

# **Patterns of Membership and Participation Among British Quakers, 1823 – 2012**

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## **Abstract**

During the 1850s there was rising concern in the Society of Friends about declining membership. From the 1840s attempts were made to obtain hard statistics on adherence and in the late 20<sup>th</sup> century another decline again reduced numbers to the level of the 1850s and 1860s.

This thesis reviews and analyses data from the middle of the 19<sup>th</sup> century to 2012, illuminating variation in both membership and participation in church worship and governance. It presents new data on participation in meeting for worship and provides geographical and socio-metric data on the origins of enquiries about Quakerism, providing both a research tool for further work by bringing large volumes of information together and illuminating the ways in which the size and the social structure of the Society of Friends has varied with time.

## **Dedication**

This is really for my children - Matthew and Ralph - who cheerfully and sometimes helpfully put up with a Dad hidden behind a laptop or book, and Deirdre my wife without whose encouragement and toleration I would never have started - or finished!

## **Acknowledgements**

I would like to acknowledge a debt of gratitude to Ben Pink Dandelion who forbore with my slowly coming to a decision to undertake this piece of work and for Ben and Hugh McLeod supervising me with tolerance and generosity; Godalming Local Quaker Meeting, Surrey and Hampshire Border Area Quaker Meeting, Friends Higher Educational Awards Committee, Michael Booth of the Pollard and Dickenson Trust and others for supporting me.

In particular I would like to thank the ever patient and extraordinarily knowledgeable staff of the Quaker Library in Friends House; the Friends distantly past who faithfully completed census and questionnaire returns and those who recorded and analysed them; and current Friends who have done the same and also responded with extraordinary generosity to my many requests for information. And, of course, Michael Gittins of Farnham Quaker Meeting who painstakingly proofread my thesis. Any remaining errors are entirely my responsibility.

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## Glossary and Abbreviations

Originally, Quakers saw the accepted names for days of the week and months as both heathen and unnecessary using instead 1<sup>st</sup> day for Sunday, 2<sup>nd</sup> day for Monday and so on. From the mid-18<sup>th</sup> century January was termed 1<sup>st</sup> month, February was 2<sup>nd</sup> month etc. However, the practice eventually became simply a peculiarity used on formal occasions and in the 20<sup>th</sup> century lapsed entirely. In the text I give dates as used in the documents referenced.

**Allowed Meetings:** No longer used. *Meetings for Worship* either too new or too small to function independently. They were ‘allowed’ in the sense that the *Monthly* or *Quarterly Meeting* allowed them to occur. Should such a meeting grow stronger it would have become ‘*recognised*’ (that is recognised as a Meeting for Worship by the Monthly Meeting) after which, should it grow stronger still it would have become a *Preparative Meeting*. The process could be reversed should a meeting decrease in numbers.

**AQM:** see *Area Quaker Meeting* and *Monthly Meeting*

**Area Quaker Meeting:** aka AQM. See *Monthly Meeting*

**Associate:** a long disused term for an attender closely involved with meeting. See also *Attender*.

**Attender:** Individuals who attend *Meeting for Worship* but who are not members. Historically distinctions were made between *Enquirers*, *Seekers* and Attenders. During the 20<sup>th</sup> century the distinctions lapsed and all non-members became known as Attenders. An archaic term for a non-member was *Associate*.

**Enquirers:** Historically, individuals who have begun coming to *Meeting for Worship* in a spirit of enquiry about the *Society of Friends*. The usage has now lapsed. With continuing presence at Meeting for Worship, an Enquirer would become a *Seeker* and after demonstrating serious and continuing interest, an *Attender*.

**Local Quaker Meeting:** See *Preparative Meeting*

**LQM:** see *Local Quaker Meeting* and *Preparative Meeting*

**Meeting for Sufferings:** aka *MfS* or *Sufferings*. Historically the body set up by early Friends to monitor and relieve the suffering of those being persecuted. It gradually grew in to the effective executive committee of the church, taking its instruction from the *Yearly Meeting*. Sufferings membership is composed of representatives appointed by each of the *Monthly* or *Area Quaker Meetings*. Meeting for business 10 times a year it was until 2008 the employer of staff. From 2008, *Trustees* took over the executive function, Sufferings remaining as policy and reflective body.

**Meeting for Worship:** The religious meeting of Quakers in which individuals wait in expectant silence for revelation, often shared in *ministry*.

**MfS:** see *Meeting for Sufferings*

**MM:** See *Monthly Meeting*

**Monthly Meeting:** aka MM, the basic unit of organisation of the church so called because historically it met to conduct business on a monthly basis. Members belong to a Monthly Meeting. Monthly Meetings also appoint representatives to *Meeting for Sufferings* and to the annual *Yearly Meeting*. From 2008 onwards, MM's became Area Quaker Meetings or AQM. The number of Monthly or Area Quaker Meetings has varied with time between about 70 and 80. Each MM or AQM has a number of constituent *Preparative* or *Local Quaker*

*Meetings.*

**Particular Meetings:** Local Meetings for Worship. See Preparative Meetings.

**PM:** see *Preparative Meeting*

**Preparative Meeting:** aka PM, i) *colloquially* Local worshipping group so called because it met monthly for business in preparation for *Monthly Meeting*. ii) Properly the monthly business meeting. From 2008 known as *Local Quaker Meeting* or *LQM* while the business meeting remained known as the Preparative Meeting. The number of PM's or LQM's has varied with time. In 2012, there were about 478. PM's or LQM's, grouped into the larger MM or AQM's.

**Recognised Meeting:** Term now disused. A Meeting for Worship recognised by Monthly meeting but inferior to a Preparative Meeting.

**Seeker:** An individual who first came to *Meeting for Worship* as an *Enquirer*, who, after demonstrating continuing commitment becomes known as a Seeker, diminutive of Seeker after the Truth.

**Sufferings:** see *Meeting for Sufferings*

**Swarthmore Lecture** An annual lecture on a topic of current interest established by the Woodbrooke Extension Committee in 1907. The lecture is given at Yearly Meeting each year and subsequently published in an extended form.

**Tabular Statement:** Annual returns of statistics from constituent meetings, recording numbers of members, attenders, births, marriages, deaths etc.

**Trustees:** From 2008, the executive body of the church.

**Yearly Meeting:** i) *colloquially* the organisation as a whole, diminutive of

*Britain Yearly Meeting*; ii) the event Yearly Meeting, held annually usually in May, effectively the AGM of the church

## Chapter 1: Introduction

### CHAPTER 1

#### INTRODUCTION

- *Purpose and Scope*

In this thesis, I survey and re-analyse statistical data relevant to the Religious Society of Friends (Quakers) in Britain. In doing so I concentrate mainly on national data, though I have also examined early and mid-19<sup>th</sup> century data relating only to York and London because they are among the earliest available and interesting because of that. I am aware that data exists from the later 19<sup>th</sup> and 20<sup>th</sup> centuries, often collected by newspapers as part of a wider church survey, but to track down and include these would extend both the scope and range of this thesis beyond the time and the resources available.

There are two reasons for attempting this survey and analysis of the statistics of the Religious Society of Friends. The first is that it is clear from the annual membership statistical exercise, the Tabular Statement, that adherents to the Society of Friends are becoming fewer, albeit in 2009 and 2010 there were slight and temporary rises in the numbers of attenders<sup>1</sup> at Quaker Meetings.

Even though I would not (yet) describe myself as ‘elderly’ Gill’s observation in his introduction to *The Myth of the Empty Church* rings true<sup>2</sup>

It is obvious to most people that a majority of churches and

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<sup>1</sup> See my glossary for further explanation of this and other Quaker terms.

<sup>2</sup> Robin Gill *The Myth of the Empty Church* (London, Society for the Promotion of Christian Knowledge, 1993) 2

## Chapter 1: Introduction

chapels in Britain today are more empty than full. Of course, there are some striking exceptions ... These apart, Sunday congregations are seen as characteristically sparse. Furthermore, the elderly often remember their churches being much fuller in the past.

One driver, therefore, was sheer curiosity about what statistics can say of the present state and possible future of Quakers.

Within the Religious Society of Friends in Britain (Quakers) concerns about the declining membership have been something of a historic theme. In the 1850s, both Friends and non-Friends published a number of tracts and pamphlets claiming to identify the causes of decline. In 1877, Robert Barclay listed several such<sup>3</sup>. Samuel Fothergill particularly neatly summarises the concerns of the time in his introduction<sup>4</sup>:

The announcement which has called forth the following pages is made on the assumption that the Society of Friends has, during the present century, been declining, both in numbers and influence. It is not, therefore, necessary to enquire into the truthfulness of this position; but, taking it as the basis of our enquiries, we shall endeavour to show the causes of the supposed declension.

Friends' concerns, however, were not limited only to lengthy polemical tracts. Meeting for Sufferings made efforts to monitor the state of meetings through committees of visitation and individuals such as

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<sup>3</sup> Robert Barclay *The Inner Life* 682. Among those listed are *The Quakers or Friends, Their Rise and Decline: An Essay on the Cause of Decline of the Society of Friends* by Quantum Mutatis; *The Society of Friends: Its Strength and Weakness* by Edmund Fry; *An Enquiry into the causes of their diminished influence and numbers with suggestions for a remedy* by Samuel Fothergill

<sup>4</sup> Samuel Fothergill *Essay* 1

## Chapter 1: Introduction

Samuel Tuke made occasional attempts in the first half of the 19<sup>th</sup> century to obtain hard data on the state of the Society<sup>5</sup>.

In 1859, an anonymous ‘gentleman’<sup>6</sup> offered a prize for the best analysis of the decline of the Society of Friends in Britain, won by John Stephenson Rowntree<sup>7</sup>. In his essay, Rowntree laments the lack of statistical information on the members and attenders of the Society of Friends and spends some effort in estimating historical numbers<sup>8</sup>. Whether because of Rowntree’s concerns, Tuke’s earlier efforts or for some other unknown reason<sup>9</sup>, in 1861 British Quakers began collecting statistics on membership and have done so annually ever since. In chapter 4, I examine the Tabular Statement, which, as a continuous series of data spanning 150 years and more, represents a major resource for the study of British Quakerism.

Disquiet about the decline in membership resurfaced in the 1980s,

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<sup>5</sup> Chapter 2 ‘Tuke Statistics’

<sup>6</sup> Thomas Kennedy *British Quakerism 1860 – 1920* (Oxford, Oxford University Press, 2001) 40 states in footnote 84 “The concerned donor was probably the wealthy Birmingham Friend George Sturge (1708 – 1888) see John S Rowntree to Norman Parry 10<sup>th</sup> October 1905 MSS port. 8/135 Library of the Society of Friends.” However, on examining Rowntree’s letter to Parry I find somewhat less certainty than Kennedy seems to suggest. Rowntree writes “Naturally in 1858 – 9 one heard a great deal of conversation and speculation as to who was the donor of the one hundred guineas, and I know the weight of evidence pointed to George Sturge...” but goes on to state that another, though less likely possibility, was George Head Head (*sic*)

<sup>7</sup> John Stephenson Rowntree *Quakerism Past and Present; Being an Enquiry into the Causes of its Decline in Great Britain and Ireland* (London, Smith, Elder and Co., 1859) vii

<sup>8</sup> John Stephenson Rowntree *Quakerism Past and Present* Chapter IV 68 - 88

<sup>9</sup> The records of Meeting for Sufferings and the Yearly Meeting are silent on the point

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mainly in the publications of Alastair Heron<sup>10</sup>. In 2004, I re-analysed the Tabular Statement for the latter part of the 20<sup>th</sup> century, confirming a claim by Heron that there was a rise in membership in the late 1960s and early 1970s followed by a decline. I showed it was possible to fit a second-order equation to the decline with sufficient confidence to predict the demise of the Society of Friends as a national institution between 2030 and 2040<sup>11</sup>. Dandelion and Charles Stroud confirmed this prediction using different methodology<sup>12</sup> although Paul Burton was able to show that the decline was not consistent, and indeed depending on time scale adopted, growth occurred in some areas<sup>13</sup>.

These findings resulted in a major statistical exercise by Dandelion and I examining trends in participation in the Society of Friends through a longitudinal survey by questionnaire of Quaker meetings between 2006 and 2010<sup>14</sup>. *Present and Prevented* is analysed in chapters 5 and 10.

Secondly, this thesis is an attempt to bring together in one place details of surveys relevant to the study of the Religious Society of Friends in

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<sup>10</sup> Particularly Alastair Heron *Our Quaker identity: religious society or friendly society?* (Kelso, Curlew Productions, 2000) and *The Future of British Quakers* (Kelso, Curlew Productions, 2001)

<sup>11</sup> Bill Chadkirk, *Will the Last (Women) Friend to Leave Please Ensure that the Light Remains Shining?* *Quaker Studies* 9 no. 1 (2004) 114-119

<sup>12</sup> Pink Dandelion and Charles Stroud A New Kind of End-Time Prophecy *Quaker Studies* 9 no. 1 (2004)

<sup>13</sup> Paul F Burton Keeping the Light shining: The End of British Quakerism Revisited *Quaker Studies* 9 no. 2 (2005) 249-256

<sup>14</sup> Bill Chadkirk and Pink Dandelion Present and Prevented: A survey of membership activity in Britain Yearly Meeting of the Religious Society of Friends (Quakers) *Quaker Studies* 12 no. 2 (2008) 253-263

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Britain. It does not pretend to be comprehensive. A letter indicates the possible existence of an 1832<sup>15</sup> survey of mortality among Friends, the earliest such yet identified. I have tried to locate surviving records without success. Slack also conducted a survey in 1967<sup>16</sup>. Finally Rowntree<sup>17</sup> and Isichei<sup>18</sup> reference two national surveys of membership undertaken by Tuke in 1840 and 1847 but give only the aggregate total of members for those years<sup>19</sup> (discovery of such early national surveys would be extremely interesting). There may be more neglected collections of data to be uncovered.

This thesis is primarily concerned with Local and Area Meetings<sup>20</sup>. It does not include participation in Regional Meetings, the central bodies of the Religious Society of Friends or other Quaker organisations, no matter how significant those might be. A further substantial study would be required to include these.

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<sup>15</sup> Among the Tuke Papers in the Special Collections department of the Brotherton Library of Leeds University

<sup>16</sup> Kathleen Slack *Constancy and Change in the Society of Friends* Swarthmore Lecture 1967 (London, Friends Home Service Committee, 1967)

<sup>17</sup> Rowntree *Quakerism Past and Present* 87. Neither the 1832 mortality nor the two Tuke surveys are listed in Helen Roberts comprehensive list of archival resources *Researching Yorkshire Quaker History* (University of Hull Brynmor Jones Library, 2007). Vigorous attempts to find the surveys in the archives of The Retreat Hospital, York, and Friends Provident where Tuke held directorships, and searches of the library catalogues of Friends House, the Borthwick Institute at York University and the Brotherton Library at Leeds University which have holdings of Tuke family papers have been unsuccessful

<sup>18</sup> Elizabeth Isichei *Victoria Quakers* (London, Oxford Historical Monographs, Oxford University Press, 1970)

<sup>19</sup> Neither the 1832 mortality nor the two Tuke surveys are listed in Helen Roberts comprehensive list of archival resources *Researching Yorkshire Quaker History* (University of Hull Brynmor Jones Library, 2007)

<sup>20</sup> Local and Area meetings are the current designation for groupings of Quakers. See my glossary for further explanation

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- *Related Findings and Research*

The scope of this thesis is limited to the Society of Friends and a significant part, the *Present and Prevented* survey, covers new ground. Samuel Tuke's early surveys of membership were exceptional; there was little interest in the numerical size and growth of the Society of Friends in Britain until it began to decline significantly in the 19<sup>th</sup> century. Rowntree's work was clearly not the first or only application of statistics to church membership, since the religious census of 1851 preceded it and the establishment of the Tabular Statement followed it in 1861. Surprisingly little attempt has been made to analyse the serial data of the Tabular Statement, though it is often quoted in passing by authors interested in particular periods of Quakerism, for example Brayshaw<sup>21</sup>. Alastair Heron applied rigorous statistical analysis to the Society to try to understand both the experience of attenders and those who had recently become members, primarily in Yorkshire<sup>22</sup>. In his introduction, Heron stated<sup>23</sup>:

The primary purpose [of *Caring, Conviction, Commitment*] is to provide all listed attenders [*in Yorkshire*] with an opportunity to speak from their experience of coming among Quakers .... The enquiry may also throw light on the reasons for hesitancy about seeking formal membership of the Society of Friends.

In his introduction Heron made reference to a 1985 study of 562

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<sup>21</sup> A Neave Brayshaw *The Quakers: Their Story and Message* (London, Friends Home Service Committee, 1969) 292

<sup>22</sup> Alastair Heron *A Caring, Conviction and Commitment: Dilemmas of Quaker Membership Today* (London, Quaker Home Service, 1992)

<sup>23</sup> Alastair Heron *Caring Conviction Commitment* 10

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attenders which showed that over a three year period only 6% became members of the Society of Friends, 39% moved on' and 55% remained attenders. Six years later, of the same group of attenders, 9% had become members, 35% remained attenders and 56% had 'moved on'<sup>24</sup>.

Among the main findings of Heron's study were that<sup>25</sup>:

- Half the survey described themselves as 'atheist' or 'agnostic'
- Many felt there was no need for membership

The latter finding is important when considering the evidence in Chapter 4 on the Tabular Statement of the growing proportion of attenders in meetings.

Heron followed *Caring Conviction Commitment* with a further study on membership<sup>26</sup>, this time covered the whole of Britain Yearly Meeting. Questionnaires were sent to everyone who had become a member in 1992, 346 individuals in total, with a response rate of 60%. Among the findings were<sup>27</sup>

- Over half of those applying for membership were 50 or older
- 25% described themselves as 'atheist' or 'agnostic' before applying (compared with 50% of uncommitted attenders)
- Those who described themselves as 'un-churched' before

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<sup>24</sup> Alastair Heron *Caring Conviction Commitment* 6 - 7

<sup>25</sup> Alastair Heron *Caring Conviction Commitment* 50

<sup>26</sup> Alastair Heron *Now we are Quakers: The Experience and Views of New Members* (New Earswick, Quaker Outreach in Yorkshire, 1994)

<sup>27</sup> Alastair Heron *Now We Are Quakers*. 8 – 9 and 44 - 50

### Chapter 1: Introduction

applying for membership were most attracted to the social concerns of Quakers, while those who were described as ‘churched’ were attracted to the spiritual values of Quakers.

- Only half reported getting to half of local meeting business meetings, less than one-third to the Monthly business meetings and two-thirds felt little or no responsibility for the central work of the Society.

Heron concludes<sup>28</sup>

*... we have become so uncertain of our corporate identity that we do not know how to deal with the meaning of membership [Heron’s emphasis]. Even our new members see it primarily in relation to their local meeting...*

*...the Yearly Meeting cannot differ from any other corporate body: responsibility for effective realisation of its avowed purpose is vested in those who have accepted a formal commitment to promote those purposes [emphasis is again Heron’s]. However much any [wish that] ‘membership’ could be abolished so that anyone could say that he or she was a ‘Quaker’ when they felt personally free to do so, it is not a practical proposition*

Rutherford undertook unpublished work on beliefs and demographics of Friends in a survey of almost 600 members and attenders in 2003<sup>29</sup>. I have partly reanalysed Rutherford’s data (chapter 11) in light of Heron’s findings on the age of those applying for membership of the Society of Friends. Rutherford found that the mean age

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<sup>28</sup> Alastair Heron *Now We Are Quakers* 51 -56

<sup>29</sup> Rosie Rutherford unpublished PhD data held at the Quaker Studies Centre, Woodbrooke College, Birmingham

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of members and attenders in 2003 was 63, 11 years after Heron found that more than half of those applying for membership were age 50 or more, suggesting that adherents to the Society of Friends are ageing by approximately a year per year.. Confirmation of this came from a report that the mean age of those on the Woodbrooke register of interested persons in 2011 was 68<sup>30</sup>. In turn it suggests that the Society of Friends will ultimately reach a crisis of old age. Indeed as shown in chapter 4 on the Tabular Statement the death rate among members is rising.

There have, besides the statistical research referred to above, been several large scale pieces of work on the values of Quakers that have influenced my research, most notably those of Dandelion's sociological analysis of Quaker theology<sup>31</sup>, Best's work on the beliefs of young Quakers<sup>32</sup> and Denley and Roylance's<sup>33</sup> collection of statements from individuals. Dandelion's demonstration of a rigid Quaker worshipping structure validating a liberal diversity of theological views frames this study well. He observes<sup>34</sup>:

...The contradiction between the liberalism afforded to ideas of belief, and the statement that such liberalism was enshrined in practice, i.e. that the practice which accommodated the liberalism

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<sup>30</sup> E-mail Ben Pink Dandelion 2011

<sup>31</sup> Pink Dandelion *A Sociological Analysis of the Theology of Quakers: A Silent Revolution* (Lampeter, Edwin Meller Press, 1996)

<sup>32</sup> Simon Best *The Community of Intimacy: The Religious Beliefs and Spiritual Practices of Adolescent Quakers* (University of Birmingham PhD Thesis 2010)

<sup>33</sup> Janette Denley and Gill Roylance eds *Holding Up a Mirror to the Religious Society of Friends* (Birmingham, Denley and Roylance, 1989)

<sup>34</sup> Pink Dandelion *A Sociological Analysis of the Theology of Quakers* 101

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was not itself open to change

Best's findings of diversity of practice among adolescent Quakers<sup>35</sup> and Denley and Roylance who show that many of those who contributed to their findings are fearful of the changes occurring in the Society of Friends mirror Dandelion's findings.

Secularisation theory seeks to explain the reduction in adherence to and the authority of religion in society, I am, however, suspicious of what a colleague during a lunchtime conversation described as 'physics envy'. Consequently, though most of the data presented in this thesis shows Quakerism in a situation of decline, whether or not it is a description of secularisation in a single church is a moot point. Heron showed that many come to the Society of Friends from other churches but we cannot know the ultimate destination of those members and attenders who leave the Society or who come for only a short while, never making it onto lists of recognised attenders. On the other hand, Dandelion is clear that many members of the Society of Friends are adherents to a post-Christian, if not a post-church, belief system<sup>36</sup>:

This is not to say that the group is no longer Christian in its origins or in part of its membership ... However, the popular theology of the group, with its large non-Christian element, is properly and necessarily described in terms which go beyond an historical Quaker-Christianity, and which reflect present-day pluralism"

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<sup>35</sup> Simon Best *The Community of Intimacy* Chapter 7 188 - 231

<sup>36</sup> Pink Dandelion *A Sociological Analysis of the Theology of Quakers* 178

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Dandelion goes on to quote a letter to *The Friend* magazine<sup>37</sup>

Daphne Hampson's opinion that 'The great majority of Friends, in my experience, have long ago discarded Christian ideology (they have difficulty in crediting that people in the churches believe these things)' may be factually true (Letter to *The Friend* 148 (1990) 1418))

One criticism of secularisation theory is therefore that a post-Christian church cannot be described as secular though it may be described as 'other spiritual'. Simply moving away from mainstream orthodox Christian belief cannot be part of a process of secularisation.

In this context, a most persuasive text has been Warner's *Secularisation and its Discontents*<sup>38</sup>. Warner seeks to present and criticise a variety of theories of secularization. The majority of these theories relate only to established Christian churches, a very narrow approach in my opinion. For some religious expression might indeed be through worship at an established church, for others at Quaker meeting and for still others in very different forms. Any theory that purports to measure secularisation per se, rather than merely decline in some Christian churches in some localities in some periods has to take account of the growth in other expressions of spirituality. Warner for example remarks<sup>39</sup>:

Individualised epistemology – *it seems right to me* [Warner's emphasis] – has now taken centre stage in much popular discourse concerning ethics and religion. This is accompanied by the

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<sup>37</sup> Pink Dandelion *A Sociological Analysis of the Theology of Quakers*. 178

<sup>38</sup> Rob Warner *Secularization and its Discontents* (London. Continuum International Publishing Group, 2010)

<sup>39</sup> Rob Warner *Secularisation and its Discontents* 92

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individualised validation of religious convictions through spiritual experiences. Personal judgement and experience are the arbiters of spiritual validity. A religion of personal choice has replaced a religion of communal givens

The final phrase above is very reminiscent of Dandelion's findings<sup>40</sup>:

...The influence of theological belief [in the Society of Friends] is limited because it is marginalised ... because it is i) largely covert, ii) largely individual ... iii) because many Friends perceive the nature of Quakerism is about experience rather than belief.

Our faith is based only on our own deep personal experience: the direct awareness and response of each and every individual to the Spirit's immediate presence... the experiential of Quakerism makes us different from the mainstream churches... (Letter to The Friend 148 (1990): 1415)

However, Warner makes his remarks in the context of a chapter entitled 'Is there a spiritual Revolution?' in which he quotes<sup>41</sup>:

Survey after survey shows that increasing numbers of people now prefer to call themselves 'spiritual' rather than 'religious' ... A cursory glance around the local bookshop or a stroll around the shopping centre leaves little doubt that Christianity has a new competitor in the 'spiritual marketplace'... we can no longer evade the challenge of assessing and exploring the growth of 'spirituality'. What exactly is it? How significant is its growth? Is it altering the whole shape of the sacred landscape in the West? Are we living through a spiritual revolution?

This is similar to an argument I have made a number of times in

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<sup>40</sup> Pink Dandelion *A Sociological Analysis of the Theology of Quakers* 290

<sup>41</sup> Paul Heelas et al eds. *The Spiritual Revolution: Why Religion is Giving Way to Spirituality* (Oxford, Blackwell, 2005) 1 quoted by Warner *Secularisation and its Discontents* 91

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discussion about declining Quakerism, using the burgeoning growth of crystal shops as a metaphor illustrative of the replacement of given, communal, religious norms by a spirituality of choice.

Warner's view supports remarks made by McLeod in the introduction to his *The Religious Crisis of the 1960s*<sup>42</sup>:

... from the 1950s to the 1970s there was an enormous increase in the range of beliefs and world-views accessible to the majority of the population. By the 1970s, the options had widened strikingly to include not only new forms of Christianity and new political faiths, but also many other religions and 'alternative spiritualities'. Indeed, by the 1990s, the fashion would be for eclecticism – a deliberate mixing of elements drawn from different belief-systems, or a casual assumption that the boundaries between them would be irrelevant.

Another criticism of secularisation is that that there are many exceptions to the presumed on-going processes. The United States is frequently noted as a special case, as are many African countries where Pentecostalism has taken root. Warner notes in reference to earlier research<sup>43</sup>:

...many European scholars are likely to be surprised when attending a conference in the United States, by the high levels of contemporary religiosity both in terms of the levels of church attendance on Sundays and the time given to religious issues and religious lobbyists in the media.

In summary therefore:

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<sup>42</sup> Hugh McLeod *The Religious Crisis of the 1960s* (Oxford, Oxford University Press, 2007) 1 - 2

<sup>43</sup> Rob Warner *Secularisation and its discontents* 84

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- It is not clear to me that secularisation is as amenable to scientific theorising as some authors seem to think. I doubt it possible to develop quantifiable theories from which predictions can be made and tested (a criterion for a scientific theory), mainly because of problems of definition of spirituality or inclusion/exclusion. Warner lists a wide variety of variations on the themes of 'believing' and 'belonging'; for instance 'believing and belonging', 'belonging without believing', 'believing without belonging', 'belonging before believing' and 'committed believing without belonging'<sup>44</sup> and further points to the problems of exclusion and inclusion in the process of secularisation<sup>45</sup>:

Warner argued that the intellectual elite in the United States was sympathetic to the secularization paradigm and inclined to view religion as inconsequential, marginal and of diminishing social significance. However, the continuing high levels of Church attendance – particularly in middle America ... point to a dimension of religion in America that did not conform readily to the classical European paradigm. Warner therefore concluded: "That the reigning theory does not seem to work has become an open secret".

- It is notoriously difficult to obtain reliable data. 'Membership' is a fluid concept varying between denominations. Catholic adherence, estimated by parish priests, is aggregated nationally as the basis for measurement<sup>46</sup>. One view of the Church of England is that

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<sup>44</sup> Rob Warner *Secularisation and its Discontents* 48 - 51

<sup>45</sup> Rob Warner *Secularisation and its Discontents* 68 - 69

<sup>46</sup> I spent several days in the National Catholic Library, St Michael's Abbey and

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everyone born within a parish is a member in the sense that everyone has the right to participate in church rites. Church statisticians therefore use a variety of criteria to estimate adherence, for example the number of baptisms, participation in communion, estimated attendance at a given date or membership of church rolls<sup>47</sup>. However, joining a church roll depends on meeting certain criteria and application<sup>48</sup>. Although there are procedures enabling annual revision of rolls, wholly new rolls have been regularly published every six years only since 2007<sup>49</sup>. Even where there are formal admissions processes, as in the Society of Friends, the resulting ‘headline’ figures can be quite misleading as to the actual number of adherents as I show in chapter 4.

- Secularisation theory seems to me to take too little account of the emergence of different spiritualities that are perhaps even less amenable to data collection and analysis.

Consequently, though I have been urged a number of times to compare my findings with other churches I have done so only to a very limited extent. Changes in the membership of the Society of Friends are

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Farnborough collating Catholic statistics and discussing the problems of measuring adherence with the librarian

<sup>47</sup> For a discussion on the variety of statistics collected by the Church of England see, for example, the foreword to *Church Statistics 2010/11: Parochial attendance, membership and finance statistics together with statistics for licensed ministers for the Church of England, January to December* (London, Archbishops Council Research and Statistics Central Secretariat, 2012) 1 - 6

<sup>48</sup> <http://www.churchofengland.org/about-us/structure/churchlawlegis/church-representation-rules/part-i.aspx#ba0> accessed 9/2/2013

<sup>49</sup> <http://www.churchofengland.org/about-us/structure/churchlawlegis/church-representation-rules/part-i.aspx#ba1> accessed 9/2/2013

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simply that, they are not necessarily part of some grand process.

There are further reasons to think the Society of Friends is different from other churches (though I am aware that it is easy for anyone closely attached to an organisation to find such reasons). First, it is an error, I think, to mistake a qualitative similarity (a worshipping community) for a quantitative similarity. For example to achieve a 10% growth rate, ambitious by any standards, Quakers would have to recruit another 1,500 members annually. For either the Catholic Church or the Church of England to do the same would mean recruiting between 350,000 and 450,000 extra adherents annually! Although the Baptist or Methodist churches are nearer Friends in size, they are sufficiently larger for the same argument to apply. The very smallness of the Religious Society of Friends therefore makes it different. The converse argument also applies; that it is an error to mistake a quantitative similarity with a qualitative similarity. Many churches of similar size (or smaller), such as the Exclusive Brethren (about 46,000 members worldwide<sup>50</sup>), are radically different in form and structure from the Religious Society of Friends. There are clear differences between minister-led biblically based churches and the individualistic community of believers emphasising personal and continual revelation in addition to, and sometimes instead of, scriptural authority that is Dandelion's 'post-Christian' Religious Society of Friends. Slack claims also that the Society of Friends is neither sect nor denomination, neither

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<sup>50</sup> <http://www.plymouthbrethrenchristianchurch.org/>

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movement nor organisation<sup>51</sup>.

Nevertheless, in my conclusion I have sought to show that there was something different about Quakerism by including, as far as possible, some comparative membership statistics of other churches as well as showing that the current decline is typical of churches in general. However, coincidence does not imply common cause.

Heron was a leading proponent of the view that the diversity of Quaker belief was a cause of the decline in membership<sup>52</sup> arguing that this diversity arose from the liberalism of the 1960s and 1970s, pointing out that by 1993, 60% of membership had joined during what Heron termed 'a post liberal phase'<sup>53</sup>. As I show in Chapter 12, I have concluded that Heron is only partly correct. I show that the cause of the rise was the successful liberalising movement in the mid-19<sup>th</sup> century and that Friends, far from simply responding to the *zeitgeist* of the mid-20<sup>th</sup> century, were already there and the growth in membership was a consequence of a coincidence of liberal Quakerism with a liberal Society.

I have used many primary sources of data, though of course my commentary and reanalysis has been informed by the secondary sources listed in my bibliography.

For instance, I spent several fruitful days in the Brotherton Library

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<sup>51</sup> Kathleen Slack *Constancy and Change in the Society of Friends* 7 –22

<sup>52</sup> Alastair Heron *Quakers in Britain: A Century of Change 1895 – 1995* (Keslo, Curlew Graphics 1995) 136, 151 - 162

<sup>53</sup> Alastair Heron *Quakers in Britain* 133

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of Leeds University examining and transcribing Tuke's data and notes on the survey of York Friends in 1840 and in the Quaker library in Central London consulting minutes and records of Meeting for Sufferings in the search for the origins of the Tabular Statement.

The *Present and Prevented* survey was primary research among meetings. I carried out the analysis (surprisingly enjoyed coding just over 43,500 bits of data into spreadsheets) playing with the analysis to see what it could be made to reveal.

Much information came, if not from source documents at least publication of primary data in other texts. For example, I discovered Thurnham's survey of the Society of Friends in 1844 in an appendix to a book entitled the *Statistics of Insanity*<sup>54</sup>. Some ultimately fruitless attempts were made to locate Thurnham's original archive. Similarly, the data on the *British Weekly Survey* of 1886 and the Mudie-Smith survey of 1902 – 1903 were taken from publications by the authors of the original surveys<sup>55</sup><sup>56</sup>. In the relevant chapters describing the Quaker surveys of 1904, 1905 and 1909 I have mostly relied on *The Friend*, the weekly Quaker journal.

Although I am primarily interested in how many Quakers, where and when, Dandelion and Collins *The Quaker Condition*<sup>57</sup>, Gill's *The Myth*

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<sup>54</sup> John Thurnham *Statistics of Insanity* (London, Simpkin Marshall and Co. 1845)

<sup>55</sup> *The Religious Census of London* (London Hodder and Stoughton, 1888)

<sup>56</sup> Richard Mudie-Smith *The Religious Life of London* (London Hodder and Stoughton, 1904)

<sup>57</sup> Pink Dandelion and Peter Collins Eds. *The Quaker Condition: the sociology of a liberal religion* (Newcastle upon Tyne, Cambridge Scholars Publishing, 2008)

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of the *Empty Church* and *The 'Empty' Church Revisited*<sup>58 59</sup> and McLeod's *The Religious Crisis of the 1960s*<sup>60</sup> have been significant in informing my conclusions.

McLeod attempted to explain the major religious changes that took place in the 'wider 1960s' which he defined as 1958 to 1974 from, the perspective of 'ordinary people'; identifying as major factors the increasing variety of religious options and the changing understanding of religious identity. Gill rejected standard secularisation theory, arguing that it ignored the fact that church building exceeded available congregations. Currie, Gilbert and Horsley, in their heavily statistical approach in *Churches and Churchgoers* sought to show that loss of religious belief resulted in secularisation, using a wide definition of religion<sup>61</sup>:

The attempt to effect certain ends either in this world or in other worlds by means wholly or partially supernatural.

Dandelion argues in *A Sociological Analysis of the Quaker Condition* that corporate belief of Quakerism has dissolved into a variety of theologies held by individual Quakers. In this, he accords with the views of Heron who has had most obviously the greatest influence on my approach in the sense that reanalysis of his data started me off on this whole

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<sup>58</sup> Robin Gill *The Myth of the Empty Church*

<sup>59</sup> Robin Gill *The 'Empty' Church Revisited* (Aldershot, Ashgate Publishing Ltd, 2003)

<sup>60</sup> Hugh McLeod *The Religious Crisis of the 1960s*

<sup>61</sup> Robert Currie, Alan Gilbert and Lee Horsley *Churches and Churchgoers: Church Growth in the British Isles Since 1700* (Oxford, Oxford University Press, 1978) 1

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endeavour<sup>62</sup>. Dandelion and Collins in *The Quaker Condition* argue that what they call ‘hyper- or ultra-liberal ... post-Christian’ (a phrase echoing Heron’s ‘post-liberal’) Quakerism maintains its identity through means of narrative and story-telling, exploring or attempting to resolve tensions between in and out, sacred and profane, unity and diversity etc. rather than by holding some corporate belief<sup>63</sup>.

British Religion in Numbers<sup>64</sup> and the annual yearbooks of various denominations such as those held by Dr William’s Library have been used to obtain comparative data.

- *Structure*

My thesis is in two sections: the first discussing the statistics of members and attenders; the second discussing statistics primarily concerned with participation in worship, business and administration. Within each section, chapters are arranged chronologically.

Following the second section there is a chapter briefly summarising other work and findings that did not warrant a whole chapter of their own, either because they have been explored elsewhere or are too narrow in scope to warrant a complete chapter. This chapter also includes some

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<sup>62</sup> Heron’s writings are too numerous to be included in their entirety here and a comprehensive list of those consulted is included in the bibliography but perhaps mention might be made of *On being a Quaker: Membership, Past, Present and Future* (Kelso, Curlew Productions, 2000) and *Our Quaker identity: religious society or friendly society?* (Kelso, Curlew Productions, 2000)

<sup>63</sup> Ben Dandelion and Peter Collins *The Quaker Condition* 39

<sup>64</sup> <http://www.brin.ac.uk> hosted by the Institute for Social Change, University of Manchester (accessed 11<sup>th</sup> November 2012)

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reanalysis and new work. Finally, there is a concluding chapter with suggestions for further work.

- *Chapter Summary*

Chapters 2 to 5 form the first part of the thesis, analysing patterns of membership and recognised attenders.

Chapter 2: *Tuke Statistics*. Statistics on York Monthly Meeting collected by Samuel Tuke in 1844

Chapter 3: *Thurnham Statistics*. I reanalyse the data give by Thurnham in *The Statistics of Insanity* 1845

Chapter 4: *The Tabular Statement*. I reanalyse the Tabular Statement from 1861 to 2011, derive information on the patterns of membership, and recognised attenders and show the decline in various social indicators such as marriage and the numbers of children associated with meetings.

Chapter 5: *Present and Prevented 2006 - 2010: Members and Attenders*. I analyse the data collected from a survey of census of meetings relevant to reported membership, attenders and children.

Chapters 6 to 10 form the second part of the thesis examining patterns of attendance at meeting for worship and participation in the business and administration of meetings

Chapter 6: *The Religious Census of 1851*. I analyse the data from

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the census that is concerned with the Religious Society of Friends

Chapter 7: *The British Weekly Survey of 1886*. Although primarily concerned with London I have included an analysis of the data from this survey because with the subsequent Mudie-Smith survey of 1902 and 1903 it forms a significant data set.

Chapter 8: *The Mudie Smith Survey of 1902 and 1903*. I reanalyse the data relevant to the Society of Friends in contrast to that of the earlier British Weekly Survey.

Chapter 9: *The Surveys of 1904 to 1914*. Between 1904 and 1914, there were three national surveys of attendance at Quaker meetings. These were the only significant national surveys until *Present and Prevented* in 2006 to 2010.

Chapter 10: *Present and Prevented Attendance* Chapter 10 is the companion to chapter 5. In chapter 10, I analyse the data collected on attendance at meeting for worship and participation in the business and administration of the Religious Society of Friends.

Chapter 11: *Heron's and Rutherford's Findings Re-examined and Extended*

. In this chapter, I briefly consider data sets that are either too small or too narrowly focussed to warrant a complete chapter but are important enough to include. I also present some new data on enquiries about Quakerism

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Chapter 12: *Conclusions* In my conclusions, I draw together my findings and seek to show that the Society of Friends has changed and is changing because of 19<sup>th</sup> century liberalisation, introducing a simple model from the work of Movement for a New Society to visualise the change. I also compare patterns of membership variation in the Society of Friends with other churches to show that the Society is different.

## **SECTION 1: MEMBERSHIP**

**Chapter 2: Tuke Statistics**

CHAPTER 2

**Tuke Statistics**

**Introduction**

Samuel Tuke (1784 – 1857) was the third generation of an influential Yorkshire Quaker family, director of the Friends Provident Institution<sup>65</sup>, an insurance company for members of the Society, and clerk of Yearly Meeting<sup>66</sup>. He was also a member of a committee that attempted to mediate between Hardshaw Monthly Meeting and a faction of evangelical Quakers led by Isaac Crewdson<sup>67</sup>. Tuke was therefore well placed to be aware of the problems of falling membership of the Religious Society of Friends. As a director of Friends Provident, he would also have known of an exercise conducted in 1832 to obtain statistics on mortality among members of six Monthly Meetings as a basis for the provision of life assurance<sup>68 69</sup>.

Tuke was also concerned about treatment of mentally ill members of the Society of Friends. His father and grandfather had already established an asylum in York, *The Retreat*<sup>70</sup>, to treat sufferers with

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<sup>65</sup> David Tregoning and Hugh Cockerell *Friends for Life: Friends Provident Life Office 1832 -1982* (London, Henry Melland, 1982) 17, 182-183 Friends Provident was an insurance company that specifically catered for members of the Society of Friends

<sup>66</sup> Charles Tylor *Samuel Tuke* 116 -124

<sup>67</sup> Charles Tylor *Samuel Tuke* 125

<sup>68</sup> David Tregoning and Hugh Cockerell *Friends for Life*

<sup>69</sup> Records of York Monthly Meeting of the Society of Friends (1668 – 1982) 7

<sup>70</sup> The Retreat continues to exist and to care for those suffering from mental illness. The majority of its directors are still drawn from the membership of the Society of Friends.

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kindness and sympathy<sup>71</sup> and Samuel Tuke continued the family connection publishing a book on its work in 1813<sup>72</sup>. Even in this early volume, cases are carefully tabulated and statistical inferences drawn to compare treatment regimens with those of The Bethlam Royal Hospital and St Luke's Hospital for Lunatics<sup>73</sup>. Given his familiarity with Friends and the use of statistics both in *The Retreat* and as an insurer it is not surprising that Tuke should eventually consider undertaking a statistical study of the Religious Society of Friends.

Both Thurnham and Isichei refer to statistical studies undertaken by Tuke. Isichei is particularly definite, stating:

Before 1861, we have reliable membership figures for 1840 and 1847, when two unofficial Quaker censuses were conducted under the supervision of Samuel Tuke<sup>74</sup>

However, Isichei unfortunately gives neither references nor provides data. Thurnham is more obscure. He includes statistics on the membership of the Society of Friends as an appendix to his own work on the treatment of mental illness at *The Retreat* and refers only to surveys of 49 Monthly Meetings in 1820, a national survey undertaken in 1840 and “a

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<http://www.theretreatyork.org.uk/about-the-retreat/our-history.html> accessed 12/04/2012

<sup>71</sup> Charles Tylor *Samuel Tuke* 12

<sup>72</sup> Samuel Tuke *Description of the Retreat: An Institution for Insane Persons of the Society of Friends Containing an Account of its Origin and Purpose, the Modes of Treatment and Statement of Cases* (York, W Alexander, 1813)

<sup>73</sup> Samuel Tuke *Description of the Retreat* 190 - 220

<sup>74</sup> Elizabeth Isichei *Victorian Quakers* 112

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return obtained by the editors of a monthly paper four years later”<sup>75 76 77</sup>.

No trace of the 1840 or 1847 data has been found. However, data on York Monthly Meeting was found in the Brotherton Library of Leeds University collected by Tuke between 1832 and 1841.

On the 12<sup>th</sup> of June 1844, Tuke received a letter from an E Chadwick<sup>78</sup>, the context of which suggests that the author was Edwin Chadwick, social reformer and investigator into urban sanitation, especially in York<sup>79</sup>. Chadwick’s letter was lengthy, asking detailed questions about immigration to and emigration from the Society of Friends. He remarks that the average age of members “... is at best 12 years beyond any middle class average I have yet met with...”

Tuke forwarded Chadwick’s letter to someone whose surname is indecipherable but, again from the context of the reply is probably James

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<sup>75</sup> Tuke is clearly referring to the survey in *The British Friend of vol. 2 1844* (London, A W Bennett, 1844) considered elsewhere

<sup>76</sup> John Thurnham *Statistics of Insanity* appendix II xv. The survey in the *British Friend* of 1844 is very brief and appears to consist of a mixture of membership figures for both Monthly and Preparative Meetings. Its utility is in providing a total figure for membership in 1844 of 15,523 individuals.

<sup>77</sup> Queries to The Retreat and research in the catalogue of the Borthwick Library of York University, depository of many Quaker records and archives of The Retreat, and the Quaker Library in London did not yield any information on the earlier surveys. However papers belonging to Samuel Tuke were eventually located in the special collection of the Brotherton Library of Leeds University. On examination the Tuke papers were found to be a notebook deposited by York Monthly Meeting containing some data concerning the Monthly Meeting between 1823 and 1844 and associated correspondence. It is therefore difficult to correlate the reference by Isichei with any other known surveys of the period. Thurnham did carry out statistical research and he would, as medical officer of The Retreat, have been familiar with records of Samuel Tuke, but does not mention them either. The rest of Thurnham’s data, is considered in chapter 3.

<sup>78</sup> Records of York Monthly Meeting of the Society of Friends 1668 – 1982 Special Collections Brotherton Library, MS/DEP/1981/2/YORK/1 University of Leeds, Leeds, 6

<sup>79</sup> Edwin Chadwick *Report on the Sanitary Conditions of the Labouring Population of Great Britain* (Secretary of State for the Home Department, London, 1842)

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Ellis, a York Friend and director (as was Samuel Tuke) of Friends Provident<sup>80 81</sup>. The letter contained a generous offer:

If ... it was generally thought that somewhat important practical results [*depend on*] obtaining the exact facts to which Chadwick referred it would not be unconsiderable (*sic*) for the Provident Institute to apply a couple of pounds for the purpose.

There are hints in both letters that Tuke was considering an annual collection of statistics and the Friends Provident was offering to fund what we would now call a pilot study. Ellis also referred to the 1832 mortality study but efforts to locate the data have been unfruitful. Since the systematic collection of data begins in 1861 with the Tabular Statement (chapter 4) 17 years later it is certainly conceivable that Tuke's efforts were remembered and formed one of the threads leading to its implementation. Further research in the Quaker archive could provide more evidence.

### **Analysis of the York Monthly Meeting Survey**

The first set of tables compiled by Tuke between 1839 and 1841 compares the age structure of York Monthly Meeting (including Selby and Thirsk) with that of the general population in two city wards of York, Holy Trinity and St Giles – containing The Retreat<sup>82 83</sup>.

In the tables, age is recorded in single years 1 to 14 and thereafter

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<sup>80</sup> Records of York Monthly Meeting of the Society of Friends 7

<sup>81</sup> David Tregoning and Hugh Cockerell *Friends for Life* 182

<sup>82</sup> Records of York Monthly Meeting 1, 2

<sup>83</sup> The Tuke data is given in appendix 2

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in five-year ranges to 95 years. Tuke, however, labels his age bands 15 to 20, 20 to 25 and so on creating ambiguity at the extremities of the ranges. Since the numbers in any overlap are likely to be few the problem has simply been ignored.

Tuke records the total population of Holy Trinity as 908, that of St Giles as 1,076, and the total membership of York Monthly Meeting as 303. It appears that some attempt has been made to normalise the data for comparative purposes by arithmetically adjusting each real value to a common starting value. We can re-calculate Tuke's normalising factors by dividing the real value by his starting value, Table 2.1 and then apply them to the real data collected by Tuke to check against the normalised figures Tuke calculated and included in his tables comparing the ages in each population.

	A. Actual Population <i>N</i>	B. Tuke's 'Normalised' Population <i>N</i>	Tuke's 'Normalisation' Factor (B/A)
Holy Trinity	908	302.3	0.33
St Giles	1076	306.0	0.28
York MM	303	303.0	1.00

**Table 2.1 Tuke normalisation factors**

Table 2.2 gives a representative sample of the results. The figures are consistent enough to show that Tuke did carry out a normalisation calculation, but show that Tuke's data contains errors,  $\bar{x} = 0.9\% \pm \sigma 0.8\%$ . The error is relatively small and possibly a product of carrying out all calculations long hand. It would seem appropriate to re-normalise the data since Tuke used different starting conditions and modern practice would

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be to normalise to a common value. The results of doing so are shown in figure 2.1.

It is clear that while there are proportionally slightly fewer people between the ages of 15 and 40 in the meeting than in the general population, there are significantly more in the range 40 to 70. Indeed that mean age of the meeting was 33.5 and that of the population in general only 28.5. This may be the discrepancy referred to by Chadwick.

A single snapshot can tell us nothing about why the age distribution of Friends should differ from the general population this way and there are at least four reasons why it might.

Selected Ages	<b>1</b>	<b>5</b>	<b>10</b>	<b>14</b>	<b>20 to 25</b>
Tuke Holy Trinity Normalised Age Data	10.5	6.3	6.0	5.6	31.6
Recalculated using Holy Trinity Normalisation Factor Table 2.1	31.8	19.1	17.0	15.2	95.8
Actual Holy Trinity value recorded by Tuke	31	19	17	15	95
Difference	0.8	0.1	0	0.2	0.8
% difference	2.6%	0.5%	0.0%	1.0%	0.8%
Tuke St Giles Normalised Age Date	14.2	8.2	6.2	5.1	31.1
St Giles Normalisation Factor Table 2.1	50.7	29.3	22.1	18.2	111.1
Actual St Giles value recorded by Tuke	50	29	22	18	109
Difference	0.7	0.3	0.1	0.2	2.1
% Difference	1.4%	1.0%	0.6%	1.2%	1.9%

**Table 2.2 Comparison of Tuke's normalised values for St Giles and Holy Trinity with calculated values**

The excess of middle age population may represent the ageing of children born to the previous generation of Friends and a failure to recruit younger members, perhaps with an outflow of younger members through, for example, emigration. Friends may have also been involved in

Chapter 2: Tuke Statistics

occupations with lower risks and consequently lower mortality than the population in general or Friends may recruit more people in older age groups.

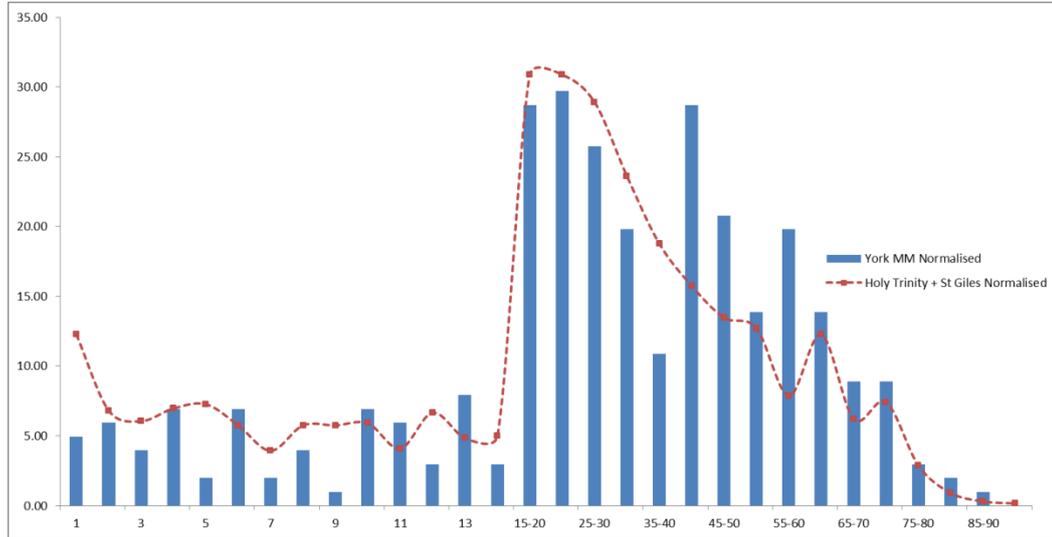


Figure 2.1 Normalised age distribution of members of York Monthly Meeting (solid blue line) against the aggregate population of the parishes of St Giles and Holy Trinity (dotted red line) 1839-1841

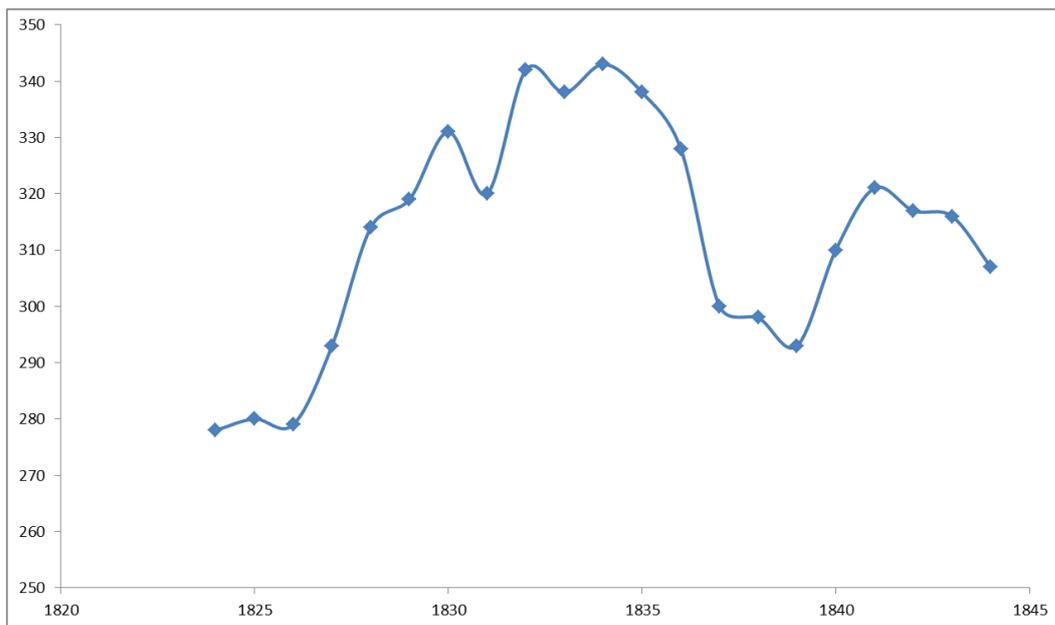
Tuke also recorded the number of living members of York Monthly Meeting by age and by gender in 1823 and in 1844, which should have enabled us to obtain an estimation of changes over a period of 21 years<sup>84</sup>. However, between those two years the average age did not change to any great extent, it was 32.7 in 1824 and 32.6 in 1844 over a period in which the membership rose by 23.4% from 278 in 1824 to 343 in 1834 (figure 2.2). Comparing the numbers of each age category reveals a suspiciously close match, with the figures varying between samples only at ages 13 (3 more in 1844), 24 (6 more in 1824) and 57 (one more in 1844). Such close

<sup>84</sup> Records of York Monthly 10, 11

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correspondence between two populations 20 years apart, while not beyond the bounds of possibility, must cast doubts on the accuracy of Tuke's recording. However, if accurate, then by the standards of the early 21st century the Society was in general extremely youthful.

Tuke recorded death rates in York Monthly Meeting between 1823 and 1844 and between 1824 and 1823 by age and gender enabling estimation of mortality among Friends<sup>85</sup>. Since the difference between 1823 and 1824 is 1 in a total of 21 years, only the period 1823 to 1844 will be considered.



**Figure 2.2 Variation in membership in York Monthly Meeting 1823 to 1844**

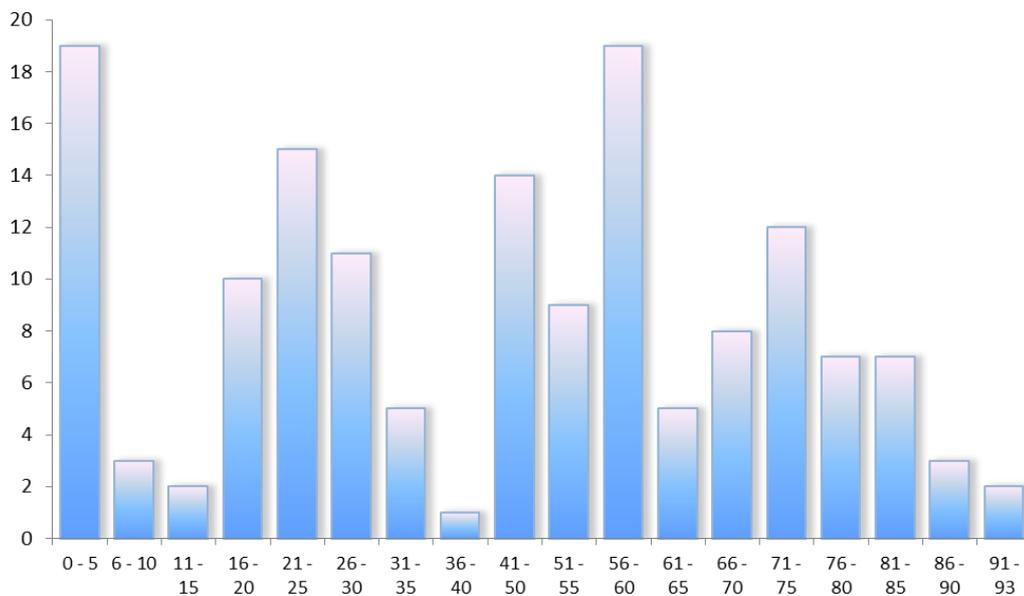
The number of individuals dying annually is small and to obtain a better picture of variation, ages have been grouped into 5-year intervals (figure 2.3). The pattern is one that might be expected for the period, a

<sup>85</sup> Records of York Monthly Meeting 10,11

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high level of infant mortality, a high level of mortality in the dangerous years of child birth and then the mortality of old age. Indeed 50% of the members of the meeting had died by the ages 41 to 45.

Plotting a chart of female deaths as a percentage of all deaths reveals the dangers of childbirth quite starkly.



**Figure 2.3 Deaths in 5-year age intervals in York Monthly Meeting 1823 to 1844**

In figure 2.4 greater than 50% (red line) indicates a majority of female deaths and below 50% a majority of male deaths. Women clearly die more frequently between the ages of 16 and 40, the years of child bearing and again from the age of 61 onwards, largely because most men have died by then. The average age at which the men of York Monthly Meeting died was 39.9 while the average age at which the women of the meeting died was 43.8. According to Drever and Whitehead, life

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expectancy at birth in Britain in general in 1840 was around 40 years<sup>86</sup>, not significantly different from that of York Monthly Meeting.

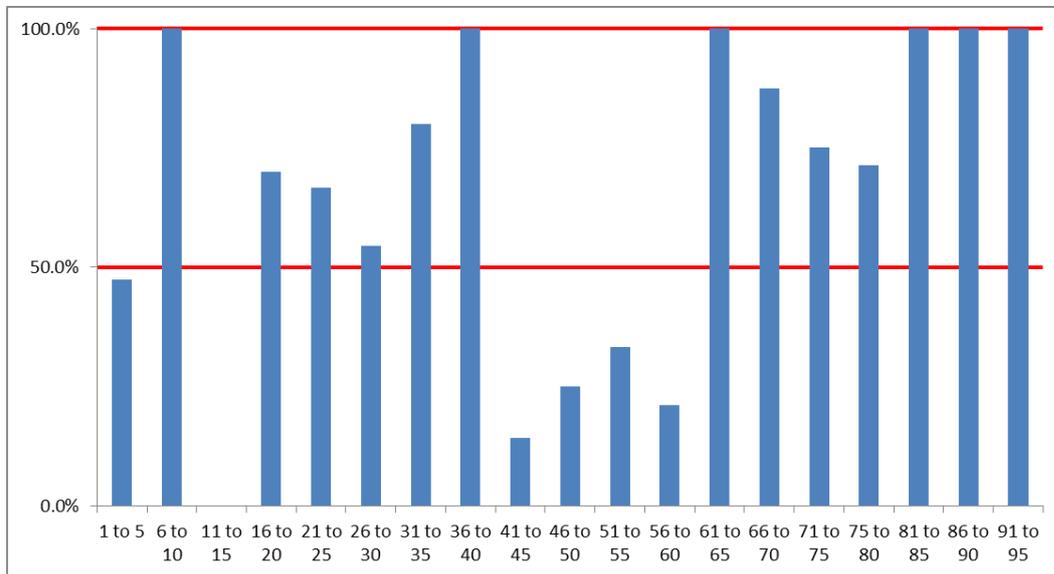


Figure 2.4 Female mortality as a percentage of all mortality in York Monthly Meeting 1823 to 1844

### Conclusions

It is not clear whether the Tuke statistics in the Brotherton Library are the remaining part of the later national study referred to by Thurnham and Isichei, or whether there are records yet to be uncovered. It is clear from the surviving correspondence with Chadwick and Ellis that Tuke was being encouraged to consider a national statistical exercise funded in part by Friends Provident Institution for at least a pilot study. Nevertheless, the data now held at Leeds University provides an informative snapshot of life and death in a Monthly Meeting in the middle of the 19<sup>th</sup> century even allowing for the errors in Tuke's calculations. We can tell that York Monthly Meeting contained a population with a mean age of membership low by

<sup>86</sup> Frances Drever and Margaret Whitehead eds *Health Inequalities: Decennial Supplement* (Office of National Statistics Series DS No. 15, London, 1997) 10

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modern standards and we can also tell that the members of the meeting were not so dissimilar to the population in general, suffering the same patterns of mortality and average ages of death.

## Chapter 3

### Thurnham Statistics

#### Introduction

In this chapter I consider the statistics on the Society of Friends provided by John Thurnham in *Observations on the Statistics of Insanity* written while medical superintendent of The Retreat hospital in York<sup>87</sup>

From the start under Tuke's administration, The Retreat emphasised a scientific approach to the treatment of mental illness<sup>88</sup>, admitting the failure of available pharmacological treatments<sup>89</sup> and the superiority of 'moral treatment' (by which was meant treatment of emotions and self-esteem) over 'medical treatment'<sup>90</sup>. The appointment in 1837 of John Thurnham, a distinguished and influential doctor described as one of the founders and 'heroes of British psychiatry' by the Royal College of Psychiatrists<sup>91</sup>, as medical superintendent of The Retreat<sup>92</sup> is not surprising.

The opening paragraph of his introduction gives Thurnham's reasons for publishing *Observations*<sup>93</sup>

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<sup>87</sup> John Thurnham *Observations and Essays* appendix II

<sup>88</sup> Samuel Tuke *Description of the Retreat* iix – ix

<sup>89</sup> Samuel Tuke *Description of the Retreat* 111

<sup>90</sup> Samuel Tuke *Description of the Retreat* 134 - 135

<sup>91</sup> [http://www.aim25.ac.uk/cgi-bin/vcdf/detail?coll\\_id=15678&inst\\_id=123](http://www.aim25.ac.uk/cgi-bin/vcdf/detail?coll_id=15678&inst_id=123) accessed 27/04/2013

<sup>92</sup> John Thurnham *Observations and Essays*, x

<sup>93</sup> John Thurnham *Observations and Essays* n.p.n

*Chapter 2 Thurnham Statistics*

... in drawing up the Statistics of the York Retreat, I was naturally led to the consideration of the statistics of insanity ... and to compare the results obtained ... with those which are exhibited in the reports of other asylums and hospitals for the insane

Thurnham also briefly gives reasons for inclusion of statistics on Quakers<sup>94</sup>

these statistics are of a particular community, much isolated from the rest of the world; - the general statistics of which I have thought deserved a place in an appendix to this work

which are compiled from<sup>95</sup>

...a digested transcript and index of the registers of the society from its earliest period; the originals of which are now deposited, as part of the national registers, under the care of the Registrar General

### **Analysis**

In appendix II of *Observations and Essays* Thurnham presents his data in two sections. The first section, on numbered pages (i - xvi), is descriptive with reference to sets of tables following in the second section on unnumbered pages. In the discussion below, I give page references for the first section, but only table numbers for the second section.

The first data presented by Thurnham is a tabulation of the membership of the Society of Friends in England and Wales “in summer

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<sup>94</sup> John Thurnham *Observations and Essays*, xi

<sup>95</sup> John Thurnham *Observations and Essays* Appendix II: Contributions to the Statistics of the Society of Friends, x

1840<sup>96</sup> (reproduced in Table 3.1), possibly from Tuke's 1840 survey.

GREAT BRITAIN AND IRELAND	Males	Females	Both Sexes
England and Wales	7,388	8,889	16,277
Scotland	79	69	148
Ireland	?	?	3,280
Total	•	•	19,705

**Table 3.1 Membership of the Religious Society of Friends Summer 1840**

The Republic of Ireland and Northern Ireland are now part of Ireland Yearly Meeting<sup>97</sup> and since this research is mostly concerned with membership of the Society of Friends in Great Britain, I only consider Thurnham's data for England, Scotland and Wales. Thurnham shows that the membership in Great Britain alone was 16,425, with a ratio of men to total membership of 45.5%. However, these figures should be treated cautiously. An unknown number are probably child members (Thurnham is silent on the point) and even if these were excluded, the age at which Friends considered young people adult would probably be lower than now. It is therefore difficult to compare them with 19<sup>th</sup> or 20<sup>th</sup> century data. Nevertheless they may be taken to represent an upper limit (since either of the considerations mentioned above would be likely to reduce the number)

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<sup>96</sup> John Thurnham *Observations and Essays*: Appendix II, Table 1.

<sup>97</sup> Christopher Moriarty Curator Friends Historical Library Dublin e-mail 20/06/2013 and 25/06/2013. The first Quaker Meeting in Ireland took place in 1654. By 1671, a self-governing 'National Half-Yearly Meeting' of all Quakers in Ireland (north and south) was in existence. In 1853, while Ireland as a whole was part of the United Kingdom, Irish Quakers remained separate and the 'National Half-Yearly Meeting' became a sovereign 'Yearly Meeting'. There remains confusion especially among British Quakers as to the independent status of Irish Quakers.

of members at the time. Thurnham notes of this data<sup>98</sup>

A return obtained by the editors of a monthly paper for four years later, presents us with a somewhat less number as that of the society in the united kingdom (*sic*)

but does not make it clear whether he means this as an indication of error in the 1840 tabulation or of a numerical decline between 1840 and 1844.

Thurnham is referring to figures in *The British Friend*<sup>99</sup> that simply list the membership of the Society of Friends indiscriminately by Monthly Meeting and Preparative Meeting. The total given in *The British Friend*, excluding Ireland is 15,523 but it is not clear whether the figures for local meetings are included in Monthly Meetings (and hence doubly counted) or excluded, therefore they should be considered unreliable.

It is not possible to comment on the gender ratio (male to female) in the Society of Friends before Thurnham but 17 years later, it had risen by only 3%. Membership was beginning to climb above that measured by Thurnham by 1895 and so one can assume a minimum in the period between 1844 and 1895<sup>100</sup>. I show later that the lowest point occurred in 1864 (13,755). Thurnham himself notes<sup>101</sup>:

As regards ... the addition of new, and the secession of old, members, I am only able to state the general belief, which I find prevails in the society, that in this country the annual increase from

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<sup>98</sup> John Thurnham *Observations and Essays* Appendix II, ix

<sup>99</sup> *The British Friend* Vol. 2 (1844): 184

<sup>100</sup> There is no data between Thurnham's 1844 figures and the Tabular Statement beginning in 1861

<sup>101</sup> John Thurnham *Observations and Essays*: Appendix II, xi

*Chapter 2 Thurnham Statistics*

the former, barely compensates for the decrease from the latter cause

In a footnote<sup>102</sup>, Thurnham quotes statistics from York Monthly Meeting that in a 19-year period from 1824 to 1843 there were only 47 admissions to the Society of Friends<sup>103</sup>. Twenty-seven of these were in some way connected (children of members, readmission following exclusion, by birth or education), the remaining 20 coming from ‘other communities’. Of the approximately 2.5 admissions per year one only was ‘new’. Since the average membership of York Monthly Meeting over the period was 312, admissions were less than 1% of the membership annually and ‘new’ admissions 0.06% of membership per year. It is impossible to know whether York Monthly Meeting was typical of the period<sup>104</sup>. In the same footnote Thurnham notes that there were 33 separations from York Monthly Meeting meaning there was an almost insignificant net gain of membership, just 14 over 19 years. Other changes would have come from death and immigration/emigration of members both

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<sup>102</sup> John Thurnham *Observations and Essays* Appendix II footnote, xi

<sup>103</sup> Sheila Wright *Friends in York: The Dynamics of a Quaker Revival 1780 – 1860* (Keele University Press, Staffordshire, 1995) 111. In table 8 Wright presents ‘YMM [York Monthly Meeting] Statistics by Decade’. This table is difficult to interpret. It is not clear whether the figures given are the mean membership over the decade or a spot membership at some point during the decade (beginning or end). However, Wright notes a rising trend with an increase of 55 in membership between 1820 and 1840, or 2.75 per year. Both the overall and annualised figures are in close agreement with Thurnham statistics for admissions. Curiously, for such a detailed study Wright does not refer to Thurnham’s or to Tuke’s work.

<sup>104</sup> Sheila Wright *Friends in York* 109 – 131 provides demographic data on certain York parishes, Bristol Quakers, London Yearly Meeting as a whole and some national data; however none of this is sufficient to determine the typicality of York MM. Wright shows that York MM increased slowly in size (by 109 over 79 years) but remarks: “... Rowntree’s ... essay ... on the decline of membership of the Society showed that, whilst ... the Society as a whole had declined in numbers ... from 1780, York Monthly Meeting not only maintained its figures, but progressively, if slowly, increased in size”

overseas and to other Monthly Meetings. Thurnham, while unable to give precise figures, remarks in respect of immigration<sup>105</sup>

The emigration, however, of members, and particularly of young men, as compared with the numbers of the society, is by no means inconsiderable, and, as the immigration of natives of other countries, and the return of emigrants from this, are so infrequent as scarcely to affect the general inferences, it is clear that there must be a corresponding decrease in the numbers of the society in this country from this cause

He goes on to show from other sources that emigration to the United States initially, and later to Australasia caused considerable loss to British Quakers. Rowntree, writing in 1859, suggests that it was an increasing prevalence of education, begun with the founding of Ackworth Friends School in 1799, that led so many to emigrate, stating<sup>106</sup>:

The increased diffusion of intelligence has operated in raising the general position of the Friends in the social scale... One of the social consequences ... is an increasing rarity of marriage. The emigration of young men from the agricultural districts has been stimulated by the diffusion of education ... In some agricultural monthly meetings it is ascertained that a quarter of all Ackworth boys have emigrated (and mostly to America).

In respect of births, deaths and marriages, Thurnham presents a table showing data collected from registers of the Society of Friends from 1800 to the middle of 1837<sup>107</sup>, reproduced in Table 3.2 (shown graphically in figure 3.1). Since Thurnham has previously included Irish Friends in his

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<sup>105</sup> John Thurnham *Observations and Essays* Appendix II, xii

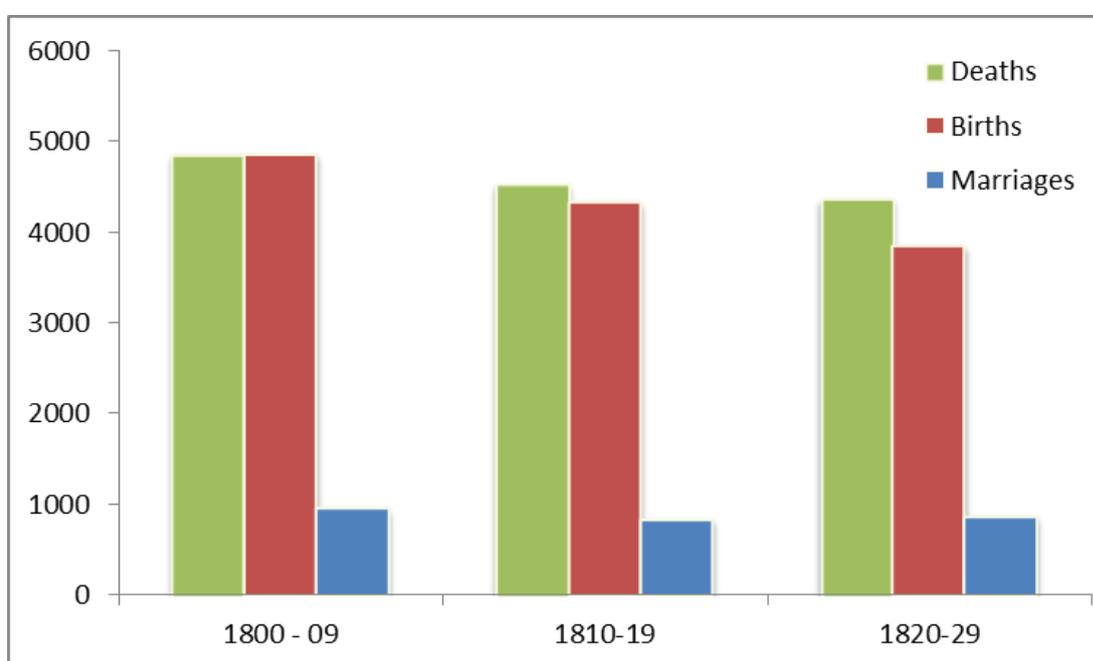
<sup>106</sup> John Stephenson Rowntree *Quakerism Past and Present* 102 - 103

<sup>107</sup> John Thurnham *Observations and Essays* Appendix II, xiv

data we might reasonably assume that he has included them here also.

SOCIETY OF FRIENDS	10 years, 1800-9.	10 years, 1810-19.	10 years, 1812-29.	7½ years, 1830-37.	37½ years, 1800-37.
Marriages .....	955	834	864	663	3316
Births .....	4863	4331	3850	2992	15966
Deaths .....	4855	4525	4363	3446	17189
Excess of Deaths over Births		194	513	524	1223

**Table 3.2 Thurnham's comparison of marriages, births and deaths 1800 – 1837**



**Figure 3.1 Graphic representation of Table 3.2**

This data is both intriguing and at first sight inconsistent. It is difficult to explain why *all* the demographic statistics are falling. Rising numbers of marriages and births, and falling numbers of deaths might suggest a growing youthful population while the converse would suggest a shrinking aging population. There are two possible explanations. It is possible, though perhaps unlikely, that the Society of Friends was coincidentally haemorrhaging old and young members at approximately

the same rate. More likely, what we see here is a population that has lost a generation to emigration in the first third of life. The remaining group of members has falling numbers of marriages and births because there are fewer young people to marry. The falling numbers of deaths is because there are simply fewer older people; those who would have grown old in Britain having emigrated earlier. This supports Thurnham's earlier contention and he quotes correspondence suggesting emigration of some thousands of members<sup>108</sup>. Thurnham himself suggests the cause of low birth rate is low marriage rate but does not elaborate<sup>109</sup>. He fails to account for the falling death rate.

Thurnham presents a table<sup>110</sup> showing births recorded in the registers of the Society of Friends from approximately 1655 to 1837 in set periods. Intriguingly this table shows a decrease of births between 1740 and 1759, which may indicate that these were peak years for loss either by emigration, disaffiliation or epidemic<sup>111</sup>.

Thurnham gives aggregate data on deaths for five quarterly meetings for the period 1811 to 1831 (Table 3.3)<sup>112</sup>. The data shows a pattern of almost a quarter of deaths occurring before the age of 5, and thereafter the number of deaths rising with age before falling again as only

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<sup>108</sup> John Thurnham *Observations and Essays* Appendix II, xii - xiii

<sup>109</sup> John Thurnham *Observations and Essays* Appendix II xv

<sup>110</sup> John Thurnham *Observations and Essays* Appendix II Table 6 n.p.n.

<sup>111</sup> The Irish potato famine was in 1741.

<sup>112</sup> John Thurnham *Observations and Essays* Appendix II xxiv

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a few live long enough to die in extreme old age<sup>113</sup>. Without further data for the general population or data on the numbers in the Society of Friends in each of the age cohorts, we cannot calculate a death rate or determine whether the mortality for the ages 20 to 40 is significantly different from the population at large. However, it is possible to estimate the mean age at death (43) and to compare it with available national data. The most easily available source, the Office of National Statistics, gives the median<sup>114</sup> age at death in 1841 as 44.8 for men and 47.3 for women<sup>115</sup>. This suggests that the life expectancy for Quakers, measured some 10 years earlier was comparable with that of that of the general population.

	0 – 1	0 - 5	5 - 10	10 - 15	15 – 20	20 - 30	30 - 40
Males	413	729	115	77	117	259	172
Females	305	712	99	101	132	273	248
Total	718	1341	214	178	249	532	420

	40 – 50	50 - 60	60-70	70 - 80	80 – 90	90 - 100	All Ages
Males	191	232	344	424	267	27	2954
Females	246	248	371	470	309	50	3159
Total	437	480	715	894	576	77	6113

**Table 3.3 Deaths at various ages in the Society of Friends 1811 – 1830 for London and Middlesex, Essex, Yorkshire, Lancashire and Westmorland**

Thurnham states he has possession of returns of membership in 49 of 90 Monthly Meetings in England Wales for 1820 and 60 of ninety monthly meetings in 1830. Using these returns, he attempts to reconstruct

<sup>113</sup> *First Annual Report of the Registrar-General of Births, Marriages and Deaths in England* (London, Her Majesties Stationary Office, 1839) 54 - 58

<sup>114</sup> A median measure is such that even in a highly skewed distribution 50% of meetings will be smaller than the median and 50% larger. A mean average is such that 50% are smaller and 50% larger in a normal (symmetrical) distribution.

<sup>115</sup> <http://www.ons.gov.uk/ons/rel/mortality-ageing/mortality-in-england-and-wales/average-life-span/rpt-average-life-span.html#tab-Trends-in-Average-Life-Span> accessed 08/08/2013

the total membership of the Society of Friends for these years and to estimate the membership in the intervening years, making comparison with the general population. I shall refer to this data later but note only that there are obvious sources of grave error in these estimations, some of which Thurnham admits to.

At present, however, all the births in the general population are not registered... We have no returns of the population of the Society of Friends in England and Wales, for the earlier part of this century

Nevertheless, he goes on to use these in order to calculate proportional rates for each of his demographic statistics to compare with national rates provided by the Registrar General (which Thurnham notes are also problematic) arriving at the comparisons in Table 3.4<sup>116</sup>.

	Marriage 1 in:	Birth 1 in	Death 1 in
Population in General 1839 - 42 <sup>117</sup>	130	31	45.5
Persons Living, Society of Friends <sup>118</sup>	209	43	40.4

**Table 3.4 Thurnham's comparison of Quaker social statistics with those of the population in general**

Given that these data are, to say the least, 'approximate' little can be said except to note that marriage appears to be much less frequent than the population in general and births slightly less infrequent which is consistent with the emigration interpretation of the data. Deaths appear to be roughly the same, possibly slightly more frequent than the general

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<sup>116</sup> John Thurnham *Observations and Essays* Appendix II xv - xvii

<sup>117</sup> John Thurnham *Observations and Essays* Appendix II, v

<sup>118</sup> John Thurnham *Observations and Essays* Appendix II xvi

population<sup>119</sup>. Indeed, Thurnham observes<sup>120</sup>:

...if we could include the children born abroad ... it is not improbable that the births would exceed the deaths... It is not improbable, also, that there is somewhat less proportion, than in the general population, of members of the society living in this country of marriageable ages, (say from 20 to 45)...

Thurnham presents a table showing gender proportions in 1841 for the Society of Friends in England and Wales<sup>121</sup> (reproduced in Table 3.5, remarking<sup>122</sup>:

The causes of the marked disparity of the sexes in members of the society ... are no doubt chiefly found in the larger proportion of men who emigrate, and who either leave the society or are disunited from it

It can be seen in Table 3.5 that between the ages of 20 and 40 the gender ratio began to change with proportionally fewer men and more women, accelerating until the effect of age and increased male mortality from 60 years onwards. While again consistent with an emigration model of interpretation are particularly affecting men, it may also be because it is this age range, when young adults began to make their own way in the world, that separation from the Society of Friends is more likely.

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<sup>119</sup> Thurnham takes the figures for Quaker marriages directly from registers of the Society of Friends. He goes on to argue, however, that in the case of marriages and consequent births a 10% correction must be made for those who 'marry out'; that is, members who marry non-members in non-Quaker ceremonies and as a consequence lose their membership. Even with these corrections (1 Quaker marriage in 190 and 1 Quaker birth in 39.5) the differences with the statistics for the general population remain.

<sup>120</sup> John Thurnham *Observations and Essays* Appendix II xvii

<sup>121</sup> John Thurnham *Observations and Essays* Appendix II xx

<sup>122</sup> John Thurnham *Observations and Essays* Appendix II xx

*Chapter 2 Thurnham Statistics*

<b>Age Range</b>	<b>Males</b>	<b>Females</b>
<b>0-20</b>	100	100.17
<b>20-30</b>	100	108
<b>30-40</b>	100	106
<b>40-50</b>	100	104
<b>50-60</b>	100	106
<b>60-70</b>	100	112
<b>70-80</b>	100	115
<b>80-90</b>	100	129
<b>&gt;90</b>	100	167

**Table 3.5 Society of Friends gender ratios  
in England and Wales in 1841**

## **Conclusions**

Thurnham's data significantly lacks important information. Data on births or deaths alone is not very informative, and only suggestive of, for instance, the effects of emigration. Without data on total membership of the Society of Friends or comparative wider population data we must be wary of making too much of Thurnham's numbers. Perhaps their greatest value is that they present a snapshot of Quakerism at a time when there is a paucity of data.

One use of Thurnham's data is that it provides a way of approaching an historical reconstruction of membership patterns, though with great uncertainty. However, if we include these estimates with data from other sources, notably Rowntree<sup>123</sup>, we can perhaps come to a more accurate picture of the pattern of historical membership. For example, Thurnham's Table 6 gives the number of births registered by the Society of Friends in England and Wales in decennial periods from the mid-1600s

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<sup>123</sup> John Stephenson Rowntree *Quakerism, Past and Present*

to 1837. In Table 2, he presents the total number of births between 1800 and mid-1837 and the membership of the Society of Friends in 1840. If we divide the number of births in Table 2 by 37.5, we can estimate the mean number of births annually for the period and on the relatively dubious assumption that the membership in 1840 was not very different from the membership in mid-1837 calculate an approximate annual 'birth-rate'. If we apply an inverse of this birth rate to the table of births from the mid-1600s to 1837, we can obtain a very rough estimate of membership. Adding estimates from other sources should improve the accuracy of this kind of reconstruction<sup>124</sup>. Interestingly, Thurnham notes only 3,104 births registered before 1659 and if Rowntree's' widely quoted estimate of 60,000 Quakers<sup>125</sup>, in a population of about 7 million<sup>126</sup> is correct a higher number would be expected. Using the methods outlined here, a more reasonable estimate of about 17,000 in the mid-17<sup>th</sup> century is obtained.

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<sup>124</sup> John Stephenson Rowntree *Quakerism Past and Present* 111 - 112 and *Quaker Faith and Practice: The book of Christian discipline of the Yearly Meeting of the Religious Society of Friends (Quakers) in Britain* (London, The Yearly Meeting of the Religious Society of Friends (Quakers) in Britain, 1995) 11.01.

<sup>125</sup> John Stephenson Rowntree *Quakerism Past and Present* 70 - 72

<sup>126</sup> <http://faculty.history.wisc.edu> accessed 16/08/2013 Population (including Ireland) in 1600, 6.2 million and in 1700 8.4 million.

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**Chapter 4**

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**Introduction**

In this chapter, I consider the Tabular Statement, the annual record of statistics of members and attenders in Britain<sup>127</sup>. I start with a description of the origin of the Tabular Statement, commenting on the claims of some authors as to the reasons for its introduction and the reaction of Friends to its advent and I will describe some of the problems associated with analysis of the data. In the analysis, I show that while there is considerable annual variability in the data, a number of significant variables are on a declining trend with important implications for the future for the Religious Society of Friends. In particular, I examine the data with reference to the rise in membership of the late 1960s and early 1970s identified by Heron<sup>128</sup> to which the later decline in membership is frequently ascribed.

The real reason why Yearly Meeting established the Tabular Statement remains unknown though various authors have confidently asserted one reason or another for it. In chapter 2 I described how Samuel Tuke had collected data on York Monthly Meeting and was beginning to consider collection of national data. Tuke was an influential Friend and although he died in 1857 knowledge of his work must have been widespread

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<sup>127</sup> Northern Ireland (though part of the United Kingdom) is considered part of Ireland Meeting based in Dublin

<sup>128</sup> Alastair Heron *The Future of British Quakers* (Kelso, Curlew Productions, 2001)

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in the Society<sup>129</sup>. Brayshaw while not referring to the Tuke survey directly notes that from the late 1850s concern at the numerical decline of the Society arose among Friends and sympathisers with the publication of a number of pamphlets on the subject<sup>130</sup>. Heron<sup>131</sup> states that the issues raised by Rowntree in *Quakerism Past and Present*<sup>132</sup> were the immediate precursor to the Tabular Statement, particularly the remarks made by Rowntree concerning the loss of members through Friends marrying non-members against the rules of the Society<sup>133</sup>.

Nor does [it], we apprehend, record another instance of so deliberate an act of suicide on the part of a church, as to persevere for a series of years in disowning from one-third to one-quarter of all its members who married.

In Chapter IV of his essay, Rowntree laments the lack of information on the state of the Society and regrets that<sup>134</sup>

The Society does not appear at any time to have ascertained officially the number of persons in profession with it.

Rowntree's essay raised disquiet among Friends who did not or could not admit that the Society was in decline. One article in *The British Friend of*

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<sup>129</sup> Dictionary of Quaker Biography Vol. TS-TUK, Quaker Library, Friends House, London; David Tregoning and Hugh Cockerell *Friends for Life* 13. 16, 182 -183; Charles Tyler *Samuel Tuke*

<sup>130</sup> A. Neave Brayshaw *The Quakers* 288

<sup>131</sup> Alastair Heron *Caring Conviction Commitment* 4

<sup>132</sup> John Stephenson Rowntree *Quakerism Past and Present* 69. For discussion on the possible identity of the unknown gentleman see footnote 7 of my Introduction

<sup>133</sup> John Stephenson Rowntree *Quakerism Past and Present* 153. The rule requiring automatic disownment was changed in 1859. Permission for all persons of whatever persuasion to marry in the manner of Friends was given in 1873. A Neave Brayshaw *The Quakers* 292

<sup>134</sup> John Stephenson Rowntree *Quakerism Past and Present* 69

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November 1858 anticipated Rowntree's findings and argued that a decline in the Religious Society of Friends was by no means certain<sup>135</sup> while also listing possible causes of decline but makes no mention of marrying out. Criticism of Rowntree appeared again in *The British Friend* in February 1860<sup>136</sup>, which dismissed the concerns of loss through marrying out in a single short paragraph. However, *The Friend* commented in an editorial in January 1860<sup>137</sup>:

... we confess that apart from the fact that our opinions agree more closely with John S Rowntree, we have a strong preference for the common sense manner in which his conclusions are arrived at.

But yet again, made no mention of marrying out.

A Yearly Meeting minute of 1861 yields the only ascertainable facts about establishment of the Tabular Statement<sup>138</sup>.

The subject of a Tabular Statement ... has been repeatedly under Consideration, and it is considered to propose to this Yearly Meeting, that the form of statement now presented be brought into operation for one year.

The minute makes no mention of Rowntree's essay and unfortunately, background papers are not to be found. However if Heron is correct that Rowntree's concern of loss by marrying out was the precursor to the Tabular Statement it is odd that data on gain and loss by marriage in and out was

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<sup>135</sup> *The British Friend* vol. XVI (Glasgow, Robert Searle, 1858) 297 - 304

<sup>136</sup> *The British Friend* vol. XVII (Glasgow, Robert Searle, 1860) 34 -37

<sup>137</sup> *The Friend* vol. XVIII (London: 1860) 1

<sup>138</sup> Committee on Arrangements for the Conducting the Business Of The Yearly Meeting 20<sup>th</sup> of 5<sup>th</sup> Month 1861 *Extracts from the Meetings And Proceedings of The Yearly Meeting of Friends 1861* (London: Edward Marsh, 1861), 21

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included only in 1871 and 1872. In these years, the numbers coming into the Society by marriage of a member and non-member in accordance with regulations were almost equivalent to those lost through marriage not in accord with regulations (Table 4.1)<sup>139</sup>

<b>Year</b>	<b>In</b>	<b>Out</b>	<b>Net</b>
1871	35	34	1
1872	17	20	-3

**Table 4.1: Individuals lost to and gained by the Society of Friends through marriage in and out**

One year after the minute accepting the principle of a Tabular Statement, Yearly Meeting agreed to make it an annual exercise<sup>140</sup>. Data for the first statement was collected on the 31<sup>st</sup> December 1861<sup>141</sup> and all consequent data has been collected on the same date. The Tabular Statement now represents a more or less consistent series of over 150 years' worth of data.

Data collection has occasionally been troublesome, producing some discontinuities although mostly of a minor nature. In 1869 there arose some confusion over the definition of an Attender and the report attached to the

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<sup>139</sup> It is equally odd that numbers of disownments for whatever reason were not recorded

<sup>140</sup> *Extracts From The Meetings And Proceedings Of The Yearly Meeting Of Friends 1861* (London: Edward Marsh, 1862) 13. The minute records "London 5<sup>th</sup> Month 22<sup>nd</sup> 1862 ... the continuing Preparation of a Tabular Statement has obtained our consideration this time; and it is concluded that it be directed to be made by the several Quarterly Meetings annually. Liberty is also granted to the Meeting for Sufferings to make some alterations in the form of a return to be supplied to our subordinate meetings."

<sup>141</sup> *Tabular Statement Extracts From The Meetings And Proceedings Of The Yearly Meeting Of Friends 1861*

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Statement of that year noted<sup>142</sup>:

...in one or more instances, as at Ayton, the children in the school are returned in the number of attenders, while in other cases they are omitted. It is desirable that an uniform system should in future be adopted.

In the following year, 1870, the position of schools and Attenders was clarified and the report noted that a slight fall in the numbers was<sup>143</sup>:

...partly owing to the instruction now given in the form of the return, that in those meetings where public schools for non-members are established, the number of such attenders should be specified

However, a note in the same report now indicated confusion as to what constituted a meeting for worship:

...but this does not represent the actual number of meetings for worship held, as in some instances the number of members of two is given together and there are some 'allowed meetings' not included in the returns.

In 1871, there were still difficulties in keeping track of meetings and the report for that year<sup>144</sup> notes that it excludes:

...besides several allowed meetings, and some which are held during the season at a few watering places

In 1891, the report on the Tabular Statement recorded differences in

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<sup>142</sup> The Tabular Statement *Extracts from the Minutes and Proceedings of the Yearly Meeting of Friends 1869* (London: Edward Marsh, 1869) 9

<sup>143</sup> The Tabular Statement *Extracts from the Minutes and Proceedings of the Yearly Meeting of Friends 1870* (London: Edward Marsh, 1870) 8

<sup>144</sup> The Tabular Statement *Extracts from the Minutes and Proceedings of the Yearly Meeting of Friends 1871* (London: Edward Marsh, 1871) 10

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opinion as to what constituted a recognised or 'Particular Meeting'<sup>145</sup>:

... where a Meeting is held regularly every First day in a separate building, and is recognised by the Monthly Meeting, with the approval of the Quarterly Meeting, as a Meeting for Worship, it should be reported as a "Particular Meeting", although the members or attenders usually present are not enrolled in a separate list, but are incorporated with those of another meeting in the same neighbourhood.

As well as Meeting for Worship, Friends also ran Sunday evening Mission Meetings, often evangelical in nature with hymns and addresses, sometimes attracting substantial numbers of people<sup>146</sup>, leading to confusion as to Quaker Attenders. The outcome was to count only those habitually present at Meeting for Worship attenders, excluding Mission Meetings. In 1901, the report on the Tabular Statement recorded

It is evident that this decrease [in attenders] is a result of the operation of the new rule<sup>147</sup>.

In 1913, the report noted <sup>148</sup>

Several changes have been made this year in the method of presenting the annual summary of statistics

The minute did not specify exactly what changes had been made.

Children seemed to have occasioned particular opportunities for

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<sup>145</sup> The Tabular Statement *Extracts from the Minutes and Proceedings of The Yearly Meeting of Friends 1891* (London: Office of the Religious Society of Friends, 1891) 6

<sup>146</sup> Elizabeth Isichei *Victorian Quakers* 91, 92, 276 - 277

<sup>147</sup> The Tabular Statement *Extracts from the Minutes and Proceedings of The Yearly Meeting of Friends 1901* (London: Office of the Religious Society of Friends, 1901) 11

<sup>148</sup> The Tabular Statement *Extracts from the Minutes and Proceedings of The Yearly Meeting of Friends 1913* (London: Office of the Religious Society of Friends, 1913) 36

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exercises in complexity. Between 1872 and 1876 boys and girls were recorded as a single total (though convincement – that is membership - by minors continued to be recorded by gender), but thereafter they were included without distinction in the numbers of Habitual Attenders and Associates (Associates were non-members more closely involved with the functioning of meeting than Habitual Attenders)<sup>149</sup>. From 1913 'birthright' children, born to parents who were members, were recorded by gender and children not born to members were separately recorded as 'minors'<sup>150</sup>. 'Ordinary' and 'temporary' lists of child membership began in 1941, following changes to child membership regulations approved by Meeting for Sufferings. The approval was, in turn, consequent on a report by a committee set up in 1938 to make recommendations on junior membership, and a Yearly Meeting minute (minute 21)<sup>151 152 153</sup>. Consequently, children were categorised as 'birthright' or one of the 'temporary' alternatives as long as one parent at least was a member. 'Ordinary List' children were included among permanent members and 'Temporary List' children could make a decision on membership at the age of 16. Children with neither parent a member continued to be recorded as 'minors'. Temporary listing was abandoned in 1960 and birthright children included in the 'ordinary list'. The

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<sup>149</sup> The Tabular Statement *Extracts from the Minutes and Proceedings of The Yearly Meeting of Friends 1876* (London: Edward Marsh, 1876) 7 - 10

<sup>150</sup> The Tabular Statement *Extracts from the Minutes and Proceedings of The Yearly Meeting of Friends* (London: Office of the Society of Friend, 1914) 69

<sup>151</sup> *London Yearly Meeting of the Religious Society of Friends Reports and Documents Presented to the Society 1941* (London: Religious Society of Friends, 1941) 141

<sup>152</sup> *London Yearly Meeting 1941* 44

<sup>153</sup> The Tabular Statement *London Yearly Meeting of the Religious Society of Friends Reports and Documents Presented to the Society* (London: Religious Society of Friends, 1942) 34 - 36

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overall effect of the changes was to shift substantial numbers of children from non-membership to membership. Although adult membership was in fact declining on several later occasions, reports to Yearly Meeting were rather congratulatory on the rising membership of the Society, and this may well have been the motivation behind the attempts to count children as members. In 1954, a table was included in the report to Yearly Meeting that clearly shows that without the inclusion of children, membership would have fallen in each decade from 1900 to 1950 (Figure 4.1).

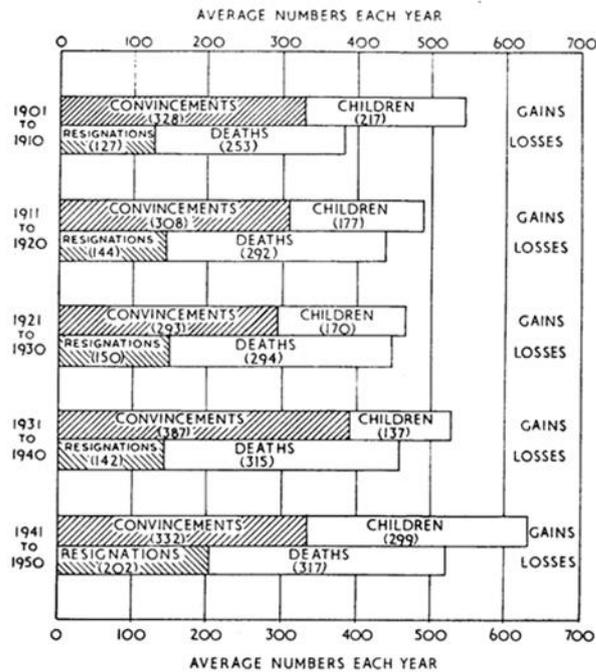


FIGURE 1.  
Annual gains and losses in ten-year periods from 1901 to 1950.

Figure 4.1 Table from the 1954 Tabular Statement

Since the numbers of minors were recorded separately only until 1875 and thereafter included without distinction among the number of attenders I have included them among attenders between 1861 and 1875, resulting is slight over estimate. In 1923, scholars at Sibford School, in Banbury,

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Oxfordshire, ceased to be included among attenders<sup>154</sup> and then between 1924 and 1961 Friends ceased recording attenders entirely without explanation.

Until 1948, the Tabular Statement included Friends domiciled in various parts of the world as members of London Yearly Meeting. Between 1909 and 1924, figures from Cape Town and Transvaal in South Africa were also included. The Tabular Statement also recorded the number of Friends temporarily abroad as a single figure without distinction as to location, age or gender. However, since the mean average percentage of these latter, as a proportion of total membership was only 4.1%  $\pm \sigma$  1.5% (maximum 6.5%, minimum 1.4%) I decided simply to ignore the distinction in the knowledge it would lead to a very slight overestimate in the number of Quakers in British meetings<sup>155</sup>. In 1925 after the establishment of German Yearly Meeting, the number of members belonging to the 'Council of International Service'<sup>156</sup>

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<sup>154</sup> The Tabular Statement *Reports and Documents of London Yearly Meeting of the Religious Society of Friends 1924* (London, Religious Society of Friends, 1924) 48

<sup>155</sup> An attempt to make correction by dividing the given total for members abroad into genders in the same proportion as British members was considered. Since it would never be certain that the numbers of Friends abroad would be in the same gender ratio as those at home (and there were likely to be more male than female Friends at least in the early days of emigration), the technique would do nothing to reduce the levels of uncertainty. It is simpler just to note the percentages of Friends abroad and thereafter ignore them.

<sup>156</sup> According to the Index to Central Organisations vol. C- FL held and maintained by the Friends Library, Friends House, Euston Road, London the Council was formed in 1919 upon the recommendation of the Continental Committee, the Colonial Committee and the South African Committee of the central organisation of Friends. The report suggested 'We need a Bureau or Council for international information and training for service...' The Council merged with the Friends Foreign Mission Association in 1927 to become the Friends Service Council. In the report accompanying the Tabular Statement presented to Yearly Meeting in 1925 there is a reference to:

The number of members of the 79 Monthly, two Months and six Monthly Meetings which compose the 21 Quarterly and General Meetings, together with Council for International Service Foreign Membership

Suggesting that some individuals held their membership through and with the

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ceased to be included in the Tabular<sup>157</sup>. However, there are inconsistencies in the report on the Tabular Statement of that year which claims a reduction in membership of merely 27 because of the transfer to the new Yearly Meeting, leaving a net increase of 42 in the British membership of London Yearly Meeting when new members are included. However, the figures themselves show a net *decrease* of 1,099 members. Clearly, other unrecorded changes had taken place and the only clues are omissions of record. The number of Monthly Meetings is not noted in 1925, but 79 were recorded in 1924<sup>158</sup> and 70 in 1926<sup>159</sup> indicating some significant changes. Mention of Cape, Transvaal, Australian and New Zealand meetings also suddenly disappear at this time. One can only surmise that at the same time a decision was taken to cease noting Friends in South African and Australasia as part of London Yearly Meeting, but instead to include them simply as Friends resident abroad with specification.

Finally, every so often for no discernible reason and without any explanation, data is missing from the Tabular Statement. For instance, in 1862 and 1925, the number of Monthly and Particular Meetings is missing and the Tabular Statement of 1934 omits the gender breakdown of members,

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Council. If all these, with the foreign Monthly and other meetings were suddenly excluded from the Tabular Statement it would explain the large apparent drop in membership.

<sup>157</sup> Tabular Statement *Reports and Documents of London Yearly Meeting of the Religious Society of Friends 1925* (London, Religious Society of Friends, 1925) 189

<sup>158</sup> Tabular Statement *Reports and Documents 1925* 208

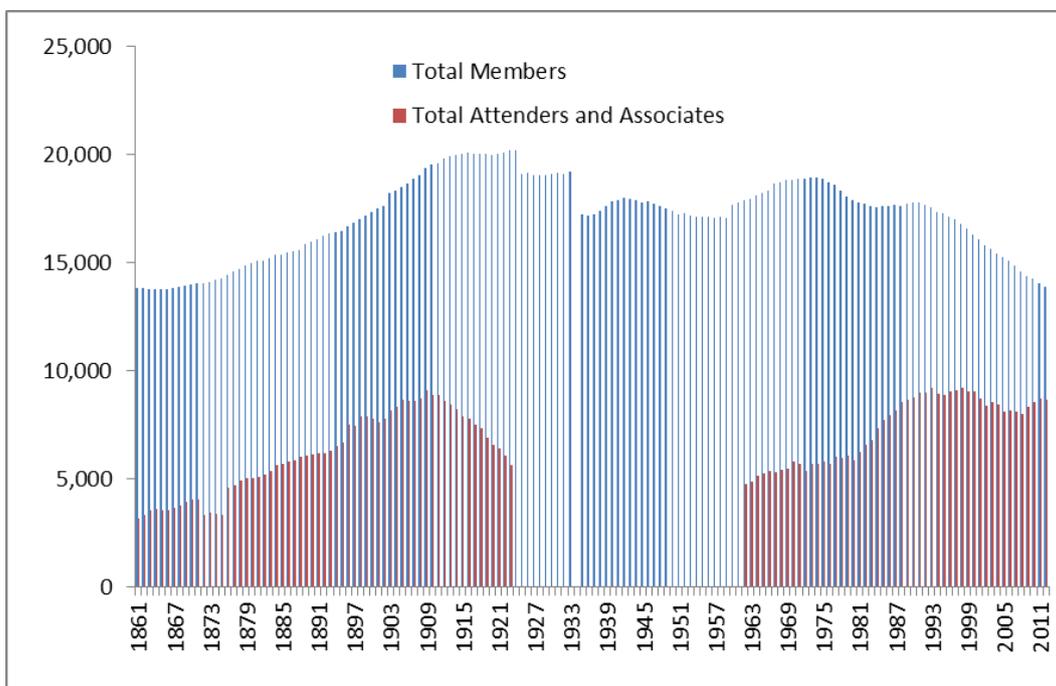
<sup>159</sup> Tabular Statement *Reports and Documents of the London Yearly Meeting of the Religious Society of Friends 1927* (London, Religious Society of Friends, 1927) 51

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recording only a total<sup>160</sup>.

**Analysis**

The first and most obvious approach is to look at a simple bar-chart of members and attenders since 1861 (Figure: 4.2). The discontinuities in the data caused by the changes in counting methods are clearly visible, especially the gap in attenders between 1925 and 1961.



**Figure 4.2 Members (blue), attenders and associates (red) 1861 to 2012**

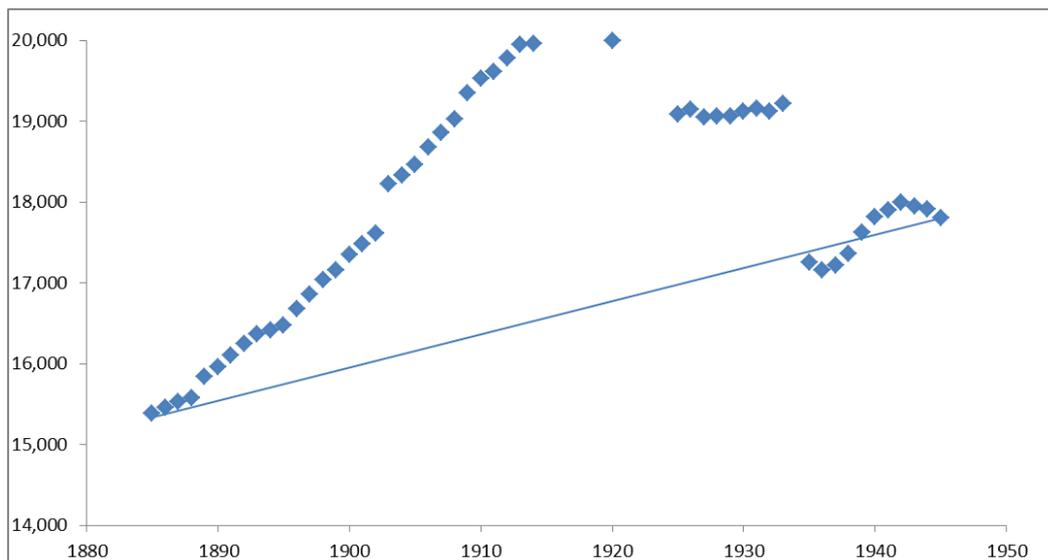
It is clear from the bar chart that there was a rise in membership, beginning shortly after 1861, which peaked around 1924 and ended in the mid-1940s, when the number of discontinuities making quantification of the numbers involved more difficult. Isichei suggests that the heyday of Quaker

<sup>160</sup> The Tabular Statement *Reports and Documents of the London Yearly Meeting of the Religious Society of Friends 1935* (London, Religious Society of Friends, 1935) 106 - 108

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Evangelicalism was over by 1885<sup>161</sup> and the period following was one of relative liberalism and rising membership. Figure 4.3 shows the changes in membership between 1885 and the end of the peak in 1945. The straight line shows the extent of the underlying trend.

By totalling the annual increase in membership between 1885 and 1945, and adding the numbers for deaths, terminations, resignations etc. (since these would at least have to be matched by new members before any increase could occur), we find that during the 60 years from 1885 to 1945 there were 19,224 admissions to membership, while in 1945 there were only 17,798 members in total as opposed to 15,380 in 1885.



**Figure 4.3 Post evangelical growth in membership 1885 – 1945**

What this means is that during the period in question, even if a proportion of the admissions were only for a few years, the total membership of the Society had renewed itself almost entirely. By 1945, then, for most

<sup>161</sup> Elizabeth Isichei *Victorian Quakers*, 8

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Friends the evangelical period was at best distant from the experience of those who made up the Society in the 20<sup>th</sup> century. Even so there would be some Evangelical Friends as Kennedy suggests<sup>162</sup>, and it would have been surprising had it not been so<sup>163</sup>. Even in the 21<sup>st</sup> century there continues to be a fundamentalist minority of Friends. The website of the *New Foundation Fellowship* for example uses language sounding clearly evangelical to modern liberal Quakers to advertise itself as “Proclaiming the Everlasting Gospel”<sup>164</sup>:

However most individuals joining during this post-evangelical period would more likely have had war than salvation as a formative religious experience, and they would have joined a Society already imbued with a theology that elevated Meeting for Worship, rather than the bible, as the yardstick of orthodox Quakerism. For example, in 1922 Ben Greene joined the Religious Society of Friends as one of this cohort of new members. Jeremy Lewis in *Shades of Greene* describes Greene’s welcoming the Quaker theological freedom and testimony of pacifism<sup>165</sup> and from his experience of the First World War<sup>166</sup>

...dominating all [Greene's] thought was the conviction that if this immense effort directed to death and destruction was possible, what

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<sup>162</sup> Thomas Kennedy *British Quakerism* 8

<sup>163</sup> There is evidence that evangelicalism lingered in Wales, until the early part of the 20<sup>th</sup> century. Martin Williams *Evangelical Friends in Radnorshire from the late 19<sup>th</sup> century* (unpublished manuscript, 1995) and by the same author *Radnorshire Quakers and the Great Revival of 1904* (unpublished manuscript, 1995)

<sup>164</sup> New Foundation Fellowship <http://nffquaker.org/> August 2011

<sup>165</sup> Jeremy Lewis *Shades of Greene: One Generation of an English Family* (London, Jonathan Cape, 2010) 51

<sup>166</sup> Jeremy Lewis *Shades of Green* pp. 52

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could not be achieved if such effort were directed to the construction of a new and just society?

Beginning 1960 membership rose to a peak and returned to a consistent fall by 1975. Heron theorised that it was caused by membership being offered too easily in an *inherently multiplicative* process<sup>167</sup>. The numbers involved in this rise can be calculated in the same way as that for the post-evangelical membership. The total so calculated is 8,223 or 43.4% of the number of members at the peak of the rise. Such a large influx of new members would certainly have had an impact on the Society especially if they brought new ideas and theologies with them. Heron argues that this is exactly what did happen, with the newcomers, imbued with the spirit of 1960s, liberalising further an already liberal society to the extent that the core message was weakened sufficiently to deter further in-comers, leading the decline of the 1990s, which is also clearly visible<sup>168</sup>.

Reanalysis of data collected by Rutherford<sup>169</sup> reveals that in 2003 the mean age at which individuals begin to attend Quaker Meetings was the mid-30s (though a significant number were younger) and the mean period before

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<sup>167</sup> Heron developed his thesis in three publications *The Future of British Quakers* (Kelso, Curlew Productions, 2001), *On Being a Quaker: membership, past, present and future* (Keslo, Curlew Productions, 2000), and *Our Quaker Identity: religious society or friendly society?* (Keslo, Curlew Productions, 1999). Heron used the phrase 'inherently multiplicative' to describe the mechanism by which those easily offered membership would go on to more easily offer membership in future in *Caring, Conviction, Commitment: dilemmas of Quaker membership today* (London, Quaker Home Service, 1992) 55

<sup>168</sup> Steve Bruce *God is Dead: Secularisation in the West* (Oxford, Blackwell Publishing, 2002) 102 – 103 and 145 – 150, argues just this point. He remarks that belief systems have a tendency to dissolve and to move toward a cultural norm unless effort and control is exercised to preserve "a distinctive set body or ideas and practices and the associated sense of shared identity". Bruce cites a number of examples, including Quakers, of dilution of faith to gain social acceptance.

<sup>169</sup> Rutherford, Rosie unpublished PhD data held at the Quaker Studies Centre, Woodbrooke College

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applying for membership was three or four years. Assuming that this held true for the period in question (though there is some evidence that newcomers to Friends might have been somewhat younger), the new members in the peak would have been born after 1920 and before 1940, even allowing for a younger demographic. It seems unlikely, therefore, in view of their ages, that all have entered the Society influenced by the times, though it is very likely that the aftermath of one or both world wars would have been a formative experience for all of them, making Friends peace testimony more attractive. It is worth noting in this context that Friends anticipated, rather than responded to, later social developments by some time, *Toward a Quaker View of Sex* was published in 1964<sup>170</sup> well in advance of the sexual revolution of later in the decade. In the light of this evidence that the main formative experience of newly joined Friends was that of war, it is interesting that Kennedy in his authoritative study of Quaker history and theology from 1860 to 1920 observes<sup>171</sup>:

As for the impact of Quakerism in Britain and around the world since 1920, the revitalized peace testimony has remained the important social and political consequence of the Quaker Renaissance

Returning to the late 20<sup>th</sup> century, we can see from Figure 4.2 that the number of members began falling from about 1990 and that attenders, while also generally falling (except for slight rises in 2009 and 2010), are becoming proportionally more numerous. The proportion of attenders in 2010 was 60%

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<sup>170</sup> Alastair Heron et al *Towards a Quaker View of Sex: An Essay By a Group of Friends* (London, Friends Service Committee, 1963). A revised version was published in 1964

<sup>171</sup> Thomas Kennedy *British Quakerism* 429

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of the total of members and over the last 20 years, it has risen at roughly 8% per decade (Figure 4.4).

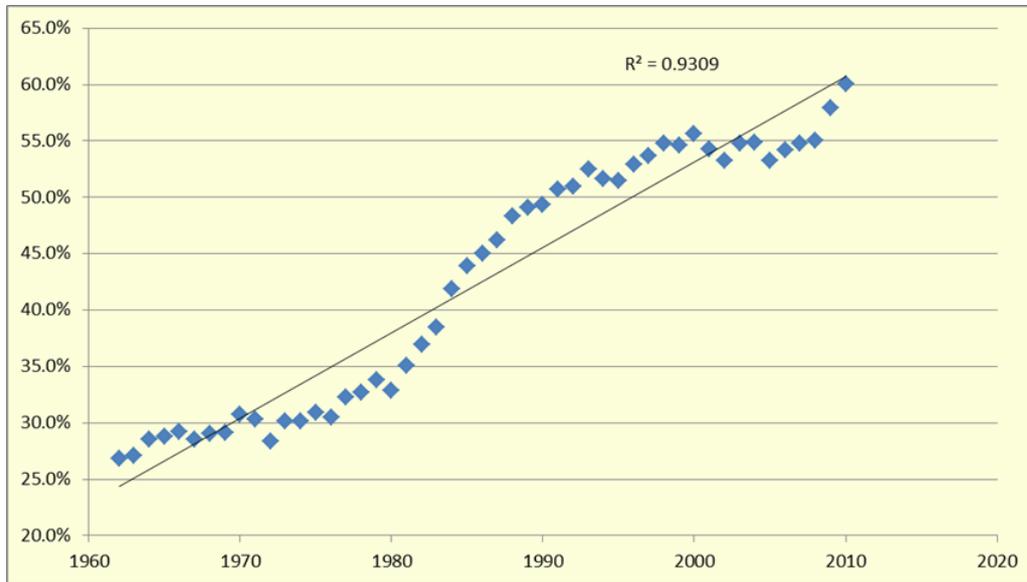


Figure 4.4 Attenders as a percentage of members 1961 to 2010

Chadkirk<sup>172</sup> has analysed the trend in membership from 1990 and found it possible to fit a second order equation to the curve with sufficient accuracy to estimate the demise of the Society, at least as a national organisation recognisable in comparison with its current structure, as occurring between 2030 and 2040.

It is difficult to say at what point the Society of Friends may become too small to be considered a national organisation. On present trends there will be half the current membership, that is 7,000 members, soon after 2030 (discussed further, below) and there will eventually be a point when the number of individuals required to support the governance structure is simply too great. If these trends continue then in 20 years or so, attenders will be

<sup>172</sup> Bill Chadkirk *Will The Last (Woman) Friend to Leave Please Ensure The Light Remains Shining*

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between 75% and 80% of the numbers of members. Heron anticipated these findings in a prediction in 'The Future of British Quakers'<sup>173</sup>

I do not think that Britain Yearly Meeting will just disappear. A distinction must be made between 'dying' and 'dying out'. At worst, British Quakers would become a slowly smaller group of people of whom most would not be in a position to declare a religious basis for their lives, a 'faith to live by'. Adherence to Quaker testimonies and values would ensure that they continue to be perceived as 'good people' and they would within their financial limitations do 'good works' [...] Corporately the Yearly Meeting would find it increasingly difficult to maintain without hypocrisy that its decision making was based upon the belief in the availability of God's guidance. Eventually it would become a largely secular ethical society, remote from its radical religious origin.

**Gender ratio among members**

The increasing of women in the Society of Friends is illustrated in Figure 4.5.

The peak ratio of men to women occurred in 1878 when numbers were almost equal (93.5%), following which the decline in ratio has been both steady and prolonged. There was a slight variation in the long fall coinciding with the peak identified by Heron when the ratio rose briefly to 74.5% in 1969, indicating that in that period there were a greater number of men joiners. If we examine the falling trend more closely we find that there was a noticeable change from 1978 onwards and that the decline has accelerated to the point at which there will be twice as many women as men by 2050 if it continues.

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<sup>173</sup> Alastair Heron *The Future of British Quakers*

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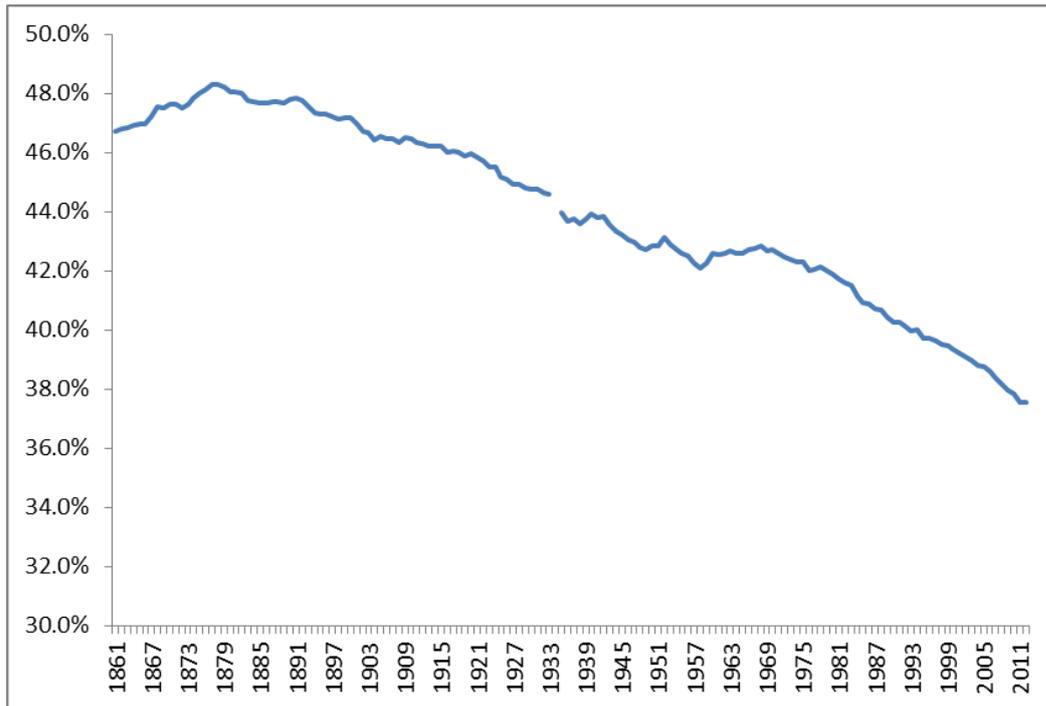


Figure 4.5 Ratio men members to total membership 1861 to 2012

There are weak signs at the extremity of the curve from 2003 onwards that the decline has accelerated, but there is too little data to determine whether it is likely to continue if it does. Why is an interesting question. As McLeod points out it may simply be that more women than men participate in religious organisations<sup>174</sup> or that in a church with an ageing membership women in general live longer than men<sup>175</sup>.

Unfortunately, the Tabular Statement records statistics of deaths, convincement, termination, etc. by gender only from 1913. However, we can possibly and reasonably assume that whatever mechanism was operating for the 97 years since 1913 was also operating for the 35 years between 1878

<sup>174</sup> Hugh McLeod *The Religious Crisis of the 1960s* 186 -187

<sup>175</sup> Tony Walter *Why are Most Churchgoers Women? A Literature Review* *Vox Evangelica* 20 (1990) 73-90.

#### **Chapter 4 Tabular Statement 1861 - 2012**

and 1913 and still draw some conclusions. If we take a simple count of increases and decreases in membership by subtracting each year from its preceding year between 1913 and 2011, we find that there has been a net loss of 2,692 men and a net loss of 698 women. The difference we have to find a mechanism for is an excess of 1,994 women. Now in the same period 13,766 men and 20,767 women were admitted or reinstated to membership: an excess of 7,001 women. Between 1913 and 2010, there was an excess of 4,260 female deaths and 336 female resignations, terminations, disassociations etc. The difference between the admissions and the departures for whatever reason is therefore 2,405, which is of very much the same order as the excess of women identified earlier. It is clear therefore that rather than male deaths or resignations the increasing feminisation of the Society is due in almost its entirety to recruiting more women.

#### **Recruitment Rates**

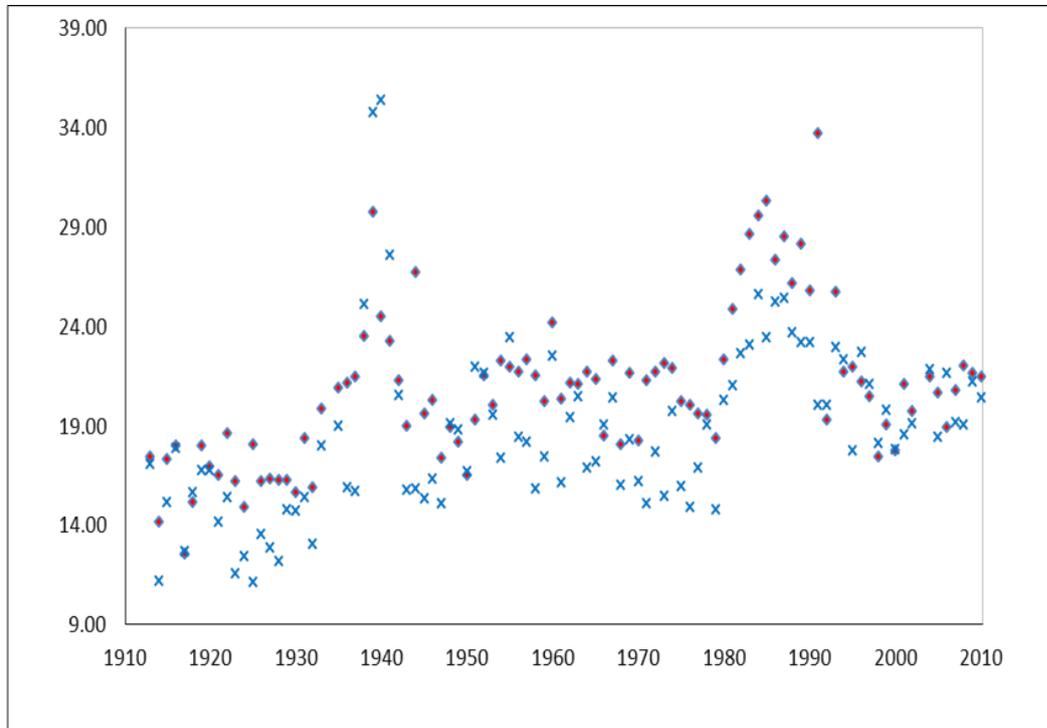
The numbers joining the Society were recorded from 1861, but separated by gender only from 1913. If we use these to look more closely at recruitment rates<sup>176</sup> in figure 4.6, we can see two distinct peaks. The first around 1939 and 1940 coincides with the beginning of the Second World War. Individuals joining at this time would most likely have been born between about 1900 and 1915, which is consistent with the argument that one main attraction of the Society of Friends to a generation that had experienced one war and was facing another, was the peace testimony. That

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<sup>176</sup> The number of admissions by conviction per 1000 members. It is not a measure of the increase in membership since it is considered separately from the losses due to resignation, termination of membership and death

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the joining rate of men and women was much the same at this time is also consistent with this.



**Figure 4.6 Male (blue crosses) and female (red dots) 'recruitment rates' 1913 – 2010**

The second peak, dominated by men, occurs between 1980 and 1990, a period of social unrest. Not only were 'The Troubles' of Northern Ireland at their peak, but the Liverpool Toxteth riots occurred in 1981, the miners' strike in the north of England between 1984 and 1985, the London Brixton and Broadwater Farm riots in 1985, the Wapping journalist protests in 1986, the Poll Tax riots in 1990 and the Campaign for Nuclear Disarmament became resurgent. On October 31<sup>st</sup> 1987, in an interview for a magazine the then Prime Minister, Margaret Thatcher, stated in a phrase that defined the period

And, you know, there is no such thing as society... People must look

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after themselves first... it's our duty to look after ourselves<sup>177</sup> It may be that at this time some men, particularly challenged by the prevailing culture of self and of confrontation, needed to make a statement of belief in a better society. A collection of oral data from Friends who joined at this period would be most illuminating. One correspondent noted in an e-mail<sup>178</sup>:

I was very opposed to most religion but attended a rally [at] Molesworth cruise missile base around 1984 with my son aged 10 There we met a Quaker peace camp and the Qs were very kind and gave us cocoa. I started attending Maidstone meeting as a result and valued the social concerns of the members during the Thatcher era. I found them compassionate and realistic, not letting the best be the enemy of the good. As a result I came into membership in 1987. I still value the practical compassion

By looking at the combined total for men and women (Figure 4.7), we can see the pattern of joining over a longer period.

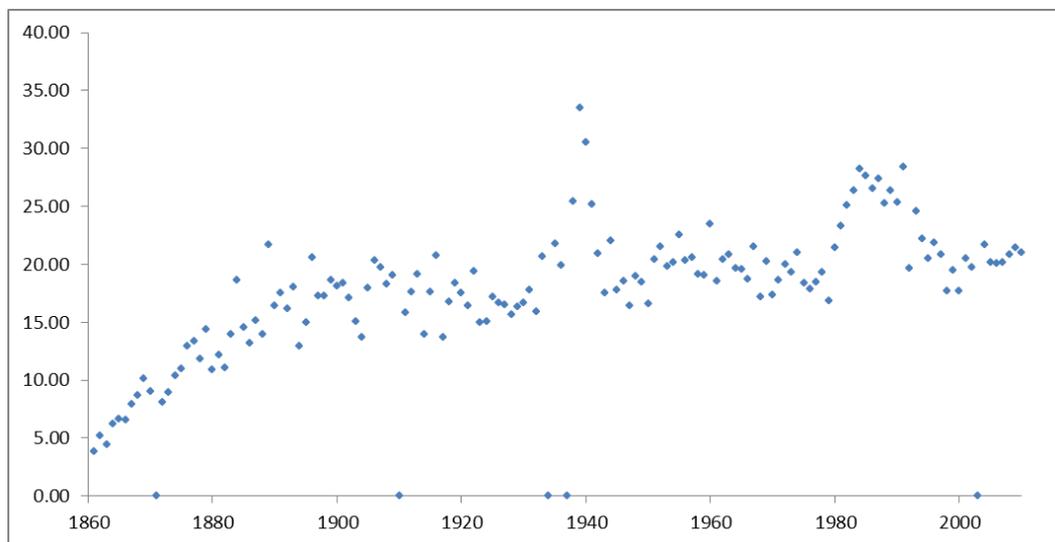


Figure 4.7 'Recruitment' rate per 1000 members 1861 to 2012

<sup>177</sup> Douglas Key *Aids, Education and the Year 2000* (London, Women's Own, IPC Media, October 31<sup>st</sup> 1987) 8-10

<sup>178</sup> Personal communication Terry Wood 17<sup>th</sup> April 2012

#### **Chapter 4 Tabular Statement 1861 - 2012**

The 1940 and 1980 to 1990 peaks are still obvious, and it is clear that from 1861 onwards there was a steep rise in applications in proportion to membership (compare figure 4.7 with figure 4.2, in which shows attenders, from which applications for membership come rising quickly). It probably represents Friends re-engaging with wider world following the criticisms of Rowntree<sup>179</sup>, and simply coming into contact with more people who might otherwise have never thought to express an interest.

The final fact of note is that the current rate of recruitment is historically quite high in proportion to membership. That does not mean there are high numbers of joiners, in real terms there are only around 300 or so annually, approximately 1.8% of the total membership somewhat less than the combined total of deaths and terminations.

#### **Marriage and Death Rates**

With so few new joiners and 40 years since the most recent peak in membership in 1972, it is likely that the membership is ageing and indeed Figure 4.8 of deaths per 1000 members shows a rising trend.

Rutherford<sup>180</sup> found that in 2003 the mean age of members and attenders was just over 60 and that 36% of respondents were over 70 and 20% were over 75. Even if Rutherford's data showing that the age of first attending Friends was around 30 to 35 still holds (and it may have

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<sup>179</sup> Until quite late in the 19<sup>th</sup> century Quakers retained elements of black and grey 17<sup>th</sup> century dress, adopted initially as a symbol of the rejection of the vanity of the world it eventually became an expensive symbol of being a Quaker.

<sup>180</sup> Rosie Rutherford unpublished PhD data held at the Quaker Studies Centre Woodbrooke College

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increased)<sup>181</sup> the current low (1.8%) rate of joining means newcomers will not have affected the mean age of membership. On the contrary, it is likely to have increased<sup>182</sup>. The fact that Figure 4.8 shows the death rate accelerating, especially considering that it covers a period of significant improvements in life expectancy, confirms this (in 1913 life expectancy at birth was around 50 for men and 55 for women. In 2010, it is nearly 77 years for men and 82 for women<sup>183 184</sup>).

Ageing and declining numbers are going to have large effects on marriage and birth rates; although the general decline in marriage and especially religious marriage complicates the picture, as do changes in birth rates in the latter part of the 20<sup>th</sup> century<sup>185 186</sup>.

From 1861, the Tabular Statement recorded the number of marriages of both members and non-members held in accordance with the practice of Friends and taking place in meeting houses; Figures 4.9 and 4.10 show the number of marriages among Friends and attenders, respectively. It is clear from Figure 4.9 that the annual variation in marriages of members is much greater than that of non-members and that it began to decline earlier, in the

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<sup>181</sup> Preliminary results from survey research too recently conducted to be included in this thesis shows that the mean age of first attendance has indeed increased to 43. Pink Dandelion et al *British Quaker Survey* Centre for Postgraduate Quaker Studies, Woodbrooke Quaker College, Birmingham, 2014

<sup>182</sup> Estimated simply by taking Rutherford's findings and adding eight years

<sup>183</sup> Joe Hicks and Graham Allen *Parliamentary Research Paper 99/11 A Century of Change: Trends In UK Statistics Since 1900* (London: House of Commons Library, 1999) 8

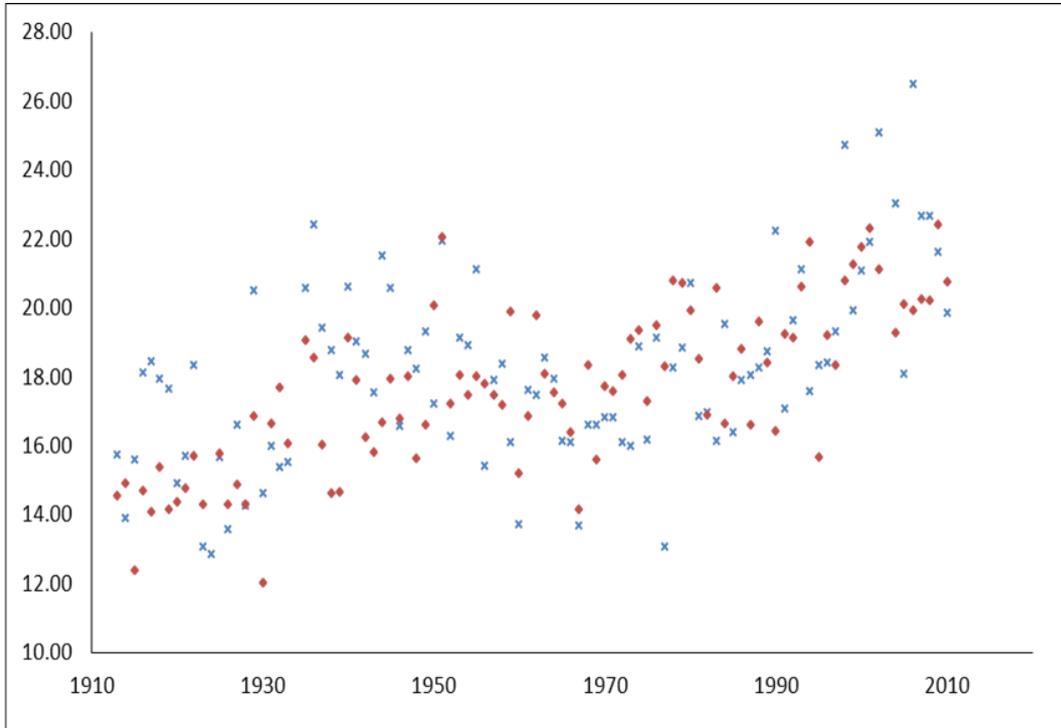
<sup>184</sup> Office for National Statistics web-site <http://www.statistics.gov.uk/cci/nugget.asp?id=168> July 2011

<sup>185</sup> Ben Wilson and Steve Smallwood *Understanding Trends In Marriage* (Newport: Population Trends 128, Office of National Statistics, Summer 2007) 28

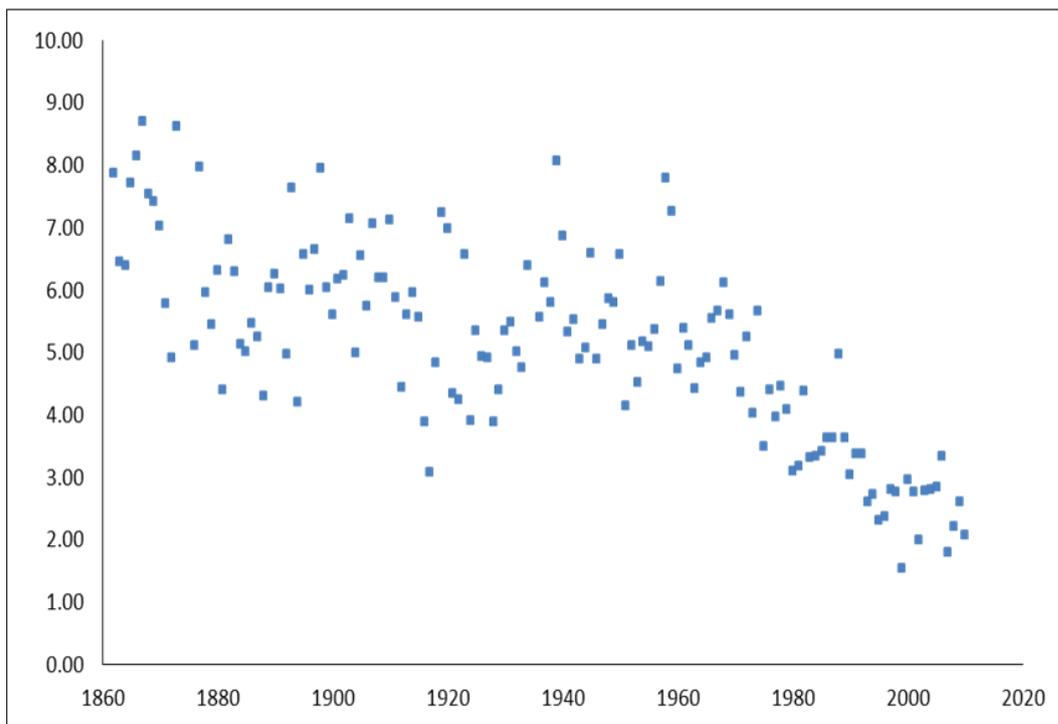
<sup>186</sup> Joe Hicks and Graham Allen *Trends In UK Statistics Since 1900*, 7

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1940s, rather than the mid-1970s for non-members, (the Tabular Statement did not record the numbers of attenders between 1925 and 1961).



**Figure 4.8 Deaths per 1000 members (men blue crosses, women red dots)**



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Figure 4.9 Marriages of members per 1000 members 1861 to 2010

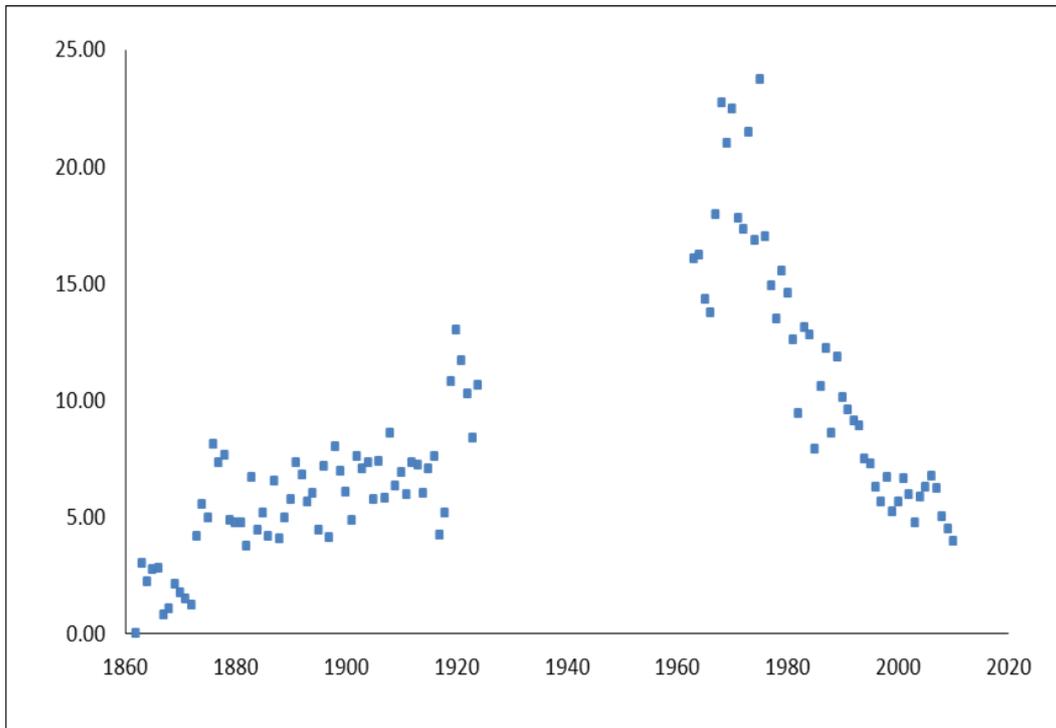


Figure 4.10 Marriages of non-members per 1000 attenders 1861 to 2010

The data from 1963 onwards for members and non-members (Figure 4.11) shows a consistent decline, with  $r^2$  in excess of 0.7 for both. On these trends, marriages among non-members will become negligible within the next 10 years or so, and those of members will follow by 2025.

The causes of decline in marriage are probably not peculiar to the Friends. Between 1982 and 2009 marriage of all kinds declined by 33%<sup>187</sup>.

### Birth Rates and Children Associated with Meeting

It is more difficult than it appears to determine the number of children born into the Society.

<sup>187</sup> Ben Wilson and Steve Smallwood *Understanding Trends in Marriage*

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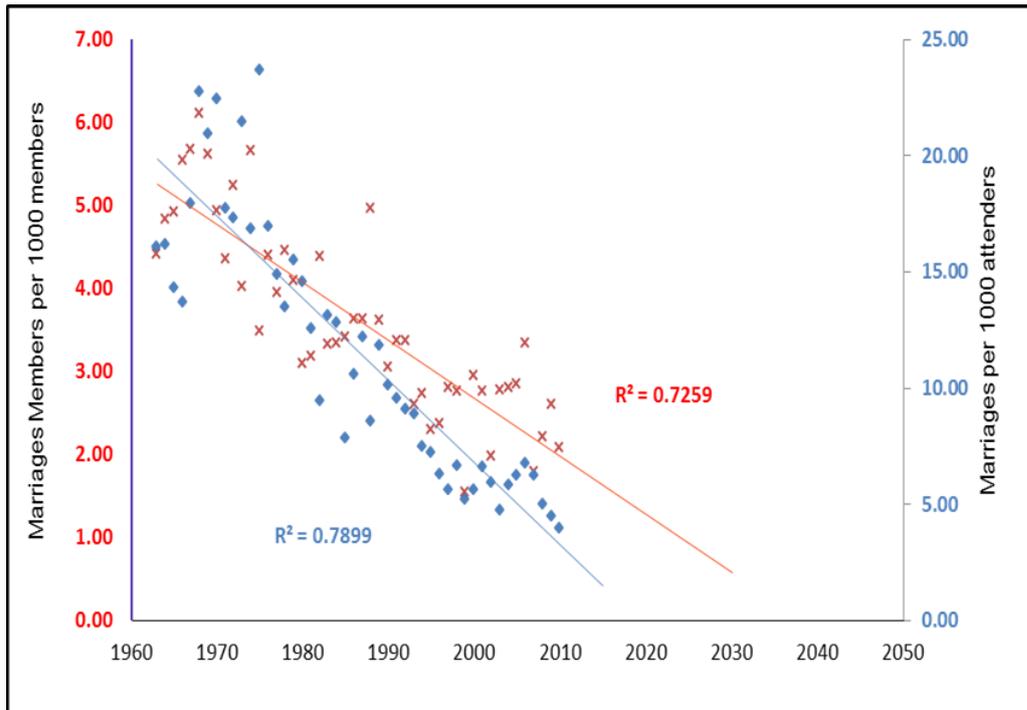


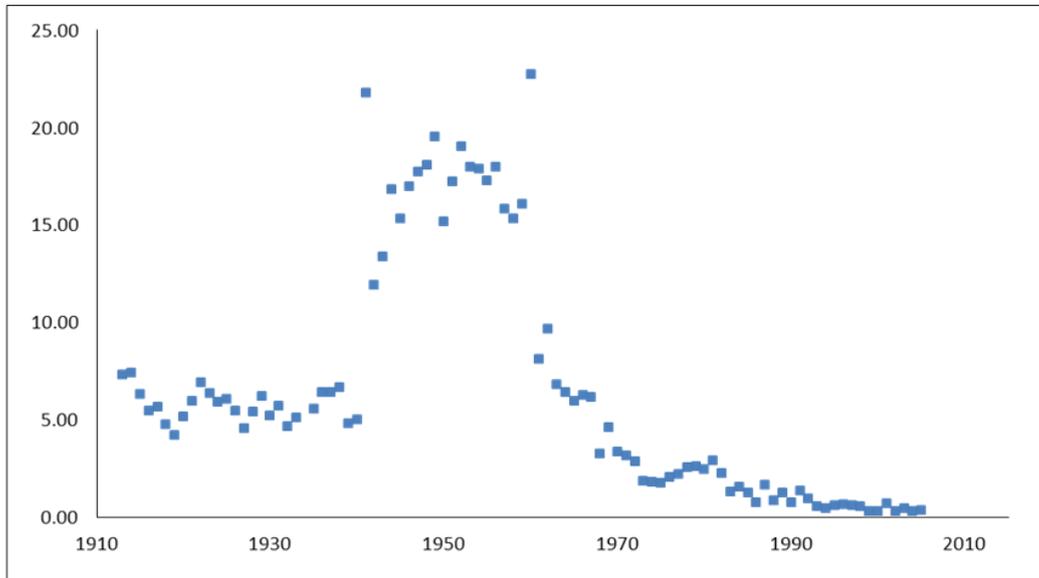
Figure 4.11 Marriages per 1000 members and attenders 1963 to 2010

Consistent statistics were kept only between 1913 and 2007, during which period there were also a large number of changes in the recording of children. The simplest approach, therefore, is to add the numbers in each relevant membership category and treat the total as the numbers of children born into the Society, since to be added to one category or another parents had to have an existing relationship with their meeting. This will, of course, mean missing an unknown number of children whose parents made no application for their membership in one of the defined categories (though given the rest of the data on ages of members and marriage rates the error will probably be small and a pattern of births will still be established)<sup>188</sup>.

<sup>188</sup> I noted earlier in this chapter that there were complex arrangements concerning child membership. Children whose parents were members were 'birthright' members, other children could be entered into a list of 'ordinary' or 'temporary' membership on request of a parent member. Determining a total of children in these categories will miss children whose parent(s) chose not to enter them in any category,

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Figure 4.12 shows an obvious post-war peak at the time of the national 'baby boom' – though not too much should be made of its apparent height.



**Figure 4.12 Numbers of children born into the Society of Friends per 1000 members**

The difference between peak and pre-peak numbers is about 13 births per 1000 members, a maximum of only another 200 births, or roughly one in every 2 meetings! What is clear, though, is that numbers had reached negligible levels before recording ceased in 2007. There is a difference, however, between the number of births in the Society of Friends and the total numbers of young people 'known' to the Society by attachment to meetings. As with other data, there are problems in analysis.

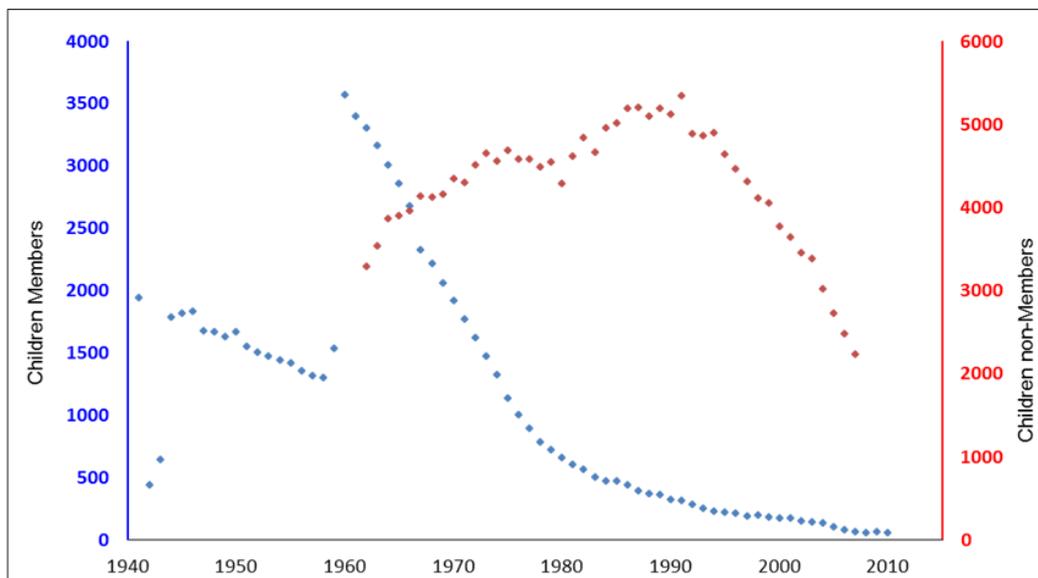
The total numbers of children not in membership were recorded only between 1962 and 2007, while children in membership were recorded consistently from 1941 onwards<sup>189</sup>. It is therefore sensible to consider both of

<sup>189</sup> They were also recorded for four years from 1873 to 1876

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these separately. Automatic child membership ceased in 1959, and thereafter happened only at the request of parents. Figure 4.13 shows this natural decline. In the 10 years from 1998 to 2007 there was a mean of only two such parental applications and a mean of only 2.4 children applying for membership in their own right annually. In 2006 and 2007, there were no applications by parents and none by children themselves in 2007.

The decline of child members therefore is simply the maturing of those who had automatically become members at birth and of those whose parents had applied for them, plus the very low numbers who applied in their own right. By 2010, only 33 boys and 22 girls were still in membership. The numbers of children not in membership show a decline from a peak in 1992. The origins of this peak are somewhat puzzling. It probably arose in two ways.



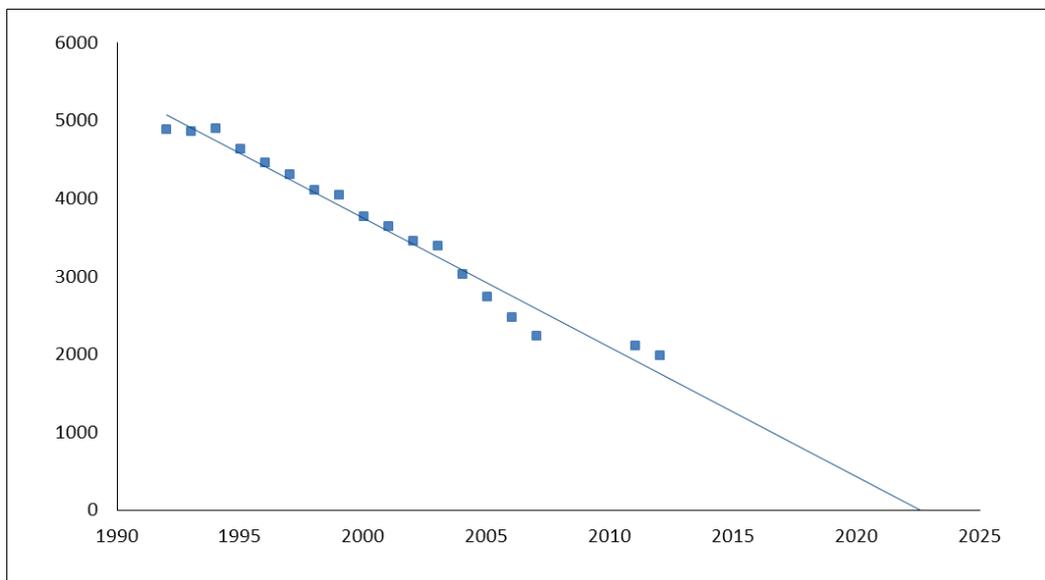
**Figure 4.13 Numbers of children, members and non-members 1940 to 2010**

The most likely is that following the abolition of automatic child

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membership, children born to members whose parents did not apply on their behalf would be included among non-member children. A suggestion of an additional contributory factor is given by the pattern of death rates, which fell coincidentally with the rise in adult membership in the late 1960s and 1970s; if that rise contained a significant number of younger people (hence the fall in death rate) then part of the rise in the numbers of children could be their offspring. Whatever the reason for the peak, it was followed by a linear decline over the next 15 years, as shown in Figure 4.14.

If this trend continues, it is likely that the numbers of non-member children will have reached negligible levels within 10 years. Indeed the real decline in meetings may be even more severe than shown since a simple head count is, as I suggested earlier, likely to overestimate active participation.



**Figure 4.14 Decline in the numbers of non-member children 1992 to 2012 (no data collected between 2008 and 2010)**

The highest recorded total of associated children was 5.340 in 1991.

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Best records a 2001 estimate by the Children and Young Peoples Committee of 5,000 children aged 0 to 18 associated with meetings and suggests that Committee's figure is inaccurate<sup>190</sup> (the Tabular Statement for that year shows only 3,534 children in total). In 2002, Best carried out his own survey of children, arriving at an estimate of 1,898 adolescents (defined as 11 to 18 years old) associated with the Society, when the Tabular Statement figure for total children was 3,602. Data from the *Present and Prevented* survey question on the numbers of children associated with meeting is given in Table 4.2.

Although covering 2006 – 2010 rather than 2002, the figures (allowing for the fact that they include all children rather than just adolescents) tend to confirm Best's estimate rather than the numbers proposed by the children's committee or derived from the Tabular Statement and suggests that the numbers in Figure 4.14 could be reduced by as much as one-third.

Date	Total	Response Rate	Corrected for 100%
2006	2095	82.3%	2546
2008	1651	75.4%	2190
2010	1705	76.2%	2238

**Table 4.2 Numbers of children associated with meetings calculated from *Present and Prevented* questionnaire returns**

## Conclusions

Analysis of the Tabular Statement offers a pessimistic outlook for the

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<sup>190</sup> Simon Best *The Community Of Intimacy* 14 – 15. In order to check this figure I visited Children and Young People's Section in Quaker Life, Friends House in 2012. To the best of anyone's recollection the figure of 5,000 was given as a guesstimate when called for in a committee paper.

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Religious Society of Friends. Membership shows a continuing decline, now in force for twenty years (1990 to 2010) which, if continued at the same level, will eventually lead to non-viability of the present form. The date by which this happens depends, of course, on the level of membership at which one assumes non-viability occurs (Figure 4.15). However, female membership attains half the present level around 2034 while there are half the current numbers of men around 2025. In the meantime, the ratio of members to attenders is likely to continue falling with important ramifications for governance of the Society of Friends.

It is also likely that the decline will accelerate because of an ageing membership and an increasing death rate. Although the recruitment rate is historically high, there are not enough younger incomers to effect replacement of those lost.

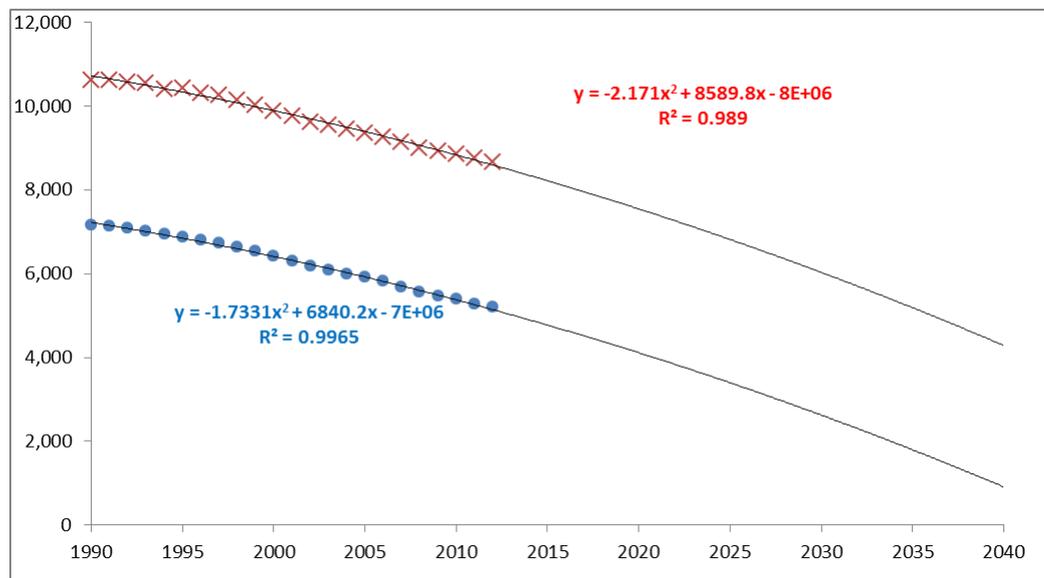


Figure 4.15 Decline in membership (women red, men blue) 1990 to 2012

The numbers of new membership will have only a limited, if any, effect

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on the mean age of the Society. A reanalysis of a survey carried out by Dandelion in 1990 alongside that of Rutherford shows that the mean age of respondents increased between 1990 and 2003 by 13 years, from 51 to 64, and that the percentage of respondents over the age of 70 increased from 22.9% to 38.8%<sup>191</sup>. Further the mean age of those on Woodbrooke Quaker College database was 68 years in 2011<sup>192</sup>, Both of these data imply that Rutherford's findings can be extrapolated with reasonable confidence to consider that in 2012 around  $\frac{1}{3}$  of the society is over 75 years old and around  $\frac{1}{5}$  over the age of 80<sup>193</sup>. Jones undertook a survey of Colchester and Coggeshall Monthly Meeting in September 2007 as part of her MPhil<sup>194</sup> research. One hundred valid responses were received from a possible 188. Although limited to a single Monthly Meeting, responses were broadly comparable to national data in terms of gender ratio, though perhaps distorted in terms of members and attenders<sup>195</sup>. Jones asked her respondents their age (obtaining 97 responses) and found that 77% were over 60 and 53% over 75 and only 2% under 30. Using Jones data we can calculate backwards to arrive at an approximate mean age for the survey as 66.

At the same time, the numbers of those marrying in the Society are

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<sup>191</sup> Mark Carey, Ben Dandelion and Rosie Rutherford *Comparing two surveys of Britain Yearly Meeting: 1990 and 2003* (Quaker Studies 13/2, 2009) 238 - 245

<sup>192</sup> Personal communication Dandelion, July 2011

<sup>193</sup> The British Quaker Survey of 2014 was designed to replicate and extend Rutherford's findings. Unfortunately constraints of time and length have prevented full discussion of this up to date data. I have, however, noted preliminary findings in footnotes where appropriate.

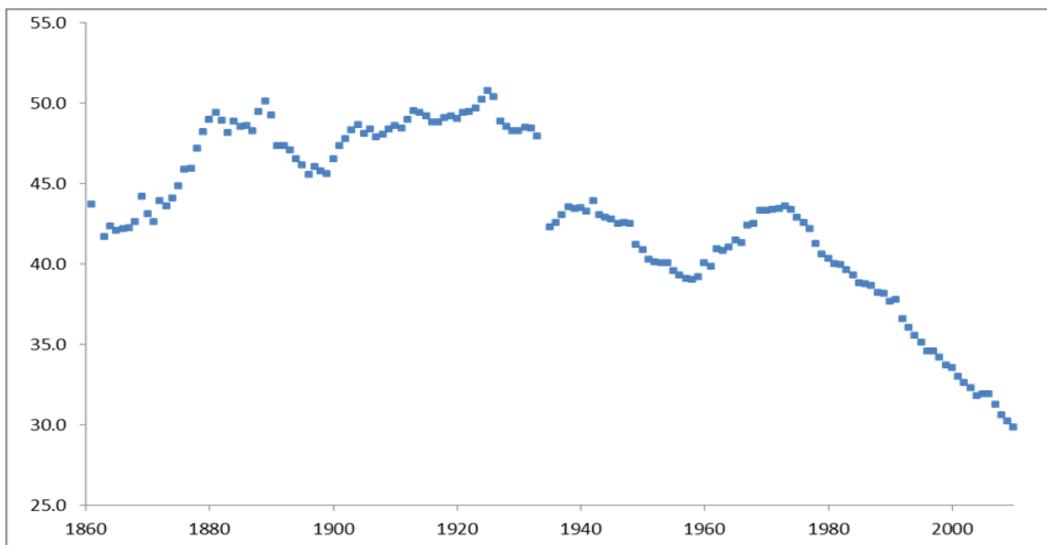
<sup>194</sup> Hazel Jones *Funding the Centrally Managed Work of Britain Yearly Meeting for the Religious Society of Friends* (MPhil Thesis, University of Birmingham, May 2009)

<sup>195</sup> Hazel Jones *Funding the Centrally Managed Work* 15

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declining rapidly. We will probably see the last of non-member marriages in roughly 10 years' time. The number of children associated with meetings is declining at a rate to reach negligible levels in the same 10-year mark.

Meanwhile the number of individual meetings is close to a historical high and Figure: 4.16 shows the numbers of members per meeting. The late 1960s early 1970s peak in membership is clearly visible as is an inter-war decline. The main feature of note is the decline from the peak in 1973, which continues unbroken. It is linear, clear and predictable ( $r^2 = 0.7$ ), Figure: 4.17). Statistics have a habit of failure in the face of reality if only because the data becomes much more variable as numbers decline.



**Figure 4.16 Number of members per meeting 1861 to 2012**

Parts of the Religious Society of Friends have, however, begun to consider closures and consolidation<sup>196</sup>, though at what point this will become widespread will depend more on individuals than on statistics.

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<sup>196</sup> Alec Davison *Sharing a Vision for London*, John Marsh, *Imaginative Uses of Your Meeting House*; Claire Scott-Booth, *Stewardship of our Meeting Houses* (Quaker Voices Vol. 3 No. 2 March 2012 ) 13-27

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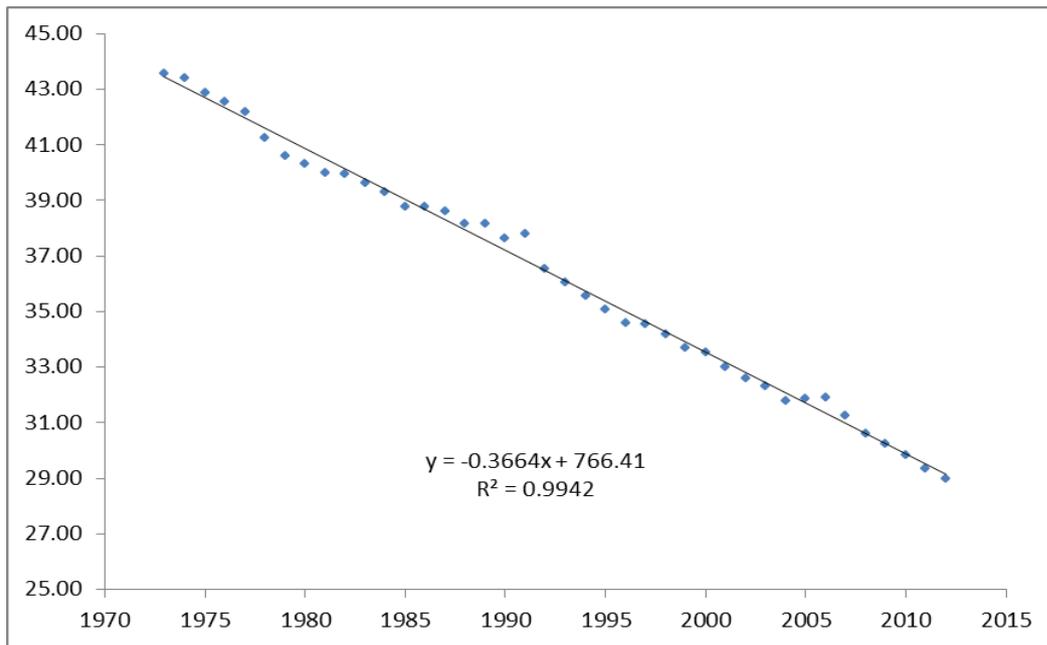


Figure 4.17 Members per local meeting 1973 to 2012

## Chapter 5

### ***Present and Prevented 2006 to 2010: Members and Attenders***

#### **Introduction**

In this chapter, I describe *Present and Prevented*, a longitudinal study of active participation in the worship and governance of Local and Area Quaker meetings, its methodology and the data collected on membership of meetings<sup>197</sup>.

In 2004, I identified a consistent decline in membership beginning in about 1990, and showed that it was possible to fit a second order equation to the curve with sufficient accuracy to produce confident predications about the future decline of membership<sup>198</sup>. The analysis suggested a thought experiment: suppose a local Quaker Meeting were to close; what would happen to the Tabular Statement?

Obviously, the number of recorded meetings would decrease by one, but the number of members would remain constant since individual membership of the Society lies with the Area Meeting. Some individuals may drift away but would remain as part of the records of the Society for some time<sup>199</sup>. Consequently, the number of members per local meeting would rise,

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<sup>197</sup> The data on attendance at meeting for worship and participation in governance and administration is considered in chapter 11 *Present and Prevented: Attendance at Meeting*.

<sup>198</sup> Bill Chadkirk *Will the Last (Woman) Friend to Leave*

<sup>199</sup> Termination of membership on grounds of non-attendance is a long process not initiated until a Friend has been absent and out of contact with a meeting for some time. The process necessitates several attempts to contact the person in question and to ascertain whether they have begun worshipping elsewhere. It can take many months, sometimes years, to complete once it has begun. Removing a name from a list of Recognised Attenders while not so formal or bureaucratic can also take considerable time

**Chapter 5: *Present and Prevented* 2006 – 2010: Members and Attenders**

at least initially. Those who worshipped at the closed meeting would most likely worship at the next nearest meetings, which may therefore report a rise in attendance. If worshippers moved to an adjacent Area Meeting, it too would record a rise in adherence (counterbalanced by an equivalent fall in the original Area Meeting). Assets of the closed meeting would accrue to the Area Meeting, which would consequently show an increase. With no or very little loss of membership, some meetings reporting increased attendance and an increase in assets, the Area Meeting may very well feel able to increase giving to the central work and invest more in its remaining meetings. The closure of a meeting would therefore show as an *increase* in activity. Only in the fine detail of the Tabular Statement would anyone note that the number of meetings had fallen. The conclusion of the experiment was that in most respects the Tabular Statement (and some other data), fails to depict reality. One reason for this is that every Area Meeting carries on its books significant numbers of individuals who have only the most distant chronological or emotional attachment to the Religious Society of Friends, inflating the apparent number of members and attenders and making it difficult to assess the true situation.

Because of this consideration was given to collecting data that might more closely reflect the *active* membership of and participation in, the affairs of the Society of Friends. The outcome was the *Present and Prevented* longitudinal study of 2006, 2008 and 2010.

**Chapter 5: Present and Prevented 2006 – 2010: Members and Attenders**

**Methodology**

*Present and Prevented* data was collected by questionnaires sent to meetings in April 2006, April 2008 and April 2010 with a request that they be completed on Sunday the 7<sup>th</sup> May 2006, Sunday the 11<sup>th</sup> May 2008 and Sunday the 9<sup>th</sup> of May 2010<sup>200</sup>. In the weeks prior to each questionnaire a short paragraph was published in *The Friend*, a weekly Quaker magazine, giving advance notice of the questionnaire, explaining the reasons for it and encouraging a response. On each occasion, one questionnaire was sent to every Local Meeting clerk and a different questionnaire to every Area Meeting clerk. The clerks were asked to complete the questionnaires giving information as accurately as possible at the date of the questionnaire. Meetings were requested to return the questionnaires to a freepost address as soon as possible after completion. The central offices of the Religious Society of Friends generously offered both copying and freepost facilities free of charge<sup>201</sup>. The questionnaires<sup>202</sup> sent to Local Meetings were in three parts: the first asked about attendance at Meeting for Worship on the given date, the second part asked about the membership and attenders as a whole and the locale of the meeting, and the third part asked about appointments to positions of responsibility and attendance at business meetings. The questionnaire to Area Meetings simply asked about attendance at business

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<sup>200</sup> The dates were chosen to avoid holiday periods such as Easter and summer, bank holiday weekends and Yearly Meeting weekend

<sup>201</sup> In return an offer was made to include questions relevant to the Central Work, but was not taken up. The subsequent analysis and conclusions are entirely those of the author and should not be construed as the official view of the Religious Society of Friends in Britain

<sup>202</sup> See Appendix 5 'Present and Prevented Questionnaires'

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meetings and appointments of officers. The questions asked of Local Meetings relevant to this chapter are given in appendix 6.

Returned questionnaires were dated on receipt, the data entered into a spreadsheet<sup>203</sup> and then filed alphabetically by name of meeting. Meetings that did not give a name were labelled Unknown 1, Unknown 2 etc. in order of receipt. Upon completion of analysis, the questionnaires were given to the library of the Society of Friends for safekeeping<sup>204</sup>.

The response rate from local meetings was extremely high and is given in Table 5.1. That from Area Meetings was not quite as high and is discussed in chapter 10. It is curious to note that the overall questionnaire response rate in 2008 was marginally lower than either 2006 or 2010, and proportionally to the number of questionnaires received the responses to individual questions was also lower. While not significant in terms of the data analysis, it is difficult to explain. It may have something to do with the initial enthusiasm of the author and publicity, but then the response of 2010 should have been lower still. Because of the Quaker system of triennial appointments, the second questionnaire, two years after the first, is likely to have been answered by a number of clerks who dealt with the first questionnaire and who may have felt ‘Oh no, not again!’. The third

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<sup>203</sup> Open Office Calc spreadsheet was initially used for the analysis but the data was eventually transferred to Microsoft Excel for compatibility with other MS Office programmes and functionality. SPSS was considered and not used because the volume of data and the relatively simple statistical functions required did not justify the cost. Consideration was given to using its Open Source equivalent, PSPP, but the advantages of doing so did not outweigh the effort required in becoming familiar with a new suite of software; which anyway was then in the early stages of development.

<sup>204</sup> Friends House, 173 – 177 Euston Road, London, NW1 2BJ

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questionnaire four years after the first is, however, likely to have been answered by sufficient new triennial appointees for a novelty factor to have reasserted itself. Clearly, multiple dimensions of analysis are possible (Table 5.2). However, in a number of categories the responses were too few to yield meaningful results, especially since most meetings failed to answer one or other questions either from oversight or because (as indicated by notes added by respondents) the data requested was unavailable or too difficult to find.

	2006	2008	2010
Number of Meetings	474	470	471
Number of questionnaires received	390	359	365
Meetings Response Rate	82.3%	76.4%	77.5%

*Questions answered of questionnaires received*

Meeting Members and Attenders List	95.1%	89.1% <sup>205</sup>	91.8% <sup>206</sup>
Urban, semi-urban or rural	98.2%	93.9%	97.8%
Quaker owned, rented or donated	97.9%	94.4%	98.6%
Moving or closing	99.2%	93.6%	98.9%

**Table 5.1 Present and Prevented questionnaire response rate**

**Analysis**

In some questions respondents were required to provide answers in categories, for example the number of members and attenders or numbers of men and women. Occasionally only a single number was given in answer,

<sup>205</sup> One meeting gave only the number of children,

<sup>206</sup> One meeting noted only a single attender and did not provide any other information, a further two meetings noted only members and a final meeting recorded a single child without any other data. Excluding these four meetings reduces the response rate to 90.7%

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usually entered in the first space in each category ('Men' in the case of gender categories and 'Members' in the case of members and attenders). Of course some meetings, especially smaller, may indeed be composed of only one gender or only members (or attenders). The effect of incorrect entries will be that the overall statistics for members and men will be slightly overestimated and those for women and attenders slightly underestimated. A very few respondents noted a refusal to distinguish between male and female or members and attenders on principle. Data from these meetings was excluded from the analysis.

**Analyses**

<b>Against</b>	Total Address List							
	Members				Attenders			
	Adults		Children		Adults		Children	
	Male	Female	Male	Female	Male	Female	Male	Female
	Urban, Semi-Urban, Rural							
	Premises							
	Quaker owned		Rented		Donated			
	Has considered							
	Moving				Closing			
	To Quaker owned	Rented	Donated					

**Table 5.2 Present and Prevented possible dimensions of analysis**

.There was clearly confusion about children. Very frequently, the question on the number of children at or associated with meetings was left blank, in most instances probably because there were no children but it is impossible to say for a particular meeting whether this was so or that the

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question was simply overlooked. A very small number of meetings noted 'We do not have child members anymore'; which is untrue<sup>207</sup>. It is also possible that some respondents assumed the question on child membership referred to children of members. The effect of such errors will be to sometimes underestimate and sometimes overestimate the number of child members, possibly significantly (since overall numbers are low), while only slightly affecting the number of child non-members since there are many more of the latter than the former. The questionnaire first asked respondents the question on child membership and then one on child non-members. Sometimes, significant numbers of children were entered as a simple total in the space provided for child membership because they were the first answer spaces the respondent met. One meeting recorded an unlikely 48 boys as child members, leaving the columns for girl members and child non-members of both genders blank.

Some questions were misunderstood, especially in relation to the numbers present at meeting for worship, and this problem is discussed more fully in chapter 10. There were also surprising problems with both honesty or self-image in a small minority of meetings who sought to show themselves in the best possible light rather than accurately<sup>208</sup>, but since this was more so in terms of attendance at meeting for worship the effect is to slightly over-

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<sup>207</sup> New regulations on child membership were approved at Yearly Meeting in 1989 with further amendments to the procedures on applications for membership by children in 2006, 2007 and 2012. Personal communication 20/8/2012, Michael Hutchinson, Assistant Recording Clerk Friends House

<sup>208</sup> One respondent noted on the returned form "Attendance was low and so I have filled in the form depicting better attendance" and another respondent rang to ask whether she could complete the questionnaire on a different day if attendance was low on the day specified, remarking that that was what the previous clerk had done on an earlier occasion.

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estimate the numbers present.

It became apparent from comments that a small but growing proportion of meetings now maintain two lists of members and attenders; one an 'official list' with a large number of rarely or never seen adherents used to complete the Tabular Statement and a second of active participants which may include recent attenders not yet on the 'official list'. On some occasions, it was not clear which list had been used to complete the questionnaire. If less punctilious meetings included unlisted adults or children as well as those listed in their answers on adherence on the grounds they were active participants in the meeting the effect would be to increase the numbers in proportion to those recorded in the Tabular Statement. If, however, other meetings used only their active members list rather than the official list the effect would be to reduce the numbers in proportion to the Tabular Statement. Since we cannot know exactly how a questionnaire was completed, I simply note these as possible errors.

Meetings faced with the question on urban, semi-urban or rural locations, occasionally ticked two boxes, none at all, or made some comment indicating an inability to do so. One or two noted that their meeting house might be in one kind of area but worshippers came predominantly from another kind of area. Answers in which only one option was selected were encoded as valid and others ignored. There was also some confusion over premises. Meetings were clear about the use of rented or donated premises, but on a minority of occasions, either ticked or left blank 'Quaker Owned Premises' and added a note to the effect that 'we do not own the premises

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so-and-so does' most commonly the Area Meeting. Besides ignoring the fact that the question was about *Quaker* ownership rather than *meeting* ownership there is apparently a widespread misunderstanding about property ownership in the Religious Society of Friends<sup>209</sup>. Answers that were in any way ambiguous were ignored in the analysis.

**Size of meeting**

First consider the total size of meetings (table 5.3)

	2006	2008	2010
Mean Size	48.4 ± σ44.1 (N = 371)	49.5 ± σ43.8 (N = 320)	51.8 ± σ45.9 (N = 335)
Median Size	35	38	39

**Table 5.3 Size of Local Quaker Meetings including men and women, adults and children**

There are two things to note from this data. First the near equivalence of the mean and a single standard deviation suggests that it is clearly absurd to consider a typical meeting to consist of between 4 and 93 individuals (taking 2006 as an example)! The positive skew of the distribution of meeting sizes indicates a significant departure from a normal distribution ( $sk_{(2006)}$  and  $sk_{(2008)} = +2.4$  while  $sk_{(2010)} = +2.8$ ). Figure 5.1 illustrates the bias toward smaller meetings: 25% of all meetings contain fewer than 20 individuals and 50% of meetings contain fewer than 36 individuals. Like the Tabular

<sup>209</sup> *Quaker Faith and Practice* 1995 15.01 to 15.05. Until recently, the Society of Friends was a religious charity excepted from registration by statutory instrument: in effect a charity with all the rights and responsibilities in law of a charity but without formal registration. One of the consequences was that the Society was not allowed to own property. A separate body, Friends Trusts Ltd, was set up to be custodian trustees and legal owners of meeting houses, investment properties, land etc. 'Beneficial Ownership' which includes responsibilities for insurance and maintenance remained with Monthly Meetings and remains now with Area Meetings.

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Statement, these totals include Friends and attenders who may rarely if ever participate in meeting. Because the numbers of children are so low ( $M_{d(2006)} = 3$ ,  $M_{d(2008)} = 2$ ,  $M_{d(2010)} = 2$ ), statistics for adults only barely change. It is worth, however, comparing adult members and adult attenders separately.

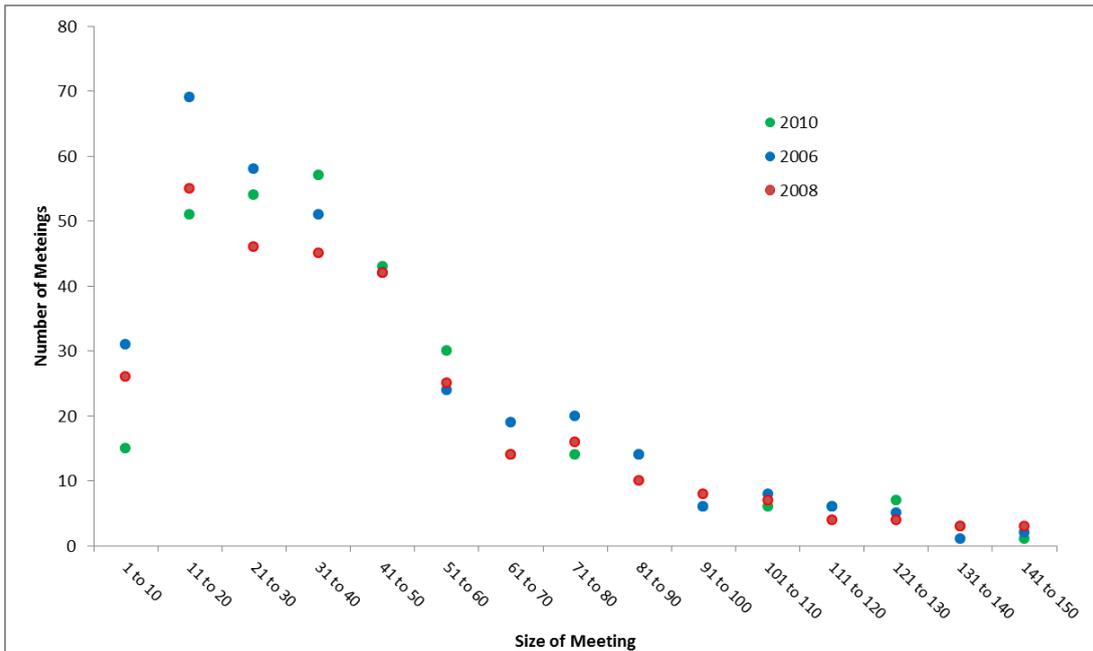


Figure 5.1 Distribution of the size of meeting recorded in each questionnaire

**Members**

Data was collected on adult membership by gender and is summarised in Table 5.4. Again, the data is highly skewed, very variable and clearly shows not only the relatively low number of members per meeting and the preponderance of female members. Figure 5.2 shows the distribution of members and attenders in a scatter graph. There are relatively few meetings with a very small number of members and a peak in the number of meetings containing around 20 members. Interestingly the curves for members as a whole (green) and for women (red) are much the same. The curve

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representing the distribution of men (blue) is quite different and shows a decline from the start without any peak. Quite why there should be relatively more men (or fewer women) in smaller meetings is unclear.

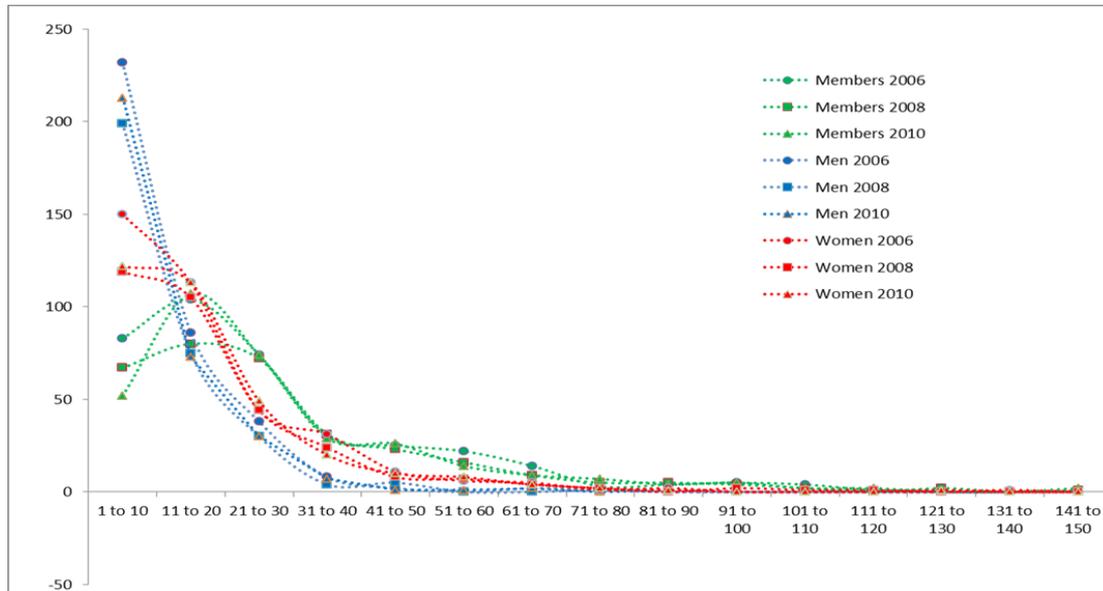


Figure 5.2 Membership of local meetings by total and gender

### Attenders

From Table 5.4, it is apparent that the median number of attenders per meeting rose from 11 to 14 between 2006 and 2010. Given the extreme variability, indicated by the large standard deviation around the mean, it is not clear that the growth was significant. To resolve this, a series of F-tests were conducted, with a null hypothesis of no differences between the data sets<sup>210</sup>.

<sup>210</sup> An F-Test was chosen because it is two-tailed, testing whether A is different from B and B different from A. Say data set A has a well-defined mean with a narrow standard deviation (SD) and the mean of data set B fell beyond a given multiple of SD(A), A would be different from B. If B had a very wide SD around the mean which overlapped the mean of A there would no difference between B and A. Two-tailed statistics such as F will test for all such possibilities,

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	2006	2008	2010
Mean adult membership	27.8 ± σ25.0 (N = 371)	28.4 ± σ24.9 (N = 319)	28.4 ± σ24.5 (N = 333)
Median adult membership	20	23	22
Median male membership	8	8	8
Median female membership	12	14	14
Median Ratio male membership to female membership	62% <sup>211</sup>	60%	60%
Meetings reporting zero members	0	0	1 (0.3%)

Table 5.4 Male and female membership of local meetings

	2006	2008	2010
Mean adult attenders	14.9 ± σ14.8 (N = 371)	16.0 ± σ15.1 (N = 319)	18.7 ± σ17.2 (N = 330)
Median adult attenders	11	12	14
Median male attenders	4	5	5
Median female attenders	7	7	9
Median Ratio male attenders to female attenders	60% <sup>212</sup>	56.7%	60%
Meetings report zero attenders	12 (3.2%) <sup>213</sup>	11 (3.4%)	3 (0.9%)

Table 5.4 Male and female attenders in local meetings

<sup>211</sup> The refusal of some meetings to make a distinction in gender or between members and attenders will cause a slight distortion in gender-differentiated statistics, usually over estimating men and underestimating women. Where a meeting either refused or neglected to differentiate by gender, totals numbers were usually given in the columns for men. For example in 2006 one meeting recorded a possible, though unlikely, 22 men members and no women members and another that recorded 17 men and no women. Statistics not differentiated by gender are unaffected.

<sup>212</sup> As with members some meetings seem to have refused to separate attenders by gender. One meeting for instance recorded 48 male attenders and no female attenders, which seems unlikely

<sup>213</sup> Although meetings were requested to enter zero if there were no attenders it may still be that some of those who left the question blank did so because there were no attenders in meetings

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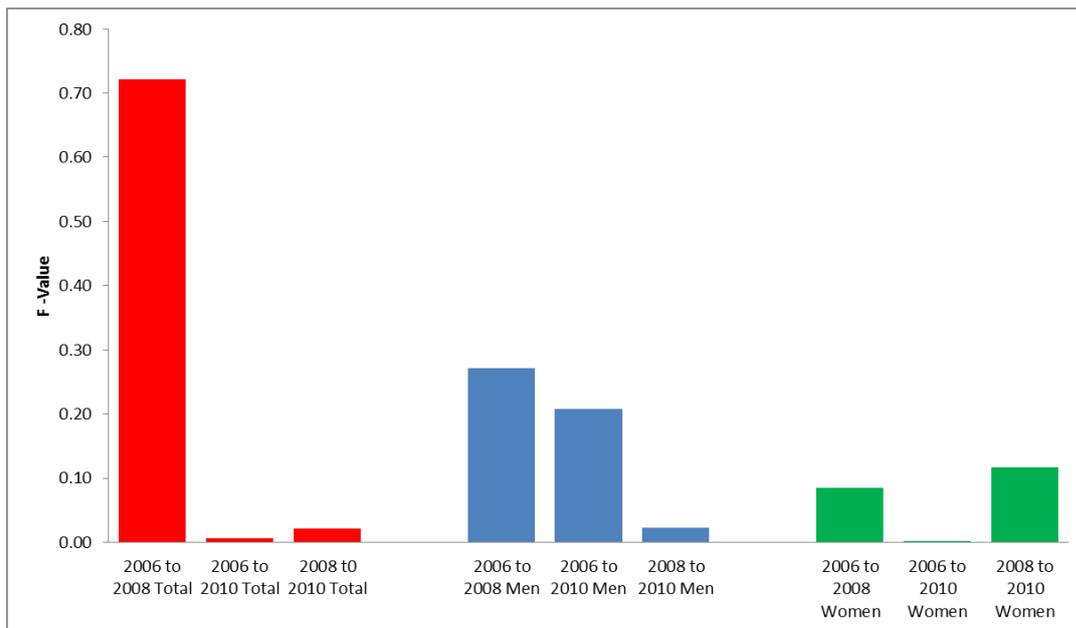
Reference to probability tables obtains a value  $F \geq 1.20$  for a significant likelihood that the samples under question would be different. The difference between 2006 and 2008 is not significant ( $F = 0.72$ ), even though the data shows a small apparent growth. The difference between 2006 and 2010 is even less significant ( $F = 0.01$ ).

When the data for 2008 was tested against 2010 the rise was still insignificant ( $F = 0.02$ ). The apparent rise recorded by *Present and Prevented* was therefore not statistically meaningful. To determine whether growth in attenders may have a gender bias, F-tests were carried out on the data relating separately to male and female and again the probability that the samples are different is not significant.  $F_{\text{men}} = 0.27$  between 2006 and 2008 and  $F_{\text{men}} = 0.21$  between 2006 and 2010 with an even lower F value between 2008 and 2010. For  $F_{\text{women}} = 0.08$  between 2006 and 2008 and between 2006 and 2010  $F_{\text{women}} = 0.001$ , and between 2008 and 2010  $F_{\text{women}} = 0.12$ ) All these findings are summarised in figure 5.3.

Curiously, there is a pattern to these findings. The F-values for men were greatest between 2006 and 2008 and much less between 2008 and 2010 whereas for women they were least between 2006 and 2008 and greatest between 2008 and 2010. Now the Tabular Statement (Chapter 4) showed a real rise in attenders in 2009 and again 2010. Some staff of the central work of the Religious Society of Friends informally expressed the opinion that this was a direct consequence of the national publicity around the decision by Quakers to accept a religious basis for same sex marriage at the Yearly Meeting in August 2009. However, if so, the individuals who began

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attending at that time must have found themselves on the official list of attenders within 3 or 4 months, whereas traditionally it could take up to a year of regular attendance at Meeting for Worship to achieve the status of a 'Recognised Attender'.



**Figure 5.3 Results of F-Tests for Total, Male and Female attenders recorded by meetings in 2006, 2008 and 2010**

There are two possibilities; this is exactly what happened and meetings excited by a sudden inflow of new people did indeed shorten the traditional apprenticeship or secondly, and more likely, the rise in the number of attenders began at least a year earlier in 2008. However, such is the variability of the Tabular Statement that between 2000 and 2011 there was a maximum gain between one year and the next of 313 and a maximum loss of -341 between concurrent years. With such a wide spread of data a real rise in numbers would not become apparent until the sum of new incomers was close to or exceeded this variability and it may be that *Present and Prevented*

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only just captured the very weak beginnings of this early rise.

### **Meetings**

Meetings were asked whether they considered themselves urban, semi-urban or rural. Basic definitions were given to prompt answers<sup>214</sup> but some respondents had difficulty in distinguishing between, for example, a small town and a large village; and, as previously noted, some remarked that their meeting house was in one setting but their congregation came from a different setting. Nevertheless, enough meetings gave answers to enable investigation of structural differences. The Religious Society of Friends took root first among northern farming communities and initially spread through the working population<sup>215 216 217</sup>. Most meetings in this early period of growth would therefore be in what are now rural areas, though some would, of course, have been in communities that later became cities, such as Manchester. It could also be expected that as urban areas grew meetings would be established among the new industrial populations masking the country origins of the Society to some extent. It is never the less surprising

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<sup>214</sup> Urban – town or city, semi-urban – small rural town, rural – village or remote

<sup>215</sup> William C Braithwaite *The Beginning of Quakerism* (London, MacMillan and Co. Ltd, 1923) esp. chapters II to V. George Fox was himself the son of a weaver, and a cobbler. The first Quaker converts were among the ‘shattered Baptists’ in Yorkshire, Nottinghamshire, Leicestershire (especially the area around Spalding) and Westmorland. See more especially the maps following page 542 and in particular the map showing *Quakerism In England and Wales at the Beginning of 1854*

<sup>216</sup> Judith Jones Hurwicks *The Social Origins of Early Quakers* (Oxford, Oxford University Press, Past and Present No. 48 August 1970) 156 – 162. Hurwicks argues that Quakerism at first had a wide appeal but then quickly narrowed excluding the very rich and very poor.

<sup>217</sup> Peter Collins *On Resistance: The Case of 17<sup>th</sup> Century Quakers* (Durham Anthropology Journal 16(2) 2009 ) 8 – 22 “During the 1650s the group [*Quakers*] developed mainly in the poorer North and West of England and consisted mainly of yeoman, husbandmen, rural artisans and their wives. By 1660, Quakerism flourished in the towns and cities primarily among the poorer sections of society”

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that in this data there is no evidence, however 'fossilised', of the original distribution of meetings. Examination of Butler's survey of 1,300 meeting houses in Britain and Northern Ireland, which gives dates of establishment and closure, would be illuminating in this respect<sup>218</sup>.

As seen in Table 5.5, meetings in urban, semi-urban and rural locations predictably decrease in size with population density. However, from figures 5.4 to 5.6, the proportion of attenders in each type of meeting rose over the period under consideration, most pronouncedly in rural meetings while the number of members fell in all but rural meetings. Burton who examined members and attenders in Scotland and in General Meetings (GM's) in England and Wales, also showed that meetings in rural areas might behave differently to others; noting<sup>219</sup>

At first glance, the only factor common to these four GM's [*exhibiting growth*] is their more rural nature, though Scotland GM, of course, contains a number of major cities'.

However, the decrease in the number of children associated with meetings is consistent across all three settings.

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<sup>218</sup> David Butler *Meeting Houses of Britain and Northern Ireland* (London, Friends Historical Society, 1999) two volumes

<sup>219</sup> Paul Burton, *Keeping the Light Shining* 253. A criticism of Burton may be made in that he chose the starting point for his trend analysis as 1899 and his end-point as 2003 when numbers were almost equal. In between there was a considerable variation in the national totals and the chances are that enough regional variations would have taken place in between to make it appear that some regions would grow and others shrink.

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	2006						2008						2010					
	Urban		Semi-Urban		Rural		Urban		Semi-Urban		Rural		Urban		Semi-Urban		Rural	
	<i>172</i>		<i>150</i>		<i>60</i>		<i>167</i>		<i>127</i>		<i>40</i>		<i>173</i>		<i>138</i>		<i>46</i>	
<i>N</i> (total meetings)	♂	♀	♂	♀	♂	♀	♂	♀	♂	♀	♂	♀	♂	♀	♂	♀	♂	♀
<i>N</i> (members)	167	166	148	148	53	53	157	157	118	118	37	37	159	159	129	129	43	43
<b>Median Members</b>	<b>11</b>	<b>16</b>	<b>7</b>	<b>11.5</b>	<b>5</b>	<b>8</b>	<b>9</b>	<b>16</b>	<b>7.5</b>	<b>13.5</b>	<b>5</b>	<b>8</b>	<b>10</b>	<b>17</b>	<b>6</b>	<b>12</b>	<b>6</b>	<b>10</b>
<i>N</i> (attenders)	166	166	147	148	53	53	157	157	117	117	38	38	157	157	129	129	43	43
<b>Median Attenders</b>	<b>5</b>	<b>8</b>	<b>3</b>	<b>6</b>	<b>3</b>	<b>5</b>	<b>6</b>	<b>8</b>	<b>4</b>	<b>8</b>	<b>3</b>	<b>6</b>	<b>7</b>	<b>10</b>	<b>4</b>	<b>7</b>	<b>5</b>	<b>8</b>
<i>N</i> (children) <sup>220</sup>	115		96		27		97		72		17		129		107		34	
% Meetings with associated children	66.9%		64.0%		45.0%		58.1%		56.7%		42.5%		74.6%		77.5%		73.9%	
<b>Median Children</b>	<b>7</b>		<b>5</b>		<b>4</b>		<b>7</b>		<b>4</b>		<b>4</b>		<b>5</b>		<b>3</b>		<b>2</b>	

**Table 5.5 Urban, Semi-Urban and Rural Meetings Compared.** The numbers in italics are the number of meetings in the calculation of median values

<sup>220</sup> Those meetings that report having associated children

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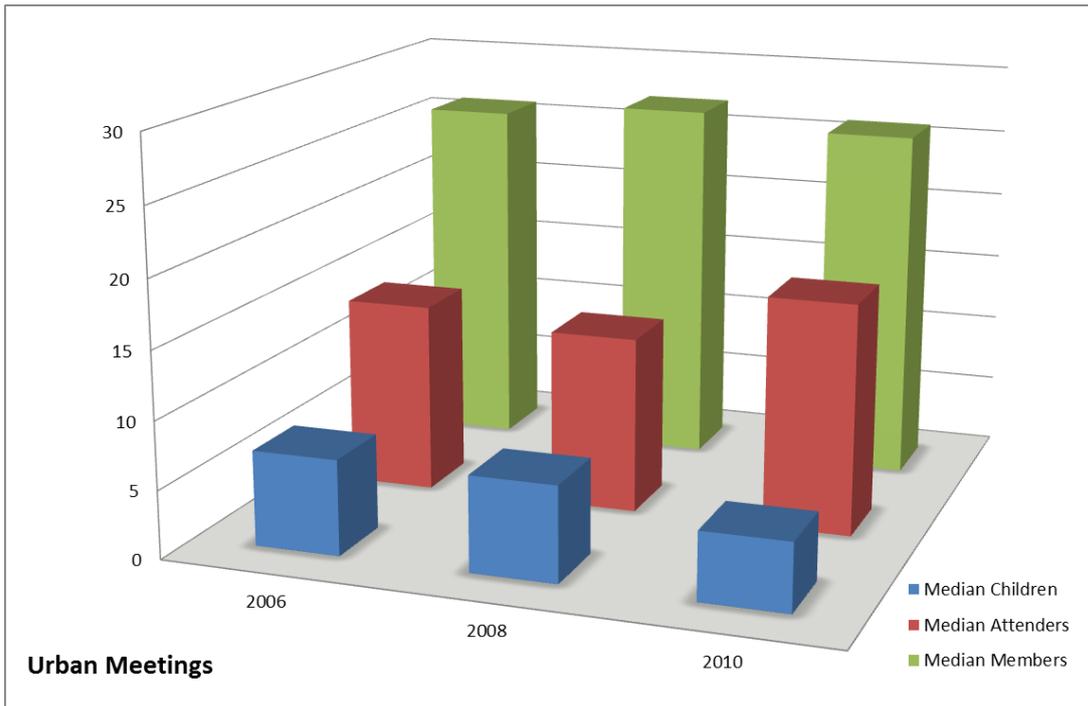


Figure 5.4 Members, Attenders and children in Urban Meetings

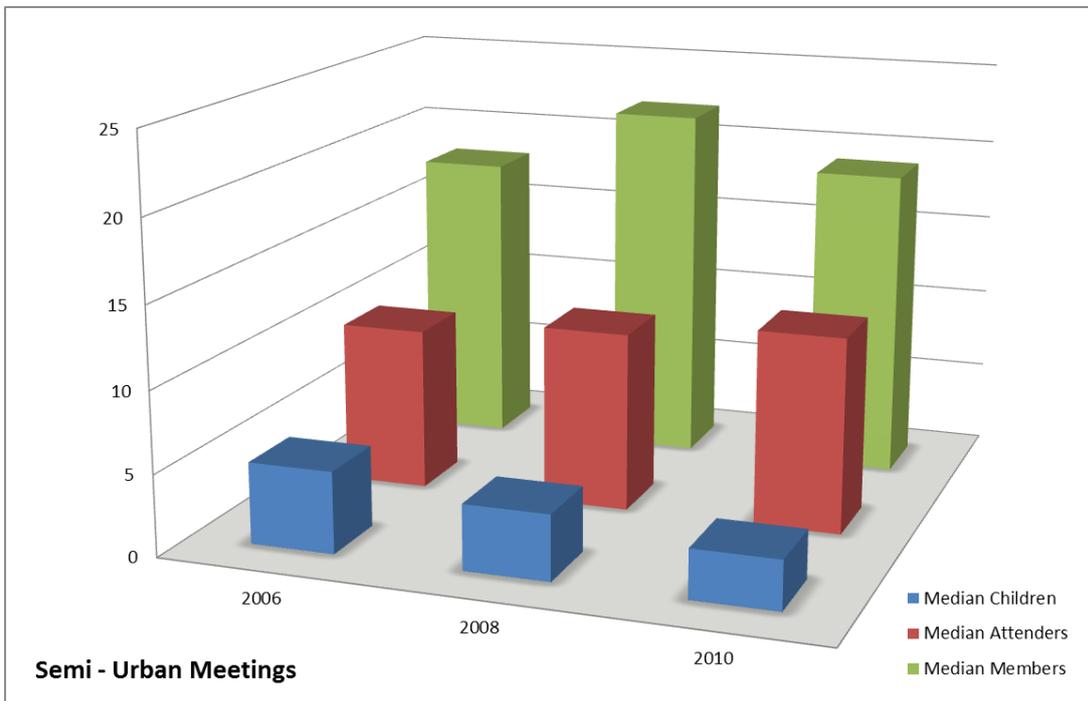


Figure 5.5 Members, Attenders and children in Semi-Urban Meetings

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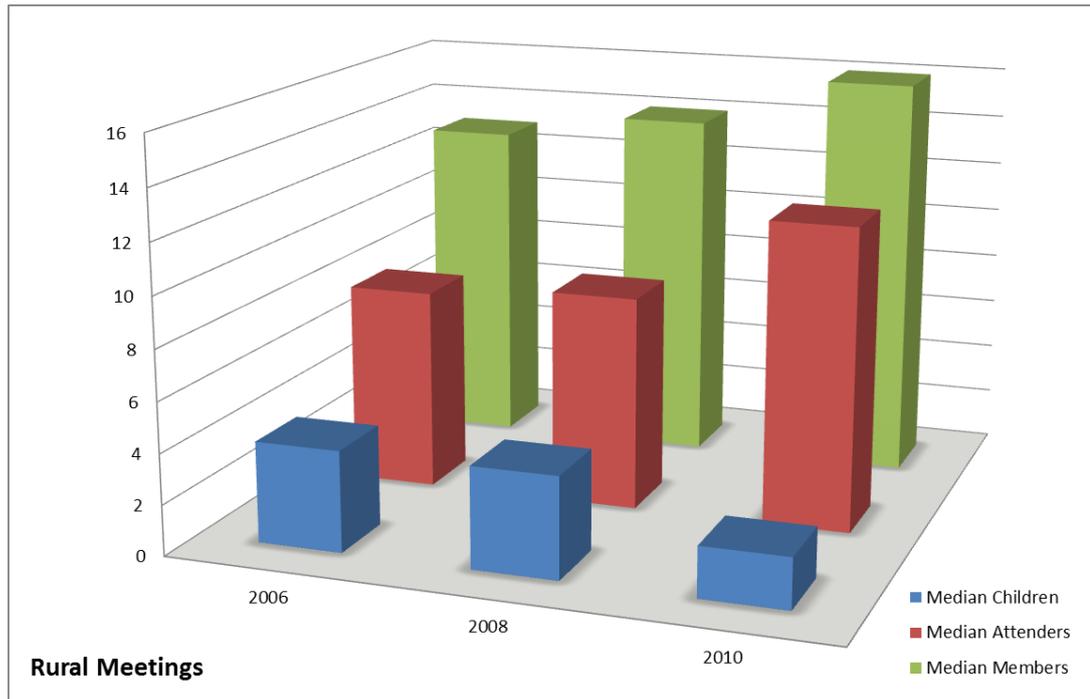


Figure 5.6 Members, Attenders and children in Rural Meetings

In all three cases, the number of meetings in which men are a majority is only a small fraction of the total number. It is also apparent that the highest ratio of men to women occurs in urban meetings and the lowest in rural meetings, and that a greater change took place between 2006 and 2008 than between 2008 and 2010, though why this should be is unclear and it would repay further study. The narrow blue line in figure 5.7 shows the average ratio of men to women across all meetings in each of the three years of the study making the decline even clearer. Of course, as can be seen from Table 5.5 the numbers of observations for rural meetings is relatively small.

This analysis excludes meetings in which the numbers of men and women were equal because the numbers of such meetings was small, (ranging from nine in urban meetings in 2008 to zero for all types of

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meetings in 2010) and gives the ratio of men and women in each type of meeting for each year.

A) It is likely to be a temporary phenomenon requiring only the arrival or departure of a single individual to change.

We can see that in all meetings (Table 5.6 and 5.7), over the four years of *Present and Prevented* there has been a considerable decline in the numbers of meetings in which men predominate and a related rise in the meetings in which women predominate.

Two more questions relating to meeting premises were asked: the first whether they owned, rented, or used donated premises in which to worship, and the second whether the meeting had considered moving or closing in the year preceding each questionnaire.

		2006	2008	2010
Urban meetings	<i>N</i> =	166	157	157
	<b>Men predominate</b>	<b>10.8%</b>	<b>7.0%</b>	<b>7.0%</b>
	<b>Women predominate</b>	<b>86.7%</b>	<b>87.3%</b>	<b>93.0%</b>
	<b>Men and women equal</b>	<b>2.4%</b>	<b>5.7%</b>	<b>0.0%</b>
Semi-Urban meetings	<i>N</i> =	148	119	128
	<b>Men predominate</b>	<b>6.8%</b>	<b>4.2%</b>	<b>5.5%</b>
	<b>Women Predominate</b>	<b>87.8%</b>	<b>89.1%</b>	<b>94.5%</b>
	<b>Men and women equal</b>	<b>5.4%</b>	<b>6.7%</b>	<b>0.0%</b>
Rural meetings	<i>N</i> =	53	38	43
	<b>Men predominate</b>	<b>7.5%</b>	<b>0.0%</b>	<b>0.0%</b>
	<b>Women predominate</b>	<b>83.0%</b>	<b>84.2%</b>	<b>100.0%</b>
	<b>Men and women equal</b>	<b>9.4%</b>	<b>15.8%</b>	<b>0.0%</b>

**Table 5.6 Percentage of each gender in Urban, Semi-urban and Rural Meetings**

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		2006	2008	2010
Urban	Members	62.5%	60.0%	62.5%
	Attenders	68,2%	66.7%	65.9%
Semi-Urban	Members	61.3%	60.0%	57.1%
	Attenders	55.0%	44.0%	53.6%
Rural	Members	62,5%	58.3%	60.0%
	Attenders	57.1%	47.5%	61.5%

**Table 5.7 Median Ratio all meetings Men / Women Members, Attenders and Aggregate**

If a meeting had considered moving, a subsidiary question was asked to determine whether the move was between any combination of own, rented or donated premises to try and capture the meetings that were ‘up-sizing’ (i.e. moving from donated to rented or rented to own premises) or ‘down-sizing’ (i.e. moving from own to rented or rented to donated premises). In retrospect, the question should have been expanded, perhaps requiring a free text answer, because, where a meeting noted that they had considered moving between two premises of the same kind there was no indication whether they were ‘up-sizing’, ‘down-sizing’ or simply moving somewhere more convenient. The question also missed meetings that were downsizing without moving. For example, one meeting known to the researcher abandoned a large first-floor meeting room in favour of a smaller ground floor library as numbers reduced.

### **Conclusions**

Comparison of the means for both the Tabular Statement and *Present and Prevented* show close correspondence (Table 5.8), confirming the accuracy of both surveys.

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	2006	2008	2010
Present and Prevent Mean Size	42.5 ± σ37.7 (N = 373)	44.5 ± σ38.1 (N = 319)	46.6 ± σ39.8 (N = 330)
Tabular Statement Mean Size <sup>221</sup>	49.2	47.4	47.7

**Table 5.8 Comparison of *Present and Prevented* data on the mean size of meetings with that of the Tabular Statement**

It is possible to reach some further conclusions about the structure of membership. Table 5.9 shows that median size of meetings is around 20 members.

However, since this is, as discussed earlier, merely a measurement of head count, including individuals who cannot or do not wish to assume positions of responsibility, smaller numbers will be actively involved in the life of a meeting (chapter 10).

Median Values	2006	2008	2010
Members	20	23	22
Men Members	8	8	8
Women Members	12	14	14
Attenders	11	12	14
Men Attenders	4	5	5
Women Attenders	7	7	9
Children (in meetings where there are children)	6	5	4
% of Meetings with children	61.3%	52.4%	74.2%
Boys	3	2	2
Girls	3	3	2

**Table 5.9 Meeting Structure**

In summary, this part of *Present and Prevented* has served two important purposes. It has increased confidence in the Tabular Statement

<sup>221</sup> Because the Tabular Statement contains only the totals of adult members and attenders and the number of meetings making the returns, only the mean for Local Meetings can be obtained.

**Chapter 5: *Present and Prevented* 2006 – 2010: Members and Attenders**

as an accurate head-count of membership and it has shown that a typical meeting is much smaller than a simple mean suggests. It also shows that there are differences, albeit small, between meetings in urban, semi-urban and rural areas. Finally, although the statistical evidence is very weak the data may just hint at a rise in attenders pre-dating the 2009 rise demonstrated by the Tabular Statement<sup>222</sup>.

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<sup>222</sup> Unfortunately it is beyond my present statistical skill to conduct more sensitive tests and it is an area of study that could well repay further investigation

## **Section 2**

### **Attendance at Meeting**

Chapter 6 The Religious Census of 1861

CHAPTER 6

**THE RELIGIOUS CENSUS OF 1851**

**Introduction**

Since 1801, a national census of population has been taken every 10 years (with the exception of 1941)<sup>223</sup>. Initially only the numbers of individuals in a household was recorded. From 1841, names and birthplaces were noted<sup>224</sup>. When the 1851 census was being prepared there was concern over the availability of places of worship for the burgeoning populations of urban areas and Horace Mann was asked to conduct a survey of places of worship alongside the population census<sup>225 226 227</sup>.

There was opposition to the religious census, mainly by Anglican Clergy suspicious that dissenting sects would use the returns for propaganda purposes. Thompson, in his criticism of Mann's census, notes for example that the vicar of St Mary's Church, Nottingham, sent his returns directly to the Registrar General rather than the local

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<sup>223</sup> <http://www.nationalarchives.gov.uk/records/research-guides/census-returns.htm>

Accessed 28/05/2011

<sup>224</sup> National Archives research guides census.

<sup>225</sup> Horace Mann *Census of 1851 Religious Worship in England and Wales Abridged from the Official Report Made By Horace Mann Esq. to George Graham Esq. Registrar General* (London, George Routledge & Co., 1854) 65

<sup>226</sup> Edward Higgs *The Religious Worship Census of 1851* (University of Essex Online Historical Population Reports)  
<http://www.histpop.org/ohpr/servlet/View?path=Browse/Essays%20%28by%20kind%29/General&active=yes&mno=2062>, Accessed 14/03/2014)

<sup>227</sup> Horace Mann *Census of 1851 Religious Worship in England and Wales* n.p.n immediately following preface

Chapter 6 The Religious Census of 1861

enumerators<sup>228</sup>:

In order to prevent improper use being made of them by the officers appointed to receive them, the majority of whom in Nottingham are dissenters

The census asked about premises and for estimates of the numbers present at worship on Sunday 30<sup>th</sup> March 1851<sup>229</sup>. The returns for established churches also asked questions about finances<sup>230</sup>.

Mann's survey has been heavily criticised, Thompson who noted that some of the places of worship recorded by the enumerators were no such thing has voiced criticism of the accuracy of the data showing that double counting of places of worship was serious<sup>231</sup>.

To avoid double counting of individuals attending two or more services Mann adopted a formula assuming that one-half of those attending an afternoon service had been present in the morning and one-third of those at an evening service had been present earlier in the day. There are obvious risks of underestimating attendance at places of worship that met only in the afternoon or the evening in this method.

Thompson also notes that there were a number of special circumstances relating to the 30<sup>th</sup> March. It was mid-Lent Sunday, a day for family reunions, there was a measles epidemic in Nottingham,

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<sup>228</sup> David M Thompson *The 1851 Religious Census: problems and possibilities* (Indiana University Press *Victorian Studies* 11, no. 1 (Sep. 1967) 87

<sup>229</sup> If there was no service on the day of the census an average of persons attending over the previous 12 months (or less if the place of Worship had recently opened) was requested.

<sup>230</sup> Horace Mann *Census of 1851 Religious Worship in England and Wales* vi - vii

<sup>231</sup> David M Thompson *The 1851 Religious Census* 89 - 90

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influenza in Leicester and it was both seedtime and lambing in rural areas<sup>232</sup>. However, he rejects criticism of participant bias showing that comparison of average estimates of attendance with actual counts indicates that attendance on March 30<sup>th</sup> was indeed average<sup>233</sup>. Several of these possible sources of error could affect Quaker statistics. Meetings may have held afternoon or evening meetings for worship, rural meetings may have been affected and, from the experience of *Present and Prevented* (chapters 5 and 10), Quakers are not above giving attendance figures showing themselves in the best possible light at the expense of accuracy. It is however impossible now to know with any degree of precision how accurate the Quaker numbers are.

On 3<sup>rd</sup> of 1<sup>st</sup> Mo 1851<sup>234</sup> Meeting for Sufferings recorded:

An application has been received ... for a return of all our Meeting Houses, to specify the extent of accommodation and the estimated number respectively in attendance at each on First Day the 30<sup>th</sup> of 3<sup>rd</sup> month next ... we desire not to obstruct any measure of the Government which does not interfere with the right of conscience ... Friends who may be appointed for the purpose are requested to make their returns in duplicate on the form in question ... within ten days of the day for which the said return is desired

This minute is interesting because it asked that the returns be made in duplicate; one copy to be kept by the Society and the other (presumably) to be forwarded to the Registrar General office. Clearly

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<sup>232</sup> David M Thompson *The 1851 Religious Census* 94 - 95

<sup>233</sup> David M Thompson *The 1851 Religious Census* 93 - 94

<sup>234</sup> . *Meeting for Sufferings Minute Book YM/MfS/M/46* 151

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Friends felt it important that they retained the collected data, though there is little evidence that anything was actually done with it other than a brief report in May 1851<sup>235</sup>

The committee appointed on the Census Returns report that duplicate accounts of all our meetings ... have been now received, [and] the aggregate morning attendance of the said meetings numbering in all 343, was 13,361, and the attendance at 216 meetings held in the Afternoon or Evening of that day was 7,453<sup>236</sup>

The returns submitted to the Society are held in the library of the Society of Friends<sup>237</sup>. The questions asked (fewer than other churches) were:

Location	Estimate seating capacity on the floor, In the galleries
Date of erection	
Separate or entire building	Estimated attendance in the Morning, Afternoon, Evening
Whether used exclusively for worship	Comments
Space available for public worship on the floor, in the galleries	

Some returns contained comments, usually mundane to do with the history of a meeting house or the difficulty in measuring the area. A few were of interest only in the similarity to comments made on the *Present and Prevented* questionnaires excusing smaller than usual

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<sup>235</sup> *Meeting for Sufferings Minute Book beginning First Month 1849* (London, Library of the Society of Friends YM/MfS/M/46 ) Minute 18 13<sup>th</sup> 5<sup>th</sup> mo. 174

<sup>236</sup> In *Present and Prevented* 2006 6,709 adults were recorded at 390 morning meetings, or 17.2 adults per meeting. In 1851 there were 38.7 adults per morning meeting,, 2<sup>1</sup>/<sub>4</sub> times as many!

<sup>237</sup> *Meeting for Sufferings* (London, Library of the Society of Friends, MS vol. 227). The returns for Surrey have been published in C Webb and D Robinson eds. *The 1851 Religious Census: Surrey* (Woking, Transactions of the Surrey Record Society Vol XXXV 1997).

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attendances. There were complaints about the exercise as a whole.

John Dale, an overseer at Capel Meeting wrote, "*I believe this return is unnecessary as our Society has made a return in another way.*" Since Dale's comment predates the Tabular Statement, it would be interesting to know more about the other returns.

The census made no distinction between members, attenders, children or adults (though some meetings did indicate the presence of first day school children. When considering this data in comparison with later surveys this should be born in mind. There is some evidence that a number of meetings were temporary in nature. The respondent for Newton Abbot noted:

This is not a settled Meeting ... The attenders are chiefly visitors to Torquay and at this season of the year when the number of these is large enough a meeting is held.

Nevertheless, the 1851 census represents a very early attempt to estimate the attendance at Meeting for Worship.

### **Analysis**

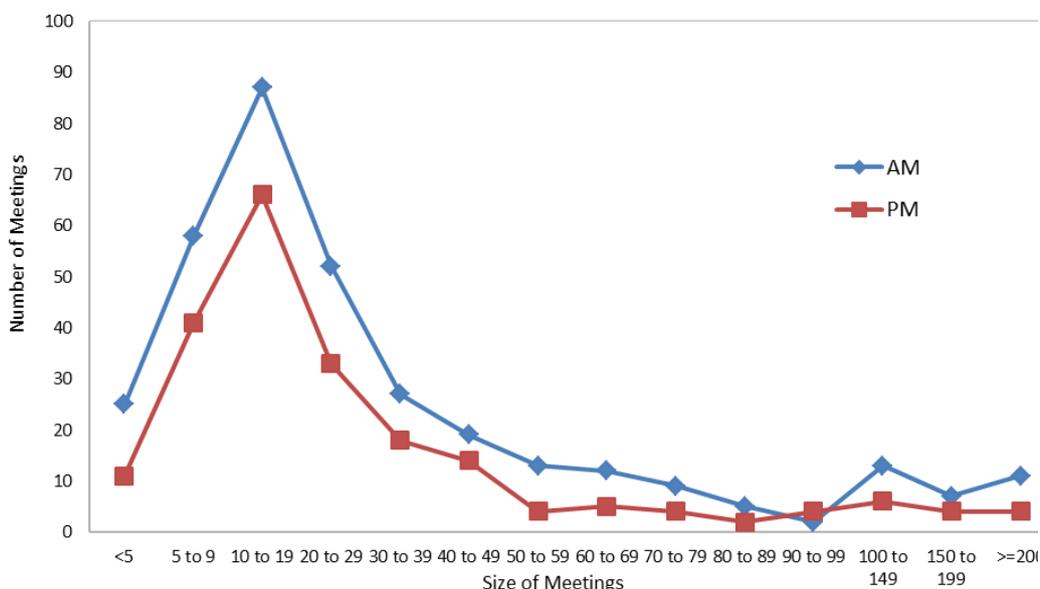
In order to analyse the data, I examined each return individually and transcribed the numbers of attendees at morning and afternoon worship into a spreadsheet. I ignored evening meetings, as being mainly of a mission or reading meeting nature.

There were 343 meetings in the data considered here. Of these 127 (37.0%) were morning meetings only, 212 (61.8%) both morning

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and afternoon and only 2 (0.6%) afternoon meetings only. The distribution of meeting sizes was heavily positively skewed ( $sk = +3.9$  for morning meetings and 4.6 for afternoon meetings). Median averages will therefore be used for comparison.

Figure 6.1 shows the distribution of sizes of meeting which follows very much the same pattern in both morning and afternoon and clearly shows the degree of skew. The most common size of both morning and afternoon meetings is 10 to 19 individuals (87, 25.6% in the morning and 66, 30.6% in the afternoon). Since the enumerators were asked only to count individuals at meeting without regard to status this figure will have included members, attenders, visitors and children (bearing in mind that the age of majority in 1851 was different). In terms of attending members the number is likely to be much smaller.



**Figure 6.1 Distribution of size of meeting for worship 1851 Religious Census**

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It is interesting to note, though, that 47 morning meetings (13.8%) had over 70 individuals present. Indeed the largest such, in Bristol, consisted of 455 people. There were 450 people at afternoon worship in Northampton. Numbers of this order are only seen at national events in the 21<sup>st</sup> century. Examination of the minute books of these and other meetings with large numbers in attendance would show whether they were normal or due to exceptional circumstances.

Overall, the total number attending morning meetings was 13,341 and afternoon meetings 7,256 (54.4% of morning attendance). Median attendance at morning meetings was 19.5 ( $\bar{x} = 39.2 \pm \sigma 61.0$ ,  $N = 340$ ) and that at afternoon meetings 17 ( $\bar{x} = 33.6 \pm \sigma 51.2$ ,  $N = 216$ ).

Meetings which met only in the morning had a median size of 10 ( $\bar{x} = 15.4 \pm \sigma 18.7$ ,  $N = 127$ ) while those that met in both morning and afternoon had a median size of 28 ( $\bar{x} = 53.3 \pm \sigma 72.3$ ,  $N = 212$ ) indicating that only the larger meetings were able to hold afternoon meetings as well. There were too few afternoon only meetings ( $N = 2$ ) to obtain meaningful comparisons.

### **Conclusion**

There is limited value in a single undifferentiated count of attendance at meeting for worship. However, a deep and detailed analysis of the 1851 census may reveal interesting data. A comparison of attendance at Quaker meetings with other dissenting churches and sects, together with geographical information and analysis of household

Chapter 6 The Religious Census of 1861

census returns may reveal important information on the interrelation of Quakers with centres of dissent and the socio-economic background of mid-19<sup>th</sup> century dissent. Such a comprehensive study is beyond the limited scope of this thesis.

Since the data collected by Mann is simply an aggregate of attendees, we cannot use it to obtain a precise estimate of membership of the Society of Friends at this time. However, we do know the attendance counted in 1904, 1909, and 1914 (chapter 9) and the attendance figures for 2006, 2008 and 2010 from *Present and Prevented*. By comparing these with the appropriate Tabular Statement, it may be possible to obtain an estimate or trend in the proportion of the adherents attending meeting for worship and thus arrive at a broad estimate for the size of the Society of Friends in 1851. I address this in my overall conclusions.

## CHAPTER 7

# THE BRITISH WEEKLY SURVEY OF 1886

### Introduction

*The British Weekly* was established in 1886, describing itself as *A Journal of Social and Christian Progress*<sup>238</sup>. It organised a religious census of London, also in 1886. The outcome was published as a series of articles and in 1888 reprinted in a single volume<sup>239</sup>. I use this volume as the main source in the discussion below. Between 1886 and 1923, William Robertson Nicoll edited the periodical<sup>240</sup>. Nicoll, writing as 'The Editor' in *The Religious Census of London*, gives no reason for the census though Mudie-Smith notes that the results were published in the first few issues of the journal<sup>241</sup> and it is a reasonable conjecture that the exercise was designed to interest its potential readership among dissenting clergy and congregations. This is indeed the view of Callum Brown who writes that *The British Weekly* was founded as an evangelical newspaper with a particular concern for religion in London and notes that the census 'gripped the attention of church leaders (especially the clergy)'<sup>242</sup>. The census, however, was limited in scope,

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<sup>238</sup> Callum G Brown *The Death of Christian Britain* 2<sup>nd</sup> ed. (Routledge, Abingdon, 2009) 56

<sup>239</sup> *The Religious Census of London*

<sup>240</sup> David L Edwards *Christian England* (Fount Paperbacks, London, 1989) 270

<sup>241</sup> Richard Mudie-Smith *The Religious Life of London* 1

<sup>242</sup> Calum Brown *The Death of Christian Britain* 26

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covering only 'Smaller London' of 29 registration districts<sup>243</sup>. This area was said to have a population of 3,816,483 in 1881 and was presumed by *The British Weekly* to have a population of 4,100,000 in 1886.

On Sunday the 24<sup>th</sup> of October 1886, enumerators employed by *The British Weekly* and superintended by a Major Colquhoun were stationed at some 1,500 places of worship to count attendees<sup>244</sup>. A later survey of mission halls was undertaken on Sunday 27<sup>th</sup> November 1887<sup>245</sup> Nicoll notes in the introduction to *The Religious Census of London* that "The day ... was bright, though cold and there is every reason to believe that there was fully an average attendance"<sup>246</sup> but continues<sup>247</sup>

The census does not take account of extra services, and exceptional circumstances in the case of separate churches increased or diminished the attendance for the day (*sic*). For example many harvest festivals were held, and ... anniversary services were conducted. Sometimes ... the regular ministers were absent. I had hoped to indicate these circumstances more precisely than has been found possible; but I believe implicit reliance may be placed on the accuracy of the figures.

None of these self-criticisms apply to Quaker meetings; there being no ministers, festivals or anniversaries to cause problems<sup>248</sup>.

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<sup>243</sup> *The Religious Census of London* xi

<sup>244</sup> *The Religious Census of London* v

<sup>245</sup> *The Religious Census of London* x

<sup>246</sup> *The Religious Census of London* v - vi

<sup>247</sup> *The Religious Census of London* vi

<sup>248</sup> Some Quaker Mission Meetings did in fact celebrate harvest

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There are other possible difficulties peculiar to Friends, however. If a Monthly Meeting, occurring at the same time as the census, was in a different borough to the one being counted a large number of Quakers may have escaped the census entirely.

Nicoll adds<sup>249</sup>

The enumeration was made by actual counting, official estimates being in no case accepted when unconfirmed, and challenge of specific figures was invited.

At no point does the author of the introduction state whether the enumerators were independent or part of the congregations being counted noting only that ‘...the number of persons employed amounted to several thousands’, adding that many of the district superintendents employed on census work were ‘...well known in the Christian world.’<sup>250</sup> The enumerators of the Mission Hall survey were clearly part of the assemblies they were counting<sup>251</sup>. Mudie-Smith who organised a later similar survey on behalf of *The London Daily News*<sup>252</sup> noted this and suggested that where enumerators were part of the congregations being counted there was a source of consistent error<sup>253</sup>. A more serious source of error was that only ‘High’ and evening church service congregations were counted, though this would be unlikely to affect

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<sup>249</sup> *The Religious Census of London* vi

<sup>250</sup> *The Religious Census of London* v

<sup>251</sup> *The Religious Census of London* x

<sup>252</sup> Mudie-Smith’s survey is considered in chapter 9

<sup>253</sup> Richard Mudie-Smith *The Religious Life of London* 2

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Quaker statistics as long as no assumption was made that the timing of Meeting for Worship would be coincident with established church services. Children who were part of the congregation were counted along with adult attendees, while those at separate children's services were not counted and this may very well affect Quaker statistics<sup>254</sup>.

### **Analysis**

Only ten Quaker meetings as well as the six mission meetings found their way into *The British Weekly* survey<sup>255</sup> and with such a small sample statistical errors are going to be relatively large. In addition, little information can be gained about the structure of a meeting since numbers were aggregated (unlike the later Mudie-Smith survey that recorded attendance of separated genders and children as different figures), however some useful information can be gleaned.

- The mean size of all meeting was  $\bar{x} = 60.9 \pm \sigma 42.1$  (max. = 171, min. 4) and the median a very close 54. There were only slight differences between morning and afternoon meetings. The mean size of morning meetings was  $\bar{x} = 66.5 \pm \sigma 50.1$  (max. 171, min. 13) while the mean size of afternoon meetings was  $\bar{x} = 55.0 \pm \sigma 34.2$  (max. 87, min. 4). Both means lie well within a single standard deviation of one another suggesting that was no statistical significance in the relative sizes. The

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<sup>254</sup> *The Religious Census of London* xii

<sup>255</sup> There were 22 Quaker Meetings within the London and Middlesex Quarterly Meeting in 1888. It is not now possible to say how many were extant in 1886 nor how many were within the boundaries of survey. However 10 is likely to represent the majority of such meetings (e-mail from Josef Keith, archivist, Friends Library, Friends House 16/05/2014)

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low value of skew of both sets of data suggests that there were as many large as small meetings in the sample, the small sample size makes measures of skewness inaccurate. By contemporary standards the meetings were very large. In the *Present and Prevented* study it was found the mean size (of a much larger and highly skewed sample) was  $14.8 \pm \sigma 12.6$  (N = 435, max. = 94, min. = 1) in 2010<sup>256</sup>.

What is clear from *The British Weekly* data is the relative insignificance of Quakers among the worshipping population of Smaller London. Table 7.1 shows the relative size of the Quaker worshipping community against the total Christian and the Non-Conformist communities for each borough in which a Quaker meeting was recorded. The borough with the highest relative Quaker attendance, Stepney, is highlighted in green and that with the lowest relative number, Wandsworth, in red, with the actual highest and lowest percentages highlighted in darker shades of the appropriate colour. Stepney Quaker meetings counted for 2.07% of the total Christian worshipping population at afternoon services, and 10.1% of the Non-Conformist community at afternoon worship. The relative attendance at morning meeting in Wandsworth was much lower at 1.5% of the total worshipping community but still a respectable 8.7% of the Non-conformist worshippers. It is worth noting, however, that in absolute numbers there were relatively few Quakers: even in Stepney, there

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<sup>256</sup> *Present and Prevented* The mean value given here is for all adults and children combined. The sample in *Present and Prevented* 2010 contained 365 meetings.  $M_d = 12$ ,  $sk = 2.03$

Chapter 7: The British Weekly survey of 1886

were only 54 at morning Meeting for Worship and 87 at afternoon Meeting. Wandsworth, the borough with the lowest relative number of Quaker worshippers also had the lowest absolute numbers, with just 17 at morning Meeting and 4 at afternoon Meeting.

On Sunday the 28<sup>th</sup> of November<sup>257</sup>, *The British Weekly* took a census of mission meetings, but only included six Quaker missions<sup>258</sup>. The survey recorded morning, afternoon and evening attendance.

Only three of the Quaker missions held morning and afternoon meetings, though all six were active in the evening. The numbers of men and women attending the mission were recorded separately in only one case. With such a small sample it is difficult to obtain any meaningful analysis, but perhaps indications can be gleaned. For instance the mean size of morning mission attendance was 182, and in the afternoon 115. In both cases the sample size was only three and so the mean is unreliable; Nevertheless when compared to the mean size for Meeting for Worship ( $\bar{x} = 66.4 \pm \sigma 50.1$  in the morning and  $\bar{x} = 55 \pm \sigma 34.2$  in the afternoons) it is clear that the Mission Meetings were very much the larger. All six Mission Meetings were held in the evening, with a mean attendance of  $\bar{x} = 110 \pm \sigma 95.5$  (median 84, maximum 284 in the Mission Memorial Buildings, Roscoe Street, Holborn and a minimum 37 in the Christian Mission Hall, Drysdale Street, Shoreditch). *The British Weekly* figures for Quaker Meetings are given in appendix 3.

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<sup>257</sup> *The Religious Census of London* x

<sup>258</sup> *The Religious Census of London* 54 - 100

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		Borough	City of London	Holborn	Camberwell	White-chapel	Stepney	Hackney	Fulham	Wands-worth	Islington	Greenwich
Friends as % of Christian	Total Worshipping	AM	0.29%	0.33%	0.51%	1.56%	1.56%	0.51%	0.41%	0.04%	0.25%	0.09%
		PM	0.28%	0.20%	0.27%	1.72%	2.07%	0.24%	0.16%	0.01%	0.11%	0.80%
		Total	0.28%	0.26%	0.39%	1.64%	1.84%	0.38%	0.29%	0.03%	0.18%	0.43%
	Non-Conformist	AM	1.29%	0.85%	1.15%	6.61%	8.72%	1.08%	1.46%	0.14%	0.49%	0.23%
		PM	0.99%	0.43%	0.58%	7.28%	10.09%	0.49%	0.55%	0.03%	0.20%	2.23%
		Total	1.11%	0.61%	0.85%	1.95%	9.52%	0.79%	1.02%	0.09%	0.34%	1.16%

Table 7.1 Quaker meetings as a % of the Christian worshipping community recorded in *The British Weekly* survey of 1888

## Conclusions

The value of *The British Weekly* survey is statistically limited and lies mainly in the fact that it is an early non-Quaker study of attendance at Meeting for Worship. The most obvious point to draw from the statistics is that Friends were very insignificant in terms of the worshipping population of 'Smaller London'; numbering not more than 664 individuals of both genders and all ages in the morning and 554 in the afternoon<sup>259</sup> (Table 7.2). When expressed as a percentage of the total population for the boroughs, Friends formed a very small proportion, varying between 0.01% (Wandsworth, population 210,434) and 0.24% (Stepney, population 58,543). Charles Booth's 1889 social map of Stepney shows a very densely populated area with the main roads lined in pink ("Fairly comfortable. Good ordinary earnings") and red ("Middle class. Well-to-do") with a dominant hinterland of grey ("Mixed. Some comfortable, some poor") and only isolated areas of black ("Lower class. Vicious, Semi-criminal") and dark blue ("Very poor, casual, Chronic want")<sup>260</sup>. Booth's map covers only the fringes of Wandsworth<sup>261</sup>, but again shows a solidly pink "middle-class" area, with considerably lower population density than Stepney.

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<sup>259</sup> *The Religious Census of London* 52 - 53

<sup>260</sup> University of Michigan <http://www.umich.edu/~risotto> accessed 26/6/2012

<sup>261</sup> Wandsworth was developed only from the 1840s with the coming of the Surrey iron Railway to Nine Elms and the industrial development along the River Thames. The great Victorian estates of large merchant houses and artisan dwellings followed from the middle of the century  
[http://www.wandsworth.gov.uk/info/200064/local\\_history\\_and\\_heritage/123/story\\_of\\_wandsworth](http://www.wandsworth.gov.uk/info/200064/local_history_and_heritage/123/story_of_wandsworth) accessed 27/06/2012

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	<b>Church of England</b>	<b>Congregational</b>	<b>Baptist</b>	<b>Wesleyan</b>	<b>Other Methodist</b>	<b>Presbyterian</b>	<b>Other</b>	<b>Roman Catholic</b>	<b>Total</b>	<b>Quaker</b>
<b>City of London</b>										
AM	9,456	2,396	23	-	-	116	526	1,156	<b>13,673</b>	<b>41</b>
PM	10,694	3,848	88	-	-	601	150	1,319	<b>16,700</b>	<b>46</b>
<b>Holborn</b>										
AM	5,383	855	1,536	958	-	-	421	475	<b>9,628</b>	<b>32</b>
PM	5,178	1,355	1,925	1,183	-	-	560	485	<b>10,687</b>	<b>22</b>
<b>Camberwell</b>										
AM	13,017	2,878	4,320	2,066	364	703	895	475	<b>24,718</b>	<b>128</b>
PM	13,528	3,003	5,344	2,074	516	569	716	573	<b>26,323</b>	<b>73</b>
<b>Whitechapel</b>										
AM	1,987	257	488	86	28	-	169	1,139	<b>4,154</b>	<b>67</b>
PM	2,359	326	462	105	49	-	159	1,880	<b>5,340</b>	<b>76</b>
<b>Stepney</b>										
AM	2,417	172	-	239	208	-	54	424	<b>3,514</b>	<b>54</b>
PM	3,177	344	-	335	137	-	133	15	<b>4,141</b>	<b>87</b>
<b>Hackney</b>										
AM	16,487	6,910	3,607	2,956	825	423	925	958	<b>33,091</b>	<b>171</b>
PM	15,722	6,488	3,953	2,720	872	273	931	843	<b>31,802</b>	<b>76</b>

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**Fulham**

AM	9,024	652	372	1,502	583	305	335	579	<b>13,352</b>	<b>54</b>
PM	7,983	566	297	1,689	466	218	315	505	<b>12,039</b>	<b>19</b>

**Wandsworth**

AM	23,421	3,579	3,781	2,677	1,195	1,269	315	1,333	<b>37,540</b>	<b>17</b>
PM	20,716	3,228	3,910	2,685	1,212	892	335	1,235	<b>34,213</b>	<b>4</b>

**Islington**

AM	16,926	6,708	3,446	3,441	1,058	2,162	1,193	1,257	<b>36,191</b>	<b>87</b>
PM	17,411	7,100	3,930	3,182	1,328	2,083	1,291	1,292	<b>37,716</b>	<b>41</b>

**Greenwich**

AM	7,478	2,131	2,469	2,126	272	554	46	904	<b>15,980</b>	<b>13</b>
PM	8,101	1,814	2,739	2,095	318	635	171	<sup>262</sup>	<b>&gt;15,783<sup>263</sup></b>	<b>110</b>

**Total**

AM	105,596	26,538	20,042	16,051	4,533	5,532	4,879	8,700	<b>191,871</b>	<b>664</b>
PM	104,870	28,072	22,648	16,088	4,898	5,271	4,761	>8,147	<b>&gt;194,735</b>	<b>554</b>

Table 7.2 Comparison of attendance at Quaker meetings with other congregations

<sup>262</sup> Number partially indecipherable

<sup>263</sup> Values for total PM worshipping community in Greenwich, total Roman Catholic and overall total worshipping community shown as greater than because of uncertainties

Chapter 7: The British Weekly survey of 1886

Friends were themselves predominately middle-class<sup>264</sup> and it is likely that the difference in predominance between the two boroughs was due mainly to the difference in population densities and the period since the Quaker communities settled in their respective areas.

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<sup>264</sup> Elizabeth Isichei *Victorian Quakers* 172-173. Isichei shows by analysis that Friends in 1840 and 1841, 1870 and 1871, and 1900 and 1901 were predominantly well to do: gentlemen, bankers and merchants formed half the total; retailers, independent craftsmen, foremen and clerks were the second largest category and finally there was a third class of skilled or semi-skilled workers many of whom were self-employed. Isichei also notes that in 1863 when the mean annual wage was £55, the mean annual income for every man, women and child Quaker in London Yearly Meeting was £182 (*ibid* 166 – 167)

## CHAPTER 8

# MUDIE-SMITH SURVEY OF RELIGIOUS ATTENDANCE IN LONDON 1902 TO 1903

### Introduction

Charles Dickens founded *The Daily News* in 1846 as a liberal newspaper. George Cadbury, Quaker chocolate manufacturer and social reformer, bought the newspaper in 1901 and, in 1902, appointed Thomas Ritzema as general manager and Alfred Gardener as editor<sup>265</sup>. Ritzema and Gardener shared Cadbury's reformist outlook and it was under these three that the newspaper commissioned the religious census from Richard Mudie-Smith, a journalist on *The Daily News* and a fellow of the Royal Statistical Society<sup>266</sup>.

Mudie-Smith carried out his survey of attendance at places of worship in London between November 1902 and November 1903. The results were published in the *Religious Life of London*<sup>267</sup>. Mudie-Smith described it as the first scientific survey in contrast to the religious census of 1851<sup>268</sup> and *The British Weekly* census of 1886<sup>269 270</sup>, evincing a high

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<sup>265</sup> London Daily News Rossetti Archive  
<http://www.rossettiarchive.org/docs/ldn.1856.raw.html> accessed January 2012

<sup>266</sup> British Library of Economic and Political Science  
<http://archiveshub.ac.uk/data/gb097collmisc0736> accessed January 2012

<sup>267</sup> Richard Mudie-Smith *The Religious Life of London*

<sup>268</sup> Discussed further in chapter 7

<sup>269</sup> Richard Mudie-Smith *The Religious Life of London 2*

<sup>270</sup> Discussed further in chapter 7

**Chapter 8: Mudie-Smith Survey of Religious Attendance in London 1902 to 1903**

degree of confidence in the outcome<sup>271</sup>.

... I do not mean to assert that the statistics ... are absolutely inerrant ... They do, nevertheless, approach ... the nearest approximation as has yet been made, or that is likely to be made, to an ideal which must remain for ever incapable of realisation.

The first nine months of the survey were spent in preparation. It began properly on July 19<sup>th</sup> in Acton, covering a different borough each Sunday until November 8<sup>th</sup> 1903, and ended in Woodford<sup>272</sup>. The results for each borough were analysed individually and aggregated to provide total attendance at religious services for London as a whole. The Quaker data derived from Mudie-Smith's survey and used in this chapter is given in Appendix 4.

In the introduction to the analysis of his data, Mudie-Smith identifies a number of errors in the religious censuses of 1851 and 1886.

Of the census of 1851, Mudie-Smith criticised the fact that the churches themselves provided the returns<sup>273</sup>:

... interested witnesses are biased witnesses, and though ... the majority of church members who acted as enumerators were as regards honesty, above suspicion, the fact remains that the presence of one 'black sheep' would be sufficient to vitiate the value of the returns

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<sup>271</sup> Richard Mudie-Smith *The Religious Life of London* The Methods and Lessons of the Census 6

<sup>272</sup> Richard Mudie-Smith *The Religious Life of London* Table showing Contribution of each Church in each District to Total Attendances, 444

<sup>273</sup> Richard Mudie-Smith *The Religious Life of London* 1

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Mudie-Smith had trenchant criticisms of *The British Weekly* London survey of 1886<sup>274</sup> for attempting to complete the whole survey on a single day, stating that it was “...a heroic, gigantic and, in view of accuracy, a well-nigh impossible task.” and

...you only discover the attendance under conditions of weather peculiar to that day. If it is fine you get an over, if wet an under, underestimate

Finally, Mudie-Smith makes something of an omnibus criticism of both earlier censuses:

The census in question took no account of any services ... preceding the 11 a.m. service; neither was any attempt made to differentiate the sexes, nor to distinguish children from adults; and, moreover, in the case of mission halls, the returns were furnished by the parties in charge of the halls

Mudie-Smith therefore attempted to design a methodology avoiding these errors. Four hundred enumerators, 200 superintendents and 13 inspectors selected from 600 applicants, were to be independent and paid a wage and allowances according to position<sup>275</sup>:

Places of worship were listed using records provided by the Registrar General, more being obtained from directories, guides and street by street investigation of all 29 London boroughs but<sup>276</sup>:

Frequently no notice of times of service was exhibited outside

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<sup>274</sup> Richard Mudie-Smith *The Religious Life of London* 1-2

<sup>275</sup> Richard Mudie-Smith *The Religious Life of London* 2

<sup>276</sup> Richard Mudie Smith *The Religious Life of London* 4

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places of worship, and often no board or bill of any description witnessed to the presence of a Tabernacle the Most High.

Each Friday postcards were sent to enumerators and superintendents telling them which churches were to be included in the count on the following Sunday. The enumerators were required to keep the location of the count secret on pain of dismissal. Groups of enumerators under a superintendent were deployed to each place of worship in a borough with one or two at each entrance to count the people going in, taking note of gender, record the result on pre-printed cards (the number in groups of attendees was estimated)<sup>277</sup>. Those judged by an enumerator to be below the age of 15 (the legal age of adulthood at the time) were counted as children, though<sup>278</sup>

Naturally we were obliged to leave the question, “When is a child not a child?” to be answered according to the common-sense of the enumerators

Inspectors visited selected churches to ensure that superintendents had deployed their enumerators adequately.

Counts of attendees took place at each Catholic Mass from 6:00 a.m. to 12:00 am, at Church of England morning services from 9:30 to 11:45, at 11:00 am non-conformist services and at all evening attendances at all churches. To estimate the numbers attending both morning and evening services, coloured slips of paper were given to worshippers leaving services at selected churches with a request that they be given

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<sup>277</sup> Richard Mudie *The Religious Life of London* 3

<sup>278</sup> Richard Mudie Smith *The Religious Life of London* 5

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back to an evening enumerator if the individual returned<sup>279</sup>. From July 1903, boroughs were counted at a rate of one a week, sometimes two, omitting Whit Sunday and August 1903. Easter Sunday 1903 was also the first day of Passover and chosen as the day to count attendance at synagogues. No churches were counted on that day<sup>280</sup>.

In spite of his efforts to avoid the problems of the earlier surveys, there were problems with Mudie-Smith's methodology.

- Only 30 of the 70 Quaker Meetings in London were counted. Identification of churches with significant buildings is easier than the often small buildings used by Friends and other similar sects. It underlines the even greater difficulty of identifying congregations that might meet in rented accommodation or homes. There may as a result have been significant and unknowable under-counting of attendance at such services.
- Mudie-Smith's enumerators were required only to estimate the number in groups of worshippers and this too represents an unknown source of error.
- Attempts to count people who attend more than one service a day by sampling churches using slips of paper for later collection is also prone to error. Many Quaker meetings held afternoon 'mission meetings' attended by large numbers of non-Quakers (who

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<sup>279</sup> Richard Mudie Smith *The Religious Life of London* 6

<sup>280</sup> Richard Mudie Smith *The Religious Life of London* 5

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may very well have attended other churches earlier) and this may also have been true of other sects. Errors would have been proportionally larger for smaller sects.

- The attempts to identify children as those who ‘appeared’ to be age 15 and under was clearly subjective and prone to error.
- Mudie-Smith states that 11:00 am non-conformist services were counted, but makes no comment on services occurring at different times.
- A person attending church in one borough on one Sunday could easily be recounted while attending a service in another borough on a different Sunday, biasing both the borough count and the aggregate total for London. This may have been truer of churches with organisational and administrative boundaries crossing those of parishes or boroughs, as was with Quaker Monthly Meetings.
- Having designed his survey to occur over 11 months to avoid the effects of weather, some boroughs would still have been counted in winter and others in the summer making Mudie-Smith’s data vulnerable to the same criticisms as levelled at *The British Weekly* survey. However, having made the criticism Mudie-Smith then notes<sup>281</sup>:

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<sup>281</sup> Richard Mudie-Smith *The Religious Life of London*, 15

Chapter 8: Mudie-Smith Survey of Religious Attendance in London 1902 to 1903

Though an abnormal year is for many reasons to be regretted, I hope to prove later on that adverse weather conditions do not affect church attendance to the extent generally imagined

### **Analysis**

The first thing to note from Mudie-Smith's data on Quakers is the relatively large size of morning meetings ( $M_d = 24.5$  ( $\bar{x} = 48.7 \pm \sigma 67.5$ ) is that *attendance* in 1903 was not far from the median size of *total* membership in 2010 (see Chapter 5). However, it should be remembered that the data is highly skewed: 24 of the 30 meetings in the sample have attendances of 75 or less, four have attendances of 100 or more and one (the Bedford Institute) has an attendance of 346! However, because of the high value of skew even if we exclude the four excessively sized meetings as outliers the median size of adult attendance is still 21 ( $\bar{x} = 28.3 \pm \sigma 23.4$ ).

Mudie-Smith also records rather more men than women attending meeting;  $M_{d(Men)} = 13.5$  ( $\bar{x} = 27.1 \pm \sigma 36.9$ ) as against  $M_{d(women)} = 9.5$  ( $\bar{x} = 21.6 \pm \sigma 31.9$ ). If we consider the total numbers of men ( $N = 813$ ) and women ( $N = 649$ ) recorded by Mudie-Smith we find a ratio of 125.3% as against a ratio in membership of 87.6% recorded in the tabular statement of 1903 (Chapter 4). In the afternoon the ratio is reversed, 68.8%, ( $N_{men} = 530$  and  $N_{women} = 770$ ). One possible reason for the difference in gender ratio between morning and afternoon is childcare: there were 566 children counted by Mudie-Smith at the morning meetings and close to twice that number, 1,056 at the afternoon meetings.

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By modern standards the number of children at meetings is very large. Mudie-Smith recorded 26 morning meetings with children present and a median  $M_d = 8$  ( $\bar{x} = 21.8 \pm \sigma 37.9$ ) and 20 afternoon meetings with children present,  $M_d = 19.5$  ( $\bar{x} = 52.8 \pm \sigma 68.6$ ). At one morning meeting, Barnet Grove Hall, 180 children were present and in the afternoon there were another 243! Some 184 were recorded at Bunhill Fields in the afternoon and 117 at the Bedford Institute in Stepney.

It is tempting to take such figures as indicative of the size of Quaker families but this is problematic for various reasons. We do not know the error inherent in the estimation of a child attendant, and do we know why there were so many children present at a particular meeting on a particular day; they may have been drawn from a wide area by some special event. Neither can we know how many of the adults recorded as present at any one meeting were a part of a family unit with children. It is worth noting in this context that a Board of Trade study of poverty found that in 1904, 40.3% of urban families had between 0 and 2 children, 37.3% three or four children and 22.4% five or more children (that is an average of 3.1 children per household)<sup>282</sup>. Although it is unlikely that Quaker families were among the poorest of their communities these figures suggest that at least for the larger meetings there were children present who were not with their parents. For instance at the Barnet Grove Hall morning meeting there were 29 men, 27 women and 180 children, while at Bunhill Fields

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<sup>282</sup> Ian Gazeley and Andrew Newall *PRUS Working Paper 38: Poverty in Britain in 1904: An Early Social Survey Rediscovered* (Poverty Research Unit Sussex University, Brighton, July 2007) 12

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afternoon meeting there were 42 men, 74 women and 184 children. They were more likely attendees at First Day Schools run by many Quaker meetings. Mudie-Smith recorded 50 adult schools in his survey<sup>283</sup>. Of these, 23 or 46% occurred at identifiable Quaker Meetings and 27, 54%, at other addresses (some of which may have been Quaker sponsored taking place at a non-Quaker location). Of the 2,310 recorded attendees, 942 or 40.8% were present at an identifiably Quaker location. The number of schools broken down by male, female or mixed in Mudie-Smith's survey is given in Table 8.1. It is interesting to note that the average attendance at adult schools was lower in the case of Quaker than non-Quaker in each case for which it is possible to calculate it (Table 8.2).

	Quaker		Non-Quaker	
	No. Schools	No. Attendees	No. Schools	No. Attendees
Male	16	604	22	1,143
Female	5	76	5	225
Mixed	2	Male 118	0	Male 0
		Female 144		Female 0

**Table 8.1 Attendance at Adult Schools**

	Quaker	Non-Quaker
Men	37.8	52.0
Women	15.2	45.0

**Table 8.2 Mean attendance at adult schools**

<sup>283</sup> Richard Mudie-Smith *The Religious Life of London* 458

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An estimation of the accuracy of Mudie-Smith's exercise can be obtained as follows. In the October of 1904, the Religious Society of Friends held the first of a series of surveys for the Society's own interests<sup>284 285</sup>. The 1904 survey was taken some 15 months after Mudie-Smith counted his first Quaker Meeting. Although there is consequently some variation in the data between Mudie-Smith and the Quaker survey, they can be compared.

Mudie-Smith's data is highly positively skewed for total adult morning attendance ( $sk = 3.3$ ). It is very much less skewed in the afternoon ( $sk = 1.1$ ). The data from the 1904 census shows the skew for morning meetings in 1904 is a great deal less than that found by Mudie-Smith ( $sk = 1.3$ ), but the same for afternoon meetings ( $sk = 1.1$ ). Since the skew is positive, it suggests Mudie-Smith's morning data contains more, proportionally, smaller meetings than does the Quaker data. It would seem unlikely that Mudie-Smith would find it easier to identify smaller meetings than larger meetings in his sample, and so it would be more reasonable to assume that difference is due to his failure to locate a number of middling meetings which would tend to a more even spread of meeting size. According to Mudie-Smith the median adult attendance at morning meeting for worship was  $M_o=24.5$  ( $n=30$ ,  $\bar{x}=48.7 \pm \sigma 67.5$ ) and in the afternoon  $M_o=39$  ( $n=26$ ,  $\bar{x}=50.0 \pm \sigma 41.3$ ). The median size of morning meeting in the Quaker study is  $M_o=33$  ( $n=33$ ,  $\bar{x}=37.2 \pm \sigma 27.6$ ) which is

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<sup>284</sup> Friends Census of Attendance: 1904 and 1909 Compared *The Friend* 8<sup>th</sup> July 1910

<sup>285</sup> The surveys of 1904 to 1914 are discussed further in chapter 10

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somewhat larger than that recorded by Mudie-Smith. For the afternoon meeting, the 1904 census records a median attendance of 20 ( $n=13$ ,  $\bar{x}=29.2 \pm \sigma 21.4$ ) which is considerably less than that recorded by Mudie-Smith. One possible explanation is that Friends' recorded larger attendances at their own morning meetings because of the bias inherent in self-recording which was one of his criticisms of the 1851 census. Another explanation may be differences in weather. However more likely explanations are that 1) Mudie-Smith, by restricting himself to the pattern of established church services on the assumption that it would be the same for all places of worship, did after all simply miss significant numbers of middle sized meetings as suggested by the differences in skewness and 2) that the numbers attending meeting were simply undercounted. An explanation for the inverse finding for the afternoon meetings may be that Mudie-Smith, again unaware of differing church structures, by chance captured unusually large assemblies such as Monthly or Mission Meetings.

Comparing data from meetings common to both samples to try to clarify the differences is not as simple as it sounds. Mudie-Smith recorded only partial addresses in his survey, while the Quaker survey used names by which meetings were known to Friends, often only loosely related to 20<sup>th</sup> century geography. Nevertheless, it has been possible to identify with reasonable confidence 21 meetings that appear in the morning data in both surveys and 9 that appeared in the afternoon data. For this set the median of the Mudie-Smith data for morning meetings is  $M_o=29$  ( $N = 21$ ,  $\bar{x}$

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=  $43.6 \pm \sigma 41.9$ ) and that of the Quaker study  $M_d=38$  ( $N = 21$ ,  $\bar{x} = 47 \pm \sigma 29.5$ ). The Quaker data is still larger than that recorded by Mudie-Smith while the skew for the Mudie-Smith data was  $sk = 1.3$  and for the Quaker data  $sk = 0.9$ . Bearing in mind that these two surveys were 15 months apart and the sample size quite small, the results continue to suggest that Mudie-Smith under-counted the numbers attending Quaker Meetings. Considering the common data for the afternoon meetings, Mudie-Smith's gives  $M_d = 23$  ( $N = 9$ ,  $\bar{x} = 22.6$ ,  $\pm \sigma 16.7$ ) and the Quaker data  $M_d = 20$  ( $N = 9$ ,  $\bar{x} = 28.6 \pm \sigma 21.5$ ). This finding continues to confirm that Mudie-Smith captured some unusually large meetings of Friends in his broader survey. For example, Mudie-Smith shows Stoke Newington Friends Meeting to be 121.4% of the 1904 Quaker survey of the same meeting and Winchmore Hill to be 115% larger than that in 1904. Examination of the records and minutes of these meetings may reveal whether or not mission or business meetings were held at a time when Mudie-Smith was likely to have taken his count.

### **Conclusion**

In spite of Mudie-Smith's confidence in his survey there were both methodological and observational problems. It nevertheless contains a large amount of useful data as long as sufficient care is taken in its use, especially as regards the smaller sects such as Quakers. The data is most useful when used in comparison with other existing data such as the surveys of attendance in 1904, 1909 and 1914 and the Tabular Statement.

## CHAPTER 9

### SURVEYS OF 1904, 1909 AND 1914

#### Introduction

In the first part of the 20<sup>th</sup> century, the Society of Friends undertook a census of attendance at its own meetings. The reason for doing so and the original returns are now lost, though the data is recorded in the Yearly Meeting minutes of 1905<sup>286</sup>, 1910<sup>287</sup> and 1915<sup>288</sup>. Whatever the reasons, the censuses of attendance in 1904, 1909 and 1914 are the earliest conducted by the Society of Friends for its own purposes<sup>289</sup>.

The census of 1914 is particularly interesting since it contributes to a picture of the Society of Friends in the very early months of the First World War during a climatic period in which both Ypres and Lille were occupied<sup>290</sup>. What happened to the idea of census in 1919 is unknown. Perhaps it was simply forgotten during the war years.

The data is mostly the mean attendance over four meetings in October of the years in question, though there are occasional records suggesting otherwise. For example, Bridgwater and Wellington meeting

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<sup>286</sup> *Yearly Meeting Proceedings 1902 – 1906* (London, London Yearly Meeting, 1905) 95 - 126

<sup>287</sup> *Yearly Meeting Proceedings 1907 – 1911*, London Yearly Meeting 1910 455 - 462

<sup>288</sup> *Yearly Meeting Proceedings 1912 - 1916*, London Yearly Meeting 1915 225 - 262

<sup>289</sup> Tuke may have conducted a private census much earlier (chapter 2) and Censuses were taken in 1851 as part of the national census (chapter 7), in 1886 *The British Weekly* (chapter 8) and in 1902-1903 by *The Daily News* (chapter 9)

<sup>290</sup> Martin Gilbert *First World War* (London, Weidenfeld and Nicholson, 1994) 90 - 91

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notes 'Calculated attendance from one Sunday'<sup>291</sup>. In the census of 1914 only, members and attenders associated with meetings and attendees at Meeting for Worship were recorded by gender.

The minutes do not give the dates of the 1904 and 1909 censuses. However, the report on the 1914 census notes<sup>292</sup>:

The scope of the inquiry and the methods adopted were exactly the same as in 1904 and 1909, but last year [*that is, 1914*], for the first time, the Census included attendances upon all the Sundays of October. In 1904 and 1909, there were five Sundays in the month, and a few small meetings held only on the first Sunday were omitted.

From this we can infer that the 1904 census took place on the 2<sup>nd</sup>, 9<sup>th</sup>, 16<sup>th</sup>, 23<sup>rd</sup> and 30<sup>th</sup> October, the 1909 census on the 3<sup>rd</sup>, 10<sup>th</sup>, 17<sup>th</sup>, 24<sup>th</sup> and 31<sup>st</sup> of October and the 1914 census on the 4<sup>th</sup>, 11<sup>th</sup>, 18<sup>th</sup> and 25<sup>th</sup> of October

The report of 1910 compares the census of 1851 with those of 1904 and 1909. It notes that attendance at Meeting for Worship in 1851 was 13,361 when the total number of members and attenders 'would have been' 17,000 to 18,000 (no source for the estimate is given), and 'the attendance today' is 11,256 from a total of 27,000 members and attenders. The report goes on to say:

There are, of course, altered circumstances which prevent a perfect comparison between 1909 and 1851, for example, the

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<sup>291</sup> *Proceedings of London Yearly Meeting 1915*, 232

<sup>292</sup> *Proceedings of London Yearly Meeting 1915*, 15

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greater number of Friends who now live far from a meeting house, and the spread of Adult Schools and their claims on the energies of Friends on First Day mornings

How far any of these are valid reasons for a presumed decline in proportional attendance at Meeting for Worship or whether they are unsupported assertions would be worthy of closer examination.

**Analysis**

I transcribed the adult data into spreadsheets. Because in this thesis I am primarily concerned with adult participation in the Society of Friends, I did not transcribe data on children's meetings with the exception of adults overseeing Mission Meetings for children, which I included among adult attendees. There were few of these compared with adult only meetings and the overall statistical effect of their inclusion or exclusion will be marginal. For example in Great Wilson Street, Leeds, in 1914 there were 72 adults (and 9 children) at one Mission Meeting while a single adult oversaw 17 children at a simultaneous children's Mission Meeting. The transcription included from five different kinds of meetings (morning, afternoon and evening Meeting for Worship, and afternoon and evening Mission Meetings). In all, 521 locations across all three surveys were identified and recorded.

Many locations appeared in only one or two surveys as venues for specific events; for example, afternoon Mission Meetings were noted in Lady Peckitt's Yard, York, in 1904 and 1909 but not in 1914, while

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afternoon Meeting for Worship was noted in New Earswick, also in York, in 1914 only. There were also many gaps in the data but it is not possible to know whether they were due to lack of event or lack of return. Examination of meeting records may be illuminating. This would be a major and rewarding task, illuminating much about changing attitudes to worship and mission in the Religious Society of Friends in the years leading up to the First World War. There are also unexplained omissions in the record, when for example data for Bridlington meeting, is given for 1904 and 1919 but not 1909, making it difficult to monitor trends. I therefore compared meetings that consistently returned data in each of the three censuses, first obtaining baseline descriptive statistics from the data, then copying to a second spreadsheet for manipulation in the following way.

Many 'main' meetings supported subsidiary afternoon or evening meetings for worship and Mission Meetings, in different localities. For example, in 1904 Birmingham George Road meeting, with 186 members and attenders, supported Mission Meetings in Hospital Street, Rea Street, Severn Street, Soho and Staniforth Hall, and in 1909 Alcester Street and Little Bromwich were added to the list. In 1914, George Road did not support any subsidiary meetings. Now since my interest is less in the geographical distribution of meetings than in the numbers attending, the attendees for each subsidiary meeting were aggregated, enabling some gaps in the record to be filled. For example, Banbury Meeting did not hold any afternoon Mission Meetings at its own premises, but a Mission Meeting supported by Banbury was held at Warwick Road. Aggregating

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the data would show Banbury *meeting* as holding a Mission Meeting irrespective of location. The outcome for Banbury and Banbury Warwick Road is given in Table 9.1

	1904						1909					
	A	B	C	D	E	F	A	B	C	D	E	F
<b>Banbury</b>	85	43		26			96	29		12		
<b>Banbury Warwick Road</b>		11			67			22			56	
<b>Banbury Aggregate</b>	85	54		26	67		56	51		12	56	

	1914								
	A	B♂	B♀	C	D♂	D♀	E♂	E♀	F
<b>Banbury</b>	79	9	20		3	6			
<b>Banbury Warwick Road</b>		2	4				8	16	
<b>Banbury Aggregate</b>	79	11	24		3	6	8	16	

Table 9.1 Raw and aggregated data for Banbury and Banbury Warwick Road meetings<sup>293</sup>

Finally, the aggregated data was examined and only those meetings with data for members and attenders and for morning Meeting for Worship selected. The outcome is a set of data that can show the trends in attendance and the prevalence of Mission Meetings across a large subset of Meetings for Worship.

*Total data set: Descriptive Statistics*

There were 25,396 members and attenders recorded as associated with meetings in 1904, 26,443 in 1909 and 25,983 in 1914. The Tabular Statement for the 31<sup>st</sup> December in each of those years shows totals for

<sup>293</sup> In both table 9.1 and 9.2, **A** is the number of members and attenders associated with the meeting, **B** the numbers at morning Meeting for Worship, **C** the numbers at afternoon Meeting for Worship, **D** the numbers at evening Meeting for Worship, **E** the numbers at afternoon Mission Meetings and **F** the numbers at evening Mission Meetings

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members and attenders of 26,690 in 1904, 28,443 in 1909 and 28,165 in 1914. Data was therefore captured from 95.2% of the Society of Friends in 1904, 93.0% in 1909 and 92.3% in 1914, summarised in Table 9.2.

Clearly the data is very positively skewed and therefore the median average is used for comparisons.

	<b>1904</b>	<b>1909</b>	<b>1914</b>
<b>Maximum Members and Attenders per meeting</b>	738	617	743
<b>Minimum Members and Attenders per Meeting</b>	1	1	2
<b>Mean Members &amp; Attenders per meeting</b>	73.4 ± σ94.5 (N = 346)	75.1 ± σ91.7 (N = 352)	75.1 ± σ91.5 (N = 346)
<b>Skew</b>	sk = 3.1	sk = 3.0	sk = 3.2
<b>Median</b>	40.5	44	45.5

**Table 9.2 Descriptive statistics for members and attenders 1904, 1909 and 1914**

Figure 9.1 shows the distribution of meeting by size. It is interesting to note just how very similar these are in each survey indicating that there are no structural changes in the range of meetings.

We can construct tables similar to 9.2 for Meeting for Worship and Mission Meetings (Tables 9.3 to 9.6). There were too few evening Mission Meetings for reliable statistics (one in each of 1904 and 1909 and none in 1914).

Table 9.3 shows that the percentage of adult attendees at all meetings for worship declined from 1904 (and perhaps before). The other tables show that the median number of attendees at morning and afternoon meetings for worship fell sharply between 1909 and 1914, and was most pronounced for evening meeting for worship. In addition, the

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number of evening meetings for worship declined between 1909 and 1914 while the number of afternoon meetings grew, though by a lesser degree.

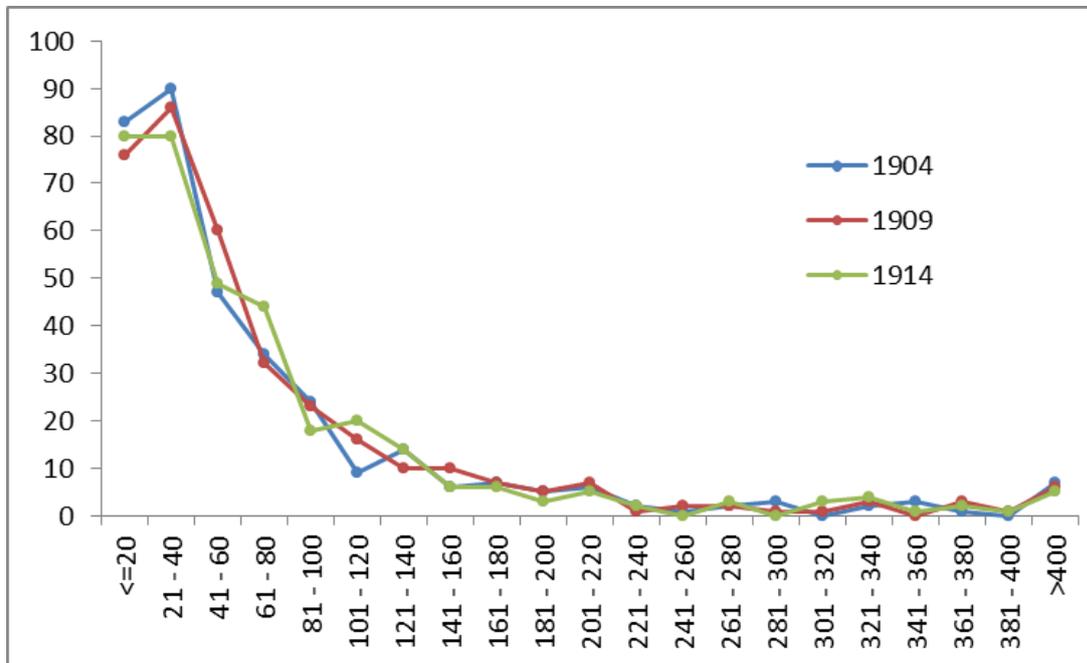


Figure 9.1 Distribution of meetings by size 1904, 1909 and 1914

Simultaneously, while the number of Mission Meetings in 1919 was approximately the same as in 1904 the number of attendees fell by almost half. Because the censuses occurred at four yearly intervals, we cannot know whether the decline between 1909 and 1914 was a consequence of war or not. The Yearly Meeting proceedings of 1914 suggest that wartime conditions did have an effect in some localities but not overall<sup>294</sup>:

In Colchester and elsewhere in East Anglia, the presence of soldiers in the district, and sometimes in Friends Meeting Houses made some differences, as did also Belgian refugees at Birmingham and York; but these local circumstances, created by the war, tend to balance each other, and do not materially affect

<sup>294</sup> Extracts from the Minutes and Proceedings 1914, 225

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the totals

	1904	1909	1914
<b>No. of Meetings</b>	354	355	367
<b>Total no. Worshippers</b>	11,617	11,014	8,295
<b>Worshippers as % of Members and Attenders</b>	43.5%	38.7%	29.5%
<b>Mean Members &amp; Attenders per meeting</b>	32.8 ± σ41.7	31.0 ± σ40.7	22.6 ± σ25.5
<b>Skew</b>	4.2	4.2	3.2
<b>Median</b>	20	19	14

Table 9.3 Descriptive Statistics Morning Meeting for Worship 1904, 1909, 1914

	1904	1909	1914
<b>No. of Meetings</b>	1	1	54
<b>Total no. Worshippers</b>	46	20	1,516
<b>Mean Members &amp; Attenders per meeting</b>	Statistics not applicable		28.1 ± σ71.3
<b>Skew</b>			6.0
<b>Median</b>			12.5

Table 9.4 Descriptive Statistics Afternoon Meeting for Worship 1904, 1909, 1914

	1904	1909	1914
<b>No. of Meetings</b>	130	140	63
<b>Total no. Worshippers</b>	4,241	3,725	1,239
<b>Mean Members &amp; Attenders per meeting</b>	32.6 ± σ43.3	26.6 ± σ35.9	19.7 ± σ19.7
<b>Skew</b>	4.4	5.0	2.9
<b>Median</b>	18.5	16.0	13.0

Table 9.5 Descriptive Statistics Evening Meeting for Worship 1904, 1909, 1914

	1904	1909	1914
No. Mission Meetings	174	203	177
<b>No. Persons Present</b>	13,626	14,765	7,191
<b>Mean Members &amp; Attenders per meeting</b>	78.3 ± σ75.8	72.7 ±σ 69.1	40.6 ± σ54.1
<b>Skew</b>	2.9	2.5	4.8
<b>Median</b>	55.5	51.0	25.0

Table 9.6 Descriptive statistics afternoon meeting 1904, 1909, 1914

Again, detailed examination of the minute books of the period would be profitable. We can examine Colchester in the census (Table 9.7). It seems that while the membership of Colchester remained constant and

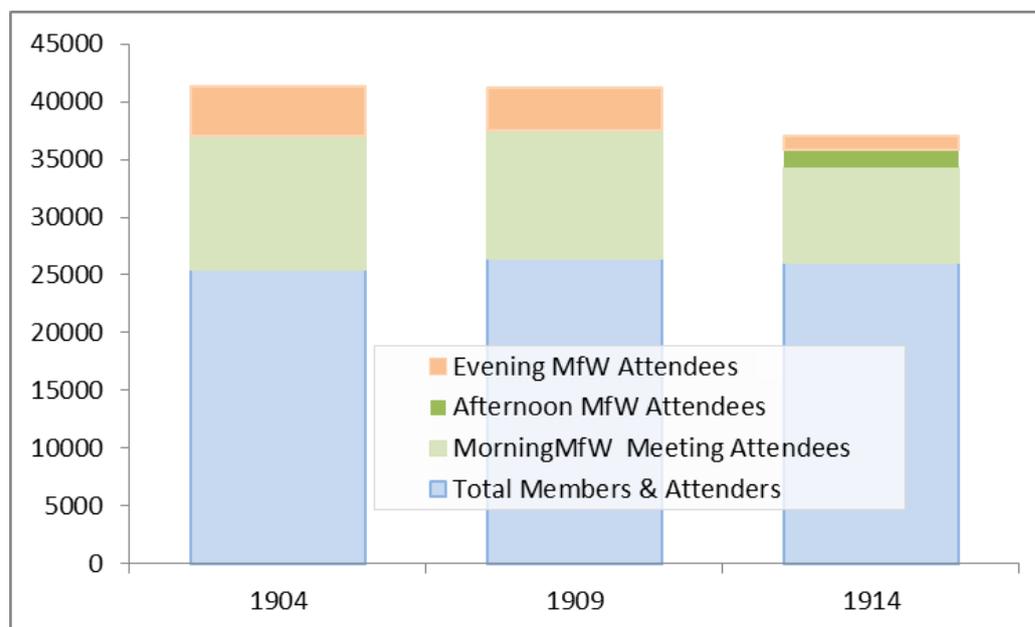
Chapter 9: The Quaker Census of 1904, 1909 and 1914

the number at the local mission meeting doubled, attendance at Meeting for Worship halved possibly influenced by the military presence.

	1904	1909	1914
Members and Attenders	126	139	140
Am Meeting for Worship	72	73	40
Mission Meetings	36	37	74

**Table 9.7 Comparison of Colchester Meeting in 1904, 1909 and 1914**

The respective proportions of members and attenders at Meeting for Worship and the comparison between members and attenders and the numbers attending Mission Meetings are shown in figures 9.2 and 9.3.



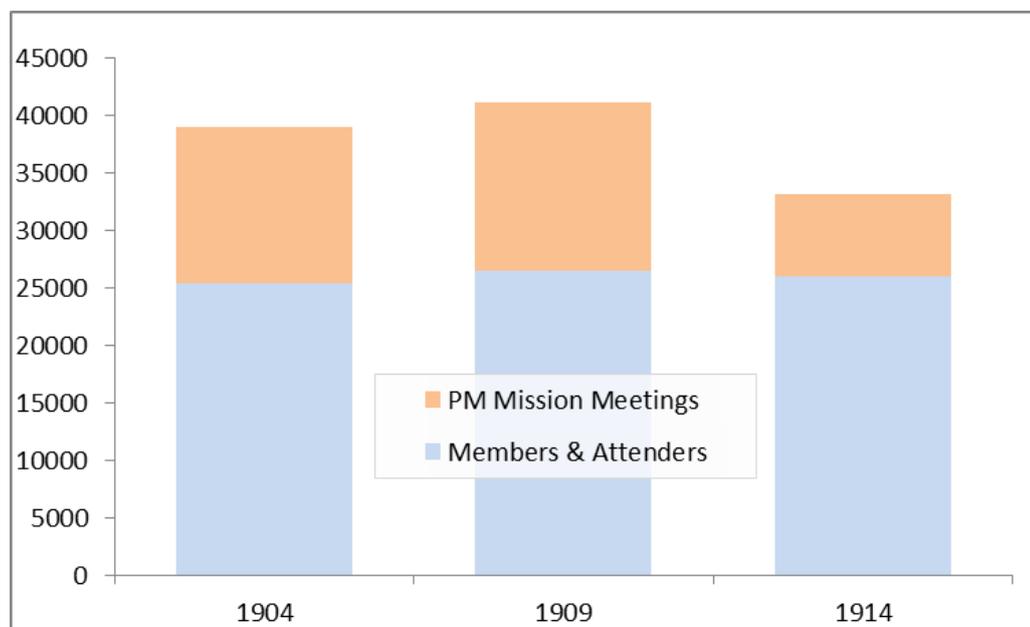
**Figure 9.2 Total members and attenders and proportions attending meetings for worship 1904, 1909 and 1914**

*Aggregated Data*

Aggregating the data using the method described above reduced the number of locations to 415 'host' meetings. Selecting further for the minimum of data further reduced the number of locations to 279 meetings.

**Chapter 9: The Quaker Census of 1904, 1909 and 1914**

These comprised 22,748 members and attenders in 1904 (85.3% of the Tabular Statement for that year), 22,970 in 1909 (80.8% of the Tabular Statement) and 22,564 (80.1% of the Tabular Statement) in 1914.



**Figure 9.3 Members and Attenders compared to numbers attending afternoon Mission Meetings 1904, 1909 and 1914**

Although this may suggest a representative sample of meetings, caution should be used in interpreting these figures because:

1. There was a reduction of the census from 521 locations to just 279 (a reduction of 46.4%) resulting in a reduction of between 10.3 and 13.2% in the number of members and attenders which suggests that smaller meetings may have been excluded, biasing the sample toward the larger and stronger meetings.
2. Some meetings closed between 1904 and 1909, or 1909 and 1914 as well as meetings that were established in the intervals between censuses will have been excluded to unknown effect.

**Chapter 9: The Quaker Census of 1904, 1909 and 1914**

3. All that is certain of the meetings that have been included is that they reliably provided data on members and attenders and attendance at morning meeting for worship in each census. The fact that data may be missing for meetings for worship or mission meetings does not mean they failed to take place. Data may simply not have been returned.

A number of trends can be examined using the aggregated statistics:

- Members and attenders associated with a meeting
- Attendance at Meeting for Worship in both morning and afternoon and
- Attendance at Mission Meetings
- Attendance at both Meeting for Worship and Mission Meetings as a proportion of members and attenders associated with meetings.

*Members and attenders associated with meetings*

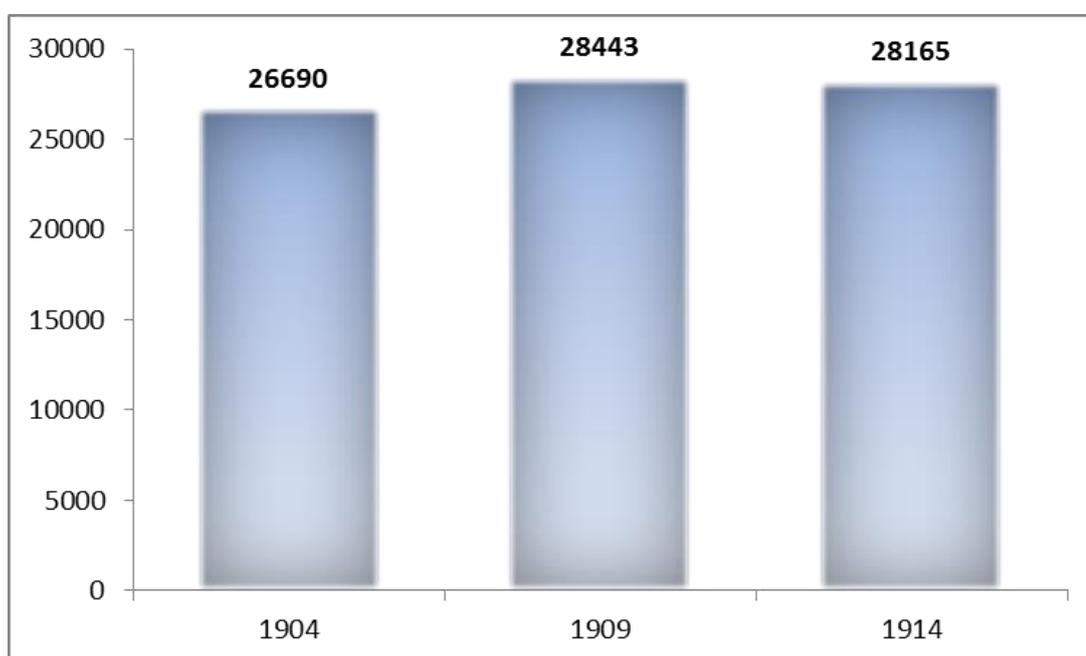
The number of adults associated with meetings remained fairly constant over the period 1904 – 1914 (figure 9.4)

*Attendance at morning and afternoon Meeting for Worship*

Again the number of morning meetings remained constant. There were 275 meetings for worship in 1904, 273 in 1909 and 275 in 1914. However, the numbers at morning Meeting for Worship fell sharply from 10,564 in 1904, to 9,522 in 1909 and to 6,973 in 1914. The largest fall, of 2,549 worshippers, or 26.8%, occurred between 1909 and 1914. Whether this was caused by the advent of war is again something only meetings

**Chapter 9: The Quaker Census of 1904, 1909 and 1914**

records can show. Expressed as a proportion of members and attendance, the numbers fell from 39.6% in 1904 to 33.5% in 1909 and to 24.8% in 1914. Not until 2006 was another comparable national survey conducted (*Present and Prevented*, chapters 5 and 10), when the numbers at Meeting for Worship were 6,257 (slightly fewer than 1914) or 39.5% of members and attenders, rather more than 1914.



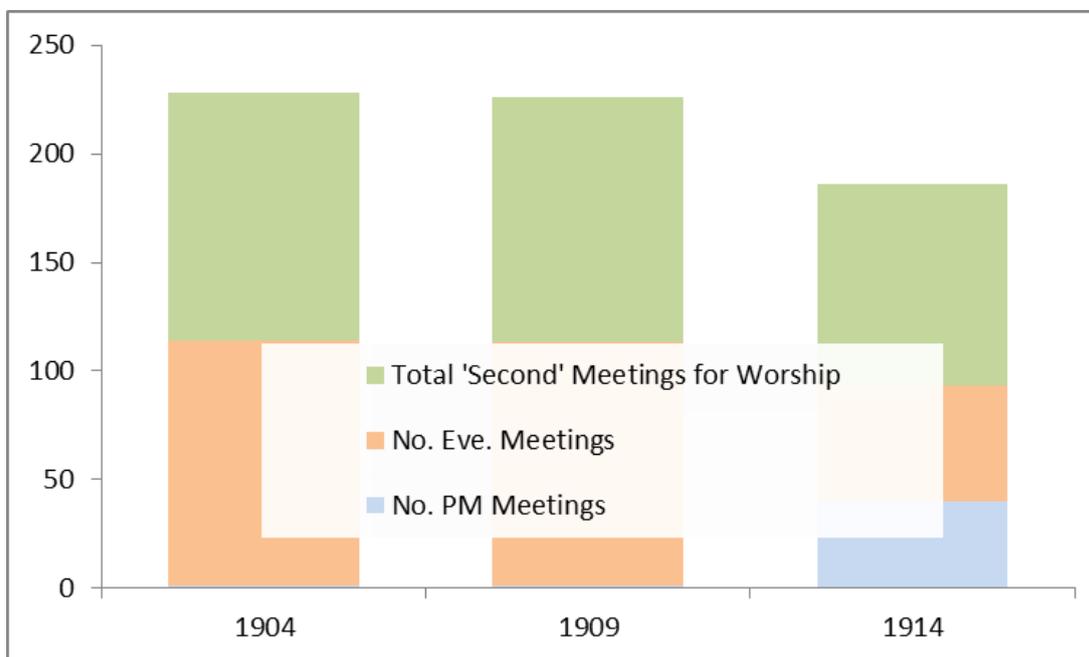
**Figure 9.4 Trend in the number of members and attenders associated with meetings 1904 – 1919**

In the 1914, survey data was collected by gender. There were 3,097 men at morning Meeting for Worship and 3,772 women, a ratio of men to women of 82.1%. By comparison, in 2006 the ratio of men to women had fallen to 61.7%

The number of afternoon meetings for worship rose from only one in both 104 and 1909 to 40 in 1914, while the number of evening meetings

**Chapter 9: The Quaker Census of 1904, 1909 and 1914**

for worship fell from 112 in 1904 and 113 in 1909 to 53 in 1914. It appears there was something of a shift between 1909 and 1914 from evenings to afternoons. If we aggregate the data, we can see that the numbers of 'second' meetings were 113 in 1904, 114 in 1909 and 93 in 1914. Clearly, there was a fall in numbers between 1909 and 1914 but not by very much (figure 9.5).



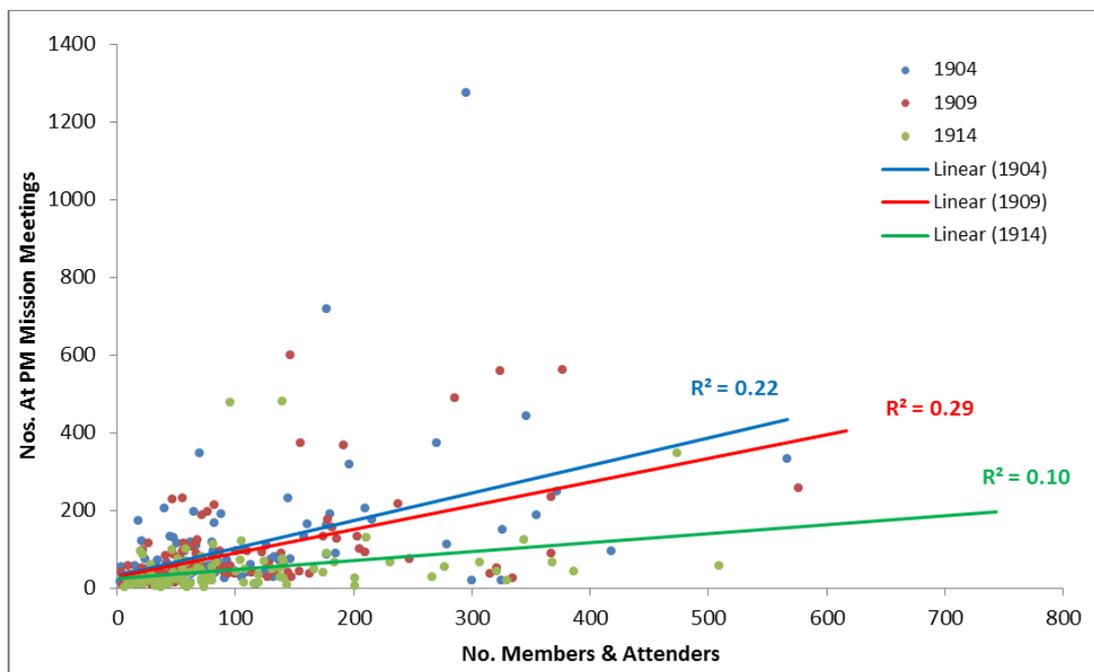
**Figure 9.5 Comparison of afternoon and evening meetings for worship and the sum of all 'second' meetings.**

The number of worshippers at afternoon and evening meetings changed more significantly. There were 40 at single afternoon meeting in 1904 and 20 at a single meeting in 1909, but 1,378 at 30 afternoon meetings in 1914. By contrast, there were 3,965 worshippers at the evening meetings in 1904, 3,479 in 1909 and only 1,165 in 1914. If we look at afternoon and evening meetings together, we can observe a gentle decline in the numbers attending second meetings from 4,011 in 1904 to

3,499 in 1909 and to 2,543 in 1914.

### *Attendance at Mission Meetings*

Plotting the numbers attending Mission Meetings against the size of the meetings hosting them reveals a poor correlation with  $r^2$  between 0.1 and 0.29, indicating a weak tendency for a direct association between size of host meeting and size of Mission Meeting (figure 9.6).



**Figure 9.6 Size of Mission Meetings as a function of size of meeting**

However, the numbers of Mission Meetings show a slow rise (113 in 1904, 117 in 1909 and 123 in 1914)<sup>295</sup> while also showing a decline in attendance from 11,403 in 1904 to 10,247 in 1909 and 5,459 in 1914. It is not clear, again, whether the drop between 1909 and 1914 was due to the war. It is notable that several meetings held very large ‘Peace Meetings’

<sup>295</sup> There were no evening Mission Meetings hosted by meetings in this aggregated data set so that the discussion here relates only to afternoon Mission Meetings

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that may have taken away some attendees. Birmingham Bull Street, for instance, had an average of 500 over two peace meetings, Scarborough another 213 at a single peace meeting.

*Attendance as a proportion of total Members and Attenders*

Table 9.8 shows trend statistics for key factors for both un-aggregated and aggregated data. There are only small differences between the aggregated and original data indicating that the former is a good reflection of the latter.

	Un-Aggregated Data			Aggregated Data		
	1904	1909	1914	1904	1909	1914
% of all Members and Attenders at Morning Meeting for Worship	45.7%	41.7%	31.9%	46.4%	41.5%	30.9%
% of all Members and Attenders at Afternoon Meeting for Worship	0.2%	0.1%	5.8%	0.2%	0.1%	6.1%
% of all Members and Attenders at Evening Meeting for Worship	16.7%	14.1%	4.8%	17.4%	15.1%	5.2%
Afternoon Mission Meeting Attenders as a % of Morning Meeting for Worship Attendance	117.3%	134.1%	86.7%	107.9%	107.6%	78.3%
Afternoon Mission Meeting Attendees as a % of Members and Attenders	53.7%	55.8%	27.7%	50.1%	44.6%	24.2%

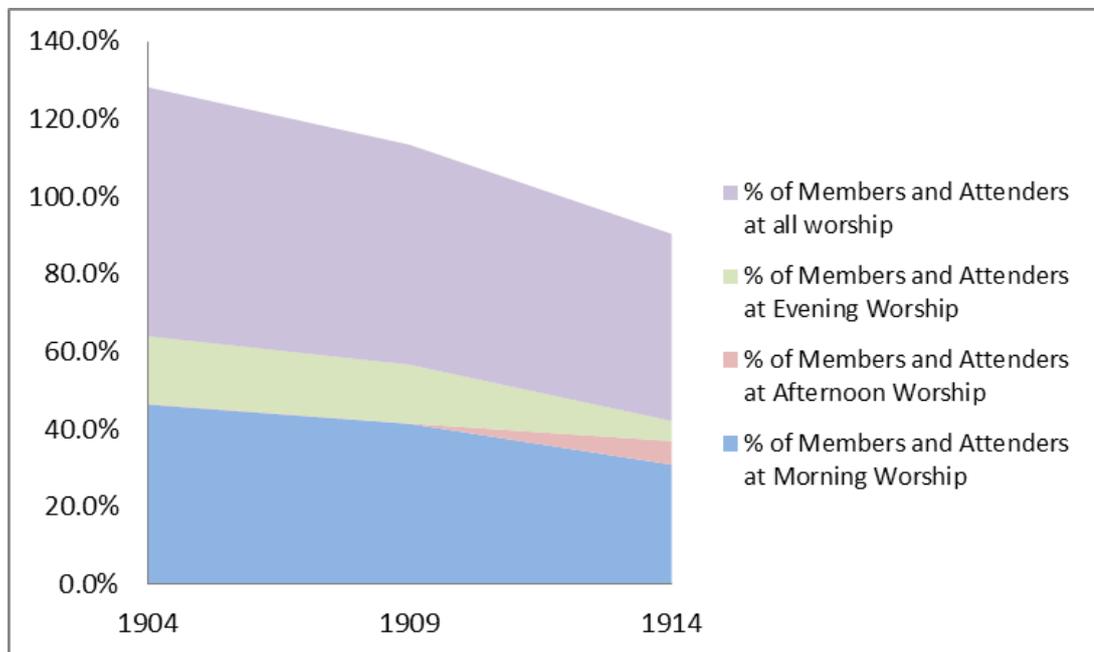
**Table 9.8 Key trend statistics for un-aggregated and aggregated data**

Now considering the aggregate data only, the percentage of attendees at meeting for worship shows a decline of 15.5% between 1904 and 1914, with the larger part, 10.6%, occurring between 1909 and 1914.

By contrast, attendance at afternoon Meeting for Worship rose from 0.2% of members and attenders to 6.1%, mainly because of the rise in the

**Chapter 9: The Quaker Census of 1904, 1909 and 1914**

number of meetings. There was a partly compensatory decline in the percentage attending evening worship from 17.4% to 5.2%, with again the larger part of the decline, 10.0%, between 1909 and 1914. Adding afternoon and evening worshipping numbers together and ignoring for the moment the possibility of double counting attenders, the decline was not so marked, from 17.6% in 1904 to 11.3% in 1914. Figure 9.7 shows the data for attendance at Meeting for Worship.



**Figure 9.7 Attendance at meeting for worship as a percentage of all members and attenders 1904, 1909, 1919**

To obtain a picture of the relative scale of mission meetings to the size of the Society of Friend of the time, we can express the numbers recorded at mission meetings as a percentage of members and attenders in total. In 1904, afternoon mission meetings attracted attendance amounting to 50.1% of the sum of members and attenders before falling to 24.2% in 1914. Between 1904 and 1909 the numbers at Mission Meeting

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expressed as a percentage of worshippers in the morning, afternoon and evening rose by a small amount from 78.2% to 78.7%. In 1914, the percentage fell to 57.4%.

Figure 9.8 shows the data for attendance at Mission Meetings

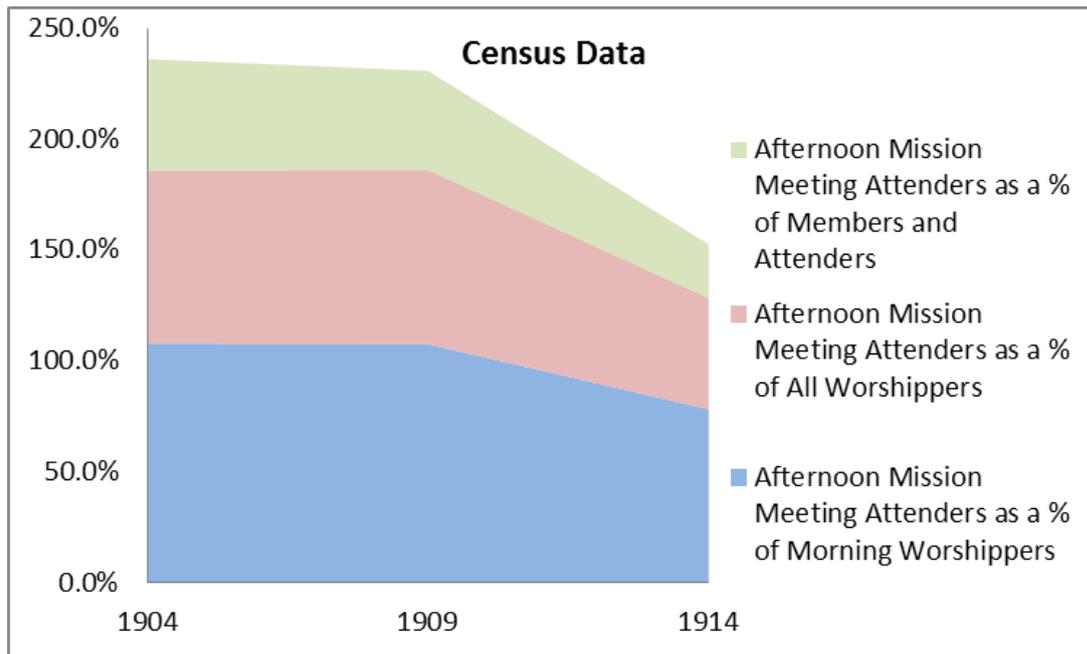


Figure 9.8 Attendance at Mission Meetings as a percentage of all members and attenders and of worshippers

### Conclusions

The surveys of 1904, 1909 and 1914 are particularly valuable in that they help illuminate the state of the Society of Friends in the lead up to the First World War. The advent of war was sudden; there were only 37 days between the assassination of Archduke Ferdinand on June the 28<sup>th</sup> 1914<sup>296</sup> and outbreak of hostilities involving Britain on the 4<sup>th</sup> August

<sup>296</sup> Martin Gilbert *First World War* 16

**Chapter 9: The Quaker Census of 1904, 1909 and 1914**

1914<sup>297</sup>. It would therefore be profitable to examine the period between the 1909 and 1914 censuses, correlating the data with the records of meetings in minute books and newsletters, a very large task and beyond the scope of this chapter.

It is noticeable that between 1909 and 1914 the numbers attending Meeting for Worship declined. There was an associated tendency to move from evening meetings for worship to afternoon meetings. The same is true of Mission Meetings, the number of attenders at which more than halved between 1909 and 1914 while the number of meetings fell by 12% in the un-aggregated data and rose in the aggregated data. This suggests that the process of aggregation eliminated some of the weaker meetings from the study and suggests that the decline in attendance was widespread.

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<sup>297</sup> Armed conflict, however, did not occur until after August 12<sup>th</sup> when a British expeditionary force was finally landed in France. Martin Gilbert *First World War* 35, 43

## CHAPTER 10

### *PRESENT AND PREVENTED 2006 - 2010: ATTENDANCE AT MEETING*

#### **Introduction**

In chapter 5, I described the genesis and methodology of the *Present and Prevented* study 2006 to 2010 and considered the data collected on the size of meetings and on members and attenders. In this chapter, I analyse the data on attendance at Meeting for Worship, at business meetings and on the numbers of appointments made to official positions.

As noted the official records of many meetings contain a large minority of individuals who have only the most tenuous, if any, connection with meeting. For example, one meeting, the records of which I examined<sup>298</sup>, in 2005 listed approximately 30 members of whom 9 were for a variety of reasons wholly or partially detached from the meeting.. If repeated across the whole of the Religious Society of Friends, the Tabular Statement 'head count' of 13,863 members at the end of 2012 would represent only 9,704 active members.

Hilken notes<sup>299</sup>:

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<sup>298</sup> The meeting was in the south of England, in a small market town. My analysis of the membership and attender lists was carried out because the meeting was in some difficulty with low attendance at Meeting for Worship and problems in finding people to take on tasks. The meeting should remain anonymous. Of the 9 unattached two maintained a sentimental listing, one lived permanently abroad, two, now adults, were children in the meeting and remained listed at the request of their parents and the remainder were too ill, elderly or lived too far away to attend meeting.

<sup>299</sup> Richard Hilken *Reason, Faith and Experience: An Introduction to 21<sup>st</sup> Century Quakerism* (Exeter, Fairway Publications, 2006) 3

Meeting for Worship is the core and cornerstone of Quaker faith. The focus of our corporate life is the Meeting for Worship

Yet, as I show below, only a small minority of Friends are present at any one time, and business meetings<sup>300</sup> attract even fewer attendees. At the same time, the data shows Friends more and more willing to take on an ever-larger self-imposed administrative burden.

The data on attendance at Meeting for Worship, at business meetings and on appointments to positions of responsibility gathered in *Present and Prevented* pertains to Local and Area Meetings only. The considerable demand made on the membership by the rest of the Society of Friends is not considered<sup>301</sup>. The data presented below therefore presents only a partial picture of the administrative overheads Friends assume.

The general problems with *Present and Prevented* discussed in chapter 5 also relate here but there were some particular issues concerning numbers present at Meeting for Worship. Some respondents did not view the questionnaire as a census and sought to show their meeting in the best possible light rather than accurately. One respondent noted on the return that attendance at meeting for worship was unusually low on the nominated day, adding, "I have filled it depicting better attendance". Another respondent telephoned to ask if they could pick a day when attendance was high,

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<sup>300</sup> Business meetings in Quaker theology are considered an act of worship for business

<sup>301</sup> Besides Meeting for Sufferings and Trustees, the central work has its own structure of departmental and functional committees. There are also numerous interests groups and other bodies such as Woodbrooke Quaker Study Centre, which make demands on British Quaker time and energy. Documentation of these other bodies and estimation of the effort required from and by them would be a substantial study in itself.

remarking that the previous clerk had done just that in a previous survey without asking.

The question on 'visitors' to Meeting for Worship was poorly understood. Although the traditional Quaker terms 'seekers' or 'enquirers'<sup>302</sup> were used as explanatory modifiers and it was clear that reference to 'members' meant 'members of the Society of Friends' a number of meetings noted in their answers on visitors "Members of another meeting" or even "Members of another meeting within the same Area Meeting". The misunderstanding occurred frequently enough to suggest that the constitutionally important distinction that Friends are not members of a Local Meeting but of the Area Meeting is being lost in places. In general, the effect is to significantly overstate the real numbers of visitors since the numbers are small anyway, and very slightly understate the larger number of members. A small number of meetings recorded no known attenders associated with meeting but a number of attenders at Meeting for Worship (11 in 2006, 9 in 2008 and 2 in 2010). It may be that these particular 'attenders' were in reality 'visitors' The very small minority who may have misallocated visitors to the attender totals will cause visitor totals to be understated.

The question on appointments to positions of responsibility also met a mixed response. It might be expected that Local and Area meetings would maintain lists of appointments, or at least recorded them in minutes, but it is clearly not true of all meetings. Notes accompanying answers varied from

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<sup>302</sup> A 'seeker' or 'enquirer' was an individual who was new to meeting or who had come for a relatively short period. Continuing attendance would lead to become known as an 'attender'

statements such as 'The number of appointments is as long as a piece of string', to a simple 'Don't know'. Numerical answers were sometimes qualified with phrases such as 'I have counted entire committees as one appointment'. One meeting noted just over 50 appointments, scratched it out and inserted a higher figure, then gave up and added 'I don't know what you want, I have enclosed list'; - of well over 100 appointments! The effect has been to significantly under-record the administrative effort of meetings.

The response rate from Preparative and Local Meetings is given in chapter 5. The response rate from Area Meetings is given in Table 10.1.

	2006	2008	2010
No. Area Meetings	72	70	70
No. Responding	65	55	50
Response Rate	90.3%	78.6%	71.4%

**Table 10.1 Response rate from Area Meetings**

In each year, there were more than sufficient responses from Meetings to be statistically significant. It is interesting to note that the response rate from Area Meetings shows a consistent decline and does not show the 2006 fall that was apparent in the Local Meeting responses.

### **Analysis**

Tables 10.2 and 10.3 illustrate the possible dimensions of analysis for both attendance and participation in Local and Area Meetings.

#### *Meeting for Worship*

The size distribution of meeting for worship was again positively

skewed and hence the median average will be used for comparison.

**Meeting for Worship**

		Attendance							
		Members		Attenders		Visitors		Children's Classes	
								No. Children	
		Male	Female	Male	Female	Male	Female	Male	Female
Against	Business Meeting								
	Attendance								
	Members		Attenders						
	Male	Female	Male	Female					
	Appointments								
	Number	Vacant							
	Proportion and Type of Vacancy								

**Table 10.2 Dimensions of analysis for meeting for worship**

**Area Meeting**

		Attendance			
		Members		Attenders	
		Male	Female	Male	Female
		Against	Appointments		
Number	Vacant				
Proportion and Type of Vacancy					

**Table 10.3 Dimensions of analysis of Area Meetings**

In 2006 there was a median of 14 individuals at meeting for worship ( $\bar{x} = 17.8 \pm \sigma 12.3$ ,  $N = 376$  meetings, maximum 69, minimum 2). If the very low number of visitors is excluded then the median size remains 14 while the

mean reduces very slightly to  $16.6 \pm \sigma 11.6$ . The total number of adults (excluding visitors) present at Meeting for Worship was 6,257 (376 meetings) compared with 15,849 adults associated with meeting recorded by 371 meetings. Normalising this latter figure to 376 Meetings for Worship we obtain: present at Meeting for Worship, 6,257, available to be present 16,063: an attendance rate of 39.0%. Comparative figures for 2006, 2008 and 2010 are shown in Table 10.4.

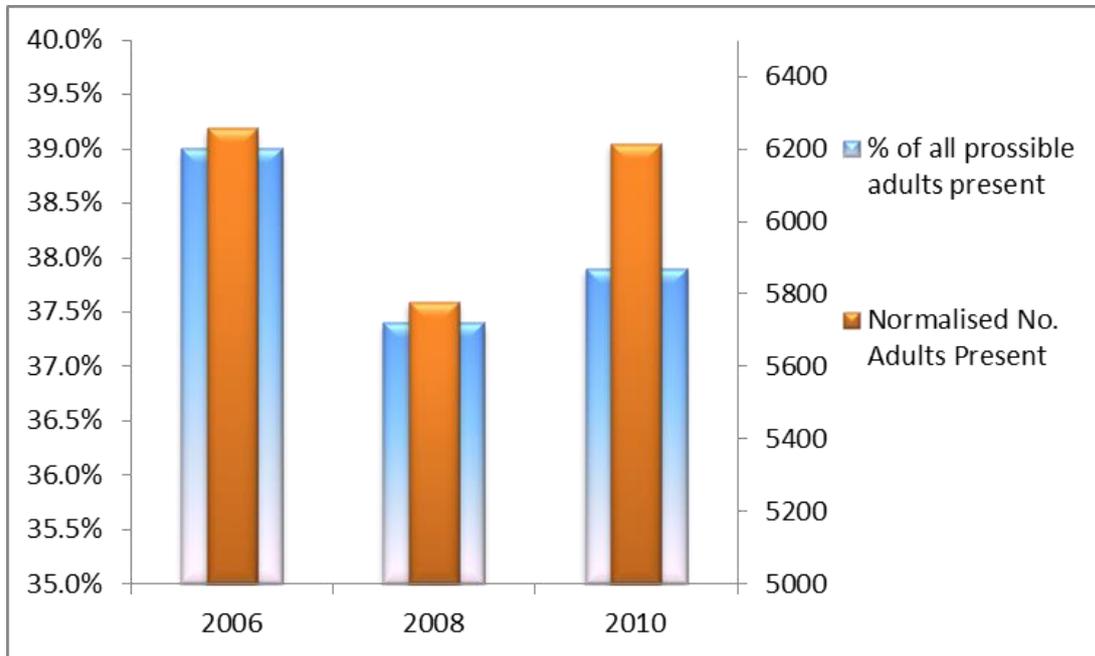
		2006	2008	2010
Excluding Visitors	Mean Adults	16.6 ± σ11.6	15.4 ± σ11.3	16.5 ± σ12
	Median Adults	14	12	14
	Total Adults	6,257	5,178	5,851
	No. Meetings in sample	376	337	354
	Normalised 'Available' Adults	16,063	14,936	16,421
	% at Meeting for Worship	39.0%	37.4%	37.9%

**Table 10.4 Adults at meeting for worship**

Figure 10.1 shows the data graphically, in which the orange columns show the normalised numbers of adults (right hand axis) and the blue columns the percentage of possible adults actually present at Meeting for Worship (note that left hand axis begins at 35%, exaggerating the decline for clarity). We can enquire further to see what differences exist between members or attenders, men or women. Table 10.5 separates the data into members and attenders.

The proportion of members coming to Meeting for Worship fell by 3.8% (from 40.8% to 37%) between 2006 and 2010 while the proportion of

attenders fell by a very similar amount, 3.4% from 35.5% to 32.1%).



**Figure 10.1 Normalised totals and percentage of possible members and attenders present at Meeting for Worship**

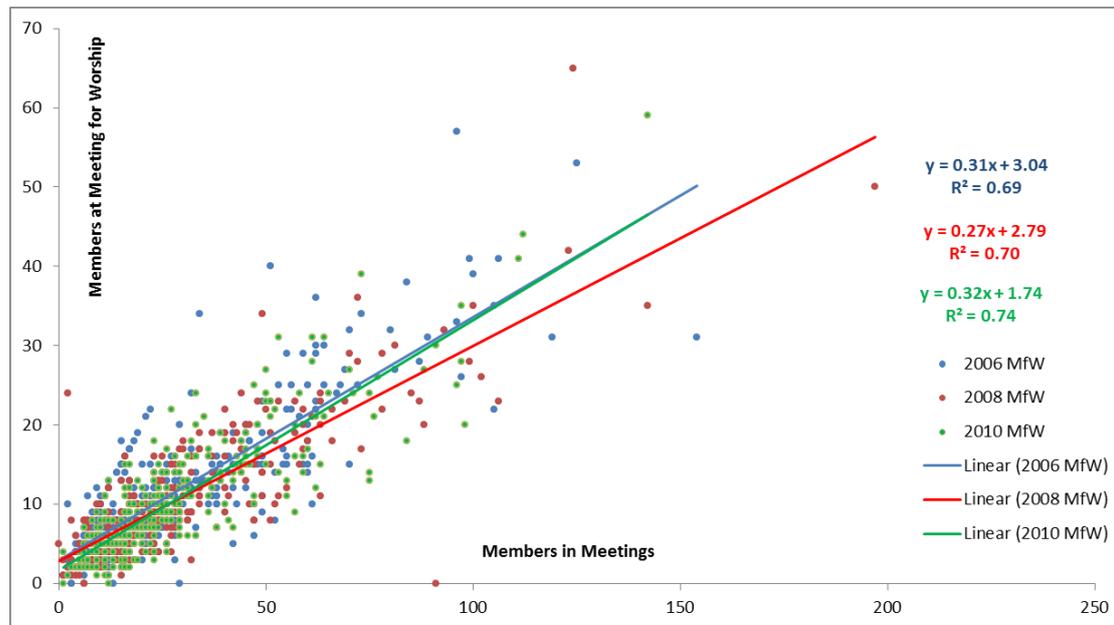
However, this latter figure is set against an *increasing* absolute total of attenders reflected in the numerical increase in the numbers present at Meeting for Worship from 5,596 to 7,021<sup>303</sup>. Members are still approximately 15% more likely to be at meeting than are attenders, which is to be expected from people who have made a commitment to a church.

Table 10.6 shows there is an almost identical likelihood of either gender being present at Meeting for Worship. The study was too short to determine the consistency of over a longer period. It is perhaps a shame that

<sup>303</sup> Note that although this represents a numerical increase of 1,425 in attenders it is over four years and 376 meetings, very slightly less than one attender per meeting per year. Note also that new attenders are most likely to be concentrated in large urban areas and in larger, active meetings. Evidence presented later (chapter 13) shows that over 3 years only about 3 or 4% of attenders become members and over half simply disappear within a year or two of beginning to attend.

there are no official statistics on attendance at Meeting for Worship analogous to the Tabular Statement. Some individual Friends or meetings do collect such data, though an appeal in *The Friend* weekly Quaker magazine had only limited success<sup>304</sup>.

Finally, it is possible to derive information about the pattern and structure of meetings. Plotting the number of members at Meeting for Worship against the number of members within a meeting produces a closely correlated linear relationship, figure 10.2.



**Figure 10.2 Members present at meeting for worship against Members of Meetings 2006, 2008 and 2010**

<sup>304</sup> An appeal for data was placed in *The Friend* magazine of the 7<sup>th</sup> of December 2012. At the time of writing six meetings have offered data series of varying periods but only five have provided it. There is too little data to be of much use.

Chapter 10. Present and Prevented 2006 - 2010: Attendance at Meeting

	2006		2008		2010	
	Members	Attenders	Members	Attenders	Members	Attenders
Present at Meeting for Worship	4,272	1,985	3,450	1,728	3,721	2,138
Number of meetings in sample	376	376	377	377	355	354
Normalisation factor (no. meetings = 376)	1.00	1.00	1.00	1.00	1.06	1.06
<b>Normalised presence at Meeting for Worship</b>	<b>4,272</b>	<b>1,985</b>	<b>3,450</b>	<b>1,728</b>	<b>3,952</b>	<b>2,255</b>
Record as associated with meetings <sup>305</sup>	10,327	5,522	9,065	5,118	9,462	6,162
Number of meetings in sample	371	371	319	319	333	330
Normalisation factor (no. meetings = 376)	1.01	1.01	1.18	1.18	1.13	1.14
<b>Normalised Meeting Members and Attenders</b>	<b>10,466</b>	<b>5,596</b>	<b>10,685</b>	<b>6,033</b>	<b>10,684</b>	<b>7,021</b>
<b>Ratio of individuals at Meeting for Worship to individuals associated with meeting</b>	<b>40.8%</b>	<b>35.5%</b>	<b>32.3%</b>	<b>28.6%</b>	<b>37.0%</b>	<b>32.1%</b>

**Table 10.5 Normalised attendance ratios for members and attenders**

<sup>305</sup> See chapter 5. The total number of individuals recorded on the address lists of meetings

	2006		2008		2010	
	Men	Women	Men	Women	Men	Women
Present at Meeting for Worship	2,572	4,137	2,087	3,497	2,351	3,896
Number of meetings in sample	376	376	337	337	356	356
Normalisation factor (no. meetings = 376)	1.00	1.00	1.12	1.12	1.06	1.06
<b>Normalised presence at Meeting for Worship</b>	<b>2,572</b>	<b>4,137</b>	<b>2,329</b>	<b>3,902</b>	<b>2,483</b>	<b>4,115</b>
Record as associated with meetings <sup>306</sup>	6,152	9,697	5,298	8,885	5,826	9,569
Number of meetings in sample	371	371	319	319	330	330
Normalisation factor (no. meetings = 376)	1.01	1.01	1.18	1.18	1.14	1.14
<b>Normalised Meeting Men and Women</b>	<b>6,235</b>	<b>9,698</b>	<b>6,245</b>	<b>10,473</b>	<b>6,638</b>	<b>10,903</b>
<b>Ratio of individuals at Meeting for Worship to individuals associated with meeting</b>	<b>41.3%</b>	<b>42.1%</b>	<b>37.3%</b>	<b>37.3%</b>	<b>37.4%</b>	<b>37.7%</b>

**Table 10.6 Normalised attendance ratios for Men and Women**

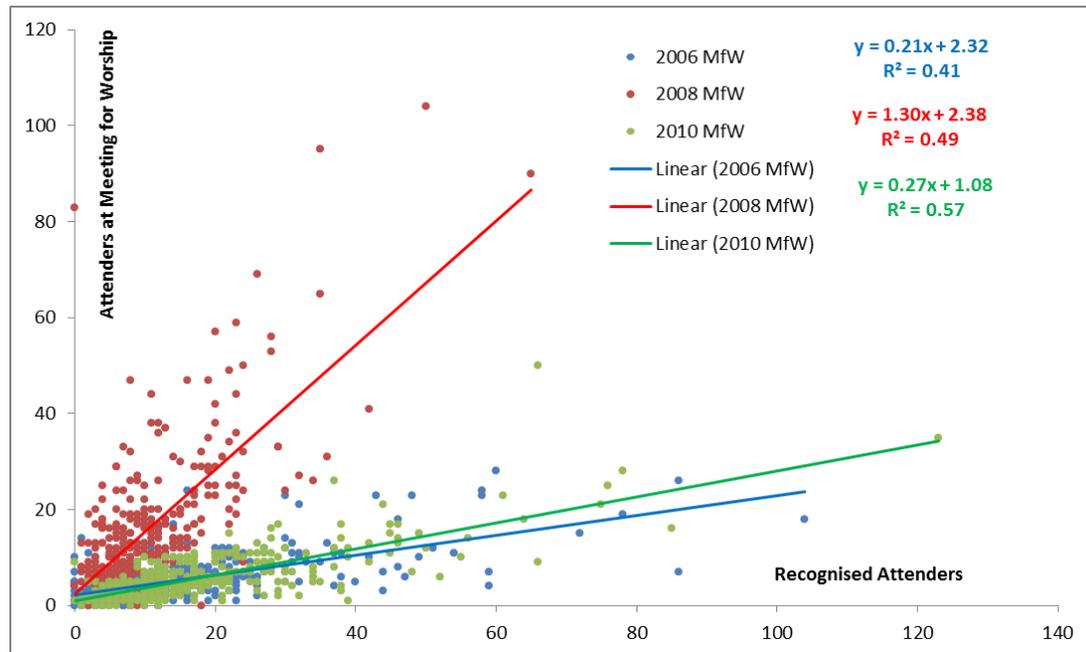
<sup>306</sup> See chapter 5. The total number of individuals recorded on the address lists of meetings

It can again be seen that 2008 is anomalous since the linear trend line for that year is very different from those of both 2006 and 2010, which are remarkably similar. The correlation coefficient,  $r^2=0.7$  suggests a close though not precise relationship between the size of a meeting and numbers at Meeting for Worship. The equations to lines suggest that generally the ratio of members at meeting for worship to those associated with a meeting is about 0.3 plus 2 or 3 though from the scatter of the data there is a large variation between individual meetings.

A similar plot of attenders at meeting for worship against attenders recognised by the meeting (figure 10.3) shows a much lower correlation. At the risk of appearing repetitious, it is again important to emphasise that the data for 2008 is different from that for 2006 and 2010, which again are very similar. The correlation coefficient for attenders is around 0.5 for members, indicating no clear relationship between the number of attenders recognised by a meeting and those present at Meeting for Worship.

In a surprising number of instances, meetings reported no members or no attenders, or no men or women present at Meeting for Worship (Table 10.7). Between 0.8% (2010) and 1.1% (2006) of meetings reported no members present at Meeting for Worship. Although in numerical terms, there were only three or four in the sample there are clear constitutional and spiritual issues involved. Who provides eldership in such meetings for instance? How does the Society exercise control over what is said and done at meeting at which there is no member present? Of less constitutional

concern but worryingly for the future of the Society of Friends over half of meetings reported no visitors, even with the overly generous interpretation put on the term by some respondents.



**Figure 10.3** Attenders at meeting for worship as a function of recognised attenders in meeting

Although there were very few meetings of only one gender, the proportion without male worshippers doubled from 4 (1.1%) in 2006 to 9 (2.5%) in 2010. Even the number of meetings with no men members at all rose slightly while, curiously, the meetings with no men attenders remained broadly constant. More than  $\frac{2}{3}$  of meetings failed to attract any male visitors while those failing to attract any female visitors rose from 58.8% to 65.4%.

#### *Children at Meeting for Worship*

In 2006, 220 of a possible 376 meetings (58.5%) indicated the presence of 1,887 children at Meeting for Worship, which meant, of course,

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Zero present at meeting for worship	2006			2008			2010		
	<i>N</i>	No. Meetings	Proportion	<i>N</i>	No. Meetings	Proportion	<i>N</i>	No. Meetings	Proportion
Members	4	376	1.1%	3	337	0.9%	3	355	0.8%
Men members	19	376	5.1%	16	336	4.8%	22	355	6.2%
Women members	8	376	2.1%	8	336	2.4%	6	355	1.7%
Attendees	23	376	6.1%	24	337	7.1%	10	354	2.8%
Men attendees	82	376	21.8%	76	336	22.6%	73	354	20.6%
Women attendees	53	375	14.8%	47	335	14.0%	32	354	9.0%
Visitors	177	376	47.1%	179	337	53.1%	182	353	51.6%
Men visitors	252	376	67.0%	230	337	68.2%	243	353	68.8%
Women visitors	221	376	58.8%	214	337	63.5%	231	353	65.4%
Men	4	376	1.1%	4	337	1.2%	9	356	2.5%
Women	1	376	0.3%	4	337	1.2%	2	356	0.6%

**Table 10.7 Meetings reporting no members, no attendees or no visitors**

that 156 or 41.5% of meetings did *not* have children present. In meetings with children, there was a mean average  $8.6 \pm \sigma 9.0$  individuals. However, as indicated by the standard deviation the data was positively skewed,  $sk = 2.5$  and the median number present of children was only 5.5 (min. = 1, max. = 58).

<i>Number of</i>	2006	2008	2010
Response	390	359	365
Children's Classes	220	85	96
Total children	1,887	352	429
Median children	5.5 (min. 1, max. 58)	4 (min. 4, max. 16)	3 (min. 1, max. 19)
<i>Normalised to 2006</i>			
Normalisation factor	1	1.09	1.07
Children's Classes	220	92 – 93	102 – 103
Total Children	1,887	382 – 383	458 – 459
<i>Frequency of Classes</i>			
Weekly		58 (17.5%)	67 (19.0%)
Fortnightly		25 (7.5%)	23 (6.5%)
Monthly		34 (10.2%)	40 (11.3%)
As and when children are present		112 (33.7%)	122 (34.6%)
Never		103 (31.0%)	101 (28.6%)
Total responses		332	353

**Table 10.8 Children at Meeting for Worship**

The numbers were low enough to be very surprising. The 2006 Tabular Statement recorded 2,557 children associated with meetings, and so in 2008 and 2010 an extra question was added asking meetings to record the frequency at which children's classes were held: (Table 10.8). There is an

obvious discontinuity between 2006 and 2008 to 2010. In 2006 58.5% of meetings recorded holding children's classes. In 2008, only 23.7% did and in 2010, 26.3% did so. The number of children present fell from 1,887 in 2006 to 359 in 2008 and 365 in 2010. The median number of children per class also fell from 5.5 to 3 between 2006 and 2010.

These figures are difficult to explain. The first thought is some artefact of the questionnaire methodology; and there are two main possibilities:

1. Some 2006 respondents may have interpreted the question to mean the number of children normally present or the number associated with meeting. The supplementary question in 2008 and 2010 may have prompted a more accurate response.
2. The 2006 survey was on the first Sunday in the month while the other two occurred on the second Sunday in the month. The 2006 survey may have captured more monthly or fortnightly classes than in 2008 or 2010.

However, meetings are not constrained to hold monthly classes on the first Sunday of the month and in fact it is likely that many do not especially in May when the first Monday is always a bank holiday.

Neither explanation is sufficient to account for the reduction in the numbers of children present. The fact that the median number of children per class also fell by almost half, from 5.5 to 3 indicates that the fall is real.

### *Business and Administration*

Traditionally 'Preparative Meeting' met in 'preparation' for Monthly Meeting at which the main business of Quakers was transacted. As implied

by the name, Monthly Meetings met monthly and consequently Preparative Meetings for Business also met monthly, though whether this was always entirely true is difficult to determine. Eventually Local 'Meeting for Worship for Business' evolved into fully fledged business meetings in their own right, although still addressing topics referred by Area Meetings or referring issues to Area Meetings. However, there is evidence suggesting that local meeting business is becoming decoupled from Area Meeting. Friends are traditionally expected to be present, and the first agenda item records Friends present and prevented; the implicit assumption being that absent Friends would be at the meeting but for some impediment. However, relatively few members and even fewer attenders attend business meetings. *Present and Prevented* questionnaire sought to quantify participation in Quaker business.

In 2006, *Present and Prevented* asked only about the numbers present at and official appointments made by, business meetings. In retrospect, it would have been interesting to ask whether members or attenders held the positions and a future research project should perhaps address this question. The numbers of Friends present at business meetings seemed low especially compared with the number of appointments; so much so it appeared that the main business of the meeting was being devolved to appointed Friends. In 2008 and 2010, therefore, the question on business meetings was expanded to ask about the frequency at which they were held

#### *Local Meeting Business*

Table 10.9 shows the size of local business meetings. The first thing

of note is the skew of distribution is much less than for meetings in general. One obvious explanation is that in small meetings, business attracts almost the whole meeting (possibly due to social pressures) and in larger meetings fewer people are present. Figure 10.4, which is an aggregate of the data from all three surveys, shows the distribution of members at meeting (blue curve) and at business meetings (black line). The curves show clearly the near normality of business meeting distribution against the highly skewed distribution of meeting size.

		2006	2008	2010
Mean Members present		8.8 ± σ5.3	8.4 ± σ4.2	8.3 ± σ4.6
Skew (members)		2.2	0.9	1.5
Mean Attenders		1.9 ± σ2.0	2.1 ± σ 2.1	2.2 ± σ 1.9
Skew (attenders)		1.7	1.8	1.0
Mean Men Members		3.2 ± σ2.1	3.0 ± σ1.9	3.0 ± σ2.0
Mean Women Members		5.6 ± σ3.8	5.5 ± σ3.0	5.4 ± σ3.2
Mean Men Attenders		0.8 ± σ1.0	0.7 ± σ1.0	0.8 ± σ1.0
Mean Women Members		1.2 ± σ1.4	1.4 ± σ1.5	1.4 ± σ1.4
No. Meetings showing Gender dominance	Men	47	38 (13.6%)	37 (11.3%)
	Women	287	217 (77.8%)	263 (80.2%)
	Equal Men & Women	29	24 (8.6%)	28 (8.5%)

**Table 10.9 Size of local business meetings in 2006, 2008 and 2010**

Chapter 10. Present and Prevented 2006 - 2010: Attendance at Meeting

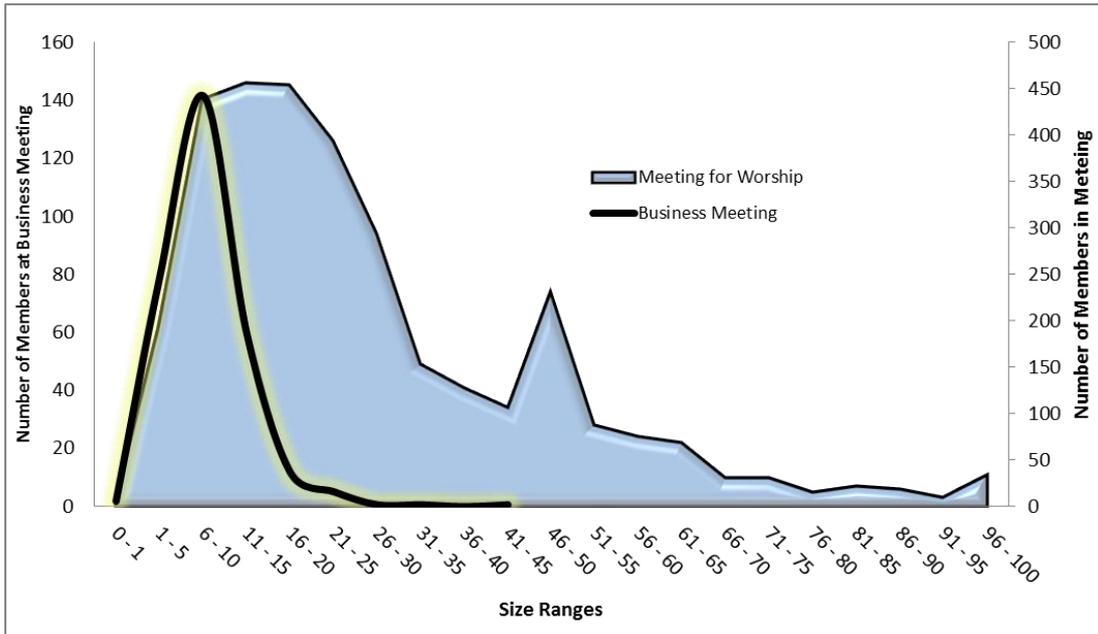


Figure 10.4 The distribution of membership in meeting for worship and at business meeting

An X-Y plot of numbers of members at business meetings against the numbers of members in a meeting (figure 10.5) gives an intriguing result.

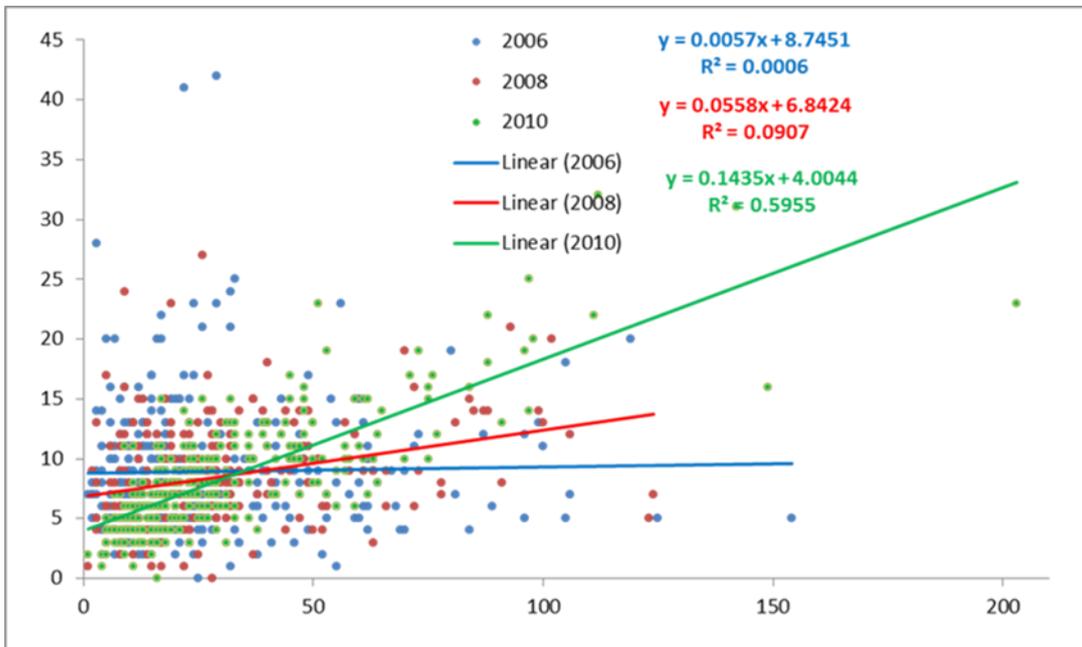


Figure 10.5 Members present at business meetings against members in meeting

As might be expected from the distribution curve most meetings are confined to the lower left corner of the chart. The intriguing outcome is that there is very little relationship between the size of a meeting and the numbers present at a business meeting. A few small meetings had large numbers present (which may have been occasioned by particular agenda items attracting a large number) but most large meetings had relatively small numbers present. It is almost as though there is a 'normal' size for a business meeting of between 3 and 15 members irrespective of the size of Meeting for Worship. Church Government acknowledges that meetings will vary widely in the numbers of appointments they need to make<sup>307</sup> noting that only clerks, treasurers, elders and overseers need to be members. There is therefore an element of choice in making additional appointments. A meeting that has its own meeting house may feel the need to appoint a premises committee, for instance. It is to be expected therefore that the number of appointments will vary widely. The numbers of vacancies were, however, comparatively low (Table 10.10).

	2006	2008	2010
No. of reported appointments	7,816	6,776	8,280
No. of reported vacancies	274	229	259
Ratio of vacancies to appointments	3.5%	3.4%	3.1%

**Table 10.10 Vacancies in appointments reported by local meetings**

It is interesting to compare these figures to the number of Friends who

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<sup>307</sup> Quaker Faith and Practice 3.23

are available to take up appointments, and who participate in both worship and business, Table 10.11. If every individual Quaker held a single appointment well over  $\frac{3}{4}$  of the members of the Religious Society of Friends would be involved in the administration of local meetings.

	2006		2008		2010	
	Number of	% of participating Friends in Meetings	Number of	% of Friends in Meetings	Number of	% of Friends in Meetings
Friends in Meetings	10,327		9,065		9,462	
In Meeting for Worship	4,272	41.2%	3,450	38.1%	3,721	39.3%
At business meeting	2,919	28.3%	2,363	26.1%	2,736	28.9%
Appointments	7,816	75.4%	6,776	74.7%	8,280	87.5%

**Table 10.11 Comparison of numbers participating in aspects of meeting**

In practice, the levels shown here represent close to 100% of those Friends able to fill positions because:

1. There will be some members who cannot take positions in the meetings for various reasons
2. The figures relate only to local meetings and exclude the demands made by Area Meetings, the central bodies of the Society and other Quaker organisations.

In 2008 and 2010, a question was asked on the frequency of business meetings, Table 10.12.

One positive aspect seems to be that the frequency at which meetings are held has not changed significantly. Although most meetings appear to meet monthly or 12 times a year, this is unlikely. Correspondents frequently

answering ‘12’ or ‘monthly’ frequently added a marginal note “Except December” (or January or August and occasionally all three). It is very likely therefore that the number of meetings recorded as being held 9, 10 or 11 months a year have been significantly underestimated.

Frequency per year	2008		2010	
	N	%	N	%
12	109	37.8%	130	38.5%
11	16	5.6%	16	4.7%
10	21	7.3%	31	9.2%
9	11	3.8%	14	4.1%
8	14	4.9%	17	5.0%
7	12	4.2%	12	3.6%
6	47	16.3%	60	17.8%
5	3	1.0%	5	1.5%
4	6	2.1%	7	2.1%
3	3	1.0%	1	0.3%
2	1	0.3%	1	0.3%
1	0	0.0%	0	0.0%
As and When	42	14.6%	44	13%
Never	4	1.4%	0	0.0%

**Table 10.12 Frequency of local business meetings**

It is interesting that in 2008 36.5% of meetings held 6 or fewer business meetings a year and almost half, 49.3%, held business meetings 9 times a year or fewer. The equivalent figures for 2010 were 34.9% holding 6 or fewer meetings and 47.6% holding 9 or fewer. Much of the system of communication between parts of the Quaker organisation is predicated on

monthly business meetings. If local meetings no longer have monthly business meetings, there are clear implications for Area Meetings or the central organisation of the church. This is especially so when questions to, and responses from, meetings need to fit a timetable set by external factors.

### *Area Meetings*

. Area Meetings are the root unit of organisation of the Society of Friends<sup>308</sup>.

The monthly [*area*] meeting is the primary meeting for church affairs in Britain Yearly Meeting ... [*providing*] a balance between worship, administration, deliberation and social life which can make it an enjoyable occasion, building up the spiritual life of its members.

At the same time as the questionnaires to Local Meetings, questionnaires were sent to all Area Meetings (of which there are about 70) with a more limited range of questions.

Area meetings have their own committee structures and appointments system on top of that of their constituent Local Meetings. Given that Area Meeting is the base unit of the organisation of the Society of Friends the numbers present at business meetings seems rather low (Table 10.13), though to some extent that is a subjective judgement considering the demands on Friends from other parts of the Quaker structure.

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<sup>308</sup> *Quaker Faith and Practice* 4.01

Chapter 10. Present and Prevented 2006 - 2010: Attendance at Meeting

		Members		Attendees		Total	Members	Attendees	Men	Women
		Men	Women	Men	Women					
2006	<b>Totals</b>	<b>618</b>	<b>979</b>	<b>65</b>	<b>90</b>	<b>1,752</b>	<b>1,597</b>	<b>155</b>	<b>683</b>	<b>1,069</b>
	<b>Average</b>	<b>9.7 ± σ4.4</b>	<b>15.3 ± σ 5.8</b>	<b>1.0 ± σ 1.4</b>	<b>1.4 ± σ 1.6</b>	<b>27.4 ± σ 10.6</b>	<b>25.0 ± σ 9.3</b>	<b>2.4 ± σ 2.4</b>	<b>10.7 ± σ 5.0</b>	<b>16.7 ± σ 6.6</b>
	<b>Median</b>	<b>9.0</b>	<b>15.0</b>	<b>1.0</b>	<b>1.0</b>	<b>27.0</b>	<b>25.0</b>	<b>2.0</b>	<b>10.5</b>	<b>16.0</b>
2008	<b>Totals</b>	<b>429</b>	<b>779</b>	<b>55</b>	<b>69</b>	<b>1,332</b>	<b>1,208</b>	<b>124</b>	<b>484</b>	<b>848</b>
	<b>Average</b>	<b>7.8 ± σ 3.3</b>	<b>14.2 ± σ 5.1</b>	<b>1.0 ± σ 1.2</b>	<b>1.3 ± σ 2.4</b>	<b>24.2 ± σ 7.7</b>	<b>22.0 ± σ 6.8</b>	<b>2.3 ± σ 2.9</b>	<b>8.8 ± σ 3.7</b>	<b>15.4 ± σ 6.0</b>
	<b>Median</b>	<b>8.0</b>	<b>14.0</b>	<b>1.0</b>	<b>1.0</b>	<b>23.0</b>	<b>22.0</b>	<b>1.0</b>	<b>8.0</b>	<b>14.0</b>
2010	<b>Totals</b>	<b>412</b>	<b>704</b>	<b>47</b>	<b>76</b>	<b>1,214</b>	<b>1,116</b>	<b>123</b>	<b>448</b>	<b>766</b>
	<b>Average</b>	<b>8.4 ± σ 3.7</b>	<b>14.4 ± σ 5.3</b>	<b>1.0 ± σ 1.2</b>	<b>1.6 ± σ 1.7</b>	<b>25.3 ± σ 8.5</b>	<b>22.8 ± σ 8.0</b>	<b>2.6 ± σ 2.6</b>	<b>9.3 ± σ 4.1</b>	<b>16.0 ± σ 5.3</b>
	<b>Median</b>	<b>8.0</b>	<b>14.0</b>	<b>1.0</b>	<b>1.0</b>	<b>23.0</b>	<b>21.0</b>	<b>2.0</b>	<b>9.0</b>	<b>15.0</b>

Table 10.13 Summary of attendance at area meeting

The first thing to note in Table 10.14 is that median attendance at Area Meeting is between 23 and 27 members, about the same as the numbers in a typical local meeting. Since the average Area Meeting contains about six meetings, only  $\frac{1}{6}$  of the entire constituent membership attends. Similarly, since about 8 or 9 Friends attend Local Meeting for business, attendance at Area Meeting is proportionally approximately  $\frac{1}{2}$  the size. Since it is customary for Local Meetings to appoint one or two representatives to Area Meeting, almost half of attendees appointed and only half are present in a voluntary capacity. It is also noteworthy that the numbers of attenders at Area Meeting is almost insignificant at approximately 130 from around 8,000.

What does stand out are the numbers of appointments made (Table 10.14). There is some evidence here of a growth in the number of appointments. Since each Local Meeting also makes a median of 14 to 18 appointments of its own and Area Meetings make a further 60 to 75 appointments then an average Area Meeting may have a total of between 140 and 200 appointees. However, the skewed structure of meetings makes it difficult to compare figures for appointments with the number of members. In the conclusion below, I attempt to estimate the total numbers of appointments and to compare them with the total number of Friends.

	<b>2006</b>	<b>2008</b>	<b>2010</b>
No. Respondents	65	55	50
No. Appointments	4,964	4,666	4,534
No. vacancies	175 (3.5%)	331 (7.1%)	153 (3.4%)
Average No. Appointments	77.6 ± σ 78.7	84.8 ± σ 38.4	92.5 ± σ 89.2
Mean No. Appointments	60	76	75

**Table 10.14 Number of Area Meeting appointments**

## Conclusions

Table 10.15 summarises the relationship in median size between meetings, Meeting for Worship and business meetings. The table demonstrates both the predominance of women members and the growing proportion of attenders within meetings. The predominance of women members is likely to continue since it exists also among attenders. The gender of applicants for membership has been recorded in the Tabular Statement since 1913 and an examination of the ratio of male applicants to female applicants produces figure 10.6.

	Median nos. of	2006	2008	2010
<b>Meeting</b>	<b>All Members</b>	<b>20</b>	<b>23</b>	<b>22</b>
	<b>Men Members</b>	<b>8</b>	<b>8</b>	<b>8</b>
	<b>Women Members</b>	<b>12</b>	<b>14</b>	<b>14</b>
	<b>All Attenders</b>	<b>11</b>	<b>12</b>	<b>14</b>
	<b>Men Attenders</b>	<b>4</b>	<b>5</b>	<b>5</b>
	<b>Women Attenders</b>	<b>7</b>	<b>7</b>	<b>9</b>
	<b>Children<sup>309</sup></b>	<b>5.5</b>	<b>6</b>	<b>4</b>
	<b>Boys</b>	<b>3</b>	<b>3</b>	<b>3</b>
	<b>Girls</b>	<b>3</b>	<b>3</b>	<b>2</b>
<b>Meeting for Worship</b>	<b>All Members</b>	<b>9</b>	<b>8</b>	<b>9</b>
	<b>Men Members</b>	<b>3</b>	<b>3</b>	<b>3</b>
	<b>Women Members</b>	<b>6</b>	<b>5</b>	<b>6</b>
	<b>All Attenders</b>	<b>4</b>	<b>4</b>	<b>5</b>

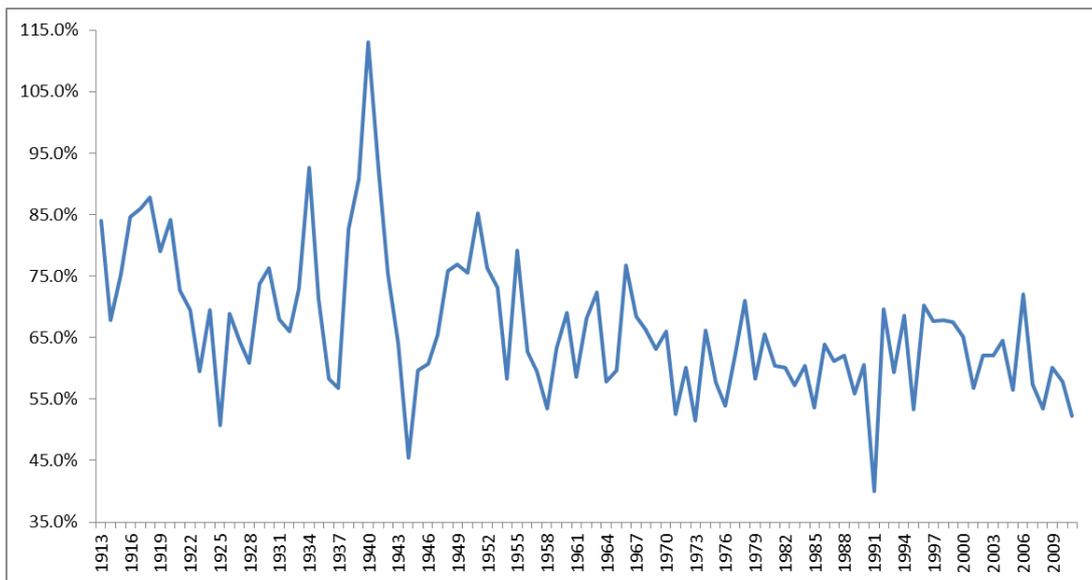
<sup>309</sup> The data is for meetings that record associated children or who note the presence of children at meeting. See the section in this chapter on children for the number of meetings so reporting.

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	<b>Men Attenders</b>	<b>2</b>	<b>2</b>	<b>2</b>
	<b>Women Attenders</b>	<b>2</b>	<b>2</b>	<b>3</b>
	<b>All Children</b>	<b>3</b>	<b>4</b>	<b>3</b>
	<b>Boys</b>	<b>1</b>	<b>1</b>	<b>2</b>
	<b>Girls</b>	<b>1</b>	<b>2</b>	<b>2</b>
<b>Local Meeting for Business</b>	<b>All Members</b>	<b>8</b>	<b>8</b>	<b>7</b>
	<b>Men Members</b>	<b>3</b>	<b>3</b>	<b>3</b>
	<b>Women Members</b>	<b>5</b>	<b>5</b>	<b>5</b>
	<b>All Attenders</b>	<b>1</b>	<b>2</b>	<b>2</b>
	<b>Men Attenders</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>1</b>
	<b>Women Attenders</b>	<b>1</b>	<b>1</b>	<b>1</b>
<b>Area Meeting</b>	<b>All Members</b>	<b>25</b>	<b>22</b>	<b>21</b>
	<b>Men Members</b>	<b>9</b>	<b>8</b>	<b>8</b>
	<b>Women Members</b>	<b>15</b>	<b>14</b>	<b>14</b>
	<b>All Attenders</b>	<b>2</b>	<b>1</b>	<b>2</b>
	<b>Men Attenders</b>	<b>1</b>	<b>1</b>	<b>1</b>
	<b>Women Attenders</b>	<b>1</b>	<b>1</b>	<b>1</b>

**Table 10.15 Comparison of Quaker Meetings 2006 to 2010** (note that figures occasionally appear inconsistent because of variations in the skew of the data).

Only once in the 98 years covered by the data has the number of male applicants exceeded that of female applicants (in 1940). The mean ratio is 66.6% meaning that over the whole period women are 50% more likely to become members of the Society of Friends than men.



**Figure 10.6 Ratio of male to female applicants for membership 1913 – 2012**

Over the 10 years 2002 to 2011, the proportion of men to women has fallen to 59.8%; that is women are currently approximately 40% more likely to apply for membership than are men. Finally, it is noticeable that the median number of children associated with meetings fell quite sharply over the period of the *Present and Prevented* surveys as noted elsewhere. There are a number of reasons why this might be so.

1. The median of 5.5 children per class suggests that 50% of meetings have less than 5 children per class, and the burden of providing regular sessions for such small numbers is too great. Five or fewer children represent very few families. If the responsibility for providing classes fell on parents then they may feel that to come to meeting simply to look after their own children is too much.
2. *Present and Prevented* did not ask about the ages of the children associated with meeting or participating in classes. If sufficient numbers became adolescent between 2006 and 2008 and, making their own choices, decided not to come to meeting, numbers may have fallen below sustainable levels. The decline would therefore connect to the birth rate of 10 or 12 years previously, that is 1996 to 1998<sup>310</sup>.

Meeting for worship shows much the same pattern as meeting as a

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<sup>310</sup> In chapter 4 *The Tabular Statement* I refer to an estimate of 5,000 young people in 2001 given by Best in his *Community of Intimacy* obtained from a report of the Children and Young People's Committee of the Society of Friends. While this figure seems to have been simply an estimate or even a guess if true the decline in the numbers of children associated with meetings would be even greater than suggested here.

whole, a predominance of members over attenders and women over men. What is very noticeable is the relative size of meeting and meeting for worship. The latter is in all adult categories less than 50% of the meeting as a whole and in some categories approximately  $\frac{1}{3}$  the size.

Business meetings are slightly smaller than meeting for worship in terms of members, but only a very small fraction of attenders participate (10% or less). This figure may be surprising since church government explicitly recommends that attenders be encouraged to attend business meetings as part of preparation for membership<sup>311</sup>.

The total number of appointments made by Area and Local Meetings shows a considerable rise between 2006 and 2010. In Table 10.16, I attempt to calculate the position nationally from the responses to *Present and Prevented*. It seems clear from this data that there was substantial growth in the number of appointments between 2008 and 2010 by some 15.5%. The numbers will of course be significantly greater in each year because of the under-reporting in the survey noted earlier. This increase coincided with implementation of Britain Yearly Meeting RECAST proposals, part of which involved Area Meetings becoming charities in their own right and creating a board of trustees. A RECAST committee was set up in 2005<sup>312</sup>, reported to Yearly Meeting in 2006<sup>313</sup> and completed a

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<sup>311</sup> *Quaker Faith and Practice* 4.37, 11.01

<sup>312</sup> Britain Yearly Meeting *Handbook for Trustees 2009* (Britain Yearly Meeting, London, 2009) 5

<sup>313</sup> Yearly Meeting of the Religious Society of Friends (Quakers) in Britain 26-29 May 2006 Minute 3: Matters Arising

first phase of implementation by 2009<sup>314</sup>. Of course, coincidence does not imply causation and further research into what the extra 2,303 appointments made between 2008 and 2010 do would be illuminating.

	2006	2008	2010
<i>Area Meetings</i>			
No. of Area Meetings A	72	70	70
No. of Respondents B	65	55	50
Ratio A to B = C	1.11	1.27	1.40
No. of appointments reported by respondents D	4,964	4,666	4534
<b>Estimate of total no. of appointments C x D = E1</b>	<b>5,499</b>	<b>5,939</b>	<b>6,438</b>
<i>Local Meetings</i>			
No. of Local Meetings A	474	470	471
No. of Respondents B	390	359	365
Ratio A to B = C	1.22	1.31	1.29
No. of appointments reported by respondents D	7,816	6,776	8,280
<b>Estimate of total no. of appointments C x D = E2</b>	<b>9,536</b>	<b>8,877</b>	<b>10,681</b>
<b>TOTAL No. appointments E1 + E2 = E</b>	<b>15,035</b>	<b>14,816</b>	<b>17,119</b>
<b>Tabular Statement Membership (year-end) F</b>	<b>15,065</b>	<b>14,569</b>	<b>14,260</b>
<b>Ratio E to F</b>	<b>1.00</b>	<b>1.02</b>	<b>1.20</b>

**Table 10.16 Estimate of total appointments in all Local and Area Meetings 2006 to 2010**

<sup>314</sup> *Handbook for Trustees 2009*, 5

## CHAPTER 11

### ATTENDERS AND ENQUIRERS

#### HERON'S AND RUTHERFORD'S FINDINGS RE-EXAMINED AND EXTENDED

##### Introduction

In this chapter, I examine a number of surveys of British Friends that do not warrant a chapter to themselves because of their limited relation to the subject of this dissertation, their extent or previous exploration. Amongst other studies, I examine those of Heron and Rutherford, which I extend to develop new insights on those attending in Britain Yearly Meeting.

In 1992, Heron published the results of a study of attenders in Yorkshire<sup>315</sup>. Among his findings were that 44.9% of respondents were aged between 30 and 49 years old, 28.3% were aged over 60 (16.1% of whom were 70 years or older) and that in the 6 years between 1985 and 1991 only 3% of attenders applied for membership annually<sup>316</sup>. Since Heron's study, the proportion of attenders in Quaker meetings has risen from 33.8% to 38.3% while the mean size of Quaker meetings has fallen by 13.8% from 55.2 members and attenders to 47.6<sup>317</sup>.

In 2003, Rutherford undertook a study by questionnaire of almost

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<sup>315</sup> Heron *Caring Commitment Conviction*

<sup>316</sup> Heron *Caring Commitment Conviction* 17

<sup>317</sup> Comparisons of the Tabular Statement 1992 with that of 2011

600 members and attenders. Her research showed that members had been attenders for approximately 3.8 years and applied for membership at a mean age of 36, implying a mean age of 32 to 33 on first attending<sup>318</sup>. In order to extend Heron and Rutherford's work I carried out further primary research on both the geographical and social origin of attenders

### **Analysis**

In *Caring Commitment Conviction*, Heron presents a table drawn from the Tabular Statement showing an increase from 6,243 to 8,758 of attenders in Quaker Meetings between 1981 and 1990<sup>319</sup>. Dandelion quotes Heron's table and suggests the data demonstrates a general increase in the absolute numbers of attenders<sup>320</sup>. However, there are distinct problems with this interpretation. First, as Heron himself notes of the numbers they represent an increase only<sup>321</sup>:

Provided there has not been a slow increase in the readiness of local meetings to list and then annually to count people as ...  
[attenders]

Secondly, the data is narrowly limited to a 10-year period. The Tabular Statement recorded the number of attenders by gender from 1866 to 1923, with a gap from 1924 to 1962. From 1963 to 2011 only total undifferentiated numbers were given, Figure 11.1 shows the number of

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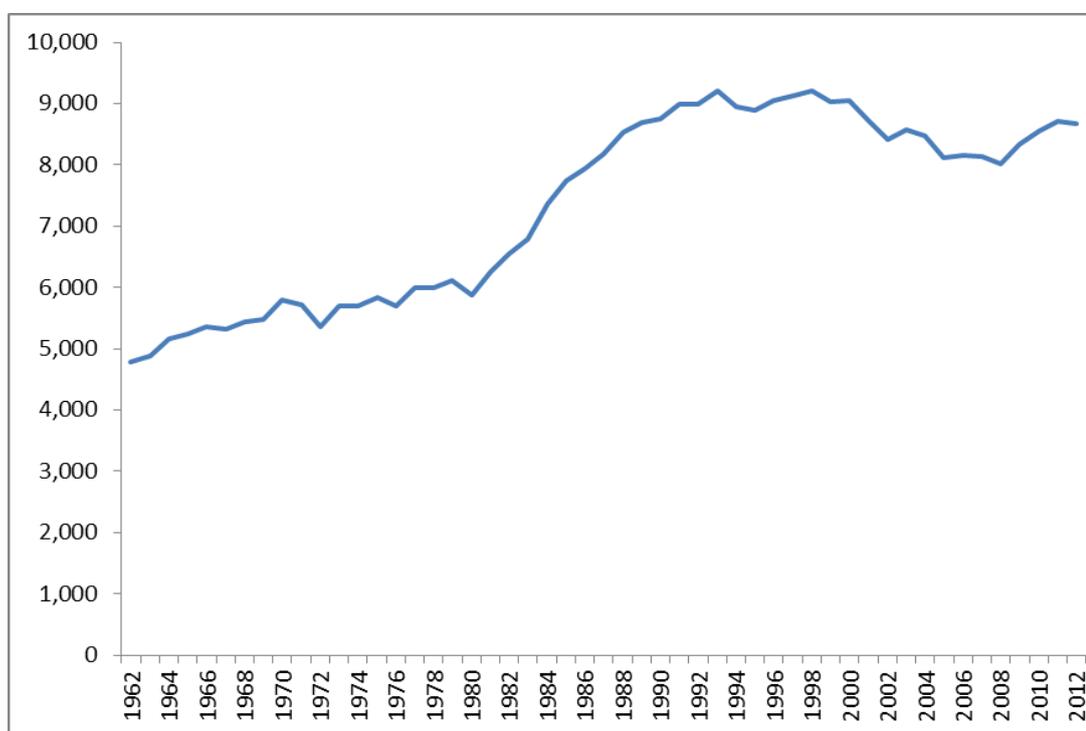
<sup>318</sup> Rosie Rutherford unpublished PhD data held at the Quaker Studies Centre, Woodbrooke College

<sup>319</sup> Alastair Heron *Caring Commitment Conviction* 45

<sup>320</sup> Pink Dandelion *A Sociological Analysis of the Theology of Quakers* 4

<sup>321</sup> Alastair Heron *Caring Commitment Conviction* 44 - 46

attenders recorded in the Tabular Statement from 1963 to 2011<sup>322</sup>.



**Figure 11.1 Attenders recorded in the Tabular Statement between 1963 and 2012**

During this period, attender totals rose to a peak of 9,201 in 1998 before falling to 8,017 in 2008, and again rising to 8,711 in 2011 before falling once more in 2012 to 8,681. The pattern is therefore more complex than a smooth rise. It should be noted that the number of attenders in 2012 is less than in 1990 (8,758), or (bearing in mind the lack of data between 1924 and 1962), 1911 (8,863). The choice of period over which to measure trends in attender numbers is therefore critical. It is also important to understand the scale of an apparent rise. The most recent minimum number of attenders occurred in 2008 (8,017) and by 2011 (the

<sup>322</sup> A description of the compilation and use of the Tabular Statement is given in chapter 4

most recent peak), the number had risen by 694, or 8.7%. In 2008, there was a mean of 16.8 attenders per meeting and 2011 a mean of 18.2, a rise of 1.4 attenders per meeting over three years. Less than one attender per year is hardly a significant growth rate. As shown in earlier chapters, the distribution of meeting size is heavily skewed with many smaller meetings and fewer larger meetings. It would be worth examining the distribution of these attender gains to determine which meetings grew and to what extent. If Heron's data still holds that only 3% of attenders apply for membership over three years we can expect that this growth in attenders will result in just over 20 new members in the period, far below replacement level in a period when membership fell by 538. Curiously, though, the rise in attenders was first recorded in the 2009 Tabular Statement, only five months after the Yearly Meeting decision on same-sex marriage in late July 2009. If that decision and the consequent national publicity resulted in new people coming to meeting, it may be that Heron's fear about the haste of meetings to record attenders has been borne out. It is certainly a phenomenon worth exploration even though the 2012 Tabular statement showed a fall.

However, I pointed out in Chapter 4 that the Tabular Statement is inaccurate. Heron estimated that only 39% of members and 36% of attenders regularly attended meeting for worship<sup>323</sup>. My findings from *Present and Prevented* are broadly in agreement with Heron's findings of

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<sup>323</sup> Heron *Caring Conviction Commitment* 42

nearly 20 years previously; that is, between 32.3% and 40.8% of members and between 28.6% and 35.5% of attenders are present at meeting for worship (see chapter 9). Of course, the likelihood is that greater proportions are occasionally present or involved in the church in other ways but the data is nevertheless indicative of a very substantial minority who exist in name only and that the Tabular Statement tells us little about the nature and pattern of adherence.

Heron conducts an interesting exercise in calculating what he calls a 'Recruitment Rate' by dividing the number of admissions to membership by the total number of attenders in the preceding year on the presumption that it is from this group of people that applications for membership come<sup>324</sup>. The result is so small that I have amended Heron by obtaining the number of membership applications per 1000 attenders. If we do this for the whole period 1963 to 2011, we get figure 11.2, in which the smooth curve is purely indicative of trend<sup>325</sup>.

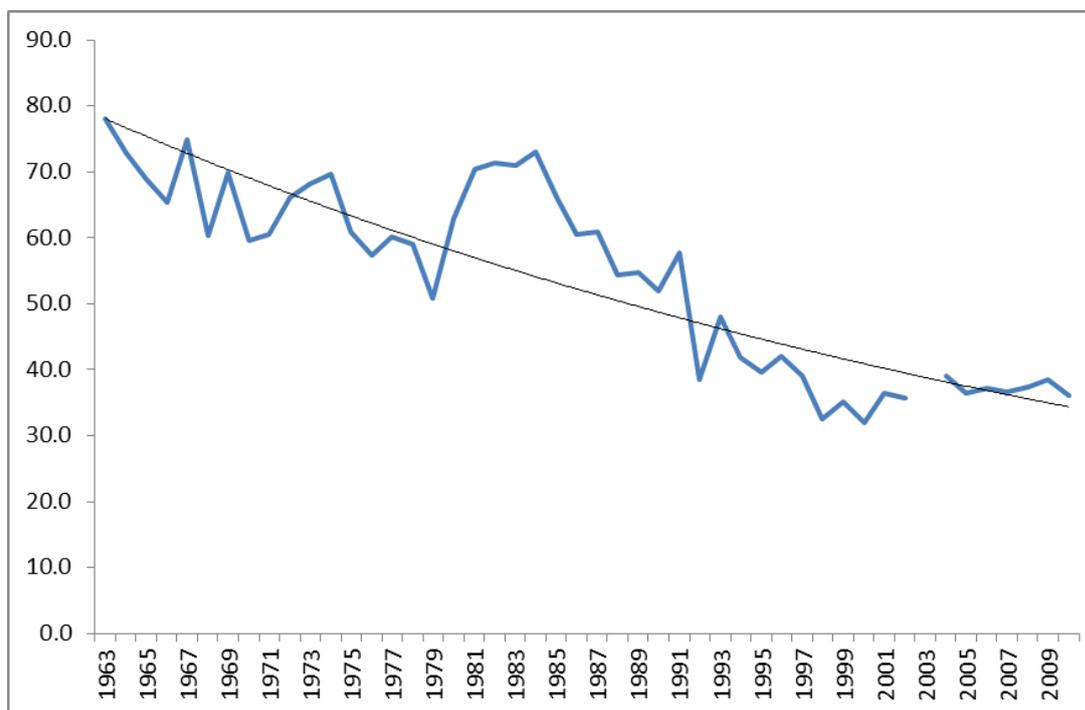
Clearly attenders were more likely to join during some past periods than now, though the trend has levelled in the 21<sup>st</sup> century and may recently even have risen slightly. Given the consistency of the data 'Heron's Recruitment Rate' seems to be a simple and useful way of monitoring the relationship between numbers of attenders and applications for membership.

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<sup>324</sup> Heron *Caring Conviction Commitment* 45

<sup>325</sup> The data too variable for predictive curve fitting and the smooth curve shown is purely illustrative of trend.

Chapter 11. Attenders and Enquirers: Heron's and Rutherford's Findings Re-examined and Extended



**Figure 11.2 Recruitment Rate using Heron's method 1963 – 2012**

A third measurement of attenders derived by Heron from the Tabular Statement is the ratio of attenders to members, figure 11.3. However, rather than expressing the ratio of attenders to members as  $\frac{Attenders}{Members}$ , I have shown attenders as a percentage of all adult adherents,  $\frac{Attenders}{[Members+Attenders]}$  because it gives a clearer picture of the composition of a typical Quaker group. It shows that attenders, while still a minority, form an increasing proportion of meetings, rising from 21.1% of adherents in 1963 to 38.3% in 2011. The rising trend is linear ( $r^2 > 0.9$ ) and extrapolation suggests it will be another 30 years before the number of attenders equals the number of members. Taken together Figures 11.1 to 11.3 show that the larger the number and the greater the proportion of attenders in the meeting the less likely they are to join.

Chapter 11. Attenders and Enquirers: Heron's and Rutherford's Findings Re-examined and Extended

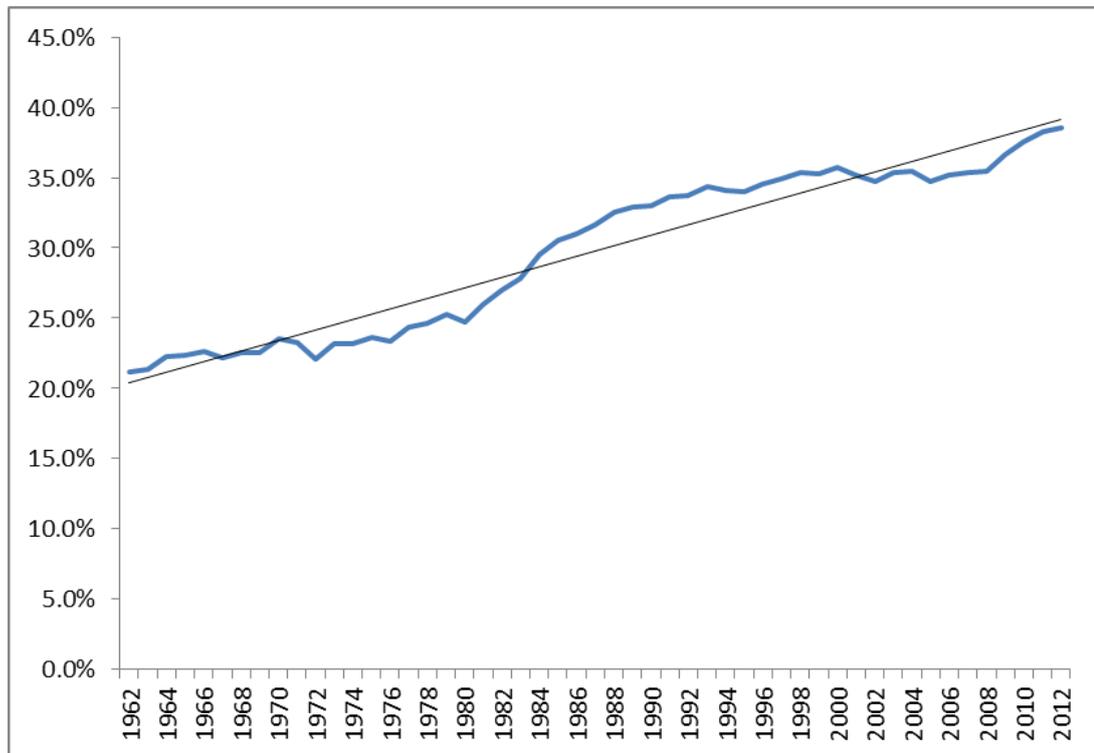
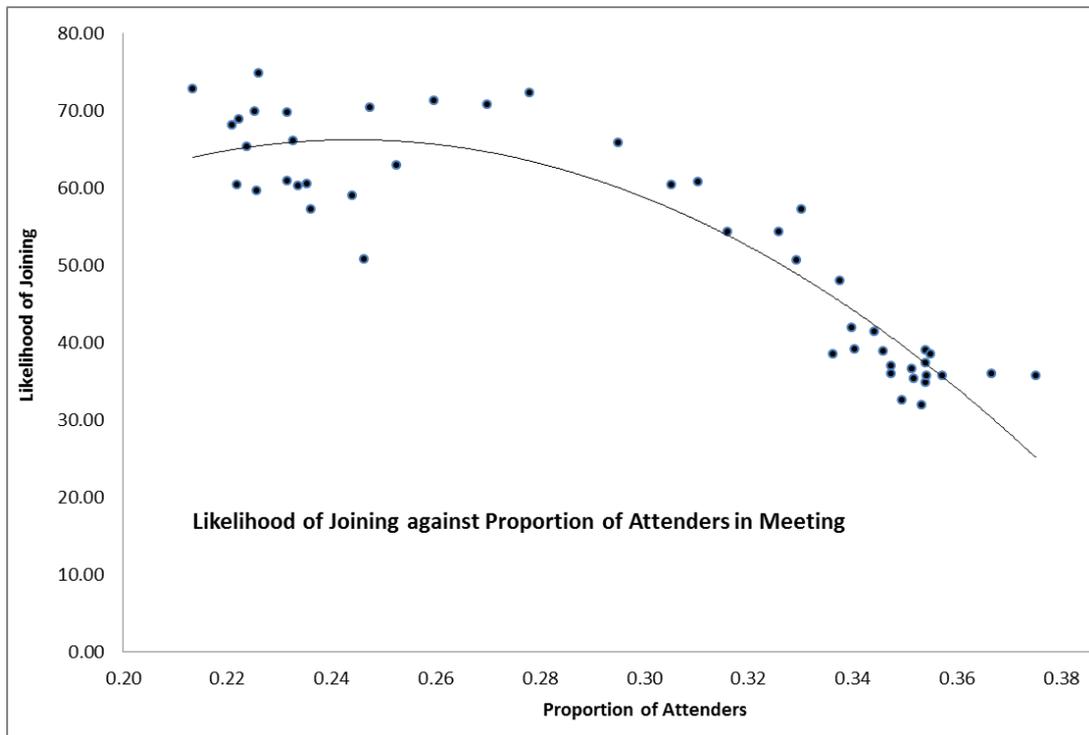


Figure 11.3: Attenders as a percentage of all adults 1963 – 2012

We can show this more clearly by plotting the likelihood of attenders joining against the proportion of attenders in meeting, figure 11.4. The smooth curve is again illustrative to emphasise the accelerating trend of attenders *not* applying for membership. This time the best fit was obtained using a quadratic equation with a high value of  $r^2 > 0.8$ . Extrapolation suggests that attenders cease to join the Society of Friends in 2016 or 2017 once the proportion reaches slightly less than 41% of adult adherents. However, as with all such predictions, the outcome is unlikely to be so clear-cut, but what can be said is that as the proportion of attenders increases the number who choose to apply for membership will continue to fall to perhaps a vanishingly small number within the near future.

Chapter 11. Attenders and Enquirers: Heron's and Rutherford's Findings Re-examined and Extended



**Figure 11.4 Likelihood of application for membership against proportion of attenders in meeting**

Further research is required on why attenders are reluctant to commit to membership. One reason may be that in meetings with a high proportion of attenders there are fewer social pressures to make a formal commitment than there would be if attenders were in a smaller minority.

Having taken the quantitative methods Heron used in his study of Yorkshire attenders and applied them to a national and extended set of data, we can confirm that what he found for Yorkshire is indeed a national phenomenon. Although the number of attenders has risen in the short term and grown as a proportion of adherents to Quakerism, in doing so, they have become less likely to make a commitment to membership.

Both Heron and Rutherford noted the ages of their respondents.

Heron's respondents were, of course, all attenders, while Rutherford's were a mix of attenders and members. Heron presented his data as the percentage of respondents in age groups while Rutherford recorded actual ages. It is possible to back calculate from Heron's data and arrive at a mean age to compare with Rutherford<sup>326</sup>. Heron's sample of 459 attenders had a mean age of approximately 49 and Rutherford's sample of 583 members and attenders a mean age of  $63.9 \pm \sigma 15.1$ . Allowing for uncertainties in the calculations, the difference suggests that the Society is either ageing at just over a year per year<sup>327</sup> or that members are considerably older than attenders. Heron's did not ask the age of attenders when applying for membership. Rutherford asked both the age of first attendance at meeting and the age of application for membership.

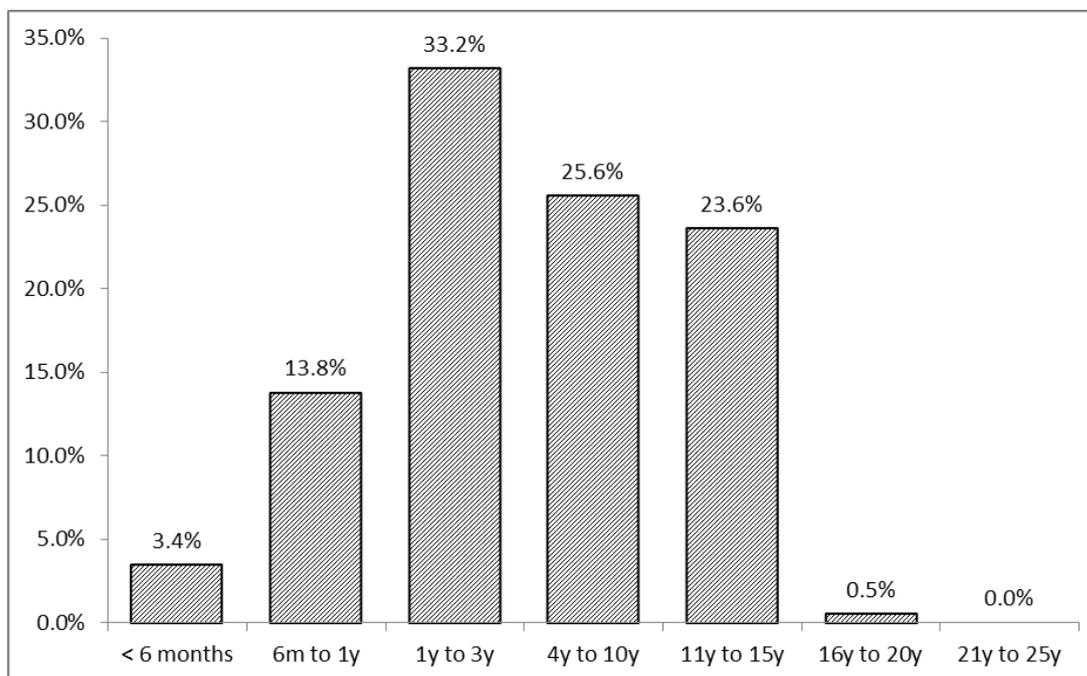
In a sample of 465 (excluding birthright members), Rutherford showed the mean age of first attendance to be  $40 \pm \sigma 16$  years and in a sample of 384 members the mean age of application was  $41.3 \pm \sigma 14.1$  years. When asked the length of attendance before membership

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<sup>326</sup> Since we know the size of Heron's sample (459) and the percentage of the sample in each age band, it is a trivial task to calculate the absolute numbers in each category. Assuming a normal distribution of ages clustered around the central value of the age band we can multiply the number in the age band by the central value to obtain an approximate total of all the ages of the individuals in that age band. If we then total the result for all the age bands, we will arrive at approximate sum of the ages of all the individuals in the whole sample. Dividing this by the number of individuals in the sample gives an approximate mean. Errors arise from a) the assumption of a normal distribution of ages within each age band, b) From assumptions that have to be made for open-ended categories: e.g. less than 20 (assumed to mean 18 to 20 with a mid-point of 19, or greater than 70, when the mid-point was assumed 80. Note that when there are few individuals in a category, as in 'less than 20' or 'greater than 70' the outcome is insensitive to quite large changes in assumptions

<sup>327</sup> There are 11 years between Heron's and Rutherford's sample and 14.9 years between the means

application the mean response was 5.6 years. The data implies that while some apply for membership very soon after first attendance a large minority spend some years considering their position<sup>328</sup>. This becomes apparent when we look at the distribution of ages at the time of application in figure 11.5. While just over 50% applied within their first three years of attending, almost a quarter took up to 15 years to do the same. Only 0.5% attended for longer than 15 years.



**Figure 11.5 Rutherford Study: Distribution of time between starting to attend meeting and application for membership**

Heron found that  $\frac{2}{3}$  of his respondents had attended meeting for three years or more,  $\frac{1}{4}$  for four to nine years and nearly  $\frac{1}{5}$  for more than 15 years or more. Findings for those who had attended meeting for three

<sup>328</sup> Since the questions were both asked of the same correspondents it seems reasonable to assume the date of first attendance was the same in each case. An alternative reading that the first question was answered relative to commencement of regular attendance and the other relative to first physical appearance at meeting does not seem tenable.

years or more and four to nine years are broadly in agreement with Rutherford, but his finding of  $\frac{1}{5}$  for 15 years or more is considerably different from Rutherford's 0.5%. However, these are different measurements. Rutherford was measuring time to application of membership and Heron length of attendance. What the disparity shows is that after 15 years of attending application for membership is unlikely.

Most Area Meetings regularly publish books of members and recognised attenders and in order to cross-check and perhaps extend the data described above I asked the Quaker library (which has a large collection of such books) for an Area Meeting geographically distant from Yorkshire with books covering as long as possible a period. Having identified such an Area Meeting (which I shall call South AM) I obtained permission from the staff responsible for data protection to record and analyse the careers of attenders in South Area Meeting. A requirement of the permission for the attender study was inclusion of a confidentiality statement<sup>329</sup>.

The books of members and attenders of South Area Meeting were published every two to three years from 1968 (the earliest in the library's collection) until 1999 and thereafter annually. From 1999, only the names

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<sup>329</sup> The collection of attender data and analysis of enquirer postcodes described in this chapter was approved by those responsible for data protection in Friends House. In accordance with agreement, the postcode data was kept in such a way that individuals remained unidentifiable and the data on identifiable individuals in the attenders study was kept in a password protected encrypted file on a removable storage device. Aggregate results of both studies are used in published outcomes and do not contain any identifiable individual information

and address of those who agreed to have their details published were included and almost certainly some refused. The books published between 2000 and 2004 and in 2006, 2008 and 2011 are missing. The methodology employed in analysis was as follows.

1. All recognised attenders in South AM (656 individuals between 1968 and 2012) were recorded on a spreadsheet first by meeting and then by full name (surname/forenames) which is the order in which they appeared in the books and by abbreviated year of first appearance to minimise the possibility of inadvertent duplication or confusion between similar names. When an attender simply disappeared from the record, I recorded 'Gone' in the year of disappearance. When they were accepted as members I recorded 'Member' in the first year they appeared as such.
2. After recording all the data, I sorted it by individual name to ensure that any attenders who had simply moved from one meeting to another in the same Area Meeting were not accidentally recorded as 'Gone'.
3. I then eliminated all attenders, whose Quaker career was not entirely encompassed by the period 1968 to 2012, including those whose status may have changed to 'Member' or 'Gone' during one of the gaps in the book series.

I was left with 380 records of whom 69 (18.2%) became members in the 44 year period examined and 311 (81.8%) who disappeared. There are a number of uncertainties in this analysis.

- There are many reasons for attenders disappearing. The books of members and attenders do not given reasons for disappearance (except for occasional marginalia noting marriages or death) and therefore the data can only describe how long attenders attended in South AM, not why they ceased to do so.
- Attenders who left probably remained in the records for some time until Friends become certain they were not likely to return. Periods of first listing in the address to 'Gone' are therefore likely to be overestimated. Attenders may also have been coming to meeting for some time before formal listing.
- An attender could have started coming to meeting, ceased attending or become a member any time between the publications of consecutive address books.

The mean time between first appearing in the attender record of South Area Meeting and application for membership was  $4.0 \pm \sigma 3.1$  years (max. 14.8 years, minimum 1 year), which compares well with Rutherford's finding of 3.8 years. However, nearly fifteen years as an attender is a long time by any standard and hardly typical. In order to exclude outliers those who had spent more than the mean plus two standard deviations (i.e. > 10.2 years) as attenders were removed from the sample. The resulting more typical time before membership was  $3.5 \pm \sigma 2.2$  years (maximum 9.5 years, minimum 1 year). The nearest mid-point in the book series was 1989. Between 1968 and 1989, 43 attenders were accepted into

membership. The meantime before application and acceptance was  $3.6 \pm \sigma 2.3$  years and between 1992 (the next published book) and 2012, 22 attenders were accepted into membership with a mean time to application of  $3.4 \pm \sigma 2.1$  years. There is clearly no significant difference between the two means and there is too little data to explore further changes in the time between attendance and application, though it would be an interesting study.

Following the same process for disappearances as for those who became members, we have a sample of 311 individuals. The mean time between appearance and disappearance is  $5.4 \pm \sigma 4.4$  years (max. 27.2 years, min. 1 year). Again, excluding those who have spent more than mean + two standard deviations we arrive at a more typical mean of  $3.0 \pm \sigma 1.2$  years, just slightly less than the time spent by attenders who later apply for membership.

Both Heron and Rutherford asked about the belief backgrounds of their respective respondents. Unfortunately, the loss of Rutherford's coding tables means these particular findings can no longer be recovered. Heron also asked attenders how they came to Quaker meeting and the reasons for not applying for membership. The answers he obtained are instructive<sup>330</sup>. Heron found that 53.4% of attenders had attended a church before coming to meeting for worship while 46.6% had not. The two major reasons for first coming to meeting was contact with an existing member

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<sup>330</sup> Heron *Caring Commitment Conviction* 14-15, 27

or attender and the least reason was contact with a Quaker school.

<b>Unconnected</b>	<b>46.6%</b>
Anglican	29.8%
Methodist	8.3%
United Reformed	4.8%
Other	4.6%
Roman Catholic	3.9%
Baptist	2.0%
<b>Connected</b>	<b>53.4%</b>

**Table 11.1 Church adherence before attending meeting for worship**

Contact with member / attender	36.8%
Family	20.5%
Other	15.0%
Reading	8.5%
Advertisement	6.1%
Meeting House	5.9%
Peace Activity	4.4%
Quaker School	2.8%

**Table 11.2 First contact with Quakers**

However, if we total the two 'contact' categories we find that 57.3% of attenders were attracted through personal contact and only 17.2% from institutional contact. Heron's data on why attenders do not join the Religious Society of Friends (Table 11.3)<sup>331</sup> is also instructive.

Commitment Unnecessary	22.1%
Not good enough	15.0%
Problem with the Peace Testimony	14.1%
Too much diversity	12.1%
Other	10.2%
Never asked	9.0%
Membership Procedure	8.5%
No encouragement	8.2%

**Table 11.3 Reasons given for not applying for membership**

The largest minority offering a single reason for not joining feel that commitment is unnecessary while a quarter were affected by what might be termed 'institutional issues' (not being asked to join, membership

<sup>331</sup> Heron *Caring Commitment Conviction* 27

procedure or receiving no encouragement to join. The largest minority, just over 40%, felt they were not good enough, had problems with the peace testimony or with the diversity of Friends. Presumably if these issues (mostly theological or belief orientated) were addressed and more encouragement were given to attenders to join Heron's 'Recruitment Rate' would rise.

Possibly the only question of Rutherford's that can be compared with Heron (albeit with assumptions about coding) is whether members or attenders had previously attended another church and if so which<sup>332</sup>. Analysing Rutherford's responses to this question using the assumptions described reveals (Table 11.4):

Total coded answers	600		
Code 99 (assumed no response)	3		
Code 0 (assumed birthright)	82		
Remaining analysable answers	515		
Coded '1'	277	% of analysable answers	53.8%
Coded '2'	236	% of analysable answers	45.8%

**Table 11.4 Responses to Rutherford's question on adherence before attending meeting for worship**

Since each of the responses appears to be reasonable, we can have reasonable (but no more) confidence in the correctness of assumptions. Assuming that Rutherford coded 1 for previous attachment

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<sup>332</sup> The data from the question "*Did you come to Friends directly from another church or religious/meditational group/community?*" is encoded in four different ways: 0, 1, 2 and 99. Assuming that Rutherford followed standard practice and used 99 as a null or no-answer code and assuming that 0 was code for birthright members we are left with 1 or 2 meaning 'yes, I did come from another church or community' or 'no, I did not come from a another church or community'.

and 2 for no attachment then the outcome is remarkably consistent with Heron's finding of 20 years earlier (connected 53.4%, unconnected 46.6%). However, if Rutherford's codes were the obverse it would indicate a swing of about 7% toward attenders lacking any kind of previous connection with a religion<sup>333</sup>.

The possibility that new attenders were hurriedly added to meeting lists immediately after the 2009 decision by Yearly Meeting on same sex marriages demands further investigation. Again, with permission of the persons responsible for data protection and the help of Outreach section in Friends House, I abstracted over 21,000 postcodes from a database of individuals who had made enquiry about Quakers between the 4<sup>th</sup> of January 1999 and the 19<sup>th</sup> December 2009<sup>334</sup>. After eliminating invalid entries there remained 20,671 valid UK postcodes, which I then used to examine the pattern of enquiries.

If we plot the number of enquiries received each day against date, we obtain figure 11.6. There are two points of interest in this chart. The first is that a cursory examination might suggest a rising trend (lighter straight line) but the daily variability in volume of enquiries is so large (between 0 and 112) that the rise, if real, is not significant ( $r^2 < 0.04$ ). The

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<sup>333</sup> It is not possible to apply similar reasoning to Rutherford's other findings. Her follow on question to the above was 'If Yes, which?' The answers were encoded in 15 different ways (although only four totalled to significant responses and all the others – excluding '99' and '0' - totalled only 9 responses collectively. While tempting to correlate with Heron's categories in size order we cannot know with any degree of certainty the meaning of the coding.

<sup>334</sup> The help of Carmel Keogh, assistant in Quaker Life outreach section is gratefully acknowledged.

largest number of enquires (112) was received on the 27<sup>th</sup> May 2002.

Examination of *The Friend* weekly Quaker magazine for the month preceding does not offer any particular reasons why this should be.

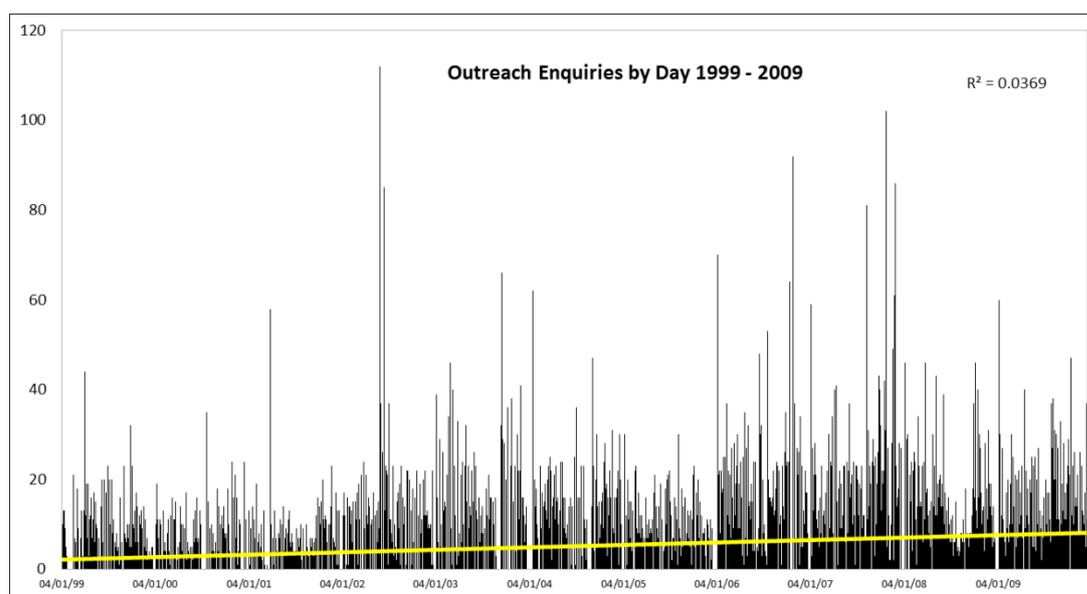


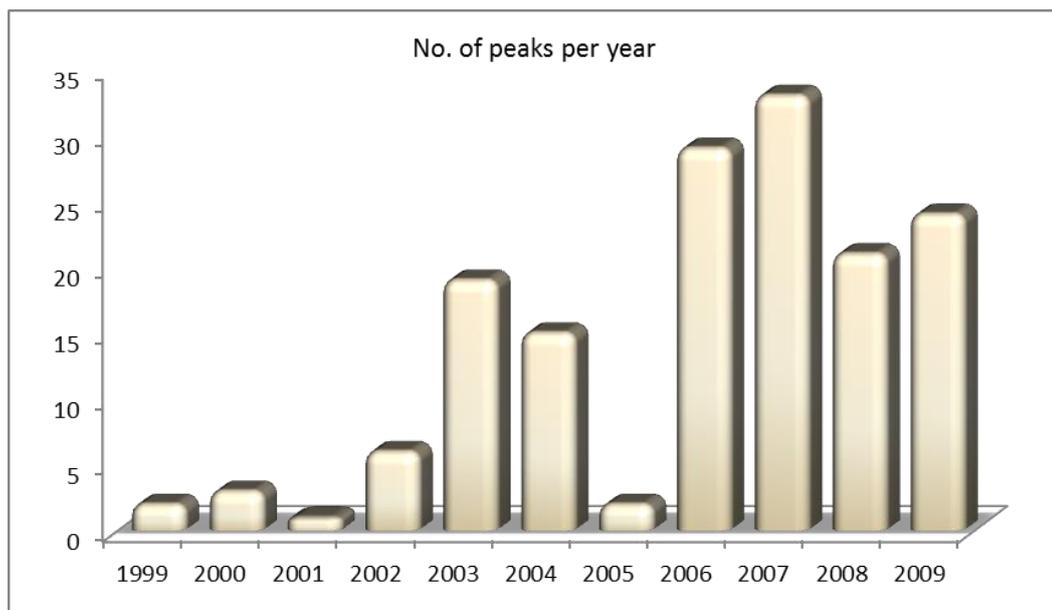
Figure 11.6 Outreach enquiries by day, 4<sup>th</sup> January 1999 to 19<sup>th</sup> December 2009

There are several exceptional peaks in the data. We can isolate them by examining only those events that are greater than the mean daily volume plus two standard deviations<sup>335</sup>. Doing so results in 155 events of mean size  $35.4 \pm \sigma 15.3$  enquiries. The number of such peak events has risen year on year (figure 11.7) in an interesting pattern. There is a clear rise with time, but a curious slump in 2005 followed by a consistently higher level of enquiries from 2006 onwards. The first Quaker Week (a national period of concentrated and coordinated outreach activity each autumn) occurred in 2007<sup>336</sup>. It is puzzling that the rise in enquiries began

<sup>335</sup> Assuming a normal distribution,  $2\sigma$  will exclude but 2.2% of the data

<sup>336</sup> <http://www.quaker.org.uk/news/quakers-mark-historic-peace-anniversary> accessed

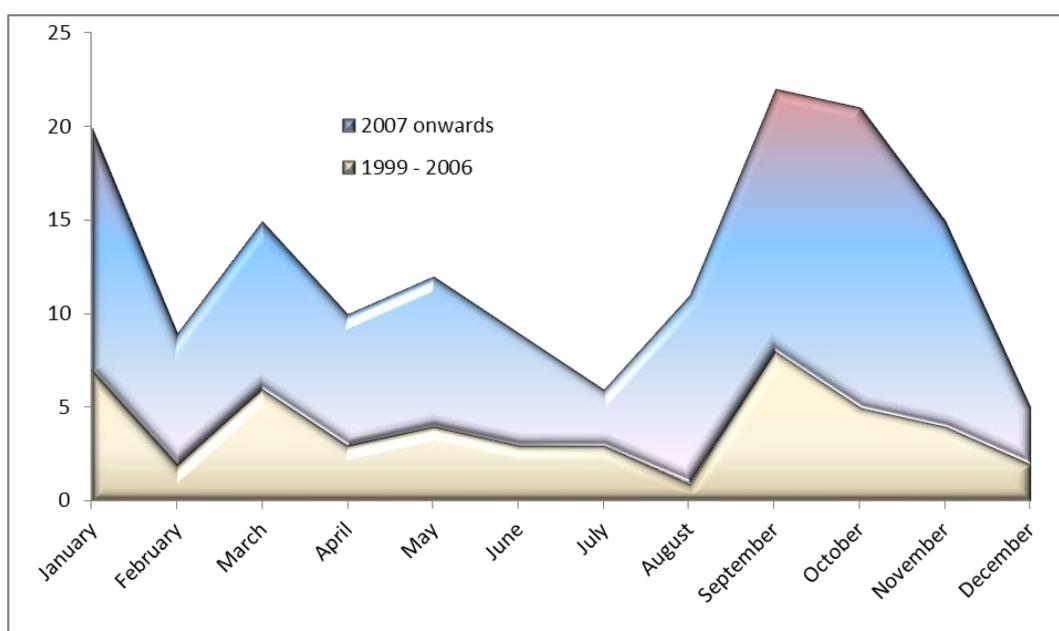
a year earlier, in 2006. If we examine the number of peak events, we find that 48 (31%) occurred between 1999 and 2005 while 107 (69%) occurred between 2006 and 2009. If we look in more detail at the number of such events by month we find the following (figure 11.8)



**Figure 11.7 Number of occasions annually that enquiries about Quakers exceeded the mean of all enquiries by  $2\sigma$  1999 - 2009**

We can see that while the *pattern* of enquiries – a peak in January and in March and another in September/October – is substantially unaltered the *volume* of enquiries increases significantly after the advent of Quaker Week in autumn 2007. One could expect overall volumes of enquiries to increase because of the ease of new technologies and the increasing availability of Area and Local meeting websites as well as the central organisation web site, yet as shown above the overall volumes of enquiries, if rising, are doing so only very slowly. One conclusion might be

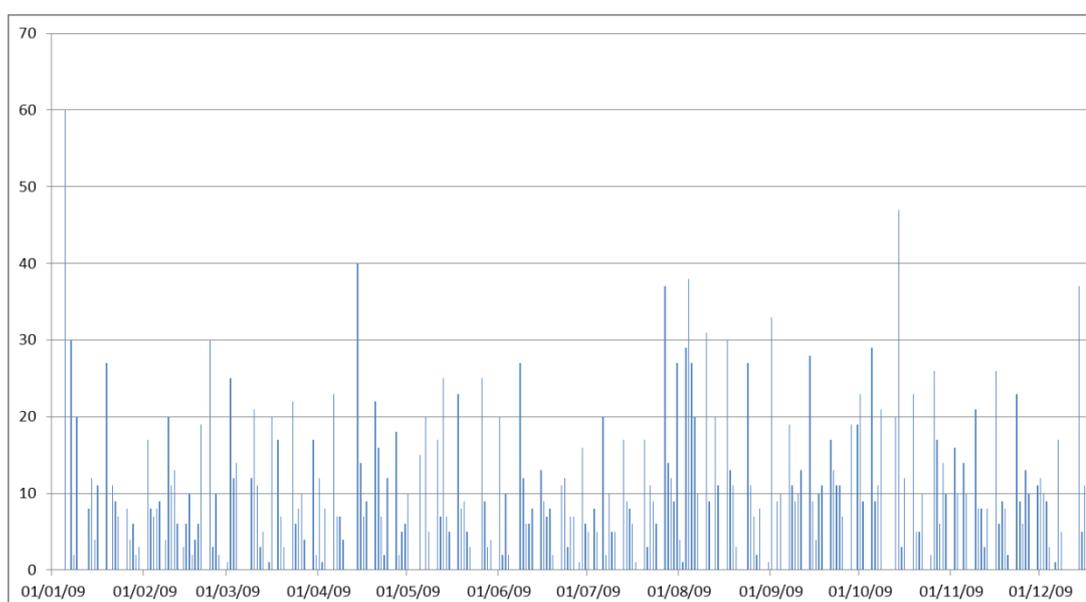
therefore that Quaker Week is prompting more people to make an enquiry about Quakers but that it is doing so partly because it is easier to do so. An investigation into methods of enquiry would be illuminating and whether a similar pattern of new enquiries exists for other churches and organisations.



**Figure 11.8 Peak numbers of enquiries before and after the start of Quaker Week**

We can now try to see if the 2009 decision on same sex marriages had an effect on the number of enquiries about Quakerism. If we look in detail at the numbers of daily enquiries in 2009, there seems to be little change throughout the year (figure 11.9); if anything, the latter half of the year appears to have been quieter than the beginning! In 2008 there were 2,630 enquiries while in 2009 there were 2,733 enquiries, a relatively small increase of 3.9%. The pattern of enquiries is, however, worth closer examination.

If we look at the period after the Yearly Meeting decision on same sex marriage as compared to the year before, we find that between July and September 2009 there were 559 enquiries as against 238 in the same period in 2008, an increase which more than accounts for the increase over the whole of the previous year.



**Figure 11.9 Daily enquiries to Quaker Life Outreach 2009**

There were 24 significant peaks ( $\geq \bar{x} + 2\sigma$ ) in 2009, of which 16 (66.7%) occurred in the second half of the year, 13 (54.2%) of which were during or after Yearly Meeting 2009. It is possible therefore that the decision on same sex marriage did result in a relatively small increase of between 100 and 300 enquiries to Quaker Life Outreach. However there are two main points to stress: 1) not all such enquiries will result in individuals attending a local meeting or investigating Quakers further and 2) many who wanted to know more about Friends may have by-passed the central offices of the Society of Friends and gone directly to the local

meeting. It can therefore only be coincidence that the number of 'new' attenders reported in the Tabular Statement in 2010 was 313, about that excess recorded by Friends House Outreach section.

There are a further two analyses possible with the postcode data., I was able to run the entire set of postcodes against, first, a map showing geographical origin of enquiry and then against a database of Indices of Multiple Deprivation indicating the social origin of enquiries<sup>337</sup>.

British postcodes consist of two parts: the first 'outward' set of characters codes for a particular city or region while the second 'inward' set of characters codes for a particular group of addresses<sup>338</sup>. Postcodes, in general, do not identify individual addresses and using appropriate software the postcode location can also be mapped on to census Enumeration Districts (EDs) of around 200 households each further masking individual locations<sup>339</sup>. The result is a map of all the enquiries received from postcodes located within an ED.

Approximately 21,000 enquiries spread over five years and the whole of Britain means that the distribution is relatively sparse and mapping by year doesn't give very much more information than that most come from major population centres. All the enquiries are therefore shown on a single composite map (figure 11.10) which shows a number of

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<sup>337</sup> With the help of Dr Phil Jones Senior Lecturer in in Cultural Geography, University of Birmingham School of Geography, Earth and Environmental Sciences

<sup>338</sup> <http://postalheritage.wordpress.com/2010/11/05/designing-the-postcode-a-complex-history-for-a-simple-purpose/> accessed 13/04/2013

<sup>339</sup> <http://www.ons.gov.uk/ons/guide-method/geography/beginner-s-guide/census/enumeration-districts--eds-/index.html> accessed 13/04/2013

interesting features. First, it is clear that interest in Quakers is quite widely spread. The only areas which provided too few enquiries to map have very low population density, for example the west and north of Scotland and the moorlands of northern England. Edinburgh, Tyneside, Liverpool and London are visible as areas of relatively high interest. London is a particular case represented as a doughnut shape with relatively few enquiries arising from the centre and rather more from the surrounding suburbs. Academia is also well represented; Oxford, Cambridge, Lancaster and Leeds can all be identified. There are, however, surprises. There appears to be a small concentration of enquiries around Falmouth and rather more from Aberystwyth (also an academic location but not as large as the others). Indeed the latter is more obvious than Cardiff or Swansea. Worcester, just to the west of Aberystwyth seems to be a denser locality for enquiries than either Birmingham<sup>340</sup> or Wolverhampton. In Scotland Aberdeen, Elgin, Stirling and Perth are clearly delineated, while Glasgow is curious by its absence. Investigation of these areas would be most fruitful, though it is likely that simply one or more Friends with a greater than usual interest in outreach can account for the differences.

The *Indices of Multiple Deprivation* (IMD) is a central government database that measures deprivation across England according to defined

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<sup>340</sup> It is worth noting that both Birmingham and London are somewhat special cases. Both are so well endowed with meeting houses that a substantial number of enquires may be made locally and not through Friends House.

criteria. Methodology and results are published on the internet<sup>341</sup>. Thirty-eight different parameters are measured to provide a deprivation score for each of 32,000 'Lower Super Output Areas' (LSOA) of around 1,500 people each. . It does not necessarily follow that a postcode mapped to a relatively deprived area represents a deprived household. Within any LSOA there may be smaller areas of relative deprivation or affluence. This is particularly true for large conurbations such as London where affluence and poverty can be separated by a few metres of pavement.

Mapping all English postcodes on to the IMD gives figure 11.11, in which red dots represent the most and green dots the least deprived areas. While significant numbers of enquiries come from the least deprived areas , for instance, from the counties around London, significant numbers come from relatively deprived areas in the Northeast, Northwest, Central England and inner London. Comparing the maps in figures 11.10 and 11.11 shows that most areas occur on both maps indicating that a high proportion of enquiries come from areas of relative deprivation that are also major population centres. Birmingham is an exception, appearing on the map of deprivation but not on the map of geographical distribution because of the relatively few enquiries originating there. It is interesting, though, that outreach activity and knowledge of Quakerism is so geographically and socially widespread. It would be instructive to re-run this exercise with a greater volume of data enabling better precision.

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<sup>341</sup> See for example <https://www.gov.uk/government/organisations/department-for-communities-and-local-government/series/english-indices-of-deprivation>, which covers the indices for England (accessed 13/4/2013).

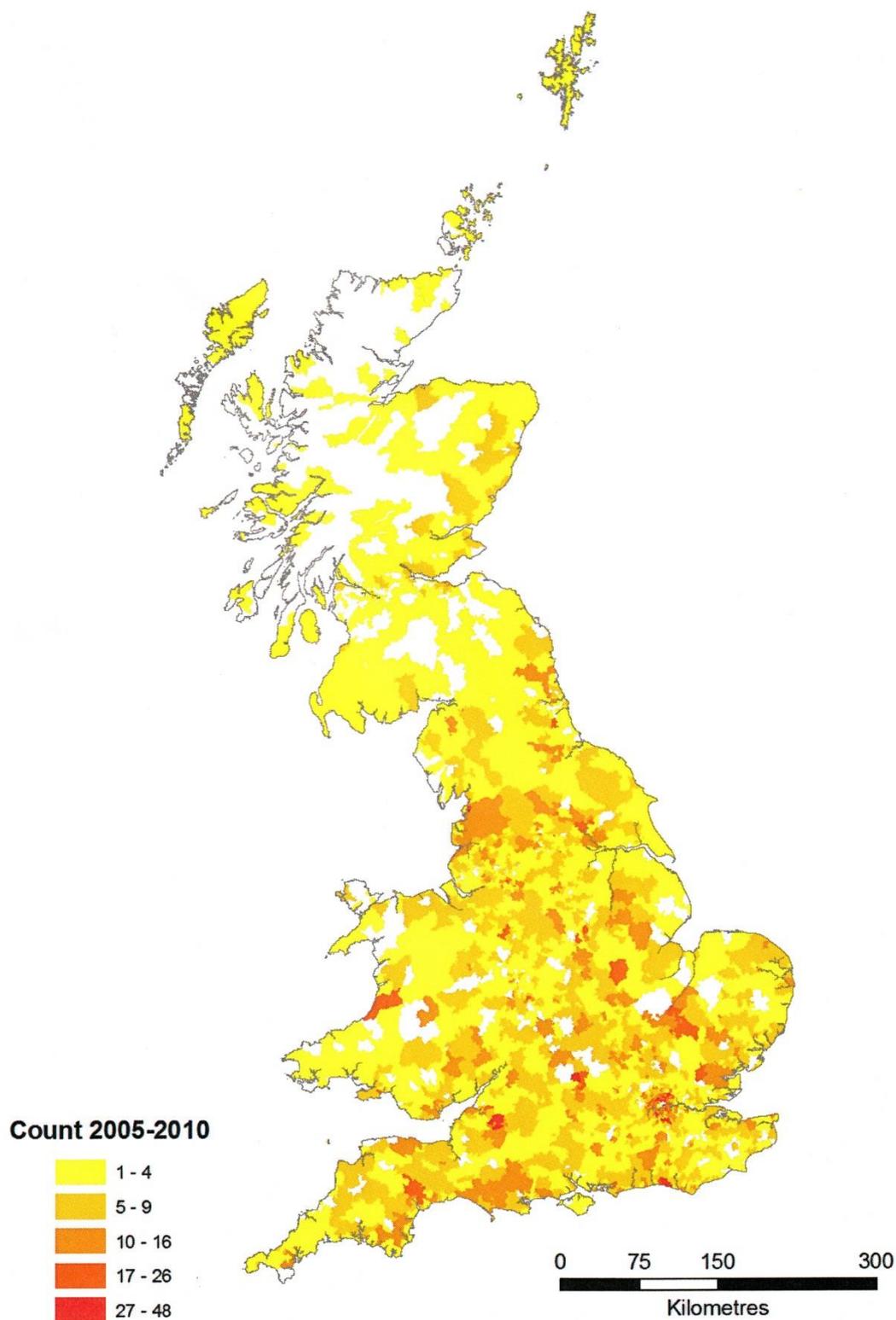
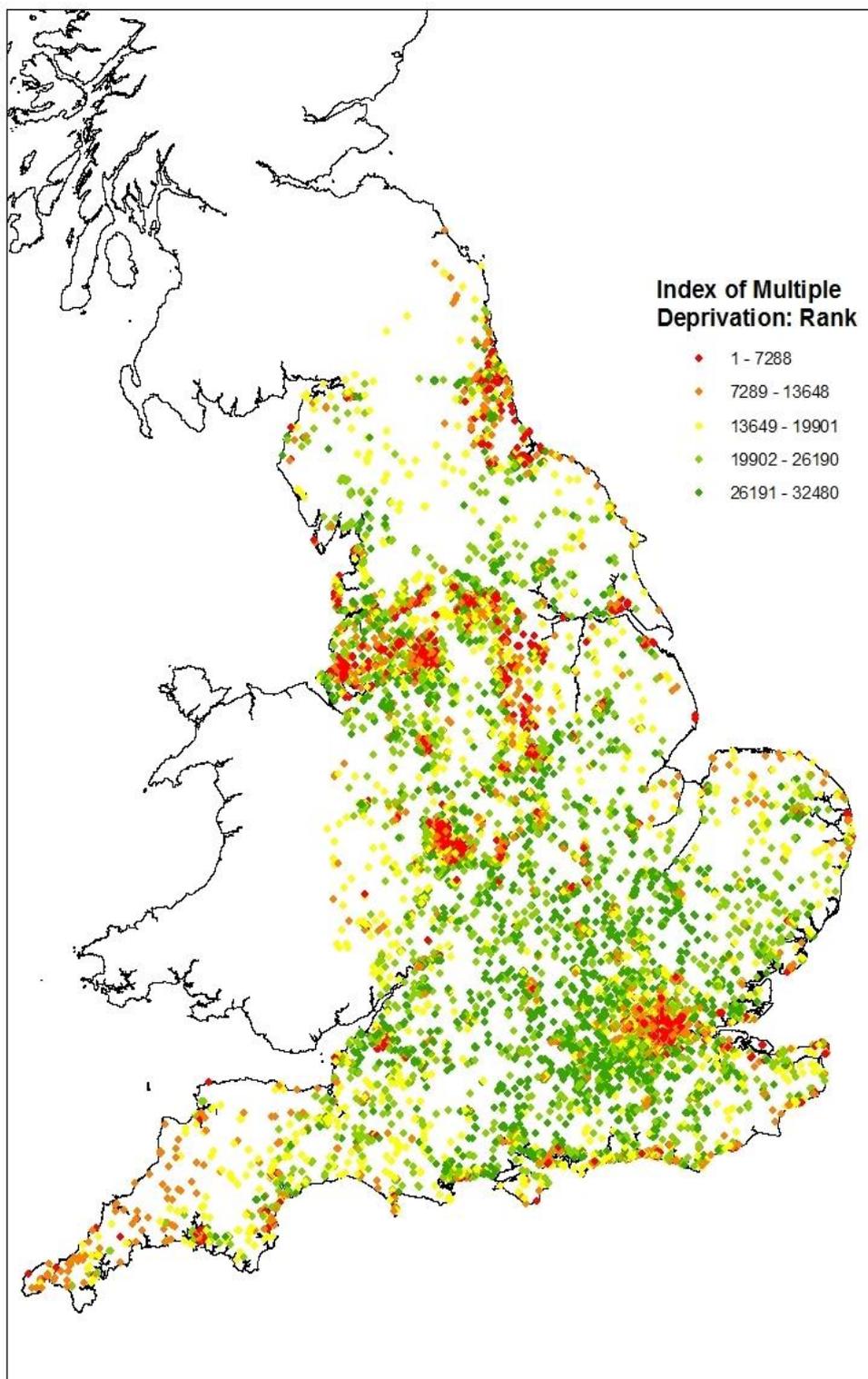


Figure 11.10 Geographical distribution of outreach enquiries 2005 to 2010

Chapter 11. Attenders and Enquirers: Heron's and Rutherford's Findings Re-examined and Extended



**Figure 11.11 Enquiries from English postcodes mapped against Indices of Multiple Deprivation**

## **Conclusions**

Heron found that 44.9% of his attender respondents were aged between 30 and 49 years old, that 28.3% were aged over 60, and that only 3% of attenders applied for membership annually, well below replacement level. Over  $\frac{2}{3}$  of Heron's respondents attended for 3 years or more. Rutherford's 2003 study of almost 600 members and attenders showed members had attended for approximately 3.8 years before applying for membership at a mean age of 36. Although Heron was measuring attenders and Rutherford attenders and members, their figures are in close agreement. They suggest that serious attenders (i.e. those with more than a passing interest) remain associated with the Religious Society of Friends for lengthy periods but that relatively small numbers eventually apply for membership and only after three years or more attendance. However even serious attenders and members are not particularly likely to be present at any given meeting for worship. Heron estimated that only 39% of members and 36% of attenders worshipped regularly and my *Present and Prevented* study supported this contention, finding that between 32.3% and 40.8% of members and 28.6% and 35.5% of attenders were likely to be present at any meeting for worship. Whether this data suggests that belonging is more important than worship is an intriguing question and is worth exploring further.

Heron's 'recruitment index', shows a falling likelihood of attenders making application for membership and it may be that simply feeling part

of the group is more important than formal recognition through membership. Heron asked 412 attenders to 'List the things about Quakers and the Quaker position and approach, which explain why you continue to attend Quaker Meeting' in ranked first, second and third order. There were 1,109 responses. Heron grouped these into nine broad categories. 'Accepting' and 'tolerant' were the first and second most popular reasons with 'worship' only third. 'Pacifism' and 'Social/Political' in a sense reflective of the traditional religious testimonies of Friends languished in 4<sup>th</sup> and 6<sup>th</sup> place respectively. The full range of answers is given in Table 11.5<sup>342</sup>.

Worship	Forms	Silence	No Creed	Accepting	Tolerant	Pacifism	Meditation	Social / Political
16.2%	5.3%	9.2%	5.0%	25.4%	17.4%	9.3%	3.5%	6.2%
3	7	5	8	1	2	4	9	6

**Table 11.5 Response to "List the things about Quakers and the Quaker Position and approach, which explain why you continue to attend Quaker Meeting"**

This certainly suggests that tolerant acceptance is the key to belonging. If, previously, a sense of belonging was best obtained by application for membership, then as the number of attenders rose in proportion to members, it is less likely that belonging will only or primarily be found through membership. It is indeed the case that the data shows that the higher density of attenders in a meeting the less likely any are to apply for membership.

<sup>342</sup> Heron *Caring Commitment Conviction* 25

In Chapter 7 of his doctoral thesis Dandelion states<sup>343</sup>

... because theological belief in the Quaker Group, is limited in its influence ... theology is individualised within the group and marginalised

If theological belief truly is marginalised within the Quaker group, there must be other forces at work holding the group together and the tolerant acceptance of idiosyncratic belief systems may be one such. This would go much of the way to explaining why a higher density of attenders should result in fewer attenders joining since validation and acceptance can be given to other attenders without the formal requirement of membership: "I belong" becomes a sufficient group identifier without the more formal "I am a member". This is not quite the same as 'belonging without belief'<sup>344</sup>, it is more belonging with particular, often unstated, personal beliefs (which may include 'unbelief').

Rutherford and Heron both showed that attenders who do apply for membership takes some time to do so. Rutherford's study showed that very close to 50% take longer than four years to do so while Heron found that 45% did so. My repeat study of South Area Meeting found that the mean time to application for membership was  $4.0 \pm \sigma 3.1$  years but excluding the extreme outliers of those who spent decades as attenders a more usual period was  $3.5 \pm \sigma 2.2$  years. They cannot, however, be said to act in haste, three to four years to come to a decision on formal

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<sup>343</sup> Pink Dandelion *A Sociological Analysis of the Theology of Quakers* 283 - 335

<sup>344</sup> Rob Warner *Secularisation and its Discontents* 50

commitment clearly suggests a seriousness of approach. Those who do not apply for membership give a variety of reasons, mostly non-theological in nature: commitment unnecessary (22.1%), never asked (9%), no encouragement (8.2%).

Formal outreach seems to have limited effect. There seems to have been something of an increase after the advent of Quaker Week and the decision on same sex marriages but not to any great extent. Heron found that only 17.2% of attenders had come from institutional contact while 53% came from personal contact. Certainly mapping the post-codes of enquiries to Friends House shows some unusual local patterns. We cannot know what prompts individuals to contact the central organisation of the Society but if it were because of national activity one would expect the distribution to more closely follow population density. It would be instructive to identify some localities and discover whether the meeting(s) or individuals in the area had been particularly active.

**Chapter 12: Conclusions**

**CHAPTER 12**

**CONCLUSIONS**

**Introduction**

In this thesis I have attempted to review extant research and statistics on membership and attender-ship of the Society of Friends in Britain, together with attendance at meetings. I have also conducted original research on participation in Quaker structures through my *Present and Prevented* questionnaire (chapters 5 and 10) and in analysing the origins of enquiries about Quakerism by mapping postcodes extracted from the enquiries database of the Outreach section of Quaker Life in Friends House, London (chapter 11). In the same chapter I analyse the careers of attenders by repeating Heron's study of the longevity and outcome of attenders in Quaker meetings using an anonymised 'South Area Meeting'.

In these conclusions I:

1. Reconstruct as far as possible a pattern of membership from the earliest days of Friends
2. Consider whether the recent decline in Quakerism is a product of secularisation and provide reasons why secularisation theory is problematic concerning The Society of Friends. I compare membership of The Society of Friends in Britain with a number of other churches to show that patterns of belonging are different.
3. Introduce a model of social change developed by the Movement for a New Society from campaigning experience in the US Civil Rights and

## **Chapter 12: Conclusions**

anti-Vietnam War campaigns and show that it can be a useful tool for visualising the process of change in the Society of Friends

4. Draw final conclusions from the three sections above and make suggestions for further research

In section 1 I examined data on the membership, and where possible, attendance, of the Society of Friends beginning with the earliest survey yet uncovered (of York Monthly Meeting), conducted by Samuel Tuke in the early 19<sup>th</sup> century (chapter 2). I continue with statistics presented by John Thurnham in the mid-19<sup>th</sup> century (chapter 3) and then the Tabular Statement from 1861 to 2012 in chapter 4. The section concludes with chapter 5 on *Present and Prevented* (referred to above).

In section 2, I examined data on attendance at meeting. The earliest surveys described are the religious census of 1851 (chapter 6) and the British Weekly census of 1886 (chapter 7). In chapter 8, I describe and analyse the Mudie-Smith religious census of London of 1902 to 1903 and in chapter 9 the Quaker attendance surveys of 1904, 1909 and 1914. Being initially interested only in attendance and needing to draw limits to this study, I have not analysed attendees as a proportion of total adherence from 1909 and 1914, though this would be an interesting piece of work in itself. In chapter 10 I analyse *Present and Prevented* as mentioned and in chapter 11 extend and reanalyse previous studies by Heron and Rutherford.

In this section I have summarised statistical information on adherence to Quakerism in Britain. Clearly, it is not comprehensive. There are many

## **Chapter 12: Conclusions**

studies of Quaker statistics explored fully elsewhere, and there are indications of yet more that cannot be currently located. For example I have noted indications of a study of mortality among Quakers in 1832, which is the earliest comprehensive set of data I have found. There is, of course, a distinction between recorded numbers, actual numbers (which will include some not yet entered in official lists as well as those who have), and active participants in the church. The latter are always likely to be fewer than the former.

### **Members and Attenders**

Previously quoted research by myself and others<sup>345</sup> have suggested that the Society of Friends in Britain is in decline, perhaps terminally so, while other research indicates that the picture is mixed<sup>346</sup>. What is clear is that much of the available data is at best partial. In particular, the Tabular Statement as a simple head count of members and attenders in Area Meetings includes individuals whose adherence is nominal and excludes recent, perhaps more active, adherents who have not been attending long enough to be included or who have been accepted into membership between statements. Membership, anyway, seems to be an increasingly rare option for adherents. In my introduction, I quoted Heron's finding from a 1985 study of 562 attenders that in a 6-year period only 9% became members, 37% leave and 54% remain as attenders. Restated numerically 51 apply for

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<sup>345</sup> Bill Chadkirk *Will the Last (Woman) Friend to Leave*; Pink-Dandelion and Charles Stroud *A New Kind of End Time Prophecy* and Alastair Heron *The Future of British Quakers*

<sup>346</sup> Paul Burton *Keeping the Light Shining*

## **Chapter 12: Conclusions**

membership, 208 leave, and 303 remain. Expressed alternatively, in a 6-year period 91% of people who encounter Quakerism decide that the religion as a whole or membership in particular is not for them. This also means that simply to replace lost members it is necessary to convince 10 times as many people to try Quakerism for 6 years. Since the loss of members from all causes in 2011 was 229<sup>347</sup>, the Society of Friends needed to attract 2,290 new attendees. Tabular Statement statistics clearly show that this did not happen.

Heron followed up his 1985 study with one in 1992 that showed that most applicants for membership were aged 50 or older, 25% described themselves as atheist or agnostic and only half reported involvement in local meeting business, one-third in area business and less than one-third felt any responsibility for the central work of the Society of Friends. This data suggests very strongly that the attraction of Quakerism consists less in joining a church than in affinity to a Local Meeting, which has clear implications for the constitution and governance of the Society of Friends in Britain. In chapter 4, I showed that losses from the Society of Friends from all causes are greater than gains through applications for membership leading to a shrinking and ageing membership. One of the problems facing the Society is a rising mean age, and increasing death rate among elderly members (figure 4.8).

Thurnham, in *Statistics of Insanity*, estimates membership to have

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<sup>347</sup> Tabular Statement 2011 published at Britain Yearly Meeting May 2012

Chapter 12: Conclusions

been 17,900 in 1830<sup>348</sup>. Thurnham also shows that in 1840, Friends in Britain totalled 16,425 members (Table 3.1) a decline of around 1,500 members. The Tabular Statement records a minimum of 13,755 members in 1864. However, if we add Thurnham's figures to the Tabular Statement data from 1861 to 1895 we can create figure 12.1

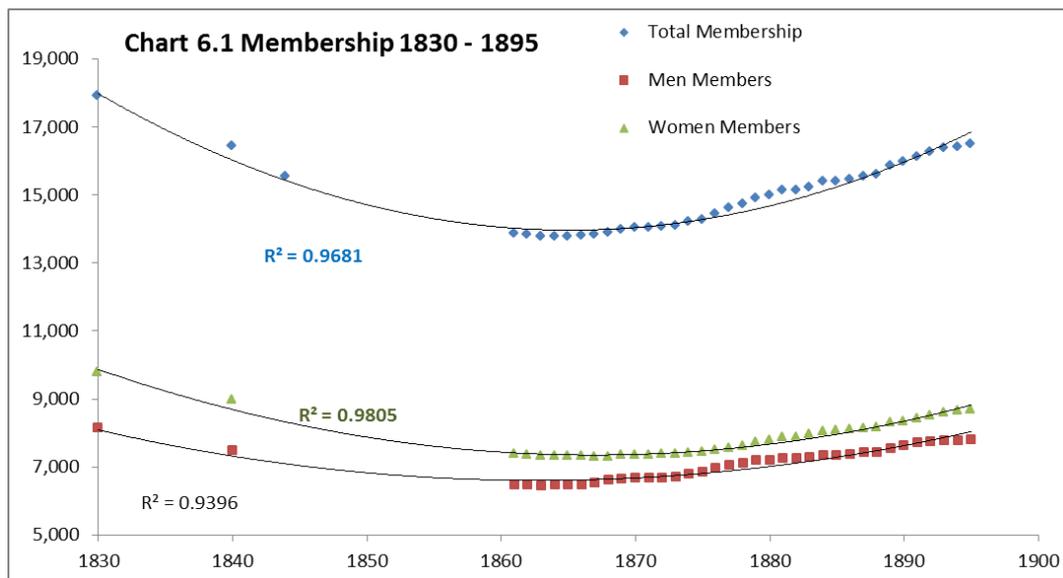


Figure 12.1 Membership 1830 – 1895: Thurnham data and Tabular Statement

The trend lines are second order polynomial equations<sup>349</sup> and although a polynomial can be derived to fit almost any curve simply by increasing its order, the fit in only a second order equation is very close indeed ( $0.94 < r^2 < 0.98$ ) suggesting a consistency of trend. Both the equation and the closeness of fit are very similar to that derived by Chadkirk<sup>350</sup> for the decline in membership from 1990 onwards. Such close similarity suggests the possibility of analogous (but not identical)

<sup>348</sup> John Thurnham *The Statistics of Insanity* 174

<sup>349</sup> Of the form  $y = ax^2 - bx + c$

<sup>350</sup> Bill Chadkirk *Will the Last (Woman) Friend to Leave*

## **Chapter 12: Conclusions**

mechanisms at work within the Society of Friends in both periods. Given Rowntree's observations about the lack of young people in 1859<sup>351</sup> and the ageing of membership in the late 20<sup>th</sup> and early 21<sup>st</sup> century there may be demographic factors at work which would be worthy of future research.

In Chapter 5, I described the membership data from *Present and Prevented*. One expected finding, but nevertheless interesting, is that meetings are highly positively skewed in terms of size of congregation, that is there are many small meetings and a few large (the skewed nature of distribution is shown in figure 5.1). The skew is such that the mean size of meeting is inaccurately inflated as a measure of a 'typical' meeting. Someone attending meeting for worship for a first time is much more likely to stumble across one of the majority of small meetings than one of the larger meetings. The most appropriate measure of size in this instance is the median: whereas the mean size of meetings varied between just over 48 persons (members, attenders and children) in 2006 to just under 52 persons in 2010, the median size varied between 35 and 39 persons (Table 5.3). The modal mean (the most common size) of meetings was only 11 to 20 individuals with just over 30 meetings consisting of fewer than 10 individuals.

Median adult membership varied between 20 in 2006 and 22 in 2010. However, as noted this figure includes those who rarely if ever attend or participate in meeting. The number of active members is, therefore, much lower than a simple head count would suggest. Further data is given in

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<sup>351</sup> John Stephenson Rowntree *Quakerism, Past and Present*

## **Chapter 12: Conclusions**

Chapter 10 *Present and Prevented: Meeting for Worship*. The median number of attenders varied between 11 and 14 over the period of the study (subject to the same caveats as for members). The number of members in meetings therefore still significantly exceeds that of attenders.

Attempts were made in *Present and Prevented* to uncover differences between urban, semi-urban and rural meetings<sup>352</sup>. The size of meeting declined from the largest in urban areas, through semi-urban to the smallest in rural areas, though interestingly there was weak evidence of growth in rural meetings even though the sample was small (60 meetings in 2006 and 46 in 2010). In 2006, the median membership of rural meetings was 5 men and 8 women, and in 2010, 6 men and 10 women. Attenders varied similarly. In 2006, the median for attenders in rural meetings was 3 men and 5 women and in 2010, 5 men and 8 women (Table 5.6).

In brief, therefore, this data presents a picture of a Society of Friends that has grown at times and decreased at other times, but with sufficient similarity in the pattern of change in the mid-19<sup>th</sup> and late 20<sup>th</sup> centuries to raise at least the possibility of analogous, and probably internal, processes at work. There is also a dominance of small worshipping groups, containing few children and vulnerable to further decline. Nevertheless, the data contains weak evidence suggestive of growth in some rural meetings.

## **2 Meeting for Worship**

Table 12.1 summarises the mean size of Meeting for Worship for each

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<sup>352</sup> Meetings were guided as to the meanings of the terms but were left to self-identify the category into which they fitted.

Chapter 12: Conclusions

year in which the data is available using the mean average rather than median<sup>353</sup>.

	1851	1886	1903	1904	1909	1914	2006	2008	2010
Mean	39.2	66.4	48.7	32.4	31.0	24.3	17.8	15.4	16.5
+ / - $\sigma$	61.0	50.1	67.5	41.5	41.0	25.1	12.3	11.3	12

Table 12.1 Median Size of meeting for worship since 1851

Attendance at Meeting for Worship has apparently declined by about half since 1855, though the statistics in the intervening period are by no means as consistent as this statement suggests. Indeed, when considering the median attendance the decline appears to be about  $\frac{1}{5}$ .

Figure 12.2 illustrates the data graphically.

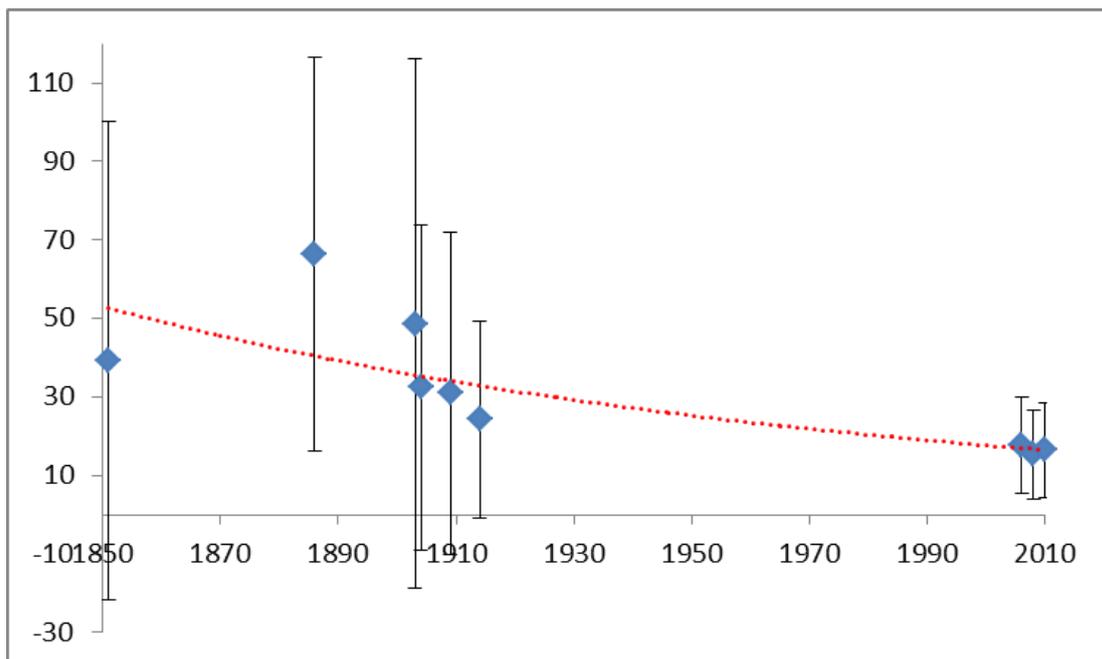


Figure 12.2 Mean size and deviation of morning meeting for worship against year of census

The red dotted line is indicative of the decline, which on cursory

<sup>353</sup> I have used the mean in this case because some surveys are more limited in extent than others, and as a consequence the deviation around the mean varies. The inaccuracies shown by the standard deviation around each mean should be born in mind when interpreting the data

## Chapter 12: Conclusions

inspection may be levelling out. However, there is a gap of 92 years between 1914 and 2006 and further data is required before a pattern becomes clear, especially since the deviation around the mean is likely to be of the same order as that in 1914 and 2006.

For four surveys I have data enabling calculation of the percentages of members and attenders at morning Meeting for Worship. In 1904, 46.5% of available members at attenders were present. The number might have been higher but for afternoon Meeting for Worship at which a further 32.2% were present. By the time of *Present and Prevented*, only about 38%<sup>354</sup> were present. Again, we have nothing between 1904 and 2006 but it appears as though the decline is real and due in a large part to proportionally fewer members and attenders at worship.

We can also use the data from 1904 and *Present and Prevented* to examine the relationship between the size of Meeting for Worship and the size of the meeting as a whole. Figure 12.3 is a scatter-gram of size of Meeting for Worship against size of meeting and is essentially the same as figure 10.2 with the addition of 1904. The data sets contained between 318 points (1904) and 367 points (2006) and are hence of significant size.

Note, first, that the scatter for 1904 is wider, and the trend line is longer, than for the *Present and Prevented* data. The largest meeting in 1904 was composed of 567 individuals and the largest meeting for worship was 396, while the largest meeting in *Present and Prevented* was in 2008 at 301 and the largest meeting for worship was in 2010 at which 94 were present.

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<sup>354</sup> Mean average of all three surveys

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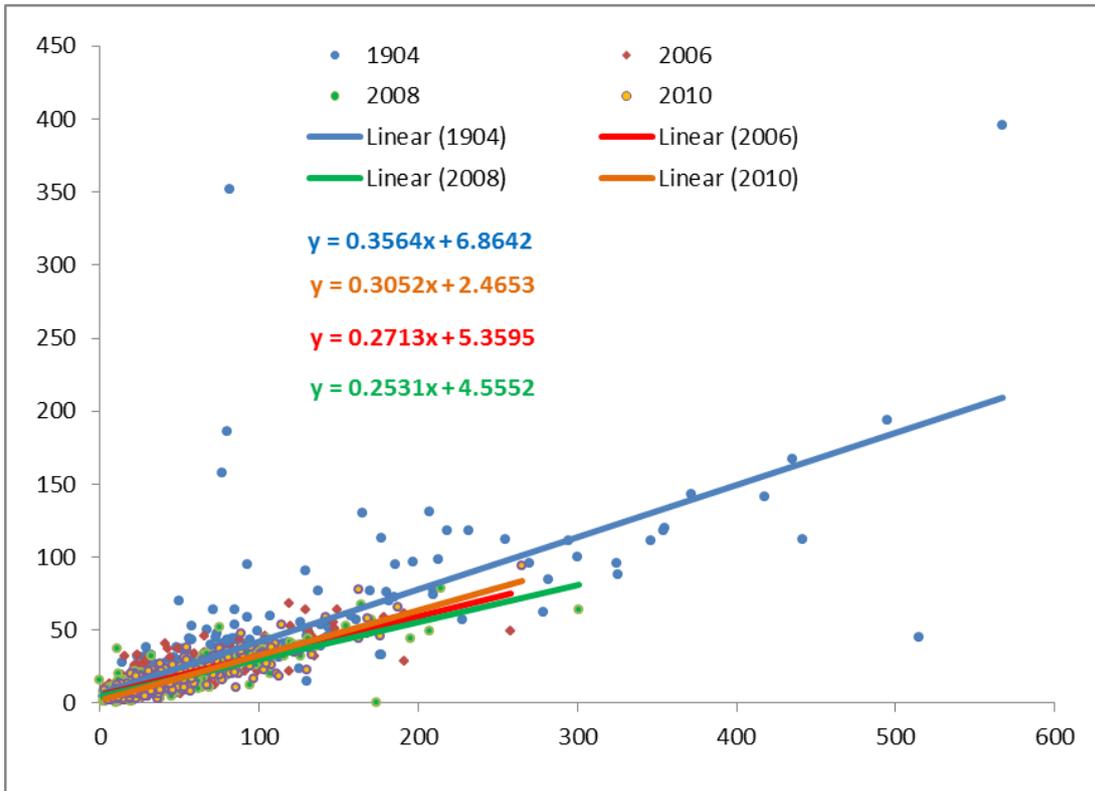


Figure 12.3 Members and attenders at meeting for worship against members and attenders associated with meeting

Note also that the gradient to the linear best-fit lines is less than one in all cases demonstrating that it takes more than one person in a meeting to achieve one extra at Meeting for Worship. We can calculate how many extra by taking the inverse of the gradient, table 12.2:

	1904	2006	2008	2010
<b>Gradient</b>	0.36	0.27	0.25	0.30
<b>Inverse</b>	2.8	3.7	4.0	3.3

Table 12.2 Inverse of gradient to linear fit of attendance at meeting for worship: Number of extra adherents required to obtain one extra person at Meeting for Worship

The number of extra adherents required to obtain one extra person at Meeting for Worship has risen from 2.8 in 1904 to between 3.3 and 4.0 in 2006. Further examination of the 1909 and 1914 surveys may reveal

## **Chapter 12: Conclusions**

sufficient information to extend this finding.

In chapter 11 I examine evidence on attenders and recruitment, showing in figure 11.2 that the 'recruitment rate' as defined by Heron<sup>355</sup> has in general terms fallen by about  $\frac{1}{2}$  since 1963 while the number of attenders in meeting as a percentage of all adult adherents has almost doubled. I show by extrapolation that consequently the likelihood of attenders applying for membership will cease once they reach about 41% of adherents. I suggest that this may be because while attenders are in a small minority there is a social pressure to demonstrate belonging by joining, pressures no longer there as attenders approach parity with members. Data from Heron and Rutherford shows that almost half of those beginning to attend the Society of Friends are 'unchurched' in the sense that they come from non-connected backgrounds, take between 3 and 4 years to decide to join as members (and only  $\frac{1}{5}$  ever do so). To illustrate what this means for the Society of Friends we can take the Tabular Statement for 2011, when there were 14,031 members. In 2012, there were 13,863 members, a decline of 168. Since only  $\frac{1}{5}$  of attenders apply for membership, mere replacement would require a cohort of 840 individuals from which the applicants come. Since 80% of attenders simply disappear these 840 would have to come from an intake of 4,200, which would have had to come into the Society in 2008 or 2009. In fact, between 2007 and 2008 the number of attenders fell by 116 and between 2008 and 2009 there was a rise of 313, a net gain of only 197 or only 5% of the number required for steady-state membership. In order to *grow* meeting

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<sup>355</sup> Alastair Heron *Caring, Conviction and Commitment*

**Chapter 12: Conclusions**

for worship rather than simply replace lost members, between 12,000 and 16,000 new adherents would have been required.

Clearly, the Society of Friends is neither recruiting sufficient members nor attracting sufficient attenders to make a significant impact on either decline or demographics. Yet from Heron’s data and the analysis of postcodes of enquiries to Quaker Life outreach it seems there is only limited response to centrally organised events such as Quaker Week, while the publicity surrounding the decision on acceptance of same sex marriage at Yearly Meeting in 2009 had a temporary effect only. However, mapping the postcodes of enquirers suggests quite widespread interest in the Society of Friends with a few ‘hotspots’ from which more enquiries come.

We can use the data from the various surveys to examine the distribution of meeting size, Table 12.3.

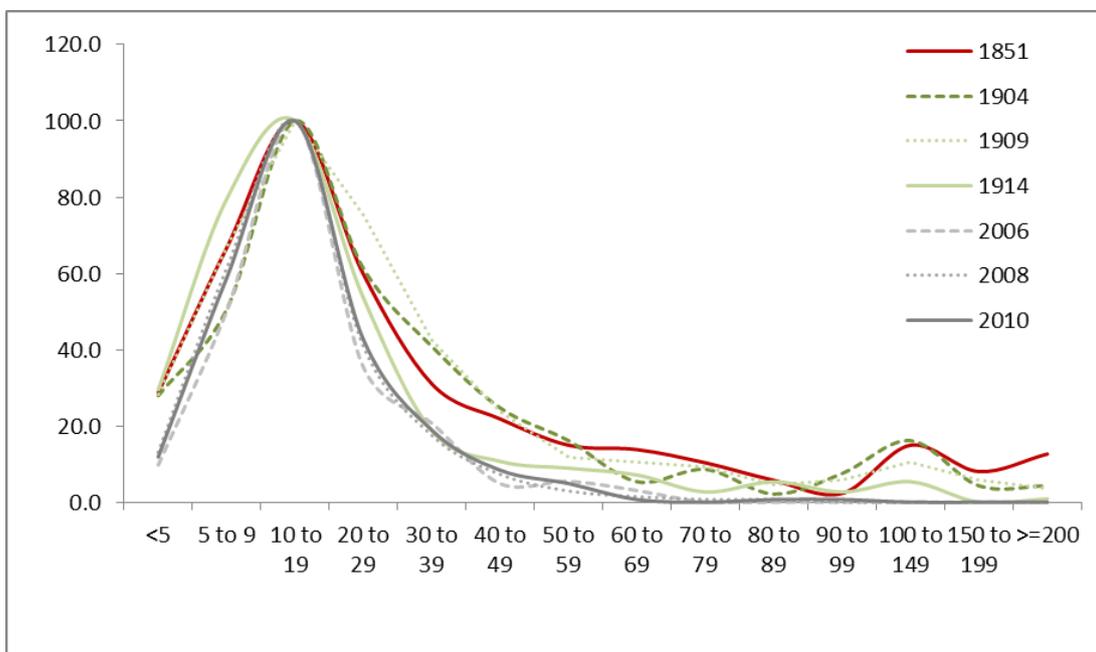
	<b>1851</b>	<b>1904</b>	<b>1909</b>	<b>1914</b>	<b>2006</b>	<b>2008</b>	<b>2010</b>
<b>&lt;5</b>	25	26	24	33	16	18	17
<b>5 to 9</b>	58	47	57	89	82	84	84
<b>10 to 19</b>	87	93	85	112	164	137	143
<b>20 to 29</b>	52	57	64	60	58	56	61
<b>30 to 39</b>	27	38	36	21	34	24	27
<b>40 to 49</b>	19	23	20	12	8	10	12
<b>50 to 59</b>	13	15	10	10	9	4	7
<b>60 to 69</b>	12	5	9	8	5	2	1
<b>70 to 79</b>	9	8	8	3	0	1	0
<b>80 to 89</b>	5	2	4	6	0	1	1
<b>90 to 99</b>	2	7	5	3	0	0	1
<b>100 to 149</b>	13	15	9	6	0	0	0
<b>150 to 199</b>	7	4	5	0	0	0	0
<b>&gt;=200</b>	11	4	3	1	0	0	0

**Table 12.3 Distribution of size of morning Meeting for Worship by year**

The distribution is interesting and it is again unfortunate that data

**Chapter 12: Conclusions**

between 1914 and 2006 is unavailable. Given the positive skew and a smooth decline in overall numbers one would expect the peak (that is the maximum number of meetings of a given size) to move down scale and to broaden, since the larger meetings would decline less rapidly than the smaller. That, however, is not the case as can be seen more clearly in Figure 12.4 in which the peak numbers have been normalised to an arbitrary 100 to show the effect more clearly.



**Figure 12.4 Distribution of size of morning meeting for worship by Year**

The peak of meeting size, 10 to 19 persons, has remained constant and has narrowed with time. What this suggests is that meetings of this size have the longest persistence. Consider a ‘supersize’ meeting of over 100 persons. It can shrink considerably without experiencing much in the way of difficulties. The only effect will be to slip down the distribution league to become moderately large. Table 12.3 shows that the number of meetings of 100 or more has reduced from 31 in 1851 to 23 in 1904, 17 in 1909, 7 in

## **Chapter 12: Conclusions**

1914 and none in 2006 onwards..

Now consider the moderately large meeting. These meetings are more numerous and decline toward a 'normal' size of meeting. They therefore tend to increase the numbers of this size. Again from Table 12.3, the number of 'normal' meetings has increased from 87 in 1851 to 93 in 1904, declining slightly in 1909 to 85. before rising to 164 in 2006, declining slightly again in 2008 to 137 and rising again in 2010 to 143..

Now consider the smallest meetings. One would expect that their numbers would rise as normal sized meetings also declined and this has indeed happened for those slightly smaller than 'normal', but the very smallest meetings are also the most vulnerable. One expects a certain amount of 'churn' as some grow and others close or merge but in fact, the numbers in this category seem to have halved between 1914 and 2006 though it would seem from *Present and Prevented* that there is currently little consideration of closure. Thus as the large meetings decline toward a normal or typical value, smaller meetings either close, or merge and tend toward normal, maintaining the persistence of the peak in around 10 – 19 adult individuals.

### **Children at Meeting for Worship**

We only have data on children in meeting from *Present and Prevented*, but what it shows is curious. The data is summarised in Table 10.8 but some bears repeating here. In 2006, 220 of 390 (56.4%) meetings reported holding children's classes with 1,867 children in attendance. In 2008

## **Chapter 12: Conclusions**

the respective figures were 85 of 359 (23.7%) of meetings with children's classes and 352 children present and in 2010, 96 of 365 (26.3%) held classes with 429 children present. However response rates differed and normalising to 2006 reveals that in 2008 there were still only about 380 children present and in 2010 slightly fewer than 460. Further, the median size of children's meetings fell from 5.5 individuals in 2006 to only 3 in 2010. Although I listed in Chapter 5 several mitigating factors that might reduce, though not entirely account for, the decline in the numbers of children the falls recorded here are really quite startling. In 2008 and 2010 a question on the frequency of holding children's classes was answered 'never' or 'only when children are present' by about  $\frac{2}{3}$  of respondents. One possible reason for the almost 79% drop in the number of children at meeting between 2006 and 2008 is that some kind of critical level was reached that made holding classes non-viable in a significant number of meetings.. My findings would suggest the Society is close to a critical point in child adherence and that Present and Prevented captured a point of precipitous decline. Although there has been a large amount of research on the spirituality of adolescents, notably by Best, more research is required on the mutual engagement of meeting and younger people<sup>356</sup>.

### **Administration and Business**

One growth area of the Society of Friends seems to be bureaucracy.

*Present and Prevented* found that the number of appointments to positions of

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<sup>356</sup> Simon Best *The Community of Intimacy*, 42 - 43. Best found that among 301 adolescents surveyed only 7.3% attended children's meeting weekly, 36.6% attended once a month or more frequently, 23.7% attended occasionally, and 30% hardly ever attended

## **Chapter 12: Conclusions**

responsibility rose from 75.4% of available Quakers to 84.5%. When the demands made by Area Meeting, the central bodies of the Society of Friends and associated bodies such as Woodbrooke Quaker Study Centre are added, then the demand may very well approach 100% of Friends (I estimate the total number of appointments at Area and Regional meeting level in Table 10.8). This is clearly going to have an effect on the energies of individuals and the amount of effort available for outreach, the support of children's meetings or indeed the support and encouragement of attenders to become members.

### **Interpolation and extrapolation of levels of membership**

Rowntree<sup>357</sup> took the number of marriages from historical records and multiplied them by an estimated figure for marriage rates in the Society of Friends to arrive at a figure for adherents, which for unspecified reasons he adjusted to arrive at a figure of 60,000 Quakers in the mid-17<sup>th</sup> century, soon after the birth of Quakerism<sup>358</sup>. There are clearly problems with Rowntree's methodology, not the least that he worked from records of unknown completeness and accuracy.

Using the information from the surveys and censuses in this thesis, I have also tried to 'guesstimate' the historical record. There may be data as yet uncovered that will both fill in the gaps in the record and enable more precise estimates to be made. Table 12.4 lists the dates on which I have

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<sup>357</sup> Rowntree *Quakerism Past and Present*

<sup>358</sup> Rowntree *Quakerism Past and Present* 70 - 72

Chapter 12: Conclusions

been able to estimate historic figures for recognised adherents and, where possible, attender-ship.

Year	Members			Attenders			Notes
	Men	Women	Total	Men	Women	Total	
1658	No earlier data						
1659	15,000	7,000	<b>22,000</b>	Nos. signing petition against church tithes			
1680			<b>57,500</b>	Rowntree <i>Quakerism Past and Present</i> estimate			
1691			<b>60,000</b>	Rowntree <i>Quakerism Past and Present</i> estimate			
1696			<b>25,000</b>	Rowntree <i>Quakerism Past and Present</i> William III estimate of dissenters including around 25,000 Quakers.			
1737	A system of formal membership begins						
1800			<b>19,800</b>	<b>4,500</b>	Rowntree <i>Quakerism Past and Present</i> excluding Scotland		
1810			<b>18,920</b>	Rowntree <i>Quakerism Past and Present</i> , page 88			
1820			<b>18,040</b>	Rowntree <i>Quakerism Past and Present</i> , page 88			
1830			<b>17,160</b>	Rowntree <i>Quakerism Past and Present</i> . page 88			
<b>1840</b>			<b>16,277</b>	<b>Rowntree refers to Tuke's 1840 survey</b>			
<b>1847</b>			<b>15,345</b>	<b>Rowntree refers to Tuke's 1847 national survey the detail of which cannot be found</b>			
1851			<b>26,199</b>	The religious census of 1851			
1856			<b>14,530</b>	<b>7,000</b>	Rowntree 76, 87 (excludes Scotland)		

From 1861 the tabular statement provides annual statistics.

**Table 12.4 Members and attenders interpolated data 1659 – 1856**

Note that I use the term 'recognised adherents' because formal membership (which enables measurement rather than estimate of

Chapter 12: Conclusions

adherence) did not start until 1737<sup>359</sup>. The derivation of the data in table 12.4 is described in appendix 8. Many of the figures are uncertain and rely on estimates and assumptions. In appendix 8, I have tried to make clear the major uncertainties. However, the data provides a basis from which estimation can be refined as the statistics are refined or when further data becomes known. The data prior to the Tabular Statement which derive from measurement rather than estimation are highlighted

Figure 12.5 illustrates the data in Table 12.4 with the addition, from 1861, of the Tabular Statement.

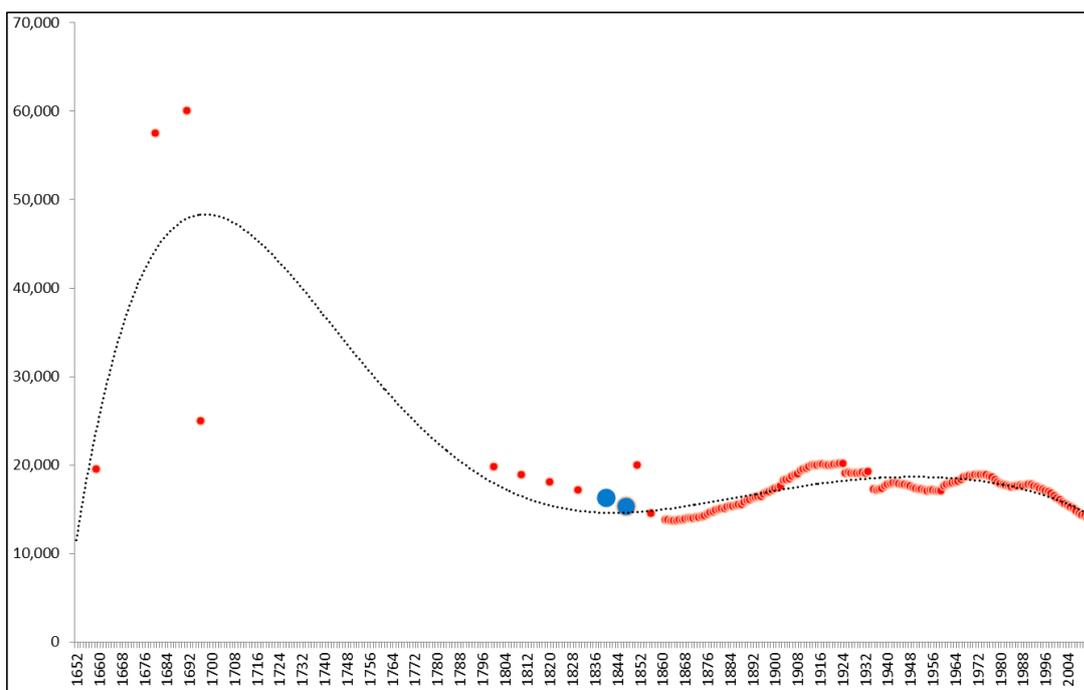


Figure 12.5 Interpolation of the Tabular Statement

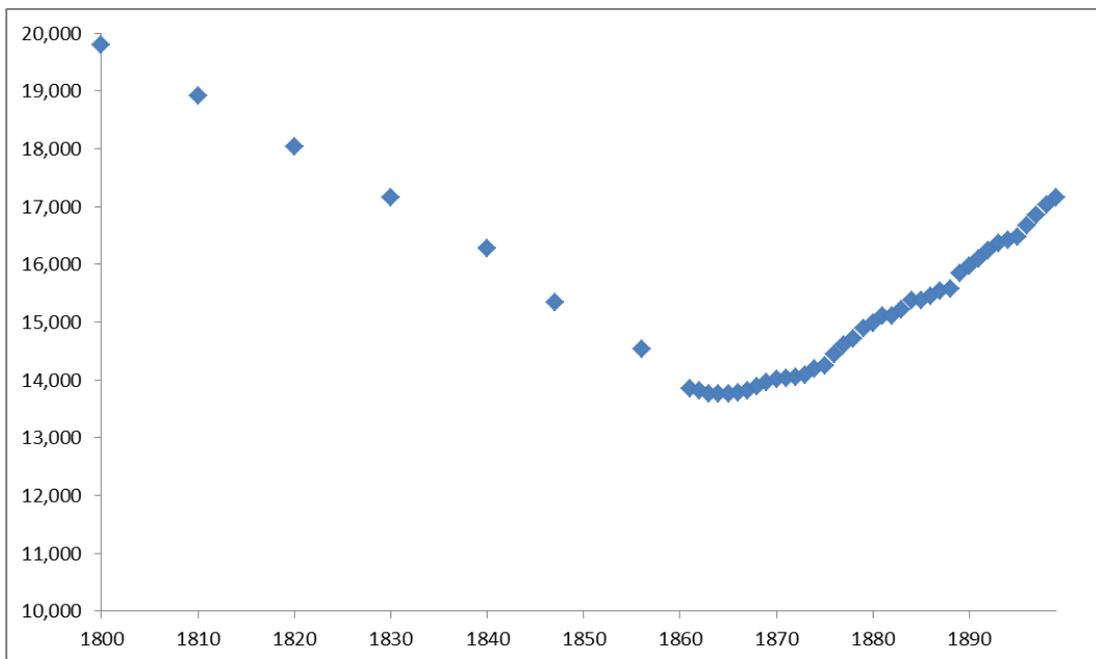
Measured points are highlighted by being made conspicuously larger

<sup>359</sup> There was de-facto recognition of membership from very early in the history of Quakerism through records of birth, marriage and death and in the provision of poor relief. In 1737 the Yearly Meeting set out rules for 'Removal and settlement' of Friends. Recognition of admission through conviction came about in the mid-18<sup>th</sup> century. L Hugh Doncaster *Quaker Organisation and Business Meeting* (London, Friends Home Service Committee, 1958) 25 – 27. Also Edward H. Milligan and Malcolm J. Thomas *My Ancestors were Quakers* (London, Society of Genealogists, 1983) 46 - 48

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than the other data. Apart from 1851, which is particularly uncertain as I explain in appendix 8, it can be seen that the pattern of membership in the 19<sup>th</sup> century lies on a fairly consistent curve, and strongly suggests that a nadir in membership occurred not long after the Tabular Statement was instituted (in 1865 when there were 13,756 members)<sup>360</sup>. Paucity of data means that we cannot know what happened between 1696 and 1800, but if we assume no dramatic changes in either direction then the pattern of membership is reasonably clear. The dotted line shows a representative curve of the pattern described.

If we look at the 19<sup>th</sup> century more closely (figure 12.6) we can see that it is possible to fit a second order equation with a very high  $r^2$  (>0.9) to the data, especially if we exclude the anomalous estimation of 1851.



**Figure 12.6 Membership in the 19<sup>th</sup> century**

<sup>360</sup> The Society of Friends is again approaching that number: in the 2012 Tabular Statement, there were 13,863 members, 107 more.

## **Chapter 12: Conclusions**

The fit of the curve means that there is a high level of confidence in the *pattern* if not the *precision* of estimation and suggests that the Society of Friends was losing membership during a period now considered one of high levels of church attendance, beginning to regain membership in a period when secularisation was taking hold.

### **Secularisation or not?**

I described in my introduction my sense of caution concerning ‘secularisation’ as a theory and process. An alternative explanation may simply be that some churches lose adherents while other varieties of spiritual expression gain in a dynamic process. I shall expand on my reasons for suspicion of secularisation theory, and then consider whether the Society of Friends conforms to or deviates from patterns in other churches. I shall later propose a different way of visualising change within the Society of Friends.

In his anthropological study of disability, Murphy warns *apropos* of a perceived tendency among socio-biologists<sup>361</sup>

To explain one or another pervasive human behavioural trait you find similar traits among animals, and then assume a genetic tie between them ... In this way, causality is hypothesised in cases in which there is only analogy...

Murphy’s warning seems to me have wider applicability than socio-biology. It is the problem of hypothesising causality from analogy that makes me both cautious of comparing the Society of Friends, a small sect of priest-less DIY theologians, to much larger minister led credo-based churches and

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<sup>361</sup> Robert F Murphy *The Body Silent* (W. W. Norton, New York, 1990) 225

**Chapter 12: Conclusions**

suspicious of attempts to do so. Clearly churches, with other social agents, are affected by changes in society, yet one might observe that Quakers and Catholics are both declining without necessarily proposing a common causality.

The Oxford Dictionary of English defines 'secular' as

1. Denoting attitudes, activities or other things that have no religion or spiritual basis<sup>362</sup>

Even if one observes that the majority of long established churches are in decline, an assumption of common cause necessitates explaining why religion and spirituality in some areas and some churches are *not* declining. The practice and expression of religion is manifestly so varied and eccentric (by which I mean particular to a people, time and location) that it is difficult to ascribe any human commonality other than that there seems to be an innate need to express spirituality, of which Quakerism, or indeed Christianity, is only one variety. Though my data shows overall decline in Quakerism it cannot be described as secularisation in a single church without more data on what happens to those who leave Quakerism. For example, while Heron shows that many come to the Society of Friends from other churches, we cannot know where those who leave the Society go. Do they go to another church or adopt a different form of spiritual expression entirely?

In my introduction, I noted Dandelion's claims that many in the Society

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<sup>362</sup> *The New Oxford Dictionary of English* (Clarendon Press, Oxford, 1998) 1681

**Chapter 12: Conclusions**

of Friends adhere to a post-Christian, if not a post-church, belief system<sup>363</sup>:

...the group can be called Christian in terms of its membership of the ecumenical bodies. However, the popular theology of the group ... is properly and necessarily described in terms ... which reflect present-day pluralism”

A cogent critique of secularisation theory is that even a post-Christian church cannot be described as secular while its adherents profess spirituality. Simply changing a manifestation of belief from mainstream to non-mainstream is not ‘secularisation’.

Warner’s *Secularisation and its Discontents*<sup>364</sup> seeks to present and criticise theories of secularization, the majority of which relate only to established Christian churches, neglecting other forms of spirituality. Bruce’s *Secularisation* begins with a wide definition of religion, one with which I can easily concur<sup>365</sup>:

...beliefs, actions and institutions based on the existence of supernatural entities powers of agency (that is, Gods) or impersonal processes possessed of moral purpose (the Hindu and Buddhist notion of karma for example) that set the conditions of, or intervene in, human affairs

A theory of secularisation has to take account of all expressions spirituality, otherwise it merely shows that participation in formal worship is declining. Referring back to my introduction, Warner’s remarks concerning the individualised validation of religious convictions and the numbers of

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<sup>363</sup> Pink Dandelion *A Sociological Analysis of the Theology of Quakers* 178

<sup>364</sup> Rob Warner *Secularization and its Discontents*

<sup>365</sup> Steve Bruce *Secularisation: In defence of an unfashionable theory* (Oxford, Oxford University Press, 2011) 1

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people calling themselves 'spiritual rather than religious'<sup>366</sup> supports remarks made by McLeod<sup>367</sup>:

... from the 1950s to the 1970s there was an enormous increase in the range of beliefs and world-views accessible to the majority of the population ... options had widened strikingly to include not only new forms of Christianity and new political faiths, but also many other religions and 'alternative spiritualities. Indeed, by the 1990s, the fashion would be for eclecticism – a deliberate mixing of elements drawn from different belief-systems, or a casual assumption that the boundaries between them would be irrelevant.

However, in spite of wide ranging definitions of religion, recognition that spirituality is manifest in various ways and the growth of personal belief systems chosen in a pick-and-mix fashion from an ever-increasing range of possibilities, defence of secularisation seems to come mainly, if not only, from the point of decline of large, long established and Christian churches. Bruce, indeed, provides what is effectively a flow chart of the development of what he prefers to call the 'secular paradigm', beginning with monotheism and leading, via Christianity and the protestant reformation, capitalism and science to relativism, compartmentalism and technology consciousness<sup>368</sup>. So, having started with an encompassing definition of religion and by some authors a recognition of the growth of alternative spirituality, secularisation becomes an argument that Judeo-Christian religion is in an inexorable process of secularisation.

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<sup>366</sup> In my introduction

<sup>367</sup> Hugh McLeod *The Religious Crisis of the 1960s* (Oxford, Oxford University Press, 2007)

<sup>368</sup> Steve Bruce *Secularisation* 27

## **Chapter 12: Conclusions**

Bruce later says that<sup>369</sup>

I am not saying that individualized forms of religion (such as ultra-liberal Christianity or alternative spirituality are not 'really' religious... I am making an empirical causal claim: because privatized, compartmentalized, and individualized religion attracts less commitment, is harder to maintain, and is more difficult to pass on intact to the next generation, it fails to make up the ground lost by, and declines faster than, traditional religion.

Bruce thus recruits different spiritualities to the process of secularisation, even though it is clearly difficult to argue that individualistic religion is more likely to decline than structured institutionalised forms if only because of lack of data. What is missing, I think, is the tenacity of religious belief. Secularisation presumes that departing adherents of a declining sect become secular, rather than seeking further and perhaps different expressions of faith. Perhaps this is best illustrated by reference to exceptions to the process of secularisation, such as the United States. Warner notes in reference to earlier research<sup>370</sup>:

...European scholars are likely to be surprised when ... in the United States, by the high levels of contemporary religiosity both in terms of the levels of church attendance on Sundays and the time given to religious issues and religious lobbyists in the media. Berger concluded that the empirical data refuted ... secularisation theory and demonstrated that it had become fallacious, unsustainable and untenable.

However, whether or not secularisation exists as a process, a theory or a paradigm, if the Society of Friends exhibits similar patterns to that of

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<sup>369</sup> Steve Bruce *Secularisation*. 48

<sup>370</sup> Warner *Secularisation and its discontents* 84

## Chapter 12: Conclusions

other churches then it may be an explanation, but it does not.

It is dangerous to assume that a qualitative similarity (a worshipping body) presumes quantitative similarity, as Murphy warned. The Society of Friends is very small compared with other worshipping groups of similar or greater longevity. For the Society of Friends to grow by a significant amount, for example, 10%, would mean gaining 2,500 or so adherents, or roughly 1 in 24,000 of the population of Britain. For the Catholic Church or the Church of England to grow similarly would mean gaining between 350,000 and 450,000 adherents, between 1 in 133 and 1 in 170 of the population of Britain. Even by comparison with the United Reform Church, the Methodist or the Baptist Church's, the Society of Friends is still small. Size then makes a significant difference to church dynamics

Nevertheless, something can be gained by looking at *patterns* of variation in adherence. Gilbert quotes statistics of certification of both temporary and of permanent places of worship by the Registrar-General between 1691 and 1850 in decennial periods, for several dissenting churches including Quakers<sup>371</sup>. Gilbert rightly notes of the statistics that they give no clue to the absolute size of the respective churches since they do not indicate either the number of pre-existing places of worship or the size of the congregations registering their premises. However, by looking at the pattern of registration one can gain a sense of the rise or decline in the confidence of a particular sect and by looking at the ratio of temporary to permanent registrations a sense of the increasingly established nature of sects as well

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<sup>371</sup> A D Gilbert *Religion and Society in Industrial England* (London, Longman, 1976) 34

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as their relative vitality. Figure 12.7 shows Gilbert's data graphically

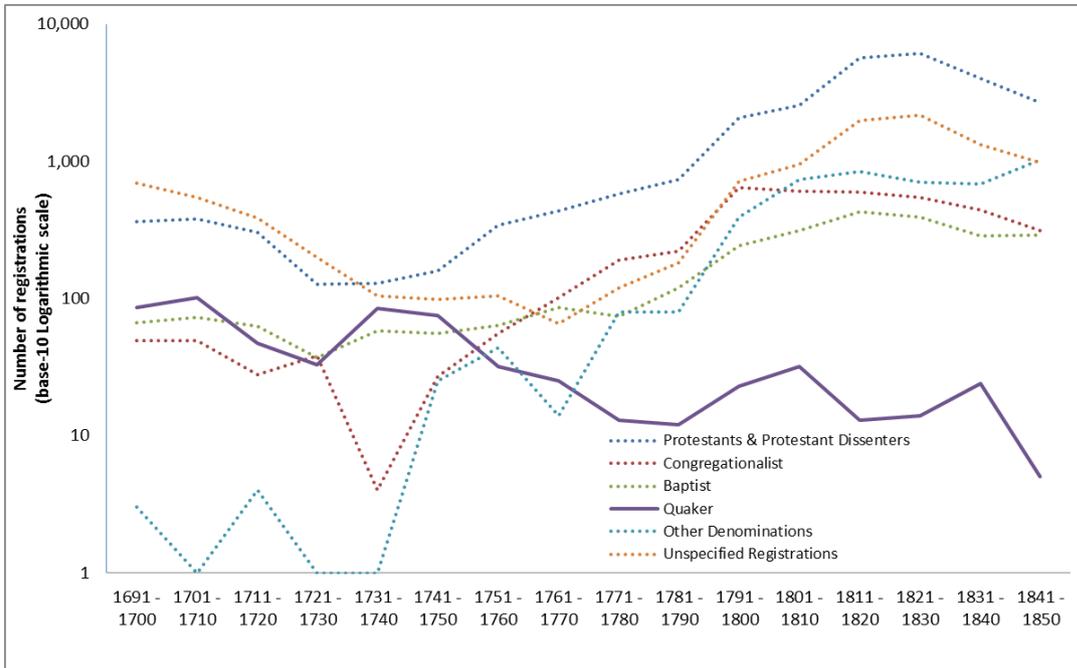


Figure 12.7 Registered dissenting places of worship 1691 – 1850

Quakers (thick blue line) initially registered as many places of worship as other sects but soon declined and from the second third of the 1760s fell significantly behind. Averaging Gilbert's data on registrations for all churches except Quakers and comparing it with Quakers registrations shows this clearly (figure 12.8)

Again using Gilbert's data, If we now look at the ratio of temporary to permanent registrations we find an interestingly different pattern (figure 12.9). Although registering fewer places of worship, it appears that the Society of Friends began registering permanent places before any of the specified sects. Registering a place of worship as permanent suggests a sect with more confidence and feeling more established. We can simplify Figure 12.9 by comparing the Quaker data with the mean of the data for the other non-

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Quaker sects (figure 12.10).

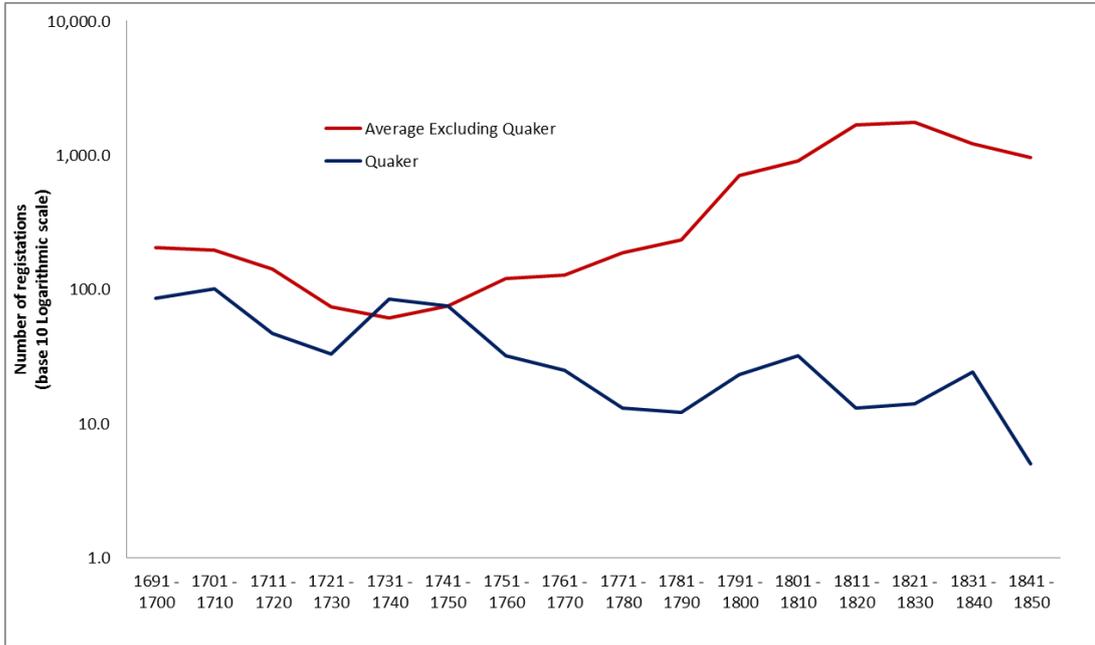


Figure 12.8 Average number of registrations of dissenting places of worship compared with Quaker registration

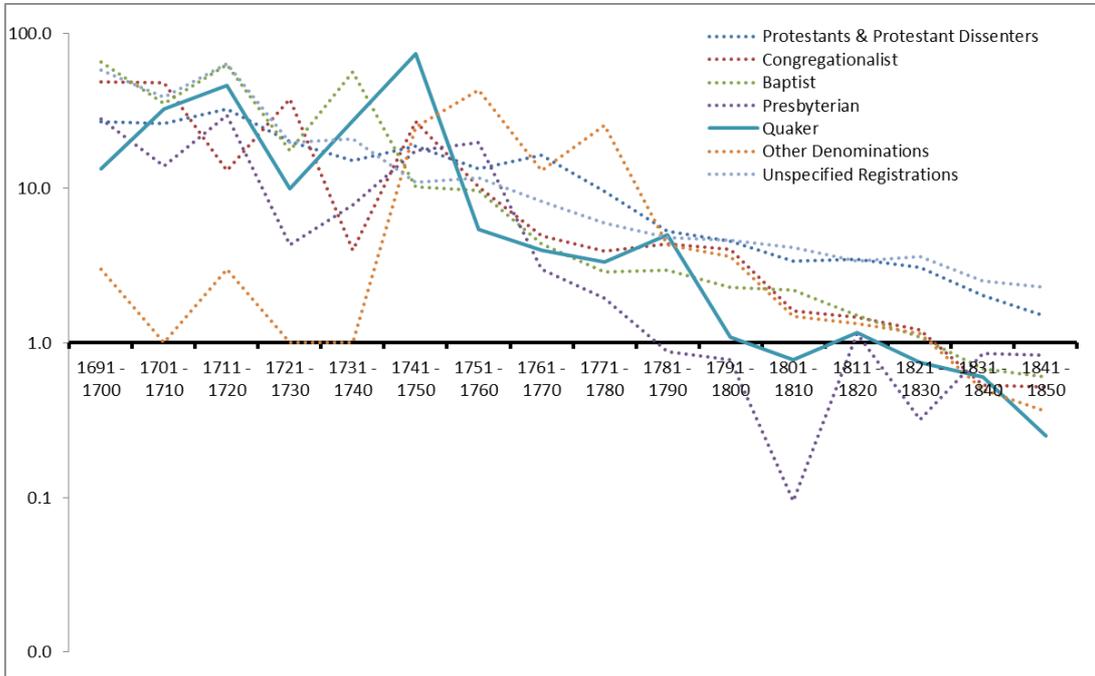
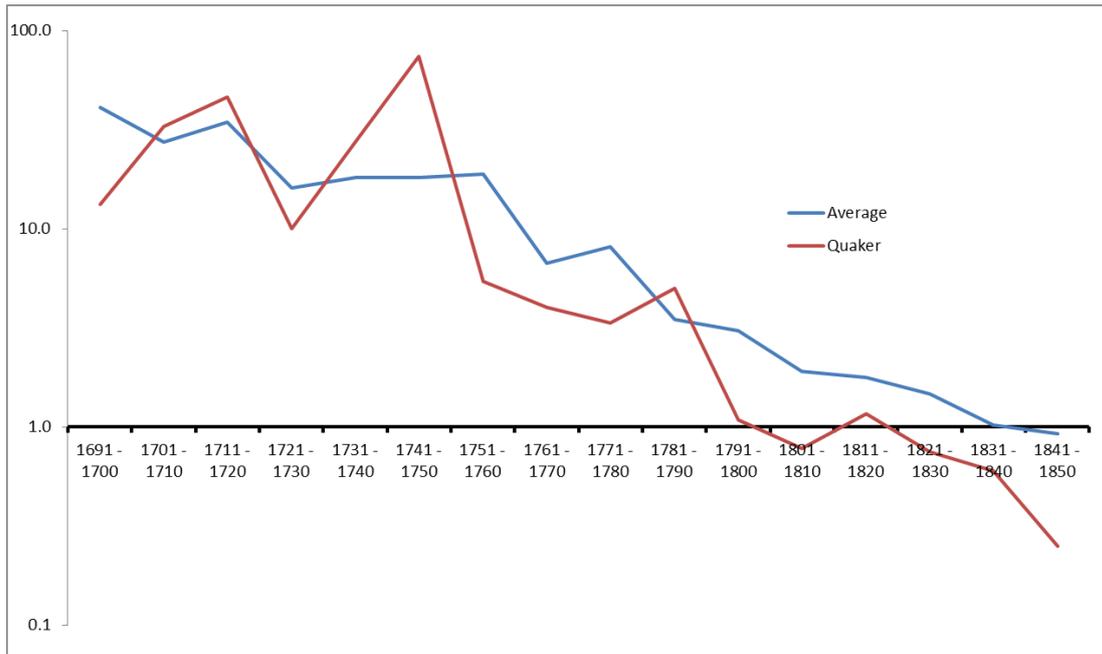


Figure 12.9 Ratio of temporary to permanent registration of dissenting places of worship 1691 – 1850. (Values < 1 indicate a higher proportion of registration of permanent places of worship)

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**Figure 12.10 Average ratio of temporary to permanent registrations of dissenting places of worship compared with Quaker ratio of temporary to permanent registrations.** (A value of < 1 indicates a higher proportion of registration of permanent places of worship)

We find that the Quaker trend continues to depart from the mean of other sects, falling below the general from about 1780s. It certainly looks as though from the first third of the 18<sup>th</sup> century Quakers began losing their founding vigour earlier than other sects making proportionally less registrations for places of worship and then from the latter part of the 18<sup>th</sup> century establishing proportionally fewer permanent places of worship. This coincides with the 'Quietest' period noted by a number of authors<sup>372</sup> when the Society of Friends effectively ossified into a peculiarly dressed, peculiarly spoken inward looking and declining group of people before the rise of evangelicalism and the conflict between conservative and liberal Quakers began shaping the modern Society of Friends

This is not merely an artefact of disparate size. If we normalise the

<sup>372</sup> For example Brayshaw *The Quakers* 175 – 199

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number of registrations of permanent places of worship to an arbitrary starting value of 50 and plot the result on a  $\log_{10}$  graph (made necessary by the wide variation in size at peak numbers), we find in figure 12.11 that most sects follow a very similar pattern of rapid growth and stabilisation from around 1810. Quakers and Presbyterians, sharing a similar pattern, differ widely from other sects showing much slower and steadier growth and tending to stabilise earlier, around 1800. It seems clear that Quakers generally were different from the majority of dissenting sects.

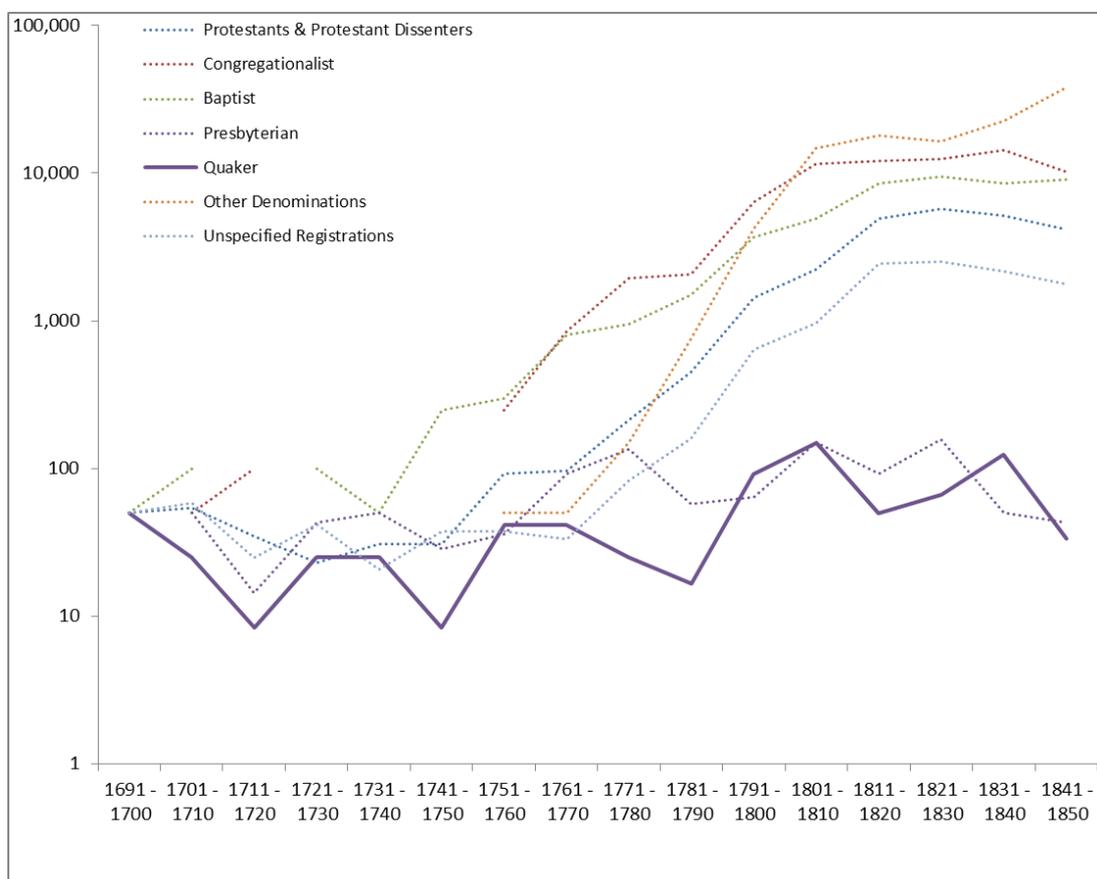


Figure 12.11 Registration of permanent places of worship normalised to an arbitrary start value of 50

It is difficult to compare church adherence because of the different measures adopted by denominations. Even where there is formal

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membership, numbers can be problematic as I point out in chapter 4 when discussing the Tabular statement. In my introduction I remarked on the particular difficulties faced by The Church of England in measuring adherence (pages 14 -15) and the variety of statistical methods used to measure adherence. One such is the parish based church electoral roll which requires qualification for admission, and which is updated only every six years (though with provision for annual amendment). The usual measure for the Roman Catholic Church is to rely on priestly estimates of the local Catholic population<sup>373</sup>.

If we take both these measures<sup>374</sup> and compare them with Quaker membership between 1900 and 1999, using a normalised starting value of 100,000 because of the disparity in size between the Anglican and Catholic churches and the Society of Friends we can derive the chart in figure 12.12.

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<sup>373</sup> Figures for the Catholic population of this country are supplied by the parish clergy, who give an estimate of the number of Catholics known to live in their parish. While it is generally agreed that the resultant figure probably underestimates the Catholic population of the country, it gives a good indication of the number known to the clergy. Since 1955 [a] standard form of Parish Register has been adopted by an increasing number of the dioceses. This has in some cases changed the basis of computation and explains certain anomalies which may appear at first sight in the comparison of population estimates over the last few years during which this change in the basis of computation has been adopted *The Catholic Directory* (London, Burns and Oates, 1961) 725

<sup>374</sup> Data for this and the subsequent discussion on statistics obtained from examination of the appropriate year books in the Roman Catholic National Library in Farnborough and in Dr Williams's Library of English Protestant non-Conformity in London. In particular:

<http://www.ekklesia.co.uk/node/11446> Baptist church attendance goes up - as membership goes down 8 Mar 2010 accessed 26/1/201

<http://www.brin.ac.uk/news/2011/baptist-union-statistics-2010/> accessed 26/1/2012

<http://www.communigate.co.uk/ne/catholichome/page3.phtml> accessed November 2011

Callum Brown *Religion and Society in 20<sup>th</sup> Century Britain*

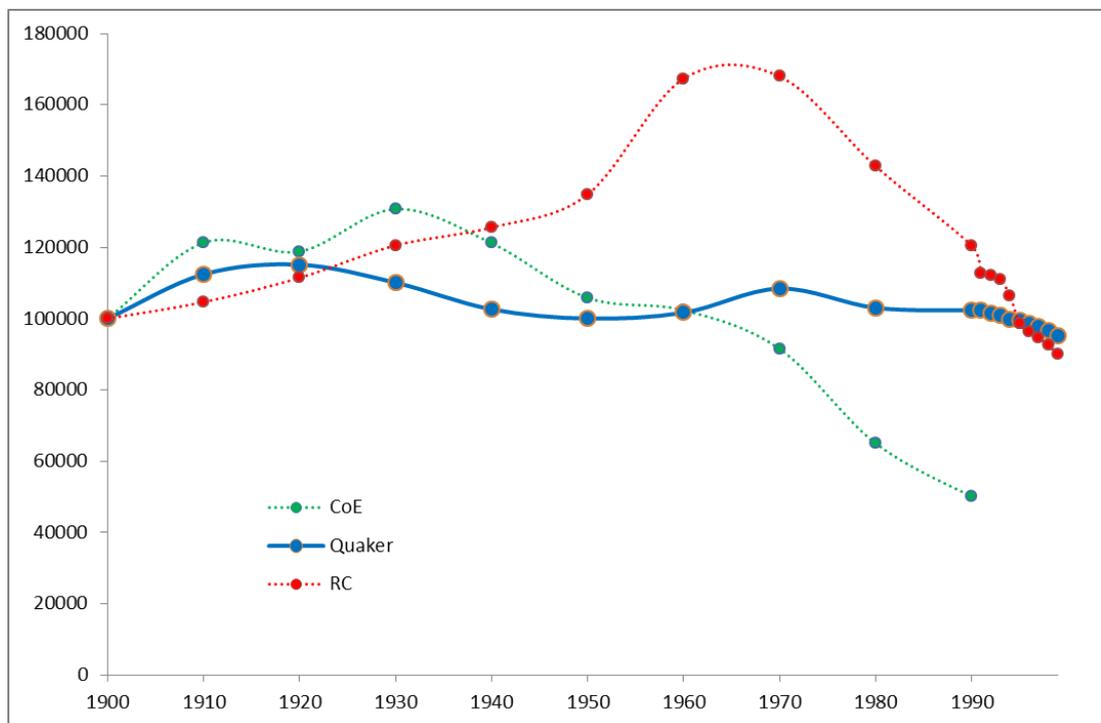
<http://www.brin.ac.uk/figures table 6.1> accessed May 2013

The Catholic Directory (Burns and Oates, London) various years. Burns and Oates ceased activities in 1970. From 1973 the Directory was published by Associated Catholic Newspapers (1912) Ltd

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We can see that again the Society of Friends (dark blue line) has behaved significantly differently from the other two churches, demonstrating neither of the peaks apparent for the Church of England pre 1930 nor that for the Catholic Church around 1970, and also beginning to decline later.

Although the data in figure 12.12 attempts to compare two very large creedal, minister-led churches with Friends it can nevertheless be seen that in the latter half of the 20<sup>th</sup> century the pattern of Catholic and Quaker adherence seem to be more closely related than that of Anglican adherence.

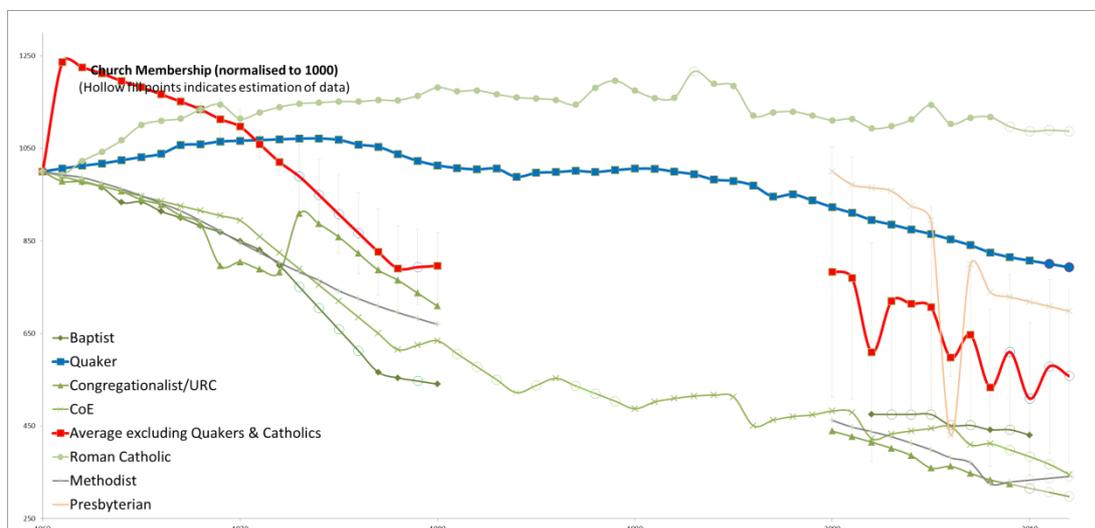


**Figure 12.12 Comparison of the Society of Friends with the Church of England and the Roman Catholic Church 1900 – 1999**

We can look more closely at that period by comparing Quaker data in the Tabular Statement with the data in the yearbooks of several sects and denominations of various sizes (figure 12.13). The prominent blue line again represents membership of the Society of Friends and the prominent red line the mean adherence of the churches excluding Roman Catholic and Quaker.

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The data is normalised to an arbitrary value of 1000 to enable comparison between churches of widely disparate size<sup>375</sup>. It can easily be seen that the pattern of Catholic and Quaker adherence differs from that of other churches. Both grew from 1960, with the Quaker growth ending in the early 1970s and the Catholic growth ending around 1980. Since then both have declined, with greater variability in Catholic adherence than in Quaker membership. By contrast, all the other churches decline from the very beginning of the chart.



**Figure 12.13 Church Membership 1960 to 2012 (normalised to 1000)** (Hollow fill points indicates estimation of data. The error bars around the mean are one  $\sigma$ )

It seems therefore the Society of Friends, while sharing some characteristics with some churches at some times, has behaved sufficiently differently most of the time to warrant an explanation that is different from a general theory of secularisation.

### Visualising Change in the Society of Friends: A New Model

In this section I introduce a model of social change arising from the

<sup>375</sup> Presbyterian data is included from 2000 onwards and was normalised to 1000 on that date

## Chapter 12: Conclusions

experience of American Quakers engaged in non-violent protest during the civil rights and anti-Vietnam war campaigns of the mid-20<sup>th</sup> century. then show how the 'Spiral of Social Change', which was initially a tool for strategy building and was later used as a model of the ways in which ideas transmute, can be applied to understanding change in the Society of Friends. XYZ

A 1955 pamphlet, *Speak Truth to Power*<sup>376</sup> written from an unashamedly Quaker Christian perspective, contained a clear call to non-violent action against injustice<sup>377</sup>.

We call on all men to say "No" to the war machine and to immoral claims of power ... We call on all men to say "Yes" to courageous non-violence, which alone can overcome injustice, persecution, and tyranny.

Following publication, American Quakers individually and corporately took part in non-violent resistance the Vietnam War<sup>378</sup>, from which experience Lawrence Scott and others founded *A Quaker Action Group* (AQAG) to carry out similar acts. Growing from the experience of AQAG, Susan Gowan, George Lakey, Bill Moyer, Dick Taylor and others founded the *Movement for a New Society* (MNS) to encourage analysis and collective action<sup>379</sup>. Lakey developed an essentially linear model of social change, explored in *Strategy for a Living Revolution*<sup>380</sup> and later revised in *Powerful*

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<sup>376</sup> Anon. *Speak Truth to Power: A Quaker Search for an Alternative to Violence* (Philadelphia, American Friends Service Committee, 1955)

<sup>377</sup> *Speak Truth to Power* 70

<sup>378</sup> Robert Cooney and Helen Micaelowski eds. *The Power of the People: Active Nonviolence in the United States* (Culver City, Peace Press Inc. 1977) 131

<sup>379</sup> Robert Cooney and Helen Micaelowski *Power of the People* 131

<sup>380</sup> George Lakey *Strategy for a Living Revolution* (New York, Grossman Publishers, 1973)

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Peacemaking<sup>381</sup>, following which the model developed in two distinct ways. One continued as a linear version, culminating in widely circulated personal paper by Bill Moyer in 1987 formalising an eight stage structure entitled *The Movement Action Plan* (figure 12.14)<sup>382</sup>

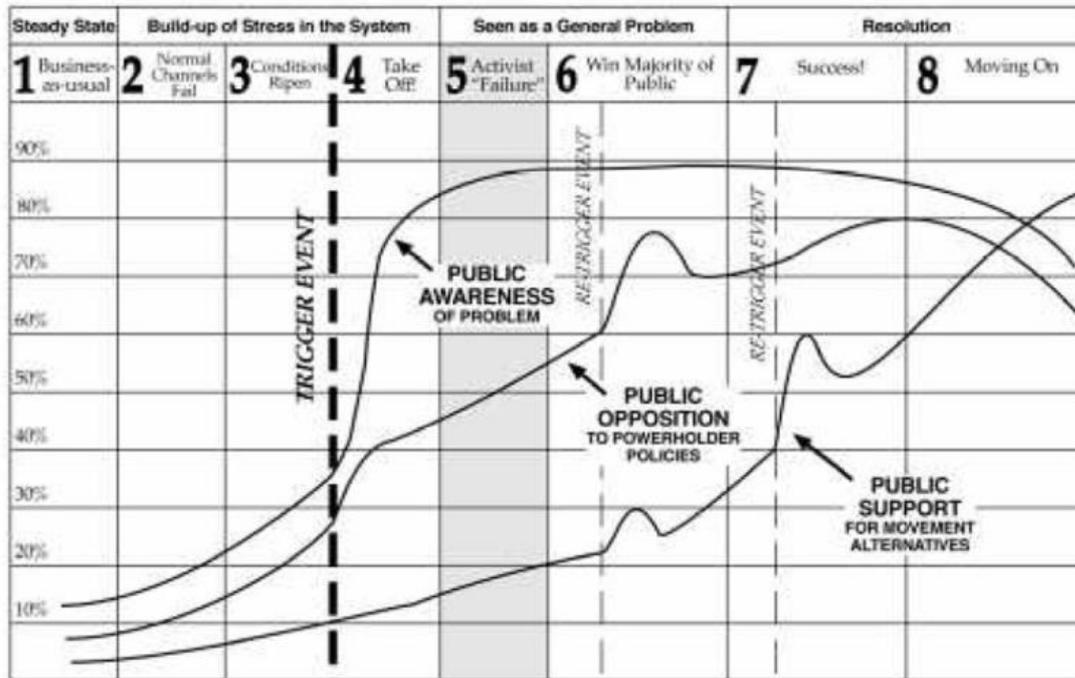


Figure 12.14 Bill Moyer's Movement Action Plan

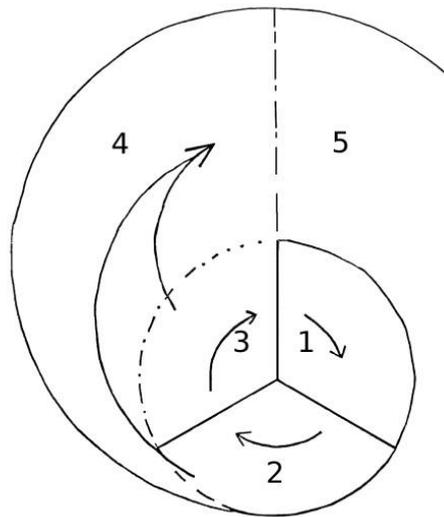
In Lakey's view there is a clear progression from initial awareness of an issue (stage 1: steady state), through protest (stages 2 to 4), to acceptance of alternatives (stage 6) and ultimate success (stages 7 and 8). Although stage 5 allows for 'activist failure' Moyer merely sees this as a point at which some activists fall by the wayside because success is taking longer than expected, rather than failure of the process. Although he acknowledges that 'Public Awareness of the Problem' will plateau he still sees 'Public

<sup>381</sup> George Lakey *Powerful Peace Making: A Strategy for a Living Revolution* (Philadelphia, Movement for a New Society Publishers, 1987)

<sup>382</sup> Bill Moyer *The Movement Action Plan: A Strategic Framework Describing the Eight Stages of Successful Social Movements* (1987)

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Support for Alternatives' increasing. As such, it less a realistic model of process, than it is typical of a utopian descriptor promising the inevitability of ultimate success. The second strand of development occurred in small steps in numerous workshops. Anecdotally at least it was the women of the Movement for a New Society who took Lakey's and Moyers linear model and bent it into the shape that became known as the 'Spiral of Social Change'<sup>383</sup>. In this form, there are five rather than eight stages (Figure 12.15).



**Figure 12.15 Stages of The Spiral of Social Change**

Stage 1 in the diagram represents the period in which individuals become aware of a new idea. This is a lonely stage because the individual has no idea whether anyone else thinks or feels the same way and there is a strong temptation to ignore the cause of unease. However, some individuals will go on to share their new ideas and may find others who feel the same or similar. Together they begin building alliances, sharing ideas and aspirations, creating the second stage of the model. Once alliances formed in stage 2

<sup>383</sup> Quaker Peace Action Caravan Training Workshop by Marion McNaughton, 1980

## **Chapter 12: Conclusions**

reach a critical mass (they may not) there may be movement into stage 3, in which there is appeal to a wider audience, creation of interest groups and publication of newsletters and other materials. However, in doing so individuals may become aware of other issues and thus, while in stage 3 on the original issue, may be moving into stage 1 on yet others. An example of this was the growing awareness in the US civil rights movement of both patriarchy and the role of the military in society. In this stage, there is a danger of splintering in different directions and never building the momentum to move on.

However, if sufficient momentum is created, then it may become possible to spin off into stage 4 when the ideas of stage 1 become widely accepted. To be successful, the acceptance of stage 4 needs to spin into stage 5 when the concerns of stage 1 have become the new paradigm. It does not necessarily follow that everyone will align with the new paradigm of stage 5: those left uneasy by the changes entering into stage 1 as an opposition.

In the *Selfish Gene*<sup>384</sup> Dawkins introduced the concept of 'memes' as cultural units which, like genes in a gene pool, compete and the best fitted to the cultural environment in which they evolve, propagate. Blackmore considered the definition of a meme to be simply an idea passed from one person to another by imitation<sup>385</sup>.

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<sup>384</sup> Richard Dawkins *The Selfish Gene* (Oxford, Oxford University Press, 1976)

<sup>385</sup> Susan Blackmore *Imitation and the Definition of a Meme* (Journal of Memetics – Evolutionary Models of Transmission 2. vol. 2 (Dec. 1988) 159 -170

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Given the correct conditions, ideas emerging in stage 1 of 'The Spiral' can compete, evolve and perhaps mutate, to become acceptable to small groups of people in stage 2, before becoming common among numbers of people within a larger cultural context in stage 3. At this stage, the mutation of an idea would be quite rapid, leading to further ideas springing up in the minds of some who find themselves in stage 1 on different but aligned issues. However, once a meme has become embedded in a cultural context; (or the idea has become widely accepted), then it is beginning to move into stage 4 while leaving behind those who still struggle to understand or accept it. With sufficient momentum, it can move into stage 5 and become the new orthodoxy. Crucially, the outward form of the host culture remains essentially unaltered. In other words, the Society of Friends remains outwardly the same though Internally there is now a new understanding of why things are done in what is still described as a particularly Quaker way.

George Fox was isolated in his spiritual crisis – in stage 1 – and it took some time find his first allies among the 'shattered Baptists' of Nottinghamshire and Lincolnshire<sup>386</sup> and then among the Westmorland Seekers<sup>387</sup> to move into stage 2 when his beliefs were becoming accepted among small groups of people. The movement from stage 2 to 3 took place in Cumbria and particularly Swarthmore Hall as the growing band of Quakers became organised and gathered resources. The 'First Publishers of the

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<sup>386</sup> William C Braithwaite *The Beginnings of Quakerism* 44

<sup>387</sup> William C Braithwaite *The Beginnings of Quakerism* 80 - 96

## **Chapter 12: Conclusions**

Truth' fanned out across Britain<sup>388</sup> taking the burgeoning Society of Friends into stage 4 when, if we are to believe Rowntree, Friends achieved 'mass movement' status with 60,000 adherents<sup>389</sup> before retreating and never achieving the status of stage 5. We can see the process happening again when a few progressive young Friends meeting in the Manchester Institute in the 1860s, under the leadership of David Duncan<sup>390</sup> began building alliances as the 'Manchester Rationalists' (Stage 1). Their ideological descendants later organised (Stage 2) in sufficient strength to defeat the moves by Evangelical Friends to persuade London Yearly Meeting to adopt the proto-creedal Richmond Declaration in 1887<sup>391</sup>. Eventually they came to dominate the Manchester Conference of 1895<sup>392</sup> (stage 3), going on to before establishing a new liberal paradigm for Friends (stages 4 and 5).

Kennedy describes the organised (stage 2) challenge that liberal Quakers presented to the evangelical and creed minded majority on their way to establishing a new paradigm of Quakerism<sup>393</sup>

... when the majority of Quakers had been convinced by their evangelical brethren that changes in the world as well as in their own perceptions of how God wished to be worshipped required that their Society break out of its spiritual isolation and begin moving toward the mainstream of evangelical Protestant Christianity. It was at this moment of apparent triumph that a group of mainly young men espousing

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<sup>388</sup> A. Neave Brayshaw *The Quakers: Their Story and Message* (74 - 77)

<sup>389</sup> John Stephenson Rowntree *Quakerism, Past and Present*

<sup>390</sup> Elizabeth Isichei *Victorian Quakers* 61 - 65

<sup>391</sup> Elizabeth Isichei *Victorian Quakers* 9 - 10

<sup>392</sup> Elizabeth Isichei *Victorian Quakers* 40 -41

<sup>393</sup> Thomas C Kennedy *British Quakerism* 6 - 7

## Chapter 12: Conclusions

modern ideas and a liberal theology peremptorily challenged the evangelical leadership of British Quakerism

More recently, as late as 1954, the clerk of Meeting for Sufferings Peace Committee was able to describe the work of that committee in a hearing to defend its right to tax exemption as a religious organisation in overtly Christian language<sup>394</sup>

...our primary purpose is not to argue and try to dissuade people. It is hoped to convince them of the truth of the Christian faith which we hold

Heron has described the 1960s as a period of challenge for Quakers in which some were beginning to lose their particular religious identity in favour of secularism while others held to core Christian beliefs<sup>395</sup>, yet by the 1990s it was no longer possible to say clearly what the Society of Friends believed only what different groups of Friends believed. Denley and Roylance provide evidence for the unease felt among 'Christian Quakers' at the increase in a diversity of views<sup>396</sup>, quoting one Friend<sup>397</sup>:

When the mainstream of the Society (*of Friends*) was made up of Christians of various shades from the evangelicals to the liberals such as myself we were able to carry the few 'odd-bods' that were with us. Unfortunately, in the ensuing years these misfits attracted others of the same ilk when they realised they could latch on to the liberalism of Friends to suit their own purposes... The result is that the Society of Friends is now a gigantic fudge! Those of us who are

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<sup>394</sup> Robert Davies, Clerk of Friends Peace Committee in reply to a question by Mr Le Champion of the Solicitors Office of the Board of the Inland Revenue during an appeal against the removal of tax exempt status from the Friends Peace Committee, before the Special Commissioners of Taxes, Turnstile house, High Holborn, London 17<sup>th</sup> May 1954

<sup>395</sup> Alastair Heron *Quakers in Britain* 56 - 74

<sup>396</sup> Denley, Janette and Roylance, Gill  *Holding Up a Mirror*

<sup>397</sup> Denley and Roylance quoting Patrick ORB. Baker 7

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Christian are edged out by others who are really feeding off the Society.

This is a particular clear description of how it feels to be part of the prevailing culture faced with the growth of a new paradigm moving from stage one ('the few 'odd-bods' ') to stage three ('Those of us [*subscribing to the old Christian cultural context*] are edged out'). The Friend who reported feeling like this is, in the context of the 'Spiral', in stage 1 of opposition to a growing new ultra liberalism. Non-theist Friends now firmly in stage 2<sup>398</sup> are, though still few in numbers, beginning to move toward stage 3, building on on-line presence<sup>399</sup> and organising 'networking' meetings at Yearly Meeting<sup>400</sup> and at Woodbrooke<sup>401</sup>. If we return to the arguments made earlier, that differences between the behaviour of Quakers and that of the other churches suggests strongly that the Society of Friends responds to an internal dynamic rather than an external process, the Spiral offers a way of envisaging that dynamic.

In chapter 4, we saw how membership overall and membership per meeting has declined over a period identified by Kennedy as one in which "*...the revitalized peace testimony has remained the important social and political consequence of the Quaker Renaissance*"<sup>402</sup>. The decline in

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<sup>398</sup> See <http://www.nontheistfriends.org/> the website of non-theist Quakers, accessed 5<sup>th</sup> November 2012. Non-theist Friends describe themselves as Quakers with "...an agnostic, humanist, atheist or related world-view, and those who experience religion as a wholly human creation"

<sup>399</sup> <http://www.nontheist-quakers.org.uk/> accessed May 2014

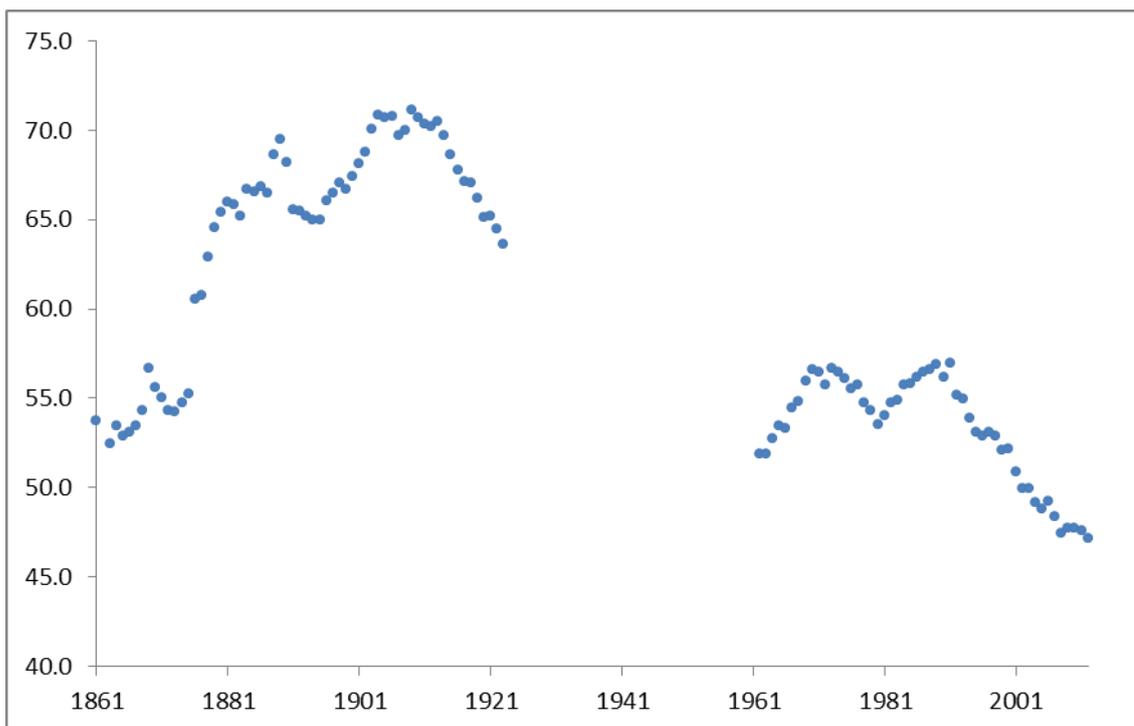
<sup>400</sup> *Getting Beyond the Words* Non-Theist Friends Network at Britain Yearly Meeting Gathering Canterbury 2011

<sup>401</sup> Conference of Non-Theist Friends Network at Woodbrooke, March 9 to 11 2012

<sup>402</sup> Thomas Kennedy *British Quakerism* 429

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membership has occurred especially since the short-lived peak of the late 1960s and early 1970s. However, if we consider the aggregate of both members and attenders we can see that in terms of the Society of Friends as a whole the decline started much later with a post war peak of 26,757 as late as 1991. Since 1991 there has been an almost continuous decline to 22,544 in 2012, a loss of 4,213 (15.8%) adherents in 21 years. If we now look at the aggregate of members and attenders per meeting, we can see a more severe decline over the last century and a half (2012 being the lowest number recorded) Figure 12.16.



**Figure 12.16 Numbers of members and attenders per meeting 1861 to 2012**

We can examine these changes in terms of the ‘Spiral’ model. During the Manchester Conference of 1895, Silvanus Thompson spoke on “Can a scientific man be a sincere Quaker?” suggesting that while science might demonstrate what is false, only the divine light could reveal what was

## Chapter 12: Conclusions

spirituality true, going on to say

...a man's religion is not that which he professes, but that which he lives<sup>403</sup>

Which is a clear statement of Quaker liberalism, and reminiscent of Dandelions description of modern Quakerism. Rufus Jones, an American Friend who thought deeply about Quakerism came to believe that the attraction of Quakerism was in the rejection of the doctrine original sin and stress on the innate goodness of human nature; a religion fully compatible with the discoveries of science<sup>404</sup>. In a line of thought that echoes that of Thompson. Kennedy remarks<sup>405</sup>:

British Quakers of a liberal persuasion enthusiastically embraced Jones notion of Quakerism as a mystical faith ... directly influenced by leadings from the Light. For them, the Light opened the way to both the severance of the ties with the harsher aspects of evangelical theology and the pursuit of spiritual answers entirely within the intellectually respectable context of modern, optimistic, liberal thought. ... Placing human progress in the vanguard with mystical faith in Christ.

Thus liberal Quakerism (having worked through stages 1 and 2 to dominate the Manchester conference in stage 3 became the new dominant Quaker culture, albeit still overtly Christian.

In the period following the second world war society also began to liberalise. I have pointed out that the experience of applicants for

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<sup>403</sup> Silvanus Thompson 1895 "The Attitude of Friends to Modern Thought" in *Report of the proceedings of the conference of members of the Society of Friends, Manchester 1895* (London, Headley Bros, 1896), 239

<sup>404</sup> Thomas C Kennedy *British Quakerism* 161

<sup>405</sup> Thomas C Kennedy *British Quakerism* 162

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membership at this time was most likely to have been that of war, citing the experience of Ben Green (chapter 4). Green was not the only example however: Albert Brockelsby, a conscientious objector of the First World War, finding antipathy within his own church (Methodist) to his position also joined the Society of Friends<sup>406</sup>. It was this generation (Green's and Brockelsby's) which became yet more liberal than the Manchester Friends a generation earlier and, with the publication of *Toward a Quaker View of Sex* in 1964, prepared the Society of Friends for a further round of liberalisation, another twist of the Spiral. This time, the coincidence of Quaker and social liberality resulted in growth in the late 1960s and early 1970s bringing in yet more liberal Quakers, as Heron has noted. The new 'ultra-liberalism' ushered in by these changes has now moved through a number of stages in the spiral and is beginning to become a new orthodoxy giving in turn rise to the unease expressed by friends in Denley and Roylance. In a talk given to the Quaker History Group Ambler notes<sup>407</sup>:

... we are the turn of a century [and] are due for another crisis

He cites two instances in support of his thesis, a call in 2008 from Quaker Life (a department of the central work of the Society of Friends) for a conference on Quaker identity and the decision by the Yearly Meeting to begin in 2012 a three-year exploration on 'What it means to be Quaker?'. Ambler goes on to say at the conclusion of his talk

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<sup>406</sup> Will Elsworth-Jones *We will not fight: The Untold Story of World War One's Conscientious Objection* (London, Aurum Press Ltd, 2007) 247

<sup>407</sup> Rex Ambler *What happened to the Light within?* (Talk Quaker History Group, Friends House London, 25<sup>th</sup> February 2014)

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We are not entirely sure who we are and what we stand for [*we can identify two reasons*] One is that we are no longer confident of the liberalism that has supported us for the past one hundred years... [a second is] that the Christian part of our identity is now a source of confusion for us ... many people are getting interested in Quakerism because they see it as *not* Christian [Amblers emphasis] ... Others are ... looking for a spiritual experience that fits with their more secular outlook

Ambler is describing the transition from stage 2 to stage 3 of a developing new paradigm for Quakers. Whether it will develop into stage 4 and perhaps 5 is a moot point. As the model suggests there is the possibility of the move simply dying away, fractionating or giving rise to an antithesis that will begin its own journey around the Spiral.

Kennedy commented on the period following the Manchester conference which as apposite to the current situation as to the late 19<sup>th</sup> century<sup>408</sup>

“In the decade since the Manchester conference, Rowntree said, the Society of Friends had begun to recognize the debilitating qualities of much of the spiritual baggage it had accumulated over the past two centuries. But while acknowledging past deficiencies, the Society, as a spiritual fellowship had not subsequently accepted responsibility for developing a coherent plan of action that would prepare the emerging generation not just to save their Society from extinction but to ‘reassert it’s positive claim ... to share in the constructive spiritual work that is afoot in the world’

Clearly, from the data, the Society of Friends is declining. For the Spiral model of social change to achieve growth and spin into stages 4 and 5

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<sup>408</sup> Thomas C Kennedy *British Quakerism* 169

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two factors are required. The first is a sense of urgency to drive outreach and the second is a sympathetic correspondence with at least an undertow of sentiment in broader society. If the urgency to reach out is missing then the outcome is likely to be a general decline, for even if there were sympathy within the general population, no advantage would be gained. Conversely, given a drive to reach out but with no response from outside, it is likely that the energy will slowly evaporate. In either case, the outcome is failure to move from stage three to four and slow decline. If there is neither internal drive nor interest in the outside world, it is likely that the remaining activists will compete internally for interest while endlessly cycling around the first three stages and ever declining in numbers.

One effect of shrinking adherence is likely to be aging. In my introduction and chapter 11, I noted a number of measurements of the age of members and/or attenders. Jones in appendix 2 of her thesis<sup>409</sup> examining funding of the centrally managed work of British Quakers also presents a table of answers on age provided by 97 members and attenders. This data is not wholly representative of British Quakers since respondents all come from a single Monthly Meeting and represent just 51.6% of all possible respondents. While Jones states that the sample is representative of Britain Yearly Meeting in respect of gender ratios it is not representative of member/attender ratios, containing only 18% of attenders as compared to 34% in Britain Yearly Meeting as whole. Nevertheless, it is one of the few surveys of the period to illuminate the mean age of members and attenders.

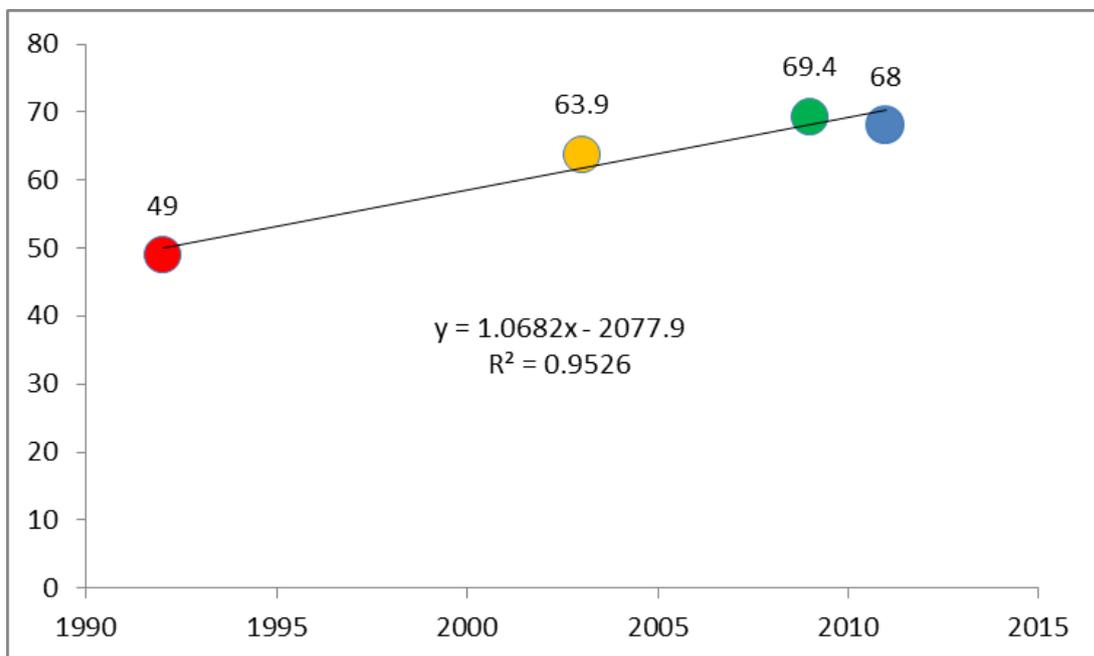
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<sup>409</sup> Hazel Leonore Jones *Funding the Centrally Managed Work of Britain Yearly* 115

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Using Jones data we can estimate the mean age for members and attenders in the meeting as 69.4 years with 78% over the age of 60. While not definitive this certainly is additional supportive evidence for the extreme aging of Britain Yearly Meeting.

If we now include Jones age data with those of Chapter 11, we can construct Figure 12.17



**Figure 12.17** Age data from Heron 1992 (red), Rutherford 2003 (orange), Jones 2009 (green) and Woodbrooke 2011 (blue)

There is a clear rise in age, even though the data is in essence measuring different groups of people. It shows a linear trend line, with a close fit ( $r^2 > 0.9$ ) with a gradient of 1.07, very close to 1, indicating that the Society of Friends is ageing at roughly a year per year and confirming the findings from examination the death rate in the Tabular Statement (chapter 4).

### Concluding the Conclusions and Suggestions for Future Research

## **Chapter 12: Conclusions**

Declining adherence to and participation in worship of the Society of Friends in Britain is likely to arise from a complex mix of factors. In no particular order of importance or effect, the following are likely to among them.

- As the proportion of attenders grows in meetings, they are less likely to join as members. Once the proportion rises above roughly 41%, it would seem that there is less to need to 'join' to achieve a sense of 'belonging'. As Heron has pointed out lack of formal commitment can mean a greater volatility in both attendance and long-term loyalty or staying power.
- Aging is an issue and may become the critical issue. With a mean age between 60 and 70 we are likely to see increasing death rates and a growing burden on meetings seeking to support frailer members as well as less energy for commitment to social issues and outreach.
- As Dandelion has pointed out there is an increasing diversity of belief within the Society<sup>410</sup>. Following the Spiral model of social change, many Friends will be in stages 1 or 2 of becoming aware of belief issues and seeking allies, some such non-theist Quakers are more advanced. Clearly as Denley and Roylance found some Quakers are feeling disturbed at the changes. It is now difficult to ask what is the Quakers believe and easier to ask what individuals within the Society believe. Whether the diversity of belief is affecting adherence and recruitment of members would be a fruitful area of research. It is uncertain if any of the currently divergent views of adherents will spin-off into stage 3 or stage 4 and provide a new

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<sup>410</sup> Pink Dandelion *A Sociological Analysis of the Theology of Quakers* 289

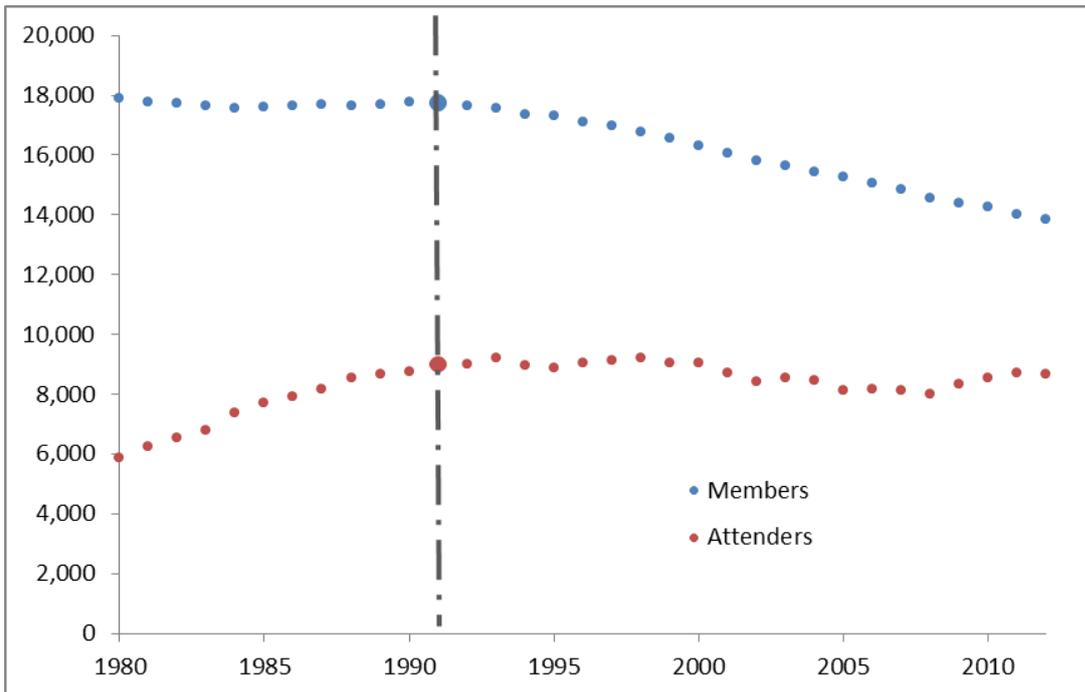
**Chapter 12: Conclusions**

paradigm for the Society.

- Growth in the Society of Friends occurs when the Quaker belief and wider society coincide, as in the 19<sup>th</sup> late century, the 1960s and 1970s.

Conversely, decline is more likely as the two diverge. A more concise statement of much the same thing is that Quakerism is currently simply unfashionable.

The real puzzle, at least as far as this thesis is concerned, is why the current phase of decline in membership began so precisely between 1990 and 1991. Figure 12.18 shows data from the Tabular Statement in the period 1980 to 2012. It is the same as the data shown in chapter 4 but a narrower range. The vertical line shows 1991.



**Figure 12.18 Tabular Statement: members and attenders 1980 – 2012**

The number of attenders is declining but much more slowly than the number of members, hence the rising proportion of attenders. There needs to

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be further research on the decline of members (is it really simply aging?) and the reasons for attenders not joining which are likely to be more complex than simply achieving a sense of belonging without joining as the proportion of attenders with respect to members rises. There is likely also to be something to do with members being reluctant to talk to attenders about membership and this too, would be a fruitful area of research. It may also be that members themselves are uncertain about membership, especially in times of change. In terms of the spiral while the existing paradigm is of ultra-liberal spirituality there many in stages 2 and 3 who are keen to develop liberalism even further while in stage 1 there are those who feel alienated by change are just becoming alert to the issues involved. Any of these groups may feel unclear what to reply when attenders ask about membership

*Patterns of Membership and Participation amongst British Quakers* has shown that relatively few seekers or enquirers are attracted to Quaker meetings and that increasingly attenders do not make a commitment to membership. In the not-so-very-long-run, the discussions on what Quakerism means in the 21<sup>st</sup> century may be of less import than the failure to attract new committed adherents.

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**Appendix 1: Notes on statistics**

Symbols

$\bar{x}$ : Mean average

$\sigma$ : single standard deviation

$\Sigma$  Sum / Total

sk : Skew

$\kappa$ : Kurtosis

There are many more small Quaker meetings than there are large meetings, the distribution of size of meetings is technically positively skewed and hence care should be taken in interpreting the statistics.

Positively skewed distributions of data plotted on a chart show a distorted curve with most measurements toward the right, smaller end, of a y-axis with long diminishing tails toward the left, larger end.

Negatively skewed distributions are the reverse, with few small measurements and large numbers of larger measurements.

'Normally' distributed data has equal numbers of small and large measurements and forms the familiar 'Bell Curve' chart.

There are three kinds of average; the mean ( $\bar{x}$ ), the median ( $M_d$ ) and the mode ( $M_o$ ). The mean is what is usually meant when the word 'average' is used alone. The median is an average such that 50% of measurements lie below and 50% above the median, while the mode is simply the most common measurement.

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When a normal distribution of data is present the mean, mode and median are all identical, or (in real life data) very close to one another. However for skewed data, the mode is clearly the peak of the curve toward on the left or the right of the y-axis while the mean is either pulled up or down by the tail of larger or smaller measurements. The median for skewed data therefore tends to lie between the mode and mean and all have very different values.

A value of skew (*sk*) can be calculated for a set of data and the further it is from zero, the more skewed the data is.

For normally distributed the mean is usually quoted as showing a 'typical' value. That is a value that a random selection of a single point of data is most likely to be close to. When a mean is quoted it should be usual (but often isn't) to also quote a single standard deviation (symbol ' $\sigma$ ') such that a random observation will lie between the mean and  $\pm \sigma$ , 68.2% of the time. A random observation will line between the mean and  $\pm 2\sigma$ , 96.6%. Clearly because the normal distribution is symmetrical around the mean,  $+\sigma$  will be the same as  $-\sigma$ . There is another value of variance from a mean that is commonly used, the standard error (SE). The standard error shows the variation of the mean of a random sample sub-set of a larger data set from the mean of the larger data set. The standard error is always less than the standard deviation since  $SE = \sigma / \sqrt{N}$  where SE is the standard error,  $\sigma$  the standard deviation and N the number of samples in the data sub-set.

Since I have not used sampling techniques I have not used the

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standard error at all. Any reference to  $X \pm y$  should be read as  $X \pm \sigma y$ . Some of my data sets are incomplete. For example some meetings did not reply to my *Present and Prevented* surveys and therefore the responses form a subset of a larger data set. However they do not form a random sample of the larger data set since we cannot know whether there was any commonality or bias among the meetings that did not respond and therefore again use of the standard error would be inappropriate.

In a skewed distribution this isn't so and the values of  $\sigma$  will be different. Also the mean is no longer the typical value and will lie somewhere along either the falling or rising part of the curve. In these case's it is usual to quote the median as the appropriate 'typical' value although, to allow comparison the number of pieces of data ( $N$ ) and the mean are usually also quoted in brackets after the median: e.g.  $M_d (N, \bar{x})$ .

The median average has been used for discussion of most Quaker data, though there are circumstances (dictated by the value of  $sk$ ) when it was most appropriate to use the mean average. To avoid confusion when this has been necessary it has been clearly indicated.

Frequent use is made of normalised data to compare similar statistics (e.g. changes in membership) between two populations divergent in quantity (for example, membership of the Catholic Church and of the Society of Friends) or in time.

Normalisation involves setting a starting value, either arbitrary or calculated as, for instance a mean, and then working out by what factor each

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population would have to be multiplied to achieve that starting value. For instance, if one wished to compare the ways in which membership of the Catholic Church and the Society of Friends varied with time, when roughly the membership of one is approximately 15,000 and the other is 3,500,000, one could plot them on a simple linear graph but the resulting lines would very far apart. Plotting them on a logarithmic scale would introduce an element of exaggeration. However by choosing an arbitrary starting value such as 10,000 and calculating a 'normalising factor', applied to all values would produce a graph which is easy to compare. For example to convert the 15,000 starting membership of the Society of Friends to 10,000 would require multiplying 15,000 by 0.75. Multiplying all Quaker values by 0.75 would not affect the *pattern* of membership it would simply look as though the initial value was 10,000. Similarly to convert 3,500,000 to 10,000 would mean multiplying by 0.00286. Multiplying all Catholic values by this would simply make it look as though the starting value was 10,000 but again. It would not affect the pattern of membership. Differences in the patterns of membership are therefore clearly seen when these normalised values are plotted on the same linear graph.

*Patterns of Membership and Participation Among British Quakers  
1823 - 2012*

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**Appendix 2: Tuke Data 1823 - 1844**

Comparative Ages Page 2		Ages																													
1839-1841	Numbers	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12	13	14	15-20	20-25	25-30	30-35	35-40	40-45	45-50	50-55	55-60	60-65	65-70	70-75	75-80	80-85	85-90	90-95
Comparative Ages p2																															
York MM	303	5	6	4	7	2	7	2	4	1	7	6	3	8	3	29	30	26	20	11	29	21	14	20	14	9	9	3	2	1	
Holy Trinity	302.3	10.5	6.6	6.0	9.6	6.3	5.3	3.3	6.6	5.3	5.6	4.3	7.3	5.6	5.0	36.0	31.6	29.0	20.6	16.0	15.6	14.6	12.0	9.0	14.3	4.6	5.3	4.0	0.7	0.3	
St Giles	306.0	14.2	7.1	6.2	4.8	8.2	6.2	4.5	5.1	6.2	6.2	4.0	6.2	4.2	5.1	27.4	31.1	29.7	26.9	21.7	16.2	12.8	13.7	7.1	10.8	7.7	9.4	2.0	1.1	0.3	
Actual Numbers Page 2																															
Holy Trinity	908	31	20	18	29	19	16	10	20	16	17	13	22	17	15	108	95	87	62	48	47	44	36	27	43	14	16	12	2	1	1
St Giles	1076	50	25	22	17	29	22	16	18	22	22	14	22	15	18	96	109	104	94	76	57	45	48	25	38	27	33	7	4	1	
(including the asylum)																															

York MM page 4	
Births 1824-1833	90
Removals in	412
Admissions on application	47
Deaths 1824-1833	110
Removals out	301
Resignations & disownment	31

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These tables refer to the Members of the Society of Friends in the York District which comprises the City and a rural district around it also the two small towns nearby – Selby and Thirsk.

Age	Living 1824 p11		Living 1844 p10		Deaths 1823-1843 p10		Deaths 1824 - 1843 p11	
	Male	Female	Male	Female	Male	Female	Male	Female
1	3	2	3	2	6	4	2	2
2	2	4	2	4		2	2	2
3		4		4	1	2		1
4	2	5	2	5	1		1	1
5		2		2	2	1	1	1
6	3	5	3	5			2	
7		2		2		1		
8	3	1	3	1				
9	1	1	1	1			1	1
10	5	2	5	2		1		
11	2	4	2	4	1			
12	1	3	1	3	1		1	
13	1	4	4	4				
14	1	2	1	2				
15	3	1	3	1				
16	4	4	4	4		1		1
17	2	2	2	2		2		2
18	4	5	4	5	2		1	1
19	2	3	2	3	1	2	1	2
20	5	3	5	3		2		2
21	1	4	1	4	1	2	1	1
22	4	2	4	2		3	1	2
23	4	6	4	6	3	2	1	1
24	7		1		1	3	1	3
25	1	4	1	4				
26	1	1	1	1	1			
27	4	4	4	4	1	4		4
28	1	5	1	5	1	2	1	2
29	3	2	3	2	1		1	
30	5	2	5	2	1		1	
31	1	2	1	2				
32	2	2	2	2	1	1	1	1
33		2		2		1		1
34	4		4			2		2
35		1		1				
36	2	1	2	1			1	
37		2		2				
38	1	2	1	2				
39		2		2				

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Age	Living 1824 p11		Living 1844 p10		Deaths 1823-1843 p10		Deaths 1824 - 1843 p11	
	Male	Female	Male	Female	Male	Female	Male	Female
40	3	6	3	6			1	1
41		3		3				
42	1	2	1	2	1	1		1
43	2	4	2	4	2		1	
44	3	5	3	5	3			
45	6	6	6	6	6	1		1
46	3	1	3	1	3			
47							1	2
48	1	3	1	3	1	1		1
49							1	
50	2	2	2	2	2			
51	2	2	2	2	2			
52	2	1	2	1	2		1	
53	1	1	1	1	1			
54		3		3		2		1
55	1	4	1	4	1	1	1	3
56	6	2	6	2	6			1
57	1	1	1		1	1		1
58	2	2	2	2	2		1	
59		2		2		2		2
60	6	6	6	6	6	1		1
61						1		1
62		1		1		2	1	2
63		1		1				
64						2	2	2
65		2		2			1	
66		1		1		1		
67		1		1		1	1	1
68	1	2	1	2	1	1	1	1
69		1		1		3		3
70		5		5		1	2	
71						2		2
72	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1
73	1		1		1		1	
74	1		1		1	2		2
75						4	1	3
76						2		2
77		1		1				2
78	1		1		1	1		1
79		1		1		1	2	1

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Age	Living 1824 p11		Living 1844 p10		Deaths 1823-1843 p10		Deaths 1824 - 1843 p11	
	Male	Female	Male	Female	Male	Female	Male	Female
80	1		1		1	1	1	1
81						1	1	1
82		1		1		3	2	2
83						1	1	2
84						1		1
85						1	1	1
86		1		1		1		1
87						1	1	1
88							2	
89						1		1
90								
91						2		2
92								
93								2

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**Appendix 3: *The British Weekly Survey of 1888***

Quaker Meetings

Location	Name	AM	PM	Total
City of London	Devonshire House	41	46	87
Holborn	Peel Court, Smithfield	32	22	54
Camberwell	Friends Meeting House, Hanover Street	128	73	201
Whitechapel	Bedford Institute Wheeler Street	67	76	143
Stepney	Ratcliff Meeting House	54	87	141
Hackney	Park Street	171	76	247
Fulham	Middle Hall Hammersmith	54	19	73
Wandsworth	High Street Wandsworth	17	4	21
Islington	Mercers Road	87	41	128
Greenwich	Meeting House Deptford	13	110	123

Mission Meetings

Missions (Census taken on Sunday 28th November)

	AM	PM	Eve
Mission Memorial Bldgs Roscoe St Holborn	507	115	284
Meeting House John's Lane Holborn	23	61	42
Juvenile Christian Mission Board School Eagle Court Holborn		170	130
Christian Mission Hall, Drysdale Street Shoreditch			37
Albert Road Hall Peckham (Men, 70; women, 56)			126
Friends Meeting House Deptford	17		41

Appendices and Bibliography

Appendix 4: Mudie-Smith Quaker Data

Survey Between November 1902 and November 1903: Mudie-Smith The Religious Life of London Hodder and Stoughton London 1904						
Meeting	AM			PM		
	Men	Women	Children	Men	Women	Children
Avenue Road Acton	10	11	11	14	28	23
Meeting House North Street Wood Green	17	7	7	7	6	21
<b>Barclay Hall Green Street West Ham</b>	17	8	84	45	74	153
Bradley Hall Station Road Wood Green	7	8	2			
Meeting House Park Lane Croydon	65	68	26	21	29	
Meeting House Claremont Lane Esher	1	7				
Bush Corner Isleworth	7	4	1			
Meeting House Eden Street Kingston	11	10		17	19	14
Meeting House High Road Tottenham	18	9		40	14	78
Meeting House Bushwood road Wanstead	48	54	13	10	3	
Meeting House Harlesden Lane Willesden	20	9	14	15	13	7
<b>Meeting House Church Hill Winchmore Hill Southgate</b>	13	16	3	13	10	
Meeting House Hanover Street Camberwell	37	21	27	25	36	14
Albert Road Hall Camberwell	5	1	16	12	9	54
Blue Anchor Lane				3	7	43
Barnet Grove Hall Bethnal Green	29	27	180	39	116	243
Bedford Insititute Quaker Street Stepney	182	164	57	36	84	117
Institute Commercial Road (*)	13	7	7	13	22	14
Bunhill Field Finsbury	62	33	17	42	74	184
Peel Meeting House Finsbury	7	2	2	17	25	46
Greenleaf Road	14	16	8	44	53	18
Devonshire House	20	13	3	8	1	1
Hoxton Hall Shoreditch	7	3	11	29	55	16
Meeting House High Street Deptford	10	8		4	10	3
Meeting House Wandsworth High Street	9	9	8	5	4	
YMCA Rooms Ealing	5	6	3			
Meeting House Lower Mall Hammersmith	12	3	1	5	2	1
Meeting House Mercers Road Holloway	20	12	4	15	12	
Meeting House Park Street Stoke Newington	37	58	8	24	27	
Meeting House St Martins Lane Westminster	105	41	52	27	37	6
Meeting House Willoughby Street Hampstead	5	14	1			

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**Appendix 5: Present and Prevented Questionnaires**

Note that in the 2008 Questionnaire Local Meetings were still called Preparative Meetings and Area Meetings Monthly Meetings.

**Local Meetings**

**Local Meetings and Other Worshipping Groups**

**Questions to be Completed on Sunday (date) of May (year)**

1. **At this Meeting for Worship how many are present? (if none in any box please enter 0)** Please note that members means members of the Society whether part of this meeting or another and attenders means recognised attenders. Visitors means seekers or enquirers or those new to meeting

	Members	Attenders	Visitors
Men			
Women			

2. **How often does the meeting have a children's class or meeting?**  
Please tick one

Every Week	Once a fortnight	Once a month	Regularly but less frequently	As and when children are present	Never

3. If there is a children's class at **today's** Meeting for Worship are many children are there? (If there was an intention to hold a class but no children present, please enter 0 in the appropriate box. If there is no children's meeting please enter NA)  
Children are those who are not adults and who are absent for all or Part of Meeting for Worship to attend a children's class. We are aware that some Meetings might not a children's class on the day of this questionnaire. Please do not complete this question unless there is class **today**.

Boys	Girls

4. **Members and Attenders**

At today's date how many members and recognised attenders in total (not just at today's Meeting for Worship) are there on the Meeting's address list?

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Please count all listed, including those that are housebound, you may not have seen for some time or who live at a distance.

	Adult Members	Child Members	Attenders	Children not In Membership
Male				
Female				

**5. In your judgement is your Meeting House / Meeting Venue in one of the following areas?**

Urban (e.g. town or city)	
Semi-urban (small rural town)	
Rural (village or remote)	

**6. Do you meet in? (Please tick the appropriate box)**

Quaker Owned Premises	Rented Premises	Donated Premises <sup>1</sup>

<sup>1</sup>Donated Premises: for example a home or room that is donated free of charge

**7. In the past 12 months has your Meeting considered moving or closing down (Please tick the appropriate box)**

Has considered moving	
Has considered closing entirely	

If moving has been considered please tick

	From Own Premises	From Rented Premises	From Donated Premises
To Own Premises			
To Rented Premises			
To Donated Premises			

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**8. Appointments**

Meaning **all** the appointments for which your local worshipping group is responsible (for example, clerk, assistant clerk, treasurer, local council of churches, premises committee, correspondents of various kinds – the list is not exhaustive). Appointments will vary from Meeting to Meeting. Note that **we are seeking the number of appointments and not the number of appointees**. One appointee may hold more than appointment. Please include all members of committees or sub committees and working groups. When considering elders and overseers please note that while names come from meetings, they are Area Meeting appointments. Include them here only if **they are appointed by the Local Meeting**.

How many appointments are there in total (including all committees)?	
At today's date how many are vacant?	

Please list all unfilled appointments


**Appendices and Bibliography**

QUESTIONS TO BE COMPLETED AT THE FIRST BUSINESS MEETING ON OR FOLLOWING  
**Sunday (Date) of May (Year)**

1.

Name of Meeting	
Date of Business Meeting	

2. **At this business meeting, how many members and attenders were present?**

	Members	Attenders
Men		
Women		

3. **Do you hold business meetings:**

<b>Monthly (please tick)</b>	<b>Less than Monthly (please state frequency)</b>	<b>As and when there is business to discuss (please tick)</b>

**THANK YOU FOR YOUR COOPERATION**

**PLEASE RETURN THE COMPLETED QUESTIONNAIRE TO:**

**Bill Chadkirk**

**FREEPOST**

**Area (Monthly) Meetings**

**Area Meeting**

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QUESTIONS TO BE COMPLETED AT THE AREA MEETING ON OR FOLLOWING THE  
**(DATE) OF MAY (YEAR)**

1. **At this Area Meeting how many are present?**

	Members	Attenders
Men		
Women		

Appendices and Bibliography

**2. Appointed Representatives**

How many constituent meetings failed to appoint representatives to this Area Meeting	
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**3. Appointments**

Of **all** appointments for which your Area Meeting is responsible (for example clerk, assistant clerk, treasurer, local council of churches, local peace committee and etc. – the list is not exhaustive and will vary from Meeting to Meeting).

Please note that we are seeking the number of appointments, not appointees. One appointee may hold more than one appointment.

When considering elders and overseers please note that usually, while names come from Local Meetings, they are Area Meeting appointments. Exclude them here only if they are appointed by the Local Meeting.

A.	How many appointments are there in total?	
B.	At today's date how many are vacant?	

Please list the unfilled appointments


**Appendices and Bibliography**

**THANK YOU FOR YOUR COOPERATION**

**PLEASE RETURN THE COMPLETED QUESTIONNAIRE TO:**

**BILL CHADKIRK**

**FREEPOST**

**Appendices and Bibliography**

**Appendix 6: Questions relevant to chapter 5**

- Name of meeting and date of completion of the questionnaire (to cross check against the specified date)
  
- **Members and attenders**  
“At **today’s date** how many members and recognised attenders in total (not just those at today’s Meeting for Worship) are on the Meeting’s address list? Please count all listed, including those that are housebound, you may not have seen for some time or who live at some distance.”
  - Adult members (by gender)
  - Child members (by gender)
  - Attenders (by gender)
  - Children not in membership (by gender)
  
- **In your judgement is your Meeting House / Meeting venue in one of the following areas?**
  - Urban (e.g. town or city)
  - Semi-urban (small rural town)
  - Rural (village or remote)
  
- **Do you meet in?**
  - Quaker owned premises?
  - Rented premises?
  - Donated premises?
  
- **In the last 12 months has your Meeting considered moving or closing down?**
  - Has considered moving
  - Has considered closing entirely  
If moving has been considered please tick
  - To own premises: from own premises / from rented premises / from donated premises
  - To rented premises: from own premises / from rented premises / from donated premises
  - To donated premises: from own premises / from rented premises / from donated premises

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**Appendix 7 Reconstruction of Historical Data**

**1659 19,500** Rowntree “...early as 1659 petitions were presented to Parliament for the abolition of tithes, signed by about fifteen thousand men and upwards of seven thousand women”<sup>411</sup>. However, Thurnham gives birth rates for 1659 and using this information I estimate the number of Quakers to be about 17,000 in 1659 (chapter 3). Taking the mean of these estimates we have a figure of 19,500.

**1680 57,500** Again taken from Rowntree<sup>412</sup> who estimated the number of Quakers from the marriage rate recorded in the Society of Friends registers between 1670 and 1679, which averaged 282 per year. Rowntree assumed one marriage per year per 140 persons (but gives no reason for this figure) to arrive at a membership of 40,000. He argues that the registers and returns are incomplete and suggests adding another fifteen to twenty-thousand adherents to the 40,000. I have opted to add 17,500 to arrive at 57,500.

**1691 60,000** Rowntree adds “*Statistics are regarded so much in the light of an affliction by the popular mind that we will not detain the reader by enlarging on the different items of evidence ... that there were not fewer than sixty-thousand persons in England and Wales ‘of the persuasion of the people called Quakers’* “. Thus, we cannot now know why Rowntree arrived at this much-quoted figure, simply than he did so. If true, it would mean a rise in numbers from zero in 1652 to 60,000 in 39 years, with the substantial part

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<sup>411</sup> Rowntree *Quakerism Past and Present* 69

<sup>412</sup> *Ibid.* 71 -72

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of the rise occurring post 1659.

**1696 25,000** Rowntree records an anonymous anti-Quaker pamphlet published in 1696 entitled *Snake in the Grass* as stating that “the Quakers are not fewer, by the lowest computation than 100,000 here in England”. He also notes that William III gathered reports on the proportions of ‘churchmen, dissenters and papists’ and found that dissenters number 108,676 above the age of 16. Rowntree then writes that after allowing for an unspecified number of minor sects “*the numbers of the different denominations are not specified...[but]...the four chief bodies ... the Presbyterians, the Anabaptists, the Independents, and the Quakers were about equal in numbers [and] this would give about fifty thousand as the number of the Friends*”. I find this curious. The author of *Snake in the Grass* probably overestimated the ‘threat’ from Friends to make a point. If Rowntree allowed the minor sects the odd 8,000 adherents and intended to divide the remaining 100,000 between the ‘four chief bodies...about equal in number’ it is very unclear how he arrived at 50,000. The figure should have been more like 25,000. He may have had the larger number in mind as more consistent with his 1696 estimate of 50,000 Quakers. However, I have chosen 25,000 here as more consistent with the evidence as recorded by Rowntree.<sup>413</sup>

**1800 19,800** Rowntree estimates the number of Quakers in England and Wales in 1800 at around 19,800 with the number of attenders at about 8,000. He estimates the number of Quakers in Ireland and Scotland at 4,500. The estimates were derived from annualising the number of marriages

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<sup>413</sup> Rowntree *Quakerism Past and Present* 69 – 70

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recorded between 1790 and 1809 and assuming a marriage for every 150 Friends<sup>414</sup>.

<b>1810, 18,920</b>	<b>1820, 18,040</b>	<b>1830, 17,160</b>
<b>1840, 16,275</b>	<b>1847, 15,345</b>	<b>1856, 15,430</b>

These figures are taken, unmodified, from Rowntree<sup>415</sup>. The figures between 1810 and 1830 are calculated from Rowntree's estimate of membership in 1800 '*From indications in several registries of births, marriages and deaths...*' Rowntree notes that '*...the number of members in the Society in 1840 was found by actual enumeration to be sixteen thousand two hundred and seventy-five, and in 1847 to be fifteen thousand three hundred and forty-five*'. He calculates the number of members in 1856 by reference to the marriage registers of the Society of Friends, estimating a reduction of 90 members per year between 1847 and 1856. The survey of 1840 is that contained in Table 1 and 2 of Thurnham's essay on the Statistics of insanity<sup>416</sup> while the survey of 1847 is probably that of Samuel Tuke<sup>417</sup>, the detail of which cannot now be found.

**1851 20,000** I have calculated this total in the following manner.

Given that in 1904, 46.5% of available members were present at meeting for worship and in *Present and Prevented* about 38% there has been an apparent decline of about 8.5% in 102 years (1904 – 2006). While we cannot assume an unvarying decline given the period it must overall have been a shallow curve and we can approximate a linear trend of about 0.008%

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<sup>414</sup> Rowntree *Quakerism Past and Present* 74, 87

<sup>415</sup> Rowntree *Quakerism Past and Present* 87, 88

<sup>416</sup> Chapter 3

<sup>417</sup> Chapter 2

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per year. Assuming a similar retrospective trend, we can make a guesstimate of attendance in 1851 of about 51% of available Quakers. In the 1851 Religious Census, Mann recorded 13,341 Quakers at morning meeting for worship (chapter 6). This would give us a total of 26,199 Quakers in 1851.

However, this figure will include both members and attenders and we know from the Tabular Statement that in 1861 attenders and associates formed about 23% of the total adherents and applying this to the calculated figure we find an estimate of 20,173 (20,000) members. Obviously, the derivation of this figure is as uncertain as any calculation might be, relying as it does on assumptions about trends in proportional attendance at meeting and the proportions of members and attenders in 1851. The fact that it is approximately 25% greater than the figures for 1847 and 1856 (the latter also an estimate) merely underlines the uncertainties in trying to estimate the historical membership of the Society of Friends

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