

THE HUNSDON QUAKERS

By the early 17th century several Hunsdon parishioners had become non-conformists. In 1620 Lady Susan Foster, widow of the judge Sir Thomas Foster of Nine Ashes and her son, Thomas, were presented at the Sessions Court for not attending the Parish Church or any other place of common prayer for six months.

Another indictment at the Court was that of George Rutt in 1646 for not attending church. William Graves the minister ejected from Little Munden Rectory in 1662, was presented at the Court in 1662 for living "within 5 miles of a congregation". He was living with his brother-in-law, Thomas Rodgers, at Hunsdon Lodge farm. The case against him was later dismissed, as Hunsdon is more than five miles from Hertford.

The puritan rector of Hunsdon, Phillip Elliot, although not ejected was absent from the church for four years after the restoration. During this time John Davis took over the care of the church.

A number of Hunsdon people had become quakers by the 1650's. Robert Burrell a tailor was one of these early quakers. He was indicted for causing a disturbance in the church during a service in 1657. In February the following year Phillip Elliot the rector was again disturbed by a quaker. This time by Henry Feast a grocer from Roydon. As the rector was about to begin his sermon Feast stood up and in a loud voice said "The prayer of the wicked is an abomination to the Lord". When the rector asked if Feast was applying the scripture to him, the Quaker's reply was inaudible "by reason of the tumult in the church".

The names and occupations of many Hunsdon quakers are known because they were so frequently presented either at the Sessions or Ecclesiastical courts for non-payment of church rates and for not attending the parish church which every parishioner was obliged to do. They were persecuted, often heavily fined and excommunicated.

In 1660 the rector sued William Hutchins, a quaker, of Hunsdon Mill Farm for tithes to the value of £1.19s.11d.

The rector won the case and Hutchins had goods worth £3 confiscated.

In 1661 at least eight Hunsdon quakers were imprisoned for over a year in Hertford gaol for refusing to swear the oath of allegiance to King Charles II. It was against the principle of the quakers to swear an oath. Robert Burrell the tailor was one of the eight men. The others were, Thomas Lamb another tailor, also described as a yeoman, Edward Camp a blacksmith, his son George Camp a shoemaker, William Crook a maltster,

Thomas Thresher a yeoman, John Goodman Miller of Hunsdon Mill and William Hutchins. These men were all fairly well off except perhaps George Camp the shoemaker.

Five quakers were presented at the Archdeaconry of Middlesex Court in 1662 for not contributing to the repair of the church. Four of them had been in prison the previous year. Thomas Thresher and John Goodman were fined 1s. 9d. each, William Hutchins 3s. 5d., Edward Camp 11d., and Edward Wharley farmer butcher 3s. 5d. All except Hutchins were excommunicated.

In the next year for another claim, Hutchins had his entire harvest taken as well as the quarters of barley stored in his farm. This meant complete ruin for a small farmer for refusing to pay tithes and he died later in the same year.

Thomas Thresher was again heavily fined in 1662. For a tithe claim of £5 he had goods to the value of £29 seized "to his utter undoing" and he died shortly afterwards. The entry of his death in the parish register states that he was "buried by the quakers in a yard at Roidon". Presumably the quaker community at Roydon, of which Henry Feast was a member, had their own burial ground.

Two years later six quakers were presented at court for standing excommunicate. Among them were Cockett Wilson and his wife who jointly ran a private school, probably for the quaker children. In the same year six people were taken to court for not having their children baptized in the parish church. These were Robert Burrell junior, Thomas Lamb, Richard Finch, John Hunsdon and Widow Wharley.

Margaret and Edward Wharley who lived at the Pump House in Hunsdon were probably the wealthiest of the early Hunsdon quakers. When Edward died soon after the birth of his son, Abraham, Margaret refused to have her son baptized in the parish church. Although brought up in a quaker household and sadly for his mother, Abraham did not remain a quaker. In 1686 when he was 22 years old, he was baptized in Hunsdon Church, Abraham lived in Stanstead Abbots and like his father became a very prosperous farmer. When he died in 1723 he was buried at Hunsdon. His large tombstone erected by his nephew and heir, Richard Mead, is on the north side of Hunsdon Church and is now a listed monument.

The churchwardens of Hunsdon had some difficulty in getting money for church repairs, as many of the wealthier parishioners were quakers who refused to pay church rates.

In 1662 the churchwardens had to admit to the Archdeaconry of Middlesex Court "that they have quakers in their parish" and were ordered "to specify their names".

They also had to admit that "the church and chancel want repair, there is noe service of the glebe, surplice, nor book of Cannons, book of homilies or register book of christenings" etc.

They were ordered by the court to provide these things. Two years later ^{when} they still had not done so, probably due to lack of money, they were excommunicated.

The churchwardens were evidently very reluctant to report neighbours and relatives to the courts and four years later they were again in trouble for not making a presentment.

At this time a large section of the population of Hunsdon were non-conformists or quakers. It is estimated from the Hearth Tax Returns of 1664 that there were about 64 households in Hunsdon and at least 10 of these were quaker families.

In the twenty years between 1664 and 1684 the Hunsdon churchwardens were mainly non-conformists and often in trouble for neglecting their duties. Excommunication which had always been a severe punishment was now ignored by quakers and non-conformists.

In 1667 Richard Finch a quaker was elected as churchwarden and Thomas Faint a non-conformist elected to serve with him. This is not surprising in a village where so many of the parishioners had become non-conformists.

Two years later the churchwarden elect, William Crowley of Briggens was excommunicated for refusing to take the oath of office. The next year he was excused from serving as he had been charged by the magistrate, Sir Thomas Leventhorpe, with frequenting seditious conventicles.

These quaker conventicles were held once a month by Edward Camp the blacksmith. In 1664 he was presented at the Bishop of London's visitation, as an excommunicate person who "usually holdeth a conventicle in our parish once a month, which the Magistrates hath endeavoured to suppress".

Edward Camp is perhaps the best known of the Hunsdon quakers through his numerous court appearances over a period of ten years. His stubborn determination to adhere to his quaker principles in spite of continuous harassment by the magistrates and court officials has shown him to be a man of strong personality. It was probably through him that the quaker movement spread so quickly and extensively in Hunsdon. His house and blacksmith's shop stood in the centre of the village near the pump, or in his day, the village well.

His trade as a blacksmith would bring him in frequent contact with most local people. The fact that he was able to hold conventicles secretly in so small a village suggests that he was popular and had the help and goodwill of neighbours and friends.

He married Grace Nott in 1615 and bought his own freehold house in 1628. His family consisted of four sons and three daughters. The eldest son, Edward, emigrated to Barbados

in 1635 when he was nineteen. Two other sons, George and William were both quakers. Philemon the fourth son may have been a quaker although he is not mentioned in any court case. He was in his father's blacksmiths business and he and his family lived in two rooms in his father's house. It was probably Philemon who kept the business going and saved the family from ruin, while his father spent a year in Hertford gaol.

Edward Camp was a very remarkable man, tough and strong both mentally and physically. When he died in 1682 he was about 90 years old. There are now many English and American descendants of Edward Camp, some of whom have recently visited Hunsdon to see his old home.

In Hunsdon Church there is a bell dated 1668 inscribed with three names, Philip Elliot rector, John Hunsdon and Joseph Calton, churchwardens, which seems to have been given to the church by these three people.

The curious thing is that John Hunsdon and Joseph Calton appear to have been non-conformists, as both had been in court for not attending church and in 1671 Joseph Calton was excommunicated although he remained a churchwarden for another three years.

In 1672 nineteen Hunsdon people were indicted for three weeks absence from church. They included the well known Quakers, Edward Camp, Robert Burrell, Thomas Lamb and Margaret Wharley, with many new names. Amongst them were farmers, carpenters, two tanners, two tailors, a bricklayer and several quaker widows.

Persecution then died out until 1680 when there was a general revival of persecution in East Herts. Hunsdon was less affected than some other villages but two wealthier of the Hunsdon quakers were heavily fined. William Voake, a maltster, had 70 quarters of malt, 2 horses and most of his household goods seized to pay a £20 fine for not going to church.

Thomas Godfrey, a yeoman, and a physician, who lived in a large house called Copthall, had goods to the value of £80 seized for not going to church and for not taking communion at Easter. Thomas Godfrey became famous for the manufacture of a cordial which became popular and was widely used for the next two centuries. Called "Godfrey's Cordial" it was used as a baby soother by the child minders in the London slums in Victorian times. It was sold by Humphrey's of Ware and in London but the place of manufacture is not known.

After these two fines the Hunsdon quakers were left in peace and just a few years later came the Toleration Act and freedom of worship.

It is interesting to speculate how the new quaker ideas had first come to Hunsdon. Very probably the quaker way of

life was introduced by people who had frequent contact with London and who had the opportunity to attend the various religious meetings of the day. Two such people were the Wharley brothers, Edward and Henry, who had business in London. Edward was probably supplying cattle for the London meat trade and Henry was in the cloth trade in London. They were amongst the earliest of the Hunsdon quakers.

The three sons of Henry were all quakers and it is likely that they were often in London at meetings. Eventually Abraham went to Pennsylvania with William Penn and Henry went to Barbados. Daniel a glover and woolendraper in London married Mary, daughter of Isaac Penington, a well known quaker of Amersham, Bucks. Daniel became a very wealthy man having inherited his father's Hunsdon property and some of his brother's. He had kept closely in touch with his quaker friends and relatives in Hunsdon and when at last they could have a Meeting House it was Daniel who provided it in 1695 on his own freehold ground.

In 1700 Daniel sold his Hunsdon property to the Calverts of Nine Ashes, reserving out of the sale a house occupied by Thomas Lamb the quaker and the "structure or building commonly called The Meeting House". At that date Daniel Wharley was the owner of the Hunsdon Meeting House.

In 1715 after two of their children had died in the unhealthy conditions in London, Daniel and his wife moved to Chalfont St. Giles. He set up a trusteeship for the Hunsdon Meeting House with members of the Hertford quakers. Daniel probably had little more to do with Hunsdon but was soon involved with quakers in the area where he now lived. In "Jordans" the Meeting House near Chalfont St. Giles, is a board on the wall, giving an account of Daniel's work there with the quakers.

The Hunsdon Meeting House continued in use throughout the eighteenth century apparently looked after by the Burr family who were quakers of Ware.

In 1691 Joseph Burr of Ware, one of the trustees of Hunsdon Meeting House, married Ann daughter of Thomas Godfrey, physician of Hunsdon. He and his wife later came to live in Hunsdon possibly in the house once occupied by Thomas Lamb and owned by Daniel Wharley.

In 1733 their daughter Ann was married in Hunsdon Meeting House as were two other members of the Burr family both daughters of John Burr of Ware. The Burrs were connected with Hunsdon for almost a hundred years. A Mr. Burr was paying the land tax for the Meeting House in 1786.

Occasionally 2 trustees from Hertford attended meetings at Hunsdon and reported that the meeting was small but run "to good satisfaction". Late in the eighteenth century Hunsdon began to be a financial burden on the Hertford quakers and

several times they discussed closing it. Even as late as 1810 extensive repairs were carried out and the building retiled. The total bill came to £21. 5s. 9d., which was paid by the Hertford Friends to John Haney the local builder and Andrew Spellor the carpenter.

Five years later in 1815, the Hunsdon Meeting House was sold to Nicholson Calvert Lord of the Manor for £150. There is no evidence of what became of the Meeting House but in 1898 a small seventeenth century building owned by Charles Redington, the local builder, was let to Mr. J.H. Buxton at £7 per annum for use as a Mission Hall. On the death of Mr. Redington his property was sold by auction, several cottages and the Mission Hall.

These were bought for £100 by Mr. John Burr of Olives Farm Hunsdon. The Mission Hall was made into a small house of two rooms and until recently a member of Mr. Burr's family was living there, in a house that may well have been the old Quaker Meeting House. John Burr may have been a descendant of the Ware Burrs, as he was a local man having been born in the village of Widford.

G. Palmer

I wish to thank Mr. Anthony Kirby who kindly gave me notes from his own research on Nonconformity in Herts. Without that help this paper could not have been written.

Other sources at Hertford Record Office.

The Calvert papers, Quaker Records and Title Deeds of "The Gate House".

A LIST OF HUNSDON QUAKERS WITH DATES WHEN THEY WERE KNOWN
TO HAVE BEEN RESIDENT IN THE PARISH.

Robert Burrell, tailor, 1657-69
James Stimson, carpenter, 1663-83
Thomas Lamb, tailor, 1664-83
Henry Lamb, 1667-69
William Crook Maltster, 1661-83
John Goodman, miller, 1661-83
John Goodman Son, 1697
Edward Goodman, 1665
Thomas Thresher & Elizabeth, his wife, 1660-72
Edward Camp and his wife, 1650-82
Edward Wharley, butcher, 1661-64
Margaret Wharley, 1661-1710
daughters Elizabeth and Mary
sons Edward and Henry
Henry Wharley of Parndon 1664-72
sons Henry, Abraham, Daniel
Thomas Godfrey, physician, 1680-85
William Hutchins, farmer, 1661-62
George Camp, Shoemaker, 1661-70
William Voakes, maltster, 1680-84
Katherine King, 1674
Elizabeth Sutton, 1676
James Stevenson
Richard Finch 1681
Michael Day, 1661
James Stevenson, carpenter, 1679
Josiah Goodman, 1661
Cockett Wilson and his wife, schoolmaster, 1662-65
William Camp junior, 1668-69

HUNSDON.

Acres, 1,868 ; pop., 526 ; value, £263.

In 1552 Nicholas Ridley, returning from Cambridge, paid a casual visit to the Princess Mary at Hunsdon, in Herts. He offered to preach before her, but she rejected the proposal and bitterly reproached the Reformed Church. From this interview he appears to have contracted a dislike of her, and therefore concurred in the steps taken for her exclusion from the throne. Here was the manor of Henry Carey, Lord Hunsdon, kinsman to Queen Elizabeth, who entertained her twice at his house. William Preston was rector here in 1576. Esdras Bland followed from 1586 to 1593, and at the same time held the living of Latton, in Essex. He was father to Esdras Bland, Puritan minister of Buckland, and was followed by ROBERT BAINES, who was appointed by Lord Hunsdon, and was a distinguished Puritan. He was Fellow of Christ's College, Cambridge, and took the part of Sampson Sheffield, when he with the college itself was charged by Dr. Copcot with Puritan sentiments. His name occurs with other of the fellows among the signatures to a letter to Lord Burghley, thanking him for putting an end to the proceedings against Sheffield.¹ Robert Baines was minister at Hunsdon from 1593 to 1608.

¹ Strype, *Annals*, III., i. 718 ; ii. 500. and preacher at St. Mary's. Sheffield was of Christ's College, M.A.,

He was succeeded by EDWARD JUDE, M.A., vicar of Nasing, Essex, from 1608 to 1630, and likewise rector of Hunsdon. He continued here till his death in 1644. He was vicar of Nasing when the Pilgrim Fathers left the village for New England.¹ Philip Elliot, M.A., was the minister of this parish during the Commonwealth. He was appointed July 20th, 1644, on the death of Jude. He signs the petition of Hertfordshire ministers to the House of Lords in 1646, thanking the lords for easing them "from many pressures under which we groaned," praying them "to establish government according to our Covenant," etc. In 1650 the jurors, Anthony Cramphorne and Thomas Thresser, present (in behalf of the appointed Commissioners to inquire touching Church livings) that house, glebe, and tithes are worth £75 *per annum*, and that PHILIP ELLIOT² is parson. He was probably here till the Restoration, and whether he was ejected from the living or not is not recorded; but we find one John Davis here 20th July, 1661, who removed to Chishall Parva, in Essex, 1684, was S.T.P., and was still living in 1700. But we also find in the *Acta* of the Archdeaconry of Middlesex Philip Elliot named as rector 1666—1677; and the next name that appears is Henry Nelson in 1686.

In 1666 George Rutt, Thos. Thresher, Thos. Lamb, Cocket Wilson, Edw. Camp, John Goodman, Robert Burrell, John Gates, all of Hunsdon, were presented for not coming to the

¹ John Elyott of Hunsdon occurs in the list of freeholders in the hundred of Braughing, circ. 1561. See Lansd. MSS. 5, fol. 49, quoted by W. Winters, Royal Hist. Soc. *Transactions*, vol. x., who says that Jude resigned his living at Nasing in 1630, and was followed there by Lionel Goodrick. *Memorials of the Pilgrim Fathers*, by W. Winters, p. 23.

² "Bennett Eliot, the father of the apostle to the Indians, John Eliot, and of Philip Eliot, another of the Pilgrim Fathers, possessed lands in this parish. He bequeathed the rents of lands in the parishes of Ware, Widford, and Eastwick, in the county of Hertford, unto my trusty and well-beloved friends, Wm. Curtis, my son-in-law, Nicholas Camp the younger, and John Keyes, all of the said parish of Nazinge, for the space of eight years from the time of my

decease, quarterly *to pay unto my sonne,* JOHN ELLIOTT, the some of eight pounds a yeare of lawfull money of England, for and towards the maintenance in the University of Cambridge, where he is a scholler." This extract, together with a long list of Eliots belonging to this family, may be found in *Notices of the Pilgrim Fathers*, by William Winters, published in the *Transactions of the Royal Hist. Soc.*, vol. x. A "James Eliot, minister and preacher of God's Word," is named in the Hunsdon registers for 1607. Also "Frances Ellyot, daughter of Philip Elyote and Frances his wife, born June 8th, baptized June 10th, 1655. This was probably Philip, the Commonwealth minister here. "Phillippe Elliot of Olyves buried February 14th, 1591," may have been his grandfather.