

RECENT PUBLICATIONS

The Quaker Peace Testimony, 1660-1914. By Peter Brock. Sessions Book Trust, York, 1990. Hardback £25, laminated card £14.95 + £1.25 p&p.

The subject matter of this important book was originally called the Quaker testimony against bearing arms, then the testimony against all war, and now the peace testimony. The change from “bearing arms” to “all war” was necessary when it was realized that simple refusal to bear arms left open the possibility that some Friends might engage in other activities in support of war, such as the manufacture or sale of weapons. The change from a negative to a positive testimony reflected the growing belief among Friends that pacifism must include efforts to build a warless world.

Peter Brock’s new study updates and complements Margaret Hirst’s classic *The Quakers in Peace and War*, first published nearly 70 years ago. Brock is much briefer than Hirst, but his style is drab. The book is fact-packed and provided with full notes, but it has a rather inadequate Bibliography and a meagre Index. Both Brock and Hirst stop at the first world war.

The outstanding impression of Brock’s study is how varied have been the circumstances in which the peace testimony has had to be applied. Friends have in general refused to hire substitutes or pay special fees in lieu of military service but have usually been willing to undertake humanitarian service under civilian control. Friends in nineteenth-century Prussia, while unwilling to pay commutation fees, made a payment to the exchequer, not as a contribution to the war, ‘but as a token of gratitude for the toleration they had of late enjoyed’ (p. 231). The greatest moral predicaments for Friends arose in Rhode Island and Pennsylvania where, for nearly two generations, they dominated political life, being repeatedly elected to the provincial assemblies even when not constituting a majority of the population. Was it morally admissible to ask others to undertake tasks regarding which Friends themselves had conscientious scruples? In the end, with encouragement from this side of the Atlantic, American Friends withdrew from government, finding it impossible to reconcile the obligations of a Christian magistrate and the refusal to take military action (p. 93).

Peter Brock stresses the tension between peace and justice (p. 17). For the 1948 assembly of the World Council of Churches, the Historic Peace Churches produced a pamphlet, *Peace is the Will of God*. The mainstream churches responded with *God Wills Both Peace and Justice*. The mainstream churches chose a good title, but the fact is that war negates both peace and justice. The American Civil War posed acute problems for those Quakers (no doubt the majority) who wished to get rid of slavery, but without violence (p. 166). Friends who support the United Nations have faced similar difficulties over UN-sponsored wars to combat aggression in Korea (1950-53) and the Gulf (1991).

Pacifists of my generation are grateful that the faithful witness of earlier generations has saved us from much of the pain of refusing to bear arms. When military conscription

has been in force, there has been legal provision for conscientious objection, including absolute exemption or exemption on condition of performing alternative service under civilian control. When I appeared before the CO tribunal in Leeds in 1940, the chairman (Judge William Stewart) pointed out that 99 men out of a 100 had obeyed the law, to which I was able to give the cheeky reply 'So have I, sir, the law makes provision for conscientious objectors.'

Brock points out how reluctant the secular authorities have been to exempt Quakers from war service, for if it should lead to mass conversion to Quakerism of the lazy and the cowardly (pp. 53, 156, 175, 231). On the other hand, the secular authorities have come to realize that it is profitless trying to compel unwilling objectors to undertake military service. There are more pressing tasks in time of war, and pacifists would be worse than useless in the armed forces.

Peter Brock has rendered us a useful service: perhaps one day he will bring the story up to more recent times, for an unchangeable principle has to be constantly adapted to new circumstances.

Sydney D. Bailey

Quakers in Gildersome. By Jean A. Mortimer, published by the Author, 60 Gledhow Wood Grove, Leeds LS9 1PA, 1990. £5.

Frequently local histories do not acknowledge the presence of Quakerism in the area studied and if it is mentioned it is inadequately covered. Publications, such as *Quakers in Gildersome*, therefore, make a very valuable and additional contribution to local history.

Gildersome, like so many meetings of that period, was an offshoot of a larger Meeting. Leeds P.M. agreed to a request from Gildersome Friends to hold a weekday meeting once or twice a month and from that they progressed to holding first day meetings on the first and third Sundays and eventually became a P.M. This lasted until 1835 when it relinquished its P.M. status back to Leeds, but worship at the meeting house continued.

The book consists of short comments on the usual aspects of a Friends' Meeting - premises, subscribers, trustees, discipline, marriages, care of the poor, sufferings, burials and burial ground etc. One interesting aspect of this Meeting during the eighteenth century was the establishment of a Workhouse School for poor Friends' children, which opened in September 1772. Quite a detailed account is given of the development of the school, which during its 40 years existence educated some 312 boys and girls, not only from this country but also from abroad.

The local records have been well used and in this short book Jean Mortimer has managed to cover the usual areas of Quaker development in the area. It must have been quite difficult to condense so much available information into an affordable publication. There are areas which could warrant further development, in say articles for the *F.H.S. Journal*.

Joan Goodwin

Ambrose Rigge: Soldier in the Lamb's War. By Charles Kohler. William Sessions Ltd, The Ebor Press, York, 1990. £2.50 + 50p p&p.

The seemingly simple style of this biography of Ambrose Rigge carries the reader easily along from 1648 to 1705, from the intelligent schoolboy, the restless adolescent and the eager young publisher of truth to the travelling preacher and the settled teacher. Charles Kohler's imaginative portrayal of characters and occasions invites us to a deeper understanding of the seventeenth century. We see the lame and disillusioned soldier in Kendal market, the comfort of fellowship at the Bull and Mouth, a voyage to Gravesend, the trial before Justice Rivers, and the school at Gratton Place. His anecdotes are firmly based on careful research. Although there is no heavy emphasis on points of civil and social history, there is much of interest within this slim volume. Ambrose Rigge's life is the epitome of the response of sensitive and courageous youth to spiritual awakening. Charles Kohler has set it out for us in an eminently readable form.

Kathleen L. Cottrell

Lending a Hand in Holland, 1945 - 1946. By Joan Hewitt. William Sessions, York, 1990. Pp. iv + 28, Illus. £2 + 50p p&p.

Joan Hewitt's booklet recalls her six months work as part of a Quaker relief team, mainly at Zetten, between November 1945 and May 1946. The text is well produced and illustrated with photographs and drawings of the period. The humour, sadness and the comradeship of working at such a time in an unfamiliar environment are placed within the broader context of the tremendous difficulties, both material and psychological, occupation and war had left the Dutch people to face. Their courage as well as their problems, are evident in these pages. All of this is presented through Joan's vivid impressions and memories of what is clearly an important moment in her life. The Quaker search for reconciliation in a hostile post-war Europe is movingly reflected in Joan's later work in the Ruhr and the gifts of fruit and vegetables she and her fellow workers were able to bring there from those they had helped in Holland. This is, as Joan points out in her Introduction, an account of one individual's experience of, and part in, a major Quaker relief initiative. The detailed history can be found elsewhere but personal records like this, with its warm humanity, careful observation and practical Quakerism, illumine that wider Quaker effort and give it life, particularly for those of us too young in 1946 to be aware of it.

Howard F. Gregg