

The Establishment of a Monthly Meeting in Durham (1654) and a Note on Anthony Pearson (d. 1666)

IN connection with her address on Quakerism in Darlington, printed in our last issue, Amy E. Wallis drew attention to a paper in Swarthmore MSS. on the very early date of the organization of Friends in County Durham. It was in fact very little after the time of the large accession to Friends of the Seekers in and about Swaledale and the Preston Patrick district. The Seekers had met monthly for the general purposes of their body, and by 1653 or 1654 Friends in Cumberland and in Durham, with many ex-Seekers among them, were beginning the same practice.¹ To Amy Wallis we are also indebted for some further facts about the last part of the life of Anthony Pearson, of whom we have known little or nothing after he ceased to associate with Friends about 1659. Both the manuscript, of which he was one of the signatories, and the new information are printed below.

The name of Anthony Pearson appears with that of sixteen other Friends on the paper which proposes the setting up of a monthly meeting of men Friends in "Bishopricke". The copy which is printed below is preserved in the Swarthmore Collection of Manuscripts at Friends House (Swarthmore MSS. II. 17) and was addressed to William Bywater of Bearpark. The address and name of William Bywater have been heavily scored through as if to blot out his name. Perhaps he left Friends later on, as did Anthony Pearson and probably some of the other signatories to this paper.

The document has been printed in James Bowden's *The Society of Friends in America*, i, 209-10 (1850), and in *Epistles from the Yearly Meeting of Friends, held in London . . . 1681 to 1857, inclusive*, i, vi-vii (1858), and is discussed by William Charles Braithwaite in *The Beginnings of Quakerism* (2nd edition, 1955), 143.

"Deare Freinds in the measure of the light of Christ, wee being brought to feele & see the estate & conditions of the Church in these parts, & the danger yt many may lye in, because of the oppressors, & thereby the enemy of the soule may come to have advantage over us. Therefore in the feare

¹ See *First Publishers of Truth*, 244; Braithwaite, *Beginnings of Quakerism*, 143; *Journal F.H.S.*, v. (1908), 3-10.

of the Lord, being moved thereunto by the Lord, and being subject henceforth every one to beare his burthen, the strong with the weake, that ye weake be not oppressed above his strength, but all drawing on hand in hand, that the weake & the tyred may be refreshed, and soe all may¹ become a ioint witnes to the everlasting truthe in word & conversation, our lives & minds being sett free from yt yt dayly may tempt or trouble in the particular.

Therefore deare Freinds we who are met together doe thinke it convenient yt some of every severall meeteing doe meete together, every first seventh day of every monthe, begining upon the first seventh day of the 3 moneth,² & to declare what necessityes or wants are seene in their severall meeteing[s], & there to be considered on by Freinds there mett, & as freedom & necessity is seene soe to minister.

And seeing at present there is a great need for a collection by reason of some great sums of money yt have beene laid out & more is to be laid out, we recommend it to your several meeteings to doe herein every one according to your freedoms in the present necessity, & to give notice ye next first day yt it may be collected for ye poore ye first day following & to be paid over to John Langstaffe: & a noate of the sume subscribed by some Freinds from every meeteing.

Christ: Eyon³

John Highington⁴

Christr. Richmond⁵

Peter Young⁶

Anth: Parson⁷

Robt: Selbye⁸

Rich: Wilson⁹

Will: Trewhitt¹⁰

¹ The word "may" is deleted.

² *i.e.*, 1.iii.(May). 1654.

³ Christopher Eyon, of Barnard Castle, fined for absence from the national worship, 1678; Besse, *Sufferings*, i, 184.

⁴ John Highington, of Durham, d. 1705, imprisoned for refusing the oath, 1660; Besse, i, 173. Conventicle kept at his house, 1669 (The Bishop's report at S. Nicholas in Durham, per H. E. Deacon).

⁵ Christopher Richmond, of Heighington or Durham, imprisoned 1666; Besse, i, 176.

⁶ Peter Young may just possibly have been a visitor from Luxton, Herefordshire; cf. Besse, i, 258.

⁷ For Anthony Pearson see below, and *Cambridge Journal* (1911), i, 470.

⁸ Robert Selbie, physician, of Durham, d. 1705; Besse, i, 181.

⁹ For Richard Wilson see G. F. Nuttall, *Early Quaker Letters* (1952).

¹⁰ William Trewhitt, of Bolden, suffered imprisonment and distrains; Newcastle M.M. records; Besse, i, 175.

	Willm Cotesworth ¹	Jo: Langstaff ⁵
	Martin Richmond ²	Rich. Eubanke ⁶
	James Whyte ³	Andrew Rawe ⁷
	John Hopper ⁴	Tho: Shawe ⁸
[Address]	To his Loving Friend/William Bywater ⁹ /at Bear Parke/this d./	
	Leave this Leter at/the Postmasters/house in durham.	
	[Endorsed by George Fox] the seting/up the menes/meeting in/bishopricke/1653." ¹⁰	

The fall of James Nayler, who had been instrumental in bringing so many into the Society of Friends in Durham probably was one of the causes of the lessening of numbers which seems to have occurred. Eventually Anthony Pearson, whose work in the formative years had made the influence of the Durham group of Friends felt widely in the Quaker movement, came to speak (in the words of the *London Gazette* of February, 1666) of his "former errors, and the party that first seduced him into them". At the return of Charles II, Anthony Pearson's friend Sir Henry Vane was beheaded, his former master Sir Arthur Haselrig was put in the Tower, and Anthony himself returned to official work under Bishop Cosin for a short period of two years as under sheriff.

¹ William Cotesworth (Cotsworth, Coatsworth) of South Shields, is identified in G. F. Nuttall's *Early Quaker Letters*.

² Martin Richmond, probably of Heighington, convinced by James Nayler in 1653, signed the epistle from the Skipton general meeting, 1660; *Cambridge Journal*, ii, 388; *Epistles of Yearly Meeting*, i, xxxvi; Nuttall, *op. cit.*

³ James Whyte, of Hopewell, imprisoned and fined repeatedly for attending meeting; Besse, i, 175-89.

⁴ James Hopper, unidentified, but many Hoppers occur in the registers about Dikenook and Wallnook near Durham.

⁵ John Langstaff, of Bishop Auckland, d. 1694; convinced by James Nayler, 1653; became a leading Durham Friend and signed various epistles, including that from London Y.M., 1673; *Cambridge Journal*, ii, 478; Nuttall, *op. cit.*

⁶ Richard Ewbank, of Gateshead, signed with other Friends a paper defending the common law marriage, without a priest, of Cuthbert Hunter, 1654; *Truth cleared from reproaches*, 3; Whitehead, *Christian Progress*, 126; Nuttall, *op. cit.*

⁷ Andrew Rawe, of Derwent, husbandman, signed the epistle from co. Durham Friends to the Skipton general meeting in 1659; imprisoned 1660, 1664; *Epistles of London Yearly Meeting*, i, xxxiv; Besse, i, 174-6.

⁸ Thomas Shaw, unidentified, but possibly one of the Ushaws of Norton-on-Tees.

⁹ Thomas Bywater is unidentified.

¹⁰ The date may be in another hand.

To Friends, the history of Anthony Pearson after the Restoration has always been obscure, but the *London Gazette*, no. 24 (from Thursday, Feb. 1 to Monday, Feb. 5, 1665 [1666]) carried the following paragraph:

“1665 [1666]. Durham, Jan. 27. Wednesday last [Jan. 24] was buried here Mr. Anthony Pearson, a man particularly noted in these parts for having passed heretofore through all the degrees of separation and phanaticism, in all of which he was ever observed as a principal leader; but having lived to see his error some time before his death, he himself, with his children and family, had received Episcopal confirmation, and did now at last upon his death-bed very solemnly confess his former errors, and the party that first seduced him into them, declaring that he now dyed a true son of the Church of England.”¹

The day of burial given in the *London Gazette* is borne out by the register entry (seen by A.E.W.) among the burials at Little St. Mary's, Durham: 1665[-66] “Mr Anthony Pearson was buried ye 24th of Jan. ye year abovesaid”.

William Hutchinson's *History and Antiquities of the County Palatine of Durham* (1785), 553, says that Anthony Pearson, gent., appointed under sheriff 2 March 1663 “quamdiu se bene gesserit”, died 23 January 1665 [1666], and was buried in Little St. Mary's, Durham.

The *London Gazette* account that the whole Pearson family conformed does not square with the evidence of Friends' registers. Anthony Pearson's widow, Grace (Lamplough) Pearson, married, 26.vii.1673 at Shotton, James Hall of Monk Heselden, near Castle Eden. James and Grace Hall had a daughter Grace (born 15.viii.1676), and she married Robert Chambers of Kendal in 1703 and died there in 1762 at the age of 86 years. The account of her in *Piety Promoted*² is more “personal” than many accounts, speaking of her “considerable skill in surgery”, “administering relief in many disorders”, and “having occasionally free access to several families of distinction in her neighbourhood”. She had been a minister about 50 years.³

¹ Surtees Society, Publications, vol. 55 (1872), 316.

² *Piety Promoted*, vol. iii, pp 181-2.

³ Testimony, *Jnl. F.H.S.*, vii, 182-3.