritanism across the area. The radicalism of men like Brearley continued to be
popular and in the 1630s, when the diocese of York attempted to impose the
instructions of Archbishop Laud to curtail the activity of the radicals, they failed.
Many congregations in the area did not want to give up their religious radicalism.
The authority of the Church of England was further diminished as the relationship
between the King and Parliament deteriorated, effectively enfranchising religious
radicals who were free to express their ideas in printed sermons, pamphlets, and
books. One of the most important issues that arose was the popular movement
supporting the introduction into law of the right to liberty of conscience and freedom
of worship, key demands directed at Oliver Cromwell during the civil wars. During
those years many religious sects sprang up including ones advocating the adoption of
a simple church, free from hierarchical systems and authority, without ceremony and
iconography, based on the first churches as described in the Bible.

In chapter three I explained how the independent religious group in Westmorland
and the Dales developed as a simple church seeking the right to enjoy freedom of
religion. Identified by many as Seekers, their first recognised leader was Thomas Taylor, an ordained Church of England minister born and raised at Carlton, near Kildwick, during the time that both Roger Brearley and John Webster were curates. Although the connection here is circumstantial, it does suggest a link between the earliest Quakers and Grindletonianism. Webster said he was introduced to Grindletonianism by the congregation at Kildwick and, although it is only conjecture, it is possible that Thomas was also introduced to radical religious ideas at that church. Adopting a radical position, Thomas gave up his benefice at Preston Patrick to become the effective leader of what must already have been a significant group of independent minded radicals. As their leader, he supervised a simple church encouraging laymen and women to be involved, refusing a salary, accepting only an amount the congregation were willing to give. Taylor led the community he did not create it. With him as leader it developed and extended its reach across the Dales. When he left to take a position at Richmond, Taylor was replaced by two laymen, John Audland and Francis Howgill, who were selected by the community. All three were among the most important and influential early Quaker preachers.

The established strength of the community that George Fox met is one of the most important factors in the transformation of the Quaker movement in 1652, and one that has not been recognised fully until this thesis. This was a well-established group which had organised itself in the way they believed the earliest church had existed. It had grown out of the history of radical Puritanism in the area and because of the strength of character and independent mindedness of the people. As the authority of the established church diminished, they had the personal strength to take their faith into their own hands and worship God in what they believed was the right way.
Focusing on the activity of George Fox understates the significance and fails to acknowledge the importance of the community he met, denying them the recognition that they deserve. This thesis, through its analysis of the socio-economic and religious history of the community, changes our perception of the group, it presents a more complete picture of the people, their organisation and motivation, and in doing so adds to our knowledge and understanding of the transformation of the Quaker movement in 1652.

**The military connection and ‘the olde preist’**

In this thesis I have drawn attention to the connection between members of the independent religious community in Westmorland, north Lancashire and the Yorkshire Dales and the New Model Army. The connection between early Quakers and the New Model Army (NMA) has been well documented by Barry Reay and Christopher Hill. The focus of these historians has, however, been on the political radicalism of the early Quakers, their involvement with republicanism and becoming a pacifist movement after 1660.14 In the view of Kate Peters, the history of Quakers in the NMA, ‘has attracted little analysis, other than as a rather counter-intuitive prelude to the Quaker peace testimony of 1661’.15 David Boulton said one of the reasons why the relationship has been underestimated was, ‘because of a distaste for the militant republican Quakerism of the 1650s’.16 What has attracted no analysis until this thesis is how the religious radicalism within the NMA influenced members of the independent religious community in Westmorland and the Dales before 1652.

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before they met George Fox and became Quakers. I have explained how the radicalism experienced within the NMA strengthened the resolve of this community to continue with their simple church in the expectation that the new government of Oliver Cromwell would deliver, in law, liberty of conscience, (freedom of religion, freedom of worship). Identifying the nature and importance of this relationship, and that it existed before 1652, adds to our knowledge of the community and our understanding of their role in the transformation of the Quaker movement.

The civil wars during the 1640s changed the social dynamics of the area. With the beginning of military activity and the formation of the Northern Association Army, the army of Parliament in the north, the area was no longer isolated. Men from across the north came together to fight for Parliament and one of their most important commanders was John Lambert who would become a major-general in the New Model Army and one of Oliver Cromwell’s key advisors. Lambert was born and grew up in the Craven area, he was a political radical who believed that through military success England would become a republic. Although he was said to have no religion he had been brought up in Puritan families and was always tolerant of religious radicalism. Political and religious radicalism spread rapidly through army units following the formation of the New Model Army and this was particularly true in Lambert’s regiments where chaplains were often radical preachers.

Serving in the army brought the men from Westmorland into contact with radical preachers like William Erbery, John Saltmarsh and William Dell, and with the strongly Puritan practices adopted in many units of the New Model Army. In chapter four I identified several of the men from the independent community in
Westmorland and the Dales who served with the Parliamentarian army, including, Thomas Taylor. Some would have known, or known of, James Nayler who had served for many years with John Lambert, including a period as one of his Council of Officers, and had gained a reputation as one of the fiery radicals preaching regularly to the troops. In chapters three and four I demonstrated how circumstances brought together people like William Erbery, John Webster, Thomas Taylor and James Nayler, forming what I identified as an informal network of like-minded individuals.

This thesis identifies for the first time the extent and importance of this network explaining how it inter-acted and played a part in George Fox’s decision to travel to Westmorland. When he explained his view on the reasons behind Fox’s journey, David Boulton identified that of 46 men Fox was said to have met, thirteen were ‘‘priests’ or JPs who may or may not have military connection’, and, ‘no fewer than 20 …. carry a military rank’ in the NMA. He said, ‘Fox was recommended from one group and one individual to another’ and that he ‘networked his way across the northwest following the recommendations of sympathisers and targeting influential men with radical sympathies’. While his explanation demonstrates a link to members of the NMA, Boulton’s argument suggests that the journey was unplanned and that progress was dependent on information received at a previous meeting. In this thesis I have argued that the journey Fox undertook, and the route he followed, were planned and in justifying this argument I have added to our knowledge and understanding of the background to the journey. I have demonstrated that the

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17 Boulton, ‘Militant Seedbeds’.

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military men and preachers Fox met in Yorkshire were part of the well-established informal network of like-minded individuals which included the radical religious community in Westmorland and the Dales. It was because of an introduction into this network that Fox became aware of the extent of religious radicalism across the area and the identity of ex-military men who may have been sympathetic to his religious views.

John Webster is representative of how this network developed and I have shown how he, informally and unintentionally, connects with others in the network. A Grindletonian with a connection to Thomas Taylor, he was a friend and colleague of William Erbery. He served in the civil wars, knew John Lambert and possibly delivered medical supplies to Lambert’s quartermaster, James Nayler, who was a central figure in this network. Meeting George Fox changed Nayler’s life, but for Fox it was also a key turning point. Through his involvement with John Lambert’s Council of Officers, Nayler knew ex-Parliamentarian army officers living in Yorkshire, the Dales and Westmorland, who had, or had tolerated, radical religious views. I suggest that it was Nayler who guided Fox around Yorkshire introducing him to old military contacts, during which time he met with ‘the olde preist’, William Boyes.

The meeting between the ‘olde preist’, who I have identified as William Boyes, and George Fox, was central to increasing Fox’s knowledge of the extent of radicalism and its history across Westmorland and the Dales. Boyes directly links radicalism across the area over a long period, from Roger Brearley to Thomas Taylor. After his meeting with Boyes, Fox knew more about the community across the Dales and
made the decision to go to Westmorland. He now knew where to go, had a route to follow which would take him via individuals who were likely to be sympathetic to his own beliefs, including John Webster and surviving Grindletonians living close to Pendle Hill and ex-military men living in the Dales. This thesis, for the first time, identifies the relevance and importance of the meeting between Fox and Boyes in the decision of George Fox to travel from Yorkshire on a route that would take him past Clitheroe, Grindleton and Pendle Hill to Westmorland.18

George Fox’s journey to Westmorland was planned, it was not accidental. There was a purpose behind his journey and the route he took. It was not a coincidence that the people Fox met on his route to Sedbergh were former members of the Parliamentarian army. Neither was it a coincidence that Fox found himself passing Pendle Hill. He was there because this was the home of Grindletonianism. When George Fox arrived at Sedbergh he was introduced into the independent religious community by ex-Parliamentarian soldiers. At Sedbergh he met a group of independent minded religious radicals who through their own strength and endeavour had formed a simple church with none of the trappings of the Church of England, of Presbyterianism or Catholicism. The strength of the community was in the character of the people involved, forged out of years of hardship, isolation and persecution and strengthened by their faith in God and their right to worship in the way they wished. There was not a conversion at the feet of George Fox, this was instead a mutually beneficial meeting of like-minded people. My argument does not

18 The meeting between Boyes and Fox is mentioned in most histories of the Quaker movement, but his identity, connections and importance have never been examined until this work. William Boyes, the radical preacher, is identified by Ronald Marchant in The Puritans and the Church Courts. While Stephen Wright, in his thesis, ‘An Investigation Into The Possible Transfer Of Theology,’ sought to identify the ‘olde preist’, he did not explain his significance.
in any way question the role and importance of George Fox to the Quaker movement, I am simply drawing attention to the importance of the community he met. The strength of the community was channelled into the development of the Quaker movement and it was through their effort and sacrifice that the transformation of the movement took place.

Figure Six: Commemorative Plaque, Fox’s Pulpit, Firbank Fell

Photograph: visitcumbria.com
Appendix One: George Fox’s route to Pendle Hill and Grindleton
Appendix Two: George Fox’s route through the Yorkshire Dales
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