

**East Cheshire Area Meeting
11th July, 2020, 10am, via Zoom
Minutes**

20.07.01 - Friends Present

All our Meetings are represented.
21 Friends are present.
The Elder present is Jennifer Dale.
The Trustee present is Gavin Mendham.

20.07.02 – Reading:

We have heard #19.35 from Quaker Faith and Practice.

20.07.03 - Caring for Friends:

We have heard the names of Friends who are in our thoughts. The Assistant Clerk, with the help of Sally Mendham will write to them on our behalf.

20.07.04 - Death – Kevin Thompson:

We record with sadness the death of Kevin Thompson, of Cheadle Hulme Meeting, on Friday 3rd July. A funeral will be held at Stockport Crematorium at 3.15pm on Thursday 16th. Numbers will be limited to 30.

20.07.05 - Membership: Transfer of Alison Johnson from Eccles LM (Manchester & Warrington AM) to Disley LM:

We have received a request for transfer of Membership from Manchester and Warrington AM on behalf of Alison Johnson who has moved to New Mills. Alison has been joining Disley Meeting for Worship on Zoom since April, so she is known to Disley Friends and we are happy to accept her transfer to East Cheshire AM. We ask Jennifer Dale of Disley Meeting to welcome her in to East Cheshire AM on our behalf.

20.07.06 – Testimony to the Grace of God in the Life of Johanna de Haas:

We are pleased to adopt the attached Testimony to the Grace of God in the Life of Johanna de Haas, as edited (attached), and ask for it to be forwarded to Yearly Meeting.

20.07.07 – Testimony: Peter Todhunter:

We feel there are further aspects of the Grace of God in Peter's life that could usefully be drawn into this. We ask Andrew Backhouse to work with Frandley Friends to do this.

20.07.08 - Date for November AM:

Due to the date of YM being arranged for 15th November, our AM date for November has been rearranged to Sunday 22nd, still to be held at Stockport if we are able to meet in person.

The dates and venues for 2021 have been circulated to all Local Meetings

20.07.09 - Nominations

Our Nominations Committee continues to seek the name of a Friend to be appointed as trustee and governor to Chaigeley School.

Our Clerks and the Convenor of Nominations Committee have brought the name of Hilary Brooks and Jill Maguire to form an initial arrangements group for the weekend we have booked at Glenthorne 6-8 November. Appreciating their willingness to work on plans for an event about which there can be little certainty as yet, we appoint these Friends.

Newsletter Editor – Following her initiation of a COVID period online AM newsletter, the name of Sally Mendham has been brought forward to serve as editor of the Area Meeting Newsletter until the end of 2023. We are pleased to accept the nomination, and Sally is appointed accordingly.

BMM: 20.06.09; recorded here

Nominations Committee has brought us the name of Barbara Harrison of Wilmslow Meeting to serve as Overseer to the end of 2022. We are pleased to appoint Barbara accordingly

20.07.10 – Area Meeting weekend in 2021

We are sorry to hear that Willersley Castle will not be reopening after the COVID period, and has cancelled our booking for 2021.

We are pleased to hear of the investigations made by Hilary Brooks into possible alternative venues (*Woodbrooke / Hayes, Swanwick / Great Hucklow and Yarnfield Park*), and authorise the Treasurer to place a booking at an appropriate venue, whether that be town or country in consultation with the Clerks.

20.07.11 - Churches Together in Cheshire Church Leaders Group:

We are pleased to record that Michael Hennessey was appointed Chair of Church Leaders Group on Friday 12th June.

20.07.12 - Meeting for Sufferings Report:

We thank Jacqui Moore for her report of Meeting for Sufferings held by Zoom on June 6th (attached)

We ask our clerks to correspond with BYM Trustees regarding how we might interact with the new Local Development Worker and the scope and challenges of the new structure.

20.07.13 – The term “Overseer”

Following the raising of concerns over the term “overseer” at Meeting for Sufferings and Quaker Life, we have received the attached Minute of record from Frandley Meeting, and heard of discussion in Disley Friends.

Meeting for Sufferings and Quaker Life have both prompted Local Meetings to review and discuss thoughts and feelings on the continuing use of the title, Overseer.

On Wednesday, 24th June, 13 members and attenders of Frandley Meeting joined via Zoom to reflect together on the role and what it should be called.

We consider that the term is very outdated and has many negative connotations. We hope that an alternative term may speedily be accepted and applied by Britain Yearly Meeting.

We identified some principles that we hope will be used in identifying a new name:

- any new title should be comprehensible to non-Quakers,
- it should reflect a less hierarchical role, more egalitarian and reciprocal, as befits the Society of Friends,

- it should clearly identify the functions undertaken and individuals to approach.

We noted that there is an overlap of the Elders' and Overseers' roles. Given the large range of responsibilities we do not think it realistic to combine these all into single roles. Rather, in being nominated elders or overseers, sometimes individuals have found that they may have the experience and gifts for aspects of both roles, but not the full range of either one. We therefore considered that there would be advantages to nominating individuals into one group covering both the present roles. This way, the group could then allocate the most appropriate Friend to meet particular needs and circumstances. This would reflect the shared responsibility and a more collaborative approach. Already Frandley Elders and Overseers tend to meet as a group rather than separately. We also note that in some meetings there is already a single group combining both roles.

We considered various names and descriptions. Some feel that the term 'Elder' also should be rethought at the same time. There were hesitations with the terms facilitator, team, welfare, pastoral, and caring, although all these expressed something of what we were striving for, as also does the word community. The name we felt might best describe a group undertaking eldership and oversight roles is *Worship, Witness and Wellbeing Group*.

We endorse the sentiments in the Minute. We prefer the ideas of "eldership and oversight" to titles "Elders" and "Overseers" and welcome the idea that Friends might be appointed to be on a committee on Eldership & Oversight rather than be identified by such titles. We encourage other Meetings to take time to explore this matter, and welcome Minutes recording their considerations. We will return to this at a later date.

20.07.14 - Northern Friends Peace Board

At Wilmslow LBM on 28th June a concern was raised as to the way forward for NFPB and this Minute has now been brought forward:

6. Northern Friends Peace Board: the future

We have heard from Andrew Backhouse regarding a way forward for the Northern Friends Peace Board. (NFPB)

Friends have heard of the need to consider simplifying our meetings and structures. We understand that NFPB and Quaker Peace and Social Witness (QPSW) are already working together on projects.

This could be the time to re-think the current position of NFPB as a separate body and bring its staff and its work within the QPSW structure.

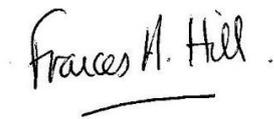
We thank Andrew Backhouse and Phoebe Spence for telling us more about how the work of NFPB and QPSW both overlap and complement each other, and reminded us of the request from BYM Trustees at Meeting for Sufferings that we "enter a conversation with them on how AMs can link in to the roll-out of Local Development Workers".

While recognising the concern for simplification, we are reluctant to take this any further at the present moment.

20.07.15 - Thank you

We thank Peter Eccles for hosting this Meeting.

Signed in and on behalf of the Meeting,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Frances A. Hill". The signature is written in a cursive style and is underlined with a single horizontal line.

Clerk

Attached Documents:

Johanna de Haas: Testimony	7-8
Meeting for Sufferings Report	9-10

NOTICES

Due to the ongoing Covid 19 situation, the Friend's Summer School 2020 will not be going ahead this year. Summer School 2021 has been booked from Sunday 8th – Saturday 14th August at Smallwood Manor, Uttoxeter, Staffordshire. See www.facebook.com/friendssummerschool for updates

Area Meeting Picnic at Disley

Area Meeting Picnic will go ahead on Sunday 30th August if circumstances allow

September Area Meeting: Change of Venue

Crewe and Nantwich Area Meeting on Saturday 19th September, 10.30 – 1pm, will take place at Elworth Methodist Church, Station Road, Elworth, Sandbach CW11 3JG, Covid regulations permitting.

Area Meeting Glenthorpe Weekend in November

Glenthorpe is opening again shortly and the Area Meeting Weekend there is still scheduled to run from 6-8th November. Please note this in diaries and “watch this space” for further details.

Change of AM date at Stockport

Area Meeting will now take place on Sunday 22nd November 2020 at Stockport MH, if circumstances allow

Churches Together in Cheshire

Michael Hennessey was appointed Chair of Churches Together in Cheshire on Friday 12th June 2020

Yealand AM Easter Camp 2021

Yealand Easter Camp for 10 – 16yr olds will be held at some point between 6 -16th April 2021. The date will be confirmed after consultation with families.

Quaker Tapestry

“Revive Survive and Thrive Appeal” would be grateful for donations to support the Quaker Tapestry and/or the Kendal Meeting House Roof Appeals:

www.quaker-tapestry.co.uk

Testimony to the Life of Johanna de Haas

Johanna was born on the 17 March 1988 and she died on 24 April 2019 at the age of thirty-one. From her second day in this world she was a person with profound and multiple learning difficulties, and her need for practical care and nurture throughout her life was paramount. But alongside this was the very human need to belong, and the way that she and her family answered this need is the essence of Johanna's life story, and her legacy. She touched in a wonderfully positive way the lives of many individuals and many groups and organisations, and we celebrate this as we go forward with the memory of Johanna in our hearts.

Johanna was brought up as a Quaker from birth and was received into membership when she was fourteen. She had many Quaker friends and we her Quaker friends have explored with her and learned from her how best to be in the moment and the value of simple things, and we have grown in our understanding of non-verbal and very individual forms of communication. Her family have helped us to do this, acting as intermediaries when necessary with patience and understanding as we have tried to live out the testimonies of respect and equality as well as being friends with the whole family. Johanna in her own right was truly our friend: she came to our parties, engaged in our singing sessions, and was an important presence in our Meetings for Worship. Her Quaker identity was even explored in a project run a few years ago by a PhD student investigating spirituality in people with profound learning difficulties.

Johanna was a member of other communities, too. Her school community and the charity Sense opened the door to friendships with other families who also had youngsters with severe learning difficulties, and these families shared anxieties, sadness, and joys. The choir that was started by her mother and a musician friend has inclusivity at its core, and through it, Johanna's joy in music was developed and expressed in a truly communal way. This year the Social History of Learning Disabilities Conference paid tribute to Johanna in a presentation called 'Remembering Johanna- a Story of Belonging', and it showed how Johanna had set a precedent for people with PMLD taking an active part in their annual conferences. She attended with her mother most years from 2011 – 2017 and together they made presentations, engaged in group sessions, and socialised.

The contacts Johann made with other children and adults on an individual level were no less meaningful. One person remembers the two of them giggling as they tried on each other's shoes as children, another Johanna's responsiveness to windy weather and sunshine, another the picture book made by her family that hung on her wheelchair and helped us to interpret her actions and sounds, many remember the fun they had with her in exploring new places in the UK and

abroad, and others the ways they found to interact with her through making music.

In 2020 a book will be published by Routledge about 'Belonging'. It includes a chapter written by Johanna's mother, Catherine, all about pushing the boundaries of inclusion for, by and with Johanna. This is an important part of Johanna's legacy. Catherine acknowledges that her work with and for Johanna brought out strengths and skills in herself that might not otherwise have surfaced. To anyone who has known them, it is awe-inspiring to have witnessed the ways in which Johanna's immediate family – her parents Paul and Catherine, her younger sister Bethan, her brother in law James and her young nephew Oscar – all rose to the challenges with imagination, strength, organisation and love. Johanna's legacy is strong for everyone who has known her, for she has expanded and enriched our experience of living together in ways we cannot forget and indeed will surely cherish for the rest of our lives.

Report to ECAM on MfS 6th June 2020

This MfS was held on Zoom in two morning sessions of one hour each, with a half hour break between. Just over 100 representatives and staff participated. The second session was held in 'break-out rooms' to consider 'How is Truth prospering in our Meetings'. This enabled us to share and discuss how Meetings are adapting to the challenges of Covid-19. Considerable thought had gone into preparing us for this new mode of conducting business. Most of us had attended specific prior 'training' in mastering the technology and the adapted discipline for this 'virtual' MfS.

Trustees

The Report of Trustees on their response to the issues of Covid-19 was a major item. Their speed in taking critical decisions to safeguard staff and resources was testimony to our need for effective central Trustees.

Our Treasurer reported that we had fortunately had some exceptional legacies recently which had given Friends a strong financial start to the year. However, loss of investment values, plus the ceasing of normal income streams from the Quiet Company, use of buildings etc., and the need to support struggling Meetings would mean that it will be necessary to dip into Reserves. We were reminded of the need for 'living' Friends to give financially when possible, to provide a sustainable income base for the work of BYM.

Although the planned roll-out of Local Development Workers has been halted for practical reasons, it is now planned to speed this up, reducing the process from 5 to 2 years. It is felt this development is enabling a better focus on what Friends need and is making the jobs of other staff easier. I asked what the implications of the faster roll-out were, particularly for AMs such as ECAM which had deliberately held back from the initial phase as we thought others had greater need. **Trustees asked us to start a 'conversation' with them on how we might link in.**

Meeting for Sufferings

A paper from MfS Arrangements Committee detailing MfS dates for the next Triennium only gave dates for four meetings per annum as opposed to the current five. This was approved, but referred back to the Committee, as there was considerable concern about whether MfS business could be properly conducted and discerned in the reduced time.

Yearly Meeting

MfS approved the rearrangement of the August 2020 BYM planned for Bath to August 2021 in Bath.

Plans for a 'virtual BYM' on Sunday 15th November 2020 for essential business were approved. Sadly, there will be no Children's and Young People's meeting and it was anticipated that a 'cap' of about 1,000 Friends attending was likely.

Quaker Housing Trust

The Report from Quaker Housing Trust was received but not discussed. It detailed some of the vital work being undertaken by many small Charities with grant monies from the Trust. Many of these grants, such as the £13,500 given to our local Boaz Trust, were to support work with Asylum Seekers and Refugees.

Responses to Covid-19

These were discussed in 'break-out' groups. We also had a brief paper on the results of a survey of Online Meetings for Worship in May 2020.

Our actions in ECAM seemed very similar to those across all the Countries, sadly though the survey reported that only 20% of respondents were doing anything specific for Children and Young People.

Matters for ECAM

ECAM may wish to consider ‘starting a conversation’ with BYM Trustees on how AM might link into the organisational changes happening with the roll-out of the Local Development Workers initiatives.

Jacqui Moore
MfS ECAM Representative