

# CAKE & COCKHORSE



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## CAKE & COCKHORSE

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Our main articles deal with the origins of Quakerism in Banbury and with dialect in the Banbury area.

It seems odd that, in puritan and dissenting Banbury of the 17th century, Quakers were looked on as dangerous subversives. But so it was, though the movement included substantial citizens. Barrie Trinder tells the story.

Dialect compulsively fascinates everyone. It is better heard than read and we look forward to Mrs Grimes' talk in next winter's programme. We will welcome any additions to the oral history of Banburyshire to fill out her excellent introductory survey of this subject which is new to Cake and Cockhorse.

The notice of the annual general meeting accompanies this issue, which includes the annual report and accounts. We hope to see you at Tudor Hall on July 14.

You will all have heard of the appeal for the preservation of Banbury Cross, and may have subscribed to it. You may not have heard of the appeal for the restoration of the Wroxton Abbey dovecote; £5 to the Director will entitle you to a personalized nesting box and thus a niche in history.

In this issue we are printing a list of members. By the time it reaches you it will not be wholly accurate, including some who have not paid 1979 subscriptions and excluding recently joined members. But we hope it will be useful. The list is ordered by areas. The objective is to

## THE ORIGINS OF QUAKERISM IN BANBURY

The Society of Friends, or the Quakers, have been active in Banbury for more than three centuries. For most of this period they have been a small but active religious body, whose behaviour and character have been of the utmost respectability. But Quakerism originated in the Interregnum, the period when the world was turned upside down. For more than a decade it was a movement which was in constant and public dispute with the established authorities. The purpose of this article is to provide as full and as detailed a narrative as the sources will allow<sup>1</sup> of the beginnings of Quakerism in Banbury, and of the Friends' conflicts with the borough authorities up to the end of the seventeenth century. The article is based on research undertaken some years ago for the Victoria County History,<sup>2</sup> and includes much detail which for reasons of space had to be left out of the account published in that History. Since the article was written there has been much research on related topics both nationally and locally. It has been possible to include here some biographical details of various Quakers and their opponents which have come to light during work undertaken in connection with the publication of the seventeenth century borough accounts, and other records volumes,<sup>3</sup> but no attempt has been made to relate the article to the recent literature on the social origins of the early Quakers.<sup>4</sup> That is a task which must be left to a future historian with specialist interests in the subject.

George Fox, the founder of the Society of Friends, was the son of a Leicestershire weaver. He began to preach in 1647-48, and formed soon afterwards his 'Society of Friends of Truth', which was nick-named the 'Quakers' in 1650. The Society quickly attracted support, and numerous members travelled the country proclaiming the truth as they saw it.

In late August or early September 1654 John Camm and John Audland, two Westmorland Quakers, passed through Banbury en route from London to Bristol. They held a meeting at 'a place called ye Castle adjoining to Banbury', and were received by Edward Vivers, who, with some of his family, was converted to the Quaker way of thinking at about this time. He was the youngest son of Richard Vivers, who had been a churchwarden in 1605, and Mayor in 1621 and 1633; in 1619 he had been presented for refusing to pay his easement to the church, which perhaps indicates some tradition of religious unorthodoxy.<sup>5</sup>

On 13 January 1655, Anne Audland and Mabel Camm, the wives of John Audland and John Camm, together with one Thomas Robinson, came to Banbury, were welcomed by Edward Vivers and held a meeting at which they won many converts. Almost immediately after their arrival, Anne Audland and a friend went to the parish church. After the priest had concluded his sermon the friend began to speak, but was silenced by the crowd. Anne Audland protested, but was hustled out by the congregation, and committed to prison by John Austin, the Mayor, and William Allen, a

magistrate who had been mayor the previous year.

In June of the same year, Jane Waugh, a serving maid who worked for the Camms, 'preached against deceit' in the Market Place, and was beaten and abused by a crowd and thrown into prison. On the following Sunday Nathaniel Weston went to the church where the vicar, Samuel Wells, was preaching. On seeing him Wells interrupted his sermon to say that someone had come into the congregation whom he feared might cause a disturbance, and that he could not therefore proceed to prayer. Weston was hauled out of the church by William Wheately, a magistrate, and taken to the town gaol after refusing to swear an oath. Early in the following month, Sarah Tims, a native of Mollington, met Samuel Wells in the graveyard, and cried out 'Man, fear the Lord!' She was attacked by a mob and committed to prison by the mayor.

The trial of the imprisoned Quakers began on 26 September 1655, with many Quakers from all over Britain present in Banbury to witness the proceedings. The judge was John Griffith, Deputy Recorder of the Borough, and John Austin was also in attendance. Before the trial commenced, a Quaker who was in the court, one Thomas Cole (Colle), who had been Tithingman in the town in 1654-55, refused to remove his hat when so ordered, and was fined £5 on the spot. When he refused to pay he was sent to prison. Robert Rich, a London Quaker, objected when 'Priest Jones' and 'Priest Smart', who were in court, were provocatively invited to put on their hats, but he was silenced.

Anne Audland was tried on a charge of blasphemy, and in spite of attempts to influence the jury, and threats that she might be burned, she was declared 'not guilty', but she was convicted of misdemeanour in calling the minister a 'false prophet'. She protested her innocence, but was sent back to prison and detained for at least a further fifteen months.

When Jane Waugh was brought into court the authorities refused to tell her what offences she had committed, and after refusing to give sureties, she was returned to prison where she was kept for five weeks. Sarah Tims was similarly brought to the court without being charged, and when she inquired how she had broken the law, the mayor replied that 'sweeping the house and washing dishes was the first part of the law to her', and she too was sent back to the gaol and kept there for six months. Nathaniel Weston refused to swear the oath of abjuration in the court, or to give sureties for his good behaviour, and was re-committed to prison without a charge being made.

At this point Thomas Halhead, one of the magistrates, said to the judge that he suspected the Quakers to be Jesuits in disguise. It seems that a crowd of Friends were outside the court building, and Robert Rich who was at their head was invited back in. When the judge asked him to speak, he protested against the injustice of the proceedings, and was quickly dragged away to prison.

On the following Sunday, 30 September, Margaret Vivers, who was

probably the wife of Nathaniel, elder brother of Edward Vivers, went to the parish church and began to speak when Wells finished his sermon. He ordered her to be taken to the gaoler's house, to which she was dragged by a jeering crowd. When a Friend went to visit her he was pushed and abused. Before the mob dispersed they encountered Richard Farnsworth, a Yorkshire Quaker who had come to Banbury for the trial. William Allen, recognised him, grinned at him, heaved his fist in anger, struck off his hat, and called for him to be taken to the stocks. The crowd seized him and he was put in prison. Allen's behaviour on this occasion fits in well with the attitude he displayed when he belligerently supported the mayor's attempts to move the sheep market in 1656.

The following day Farnsworth was asked to swear the oath of abjuration, which he refused. He was then told that if he would pay his gaol fees and promise to leave Banbury he could be freed, but again he refused. He was said to have been like a man in a trance, and when asked where he lived he replied: 'In the first place in God, in whom we live, move and have our being'. He was kept in prison for six months.

The Quaker protests against the borough authorities continued nevertheless. Mary Coats and Mary Lampery reprovved the vices of the mayor and magistrates and were sent to prison. The former was quickly released, but the latter was detained for sixteen days. Nathaniel Ball of Broughton was sent to gaol for speaking to the priest at the parish church, and William Sampson and Thomas Marshal for similar interruptions at other public assemblies. Christopher Burcott of Bristol and George Bayliss of London who were visiting Friends in Banbury were also imprisoned, the former for three days and the latter for several weeks. James Wagstaff was fined £2 for refusing to swear an oath, and on his refusal to pay was deprived of goods worth more than that value. Wagstaffe was a mercer, keeper of the Flower-de-Luce inn, and had served as a Tithingman and as Constable.

Richard Farnsworth preached through the grating of his prison, and the ill-treatment of the women Quakers attracted much publicity. Anne Audland was imprisoned in 'a close nasty place, several steps below ground, on the side whereof was a sort of common shore that received much of the mud of the town that at times did stink sorely, besides frogs and toads did crawl in her room, and there was no place for fire; yet she was in great content because it was God's cause'. Meetings were regularly held in the private houses of Friends, and by 1655 there was a strong body meeting under the leadership of James Wagstaff and Edward Vivers, and Bray Doily of Adderbury.

Some of the Quakers were obviously men of considerable standing in the town. Edward Vivers was a member of a family with a long record of office holding. He was a woollen draper, and in 1662 had taken from him three pieces of cloth valued at £12. He had been Constable in 1647-49, and his contribution of £2 to the gift to Charles II in 1661 suggests that he was

one of the wealthiest men in Banbury. His three-gabled house in High Street, which had ten hearths in 1662, still bears his initials, and is impressive evidence of his status. He was buried on 21 June 1685.

William, first Viscount Saye and Sele, bitterly attacked the Banbury Quakers in 1655. In a pamphlet he called Anne Audland 'that prating woman Audler', and tried to establish that the 'falling down, foaming at the mouth, Quaking and using unnatural gestures' caused by her preaching were contrary to the Word of God. This was not, as has been suggested in several publications on the history of Banbury, the first use of the term 'Quaker'. The "New English Dictionary" shows that it was in use well before this date. The Quakers printed a reply to Lord Saye and Sele which proclaimed that Anne Audland's preaching caused many to know,

'the power of God manifest which caused trembling and quaking, of which we are not ashamed, though thou revile it,'

and concluded,

'consider William, what will all the glory and dignity of the world do for thee, if thou go with thy grey head laded with sin unto the grave'.

Quakers from neighbouring villages were attending meetings in Banbury in 1655, and the borough authorities tried to stop them by confiscating their horses. Friends from Radway, Gaydon and Tadmarton suffered in this way. The Quakers refused to pay the sums for which they were assessed for repairs to the parish church, which had been damaged in the Civil War, and in 1656 and 1657 several suffered confiscation of goods in lieu of fines. In 1658 Richard Keite of Upper Norton was detained in prison for several months for going to the 'steeple house' in Banbury, and Margaret Freebody of King's Sutton was kept in prison for five weeks or more for speaking to Samuel Wells. In the following year Hannah Alcock of Shutford was detained for a similar offence, and Richard Russell was kept in Oxford Gaol for about two months for refusing to swear an oath. Russell's house was assessed for four hearths in 1662 and three in 1665. He was buried on 29 November 1687.

There were forty Quaker households attending the Preparative Meeting in Banbury in 1660 some of them from outside the town.<sup>6</sup> The restoration of the Stuart monarch brought a sharp renewal of persecution, on a more brutal scale than had even taken place during the Interregnum. More goods were taken in lieu of payments for the repair of the church, and seven men were imprisoned in Oxford for seven or eight weeks for refusing the oath of allegiance and not promising to cease meeting together. Twenty-eight others were arrested at a meeting in Banbury and committed to the local gaol by Edward Welchman, then mayor, for refusing the oath of allegiance, and they too were kept for about two months before being released on the orders of Sir Anthony Cope. In 1661 eleven men were imprisoned for several days, and one for three weeks, for similarly

refusing the oath of allegiance. Richard Russell had goods to the value of twelve shillings taken from him while he was at a meeting. Nine Banbury Quakers and five from surrounding villages were taken from a meeting by Richard Halhead, the mayor, and when they refused the oath, four were sent to Oxford and detained for three months. On 6 October 1661 a party of soldiers burst into a meeting and beat and bruised many Quakers while dragging them out of the house, wounding one in the breast with a sword. On 11 October a letter to Lord Falkland, Lord Lieutenant of Oxfordshire, from the Lords of the Council asked him

'to prevent and dissipate all conventions of Sectaries and like dangerous persons within his jurisdiction',  
and especially,

'a numbrous conventicle of insolent Fansticks who usually assemble in the town of Banbury and refuse to disperse themselves; but obstinately continue their meetings'.

It thus seems that the Quaker meeting in Banbury became the focus for many who were opposed to the restored monarchy. In 1662 Edward Vivers, Henry Phillips and five others were taken from a meeting and fined, the two former losing goods as well as money. Phillips was a hatter whose house was assessed as having four hearths in 1662 and 1665. His wife was buried in the Quaker meeting house yard on 6 August 1667. Jane Waugh was dragged from a meeting to spend a further three months in prison.

In 1662 the vicar excommunicated eight Friends for failing to pay their assessments for the repair of the church. Henry Phillips was arrested by soldiers under the command of Sir Francis Henry Lee and kept prisoner for eight and a half years because he would not promise to attend church instead of the Quaker meetings, and because he refused to swear the oath of allegiance. In 1664 ten Friends were taken from a meeting by Nathaniel Hill, the mayor, and Nathaniel Wheatley and Richard Halhead, two magistrates, and they were kept in prison for six weeks. In September 1665 Edward Hyde, Lord Chancellor, ordered Edward Vivers to be brought before him at Oxford. He subsequently appeared at several courts without being charged, until he was finally accused of enclosing a burial ground and building a meeting house within it. Hyde sent him to prison, and it was not until two years and seven months later that he was released on the orders of James, second Viscount Saye and Sele.

During 1672 several Quakers were presented by the churchwarden for refusing to pay church rates,<sup>7</sup> but in general the 1670's seem to have seen a slackening of serious persecution in Banbury. From 1678 Friends in several north Oxfordshire villages were penalised for non-payment of tithes, but it was not until April 1683 that any of the Banbury Quakers so suffered. In that month John Long, a Neithrop Yeoman, whose house had six hearths in 1662 and 1665, was ordered to appear at the Ordinary's Court for keeping milch cows without paying tithes. He refused to pay a

fine, and was imprisoned for ten weeks during which time the fine was settled by his relatives. This incident marked the beginning of a further period of persecution. In March 1684 four Friends were fined two shillings for their absence from Common Prayer, and early in 1685 ten Quakers were fined more heavily for the same offence.

In August 1684 Richard Vivers was approached during a meeting in a lane near the meeting house while he was at prayer, and fined £20 by Richard Whatley the mayor. He lost goods to the value of £15.3.9d. at the same time. Richard was the son of Edward Vivers and was born between March 1650 and June 1655. He was a woollen draper at the time of his marriage in 1675, and by the time of his death in 1727 was described as a gentleman.<sup>8</sup>

In January 1685 the same Richard Whatley, now no longer mayor, approached John Haynes while he was speaking in the meeting house after the burial of a woman Friend, and after pronouncing a fine of £20, ordered him to forfeit £22 worth of goods. The constables who accompanied him could find no one to give them assistance in spite of threatening one man with the stocks and sending another to prison. This seems to mark a significant change in the attitude of the people of Banbury towards the Friends, for previously they seem always to have been ready to join a mob to attack the sect. In the same month three Quakers meeting in the house of John Parson were found by constables who fetched magistrates who fined them £13.0.3d.

The first Quaker meeting house in Banbury was in the rear of the premises of James Wagstaffe and was opened in 1657, though it seems that Wagstaffe had entertained the Friends regularly even before its erection. In 1664 William Potter and Andrew Hill purchased the plot of land now occupied by the present main meeting house, and the land directly in front of it, bordering the Horse Fair, at a cost of £25. The meeting house built in 1657 was removed from Wagstaffe's land, and erected on the new site. It was still in use in 1705, and it seems doubtful whether there is any substance in the tradition that it was burned down by an angry mob. There was a graveyard attached to the meeting house, and in order to increase its capacity and to provide room for a meeting room for women Friends, more ground was bought for £15 in 1681, and a further plot in 1681. Another room was added in 1714. The meeting house was thatched at this time, and was approached from the Horse Fair by a path. The burial ground was hired to one of the Friends for grazing. The meeting house was rebuilt in its present form between 1748 and 1750, since when there have been only minor additions and alterations.

Persecution of the Quakers in Banbury largely ceased after 1685, but during the 1690's John Long of Neithrop, a yeoman, was regularly deprived of money for tithes. The richer Banbury Quakers were mostly merchants and so less affected by demands for tithes than the yeoman Friends of the north Oxfordshire villages. After 1670 the Banbury meeting

was visited by many prominent Quakers. Between June 1677 and May 1678 there were twenty visits by about thirty different Friends who arrived on horseback, and doubtless others came on foot. In April 1678 George Fox and his manservant stayed in the town for three nights, and a new girth was provided for his horse and his saddle repaired. Although persecution seems to have ceased, it was still necessary in 1698 and 1699 to appoint men to attend at the doors of the meeting house to 'hinder rude people from troubling the meetings', and in 1702 a dispute between the Established Church and the Quakers in Banbury was deliberately provoked by Francis Bugg, a lapsed Friend.

The Banbury Quaker Meeting continued, declining a little during the eighteenth century, but in the nineteenth it provided many of the leaders of political, commercial and charitable organisations in Banbury. Never again did its members confront the local authorities as they had done in the 1650's, nor were they ever regarded with such suspicion and apprehension. Like many religious bodies, its respectable middle age was very different from its passionate youth.

Barrie Trinder

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some forty prisoners, and escorted them back to Oxford, on their way to the county gaol. But as they passed down St Giles, where the annual St Giles Fair was in progress, the prisoners were all rescued by the sympathetic citizens.

Though the unreformed Corporation of Banbury had been unpromisingly High Tory, there was a strong element of opposition and independence in the town, and in rural Oxfordshire, which emerged in these episodes.

Bryan Keith Lucas

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