Centred on Wiltshire, south-west England, this case study examines the ‘settling’, organisation and demographics of early Quakerism. These aspects are considered against national political developments and the shifting patterns of persecution and tolerance of the Commonwealth, Restoration, ‘Tory Reaction’ and reign of James II. In a county split into the ‘chalk and cheese’ regions of the south and north, topography and the inherent bias towards different employments, as well as trade, travel routes, and Civil War allegiances helped create the ‘right’ conditions for religious Nonconformity.

The first Quaker missionaries in Wiltshire were John Wilkinson and John Story, the eponymous figures of a prominent controversy of the early faith. This centred on increased centralisation, authority and discipline under George Fox (founder of the Religious Society of Friends), as well as the emergence of women’s meetings and the authority of female Friends over aspects of men’s lives (especially marriage). The turmoil marked the county for years and created important local schismatics, who were denigrated in print by the leadership; views which have transmitted down the ages, distorting past realities. Women’s meetings were both a means to discipline the Society and channel the faith of women, previously in the public eye for interrupting Church services or evangelising in market-places. The study considers how Meetings settled into being, from peripatetic events to static meeting houses, which often embraced Friends from wide areas and could be hosted or convened by women. The author has unearthed evidence of the demographics of a specific local Meeting (Purton), a leading female (Margaret Shurmer) and the demographics of Wiltshire’s Book of Sufferings, introduced as part of the move towards established administration and used as propaganda by the Foxian elite to help gain acceptance for Quakerism.

KEYWORDS: religious dissent; Nonconformity; missionaries; Wilkinson-Story controversy; schismatics; Quaker separatists; George Fox; propaganda; persecution; Book of Sufferings; conventicles; illegal meetings; swearing oaths; hat removal; fines; discipline; women’s meetings; authority; marriage

USEFUL FOR: historical geographers; those interested in gender in faith and women’s history; historians of late-seventeenth-century politics and Nonconformity; theologians and others interested in how disagreements within sects shape their organisation; local historians; Wiltshire/ Quaker genealogists
Introduction

Overview: This section – and the timeline of significant political events in Appendix 1 forms the backdrop to this local study. The introduction outlines the central themes of the thesis, its relation to wider scholarship, the sources and methodology used and the structure of the work.

Society: Society is one of the three central themes of the thesis. The term is used in the thesis to describe ‘all facets of the Friends’ Meetings and their organisational networks’. Incorporated within these discussions are Quaker demographics in Wiltshire – including social status and gender, a central part of the work – and the logistics of how early Friends managed and nurtured their Meetings.

Schism: The author asserts that Wiltshire Quakers Nathaniel Coleman and Arthur Eastmead were at the forefront of the internal Wilkinson-Story dispute which erupted in the 1670s between George Fox’s leadership group and disaffected Friends across the country.

Sufferings: ‘Sufferings’ was the term used for incidents of persecution against Quakers for their religious belief, which were recorded by local Meetings. These have been seen as within the ‘Christian tradition of martyrdom’. The author indicates that many sufferings were prosecutions for law-breaking, akin to the non-payment of church dues amidst the wider population, or a consequence of the Clarendon Code, a series of revived recusancy laws penalising those who refused to attend Anglican Church services.

Chapter 1. Chalk, Cheese and Cloth: the Demography of Dissent in Seventeenth-Century Wiltshire

Overview: This chapter concentrates on the reasons – each assessed against wider scholarship – for the spread of religious Dissent in Wiltshire. It operates as an extended introduction to Chapter 2, which deals specifically with the development of Quakerism in the county.
### The North/South Divide:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>South</th>
<th>North</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Topography/ Farming</strong></td>
<td>Chalk/sheep</td>
<td>Cheese/dairy</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>‘said to be the origin of the expression ‘as different as chalk and cheese’ (p. 37).</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Church Organisation</strong></td>
<td>Effective</td>
<td>Ineffective, perhaps fostering peripatetic Nonconformist preaching</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Industry</strong></td>
<td>Employment reliant on semi-manorial system of Anglican gentry; limited clothiers</td>
<td>Independent and clothier industry central (historiography often correlated industry with Dissent; author notes prominent in eastern ‘cheese’ region)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Trade</strong> (opportunities for ideas exchange)</td>
<td>More urban centres; fewer markets; some contact with Wales and Bristol, but roads of uneven quality and alignment often east/west</td>
<td>Fewer urban centres, but Marlborough sat on travel routes to east and west, north and south; frequent markets</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Civil War Politics</strong></td>
<td>Most Royalist MPs in central and southern Wiltshire; most sympathisers in chalk area</td>
<td>Most Parliamentarian MPs and pensioners (Dissenting meetings reflected areas of allegiance); later most Whig MPs</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Commonwealth Religions:** After the Civil Wars (1646-51), the Commonwealth governed until 1660. After 1652, a comparatively tolerant Presbyterian system was introduced. Royalist and/or strict Church of England clergy were often removed, but ‘a diverse array’ of beliefs were accommodated. Without cohesion, Dissent was often accepted. Ranters, however – though ‘a minor presence in Wiltshire’ and who, sharing some Quaker tenets, rejected obedience and the notion of sin – were ‘effectively silenced’ by the 1650 Blasphemy Act. With their travelling missionary approach, and similar meeting arrangements and concerns, Baptists and Friends have been seen as closely associated (excepting Baptists’ notion of salvation through conversion and Quakers’ belief in the inner light of Christ in everyone). The author suggests that the two beliefs were symbiotic, and that Quakers peaceably succeeded in converting Baptists. Thereafter, a war of words was begun between the denominations, though this diminished after 1674.

**Politics:** The remainder of the seventeenth-century was dominated by the fallout from the restoration of the monarchy and the Church of England. There was an immediate ‘backlash against Nonconformity’. The Anglican clergy was reinstalled, but Presbyterian and Dissenting ministers garnered conventicles. Now considered a threat to Church and state, Nonconformists came to be targeted though the
Clarendon Code, foreshadowed in the 1660s, but established in the 1670s and 1680s. Moreover, legislation – the Test Acts (1673 and 1678), targeting Catholics, and the Declarations of Indulgence (1672, 1687 and 1688) – swung between persecution and tolerance. However, its application was dependent on the inclination of the local authorities, though tithes and swearing oaths (both inappropriate in Quaker beliefs) were unavoidable. The ‘Tory Reaction’ (1681-85) fostered suspicion and persecution. The 1688 Declaration helped to spark the abdication of James (king, 1685-8) – a long-time source of concern for those anxious about the encroachment of Catholicism – in favour of William and Mary. However, the Clarendon Code had already largely fallen out of use and the 1689 Toleration Act generated the registration of meeting houses of all denominations in Wiltshire and elsewhere.

Chapter 2. The Settling of Quaker Communities in Wiltshire c.1655-1725

Overview: This chapter explores to what extent the expansion and embedding of Quakerism in Wiltshire can be seen to relate to the influences outlined in wider scholarship and in chapter 1: geography, agriculture, industry, trade, patronage and political allegiance. The distribution and organisation of meetings and social class are therefore discussed, as is a demographic case study of Purton Particular Meeting.

Meeting Organisation: The faith settled into Wiltshire, 1650-60. The ‘First Publishers of the Truth’ (early Quaker missionaries, who worked in pairs) appeared in the early-1650s; Wiltshire’s were John Wilkinson and John Story. Co-incidentally, George Fox encouraged the formation of Monthly Meetings to facilitate aid for poorer Friends and instil discipline. Whilst it is unclear how organised Meetings were, communications between local and regional administration, the author argues, were ‘reasonably good’ and registers of births, marriages and burials, and books of sufferings were in place. Restoration persecution increased organisation. That this encouraged Quaker isolation is challenged by the records of Wiltshire sufferings. Meetings for worship consolidated after the Toleration Act, but administrative meetings also bedded in and, from the 1670s, the London Yearly Meeting ‘[included] representatives of the whole membership’. From the 1690s, as persecution waned, Quakers grew more preoccupied with internal matters.
**Wiltshire Meetings:** Aside from local Particular (worship) and Preparative (business) Meetings, there were three divisional Monthly Meetings (Chippenham and East for the north and north-east; Lavington for central and southern. Salisbury was a brief addition, 1692-1717). Men and women worshipped together, but held separate Monthly Meetings for decision making and had separate gendered areas of responsibility. After the establishment of a central county Quarterly Meeting, the author argues, record-keeping was less reliable. Wiltshire Particular Meetings gathered Friends from ‘geographically convenient’ places’, though Friends could decide which Meeting to frequent. Meetings often adopted a single place name, but encompassed Quakers from several parishes; the meeting venue rotated between these sites. This led to misunderstandings then as now, but may also have assisted in avoiding raids on venues.

Although distributed through Wiltshire in rural and urban locations, the author discovered that Quakerism was considerably more prevalent in the northern ‘cheese’ area. She also contends that whilst there was a link between sites of Quakerism and cloth trade/ manufacture, a ‘better fit’ was with Civil War Parliamentary allegiance; however, she adds, all three correlate and so there is no single factor in the spread of Quakerism. It is suggested that the number of Wiltshire Friends has been consistently underestimated. Certainly, 22 premises were registered under the Toleration Act; previously Meetings in rotation, now 10 were static Meeting Houses.

**Class:** There has been considerable debate amongst historians as to which social class Quakers were drawn from. The disparities in occupational titles and descriptions and apparent unreliability of Quaker record-keeping has meant that an accurate assessment of class has been difficult. Even so, the dominant narrative in the scholarship has been that Friends were drawn from the ‘middling sort’. The author had the benefit of the ‘rare survival of informers’ lists of names’ of those attending Purton Particular Meeting in Wiltshire, 1670-1700. Regular participants numbered 37 women and 48 men; 15% ‘were [men] described as gaining their main incomes from the land’; 21% were described as wives; for 28% there was no record of occupation or status; ‘the remaining 36 percent were described as artisans, cloth-workers and traders’. The Meeting was tight-knit, with often-related attendees coming mainly from the immediate area. The Meeting also demonstrates that the Quaker community was not dominated by impoverished women.
Chapter 3. Wiltshire Friends’ Opposition to Foxonian Unity – The Wilkinson-Story Controversy

Overview: This chapter explores early national disagreements between Friends. In Wiltshire, schism was keenly felt: the most well-known of these ructions featured John Wilkinson and John Story, the county’s early Quaker missionaries. The contemporary and historical depiction of separatists is central to the chapter.

Early Controversy: Historians have overlooked Wiltshire and its Quaker separatist leaders, Nathaniel Coleman and Arthur Eastmead, in the Wilkinson-Story controversy, though they have recognised Bristolian William Rogers. These men were said to have ‘regarded themselves as the guardians of true Quakerism’ against ‘a [Foxian] leadership bent on imposing a formal organisation and identity in place of individualism and the leadings of the inner light’ in order to ‘establish credibility as a legitimate religious organisation’. There had been earlier conflicts with groups inspired by Rice Jones (denigrated as ‘Proud Quakers’ with ‘Ranting tendencies’), James Nayler (who in Bristol, 1656, accompanied by women, replicated Christ’s entry to Jerusalem) and John Perrot (labelled a Ranter). The response of the Foxian hierarchy was to seek public repentance from, or shun those involved. Alongside the ‘erosion’ of membership equality through centralised leadership, such punitive discipline influenced the Wilkinson-Story controversy; so too did personality clashes. Nevertheless, it was female authority that proved incendiary.

Wiltshire and the Wilkinson-Story Dispute: In Wiltshire too, there was disquiet. Already influential in the north of the county, yeoman farmer Nathaniel Coleman publicly challenged Fox’s power and his support for emerging women’s meetings and their authority over marriage. Whilst Coleman later made a public retraction and remained central to Chippenham Meeting, the author argues that Coleman’s local position remained volatile. Coleman, Wilkinson and Eastmead accompanied John Story to reconcile Quaker separatists with other Friends at his home Meeting in Westmorland. The same year (1678) – two years after Wilkinson and Story were condemned by London Yearly Meeting – Coleman emulated the earlier actions of Westmorland separatists, seizing the minute book of his home Meeting. Purton also juddered: amidst charges of improper behaviour in Meetings, there was dissatisfaction with female power. The author then cites the writings and personal papers of several (often Foxian) Friends to support her contention that Coleman and Eastmead were leading figures in the turmoil, even mooting the possibility that Coleman influenced William Rogers.
The controversy has recently been reconsidered by scholars as harbouring elements of class rivalry and generation clashes. Whatever the case, Chippenham Meeting hoped for decades to be reconciled with Coleman’s splinter Meeting, or at the very least the retrieval of their minute book. Coleman continued to challenge Fox, and Eastman continued his work as a Quaker separatist preacher. Gently, animosity ceased: Fox died in 1691; Coleman in 1700; and Eastmead in 1705.

‘Bad Press’: At the time, the author argues, there was significant censorship by Yearly Meeting and attempts to discredit the separatists, with the term Ranter in particular being applied. Ever since, biographers or historians have often taken as fact the accounts of the Foxian hierarchy; to this day using Ranter as a description. Debate finally emerged in the 1940s, with Winthrop Hudson ‘[mooting] a conspiracy theory involving the deliberate suppression’ of texts; historian Rosemary Moore has described this as ‘an incipient mechanism for suppressing the wilder variants of Quaker piety’.

In spite of the scholarship devoted to the Wilkinson-Story controversy, ‘there is no real consensus on the nature and spread of the dispute, or on its role in determining the Society’s destiny’. Different interpretations are discussed. The author argues that there were several outcomes. One immediate impact was to streamline administration, taking better care, for example, of the written records. In Wiltshire, Meetings used ‘doormen to vet attendees’, but there was also an emphasis on the local resolution of differences. Moreover, the author suggests, the controversy was (and is) the root cause of the Book of Discipline’s compunction ‘to hear one another in humility and love’.

Chapter 4: ‘Sufferers for Conscience Sake’: Wiltshire Friends and the Law, 1653-1700

Overview: One intention of this chapter was to produce a template by which Friends’ sufferings can be assessed in a more effective fashion than heretofore. The result, a set of statistics recording ‘crime’, punishment and gender under date cohorts between 1653-89 – drawn from Quakers records and the Quarter Sessions – form the backbone to a nuanced set of inferences and conclusions.

Law, Politics and Sufferings: The Civil War interrupted the legal apparatus. There remained a sophisticated court mechanism; in fact, in 1661, though weakened, ecclesiastical courts were revived. Moreover, in 1660 the Church had also reclaimed responsibility for collecting tithes (taxes due to the Church). Co-incidentally, Friends began to self-impose discipline. This did not include their principles,
illegal in civic society: refusal to swear oaths, remove hats and pay tithes; consequences ranged from excommunication to barring Friends from office. Local officials ‘interpreted and implemented’ legislation and so the law was conditional and dependent on local social and religious attitudes; central authority therefore introduced a system of penalties for offenders and rewards for informants or constables.

Friends’ early extreme behaviour was widely unsettling. As other emerging sects, they were considered a threat to social order; in small, rural parishes this would have been magnified. Whilst peripatetic Quaker preachers fed into migration anxiety, Friends’ public evangelising meant that they were often in breach of the peace. This accounted for 40% of Wiltshire sufferings in the 1650s; over 80% of those reported by the Wiltshire Friends in their first decade were recorded in the two years following Nayler’s 1656 messianic entry to Bristol. The 1661 Restoration ushered in plots to remove King Charles II; Quakers’ public declaration of non-violence (the Peace Testimony); and, after the 1683 Rye House Plot, renewed persecution. With the accession of James II and the Declarations of Indulgence (1687 and 1688), ‘all laws against the Quakers were immediately suspended’.

Use and Abuse of Prosecution: The compilation of sufferings had a practical origin: helping those in pecuniary distress. Stoic first-generation Friends – sometimes framed as martyr-like in the scholarship – were of singular character. Later Friends instead used sufferings to portray themselves as ‘God-fearing and peaceable’ and persecuted at the hands of the authorities, and sufferings have since been similarly used by historians. As well as enlisting public sympathy, publicity also shaped an aspirational image for Quakers. The sufferings were therefore collated by London Friends and the Meeting for Sufferings, established 1675. Wiltshire held its own Meeting for Sufferings. The author argues that incidents here were massaged for their propaganda value, especially for London Friends. Nevertheless, law enforcement was uneven and dependent on relations with the local authorities. Recusants who failed to pay fines could forfeit two-thirds of their land to the Crown, although such a drastic penalty was usually reserved for Catholics. However, this did happen occasionally to Wiltshire Quakers.

Wiltshire Sufferings: The statistical analysis of Wiltshire sufferings, 1653-89 (reproduced in Appendix 2), is drawn from: the register of sufferings (which recorded the ‘sufferer’, ‘the names of informers and attestors [sic]’ and ‘justices and constables’); and ‘the churchwardens presentments and quarter sessions great rolls’. The central table of results organises statistics into: decade; gender; residence
(north/south Wiltshire); offence and penalty (not scrutinised for gender differences). The author then presents a nuanced results section, split into subheadings according to offence, and then demographics.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Offence</th>
<th>Frequency</th>
<th>Changes Over Time</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Hat Honour</td>
<td>Rare</td>
<td>Usually dated to early Quakers</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Public Speaking</td>
<td>40% of reported sufferings</td>
<td>Most prosecutions 1650-9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Non-payment of Tithes</td>
<td>c.25% of reported sufferings</td>
<td>Most prosecutions 1650-70, but later, after James II’s toleration acts, became only legal recourse open for Dissenters’ punishment</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Church Absences</td>
<td>Dependant on legislation</td>
<td>Height in 1670s and 1680s</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Attending Conventicles</td>
<td>Dependant on legislation</td>
<td>Sporadic prosecutions 1650s; 94% of trials 1660-3 – already waning before 1664 Conventicle Act. The 1670 Conventicle Act (1670), with its punitive adjunct for landlords, spurred the establishment of permanent Meeting places.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Miscellaneous</td>
<td>Sporadic</td>
<td>Author notes Friends tempted to record any prosecution as persecution, e.g. vagrancy</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

- Social status of persistent offenders – wealthy Quakers tended to be targeted more frequently (perhaps because they could afford to pay tithes and fines), even if poorer Friends were more active in the movement, their lack of property meant they were unlikely to host meetings.
- Gendered aspects of persecution – most Wiltshire sufferers were men; the number of their prosecutions trebled between the 1650s and 1660s, whereas that of women diminished. The only gender-specific crime was male failure to remove a hat. However, other offences, like non-payment of tithes, would also have left men liable from their social/household position. There is no evidence that women were treated more harshly under the law.
- Regional divisions – reported sufferings reflect the northern prevalence of Quakers, though southern sufferings may have been under-reported due to communication and travel difficulties. Persecutions also seemed to cluster around certain places at certain times, indicative either of administrative procedures, or heightened local tensions.
- Prosecution timings – essentially, the author argues that Wiltshire sufferings tended to follow trends in national political tensions. However, she also suggests that regional variations would have
reflected local involvement in sedition; she notes that whereas 1664 London witnessed heavy persecution, Wiltshire prosecuted only six people.

- Punishment trends – Wiltshire evidences the policy shift from imprisonment to fines. There is a brief discussion about prison conditions and why Quakers, as prisoners of conscience, would have felt this especially unfair.
- Informers and fines – fines offered a means to avoid creating public sympathy for imprisoned Friends. This may have been the rationale for the second Conventicle Act. Despite legislation, fines were often arbitrary and defrayed in property seizure. Informants received a cut of the fine. Whilst there is evidence that temptation, even amongst officials, was present, the author argues this was not typical.
- Oaths – the Toleration Act did not nullify all persecutory legislation. The issue of oaths remained until the 1669 Affirmation Act, which obfuscated an oath, but created confusion and division amongst Friends. Yet the social attitude towards Quakers – with their public or propaganda presentation as sober, honest and fair – had also shifted across time and they gained acceptance.

Chapter 5. Wiltshire Quaker Women: Margaret Shurmer and her sisters

**Overview:** This chapter uses the case study of Wiltshire to understand how female Quakers operated at grassroots level. These ‘ordinary’ women are considered against wider social attitudes and prominent female Friends, and set against earlier discussions of the Wilkinson-Story Controversy and Quaker sufferings.

**Convention and Quaker Women:** Under the Commonwealth, women enjoyed a certain degree of freedom. Some published, like Margaret Fell, wife of George Fox. Even so, convention dictated female modesty and quiescence. In spite of widespread disapproval, ‘the definitions of public and private spheres and the boundaries of gender space were fairly fluid’ in the late-1600s: cottage industries involved families at home; women could be shopkeepers, brewers or farmers. Historian Richard Allen has argued that ‘women’s organisational skills’ were ‘an important factor in helping Quakerism to survive ... persecution’. Quakerism challenged social conventions, enabling participation and vocal opinion. This included the early Quaker technique of interrupting ministers and preaching to their congregation, or evangelising in public; women did so out of faith, not gender. Despite Quaker concerns
about their public visibility and negative publicity, female Friends were actively encouraged as missionaries.

**Female Friend’s Responsibilities:** Margaret Fell’s home, Swarthmore Hall, had been the Quaker hub. A source of scholarly debate, it has been suggested that Fell influenced Fox towards the formation of the women’s meetings. Fox had always promoted spiritual equality, though in reality many Friends ‘still viewed the subjection of wives to their husbands as part of natural law and the law of God’. The author argues that the meetings gave female Friends fresh opportunities and created communities, connecting local and national meetings. Worldly skills were useful once Quaker women were diverted away from public speaking to caring for younger Friends, settling servants, raising their own funds, dispensing charity and decisions around young females’ education. Nevertheless – and despite the position of the women’s meetings as subordinate to men’s – the authority of women over men, especially in terms of marriage and younger male’s moral behaviour, continued to prove difficult. This concern with marriage was fostered by necessity. Unwilling to marry in Church, Quakers needed to prove the legitimacy of their marriage declarations, which occurred at a Meeting house before witnesses; with a less conventional approach, first checking people were free to marry was carried out by women.

**Wiltshire Women and Meetings:** Quaker women could be missionaries, as Barbara Blaugdone, Katherine Evans, or Sarah Cheevers (c.1608-1664), ‘Wiltshire’s only female Friend of renown’ (p. 288). Two Wiltshire women were part of Nayler’s entry to Bristol. Yet most women manifested their faith locally, by hosting Meetings and through everyday actions. However, nine women did speak publicly or interrupted ministers in 1650s Wiltshire. Reactions included a Warminster congregation tearing off Evans’ clothes, to Melborough’s mayor charging females with breaching the peace. As sensibilities shifted, partly through women’s own meetings, the proportion of female Friends’ in reported sufferings dropped from 24% to 12%, with most post-1660 instances connected to attending, holding or hosting peripatetic Particular Meetings.

Wiltshire women’s meetings were operational by 1678, and were disrupted by Quaker separatists. Women could become leading local Friends, for example wealthy widow and mother Margaret Shurmer (c.1645-1710) of Purton Particular Meeting; the author argues that Shurmer’s and Quaker preacher Anne Audland’s lives hold ‘interesting parallels’. Shurmer’s home became a Meeting House in 1689-1705 (throughout the Tory Reaction), an important, dangerous and expensive decision, especially for a Meeting that attracted wealthier Friends. Shurmer became one of the chief marriage investigators. By
the 1690s, she was regarded as the leader of the Particular Meeting and continued to be an important mediator in internal disputes. There is some suggestion that Shurmer was not unique: Jane Selfe of Market Lavington displayed evidence of leadership. As Meetings settled, prominent female positions diminished and Meeting Houses became demarcated between male and female space. However, there were still opportunities for women to evangelise: Joan Vokins, for example, a proponent of Vale of the White Horse women’s meetings, travelled to America, Barbados and Ireland in the 1680s with the support of the Society.

Conclusion

The author reflects on why her thesis is important. She contends that regional studies can develop our understanding of Quaker histories – citing, for example, that up to 2% of the urban and rural population of Wiltshire considered themselves Friends, in comparison to the national average of 1%. The spread of the faith, she suggests, was due to many factors, but ‘the same conditions that were favourable to both Parliamentarian sympathies and cloth production were also those conducive to religious radicalism’. The study is also useful, the author argues, to ascertain how local people responded to national politics and legislation.

The study has likewise nourished understanding of meetings and their relationship to local geography: meetings were peripatetic and attracted people from wide areas. Not only did this generate and sustain membership, it helped to avoid relentless persecution. Moreover, the case study of Purton has developed ideas about meeting demographics. In the Wilkinson-Story schism, local supporters did not single out Purton as being exceptional for having a woman in a leadership role; Margaret Shurmer was significant, but the role played by other local women in the development of the faith was pivotal. The controversy was an important element in Wiltshire Quaker life for a generation. Nathaniel Coleman and Arthur Eastmead had a substantial role to play in their home county and as supporters of Wilkinson and Story. The turmoil would promote the use of propaganda by the Foxian leadership of the Society and even the establishment of Quaker discipline. As part of this elongated genesis of directives and records, sufferings would also become useful for propaganda. However, the Wiltshire Book has also revealed Quaker organisation and demographics, as well as suggested a research template for similar studies elsewhere.
Appendix 1. The Political Context of Seventeenth-Century Religious Dissent

A useful chronology of major political events and legislation between 1650 and 1696.

Appendix 2. Table of Wiltshire Friends’ Sufferings, 1653-1689

A tabulated representation of entries from Wiltshire’s Book of Sufferings between 1653 and 1689 listing: last name, date, sex, offence, penalty, region, source.

Summary prepared by Rebecca Wynter (2012)