

RECENT PUBLICATIONS

Quakerism in Lincolnshire. By Susan Davies. Yard Publishing Services, Lincoln, 1989. Pp. xiv + 129.

In this slim and readable volume Susan Davies has covered the history of Friends in Lincolnshire from the first journeys of Richard Farnworth in 1652 and 1653 to the restoration of meeting houses between 1987 and 1989. It is a nicely balanced study which deals not only with personalities and buildings but also with the religious and spiritual life of the Society and its testimonies over nearly 350 years. The author has undertaken much archival research and the book demonstrates also her wide reading in and around the subject. In this way it admirably links the history of Quakerism with the history of the county.

The first half of the book, chapters one to seven, are devoted to the establishment of Quakerism in Lincolnshire and the suffering Friends underwent before the Toleration Act of 1689. It is understandable that this period should receive very full attention as the history is written to commemorate the tercentenary of the building of the first meeting house in Lincoln and the greater toleration in religious worship that arose after 1690. Interestingly we note that persecution of a sort in the form of prosecution for the non-payment of tithes continued into the 1840s, if not later.

The rise of Quakerism occurred at a time of general upheavals in the state which were reflected in Lincolnshire. That some members of the Wray family of Glentworth and Ashby were pro-Quaker is not surprising if one reads about them in *Tudor Lincolnshire* and *Seventeenth-Century Lincolnshire (History of Lincolnshire, volumes VI and VII)*. By the end of the sixteenth century many people had under puritan influence begun to adapt a radical attitude and a ready acceptance of nonconformity.

Throughout the centuries the county has provided several well-known Quaker families (we avoid the word "weighty" nowadays – perhaps even in commas) but it is a comment on family, social and denominational history that 'only members of the Burtt family now remain who are descended from the Lincolnshire farming Friends of the seventeenth century' (p.115).

The book has excellent plans of the distribution of Quaker communities and of the particular and monthly meetings throughout the period. With the exception of the photographed documents, some of which are too small to read without a magnifying glass, the illustrations are very good. And the photograph of Sophia Thompson on her tricycle on p. 105 is superb.

It would have been informative to have had more on the rise of Methodism in the county where it took so firm a hold and some investigation as to whether it contributed to the decline in Quaker numbers. Apart from slight inaccuracies in the description of different tithes, Susan Davies's work is historically sound. This book is essential reading for Friends and for all those interested in the history of nonconformity in Lincolnshire.

Gerald A.J. Hodgett

Friends to China: The Davidson Brothers and the Friends Mission to China 1886–1939. By Charles Tyzack. William Sessions Ltd, York, 1988. £10.75 post paid.

This is a fascinating book. In it Charles Tyzack gives an account of the Davidson family's involvement in the Friends Mission to China between 1886 and 1939. He points out that it is not a definitive history of the Friends Mission because it concentrates on work where the Davidson family members were involved rather than attempting to give an overall picture. But by following the fortunes of four brothers, we become involved in their characters and their adventures; and the story grips us in a way that a more balanced account would find it hard to do.

Their adventures make stirring reading. Warburton Davidson is beaten almost to death; Robert's steamboat sinks in a Yangtse gorge; Alfred lies behind armoured plates on board his vessel; Henry hauls down the military flags from the Meeting House and narrowly avoids imprisonment. It was, of course, a very dangerous period for westerners who wanted to go beyond the Treaty Ports and anti-foreign feeling could be very strong.

For me, there were points of contact between my life and the people and places in this book. I spent time in Chungking and Chengtu in my FAU (Friends Ambulance Unit) days, visiting Tungliang, Tungchwan and Suining; I am cousin to the Wighams mentioned; and I suspect I may have been the last member of a foreign football team to score a goal against those agile school boys at Wen Feng T'a, F.L. Yang's school above Chungking. But the reader needs no points of contact to enjoy this book. It is good reading.

Inevitably when thinking about missions, the question emerges about success in bringing Christianity to the Chinese. If the answer is wanted in terms of numbers of converts, it will look disappointing and I doubt if Friends did any better than anyone else. But Friends did something very special – and the Davidson family led the way in doing it. That was creating close relationships with Chinese people and setting up institutions in which their friendship could flourish. The school at Wen Feng T'a was one; the International Friends Institute in Chungking was important as a point of contact for many years; the YMCA at Chengtu was another; but perhaps the most important and long lasting was the contribution to the creation of the West China Union University in Chengtu of which Robert Davidson was the first chairman. It was created in a remarkable atmosphere of ecumenism that preceded the Edinburgh Conference of 1910.

The Davidsons and their colleagues displayed that Quaker genius for bridging their cultural gaps, working with others in a good cause and getting to know their Chinese partners in 'the things that are eternal'. I remember, when visiting Tungliang and Suining in the 1940s, observing how different were the relations with Chinese people compared with other missions we encountered. Our concept of 'that of God in every man' reaches distant corners.

This book is good history in itself. For completeness it is good to learn that Charles Tyzack might go on to write an overall history of the Friends Mission. Perhaps someone should be embarking on the next chapter of Friends in China – to write a proper history of FAU (and FSU) in China; the files and the diaries are around, not to mention living memory!

Chris Barber

Hedge of Wild Almonds: South Africa, the 'Pro-Boers' and the Quaker Conscience. By Hope Hay Hewison, James Currey, London, 1989. Pp. xviii + 389, illus. £25.00, paperback £12.95.

It seems to me that there is a necessarily spiritual dimension about the writing of any history that deserves the name. The discipline itself is that of entering with an increasing depth of understanding into the personalities and processes of the past. Most of us, I suspect, succumb to its enchantment through the emotional response we find ourselves making to the stories and values we grew up with, or else our rebellious rejection of them. Either way, we are on dangerous ground. We do not spring newly made from the head of time, and we have to come to terms with our formative influences. This is why history is a spiritual activity. This is why many shun or fear the humanities. Before people face the past they have to face themselves.

The Anglo-Boer War of 1899–1902 is a case in point. I grew up knowing that the 'Boer War' came before 'the Last War'. In my imagination it is associated with faded sepia photographs, the lore of scouting and the tune 'Dolly Gray' played on a barrel organ in Great Russell Street every morning as I went to work in Bloomsbury in the late fifties. I have grown up knowing that the standing enclosures at football grounds are often called 'kops', and that pre-1914 houses sometimes bear strange names like 'Vereeniging'. The assumptions of a vanished imperialism are so multifarious and deeply ingrained that it takes time for someone of my generation to work them out.

This graciously written and attractively produced book is of signal assistance in the process of coming to an understanding of the complexities of the imperial heritage in connexion with contemporary South Africa. Mainly focussed on London Yearly Meeting and its attitudes over a period of just 20 years, it in fact provides a concise account of the history of South Africa from the Dutch settlement of 1653 to the creation of the modern state in 1910. The hedge of the title was originally planted by Jan van Riebeck to mark the separation between the territories of the settlers and the native Hottentots. Throughout the book we encounter the short term advantage and long term misery that flows from the greed for land, and the hedges in the mind which South Africa has such difficulty in uprooting.

The main part of the text follows the phases of the war, beginning with British policy towards the Boer republics, the outbreak of the conflict and the early setbacks, the Boer guerrilla campaign after 1900 when Britain thought the war was won, and the consequent moves by Britain against the civilian population, the immediate consequences of the fighting, and finally the movement towards rapprochement and the emergence of the Union of South Africa. The topic necessarily requires a chronological treatment but the author very skilfully weaves a number of themes into it. There is the general history of South Africa, and stories of Friends in that country and this. Particularly important is the attention given to the indigenous peoples, indentured workers and the non-European immigrants most notable of whom was, of course, M.K. Gandhi.

What emerges is a picture of Friends of almost a 100 years ago struggling with the new complexities the twentieth century has attached to old dilemmas. As has been noticed elsewhere in connexion with Australia, the inward looking nature of nineteenth-century British Quakerism made it ill-equipped to deal with the growth of Quaker communities in what were then the colonies. Partly this was the religious heritage, partly the social isolation in which most Friends then lived. Partly it is an

expression of an ambivalence about the growth in a group which nevertheless dreams of changing the world.

The central narrative shows how the war brought many of these social and theological tensions to a head. Early 1900 found Friends divided into a larger, pro-Boer group, and a smaller group broadly sympathetic to Government policy. The former comprised the more progressive Friends associated with the movement set off by the Manchester Conference, the latter, the older, traditionalist leadership of the Society. Attitudes do not seem to have been based on the kind of grasp of the complexities of the situation which we would consider essential today. The author's thesis is that the terms of contemporary debate, and therefore the outlines of the post-war settlement, were determined by the relations of the Boer republics and the Imperial power, and not a political and social settlement of Southern Africa which took real account of the African and non-white immigrant population. The long term significance of this is obvious.

London Yearly Meeting was no more successful in appreciating this than anybody else. Indeed, it seems that its structure and the variety of opinions held within it prevented the kind of response Friends might look for today. The Friends' South Africa War Victims fund was set up in 1899 but was beset with troubles and proved dilatory, and the 1900 Yearly Meeting is remarkable more for the theological wrangle over its statement on the war than what it actually said. On the other hand, away from corporate restraints, individual Friends were active in the South Africa Conciliation Committee and in support of Emily Hobhouse's work in the concentration camps.

We are therefore offered a subtle judgment on the period. The idealism and practicality show up clearly, as we would expect and indeed want to expect. But also we are shown the limitation of the way we choose, as Friends, to do things. Perhaps we are always in transition, and it was the nature of the emergency in 1899 which made Friends more effective in organisations other than their own, bearing in mind the transition in their own ranks. Even today the question of sanctions divides Friends, so perhaps we are not so very different. Every so often, through an aside, the author reveals her family experience in these events. Her book is a work of highly readable scholarship and also a work notable in intention and execution. It is a real history.

John Punshon