

WILLIAM FORSTER SENIOR AND THE RESPONSE OF NORWICH AND NORFOLK TO THE FAMINE IN IRELAND, 1846-1849



Born in 1784, William Forster, the father of the future MP W. E. Forster, was 62, and had been living in Norwich about nine years when, on 25 November 1846, he attended the third meeting of the London Friends' committee for the relief of distress in Ireland. He shared with the gathering his willingness, indeed his religious calling, to visit Ireland on its behalf. His purpose would be to gather information on the state of the inhabitants with the intention of providing effective relief in co-operation with Irish Friends.¹ His offer was accepted and on 30 November he set out on this mission which would last through the harsh winter months and into April the following year. The purpose of this article is to investigate why Forster became drawn to take such an active part in efforts to alleviate the desperate situation in Ireland, and the response to this phase of the Famine by men and women living in Norwich and, to a lesser extent, in Norfolk. This is followed by a briefer section considering local press reports of events in Ireland in the following years, and the visit that William Edward Forster paid there in 1849. The intention is to open the subject up in the hope that others may take it further.²

The background: the Famine in Ireland and government response

The precursor of the Famine, as distinct from the distress arising from the less severe failures of the potato harvest experienced intermittently over preceding years, was the appearance of potato blight, a fungal disease which spread from America and occurred in Europe sometime around 1844. In Ireland the effect was felt in the autumn of 1845, but measures undertaken by Sir Robert Peel's administration were successful in containing the initial outbreak. However the population, over eight million at that time, had become so heavily dependent on the crop, which had hitherto been a reasonably reliable and very nutritious source of food, that its re-emergence in 1846, and again in 1848, proved devastating. There was too a system of landholding that increased the vulnerability of tenants and encouraged the dependence on a single crop. A 'tenant at will' could be turned out of a holding at the will of the landlord, whereas a tenant who had 'tenant right', a system that operated mainly in the region around Ulster, could claim compensation for improvements that he had made to the holding. A third form of contract, known as 'conacre', gave entitlement to use a small portion of land, sometimes as small as half or a quarter of an acre, on which to grow one crop for the growing season.³

Under the Act of Union, which came into force on 1 January 1801, Ireland came under direct rule from Westminster, being represented there in both Houses of Parliament, but by fewer members than had previously been eligible to attend the Irish Parliament. Through the years 1845-1849 there were two parliamentary ministries, under the Tory Sir Robert Peel from 1841-46, and the Whig Lord John Russell from mid-1846-1852. Their responses can only be summarised briefly here. In November 1845 Peel's government set up a relief commission to act with local relief committees whose task was to distribute the food that had been ordered and that would arrive gradually over the coming months. The major part of this food, including a consignment of Indian corn that the prime minister had ordered on his own responsibility, was made available to the distributors at cost price. Alongside this measure, employment was to be encouraged through a system of public works, but the low wages paid were insufficient to feed families. By the time Russell came to power it was clear that the extent of

the starvation and famine-related illness was such that further measures were needed. Soup kitchens, which had been operating through philanthropic endeavours, would be incorporated temporarily into the legal framework. This provision was ended in September 1847. Public works were to be run down gradually, and in June 1847 the Poor Relief (Ireland) Act gave boards of guardians powers to give outdoor relief to defined groups of widows, children and the infirm, and time-limited outdoor relief to the able-bodied poor. A concession to landlords, often referred to as the 'Gregory clause' after William Gregory who instigated it, excluded those holding more than a quarter acre of land from any relief. This clause proved to be variously interpreted and liable to be ignored.⁴

Numerous factors influenced how these measures were formulated and applied including religious and ideological standpoints. Free trade was one issue. In response to the early signs of crisis it was the pragmatic conservative Sir Robert Peel who resolved to repeal the high import duties imposed under the Corn Laws. This was accomplished with much difficulty in 1846: abolition had been a keynote of Whig policy and there were resisters in both parties. A principle, upheld with increasing firmness by Russell's Chancellor of the Exchequer, Sir Charles Wood and by the government administrator, Charles Trevelyan, who was assistant secretary to the Treasury, was that, to discourage dependency, government support should, with limited exceptions, be in the form of long term loans. Expectations relating to the money that could be recovered from poor rates, and the extent to which landlords could provide employment, however, proved extremely unrealistic - failure to pay rent led to evictions, and vastly increased numbers of emigrants, not to employment as labourers. As a final example, the movement in Ireland for repeal of the Act of Union, which, with benefit of hindsight probably peaked under the leadership of Daniel O'Connell in 1843, was continued by various breakaway groups, emerging in 1848 as the Young Irelanders who advocated the use of force. Research on the Famine over the past 30 years, especially following the 1995 anniversary, has greatly increased awareness of the diversity of local conditions and responses. The themed contributions, maps and case studies in the recent *Atlas of the Great Irish Famine* illuminate this diversity.⁵

William Forster's experience in Ireland prior to 1846

William Forster (1784-1854) was a Quaker travelling minister. Anyone might break the silence of a Quaker meeting for worship to give vocal ministry if he or she felt led to do so. Friends recognised that some members had a particular gift in this service, and in the nineteenth century those men and women who had given spoken ministry acceptably over time were recorded by the group of meetings in their local area known as the Monthly Meeting. Subsequently, if they felt called upon to travel beyond their own immediate locality they would apply to the Monthly Meeting for a certificate of endorsement.

William Forster was recorded as a minister by Tottenham Monthly Meeting in August 1805.⁶ He crossed to Ireland to attend Dublin Yearly Meeting (with which the annual gathering then known as London Yearly Meeting had close ties) in 1809. Under his calling as a minister he travelled widely there in 1813-14, visiting not only the provinces of Ulster, Munster and Leinster, where Friends had a strong presence, but the more remote regions to the west, and addressing public meetings that were sometimes attended by Roman Catholics as well as members of other Protestant denominations. Forster held strong evangelical convictions and the visit was far from easy for him, but the country made such a strong impression on him at the time that he confided, in a letter quoted by Benjamin Seebohm:

Such is my concern on account of the inhabitants of this nation ... that were a door to be opened for free gospel labour among them, I have thought that I could willingly spend the remainder of my days in this land ...⁷

In March 1843 Forster, who had been living in Earlham Road, Norwich since 1837, applied to Norwich Monthly Meeting for a certificate to visit the young in the cities of England and Ireland. As was customary he returned the certificate, which would have been endorsed by the clerks of the Meetings he visited, on completion of his travels in the following November.⁸ This visit is not mentioned by Seebohm, but it is important for this study in that it reveals that

he had an opportunity to make personal contacts and experience conditions in some parts of Ireland just a few years prior to his visit in 1846/7 and the onset of famine.

The Norwich Scene

In 1841 Norwich had a population of 62,344, which increased by 1851 to 68,706, a modest rise in comparison with the rapid expansion of northern industrial towns.⁹ In 1845 it was experiencing widespread unemployment.¹⁰ William Forster was known not only for his support for efforts to abolish slavery but also for his active participation in Norwich societies for the alleviation of distress. According to Seebohm it was at Forster's suggestion that a soup kitchen was opened in the winter of 1840-41.¹¹ No archival record of the venture appears to have survived, but it was still active in January 1847, when an announcement on behalf of The Norwich Soup Society appeared in the *Norwich Mercury* detailing its activity in 1845-46 and appealing for contributions. It could make sufficient for 800 families (2000 quarts) daily. The secretary was Thomas Geldart, and the Treasurer Joseph John Gurney. Experience here would be invaluable during Forster's investigative journey in Ireland: on 4 December, for example, he offered a boiler to a clergyman, but finding that that gentleman already expected to receive one, resolved instead to donate £10 once the kitchen had been set up.¹²

Philanthropic work such as this, together with broadly shared evangelical beliefs drew many together across denominational boundaries in the 1840s. The bishop of Norwich, Edward Stanley (1779-1849) took a lead in this regard, supporting charitable societies in the city and county and welcoming the opportunity to meet Dissenting ministers on neutral ground. An upholder of temperance, in 1843 controversially he endorsed the endeavours of a Roman Catholic, Father Theobald Matthew to win the Irish over to the cause, and welcomed him to the palace.¹³ Forster, who was united to the banker and Quaker minister Joseph John Gurney by family links, was part of this circle.¹⁴ In recording that part of his journey that took in the estate of Lord Dillon, he referred to a letter of introduction to 'a lady of that family' given to him by the Bishop of Norwich. He planned, as a result, to donate money for

wool and needles to provide women and girls with employment.¹⁵

In August 1846 the *Norfolk Mercury* reported that the potato blight appeared 'more virulent' than in the previous year. According to T. Wemyss Reid, Forster's son William Edward, who had moved to Bradford in 1841, took a holiday in Ireland in September 1846 and wrote home about his experience there to his father and to Barclay Fox.¹⁶ His letters have not survived, but his account probably aligned with the comment of the *Mercury*. It was the view of the *Norfolk Chronicle* on 14 November that employment was on the increase 'and in most of the suffering districts the supply of food is becoming more abundant, while prices are everywhere declining'.¹⁷ This was an endorsement of the measures for public works, importation of food, and workhouse relief undertaken by Sir Robert Peel's Conservative government and that would be carried on by the Whig administration of Lord John Russell into the spring of 1847. These were the conditions that William Edward's father would investigate. In his journal entry on 18 November the Norwich Quaker banker Joseph John Gurney warmly endorsed Forster's intention:

Very interesting communication with Friends on the subject of poor, miserable, starving Ireland. Dear William Forster seems bent on being our ambassador thither. I think it is a case which requires not merely subscription, but sacrifice; and his sacrifice is a noble one; mine only pecuniary.¹⁸



Ireland in the 1840s

William Forster's visit to Ireland, 1846-47

In the issue of December 5 the *Norwich Mercury* reported that 'The Society of Friends in Dublin, have entered into a subscription of £2,000 towards the relief of the poor throughout Ireland'.¹⁹ From the beginning the London and Dublin Committees kept in close contact and it was to Irish Friends' Central Relief Committee that William Forster first reported. His subsequent journey, which lasted much longer than originally envisaged, took him through Roscommon, Leitrim, Fermanagh, Donegal, Sligo, Mayo, Galway, Longford and Cavan.²⁰ The Central Relief Committee was determined to make no distinction of religion and to help those who fell outside the government scheme of public works. A summary of the impact of Forster's visit was included in the report

issued by the Committee in 1852: he revealed destitution 'far exceeding that which had been at first supposed'; he stimulated the upper classes in the endeavours to relieve the distress in their midst; he disseminated information, exhibited sympathy, and:

He ... afforded most important help to our Committee, by opening a correspondence with individuals and local bodies in those remote districts; and thus furnished us with many efficient and trustworthy agents for the distribution of the funds confided to us, in places far removed from the residence of any member of our own religious profession.²¹

For part of the time William Forster was accompanied by his son, William Edward, and by the Quaker merchants Joseph Crosfield (1821-1879) of Liverpool, and James Hack Tuke (1819-1896) of York. It is not clear who was responsible for ensuring that Crosfield's account of the first week, which was printed by the London Friends' Irish Relief Committee, was made available to the *Norwich Mercury*, but on 9 January 1847 the paper published a substantial extract. In a leading article that began by referring to the need for 'such a Poor Law as shall compel Landed Proprietors to bear the burden which want of employment creates', and expressed fear that the poor might come to rely on relief, the paper redressed the balance by quoting three affecting incidents of extreme distress as related by Crosfield, beginning:

On the 1st inst., accompanied by Dr. Bewley, a benevolent and active physician of Moate, and myself, W.F. [sic] went down into a wild and lawless district called Ballinahown, where great distress is at present existing ...

and concluding:

In the next cabin there lay ... a boy of about seventeen years of age, whose gaunt haggard face and wasted limbs, and the extremely reduced state of his pulse, told far more of famine than of disease. In this cabin, which had

seven inhabitants, the only support was from the daily ten-pence earned by the father of the family, but ... thirteen pence, would be daily required [thus] some idea of the inadequacy of this to their maintenance may be formed. This woman [in the cabin] gladly undertook to walk seven miles ... to make a little broth for her son.²²

The reference in the *Mercury* to landed proprietors accorded with widely held opinion. Crosfield noted absenteeism in the sentence that followed the extract quoted by the *Mercury*: 'Close by the village stands Ballinahown House, a large, old ruinous mansion, the property of a wealthy merchant in Dublin, who seldom or never resides on the estate'.

Benjamin Seebohm summarised William Forster's work on his return:

Long after his return from Ireland, he continued to be much occupied with the concerns of the "Central Relief Committee" in Dublin. He wrote many letters, obtained additional subscriptions among his friends, and was in other ways perseveringly interested in the present relief of the distressed, as well as in the permanent amelioration of the condition of the poor people with whom he had sympathised so largely.²³

His effort with regard to emigration will be considered below.

Public response to immediate need

As accounts of suffering increased the public demanded action. On 16 January the *Norfolk Chronicle* reported on a public meeting that had been held in Great Yarmouth town hall. The attendance was small, but included the Mayor, five named Anglican clergy, the Quaker John Brightwen, who worked at a branch of Gurneys bank, and Benjamin Dowson. John Brightwen said that it was now a well-established fact that unless they extended charity to Ireland 'promptly and liberally, thousands upon thousands would suffer death in the most terrible form'. His request to set up a subscription

was seconded by the historian of the town, G.D. Palmer. Mr. Brightwen put down £100 on behalf of the bank. It was noted that some had already subscribed to a Mr. Dunn's approach.²⁴

The London Friends' Committee (which was regularly attended by William Forster's brothers Josiah and Robert) was busy organising an appeal for contributions, though not quickly enough for Henry Bidwell of Norwich Meeting, who wrote on 19 December 1846 'on behalf of our Committee on Distress in Ireland' to express disappointment at not yet having received any copies of the address appealing for contributions. There are no surviving records of this local committee, which had already begun applying for subscriptions. On the 25th, just two weeks before his unexpected death, Joseph John Gurney noted:

My subscription of £500 to Ireland has at length been well backed up by the accompanying list. This is a comfort to me; it is a vast case of physical woe.²⁵

It was probably initially through Bidwell's committee that the Dublin Central committee received two bales of clothing from Norwich.²⁶

About the same time, Amelia Opie gave a clear picture of how the relief work operated, and a hint of religious anxiety:

Oh! The horrible state of things in that country [Ireland]; without our aid they say the poor people must perish! I am collecting for the Ladies' Committee at Dunmanaway, [Dunmanway] near Cork, a very distressed district, but small and with few rich residents in it therefore the more needing help. I let no day pass without having in the course of it begged of some one. I take six pence or a shilling with thanks; and I have accepted twopence from a little boy, who sent it to me because he knew what it was to be hungry himself. I have a humble agent at work to procure small sums, as my Irish ladies advise; and have a little money

still in hand, which I hope to make more. We shall one day perhaps know scenes here like those in Ireland, and trials which *wealth* cannot help us to avoid or remove, but "shall not the judge of all the earth do right?"²⁷

General Robert Meade (1772-1852) was a member of the Meade family who owned large estates in Ireland. The majority of the family records are in the Irish National Archives in Dublin, but this Robert Meade had land in Earsham on the Norfolk and Suffolk border. Papers in Norfolk Record Office include reports from his agent, Crane Brush, on the soup kitchen that was operating in Rathfriland from 22 December 1846 into 1847. Accounts exist for two days, showing 159 families (730 individuals) and 165 families (780 individuals) as recipients on 9 February and 13 February 1847. There is also a list of subscriptions to the fund raised, over three weeks, by 'The Gentlemen who lately took upon themselves to collect Funds for the relief of the Working Poor of Rathfriland', ranging from £50 to £1.10 0d, and including donations from two Presbyterian ministers. They had had a total of 209 applications and had admitted 147 and rejected 62.²⁸

The British Association for the Relief of Extreme Distress in Ireland and Scotland was set up in 1847 and operated until 1849. The London Friends' Irish Relief Committee co-operated with it, and Samuel Gurney was a member of both committees. Its report names some of those who gave contributions of £5 and upwards between January and September 1847. The list includes members of the Gurney family, the Catholic Jermingham family, Heacham parish in North Norfolk, which donated £28 by Revd. Henry Wright, and a collection taken at the Octagon Chapel in Norwich that raised £87.12s.11d.²⁹

In her letter to the Archbishop of Canterbury requesting that the clergy preach sermons in aid of the fund for the distressed Irish, Queen Victoria stressed that those who would hesitate to give their mite to a subscription would put it in a collection plate at the church door.³⁰ There were two such appeals in 1847. The first, in January, drew generous response from the empire and America, but the second, in the autumn, was poorly received and raised far less.³¹

Diminishing support

The work of gathering contributions could be exhausting. As Joseph John Gurney wrote at the end of 1846:

I think I had rather not hear any more of those affecting statements, they are almost too much for me. I believe I can do no more, and therefore must try to leave the subject.³²

Gurney, who died in January 1847 as a consequence of a fall from his horse, might, had he lived, have recovered strength and motivation. Weariness on the part of those who had worked hard to gather subscriptions and clothing cannot account for the extent of the decline in support. Much more influential was the reporting of Irish news in the three Norfolk newspapers, the long-established *Norfolk Chronicle* and *Norwich Mercury* and the *Norfolk News*. The *Chronicle* and *Mercury* were both conservative in their outlook, generally supporting government policy and devoting considerable space to Irish affairs. On 27 December 1845 the *News* printed an 'Address to readers' looking back on its first year of publication in which it stated that it supported 'principle unfettered by expediency and unassisted by party'. In January 1847 the paper united with the widespread support for the public appeal, reporting that a subscription list has been opened headed by donations by the Queen, Prince Albert and other members of the royal family. It noted the antipathy of *The Times*, and approved the action of the *Morning Chronicle* in replying that the government supported voluntary effort.³³

William Forster, who had himself travelled extensively in America, expressed anxiety for the welfare of emigrants while still in Ireland. On 21 March 1847 he referred to his recent visit to 'a wretchedly poor population on the shores of the bay of Sligo, principally tenants of Lord Palmerston'. He was in contact with gentlemen who 'are making arrangements upon a large scale for shipping many of the smallest of the tenantry to America, which can hardly fail to improve their condition ... I believe I must see Lord Palmerston on my return and try whether something cannot be done for [them] on their arrival on the western shores of the Atlantic'. Benjamin Seebohm added that Forster did have

an interview with Lord Palmerston, but that the outcome was unknown. Tyler Anbinder, who has studied Lord Palmerston's conduct relating to Irish emigration in the Famine, makes no reference to Forster. Anbinder has concluded that Palmerston treated his tenants more generously than many landlords, and that even if his motives in promoting it were partially selfish there were emigrants who were grateful.³⁴ For many, however, Forster's hope that emigration would be better for emigrants than their current state was unfulfilled. Conditions on the ships were often appalling and large numbers of passengers, weakened, if not actually ill, on embarkation either succumbed during the voyage or died in holding camps when they landed. Forster's actions on his return were conducted against a background of hostility to emigration in the *Norwich Mercury*.

On 1 May 1847 the paper reported that the 'ravages of fever and disease continue to be frightful'. The scale of emigration was unprecedented and 'several landlords are providing their small tenantry and the squatters on their estates [most probably because they had had their cabins levelled] with free passage'. This description could cover those who made provision of food and clothing and paid the journey to the port, as well as those who only paid the journey to port, where they became cargo passengers, in effect ballast. It conveys an impression of generosity, but in practice the support, where given, varied greatly in extent. Reports of large-scale emigration to Liverpool gave rise to a passage in the *Mercury* in the following week expressing much fear that the 'influx' of 180,000 'wretched beings' as emigrants to Liverpool might result in the spread of disease, even, shockingly, appearing to hint at conspiracy, after the sacrifices made by the government and people: 'Is our return to be a diabolical attempt to spread contagion among us?' On 15 May the paper reported 'most lamentable' accounts of distress in Cork and Waterford, but also expressed its support for the government in basing relief measures on the English Poor Law, believing that Ireland must take responsibility for herself, but expecting that the landlords would be resistant.³⁵

James S. Donnelly Jr. has examined the evidence for public opinion exhibited in newspapers, principally the *Illustrated London News*

and *The Times*, in relation to the Poor Law Amendment Act of June 1847 which empowered poor law guardians to give conditional outdoor relief. He concluded that the press moderated its response in the light of some of the effects of the legislation but did not seek to abandon it. By 1849, after the harvest failure in 1848 had dashed the attempts by small tenants to re-establish themselves, proprietors were being scapegoated and the *Times* could write with approval that insolvent proprietors were being compelled to surrender their estates and that emigration was enabling the introduction of new enterprise and capital.³⁶

Other matters appearing in the newspapers in 1848 that would be likely to rouse, or reinforce already existing negative feelings towards the Irish. These include the trial of John Mitchel under the Treason and Felony Act for articles in the *United Irishman* he was sentenced to transportation; the statement by William Smith O'Brien that the time was coming when 'armed resistance to the oppression of the country will become a sacred obligation,' and disapproving comments in the *Chronicle* relating to what the paper viewed as conciliation towards Catholics regarding education.³⁷ None of the three papers mentioned the private appeal that was made in June 1849.

T. Wemyss Reid records that William Edward Forster joined Thomas Carlyle on a visit to Ireland in April 1849. Forster attributed to the Poor Law the fact that there was no famine, but found 'the cabins unroofed, the tenants in the work house or underground, or emigrated; the landlords many of them ran away or hiding in houses for fear of bailiffs'. He visited Ballina Workhouse, which he judged well managed but far too full, and was a guest of Lord George Hill (whom his father had met in 1847) whose benevolence he praised, but whose ability to promote industry in his tenants the visiting Englishman deemed 'hopeless'.³⁸

The national public response peaked in 1847 and thereafter declined as attention was diverted elsewhere and when negative aspects of other events in Ireland were often emphasised. There is no evidence to suggest that the response in Norwich and Norfolk followed a different pattern. By 1849 funds for immediate distribution were running down and the nature of the work was

changing as government and relief societies, albeit from different perspectives, strove to establish long-term solutions. In her study of Quaker relief in Ireland over the period 1651-1921 Helen Hatton has concluded that of even more consequence than their non-sectarian response was Friends' recognition of the importance of disinterested investment for the long-term alleviation of Irish poverty.³⁹ Friends had provided funding for various projects, some successful, some not, most notably for fisheries and agriculture. These included a model farm established by the Irish Friends' Central Relief Committee that operated until 1863.⁴⁰ A lasting effect of the work has been the establishment of a folk tradition in Ireland, amongst people who know nothing else about Friends, that Quakers did great deeds of mercy during the Famine.

In this short article it has only been possible to introduce so broad a theme as the Norwich and Norfolk response to the disaster of the Irish Famine. No attempt, for example, has been made to trace the returns from Norfolk parishes to the appeals in 1847 for the 'Relief of a large Portion of the Population in Ireland, and in some Districts of Scotland', which would require an article of its own.⁴¹ William Forster was a member of the Society of Friends and the survival of the records of the two Quaker bodies engaged in the work of relief, in London and Dublin, has made it possible to set his endeavours within the wider Quaker context. At the local level Quaker records in the mid-nineteenth century recorded charitable activities undertaken in support of their own members, but not those carried out by Friends who were associating in their private capacities to further a shared endeavour. This distinction, which may well be true in relation to other Dissenting congregations, points to the possibility that sources such as family archives and the memoirs of ministers may yield information that would broaden the range of the inquiry.

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This article will also appear in the forthcoming issue of The Annual: the Bulletin of the Norfolk Archaeological and Historical Research Group.

END NOTES

1. Library of the Religious Society of Friends, London (hereafter LSF) MS Box V3/1, London Irish Relief Committee, minutes 25.11.1846.
2. I am indebted to Juliana Minihan for discussion on the subject and to Rob Goodbody and Christopher Moriarty for their comments on an earlier version of this article. My interest in the link with Norwich was aroused by the account of the Famine in Maurice J. Wigham's *The Irish Quakers: a Short History of the Religious Society of Friends in Ireland* (Dublin: Historical Committee of the Religious Society of Friends in Ireland, 1992). Newspaper evidence suggests that there is sufficient material to support a range of further research relating to Ireland.
3. C. Woodham-Smith, *The Great Hunger: Ireland 1845-1849* (London: Hamish Hamilton, 1962) pp. 22, 34; C.O. Murchadha, *The Great Famine: Ireland's Agony 1845-1852* (London and New York: Continuum, 2011), p. 6.
4. J.S. Donnelly, Jr, 'The Administration of Relief, 1846-7' and 'The Soup Kitchens', both in W.E. Vaughan, ed., *Ireland under the Union, 1801-1870* (A New History of Ireland, V) (Oxford: University Press, 1989), pp. 294-306 and 307-315.
5. J. Crowley, W.J. Smith and M. Murphy, eds, *Atlas of the Great Irish Famine* (Cork, Cork University Press, 2012).
6. W. Forster, *Memoirs of William Forster*, ed. B. Seebohm, 2 vols (London: Alfred W. Bennett, 1865), vol. 1, p. 44. For a short account of Forster's life see E.H. Milligan, entry for William Forster (1784-1854) in *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography*, (2004) vol. 20, pp. 430-431.
7. Forster, *Memoirs*, vol. 1, p. 164. The account of his journey occupies pp. 143-178.
8. Norfolk Record Office (hereafter NRO), SF 70, Norwich Monthly Meeting minutes, 9.3. and 9.11.1843. The endorsed certificate is not in the archive.
9. R. O'Donoghue, *Norwich, an Expanding City 1801-1900* (Dereham: Larks Press, 2014), Appendix 1, p. 236.
10. J.K. Edwards, 'Communication and Trade 1800-1900', in J.C. Barringer, ed., *Norwich in the Nineteenth Century* (Norwich: Gliddon Books, 1984), p. 125.
11. Forster, *Memoirs*, vol. 2, p. 130.

12. Forster, *Memoirs*, vol. 2, p. 215; *Norwich Mercury*, 2 January, 1847, p. 1.
13. Edward Stanley, Bishop of Norwich, *Addresses and Charges of Edward Stanley (late Bishop of Norwich) with a Memoir by his Son, Arthur Penrhyn* (London: John Murray, 1851), pp. 48, 55, 71, 76-8.
14. Forster had married Anna Buxton, sister of the anti-slavery campaigner Sir Thomas Fowell Buxton, who had married Joseph John's sister Hannah.
15. Forster, *Memoirs*, vol. 2, pp. 215-16.
16. *Norwich Mercury*, 15 August, 1846, p. 2; T. Wemyss Reid, *Life of the right honourable William Edward Forster*, 3rd edn, 2 vols in 1 (Bath: Adams and Dart, 1970) [1888], vol. 1, pp. 137, 170-185.
17. *Norfolk Chronicle*, 14 November, 1846, p. 2.
18. J.J. Gurney, *Memoirs of Joseph John Gurney; with Selections from his Journal and Correspondence Edited by Joseph Bevan Braithwaite*, 2 vols (Norwich: Fletcher and Alexander, and London: W. and F.G. Cash, 1854), vol. 2, p. 503.
19. *Norwich Mercury*, 5 December, 1846, back page. For the work of this Committee see Central Relief Committee of the Society of Friends, *Transactions of the Central Relief Committee of the Society of Friends during the Famine in Ireland, in 1846 and 1847* [edited by Joan C. Johnson] with an index by Rob Goodbody (Dublin: Edmund Burke Publisher, 1996). [1852]; R. Goodbody, *A Suitable Channel: Quaker Relief in the Great Famine* (Old Connaught, Bray: Pale Publishing, 1995).
20. This summary of counties is given by Robin B. Goodbody, *Quaker Relief in Ireland's Great Hunger* (Kendal: Quaker Tapestry Books, 1995), p. 7.
21. Central Relief Committee, *Transactions*, pp. 39-40.
22. LSF, MS Box V3/1, following minutes of 23.12.1846: J. Crosfield, *Distress in Ireland. Letter from Joseph Crosfield Describing The First Week of Wm Forster's Journey in the Distressed Districts* (London: Edward Newman printer, n.d.); extracts from this, and from a number of other visits over the period of the Central Relief Committee, including those of W.E. Forster and J.H. Tuke are printed in Appendix III of the *Transactions*; *Norwich Mercury*, 9 January, 1847, p. 2.
23. LSF, Minutes of the London Friends' Irish Relief Committee, MS Box V3/1 9.11. 1846-27. 1. 1847; Forster, *Memoirs*, vol. 2, pp. 211-2, 240.

24. *Norfolk Chronicle*, 16 January, 1847, p. 3.
25. LSF, MS Box V3/8; J.J. Gurney, *Memoirs*, p. 504.
26. Central Relief Committee, *Transactions*, Appendix XV, p. 380.
27. A. Opie, *Memorials of the Life of Amelia Opie, Selected and Arranged by Cecilia Lucy Brightwell* (Norwich: Fletcher and Alexander, London: Longman Brown, 1854), p. 374, quoting Genesis 18:25.
28. NRO, MEA 11/118 and MEA 5/49.
29. British Association for the Relief of Extreme Distress in Ireland and Scotland, *Report ... with Correspondence of the Agents, Tables &c, and a List of Subscribers*. (London, 1849).
30. *Norfolk Chronicle*, 23 January, 1847, p. 2.
31. C.O. Murchadha, *The Great Famine*, p. 159 gives a British Empire figure of £171,000 for the first appeal, but states that the second raised only £30,000.
32. Forster, *Memoirs*, vol 2, p. 508. Joseph Bewley in Ireland was thought to have worked himself to an early death for the cause: M.J. Wigham, *The Irish Quakers*, p. 87.
33. *Norfolk News*, 17 December, 1845, p. 2; 9 January, 1847, p. 2.
34. T. Anbinder, 'Lord Palmerston and the Irish Famine Emigration' in *The Historical Journal*, 44, 2 (2001), pp. 441-69. There is no reference to William Forster dated 1847 in the Palmerston Papers. I thank John Rooney, Archivist at the Hartley Library, University of Southampton, for information that the copy of a letter, dated 10 June 1849, relates to William Forster's journey to sovereigns in Europe with a message from the Society of Friends calling for the abolition of slavery: University of Southampton Library, Palmerston Papers MS 62/PP/GC/FO/27, 1849.
35. *Norwich Mercury*, 1, 8 and 15 May 1847, all p. 2.
36. J.S. Donnelly Jr., "Irish Property Must Pay for Irish Poverty": British Public Opinion and the Great Irish Famine' in Chris Morash and Richard Hayes, eds, *'Fearful Realities' New Perspectives on the Famine* (Blackrock, Co. Dublin, Irish Academic Press, 1996), pp. 60-76, with quotation from *the Times*, 2 April 1849, on p. 76. Around a million people are estimated to have emigrated.
37. *Norfolk Chronicle*, 3 June, 1848, p. 2; *Norwich Mercury*, 3 June, 1848, p. 2; *Norfolk Chronicle*, 30 September, 1848, p. 2.
38. T. Wemyss Reid, *Life* vol. 1, pp. 249-50.
39. Hatton, Helen E., *The Largest Amount of Good: Quaker Relief in Ireland, 1654-1921* (McGill-Queen's University Press, 1993), p.

250. I am grateful to Maria Kennedy for drawing my attention to this work.
40. R.B. Goodbody, *Quaker Relief*, pp. 22-30, and R. Goodbody, *A Suitable Channel*, pp. 69-70.
 41. NRO, PD 515/41. Quotation taken from the receipt in the records of the Tibenham parish, 1847, relating to the second appeal on 29 September.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENT OF ILLUSTRATIONS

1. William Forster (1784-1854)

Reproduced from a half tone block of a drawing of 1835 included in *Friends of a Half Century; Fifty Memorials with Portraits of Members of the Society of friends 1840-1890*, ed. William Robinson (London: Edward Hicks, 1891) p. 119, with permission from the Library of the Religious Society of Friends, London.

2. Ireland in the 1840s

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