

EDITORIAL

This is a special issue of *Quaker Studies* on the theme of researching the history of the Quaker peace testimony. It is the fruit of cooperation between the Quaker Studies Research Association and the Yorkshire Quaker Heritage Project. For those of you not familiar with the Project, this was based at the University of Hull Brynmor Jones Library until summer 2002 and involved a three-year survey of Quaker archives and book collections held by repositories in Yorkshire, and beyond, relating to the region. The results of the survey are available by searching the Project's online location register (go to <http://www.hull.ac.uk/lib/archives/quaker> and choose 'Online databases'), as well as, selectively, in a printed research guide.

The pieces chosen for publication here were originally given as papers at the 'Witness against War' conference organized by the Project and held at Hull University on 31 March 2001. An overview of the Quaker peace testimony and its contribution to the wider British peace movement is combined with case studies of the anti-war movement in Huddersfield during the First World War, and of York Friends during the Second World War. Finally, as aids to research, there are surveys of primary sources in this field and in particular, of the resources within the Commonweal Collection.

Martin Ceadel has published in recent years two major studies of the history and ideas of the British peace movement covering the period 1730 to 1945. This paper draws out the particular contribution made by the Society of Friends to the movement since the late eighteenth century and through to the closing decades of the twentieth century. In doing so Ceadel takes the peace testimony beyond the realms of individual conscience or sectarian faith, and situates it in its wider political context. Of the five historical phases which the peace movement passed through, Ceadel identifies the period between the defeat of Napoleon and the outbreak of the First World War as the most creative and influential for Quaker peace activism. This was through the vehicle of the Peace Society and Ceadel has had possibly unique access to its archives for his latest work. He also provides a theoretical framework for

research which distinguishes between defencism, pacificism and pacifism. This might usefully be applied to more detailed study of the peace testimony during the twentieth century, and particularly the period following the Second World War.

The first case study by Cyril Pearce narrows down the focus to a particular place and time, Huddersfield during the Great War, and broadens out to look at the anti-war community as a whole. Pearce uses his material not only to produce a detailed local study, but also to raise wider questions about the accepted view of the First World War. What we begin to see here (and this is more fully developed in his recent book, *Comrades in Conscience*) is how the different strands of radical opinion in a West Riding textile town came together to oppose the war, and the extent to which this movement was tolerated by the wider population. The Friends Meeting, the Adult Schools and individual Friends (such as the Robson family), were united in their anti-war stance with members of the Independent Labour Party, the British Socialist Party, local unions, the Trades Council, socialist clubs and Socialist Sunday Schools. This is just one example of how good local history can help us to understand the peace testimony in practice.

David Rubinstein bases his research into the experiences of York Friends in face of war in the years 1939 to 1945 largely on the evidence of personal testimony, including memoirs and interviews. The result is a patchwork of individual interpretations of the peace testimony, and of individual decisions on how to act in wartime. This brings out very clearly that whilst the Society as a whole maintained its absolute pacifist position, Friends were at liberty to act as the 'inward light' directed them, even to the point of joining the armed forces. This paper stands in contrast to Pearce's approach. It may reflect the different circumstances of the two world wars, or the longer term diversification of opinion within the Society of Friends on the peace testimony, or simply the difference between Huddersfield in the 1910s and York in the 1940s. Again, there is scope for more research.

Christina Arber surveys the materials available in the Commonweal Collection, an independent library housed in the J.B. Priestley Library at Bradford University. Commonweal specializes in collecting resources for the study and practice of non-violence and movements for social change. Arber's bibliographic review highlights the strong Quaker influence on the library's origins and ethos. Membership of the library is free and open to all. As part of the peace movement itself, its resources are especially valuable for exploring modern Quaker peace work at national and international levels.

Helen Roberts, archivist to the Yorkshire Quaker Heritage Project,

concludes with an overview of the archive sources available for research into the history of Quaker pacifism. Her survey covers records of the Society of Friends, personal papers of a selection of Yorkshire Quakers involved in peace work, and records of British peace associations with Quaker connections. There is a regional bias towards Yorkshire, due entirely to the nature of the project, and an historical bias towards the twentieth century. There is a wide variety of material, some of which has been used by historians such as those featured in this issue, some of which is little known or under-utilized. There are many different ways in which the sources can be exploited. The history of the peace testimony needs to be taken forward and we hope that this special issue will go some way to make this happen.

Helen Roberts
Guest Editor
Hull
January 2002