

Minutes of a meeting of Quakers in Yorkshire

Held at Balby (Doncaster) Friends Meeting House on 27 April 2019

Representatives

Brighouse West Yorkshire Area Meeting

Ann Banks, Ann Bettys, Robin Bowles

Central Yorkshire Area Meeting

David Cook, Ruth McTighe

Craven & Keighley Area Meeting

Sylvia Boyes, David Olver, Chris Petrie, Alison Tyas

Leeds Area Meeting

Martin Ford, Jane Garrett (prevented), Su George (prevented), Pat Gerwat, Robert Keeble, Una Parker, Brian Senior (prevented), Liz Schweiger

Pickering & Hull Area Meeting

Helen Clark, Steve Hallett, Peter Robinson, Rosi Robinson

Sheffield & Balby Area Meeting

Romayne Gayton, June Lewis, Kathleen Wallace

York Area Meeting

Ruth Davies, Hilary Evens, Nicholas Evens, Julian Pattison, Graham Torr, Barbara Windle

QiY 19/04/01 Reading

In our opening worship we have heard read part of 21.22 of Quaker Faith and Practice.

QiY 19/04/02 Testimony (David Peryer)

We have heard part of a testimony to the singular grace we have seen in the life of our Friend David Peryer. This testimony was accepted by York Area Meeting on 12 January 2019. We endorse the testimony and thank the Friends who prepared it.

QiY 19/04/03 Welcome

We have been given a very warm welcome by Jill Cooper on behalf of Friends at Balby (Doncaster).

QiY 19/04/04 Appointment of Elders

We thank Jill Cooper and Denise Cann for acting as Elders at today's meeting, Jill this morning and Denise this afternoon.

QiY 19/04/05 Reinvigorating Quakerism – Paul Parker, Recording Clerk

Paul gave us the background to his thoughts on this by reading 10.02 of Quaker Faith and Practice. He reminded us of the transformative power of coming to meetings for worship and of the efforts of early Friends to get to meeting. It is important to make sure this is about transformative change in worship and in our lives.

Paul has reminded us that the world is a better place for having Quakers in it. It is important for us to think about this in the context of the more secular, more regulated and more pressured world in which we live. Quakerism is not so visible and the voice of faith is often seen as less relevant. We have changed as well: there are fewer Quaker families and many examples of single Quakers in households. Quoting last year's Tabular Statement, he confirmed the continuing decline in membership: a 14% decline in ten years. The median number of members in meetings is 18 (down from 24 ten years ago) which means possibly 11 or 12 people typically attend meeting on a Sunday. There are 250 meetings like this. We are asked if we need 70 area meetings and so many tiers of decision making. We need to respond to these changes at national, local and individual level in order to survive.

The evaluation of the experimental *Vibrancy in Meetings* project, in which Britain Yearly Meeting (BYM) staff work alongside local meetings, has shown that workers have been able to support local meetings in various ways, including navigating the decision-making process. This has prompted BYM trustees to launch a *Simpler Meetings Pilot Project*, the object of which is to bring about a simplification of procedures, structures and overall governance so that we produce thriving communities. Having regional workers could modify the relationship between local meetings and Friends nationally. Already, six BYM staff live in Yorkshire. By considering local, national and individual changes and working across meetings, we might be able to reinvigorate ourselves and how our lives and communities speak to the world. This will make Quakers sustainable as an organisation and able continue to transform lives. Thinking laterally should release energies.

We have shared thoughts in groups, on 1) What opportunities there might be for reinvigorating Quakerism in Yorkshire and 2) What needs to be kept and lost?

There were many positive proposals and also a number of negative comments about the burdens experienced by post holders. The comments will be collated and circulated to meetings with the minutes.

In our plenary, we have heard that Friends would wish to unite with the principle of further exploring ways to bring about simplification. We recognise that it is for individual area meetings to also unite with this and it is important that each is engaged. As a means to achieve this, we ask that this minute, together with a summary of the group contributions, be sent to the clerk of each area meeting for Friends' consideration. Our proposal, should they agree, is that they appoint a representative to participate in a working group to take this forward. We ask Quakers

in Yorkshire (QiY) trustees to convene the first meeting. The group should then appoint its own convenor and prepare terms of reference in consultation with QiY trustees. We ask representatives from meetings today to undertake to engage their area meetings and ask those interested in participating in the working group to sign a sheet.

We thank Paul for a most persuasive presentation which has stimulated us to take action. We hope to hear an update on this early next year.

QiY 19/04/06 Appointments

Nominations for appointment are brought to us as follows.

From Area Meetings

QiY Outreach Projects Committee

From Leeds Area Meeting: Iona Lyons to serve a further term of two years from 1 January 2019 to 31 December 2020.

QiY Nominations Committee

From York Area Meeting: Roy Love to serve a first term from now to 31 December 2021.

From QiY Nominations Committee

Breckenbrough School

John Margham (Harrogate) to serve as a Governor of Breckenbrough School from now to 31 December 2022.

These names being acceptable, the Friends are appointed. We thank them for their willingness to serve. We also thank both AM and QiY Nominations Committees for their work on our behalf.

QiY 19/04/07 The Retreat - Jennifer Barraclough, Trustee Director

Jennifer Barraclough, Clerk to the Board of Governors of The Retreat, has spoken to us about the changes to the ways in which mental health services will be provided in future at the Retreat. Jennifer has had a wide range of experience in the management of Quaker organisations. She reminds us that transformation will happen whether we want it or not, and that it will not take place without pain. When she arrived at The Retreat in 2015 there were considerable concerns about the safety of the buildings, and the Care Quality Commission (CQC) had given the hospital an inadequate rating.

The board had to ask what kind of transformation was taking place. It tried very hard, with specialist advice, to meet current requirements for in-patient services. The buildings were not fit for purpose, and the facilities were not going to be good enough to function in current circumstances. When The Retreat was founded it was a forerunner in the humane treatment of people with mental health problems. But this

was no longer the case, and fundamental changes were essential and inevitable, with much of the burden borne by the staff. The principal change is therefore the closing of the residential care wards at the hospital.

The New Retreat will focus on outpatient care and services. The Tuke Centre has served the community well, but the new centre will extend its reach beyond the bounds of the current estate. A contract is in place with Scarborough Health Services to expand provision and move forward as the Directors are committed to enabling the institution to serve people in need and to contributing to the national debate on mental health care. In-patient care has been handed over to Schoen Clinic, a well-established healthcare organisation, whose vision is ultimately to provide a new hospital on the same site.

Friends have commented on the tremendous work done by Jennifer and other members of the Board who have helped to engineer the changes to the structure of the organisation.

We are very grateful to Jennifer for sharing her experiences of her work with the Board in bringing the transformation to The Retreat.

QiY 19/04/08 Quaker Council for European Affairs - Andrew Lane, Director

Andrew Lane, Director of the Quaker Council for European Affairs based in Brussels, has spoken to us about the challenges facing QCEA in the current climate of international relations.

Andrew first went to Quaker meetings in Norfolk and Bedford and found himself welcomed in each place; he became involved with Quaker peace-building as a result. His work at Brussels, as the leader of a team of 4.7 staff, includes a spread of initiatives to improve international relations and the lot of refugees.

He noted that the Conversation Club at Doncaster FMH has up to 100 attenders at its meetings, welcoming refugees and asylum seekers from many countries overseas. There are many stories of work done by Quakers at Quaker House in Brussels. Some Friends have sold their property and come to live there as a way of creating a stronger Quaker presence. Brussels is at the centre of the European project, and this gives Friends an opportunity to have an effective influence on policy making.

With the process of globalisation, Brussels is one of a number of key cities which have become centres of political influence. One example of the centre's work is an anti-racism course to help promote better attitudes among those involved in international relations.

Andrew told us that about 1000 young people live in a park near Brussels centre, and a scheme has been introduced to enable *sans papiers* migrants to have healthier accommodation. A type of Quaker work, less known about, is illustrated by a friend of Andrew's, born in Darfur, but who escaped the genocide and went to Libya. Often

people escaping areas of conflict reach Brussels, months later. His friend managed to escape from Libya and reach Europe by boat. Through getting to know individual refugees, Andrew has become aware of the humanity of every individual. For such people Brussels has become a respite place for people who see England as their final destination.

The challenge for an organisation like QCEA is to decide when alarms should be sounded about human rights abuses. At present, across the world there is an increase in militarisation and expenditure on armaments. The current situation with the UK leaving Europe makes the militarisation a greater priority for other EU states.

Quiet Diplomacy is a feature of QCEA's work: getting people around the table to talk about international issues, using Quaker business methods, engaging in conversations over a meal. Child immigration detention is an example: Europe does not know the numbers and locations of children in detention. QCEA has taken the initiative to find out the answer and has published papers in response.

Available online, QCEA offers the results of specific small-scale research projects: an account of the mysterious EU budget; how to tackle anti-migrant hate speech; and the document, Building Peace Together. The military tend to dominate in Brussels, with NATO headquarters based there, so peace initiatives are a low priority.

As another example of the Brussels work, Quaker House offers a Saturday film show for children of asylum seekers. Over Christmas, 50 migrants slept in the house, and 350 had a meal there. The emphasis is on bringing people to share a meal, since diplomats have never met refugees. Retreats are made available for workers with refugees in camps to come and receive therapy to ease the distress experienced through their work.

QCEA offers conferences also, and the next will be themed peace-making.

We have been impressed by the wide range of activity that takes place at QCEA and how important it is for us to support the work as much as we can. We are most grateful to Andrew for illuminating us on his work and the Quaker presence in Brussels.

QiY 19/04/09 Closing Minute

We conclude our meeting by offering our thanks to Balby (Doncaster) Friends for welcoming us today, and for their work in arranging the day for us.

Our business being completed we part to meet again at Skipton on 20 July, if the Lord permits.

Chris Love, Arthur Pritchard
Co-Clerks, Quakers in Yorkshire