



## **Elizabeth Hooton 1600-1672**

### **First female Quaker preacher**

Elizabeth was born in Ollerton moving to Skegby, Sutton in Ashfield when she married. They had several children and she was middle-aged when she met Fox in 1647, she was already a Nonconformist, a Baptist. She became an early supporter of George Fox the founder of the Society of Friends or Quakers.

Initially against the wishes of her husband, she began to organise meetings at her house where the remnants of her Baptist group could hear Fox's ministry. This group became known as the Children of Light. It was the power of Hooton's words that persuaded Fox that God anointed women for ministry as well as men. Within a few years, she had become one of his itinerant preachers. In 1651, she was imprisoned in Derby for 'reproving a priest', and in 1652 she was jailed for 16 months in York Castle for preaching in the church at Rotherham.

Aged 60 she travelled to Boston, Massachusetts, in 1662, where she was taken on a two-week walk into the woods and abandoned. She managed to make her way back to civilization in Rhode Island and then sailed back to England by way of Barbados.

Back in England, she discovered that some of her cattle had been confiscated and she petitioned King Charles II for justice, and used the opportunity to preach to him and inform him of the religious intolerance occurring in the Massachusetts Bay Colony. He gave her a letter authorizing her to settle anywhere she liked in the American colonies and to set up a safe house for Quakers. She first went to Boston and was expelled. Then she went to Cambridge, Massachusetts. The authorities did not accept the letter and ordered her whipped. Afterwards, she was again abandoned in the woods, but she made her way back to England where in 1664, she was imprisoned in Lincoln for five months for disturbing a congregation.

Hooton embarked on her final voyage in 1670, joining George Fox on a trip to the West Indies and the American continent aiming to encourage Friends in the New World. A week after arriving in Jamaica in 1672, Hooton died peacefully of natural causes.

George Fox wrote about her death, "... Elizabeth Hooton, a woman of great age, who had travelled much in Truth's service, and suffered much for it, departed this life. She was well the day before she died, and departed in peace, like a lamb, bearing testimony to Truth at her departure."

Hooton is memorialized in a panel B2 of the Quaker Tapestry, a 77 panel tapestry at the Friends meeting house in Kendal Cumbria