

Key People

Gervase Benson

Gervase Benson (d. 1679) was a lawyer and influential social figure who joined the Quaker movement. Living at Borrett Farm near Sedbergh, he was 'convinced' by George Fox when Fox visited the town in June 1652 and met with a group of separatists that Benson had gathered. His legal training helped Quakers considerably and he also wrote tracts as a Quaker.

[Read more about Gervase Benson](#) on Lancaster University's Quaker Project website

Edward Burrough

Edward Burrough (1634 – 1663) was a Westmoreland seeker from Underbarrow near Kendal. He was one of the early Quaker missionaries and with Frances Howgill consolidated Quakerism in London and also travelled to Ireland. A prolific tract writer, he and the Baptist John Bunyan had a tract debate in the mid-1650s. He died in London in jail in 1662.

Charles I

Charles I (1600 - 1649)

Charles II

Charles II (1630 – 1685)

Read more about [Charles I](#) and [Charles II](#) on the BBC history website

Oliver Cromwell

Oliver Cromwell (1599 - 1658)

Read more about [Oliver Cromwell](#) on the BBC website.

Richard Farnsworth

Richard Farnsworth (c1630 – 1666) was a Yorkshire Seeker who became converted by George Fox to the Quaker way in 1651. He was with Fox on his travels to Pendle Hill. He was a leading Quaker and author of a number of documents helping organise the Quaker movement so that it could survive scandal and persecution.

Read more about [Richard Farnsworth](#) on Lancaster University's Quaker Project website

Margaret Fell

Margaret Fell (1614 – 1702), co-leader of the Quaker movement after her conversion in 1652. A very able theologian, she also had considerable pastoral skills. Her set of skills helped Quakerism survive the persecution of the 1660s and 1670s. She suffered imprisonment and campaigned tirelessly for the Quaker faith, outliving nearly all the other first generation leaders.

Thomas Fell

Thomas Fell (1598 – 1658), was born and died in Ulverston. He was an able supporter of the Parliamentary cause and was given numerous responsibilities by Oliver Cromwell, including becoming an assize judge for the north-west of England. He lived at Swarthmoor Hall and was from a gentry family. He never became a Quaker but accepted his wife's conversion and was supportive of the Quaker movement.

Mary Fisher

Mary Fisher (1623 – 1698) was born in Yorkshire and was working as a housemaid when she was converted by George Fox's preaching. She became active in the Quaker movement and was publicly flogged along with Elizabeth Williams in Cambridge. Between 1655 and 1657, she and Ann Austin travelled to Barbados and then to Boston, where they were imprisoned for their faith. Finally they were departed. In 1658, Fisher was one of a group of six who travelled across Europe and whilst the others were tricked to turn back, she eventually had a mutually appreciative meeting with Sultan Mehmed IV in Adrianople. She married twice and emigrated to Charleston, South Carolina, where she died in 1698.

Elizabeth Fletcher

Elizabeth Fletcher (1638 – 1658) from Kendal worked with Elizabeth Leavens as Quaker missionaries, though also travelling in Ireland on her own. Fletcher enacted signs and walked naked through the streets of Oxford to show how false teachings would be stripped away. Leavens and Fletcher were particularly roughly treated in Oxford and Fletcher was pushed against a gravestone (before they whipped out of the city) sustaining an injury which hastened her death.

George Fox

George Fox (1624 – 1690). Born in Leicestershire, Fox had a transforming spiritual experience aged 23. He saw that all of humanity could have a direct relationship with God and that the rest of Christianity was corrupt. Everyone was a minister and outward religion was to be replaced by an inward one. He had second major experience in 1648 where he felt himself perfected and saved, ideas which came to define early Quakerism. His preaching in the Midland met with little success and he was jailed for a year in Derby. When he came out he went north and in Yorkshire, Lancashire and Westmoreland, gained hundreds of followers who came to form the early Quaker movement.

Francis Howgill

Francis Howgill (1618 – 1668) was from Grayrigg near Sedbergh. He was a local preacher and was preaching in the chapel of ease on Firbank Fell on the day when Fox had his major preaching success there. Earlier he had intervened on Fox's behalf when people had questioned why Fox was preaching from a tree rather than in the church at Sedbergh. Howgill, along with Edward Burrough, were leading Quaker missionaries. Howgill died in jail in 1668.

Read more about [Francis Howgill](#) on Lancaster University's Quaker Project website

William Lampitt

William Lampitt (d. 1677) was the puritan minister of Ulverston where the Fell family worshipped until George Fox converted Margaret Fell, having interrupted one of Lampitt's services, in 1652. Lampitt tried to persuade Thomas Fell that his wife had been 'bewitched' but was unsuccessful. It seems George Fox and Lampitt took an immediate dislike to each other.

Elizabeth Leavens

Elizabeth Leavens (1626 – 1666). Ministry partner to Elizabeth Fletcher, both from Kendal, they were active Quaker missionaries. They suffered for their faith, notably being 'whipped out' of Oxford. Married to Thomas Holme, also a Quaker missionary.

James Nayler

James Nayler (1618 – 1660) was a Yorkshire Seeker, converted to the Quaker faith in 1651. Nayler had served as Quartermaster under Major General Lambert and was himself a very able preacher and writer. He was seen by many to be the co-leader of the Quaker movement with George Fox. Tried for blasphemy in 1656, he narrowly avoided the death penalty (perhaps because of his military record) but was punished horribly and was branded with a 'B' for blasphemous. He spent the next three years in jail. On his release he was beaten up on his way north and died from his injuries.

Read more about [James Nayler](#) on the BCW Project website

William Prynne

William Prynne (1600 – 1669) was an English lawyer, author, polemicist, and political figure. He was a prominent puritan who attacked baptists as well as Quakers in his writings. He gained some favour after the Restoration, even as a Prebyterian.

Richard Robinson

Richard Robinson lived at Brigflatts and housed George Fox for a night when he first came to Sedbergh. He became a Quaker.

Read more about [Richard Robinson](#) on Lancaster University's Quaker Project website

Nathaniel Stephens

Nathaniel Stephens (1606 – 1678) was the parish priest, installed by the local Purefoy family as minister at Drayton in the Clay or Fenny Drayton where George Fox grew up. Fox and Stephens had many conversations about religion but Fox grew impatiently critical of Stephens and Stephens increasingly frustrated with Fox.