

Minutes of East Cheshire Area Meeting
at Frandley Meeting House, Sunday 14th May 1.45pm

17.05.1 Friends Present

There are about 50 Friends present. All our Meetings are represented.

17.05.2 Reading

#24.60 from Quaker Faith and Practice, as quoted in the QPSW report, has been read in our opening worship.

17.05.3 Caring for Friends

We have heard of a number of Friends who are unwell and we are holding them in our thoughts. We ask our Assistant Clerk and Liz Morris to send our greetings.

17.05.4 Quaker Life Representative Council report

Sue Pounder has shared her reflections on the meeting of QLRC held at **Woodbrooke, 21 – 23 April 2017, entitled Helping Seekers Find Quakers – Being Worth the Finding**

We look forward to an Area Meeting trip to Friends House Library when Libby Adams, the chief Librarian, has offered to bring out materials of particular interest to East Cheshire Friends.

Sue's written report is attached to the Minutes. We thank Sue for this report.

17.05.5 Quaker Peace and Social Witness Annual Conference report

A report from Jo Chambers on the QPSW annual conference entitled **Journeys of Witness**, held earlier this month, is attached to the Minutes. We thank Jo for this report.

17.05.6 Nominations

Nominations Committee has brought forward the following names:

Howard Hilton, of Crewe and Nantwich Meeting, to serve as AM Trustee to 2019.

Denise Renshaw, to serve as Membership Clerk and AM coordinator for LOMA from 2017 to 31 December 2020.

Sue Pounder, to serve as Safeguarding Officer from now to 31 December 2019

Andrew Backhouse, Frances McCann, Peter Eccles to serve as an organising group for the next Glenthorne weekend, with freedom to co-opt as they feel appropriate.

These names being acceptable, the Friends are appointed.

We thank Janina Miklaszevicz for her service as Safeguarding Officer and

Ben Evens for his service as Assistant Clerk for Membership and for managing the List of Members and Attenders and Data Compliance.

Sue Clarke is now serving as convenor to Nominations Committee.

17.05.7 Nominations Committee training

We agree to send Denise Renshaw to a Nominations training event, noting that she is on the waiting list for an event to be held at Swarthmoor in June.

17.05.8 Stockport Meeting Clerks and Elder

Stockport Meeting has notified us that the following will serve as Clerk and Assistant Clerks:

Clerk – Geoff Thomason until 31 December 2017

Assistant Clerk 2017 – May: Sheila Whitehead

July: Pat Carlisle

September: Tim Carlisle

November: Margaret Moss

Stockport also offer the name of Tim Carlisle to serve as Elder until 31 December 2019. We appoint Tim accordingly.

17.05.9 Meeting for Sufferings Report

Jacqui Moore has reported on the Meeting for Sufferings held on 1st April.

[In relation to this] the availability of training for trustees from Cheshire East Council for Voluntary Service has been highlighted in this meeting. Specific support and training for premises committees has been raised as a need.

There is a link for contacting the new Property Officer at Friends House in the report.

We encourage our ECAM Trustees to consider these and any further responses to the three questions on stewardship included in Jacqui's written report and respond direct to Friends House as appropriate.

We thank Jacqui for her report.

17.05.10 Numbers of Area Meetings per year

We have duly considered the change made last year to holding Area Meeting six times per year.

We agree to continue with this number of meetings, but ask the Clerks to consider the best timings for meetings, with particular focus on the long gap between November and February meetings this last year.

We value our opportunities to meet with one another, and have appreciated the regional Gathering held at Wilmslow in November, and the afternoon meeting at Crewe and Nantwich on Death and Dying held as an extension to Area Meeting in March. Friends in all Meetings are encouraged to consider what opportunities they might offer to bring Friends from the Area Meeting

together. A list started informally before the start of this meeting identifies the following regular events to which all AM Friends are welcomed.

Events organised by Local Meetings, over the last year which were open to all Area Meeting Friends :

Disley: Garden Party picnic

Christmas Meet

Quiet Garden

Open Garden

Journeyman Theatre

CAN: Film showing: "The Divide"

Wilmslow: Enquirers' Day

Wilmslow/Marple: Ada Salter Story

Marple: Speaker from QRAG (Refugees and Asylum)

Frاندley : Meeting for Learning (LM but extended the invitation)

Stockport: Circle dancing

New Year Party

Great Hucklow weekend

Cheadle Hulme: Midweek Meeting 1st Thursday each month

We welcome Local Meetings to offer ideas for extending Area Meetings scheduled as morning events by adding on afternoon activities.

17.05.11 Data Compliance

Our membership clerk, Ben Evens, reports that, as far as he has been able to ascertain, all officers of the Area Meeting have complied with the requirements of the Data Protection Act. Consent forms are held by the membership clerk in respect of all those whose names appear in the List of Members and Attenders with the exception of a few names which are being pursued. The requisite form giving this information will be returned to Friends House.

17.05.12 Five Minute Find-out: Denise Renshaw

We thank Denise for sharing some of her life story with us.

17.05.13 Yealand report

The Yealand "Camp" was held from 9th to 13th April. 16 young Quakers attended, supported by 7 adults and one small child.

We have enjoyed a brief film showing assorted activities, some more lively, and some more peaceful.

Yealand highlights include:

- A visit to Lancaster Castle where some early Quakers were imprisoned – and where some YQs had the experience of being locked in a cell,
- Silk painting
- Joining a pilgrimage about taxation for welfare, where 12 Yealand YQs walked about 10 miles from Lowick to Swarthmoor Hall

- Business meetings to share ideas and make decisions – particularly about going on the pilgrimage, when others chose to go on a walk,
- Living together as a community,
- Walks in fresh air and hills,
- Epilogues,
- Jokes (and Joseph's riddle).

Young Quakers thank the Area Meeting for supporting the event. We thank them for their report, and we thank the helpers too.

17.05.14 QPSW/QCEA Conference – Sanctuary Everywhere 1-3 December

We have been told that:

Quaker Peace and Social Witness (QPSW) and QCEA are holding a joint conference in Brussels in December. Sanctuary is a place of refuge and safety. This conference will look at how we transform Europe into a continent of sanctuary, both for all the people who currently live here, and for other people seeking protection.

The conference will be an opportunity for Friends to consider the Quaker work on forced migration, but also much broader issues of what Friends can do to ensure Europe is a continent that values the human dignity of all people. The conference will consider how these issues will be effected by the UK withdrawal from the EU, and the impact that any future withdrawal from the European Convention on Human Rights might have.

Europe is facing significant challenges relating to peace and human rights, including an increase in nationalism - and some fragmentation of the mechanism for dialogue and cooperation that have developed in the last 60 years. As Friends we oppose war, and call for peacebuilding efforts long before war is on the agenda. The question facing European Friends is what should we be doing to swim against the current tide. It will be an opportunity to build upon the theme of Yearly Meeting Gathering, but also to Worship with Friends from across Europe.

Speakers will include:

Marigold Bentley, Assistant General Secretary, Quaker Peace and Social Witness

Heather Grabbe, Director of Open Society Foundation – Europe.

We encourage Meetings to consider who might usefully attend this

conference, and agree to send up to 3 delegates. We ask local meetings to suggest names to Sue Clarke as convenor of Nominations Committee by the end of June. She will liaise with the Clerks to identify a final delegation.

17.05.15 Treasurer's Report 2015

Peter Eccles has presented the 2015 Annual Report and Accounts which have been approved by the examiner, David McHugh. Trustees have authorized the clerk to Trustees to sign the accounts. At the end of the year there was £6,237.91 in the General Purposes Fund a reduction of £711.47.

We approve the Annual Report and Accounts subject to minor textual amendment following points raised.

We thank the examiner David McHugh for his work.

We thank Peter for this report.

The accounts are attached to these Minutes.

17.05.16 Death of Pat Fearnley

We have received the following Minute 1 from Wilmslow Local Meeting 7th May, regarding the record of death of Pat Fearnley and the Testimony to the Grace of God in her life.

1. The death of Patricia Fearnley

Patricia Carol Fearnley 1929 - 2017

It is with sadness that we report the death on Sunday 9th April 2017 of our Friend Patricia 'Pat' Fearnley. A Memorial Meeting was held at Wilmslow Meeting House on Sunday 23rd April attended by Friends and Family. Wilmslow Friends were also represented at the service at Macclesfield Crematorium on the following day.

Pat attended Wilmslow Meeting with her husband Arthur Fearnley, who was already a Quaker and she was accepted into Membership in 2007.

Pat was born in Worsley in 1929 and grew up in Swinton, leaving Pendleton High School in 1947 to take up a place at Manchester School of Dentistry. However her plans to graduate and join her stepfather's dentistry practice did not materialise. Through her interest in amateur dramatics she met the Fearnley brothers, Arthur and Walter, and in 1951 gave up her dentistry course a year before qualifying to marry Arthur. Pat and Arthur had three children, Catherine, Richard and Robert, and many of their happiest memories are of the family holidays and walks that Pat organised each year bringing the widening circle and generations together.

In the early 1960s Pat went back to college and after graduating worked as a

primary school teacher until 1975. At the time of the 1974 General Election Pat became involved in campaigning for the Liberal Party, later to become the Liberal Democrats, and her great interest in politics grew from then on. In the 1990s Arthur and Pat moved to Wilmslow from Altrincham, Pat became secretary to the North West Branch of the Liberal Democrats and in 1994 Pat was awarded the MBE for services to politics. She continued to work unstintingly for the party and at the age of 74, having been a Borough Councillor for some time, Pat was elected as a Liberal Democrat councillor on the almost exclusively Conservative Cheshire County Council. She had campaigned tirelessly prior to her election but many felt it was the warmth of her personality, even more than her politics, that won her the necessary votes. During her four years as a County Councillor her main focus was on sustainability issues. She was greatly concerned about climate change and cared deeply about the world we were passing on to future generations.

Although a regular and valued Attender at Wilmslow Meeting she had not wished to enter into Membership while the demands of her political activities would prevent her from taking a full part in the life of the Meeting. The summer garden party for Wilmslow Friends that Pat held at her home on many occasions, until her health became too poor, is remembered with great fondness. In 2007 having retired from politics, Pat applied for and was accepted into Membership and served the Meeting as an Elder. Pat left a short farewell letter for her family and in that she said "On a personal note concerning religious beliefs, I have found being a member of the Society of Friends allows me to be free to think, listen and question freely whilst showing a way of life".

In her 70s Pat's eyesight began to fail but she adapted and continued to live her very full life, independently. However, three years ago when her health became too poor, Pat moved in to a 'granny' flat at her son's home and continued to attend Meeting when able, with her carer.

Pat's life was indeed one of service. We give thanks for the Grace of God as seen in the life of Patricia Fearnley.

17.05.17 Death of Geoffrey Tickle

We have received from Marple Meeting the following testimony to the Grace of God as seen in the life of our Friend Geoff Tickle.

Testimony to the Grace of God as seen in the life of our Friend Geoffrey Tickle

Our Friend, Geoffrey Tickle, died at the age of 89 on 5th January 2017. A Meeting for Worship to give thanks for the grace of God as shown in his life was held at Hadfield Methodist Church on Wednesday 11th January.

Geoff grew up in the Manchester “village” of Chorlton, and attended Manchester University. He met and married Hilda in the early 1950’s, starting family life in north Manchester. They later moved to Hadfield, near Glossop and Geoff worked at the University of Sheffield.

Geoff’s Christian faith was an important part of his life, and he came to Quakerism after many years in the Church of England. He started attending the small Glossopdale worshiping group around 1990, and came into membership in 2004. Geoff and Hilda enjoyed the wider Quaker community, attending an ECAM weekend away at Glenthorne and events at Marple.

After the Glossopdale meeting closed, Geoff’s nearest meeting was Marple, but by then Hilda had suffered a serious stroke and Geoff became her main carer. It was difficult for him to attend meeting but he and Hilda appreciated the continuing contact and visits.

Geoff had huge energy – he loved rugby, and was a passionate climber and mountaineer. He loved the natural world and being outside in the countryside. He was able to inspire and share his enthusiasm with others and was a founder member of both Glossop Mountain Rescue Team and the Rugby club.

He was a “lifelong learner”, very well read and naturally questioning and challenging. He loved to talk! Geoff seemed interested in everything and had incredible general knowledge - demonstrated when he took part in Brain of Britain and the TV quiz “Fifteen to One”.

People were at the heart of all he did. He was immensely proud of his three children and grandchildren. The love between him and Hilda was inspirational, and in the local community he was known for his practical care and generosity. Geoff was a truly remarkable man and has enriched the lives he touched. He is much loved and missed by those who knew him.

Sue Pounder

Elder

Marple Quaker Meeting

17.05.18. Death of Doris Grimsditch

We have received notification of Doris' death on 25th April. Doris was previously a member of this Area Meeting. The funeral was held after the manner of Friends on 12th May. Crewe and Nantwich Meeting will send a minute and testimony to a future AM.

17.05.19. Application for Membership: Caroline Platt

Sue Pounder has reported on the visit she and Bridget had with Caroline. We are pleased to accept Caroline into membership, and ask Alan Russell to welcome her on our behalf, asking her what book she would like to receive.

17.05.20. Application for membership: Darren Booth

We have received an application for membership from Darren Booth of Cheadle Hulme Meeting. We appoint Annique Seddon and Peter Eccles to meet with Darren.

17.05.21. Transfer of membership.

We have received a Certificate for Transfer of Membership from Wirral and Chester Area Meeting in respect of Howard Wilson Hilton who attends Crewe and Nantwich Meeting. We accept this transfer and ask *Andrew Backhouse* to welcome Howard to East Cheshire Area Meeting.

17.05.22 Proposed Quaker Marriage at The Ridge Methodist Chapel, Marple

There has been a request to hold the wedding of Caroline Platt and her fiancé David Thickbroom, commonly known as Buddha Shanti, in about a year's time (date not yet set) at Ridge Methodist Chapel. It is at very early stages of planning and Hazel has not yet met with the couple although they have a time fixed to do so.

Ridge Methodist Chapel is particularly suitable because it has disabled access and parking. As it is not a previously recognised venue for a Quaker wedding. Hazel Todhunter has checked requirements with Friends' House. She was advised that it would be fine if a Quaker wedding at this venue is approved by AM.

We approve.

17.05.23 EMEYF appeal

We have received an appeal from Europe and Middle East Young Friends to support their bursary fund.

We ask our Treasurer to send £220 to represent the costs of 2 places.

17.05.24 Meeting for Sufferings comes to Manchester

We look forward to working with Manchester and Warrington Area Meeting and Pendle Hill Area Meeting in welcoming Meeting for Sufferings to Manchester for their October meeting on 7th October. We will need to appoint someone who will act as ECAM coordinator, liaising with Margaret Calvert, Clerk of M&WAM, and James Johnson from Friends House on matters related to hospitality (for travelling Friends for the nights before and after) and the production of a display about work going on in our AM. We are also invited to send up to 4 observers in addition to our MfS representative.

Friends who would like to attend are invited to speak to Andrew Backhouse and Jacqui Moore.

If Meetings wish to suggest ideas for inclusion in a display, they should discuss them with Ben Evens.

17.05.25 Hospitality

We thank Frandley Friends for their hospitality.

Signed in and on behalf of East Cheshire Area Meeting
Frances A Hill, Clerk

LM Clerks please note Minutes 17.05.14 and 17.05.24

Trustees please note minute 17.05.9

ECAM Nominations Committee please note minute 17.05.14

NOTICES

Disley Meeting House Open Garden June 11th, 1.00-5.00pm

The garden is open to all. Plant sale. Refreshments available.

Workshop on Migration Issues. Saturday 15th July 10am - 3pm at Stockport Quaker Meeting House.

Organised by Phoebe Spence and supported by Stockport LM, this workshop will be run by Hope not Hate and will be free of charge. Phoebe will put it on eventbrite to manage the bookings and will circulate a poster with some detail of the content soon.

To give an idea of what sort session it may be here some background to another session Hope not hate organised.

The reason we started running this training is because it's pretty clear that migration is one of, if not *the*, most sensitive issue in Britain today. I'm sure that you'd agree that debates on the subject can be uncomfortable, upsetting or angry, and often do little to change anyone's mind as people often try to "out fact" one another. At the same time, fighting for a progressive stance on migration is more important than ever, and we need to be able to persuade people who don't already completely agree with us.

To learn the tools to do this, the session (which is v interactive) focuses on how to listen and question effectively, how to use stories to effectively persuade people, and how to create spaces for more constructive communication around difficult issues.

Children and families day. Friday, 2 June 2017, Friends House, London

This free event is a great opportunity for children, with an accompanying adult, to visit, find out about and enjoy Friends House and learn more about the work that goes on here. This could be a meeting excursion or a family day out. Adults will stay with children all through the day. There will be a chance to hear about Quaker peace and social justice work, to visit and find out about the Quaker Library, visit the Quaker Centre with its bookshop and worship space, and to learn lots more about Friends House. The day will include stories, talks, activities and worship.

Friends House is opposite Euston Station in London so is easy to get to. Refreshments will be served but please bring a packed lunch.

To find out more about this event visit the children and families event page of the Quaker website or facebook.com/QuakerLifeNetwork

Bursaries still available for Yearly Meeting Gathering

If you are prevented from attending Yearly Meeting Gathering this year because of financial need we have bursaries available to help with part or all of the costs. Application is via a short form, which will also need to be signed by a local overseer. If you would like to know more please talk to your local overseers or contact:

Gary Mitchell, 020 7663 1006, garym@quaker.org.uk

What have you learned from the process of reading *Quaker faith & practice*?

If you have been following the 'Reading *Quaker faith & practice* calendar', then you will have just finished the whole book. Congratulations! We would like to find out what you have learnt from the process. Your comments will inform the process of discernment about whether it is time to our book of discipline, which Yearly Meeting will probably consider in 2018.

Please complete the form at:

www.surveymonkey.co.uk/r/Readi Michael Booth,
Friends House, 173 Euston Road, London NW1 2BJ.
qfp@quaker.org.uk

Young Friends General Meeting, May gathering

26–29 May, Sheffield Meeting House

Young Friends General Meeting will be having a three day gathering over the second May bank holiday. All young adults (18–30ish) with an interest in Quakerism are most welcome to attend. We will pay travel expenses for first-time attenders. The event promises to be interesting and stimulating, featuring a conference call with young Friends in Philadelphia, and a talk from Veterans for Peace. If your meeting does not yet have a representative to YFGM, please consider appointing a young adult and covering their costs to attend.

For further information and to register please visit YFGM's website:

yfgm.quaker.org.uk. If you have any queries, contact the YFGM coordinator, Rachel Evans on yfgm@quaker.org.uk / 020 7663 1050.

General election 2017

Guidance on holding hustings is available to download on the Quaker Vote website at www.quakervote.org.uk and the blog will be updated on a regular basis over the next few weeks.

Friends@ House has produced a leaflet highlighting 4 key issues to raise in discussion with others: climate change, nuclear weapons, forced migration and economic inequality.

Beside the leaflet a recent QPSW podcast discusses these key issues and how Quakers are engaging with the General Election. It is available on I Tunes (Apple podcast), Stitcher, Sound Cloud or other podcast Apps. Till Geiger is happy to advise on accessing podcasts if needed.

"Can political parties use our meeting house?"

Ahead of the general election, meeting houses may receive requests about room hire from political parties. Many meeting houses have policies about who they will or will not hire to – some do not hire to any political party, some hire to political parties as long as it is a public event, while others hire to political parties for both public and private events. These policies are all acceptable, provided that:

1. The meeting house treats all the main political parties fairly and consistently. If the meeting wouldn't hire to the Conservatives, it shouldn't hire to Labour.
2. The meeting house must charge the usual rate to political parties. If it does not, then giving them the room will be a "donation in kind". Donations to political parties are not allowed by the Charity Commission.

If meetings have any questions or concerns, please email Jessica Metheringham, the Parliamentary Engagement Officer, at jessicam@quaker.org.uk.

Refugee Week 19–25 June

Refugee Week is an open platform for organisations to organise vents amplifying the voices of people seeking sanctuary.

Many meetings will be organising events for this, from talks to all-age semi-programmed meetings for worship. If your meeting is organising an event in Refugee Week please let Tim Gee know so we can help promote it. To see all of the events organised so far, visit www.quaker.org.uk/migration

Tim Gee, timothyg@quaker.org.uk

Quaker Week 2017 speaker offer 30 September – 8 October. Info' from Friends' House

The theme for Quaker Week 2017 is 'In turbulent times: be a Quaker'. Quaker Week is our annual outreach event. We encourage meetings to use this week as an opportunity to hold events that will attract people from the local community; resources will be available in the coming months. If you would like to book a speaker please email us with suggested dates and a theme or topic you would like covered.

speakers@quaker.org.uk

Meeting for Sufferings, Central Manchester Meeting House, 7 October, 2017 (see *minute 17.05.24*)

Information taken from Information sheet given to MfS reps.:

This is an exciting opportunity for members of Meeting for Sufferings and Quakers in and near Manchester to meet, worship with each other, and share concerns.

What will be different about the timing?

We don't expect any change to the meeting itself, which will be held from 10am to 4pm on Saturday, as usual.

Although this isn't a residential, Friends can gather together before and after the meeting:

- Friday 6th October, 6pm to 8pm – informal gathering with a bring-and-share meal, for members of Sufferings and for any other Friends from the region
- Sunday 8th October – representatives staying in the area will be very welcome at any of the local Meetings for Worship.

What will be different about the agenda?

The agenda will be the same as for any other meeting. At present, we're expecting a report from Quaker Peace and Social Witness Central Committee; to reflect on Yearly Meeting 2017; and to consider BYM communications, including our Speaking Out Policy.

How will Sufferings connect with local Quakers?

- The clerks have invited four neighbouring AMs to send additional representatives on this occasion
- Friends from these AMs have also been invited to offer a display about their Quaker life, concerns and activities
- If space allows, we'll organise lunchtime discussions on Saturday
- We hope local Quakers will join us on Friday evening for an informal gathering and food; and offer overnight accommodation to representatives.

What about accommodation? Some of us will be able to travel to Manchester for the day. But for anyone who needs overnight accommodation, there are several options:

- Local Quakers can offer accommodation on Friday and/or Saturday night.
(Sally has e mailed Juliet Prager to see if this is being organised locally or nationally to determine who we can notify about offers of accommodation)

- You may have friends or family in the area.

- There are city-centre hotels near the Meeting House.

We hope Friends will feel able to stay with local Quakers; it would be especially good to join them at their Meeting for Worship on Sunday morning.

Area Meeting Reports
Sunday 14th May 1.45pm

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Quaker Life Rep Council: Helping Seekers Find Quakers – Being Worth the Finding

Woodbrooke, 21 – 23 April 2017

This was, as always, a packed and stimulating weekend – my third, so now familiar and the most personally energising for me. Thank you for enabling me to attend.

In preparation, reps gathered responses to questions of identity, community, openness and the role of Quaker Life. I am grateful to ECAM Friends who responded. In total, Quaker Life received contributions from over 30 area meetings, and these will be collated and presented later in the year.

Reps council challenges us to look honestly at our Quakerism – who we are and what we do, as embodied in our local and area meetings, but also our individual lives.

Quaker Life staff are there to help and support us in doing this. And what a resource! Libby Adams, Head of Library and Archives shared her delight in welcoming visitors – of all ages – the Friends House Library. Where possible, she will bring out documents and items relating to the area the group comes from. Would East Cheshire Friends like a day trip to London?

The main session took us into “finding and being found”. If the Quaker way of worship and witness is a “pearl of great value” to us, then what are we called upon to do? Surely not to put it away somewhere in a box, or bury it in the sand!

Alastair Fuller, the first main speaker, addressed this – describing a “virtuous circle” where nurturing our meetings and our own spiritual growth (“inreach”) is inseparable from a more outward journey. Not two separate things, not even two sides of the coin, but utterly one. In today’s society, membership organisations are dwindling – old structures and ways of belonging are no longer serving. Quakers need courage to face change – and accept that we may get it wrong at times. The waves are coming in – get onto that surfboard.

Kevin Redmond talked about his flourishing meeting at Street, Somerset – where Friends cherish the worship, learning and social elements of being a community. He introduced the Quaker iceberg - we may have 360 years of history, but it is only the bit above water that people will see. Street Friends are visible in their local community through projects like community meals, opening their meeting houses to other faith groups, and sharing in civic events.

Joanie Harrison is a Quaker hospital chaplain in Peterborough – often the first and only Quaker people will meet, and she talked of her deep awareness of her work as ministry. Also the exhaustion and tenderness of travelling with people during very difficult times. For her, it is a ministry of “not having answers” – but of deep

listening and discernment. Being authentically herself - which those around her respond to – patients, staff and the other chaplains.

I encourage local meetings to revisit the resource “Sharing our Meetings’ Stories”, a Quaker Life publication from 2014. It must be on those shelves somewhere! I would also love to hear from previous QL reps – can we share **our** stories and experiences?

Sue Pounder
Deputy QL Rep, Marple Local Quaker Meeting

The essence of the QPSW Annual Conference 2017
(from one attendees perspective):
JOURNEYS OF WITNESS

6th May 2017

What did I learn about QPSW work?

I was blessed to have been nominated by my local meeting to this year's QPSW (Quaker Peace and Social Witness) Annual Conference weekend. As a relatively new attender, having attended my first Friends' Meeting in September 2013, I knew very little about the work of Quakers in Britain's Peace and Social Witness. Through the varied and engaging talks and workshops I gained an understanding of the breadth of the Britain's QPSW work, namely: Peace Accompaniment & Witness; Peace Education; Social Justice including Migration; Economic Justice including New Economy; and Sustainability. I learned that QPSW discernment and work takes place at all levels and each level interacts and influences the other levels, from a Central Committee and employed staff, to Area, Local and individual activism.

I not only learned about the areas of work, but also about the different forms action and activism can take:

“Quaker witness takes many forms – it can be both personal and shared, loud and quiet, lifelong and sporadic, depleting and nourishing. QPSW seeks to support Friends individually in their lives, jointly in their meetings and in Britain Yearly Meeting in living out this witness in the world.” *From conference information*

Finding out about the Turning the Tide Programme was particularly engaging for me. Turning the Tide being “a social action training programme [which] offer[s] a range of workshops and resources... all work is focused on supporting nonviolent social change at the grassroots.” I found it engaging because it creates a space in which individuals and groups can find a way for social action and change, starting with where they 'are at' (“grassroots”) and using the skills, time and resources available. Most of the time we know what we do not want in the world, it is another thing to know what we do want instead, and even when we know that, the hugest challenge is how to be part of getting there as one individual in problems that involve a population of billions. It is so easy to feel lost, overwhelmed and even angry in the face of the complex social issues we face, and of which we are all a part. I found hope in the message of this programme that you can take action and make change with what you already have.

How did the conference fit into my journey?

I have had faith in God throughout most of my life, but had had no direct contact with Friends until recently, having been brought up in a Roman Catholic family. Since childhood I had been intrigued by this group who called themselves Friends who so demonstrably lived out their faith through social action. I have been profoundly affected on my inner journey and spirituality through Meetings. I am however, in the very early stages of exploring *how* I can take this into action.

I found the experience of the Conference inspiring and empowering, I feel this was so because we were welcomed and supported in all the activities to take our own steps in our understanding from our diverse and unique starting points. There were no attempts to convert; there were no commandments. Any perhaps overly ebullient passions (which can often effervesce vigorously in the face of great social challenges) were listened to and accepted in the same way as perhaps the most basic of questions; which seemed to me in itself living witness of Friends' peaceful way.

Through a mixture of information, shared witness and discernment over the weekend, the message to me personally was that both inner- and outer-change come from: inclusivity, inspiration and empowerment, all of which I feel are central to Peace and Justice. We cannot contribute to peace in our communities to our full potential without also working towards personal inner-peace.

What will I take forward from the Conference on my personal journey?

So I learned a little about what work is being done, and a little about the many ways in which this work may happen. Furthermore, I experienced a little of what Arnold Midell, amongst many others I am sure, has talked and written about: the connection between inner-change and outer action and change. This was an important message for me personally as my automatic reaction to great social challenges and injustices can be anger and frustration. I began to see that because this is not a peaceful way, anger can cause conflict and disengagement of others, and burn-out for me! This was a revelation to me.

At the Conference's closing Meeting for Worship, Friends shared their messages from the weekend, here are just a few, in my own words:

- that Quakerism is an authentic and refreshing space in which to explore complex issues in an inclusive and non-binary way
- that we are not alone, that we are leaves on a tree, and that our small action can support the health of the whole tree, and even that we are a leaf on a tree in a forest
- the start of change can come from the cross-pollination of ideas in human conversations, so an action we can take is to start important conversations, and to keep listening, reflecting and talking
- that activism truly leads to change when it comes from love: If I speak in the tongues of men and of angels, but have not love, I am a noisy gong or a clanging cymbal; 1 Corinthians 13:1

For me my learning at the Conference is best brought together in QF&P 24.60:

“The first Friends had an apocalyptic vision of the world transformed by Christ and they set about to make it come true. The present generation of Quakers shares this conviction of the power of the spirit, but it is doubtful whether it will transform the world in our lifetime, or in that of our children or children’s children. For us it is not so important when the perfect world will be achieved or what it will be like. What matters is living our lives in the power of love and not worrying too much about the results. In doing this, the means become part of the end. Hence we lose the sense of helplessness and futility in the face of the world’s crushing problems. We also lose the craving for success, always focusing on the goal to the exclusion of the way of getting there. We must literally not take too much thought for the morrow but throw ourselves whole-heartedly into the present. That is the beauty of the way of love; it cannot be planned and its end cannot be foretold.”

Wolf Mendl, 1974

In friendship, Jo Chambers-Shirley, Marple Meeting, Cheshire East

1 Report of BYM Trustees

The Heritage Project is now complete and all taking part felt it had gone well. BYM now knows it has 345 Meeting Houses of which 46% are listed. The report will shortly be available on the website and some areas have linked with the Pevenser Revision of buildings. Thanks were given to all participating, and legacy funding has enabled the appointment of a property officer. (Lesley Hennigan: lesleyh@quaker.org.uk or 0207 663 1029)

A Scottish Parliamentary Engagement Officer has been appointed for 3 years to advocate for peace, truth and equality.

Trustees are considering the implications of BREXIT. The Recording Clerk attended an inter-faith gathering at Lambeth Palace to share concerns and visions of what sort of society we want Britain to be. A letter has been sent on issues of sustainability, trade policy and human rights, refugees, and integrity in public affairs. We were reminded that the Peaceable Kingdom has no borders.

Friends House has reduced its carbon foot print by 29% since 2009 and has received a Carbon Smart Gold Award. BYM has made £5,333 p.a. available to Quaker United Nations Organisation for their project on the human impacts of climate change.

The profile of the Society of Friends is an ageing one. Quaker Life is looking at how to engage better with young adult Friends and families with young children and teenagers. A family day for children is being arranged for 2nd June at Friends House. Friends are asked to consider how they can communicate in a more accessible way – such as simplified minutes and the use of live links in reports.

2 Quaker Stewardship Committee (QSC)

The Stewardship Committee essentially aims to support and ensure the Society and Area Meetings, in particular, are managing their resources of money and property well. This involves advising and checking on legal requirements and supporting Treasurers and Trustees in their work.

In 2016 all Meetings met the requirements of the Charity Commission or Scottish Charity Regulator in their reports.

Stewardship had asked MfS and Area Meetings to consider the following 3 questions

1 What more can QSC and Area Meetings do to ensure that Trustees and Treasurers receive the support they need.

2 Would making wider central use of the information provided in Trustees' annual reports and accounts be a worthwhile expenditure of BYM's resources?

3 How can QSC best prompt a wider conversation to ensure that BYM's governance structures are sustainable in the long-term?

I had the opportunity to speak to a few of our AM Trustees on these questions and further comments are still welcome from AMs

Briefly the discussion included

1 A positive response to the support offered by QSC. Other AMs agreed with a point made by our Trustees, that a proactive approach to AMs by QSC would be welcome, such as visiting AM Trustees, especially those AMs who have not sent representatives to relevant courses. Woodbrooke is developing an on-line course for Trustees.

2 Sufferings was reminded that whilst Trustees had the legal responsibility for AM annual reports, these are reports on the life of the whole Area Meeting (QfP 15.03) and thus the responsibility of a gathered AM. Also, they could be used for outreach.

If report information was to be shared more widely within the Society, it was suggested it would be helpful to have some guidelines to enable consistency.

3 There was recognition of the varied and differing needs, resources and limitations of AMs.

3 Quaker World Relations Committee (QWRC)

There was an interesting report on how QWRC links with Quakers round the world and encourages these links with Quakers in Britain. Funding has been agreed for a Sustainability Communications Officer to gather information on Quaker initiatives round the world. Skype is now widely used as a sustainable way of communicating and worshipping.

QWRC would like to extend their network of interested Friends and their register of Friends and Meetings able to offer hospitality to overseas visitors. (email Marlene Schepers at marlenes@quaker.org.uk)

4 Other Matters

Quaker Life Central Committee has been asked to develop guidelines on good practice in relation to 'Vulnerable Adult' members.

Quaker Life Central Committee were also asked to consider a minute from NE Thames AM on Transgender and Non-binary inclusion. (Non-binary are people who do not identify as either male or female). We were reminded by the Recording Clerk that our Tabular Statement of Membership does have a column – other- for those not wishing to be listed as female or male. The use of 'their' rather than 'he/she' is also inclusive.

Jacqui Moore

ECAM Alternate Representative

The following table summarizes the collated financial activity of East Cheshire Meeting during 2015

£	Gen	Gifts & Legs	YM	Stockport MH	Restricted	Local	Total	%	2014
Contributions from Friends	335	2,853		24,571		43,466	71,225	37	81,612
Legacies					23,478	26,783	50,261	26	1,000
Trusts and Meetings				19,700			19,700	10	69,969
Fundraising events				9,655			9,655	5	7,397
Interest/dividends etc	9	17		1,957	9,609	987	12,579	7	11,244
Lettings						22,208	22,208	12	17,656
Other				2,282		4,520	6,802	3	13,200
TOTAL INCOME	344	2,870	0	58,165	33,087	97,964	192,430	100	202,078
Life of the meeting	138	1,607				4,582	6,327	2	7,141
Committees and conferences	4,425					223	4,648	1	2,653
Bursaries/grants			700		1,370	140	2,210	1	8,011
Children/young people						134	134	0	152
Outreach						764	764	0	781
Premises	2,755				3,769	34,132	40,656	11	43,396
Stockport project fees				289,620			289,620	79	176,289
Stockport fund-raising expenses									3,493
Britain YM						15,930	15,930	4	17,600
NFPB	680					949	1,629	1	1,481
Other Quaker bodies	770					1,920	2,690	1	3,035
Non-Quaker bodies	343					600	943	0	422
TOTAL EXPENDITURE	9,111	1,607	700	289,620	5,139	59,374	365,551	100	264,454
Transfer	8,016		2,000	2,000		-12,016	0		
NET MOVEMENT	-751	1,263	1,300	-229,455	27,948	26,574	-173,121		-62,376
Investments value change	40						40		56
Adjstments						-8,041	-8,041		
Balance 1/1/2015	6,949	5,693	0	226,582	17,009	113,567	369,800		432,120
Balance 31/12/2015	6,238	6,956	1,300	-2,873	44,957	132,100	188,678		369,800

1. There is some overlap between the headings. For example the 'bursaries/grants' includes some payments to children and young people.
2. The large adjustment figure results mainly from an error my interpretation of the Frandley accounts for 2014. An internal transfer of £8,000 was shown as 'other income'.
3. The transactions related to the Stockport Meeting House project dominate the figures and make comparisons difficult.
4. During 2015 the value of our Endowment Funds increased by £20,156 (£9,364 in 2014, £49,763 in 2013) to £411,283.
5. The insurance value of our property at the year-end was £3,454,725.
6. The total contribution to Yearly Meeting including contributions from individuals sent through meetings or directly was £29,973 (£45,422 in 2016, £35,935 in 2014, £30,828 in 2013, £40,462 in 2012, £38,431 in 2011).
7. The total contribution to the Northern Friends Peace Board including contributions from individuals sent through meetings was £1,953 (£1,855 in 2014, £1,845 in 2013).
8. The membership of the Area Meeting at the end of 2015 was 169 with in addition 96 recognized adult attenders and 35 children.
9. I apologize for the lateness of these accounts.

Peter J Eccles, 11 May 2017