

# Quaker Weavers at Newport, Ireland, 1720 -1740

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## Quaker Weavers at Newport, Ireland, 1720-1740

**SEVERAL** times in the eighteenth century new Irish Quaker communities suddenly came into existence through the migration of a number of Friends into an area at the same time. This was true, for example, in the case of both the Timahoe Meeting, in County Kildare, and its: American offshoot in Camden, South Carolina.<sup>1</sup> One of the more interesting and least-known examples of this type of development is seen in the sudden appearance in 1720 of a small group of Quakers at Newport in County Mayo, near the N .E. corner of Clew Bay on the west coast of Ireland. Its rapid departure to County Roscommon in the winter of 1739-1740 was equally striking. A brief reference to the existence of this Quaker settlement is found in Grubb's *Quakers in Ireland*,<sup>2</sup> but one is still left with many questions. Why did these Friends come to Newport? From where did they come? What was life in Newport like for them? Why did they leave? These and still other questions inspired the research and effort which have produced this present study.<sup>3</sup>

It was Captain Pratt's establishment of a colony of linen weavers at Ballyvaughan, or Newport, in 1719 which brought, the Quaker settlement into existence. Whether or not Pratt purposely recruited Friends as such is unknown, although at this very same time there were a number of large landholders seeking *Quaker* tenants for their farms. A 1725 letter from Ireland reports that,

Many very considerable Men in this Country, that have great Quantities of Land to set, do very much covet to have Friends for their Tenants; for many of our Friends have been so dilligent and industrious, and have made such fine Improvements upon the Farms that they have taken, and have also been so punctual in paying their Rents, that they are very much respected by their Landlords.<sup>4</sup>

Most of the Friends who settled at Newport came from Ulster, with the majority of them having belonged to Rathfryland Meeting in County Down. Among these were the young families of John and Jane Peck, William and Jane McGae [MaGae] , John and Margaret McGae, Robert and Margaret Taylor, and Thomas and Elizabeth McClung.<sup>5</sup> .. They were joined by Joseph and Mary Evans (formerly of Dunclady Meeting, County Derry) and other members of the Evans family.<sup>6</sup>

Thomas McClung, carrying a certificate from Lurgan Monthly Meeting, had originally set out for America but was soon shipwrecked. Eventually he reached Dublin where, being in poor health., he resided with Paul Johnson. In September 1720 he notified Dublin Friends that he intended to live on Captain Pratt's

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<sup>1</sup> Cf, Kenneth L, Carroll, "The Irish Quaker Community at Camden," *South Carolina Historical Magazine*, LXXVII (1976), pp. 69-83.

<sup>2</sup> Isabel Grubb, *Quakers in Ireland, 1654-1900* (London, 1927), p. 94. Cf. Isabel Grubb, "Social Conditions in Ireland in the Seventeenth and Eighteenth Centuries as Illustrated by Early Quaker Records" (M. A. Thesis, University of London, 1916), p. 61, where she wrongly states that most of this Newport group was from Drogheda. A typescript copy of the thesis is to be found in Friends House Library, London, while the original hand-written text is in Friends Historical Library, Eustace Street, Dublin.

<sup>3</sup> I wish to express my appreciation to Olive Goodbody and her staff at Friends Historical Library, Dublin, for their kind assistance in making available to me the various documents which I required in the summer of 1976

<sup>4</sup> Benjamin Holme, *A Collection of the Epistles and Works of Benjamin Holme* (London, 1753), p. 45.

<sup>5</sup> Moate Monthly Meeting Record of Births, Marriages, and Deaths, I (1660-1782), 79, 81, 82, 83, 84, 89. This volume is labelled H.1; cf. Olive C. Goodbody, *Guide to Irish Quaker Records, 1654-1860* (Dublin, 1967). These original manuscript records are at Friends Historical Library, Eustace Street, Dublin.

<sup>6</sup> *Ibid.*, H.1, 85.

land at Ballyvaughn [Newport] in County Mayo. Dublin Quakers expressed their sorrow that he had not "advised" with them earlier, but since he had gone so far in his negotiations with Pratt they wished him well, expressed their hope for his "preservation", and advised him to "be careful in his conversation". They also gave him fifty shillings from the legacy of Samuel Baker, since McClung had been ill much of the time he had been in Dublin.<sup>7</sup> Thomas was soon joined at Newport by his wife Elizabeth whom he had married at Rathfryland Meeting in 1714.<sup>8</sup>

It was probably the presence of McClung at Newport which helped prepare the way for several Leinster Quaker families to join the Newport group. Early in March 1721 it was learned that William Sutcliffe and his family of Drogheda were about to depart for Newport, and some other Drogheda Friends were reported as "seeming to Encline that way". Before Dublin Monthly Meeting Friends could meet with Sutcliffe, he and his family had already removed to Connaught, but the other Drogheda Quakers decided to remain where they were for the present. The Monthly Meeting appointed Joseph Gill, Paul Johnson, and Peter Judd to write to Sutcliffe "and advise him to be very careful how he takes up money from Capt Prat[t] & be frugal & sparing in laying out money Either on Building or otherwise".<sup>9</sup> In 1722 Joseph Kelly and his wife removed from Dublin to Newport, after Dublin Friends had corresponded with Friends in Newport about the possibility of his earning a livelihood for his family there (not having done so well previously in Dublin).<sup>10</sup> It is not known whether any other Leinster Friends removed to Newport, although it is quite clear that none came from Munster.<sup>11</sup> Other members of the Newport Quaker colony (probably most of them being from Ulster) included Henry Lipscomb, Robert Hennen [Hainan, Henon], John Cantrell and family, Patrick McGae [McGaw, Maga, etc.] and family.

From Irish Quaker records still extant a partial picture of the religious life of this Newport Friends community can be recovered. From the first they held meetings for worship, both on First Days [Sundays] and week days. They were to some degree under the care of Moate Monthly Meeting, whose constituent meeting at Ballymurray in County Roscommon was the nearest one to Newport. Certificates of removal were received by Moate Monthly Meeting. The National Half- Year's Meeting, in May 1721, recommended that Leinster Province Meeting (to which Moate Monthly Meeting belonged) take the needed care of Newport Friends and that "Friends of Ulster be not wanting on their part".<sup>12</sup> Throughout the life of this community the National Meeting felt a special responsibility for its welfare and extended whatever aid-both spiritual and material-was needed.

From the very beginning Newport Quakers experienced, some disabilities because of their

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<sup>7</sup> Minutes of Dublin Monthly Meeting of Friends, 1716-1724 (D. IS), for 20th of 7th Month, 1720. These manuscript records are at Friends Historical Library, Dublin, and are hereafter referred to as Dublin Monthly Meeting Minutes.

<sup>8</sup> Albert Cook Myers, *Immigration of the Irish Quakers into Pennsylvania, 1682-1750* (Swarthmore, Pa. 1902), p. 353.

<sup>9</sup> Dublin Monthly Meeting Minutes, D. IS, minutes for 7th of 1st Month, 1720/1 and 21st of 1st Month, 1720/1. There is no evidence that any more Drogheda Friends moved to Newport.

<sup>10</sup> *Ibid.*, D. IS, minutes for 21st of 6th Month, 1722. Cf. certificate for Joseph Kelly and family to Newport, in Moate Monthly Meeting Minutes, H. 8, no page number, dated 4th of 7th Month, 1722.

<sup>11</sup> The Epistle from Munster Quarterly Meeting dated 15th of 2nd Month, 1728, so states this. Cf. The National Book for Recording Epistles and Papers from the Three Provinces, etc., 1708-1737 (A. 20), pages unnumbered.

<sup>12</sup> National Meeting Proceedings, 1708-1757 (A. 3), minutes for 8th to the 11th of 3rd Month, 1721.

religious beliefs. In 1721 Henry Lipscombe, who had suffered "to a considerable value by accident of fire", was refused "relief by way of Brief" *because he was known to be a Quaker*. A collection was, therefore, taken up in all Monthly and Particular Meetings, and about £42 was sent to him by his fellow Quakers.<sup>13</sup> Quaker testimony against tithes and a paid ministry led to distraints for tithes in 1722 and 1723, when David Costelow (on behalf of "John Birmingham Priest") took sheaves of oats from many Friends to satisfy these demands.<sup>14</sup> A 1736 epistle from Newport Friends to the National Meeting reported great sufferings for the same reason.<sup>15</sup>

Although Newport Friends do not appear to have had a meeting house (probably meeting for worship in their homes instead), they very early experienced the need of a burial ground of their own. Robert and Margaret Taylor buried their daughter Elizabeth early in December 1721, with William and Jane McGae burying their daughter Elizabeth twelve days later. Thomas McClung's wife Elizabeth died in 1722, while Joseph and Mary Kelly and Joseph and Mary Evans lost daughters in 1723.<sup>16</sup> In 1723 Dublin Friends learned from Joseph Kelly, who was in that city for a short time, that the "writing for the. Burying place at Newport belonging to Friends [was] not [yet] perfected".<sup>17</sup> Paul Johnson and Samuel Fuller were appointed to get it done "this day" or before Kelly "go out of town homeward". By 1725 it was felt that this burial place needed enclosure, with Leinster Province Meeting giving £4 for that purpose.<sup>18</sup> In 1731 it was discovered that Newport Friends still did not have a lease on the burial ground, so that Dublin Friends were asked to assist them in that matter.<sup>19</sup> In 1736 there was, great concern that John Cantrell (who had been "testified against" by Newport Friends some years earlier) still had possession of the lease. A committee was therefore appointed to attempt to get him to surrender it to Friends.<sup>20</sup>

Some time after the Newport Quaker community came into existence it was felt that there should be some form of "church government" provided for Friends' use-even though they were too few in number and too far removed from the nearest Monthly Meeting for the usual pattern to be applied. In November 1724 the National Half- Year's Meeting decided that when specially appointed Friends from Leinster, Munster, or Ulster Provinces visited Newport Quakers (on a fairly regular schedule), these visiting Friends and "such Friends of Newport that are Qualified to sit in Men's Meetings, [are to] Hold a man's meeting there for the management of Religious affairs and keeping up Truth's Testimony, and their proceedings to be entered of Record in a Book to be prepared for that Purpose".<sup>21</sup> Exactly one year later women Friends at Newport were given the right of holding a Women's Meeting when Visiting Friends were

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<sup>13</sup> *Ibid.*, minutes for 8th to 11th of 3rd Month, 1721

<sup>14</sup> Leinster Province Records, Tithes 1719-1723 (B. 8), 1722 Sufferings for County Mayo list Patrick Gae [McGae], John Peck, Robert Taylor, and John Gae as suffering; 1723 cases included William Sutcliffe, Thomas McClung, Patrick Gae, John Peck, Robert Taylor, and Joseph Kelly

<sup>15</sup> The National Book for Recording Epistles and Papers from the three Provinces, 1708-1739 (A. 20), letter of 17th of 2nd Month, 1736, signed by Patrick Maga [McGae], John Peck, John Maga, Robert Taylor, Robert Hennen, and William Maga.

<sup>16</sup> Moate Births, Marriages, and Deaths (H. I), 80, 81, 82, 83, 85.

<sup>17</sup> Dublin Monthly Meeting Minutes (D. IS), minutes for 10th of 7th Month, 1723.

<sup>18</sup> Leinster Province Meeting Minutes, II (B. 2), 292. Paul Johnson was asked to send the money to Newport.

<sup>19</sup> National Meeting Proceedings (A. 3), minutes for 8th to 10th of 9<sup>th</sup> Month, 1731.

<sup>20</sup> Leinster Province Meeting Minutes, II (B. 2), 456. The committee was composed of John Ashton, Jonathan Barnes, and Jerry Hanks. What success they had has not been ascertained.

<sup>21</sup> National Meeting Proceedings (A. 3), minutes for 8th to 11th of 9<sup>th</sup> Month, 1724. No such record book is known today.

present.<sup>22</sup> At this time in 1725 it was agreed that if any should "contemplate" marriage, the first presentation should be to the Newport Meeting, the second to Moate Monthly Meeting, and the third to Leinster Province Meeting.<sup>23</sup> The first such Quaker marriage in Newport took place shortly thereafter, in First Month 1725/6, when Thomas McClung and Elizabeth Evans were married. After having declared their intentions of marriage once before a Men's Meeting and a Women's Meeting at Newport and once before Moate Monthly Meeting, they received permission from Leinster Province Meeting to accomplish their marriage at Newport (where their marriage was to be published twice in a public meeting). The marriage itself was to be under the care of Moate Monthly Meeting, with the assistance of Ballymurray Friends of County Roscommon.<sup>24</sup> The marriage then took place at a meeting for worship the 23rd of the 1st Month, 1725/6, with forty-seven witnesses signing the wedding certificate.<sup>25</sup> Among these witnesses were Benjamin Holme (well-known British travelling Friend who visited Newport Friends on several occasions) and Gershom Boate (of County Roscommon).<sup>26</sup>

Almost from the start of the Newport Quaker settlement Irish Friends felt a responsibility for providing religious visits to this isolated group. In May 1721 the National Half-Year's Meeting recommended that Leinster Province Friends take the necessary care of Newport Friends, and "that Friends of Ulster be not wanting on their part".<sup>27</sup> A few months later it was learned that they had been visited by Joseph Gill of Dublin and John Burton of Yorkshire, who were accompanied by a number of Friends from Moate Monthly Meeting.<sup>28</sup> They reported that they had "several meetings with Friends and [other] People, to good satisfaction".<sup>29</sup> Shortly thereafter Newport Friends had a religious visit from Paul Johnson and John Stoddart of Dublin, who were accompanied by Philip Martin and Joseph Inman the younger.<sup>30</sup> A 1722 request by Newport Friends for more such visits led the National Meeting to ask the three Provincial Meetings to see that Newport Quakers were visited by ministers and elders. Soon they recommended that Connaught Friends have "seasonable visits", with Ulster and Leinster Friends appointing visitors to make

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<sup>22</sup> *Ibid.*, minutes for 8th to 11th of 9th Month, 1725.

<sup>23</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>24</sup> Leinster Province Meeting Minutes, II (B. 2), 219 (minutes for 5th of 1st Month, 1725/6). It is not known whether there were any other Quaker weddings at Newport.

<sup>25</sup> Moate Births, Marriages, and Deaths [H.1], 195.

<sup>26</sup> Other witnesses, including the whole adult Newport Quaker community, were as follows: Joseph Evans, Mary Evans, Patrick McGae, Anne McClunn [McClung], Samuel Evans, John McGae, John Peck, William McGae, John Evans, Joseph McGill, Mary McGill, Mary Kelly, Jane Suttcliffe, Mary Suttcliffe, Elinor Cantrell, Kathrine Davis, Mary Kining (?), Elizabeth Cantrell, Deborah Evans, Mary Egger, John Suttcliffe, Henry O'Brien, Margaret Birmingham, John Gee, John Clibborn, John Davis, Robert Richardson, Thomas Sanders, Dag (?) Bealy, George Farris, James Barington, Moses Evans, Hugh O'Donnell, Gerald Clark, Charles O'Donnell, Manus O'Donnell, William Suttcliffe, Thomas Todd, Samuel Larminie, Joseph Kelly, John Egger, John Cantrell, Jane Peck, Robert Henon (probably related to Thomas McClung's first wife who died in 1722), and Anne Birmingham. Several of these witnesses probably represented Moate Monthly Meeting and several others may possibly have been Ulster relatives.

<sup>27</sup> National Meeting Proceedings [A.3], minutes for 8th to 11th of 3rd Month, 1721.

<sup>28</sup> Leinster Province Meeting Minutes, II [B.2], 222. Joseph Gill (1674-1741) of Dublin travelled much in Ireland, made several religious visits to England and Scotland, and travelled on religious service in America in 1734-1736.

<sup>29</sup> National Meeting Proceedings (A. 3), minutes for 8th to 10th of 9th Month, 1721.

<sup>30</sup> *Ibid.*, minutes for 25th to 27th of 2nd Month, 1722. In addition to visiting Newport and Ballymurray Meetings in Connaught they also had several meetings among other people in that province "to good satisfaction". Paul Johnson (1682-1746) was a prominent Dublin Friend who travelled widely in Ireland and also paid a religious visit to America in 1731-1732.

the journey; at least once each quarter. <sup>31</sup>

By May 1723 it was learned that Joshua Northall, Mungo Bewley, Gershom Boate, and John Pladwell (all of Leinster Province Meeting) had visited Newport. Later that same year several Ulster Friends, unnamed, made a similar visit. By May 1724 it was noted that Friends from all three Provinces had made one or more such visits. <sup>32</sup> Late in 1724 the National Meeting suggested a more definite visiting arrangement-with Leinster Friends being responsible for two visits each year, while Munster and Ulster were each responsible for one. <sup>33</sup> This scheme was accepted by all three Province Meetings and was faithfully carried out for the next several years. It was in conjunction with these visits that the Newport Men's Meetings and Women's Meetings for business were held. .

In addition to these many visits by Irish Friends who were appointed by their Province Meetings, Newport Quakers also benefited from the presence of a number of British and American Friends who were travelling under religious concern. Among these were John Fothergill (1724), Benjamin Holme (1724, 1725, 1736), Edmund Peckover (1726), John Woodrow (1731), and Edward Tylee (1732) all from England, and Susannah Morris (1731) and Arthur Jones (1732) from America. Fothergill, who accompanied Benjamin Holme to Newport in December 1724, notes that they got the 26th to Newport, where there are a few Friends; we staid here several Days, and had three large Meetings in the Court-house to our Satisfaction, thro our Father's divine Help, many sober People coming in; And we had some good Service most of one whole Day among the few Friends there, whom we left in a good degree of , nearness in the Love and Covenant of God, to whose heavenly; Teaching and Help they were recommended. <sup>34</sup>

Most visiting Friends, especially if they were "public" or ministering ones, probably used much this same approach of open or general meetings to which the larger community might be invited and "select" meetings for the small Quaker constituency. Munster Friends, for example, reported that several of their numbers accompanied Benjamin Holme to Newport in 1725 and that they had several public meetings as well as holding, with Newport Friends, a "Men's meeting for the affairs of Truth among them". <sup>35</sup>

The winter of 1727-1728 proved very difficult for Newport Quakers who suddenly found themselves in great need of employment. <sup>36</sup> Soon they also met with further "discouragement as to a livelihood, by the failure of one Intrusted as the manager". John Cantrell, who had served as "manager" of their weaving enterprise, had seriously weakened the economic situation of the group. Cantrell was soon "testified against" for his failure, and another Friend was proposed as "manager". <sup>37</sup> Shortly after the National

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<sup>31</sup> *Ibid.*, minutes for 25th to 27th of 2nd Month, 1722, and for 8th to 10th of 9th Month, 1722.

<sup>32</sup> *Ibid.*, minutes for 8th to 10th of 3rd Month, 1723; 8th to 11th of 9th Month, 1723; and 8th to 11th of 3rd Month, 1724- Leinster Friends who visited in 1724 included Joseph Gill, John Russell, and Benjamin Parvin.

<sup>33</sup> *Ibid.*, minutes for 8th to 11th of 9th Month, 1724.

<sup>34</sup> John Fothergill, *An Account of the Life and Travels in the Work of the Ministry of John Fothergill* (London, 1753), pp. 222-223.

<sup>35</sup> Munster Province Epistles, Portfolio M II, number 120 (26th of 5th Month, 1725). These documents are at Friends Historical Library, Dublin. Munster Friends who travelled with Holme were Solomon Watson, Jonathan Hutchinson, and Edward Barwick. Paul Johnson and Philip Martin, both of Dublin, also accompanied Holme.

<sup>36</sup> National Meeting Proceedings (A. 3), minutes for 8th to 11th of 9th- Month, 1727.

<sup>37</sup> Leinster Province Meeting Minutes II, (B. 2), 325 (17th of 12th Month, 1727) reports this development as well as a visit to Newport by Joseph Gill, Henry Btookneld, Jr., Alexander Shelby, and Robert Sinclair. It was probably at a Men's Meeting attended by these visiting Friends that John Cantrell was testified against.

Meeting- made known to others the financial needs of Newport Friends, Leinster and Munster Friends moved to assist them. Munster Friends gave £20 to help them. Leinster agreed to raise £41, and Ulster was asked to provide its proportional share. Friends proposed that some method be found to employ these weavers rather than simply giving them money.<sup>38</sup> It was in connection with this suggestion that Dublin Friends advanced them £20 of yarn and “wrought Lip”.<sup>39</sup>

This financial difficulty soon made Newport Friends announce to the National Meeting that they would have to , remove themselves for “want of livelyhood”. They reported that most of their group who “ are of ability” were inclined to transport themselves to America. The National Meeting responded that it could not recommend removal to America but advised that, as soon as they had cleared their incumbrances, they should move closer to other Irish Friends. Moate Monthly Meeting (drawing upon funds of the National Meeting) was asked to minister to their needs.<sup>40</sup> Several families, in spite of the advice of the National Meeting, emigrated to the New World-with those of Thomas McClung, Joseph Evans, and Samuel Evans moving to Pennsylvania in 1729.<sup>41</sup>

By late 1730 the somewhat reduced colony of Quaker weavers at Newport wrote that conditions had improved for some of them. They also spoke of a recent visit by some Leinster Friends and asked' for the continuation of such visits which were now more important than ever.<sup>42</sup> Early in 1731 they were visited by Susannah Morris (an American Friend who had recently been shipwrecked on the coast of Ireland) and John Woodrow of Woodbridge in England. It was then learned that those Friends who were still in Newport were likely to remain there rather than removing either to America or to some other part of Ireland.<sup>43</sup> Soon Newport Quakers were reporting that "an openness appears in people thereaway to hear the Doctrine and Testimony of Truth declared", and once again asked for visits.<sup>44</sup> In 1732 religious visits were made by Arthur Jones of America and, a bit later, by Edward Tylee of Bristol, both of whom were accompanied by Leinster Friends. It was learned from these visits that Newport Friends were "in a hopeful condition in the Truth and a more likely way of getting a living than formerly and that there is an openness in people there and also at Castlebarr to hear the Testimony of truth declared". Friends in the ministry and others "Capable of ministering help & Encouragement" were asked to visit them.<sup>45</sup>

Late in 1733 Joseph Gill of Dublin received a certificate to visit Friends meetings in Connaught (at Ballymurray and Newport) and to appoint meetings in such parts of that Province or elsewhere as way opened.<sup>46</sup> Accompanied by James Pim, Daniel Huson [Hewson], and Richard Jessop, he visited Newport in December 1733 and had several meetings for worship and one for discipline with Newport Friends- finding

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<sup>38</sup> Munster Epistles, Portfolio Moll, number 140 (8th of 11th Month, 1727); National Meeting Proceedings (A. 3), minutes for 8th to 11th of 3rd Month, 1728. Ulster Province appears not to have responded with assistance.

<sup>39</sup> Dublin Monthly Meeting Minutes, 1724-1733 (D. 16), minutes for 9th of 2nd Month, 1728. The epistle from Leinster Quarterly Meeting to the National Half- Year's Meeting, dated 6th of 3rd Month, 1728, reported that Dublin Friends had advanced £25 to give work to Newport Friends.

<sup>40</sup> National Meeting Proceedings (A. 3), minutes for 8th to 12th of 9th Month, 1728.

<sup>41</sup> Myers, *Immigration of the Irish Quakers into Pennsylvania, 1682-1750*, pp. 353, 354, 355. It seems probable that the Sutcliffe family also removed from Newport about this same time (either to some other American colony or to some other section of Ireland).

<sup>42</sup> National Meeting Proceedings (A. 3), minutes for 8th to 11th of 9th Month, 1730.

<sup>43</sup> *Ibid.*, minutes for 8th to 11th of 3rd Month, 1731. Some Leinster Friends accompanied both of these visiting ministers to Newport.

<sup>44</sup> *Ibid.*, minutes for 8th to 10th of 9th Month, 1731.

<sup>45</sup> Munster Epistles from National Meeting, Portfolio M I, number 28 (8th to 10th of 9th Month, 1732).

<sup>46</sup> Dublin Monthly Meeting Minutes (D. 16), minutes for 13th of 9th Month, 1733.

them "in a hopeful way, both as to Truth & supporting their families by their lawfull employments, and also that there is a great openness thereaway & in other parts of that Province to hear the Testimony of Truth declared".<sup>47</sup> 1735 visitors John Russell and Robert Sinclair, accompanied by James Byrn, found Newport Friends "in a lively frame of spiritts & of good repute among their Neighbours and very desirous of Friends visitts more frequently".<sup>48</sup>

Newport Friends began to think quite seriously, early in 1736, about the possibility of removing from County Mayo. In a letter to the National Meeting they reported that they were being visited by John Hancock and John Turner (both of Ulster), the first visit received since the previous June. They expressed the need for more such visits now-reporting that they were "more needful to us than formerly by reason of our youth growing up: our concern for them being such that they might be Preserved [in the Truth]". Most Newport Friends had been young couples with small children or just starting their families when they had moved to Newport in 1720. By the mid-1730s, however, it was a growing concern that some, now being in a marriageable state, might "run out". The few Quaker families remaining in Newport were so closely related that there could be no marriages within the group, "which is of great trouble to us". They therefore requested that other Friends might propose a way for them to be brought near the "Body of Friends". They also reported that they were experiencing great sufferings at the hands of a "tythe monger, whose oppression seems to grow, without much appearance of Relief".<sup>49</sup>

A second 1736 letter from Newport Friends, some six months later, noted that "The few of us, that remains here, remains in love and the [spiritually] Living among us can say we are near one to another." They also reported that their meetings for worship, both First Day and Week Day, were pretty well kept up. An addendum contained the information that they had recently been visited by Benjamin Holme (accompanied by Benjamin Wilson, Joseph Boardman, and Thomas Siggins) and even more recently by Elizabeth Tomey and Frances Knight (both of Cork) and Samuel Pearce and Janes Tomey (of Limerick).<sup>50</sup>

Holme and the Irish Friends who had accompanied him to Newport reported to Leinster Friends that the Newport brethren were in poor financial circumstances and expressed their belief that ('if they had full work at their Looms they Could Maintain their Families, so that if about sixty pounds could be raised for them to employ themselves without Diminishing their principal Sum" it would be very helpful. Leinster Friends in August 1736 expressed the hope that the National Meeting could raise this amount and offered to provide £35 of that sum themselves. Joseph Gill, Benjamin Dawson, and John Stoddard were asked to write to Munster and Ulster Friends to acquaint them with the great need of Newport Friends and what Leinster Friends had voluntarily accepted as their share of the desired relief funds.<sup>51</sup> Some Newport Friends, whose names are unknown, attended the National Meeting in November of 1736. A committee met with them to

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<sup>47</sup> Munster Epistles from National Meeting, Portfolio M I, number 30, reports that wherever Gill and his companions travelled the people were "generally kind and ready to give places & conveniences for meetings".

<sup>48</sup> *Ibid.*, Portfolio M I, number 33 (8th to 11th of 9th Month, 1735).

<sup>49</sup> The National Book for Recording Epistles and Papers from the Three Provinces, 1708-1739 (A. 20), letter dated 17th of 2nd Month, 1736. The letter was signed by Patrick Maga, John Maga, William Maga, John Peck, Robert Taylor, and Robert Hennen.

<sup>50</sup> *Ibid.*, A. 20, letter dated 30th of 8th Month, 1736, and signed by Patrick McGaw [Maga, McGee, Gae], John Peck, and Robert Taylor. Holme's visit was in the summer of 1736. Cf. Leinster Province Meeting Minutes, II (B. 2), 456.

<sup>51</sup> Leinster Province Meeting Minutes, II (B. 2), 458. Within Leinster Province the following quotas were assigned: Moate Monthly Meeting £3:06:00; Mountmellick £5:07:03; Edenderry, £3:00:06; Carlow, £5:18:03; Wexford, £3:00:06; Wlcklow, £6:16:06; Dublin, £11:11:00.



"inspect into their condition" and reported back to the National Meeting that there was no "present prospect" of constant employment-so that they would need assistance. The National Meeting therefore allotted £25 for this purpose, with Leinster's share being £13:15:00.<sup>52</sup>

No information for 1737 is available but in 1738 Newport Friends were visited by Samuel Stephens, Samuel Pearson, Richard Jessop, and James Burn [Byrn] who reported them to be "in low circumstances in the [things of the] world, yet they think they are worthy of the Notice and visits of Friends". They were also said to want to remove from Newport and desired that Friends "Enquire out for Places for them".<sup>53</sup> It was their intention to settle closer to other Friends.<sup>54</sup> During this closing period of their stay in Newport they received from Dublin Friends three copies of Robert Barclay's *Apology*, one copy of David Hall's *Epistle*, and the relevant parts of the Proceedings of the last National Half- Year's Meeting.<sup>55</sup>

By May 1739 it was reported that Newport Friends had taken land in County Roscommon, where they would be much closer to Ballymurray Friends. They would not, however, be able to remove there until they could dispose of their "present Interest" at Newport; therefore John Barclay, and Paul Johnson were asked to help them settle with their landlord.<sup>56</sup> In the winter of 1739-1740 the Newport Quaker community finally ceased to exist, for its members trans- ported themselves to the neighborhood of the town of Roscommon--experiencing great hardship in removing, as a result of the "extremity of the weather". Since they were now properly within the bounds of Moate Monthly Meeting they received financial help from Moate (at the request of Leinster Province Meeting) which was in turn repaid from the funds of the National Meeting.<sup>57</sup> A committee, with representatives from all three Province Meetings, met with these resettled Friends in the summer of 1740 and finding them still in need, advanced them an additional £13.<sup>58</sup> Further help was given to them the following year also.<sup>59</sup> Soon, however, they settled in and made a new life for themselves in County Roscommon, with some of them remaining there the rest of their lives.<sup>60</sup>

#### KENNETH L. CARROLL

In the list of theses under the heading of "Research on Irish history in Irish universities, 1975-6" in *Irish historical studies*, vol. 20, no. 77, March 1976, the following appears as being in progress:

Thomas Greer of Dungannon, 1724-1803: quaker linen merchant. By J. W. McConaghy. For Ph.D. Q.U.B. (Professor D. W. Harkness).

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<sup>52</sup> National Meeting Proceedings (A. 3), minutes for 8th to 10th of 9th Month, 1736. Cf. Leinster Province Meeting Minutes, II (B. 2), 463.

<sup>53</sup> Leinster Province Meeting Minutes, II (B. 2), 495 (1st of 5th Month, 1738).

<sup>54</sup> National Meeting Proceedings (A. 3). minutes for 8th to 11th of 9th Month, 1738.

<sup>55</sup> Dublin Monthly Meeting Minutes, 1735-1742 (D. 17), minutes for 23rd of 3rd Month, 1738, and 6th of 4th Month, 1738.

<sup>56</sup> National Meeting Proceedings, A. 3, minutes for 8th to 10th of 3rd Month, 1739.

<sup>57</sup> *Ibid.*, A. 3, minutes for 8th to 11th of 3rd Month, 1740. ,

<sup>58</sup> Leinster Province Meeting Minutes, II (B. 2), 526, 529. Those who visited them were John Russell, John Gee, William Lightfoot, William Sprnwles, James Byrn, and Thomas Siggins. Cf. Munster Epistles from the National Meeting, Portfolio M I, number 43.

<sup>59</sup> Munster Epistles from the National Meeting, Portfolio M I, number 44.

<sup>60</sup> Moate Births, Marriages, and Deaths (H. I), 79 lists the burial of John Peck at Ballymurray in 1772, and p. 84 reports the death of John McGae in 1766.