

## RECENT PUBLICATIONS

*Friends in life and death: the British and Irish Quakers in the demographic transition.* By Richard T. Vann and David Eversley. Cambridge University Press, 1992. ISBN 0 521 39201 2 Pp, xix + 281. Price £32.50 (\$49.40).

The main reason for a scholarly study of Friends' records of births, marriages and deaths is that they exist; and, despite imperfections which are carefully set out in this book, they have a quality and continuity seldom matched in the parish registers or in other demographic records of the time. When George Fox exhorted Friends to 'buy convenient Books for Registering the Births, Marriages and Burials, as the holy men of God did of old', he began a tradition which is still continued in the meticulous work of registering officers and clerks of Monthly Meetings. But the body of Quaker evidence can be looked at from two points of view. If Friends were representative of the people of their time, then it is evidence which throws light on general demographic trends. But if Friends were a 'peculiar people' whose habits of marriage and conception and whose longevity differed from that of the general population, then the evidence throws light on the nature of their peculiarity.

But, in deciding between these points of view, there is a problem. It is clear that income, social class and occupation affect marriage, conception and longevity. In these respects, Friends were never representative of the population as a whole; and, to make matters worse, their characteristics changed from the seventeenth to the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries. Many early Friends were peasant proprietors or small shopkeepers or artisans. But (for instance) in rural England, between the half centuries beginning in 1650 and in 1800, the percentage (among Quaker bridegrooms) engaged in agriculture fell from 30 to 9, while the professional and clerical classes rose from 7 to 34 per cent. Other areas show similar changes – a move towards the present position in which the Society is almost entirely middle class. The authors perhaps overemphasize the demographic significance of having had many of the important (and wealthy) leaders of the Industrial Revolution; but it is clear that, for each area and period, we really need comparative data from groups of similar social characteristics. Only fragments of such data exist.

Another problem is that the Society, in its efforts to keep itself pure and separate from the 'world', went through a long period of wholesale disownment. This changed the Quaker population in a way which is not readily measured. In addition, many emigrated, and some were 'convinced'. So, while the Society was in some respects a closed group tending to marry within its own number, it is not possible to assume that each Friend would appear in the registers at birth, at marriage and at death.

However, some striking calculations can be made of the number of children per family surviving to the age of 15. In Ireland in the eighteenth century this was over 6, making 'the Irish Quakers one of the most fertile populations known to historical demography' (p. 240) – far beyond replacement levels. In Britain, families increased in the second half of the century, and then fell somewhat in the period after 1800. The rise in marital fertility would have been moderated by a rise in the age of first marriage and by an increase in celibacy, were it not for the fact that the intervals between children

became shorter. At the same time, infant and child mortality fell from the very high levels around 1700. High fertility and falling mortality would have produced an explosion of Quaker populations, but there is evidence as we move to the nineteenth century of an early acceptance of family limitation.

It is misleading to compare Quakers with sects like the Hutterites, the Amish and the early Mormons, for – though also tending to marry within their own group – these were all people with a secluded agricultural life. Instead, the authors choose as comparators the British peerage and the upper bourgeoisie of Geneva. There are interesting parallels; for instance, the peerage also gave rise to many women who never married, it had a high fertility between 1750 and 1800, but also a high age of marriage. All three groups show low death rates, beginning to decline before those of the population as a whole. Indeed, in 1825 the expectation of life at birth for Quakers in Bristol was over 40 years, against 29 for the population as a whole and 20 for the poor. (These figures are still affected by high infant mortality; but even at age 20 a Quaker could look forward to living, on average, to 60, whereas the figure for ‘the poor’ is 52). Robert Rankin, who compiled these figures, commented ‘The moral habits for which the members of the Society of Friends are proverbially eminent, tend as certainly to the prolongation and enjoyment of life, as their opposites tend to abridge and embitter it’ (Quoted, p. 238). There is therefore some historical basis for the weekly habit of many Friends in counting the nonagenarians in the death column of *The Friend*.

This book is a very important scholarly contribution to demography. It is well written and clear, but cannot be recommended as light reading to Friends without demographic knowledge; for the story it has to tell is necessarily a very complex one, and honesty requires of the authors great caution in presenting their results. For instance (p. 254) – ‘Can we use the findings of this research to illuminate the demographic developments of the rest of the British and Irish population? On this point we remain agnostic, awaiting comparable family reconstitution analysis of much larger sections of the Anglican population. (Such material apparently will never be found for the Roman Catholic population of Ireland, as their parish registers have not survived).’ In other words, what our Friends have discovered is suggestive rather than offering clear proofs; even the evidence for early family limitation is an inference rather than a confirmed discovery. But from very difficult material they have achieved much, and deserve the thanks of Quaker historians as well as of demographers.

Charles Carter

*Studies in Peace History.* By Peter Brock, Wm. Sessions Ltd., York, 1991.  
£8.00 + £1.00 p & p.

The author is Professor Emeritus of History at the University of Toronto. Over the years he has made a substantial and scholarly contribution to the literature on pacifism, especially on pacifism in Europe until 1914, and is also an expert on East Central Europe. ‘A friend of the Friends’, he was a conscientious objector during the last war and later worked as a volunteer in the Anglo-American Quaker Relief Mission in post-war Poland.

The nine studies, some new, others previously published in scholarly journals, bear testimony to the breadth of his interests in pacifism: one is on the Lollards, two on the situation in sixteenth- and seventeenth-century Poland, three on American history in the

eighteenth and nineteenth centuries, one on pacifist witness in Hungary in the latter part of the nineteenth century, one on an episode in the life of Mahatma Gandhi, and, finally, one on the substantial rights enjoyed by pacifists in Lenin's Russia.

Although John Wyclif, the founder of the Lollards, who died in 1384, had not condemned war absolutely, some of the followers of the movement, which survived until the sixteenth century, did so. They became England's first avowed pacifists.

The two studies on pacifism in Poland are interesting because they suggest that the pacifist witness of the Anabaptists, strong in its early years, was weakened by some thinkers like Faustus Socinus (1539-1604), who justified the assumption of public office and the performance of military service by the nobility. Pacifism, however, did not entirely disappear. Some later thinkers still thought it wrong for Christians to fight, though they differed on whether governments should wage war, including so-called defensive wars.

Two of the studies on American history deal with conscientious objection. Seven young Virginian Friends, who were conscripted into the militia in 1756 to serve under Colonel George Washington, refused to do so on grounds of religious principle. The author says that Washington (then aged 20) was also one of the heroes of the story because he respected their rights of conscience.

The second study is based on the autobiography of Thomas Watson (1753-1811), who became a conscientious objector after fighting in the battle of Germantown in 1773. He later joined the Society of Friends. He was not apparently aware of the refusal of others to fight, but came to his views independently.

The third American study shows that while most American Friends remained loyal to their pacifist principles, they did not support the New England Non-Resistance Society set up by William Lloyd Garrison in 1838. It condemned not only war, but also civil government. As a result, the peace movement of the time was sadly deprived of Quaker support when it was badly needed.

The seventh study indicates that although there were only a few pacifists in Hungary during the latter period of the Habsburg Empire, the authorities were anxious not to encourage them. Pacifists tended either to belong to or be sympathetic towards non-Magyar and underprivileged groups. They were mainly Tolstoyans or Nazarenes. While the latter refused military service, they were prepared to do non-combatant duties. They were also active proselytizers.

Was Mahatma Gandhi ready to become a combatant in the summer of 1918? In his eighth study the author states his view that while Gandhi planned to remain true to his ideal of nonviolence and not use a weapon, he was apparently prepared to recruit and lead a unit on the battlefield, and allow them to use weapons.

The final study, perhaps surprisingly, reveals that pacifism flourished in the Soviet Union during the time of Lenin. V.G. Chertkov, the leader of the Tolstoyans, had appealed directly to him on behalf of the objectors. A very liberal decree was passed allowing those who objected to military service for religious reasons to do alternative service. With the death of Lenin in 1924 the age of pacifism was virtually ended.

*Cecil Evans*

*Quakerism in York 1650-1720.* By David Scott. Borthwick Paper No. 80 (1991) obtainable from the Secretary, Borthwick Institute, Peasholme Green, York YO1 2PW. £2.00 + 35p. p & p.



The Borthwick Papers include studies on many aspects of the City of York and surrounding areas, but this is the first on early Quakerism.

David Scott's approach is analytical rather than factual using the latter only to illustrate points in the development of his thesis. He is using as his basis Michael Mullett's questioning the 'extent to which eighteenth-century Quakerism had suffered a decline from sect to denomination', and Nicholas Morgan's endorsement of the same with reference to the unchanging character of Lancashire Quakerism during the seventeenth century based upon the earliest Quaker practices as opposed to the developments in London and the 'metropolitan South'. Scott considers the York Quaker meeting was ideal for a similar approach.

His purpose is 'to gain some insight into the attitudes and group behaviour of the early York Quakers and to determine in what way, if any, their outlook changed over the period 1650-1720', and also their relationship with the wider community and the municipal establishment.

The main part of the booklet uses factual information to illustrate the changes, if any. There are Tables on 'Social Composition..1650-1715' indicating the shift in the basis of recruitment after the 1660s; 'Friends attending P.M. 1670-79 and M.M. 1670-83' showing the latter to be dominated by civic Friends; 'Discipline in the York Men's P.M. meeting' and a detailed account of a matter of discipline concerning re-marriage which resulted in a number of York's Quaker community becoming separatists.

Friends' concern with morals arose 'as much from a perception of growing moral laxity in society as within the Meeting'. During the period studied the battle against such laxity in York was not waged by Friends alone and facing this problem together meant issues of doctrine and worship lost significance between the devout Christians in York – York Friends displayed rather less of the 'classic sectarian trait'.

David Scott frequently makes comparison between the rural Lancashire Quakers and the urban York Quakers. The political and social environment was more congenial and York Friends interacted with municipal, guild and parish officers as also with the city's business community whilst maintaining their religious stance.

The author concludes with an assessment of the character of civic Quakerism in York which did change over the period but in a far less dramatic way than the decline theory of Mullett and Morgan would suggest.

A study such as this on early Quakerism is valuable if only to show how areas/communities differed in their development.

*Joan Goodwin*

*Experiences in the life of Mary Penington.* (written by herself) Reprinted 1992 by Friends Historical Society. Pp xxix + 119. Price £4.50.

This neat little book is a worthy successor to Norman Penney's 1911 edition. It contains all the original material, the "exercises", the letter to her grandson and the abstract of her will, together with the family tree, Norman Penny's excellent footnotes, biographical introduction and bibliography. A new frontispiece portraying Lady Springett replaces the photograph of Jordans Meeting House. There is now also a map of south-east England drawn specially by David M. Butler, and further bibliographical notes by Malcolm Thomas. We are grateful to Gil Skidmore for her preface analysing and evaluating the spiritual autobiography as a seventeenth-century literary form and Mary Penington's in particular.

Although she spent the whole of her life in the south-east, Mary Penington's writings reflect the turbulence of events and the ferment in thinking that preceded and accompanied the rise of Quakerism in the country as a whole. She was 17 years old when the Civil War began, 18 when she married the gallant Sir William Springett, and 20 when in 1644 he died of a fever at the age of 22. Charles Thomas-Stanford in his *Sussex in the Great Civil War* describes her writings as presenting an unrivalled picture of an aspect of the times – not very commonly appreciated – the life of a country gentleman who was yet a Puritan of the strictest upbringing and practice.

We would take his point further. She herself was one of the privileged and influential, with estates and stately homes, who were also Parliamentarian and Puritan. She tells of how she and William were, in fact, in open revolt against what they saw as vain repetition and superstitious symbolism in Puritan worship. After his death she suffered years of isolation as she continued her search for spontaneity in prayer and genuine religious experience. She did, however, eventually meet others like herself, and among them, Isaac Penington whom she married in 1654. Then at last they came into contact with Quakers, who, that very year had begun their mission to London and the South.

Shortly after their conviction they moved to Buckinghamshire where for the next 20 years, in spite of the recurring hazards of persecution, their home was a meeting point for travelling and local Friends and a place for worship. Particularly close to them as a family were Thomas Ellwood and William Penn. Together with the Peningtons they can be seen as belonging to a group of early Friends, perhaps more numerous than one might suppose, who stemmed from the same background, who had much to lose but who gave so much to the young movement, and indeed to us in the Society of Friends today.

Mary Penington's writings supplement the journals of Fox and Ellwood. We see the struggles that preceded conviction, the price that had to be paid for it afterwards, the way they supported one another and the joy of the gathered fellowship which came so soon to include men and women of a different way of life, with different gifts but with the same inward experience and the same spirit as their own.

At the centre there was Mary Penington herself, courageous and competent, with her spiritual dreams and practical decisions, loving and loyal even in danger and disaster and, above all, as we see from her initial self-confessed reluctance to subject her social status to Quaker ways, a woman able to come to terms with herself.

*Hope Hewison*

*Women & Quakerism in the 17th Century.* By Christine Trevett. William Sessions Ltd., 1991. £5.00.

Christine Trevett's book on women and Quakerism in the seventeenth century is the first to be published on this subject in Britain. Although herself a specialist in the early Christian Church, she embarked on the exercise because there was no easily manageable source book on the subject for teaching purposes. As she herself notes, the study is only a beginning.

Christine Trevett provides a highly detailed account of the struggles and tribulations of early Quaker women, set against the extraordinarily complicated and changing backdrop of the seventeenth century. The book (which is attractively illustrated) is

divided into three chapters: the first setting the scene and examining the lives of a number of individual women; the second dealing with women who ministered in public; and the third of marriage, children, education and the special Women's Meetings. Within the compass of what is a short book (131 pages of text), the author draws heavily on original sources and other material on the subject of early Friends.

Many of the women were extraordinary by any standards, such as Elizabeth Hooton, the itinerant minister imprisoned both in England and in Massachusetts, whipped and humiliated in public, and an early advocate of prison reform. But of particular interest is Christine Trevett's portrayal of the early women charismatics and the tensions between that strand of Quakerism and the organization and discipline that were eventually to prevail.

Perhaps mistakenly, I had expected this to be a book about the impact of women on Quakerism. Instead, it is much more a book about the impact of Quakerism (and the wider scene of the seventeenth century) on women. The specific contribution that women made to early Quaker beliefs and practices remains an elusive subject. While the wealth of source material is to be welcomed, it is not, I feel, set within a sufficiently clear conceptual framework, so that it is often left to the reader to make generalizations and draw the conclusions.

At the same time, there are real nuggets to be mined. Perhaps one of the more surprising findings to emerge from the material is the fact that so little deference was made to women, and that, as Christine puts it, 'there was only a tilting, rather than an upturning of the prevailing order'. Only 82 out of 650 early writing Friends were women. By the end of the century men and women were worshipping on different sides of the Meeting House. Earlier, the Women's Meetings of the 1670s were far from universally supported within Quakerism, and were remarkable for their *lack* of power.

As the author concludes, in the 'age when women were believed to be beset by moral and physical weaknesses, by ignorance and love of frivolity, when they were linked in the minds of Christian men with carnality ..... the task of these women Friends was not one which was accomplished lightly'. Bringing this turbulent, extraordinarily complex period to life is an accomplishment for which we may be grateful, although I for one would have been glad for the book to have had a broader sweep.

*Jan Arriens*

Jean E. Mortimer: 'Joseph Tatham's School, Leeds' and 'Thoresby's "poor deluded Quakers": the Sufferings of Leeds Friends in the Seventeenth Century', *Miscellany*, Publications of the Thoresby Society, 1990 Second Series, volume 1. Available from the Society, 23 Clarendon Road, Leeds, LS2 9NZ. Prices £1.70 and £1.20 respectively, postage extra.

In 1756 Joseph Tatham set up a private school in Leeds, under the auspices of Leeds Meeting and housed on the Meeting's premises. It survived until 1838. Jean Mortimer's account of the history of the school draws on Leeds Friends' records and for its later part also on memoirs, journals and obituary notices. She describes the range of subjects

taught, the charges and the school rules. Two contemporary lists of boarders with 367 names are printed and some individuals amongst them are described. This is a brief but valuable account of an interesting Quaker educational enterprise.

Jean Mortimer's other article is informative on the ways in which Friends suffered, on the sources for studying sufferings and on the varied reasons for those experiences. These are well illustrated from local examples which carry on into the nineteenth century despite the title.

*David J. Hall*

*Cork City Quakers, 1655-1939: A Brief History.* By Richard S. Harrison, Privately Published, 1991.

Richard S. Harrison sets out the purpose of this study in his Introduction. 'This short book sets out to highlight some of the chief themes of Cork quaker history'. The key word here is 'highlights'. Adopting a chronological approach he presents the establishment, witness and activities of Cork Friends across nearly three centuries. Some chapters benefit from a chronological division of time within a given topic, enabling the stages or diversity of the theme to be clearly seen. This is particularly effective in his account of the Cork Quaker business community from the seventeenth to the nineteenth centuries. Irish Quaker involvement in business is one of Richard Harrison's major research interests. However, later chapters on Social Life and Education and Cork Friends from 1850 to 1939 present problems. These most probably arise from the material available but also from the 'Highlight' and chronological approach pursued. They become selective glimpses of events, individuals and institutions, worthwhile to read, but lacking a firm analytical framework to bring them together.

Some items find an uneasy place in specific chapters. Do Friends' concern not to bear arms in the 1790s and their opposition to the death penalty fit appropriately within the theme of philanthropy? Here Richard Harrison writes perceptively on the relation of Cork Quaker involvement within the wider community in philanthropic activity undertaken in the city. Also might it not have been more effective to have included all the Quaker civic and philanthropic participation across the period in one thematic chapter? There are no references in the notes for his account of Cork Friends in the troubled period of 1916-23 and one hopes that more evidence might exist for those years than the examples given.

Quaker history is not the easiest to write. Quaker minutes and other records can give us detail but, as John M. Douglas observed, so much of Quaker endeavour and witness comes from the Meeting for Worship which does not provide material for historical writing. This said, Richard Harrison has, within his remit, used a wide range of primary and secondary sources, with well chosen illustrations, to present the richness of Quaker history in his chosen theme. As he rightly says all books are 'preliminary' given the nature of the evidence available and the previous study undertaken. He also indicates some themes he is undertaking further research into. Could he, with this encouraging start, undertake a more detailed historical study which fits Cork City Friends into their regional and national context as one highly significant community in the wider presence of Quakerism in Ireland?

*Howard F. Gregg*



*I Will Not Fight: Conscientious Objectors and Pacifists in the North West during the Second World War.* By Pat Starkey. Liverpool University Press, 1992. £5.00.

This pamphlet fits Pat Starkey's previous study of the Liverpool and District Pacifist Service Unit into a wider regional context. *Companions in Caring* was reviewed in Volume 56 Number 1 of this *Journal*. This pamphlet is one of a series of Liverpool Historical Essays published by the Department of History, University of Liverpool. Its 38 pages of text provide a balanced and comprehensive account of many aspects of its major themes. It will jog memories for those who were conscientious objectors between 1939 and 1945 or those who remember their courageous, practical and sometimes awkward witness. For those who do not, the pamphlet will serve as a valuable introduction to what is now the historical experience of active objection to participation in the military conduct of the Second World War.

Dr. Starkey reminds us that conscientious objectors and pacifists are not the same thing and goes on to examine the political as well as religious reasons for a refusal to fight. A useful survey of peace groups as well as individuals is made. The legal process for conscientious objection, with its options and penalties, is clearly described. The historical balance in this section is well maintained between accounts of unsympathetic judges at tribunals in Manchester and those conscientious objectors whose stand 'asked for trouble'. The loss of personal popularity and employment in areas of diverse work in the region for those who refused to fight is detailed, together with the ill treatment of pacifist soldiers in detention in Liverpool in 1940. The various forms of service open to pacifist and conscientious objectors is then given in detail, with sections on the role of Pacifist Service Bureaux, Non-Combatant Companies in the Army, Fire-watching and Pacifist Service Units. This last section is a concise summary of *Companions in Caring*. Of particular interest is the different attitudes of the staff at two Manchester hospitals to those conscientious objectors who undertook fire-watching duties there after their day's work.

Besides references elsewhere in the text, the Society of Friends has six pages for the considerable, varied and active service Friends and Meetings undertook for the larger community in the region and abroad. M. Shearer's 1979 account of *Quaker peace work on Merseyside* is a key source for Dr. Starkey here.

The pamphlet ends with a brief account of regional initiatives in reconciliation and participation in reconciliation and relief work in post-war Europe. This was largely undertaken through the Friends Relief Service and the Friends Ambulance Unit. The significant service of the Pacifist Service Units in Liverpool and Manchester led to the establishment of Family Service Units in 1948 to continue and extend their pioneering work. The measure of what conscientious objectors did achieve is well conveyed in this study. Dr. Starkey's careful and well researched pamphlet should encourage similar regional studies elsewhere to lay the groundwork for a future national synthesis of this important topic.

Howard F. Gregg

*Quakers & Railways.* By Edward H. Milligan. W. Sessions, York 1992. £4 + £1.00 p&p.

This is a book to be cherished; splendidly set out with pictures, drawings, maps and photographs. The Quaker originators, devisors and inventors – some rather grim-



looking, others rather handsome – are portrayed beside the account of that which they originated, devised or invented. Most people have a smattering of knowledge about railways. Bradshaw is conceivably still a household word in some establishments, and the name Edward Pease indissolubly linked with the Stockton and Darlington Railway; the year of 1825 being recalled in some circles as easily as that of 1066.

In this engagingly produced work the smatterings are drawn together, and much more added and set out clearly and lucidly and, where appropriate, amusingly. It is one of those books which can be dipped into. The cover is indeed eye-catching: it might be seen as a form of Outreach, demonstrating that a Quaker is not always “some very melancholy thing”. And although the book gives an introduction into parts of the history of the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, children will love it just because it is a book about trains. Study of the maps will trace the development of what is now known as the rail network, but a good magnifying glass is needed both for this and the timetable reproductions.

The book will sit happily on Quaker bookshelves, shedding its bright colours over more sombre tomes. It should also be required reading for Ministers of Transport.

*Patricia R. Sparks.*