

This paper is reprinted here with the permission of the North American Association for the Study of Welsh Culture and History.

**A PILGRIM'S PROGRESS. A WELSH
QUAKER'S SPIRITUAL JOURNEY.
FOUR PAPERS WRITTEN BY THOMAS
LEWIS OF SHIRENEWTON, GWENT.
C.1741-2**

When I was but very young in years I took my journey into a far Country, where I did wast[e] my goods by riotous living: there were Ringleaders of Wickedness and I took great delight in their companies, then I drank Iniquity as the Ox drinketh water.¹

These words were not penned by any well-known religious leader or social commentator, but were composed by a less prominent figure who concluded his allegory with the following line:

*'From me whose name is Tho^s Lewis, one of the People called Quakers at the Place of my Nativity in the County of Monmouth near Shirenewton the 8th of y^e 9th Mth 1741.'*²

In this parable entitled 'A Warning for all Youth', Thomas Lewis described his early life, his 'spiritual journey' and his eventual escape from a land of wickedness and debauchery. Such articles, written by members of the Society of Friends advocating a well ordered life, were warmly welcomed and stoically preserved. This tale, which was one of four papers written by Lewis and transcribed into the Monmouthshire Monthly Meeting minutes from October 1741 to February 1742, demonstrates Friends' view of themselves as an especial people and provides an insight into how members interacted with the world about them. The purpose here is to explore some of the themes which Lewis touched upon in these papers.

Thomas Lewis - 'our spiritual guide'

Little is actually known about the man who penned these papers.

There are very few references to him or to members of his family in the minutes of the Quarterly or Monthly Meetings of Monmouthshire Friends or in other records. The evidence available does note that he had a son called Thomas,³ a daughter Mary, and that he lived in or near the town of Shirenewton. According to the Monthly Meeting where his papers were read, he was 'bedrid these several years', and in 1736 he was given financial assistance by the local Meeting because 'he had been a long while visited with sickness',⁴ while in 1744 his daughter-in-law was given 2s. 6d. for his maintenance. This relief was subject to the periodic scrutiny of Friends who observed that the arrangement was to be continued only 'till Friends think proper to alter it'.⁵ Shortly before his death in December 1746, Thomas Lewis and his daughter, Mary, were reprimanded by Friends for their behaviour towards Michel[le] his daughter-in-law. The Monthly Meeting appointed three senior members to speak with him advising Lewis 'to be more kind and affectionate to ye Daughter in law and that he will keep peace at home.'⁶ He was nevertheless interred in the Shirenewton burial ground with Friends paying all his funeral expenses.⁷ (See fig. 1).

Quakers in Monmouthshire

It is now important to turn briefly to the development of Quakerism in Wales and particularly in Monmouthshire to provide a context for Lewis's papers. In the first chapter of *Protestant Dissenters in Wales 1639-1689*, Professor Geraint Jenkins noted that the origins and significance of many of the Welsh Dissenting congregations have been researched and analysed. Yet, in contrast, he noted that 'we still await a full-scale study of Welsh Quakerism'.⁸ My own study does not claim to be that work, but it does complement previous investigations into Quakerism in Wales,⁹ and may assist further research work and ultimately the study to which Professor Jenkins referred.

To begin any journey a point of origin is needed, and it is to the Quaker point of origin that attention must now briefly be given. As a consequence of the Civil Wars and the growth of radical dissent during the Interregnum, a proliferation of religious movements emerged.¹⁰ In this period of upheaval, George Fox, a weaver's son from Fenny Drayton in Leicestershire, had a vision of a new community of believers and found willing converts to his ideas. In Monmouthshire, converts to Quakerism, who came from a variety of backgrounds, sought solace from the uncertainties of a world which had been 'turned upside down', and, as a result, turned away from the local parish church which had failed to meet their spiritual needs.

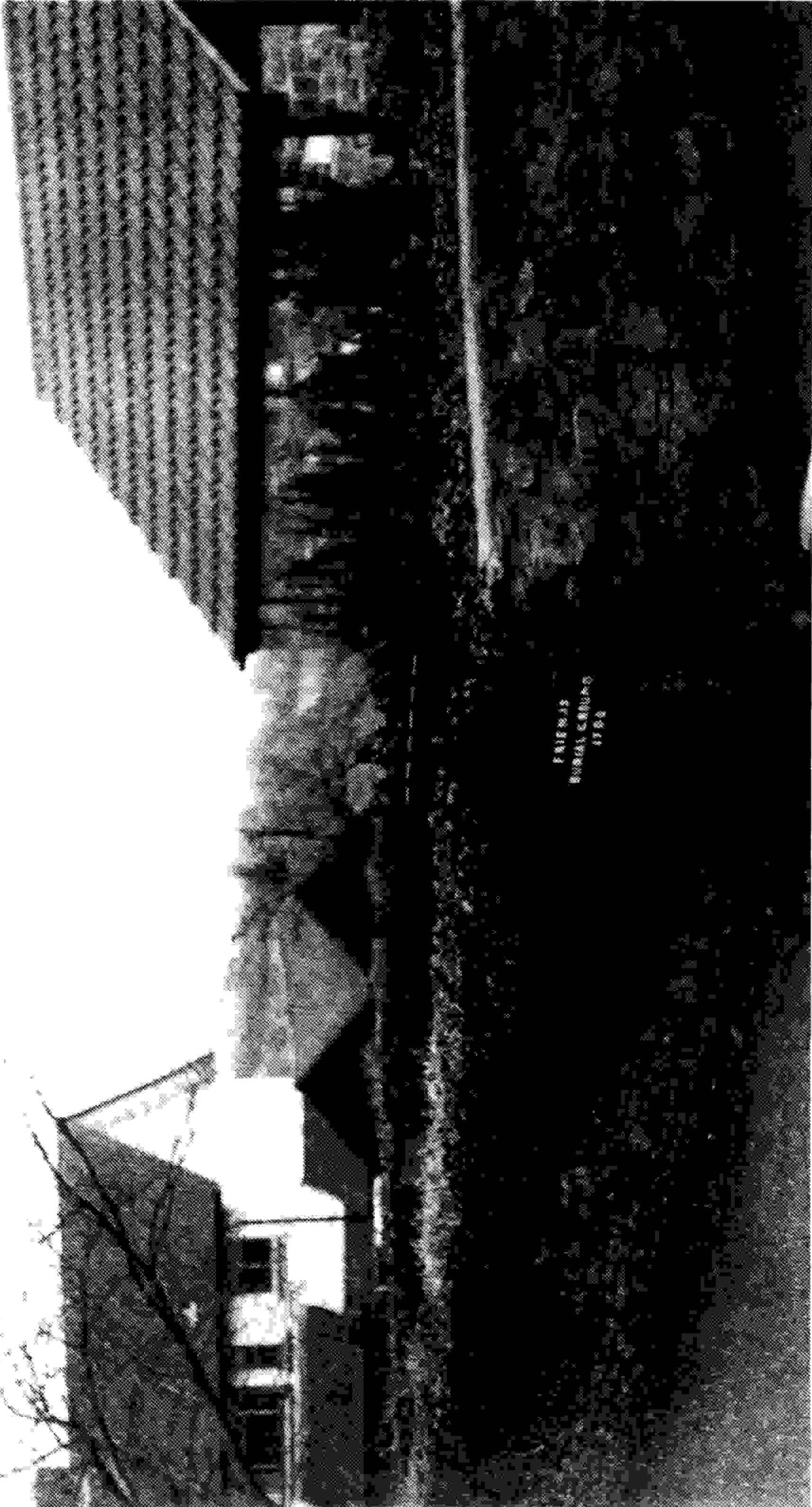


Fig. 1. Friends' Burial Ground, Shirenewton, c.1996

Friends' rejection of Calvin's doctrine of predestination and its replacement with the message of 'Inner Light', as well as the suggestion of salvation for all, proved to be seductive in the county. As a consequence, Friends rejected many of the accoutrements of the parish church by creating a religion based upon simplicity and plainness, and upon their own spiritual experiences.¹¹

Quakerism in Monmouthshire developed in five distinct areas, namely in the north-east of the county at the Pant, Llanfihangel Ystum Llywern (near Monmouth); along the main trade route from Chepstow to Cardiff with Meetings at Shirenewton in the east and St. Mellons/Castleton in the south-west; in the eastern valley at Pont-y-Moel and later at Trosnant (Pontypool); and in the north-west at Llanwenarth and Abergavenny. The maps (at the end of the Transcripts following this paper) suggest that the geographical location of these meetings was significant. The first map drawn by Thomas Kitchin in 1763 (see Map. 1) provides detail of the parishes in the county of Monmouth and the main roads in use during that period.¹² Clearly, with the possible exception of the Pant Meeting which was at a short distance from the main road, all the other Meetings were on or close to a main road and were reasonably near market towns. At such places itinerant preaching would have been fairly common accompanying the spread of new religious ideas. The second map drawn by Richard Blome in 1673 (see Map. 2) shows the difficult terrain that Quaker preachers and members had to overcome when travelling to Meetings.¹³ The great distances which Friends were prepared to travel, often on poorly maintained roads, shows clearly their commitment to the Society.

It is now pertinent to return to our 'spiritual guide', Thomas Lewis.

The 'Road to Damascus': A Quaker 'convincement'

Thomas Lewis freely admitted that he was prepared to remain in a land of loose living and moral decay believing the 'Idol Shepherds Doctrine'. Yet he recognised that he was spiritually unfulfilled, and he turned to other religious congregations commenting that: 'it came to my mind to seek out another way'. This proved to be equally unrewarding as he found himself still 'in the same Country' and he was left, as he graphically suggests, 'like a Tree, that did wither between the barren Mountains and the desolate Hill'.¹⁴ It was during this period of spiritual torment that he was confronted with the message of Quakerism. Nevertheless, in spite of his willingness to seek out Friends, he remained in this 'barren land' and failed to understand the significance of the Quaker message. The continued

presence of Friends in the area gave Lewis another opportunity to search for the peace and contentment for which he longed, but he often found that he was struggling against a powerful enemy:

'I found the way very easy into the Country, but to return from thence I could not by my own strength, no more than I could remove mountains; for when I was resolved to forsake the Countrey I could see much Rubbish, and the way very Rough.'¹⁵

Yet with the help of 'God's mercy' and the 'Inner Light', he had succeeded in abandoning his former lifestyle and had become a Quaker. The expression of joy and contentment is clearly in evidence as he spoke of his freedom to 'go through Town and Countrey void of that slavish Fear unto which I was subject, while in the strange Country'.¹⁶

Social and Religious comment in the Lewis papers

Apart from providing an insight into the way he was convinced, Thomas Lewis also gives additional information on a variety of social and religious practices. It is to these observations that the remainder of this paper will now be devoted.

[i] The Church and Hat-Honour

Friends' dealings with the clergy, especially in the period before the 1689 Toleration Act, often led to their persecution. It was believed that the growth of the sect and its radical religious beliefs would lead to a decline in standards of worship. Quakers, with their unorthodox views, challenged many of the tenets of established religion and refuted the authority of the 'Visible Church'.¹⁷ Clergymen, therefore, felt threatened by a new group of religious zealots who consistently denied the view that membership of the established church was a proper test of political loyalty. Joshua Miller, the Puritan clergyman of St. Andrew's Church, Cardiff,¹⁸ and a fierce critic of Friends, remarked that he had never:

'met with such railing, reviling, brawling spirit, or heard the like...such words as these I have had from them, thou priestly deceiver, false prophet, hireling, thou preachest nothing but lies blind guide; with such a bed-rose of junctives, that the Oyster women of Billingsgate would blush to name...'¹⁹

Furthermore, Friends' call for a ministry of men and women who spoke simply and could reach the consciences of men, instead of university-trained pedagogues, aroused suspicion. Thomas Lewis's papers, written in the mid-eighteenth century, similarly condemned the clergy for their vanity, claiming that they loved 'Greetings in the markets, and to be called of men - masters' and thought more of their own stomachs than of the welfare of their congregation.²⁰ He suggested that the clergy were no more than 'idol shepherds' who took little notice of the debauched world that surrounded them and 'some of them took delight in the same themselves.'²¹

The clergy were also denounced by early Friends as the oppressors and exploiters of the poor. As Francis Gawler, a seventeenth century Glamorgan Quaker, alleged, the clergy were 'fighters and strikers, false accusers, pullers by the hair of the head, evil speakers', who only secured their livings by underhand methods,²² or by the taking of tithes to the obvious detriment of the poor and the destitute.²³ The church's claim to the enforced payment of maintenance for the ministry provoked Friends to bear testimony against tithes and call for the abolition of maintenance.²⁴ Thomas Lewis echoed these earlier sentiments when he commented that the clergy were false preachers who took a perverse interest in offering their parishioners hope of salvation while also pretending 'to deliver some of them unto Satan'. Here the damned were to remain 'without any Hope or Remedy forever' unless the parishioners paid the church a sufficient sum of money to ensure that they were safe 'from the custody of Satan'.²⁵ This was nominally a tithe or a tenth of their annual income or produce.

Agitation against the tithe was a direct challenge to the Church for, if parishioners refused to pay, then there would be no 'livings' for the clergy and, therefore, a complete breakdown in church worship and authority would follow. There is some truth in the view that opposition to the tithe was based on Scripture, but there were also economic and social grievances. This underlined the antipathy not only to the existing structure of society based on social gradations but also fervent hostility to the impositions of the clergy. The disproportionate spread of wealth between rich and poor, and between urban and rural areas, helped to inflame passions, especially as the burden of paying tithes normally fell upon the rural and the poorer sections of the country. Lewis commented in his second paper that:

He that entreth not by the Door into the Sheepfold but climbeth

up some other way, the same is a Thief and Robber - Thieves and Robbers, have an Armour, and their weapons are very keen; they have a spear to frighten the People. If a poor man have a few Goats upon a free common they claim a share in them, If a poor widow have a Couple of Ewes and Lambs they likewise claim a share in them...

He added that if the weak or sick who 'Lie upon a Bed of Straw perhaps with hungry Bellies' were visited by these men then

it is much if they open their mouths unto them much less give them an Advice concerning their latter End...I could never find that the said Thieves and Robbers do ever own any poor or such that are relieved by Parishes while they are alive - But when they are dead and laid in the grave then the Thieves and Robbers - Cry out the Soul of our Dear Brother or Dear Sister here departed: - O the Leaven of the Pharisees which is hypocrisy! The Sons of Ely do exercise Lordship over the People! They put money at usury, and purchase Houses and Lands with the Gain of oppressions.²⁶

The fervent campaign organised by the Quakers against clergymen and the extraction of tithes gave both the Church and secular authorities every opportunity to persecute Friends. The loss of many of the Llandaff Church court and Quarter Session records for Monmouthshire, including details of the presentments for non-attendance at Sunday worship and failure to pay fines or tithes, however, means that any investigation into the persecution of Friends is incomplete and consequently frustrating. Indeed, most of the evidence of persecution for south-east Wales derives from Quaker sources and has to be treated with appropriate caution. Thomas Lewis refers to the persecution of the 1650s in the following manner:

The Presbyterians and Anabaptists had spears in their Hands in that Time of Oliver Cromwell, that Blood thirsty man; And they did hunt after Blood as the scribes and Pharisees did at Jerusalem in the Time that Saul Received Letters from the Chief Priest to bring both men and women bound to Jerusalem that he could find confessing the name of Jesus - But their downfall came to them at Jerusalem, and likewise ye Presbiterians in England. It has been such a time in England that those

Dissented from those Hunters after Blood were condemned to be burnt at the stake. If the Hunters after had their will, I am apt to think that it would be even so now.²⁷

Attacks on the law, wealth and social status also drew hostility from prosperous members of the local community as well as from those who jealously guarded their social position. Coupled with their attack on wealth was the onslaught on privilege waged by Friends. Inherent in the Quaker code of conduct was the assertion that no man should adopt a superior attitude simply because of his social position, and since all men were equal in the sight of God, Friends refused to act with deference to those in authority. In keeping with this assertion they refused to remove their hats or hat-honour their social superiors or to address them according to their titles. This refusal to hat-honour, as the following Welsh ballad shows, was not confined to Friends, but it was one method adopted by them to distinguish between the honour accorded to God and that which men had usurped:

'One day a learned bishop,
In measured voice and deep,
Pronounced the benediction
Above his gathered sheep;
And listening with attention
To what his Lordship said,
He noticed there a peasant
His hat upon his head.

The Bishop when he saw him,
In anger did cry out,
'Now there, while I am speaking,
Take off thy hat, thou lout!'
'I won't' the peasant answered,
'The merit must be small
Of words that will not enter
The brain through hat and all.'²⁸

Examples of the refusal to remove hats were commonly recorded in Friends' accounts as well as in the records of their adversaries. In 1659, Francis Gawler noted that when he was presented before the magistrates at Cardiff, he refused to take off his hat. The constables refused to remove it, but threatened Gawler with a fine for contempt

unless it was taken off.²⁹ One of the fullest Welsh accounts, however, was provided in 1741 by Thomas Lewis:

In a little Time a small Persecution did arise so that I was to appear before one of the Rulers of y^t Country where I had been and it was a Publick House where much People was, and the Custom of this Countrey was to bow unto Idols, which I was not to do. Then he was in a Rage, and thought to compell me; but thro' mercy I feared him not which could kill the body. When he saw that he could not prevail over me, he compelled the People to take off my Hat, and if they had stript off my Coat as they did my Hat, I believe that I had strength enough to bear it...afterwards I did talk with that same Ruler several Times without any more reverence than Mordecay gave unto Hamar, and within his own private Chamber where I drank without any bowing or crouching. I do earnestly desire that such who have a Zeal for the House of God, that they take care not to Bow and Crouch unto Idols...³⁰

[ii] Moral Reform v. Popular Culture

As noted earlier, Lewis described his own reckless youth in a parable, depicting his life in a strange land where there was much idleness and debauchery. In his third paper Lewis gave instructions to the younger members of the Society on how they ought to behave. It is to this society that attention will now be drawn, particularly to those aspects of popular culture which Lewis most abhorred. In the first of his four papers, Lewis gave a rendition of the Lord's prayer and his own opinions on those unsuitable for the 'kingdom':

Thy Kingdom come; I doubt there is a great Numb^r of people y^t knows not where his Kingdom should come; but Fornicat^{rs} and Adulterers, Thieves, and Robbers, Common Drunkards & such as can call for Damnation upon their Brethren & fellow Creatures, except they repent, his Kingdom will not come; his Kingdom will not come into an old nasty Bottle: for new wine must be put into new Bottles.³¹

Apart from attending to the necessities of everyday life, the Monmouthshire Meetings, like Friends elsewhere in England and Wales, reacted to that which they considered to be frivolous, immoral or simply unnecessary.³² The Quaker code of conduct was an attempt to address some of the pressing social evils of the day and was

enacted by both men and women Friends. It was not the intention of the Society to restrict individual freedom, but rather, by applying the code, it was hoped that members would be forewarned about the dangers of too close a fraternisation with the 'vanities of the world'. Thomas Lewis's attack on the evils of the world was clearly meant to assist in the process of educating Friends about people who:

Love those evil memb^{rs} more than they do y^e Living. Because they do Love this World more &c. Because they Love Drunkenness more &c. Because they Love fornication & adultery more &c. Because they Love Thievery & Robbery more &c. Because they Love Lyes & Blasphemies more &c. Because they do Love to Curse & Swear more &c. Because they Love to follow Idleness & Gamings more &c. Because they Love Pride more &c. Because they Love to sing ungodly Books & Ballads more &c. Because they do Love envy, hatred & malice more &c. Because they Love to bow unto Idols more &c. Because they Love to fight (wth) one another & to murder more &c. Because they Love to grind y^e faces of ye poor more...³³

Lewis, however, concluded with an appeal that 'People may repent & forsake those evil members.'³⁴ The employment of the code, therefore, helped to prevent Friends from committing misdemeanours and provided sage counsel for those who had fallen into bad practices. Disownments and warnings, such as Thomas Lewis's papers, were recorded for posterity in the Meeting minutes and read out at public meetings. This gave Friends an opportunity to reflect upon their own lives and endorse standards of behaviour expected from members of their religious community.

It could be argued, however, that Friends' views excluded them from the 'invigorating realms of music, drama, politics and sport',³⁵ and made them appear disagreeable neighbours.³⁶ Dr. Barry Reay has argued that as the Quaker 'middling sorts' accepted the principles of the puritan 'reformation of manners',³⁷ many Friends were admonished or expelled for participating in popular and traditional pastimes.³⁸ He has observed, however, that such a reformation was never achieved as the Society constantly had to remind the constituent meetings to watch over its members, especially in their relations with the 'world's people'. The clash between popular culture and reformed behaviour led many Friends to challenge the tenets of the Society.³⁹ More serious, however, was the diminution of numbers when Friends found themselves unable to conform to the standard pattern of ethics of the Society.

Friends' abhorrence of ungodly behaviour in places of public diversion, such as inns, led them to challenge some of the established social activities in the life of Monmouthshire people. Friends, therefore, set themselves against 'debauched' practices and issued strong warnings against excessive drinking because of its effects on society and the way it contaminated both mind and soul. Alcohol abuse, throughout the early modern period, was a serious problem and was justifiably condemned as leading to idleness.⁴⁰ Friends were sternly warned against the evils of excessive drinking, especially when travelling to or residing at inns.⁴¹ In January 1701, George Newcombe, a nailer of Pont-y-Moel, was testified against for excessive drinking. Friends asserted that he brought great shame upon the Society by giving 'occasion of reproach and ignominy unto ye precious truth'.⁴² In the case of John David, a tailor of Castleton, references in the Monthly Meeting minutes in 1706 and 1707 note his 'excessive' drinking and 'sitting up late'⁴³ which may well have hastened his death in 1709.⁴⁴ This episode is sad enough, but is made more poignant with the knowledge that he had reformed his 'ill course of life'⁴⁵ and had been married less than two years before he died. In the mid-eighteenth century, Monmouthshire Friends censured another two members for drunkenness. In 1749, Zacharias Jones of Cowbridge was denied membership after he was 'many times extream drunk' and had tarnished the image of Friends.⁴⁶ Again in 1762, William Williams of Abergavenny was disowned after failing to heed Friends' warnings about his excessive drinking.⁴⁷

Yet it would be wrong to assume that the measures taken by Friends stemmed solely from a concern to restrict the harmful effects of alcohol abuse or to preserve their growing acceptance in the wider community. By attacking excess, Friends were attempting to limit the consequences of such behaviour, and avert the dangers posed to family life and economic prosperity. In 1775, for example, in the testimony against Owen Edwards of Pontypool, there is a clear indication that the consequences of his heavy drinking was that his business had gone bankrupt and that he had left his wife, Rebekah, in 'a helpless situation'.⁴⁸

Friends were also warned about the 'nurseries of debauchery and wickedness' such as cock fighting arenas, racecourses, gambling halls, and theatres.⁴⁹ Indeed, Evan Bevan, a Quaker teacher from Pont-y-Moel,⁵⁰ condemned wakes and revels, common harvest shouting and horse racing.⁵¹ In the *Gloster Journal*, Bevan published an article entitled *Of the evils of Cockfighting* in April 1731.⁵² This paper condemned what he saw a debasement of God's creation 'to gratify the Lust of depraved Nature'. This stinging condemnation stated that

for both the rich and the poor alike cockfighting and gambling led to 'Covetousness and Idleness, and lays a Snare before Multitudes to do Evil'⁵³ Thomas Lewis later observed that Monmouthshire was typical of early modern Welsh and English society:

'There was such idleness as Cock fightings, and a great number of those Country People did flock into it. Some did curse, and some did swear; some did hoop, and some did Quarrel; there was such idleness as Dancing, Singing of ungodly Books, and Ballads; there was likewise such idleness of Gamings as Balls, Bowls and Pins, Cards and Shuffleboards; and a great many of that Country People took much Delight in them both old & young.'⁵⁴

Furthermore, in 1746 Joseph Rule, a teacher who lived at the Pont-y-Moel meeting house, was brought before the Monthly Meeting to explain why he had vacated the premises without notifying Friends.⁵⁵ As part of his reply to the Meeting, he complained that on one side of the meeting house was a cockfighting arena and on the other a 'skittle ground the 'noise of which he could not bear'.⁵⁶ Friends, however, were not fully convinced of his motives and were not prepared to allow him to indulge in a planned visit to England.⁵⁷

Towards the end of the eighteenth century, leading Friends still counselled against leisurely pursuits and influences in spite of the acceptance by some Monmouthshire Friends of such activities. A letter from Richard Reynolds of Ketley, Salop, to James Lewis of Pontypool in July 1788, refers to the custom of selling lottery tickets in the county. This custom was seen as 'a species of gaming, and not to be practised by Friends'.⁵⁸

To conclude, Thomas Lewis's outspokenness on Monmouthshire Society casts further light on this Welsh country in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries. Although he made critical observations on the world which he inhabited, Lewis nevertheless hoped that people would 'Repent before it be too late'.⁵⁹ It is, therefore, worth ending with an uplifting comment from this Welsh Friend who believed that if people held 'fast ye Truth ye living and eternal God will neither leave thee nor forsake thee'.⁶⁰ The presence of Friends in Wales and in America today surely bears testimony to this belief.

Richard Allen

(This paper was presented at the Third Annual Conference of the North American Association for the Study of Welsh Culture and History in 1997. Details for future conferences can be gathered from Marcella Barton at the University of Rio Grande, Rio Grande, Ohio, USA. 45674. (e-mail: Welsh@Urgrgcc.edu) H.F.G.

NOTES AND REFERENCES

- ¹ Glamorgan Record Office (hereafter G.R.O) D/DSF/353. The Monthly Meeting Book of Monmouthshire Friends 1734-44. Meeting held at Pont-y-Moel (Pontypool), Monmouthshire, minutes dated 28/10/1741.
- ² Ibid.
- ³ Thomas Lewis II had married Michell[le] Jones of Skenfrith (Ynysgynwraidd) on 7/11 (January)/1740/1, but was subsequently disowned for failing to resolve a lengthy dispute with his sister-in-law, Elizabeth Lewis. See Public Record Office (hereafter P.R.O.). Society of Friends Registers. (Monmouthshire). No. 677, p. 138; National Library of Wales, Aberystwyth, (hereafter N.L.W.) Microfilm. Non-Parochial Registers (hereafter N.P.R.) 44; G.R.O., D/DSF/354. The Monthly Meeting Book of Monmouthshire Friends 1745-91. Meetings held at Pont-y-Moel and Shirenewton, minutes dated 7/7/1762, 2/2/1763, 1/12/1763, 18/4/1764.
- ⁴ G.R.O., D/DSF/353. minutes dated 29/1/1736.
- ⁵ Ibid., minutes dated 1/6/1744.
- ⁶ G.R.O., D/DSF/354, minutes dated 1/8/1746.
- ⁷ P.R.O., Society of Friends Registers. (Monmouthshire). No. 677, p. 176; N.L.W., Microfilm. N.P.R. 44; G.R.O., D/DSF/354, minutes dated 29 December 1746.
- ⁸ G.H. Jenkins, *Protestant Dissenters in Wales 1639-1689* (Cardiff, 1992), p.7; Cf. the general studies on the Quaker faith most notably W.C. Braithwaite, *The Beginnings of Quakerism* (London, 1912); Idem., *The Second Period of Quakerism* (London, 1919); A. Lloyd, *Quaker Social History 1669-1738* (London, 1950). Recent general studies include R.T. Vann, *Social Development of English Quakerism 1655-1755* (Cambridge, Mass., 1969); E. Isichei, *Victorian Quakers* (London, 1970); B. Reay, *The Quakers and the English Revolution* (London, 1985). The development of local Quaker studies, especially at Lancaster University under the supervision of Michael Mullett, has led to a proliferation of theses and articles including Nicholas Morgan, *Lancashire Quakers and the Establishment 1660-1730* (Halifax, 1993).
- ⁹ Most notably T. Mardy Rees, *A History of the Quakers in Wales* (Carmarthen, 1925); H.G. Jones, 'John Kelsall: A study in religious and economic history' unpublished University of Wales M.A. thesis, 1938; M.F. Williams, 'The Society of Friends in Glamorgan 1654-1900' unpublished University of Wales M.A. thesis, 1950). It is also worth noting the two Welsh Quaker novels by Marion Eames. Written in Welsh as *Y Stafell Ddirgel* (Llandybie, 1969) and *Y Rhundir Mwyn* (Llandybie, 1972) they have both been translated into English as *The Secret Room* (Llandysul, 1995) and *Fair Wilderness* (London, 1987).
- ¹⁰ Notably the Fifth Monarchists, Muggletonians, Ranters, Familists and Seekers. For an excellent review of the secondary literature of Puritanism and Nonconformity, and a discussion of the terminology of the period, see R.L. Greaves, 'The Puritan-Nonconformist Tradition in England, 1560-1700: Historiographical Reflections', *Albion*, 17 no.4 (Winter 1985), pp. 449-86.
- ¹¹ Helpful studies on the origins and doctrines of the Society are provided in W.C. Braithwaite, *Beginnings*, passim; E.K.L. Quine, 'The Quakers in Leicestershire', unpublished University of Nottingham Ph.D. thesis, 1968, pp. 276-317; B. Reay, 'Quakerism and Society' in J.F. McGregor and B. Reay (eds.), *Radical Religion in*

- the English Revolution* (Oxford, 1984), Ch.6. A brief examination of the origins of the Society is also provided in Michael Mullet, 'George Fox and the origins of Quakerism', *History Today* (May 1991), pp. 26-31. The roles of George Fox and Margaret Fell are further examined in W.C. Braithwaite, *Beginnings*, Ch. 2; I. Ross, *Margaret Fell: Mother of Quakerism* (London, 1949); H.L. Ingle, *George Fox and the creation of Quakerism* (London, 1994).
- ¹² Gwent Record Office, C. Misc. Maps. 67. *A New Map of Monmouth Shire* by Thomas Kitchin (1763). Appended at the end of this Paper.
- ¹³ N.L.W., PB1440. *A Map of ye County of Monmouth Shire with Hundreds* by Ric. Blome by His Majesty's Command. From *Brittania: or a Geographical Description of the Kingdoms of England, Scotland and Ireland* (1673). Appended at the end of this paper.
- ¹⁴ G.R.O., D./DSF/353, minutes dated 28/10/1741.
- ¹⁵ Ibid.
- ¹⁶ Ibid.
- ¹⁷ For a discussion of Quaker beliefs and an appraisal of Robert Barclay's, *An Apology for the True Christian Divinity* (1692) and the works of William Penn, see E.K.L. Quine, 'The Quakers in Leicestershire', pp. 277-316.
- ¹⁸ For further details, see G.H. Jenkins, *Protestant Dissenters*, p. 36.
- ¹⁹ Joshua Miller, *The Anti-Christ in Man, Christ's Enemy* (London, 1656), p. 8.
- ²⁰ G.R.O., D/DSF/353, minutes dated 5/8/1741. Lewis refers to the clergy as men 'whose God is their Belly'.
- ²¹ Ibid., minutes dated 28/10/1741.
- ²² Francis Gawler, *A Record of some Persecutions in Wales* (London, 1659), pp. 17-18.
- ²³ Ibid., p. 27.
- ²⁴ Cf. other early dissenters. See William Erbery, 'The Grand Oppressor, Or, The Terror of Tithes; First Felt, and now Confest. The Sum of a Letter, written to one of the Commissioners in South Wales, April 19, 1652.' *The Testimony of William Erbery* (London, 1658), pp. 50-1; H. Shaw, *The Levellers* (2nd ed., London, 1973), particularly pp. 41-2, 116. For a brief survey of the impact of the Leveller and Digger movements on Quakerism, see E.K.L. Quine, 'The Quakers in Leicestershire', pp. xvii-xx.
- ²⁵ G.R.O., D/DSF/353, minutes dated 28/10/1741.
- ²⁶ Ibid., minutes dated 5/8/1741.
- ²⁷ Ibid.
- ²⁸ 'The Bishop and the Peasant' (Yr Esgob a'r Gwladwr). The original Welsh version given below was based upon the singing of Thomas James of Llanofor Inn, Pontypridd, and provided in *Cylchgrawn Cymdeithas Alawon Gwerin Cymru - Journal of Welsh Folk Song Society I* (1909), p. 27. The translated version was presented in *Cylchgrawn Cymdeithas Alawon Gwerin Cymru II* (1910), p. 45; *Journal of the Friends Historical Society*, 9 (1912), pp. 171-2.
- 'Fel 'ry-doedd rhyw Esgob
 Mewn modd dysgedig iawn,
 Ryw dro'n cyhoeddi'r fendith
 Uwchben rhyw lannaid llawn,
 'Roedd yno ryw hen wladwr,
 Tu fewn i'r adail fawr
 Yn gwrando'n brysur ddigon
 Heb dynu'i het i lawr.

Yr Esgob hyn pan welai
 A waeddai maes yn hy
 'Tyn d'het i lawr y drelin
 Tra yn fy ngwrando i'
 'Na wna'f be'r dyn yn wrol
 'Ni thal eich bendith fawr
 Os nad a'i mewn i'r menydd
 Heb dynu'r het i lawr.'

For further details of the Quaker refusal to acknowledge social distinctions, see A.M. Gummere, *The Quaker: A Study in Costume* (Philadelphia, 1910), pp. 67-71, 75-86; A. Anderson, 'Lancashire Quakers and persecution 1652-1670' (unpublished University of Lancaster M.A., 1971), pp. 33-5; C. Horle, *The Quakers and the English Legal System, 1660-1688* (Philadelphia, 1988), pp. 15-16.

- ²⁹ Francis Gawler, *A Record of some Persecutions*, p. 14; T. Mardy Rees, *The Quakers in Wales*, pp. 28-9. Gawler later complained that after he had removed his expensive hat it was taken away and never returned. He was also able to claim that, since this court appearance took place on a Sunday, the magistrates were breaking the Sabbath. Cf. The Montgomeryshire Quaker, Richard Davies who recorded that when he was summoned before the High Sheriff and magistrates of that county they 'stood as People in amaze'. See Richard Davies, *An Account of the Convincement, Exercises and Services and Travels of that Ancient Servant of the Lord, Richard Davies* (London, 1710 ed), p. 59; J.E. Southall, *Leaves from the History of Welsh Nonconformity...Autobiography of Richard Davies* (Newport, 1899), p. 44.
- ³⁰ G.R.O., D/DSF/353, minutes dated 28/10/1741.
- ³¹ Ibid., minutes dated 5/8/1741.
- ³² See John L. Nickalls (ed.), *The Journal of George Fox*, (Cambridge, 1952), p. 37 where George Fox warned those 'as kept public houses for entertainment that they should not let people have more drink than would do them good, and in testifying against their wakes or feasts, their May-games, sports, plays, and shows, which trained up people to vanity and looseness'. See also comments in Robert Barclay, *An Apology for the True Christian Divinity...* (8th ed., London, 1692), p. 512; M. Mullett, 'From Sect to Denomination: Social Development in 18th century English Quakerism', *Journal of Religious History*, 13 no. 2 (1984), pp. 171-4; B. Reay, *The Quakers and the English Revolution*, pp. 118-20; D. Scott, *Quakerism in York 1650-1720* (York, 1991), pp. 14-5, 21-2. Cf. Methodism which appealed from the mid-eighteenth century onwards for the middling sorts to set new standards of personal morality and to avoid the harmful effect of some popular pastimes. See W.G. Hughes-Edwards, 'The Development of the Methodist Society in Wales c.1735-1750' (unpubl. University of Wales M.A. thesis, 1966), p. 215ff; G.H. Jenkins, *Foundations of Modern Wales 1642-1780* (pbk. ed., Oxford, 1993), pp. 368-9.
- ³³ G.R.O., D/DSF/353, minutes dated 3/12/1741.
- ³⁴ Ibid.
- ³⁵ N.L.W., MS.17743E. Many of these entertainments were necessary in periods of hardship as a means to avert the boiling over of social tensions. See for fuller coverage on this topic G.H. Jenkins, *Literature, Religion and Society in Wales 1660-1730* (Cardiff, 1978), p. 111; R.W. Malcolmson, *Popular Recreations in English Society, 1750-1850* (London, 1973); K. Thomas, 'Work and Leisure in Pre-Industrial Society', *Past and Present*, 29 (1964), pp. 50-62; C.J. Williams,

- 'Glamorgan Customs in the Eighteenth Century', *Gwerin*, I (1957), pp. 99-108; B. Reay (ed.), *Popular Culture in Seventeenth Century England* (London, 1985), particularly Ch. 1, 3 (Popular Religion); Eamon Duffy, 'The Godly and the Multitude in Stuart England', *The Seventeenth Century*, I no. 1 (1986), pp. 31-55; D. Underdown, *Revel, Riot and Rebellion. Popular Politics and Culture in England 1603-1660* (pbk ed., Oxford, 1987), especially Ch. 3-4, 9-10; P. Burke, *Popular Culture in Early Modern Europe* (rev. ed., Cambridge, 1994), particularly pp. 238-40; R.T.W. Denning (ed.), *The Diary of William Thomas of Michaelston-super-Ely, near St. Fagans Glamorgan, 1762-1795* (Cardiff, 1995), *passim*.
- ³⁶ For examples of anti-Quaker literature in popular literature, see G.H. Jenkins, 'Quaker and Anti-Quaker Literature in Welsh from the Restoration to Methodism', *The Welsh History Review*, 7 no. 4 (1975), p. 424 n. 125, *passim*.
- ³⁷ Fuller details are provided in K. Wrightson, 'The Puritan Reformation of Manners' (unpubl. University of Cambridge Ph.D. thesis, 1973). See also R.B. Shoemaker, 'Reforming the City: The Reformation of Manners Campaign in London, 1690-1738' in L. Davison, T. Hitchcock, T. Kearns and R.B. Shoemaker (eds.), *Stilling the Grumbling Hive* (Stroud, 1992), pp. 99-120.
- ³⁸ Dr. Reay has suggested that 'Quaker culture was a serious culture, with no time for the frivolity and self-indulgence of drama, painting, sculpture, music and dance, or the even less serious forms of popular leisure.' See B. Reay, *The Quakers and the English Revolution*, p. 118; Cf. Michael Mullet who has noted that Friends reluctance to join in community events stemmed from the way in which they viewed their neighbours. Even in the post-Toleration period Friends recalled the years of persecution when their neighbours reviled their presence. They, therefore, chose to remain outside this 'world' believing that their local communities, and especially the parish church, were still full of animosity and spitefulness towards them. See M. Mullett, *Radical Religious Movements in Early Modern Europe* (London, 1980), p. 90. This religious 'cleavage' is further discussed in M. Spufford, *Contrasting Communities: English Villagers in the Sixteenth and Seventeenth Centuries* (Cambridge, 1974), particularly pp. 346-9; D. Underdown, *Revel, Riot and Rebellion: Popular Politics and Culture*, pp. 254-5; T.A. Davies, 'The Quakers in Essex 1655-1725' unpublished University of Oxford D.Phil. thesis, 1987, Ch. 7.
- ³⁹ Indeed, as Dr. Reay demonstrates many rank and file Quakers were similar in their addiction to social pursuits as were their non-Quaker contemporaries. See B. Reay, *The Quakers and the English Revolution*, p. 120.
- ⁴⁰ G.R.O., D/DSF/2, pp. 823-4, 897-8. The Yearly Meetings at Wrexham and Newtown, minutes dated 8-10/5/1764, 28-30/4/1773. See also G.H. Jenkins, *Literature, Religion and Society*, pp. 92-7. For a detailed study of the alehouse and efforts to curb excessive alcoholism, see P. Clark, 'The Alehouse and the Alternative Society' in D. Pennington and K. Thomas (eds.), *Puritans and Revolutionaries* (Oxford, 1978), pp. 47-72; L. Davison, 'Experiments in the Social Regulations of Industry: Gin Legislation, 1729-1751' in L. Davison et al. (eds.), *Stilling the Grumbling Hive*, Ch. 2.
- ⁴¹ G.R.O., D/DSF/2, p. 498. The Yearly Meeting held at Coed Ecionaidd, Denbighshire. Minutes dated 18/1/1692-3. Cf. R. Mortimer, 'Quakerism in Seventeenth Century Bristol' unpublished University of Bristol M.A. thesis, 1946, pp. 226/7; B. Reay, *The Quakers and the English Revolution*, pp. 118-19.
- ⁴² G.R.O., D/DSF/325, minutes dated 1/11/1700, 2/2/1700-1, 7/1/1701. Friends

did hope for an end to this excess but he was never re-admitted.

- ⁴³ G.R.O., D/DSF/351, minutes dated 6/9/1706, 4/10/1706.
- ⁴⁴ P.R.O., Society of Friends Registers (Monmouthshire). No. 677, p. 247; N.L.W., Microfilm. N.P.R. 44.
- ⁴⁵ G.R.O., D/DSF/351, minutes dated 7/3/1707. A copy of his recantation is provided in G.R.O., D/DSF/325, minutes dated 2/5/1707.
- ⁴⁶ G.R.O., D/DSF/326, minutes dated 26/4/1749, 1/11/1749.
- ⁴⁷ G.R.O., D/DSF/354, minutes dated 5/5/1762.
- ⁴⁸ *Ibid.*, minutes dated 22/3/1775. The minute runs on to say that the Meeting owed a debt of gratitude to Nathaniel Beadles Senior (Rebekah's father) for otherwise she would have been 'under ye care of ye meeting'.
- ⁴⁹ Friends were requested by the London Yearly Meeting to be 'careful to avoid all vain sports, places of diversion, gaming and all unnecessary frequenting of ale houses or taverns, excess in drinking and intemperance of every kind'. *Ibid.*, minutes dated 1/10/1755. For further details, see R. Bauman, *Let your words be few: Symbolism of Speaking and Silence among Seventeenth-century Quakers* (Cambridge, 1983), p. 23. These were not new concepts as the radical sects of the Interregnum and earlier Puritans had challenged matters pertaining to public traditions. A stimulating article on the Puritan denouncement of Christmas festivities is given in C. Durston, 'Lords of Misrule. The Puritan War on Christmas 1642-60', *History Today*, (December 1985), pp. 7-14.
- ⁵⁰ The life of Evan Bevan and his American Quaker relatives are captured in J. Rakenshaw, 'A Memoir of Evan Bevan', *Friends' Library*, 13 (1849), pp. 174-8.
- ⁵¹ G.R.O., D/DSF/352, Monthly Meeting of Monmouthshire Friends 1720-34. Meetings held at Pont-y-Moel, minutes dated 5/6/1724, 4/4/1729, 4/8/1731; G.R.O., D/DSF/353, minutes dated 3/6/1737. Cf. The efforts of the members of the Montgomeryshire and Shropshire Monthly Meeting who in 1701 decided to translate into Welsh, John Kelsall father's *Testimony against Gaming, Musick, Dancing, Singing, Swearing and People calling upon God to Damn them. As also against drinking to excess, Whoring, Lying and Cheating...* (London, 1682) to strengthen Friends resolve against such diversions. Five hundred copies of the translation were later produced and given out among Friends. See G.R.O., D/DSF/379, minutes dated 27/12/1704-5, 27/1/1705. Details are also provided in G.H. Jenkins, 'Quaker and anti-Quaker literature in Welsh', p. 413. The diaries of John Kelsall are full of scathing attacks upon popular pastimes. For example, in May 1722, he complained of the wickedness of the townspeople of Oswestry who were 'drinking swearing &c, all night long', and the following month at Llanfyllin he commented upon the disturbance made by 'rude company all night long'. He went on to add: 'It is indeed most sad to consider wt wickedness and profaness abounds daily scarce we can go to any place but people seem as they had loos'd full Reins to all sort of vanity without any consideration of God or a future being'. See Friends' House Library, London. Kelsall MS. S. 193/1, pp. 114, 117 (transcript S.186, pp. 92, 94-5). Entries dated 18/5/1722, 9/6/1722) and partially cited in H.G. Jones, 'John Kelsall', p. 100.
- ⁵² *Gloster Journal*, 13 April 1731, p. 2.
- ⁵³ *Ibid.* The Journal did, however, record cock-fights or proposed contests. See *Gloster Journal*, 18 May 1789, 24 May 1790 and cited in R. Nichols, 'Articles on Cockfighting', *Pontypool and District Review*, 12 (February 1973), pp. 14-16.
- ⁵⁴ G.R.O., D/DSF/353, minutes dated 28/10/1741.

⁵⁵ G.R.O., D/DSF/354, minutes dated 7/3/1746.

⁵⁶ Ibid., minutes dated 4/4/1746.

⁵⁷ Ibid., 2/5/1746, 6/6/1746. The following year Joseph Rule had left the county and took up residence in Somersetshire. The Clarum Meeting requested a certificate of removal from Monmouthshire Friends, but the reply shows their displeasure at Rule's casual behaviour: 'his conduct and behaviour far as we can find has been inoffensive and therein we are in unity with him and likewise find that he was solvent. But as to his ministry his Travelling & visiting other meetings in those weighty respects He does [not] appear so settled and stayed as we could desire.' Ibid., minutes dated 30/1/1747.

⁵⁸ Gwent Record Office, D/2200.17.

⁵⁹ G.R.O., D/DSF/353, minutes dated 5/8/1741.

⁶⁰ Ibid., minutes dated 28/10/1741.

Transcripts

1st Paper. ⁶¹

This is in Love to all true Seekers: for a great Numb^r of People flock together as they did in primitive Times to hear some new Thing but the Lamb is y^e Light thereof & y^e nations of them y^t are Saved shall walk in y^e Light of it. There are in the Kingdom of England several Profesions: but there is but one true Religion w^{ch} is this, Thou shall Love the Lord thy God with all thy Heart, and with all thy mind, and with all thy Soul, and with all thy strength; and such as have this, the Lord, even the Almighty God will shew them of his Ways, and he will warn them for joyning with any Evil whatsoever: but I never read of any of the Believers in Christ y^t ever persecuted any for not joining with them; but the old Dragon cast a Flood thinking to destroy the Woman; and when she could not prevail she went to make War with the Remnant of her Seed; and so he doth now; for y^e Enemy hath a great many Instruments, in as much that they have compassed Sea and Land to make one proselyte, and when he was made, he was two fold more like the child of Hell then themselves: if the blind lead y^e blind both shall fall into the Ditch: both the Preacher and the Hearer fall into the same Darkness. They are they y^t Love Greetings in the markets, and to be called of men - masters; they do appear as white Sepulchres, and People walk over them, and are not aware of them; they are such whose God is their Belly, who mind earthly Things: for Satan can transform himself into an Angel of Light: How much more his Ministers? There is a great Number of

People, yea the most part of the Kingdom, that make much use of that Lesson which our Lord Jesus gave unto his Disciples; but those Disciples were such people as were worthy to receive it: for they were Chosen out of the World: they also received a free Gift and they were to give freely, not as the Hirelings do, who pray more for the Fleece then for the sheep; but let us return unto the Beginning of that Lesson which is *Our Father w^{ch} art in Heaven*. I do remember the Time when I was not worthy to say that God was my Father, neither was I worthy to be called his son; yet at the same Time I could say or read it over. It may be read what our Saviour said unto the unrighteous Jews you are of your Father, the Devil, and his works ye will do; but our Adversaries do very much abase our Friends because they do not delivver the Lesson unto all vain Fathers of the World; but I firmly believe that whatsoever preceeded out of his mouth, as he was the very Lip of Truth is certain & True. *Hallowed be thy Name*; but how light People can blaspheme his holy Name by talking the same in vain by Cursing, Swearing and many idle words, yet let such assuredly know y^t according to ye holy Commandments God will not hold him Guiltless y^t taketh his Name in vain. *Thy Kingdom come*; I doubt there is a great Numb^r of people y^t knows not where his Kingdom should come; but Fornicat^{rs} and Adulterers, Thieves, and Robbers, Common Drunkards & such as can call for Damnation upon their Brethren & fellow Creatures, except they repent, his Kingdom will not come; his Kingdom will not come into an old nasty Bottle: for new wine must be put into new Bottles. *Thy will be done in Earth as it is in Heaven*; but such as follow Gamings & Idleness; such do not will God on Earth as it is in Heaven. *Give us this Day our Daily bread*; I doubt y^t there is a great many People y^t knows not what was y^e Apostles Daily Bread; It was y^e Spiritual Flesh and Blood of our Lord Jesus Christ, w^{ch} is taken & received at ye Lords Table for y^e unrighteous cannot be partakers of the Lord's Table and of the Devils. *Forgive us our Trespases as we forgive them that Trespass against us*; an hard Lesson to be so freely spoken by such or from them y^t are smitting Eye for Eye, and Tooth for Tooth. I know not of any in the World that are more ready to persecute yⁿ those that do make most use of that Lesson. Viz. in reading of it. *Lead us not into Temptation*; God leads not into temptation any such that Love Him wth all their Hearts. *Deliver us from Evil*; Verily y^e Apostles had great need to pray to Almighty God to Deliver them from all Evil, for the Enemy was very busy about y^m but that their Guide was near y^m. I am of the mind they did not know but as their Lord and mast^r Revealed unto them for he told one of them in particular, Satan hath desired you

that he may sift you as wheat; but I have praised y^e Father that y^r Faith fail not. *For thine is ye Kingdom*; the Kingdom of God is his own Kingdom; and hath no fellowship wth ye Kingdom of Darkness; and in such as his Kingdom doe Rule and Reign, his Power and his Glory will remain in them for ever and ever. I wish that people may take the Apostle's Advice. Be not deceived, God will not be mocked: for whatsoever People sow, the same they shall Reap. I wish that People may Repent before it be too late: for There is joy in Heaven over one sinner y^t Repenteth more than over ninety and nine just Persons that need no Repentance.

Tho^s Lewis one of the y^e people called Quakers being a weak old man y^t caused these few Lines to be written - y^e 20th of y^e 6th Mth 1741.

Written by me Evan Morgan. ⁶²

NOTES AND REFERENCES

⁶¹ G.R.O., D/DSF/353, minutes dated 5/8/1741.

⁶² A labourer from Langstone. See N.L.W., LL/1758/50. His will is dated 31 March 1758.

2nd Paper.⁶³

He that entreth not by the Door into the Sheepfold but climbeth up some other way, the same is a Thief and a Robber - Thieves and Robbers, have an Armour, and their weapons are very keen; they have a spear to frighten the People.

If a poor man have a few Goats upon a free Common they claim a share in them, If a poor widow have a Couple of Ewes and Lambs they likewise claim a share in them; but if a [blank] had one or Fatherless that Lie upon a Bed of Straw perhaps with hungry Bellies (whilst Thieves and Robbers fare sumpuously every Day) and any of them happen to meet any such poor Fatherless or any weak old body in the way, it is much if they open their mouths unto them much less give them an Advice concerning their latter End. They have not the free Gift. Therefore they cannot give freely: I could never find that the said Thieves and Robbers do ever own any poor or such that are relieved by Parishes while they are alive - But when they are dead and laid in the grave then the Thieves and Robbers - Cry out the Soul

of our Dear Brother or Dear Sister here departed: - O the Leaven of the Pharisees which is hypocrisy! The Sons of Ely do exercise Lordship over the People! They put money at usury, and purchase Houses and Lands with the Gain of oppressions. The Presbyterians and Anabaptists had spears in their Hands in that Time of Oliver Cromwell, that Blood thirsty man; And they did hunt after Blood as the Scribes and Pharisees did at Jerusalem in the Time that Saul Received Letters from the Chief Priest to bring both men and women bound to Jerusalem that he could find confessing the name of Jesus - But their downfall came to them at Jerusalem, and likewise y^e Presbyterians in England. It has been such a time in England that those Dissented from those Hunters after Blood were condemned to be burnt at the stake. If the Hunters after had their will, I am apt to think that it would be even so now. - For the God of this world hath blinded the Eyes of those that believe not, Lest the Light of the glorious Gospel should shine upon them. It is written for thy violence against thy Brother Jacob shame shall cover thee and thou shalt be cut off[f] for ever. - They have shed the Blood of Saints, and Prophets and he hath given them Blood to drink. O repent, repent, Mount Esau! for the Lord God Almighty, the Lord of Heaven and earth, can throw down the strong hold of Satan. - Be careful my Friends, the Son of God hath overcome the World. The Fear of the Lord is the Beginning of Wisdom. Blessed and Holy are they that have part in the first Resurrection, on such the second Death hath no Power. I could never find but that there were stumbling Blocks in Israel since the Time that a man was sent out of every Tribe, thereof to spy the Land of Canaan. - But he that overcometh shall eat of the hidden Manna. It is written the hour cometh that the Dead shall hear the voice of the Son of God and they that hear shall live. Unto thee, the onely Wise and eternal God do I return Praise and Thanksgiving, and be they ascribed unto thy worthy Name from henceforth for ever and ever more. Amen, from me whose name is Tho^s Lewis One of the People called in scorn Quakers y^e 20th of y^e 7th Mth 1741.

NOTES AND REFERENCES

⁶³ G.R.O., D/DSF/353, minutes dated 5/8/1741.

3rd Paper. ⁶⁴**A Warning for All Youth**

To Remember their Creator in the Days of their Youth lest they may take false Liberty as I did.

When I was but very young in years I took my journey into a far Country, where I did wast[e] my goods by riotous Living: there were Ringleaders of Wickedness and I took great Delight in their Companies, then I drank Iniquity as the Ox drinketh water. There were such idleness as Cock fightings, and a great number of those Country People did flock into it. Some did curse, and some did swear, some did hoop, and some did Quarrel; there was such idleness as Dancing, Singing of ungodly Books, and Ballads; there was likewise such idleness of Gamings as Balls, Bowls and Pins, Cards and Shuffleboards; and a great many of that Country People took much Delight in them both old & young. But there were in that far Country idol Shepherds who took but little notice of such idleness, and some of them took delight in the same themselves; however they did perswade those Country People that they could make Christian members of Christ, Children of God, and inheritors of the Kingdom of Heaven: But if any of those People for whom they pretended to do such a great thing for did not take care to give them the Fleece, they were ready to persecute them; and they did pretend to deliver some of them unto Satan, there to remain without any Hope or Remedy forever, as the said Shepherds did pretend; Except the People did provide sums of money to pay them for their Pretence, to pay them back again from the custody of Satan. They likewise did perswade those Country People that there was nothing better to be had than what they sold unto them. One thing was their Goods were delightsome to those People for their shops were very plentiful had it not been the great Mercy of God, there should I end all my Days believing the Idol Shepherds Doctrine. It came in the view of my mind that I never received any Benefit from them concerning the World to come: for their Way did perish. Again it came to my mind to seek out another way as I thought. Yet alas! it proved to me that I was still in the same Countrey. Then I was left like a Tree, that did wither between the barren Mountains and the desolate Hill. But the time came through Mercy that the Lot of some of the Messengers of the new Covenant was to draw into those Parts of my Nativity, and I was willing to seek what I could find by them, but alas! I had been so long in the above said Country that I could understand but little of their Doctrine: but thro' Mercy one Messenger came after another; and I was willing to seek, neither did I see my Labour too good; then I took better care in Reading of the Scriptures; but alas! my abode had been so long

in the said Country, my apprehension was too short to understand the Prophecy of the same; and my House was so foul that I knew not where to find the piece [sic. peace] which I had lost. I found the way very easy into the Country, but to return from thence I could not by my own strength, no more than I could remove mountains; for when I was resolved to forsake the Countrey I could see much Rubbish, and the way very Rough; but thro' the great Mercy of the Almighty who said His Judgments upon me for my Trangression; the same brought it forth to victory and made that smooth which I said Rough. Then I could go through Town and Countrey void of that slavish Fear unto which I was subject, while in the strange Country; then I could say that Christ's yoke was easy and his burden light. By that time People did gaze at me, as if I had come out of some strange Land; some did speak evil of me, and some did mock me, and gave me a Name which I had not while in the strange Countrey, even the scornful name of a Quaker, In a little Time a small Persecution did arise so that I was to appear before one of the Rulers of y^t Country where I had been and it was a Publick House where much People was, and the Custom of this Countrey was to bow unto Idols, which I was not to do. Then he was in a Rage, and thought to compell me; but thro' mercy I feared him not which could kill the body. When he saw that he could not prevail over me, he compelled the People to take off my Hat, and if they had stript off my Coat as they did my Hat, I believe that I had strength to bear it thro' mercy, but afterwards I did talk with that same Ruler several Times without any more reverence than Mordecay gave unto Hamar, and within his own private Chamber where I drank without any bowing or crouching. I do earnestly desire that such who have a Zeal for the House of God, that they take care not to Bow and Crouch unto Idols. Our Lord Jesus gave a Commandment to beware of false Prophets, and also to the Believers a sign, that they might know them by their Fruits, but such as do receive that knowledge it is better for them to seal it with their Blood than to deny it. Our Saviour gave another Commandment to beware of the Leaven of the Pharisees which is hypocrisy, but such that are aware of them they cannot sit down nor rise up with them, where they sell their Goods. Lovi[ng] Friends, if thou dost hold fast y^e Truth y^e living and eternal God will neither leave thee nor forsake thee. From me whose name is Tho^s Lewis, one of the People called Quakers at the Place of my Nativity in the County of Monmouth near Shirenewton the 8th of y^e 9th Mth 1741.

NOTES AND REFERENCES

⁶⁴ G.R.O., D/DSF/353, minutes dated 28/10/1741.

4th Paper.⁶⁵**Thomas Lewis's 4th Paper 1741**

It is written why seek ye y^e Living among y^e Dead? I doubt there is a great Number of people in y^e Kingdom of England y^t knows where to seek ye Living Because they Love y^e Right hand & the Right Eye more than they do Love y^e Living. Because they Love those evil memb^{rs} more than they do y^e Living. Because they do Love this World more &c. Because they Love Drunkenness more &c. Because they Love fornication & adultery more &c. Because they Love Thievery & Robbery more &c. Because they Love Lyes & Blasphemies more &c. Because they do Love to Curse & Swear more &c. Because they Love to follow Idleness & Gamings more &c. Because they Love Pride more &c. Because they Love to sing ungodly Books & Ballads more &c. Because they do Love envy, hatred & malice more &c. Because they Love to bow unto Idols more &c. Because they Love to fight (wth) one another & to murder more &c. Because they Love to grind y^e faces of y^e poor more &c. as it is written by y^e Prophet unto them y^t grind y^e faces of y^e poor. It is better to enter into Life wthout those evil members then to run y^e hazard of Everlasting Punishment where there is wo & misery forever. Where y^e worm dieth not & y^e fire is not quenched & old Heaven & ye old earth will not pass a way while those evil members are not cast away. It is written y^t there were Six men prepared wth slaughter weapons to go through Jerusalem, but one of them had a writers inkhorn by his side to set a mark upon them w^{ch} did sigh & mourn for y^e abominations y^t were done in y^e midst thereof. I hope y^t there is now some y^t sigh & mourn for y^e abominations of those evil members.

My name is Tho^s. Lewis one of y^e People called Quakers who doth wish y^t People may repent & forsake those evil members.

y^e 24th of y^e 11th Mth 1741.

NOTES AND REFERENCES

⁶⁵ G.R.O., D/DSF/353, minutes dated 3/12/1741. Read at the Shirenewton Monthly Meeting by adjournment dated 29/1/1742.

Maps 1 and 2

Key

1 Abergavenny/Llanwenarth: Early gatherings were held in these parishes from the mid-1650s onwards. A Meeting was settled in Abergavenny in 1707 and removed to Goetre in 1722. It was discontinued c. 1725.

2 The Pant, Llanfihangel Ystum Llywern: The home of Walter Jenkins and the Beadles/Hanbury families. The Meeting was established in 1668 and discontinued c. 1756.

3 Shirenewton: A Meeting was established here in 1668 and discontinued in 1823. A purpose built meeting house was built in 1724.

4 St. Mellons/Castleton: A Meeting was established either in the parish of St. Mellons or in the parish of Marshfield in 1668. Registers for the seventeenth century are recorded as 'The Melance (sic. St. Mellons) Meeting while Friends' registers for the eighteenth century are from the Castleton Meeting (Marshfield Parish). There was no meeting house and, therefore, the gatherings were held in Friends' houses.

5 Llanfihangel Pont-y-Moel: A Meeting was established here in 1668 probably in the house of Richard Hanbury and later held in a meeting house in the parish.

Trosnant: This meeting was established in 1800 when Friends transferred from Pont-y-Moel. It was discontinued in 1835.

6 Ebbw Vale Works: This Meeting was established by the Harford family in 1818 and was later (c. 1836) transferred to the South Wales Monthly Meeting.

7 Newport: This Meeting was established in 1823 and in 1836 was transferred to the South Wales Monthly Meeting.

Map 2. The geographical location of the Quaker Meetings in Monmouthshire c.1654-1836.



Source: N.L.W., PB1440. A Map of ye County of Monmouth Shire with hundreds by Ric. Blome by His Majesty's Command. From *Brittania: or a Geographical Description of the Kingdoms of England, Scotland and Ireland* (1673).