

Rookhow in 1725

Notes for a talk at the tri-centenary celebration at Rookhow

on Saturday 7th June 2025 by

Rex Ambler

We know why Rookhow was built in 1725. It was to house all the Friends from this southern part of the Lakes when they came together for their Monthly Meeting. Their own local meeting houses in Swarthmoor, Hawkshead, Cartmel, Height and Causey End were all too small to contain their numbers, which were growing. They were also too far for Friends to travel when they came to meet in one house, and the journey was rough and dangerous – before roads were neatly laid as they are now they were rocky, swampy and often very wet, just about manageable on horseback. So building a big house here, equidistant from all the others, made sense, unlikely as that might seem in such a remote and wooded place.

It would have taken a huge effort, even so, for all of them to meet here every month. Was it really so important?

We know little about the Friends involved, unfortunately, though their names are familiar in the history of Friends both before and after. When they first set up their meetings in the 1650s they were seriously persecuted by the state for not accepting the authority of the Church of England, and that persecution continued off and on for some 30 years. All the facts were recorded and painstakingly set down by Joseph Besse during those years and published in 1753: *The Sufferings of the People called Quakers*. I have my own copy of this work. Under ‘Lancashire’ for 1660, for example, it says:

On the 24th [January] at Swarthmore, forty three persons were taken, some out of their houses, others from the market and some from their labour and employment, by a party of horsemen and without any warrant, *mittimus* or examination before a magistrate, committed to Lancaster Castle, namely... Tobias Wilson, Thomas Fell, Thomas Goad... William Simpson,... John Goad... Thomas Rawlinson.¹

It is rather surprising, then, that some of these names appear in a Minute of their monthly meeting some sixty years later about the building of a new meeting house. It tells us something about their commitment to the Quaker way. It is surprising too that we still have these Minutes, so carefully written in a book. They have been kept in the county archive in

¹Joseph Besse, *The Sufferings of the People called Quakers*, vol 1, p.308. A summary of these and other events from this area was given by B. Nightingale, *Early Stages in the Quaker Movement in Lancashire*, London, 1921, pp.57ff.

Barrow, and today, remarkably, we have the archivist herself, Susan Benson, who has kindly brought the Minutes Book with her today, so that we can all have a look at it. Here for example is a Minute from the Swarthmore Monthly Meeting of ‘the 1st of 8th mo. 1723’, which reads in part,

It was generally agreed upon to build an house if place convenient could be obtained. Therefore this meeting appoints Daniell Abraham, Joseph Goad, William Simpson, Stephen Corsfield, Anthony Wilson, Wm Rawlinson...to consider further on that affair, agree upon a suitable place to build upon and they are desired to confer about the same at the general meeting at Height & further as they may see occasion in order that they may give account to our next monthly meeting.

And here are some extracts from later in the Minute book.

MM at Causey-end 3 of 1st mo 1724:

Conclusion is made that the same is to be builded at Rookhow near Abbot-oak.

Given in a close of ground purchased of John Taylor of Whitemoss for £65.0.0 to be paid the second day of 12 mo next.

MM at Cawsey-end 6th of 2nd mo 1725:

Account is given to this meeting that Daniell Abraham has just paid to Anthony Wilson the sixty five pounds that was in his hand which the said Anthony Wilson paid to John Taylor being the purchase money for that parcell of ground whereupon the meeting house and other erections are builded called Rookhow....

The general meeting be kept at the new meeting house the third first day in this month

MM at Rookhow 3rd day of 6th mo 1725.²

Anthony Wilson was asked to oversee the construction of the building. And his family have remained Quakers ever since. Roger and Margery Wilson were members of my meeting at Yealand, quite prominent Friends nationally, and I got to know their son quite well myself, also Anthony Wilson.³ And Daniel Abraham, who worked with Anthony (the first), we know as the son-in-law of Margaret Fell. Now, some 20 years after Margaret’s death, he was running the Swarthmoor estate himself.⁴

²I am grateful to Rebecca Marsden for transcribing these Minutes so that I was able to read them. It is part of her research into the beginnings of Rookhow, which is still under way, I gather.

³I asked my friend Anthony about this connection, just to make sure, and he said that unfortunately there were so many Wilsons in the is part of the world that he couldn’t know for certain he was related to his namesake.

⁴Daniel Abraham was also mentioned in Besse’s *Sufferings*, referred to above: e.g. vol 1, p.327, again under ‘Lancashire’: ‘In September 1684 Daniel Abraham... and Leonard Fell were sent to gaol for absence from the national worship. The two... continued there about a month.... In the same month William Rawlinson, Abraham Rawlinson... were committed to prison’. And on p.329: ‘For the same cause [meeting together] Daniell Abraham and his wife [née Rachel Fell] and Margaret Fox [her mother] were prisoners in Lancaster about sixteen days, and

We have some further accounts of the life of Friends at this time in William Stout's autobiography and Nicholas Morgan's PhD thesis some 30 years ago on *Lancashire Quakers and the Establishment, 1660-1730*, which of course covers our period in the 1720s and includes this area which, as you know, was then part of Lancashire, before Cumbria was invented. That thesis is now a book and a good read. Still not a lot on the Quakers, though, who met at Rookhow. So I have had to draw on what we know of Quakers in other parts of the country, which were all going through a period of change, and that is something that has interested historians quite a lot. But reading some of that has also been rather disappointing for me. I wanted to know what Friends were doing in their silent meetings, how they communicated the insights they gained 'in the light' as they gathered here and how they responded to the world around them. But these are not questions that historians, as such, like to get involved in. One historian I read admitted that at the end of his book and suggested very helpfully why that should be the case.

Although it has not been my purpose to describe it, one also senses in the eighteenth-century Quakerism more than can be precisely analysed. That part of Quaker inspiration from the inward light does not always generate the kind of evidence which the historian can handle. Meetings for worship kept no minutes; but they were nevertheless of transcendent importance for Friends themselves.⁵

What an interesting comment. I wish other historians had been able to take that on board and maybe find other ways to access these deeper experiences of the spirit. But generally, of course, historians today, professional historians, are reluctant to do that. They are concerned to maintain a very modern detachment from what they study and to stick as far as possible to the measurable facts.⁶ What I wanted to understand about these Quakers in 1725 is what they were really doing, or trying to do, because I sense that what I had been told in the histories rather falls short of that. You will see what I mean from this opening statement on the period in what is generally regarded as the best one volume history of the Quakers, by Barbour and Frost, and they pick on our year 1725 as the time when this new kind of Quakerism finally emerged:

At first sight the stance of Friends in 1725 appears to bear little relationship with the spontaneous outbursts that created and sustained Quakers in the 1650s. Denouncing injustice, going naked for a sign, calling for political transformation, interrupting

Leonard Fell about two months.'

⁵Richard T. Vann, *The Social Development of English Quakerism 1655-1755*, Harvard University Press, 1969, pp.207f.

⁶See the marvellous discussion of this by the philosopher Jeffrey Dudiak, 'The Meaning of Quaker history' and the response to it by two 'professional historians', Larry Ingle and J. William Frost, in the American journal *Quaker History*, vol 106, Spring 2017, no 1, pp.,1-27.

church services, pronouncing judgment on society, welcoming the imminent millennium, were either absent or little emphasized after 1700.... Friends had become respectable artisans, farmers, and merchants with only a smattering of the poor or gentry.⁷

What concerns me about this description is that the striking activity of the early Quakers is put down to 'spontaneous outbursts' and the actions themselves, when brought together like this, appear to be quite wild and disruptive. We are immediately led to think of people we may have known who could be described this way, like the 'radicals' of the 1970s perhaps, or the 'extremists' of our own time. With that sort of account the historian does not have to bother about the more elusive question of what was really inspiring these people or whether there was some validity in what they were doing. It makes me sad to realize that this kind of characterization has gone on from the very beginning. Listen to this apparently objective definition of what a Quaker is from a non-Quaker of the time. This is Thomas Dyche who wrote *A New General English Dictionary* in 1735, one of the first to be written, of course, even before the more famous dictionary by Samuel Johnson, who chose to ignore the Quakers altogether. So Dyche says:

QUAKER one that shakes or shivers with cold, fear or some other agitation of the mind, from whence a large sect of Christians are so called, especially in England and the dominions thereof, that at their first appearing about the year 1650 seemed to be agitated by some supernatural power, and acted and behaved as if possessed, pretending to the immediate and extraordinary inspiration of God's holy Spirit, that external ordinances [prayer books and such] are abolished and that no sacraments are necessary, but that in every action the Spirit of God guides the faithful and inspires them with the true knowledge and understanding of the Scriptures, etc.⁸

The same understanding was voiced 20 years later in Benjamin Martin's dictionary:

QUAKERS. [So called from the extraordinary agitations they were under when moved, as they say by the spirit] a religious sect that arose during the interregnum, and founded by George Fox. Their particular tenets are built on Scripture misunderstood, and consist in believing that every person is at present inspired in the same manner as the Apostles; hence they reject a standing ministry, and hold that no one is authorized to preach unless immediately inspired by the Holy Ghost; they reject the sacraments of baptism and the Lord's supper as outwardly administered;

⁷Hugh Barbour and J. William Frost, *The Quakers*, Friends United Press, Richmond, Indiana, p.95.

⁸Quoted in Russell Mortimer, 'Some notes on early dictionary references to Quakers', *The Journal of the Friends' Historical Society*, vol 43, no 1, 1951, p.33.

hold oaths on any occasion unlawful; are extremely plain in their apparel, as well as in their language; look on payment of tythes as inconsistent with the gospel, and are remarkably simple, and in general just in their dealings.⁹

These accounts go well beyond what we today would regard as a 'definition'. More an evaluation, we might say. But even that isn't right. They are clearly expressing disapproval, even outrage at what these Quakers do. There is surely an insinuation, typical of the English even then, that these people are in fact worse than the modest description given. It was, of course, a theme in the culture of that time that society and church both needed to be guided by reason, and not misled by feelings or intuitions which could lead to chaos, as they had, apparently, in the Commonwealth period. So groups like the Quakers were written off as 'enthusiasts', which was not, as it is now, a generally positive thing. It meant they were possessed by another spirit than their own, as mad people were thought to be as well. But what most strikes me is that no attempt is made to explain why they live in this way, which is obviously so different from the way most people lived. In fact, the description in both suggests these people were so obviously out of their minds that we have no need to ask what they thought or said about things.

This is ironic, because if you look into the early history of Friends, as I have done, you will see that they were very concerned indeed about being in their right minds. We could even say it was their main concern. In his epistles George Fox often warned people not to get carried away by feelings or impulses, but to look for that cool, wise insight that they have deep within them and to follow that. Here for example:

Now as the principle of God in thee hath been transgressed, come to it, to keep thy mind down low, up to the Lord God; and deny thyself. And from they own will, that is, the earthly, thou must be kept. Then thou wilt feel the power of God that will bring nature into its course, and to see the glory of the first body [as initially created]. And there the wisdom of God will be received, which is Christ, by which all things were made and created, in wisdom to be preserved and ordered to God's glory. There thou wilt come to receive and feel the physician of value, which clothes people in their right mind.¹⁰

On the other hand, they saw the church and society of their time as living in something of a fantasy. Their official teachings were not an altogether truthful interpretation of the Bible or an honest reflection of their own experience. At some level they must have known this, but

⁹Ibid., p.34.

¹⁰A letter to Lady Claypole, Cromwell's daughter, who was herself mentally unwell at the time, 1658, in *Journal*, ed. Nickalls, p.347, and my anthology of Fox, *Truth of the Heart*, 1:127. Cf. Job 13:4.

they were unable to affirm the truth as they knew it in their hearts and therefore persuaded themselves and others to believe stories about themselves which suited their needs at the time but didn't fit the reality. So, having been 'invented', they could only lead to trouble. They may have been good stories, like those reported in the Bible, but if they didn't reflect what people today knew from their own experience, they would be no help. In fact believing them to be true when their experience told them otherwise could threaten their sanity. William Penn could even compare the society of his time to Bedlam, because it no longer knew what made for health and happiness.¹¹ The main mission of those first Quakers, as they saw it, was to call people back to the truth of their life, which they already in some sense knew, but could know fully and properly only by giving up on their endless talk and favoured stories and going silent and still to allow the truth they had repressed to disclose itself. They would then see the truth for themselves, which would heal their troubled minds and guide them on how to live. And that would indeed be possible because the Quakers had found that to be so in their own experience. That is why they came together regularly in their meeting houses to sit together in silence. And that is why they built Rookhow.

Their strange behaviour, as others saw it, was a way they tried to live that truth consistently, what they had discovered in their meetings was the right way to live, given what they were discovering about how not to live it. They were trying to make the truth the basis of their life, and learning from one another and their varied experience how they were to do that. Hence their commitment to telling the truth, being honest in business, not controlling others or being violent to them. And this way of life, they found, was the best way to convey to others what this truth was. It was very difficult to describe in words, and people were generally (though not wholly) resistant to being told. Public arguments about the Quaker message didn't get very far, they discovered. So they relied more on 'letting their lives speak', as George Fox put it. Their lived commitment to the truth was in fact their best testimony to it. And as in a court of law, a testimony was a personal witness to the truth as you yourself had experienced it and others maybe not. So being truthful and fair in their dealings with people, for example, was meant to convey something about human life which others would recognise in their

¹¹William Penn, *Some Fruits of Solitude*, 1693, Preface: 'We understand little of the works of God, either in nature or grace. We pursue false knowledge and mistake education extremely. We are violent in our affections, confused and unmethodical in our whole life; make that a burden which was given for a blessing; and so of little comfort to ourselves or others, misapprehending the true notion of happiness and so missing of the right use of life and way to happy living. And until we are persuaded to stop, and step a little aside, out of the noisy crowd and incumbering hurry of the world, and calmly take a prospect of things, it will be impossible we should be able to make a right judgment of our selves, or know our own misery. But after we have made the just reckoning which retirement will help us to, we shall begin to think the world in great measure mad, and that we have been in a sort of Bedlam all this while.' At the time, of course 'Bedlam', an abbreviation of Bethlehem, was the hospital in London reserved for 'lunatics'. It was often visited by people curious about what madness was, but Penn was suggesting in effect that to discover what it was they had only to look around them and indeed into their own hearts.

hearts, and maybe respond to – or not. Did you notice that surprising conclusion to the second definition I read, which seemed to imply they were out of their heads? ‘And in general [they] are just in their dealings’. Something had got through, but he evidently didn’t know quite what to make of it.

Or perhaps he didn’t want to know, which is why he chose to misrepresent their life for the entertainment of his readers. There was a lot at stake, of course, in taking this Quaker testimony seriously, especially for those who had wealth or power. This Quaker truth could be, as our modern Al Gore put it in relation to the climate crisis, ‘an inconvenient truth’.

It reminds me, in fact, of the response in our time to climate activists who are trying in their actions to convey a truth about the danger we are in. But it is not a truth the state wants to hear, for obvious reasons. So they ridicule the protesters as ‘extremists’, and subversives, and take no serious care to understand what they are saying. Like the state in Fox’s time, they lock the truth out of their minds by literally locking the witnesses in prison.

The Friends held out, even when they recognized that the world in general was not going to accept their testimony. Even their achievement in helping to bring about the Act of Toleration in 1689 did not fundamentally change that view. They were still ‘on probation’ as an acceptable sect of Christianity, and like the Jews, they were excluded from any positions in society which might give them power or influence: in universities, law courts and parliament in particular. At the same time, they were valued for their gifts in trade and finance, and later in manufacturing, where I suppose their strange ideas wouldn’t become a problem.

So yes, in one sense they gave up on their mission. They realized at around the turn of the century that they were not going to change the world as they had hoped. They should be more concerned now, with this new compromise, that they themselves were not going to be changed by the world. Other factors were in play to support this move. By 1700 their first leaders had died, apart from Margaret Fell, George Whitehead and William Penn, who were then of course very old. Also, with the horrendous persecution in England and the new opportunities in the colonies, led by William Penn himself, many thousands of Quakers left the country, often their best and brightest. And finally, there was the obvious difficulty they had with communicating this profound message of theirs, not only to doubtful strangers, but even to their own offspring. This has been a problem for all great spiritual movements, so far as I am aware. The Quakers could perhaps have given more attention to the practice, to teach their young how waiting together in silence can evince a deeper truth that may not be otherwise available. William Penn wrote some very helpful advice to his children, but I have not come across any one else who did. Margaret Fell’s own life was a testimony for her children, showing them how they themselves could live, as they themselves confessed. The

testimonies were meant to do that, of course. But they could also be taken amiss, as they were by the dictionary compilers. Young Friends usually took them to be models for how to live, the way children generally do, I suppose. They took them as rules to be followed.¹² And follow them they did. There was in fact a quite strong commitment to these testimonies as prescriptions on how to live. It enabled them not only to understand how to live the Quaker way, but also to bond together at a time when they were not being accepted by the world, and to maintain a witness to the world in the hope that the world would eventually accept it, and them. So they were prepared to see themselves as somewhat separate from the world, a 'peculiar people' as they came to be known, but not disengaged from the world. That was a delicate balance, and we can believe there were many discussions here in Rookhow on how far they could go, or should go, in engaging with a world that lived on quite different principles. Bear in mind, Friends had no priests or bishops to make these decisions for them; they had to discover the way themselves through their silent meetings and brave explorations, and to agree a way forward together, in unity!

One issue must have dominated the others. They were now perforce traders and manufacturers. Along with farmers and craftsmen, that was almost all they were allowed to be. And they responded to this challenge well. They had certain advantages, in fact: networks of fellow Quakers across the country, fuelled by their frequent meetings; talented individuals who were prevented from going into the professions; a reputation for trustworthiness and fairness in their dealings; and money to spare from their simple life-style to be invested in the business. So you can imagine these simply dressed Friends talking together on this courtyard before going home, even while their families reminded them they still had a long journey to get home and the horses were getting restless. But they often allowed time for these extra discussions, and stayed at the monthly meeting for most of the day, a practice that lasted until very recently.

You can imagine them talking, for example, about what was going on in the country to improve trade and business. We know they were interested in iron. There was an iron foundry just north of here, Force Forge, which produced iron from the rare haematite to be found in these parts. Margaret Fell had some interest in it before. And we know that the warden appointed for Rookhow, who lived in the cottage attached to the main building, was referred to in the census as a 'woodcutter', so he would have been working in our woodland to make charcoal to help produce the crude iron. But Friends were now talking with Friend Abraham Darby of Shropshire – was this at a Yearly Meeting? - about his new technique for

¹²In his *Introduction to Quakerism*, Cambridge U.P., 2007, Pink Dandelion describes this as an historical shift of focus from 'truth to rules' and then notes a similar shift in the 20th century 'from rules to values'.

making iron even harder by heating it to a great temperature with coal. There was even talk of Friends here linking up with his operation in Shropshire, though nothing came of it, apparently.¹³ They might even have talked with Friends in Northumberland who were trying to develop ways of moving coal and such faster across the land, especially at the time with planks of wood, though eventually with Friend Edward Pease of Darlington, with cast iron rails, a hundred years later. And Stephenson his friend even invented a steam engine to put on top of them.

But all this work raised problems for them. Trade and business meant dealing with other people all the time and also accepting broadly the standards that were set for doing these things. How were they to behave in the company of other people in business? How could they maintain their testimonies to truth when these could go quite against the grain of the way of doing business in this newly competitive world?

One thing they were confident about. They had to be truthful and honest. And generally, it seems, they were, against the grain of a culture that prized bargaining and naked self-interest. And the Quakers' honesty and fairness were not only admired, as we saw in that dictionary definition about 'justice': they were effective in advancing their work – and also interest in their testimony. More people were becoming Friends, especially here in the North, even when numbers began to decline in the South.¹⁴ 1725 marked a watershed in fact. It was the year when numbers peaked. The number of Friends in the 1660s had been between 30 and 40,000. In 1725 the number was 100,000. And that in a general population in England of 5 million. If you think of it, that is a huge proportion of the population. The population of England now is about 50 million, isn't it? Ten times what it was then. So the equivalent proportion of Quakers today would be one million.

On the other hand, those early Quakers were not into the small-talk and fun-and-games that were part of the business ethos, and they did not dress to impress, but retained their simplicity and restraint. So what were they to do when they attended the wedding or funeral of a friend or colleague, for example, where they would be expected to join in, to some degree at least, so

¹³Cf. Richard C. Allen and Rosemary Moore, *The Quakers 1656-1723*, Pennsylvania State U.P., 2018, chapter 11 'The Friends and Business in the Second Period', e.g. p258: 'At the same time, Darby was involved with other metalworking businesses in Shropshire... and he was investigating other possibilities, including a business connection with William Rawlinson, a Quaker iron master and copper miner from Furness in the modern county of Cumbria. [footnote 90: one of the family known to Quaker history because of a long-running dispute with Margaret Fell about the management of a forge. See Bonnelyn Kunze, *Margaret Fell and the Rise of Quakerism*, pp. 101-26] This eventually came to nothing'. This, no doubt, was the William Rawlinson referred to in the Minute quoted above listing the Friends asked to investigate a meeting house for the Monthly Meeting.

¹⁴Nicholas Morgan puts this down to the impressive discipline of Quakers in the North in maintaining their discipline. As we shall see, though, that discipline was not always admired, even up here. Morgan's final chapter of the book, already referred to, is particularly about this disparity: 'Discipline, decline and mission'. On the actual numbers involved see William C. Braithwaite, *The Second Period of Quakerism*, revised edition, pp.457-460.

as not to offend or spoil the fun?

Quakers everywhere discussed these things at length, more than might seem healthy to us, but we have to recognize that to them a great deal hung on it, even their own survival in the world. So this is why we have an Epistle from the Quarterly Meeting of Lancashire, which of course included this Monthly Meeting, addressed to London Yearly Meeting, reassuring Friends that up here in the North their advice on following the testimonies was being very strictly followed, and an Epistle from Margaret Fox (as Margaret Fell now was) warning Friends not to be laying down the law on what they could or should not do!

First an 'Epistle from the Quarterly Meeting in Lancashire the 7th 2 mo. 1698 to Friends and brethren at the Yearly Meeting in London.' It was in response to a request from Yearly Meeting to Friends across the country as to how 'truth was prospering among them'. It was the beginning of what we came to know as *Advices and Queries*, only then, in 1698, the advices and queries were meant to be answered as well.

Brethren,

.... Having considered the many branches of our Christian testimony, the several admonitions, requests and friendly advices, which have from year to year come to [us], the Yearly Meeting having unity therewith, concluded to recommend a strict enquiry to be made in all the particular meetings in our county, how Friends uprightly bear their testimonies for Truth and answered Friends' advices, which accordingly was done, and the account now returned to this Meeting... [is that] generally our Friends are clear in their testimonies against the hireling priests... against oaths or swearing in any case whatsoever...against wars and fighting with any carnal weapons whatsoever in order to destroy men, women and children... against the welfare of our neighbours... against all excess and superfluities of meat, drink, apparel together with vain and foolish customs, fashions and observances at births, marriages and funerals, and fellowships of the world....

Thus having given you dear brethren a brief account of the state of Friends in our county of their love and zeal for Truth and testimony to it, and their readiness to comply with friendly advices, we leave you to that ancient love and therein to your care.¹⁵

Margaret Fell may well have been at the meeting that endorsed this Epistle, but she was not at all happy with it, as she wrote in a letter soon after.¹⁶ Two years later, in what became the last

¹⁵Quoted in full in Nicholas Morgan, *Lancashire Quakers and the Establishment 1660-170*, Ryburn Academic Publishing, 1993, pp.295-7.

¹⁶See Nicholas Morgan, *op.cit.*, pp.255f.

of her many letters to Friends, she expressed her disquiet more fully, especially with the 'friendly advices'.

Margaret Fox to Friends, and Brethren and Sisters, 2nd month 1700:

Friends...

We are the people of the living God... He has made us partakers of his divine nature and he has given us his good and holy spirit to lead us and to guide us into all Truth in all things....

Let us beware of tampering with anything contrary to this holy spirit.... And let us beware of meddling with the things of God otherwise than his spirit leads and guides. Now there is a spirit got up us amongst Friends in some places that would make and meddle in their imaginations in leading of Friends into things outwardly....

Away with those whimsical narrow imaginations, and let the spirit of God which he has given us lead us and guide us; and let us stand fast in that liberty where with Christ has made us free, and not be entangled again into bondage, in observing proscriptions in outward things which will not profit nor cleanse the inward man....

For it is now gone 47 years since we owned the truth, and all has gone well and peaceably till now of late, that this narrowness and strictness is entering in, that many cannot tell what to do, or not to do....

If we can but frame according to outward proscriptions and orders, and deny eating and drinking with our neighbours, in so much that poor Friends is mangled in their minds, that they know not what to do, for Friends says one way and another, another, but Christ Jesus says that we must take no thought what we shall eat, or what we shall drink, or what we shall put on: but bids us consider the lilies how they grow in more royalty than Solomon. But contrary to this we must look at no colours, nor make anything that is changeable colours as the hills are, nor sell them, nor wear them. But we must be all in one dress, and one colour. This is a silly poor gospel.... Now I have set before you life and death, and desire you to choose life and God and his Truth,

The 2 mo. 1700,

Margaret Fox¹⁷

Margaret has beautifully expressed the original inspiration of Friends and the sadness of what eventually became of it. But did she appreciate the pressures that most Friends were under in trying to maintain their way of life? It is a question we ourselves have to ask as we confront

¹⁷Quoted in full by Nicholas Morgan, op.cit. pp 292-4; also in Elsa F. Glines, *Undaunted Zeal: the letters of Margaret Fell*, Friends United Press, Indiana, 2003, pp.468-471.

the world in its very different modern form. And though Margaret's protest may have seemed out of touch with the way most Quakers were thinking then,

at least in these parts, she may well have won the day. I found a description of Friends in 1724 in another dictionary, which comments on how they had changed in the last 20 years or so. I will conclude with this quotation:

Quakers, a Party or sect in religion, who first appeared in England about 1652.... They were formerly very plain in their habits, but that humour is much abated, especially among their women, who wear the richest silks, and the men the finest cloth, hats and perriwigs.¹⁸

¹⁸Edward Cocker, *Cocker's English Dictionary*, 3rd edition 1724, quoted in Russell Mortimer, op.cit. pp.30f.