

LEWES QUAKERS IN THE SEVENTEENTH AND EIGHTEENTH CENTURIES

by *W. K. Rector*

It was in the year 1647 that George Fox, the generally acknowledged founder of Quakerism, first speaks of himself as “ declaring the truth ” which was to become the Quaker message.¹ Fox was at this time living at Mansfield in Nottinghamshire and had become closely involved with a group of scattered and disorganised Baptists. Impressed by the message and personality of Fox, this scattered community found a new association under his leadership called, “ Children of the Light ”—the earliest name by which Friends were known.² The term “ Quaker ” was first applied to Fox and his followers in 1650 by a Derby magistrate, Gervase Bennett,³ and it was not until much later, in 1793, that the name “ Society of Friends ” came into use.⁴

By the Spring of 1652 Fox had taken his message into Lancashire, Yorkshire and Westmorland where he gained many converts—especially amongst the Seekers.⁵ The Seekers were a product of the religious turmoil of the time and consisted of people who were dissatisfied with contemporary religious practice and were waiting and hoping for the restoration of the Church according to the New Testament pattern. As it turned out, they afforded the most receptive audience in England for the preaching of George Fox, and great numbers of them became Children of the Light. They also supplied most of the early “ Publishers of Truth ”—a term applied to the first Quaker travelling ministers.⁶ By 1654 the Quaker movement was strongly established in the north of England and Fox and his followers decided that the time had come to take the message to the south.⁷ Within a year pioneer Publishers of the Truth established a headquarters in London which was to cope efficiently with the various problems arising from the rapidly expanding movement. Fresh workers came down from the north and among them were, John Slee and Thomas Lawson, the first Publishers of Truth in Sussex.⁸ Slee was from Greystoke in Cumberland and Lawson, one of Fox’s earliest converts, came from Rampside. Lawson later became the first of the distinguished line of Quaker schoolmasters and also a noted botanist.⁹ Joining Slee and Dawson in bringing the Quaker message to Sussex was an old Commonwealth soldier, Thomas Lawcock, who was to suffer four imprisonments for his Quaker activities in this county.¹⁰

The “ Blessed Testimony and Joyful Tidings of Salvation ” was first preached in Sussex early in 1655 at Horsham where John Slee, Thomas Lawson and Thomas Lawcock “ declared the truth ” in the market-place. They were received well by some but for the most part were

¹ William C. Braithwaite, *The beginnings of Quakerism* (Cambridge University Press, 2nd edition, 1961), p. 42.

² *Ibid.*, p. 43.

³ *Ibid.*, p. 57.

⁴ *Ibid.*, p. 576.

⁵ *Ibid.*, pp. 78-80.

⁶ *Ibid.*, p. 25.

⁷ *Ibid.*, pp. 154-157.

⁸ *Ibid.*, p. 185.

⁹ *Ibid.*, p. 370.

¹⁰ *Ibid.*, p. 399.

reviled and stoned as madmen. On the same day they moved on to the house of Bryan Wilkason in Nuthurst parish about two miles from Horsham, Wilkason "being, endeede, the first man that Gave Entrance as well to their persons as to their Testimony." The next day, being a Sunday, a meeting was held at his house and, on the following Sunday, another was held at the house of Richard Bax, a weaver of Ifield. At this time a group of Seekers were meeting in the house of John Russell at Southover, Lewes, and to it came Thomas Robinson who "declared the truth" to the convincement of Ambrose Galloway, Elizabeth his wife, and Stephen Eager, all members of the Seekers.¹ Thomas Robinson came from Grayrigg in Westmoreland and was one of the first Publishers of Truth.² Soon after, George Fox and Alexander Parker visited the house of Bryan Wilkason where they met Thomas Lawcock who was later "moved" to cause a disturbance in Horsham Church, and as a result, was committed to Horsham Gaol on the 24 July 1655 where he remained for nearly four months.³ Fox's travelling companion, Alexander Parker, came from the Bowland district in Yorkshire, a well-educated man who was at this time twenty-five years of age and later became one of Fox's closest personal friends.⁴ In the same week Fox held a meeting in Wilkason's house to which Matthew Caffyn, a Baptist minister, came and strongly opposed him.⁵ Matthew Caffyn (1628-1714) was a remarkable man destined to have considerable influence in the sphere of liberal nonconformity both within and without the county of Sussex. He studied at Oxford but was expelled because of his expressed disbelief in the doctrine of the Trinity and he was to lead a life of hardship—including imprisonment in Newgate for the sake of the truth as he saw it. He became known as "the Battle Axe of Sussex" because of his great ability in controversy and during his period of ministry at the General Baptist Chapel, Horsham, he exerted great influence on the General Baptists in the county as a whole. When the General Baptists erected their chapel in Eastport Lane, Lewes, in 1741, the congregation there were known as "Caffynites".⁶ After Fox's clash with Caffyn, and in the same week, Alexander Parker accompanied Fox to Ifield where they held a large meeting at the house of Richard Bax. Many converts were made and from that time a regular meeting was held at Ifield—the first established Weekly Meeting in the county. Later in 1655 Fox and Parker held a meeting in John Russell's house in Southover—apparently the only time that Fox visited Lewes.⁷

By 1668 the Quaker movement in Sussex had gathered momentum and on the 9 October of that year a General Meeting of the Friends of Truth in Sussex was held in the house of Richard Bax (one of the earliest Quaker converts) at Capel in Surrey. The names of the meeting places in Sussex at that time were given as: "Chichester, Burdam Green, Arundell, Stening, Wiston, Shipley, East Grinstead, Forrest, Ifield, Horsham, Hurst, Lewis, Bletchington, Rottingdean, Maresfield Forge, Buckstead, Alfriston, Warbelton, Boorham and Doemoore." It should be noted here that "meeting place" did not necessarily mean "Meeting House"; for instance, Lewes, was not to have a Meeting House until 1675. At the General Meeting in 1668 the names of Quakers judged fit to keep Monthly and Quarterly Meetings were put forward. For Lewes, Blatchington and Rottingdean, Nicholas Beard, Ambrose Galloway and Richard, John, Walter and Henry Scrase were chosen. Monthly Meetings were to be held

¹ East Sussex Record Office, Society of Friends (hereafter E.S.R.O., SOF) 5/1, pp. 1-2.

² Braithwaite, *op. cit.*, p. 146.

³ E.S.R.O., SOF/5/1, p. 2.

⁴ Braithwaite, *op. cit.*, p. 178.

⁵ E.S.R.O., SOF/5/1, p. 3.

⁶ J. M. Connell, *The story of an old Meeting House* (Longman, Green & Co. Ltd., 2nd edition, 1935), pp. 37-55.

⁷ E.S.R.O., SOF/5/1, p. 4.

on the fourth day of the third week in every month; the first Monthly Meeting was to be held at John Wenham's house in Kingston, near Lewes, on the 26 November 1668. It was also agreed that representatives of all the Meetings in the county should meet together once in every quarter of the year; the first Meeting was to be held at Blatchington in the house of Widow Scrase on the 2 December 1668.¹

Until 1675 Lewes Quakers met in various private houses and there is no mention in the records of any established Meeting House prior to that date. In the minutes of a Quarterly Meeting held at Alfriston on the 21 July 1675 there occurs the following entry:

“Concerning the proceeding of Lewes friends about a meeting place of which account was now given, thereupon the meeting have passed their approbation thereof and desires they proceed to fitt up after the best manner the said room they can with all speed for the use aforesaid.”²

On the 15 January 1675 at a Monthly Meeting held at the house of Thomas Moseley in the Cliffe, Lewes, it was “ordered that ye next meeting be held in friends Meeting House in Lewes if ye Lord permit.”³ In the first volume of the Sussex Books of Sufferings there is this entry: “About the Seventh month of this presente yeare, 1675, was finished the Building of the Meeting House of Friends, of Lewis.” It is probable that premises already in existence were converted into a Meeting House but it was not until 1678 that the property was taken on a long lease. In an indenture dated the 22 May 1678 premises known by the name of Puddlewharfe, and before that, Archers, in the parish of All Saints, were leased to Ambrose Galloway for a period of 999 years and were to be used for a “Meeting place for the people called Quakers.” The premises were bounded on the east by a lane (Friars Walk) leading to the Church of All Saints and on the north, south and west by property of the heirs of Richard Kidder.⁴

In 1682 fines for attending an unlawful assembly were imposed upon Ambrose Galloway, tailor of Lewes; Thomas Moseley, woollen-draper in the Cliffe; Elizabeth, wife of Thomas Robinson, felt-maker in the Cliffe and Thomas Akehurst, mercer in the Cliffe. Jane Kidder, spinster, at this date living in the Meeting House, was also fined. The house, called Puddlewharfe, was probably the premises fitted up as a Meeting House in 1675.⁵ The riverside quay known as Puddle Wharf was, in 1682, in the possession of Ambrose Galloway whose house, standing east of Friars Walk and near the river, was adjacent to the wharf.⁶ One can only assume that the house known as Puddlewharfe, which stood west of Friars Walk and some distance from the river, derived its name from some association with Galloway's riverside property. In a survey of Lewes dated 1790, compiled by the Lewes antiquarian Thomas Woollgar, four newly-built premises are listed as standing on the site of the “Late Meeting House of the Quakers.” The survey indicates that the old Meeting House of 1675 was situated on, or close by, the west side of Friars Walk, and probably stood on, or near, the land lately occupied by Browne and Crosskeys Ltd., later Courts and now (1975) lying derelict after Courts' disastrous fire.⁷

Although a deed to “Lewis burying ground” is mentioned as early as 1674,⁸ it seems that Quaker burials at Lewes did not take place until 1697 when land to be used for this purpose was obtained on a 1000 year lease from John Newnham of Barcombe.⁹ With the exception

¹ Ibid., SOF/1/1, p. 1.

² Ibid., SOF/1/1, p. 43.

³ Ibid., SOF/30/1.

⁴ Ibid., SOF/9/1, fol. 23.

⁵ Ibid., SOF/5/1, p. 187.

⁶ Thomas Woollgar, *Spicilegia*, Sussex Archaeological Society Library, vol. 1, p. 436.

⁷ Ibid., p. 533.

⁸ E.S.R.O., SOF/1/1, p. 34.

⁹ Ibid., SOF/9/1, p. 167.

of a still-born child, the first burial in Lewes burial ground, Friars Walk, was that of Margaret, wife of William Robinson, who died in March 1697/8. Another early Lewes burial was that of Antony Tomkins who, two years before his death in 1698, was one of those chiefly concerned in obtaining the Lewes burial ground.¹

Early marriages took place in private houses, some at the house of William Yokehurst, Firle, in 1676; at the Falmer House of Nicholas Beard in 1679; and at "Pains Place," Cuckfield, during the period 1675-1710.² In the early years of Quakerism those outside the Meeting rarely attended Quaker weddings but later in the 17th century the names of friends and neighbours often appear in the Marriage Registers. Henry and Rebecca Snooke, John Courthope and John Tattersall, all non-members, were present at the Lewes wedding of John Field of Southwark and Mary Akehurst of the Cliffe, Lewes in 1687. In 1696 the Lewes wedding of Thomas Rigg, son of the eminent Quaker minister, Ambrose Rigg, and Elizabeth Courthope, saw a large number of non-members in attendance; among them were Geary Courthope, Peake Elphick, John Henry, Edward Cripps, Sarah Byne, Robert Whitpaine and Elizabeth Springett.³

The 17th century Quaker, Ambrose Galloway, already mentioned several times, deserves special attention. There were, in fact, three men who bore this name: Ambrose Galloway the first, who died 7 September 1696; his son, Ambrose Galloway the second, who died in 1718 at his house near Cliffe Bridge; and Ambrose Galloway the third who died in 1738 and about whom it was said, "He was an energetic Tory at a time when Quakers as a rule were Whigs, and was a violent partisan at the 1733 election."⁴ All the Galloways took an active part in Lewes Quaker affairs, but none more so than Ambrose Galloway the first. A prosperous tradesman and a member of the original small group of Lewes Quakers, Galloway spent considerable time in prison for upholding his Quaker views. In February 1660 he and his wife Elizabeth were, along with other Quakers, sent to prison for attending a Meeting of the Friends of Truth at Lewes. They were released in April 1661. In June of the following year Galloway was arrested at a Meeting held in the house of Thomas Luxford, Hurstpierpoint, and committed to Horsham Gaol along with eight fellow Quakers. The prisoners were later brought before the Assizes at which time they were, with the exception of Ambrose Rigg, fined five pounds each and sentenced to be imprisoned until the fines were paid. The men refused to pay the fines, were sent back to gaol, and not released until April 1666.⁵ Other forms of harassment were also employed and in May 1664 William Bryant, churchwarden of All Saints, Lewes, took a large piece of cloth from Galloway's shop because he had not paid a four shilling fine levied upon him and his wife for non-attendance at Church. Galloway was in prison at this time. On the 11 January 1670 William Snatt, "priest of the parish of allhallows, in Lewis", sent his maidservant into Galloway's shop for two waistcoats, for which Snatt was to later pay eight shillings. The sum was never paid, Snatt keeping the waistcoats because Galloway owed tithes amounting to two shillings and eightpence.⁶

In 1682 Ambrose Galloway lived in the first house west of Cliffe Bridge on the south side of the High Street, a house that was occupied by the Galloway family at least as late as 1739. The property included the warehouse and quay known as Puddle Wharf. A house and orchard

¹ Percival Lucas, "Some notes on the early Quaker Registers," *Sussex Archaeological Collections* (hereafter S.A.C.), vol. 55 (1912), p. 91.

² *Ibid.*, p. 90.

³ *Ibid.*, pp. 95-96.

⁴ *Ibid.*, p. 91.

⁵ E.S.R.O., SOF/5/1, pp. 48-49.

⁶ *Ibid.*, SOF/5/1, pp. 99-100.

on School Hill also belonged to Galloway in 1675, being described as the fourteenth property from the bottom of the hill and on the south side. This property was later occupied by Richard Stephens (1683), widow Stephens (1694), and Thomas Rigg (1695), all members of the Lewes Quaker community.¹ In a collection of 17th century Sussex tradesmen's tokens owned by the Sussex Archaeological Society there is a good example of one of Galloway's trade tokens dated 1667 with initials "A.G.E." arranged on it in the triangular fashion then in common use. The initials include those of both man and wife; in this case, Ambrose and Elizabeth Galloway, the surname initial being at the apex of the triangular arrangement. Ambrose Galloway the first died on 7 December 1696 and was buried in the Quaker burial ground at Rottingdean.² In his will, dated 14 August 1696, Galloway left all lands, tenements and personal estate to his son Ambrose, a small piece of old gold to his daughter Ruth, thirty pounds each to his grandchildren Ambrose, William and Elizabeth on their reaching 21 years of age, and twenty shillings to the poor of the parish of All Saints.³

William Snatt, the man who instigated much of the persecution of Lewes Quakers in the 1670s, was the son of Edward Snatt, master of the Free Grammar School at Southover, Lewes. John Evelyn, the diarist, mentions Edward Snatt in his memoirs. The son, William, took his B.A. at Oxford in 1664 and was ordained by Bishop Henry Kind, of Chichester, on the 16 April 1669. He became Rector of St. Thomas's in the Cliffe, Lewes, in 1674 and Rector of St. Michael's and All Saints, Lewes, in 1675. He left Lewes in 1681 to take the living of Cuckfield.⁴ Lewes Quakers came to know William Snatt very well and what they knew they did not like. On the 5 November 1675, shortly after the opening of the Meeting House at Lewes, Snatt, along with two other priests, came to a Meeting where he took the names of those attending. The names were presented to Justice Henry Shelley, at which time Snatt swore that those named had met in the house of Thomas Moseley, which was false, for it was not Moseley's house but the recently opened Meeting House. Heavy fines were imposed upon those named. Five days later, Snatt came to the Meeting House again and took more names,⁵ and on the 17 November visited the Meeting House with two Constables, a Lieutenant, an Ensign and two Sergeants of the Militia, and also "a great number of rude people of the baser sort" who violently dragged the Quakers from the Meeting House, kicking and beating them. Information was given against some of those attending the Meeting and heavy fines were imposed.⁶ A week later, on the 24th, Snatt came again accompanied by the Constables and about twelve soldiers with their Officer. They dragged the Quakers from the Meeting House, punched some of them, and set a guard at the door to keep them out. They also took seventeen new deal forms from the Meeting House.⁷

The Toleration Act of 1689 eased things considerably for the Quakers; a "seditious conventicle" became a meeting protected by law and could no longer be harassed by prejudiced zeal backed by greedy informers. But the Act had only given ease with respect to public worship and the Oaths of Allegiance; tithes had been excepted from the Act and other personal disabilities of Quakers in their private life remained. So, although by the early 18th century the more violent kind of persecution of the Lewes Quakers had ceased, they were considerably harassed

¹ Woollgar, *op. cit.*, p. 436.

² E.S.R.O., SOF/410/1/1/2.

³ *Ibid.*, Probate Wills A42, pp. 184-185.

⁴ The Rev. Canon J. H. Cooper, "The vicars and parish of Cuckfield," *S.A.C.*, vol. 46 (1903), pp. 108-113. See this article for more detailed information about William Snatt.

⁵ E.S.R.O., SOF/5/1, p. 118.

⁶ *Ibid.*, SOF/5/1, p. 121.

⁷ *Ibid.*, SOF/5/1, p. 123.

by action taken against them as a result of their refusal to pay tithes. Such action usually consisted of the confiscation of property or goods according to the value of the tithe demand. Unfortunately, in many cases, the goods taken were worth more than the tithe demand in question. Many instances of this kind are recorded in the Sussex Books of Sufferings, but it will suffice to mention here three which took place on the same day early in the 18th century. On 15 May 1718/19 Thomas Beard reported to Monthly Meeting that, for 20 shillings demanded by John Clifton, priest of the Cliffe, for two year's tithes, Officers of the parish took from him a silver cup worth about three pounds, out of which sum only 13 shillings were returned. The Officers also visited Thomas Robinson in the Cliffe and, for a forty shilling tithe demand, took from him a silver tankard worth £9.10.0 and later returned to him the sum of £4.10.0. Elias Ellis, of the Cliffe, was also visited and for a tithe demand of £1.12.0, the Officers took from him a copper pot weighing 11lb. and five pewter dishes weighing 43½lb. which were sold for £7.11.3.¹ Both Thomas Robinson and Elias Ellis were active and well-known Lewes Quakers. On 17 August 1723 Ambrose Galloway was asked by Monthly Meeting to record the death of Thomas Robinson, aged 85, which took place on the 2 June 1723. He was buried in Friends Burial Ground, Friars Walk, Lewes. Robinson left an annuity of £5.0.0 to Lewes Monthly Meeting which is still being paid.² Elias Ellis, feltmaker of the Cliffe, died on the 26 July 1748, and he too was buried in Friends Burial Ground, Lewes.³

Right from the beginning of organised Quakerism the various Meetings were closely concerned with the welfare of their respective members. Many instances could be cited from Quaker documents to illustrate this concern. It is certain that no needy Quaker went unhelped by his Meeting and it is equally certain that all the circumstances of each individual case of need were thoroughly examined by the Meeting. On 21 June 1712 Lewes Monthly Meeting considered the case of Thomas Rowland's family, to whom for some time the Meeting had given aid, and came to the conclusion that the Rowlands had more and higher quality household goods than seemed absolutely necessary, considering that they could not live by their own labour. John Snashall and John Downer were appointed to visit the Rowland's house and make a list of all goods that might be spared and bring the list to the next Monthly Meeting. John Downer and his wife carried out the mission and reported on the 18 July that they could find little of value amongst Rowland's goods except a pair of wheels, an old plough and some other husbandry tackle. The Meeting instructed John Downer to take the goods and allow Rowland two pounds worth of wheat in exchange. The goods were later sold for 23 shillings and tenpence, the Meeting making up the difference between the price obtained and the cost of the wheat given to Rowland. Nothing more is heard of the Rowland family until 16 October 1713 when Monthly Meeting disbursed £1.5.0 for a half-year's rent for Thomas Rowland's house at Lewes. On 21 December 1716 Ambrose Galloway was asked by Monthly Meeting to record the deaths of Thomas Rowland and his wife in the Cliffe, Lewes. Rowland died on 13 June and his wife on the 17th. Both were buried in Friends Burial Ground, Friars Walk, Lewes. At a Monthly Meeting held on 20 April 1717 a subscription for Henry Parker was discussed. Lewes Quakers told the Meeting that they had been informed that Parker, "Does not work and Labour According to the precepts of Scripture and Example of good men." In view of this the matter was suspended until the Meeting could make certain that Parker was doing all he could to support himself and his family. The records do not show what the ultimate decision in this matter was.⁴

¹ Ibid., SOF/5/1, p. 312.

² Ibid., SOF/30/1.

³ Ibid., SOF/30/5.

⁴ Ibid., SOF/30/1.

Moral concern was certainly not lacking in Quakers at this time, as is shown by the way in which all proposals of marriage within the Meeting were carefully scrutinized before a Certificate of Clearness was issued and by the not infrequent warnings to those who, in the view of the Meeting, were keeping bad company and falling into corrupt ways. At a monthly Meeting held at Lewes on 16 October 1730 members considered a proposal by Quarterly Meeting that each Meeting should appoint someone to caution and advise young Quakers about the spiritual dangers to be encountered in life. The Meeting concluded that

“ Inasmuch as the number of friends amongst us is but very small, and that it is a duty incumbent on all who are rightly qualified and find themselves thereunto moved, to warn caution and advise in the spirit of love and meekness as occasion may require, it may be less needful to appoint any in particular for that service, but rather desire that all friends in general would diligently consider their duty in this affair, and as they find themselves inclined and qualified by divine assistance not to be short in this so needful a matter.”¹

A more serious matter was discussed at a Monthly Meeting held at Lewes on 17 April 1730/1, when John Hands gave an account of a member of Herstmonceux Meeting who had been hastily married by a priest. John Hands and Samuel Akehurst were appointed to speak with the man and bring him to his senses, and to request of him a “ paper of condemnation ” wherein he would repent of his derelictions. This statement was duly produced and presented for the consideration of Monthly Meeting on the 20 November where it was read out and then placed in the minutes. The records do not indicate if this repentant act sufficed to restore the unfortunate man to the Meeting’s favour.²

In the later years of the 18th century Lewes Quakers became dissatisfied with their premises in Friars Walk. At a Quarterly Meeting held at Horsham on the 22 September 1783 Thomas Rickman senior, on behalf of Lewes Monthly Meeting, applied for approval to sell the old Meeting House; the money from the sale to be used for building a new Meeting House with dwelling attached in a more convenient place. Rickman stated the case as follows:

“ Our reasons for this application are these. Near the present Meeting House is a Slature House and in the Summer Season the Soile is sometimes thrown out in the road leading to the Meeting House, which in that Season of the Year is offensive and lately a Turners Lathe is working in the week day, which is disturbing to the Meeting when sitting. The intended new Meeting House and the Dwelling House we suppose will cost about £220 and the money arising from the sale of the present House we apprehend may be near £100. The difference we hope to raise by Subscription in the compass of Lewes Monthly Meeting.”

The Meeting unanimously agreed to grant the application and at a Quarterly Meeting held at Ifield on 21 June 1784 Thomas Cruttenden, one of the Quakers appointed to manage the affairs relating to the sale of the old Meeting House and the building of the new, presented a full report on the proceedings. Sale of the old Meeting House brought £110 and subscribers contributed £121.16.0. The subscribers and the amounts subscribed were: Thomas Rickman senior and Thomas Rickman junior, £21.0.0 each; Daniel Burns, Thomas Cruttenden, Thomas Martin, John Rickman, Richard Peters Rickman, Samuel Rickman senior, Mary Rickman (Barcombe), ten guineas each; Christopher Spencer, five guineas and Samand Carter, one guinea. The Meeting House was built by the Lewes carpenter, George Wille, who was paid the sum of £216.4.1; the bricklayer, Thomas Boxall, was paid £7.7.6. The Meeting House seats, two stoves and painting, cost £4.5.5 and on the occasion of “ raising day ” a dinner was provided for the sum of £1.11.6.³ Mathematical tiles were used in the construction of the external facing of the Meet-

¹ Ibid., SOF/30/2, pp. 249-250.

² Ibid., SOF/30/3.

³ Ibid., SOF/1/3, pp. 69-70.

ing House; such tiles being a kind of false brick which, when locked together and hung on battens, give an overall effect of ordinary brick construction. They were probably used as an economy measure.

About a year after the building of the new Meeting House in Friars Walk there occurred a sale of property in the Cliffe the circumstances of which, because of their relevance to what has been written in the past about the first Quaker Meeting house in Lewes, must now be examined. In a document dated Lady Day, 1785, Richard Peters Rickman, prominent member of Lewes Meeting, granted a lease of,

“All that piece of Ground whereon a Warehouse now stands in the Yard of the said Richard Peters Rickman in the Cliffe unto the said Joseph Middleton Thomas Davey Joseph Simes James Newton Thomas Harmer James Smith Wm. Surgey Alex. Cheale Richard Broughton and John Weller for the term of Forty years at the yearly rent of Five pounds with liberty to pull down take and convert to their own use the materials of the said Warehouse and to erect and Build a Meeting or Place on the said piece of ground for the purpose of Protestant Dissenters of the Denomination of Particular Baptists assembling for Divine Worship but to be used for no other purpose nor by any other Religious Sect whatsoever. . . . Or shall be used as a Burial Ground without the License and Consent in writing of the said Richard Peters Rickman. . . .”¹

It has been stated by other Quaker historians that, prior to the building of the Particular Baptist Chapel, the site was occupied by the first Quaker Meeting House in Lewes, but an examination of the documentary evidence does not bear this out. The first Quaker Meeting House was in Lewes proper (not in the Cliffe) and, as we have seen, lay west of Friars Walk and in the parish of All Saints, whereas the Particular Baptist Chapel was located in the Cliffe, approximately where the gasworks lately stood, and in the parish of St. Thomas. The lease quoted from above reveals no evidence of a Quaker Meeting House having occupied the site prior to its lease to the Particular Baptists. Earlier writers may have been misled by the fact that the Quaker, Richard Peters Rickman, was involved in the lease transactions.

The Quaker historian William C. Braithwaite, after pointing out the difficulties in trying to arrive at an accurate estimate of the number of Quakers in England at the close of the 17th century, calculated that, in 1660, there were from thirty to forty thousand men, women and children in the movement, out of a total population of about five millions. According to him, this number had risen by 1680 to forty to fifty thousand, out of a total population of about five and a half millions.² As there was no formal membership in Quaker Meetings until 1737, and then only as a by-product of poor relief, it is hardly surprising that there exists no official lists of members of Lewes Meeting in the documents pertaining to the last half of the 17th century. In view of this, it is difficult to discover the number of Quakers belonging to Lewes Meeting during this period, or what proportions of this unknown quantity could be assigned to Lewes, Southover, the Cliffe or the rural environs of Lewes, although it would seem that the Cliffe could claim the largest proportion. It is not until much later that documentary evidence becomes available which sheds some light on the number of members belonging to Lewes Meeting.

The Southover Ecclesiastical Survey of 1724 states that, in that year, Southover contained 61 families, of which 15 were Presbyterian, two Anabaptists, and one Quaker. There were no Roman Catholics.³ Late in the 18th century, a minute book for the year 1787 gives a list of the members of Lewes Meeting as follows: Daniel Burns, wife, son Samuel and daughter Patience; Thomas Cruttenden, wife; Jane Cruttenden; Mary Cruttenden; Susanah Cruttenden; James

¹ Ibid., SOF/37/7-215.

² William C. Braithwaite, *The second period of Quakerism* (Cambridge University Press, 3rd edition, 1961), pp. 457-459.

³ Woolgar, *op. cit.*, p. 460.

Carr, apprentice; William Chantler; Thomas Davey, wife, one child; Mary Graham; Mathew Likeman; Thomas Martin, wife; William Martin; Elizabeth Newnham; Caleb Pearce; John Rickman, wife, two daughters, Elizabeth and Sarah; Richard P. Rickman, wife, two daughters and many young children; Thomas Rickman Senior, wife; Thomas Rickman, wife and young family; Christopher Spencer, wife, young family; James Webb, abroad.¹ Richard Peters Rickman lived in the Cliffe and was a banker, brewer and freeholder of the old Bear Inn by Cliffe Bridge. On 5 June 1767 he married Mary Verrall (1749-1818), a daughter of George Verrall, founder of a well-known Lewes auctioneering business. The marriage took place in Cliffe Church and, as Rickman was a Quaker, the marriage was irregular according to Quaker discipline at that time. In this instance the wife accepted her husband's faith and the children were brought up within the Society of Friends, some of them and their descendants becoming eminent Quakers of their time. The marriage produced eighteen children, which no doubt accounts for the "many young children" comment of the clerk who compiled the 1787 membership list. Rickman died on 28 September 1801, aged 55, and was buried in Friends Burial Ground, Friars Walk, Lewes.² Thomas Martin was a mercer, draper and salesman of Lewes and the author of a book called "Quakerism No Delusion."³ After his death a nephew, William Marten, carried on the drapery business and on the 13 July 1790 he married Jane Cruttenden. William Marten's obituary appeared in the *Sussex Weekly Advertiser* for the 3 January 1823:

"Died on Monday, the 6th instant, at his house in this town, aged 58, Mr. Wm. Marten, one of the Society of Friends, and well known in Sussex and the neighbouring counties, as a man of eminent piety and the most diffusive benevolence. . . . His remains were interred yesterday morning in the Friends' burial ground in this town, attended by a numerous and respectable train of relatives and other sincere admirers, and also by about 500 children from the Lewes Subscription School, of which he has been one of the first promoters and most active Directors."⁴

It is noticeable that, from the 17th century Quaker beginnings in Lewes, to well into the 19th century, most of the names mentioned in the minute books are associated with the Cliffe. The cause of this concentration probably lies in the fact that the Cliffe area was one of lively trading activity. In the latter part of the 17th century, on through the 18th and 19th centuries, the River Ouse, which serves as the western boundary of the Cliffe, was the scene of considerable waterway traffic. Some of the better-known Quaker families, such as the Rickmans and the Godlees, became timber and coal merchants and ultimately owned or controlled large warehouses and wharves which lined the riverside. Other names frequently mentioned in the minute books are those of small tradesmen in the Cliffe, some of them reasonably prosperous, as can be deduced from an examination of the kind of goods taken from them for tithe demands. It is interesting to note the significant change in social respectability that gradually came about during the period 1655-1800. There is a great difference in status between the tradesman, Ambrose Galloway of the 17th century and, say, the banker and brewer, Richard Peters Rickman, of the late 18th century; and an even greater difference between Galloway and Rickman's son, John (1774-1859) who, in 1818, bought and retired to Wellingham House, near Ringmer.⁵ The Rickmans had become respectable citizens of the town, men of substance who lived the lives of gentlemen in large houses; the Ambrose Galloway who died in 1696 was a reasonably prosperous man but it is doubtful whether he was considered by many of his fellow townsmen as being very respec-

¹ E.S.R.O., SOF/30/11.

² Percival Lucas, "The Verrall family of Lewes," *S.A.C.*, vol. 58 (1916), pp. 107-109.

³ A. E. Marten, "The family of Marten in Sussex," *S.A.C.*, vol. 68 (1927), p. 247.

⁴ *Ibid.*, p. 248.

⁵ Lucas, *op. cit.*, pp. 107-109.

table or as being a gentleman. Galloway was an upholder of what was, in his time, thought to be a troublesome religious sect and he spent a good deal of time in prison because of his religious views; the Rickmans were the gatherers of the fruit and faithful members of what had, by their time, become an acceptable religious group. The reasons for the change in the Quaker outlook and also the way in which those in authority came to view the Quaker are fairly clear. During the 17th and 18th centuries the power of the Church in civil matters was being displaced by the growing power of an increasingly secular State, and leaders of the State were finding it unrewarding to persecute religious groups, especially if, as it often happened, such groups contained people useful for the stability and prosperity of the State. On the Quaker side, as many writers on Quakerism have pointed out, the Quaker way of life often led to prosperity and its inevitable corollary, power; factors which produced a softening of the radical ideals present in much of early Quakerism. The Quaker historian, Braithwaite says, "Quakerism, like other religious movements, began as a fellowship, thrilling with intense life . . . and later by the necessity for self-realisation, the accretions of habit, the stereotyping force of tradition, and the pressure of the outside world, it established a strong organisation and lost something of its soul."¹

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¹ Braithwaite, *op. cit.*, p. 324.