

NON-CONFORMIST HISTORY IN THE CRAVEN AREA OF YORKSHIRE AND THE LIFE OF REV. RICHARD FRANKLAND

Jim Nelson

English history is of course local history and so nonconformist history starts with King Henry VIII, when as we know he had woman trouble, the Pope said “Now Henry it is till death us do part” Henry replied “that could be arranged!” but the King not going to be dictated to declared himself Head of the Church of England; so in 1509 we had Reformation but it was in name only, all the parish priests were R.C. trained, their order of service remained the same. Along came Edward VI and in 1547 he set up the book of common prayer and the 42 Articles, much of which remains to this present day, and so things began to change slowly.

But Queen Mary had other thoughts, for in 1553 a law was passed to enforce the book of common prayer. It was persecution for those who did not conform and many fled to the continent. There were high hopes of toleration when Queen Elizabeth came to the throne and some refugees returned, but alas the archbishops produced regulations for church government which was enforced through the high courts; the vicar of Sedbergh, Rev. Giles Wiggington was up at court in 1585 and Rev. John Wilson of Skipton, two years later, was in court for some breach of church regulations. Dissent grew, the Presbyterians desired a national church apart from state interference, others thought that each church should be independent of all control, such were the Baptists and the Independents.

1606 brought King James of Scotland down to London to be James I of England. Again hopes grew because of the Presbyterian teaching of John Knox the Scottish preacher, but that was not to be.

Nonconformists fled to Holland and the Mayflower took Puritans to America, John Bradford a Yorkshireman became the first Governor of New England in 1620. By 1625 King Charles I relaxed the pressure somewhat in the matter of church regulations and in fact Puritans and Presbyterians gained representation in the ‘long Parliament’ which sat from 1646 to 1660. The Westminster Assembly drew up the “Confession of Faith” in line with Presbyterian thinking and reduced the 42 Articles to 39, but still there were some Articles that the Independents dissented to.

Now this was the time of Oliver Cromwell, as we know he was very anti Roman Catholic. But Oliver did try to set up a good standard of preaching by sending out his “Triers” or inspectors, and any priest not ‘up to the mark’ was out and replaced in some cases by a Baptist, Presbyterian, Puritan or Independent to the pulpit of the parish church. Then here in the dales we had Cromwell’s second in command, Gen. John Lambert of Calton in Malhamdale, but that did not mean that the dales were all Parliamentary. There was Lieut. Arthur Caterall of Giggleswick in the Royalist Army, and there is a list to be seen of all that he claimed from Parliament after the civil war amounting to £454.10s.0d.

Oliver died 3rd. September 1658 and by his request his son Richard was appointed “Lord Protector”. But Richard was not the man that his father had been and a power struggle grew between Gen. Lambert the Independent and Gen. Booth, Presbyterian, until they met up near Daventry, did a bit of sabre rattling then decided to shake hands, for after all they had fought on the same side in the civil war with Cromwell.

In September of that year, 200 church leaders met at the Savoy Palace and from this the Congregational Church was formed. In May, 1659 Richard Cromwell abdicated, but fighting continued. Gen. Lambert was victorious at Nantwich and in October he took his troops to London and surrounded Westminster to prevent the Royalist Parliament from sitting. This was in effect a military coup which lasted until Boxing Day. By 1660 King Charles was brought back from France with a strong R.C. influence and an agreement that if Spain attacked England the French would help on condition that the R.C.s in England had freedom of worship. The nonconformists had hopes of being included in this, but not so, the question of tithes in parishes where nonconformist ministers had the living came under dispute. The Lords ruled that in such cases the church wardens should hold such money. The Rev. Thos. Smallwood of Batley was the only minister in Yorkshire to come under this ruling, but the real test was to come on St. Bartholomew's Day 1662 when all who did not conform to the Act of Uniformity were evicted from their livings; almost 200 of them in all. On October 10th of that year, Jeremiah Marsden and James Fisher of Sheffield organised an uprising meeting in Farsley Wood near Leeds, but informers gave them away and 21 were caught and imprisoned. Persecution continued and in 1664 Parliament passed a bill forbidding more than five people other than family to meet in a house;

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| 1st offence a fine of £5 or 3 months imprisonment. |
| 2nd offence a fine of £10 or 6 months imprisonment. |
| 3rd offence a fine of £100 or Transportation for 7 years. |

So this became known as the banishment act, as transpor-tees did not come back unless someone paid their return fare. Informers received one third of the fine. At this time of troubles for the nonconformists, a Yorkshire man, the Rev. Richard Frankland, M.A. was evicted from his living at Bishop Auckland, Co. Durham and returned to his native village of Rathmell in the Craven District, on the west bank of the River Ribble, three miles south of Settle.

To read of the life of this man, gives quite a good insight into the life of a nonconformist of this period. This village boy enrolled as a pupil at Giggleswick Grammar School when he was 10 years old and stayed until he was 18. The head-master at that time was Rev. Robert Dockray, and to have obtained the post he would have to acknowledge the use of the book of common prayer, but we do not know if he was a Royalist or a Parliamentarian. Frankland proceeded to Christs College, Cambridge in 1648; here he was under the mastership of Samuel Bolton, a distinguished Puritan, with Oliver Haywood as a fellow student and friend, and in the "shade" of Milton just gone before them. Richard graduated with a B.A. in 1652, and M.A. in 1655, being ordained the same year. He was minister, in succession, at Hexham, Lanchester and Bishop Auckland.

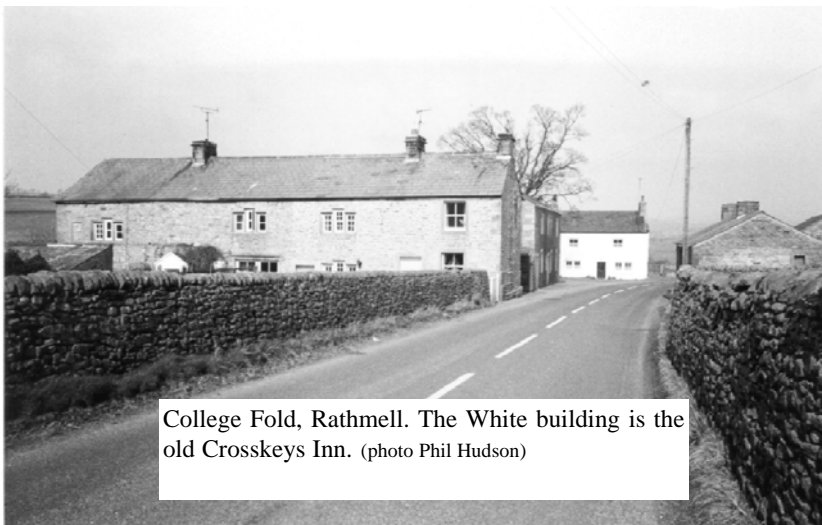


Oliver Cromwell was very impressed with this young man and offered him a post in what was to be the new University of Durham, but all this came to an end with the Act of Uniformity, 12th. August 1662. Rev. Frankland said NO, he would not conform to the book of common prayer and so he was ejected from his living and returned to Rathmell to live in the Mill House. Little is known of his life of the next eight years except that he sought and obtained an interview with the King (Charles II).

In short he told the King that he should improve his ways, and according to the account the King had replied "yes, he would", but of course he did not. This was a brave thing for a village man to have done, at a time when heads 'were rolling' in the Tower of London.

Richard had married Elizabeth, daughter of Samuel Sanderson of Hedley Hope during his time in Co. Durham, their first two children being born there, the next two were born in these early days at Rathmell and were baptised in Giggleswick Church.

Dissenters had been excluded from Oxford University since 1581 and Cambridge from 1616, so the only possible trained pastors for the nonconformist Meeting Houses were the ejected ministers. These by death and by conforming were being gradually reduced in number and it became evident that if something was not done there would be no pastors left. With this in mind Rev. Richard Frankland opened his house to students 8th. March 1670. The first to enrol was George Liddel, son of Sir Thos. Liddel of Ravensworth Castle which gave the school a good start, but it still took 4



College Fold, Rathmell. The White building is the old Crosskeys Inn. (photo Phil Hudson)

years for the class to reach 15 in number. The quality of the teaching, all in Latin, became widely known, and to help "cover" the theology the list of subjects on the syllabus included logic, metaphysics, somatology (study of the human frame), pneumatology, natural philosophy, chronology and divinity.

At this time, the 'powers that be' would keep a keen eye on Rathmell, as we know from an account of the suf-

ferings of the Quakers; a farmer of Knight Stainforth, Samuel Watson was fined on a number of occasions for speaking in a meeting in either Eldroth Hall or his own home, the fine being increased each time until the Justices took 28 head of cattle, 9 horses and 130 sheep worth £120. A Langcliffe couple were put into prison for a year for being married in a Quaker meeting instead of the parish church.

By 1674 things were most uncomfortable at Rathmell, so the whole academy packed up their possessions and quietly moved to Natland, near Kendal, then in the county of Westmorland. Here Frankland found the antagonism less severe, though his course at Natland was by no means smooth; Frankland was able to hold on to his work there for about nine years. During this period there were 77 students, many of whom became well-known nonconformist preachers and tutors. One such was John Chorlton who was assistant and then successor to Henry Newcombe who formed the Manchester Academy. Two others were the sons of Oliver Heywood (Chairman at the Savoy Conference); there were also Jabez and John Clay, the former became an eminent naturalist and the latter reached a high place in the legal profession. Richard Frankland's own two sons, John and Richard, were also at Natland; John died during his student days and Richard succumbed at Attercliffe to an attack of smallpox when he was 23 years old.

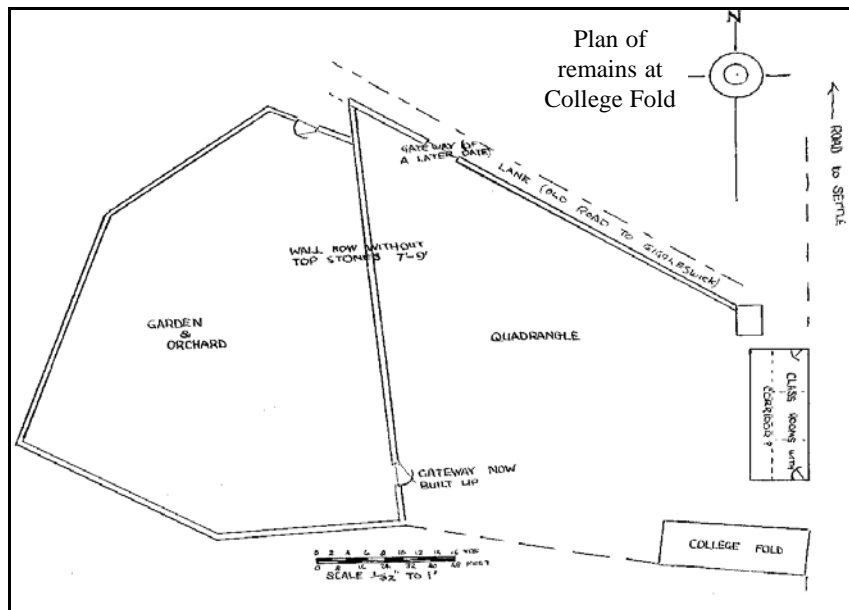


In July 1678 the first non-Episcopal ordination took place at Marton Scar, Winterburn; the minister in question was John Isott, one of the first students of Rathmell. The Rev. Richard Frankland took part and for this he was excommunicated from Giggleswick Church. The Rev. John Isott became the first minister at Winterburn Chapel, one of the oldest dissenting meeting houses in Yorkshire. It was a building provided by Mrs. Barbara Lambert, daughter-in-law of Gen. Lambert of Calton Hall, Malhamdale. The building has changed little since that time, but is now a house. The home of the Lamberts became a refuge for the academy when the courts closed Natland under the "Five Mile Act" but only a handful of students were able to join him there. In 1683, less than a year, they returned across the county border going to Dawson Fold, a farmhouse in the Kendal area. But in 1685 the academy moved across the Westmorland border into Lancashire into the remote farmhouse of Hartbarrow, close to Cartmel Fell, no doubt with a better chance of escaping a writ if it came from either County. But the following year they moved again back into Yorkshire, and here with his son John, Richard Frankland set up his academy again on 8th. November 1686 at Attercliffe near Sheffield.

We may sing about the "Vicar of Bray" but this shows how hope and disappointment must have alternated during those restless and unsettled times - a lesser man would have given up!

Lord Wharton of Ravenstonedale and Sir T. Rokeby, on the occasion of Frankland's excommunication, interceded for him with King William III who ordered his absolution which was publicly read in the Church at Giggleswick.

At last hope came with King James' Indulgence, which gave freedom to teach and preach. So at the cost of £2-10-0 Frankland took out a licence and returned to his native Rathmell, leaving the



new academy at Attermire with 51 students, in the hands of Timothy Jollie. This was on the Rathmell model but with a narrower curriculum; Jollie excluded all mathematical studies on the singular pretext that they "tended to scepticism". The Rathmell academy was reformed and the buildings extended to accommodate 140 young men for the Ministry, so the Meeting Houses of Craven would provide good places for preaching practice; In 1689 houses were licensed for preaching at Settle, Bentham, Stainforth, Clapham, Tosside, Marton, Airton, Bell Busk, Broughton and Arncliffe.

Richard Frankland died "in harness" in the midst of his students on 1st. October 1698. He was buried at Giggleswick Church where there is still a memorial tablet on the wall. Today, at Rathmell a row of cottages still retain the name of "College Fold", these and the row at right angles formed part of Frankland's academy. An account of 1821 by Rev. John Cockin states "It was an extensive establishment bounded by a high wall, which enclosed an acre of ground, the garden and orchard were extensive but are now converted into pasture land". Part of this high wall can be seen by what was the old road to Giggleswick from Rathmell.