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CHALK, CHEESE, AND CLOTH:
THE SETTLING OF QUAKER COMMUNITIES IN
SEVENTEENTH-CENTURY WILTSHIRE*

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ABSTRACT

The underlying geology of Wiltshire was responsible for the county's contrasting farming and settlement patterns of the seventeenth century, and gave rise to its distinctive north-south 'chalk and cheese' divide. These particular characteristics, which also shaped the road networks and the location of the cloth-producing industry, played a significant role in determining the way in which the early Quaker movement developed within the county. This paper not only places the development of Wiltshire Quakerism within the context of the county's topography but also identifies the influence of other factors, such as patronage and the presence of other religious groups, on the settling of the network of Quakers' Meetings.

KEYWORDS

cloth-production, farming, organisation, patronage, trade routes, Wiltshire

CHALK AND CHEESE

In North Wiltshire...(a dirty clayey country) the Indigenae, or Aborigines, speake drawing; they are phlegmatique, skins pale and livid, slow and dull, heavy of spirit: hereabout is but little tillage or hard labour, they only milk the coves and make cheese; they feed chiefly on milke meates, which cooles their braines too much, and hurts their inventions. These circumstances make them melancholy, contemplative, and malicious; by consequence whereof come more law suites out of North Wilts, at least double to the Southern parts. And by the same reason they are more generally apt to be fanatiques...

On the downes, the south part, where 'tis all upon tillage, and where the shepherds labour hard, their flesh is hard, their bodies strong: being weary after hard labour, they have not leisure to read and contemplate of religion, but goe to bed to their rest, to rise betime the next morning to their labour.¹

In these few descriptive sentences John Aubrey judged the different characteristics of Wiltshire's resident populations on each side of its north-south divide. Writing in

1685, he saw the county's distinctive geology as the key factor underlying all aspects of its life, from the siting of the major areas of settlement to the way in which agriculture and industry developed. He believed that those involved in certain occupations developed particular patterns of behaviour, and the correlation between cloth-production and religious Nonconformity has been observed in many English counties.² This paper assesses the role of geographical factors in determining ideological allegiances and how far those factors influenced the way in which Quakerism was settled in Wiltshire.³

The different methods of farm production employed on the southern chalk downlands and the northern dairy pastures, which gave rise to the regional differences in behaviour observed by Aubrey, are said to be the origin of the expression 'as different as chalk from cheese'. Land use, settlement patterns, and communications networks have all played their part in determining the way in which radical ideas were received throughout England in the seventeenth century, and why such ideas flourished in some places but failed to take root in others. Some of the factors that influenced the spread of political and religious dissent appear to be readily identifiable. The conventional view is that radical ideas tended to follow trade routes and that, in addition to the strong links between religious dissent and the cloth industry, there were strong links between dissent and the areas that supported Parliament in the Civil Wars.⁴ The suggestion that Nonconformity flourished in the west cheese region of Wiltshire with its cloth industry, rivers, and road links, but that it was absent from the east cheese region which, allegedly, lacked these factors will be challenged.⁵ Historians such as Alan Everitt and Henry Lancaster⁶ have identified additional influential factors and concluded that the proliferation of dissent was due to a conjunction of favourable circumstances rather than to any single universal cause. Therefore, a range of factors, from geography, communications, and economics, to Civil War allegiances and patronage, will be examined to determine their influence on the development of dissenting communities in seventeenth-century Wiltshire.

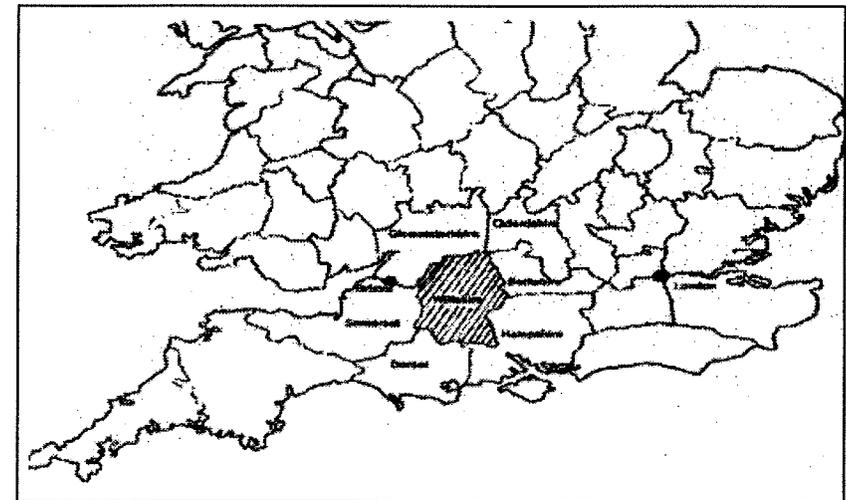


Figure 1. Wiltshire's Position in Southern England

LAND USE IN SEVENTEENTH-CENTURY WILTSHIRE

The organisation of the different modes of farming in the chalk and cheese regions led to differences in the structure of daily life in the individual communities, with some people enjoying a degree of autonomy while others were subject to invasive external controls.⁷ Although Wiltshire was a predominantly agricultural county, not everyone living there was engaged in farming, and those who were also needed to trade for essential supplies, or had to supplement their basic income in other ways. Industry, mainly in the form of cloth-production, cut across the agricultural north-south divide following the line of the rivers of north and west Wiltshire down to Salisbury in the south. Industrial activities and markets, and the communications networks necessary to service them, were all important aspects of daily life, and all would have provided fora for the exchange of news and views. Figures 1, 2, and 3 show the location of Wiltshire within southern England; the different farming regions and the extent of the cloth industry; and the road networks of the period together with the main towns and villages.

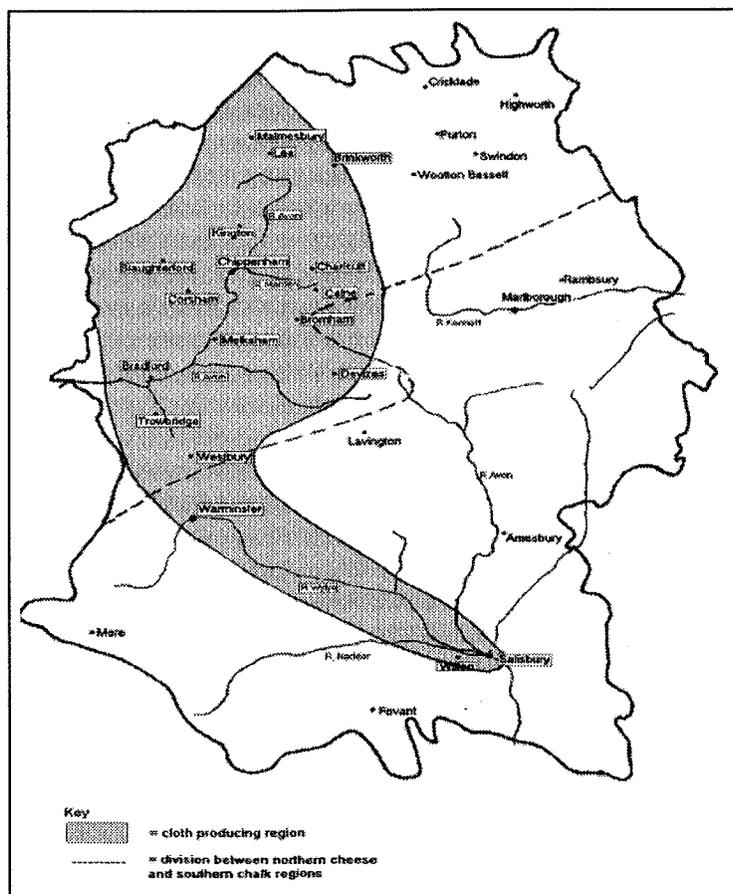


Figure 2. *Wiltshire's Chalk, Cheese, and Cloth Regions*

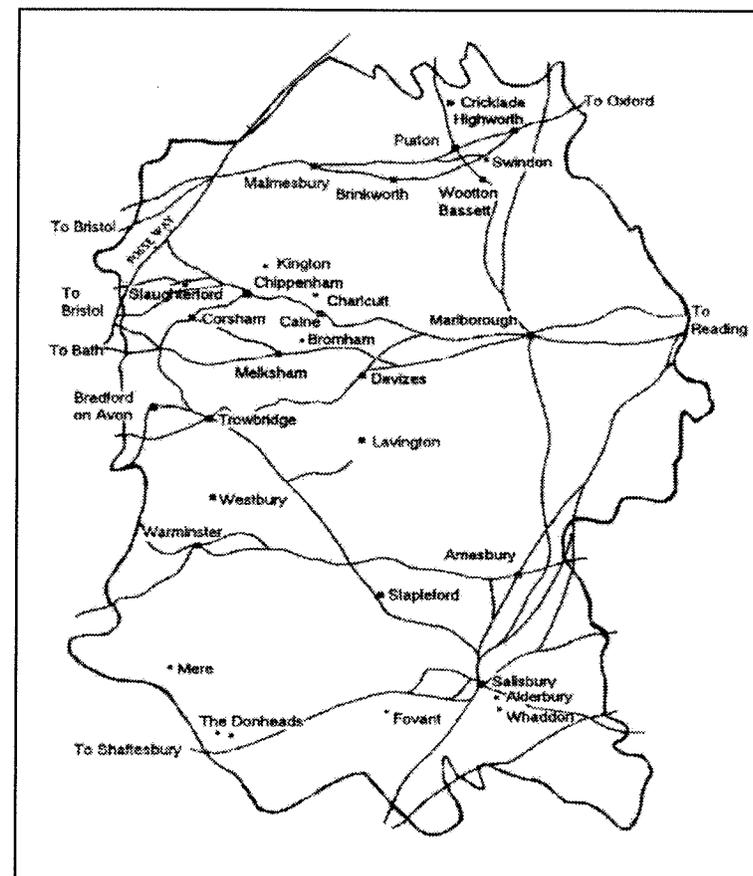


Figure 3. *The Urban Centres and Road Network in Seventeenth-Century Wiltshire*⁸

Agriculture

Much of the agricultural land in Wiltshire had been enclosed by the mid-1600s, often by private agreement, either with or without confirmation in the Chancery or the Court of Exchequer. There were exceptions to this progression on the southern downlands, and in the north-west of the county where enclosures continued—with some depopulation—throughout the century.⁹ These later northern enclosures were created from heath and woodland, the process bringing economic disaster to some of the poorer inhabitants of the region.¹⁰ Those with insecure tenures could face eviction, and many more lost the use of the common and waste lands on which their subsistence depended.¹¹ The extensive rioting this triggered won some concessions for the inhabitants but did not halt the enclosure programme,¹² and contemporaneous Puritan commentators were often scathing in their condemnation of the practice and its effects on the rural poor.¹³ There was also opposition from those concerned that evictions from smallholdings would result in a loss of tax payers, of trained men for the militia, and of tithes-payers for the church.¹⁴ Nevertheless, an Act of

Parliament of 1656, confirmed in 1660, converted to freehold all land formerly held from the king by feudal tenure, which eased the way for such agricultural improvements.¹⁵ Most of those who suffered from the effects of enclosures were people of little wealth or status, but some propertied farmers also suffered through the loss of common grazing rights as well as by having to pay heavier poor rates to support their dispossessed neighbours.¹⁶

The county's nobility was most strongly represented in the southern chalk region, with seven of the nine main noble houses having their seats here.¹⁷ The manorial institutions retained their influence in this area throughout the seventeenth century, with tenant farmers being bound by regulations enforced by the manorial courts. Thus, elite control over tenants and community practices would have been a feature of everyday life, with the peasants usually having little choice but to conform to locally instituted customs and practices.¹⁸ John Chandler explained the social influences of the south Wiltshire lords of the manor thus:

A cottager in a Wylde valley village, hemmed in by an adjacent manor house or barn belonging to his landlord and ultimate employer, the squire, may form his political and religious views, and see his own place in the community, rather differently from a smallholder or cottage weaver a few miles away, on the outskirts of Westbury, who claimed the freehold of his dwelling, had no immediate neighbours, and was beholden to nobody.¹⁹

The Church also retained land in this region, and it was the policy of the bishops of Salisbury to issue long leases for entire manors from the Church estates. This system allowed the Church to exercise some control over its tenants, as well as to facilitate patronage, which would have permeated all aspects of their lives – business, social, and religious. This security of tenure also encouraged tenants to undertake permanent improvements to the land, which had led to the growth of agrarian capitalism, and funded the agricultural revolution of the first half of the century.²⁰ The settlement pattern here was one of compact villages adjacent to large empty tracts of land, which remained largely open until the Georgian Parliamentary enclosures of the eighteenth century.²¹ About half of the region was comprised of sheep downs, the abode of Aubrey's hard-labouring shepherds, with three-quarters of the rest being arable and one quarter laid to permanent grass.

In the north of the county the manorial system was in serious decay, since most of the Crown estates there had been sold off during the sixteenth century, and by 1640 the amount of Crown land in Wiltshire was negligible. As the best prices were achieved by splitting up the estates, many manors were dismantled and sold off, often to the sitting tenants.²² Non-manorial tenancies multiplied, with the new landlords letting out the land on annual tenancies or for terms of a few years. Where the manors did survive their functions were limited, since copy-hold tenures were decreasing and common husbandry did not call for much regulation.²³ It was not unusual for the self-employed dairy farming families, characteristic of this area, to be dependent on the cloth industry for a considerable part of their incomes, the women

and maid-servants undertaking such tasks as spinning and carding, and men doing the weaving.²⁴ This integration of industrial activities into farming and village life further eroded the authority of the landed classes in the region,²⁵ with the rank and file having a greater degree of autonomy than their counterparts on the chalk.

Cloth Production

Cloth production was of considerable importance to the county's economy, although the social status of those involved in the industry was fluid for much of the century, ranging from a few wealthy clothiers, through middle-ranking clothiers and small independent weavers, to the semi-independent farmers and weavers. Conditions for those employed in the industry could be harsh, and Aubrey noted, in the 1680s, that spinners and others were kept barely alive by their meagre wages, reflecting that their way of life 'nourished theft, sedition and rebellion'.²⁶ Thus, he identified both the leisured farmers and clothiers of the north and their downtrodden employees as having incentives to explore radical ideas. Margaret Spufford noted that weavers could read whilst working and so had the ability to pursue dissenting ideas and, because many clothiers traded regularly with Reformed Europe, they also had access to Continental books and ideas.²⁷ Even so, she did not subscribe to the view that there was any economic determinism for religious dissent, although she conceded that there might be conditions that fostered it. Henry Lancaster demonstrated that Wiltshire cloth production did offer such favourable conditions, through his examination of the county's twenty parishes with the highest numbers of Nonconformists, which revealed that most of them were satellites of the larger cloth towns.²⁸

In common with historians of Nonconformity, historians of the Wiltshire woollen industry²⁹ noted the apparent correlation between the spread of religious dissent and cloth production. This correlation with Quakerism is shown in Figure 4, which identifies the Wiltshire parishes with a known Quaker presence in the 1670s. While the bulk of these places was located within the main cloth-producing region, a few in the south, and in the agricultural north-east, were clearly outside it.³⁰ However, despite being outside the main manufacturing area, the village of Mere, in the extreme south-west, was one of the places, identified by Daniel Defoe in the early eighteenth century, where the cloth trade was the principal employment.³¹

Despite claims to the contrary,³² the north-east corner of the county supported flourishing communities of Nonconformists. The Episcopal Returns ordered by Archbishop Sheldon in 1669³³ described Purton as having a Meeting that consisted of about one hundred 'Quakers and such like fanatickes'.³⁴ A range of contemporaneous records, both Quaker and Anglican,³⁵ all testify to an enduring concentration, rather than an absence, of religious dissent in the east cheese region. Although predominantly an agricultural region (see Figure 2), the area was not a rural backwater in the seventeenth century, for it was linked in to the major road networks.³⁶ Many of the residents supplemented their incomes through links to the textile trade and the Purton Friends numbered tailors, hatters, and glovers among their members, while many of the women Friends there were described as spinsters.

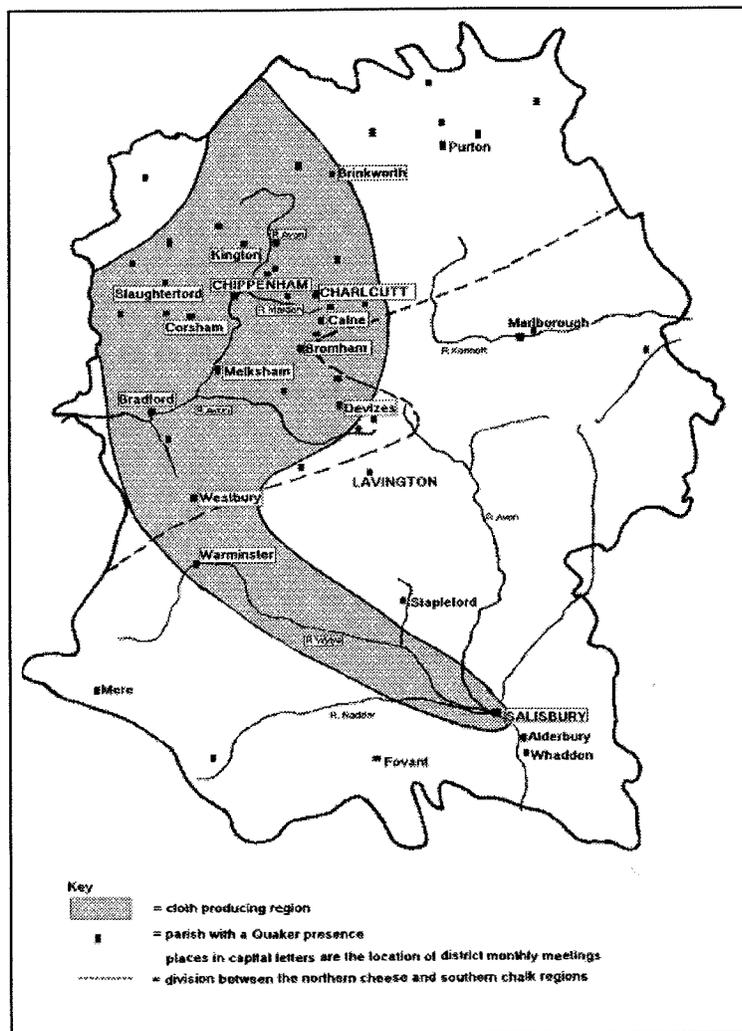


Figure 4. Parishes with a known Quaker Presence in Wiltshire c. 1670³⁷

Communication Networks

Because the seventeenth century English road system was quite different from modern networks, it is important to be aware of the contemporaneous transport links in order to understand the interaction between the various communities within the county, and how the local roads fed into the national network.³⁸ These road links would have governed all aspects of daily life, from access to the most convenient markets at which to sell produce, to the ease – or otherwise – with which one could attend religious meetings. The deplorable state of most of the smaller tracks and byways of the period would have made travel difficult, even between apparently close towns and villages. Some improvements were instigated during the Interregnum, when surveyors were empowered to take action for mending the highways

and, after the Restoration, the first Turnpike Act was passed in 1663.³⁹ While it is still possible to identify the main links along the county's east–west axis, few of the main north–south road links existed at that time. Some local north–south routes, in the form of tracks, or green lanes, which would have been affected by bad weather, had connected the main cloth-producing towns to the sheep farms of the Cotswolds and Salisbury Plain. However, by the seventeenth century the focus of trade and supply had shifted, and the east–west stage-coaching routes became the preferred trading routes, as shown in Figure 3.

The main route from London, through Reading, to Bristol and the west went through the cheese region, passing through Marlborough and Chippenham. Access to the north-east corner of the county was provided by the road from the north of England via Oxford to Bristol, which passed through Highworth and Purton and on to Malmesbury, running parallel to the Great West (London to Bristol) Road. The only major north–south route through Wiltshire was that going from Poole through Oxford and Coventry to the north of England. This travelled up the eastern side of the county, passing through Salisbury and Marlborough before forking to pass through Purton and close to Highworth.⁴⁰ A number of roads converged on Salisbury in the south-east, but there were few well-defined routes for travelling across the vast expanse of the Salisbury Plain. Despite the lack of good north–south links, Wiltshire's location at the gateway to south-west England made it an ideal position to absorb radical political and religious ideas as they spread throughout the country (see Figure 1).

Market Towns and Administrative Centres

The towns that were the main centres of the Wiltshire cloth industry – Devizes, Trowbridge, Chippenham, Calne, Corsham, Warminster, and Bradford (see Figure 2) – also served as market towns and stage-coaching centres, which made them ideal places for the dissemination of ideas from across the country. Many of the larger villages of the period, such as Bromham and Purton, were not much smaller than some of the towns and also served as community centres for their rural hinterlands.⁴¹ Marlborough on the River Kennet, outside the cloth region, was the only sizeable town in north-east Wiltshire. It was the second most populous settlement in the county, benefiting from its position at the junction of the east–west and north–south routes and hosting one of the greatest cheese markets in the west of England.⁴²

These external markets and established trading links were important to the economy of the cheese region. Commodities such as cheese, butter, beef, bacon, mutton, and wool commanded wide sales, being famous in Smithfield and other metropolitan markets.⁴³ The extensive nature of such markets meant that there were constant opportunities for those engaged in trade to be exposed to the influence of a range of new ideas. As the country's main producer of undyed white broadcloths, Wiltshire clothiers would have had regular contact with their Continental counterparts through their export markets. By the mid-1680s they were able to export from Bristol in addition to London, with markets in Scandinavia, Germany, Netherlands, and other parts of western Europe, as well as in the Near and Middle East, and the New World. This international trade provided ample opportunities for contact with

foreign radical political and religious groups,⁴⁴ and helped to foster the nascent religious networks of like-minded individuals. Although the southern worker was largely 'protected' from such outside influences by his or her lord and master, there was still some trade with market centres in Bristol and Wales, with the associated opportunities for contact with radical ideas.

Malmesbury in the north and Salisbury in the south had both been centres for the cloth trade in the sixteenth century, although their importance in the industry had declined by the later seventeenth century. Salisbury had fallen behind Exeter as a major textile centre but was still ranked as the twelfth largest provincial town in the country.⁴⁵ Both these places had also developed as important centres of ecclesiastical administration. Salisbury grew up around the cathedral to become a regional capital, with the Archdeaconry of Salisbury embracing virtually the whole of south Wiltshire, along with adjacent parts of Dorset and Hampshire. The Archdeaconry of North Wiltshire, centred on Malmesbury, administered most of the county's cheese region.⁴⁶

PARLIAMENT, CLOTH, AND DISSENT

The apparent independence of the dairy farmers, in contrast to the lingering manorial system in the south, could help to explain why some areas supported Parliament and others the king during the Civil Wars. In many instances, the sympathies of the local populations during this period were linked to the stance of the local elite, as an extension of the obligation owed to a lord of the manor. Figure 5 shows the extent of the allegiance to Parliament in Wiltshire at that time. John Wroughton demonstrated a correlation between Civil War allegiances and religious dissent,⁴⁷ which could be associated either with elite patronage, or with a local assertion of religious and political opposition to authority. Comparison with Figure 2 would suggest that the people in the cloth-producing region overwhelmingly supported the Parliamentarians' cause, while the inhabitants of the Marlborough Downs and Salisbury Plain stood for the king.⁴⁸ However, the area which gave its allegiance to Parliament spread further than the main cloth district, encompassing much of the north-eastern cheese region as well as taking in the south-west corner of the county and extending into Dorset and Somerset.⁴⁹

The area of Parliamentary support gives a better match with the distribution of Wiltshire Quakers than that of the main cloth-producing region alone. It is, therefore, a reasonable supposition that the ideals of many of those who supported Parliament made them receptive to Quaker preachers after the Civil Wars. Another old Wiltshire adage from this period declared that 'chalk is church and cheese is chapel' and the south of the county, most of which was in the firm control of Archdeaconry of Salisbury, was largely royalist.⁵⁰ However, the position of Salisbury itself, like that of Malmesbury in the north, was ambiguous – perhaps because of their earlier roles as regional centres of the cloth trade. The sympathies of the people for one side or the other were often overtaken by events as, during the course of the wars, the whole county changed hands while the fighting ebbed and flowed. Wiltshire was largely under the influence of Parliament in the early stages, but most fell to the king's forces during 1643–44, leaving the Parliamentary forces isolated in

scattered outposts, mainly in the north-west. The whole county was retaken by Parliament in 1645, after which time Fairfax's forces were often in the area.

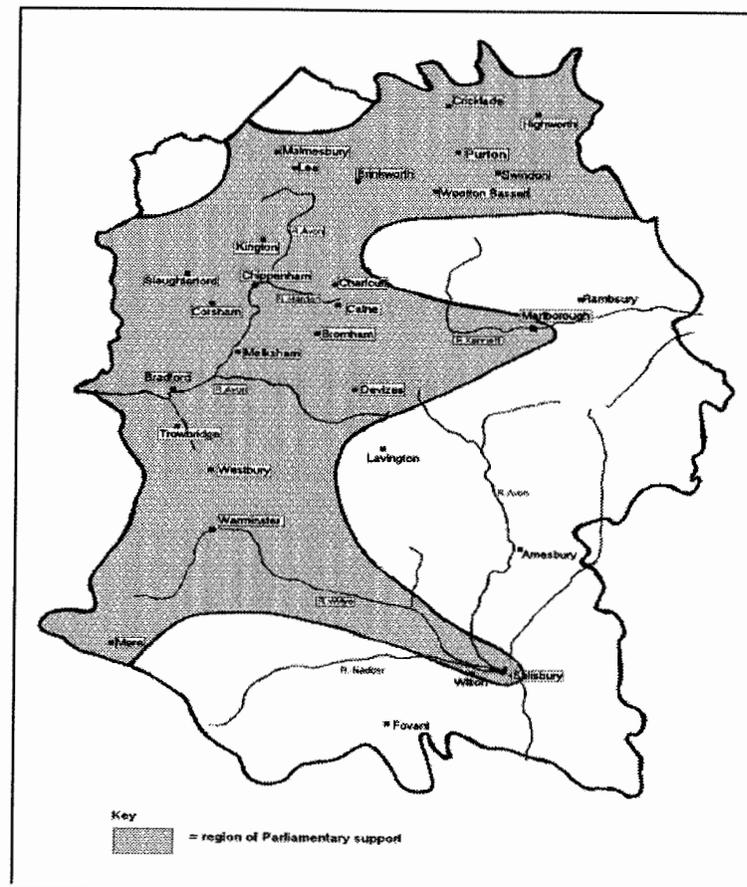


Figure 5. *Civil War Allegiance to Parliament in Wiltshire 1642–46*⁵¹

In the aftermath of the Civil Wars a number of the disbanded Parliamentary soldiers turned to a life of itinerant preaching. Some were Quaker missionaries who were able to utilise the recently established Friends' networks, often being furnished with lists of names, places, and travel information.⁵² The Great West Road, which cut a corridor several miles wide through the north of the county, provided relatively easy access for these itinerant missionaries to reach the cloth and dairy parishes. Since this area would have been the first port of call for most of the missionaries to Wiltshire, it is a possible factor in the apparent association between Civil War allegiances, cloth production, and dissent.

Yet not everyone in the cheese parishes was receptive to new ideas, and missionaries from the north of England were often viewed as troublesome outsiders, or worse. Many had to face hostility as unwelcome aliens, being described as 'Northern locusts'. One observer commented that 'Our quiet west country people do Judge

them to be men of a strang humor'.⁵³ Popular hostility towards itinerant evangelists was whipped up in the pulpit, and by propaganda pamphlets that portrayed them as little more than a band of dangerous criminals and atheists.⁵⁴ Nevertheless, Quaker missionaries were well-received in parts of the west of England, with John Camm and John Audland finding receptive audiences in Bristol. Wiltshire was the main field of labour for John Story and John Wilkinson,⁵⁵ where they had considerable success, particularly in the cheese region. However, local support for the pair, who were to become the leading Quaker opponents of George Fox in the 1670s, led to division and dispute within the local movement – especially in the Chippenham area – that lasted for over thirty years.

OTHER INFLUENCES ON THE SETTLING OF DISSENT

Patronage

That numerous opportunities existed in seventeenth-century Wiltshire for the exercise of patronage by both secular and ecclesiastical landlords has already been demonstrated. However, patronage could also be present in many more guises than just the obvious form of a patriarchal or dictatorial influence of a lord of the manor over his tenants. It could be manifest through trading and business networks as well as through the attitudes of other figures of authority. Local clergy could exert a considerable degree of influence on their community when, for example, an energetic minister could generate considerable support for the established Church, whereas an indifferent or remote clergyman might have his flock searching for a more satisfying alternative. The populations of some rural parishes had grown rapidly to service the cloth industry and were either too large or too distant from the parish church for it to accommodate their needs.⁵⁶ Charismatic dissenting and Nonconformist preachers could persuade large numbers to follow their teachings, an example being the Presbyterian minister, Simon Gawen, who formed a congregation of his sympathisers after he had been ejected from his Malmesbury living in the Restoration purges of 1660–62.⁵⁷ Similarly, Benjamin Flower, who was ejected from his living in Cardiff,⁵⁸ returned to his native Wiltshire as a Nonconformist preacher in the Chippenham area, where his father had been an active member of the Church during the Interregnum.⁵⁹ The Ecclesiastical Returns of 1669 stated that 300–400 people attended the Meetings in Charlton, where the teachers were 'Mr Stubs, Mr Flower, and Mr Hancock by turns', while 400–500 gathered to hear them preach further south, at Horningsham.⁶⁰

Dissenting communities might be persecuted to near-extinction through the vigilance of, or owe their survival to the laxity of, a local magistrate's attitudes to enforcing the laws. All those attending two Friends' Meetings hosted by a poor widow, Dorothy Rawlings of Bromham, in October 1670, were reported to the magistrate for contravening the Second Conventicle Act. The total fines imposed on this group of nine men and women amounted to an incredible £83, but the sale of their distrained household and personal goods raised only £54.14s, and left them all in extreme poverty.⁶¹ Although such examples were not uncommon, local officials were not always able to act as they wished when tackling the problem of

illegal conventicles, and were often dependent on the support of their own social superiors. In August 1670 the Wiltshire JP John Eyre had complained bitterly that the lack of requested troops meant he was unable to enforce the Second Conventicle Act:

I long since desired that some of Lord Oxford's troop of horse should be quartered at Chaldfield, Warminster, Trowbridge, Bradford, and other places in Wilts... which was partly promised; if it had been performed, I should have had no occasion for this trouble, as there would be no meetings.⁶²

On those occasions where Nonconformists were successfully prosecuted it did not always have the desired effect, and the zealous efforts of a group of JPs in the cheese region actually strengthened their resolve rather than quashing it. Justice Sharrington Talbot of Lacock reported the defiance of the conventiclers thus:

I have been informed by John Eyre of Little Chaldfield, Henry Long a captain of foot in Wiltshire, and Mr Cornelius, each of whom are very active in suppressing conventicles, that the Quakers who were fined by Jas Montague and George Johnson still despise all authority, and say they will meet.⁶³

However, not all officials were as pro-active as Eyre and his colleagues in trying to enforce the laws, and cultivating a good working relationship with local magistrates or other representatives of authority could be beneficial to Nonconformists. Adam Gouldney, a Chippenham businessman and Quaker,⁶⁴ noted that Friends there were on good terms with the local justices, who chose not to enforce a warrant issued against 26 men and women for attending an illegal Meeting in 1670.⁶⁵ Thus, the support of a family of substance, such as the Gouldneys with their influential contacts, was often crucial for the survival of a Meeting. Without such protection, faithful Quakers would gravitate to those towns and villages where their activities were tolerated, or join the emigration to America.⁶⁶

In addition to any possible elite support, the ability of the local network to sustain its members, both physically and spiritually, would have been important in the face of prosecutions through the courts, or the hostile reaction of some local clergy and communities. A strong network of local Meetings could raise financial stock, through donations, to sustain those enduring persecution. Comparatively wealthy Friends frequently provided the premises for Meetings and so bore the additional fines imposed on the Meeting's host under the Second Conventicle Act. As the century progressed the need for external elite support was reduced, as a gradual change in the general perceptions of the behaviour of religious dissidents and their place in society allowed some groups and individuals to find a degree of acceptance in many areas.⁶⁷ Nevertheless, this acceptance was still qualified by some of those same factors that had influenced earlier intolerance. In the decades following the Revolution of 1688, the High Church Tories, who were largely supported by the ordinary clergymen in the counties, vigorously championed Anglican supremacy.⁶⁸ The requirement to pay tithes and church rates had not been affected by the Toleration Act of 1689, and neither were the Test and Corporation Acts repealed at this time.⁶⁹

Social Pressures

Groups of families, dependants, business contacts, and friends were often closely tied together in the networks of Nonconformists' Meetings. Such networks could sustain the individual within the group, but there was also the possibility that an individual's closest associates could challenge or impede his or her choice of religious practice. In the 1650s and 1660s, family members or neighbours might have been swept along by a convert's enthusiasm only to return to the established Church once the harsh reality of persecution was felt. Equally, concerned conforming family and friends of converts might have felt the need to rescue loved ones from these 'peculiar people'. Although the situation eased as subsequent generations came to be accepted or tolerated, there was still opposition at times of increased public unease, such as in the wake of the Popish Plot (1678) or the Exclusion Crisis (1679–81).⁷⁰ Violent animosity flared up against Nonconformists at the time of the Rye House Plot in the spring of 1683, when fears of rebellion were rife and illegal conventicles were viewed with suspicion as potential hotbeds of sedition.⁷¹ It is quite possible that the Cricklade constable, Edward Saunders, used that political situation to stage a 'rescue' bid to free his widowed sister Margaret from the Quakers. In his official capacity, he informed magistrates of a series of illegal conventicles she hosted over the course of the summer of 1683. All those attending the Meetings were fined at the Michaelmas Quarter Sessions⁷² – Margaret most heavily as the host – but this did not persuade her to leave the Quakers. Quite the contrary, for she continued to host Meetings into old age and died a Friend.⁷³

COMPETITION FROM OTHER RELIGIOUS GROUPS

The strength or otherwise of the local representatives of the Church of England in various parts of the county was an influential factor in either encouraging or suppressing the establishment of alternative forms of worship. Similarly the presence of other Nonconformist groups affected the reception Quaker preachers received, and led to competition for converts. The Civil Wars had shattered the Puritan dream of religious uniformity⁷⁴ and spawned a plethora of dissenting factions, none of which developed in complete isolation from the influence of its neighbours. The period was a time of flux, with many religious radicals sampling what each faction had to offer, and frequently changing their allegiance, before locating their spiritual home. As a result, many changes took place within, and between, the dissenting groups and their leaders, before settled churches and organisations began to emerge in a recognisable form in the 1650s and 1660s

The civil and ecclesiastical authorities were anxious to maintain social order and so made continual efforts to stamp out dissidence in all its guises. Officials had little incentive to differentiate between the various groups, which to the uninitiated outsider appeared to be much the same. Confusion often arose because the boundaries between the different religious groups, such as those between the Independents, Baptists, and Quakers, were less clear-cut and rigid than they became later.⁷⁵ The assortment of radicals known as Ranters, who acted on the belief that God's grace had made them incapable of sin,⁷⁶ had a small presence at Langley Burrell, near

Chippenham, in north Wiltshire, from the 1650s, and in 1652 Justice Edward Stokes deemed them to be an immoral rabble.⁷⁷ Although the Quakers were careful to keep their distance from them, both Christopher Hill and Su Fang Ng have suggested that the early Quakers were much closer in spirit to the Ranters than their leaders later liked to recall.⁷⁸ The use of Nonconformist labels was often intended as a deliberate term of abuse or contempt. An example of this ploy is provided in the Quarter Sessions Great Roll for October 1660, when the local magistrate accused Sir Walter St John of Lydiard Tregoze, near Swindon, of being 'a rogue and a rebel, an anabaptist and a quaker'.⁷⁹

While some Quaker converts could be found in each of the regions, they were most numerous on the cheese-producing terrain, with their main strongholds in the cloth villages around Calne and Chippenham, including Slaughterford, which had a long history of religious radicalism. Both General and Particular Baptists also flourished in the cloth-producing area of this region, from where they spread mainly to the south, in which region the Independents (or Congregationalists) were also at their strongest. Some of the more established Nonconformist groups appear to have been responsive to the preaching of the early Quaker missionaries. John Story and John Wilkinson claimed in a letter to Edward Burrough and Francis Howgill, in 1656, that they had had considerable success among the Baptists in Trowbridge.⁸⁰ The General Baptists were most strongly represented on the Wiltshire–Somerset border around Southwick, near Trowbridge, where the growing population employed in cloth production lacked an Anglican Church of its own,⁸¹ and whose members enjoyed some protection from the local JP William Trenchard. Despite the claims of the Quaker missionaries, the Particular Baptists continued as the dominant faction in Trowbridge.⁸² The two groups frequently vied with each other for converts, but eventually settled down to a relatively peaceful co-existence within the town.⁸³

Presbyterian clergy were predominant among those who lost their livings in Wiltshire after the Restoration, for failing to conform to the re-established Church of England. Many ejected ministers chose to stay in the county and set up their own churches, often taking advantage of the inadequate parochial machinery in the larger parishes, which meant that Presbyterian congregations could be found across the whole county. Thus, geographical and industrial considerations do not seem to have been a major factor in the siting of these Meetings, although elite patronage in the chalk region might have played a part. In the north of the county ejected ministers like Simon Gawen, referred to above,⁸⁴ were sustained by the continued support of their former congregations. However, in the south, the ejected vicar Peter Ince received his support from the Presbyterian lords of the manor, Thomas and Robert Groves at Donhead St Mary. As patrons of the benefice of Donhead they allowed him access to the church there to carry on his ministry.⁸⁵ The continued ministries of such clergy undoubtedly generated loyalty among their former friends and congregations, who followed them rather than trying out other Nonconformist groups. Such competition might be expected to have been a deterrent to the establishment of Quaker Meetings in the parishes where these men were still active. Nevertheless, it actually appears to have generated an atmosphere of toleration for other religious

dissidents in some places, and a few Quakers were known to meet in the conservative area around the Donheads.⁸⁶

The other main Nonconformist group, the Catholics, was largely confined to the south of the county. As noted above, the patriarchal control exercised by many landowners and gentry, especially from the older noble houses, could account for the adherence of their dependent populations to the established Church, or to Catholicism. The Arundels of Wardour Castle were leading Catholics in the region, promoting and supporting a Catholic following among their tenants and dependants. Similarly, the religious stance of a master might be instilled into his apprentices along with their occupational training. John Davis, who was born at Amesbury near Salisbury in about 1667, left an account of his religious experiences starting with the information that he was 'apprenticed to Papists and became a zealous Papist' himself.⁸⁷ He attributed his choice of religious beliefs and practice largely to his working and living environment. Davis later joined a household in the north of England, where his spiritual journey continued to be influenced by his environment, since the family doctor was a Quaker who introduced him to the works of Robert Barclay. Even so, he initially thought that Quakers were 'foolish mistaken people, and rather despised than hated them'.⁸⁸ After a lengthy internal struggle Davis became a Quaker but his master's family regarded him as a Jesuit.⁸⁹ The experiences recorded by Davis shed some light on popular attitudes to Quakers towards the end of the century, and also highlight the continuing confusion many of his contemporaries experienced in trying to distinguish between the various branches of Nonconformist religious practice.

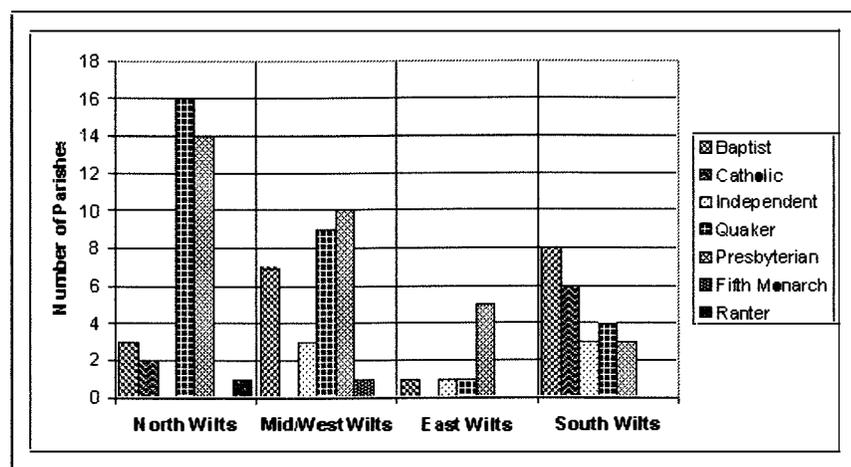


Figure 6. *Parishes with a known Dissenting Presence, c. 1670*⁹⁰

The county has been divided into quarters to show the religious preferences of the different regions. The north, mid and west Wiltshire parishes are those in the cheese region, while the chalk region encompasses most of east and south Wiltshire.

It is evident that a range of factors influenced the settling of the various Nonconformist groups within the county. Figure 6 shows their relative strengths in its geographical sub-divisions from which some regional religious preferences can be detected. While Presbyterianism flourished across the whole county, Quaker Meetings were more numerous in the northern parishes, the Baptist Meetings in the western ones, and the Independents and Catholics were located mainly in the south. However, in some cases, the presence of a faction was represented by just one individual or family within a parish and should not be taken as proof of a settled Nonconformist Meeting there. In addition to the small collection of Ranters in the Chippenham area, the county had a few Fifth Monarchy Men, a politically religious association, who saw it as their duty to eliminate any hindrances to the imminent commencement of Christ's reign on earth.⁹¹ An isolated outpost of this group continued to meet in Devizes into the 1670s, although many of their concepts had been absorbed into Quaker thought by that time. Despite the controversy stirred up by presence of all these dissidents, they never represented more than a minority of Wiltshire's residents. At the time of the Compton Census in 1676, all the Protestant Nonconformist groups together made up only a little over five per cent of the county's population, while the Catholics represented less than one per cent. The vast majority – around 94 per cent – of adults in the Archdeaconries of Salisbury and North Wiltshire claimed to conform to the Church of England.⁹²

THE NETWORK OF QUAKER MEETINGS IN SEVENTEENTH-CENTURY WILTSHIRE

Geographically, the early Religious Society of Friends in Wiltshire was divided into three main divisions. Two of these were centred on the more densely populated and industrialised north of the county, at Chippenham and Charlcutt, while the third was based at Market Lavington on the edge of Salisbury Plain and the chalk region.⁹³ The earliest Friends' Meetings affiliated to these divisions were those settled along the corridor of the Great West Road where, as noted above, good road links provided easy access for Quaker missionaries.⁹⁴ The county's network of roads (Figure 3) also played a crucial role in the practical organisation and make-up of the three administrative divisions. Although Devizes and Lavington appear to be relatively near neighbours in the centre of the county, communication between the two places was poor prior to the mid-eighteenth century when the present road network was constructed. Before then the roads were so difficult, and frequently muddy, that it was easier to go from Lavington to Bradford or Melksham than to Devizes.

The venue for Monthly Meetings was rotated around each division to try to ensure that travelling difficulties did not prevent each Particular Meeting's being represented on most occasions.⁹⁵ Similarly, the venue for each Particular Meeting usually rotated around its member parishes, and was often known by the name of one of those parishes. For example, Kington Particular Meeting, which served an area with a radius of about four miles, drew its members from at least five rural parishes: Kington itself, Sutton Benger, East Tytherton, Stanton St Quintin, and Langley Burrell. Similarly, the Purton Particular Meeting actually held most of its Meetings in

neighbouring Purton Stoke and was supported by members from ten parishes, mainly within a radius of eight miles.⁹⁶ Thus, the actual place where a Meeting was held often reflected its status as a geographically convenient local centre, rather than the enthusiasm of the host's immediate neighbours. The divisional affiliations and organisational network of the Wiltshire Society are shown in Figure 7.

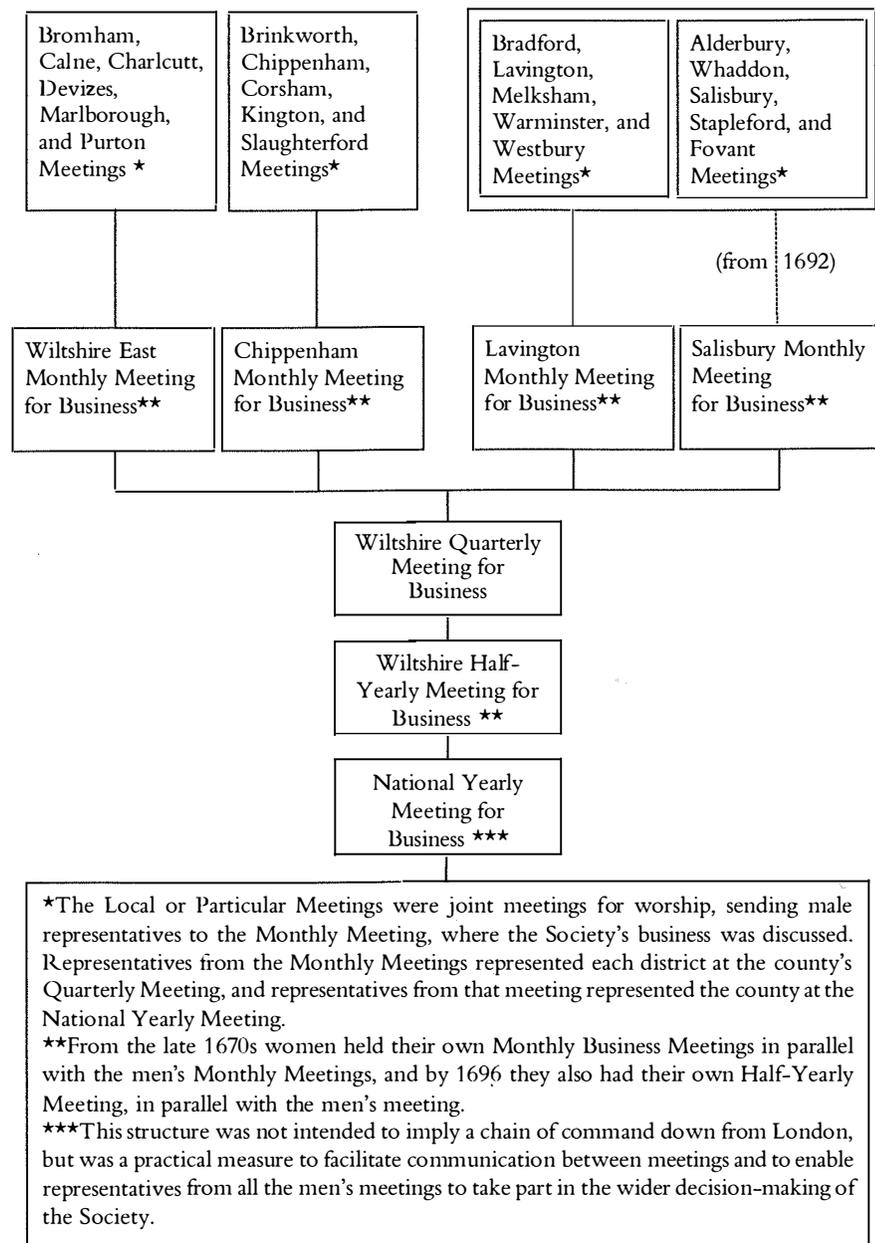


Figure 7. Seventeenth-Century Wiltshire Friends' Organisational Network

Lavington Monthly Meeting had been established in 1678 and, despite the barrier that Salisbury Plain represented, it grew to cover a vast geographical area as the movement spread further south, encompassing Particular Meetings in the city of Salisbury and its neighbouring parishes of Alderbury, Whaddon, Stapleford, and Fovant. This expansion of Quakerism into south Wiltshire over the next decade highlighted the problems of travelling to Meetings. The Salisbury Friends had so much difficulty in getting across the Plain that they eventually set up their own Monthly Meeting, in 1692.⁹⁷ They might have been encouraged to assert their independence from their distant colleagues, at that time, by the growing respectability and acceptance that Friends were experiencing in the wake of the 1689 Toleration Act. Even so, the Wiltshire Quarterly Meeting was increasingly unhappy with this turn of events and eventually, in 1704, stated that:

This Meeting takes notice of it, and is doubtful that the end of their parting with Lavington Monthly Meeting to be a Monthly Meeting of themselves is not answered, and therefore desire that they will take the same into consideration and to joyn again with Lavington Monthly Meeting, if they think fit.⁹⁸

Ultimately, in 1717, the Salisbury Friends agreed to rejoin with Lavington Monthly Meeting,⁹⁹ and the Quarterly Meeting embarked on a rationalisation programme for the all the Meetings within the county's three remaining divisions.¹⁰⁰ The stated purpose of these reorganisations was to reduce travelling within each of the Monthly Meeting divisions. However, the changes ignored the customary links between market towns and their rural hinterlands and proved so unpopular with the membership that, within a few months, all Particular Meetings had reverted to their original Monthly Meetings. Special provision was made for the Salisbury Friends, who were advised not to host any Monthly Meetings and permitted to attend only such Monthly Meetings as they found convenient.¹⁰¹

The long-term solution to the problems of travelling to Meetings saw Salisbury Friends become part of the neighbouring Hampshire Quarterly Meeting and Ringwood Monthly Meeting. Cross-border affiliation, with Meetings in Dorset, also solved the travelling problems of the Friends at Mere in the remote south-west of the county. Their Meeting had never been affiliated to any of the Wiltshire Monthly Meetings, although it was the Wiltshire Quarterly Meeting Clerk who assisted with the registration of the Mere Meeting House with the local magistrate. Marjorie Reeves surmised that Friends in Marlborough, seemingly similarly isolated in the eastern part of the county, would have had closer affiliations with their counterparts in Hungerford and Newbury in neighbouring Berkshire.¹⁰² However, examination of the Wiltshire East Monthly Meeting minute book has revealed that the Marlborough Quakers regularly sent representatives to that Monthly Meeting and were actively involved with the Wiltshire Society.¹⁰³

While the final choice of which Particular Meeting, or even which Nonconformist sect, to join may well have been partly influenced by whichever was the most convenient geographically, Friends were not restricted to attending their nearest Meeting. Examples abound in the northern divisions of Quakers visiting, or joining, Meetings outside their immediate area. In the 1670s and 1680s Edward Edwards, a

yeoman of Brinkworth, was a Member of Purton Particular Meeting, five miles away, affiliated to Wiltshire East Monthly Meeting,¹⁰⁴ despite Brinkworth having its own Meeting which was affiliated to Chippenham Monthly Meeting. It is clear that some Friends chose to travel considerable distances for weekly worship, which demonstrated a high degree of commitment to a specific Meeting, possibly motivated by family ties, that outweighed convenience of access. In the 1680s a group of Friends at Mildenhall, near Marlborough, regularly travelled twelve miles each way to the Meeting at Purton rather than attending the one in the town.¹⁰⁵ Although the general travelling difficulties experienced by Friends in the Lavington and Salisbury divisions, discussed above, were recorded in the Quarterly Meeting minute books, less is known about the specific attendance preferences of individual southern Friends because their earliest Monthly Meeting minute books have not survived.

Local Quaker historians, Max Greenwood and Harold Fassnidge, classified each parish with a Quaker presence, and hosting a Meeting, as having a separate Meeting.¹⁰⁶ Even so, their assessment of 33 Particular Meetings for the three divisions, plus a further dozen whose affiliations were unclear, would seem an over-estimation of the number of settled Meetings held in the county. The records confirm that there was a Quaker presence in some 45 different parishes throughout the county, many of which acted as host for their Particular Meeting,¹⁰⁷ especially in the 1660s and 1670s. However, since it has been shown that most Particular Meetings were supported by Friends from four or five different parishes meeting in rotation, this would account for the discrepancy between the number of places with a Quaker presence and the number of settled Meetings. Initially most of these Meetings were held in the homes of individual Members, many of them eventually being registered as meeting houses under the provisions of the 1689 Toleration Act.¹⁰⁸ In January 1689/90 there was a block registration of 22 premises in Wiltshire, under the new Act.¹⁰⁹ The bulk of these early registrations were for premises in the north and west of the county, with only five of them situated in the south. This indicates that the Society had an effective network of settled Meetings in the cheese/cloth region by the last decade of the century but that, despite the presence of some small Meetings of Friends in and around Salisbury, the movement was less widespread in the south.

CONCLUSION

A combination of factors appears to have influenced the way in which the network of Quaker Meetings spread throughout Wiltshire as the seventeenth century progressed. The link between Nonconformity and cloth production seems to be supported in Wiltshire, for the main concentration of Friends was certainly to be found in the cloth-producing areas where they were probably sustained, in part, by trading links with sympathisers in the cloth industry both in England and abroad. Nevertheless, the caution Spaeth advocated when linking the location of Nonconformity to the spread of the cloth industry¹¹⁰ is well-founded, as Nonconformity was almost ubiquitous – even if it was stronger in some regions than others. The correlation between support for Parliament in the Civil Wars and the spread of Quakerism in Wiltshire would seem stronger than that with cloth alone, although it

could be indicative of a three-way link between Civil War allegiances, cloth production, and dissent. The places in which Quakerism was strongest were those where the inhabitants were already favourably predisposed to religious or political dissent, and some of the other dissenting factions were also present. In some cases Quaker converts had previously espoused other dissenting notions, with missionaries claiming to have had much success among the Baptists.

The regional differences in farming denoted by the north–south divide of the chalk and cheese districts also had a bearing on local attitudes and religious preferences, with Aubrey's observation that those on 'the cheese' were 'more generally apt to be fanatiques' being largely borne out. Patronage was an important factor in determining the religious choices of some of the county's dependent populations. In various guises, it was also an essential ingredient in the survival of at least some individual Quaker Meetings, although the repeated persecution suffered by large numbers of Friends seems to have served to strengthen their resolve to meet and worship as their consciences dictated. The political mood swings that vacillated from persecution to indulgence, back to paranoia over real or apparent plots, and finally towards (albeit limited) toleration, all influenced social attitudes towards Friends and how they were treated by their communities.

While it can be seen that the main trade routes were important for the dissemination of ideas into and across the county, Quakerism spread beyond the Great West Road, and the cloth district, into the agricultural north–east and the remote southern corner of the county. Once the movement had established settled Meetings, it was the road network that played a key role in determining the practical organisation of the Society. The affiliation of individual Meetings to others within the movement was largely dictated by the county's internal road systems, which governed the ease or difficulty of travelling to Meeting venues. Thus, it was ultimately Wiltshire's particular geology that dictated all aspects of county life, the soil type and flow of the rivers determining the type of farming undertaken, where best to site industrial processes, and where the roads would go. These same factors then determined not only how and where new ideas could be spread, but also how those that embraced them would organise their Members.

NOTES

* This is a revised and expanded version of the paper given to the Quaker Studies Conference on 'Friends in Town and Country', Woodbrooke Quaker Study Centre, Birmingham, 16 August 2003.

1. Aubrey, J., *The Natural History of Wiltshire*, Devon: David & Charles, 1969 [1685], with introduction by K.G. Ponting, p. 11.

2. For example see Davies, A., *The Quakers in English Society 1655–1725*, Oxford: Clarendon Press, 2000, for Essex; Everitt, Alan, 'Nonconformity in Country Parishes', in Thirsk, J. (ed.), *Land, Church and People*, Reading: British Agricultural History Society, 1970, for Kent; and Adams, Beverly Ann, 'The Body in the Water: Religious Conflict in Hertford 1660–c. 1702', PhD thesis, University of London, 2000, for Hertfordshire.

3. Wiltshire, in common with many other counties in seventeenth century England, had territory under its administration within various neighbouring counties. However, for the sake of

clarity in the following discussion, only those Meetings and sects within Wiltshire's geographical boundaries are included here.

4. For example see Braithwaite, W.C., *The Beginnings of Quakerism to 1660*, York: Sessions, 1981 [1912]; Hill, C., *The World Turned Upside Down*, Harmondsworth: Penguin, 1972, and *idem*, *Reformation to Industrial Revolution*, Harmondsworth: Penguin, 1992, regarding trade routes. For links with the cloth industry see Ramsay, G.D., *The Wiltshire Woollen Industry in the 16th and 17th Centuries*, London: Frank Cass, 1965; Mann, J. de L., *The Cloth Industry in the West of England from 1640–1880*, Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1971; Reeves, M., 'Protestant Nonconformity', in Crittall, E. (ed.), *Victoria County History of Wiltshire* (hereafter *VCH*), 18 vols.; London: Oxford University Press, 1956–, III, pp. 99–149; and Spaeth, Donald, 'Parsons and London: Parishioners; Lay-Clerical Conflict and Popular Piety in Wiltshire Villages 1660–1740', PhD thesis, Brown University, 1985, pp. 238–47. For Civil War links see Wroughton, J., *An Unhappy Civil War: The Experiences of Ordinary People in Gloucestershire, Somerset and Wiltshire 1642–1646*, Bath: Lansdown Press, 1999.

5. For example, Reeves, 'Protestant Nonconformity', pp. 119–20; and Spaeth, 'Parson and Parishioners', p. 279.

6. Everitt, 'Nonconformity in Country Parishes', pp. 178–99; and Lancaster, H., 'Nonconformity and Anglican dissent in Restoration Wiltshire 1660–1689', PhD thesis, University of Bristol, 1995.

7. David Underdown provided a detailed analysis of the regional differences in Wiltshire in his *Revel, Riot and Rebellion, Popular Politics and Culture in England 1603–1660*, Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1985, Chapter 4.

8. Based on Chandler, 'Accommodation and Travel', p. 92.

9. Hoskins, W.G., 'Economic History', in Crittall (ed.), *VCH*, IV, p. 3. See also Tate, W.E., 'A Handlist of Wiltshire Enclosure Acts and Awards', *Wiltshire Archaeological and Natural History Magazine* (hereafter *WAM*) 51 (Dec. 1945), p. 131.

10. For a comprehensive account of the problems caused by enclosures in the west of England see Sharp, B., *In Contempt of All Authority: Rural Artisans and Riot in the West of England 1586–1660*, Berkeley: University of California Press, 1980.

11. Hill, C., *The Century of Revolution 1603–1714*, Edinburgh: Nelson & Sons, 1961, pp. 17–18.

12. Ingram, M., *Church Courts, Sex and Marriage in England 1570–1640*, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1987, p. 78; and Hill, Christopher, *Change and Continuity in 17th Century England*, London: Weidenfeld & Nicolson, 1974, p. 182.

13. Tawney, R.H., *Religion and the Rise of Capitalism*, Harmondsworth: Penguin, 1964 [1922], p. 216.

14. Hill, *The Century of Revolution*, p. 27.

15. Hill, *The Century of Revolution*, p. 148.

16. Underdown, *Revel, Riot and Rebellion*, pp. 108–109.

17. The seven southerly noble houses were the Dukes of Queensbury at Amesbury, the Lords Feversham at Burford, the Dukes of Bolton at Edington, the Lords Weymouth at Longleat, the Lords Folkstone at Longford, the Earls of Pembroke at Wilton, and the Lords Arundel at Wardour Castle. The two northern houses were the Earls of Suffolk at Charlton near Malmesbury and the Lords St John at Lydiard Tregoze near Swindon.

18. Thorpe, H., 'The Lord and the Landscape', in Mills, D.R. (ed.), *English Rural Communities: The Impact of a Specialised Economy*, New York: MacMillan, 1973, p. 31.

19. Chandler, J., *A Sense of Belonging: History, Community, and the New Wiltshire*, Bradford on Avon: Ex Libris Press, 1998, p. 24.

20. Kerridge, E., 'Agriculture', in Crittall (ed.), *VCH*, IV, pp. 59–62.

21. Chandler, *A Sense of Belonging*, p. 24.

22. Hoskins, 'Economic History', pp. 1–6; and Kerridge, 'Agriculture', pp. 43–64.

23. Kerridge, 'Agriculture', pp. 45.

24. Stone, L., *The Family, Sex, and Marriage in England 1500–1800*, Harmondsworth: Penguin, 1990, p. 418; and Hoskins, 'Economic History', p. 3.

25. Mills, *English Rural Communities*, p. 14.

26. Aubrey, *The Natural History of Wiltshire*, p. 110.

27. Spufford, M. (ed.), *The World of Rural Dissenters 1520–1725*, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1995, pp. 42–44, 55.

28. Lancaster, 'Nonconformity and Anglican Dissent', p. 231.

29. Ramsay, *The Wiltshire Woollen Industry*; Mann, *The Cloth Industry in the West of England*; and Ponting, K.G., *The Woollen Industry of South-West England*, Bath: Adams & Dart, 1971.

30. While some activities connected with the cloth industry have been identified outside the main area of production, as denoted by Ramsey, such activities were commonplace to most areas. The area shown in Figure 3 is that of the main industrial production.

31. Defoe, D., *A Tour Through England and Wales, 1724–27*, I, pp. 279–84, cited in Ponting, *The Woollen Industry*, p. 149.

32. Reeves, 'Protestant Nonconformity', pp. 119–20; and Spaeth, 'Parson and Parishioners', p. 279.

33. Turner, *Original Records*. In his preface to vol. I, pp. vii–xx, Turner provides a detailed explanation of the nature of the Episcopal Returns ordered by Archbishop Sheldon in 1665, 1669, and 1676. The Returns of 1669 are more complete than those of 1665 and give particulars, by parish, of the Nonconformist conventicles in each diocese. The 1676 Returns take the form of a religious census of every parish in England and Wales.

34. Turner, *Original Records*, pp. 27–28.

35. WSRO 854/1 & 854/2: Religious Society of Friends Registers of Births, Burials, and Marriages; WSRO 1699/75: Wiltshire East Monthly Meetings Minutes 1677–1705; WSRO D1/52/10/2: Churchwardens Presentments for the Deanery of Cricklade for 1683; Whiteman, Anne, *The Compton Census of 1676: A Critical Edition, Records of Social and Economic History New Series X*, London: Oxford University Press, 1986; and Turner, *Original Records*.

36. Ogilby, J., *Road Maps of England and Wales 1675*, London: Osprey, 1971. See also Figure 3.

37. Evidence of a Quaker presence has been taken from the Friends' minute books, records of sufferings, and registers of births and marriages (Wiltshire and Swindon Records Office [hereafter WRSO] 1699/75, 1699/79, 1699/17, 854/1 and 854/2), as well the 1669 Ecclesiastical Returns (Turner, G. Lyon, *Original Records of Early Nonconformity Under Persecution and Indulgence*, 3 vols.; London: T. Fisher Unwin, 1911), and the churchwardens presentments for 1674 (WSRO D1/54/6 series).

38. Industrial growth, together with the coming of turnpike roads and canals in the eighteenth century, and the railway in the nineteenth century, changed the landscape forever, as some areas rapidly expanded while others were bypassed and became rural backwaters. Twentieth-century changes, such as the building of the M4 from London to South Wales, and the continued industrial expansion of Swindon, have further blurred the old road networks and community ties between towns and villages. Some modern community links bear little or no relationship to those in existence 300 hundred years ago, with the motorway creating a barrier between formerly close communities. As with the turnpike roads in the eighteenth century, the motorway has bypassed some towns and villages once on trade routes and thus diminished their former importance.

39. Hill, *The Century of Revolution*, p. 151.

40. Ogilby, *Road Maps*.

41. Barry, J. ('Urban History in the South West 1688–1832: Current Issues and Future Prospects', Opening address to the Regional History Centre Conference 'Image, identity and urban experience in South-West England 1688–1832', UWE Bristol, 28 June 2003), provided a useful definition of what constituted a town during this period.

42. Chandler, J., 'Accommodation and Travel in Pre-Turnpike Wiltshire', *WAM* 84 (1991), pp. 85–87; and Aubrey, *Natural History*, p. 115.

43. Kerridge, 'Agriculture', p. 45.

44. Ramsay, *The Wiltshire Woollen Industry*, p. 117.

45. Hoskins, 'Economic History', p. 4.
46. Ingram, *Church Courts, Sex and Marriage*, pp. 37-38.
47. Wroughton, *An Unhappy Civil War*, p. 17.
48. Lancaster, 'Nonconformity and Anglican Dissent', p. 231.
49. Wroughton, *An Unhappy Civil War*.
50. Maclear, J.F., 'Quakerism and the End of the Interregnum: A Chapter in the Domestication of Radical Puritanism', *Church History* 19/4 (1950), p. 247.
51. Based on Wroughton, *An Unhappy Civil War*, p. 17.
52. Vann, R., *The Social Development of English Quakerism 1655-1755*, Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1969, pp. 10-11.
53. Reay, B., 'Popular Hostility towards Quakers in Mid-Seventeenth-Century England', *Social History* 5 (Oct. 1980), p. 394.
54. Reay, 'Popular Hostility', p. 391.
55. Braithwaite, *The Beginnings of Quakerism*, pp. 164-65.
56. Watts, M.R., *The Dissenters, from the Reformation to the French Revolution*, Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1978, p. 285. See also p. 14 below, the parish of Southwick, near Trowbridge, lacked an Anglican Church of its own.
57. Reeves, 'Protestant Nonconformity', p. 104.
58. Allen, R.C. ('The Society of Friends in Wales: The Case of Monmouthshire c1654-1836', PhD thesis, University of Wales, 1999, p. 417) cited the case of Dorcas Embeny who was imprisoned in 1658 for berating Benjamin Flower in his Cardiff church.
59. Reeves, 'Protestant Nonconformity', p. 104.
60. Turner, *Original Records*, I, p. 121, and II, pp. 1057-58.
61. WSRO 1699/17: Wiltshire Book of Friends' Sufferings, entries for 9 8m 1670 and 16 8m 1670. To put the fines in context, Cunningham, B.H. (*Records of the County of Wiltshire*, Devizes: George Simpson, 1932, pp. 294-96), listed the wage rates for agricultural workers in Wiltshire, which were revised in 1685 and under which the yearly wage for a chief shepherd was set at £5.
62. *Calendar of State Papers, Domestic Series 1670, with Addenda 1660 to 1670*, London: HMSO, 1895, p. 369, S.P. Dom. Car. II, 277, No. 204.
63. *Calendar of State Papers*, p. 384, entry for 20 Aug. 1670.
64. Adam Gouldney was a leading local Friend, and was listed at the back of the book of the Minutes of the Meetings for Sufferings, vol. 2, 1680-83, as one of two county correspondents with London Friends.
65. WSRO 1699/17: Wiltshire Book of Friends' Sufferings, entry for 1.iv.1670. Coward, B., *The Stuart Age, a history of England 1603-1714*, London: Longman, 1980, p. 424, considered the failure of some magistrates to execute penal laws in full to be a major factor in the survival of Nonconformity under Charles II and James II.
66. Greenwood, J.M., 'Quakers in the Devizes Area: A Survey of 340 Years of History', Trowbridge: Wiltshire Local Studies Library unpublished typescript, 1994, p. 6.
67. However, Coward (*The Stuart Age*, p. 426) noted that gentry patronage of Nonconformity all but disappeared after 1689.
68. Holmes, G., and Speck, W.A., *The Divided Society: Party Conflict in England 1694-1716*, London: Edward Arnold, 1976, pp. 3-4.
69. There are numerous cases in the Wiltshire records of Quaker sufferings of the clergy pursuing claims against Friends for unpaid church rates and tithes, well into the eighteenth century.
70. For a comprehensive discussion of social attitudes towards Quakers see Reay, 'Popular Hostility'; and Hill, *The World Turned Upside Down*.
71. For information on the social unrest of the period see Greaves, R.L., *Secrets of the Kingdom: British Radicals from the Popish Plot to the Revolution of 1688-1689*, Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press, 1992.

72. WSRO A1/110 1683M Quarter Sessions Great Rolls; and WSRO 212B/5535-5538 and 212B/5556-7 informants' records for 1683. Margaret Shurmer was charged with hosting a series of five meetings, in Purton Stoke, over the summer of 1683.
73. WSRO 1699/75 Wiltshire East Monthly Meetings Minute Book, 1677-1705.
74. Watts, *The Dissenters*, p. 89.
75. Watts, *The Dissenters*, p. 6, for example, identified both General Baptists and Quakers as having their roots in Lollardy.
76. Hill, *The Century of Revolution*, p. 167; and Morton A.L., *The World of the Ranters*, London: Lawrence & Wishart, 1970. See also Davis, J.C., *Fear, Myth and History: The Ranters and the Historians*, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1986, which questions the actual existence of the Ranters.
77. Stokes, Edward, *The Wiltshire Rant*, London, 1652.
78. Hill, *The World Turned Upside Down*, p. 232, and Ng, Su Fang, 'Marriage and Discipline: The Place of Women in Early Quaker Controversies', *Seventeenth Century Journal* 18.1 (2003), p. 115.
79. WSRO A1/110 1660 Quarter Session Great Roll.
80. Letter to Burrough and Howgill at Bristol, dated 6 Feb. 1656, in the A.R. Barclay Collection, cited in Braithwaite, *The Beginnings of Quakerism*, p. 387.
81. Watts, *The Dissenters*, p. 282.
82. Ramsay, *The Wiltshire Woollen Industry*, p. 114.
83. Underwood, T. LeRoy, 'The Controversy Between the Baptists and the Quakers in England, 1650-1689: A Theological Elucidation', PhD Thesis, University of London, 1965.
84. See p. 170 above.
85. Reeves, 'Protestant Nonconformity', p. 106.
86. Underdown, *Revel, Riot and Rebellion*, pp. 250-51.
87. Davis, J., *Some Account of the Wonderful Operations of Divine Love and Mercy as Exemplified in the Life and Experiences of John Davis*, c. 1720; repr. Manchester: John Harrison, 1844, Wiltshire Tracts 15, Folio 14, pp. 4-5.
88. Davis, *Some Account*, pp. 13-14.
89. Davis, *Some Account*, p. 23.
90. The chart has been compiled using available contemporaneous sources such as the Wiltshire Friends' minute books, records of sufferings, and registers of births and marriages (WSRO 1699/75, 1699/79, 1699/17, 854/1 and 854/2); WSRO A1/250: Meetinghouse registrations, transcribed in Chandler, J., *Meeting House Certificates and Registrations 1689-1852*, Devizes: Wiltshire Record Society, 1985; and WSRO D1/50 series: churchwardens' presentments to the bishop on the state of the parishes; together with Reeves, 'Protestant Nonconformity'; Williams, J.A. (ed.), *Catholic Recusancy in Wiltshire 1660-1791*, London: Catholic Record Society, 1968; and the ecclesiastical returns to Archbishop Sheldon in 1669 contained in Turner, *Original Records*.
91. Hill, *The Century of Revolution*, p. 168. For more information on the Fifth Monarchy Men see Capp, B., *The Fifth Monarchy Men: A Study in Seventeenth-Century Millenarianism*, London: Faber, 1972.
92. Whiteman, *The Compton Census of 1676*, p. 108.
93. The Wiltshire East Monthly Meeting minute books dates from 1667, and the Chippenham Monthly Meeting minute book from 1669. The Meeting at Alderbury, near Salisbury, is first mentioned in the Friends' Book of Sufferings, in 1677, and the Wiltshire Quarterly Meeting minute book dates from 1678.
94. See p. 169 above.
95. See WSRO 1699/79 & 1699/75 Monthly Meeting minute books for Chippenham, and Wiltshire East Meetings. Stephens, S. ('Travel and Mobility: A Case Study of Friends in NorthEast Norfolk', paper presented to the Quaker Studies Research Association Annual Conference, May 1999), noted similar arrangements in Norfolk.

96. Members of the Purton Meeting had been lobbying Quarterly Meeting for help to finance a meeting house in the more conveniently placed Purton from the 1690s, but it was not until 1705 when Margaret Shurmer of Purton Stoke relinquished her role as Meeting host that this was achieved.

97. WSRO 854/76 Lavington Monthly Meeting minute book, 1692–1774.

98. WSRO 1699/38 The Memorial of the Quarterly Meetings of the People of God called Quakers, in the Countie of Wilts, 1678–1708, entry dated 3 2mo 1704.

99. WSRO 1699/31 South Wiltshire Monthly Meeting minute book, entry dated 10 2mo 1717.

100. WSRO 1699/40 Minutes of the Quarterly Meetings of Wiltshire Friends 1708–1734; and Greenwood, 'Quakers in the Devizes Area', pp. 5, 14.

101. WSRO 1699/40 Minutes of the Quarterly Meetings of Wiltshire Friends Wiltshire, various entries for 1725.

102. Reeves, 'Protestant Nonconformity', p. 119.

103. WSRO 1699/75 Wiltshire East minute book.

104. WSRO 1699/75 Wiltshire East minute book; and WSRO A1/100 1683M, Quarter Sessions Great Roll. Edwards was a regular Member of Purton Particular Meeting in the 1680s.

105. It is hoped that ongoing research will ascertain if such journeys were combined with other, possibly occupation-linked, activities, such as a weekly visit to a specific market. Many Friends in north-east Wiltshire were travelling upwards of eight miles on mainly poor roads to attend meetings, which would have taken the entire day. It would be useful to know if trading/business links took them regularly to towns or villages that hosted meetings, or if perhaps meeting for worship was combined with social visiting.

106. Greenwood, 'Quakers in the Devizes Area', pp. 5–6; and Fassnidge, H., *The Quakers of Melksham 1669–1950*, Bradford-on-Avon, Wiltshire: Bradford-on-Avon Friends, 1992, Appendix B.

107. WSRO Quarter Sessions Great Rolls A1/110 series; Churchwardens' presentments D1/50 series, and Friends' minute books 1699/38, 1699/75 and 1699/79. See also Turner, *Original Records*, I; Whiteman, *The Compton Census of 1676*; and Williams, *Catholic Recusancy in Wiltshire*.

108. For details of the Act and transcribed lists of the certificates issued see Chandler, *Meeting House Certificates*.

109. WSRO 854/14, and Chandler, *Meeting House Certificates*, No. 24.

110. Spaeth, 'Parsons and Parishioners', pp. 238–47.

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