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CHARLES WESLEY AND THE IRISH INHERITANCE TRADITION

THERE is a story often repeated in biographies of Charles Wesley that an Irish gentleman called Garret Wesley of Dangan, Co. Meath, looked for an heir to his estate and therefore inquired of Samuel Wesley of Epworth whether he had a son called Charles. On finding that he did indeed possess such a son, Garret supported Charles financially at Westminster school and offered to make him his heir. Samuel left the decision to Charles who refused the offer, which John Wesley many years later said was 'a fair escape'. In some versions of the story, though not the earliest ones, it was claimed that the Epworth Wesleys were related to the Irish ones and later still that there was also a relationship to the heir to whom Garret finally bequeathed his estate. This was his neighbour and cousin Richard Colley, who on inheriting the estate in 1728 changed his name to Wesley, though by the 1790s the family had changed it again to Wellesley, which appears to have been the earlier prevailing form of the Irish Wesleys name. Richard Colley's grandson, as post-1815 versions of the story naturally pointed out, was the Duke of Wellington. This gave scope for speculating on what might have been the fate of Methodism, India and Europe had Charles accepted the offer.

Though Methodist writers and some others appear to have accepted the story without question, it really looks rather too good to be true. It is the kind of story often told about the childhood of famous people, with the air of a fairy-tale or perhaps of lost heirs and forfeited inheritances so popular in Victorian fiction. Strictly speaking, two claims were being made in the most developed versions of the story. One is that Garret made the offer of heirship; the other is that the families were related by blood. The latter, however, appears to be a late development in the published versions of the story. The heirship claim may still be able to stand or fall on its own merits. The eighteenth-and nineteenth-century

passion for transmitting estates without a break certainly led to plenty of cases of adoption and name-changing of the kind which happened here to Richard Colley. To adopt someone with the same name, whether or not he was actually a relative, is certainly not out of the question.

Unfortunately for the story, however, two modern writers appear to have demolished both the claim that the families were related and (though somewhat less decisively) that Garret offered to make Charles his heir. In 1948 Charles Evans included the story in an article in *Notes and Queries* on the Wesley family's alleged ancestry.[1] Evans cites the *Dictionary of National Biography* as stating that the story goes back to an unpublished sketch of Charles Wesley's life by his brother John written in 1790. It first appeared in print (according to Evans) in an anonymous life of John Wesley published in 1805. He goes to quote W. H. Maxwell's life of Wellington (1839) to the effect that it might very well be true that Garret contributed to the expenses of Charles's education and probably intended to do more for him. But Maxwell doubted that any offer was made to make Charles his heir or that, if made, it could have been refused.[2] As to kinship between the two Wesley families, Evans says that this claim does not seem to have appeared in print before G. J. Stevenson's *Memorials of the Wesley Family* (1876) who used material on the Wesley-Wellesley family pedigree researched by the first Earl of Mornington (1735-81). Evans then moved on to his main concern, which was to trace in detail this and other claims about the Epworth Wesleys' pedigree, including the alleged relationship of Susanna Wesley (*née* Annesley) to the Annesley Earls of Anglesey. These investigations seem to prove that both claims were not only unproveable but in fact virtually certain to be fanciful.

The other modern critical account is in Lady Longford's biography of the Duke of Wellington, focussing on the heirship story.[3] She begins by describing it as an 'unsubstantiated tradition'. She thinks it first appeared a century after the event in Adam Clarke's *Wesley Family* (1823) and then in Thomas Jackson's *Life of Charles Wesley* (1841). She quotes John Wesley's remark about a 'fair escape' but says this cannot be found in the Wesley Concordance and that searches of tke Methodist archives show that no such manuscript life of Charles exists there. Stevenson, she says, was the first to claim a blood relationship with Garret Wesley. Victorian genealogists then 'over-egged' the pedigree to claim a relationship with the Colleys as well. These claims to a relationship she says have been disproved by Evans and by Mr Malcolm Findon's researches in the Methodist archives in 1966. The general tone of her comments suggests that she had no faith in the adoption story either. This is not surprising when Garret already had to hand a fairly

1 *Notes and Queries* 193 (1948), pp255-59.

2 W. H. Maxwell, *Life of Field-Marshal his Grace the Duke of Wellington* (1839) I, p. 6n.

3 E. Longford, *Wellington. The Years of the Sword* (Book Club ed., 1972) p. 7n.

close neighbour and undoubted relative in Richard Colley.

These two investigations seemed not only decisive against the story but to confirm what one often suspects about a number of Wesley traditions once they are subjected to critical scrutiny. Certainly this seemed to the present writer to confirm his own doubts about the story. Yet a final check through the sources began to reveal that there were errors both in Evans's and Lady Longford's recital of the evolution of the heirship story. To anticipate the main finding from the investigation which follows, the heirship story is recorded earlier than they supposed and can be shown to originate within the Epworth Wesley family. The claim to a relationship between the two Wesley families remains mistaken but was also current much earlier than Evans and Lady Longford realized. It will have been noticed that though Lady Longford cited Evans, she overlooked his remark that the story first appeared in print in 1805 and claimed it appeared no earlier than Clarke in 1823. I have not been able to trace the anonymous life cited by Evans but it turns out that this does not matter. The first published account with the claim that it originated with John Wesley's biography of his brother is in fact in John Whitehead's life of the Wesley brothers, in the first volume published in 1793 and in all probability the anonymous writer of 1805 found it there.

To see how and why Whitehead was first in the field it will be best to mention first the two earlier lives of Wesley in which the story did *not* appear. John Hampson's *Memoirs of John Wesley* (1791) included a brief account of Charles, but he does not mention the adoption story. This is not surprising as it had originated in John Wesley's manuscript account and Hampson had access only to published material. The same is true of Thomas Coke and Henry Moore's joint life of Wesley published in 1792. The first biographer to have access to Wesley's papers was John Whitehead which is why the story first appears in print in volume I of his *Life of John and Charles Wesley* published in 1793. As the first published version it is here reproduced in full:

'When he [Charles Wesley] had been some years at school, Mr R. Wesley, a gentleman of fortune in Ireland wrote to his father and asked if he had any son named Charles, if so he would make him his heir. Accordingly a gentleman had brought money for his education several years. But one year another gentleman called, probably Mr Wesley himself, talked largely with him, and asked if he was willing to go with him to Ireland. Mr Charles desired to write to his father, who answered immediately and left him to his own choice. He chose to stay in England. Mr W. then found and adopted another Charles Wesley, who was the late Earl of M-n-g-n. A fair escape, says Mr John Wesley, from whose short account of his brother we take this anecdote'.[4]

[4] J. Whitehead, *Life of John Wesley....[and]....Charles Wesley*, (1793) I, p.98; repr. Dublin (1805) p.2.

It will be noticed that there are two errors of detail in this account. The Irish gentleman was Garret not 'R' Wesley; and the other 'Charles Wesley' was in fact Richard Colley who did indeed become the first Baron Mornington in 1746. In 1793, of course, there was no reason to reflect on the portentous effects of Charles's refusal on Methodism and England since the future Duke of Wellington was as yet only an obscure army officer and Irish M.P.

Southey's *Life of Wesley* published in 1820, duly repeated the story and although no source is cited, he must have derived it from Whitehead since that work is listed in his bibliography and he confessed that he only had access to published material on Wesley. He also added a purple passage reflecting on the fate of Methodism, India and Europe if Charles had accepted and the Wesley-Wellesleys had not received the inheritance.[5]

Then came Adam Clarke's *Wesley Family* published in 1823. In the midst of a learned and discursive disquisition on the origins of the name Wesley, Clarke wrote that the family believed that their ancestors came from Saxony and that a branch of it went to Ireland. He could not tell (he said) whether a family called 'Posley' or 'Postley' that he had encountered in Ireland was the same as that of the Wesleys of Dangan, though they claimed the name had been corrupted from 'Wesley' by the local pronunciation.

He then repeated the adoption story on much the same lines as Whitehead. He correctly identified the Irish gentleman as being from Dangan, though without giving his name, named Richard Colley as the actual heir and duly noted the Wellington connection. Yet he does not refer to the story as deriving from John Wesley's account but instead says that Charles refused the offer 'fearing lest worldly prosperity.... might lead his heart from due attention to his eternal interests'.[6] Although these variations may simply reflect Clarke's corrections of Whitehead from his own knowledge it will be suggested later that he was drawing the story from a different and independent source.

This was certainly not the case with Henry Moore's *Life* of John and Charles Wesley published in 1824. His earlier *Life* of John written with Coke is generally supposed to have been largely his own work, but this was without the use of Wesley's manuscripts. Whitehead had kept them for his own use and, together with his demand for a fee, this had led to an acrimonious dispute in which Moore had taken part.[7] Moore was

5 R. Southey, *The Life of Wesley*, ed., M. H. Fitzgerald (Oxford 1925) I, p. 33.

6 A. Clarke, *Memoirs of the Wesley Family* (1823) pp. 1 - 2.

7 Moore's manuscript account of the controversy with Whitehead was published only a few years ago in R. P. Heitzenrater, *Faithful unto Death. Last Years and Legacy of John Wesley* (Bridwell Library, Dallas 1991) pp. 83-125. Moore was still complaining in the preface to his *Life* that some of Wesley's manuscripts remained in other hands or had been destroyed.

frequently critical of Whitehead's *Life* yet it has often been noticed that he nevertheless frequently used material from Whitehead without acknowledgement in his own. His version of the adoption story is in fact a verbatim reproduction of Whitehead's without acknowledgement, including the two errors in names already noted.[8] He adds the descent to the Duke of Wellington but in giving the source of the story in John Wesley's account of his brother, Moore again follows Whitehead verbatim apart from substituting 'I' for Whitehead's authorial 'we' . He does, however, conclude by saying that 'Mr John Wesley wrote the short account a few months before his death, intending to publish it. It remains among his manuscripts'. This seems to imply that Moore had actually seen that manuscript, in which case the coincidenee of wording with Whitehead may simply mean they are both quoting the original exactly. The errors would then be from Wesley. But some doubt remains on whether he was only quoting Whitehead .

Then in 1839 appeared Maxwell's *Life* of Wellington which we have seen was quoted by Evans in his 1948 article. Maxwell states that he obtained the story from Southey.[9] His account has therefore no independent value though it is of interest as apparently the first to voice some criticism of the truth of the story in print.

Maxwell's comments on the story excited indignation from Thomas Jackson when he came to publish his *Life of Charles Wesley* in 1841. Having repeated the story in the usual form he quoted Maxwell's doubts and refuted them to his own satisfaction by saying that the story could only be doubted if John Wesley was either an incompetent witness or 'a man of doubtful veracity'.[10] Neither possibility could be maintained (he said) for John was likely to know his brother's history and it would be hard to find a reason for his departure from the truth. In any case, why should Garret support Charles at school if he did not intend to adopt him as his heir? Jackson said that John Wesley wrote the account of his brother a few months before his death and intended to publish it but died before he could do so, leaving the manuscript among his papers. As with Moore, it is not entirely clear whether Jackson actually saw Wesley's account at first hand but he evidently did not simply depend on Whitehead. Apart from the now customary reflections on how Charles's refusal had changed the course of history, he gave Garret's and Richard Colley's names correctly and did not claim a family relationship between the two Wesley families. His response to Maxwell is at least partly convincing though it is not impossible that Garret might support Charles at school without making him his heir; and John Wesley might have misunderstood or exaggerated the episode without being a conscious liar. The real weakness of Maxwell's criticism was his inability

8 H. Moore, *Life of John...[and]...Charles Wesley* (1824) I, p.151.

9 W. H. Maxwell, op. cit., I, p. 6n.

10 T. Jackson, *Life of Charles Wesley*, (1841) I, p.11.

to understand the Wesleys' religious priorities. John Wesley's 'fair escape' must refer to the snares of worldly prosperity and Henry Moore's interpretation of Charles's motives for refusing the offer is clearly correct. There is no doubt that he dreaded the probable effects of wealth on himself and his family in stifling their aspirations after eternal life.

It is unnecessary to pursue the transmission of the story further except to note that Stevenson, not always a very accurate writer, gave a somewhat confused account of the episode; and, as Evans and Lady Longford observed, helped to embroider the Wesley pedigree to include claims that the Epworth Wesleys were related both to the Irish Wesleys and the Colleys. To sum up the record so far. The earliest published account comes from Whitehead and it is at least possible that Moore and Jackson had little hard information beyond what Whitehead supplied apart from correcting Whitehead's errors over the names and Moore failed even to do this. Only Adam Clarke showed signs of possibly drawing from an independent source. Otherwise the whole story appears ultimately to rest on John Wesley's memoir of his brother and this has apparently been lost or destroyed if indeed (as Lady Longford seemed to hint) it ever existed.

However, the doubters' analysis of the sources of the story of the heirship offer, as distinct from dubious claims about pedigrees, has already proved to be defective. Evans failed to notice that the story first appeared in Whitehead, and Lady Longford, as well as being unaware of this, overlooked the fact that even Evans had traced it back to 1805. It certainly did not originate with Clarke as she supposed. But she was also in error on a more basic point by apparently doubting whether the alleged manuscript biography of Charles by John Wesley could be shown to have existed. That the manuscript has not survived is not surprising since we know that other papers of John Wesley were lost and even destroyed. But in this case there is indisputable evidence that it did once exist. In his published *Journal* for 3 September 1788 Wesley wrote that 'I made a little beginning of some account of my brother's life'.[11] To his niece Sally, Charle's daughter, he wrote on 8 September 'I have begun to write my brother's life' and asks for any recollections she has. On 26 September he wrote to her again about papers she possessed that might be suitable for publication.[12] So the source of Whitehead's account is precisely as he claimed. Though the memoir was evidently unfinished the inheritance story would naturally appear early in John's account. It also seems probable that a well-known account of Charles being born prematurely wrapped in wool and not crying until he reached the equivalent of full term, will also have come from this memoir as it was first published by Whitehead.

[11] John Wesley, *Journal* ed. N. Curnock, (repr.1938) VII, p. 432.

[12] John Wesley, *Letters* ed. J. Telford (London 1931) VIII, p. 87, 93.

What remains obscure is how far Whitehead accurately or perhaps verbatim reproduced Wesley's account though Moore's exact reproduction of the same wording would suggest that the version might be as John Wesley gave it if we could be sure Moore had seen the manuscript. Charles himself, unfortunately, nowhere records the story. There is, for example, no reference to it in his well-known account of his early life and the origins of Methodism in a letter to Dr Chandler in 1785.[13] But this is perhaps not the kind of story he would share with anyone but a close friend and in any case the purpose of his recollections in that letter was to claim that Methodism was a faithful auxiliary of the church until John Wesley betrayed it by his ordinations in 1784. It must be presumed that John Wesley heard the story from his father or Charles or other members of the family, either at the time or much later. We do not know how far he may have misunderstood or exaggerated it by 1788. Where we can test them, his recollections seem generally to be broadly correct in substance but can be faulty in detail. Thus his version of the famous breach between his parents before his birth over prayers for King William is over-simplified and in some details incorrect as we know from contemporary correspondence by his mother. Again, John claimed that his father 'ghosted' Sacheverell's defence speech in 1710. It is generally believed that the speech was written by supporters but no one else has attributed it to Samuel Wesley though it is not implausible that he had a hand in it. Again, in telling Moore about his affair with Sophey Hopkey in Georgia, the aged Wesley claimed that he had not 'familiarly conversed' with any women except his relations. This is clearly incorrect in view of his close friendships in the Kirkham circle at Stanton, especially with 'Varanese'.[14]

One possible doubt about the story which does not appear to have been raised but should be considered, is the question of how Garret heard of the Epworth Wesleys in their remote parish. But this is not as unlikely as it may appear at first sight. Samuel had his contacts in London and his political connections which would together probably account for Garret's discovery of him.[15]

Is there any other evidence for the story? There is, and it seems to carry it back earlier than John's 1788 manuscript and even suggests that the claim to a blood relationship between the two Wesley families was

[13] MS letter to Dr Chandler 29 April 1785 in Methodist Church Archives (MCA), John Rylands University Library, Manchester, DDWES/1/38.

[14] For references and discussion of these examples see my *Reasonable Enthusiast* (2nd. ed. 1992) pp. 48-9, p.46, p. 125.

[15] Though too late to be relevant to the present problem it is of interest to note that Mary Granville (later Mrs Pendarves and finally Mrs Delany) was, along with her sister Anne, an intimate of the Wesleys and the Kirkham circle at Stanton during Wesley's Oxford period. It was she, apparently, who coined their fancy names like 'Varanese' for Sally Kirkham. She herself was 'Aspasia'. *CONTINUED ON PAGE 124*

being canvassed among them almost a century before Stevenson. In 1821-22 Sally Wesley, Charles's daughter, wrote a series of letters to Adam Clarke containing anecdotes about the Wesley family. Clarke had apparently been planning to write a biography of John Wesley though in the end he changed his mind and wrote his *Wesley Family* instead. This work contains much valuable material from manuscripts as well and includes, as we have seen, a version of the heirship story. Clarke made special mention of his debt to Sally for information and she evidently regarded herself as the custodian of the family traditions but also of her father's and uncle's reputations. For example she claimed, on the authority of her mother, that in the affair of Grace Murray, Murray was to blame and not the Wesley brothers.

On 5 July 1821 Sally wrote to Clarke telling him that the Wesleys originated in Saxony; some had gone on crusade and hence the scallop shell on the Wesley coat of arms. There is little doubt that these titbits and the claim that a branch of the Wesleys ended up in Ireland which figured in Clarke's account of the origins of the Wesley name came from Sally. In the same letter Sally wrote that 'Wesley of Dan Gan [*sic*] traced some relationship which induced him to write to my grandfather (whose family had once settled in Ireland, three or four generations before). He then adopted my father with the promise of making him his heir. It was the Wesley of Dan Gan who sent him to Westminster and came across to England to take him back, when my grandfather referred him to his son who was not dazzled by splendour at any time of his life (tho' Mr Southey attributed the refusal to his being satisfied with his prospects at Christ Church'). So Charles rejected the offer. She then adds that 'he spoke of this to Lord Mornington (father to the Duke of Wellington) who was intimately acquainted with us and entertained a real friendship for him and partial regard for my brothers as a signal instance of divine goodness, which kept him out of the temptations of riches'. Her father, she remarked, always dreaded the effects of riches either for himself or his family.[16]

On 24 May 1822 she wrote further to Clarke saying that 'the title of Wellesley was belonging to the Garret ['Mornington' crossed out] estate and heirs which they have adopted'. She goes on: 'It was Garret Wesley

NOTE 15 CONTINUED FROM PREVIOUS PAGE

In 1731-33 she visited Ireland and met the Colleys turned Wesleys. Her slighting remarks on John Wesley in 1783 conceal the close friendship and - on his part at least - warm correspondence they conducted in earlier years. See Lady Llanover ed., *Autobiography and Correspondence of Mary Granville, Mrs Delany* (1861) I, p.40n., p.282; VI, pp.174-5. For Wesley's correspondence with her and her sister in 1730-31 see John Wesley, *Works* (Bicentennial Ed.) XXV, pp. 246-324 passim; and briefly in 1734 and 1736, ibid XXV, pp. 389-91, pp. 475-6.

[16] MS letter D6/1/278 in Wesley College, Bristol, library. I am indebted to Janet Henderson, librarian of Wesley College, for copies of this and the following letter.

of DanGan my grandfather was supposed related to. Whether the Morningtons had any affinity to him I do not know. Whoever he adopted was to take the name of Wesley as a condition of inheritance I heard and their name was not Wesley. The old Lord Mornington told his late majesty [George III] that we were related. He had a peculiar friendship for my father with whom he was intimate, and was very fond of my brothers. Charles was very like him in person and his lordship had very remarkable talents for music'. These brothers were musical prodigies in need of patronage and Sally observed that her brother Charles 'has been blamed for not cultivating the connecton with the son as they were acquainted when young, but this sort of ambition was not in the blood of the Wesleys, and Charles had less of it than anyone I ever saw....'.[17] As regards the alleged family likeness, it is reported that Henry Moore, while present at a review by the Duke of Wellington in Hyde Park, pointed to the Duke and said 'That is John Wesley as I knew him' [18]

The Lord Mornington to whom Sally refers is clearly the first Earl (created 1760) as she says he was Wellington's father. That he was a friend of Charles Wesley and his sons is well attested - the contacts were in part based on a mutual love of music and in connection with the home concerts promoted by Charles Wesley for his sons. Although recorded at such a late date, Sally's recollections evidently reflect family tradition and must have come to her from her father or mother and not from published versions. She had in fact read the early lives of the Wesleys including Whitehead's but her account to Clarke is evidently independent of this. She seems to have thought Whitehead generally reliable and that he had quoted her father's MS journal accurately. On the other hand she said he naturally lacked family knowledge on some episodes and that he had not submitted his manuscript of the biography to family scrutiny. There is no indication that he drew on her recollections. But the adoption story in Clarke's version looks as though it came from Sally rather than from Whitehead.

Sally's reference to Lord Mornington being told the story by Charles Wesley clearly dates it before 1781, earlier even than John Wesley's memoir.

What is more, if she is not adding later claims, it appears that there were already traditions current before 1781 about there being a family relationship between the two Wesley families and at least the question being raised whether the Epworth Wesleys were related to the Colleys turned Wesley-Wellesley. These claims may have derived from Mornington's researches which were used a century later by Stevenson, so they were not simply the product of Victorian 'over-egging' of

[17] MS letter D6/1/296 at Wesley College, Bristol.

[18] John Wesley, *Journal* ed. Curnock, VII, p. 462 citing a story conveyed to him from George Osborn.

pedigrees. This does not of course mean they were any more authentic. But that the tradition of a family relationship between Wesleys and Wellesleys was current in the early part of the nineteenth century is shown by the fact that a Wellesley relation when standing for Parliament in 1830 was hopefully smeared by his opponent as a relative of John Wesley. In response he said he was as proud of this relationship as of that to the Duke of Wellington![19]

What can be concluded from this review of the evidence for the story? Whatever exaggerations it may possibly have undergone in the course of transmission, it clearly derives originally from Wesley family traditions and the substance of the adoption story was narrated by Charles himself before 1781. John Wesley, who presumably had the story from Charles or his father or his own knowledge, undoubtedly wrote it down in 1788 or soon after in a memoir now lost or destroyed. Whitehead first made it public in 1793 on the basis of John's memoir, either verbatim or in summary with two errors (from John Wesley?) which did not affect the substance of the story and were later corrected. Clarke probably repeated the story on Sally's authority rather than Whitehead's but Moore and Jackson drew it either direct from John Wesley's account or from Whitehead, in Jackson's case with corrections. The claims to family relationship between the two Wesley families were already being canvassed before 1781, probably on Mornington's authority; seem to be reflected to some extent by Clarke but did not surface decisively until Stevenson in the 1870s.

Though the family relationship claim now seems to be exploded, the basic story about support for Charles by Garret and the offer of the inheritance cannot now be dismissed out of hand. How far the details of the story are strictly accurate in the form transmitted by Sally and John Wesley is now impossible to affirm with absolute certainty for lack of strictly contemporary evidence. It may be that Maxwell guessed correctly that Charles received support rather than a clear offer of the inheritance. But given that it can now be demonstrated that the story originated within the Wesley family and well before Charles's death as well as separately from his brother, it now seems impossible to dismiss it as a fantasy by Wesley's later biographers. At least there is no reasonable doubt that the Wesleys themselves believed it to be true.

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(A revised edition of *Reasonable Enthusiast: John Wesley and the Rise of Methodism* is announced for March 2002)

[19] MCA, Wesley Family Papers DDWES/1/66.

THE YARMOUTH CIRCUIT BOOKLIST 1806

AMONGST the mass of organisational detail entered into the Yarmouth Circuit Book[1] is a catalogue of 'the Stock of Books in the Yarmouth Circuit.' This list of devotional publications fills four pages of the superintendent minister's record and is dated 1806.

This 'Book,' in fact, consists of two volumes bound in vellum. The first is inscribed 'The Lists of the Society of the Norwich Circuit, 1785', but has also been labelled in another hand now too faded to read apart from the words 'Yarmouth Circuit'. The second volume is headed 'This book contains an account of the societies in the Yarmouth Circuit - June 17th 1798' and gives information up to the year 1810.

The contents of the earlier volume consist predominantly of the registers of class members in the various societies of the huge Norwich circuit. However, in 1794, the Rev. Charles Boone wrote, 'as the circuits are likely to be divided this year, I have rather chose to set down the People in two separate Books' and thereafter both books refer to the newly created Yarmouth circuit only.

By 1805 this circuit consisted of 533 members in eighteen societies with three travelling preachers and thirteen local preachers. The geographical area covered lay mainly to the south of the Norfolk-Suffolk border in the extreme coastal region and included the ports of Yarmouth and Lowestoft as well as many very small villages. Yet, in contrast to the details given for previous years, the individual members were not noted, neither were the names of the ministers,[2] local preachers, circuit officials nor the different societies. Indeed, apart from the long list of books, the only other information supplied for 1805-6 were the eighty-seven names of 'subscribers of magazines.' Although these publications were not named, it is likely they were issues of the *Arminian Magazine* begun by John Wesley in 1778 and renamed *The Methodist Magazine* in 1798.

Eighty-three separate book titles are mentioned as well as nine different hymn books. For a relatively small and largely rural circuit, this is an astonishing collection. Next to each title is the selling price of the individual volume, the numbers held in stock and the total price which would be realised if all were sold. The value of the stock is given as £25.0.5d.

The latter half of the eighteenth century had seen a huge expansion in the amount of literature published. Multifarious provincial newspapers were founded and circulating libraries and bookshops provided material covering a wide spectrum of interests. New publications were

1 Norfolk Record Office, FC16/2

2 These were Thomas Yates, Caleb Simmons and William Breedon.

announced in the newspapers - a typical edition of the *Norwich Mercury* of 1763 advertised books on music, science, divinity, geography and travel. Newly-established societies, both lay and religious, fuelled the demand for literature associated with their particular interests whilst local controversies and quarrels occasioned flurries of pamphlets justifying the positions of the protagonists.

John Wesley, a voracious reader, was convinced that the members of his societies could profit from the books he himself had read; he complained in 1770 that 'the societies are not half supplied with books'[3] He used his skill as an editor to abridge edifying and instructive material and then to publish it in a very cheap form. The *Journal* entry for Friday 17 February 1769 says 'I abridged Dr Watts' pretty Treatise on the Passions. His hundred and seventy-seven pages will make a useful tract of four-and-twenty. Why do persons who treat the same subjects with me, write such larger books?..... Their *principal end* is to get money; my only one to do good.'[4] Wesley did not always acknowledge the sources he used so that the publication sometimes appeared to be his own work rather than his adaptation of the work of others.[5] In all he produced about four hundred different publications. Many were intended to raise the spiritual life of the readers whilst others, such as his *Primitive Physick* and educational textbooks, were practical. His aim was to educate and uplift and this applied to his preachers, his schools, the members of the societies and the general public's growing thirst for literature.

The money raised by the sale of books was an important source of income for Methodism and was used primarily to aid impecunious ministers and their families. The primary concern, however, was not financial, but educative and spiritual; Wesley saw it as 'an integral part of the work of God'.

These books and tracts were welcomed by the members and attenders of societies and were distributed round the circuits by the preachers who carried them in their saddlebags. The brevity of the tracts and the abridged books meant that many copies could be packed into the limited space of the bags, a space which had to be shared with all that the preacher required for travel.

The large number of books on offer and their scope raises the question of the level of literacy amongst the Methodists living in this circuit. Although it was not unknown for books to be bought by those unable to read them[6] and even if many listened to the books being read

[3] Large Minutes of Conference quoted in 'John Wesley' by Maldwyn Edwards in *A History of the Methodist Church* ed. Rupert Davies and Gordon Rupp,(1965) vol.1, p43

[4] *John Wesley's Journal* (JWJ) ed. Nehemiah Curnock, 1909, vol 5 p300.

[5] *Reasonable Enthusiast* by Henry D.Rack,(1989) p346.

[6] It was not unknown for people to own books, but be unable to read them like the illiterate Cheltenham shoemaker who kept volumes of Cobbett's works carefully protected in washleather cases. *Memoirs of a Social Atom* by W. E. Adams, 1903, vol.1, p164.

aloud, there must have been enough people able to read to make the stocking of such a quantity and variety of books a viable and profitable enterprise. Moreover, these books cannot be judged to be easy reading.

It is very difficult to calculate the standard of literacy at this time. E. P. Thompson has suggested that two out of every three working men were able to read in some measure at the beginning of the nineteenth century,[7] but based this calculation on signatures on marriage registers. This does not take into account the numbers of those who were able to read but not to write. Moreover, this assessment was a national average. Other estimates have suggested that in Norfolk by the late 1830s the illiteracy rate was 46%[8] though do not clarify the difference between those who could read but not write and those who could do neither. At the beginning of the nineteenth century 150 children were being educated at the Charity School in Yarmouth. In addition, 30 boys and 20 girls lived in at the Children's Hospital School with 111 boys and 30 girls attending as day scholars. The expectation at this latter educational establishment was that the children should remain at school until they were fourteen years old and many were then apprenticed at the expense of the charity. Other children attended the school at the Unitarian Meeting house as well as other small private educational establishments in the town.[9] This was, however, a time just before the great expansion of the Sunday school movement - the Methodist Sunday school for fifty boys was established in the town in1809 and their day school for 300 scholars was opened in the summer of 1813. Good education in the rural areas must have been patchy at best.

Books may also have been sought by people wanting to learn to read or wishing to improve their reading skills. Very many people were assiduous in Bible reading at home and set an example to those who did not have the necessary ability to do so. Hannah More, the educationalist, writing in 1801 explained that 'For many years I have given away annually nearly two hundred Bibles, Common Prayer Books and Testaments. To teach the poor to read without providing them with safe books has always appeared to me an improper measure, and this consideration induced me to enter upon the laborious undertaking of the Cheap Repository Tracts...'[10]

A public library was opened in Yarmouth in 1802 although there was a yearly subscription of one guinea for membership.[11] However, another library was exclusively for the use of Methodists: Augustus Watmough, the minister in the town in 1824-6, collected and published historical information about the circuit. He described how a library had been

7 *The Making of the English Working Class*, by E. P. Thompson, (1963) p783.

8 *Directory of Norfolk* by William White, 1836, p?

9 *Captain Swing* by Eric Hobsbawm and George Rude, (1975) p64.

10 *Memoirs of the Life and Correspondence of Mrs Hannah More* (1834) vol 3, p135.

11 *Directory of Norfolk* by William White, 1845, p262.

started in the Yarmouth chapel around the turn of the century. Some time later, the minister then stationed there, John Riles,[12] 'happened to call the book-case which contained the whole library "a book-tomb"....but instead of leading to greater reading and an increase in the library by the purchase of more volumes, it had just the contrary effect; the members hastily concluded that since the library had not been so encouraged as its importance demanded, it might as well be divided and broken up. Such was the fate which it then met, to the great grief of some persons....' The library was refounded in 1811 and some of the books in the earlier collection were given back for general use.[13]

At the top of the list of the Yarmouth books is the *Large Hymn Book.* This collection of hymns formally entitled the *Collection of Hymns for the use of People called Methodists* was first published in 1780 and it continued to be used together with some nineteenth-century additions until 1875. In its original preface John Wesley explained that 'it is not so large as to be either cumbersome or expensive: and it is large enough to contain such a variety of hymns as will not soon be worn threadbare. It is large enough to contain all the important truths of our most holy religion...'[14] Wesley intended his hymn books to be used also for devotional reading and spiritual enrichment, though here at 4/6d and a small edition at 4/- it was, however, an expensive purchase.

Conspicuous in the list are more than a dozen of John Wesley's sermons. Although various editions of his collected sermons were published during his lifetime, here some of them are printed individually and are available at one or two pence each. *The Almost Christian, Salvation by Faith, Means of Grace and Scriptural Christianity,* all in the Yarmouth list, appeared in the first book of sermons published in 1746.

The 'Words', in the main, written by Wesley in 1745, had an immense circulation and were directed against various evils he saw in society. 'Swearers,' 'Drunkards,' 'Sabbath-breakers' were singled out for a particular caution; 'Words' and' Advice' were also directed at Protestants, Englishmen - showing that the 1745 rebellion threatened religious liberty, freeholders - warning them about election bribery - and soldiers. Most of these tracts consisted of four pages[15] and sold for a penny. In the Yarmouth list they are priced at just one farthing.

Other Wesley tracts and sermons were for sale here - *The Character of a Methodist, A Plain Account of the People Called Methodists, Advice with Regard to Dress, Predestination Calmly Considered* and his *Primitive Physick* which was first published in 1747 with twenty-two further editions

12 John Riles was stationed in the Yarmouth circuit 1801-4.

13 *A History of Methodism in the Town and Neighbourhood of Great Yarmouth* by Augustus Watmough, (1826) p179.

14 Quoted in The *Methodist Hymn Book*, 1933, p v.

15 *Advice to the People Called Methodists* was of eleven pages, but was also priced one penny. It was published in October 1745.

published during Wesley's lifetime. Writing to the Methodist societies in Bristol in 1763, he advised them to read this book 'which if you had any regard for your bodies or your children, ought to be in every house.'[16] Wesley's *History of England* in four volumes was completed in January 1776. Also listed is the funeral sermon he preached for his close friend and colleague John Fletcher.

'On Sunday the 6th' (November 1754), John Wesley wrote, 'I began writing *Notes on the New Testament* - a work which I should scarce ever have attempted had I not been so ill as not to be able to travel or preach and yet so well as to be able to read and write.'[17] This work was intended for the use of preachers and was based on the *Gnomon Novi Testamenti* of 1742 by the Lutheran scholar Bengel.[18] The quarto volume listed here was priced one guinea which must have put it far beyond the reach of the itinerant preachers with their very meagre income.[19]

Clearly Wesley's tracts and books were widely available and met a great need. His aim was 'to furnish poor people with cheaper, shorter and plainer books than any I have seen'[20] and fifteen years after his death, his copious publications had not been supplanted.

The booklist contains writings by other authors although many were in a form edited by Wesley. Daniel Brevint's *Christian Sacrament and Sacrifice* and *Companion to the Altar*, the *De Imitatione Christi* of Thomas a Kempis, translated and renamed *Christian Pattern* and the translation of Aldrich's *Logic* primarily for use at Kingswood school[21] were all for sale. Joseph Alleine's *Letters*, much admired by Wesley, were abridged in 1782 and he noted on the title page, 'This book is not to be sold, but given away.' Mrs Rowe's *Devout Exercises of the Heart* met with his approval and so, too, did the journal of Mary Gilbert, a girl who had died aged seventeen. He 'corrected' her diary, 'a master piece of its kind. What a prodigy of a child! Soon ripe and soon gone.'[22] The devotional poem *Night Thoughts* caused problems. Wesley felt it to have great spiritual force and on Tuesday 20 December 1768 he wrote, 'I took some pains in reading over Dr Young's *Night Thoughts* leaving out the indifferent lines, correcting many of the rest and explaining the hard words,' but he was sued for his failure to observe the law of copyright, paying £50 in settlement.[23] John Nelson's *Journal* and John Haime's *Life* presented inspirational examples to readers.

16 Undated, but internal evidence suggests a date of 1763- *JWJ*, vol 5 p31 n.

17 *JWJ*, vol 4, p91.

18 *JWJ*, vol 4, p91 n.

19 Some Methodists had other income such as Robert Carr Brackenbury of Raithby Hall in Lincolnshire who came unofficially to preach at Yarmouth in September 1782.

20 Quoted without date in *A New History of Methodism* by W. J. Townsend, H. B. Workman and George Eayrs, (1909) vol 1, p220.

21 *JWJ*, vol 3, p459 and n.

22 *JWJ*, vol 5, p253

23 *JWJ*, vol 3, p162 and n

The Circuit book gives no indication of the numbers of books sold. Money available for the purchase of such items must have varied considerably and would have been dependent upon the numbers of people in jobs with enough of a surplus of wages per household above the barest subsistence level to have enabled books to be bought. By 1805 occupations are no longer noted against the names of class members. The last year that this was done in these books was in 1798. Then, the lists for the two ports of Yarmouth and Lowestoft show many occupations connected with the sea with a large number of craftsmen as well as two 'merchants,' three school masters, a 'tide writer,' a distiller and a gentleman. Of the 273 men in these two societies, only seven do not have an occupation allocated to them and who may, therefore, have been without employment. Outside these towns, all but two of the 160 men have jobs attached to their names although one is styled 'pauper.' Thirteen farmers were listed together with a school master, a watch maker, a nautical pilot and a number of skilled artisans such as tailors, blacksmiths, thatchers, wheelwrights, saddlers, carpenters, shoe makers and a sail maker; 86 were classed as labourers - presumably agricultural labourers in this rural area - and there was a handful of brick makers, brick layers, gardeners, wood men and a 'packman.'

Life for the country labourers was very difficult at this time with wheat prices having risen dramatically during the Napoleonic wars, particularly during the famine years of 1800 and 1801. At the same time wages for labourers had only marginally improved. Arthur Young records that in the parish of South Town next to Yarmouth, for example, winter wages in 1752 in both winter and summer were 1/4d a day; in 1792 winter wages were still 1/4d whilst summer wages had crept forward to 1/6d.[24] At the same time rent in Norfolk for agricultural labourers other than the minority who lived in tied cottages averaged £3.3.0 annually, whilst in Suffolk the annual average was £2.10.0.[25] Arthur Young writing in 1804 pointed out that Norfolk had, for many years, been distinguished by the economy of its farmers 'not only from a low price of labour, but also from a much greater activity and spirit of exertion amongst servants and labourers, than was to be found in almost any other county of the kingdom. This spirit is still highly commendable here, but by reason of the scarcities throwing the mass of the people on the parish to be supported by rates, it has suffered considerably.'[26] Amongst the agricultural labourers, there can have been little money to spend on tracts and books.

Wesley urged his preachers to read whilst riding as he did and was

[24] *General View of the Agriculture of the County of Norfolk* by Arthur Young, (1804) chart opposite p492.

[25] Figures taken from Eden's State of the Poor, 1797, and quoted in *The Common People*, by G. D. H. Cole and Raymond Postgate, (rev. 1956) p79.

[26] Arthur Young, op. cit., p483.

keen to promote their good education to the extent that on occasions he read to them himself.[27] This Circuit book provides no evidence that the books listed were read by the preachers. Richard Reece, stationed in the Norwich circuit in 1788-9 and a frequent visitor to many of the societies in the Yarmouth area, however, often wrote of his reading and studying and his efforts to find a suitable tutor.[28]

No other schedule of books appears in this document nor in any other of the early Norfolk Methodist records except for that contained in two account books of items for sale stocked by the Norwich Primitive Methodist Circuit. The first runs from 1823-33. Apart from various hymn books ranging in price from 7d to 4/6d, the only other books minuted there are '2 Histories' at 7d each and '2 Abbots Journals' at 1/6d each.[29] The second set of accounts are those which belonged to the Book Steward of the Circuit and record the sale of magazines from the summer of 1827, but no books are mentioned until September 1829 when just one other publication is listed.[30] The contrast between the scope of the two Primitive Methodist lists and the earlier Wesleyan one is startling.

Why was this list with its associated prices written here? In 1774, thirty-two years before this inventory was compiled, Conference had ordered that each Assistant itemise the books in his circuit and send the note together with the money owed to London. Further, in 1781, Conference had addressed itself to the waste of books and directed that an exact catalogue from each circuit should be sent to the Book Steward. Was this order still complied with in 1806 and this list is a duplicate of the one sent to London? Or perhaps there was a more local explanation.

Since 1801 the finances of the circuit had been in deficit. In consequence, applications had been made for help to the Connexional Contingent Fund from which £48.10.4d per annum had been allocated to the circuit. When the rigorous Robert Miller was appointed as superintendent in August 1804, he was shocked to discover that the same society steward had managed the finances of the Yarmouth congregation entirely on his own since Yarmouth had been made into a circuit ten years earlier. 'Fond of rule and order in all things,'[31] Robert Miller was determined that the Connexional rules should be observed regarding the two years' time limit on appointments and selected Samuel Barber, a class leader of many years' standing, to assist the steward, John Sewell, with the society duties. Sewell, who was also joint circuit steward, was not willing to relinquish any of his responsibilities, but the efforts of Miller to explain to the societies that they had financial

27 *JWJ*, vol 3, p391.

28 Norfolk Record Office, FC 17/151.

29 Norfolk Record Office, FC 27/15.

30 *ibid*

31 Watmough, op.cit., p149.

responsibilities, together with the open accounting he insisted upon, meant that by the end of the year circuit finances had so improved that no subsidy from the Connexion was required.

Once Robert Miller had set off to attend Conference in the summer of 1805, John Sewell called the society stewards in the circuit together. Telling them that the circuit finances had been over extended by Miller and that the accounts were in arrears as a result of chapel alterations, he persuaded them to reduce the salaries of the itinerant preachers coming to the circuit. On his arrival at Yarmouth, the new superintendent, Thomas Yates, was informed of this decision in no uncertain terms and this 'grated on his feelings and led him to oppose it with more asperity perhaps than was likely to prove beneficial.'[32] Feelings became ever more agitated, culminating in vituperative exchanges at a painful Quarterly meeting. Yates questioned Sewell's accounting and the purposes for which the circuit's money had been used. He complained that Sewell's accounts had been seen by no one and that he had mixed circuit and chapel finances together. The 'disputes ran so high that some opprobrious epithets were exchanged,'[33] but Yates finally managed to secure the appointment of two new stewards in place of Sewell. Perhaps this booklist was an attempt to record some of the assets of the circuit independently of Sewell.

However, the 1806 catalogue of books was clearly not, it was felt, an appropriate entry for inclusion in the Circuit book. Immediately following it and in the handwriting of John King, one of the next group of travelling preachers in the Yarmouth circuit, is the sharp comment, 'N.B. The Book was left in this condition by Mr Yates, no Names Registered; and other things inserted which ought not: such as the plan of the Circuit; Book account; subscribers for the Mags, these things were inserted which have Occasioned the blunders you now see. 'Perhaps it was he who cut out three pages from this part of the volume. Thereafter the book returns to its accustomed form.

NORMA VIRGOE

(Norma Virgoe has written widely on Nonconformity in East Anglia)

[32] Watmough, op.cit., p156.

[33] Watmough, op.cit., p156.

CLERIHEW CORNER

Dr. Wilbert F. Howard
never grimaced or glowered,
but knew how to show his displeasure
in no uncertain measure.

J. A. V.

THE STOCK OF BOOKS IN THE YARMOUTH CIRCUIT

			£	s	d
12	Large Hymn books	4/6	2	14	0
13	Pocket Do	4/-	2	12	0
2	Nativity Do	2d			4
3	Resurrection Do	3d			6
28	Whitsunday Do	3d		7	0
11	Ascension Do	1d			11
35	Children's Do	3d		8	9
13	small H. Books	1/5		18	5
3	small Do in Red	1/6		4	6
5	sacrament H. Books	1/6		7	6
8	Primitive Physick	1/6		12	0
6	Tissot	3/-		18	0
3	Nelson's Journal	1/6		4	6
6	Nelson's Do	2/-		12	0
4	vols History England			13	0
2	Young's Night Thoughts	2/-		4	0
2	Fletcher's Letters	4/-		8	0
2	Do scrip. seals	4/-		8	0
1	saints Rest	3/-		3	0
1	Watts' Orthodoxy	2/6		2	6
1	vol Wesley's sermons	3/-		3	0
2	vols Fletcher's works new ed.	7/-		14	0
3	Kempis Clasped	1/4		4	0
1	Do unclasped	1/2		1	2
8	Rowe's Exercises of heart	1/-		8	0
32	Instructions and Tokens	3d		8	0
3	Primitive Physick unbound	1/6		4	6
13	Predestination calmly considered	6d		6	6
			£14	8	1
3	Allienes Letters	6d		1	6
4	Allienes Alarm	9d		3	0
5	General Minutes	6d		2	6
6	Lefevres Letters	8d		4	0
3	Phenomenon	6d		1	6
8	Wood's Address	2d		1	4
7	Welsh's Life	1/-		7	0
5	Baxter's Call	8d		3	4
3	Miss Mary Gilbert	6d		1	6
124	Society and band Rules	1d		10	4
28	Tumult Hymns	2d		4	8
42	Call to Backsliders	2d		7	0
59	Great Assize	2d		9	10
1	Triumph of liberty	3d			3
39	sin in Believers	2d		6	6
15	Catholic spirit	2d		2	6
13	Way of salvation	2d		2	2
10	Almost Christian	1d			10
11	Lord our righteousness	2d		1	10
9	On early Rising	1d			9
42	Wandering thoughts	1d		3	6
11	On the Trinity	1d			11
6	Reformation of Manners	2d		1	0
5	On the Law	3d		1	3
30	Cure of evil speaking	2d		5	0
9	Fletcher funeral sermon	3d		2	3
			£18	14	4

12	On free Grace	2d		2	0
28	Weel in a weel	2d		4	8
5	Inthusiasm	2d			10
21	Salvation by faith	1d		1	9
16	God's Love	1d		1	4
12	Means of Grace	2d		2	0
5	Hell Torments	2d			10
9	scriptural Christianity	2d		3	2
4	Prayers for children	2d			8
10	Forms of prayer	4d		3	4
10	Haimes' life	4d		3	4
8	Baxter's (illegible)	3d		2	0
6	Christian Sacrifice	2d		1	0
6	Life Alice Gilbert	2d		1	0
21	Genuine Christianity	1d		1	9
1	Pilgrim's progress	4d			4
4	Plain account of Methodist	3d		1	0
1	Repentance of Believers	2d			2
5	Christian prudence	3d		1	3
10	Thoughts on Imputed Right	1d			10
4	Election Reprobation	1d			4
11	Manners of Correct Christian	2d		1	10
7	History of Methodism	1d			7
4	Thoughts on a single life	1d			4
9	Advice on dress	1d			9
2	Life of God in soul of man	4d			8
3	Reasons for (illegible) communion	3d			9
			20	12	10
10	Dialogues	1d			10
4	Dialogues	2d			8
3	Distinguishing marks of Grace	4d		1	0
28	Words	1/4d			7
1	Character of a Methodist	1d			1
3	Mr Harper's Journal	4d		1	0
10	God's Sovereignty	1d			10
1	Logic	4d			4
3	Renewing covt with God	2d			6
1	Genuine (illegible) Creed	4d			4
3	Companion to altar	6d		1	6
6	Advice to Methodists	1d			6
3	Friendly Address to single people	3d			9
2	Defensive War	1d			2
2	sets scripture cards	2/-		4	0
4	Pocket Companions	1/3d		5	0
5	Minutes of Conference	6d		2	6
11	sets old Mags	1/-		11	0
1	Wesley's Notes New Testament Quarto		1	1	0
			23	4	5
Doctor Coke's Numbers - Nos left at Yarmouth		6d		12	0
Left at Mr Eastough's - Peasinghall - 12 Nos			1	4	0
			1	16	0
		Total	25	0	5

The Revd William Leary 1917 - 2001

I became acquainted with William Leary in the late 1960s, soon coming to appreciate his wide knowledge of Methodist history, which he was generous in sharing as I found when seeking information about about the Primitive Methodist women travelling preachers.

William Leary was born on 5 November 1917 at Tetney, Lincolnshire, into a Methodist family. Called up in 1939 he served in the navy, first as a radar operator and then as captain's secretary - because he *said* he could type! With his own office William was able to study for his Methodist local preacher's and ministerial examinations. After training at Hartley Victoria College, (1945-47) he went to the South Petherton Circuit (1947-48) and in July 1948 William married Marion, a teacher. They served in the Wath-on-Dearne (1948-52); Sheffield North East (1952-58) and Lincoln North (1958-62) circuits. After fifteen years William resigned from the ministry, went to Lincoln Diocesan Training College (1962-64) and became Head of Religious Education at the City School, Lincoln. In 1978 William Leary was appointed Methodist Connexional Archivist (1978-89) and it was during this time, while living in Chester, that he was persuaded to allow his name to go forward to the 1981 Conference for re-instatement as a supernumerary minister. Eventually, following the death of one of their sons, he and Marion returned to Lincolnshire. Here, although at times suffering from ill-health. he never stopped preaching, lecturing, researching, writing and answering queries.

What of William Leary's research and writing? Too numerous to list are his local histories, especially relating to Lincolnshire Methodism and Methodists. Wider Methodism is in his debt for his published work: in particular *Directory of Primitive Methodist Ministers and their Circuits* (1990) and *Wesley Guild - the first hundred years, 1896-1996* (1995). William's numerous unpublished lists and indexes are of inestimable value and constantly in demand at the Methodist Archives and the WHS Library.

A member of the Wesley Historical Society from 1950 William served as Exhibition Secretary (1968-98), organising some notable displays of local Methodist history at Conference, where, in addition, he and Marion for many years 'manned' the Society's stand. He gave the 1987 WHS Lecture, which was published as *Man of One Book: A Study of John Wesley's Reading.*

For all his love of Methodist history and archives William was firmly rooted in the present age - with his love of preaching, music, gardening, travelling, crosswords and snooker. On his last visit in June last year William 'sent' Marion and I shopping, while he searched for references for the book which was actually at the printers at the time of his death, and how he laughed when he saw that all Marion had bought was a 'door mat'! So many memories of William Leary are of a wonderful friend, with a lively, enquiring mind, a generous spirit and a great sense of fun.

E. DOROTHY GRAHAM

WHS LIBRARY

The three years since my last report have seen major changes, notably the transfer of the Westminster College campus to Oxford Brookes University. Our legal agreement with Westminster College has been transferred to the University and our interests, including the grant towards purchasing new publications, safeguarded. Inevitably, however, the transition has had some effects, particularly on the electronic cataloguing of our collection. This was in suspense for about eighteen months, firstly because of the conversion of the existing catalogue to the University's TALIS system, and then because of changes of staff. Martin Astell left for a post at the Essex Record Office after outstanding service to the Wesley and Methodist Studies Centre and Peter Forsaith has since been appointed as his successor. Please contact him in advance on 01865 488319 or at pforsaith@brookes.ac.uk if you are planning a visit.

Electronic cataloguing has now been resumed. The first priority was to clear the considerable backlog of recent acquisitions, and though the flow of these continues, attention has now switched to dealing with gaps in the cataloguing of the existing collection. There is a considerable way to go before all the books and pamphlets have been dealt with, but the part-time services of a member of the library staff have been "bought in".

The card catalogue has been kept up to date and will continue to be essential for the foreseeable future. Foremost among the many donations to the library was the library of Alfred Taberer. His books have been sorted and many added to the main collection or to the set of duplicate copies. We plan to make the latter available on loan, though it will not normally be possible to do so by post.

The rebinding programme has continued steadily. Volunteer help by WHS members within reach of Oxford has enabled us to identify gaps in the collection, the result of there being no collection development policy in earlier years, and the list of titles we are seeking is regularly updated as copies of wanted titles are located and acquired. I will gladly send a copy of the list on request. The scope of the library is being extended into one or two areas where it has been relatively weak; e.g. post-Wesley theology (until recently we had none of J. Agar Beet's numerous titles) and the writings of such authors as Ramsay Guthrie, William J. May and H. L. Gee, popular among grass-roots Methodists .

A move to new, purpose-built premises on another part of the campus is under consideration. More immediately, I expect to hand over the librarianship to John Lenton in July.

JOHN A.VICKERS

BOOK REVIEW

A Little Primitive. Primitive Methodism from Macro and Micro Perspectives by Kenneth Lysons. (Church in the Market Place Publications, Buxton. pp xii, 290. £9.99. ISBN I 899147 30 6)

This is an attractive, compelling 'read', combining scholarship with insight and humour, which I heartily commend. Dr Lysons, firstly, gives a clear survey of Primitive Methodism from Mow Cop to Sir William Hartley and A.S.Peake showing convincingly how a revivalist local sect developed into a national (and international) denomination. A total life cycle can be analysed. This is the 'Macro' account, firmly based on recent research. Secondly we have a personal vignette of later Primitive Methodism in the Lowton PM circuit. Lysons combines autobiographical and oral history without sentimentality. It bears interesting comparison with Oliver Beckerlegge's recent picture of United Methodism in the same period.

The first part (using Clive Field, Obelkevich *et al*) includes analysis of the sociological composition of the PMs in villages and one-industry areas, with more working class labourers and miners than the Wesleyans. We move from the dominance - and sometimes unpleasant rivalry - of Bourne and Clowes who retired in 1842 - through the ascendancy of Districts to the chapel-debt dominated period, when Hartley provided much of the money for the training of a new style of ordained ministry.

Historians might have a few critical comments - many are wary of the 'Weber-Tawney' thesis, linking later forms of Protestantism and modern capitalism, but Dr. Lysons shows how 'nobodies' could become 'somebodies'. Conversion, responsibility, frugality and hard work could lead to a rise in the social scale. In the next generation, education was vital. The PMs had more day schools than often realized. The stress on the influence of dissenting Puritanism needs balancing with Quaker influence. Dr J. T. Wilkinson said he had much of the Quaker in him! The use of women preachers is Quakerly. The PMs clearly played an important role in Trade Unions and the early Labour Party but the Wesleyans produced Arthur Henderson, Philip Snowden and George Tomlinson also.

In the second part the role of the Sunday School - independent in its style - and influencing a majority of the population - is stressed. Worship and preaching are graphically described - increasingly like the rest of Methodism, but with less stress on the sacraments. Had the Love Feast disappeared? The Primitives were more dissenting than the Wesleyans, so we have a Lancashire example of the 'consciousness of effortless superiority' of the Establishment, especially in educational matters producing non-conformist truculence, not always to the benefit of children. The issues of 1902 are still with us in the debates on 'Faith Schools'. Primitive Methodism

was, in its ethics very strict and rather pietist as well as having a radical element which was, perhaps, more evident in the North East and in East Anglia than in Lancashire.

There are a fair number of proof errors, e.g. 'Arminian' not 'Armenian', '1836' not '1806' (p 8), Bourne's death was 1852 (p 9). 'Forster not 'Foster' (p 248). There is no index. But this is a real bargain and an important portrayal of a significant part of our Methodist history. Do we now lack the acumen of business men like Hartley?

JOHN MUNSEY TURNER

NOTES & QUERIES

1551 QUINTON METHODIST HISTORY ON CASSETTE AND CD

Quinton Methodist Church has combined with Quinton Local History Society to produce a booklet, cassette and double CD, *Ravers, Ranters and Respectable Schoolboys*, in which a cast of over forty readers and singers tell the fascinating story of the turbulent coming of Methodism to the little village of Quinton, five miles from Birmingham.

The scene opens in Quintain Green farmhouse, late in the eighteenth century, where Ambrose Foley has just returned from London where he encountered John Wesley. Inspired by this experience Foley starts a Methodist meeting in his own kitchen and invites Wesley to Quinton. Though his neighbours at first think that Foley is raving, the invitation proves to be a turning point in village history and leads to the building of Quinton's first chapel.

A generation later Primitive Methodist William Stringer arrives on the scene to mission the village for the Ranters. Opposition and persecution meet him in the form of stones and rotten eggs. Nevertheless the Ranters begin regular meetings and establish a Sunday School in a cowshed before eventually building their own chapel. Discipline amongst the Ranters is strict and visits to the circus are forbidden.

By the end of the nineteenth century a boarding school for the sons of Primitive Methodists is established in Quinton, and in the final scene the respectable schoolboys of Bourne College, gathered together from all parts of the country and across the world, are seen in their Speech Day of July 24 1891 in company with their teachers and parents, the President of the Primitive Methodist Conference and various local and national dignitaries.

The script was researched and written by local preacher Michael Hall, whose interest in Quinton history began more than thirty years ago and has led to the publication of three books and a previous tape. Proceeds from the sale of *Ravers, Ranters and Respectable Schoolboys* are for Quinton Methodist Church funds. The cassette and accompanying booklet cost £5 (plus £1 p&p) and the double CD and accompanying booklet cost £10 (plus £1 p&p). Cheques (made payable to Quinton Methodist Church) with order to 8, Hickmans Close, Halesowen, West Midlands, B62 9DF.

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