

ART. IX. – *Anthony Pearson, An Early Cumbrian Quaker.*

By A. R. JABEZ-SMITH.

IN April 1965 Mrs Amy E. Wallis of Darlington, a member of our Society from 1967 until her death in 1977, gave an address entitled “Anthony Pearson (1626-1666) An Early Friend in Bishoprick” to the Friends’ Historical Society¹ of which she was a distinguished member. Anthony Pearson, author of the frequently reprinted “Great Case of Tythes” was presumed by the contributor of his entry in the Dictionary of National Biography to have been a native of County Durham where he lived and worked from his early twenties to his death at the age of forty. It was Mrs Wallis who discovered in the course of her research on Pearson that he was a native of Cumbria and married a Cumbrian girl. He was baptised at Cartmel on January 7th 1626/7 son of Edward Pearson of Cartmel Fell and he married Grace, daughter of Thomas Lamplugh of Ribton Hall in Bridekirk parish. The marriage probably before a justice of the peace at Ribton in 1653 is, like her elder sister’s in 1654, unrecorded in the Bridekirk parish register.² The marriage must have taken place before the late summer of 1653 because George Fox records that Anthony Pearson and his wife were with him at this time in Bootle.³

Thomas Lamplugh who acquired the manor of Ribton and other lands in Cumberland by foreclosing a mortgage of £800,⁴ reputedly came from Beverley to take up residence at Ribton “during the Civil Wars”;⁵ but he must have arrived a little earlier because the baptism of his daughter Grace on November 17th 1636 is recorded in the Bridekirk register. Grace was named after her mother Grace Barwis, daughter of Anthony Barwis of Ile Kirk (1580-1616) and his wife Grace Fleming.⁶ Grace (Barwis) Lamplugh died aged 30 in 1640 when her daughter Grace was only three years old.⁷

Grace (Barwis) Lamplugh’s brother “Great Richard Barwis” (1601-1648) was “probably the ablest of the local Parliamentarians”; he was M.P. for Carlisle from 1628 until his death.⁸ Thomas Lamplugh served with him on the County Committee of Cumberland from 1642.⁹ The household at Ribton Hall was therefore Parliamentary and it was into this sympathetic atmosphere that the young Anthony Pearson was introduced in the early 1650s.

Pearson at the age of twenty became secretary to Sir Arthur Hesilrige and went with him to Newcastle when Hesilrige was appointed Governor of the North. In 1649 Pearson was appointed Clerk and Registrar to the Compounding Commissioners. When in 1650 Hesilrige returned to London, Pearson remained in the North to look after the estates, including the manor of Bishop Auckland acquired by Hesilrige and it was then that he went to live at Ramshaw Hall, West Auckland, later to become open house for visiting Friends.¹⁰ But Pearson was not yet a Quaker. By 1651 he was an active Justice of the Peace in Cumberland and Westmorland and it was probably in this capacity that he first became known to his fellow justice, Thomas Lamplugh of Ribton. It seems that following the trial at Appleby in 1652 of James Nayler, a prominent Quaker, for blasphemy “Justice Pearson”, who appears to have presided, himself became a Quaker. Nicolson & Burn add a note to their report of Nayler’s examination, “This same Justice Pearson (to shew how catching is enthusiasm) afterwards turned Quaker, and writ a book against

tithes".¹¹ After his marriage to Grace Lamplugh her father was host to Friends at Ribton and at their home in West Auckland Anthony and Grace received and entertained George Fox, James Nayler and many other leading Friends. Mrs Wallis has emphasized Pearson's close connection with the household at Swarthmoor and indeed he was named by Judge Fell as a trustee of his will.¹²

At the Restoration Hesilrige was imprisoned and Pearson, having been cleared of enmity towards the King, withdrew from Quaker affairs though remaining well disposed to Friends. He was appointed Under-sheriff by Bishop Cosin of Durham but died in January 1665/6 aged forty.¹³ His will (Appendix) mentions his son Thomas and refers to a tenement in Cartmel Fell. His widow remarried in 1673 a Quaker, James Hall, and it is to the Quaker record of this marriage that knowledge of the identity of Grace Pearson's parents is due. The record is thus, "Grace Peirson, late of Ramshee, widow of Anthony, Parents Thomas and Grace Lamplough, married James Hall at Shotton 1673 7mo 26".¹⁴

James and Grace Hall had a daughter, also named Grace, who married in 1703 Robert Chambers of Sedgwick near Kendal.¹⁵ She was a celebrated Quakeress who is said to have travelled in the ministry "both here and in the colonies". She was credited with considerable skill in surgery and in administering relief in many disorders,¹⁶ a talent endorsed by Catherine Countess of Suffolk when she wrote in January 1758 to her agent at Levens, Mr Martyr, ". . . I am sorry you have a Humour in one of your Eyes. do not tamper too much. If you can get Grace Chambers Advice believe me she'l do you more good then Doctors".¹⁷ Grace was then 81 and apparently in good health because in April of the same year Lady Suffolk writes "I am glad Grace Chambers well."¹⁸ She died in September 1762 aged 85.¹⁹

In 1659 Cumbrian Quakers compiled a list of serving justices of the peace divided into three categories, "Friends", "Moderate men" and "Persecutors". Among the "Moderate men" was Anthony Pearson's father-in-law, Thomas Lamplugh of Ribton Hall²⁰ who, Parliamentarian though he was, evidently held no strong political or religious convictions; in 1654 Grace Pearson's sister Frances married Colonel John Lamplugh of Lamplugh, a Royalist who had commanded a Foot Regiment in the Marquess of Newcastle's "Whitecoats" at Marston Moor, been wounded and captured;²¹ Grace's first cousin, Thomas Lamplugh (who had been adopted by her father and brought to Ribton) was a staunch but wary high churchman who became Archbishop of York and founded a line of Lamplugh parsons. Moderation seems to have been a characteristic of Anthony Pearson's "in-laws" for it is recorded that archbishop Thomas Lamplugh when Bishop of Exeter was lenient towards non-conformists. Whether his wife's family had any influence on Pearson's decision after 1660 to withdraw from Quaker affairs is a matter for speculation, as is the influence of Pearson and his Quaker friends' meetings in the mid-1650s at Ribton Hall on the growth of Quakerism in Bridekirk; in 1676 there were said to have been 30 Quakers and 33 other dissenters in the parish of 577 souls of "communicable" age, a concentration of Quakers exceeded in the diocese of Carlisle only by Caldbeck (70), Wigton (40) and Ravenstonedale (32). However, the latter three parishes each returned the number of their "Other Dissenters" as "Nil" so there is a possibility that the local clergy and wardens concerned classed all their non-conformists as Quakers.²²

Appendix

Will, Durham, of Anthony Peirson of the City of Durham gentleman.

I give to the poor £5 I give to Thomas Knipe Esq for and towards the payment of the fine of the tenement late John Bluett's lying in Cartmell Fell in the County of Lancaster I give all the rest of my goods and chattels to my son Thomas Peirson whom I make sole executor 18 January 1665

Signed Ant Pearson Seal (shield: three roundels 2 and 1, crest: a bird). Witnesses, Thomas Kinleside, Tho: Hatter

Inventory of goods whereof Anthony Pearson of the City of Durham Esqr lately dyed possessed 26 January 1665 Total £99 10s. 10d.

Goods of the said Anthony Pearson appraised & valued at Ramshaw 27 January 1665. £5 5s. 10d. At the Toft Mill 13s. 6d. At Edw: Slee's 4s.

Total	£6 13s. 4d. (<i>sic</i>)
	99 10s. 10d.
	£106 4s. 2d.

Act Book

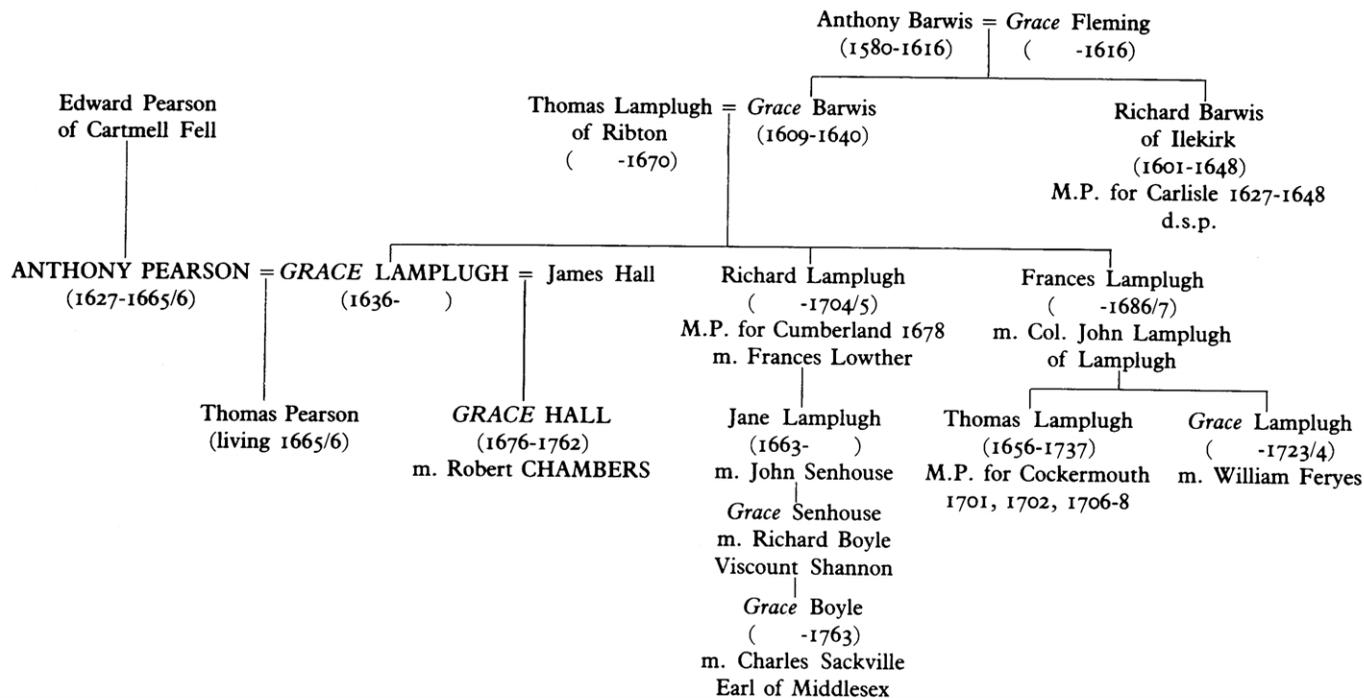
29 January 1665 The will of Anthony Peirson lately of City of Durham Esq deceased. Admon to Anthony Alderson (Grace Peirson widow & relict of deceased having first renounced) for the sole use & behoof of Thomas Peirson son of deceased a minor.

(For the above transcripts I am indebted to C. Roy Hudleston, F.S.A.)

Notes and References

- ¹ *Jnl.F.H.S.*, 52 (1966) 2, to which reference should be made for a full account of Pearson's writings and work for and among the early Quakers.
- ² Grace's sister Frances's marriage is recorded fully in the Lamplugh registers where it is stated that it took place at Ribton in the presence of ten named witnesses and that the bride was the "eldest daughter of Thomas Lamplugh of Ribton Esqre". The entry also records that the banns were published on three several Lords days in the parish church of Lamplugh. It is reasonable to suppose that the Royalist bridegroom, Col. John Lamplugh of Lamplugh, uneasy about the legality of his non-religious marriage, caused the entry to be made. Anthony Pearson, on the other hand, as an opponent of the established church would have had no such qualms, with the probable result that his marriage is nowhere recorded, having taken place before the establishment of Quaker records.
- ³ *Jnl.F.H.S.*, *op. cit.*
- ⁴ *Northern History*, V (1970) 48.
- ⁵ NB, 2, 106.
- ⁶ CW2, li, 118.
- ⁷ Bridekirk register. The affection for the name 'Grace' displayed by the descendants of Grace Barwis is exemplified in the accompanying genealogical table which is primarily intended to shew Anthony Pearson's and Grace Chambers' Lamplugh relations.
- ⁸ CW2, li, 119.
- ⁹ *Northern History*, *op. cit.*
- ¹⁰ See Note 1.
- ¹¹ NB, 1, 539.
- ¹² See Note 1.
- ¹³ St. Mary the Less, Durham, parish register.
- ¹⁴ Letter from Mrs Wallis to the writer 9th April 1967.
- ¹⁵ *Durham Quarterly Meetings*.
- ¹⁶ *Jnl.F.H.S.*, 7 (1910) 182/3.
- ¹⁷ CW2, xlvi, 172.

ANTHONY PEARSON AND HIS WIFE'S FAMILY

¹⁸ *Ibid.*, 177.¹⁹ *ful.F.H.S.*, 48 (1957), 122.²⁰ *Ibid.*, 51 (1966), 2, 92.²¹ Peter Young, *Marston Moor* (Kington, The Roundwood Press, 1970).²² CW2, II, 140.