

**EAST CHESHIRE AREA MEETING
FOR BUSINESS
held on Saturday July 10th at 1.45pm
at Disley Meeting House**

21.07.01: Friends present: in person 7, on Zoom 14.

All our meetings are represented.

Accompanying Elder: Jan Vulliamy

Trustee present: Ann Lewis

21.07.02: Reading from Quaker faith and practice:

During our opening worship paragraph 23.46 was read from Quaker faith and practice.

21.07.03: Caring for Friends:

We have heard the names of Friends who are in our thoughts. We ask our Assistant Clerk, Anne Sumner and Sally Mendham to write to them on our behalf.

21.07.04: Death of Mary Balman of Stockport Meeting:

We have received the following minutes from Stockport Meeting for Business held on Sunday July 4th

1. Death of Mary Balman

We record with sadness the death of Mary Balman on 3 June, at the age of 89, after a long illness. Mary was a birthright Friend and a long-standing member of Stockport Meeting. A funeral after the manner of Friends was held at Stockport Crematorium on 18 June and attended by several Stockport Friends.

2. Collection in memory of Mary Balman

A collection for Amnesty International in memory of Mary Balman raised £182. Amnesty International was a cause close to Mary's heart.

Stockport Meeting hopes to hold a memorial meeting for Mary at a future date.

21.07.05: Death of Lynn Schumaker of Disley Meeting:

We have received the following minute from Disley Meeting for Business held on 2nd July.

4 Minute of record: we record with sadness the death of our Friend LynSchumaker. Lyn died peacefully at the Cavendish Hospital in Buxton on 29th June, accompanied by some of her friends. Lyn faced her death, as she faced her life, with steadfast courage. Many of Disley Friends supported Lyn lovingly through her final months. Lyn's burial will be in the woodland part of Buxton cemetery on Thursday 15th July at 1.30. We will be organising a separate memorial meeting at the end of the summer when we hope more than 15 people can be in the Meeting House.

6. Nominations:

Frandle Meeting has brought forward the name of Jacqui Moore to serve as their representative on AM Nominations Committee, and Hazel Todhunter as Deputy. Both Friends are in membership.

These names are acceptable to Friends and the two Friends are duly appointed.

Frandle Meeting has appointed Patrick Jones as their representative on AM Children's Committee to serve a further triennium from January 2022.

We ask Friends to send nominations for Elders and Overseers to AM Nominations Committee by August 20th.

21.07.07: AM meeting with Paul Parker on 06.06.21 On Zoom:

Around 35 Friends attended a Zoom meeting with the Recording Clerk, Paul Parker, to discuss the changes taking place within the Society as a result of the initiative to simplify our structures, Towards a Simpler Church.

Gavin Mendham's thorough report is attached to the minutes.

21.07.08: Black Lives Matter:

Further to minute 21.05.14 Ann Lewis and Keith Braithwaite organised a survey for feedback on the meeting "ECAM Wake Up! - Black Lives Matter" Zoom discussion on 20.04.21

The results of the survey are attached to the minutes.

There seems to be an appetite in the AM to continue discussion and learning on this topic.

We invite Friends who will be attending Yearly Meeting on Zoom to go to the session called "Quakers in Conversation: doing our anti-racist work" where our Friend Ann Lewis will be speaking.

We hope to return to this after Yearly Meeting.

Changing hearts and minds is a long term process. We ask meetings to share their thoughts and activities and to look out for initiatives for learning and action from Area Meeting.

The Clerks will enquire of Woodbrooke regarding the course on “Inclusion and Diversity” for possible use in our Area Meeting.

21.07.09: Area Meeting weekend at Glenthorne;

We are booked in at Glenthorne, in Grasmere, for the weekend of 15th-17th October 2021. We are hoping that restrictions will have been lifted sufficiently for us to go. The probable costs will be - £156 per adult, 0 – 4yrs. Free, 5 – 10yrs. – 50%: £78, 11yr – 15yrs 70%: £109.20

Jill Maguire and Hilary Brooks are the organisers, and they will be sending a calling letter and booking form very soon..

21.07.10: Contribution to Northern Friends Peace Board:

Northern Friends Peace Board has suggested a guideline contribution for 2021 of £9 per member. We agree to pay half of this from AM funds and encourage local meetings to contribute at least the other half.

Meetings are invited to send their contributions directly to NFPB.

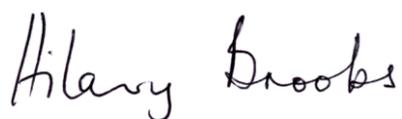
21.07.11: Memoranda of Understanding:

Disley Meeting and Frandley Meeting have brought forward their Memorandums of Understanding. We accept the memorandums and the Clerk has signed them. Both memorandums are attached to the minutes.

21.07.12: Area Meeting dates and venues 2022:

We accept the dates and venues for Area Meetings in 2022, which are attached to the minutes.

Signed:



Hilary Brooks
Clerk

Clerks please note: 21.07.08, 21.07.09, 21.07.10, 21.07.12

Notices

Yearly Meeting Gathering: 31.7.21 – 8.08.21 Online

Regional Gathering on the Environment: Saturday 25th September -
Manchester & Warrington – Contact Elizabeth – Eccles LM

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Feedback on meeting with Paul Parker

First let me explain what happened to our minute we sent to Trustees, MfS and YM arrangements committee. Sadly we are too late for the agenda for YM, but we do hope that Trustees will bring it up in their report, we are not the only AM to have expressed disquiet. Clerk to Trustees has received the minute. We expect MfS to look at the whole issue if not in July then at their next meeting.

Since last AM there have been discussions, Zoom meetings and many emails between the group who are involved in exploring and trying to understand the decisions being made at Friends House.

The restructuring programme for simplification began early in 2019 with a view to being completed by 2023. Four years seems about right for a Quaker discernment process! But then came the pandemic, and like all other institutions, we were thrown into disarray. Staff were furloughed and a skeleton staff worked from home and met on Zoom.

On top of this came a huge deficit in income from the Quiet Company (hospitality). The Society has lost £2million at least so far. This made restructuring and efficiency more urgent and the finish date was brought forward to 2022. Making this happen with so many limitations is a huge challenge, and communication has perhaps been the most difficult.

We have heard reports of people's distress, worry, and anger at what is happening to them and the effects they see these changes having on the Society. On the other hand we have had a Zoom meeting with Paul Parker the Recording Clerk who agrees that it is a difficult time and that some of the decisions will be far reaching and challenging.

So far we have heard that there will be new Local Development Workers all around the country supporting AMs and LMs. One concern here is that too much will be expected of AMs who are already overstretched, and again, too much will be expected of volunteers. Reductions in FH staff throws up concerns that some groups and committees won't have the professional support that they need.

No one likes change, and Quakers do like their traditional ways of doing things. Normally there would be lots of meetings, opportunities to thrash things out informally over cups of tea, much more involvement with staff and committee members around the country, and lots of feedback to us at AM level. This hasn't been possible, so Friends are rightly worried about "right ordering" and true discernment. There seems to be a loss of trust which is devastating, and needs to be addressed urgently.

Paul Parker assured us that the Trustees do practise deep discernment and maybe we need to take more heed of that. Next week our group is meeting on Zoom with Alison Bredon a Trustee from Chester who often worships at Frandley. This may help to throw more light on what is happening.

There are some Q&A sessions on this issue with Oliver Robertson, Head of Worship and Witness, which are open to all Friends. The dates and links are in "Quake", the online magazine. If you do not receive this, ask the Clerk for detail.

A Report on the Area Meeting held June 6th with Paul Parker: Recording Clerk

This report forms part of our Trustees Meeting held today June 7th 2021, within Minute 4 on our Agenda, “ The relationship between BYM and AM Trustees”

Yesterday, Sunday June 6th 2021, an East Cheshire Area Meeting was held with Paul Parker, the Recording Clerk to the Society of Friends.

This meeting was attended by at least 35 East Cheshire Friends, with Paul Parker and Clerked by our Area Meeting Clerk, Hilary Brooks. Trustees attending this meeting were, Jill Maguire, Ann Lewis, Gill Alcock and Gavin Mendham.

The high attendance at this Area Meeting by East Cheshire Friends is an indication of the concern, expressed by our Area Meeting, in a minute sent from our AM Meeting on 20.3.21 to Meeting for Sufferings and Britain Yearly Meeting Trustees. East Cheshire Friends are concerned that changes being made to the structure and processes of our Society should ensure that Friends working for the Society as employees or as volunteers are listened to and that the processes of change are adapted during implementation and not dictated.

Questions were raised to Paul Parker and included the following:-

1. The Society’s work on Criminal Justice, and the impact on employees pursuing this work.

2. Whether Britain Yearly Meeting Trustees were exceeding their powers, and Meeting for Sufferings not having sufficient chance to understand and reflect on changes.

3. The underpinning of the work of Quaker chaplains and how the current range of chaplains would be supported as roles and appointments are in a state of change.

4. Concern regarding the speed and process of change having an impact on the Society’s employees becoming subject to stress, and a question over the communications to staff being appropriate and timely.

5. Whether Yearly Meeting 2021, can be given an opportunity to respond to the current concern of our Area Meeting to reflect on the current changes and implementation process as experienced.

6. Whether there is a “Creative Tension” and what we do when “Church” and “Charity” interface is in tension? When Friends serving on Trustees or Central Committees hear from the Subcommittees or others of problems causing Friends within the Society to have serious concerns that there are short comings in this re-structuring - can they be listened to and addressed in order to give confidence in the changes being made?

7. Whether during the process of change, those at “ground level” who should be involved in change as it happens, were being involved. Were the Trustees aware of what is being done now at ground level and so aware of “who was going to do what next”? As Local Development workers become established, is their brief expanding in an unrealistic way, covering the gaps being exposed?

Gavin Mendham Clerk to ECAM Trustees Monday June 7th 2021 assisted by Gill Alcock