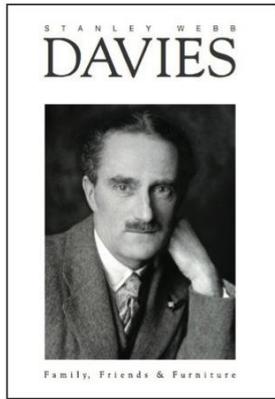


Stanley Webb Davies; Family, Friends & Furniture
by Ian Naylor and Harold Hays.



A new book – but one mystery remains. Perhaps you can help

Six months of hard graft by experienced researcher and writers resulted in an excellent biography of former Grange-over-Sands resident Stanley Webb Davies who went on to become a leading light in arts and crafts furniture from his base in Windermere.

The book traces his family roots from mid-1800s Congregationalism, through the Lancashire textile industry, his work with the Friends (Quakers) war victims relief team in France during the Great War, marriage to his lovely wife Emily at Cartmel Meeting House and his move to Windermere.

Pat Rowland, who was one of the team involved in research for the book, says: "It's a very interesting book and everyone involved learnt something new."

The book has a wide range of characters, among them Mahatma Gandhi, buccaneer Captain Henry Morgan, Walt Disney, Siegfried Sassoon and Wilfred Owen, King George VI, and a wide range of action and adventure – fleeing the Boxer uprising, the return of Rembrandt's Night Watch to the Rijksmuseum after the last war, the sinking of the Bismarck, prison and daring rescues in the hell of the Great War.

But one thing eluded co-authors journalist Harold Heys of Darwen and academic Ian Naylor of Bingley. And it still annoys them. Perhaps, just perhaps, one of our readers can throw some light on the puzzle ...

The authors had access to family papers and diaries, although they struggled with gaps in the narrative. Service with the Quakers relief workers wasn't a problem and neither was his time learning his craft after turning his back on a comfortable position with the family firm in his home town in Darwen. Equally his marriage and honeymoon in Scotland and time setting up and developing his successful venture in Windermere and building a new home there – all are well detailed.

But the book doesn't have much more than a hint of where Stanley and Emily first met. It seems to have been rather a speedy romance and they married just a few weeks

after they became engaged. But where did their loving relationship over the next 50-years actually begin? Where did they first meet?

Says Harold Heys: "We came across several stumbling blocks during months of research. The biggest problem we had was putting a date to him losing an eye because of cancer. We had so much detail on so many aspects of his life but couldn't work that one out until our deadline was looming and Ian got a lucky break looking through the tiny writing in a diary from the mid-50s. It was one of those Eureka moments that everyone interested in local history will know well."

But that first meeting of Stanley Davies and Emily Thomas? They had to finally admit defeat. Ian Naylor says: "We'd been confident that we would sort it out. It didn't seem to be a problem. But we never did crack it."

Stanley was in his mid 20s when, after the Great War, he pitched up in Grange-over-Sands to where his father, Thomas Pearce Davies, had moved after retiring from the very successful Greenfield and Waterfield Mills in Darwen. The business had been left in the care of Stanley's older brothers Percy – later to become the first Lord Darwen – and Willie who spent time in France with the Friends Ambulance Service during the war.

Stanley had spent a couple of years learning his trade with arts and crafts furniture legend Arthur Romney Green on the South Coast before deciding, in 1922, that he was ready to start out on his own. He returned to live with his father while he got his venture under way,

Emily, meanwhile, was also living in Grange. She and her younger sister Daisy and younger brother Charles had been orphaned after the deaths of both their parents when they were children and they had been cared for by aunts and uncles. They were comfortably off and the girls moved to Grange and attended Miss Brindle's "ladies boarding school" at Kents Bank House.

They stayed on in the town and lived at Eden Mount when in 1916 they were working as nurses at Eggerslack which was an auxiliary military hospital in the town. Charles, a slight lad, had served the Colours for just a couple of months before being discharged as medically unfit.

So ... in 1922 Emily was living with Daisy in Eden Mount while Stanley, on breaks from his work with Romney Green, was staying "round the corner" at Pengarth, Ashmount Road. Charles Thomas had married in 1919 and Daisy was to marry an academic in 1923, the same year that Stanley and Emily were married.



Stanley had been expected to stay a bit longer with Green and his departure came as something of a surprise. Perhaps a friendship with near neighbour Emily was beginning to blossom? They could have met socially at the home of mutual friends or perhaps just bumped into each other. Perhaps he had splashed her as he drove past? Perhaps their pet dogs had met up?

Emily was pretty and friendly, Oxford-educated Stanley was a personable chap with a charm to match his good looks. The fact that she was about ten years older didn't seem to be a problem and she was happy to become a Quaker.

They had a lot in common, an interest in nature and the arts. She became an expert wood-carver, probably under Stanley's guidance and she was an inspiration to him during a happy, loving marriage which lasted 50 years at Gatesfield in New Road, Windermere, although they didn't have any children.

Half-a-century! But how did it all begin? Answer, please, to Pat Rowland.

- Stanley Webb Davies; Family, Friends & Furniture costs £15 plus £2 p&p from info@naylorpublishing.co.uk. Grange information centre have had a few copies on sale. It's a glossy A4 production of close on 200 pages of 60,000 words and some 150 photos. It is the third book produced by the Friends of Darwen Library to mark the Centenary of the Great War. Their two previous books went to reprint and sold out.