

Frank Gregory and Peter Willett, *Deacons' Dissenters Raise the Cross: The history, origin and memoirs of Cross Hills Baptist Church*, Catamount Publications, Coalville, Leicestershire, 1998, 204 pages, £8-50. ISBN 0 9526718 2 4.

This is the result of a collaboration between a local historian (Gregory) and a church deacon (Willet), heading up a research committee (the Cross Hills United Researched Church History) with convenient acronym. Anticipating the enquiry 'where on earth ...?', the authors provide a series of maps which locate this 'few square metres of land in one tiny corner of Leicestershire' around the villages of Bagworth, Thornton and Barton-in-the-Beans. The historical context is Samuel Deacon I (whose father fought with King William at the Battle of the Boyne), through his son, Samuel Deacon II, and on to his assistant, Jacob Brown, the principal founder of the church building at Cross Hills in 1814. Deacon senior was a key individual in establishing the New Connexion of General Baptists, and his son, a clockmaker, 'brought the Gospel to Bagworth' in 1796.

The 'little church was built in no man's land' because of fierce Anglican opposition to the cause: it is regrettable that not more is known. Hostility from the established church was to cost Jacob Brown his position as a servant and the humble nature of the Cross Hills position is repeatedly stressed, both the near anonymity of the chapel's location ('... off a sloping road, on a bend ...') and the outwardly ordinariness of its members in an area dominated by mining and agriculture. Cross Hills was not a wealthy church and relied rather upon staunch faith.

Rather than a chronological account or thematic exploration, the authors have published an edited compilation of sources, recollections and anecdotes built around a loose narrative. Cross Hills possessed few members able to provide posterity with a literary bequest and there were few records (no church meeting minutes prior to 1900). In this respect Willett and Gregory have done an admirable job, telling the story of local Dissent through the lives of a handful of key families. These include the Ormes, the Primes and the Blowers, who sustained the church through many generations. Where contemporary evidence was short they smartly utilized the one source in profusion - photographs, plus miscellaneous printed ephemera. The chapter on the Sunday School, for example, runs to nearly nine and a half pages, but only two are text.

The last quarter of the book is devoted to the rebuilding of Cross Hills in 1996, the third sanctuary on this site. The detailed saga of subsidence, disappointment, demolition and reconstruction, is an instructive and ultimately heartening tale. Cross Hills is a church aware of its heritage without becoming trapped within its past, exemplified by the tasteful incorporation of elements of the 1885 chapel into the new building. Above all, the enormous affection felt for this small community of worshippers leaps from the page. Gregory and Willett have demonstrated what can be achieved within even such a self-professed 'ordinary' church as Cross Hills.

STEPHEN BUNKER

ANGUS ARCHIVE ACCESSIONS 1998

Fourteen separate accessions of manuscripts have been received into the Angus Library since January 1998. They include:

Typed copy of the **Sierra Leone diary of Sir Herbert Janes, 1954**, donated by his grandson, Peter White. This diary was written while Janes visited Sierra Leone for the Baptist Commonwealth & Colonial Society, to investigate the state of Baptist churches.

The originals of **35 Pearce and Carey letters, 1790-1828**, and typed transcripts, deposited by Sue Peters of Australia.

Birthday prayers and other verses by **Joseph Kinghorn, 1782-1832**, donated by Kenneth Hipper of St Mary's Baptist Church, Norwich.

Additional papers of the **Angus archive** donated by Tony Spring on behalf of the executors of the late Barbara Angus. These include photographs and lantern slides (all identified!), books and other papers, relating to BMS work in China and India in particular.

Original manuscripts collected by, and research papers of, the late **Graham Hughes**, relating mainly to Dan Taylor's work and the New Connexion of General Baptists. The papers, which have been given by his widow, Jean Hughes, include original correspondence between Dan Taylor (who published under the pen names of Philalethes and Philanthropus) and George Birley of St Ives, on matters theological and to do with the religious books trade, letters of William Thompson of Boston (Lincs) and of other leading members of the New Connexion, some early minutes and resolutions of the New Connexion; papers relating to the Baptist church at Boston; and Hughes' own research notes on the Lincolnshire Baptists and the Welsh Baptists. A calendar of this important collection is being prepared by JT.

Deeds and associated documents relating to **Salem Chapel, in Dover**, deposited by Geoffrey Breed.

Church minutes of Burford Baptist Church, 1829-1901, 1930-1967 (2 volumes), deposited by Dr John Packer.

Moulscobm Way Baptist Church Forward Movement minutes 1950-1956, deposited by Mrs Sue Aldridge, Sussex Baptist Association.

JENNIFER THORP

WHITLEY LECTURE 1999

A SHARED MEAL AND A COMMON TABLE Some reflections on the Lord's Supper and Baptists

The Revd Keith G. Jones, Rector of the International Baptist Theological Seminary, Prague, will deliver the lecture on 3 May at Regent's Park College, Oxford (4pm) and 4 May at Northern Baptist College, Manchester (2pm). In print it is available from the Whitley Secretary, Mrs Faith Bowers, 89 Brockenhurst Avenue, Worcester Park, Surrey KT4 7RH, price £2-50.