

SEVENTY-FIVE YEARS OF SERVICE

The Baptist Historical Society is celebrating its seventy-fifth anniversary this year, so it seemed good to look at the ups and downs in the Society's statistical story as gleaned from the pages of the *Transactions* and the *Quarterly*, and for more recent years from my own accounts and membership lists. More details could obviously be filled out by a detailed examination of the Society's minute books, but time has precluded this.

On 30th April 1908 at the fourth session of the Annual Assembly of the Baptist Union at Bloomsbury, the Union resolved unanimously:

That the members of the Assembly of the Baptist Union cordially approve of the proposal to form a Baptist Historical Society and trust that this important denominational work will receive practical and general support.

The inaugural meeting was held that same afternoon when 65 ministers and delegates joined the new Society.

Membership

Continuing this theme, the first list of members published in the *Transactions* in October 1908 showed that the 65 original members had grown to 115. There was a steady growth in membership until the beginning of the First World War, during which membership dropped to the hundred mark. Both 1922 and 1923 saw appeals for new members and in 1923 membership stood at 153 and by 1925 had risen to 186. The recession of the late twenties and early thirties saw a decline once again; one can deduce from the subscriptions in the financial statements that it was about 150 in 1936. From then on there was a steady growth, till in 1945 membership was 299. Through deaths and resignations this figure fell to around 200 in 1950 when there was a further appeal for new members. The list of members published in 1963 shows that there were now 349 members and the annual report of 1969 states that the total was now 476 of whom 150 were overseas. In October 1982 the membership is 536 of whom 183 are overseas. The reason for the sudden increase in the late sixties was that, owing to the demise of the Carey Kingsgate Press, the Society took over the trade sales, hitherto handled by them, of which no separate list was ever provided. While the present membership is the largest in the Society's history, there is still room for improvement. To think in terms of a thousand members is not outrageous, and would enable us to become more soundly based to carry out more publishing ventures.

Subscriptions and the cost of the *Quarterly*

The original subscription in 1908 was five shillings for ordinary members who received just the *Transactions* (the forerunner of the *Baptist Quarterly*) and one guinea for honorary membership, which enabled subscribers to receive the *Transactions* and all other publications; life membership was

ten guineas. The other publications in these early days included *The works of John Smythe*, *The Minutes of the General Assembly of the General Baptist Churches 1654-1811*, *The Minutes of Ford Church 1688-1797*, *Baptists in Yorkshire and the North West 1644-1918* and *Baptist Confessions of Faith* by J. McGlothlin. Some of these were published by other presses and bought in for members, for example, *The Works of John Smythe* was published by Cambridge University Press. Some were issued by the Kingsgate Press and available to the public, others like McGlothlin's *Baptist Confessions of Faith* were available to subscribers only. These special publications continued at intervals up to the Second World War, when the difficulties of obtaining paper made it hard enough to keep the *Quarterly* going, let alone publish other volumes.

The subscription stayed at this rate until the *Transactions* became the *Baptist Quarterly* in 1922, when ordinary membership became ten shillings, with no alteration in honorary or life membership terms. In 1937 a special subscription of 15 guineas was introduced for churches who wished to become permanent members. Cloughfold in Lancashire was the first member in this category. These rates applied right through to 1957, a remarkably long stable period.

In 1957 a new basis for membership subscriptions was introduced. The old 'ordinary' and 'honorary' were removed and a basic figure for membership was stated, in this case one guinea, with half rate for ministers in the British Isles, i.e. ten shillings and sixpence. Life membership stayed at ten guineas for individuals and fifteen guineas for churches. The next alteration was in 1963 when subscriptions were doubled to two guineas and one guinea, and life membership became £25 with the special category for churches abolished.

With decimalisation in 1970 the rates became £2-50 and £1-25 with life membership at £30. The inflation of the seventies meant rises in 1973, 1977, and 1981. The 1973 rates were £4-00 and £2-00, trade and libraries £5-00, and life membership still at £30. In 1977 these became £6-00 and £3-00, trade at £7-50 and life membership at £75-00 with a special rate for the over-sixties of £30. The present rates introduced in 1981 are £9-00 and £4-50 with trade at £11-00 and life at £90-00 (£45 for the over-60s).

The cost of the *Quarterly* has paralleled the subscription rate, being half-a-crown for 1908-1915, three shillings for 1916-1947, five shillings 1948-1956, six shillings 1957-1962, twelve shillings for 1963-1969, 75p 1970-1972, £1-25 1973-1976, £2-00 1977-1980, and £3-00 for 1981 onwards. This leads me to say that the Society has numbers of back copies of the *Baptist Quarterly* (though some are in shorter supply than others) from 1946 to the present. These are available to members at the marked prices if anyone wishes to extend the range of their *Quarterlies*.

In the last few years we have published a number of what we now call "Occasional Publications". These include the Cumulative Indexes with the help of University Microfilms Ltd,

and our own publications of the *Association Records of the Particular Baptists to 1660, Who are the Baptists?* and *Baptist Union Documents 1948-1970.*

Financial State

As Treasurer it is interesting to look back at the financial health of the Society over the years. From the beginning to 1926 the Society ran with a deficit which averaged £40 (except for 1915 when there was a balance of £56). This deficit was on a turnover of about £170 per annum, which means the Society was really running on a shoe string. During the 1930s, apart from a deficit of £37 in 1936, the Society showed a balance and some increasing reserves, and this happier situation continued up to 1945 when the balance and reserves amounted to £220. Mr Calder reported in 1950 that all reserves had been used up and there was a deficit of £65, and in 1951 an appeal for new funds and for new members was launched "because of the serious financial situation". But still the deficit increased. In 1956 a grant of £250 from the Baptist World Alliance Congress surplus helped turn the situation and the Baptist Union agreed in 1960 to make a grant of £50 annually (later this was increased to £75). When Mr Calder retired in 1966 as treasurer he was able to hand over a small balance. With the demise of the Carey Kingsgate Press in 1967, the Society became responsible for its own printing and trade subscriptions, which helped to consolidate the finances. In 1976 we became a registered charity, which enabled United Kingdom subscriptions to be paid under covenant, and the tax reclaimed. The more members who do this, the better able is the Society to hold subscriptions steady. Because of special funds contributed by the Colleges for the New Baptist History and the invested life membership subscriptions, the total assets of the Society now stand at over £6,000.

Dr Whitley, writing in an editorial in the 1930s, reports that the American Baptist Historical Society had an income of £600 per year, and says wistfully what could not the Society do with that sort of income. (The income of the Society at that point was under £200 per year). The present Treasurer would echo these sentiments in inflationary corrected terms. What could not your Society do in the way of new publishing ventures if its income was, say, £20,000 a year instead of £5,000?

Officers

The lists attached here show how much the Society owes to the long and generous service of its past officers. The office of Editor is not mentioned separately until 1918, though it is clear that the functions of this office were carried out from the beginning by Dr Whitley. The Librarian is another office which came later in the Society's story, when it is plain that the work of looking after the increasing collection was too much for the Secretary to handle.

President

1908-1920	Rev. Principal G. Gould, M.A., D.D.
1922-1945	Rev. H. Wheeler Robinson, M.A., D.D.
1946	----
1947	Rev. W. T. Whitley, M.A., Ll.D., F.R.Hist.S.
1948-1959	Seymour J. Price
1960-1980	Rev. E. A. Payne, C.H., M.A., D.D.
1981-	Rev. B. R. White, M.A., D.Phil.

Vice-Presidents

1908-1927	Rev. J. H. Shakespeare, M.A.
1908-1917	Rev. T. Vincent Tymms, D.D.
1908-1911	His Honour Judge Willis, K.C., B.A., Ll.D.
1913-1917	Sir George Macalpine, J.P., Ll.D.
1918-1923	Rev. J. Clifford, M.A., LL.B., B.Sc., D.D., F.G.S.
1922-1928	Rev. J. C. Carlile, C.B.E., D.D.
1924-1927	Thos. Penny, J.P.
1928	Rev. H. C. Mander
1929-1934	Seymour J. Price
1935-1946	Rev. W. T. Whitley, M.A., Ll.D., F.R.Hist.S.
1947-1969	Rev. A. Dakin, B.D., D.Th.
1947-1950	Rev. P. W. Evans, D.D.
1947	Seymour J. Price
1947	Rev. A. C. Underwood, D.D.
1948-1950	Rev. A. S. Langley, F.R.Hist.S.
1948-1959	Rev. E. A. Payne, C.H., M.A., D.D.
1951-1964	Rev. Hugh Martin, M.A., D.D.
1952-1961	Rev. F. Townley Lord, B.A., D.D., Litt.D.
1966-1970	Rev. R. L. Child, B.D., B.Litt.
1966-1983	Allan H. Calder
1971-1981	C. B. Jewson, F.S.A.
1971-1981	Rev. B. R. White, M.A., D.Phil.
1971-	Rev. W. M. S. West, M.A., D.Theol.

Secretary

1908-1934	Rev. W. T. Whitley, M.A., Ll.D., F.R.Hist.S.
	Assistant Secretary 1924-1946 Rev. A. C. Klaiber, M.C., B.D.
1935-1946	Seymour J. Price
1947-1956	Rev. G. W. Hughes, B.A., B.D.
1957-1970	Rev. W. M. S. West, M.A., D.Theol.
1971-1976	Rev. D. C. Sparkes, B.D.
1977-1982	Rev. P. J. Wortley, B.A., B.D.
1982-	Rev. R. Hayden, M.A., B.D.

Treasurer

1908-1909	James Ward
1910-1921	J. W. Thirtle, Ll.D., M.R.A.S.
1922-1933	F. J. Blight, F.R.S.E.
1934-1965	Allan H. Calder
1966-	Rev. T. S. H. Elwyn, M.A., B.Sc., B.D.

EditorAssistant Editors

1918-1935	Rev. W. T. Whitley, M.A., Ll.D., F.R.Hist.S. 1922-1924 1924-1938	Rev. A. Dakin, B.D., D.Th. Rev. F. Townley Lord, B.A., D.D., Litt.D. Seymour J. Price
1936-1945	Seymour J. Price	
1946-1950	Rev. E. A. Payne, C.H., M.A., D.D. 1947-1952 1948-1952	Seymour J. Price Rev. G. W. Hughes, B.A., B.D.
1953-1957	Rev. G. W. Hughes, B.A., B.D.	
1958-1962	Rev. W. M. S. West, M.A., D.Theol. 1960-1964 1960-1962	Rev. A. Gilmore, M.A., B.D. Rev. G. W. Rusling, M.A., B.D.
1963-1975	Rev. G. W. Rusling, M.A., B.D.	
1976-1979	Miss Rosemary Taylor, M.A., M.Phil. 1976-1980	Rev. B. W. Amey
1980-	Rev. K. W. Clements, M.A., B.D.	

Librarian

1928	Rev. W. T. Whitley, M.A., Ll.D., F.R.Hist.S.
1929-1946	Rev. Prof. F. E. Robinson, M.A., B.D.
1947-1960	Rev. E. J. Tongue, D.D.
1961-1964	Rev. N. S. Moon, B.A., B.D., M.Th.
1965-1970	Rev. E. F. Clipsham, M.A., B.D.
1971-	Rev. G. W. Rusling, M.A., B.D.

Note that in 1963 the Library was moved from Bristol and amalgamated with the Baptist Union Library at Church House.

Minute Secretary

1965-1970	Rev. E. F. Clipsham, M.A., B.D.
1971-1975	Miss Rosemary Taylor, M.A., M.Phil.
1976-	Mrs Faith Bowers, B.A.

THORNTON ELWYN

OUR CONTRIBUTORS

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Assistant Chief Planning Officer, Glasgow District Council
- Paul S. Fiddes, M.A., D.Phil.
Tutor, Regent's Park College, Oxford
- Neville Clark, M.A., S.T.M.
Tutor, South Wales Baptist College, Cardiff