

## IRISH FRIENDS AND 1798

### Witness to non-violence in the 18th century

**Q**uakerism came to Ireland in the 1650s with the first recorded meeting being settled in Lurgan, Co Armagh, by William Edmundson in 1654. It spread quite quickly amongst the English settlers, many of whom were ex-Cromwellian soldiers, and there was a membership of between 5,000 and 6,000 by the end of the 17th century. Province Meetings were held in Ulster, Leinster and Munster with representatives appointed to National Half-year's Mens Meetings in Dublin from 1669.

In 1798 Ulster Province had five Monthly Meetings with eighteen Particular Meetings, Leinster Province had seven Monthly Meetings with twenty eight Particular Meetings and Munster Province had five Monthly Meetings with seven Particular Meetings.<sup>1</sup>

From 1760 to 1800 the population of Ireland doubled to five million and the accompanying competition for land led to agrarian violence in many parts of the country. Secret societies, like the Whiteboys and Rightboys in Munster and the Steelboys and Oakboys in Ulster were formed to protest against tithes, land enclosure, low cattle and grain prices. In order to counteract increasing violence the Ascendancy landowners formed groups of Volunteers and had over thirty thousand men under arms by the 1780's. The American and French revolutions added to the turmoil. The United Irishmen, initially an idealistic debating society, became a revolutionary force from 1793 and the basic ingredients were in place for the rising of 1798. Thirty thousand people died in the rebellion and its aftermath and it has had repercussions on politics and social and economic life ever since.

#### **The National Concern for Peace**

At the end of the 18th century Dublin had a population of two hundred thousand and was the second city of the British Empire. The Liberties, an area which did not have fine squares and public buildings, was where many Friends lived next to their Meeting House in Meath Place. It was at this Meeting House that Friends from all over Ireland would gather twice a year for the National Half-year Men's Meeting. The growth of the Volunteer Movement in the 1770's was of concern of Friends and in the minutes of a Half Year Meeting

in 1779 we read:<sup>2</sup>

We understand that in most quarters of the nation, many of the inhabitants are associating in armed companies as they allege for internal defence and that in some parts endeavours have been used to draw in Friends so far as to contribute to the expense of clothing them. This meeting is of the judgement that notwithstanding any plausible pretexts that may be made use of..... to contribute in any way to the fitting out of these companies is a manifest violation of our Christian testimony against war. .... And as a frequent attending and amusing ourselves looking at these companies training and exercising in the use of arms may be construed as a tacit approbation, we judge it inexpedient and improper for Friends, as tending to weaken their hands and their testimony.

In 1793 the meeting addresses the conduct of Friends and finds:

a spirit of libertinism rushing in, and laying waste the testimony, which we have been called to bear against the attendance at vain sports, places of diversion and gaming, as well as the unnecessary frequenting of taverns and other public houses, and excess in drinking.-

The minutes then, not surprisingly considering that war has just been declared with France, turns to the peace testimony:

As this is a time of outward commotion, perplexity and trouble; when many of the inhabitants of this nation are arming by order of government, we feel ourselves engaged to remind Friends of our testimony against bearing arms, which should lead us to have no dependence, nor confidence, in the arm of the flesh, for protection of persons, or property - and apprehending some in profession with us have defensive weapons in their houses and some others to be in the practice of paying or hiring those who may carry such weapons, we earnestly recommend to quarterly and monthly meetings to be very vigilant over their members, and to use their endeavours to preserve a strict uniformity of conduct, consistent with our Christian profession.

In 1795 the meeting advises Friends to guard against furnishing articles for the supply of war and entering contracts which might

weaken the Society's Christian testimony. One year later, in 1796, the Half-year's Men's Meeting homes in strongly on the subject of guns and minutes as follows:

The subject of some in profession with us having guns in their houses, which might be made use of for the destruction of mankind, as well as other instruments of a like nature, having come weightily under the consideration of Friends in the three Provinces, this meeting, under a solid feeling, is of the judgement that all such should be destroyed, the more fully to support our peaceable and Christian testimony in these perilous times, and recommend to quarterly and monthly meetings to use further endeavours in labouring with any who may keep such arms in their houses and to deal, as in the meekness of wisdom they may be directed, with such as obstinately persist in refusing to comply with the advice of Friends, and return an account of their care to the next half year's meeting.

There is a further minute on the subject six months later in October and then in the aftermath of the failed French expedition to Bantry Bay in May 1797 the minute becomes much more forthright:

It appears that although many have complied with the advice of Friends in destroying... (guns)... yet it is painfully observable that others have put away theirs in a collusive inconsistent manner, and that in divers parts Friends have not been executive enough in bringing on record the names of such of their members as continue to retain theirs without any pretext, and deal with them in meekness and wisdom.

The effect that these minutes had on the subsidiary Quarterly and Monthly Meetings will be examined later. At National level the Society had decided that it would only hold one National or Yearly Meeting each year and gave executive power to its Yearly Meeting's Committee which met for the first time in 1798.

Lord Cornwallis became the new Viceroy in May 1798 and Yearly Meeting's Committee decided to send him a lengthy address, dated 6th July 1798, from which the following has been extracted:

<sup>3</sup>At this time when dislocation is spread over some parts of the land ..... we believe ourselves called out of all wars and

fightings, to hold up the standard of that dispensation which was ushered in with the declaration of peace on earth and goodwill to men. So we believe ourselves called to live peaceably and quietly under the Government as faithful subjects ..... which we believe is the best return we can make for the many favours we have experienced since the present Royal family ascended the throne, for which and the continuation of our civil and religious liberties we desire respectfully to express our acknowledgements. Realising that the protection and support of kingdoms is not in the multitude of an host but in the Lord Almighty, may thy Council's seek his protection by that righteousness which exalts nations.

Lord Cornwallis, replied somewhat coolly, but promised protection to peaceable inhabitants:

They who in this season of unprovoked rebellion are restrained by a principle of conscience from serving their country by their arms, are so much the more bound to exert every influence of example and every effort of exhortation for the counteracting of treason and restoration of peace and good order. .... That you will feel this your peculiar duty, I cannot entertain any doubt.

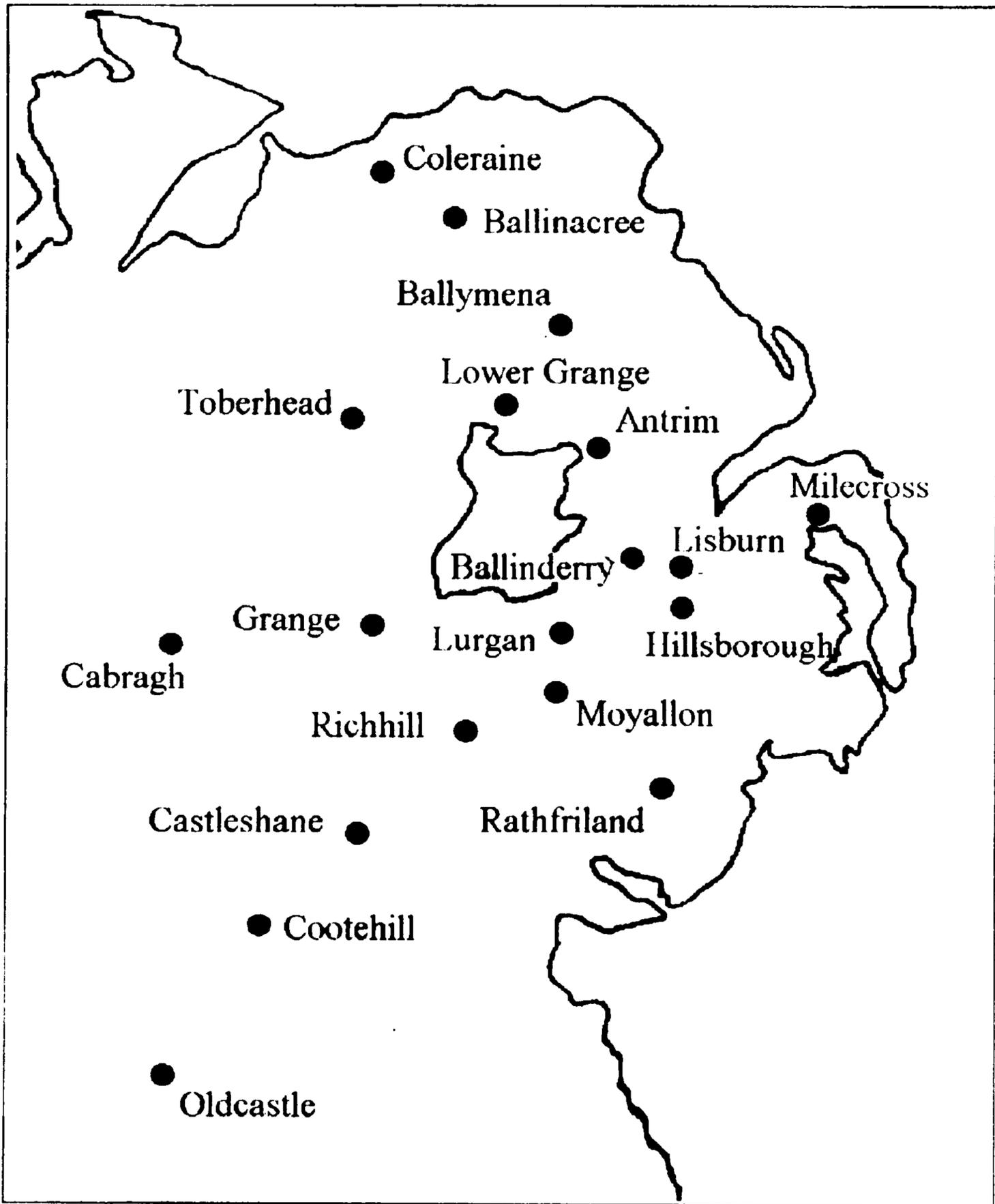
### **Province Meetings accept Responsibility**

The minutes of the three Province or Quarterly Meetings repeat the National Half-year Meeting minutes and copy them to their Monthly Meetings. They then record the answers which were received at subsequent meetings.

Leinster Province Men's Meeting<sup>4</sup> is typical in that it has minutes on the subject at every meeting from 1796 to 1798.

Mountmellick - Third-month 1796. On hearing answers to the eighth query,<sup>5</sup> this meeting, being impressed with the concern that some continue to keep arms in their houses which could be made use of for the destruction of mankind, contrary to our peaceable principle, is of the judgement that all ought to destroy such, and directs the different meetings of Friends to appoint committees to labour individually with their members.

Carlow - Twelfth-month 1796. ... it appears that there are in all monthly meetings some who persist in keeping them which is a cause of grief to us. It is now weightily recommended to each



Friends Meetings in Ulster in 1794



monthly meeting to continue their care herein, and to deal with such as are refractory in best wisdom as may appear necessary for supporting that testimony.

Mountmellick - Third-month 1797. Wicklow reports that all guns were destroyed or given away, the latter of which is not felt comfortable to this meeting.

Enniscorthy - Sixth-month 1797. ... any conduct short of destroying them is not fully supporting our peaceable and Christian testimony.

Moate - Ninth-month 1797. Account is returned from the different meetings ..... that some continue to retain them (their guns) who have been treated with and some disowned.

Mountmellick - Sixth-month 1798. All meetings save Mountmellick and Edenderry have dismissed from their proceedings the care before them respecting those who retained guns.

Munster Provincial Mens Meeting has many minutes on the subject of the destroying of arms. However, because there had been no outbreak of violence in the areas where Friends lived they were less diligent in their approach. Even in April of 1799 the meetings of Cork, Youghal and Co Tipperary are not able to give a clear account that all guns had been destroyed.

### **Monthly Meetings uphold the Concern**

Monthly Meetings in Ulster Province appointed Friends in 1793 to look into the employing of armed watchmen and the keeping of firearms in Friends' houses. Overseers were warned to be vigilant concerning Friends joining and serving the Militia regiments being raised at the time. There were reports several months later that 'Friends are mostly clear of keeping arms in their houses'.

Things then remain relatively quiet until 1796 when the Half-year Meeting's minutes requires action and revitalises the Friends appointed to look into the matter throughout the Yearly Meeting. The response takes various forms in the minutes:

### **Destruction of arms**

Almost all Friends comply with the instruction and minutes such as this one from Antrim Monthly Meeting<sup>6</sup> in Second-month 1797 are common:

'The service respecting firearms and such like weapons appears

to be finished except one member in the bounds of Grange (Lower) Meeting.'

Joseph Haughton<sup>7</sup> of Ferns in Co Wexford records his appointment to visit Friends in Wexford Monthly Meeting asking them to destroy their guns:

I saw the necessity of first cleansing my own hands. I took a fowling piece which I had in my own possession and broke it in the street opposite my own house, which was a matter of wonder amongst my neighbours. It was a time of serious thoughtfulness, and in many families this committee had little more to do than communicate their business, for the concern of the superior meetings had made its way into most of the families; and being convinced of its propriety, had previously destroyed all such instruments, and others gave expectation of it having been speedily done.

### **Refusal to comply with the instruction**

Those who refuse to destroy their guns are visited repeatedly by the appointed Friends. Richard Erwin appears in the minutes of Antrim Monthly Meeting on ten occasions from February 1797 to August 1798 and then, two months after the battle of Antrim, he is finally disowned.

From Dublin Monthly Meeting Second-month 1797:

Samuel Gamble keeps defensive weapons which he could not be prevailed upon to part with; also that there are six individuals who keep guns which they say are for domestic uses; and four others who being freemen, keep guns to comply with their affirmations which they took on obtaining the Freedom of the City: and another who has some arms which he declares are not for defence, but has not been prevailed upon to destroy them, they lying as he says in a state unfit for use..... it is consistent with Truth for all of these things to be destroyed. As to the Freedom of the City the solid sense and judgement of this meeting is that it is inexpedient and inconsistent for any members ..... to be concerned therein at all ..... and also those who have heretofore taken out their Freedom deeply consider their situation, and when way opens, that they neglect not to get from under that yoke of bondage which they appear to be in.

From Wexford Monthly Meeting we read 'William Woodcock retains pistols, and as there can be no excuse made for keeping such but for offensive or defensive purposes, Friends can not have unity with him.'

### Repent or be Disowned

When the efforts of a Monthly Meeting have failed to change the habits or way of life of a Friend a decision would be taken to disown. A Testimony of Disunity was drawn up and this one from Cork is a typical example:

<sup>8</sup>Cork - 9th Day of 11th month 1798

Whereas Joseph Church who had his education in profession with us, hath been so far regardless of the dictation of truth to his mind, and the frequent advices of Friends as to have kept a weapon of defence, conducted himself in dress and address inconsistently with a life of Christian plainness and self denial and for a considerable time past neglected the attendance of our religious meetings. We do deem it incumbent on us to testify our disunity with such conduct and to disown him to be a member of our religious society: yet our desires are that he may be favoured to see and submit to that principle of Light and Truth which would lead him into more circumspect walking in life and thereby be reinstated into fellowship with Friends.

Not all investigations ended in this way. The following letter of apology to Richhill Monthly Meeting in 1795 shows the effect on Friends of the visits by those appointed by the Monthly Meeting. This one resulted in the family of a well known Ulster Friend remaining with the Richhill Meeting to this day:

<sup>9</sup>Dear Friends,

Without considering the consequences of our running thro' surprise amidst the tumult and in a warlike manner bearing arms we have been sorry since for our doings. Being brought to a sense by Friends that visited us on that account and of the reproachfulness thereof, that any of our Society violate and act so inconsistent with the principles we profess which to our great loss we have been too ignorant of; but we hope for the future to be more careful not to give any occasion for such accusations.

We remain your loving Friends,

Abraham Pearson

Isaac Pearson

### Accounts of the Suffering of Friends

#### ANTRIM MONTHLY MEETING

##### Thomas Hancock

Nine pages of his book *'The Principles of Peace, etc'*<sup>10</sup> are devoted to what happened to the family of Gervase Johnson during the battle of Antrim in June 1798. Gervase was away travelling in the ministry in America leaving his son and daughters in his house in Antrim.

On the day of the Battle, when it was announced that the rebels were approaching, few of the regular army being then in the place, expresses were sent off in different quarters for assistance. A regiment of cavalry arrived before the commencement of the engagement, but was not able to make any effectual stand against the force opposed to it. About one o'clock in the day, the Rebels marched into the town; and their appearance caused a general dismay, so that horror seemed to be pictured on every countenance.

The family intended to stay in their house until they saw that the insurgents' cannon had been set up in the street opposite their door. At this they attempted to take refuge in the fields, but there were so many rebels milling around the house that they were forced to turn back.

The Rebels had gained possession of the town, having obliged the cavalry regiment to retreat, after a very deadly encounter, in which about one third of the regiment, in the short space of a few minutes, was either killed or wounded; but it was not long before a regiment of the Monaghan and Tipperary Militia entered the town; and, seeing the Rebels beginning to yield they acted with great cruelty, neither distinguishing friends nor enemies, but destroying everyone who appeared in coloured clothes. In a very short time they dispersed the Insurgents, and retook the town.

The soldiers killed many who had not been involved. They fired into houses and showed no mercy to those who had fled to the fields.

When the firing had almost ceased, the family above noticed (the Johnsons), concluded it would be much safer for the Rebel who had taken shelter with them to try to make his escape: for

the probability was, that if he should be found in the house, at such a time, he would not only suffer himself, but be the occasion of the family suffering also. He made his escape accordingly, and was saved.

Almost immediately the soldiers came roughly into the house to search it. Finding only the family their demeanour changed and they treated them remarkably kindly.

The soldiers now brought into the house a poor wounded soldier, and gave him in to the care of the family. Part of his bowels had forced their way out through a wound made by a musket ball. Every possible attention was paid to him, and he was thankful for it, but died the next morning, after suffering great pain.

The town presented an awful appearance after the battle: the bodies of men and horses were lying in the blood stained streets; and the people were to be seen here and there saluting each other - like those who had survived a pestilence or an earthquake - glad to see each other alive, after the recent calamity.

The inhabitants were kept in a state of alarm for many days, not knowing when another attack might be made on the town. Meanwhile the soldiers were 'racking'<sup>11</sup> many houses, and taking away the property.

They carried off the shop goods of a Friend living in a 'suspected' quarter of the town, but did not hurt any of his family. The young man, who, with his sisters, was so critically circumstanced, as above related, interceded for his friend with the commanding officer; but the latter would not prevent the soldiers from plundering, saying, "he is a Quaker, and will not fight; therefore the men must be allowed to take his goods".

## WEXFORD MONTHLY MEETING

### Joseph Haughton

Not long after breaking his gun in the main street of Ferns he got into trouble with the military; by not giving up his store house as a guard house for the soldiers; by interceding with the Commanding Officer on behalf of the wife and children of a United Irishman whose house was about to be burned, and refusing to sell rope to the militia to

hang some suspected persons. Concerning this last item Joseph Haughton has this to say:

I was at a loss to know what ought to be done. However when some of the military came to buy I refused to sell ropes and linen intended to torment and perplex my fellow creatures. They then took them away by force, offering payment which I refused to take. This was a day or two before the general rising of the United Irishmen in this county, and was, I believe, made instrumental through the direction of Divine Providence in the preservation of myself and my family.

Shortly afterwards the United Irishmen became active in the surrounding countryside. The scene around Ferns that day was awful, with houses and haggards of corn on fire, some set on fire by military and some by their enemies so that total devastation seemed to be at hand. The Protestant inhabitants were coming in to the town for safety and bringing news of those who had been wounded and slain. Being informed that some of the fugitives were much in need of something to eat, the Haughtons prepared food and sent out an invitation. But no one came, and in the evening they learnt that the military and those who had come in for safety had left for Enniscorthy.

Thus we remained in doubtful suspense till next morning when the town of Ferns filled with an ungovernable and undisciplined crowd consisting of many thousands of the United Irishmen, following the footsteps of the military to Enniscorthy, and demolishing the houses of those called Loyalists, Orangemen, and the like for the inhabitants of them were fled. My house was soon filled, when to our astonishment and humble admiration, instead of the massacre which we dreaded, we were met by caresses and marks of friendship, declaring they intended us no injury, but would fight for us and protect us and put us in their bosoms, adding that they wanted nothing from us but provisions. They seemed to be in extreme want of something to eat, and the food prepared for those they called enemies was now ready for them, and having eaten it up they proceeded on their way to Enniscorthy. In a little time we could see the columns of smoke rising from the burning houses six miles distant, and in the evening some of them returned with tidings that Enniscorthy was in their hands, and their camp fixed on Vinegar hill overlooking the town.

During the uprising Friends continued to go to Meeting for Worship walking many miles each way because all horses had been commandeered. They were frequently stopped and questioned and threatened with what would happen to them if they came that way again.

When the usual time of holding our Monthly Meeting at Enniscorthy came, I went in company of William and Martha Wright who were on horseback. We got on without much interruption until we reached about half way, when their horses were taken from them by some patrols from Vinegar Hill. We walked in to Enniscorthy, not knowing where to go except to the Meeting House. Thither we went, and there met several Friends belonging to Enniscorthy and Cooladine Particular Meetings. None came from Ross as that town was in a state of siege, and none from Forest Meeting which was near Scullabogue where so many people were burnt alive. We sat the Meeting for Worship, but were a good deal interrupted by persons walking and making a noise in a loft adjoining, who after a while went away. It appeared they came for an ill intent which they were not permitted to fulfil. I observed they had broken a large hole in the ceiling which we were afterwards told was for the purpose of more readily setting it on fire, but that others of the party stopped them.

Joseph Haughton records many incidents involving Friends and others during this time when the rule of law was suspended and each man acted according to his own will. Three Friends<sup>12</sup> were taken to the United Irishmen's camp on Vinegar Hill where they underwent a sort of trial, and nothing being alleged against them were set free.

After the rebellion subsided the country was much infested with robbers, and where Friends lived in country places they were exceedingly teased with such. .... In some places Friends were so incessantly assailed by night that they were wearied out and were obliged to leave their houses.

Joseph Haughton concludes his account with the following:

Strangers passing the houses of Friends, and seeing them preserved, with ruins on either hand, would frequently,

without knowledge of the district, say they were Quakers' houses.

### Dinah Wilson Goff

Dinah Wilson Goff<sup>13</sup> was 14½ years old at the time of the rebellion, the youngest of the 22 children of Jacob and Elizabeth Goff of Horetown House, Co. Wexford. Horetown House was midway between New Ross and Wexford and near to two rebel camps. Dinah recorded her recollections shortly before she died in 1857:

A day or two after the commencement of the rebellion, two carts were brought to our door, and the cellars emptied of all the salt provisions, beer, cider, etc. which were taken off to the camp. Fourteen beautiful horses were turned out of my father's stable, and mounted in the yard by two or more of the rebels on each. Some which had not been trained, resisted by plunging; but their riders soon subdued them, running their pikes into them, and otherwise using great cruelty

One day a rebel enquired of my mother, 'Madam, do you think we shall gain the day?' Feeling it to be a serious question, after a pause she replied 'The Almighty only knows.' He answered, 'You are right, madam; have a good heart, not a hair of your head shall be hurt; but when this business is over, the Quakers are all to be driven down into Connaught, where the land is worth twopence an acre, and you will have to till that, and live on it as you can.' My mother smiled and said - 'Give us a good portion, for we have a large family'.

Like Joseph Haughton, Dinah describes many horrendous incidents including the burning of the Protestant prisoners in the barn at Scullabogue about one and a half miles from Horetown. Numbers are uncertain but it is reckoned that between 180 and 250 persons lost their lives in the incident:

On the morning of the battle of New Ross, sixty or more of the prisoners were brought out on the lawn, and offered, one by one, life and liberty if they would change their religious profession; but they all refused. Two of the prisoners, who had attended Forest Meeting,<sup>14</sup> were tortured by having their limbs broken one by one and were finally shot with the wife of one standing between supporting them. On the same day, - viz. the 4th of sixth month - the barn was set on fire and all the other

prisoners consumed. I saw the smoke of the barn, and cannot now forget the dreadful effluvium which was wafted from it to our lawn.

Dinah describes the taking of Enniscorthy by the rebels just before the holding of Leinster Quarterly Meeting as follows:

A severe conflict took place at Enniscorthy, the garrison being forced to surrender, and many hundreds, as we were told left dead in the streets. Two days after it, our Quarterly Meeting for Leinster Province was, in usual course, held there; and was attended by David Sands from America, a valued minister of our Society, who was then travelling in Ireland, with Abraham Jackson as his companion. As they passed through Enniscorthy, the latter had to alight and assist in removing dead bodies, which still lay in the streets, from before the wheels of the carriage. The meeting, though small, was said to be remarkably solemn, as it well might be, and also much favoured; many other Friends with ourselves were deprived of the means of attending, by the want of horses which the rebels had taken.

Later English troops landed at Duncannon Fort and encamped near Horetown. The Goff family were sitting at dinner when they were informed that the rebel forces were coming from Wexford to surround the English encampment. General Moore had had warning of this and met them on the road near Horetown House where a three hour engagement took place leading to the rebels being routed:

The rebellion was now at an end, but its consequences remained. Not only houses in ruins burnt and torn to pieces by both armies were to be seen everywhere, but many of the rebels who were outlaws took up their abode in caverns in the wood of Killoughran, and sallied forth by night to commit depredations on the inhabitants, some of whom had returned to their dilapidated dwellings. They visited us two nights when our sufferings were greater than any during the whole rebellion.

She goes on to tell how they were woken up one night by ruffians demanding money which her father gave them. They came again two weeks later at midnight and plundered the house taking all the clothing which did not betray the costume of Friends. They

threatened to take Jacob Goff's life and asked him if he had anything to say before they shot him. Not understanding his silence they hastened him to speak and he prayed that ....

the Almighty might be merciful to him and forgive him his trespasses and sins and also forgive them (the rebels) as he did sincerely. They said that was a good wish and asked if he had anything more to say. He then desired that they would be tender to his wife and family, on which they said, 'Good night, Mr Goff, we only wanted to rattle the mocusses<sup>15</sup> out of you.'

Jacob Goff was much shaken by these events and his health deteriorated to such an extent that he died later that year aged 62.

## CARLOW MONTHLY MEETING

### Mary Leadbeater

Mary Leadbeater<sup>16</sup> was 40 years old in 1798. She kept a journal throughout her life in Ballitore and this was published as part of *The Leadbeater Papers* in the last century. The beautiful descriptions of life in her grandfather's school and in the tranquil village of Ballitore make a very sharp contrast to her record of the terrible events during the rebellion.

In Ballitore the saga starts with the billeting of troops as early as 1793, records their sudden departure with the sighting of the French fleet off Bantry in December 1796 and the friendly relaxed atmosphere which obtained until the detachment of King's County militia under the captaincy of an old Ballitore boy was withdrawn early in 1798. They were replaced by the Tyrone militia, mostly composed of 'professed orangemen, wearing the ribbon of their party' and later joined by a party of the Welsh fencibles. The torture and mistreatment of those villagers suspected of being 'United men' is dealt with in detail.

On 24th May, without warning the troops were withdrawn from Ballitore and concentrated at Naas. Ballitore was occupied by the insurgents the same day and the loyalists in the village thought their day had come. In fact they were spared with the exception of one young yeoman who happened to be the son of a local squire.

Everyone seemed to think that safety and security were to be found at my brother's<sup>17</sup> house. Thither the insurgents brought their prisoners, and thither, also their own wounded and suffering comrades. It was an awful sight to behold in that large parlour such

a mingled assembly of throbbing, anxious hearts - my brother's own family, silent tears rolling down their faces, the wives of the loyal officers, the wives of the soldiers, the wives and daughters of the insurgents, the numerous guests, the prisoners, the trembling women - all dreading to see the door open, lest some new distress, some fresh announcement of horrors should enter.

Two days later the tide was turning against the insurgents and John Bewley, along with Abraham Shackleton and another Friend attempted to treat with Colonel Campbell in Athy on their behalf. The negotiations were unsuccessful, Colonel Campbell's ultimatum expired and he decided to make an example of the town.

I though the bitterness of death was passed, but the work was not yet begun. Colonel Campbell's men who had impatiently rested on their arms several hours, marched out of Athy. They took Narraghmore on their way.....entered Ballitore exhausted by range and fatigue; they brought cannon. Cannon in Ballitore! The horse and foot had now met. Colonel Campbell was here in person and many other officers. The insurgents had fled on the alarm - the peaceable inhabitants remained. The trumpet was sounded, and the peaceable inhabitants were delivered up for two hours to the unbridled license of a furious soldiery! How shall I continue the fearful narrative?

Mary Leadbetter continues for almost eight pages to outline the deaths of innocent neighbours and friends in a heartrending narrative. However, the withdrawal of the soldiers was not the end of the troubles in and around Ballitore. As in Wexford those of the insurgents who escaped capture were sheltering in the Wicklow mountains and

'made nightly excursions for food, money and clothes, levying their 'black mail' on the timid and peaceful, while the lengthening nights favoured their designs.'

A second attempt by the Friends to treat on behalf of the surrounding country was more successful and after the arms had been handed up by the inhabitants Abraham Shackleton gave an address to Colonel Campbell in which he pleaded for leniency in dealing with the rebels. Extracts from this address makes interesting reading:

Abraham Shackleton believes that there does not exist that dark spirit of persecution among the people which is attributed to them. ....It is said, that they have formed a conspiracy for general massacre: no such disposition was apparent the two days, that we of this town were entirely in their power. Why did they not proceed then to a massacre? They spared to whip one man, who, they said, was an informer; - They forbore to whip the soldiers wives, when that cruel retaliation was suggested by the women of the town; - They offered no injuries to the officers' wives in my house, nor to the sick soldier and two officers servants with me. A.S. believes that no such conspiracy exists, and that it is conceived only in the minds of men of property, who are alarmed at the thought of losing it. He believes that by mild treatment the people may be made useful to us and happy in themselves. They have found the folly of resistance. ....If the money laid out on spacious buildings, cultivating fine gardens, and pleasure grounds, were some of it expended in cultivating the morals of the people, what a happy harvest of blessings would it not produce to the cultivators? If the rich did not insult the poor by their wanton extravagance and riot, the two orders of society would coalesce, and religious distinctions would not be so much thought of.

### **The Yearly Meeting makes its Record**

Some twelve years after the rebellion Ireland Yearly Meeting decided that it ought to make some record of events and in 1810 it issued a lengthy report.

It commences by quoting many of the minutes set out herein in the National Concern for Peace. Yearly Meeting's Committee investigated the sufferings of Friends and in an interim report in 1799 the Committee said that it would be wrong for any Friend to receive compensation from the money raised by the Government for this purpose. They asked for a subscription from Monthly Meetings and £3,847-11s-9d was received. £2,852-15s-10d<sup>18</sup> was distributed against losses adjudged to be more than £7,500 and the balance returned to the Monthly Meetings.

The assistance offered by Yearly Meeting in London in 1799 was not taken up. After the American revolution Irish Friends had given money to Friends in Philadelphia, so that the reciprocal offer is recorded in some detail with lengthy quotations from the epistles of the two Yearly Meetings.

The report gives thanks for the preservation of the members of the

**Society:**

It is worthy of commemoration, and cause of humble thankfulness to the Preserver of men, that amidst the carnage and destruction which frequently prevailed in some parts, and notwithstanding the jeopardy in which some Friends stood every hour, and that they had frequently to pass through violent and enraged men in going to, and returning from, our religious meetings - which, with a very few exceptions, were constantly kept up - the lives of the members of the Society were signally preserved.

**Conclusion**

Is there a message for us today in what the Friends of 1798 did to preserve their lives and their families?

The tremendous care which was taken all over the country with the Friends who were seen not to be walking in the truth is shown in meticulous minutes. Disownment was never undertaken lightly, and where the waverers showed any sign of repentance, they were welcomed back into the fold.

The fact that the 'peculiar people' were singled out by their way of life, strange forms of speech, simple dress and their known lack of arms, has to have played a major part in their preservation. Could any family today, Quaker or otherwise, manage to feed a company of soldiers for days on end like the Shackletons, Goffs or Haughtons were able to do?

Looking back, modern Friends would see in the records and accounts of the rebellion and its aftermath that rather too much emphasis was placed on 'Divine Intervention' in the preservation of the 'peculiar people'. The way that Abraham Shackleton, John Bewley, Joseph Haughton and others undertook mediation between the warring parties, often at great danger to themselves is something which Friends continue to do to this day and it is nice to think that Quaker House in Belfast has played some small part in today's peace process in Northern Ireland.

Irish Friends in the 18th century were relatively wealthy people. To have owned a gun at all would be a measure of this. To destroy it would be the equivalent of writing off your brand new motor car today before you have insured it! The £7,500 of goods and property reputedly lost by Friends during the rising has a modern equivalent of nearly IR£400,000 and the sum paid out to members would be IR£150,000.

In contrast to 1798 Friends in Northern Ireland have suffered

property damage in the turmoil of the past 20 years and they have had no difficulty in conscience in accepting compensation from the Government for broken windows and more serious damage to premises.

Glynn Douglas

## NOTES AND REFERENCES

For more information on Irish Friends:

*The Irish Quakers* by Maurice J Wigham published by the Historical Committee of IYM 1992.

*Early Quakers in Ireland* Presidential address in JFHS, Vol 48, No. 1 (1956) by John M Douglas (1889-1966).

*Quakers in Ireland 1654-1860* by Isabel Grubb published by Swarthmore Press 1927. There are many accounts of Irish history and of the rebellion in 1798, those familiar to the author include the following:

*Modern Ireland 1600-1972* by Roy F Foster published by Allen Lane 1988.

*The Year of Liberty* by Thomas Pakenham published by Hodder and Stoughton 1969.

- <sup>1</sup> In contrast in 1998 Ulster Quarterly Meeting has three Monthly Meetings and fourteen Preparative Meetings, Leinster Q M has two M Ms and nine PMs and Munster Q M has two M Ms and five P Ms.
- <sup>2</sup> The manuscript minute books of the National Half-year Men's Meeting and the Yearly Meeting which succeeded it are in the Historical Library in Swanbrook House.
- <sup>3</sup> The YMC letter and Lord Cornwallis' reply are quoted from notes made by John M Douglas in 6 Eustace Street early this century which are now in the author's possession.
- <sup>4</sup> Leinster Province Men's Meeting manuscript minute books are in the Historical library in Swanbrook House.
- <sup>5</sup> Monthly Meetings had to answer the queries to the Province Meeting in writing each year. The eighth query at that time read: *Are Friends faithful in our testimony against bearing arms, and being in any manner concerned in the militia, in privateers, letters of marque, or armed vessels or dealing in prize goods.*
- <sup>6</sup> Microfilm copies of the manuscript minutes of Ulster Quarterly Meeting and its constituent Monthly Meetings are kept by Ulster Quarterly Meeting in the strong room at Lisburn Meeting. The original manuscript minute books are in the Public Record office in Belfast.
- <sup>7</sup> Joseph Haughton (1765-1845) was the son of Jonathan Haughton of Ballitore. His account of *God's Care of Friends during the Irish Rebellion* was written in 1811. In 1910 it was included in *Friends in Ireland* edited by Alice Mary Hodgkin and published by the Friends' Tract Association in London. A facsimile reproduction of *Friends in Ireland* has been published by Booktree Publications, Cookstown, BT80 8PR, NI.
- <sup>8</sup> From notes in the author's possession which were made by John M Douglas.
- <sup>9</sup> A copy of the original is in the hands of Allen Pearson of Richhill meeting.
- <sup>10</sup> *The Principles of Peace, exemplified in the conduct of the Society of Friends in Ireland during the Rebellion of the year 1798; with some preliminary and concluding*

*observations* by Thomas Hancock MD (1783-1849) first published in 1825 with a revised and enlarged second edition in 1826 and various reprints during the next 30 years. This is still the most comprehensive account of Friends and the rebellion.

- 11 'Racking' was the term given for destroying a house by levering off the door and window lintels so that the walls and roof above would collapse.
- 12 Samuel Woodcock, Jacob Martin and John Hancock of Ulster Province (being then in the neighbourhood).
- 13 Dinah Wilson Goff (1783-1858), wrote her account in Penzance in 1856 just over a year before she died. *Divine Protection through Extraordinary Dangers; Experienced by Jacob and Elizabeth Goff and their Family, during the Irish Rebellion in 1798* was published in Dublin by John Gough. For information about her family see the Goff letters in JFHS Vol 15 Nos 2 and 3.
- 14 Brothers John and Samuel Jones.
- 15 Guineas.
- 16 Mary Leadbeater (1758-1826) Poet and author. Some of her poetry was published in Dublin 1808. Richard D Webb published two volumes of *The Leadbeater Papers* in London in 1862 which included her best known work *The Annals of Ballitore*.
- 17 Abraham Shackleton (II) (1752-1818) grandson of the founder of Ballitore School and its headmaster in 1798.
- 18 Each Monthly Meeting set up its own small committee to process the claims of its members. Most of the letters relating to these claims were collected by Yearly Meeting's Committee and have been preserved in Swanbrook House. Joseph Haughton received £400 against losses of £564, Dinah Goff's family made no claim and William Leadbeater, Mary's husband, received £100.

EDITOR: The maps included in the article have been prepared by Glynn Douglas who is to publish a book on the same topic later this year.

Howard F Gregg