

Anne Orde, *Religion, Business and Society in North-East England: the Pease family of Darlington in the Nineteenth Century* (Stamford: Shaun Tyas, 2000), pp. vii + 131. Paperback. ISBN 1-900289-40-7. £19.95.

To write a new history of the Pease family is not easy. Much has already appeared in print, the sources are copious, and there is a cast, if not of thousands then of dozens, of siblings, cousins and relatives by marriage in Darlington and elsewhere, notably Norwich and London. Anne Orde's book manages to surmount many of these potential problems. It is meticulously researched and clearly written, full of useful leads and links on Quaker sources, and with a bibliography which will be a starting point for any future study of the family. The fourth in the series *Studies in North-eastern History*, it boasts the same high standard of production as previous volumes, with a fine set of illustrations along with the map and family tree essential to help the reader navigate County Durham and the Pease family.

The book is topped by an introduction describing the context in which this and other Quaker businesses operated, and tailed by a chapter mainly on the social and domestic life of the family, but also containing a short conclusion on what is termed 'Decline'. This may more accurately have been called 'Crash', for as Orde makes clear, bankruptcy, and the social and financial disaster which would have ensued, were averted in 1902 only through rescue by sympathetic business associates. The main part of the text falls into two halves: the first examines some of the Peases' industrial activities, the second recounts their engagement in local and national politics.

Dr Orde's background is in the history of international politics, and it is in the chapters on the Peases' political activities that she is most sure-footed. There is a well-rounded summary of the Pease dominance of local politics in Darlington, and an interesting chapter on the national political scene with a valuable synopsis of north-east politics in the nineteenth century. By the end of that century, the Peases, who had agonised so much over Joseph Pease's decision to stand in the reform election of 1832 and become the first Quaker

MP, were the largest 'family party' in parliament.

The section on the family's business interests covering railways, iron and urban development does not move far beyond the scope of Maurice Kirby's accomplished studies of the Peases and of the Stockton and Darlington Railway, *Men of Business and Politics* (London: George Allan and Unwin, 1984) and *The Origins of Railway Enterprise* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1993). On coal there is a comprehensive chapter which develops the idea of the Peases' relations with their workforce, and which gives a good account of employment legislation and of education in mining villages. The family's original business, the worsted firm founded in the eighteenth century which became Henry Pease and Company, is mentioned only incidentally. Yet this was the bedrock from which all other commercial activities grew, and furthermore would have provided fascinating comparative material on the Peases' approach to their responsibilities as employers and other dilemmas faced by Friends in business. Relations with colliery employees might have been distant, socially and geographically, but how did they compare with those within Darlington, with textile workers, voters and other residents? It is in this sphere that an opportunity seems to have been missed. The chapter on Quaker life in the late nineteenth century is excellent, especially on philanthropy and the role of women, and there are insights into changing attitudes on 'plainness'. But tantalising questions remain, not just surrounding the family's industrial activities and their promotion of profitable public utilities, but also in their involvement in various urban schemes, about the motivations and principles of Peases and other wealthy Quakers. Building projects ranged from the Freehold Land Society to some less than model housing in the insanitary yards of Darlington, the creation of Saltburn as a railway resort, and above all the invention and management by the Peases of the hideous monster that was nineteenth-century Middlesbrough. The progression of Henry Pease from an interest in landscape gardening to these increasingly ambitious projects with dubious social results warrants a study in itself.

It would be too much to expect an exhaustive treatment of all these issues in a relatively slim volume. It is to be hoped that this accessible and well-referenced work will alert a wider readership to the potential for further research into this intriguing Quaker dynasty.

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