

Quakevine

News, Views, Venues and Dates for Quakers around York

Issue 171

August 2018



Erik Dries (Netherlands YM) always improves and enlivens our annual European Quaker business meetings with impromptu drawings on whatever is to hand – blackboard, flipchart paper

Contents

Editorial	2
A thought-provoking Meeting for Sufferings	2
On first meeting Quakers	3-4
<i>Quaker faith & practice: extract of the month</i>	4
York Area Meeting & Miscellany, including: <i>Trustee Report; Erosion of Truth; Friargate Quaker Centre Update</i>	5-6
York Quakers: end of WW1 Anniversary	7
Harrogate's Woodbrooke on the Road	7
Friargate Miscellany & Diary	8
Meetings for Worship in York Area Meeting	8
Quakevine contact information	8

Editorial

Two things. The first is that I accidentally came across the article on pages 3-4 when I was trawling the web for some entirely different Quaker information. I'm always interested to find out how others see us and I believe you will be too.

Secondly, going to Bergen for the Annual European Quaker Conference [see front cover] recently was bound to increase my interest in the Norwegian Quaker movement and how it arose. The origins are - to my knowledge - unique. The first convincements were of Norwegian prisoners, confined in the 'hulks' moored on the Thames during the Napoleonic wars. During some years of hardship there, prisoners were supported by English Quakers. When allowed to return to Norway, about twenty or so continued to live according to Quaker principles and to consider themselves Quaker. By 1818 they were organised into two Meetings, one in Stavanger and one in Christiania [now Oslo]. 200 years later there are meetings in seven areas. During World War Two, such Friends were active in the underground movement protecting Norwegian Jews and refugees; some were imprisoned by the occupying Nazis for resistance work [one was in fact nominated for the Nobel Peace Prize in 1957].

And another York connection: after World War Two, when many young Friends were involved in post-war reconstruction work, **Colin Henderson** of Friargate Meeting was a co-worker with Hans Eirik Aarek. That self-same Friend, now Professor Aarek, spoke to us at this year's conference on the history of Quakerism in Norway.

Barbara Windle

A thought-provoking Meeting for Sufferings in July

At July's Meeting for Sufferings Gethin Evans of Mid Wales Area Meeting brought his Area Meeting's concern that we should remember not only our Quaker forebears who suffered as conscientious objectors during World War 1, but also those whose consciences led them, however reluctantly, to undertake military service.

In the course of his introduction he quoted a business meeting minute he had found in the archives of Kingston upon Thames Local Meeting from November 1918. I cannot have been the only person present who was deeply moved and impressed by the quality and feeling of this minute that Gethin's researches have uncovered. [Ed]

minute13 Kingston upon Thames Quaker Meeting for Business 13.11.1918

We have remembered together, with thankfulness, humility and prayer, the end of the Great War by the signing of the Armistice on Monday last the 11th. Our hearts have gone out in loving tenderness to those of our number who have lost on the field of battle dear ones, cut off in the flower of their youth; and inasmuch as those died for the Truth as they saw it, we rejoice at their faithful witness.

We have remembered, too, those from amongst us who not less faithful, have been or are still witnessing in prison for the Truth as they see it.

Not unmindful of the difficulties which such divergent views must bring, we are happy to remember that [though] our points of argument are many, we are one in our devotion to a common Master, one in a single aim, to seek out and follow our Master's will. In the difficult days which are ahead of us these past years of mutual tolerance, the expressions begot of trials and sorrows patiently borne, shall with God's grace, enable us to win together nearer to the eternal truth, and out of the wreck and tragedy of a world at war, together help us towards establishing the Kingdom of the Prince of Peace.

Montague Davie, Clerk

A Newcomer reflects on first meeting Quakers

My thanks to The Guardian and to Jessica Read for permission to reprint this article. It first appeared in the Guardian's 8 January 2010. I wonder what has happened to Jessica's interest in Quakers over the subsequent eight years?

Last August I was sent to write about the post-evangelical Greenbelt festival. Being an atheist who abhors proselytising and finds evangelism extremely problematic, I initially made a reluctant observer. But as the day unfolded, I stood corrected in some of my preconceptions: the festival supported liberal ideas, hosted inter-faith debates and embraced some facets of radical activism. One event in particular stood out: I found myself unexpectedly moved to the verge of tears while attending my first Quaker meeting. My reaction was uncharacteristic, but I had no particular desire to analyse it in either religious or secular terms. I did, however, decide to find out more about the Quaker faith.

Last autumn found me attending Quaker Quest, a weekly free programme open to those interested in learning about the Society of Friends. Having completed some reading (from Quaker Faith and Practice to the small but lively Quaker blogosphere) before deciding to attend, I knew that my own morals were running in parallel with many of the testimonies shared by British Friends: a commitment to truth and social justice, peace, equality, simplicity, and an emphasis on community work. Other elements suggested that I wouldn't be tempted to storm off Quaker Quest in frustration. I knew Quakerism was based on experience and centred around both testimonies and silent worship, and the programme solely aimed to showcase the beliefs of individual Friends rather than set a rigid definition of "correct" spirituality. It is often jokingly said that if asking three Friends the same question, five different answers would be given.

Friends undertook groundbreaking work in regard to gay rights, from publishing the trailblazing 1963 publication *Towards a Quaker View on Sex*, which affirmed the unimportance of sexual orientation in intimate relationships, to finally granting gay couples the right to marry. I also admired Friends' tendency to walk the walk by undertaking activist work in many places, from UN headquarters to Iraq, from UK prisons to nuclear facilities. This sounded both encouraging and intriguing.

As I first pushed the doors of Friends' House, the idea that modern Quakerism, being free of any dogma and leaving the human mind free to think critically, analyse, refute or adopt his or her "way" to believe, was reassuring. It is this reluctance to be prescriptive which goes to explain the diversity of Friends, whose members are primarily Christians but also count Buddhists, Pagans, agnostics, nontheists and everything in between.

What I found at Quaker Quest were evenings focused on specific Quakerly subjects: simplicity, worship, peace, Jesus, God and equality. Each session began with three Friends sharing their personal thoughts on the day's topic, which is followed by a group discussion, a Q&A and 30-minutes' silent worship. I was grateful that great care seemed to have been taken in picking the speakers, who all came from different backgrounds in an effort to illustrate the Quaker experience's complexity. This was somewhat mirrored in the audience, with people of all races, all ages and creeds attending, although I couldn't tell about class. Some of those present described themselves as lapsed Christians, and a few had been attending the Alpha Course without success (on that note, I appreciate that anyone deciding to join the Society of Friends isn't referred to as converted, but convinced - a small but crucial difference).

The group discussions were always eye-opening, especially to someone like me prone to hastily judging Christian beliefs; while there have been small disagreements between participants (I once got into a heated back-and-forth about science and the existence of logic), the atmosphere was nothing but respectful. We shared anecdotes about our spirituality or lack thereof, talked about restorative justice, considered alternatives to violence and explored the idea of Jesus as (depending on who you talked to) a historical figure or the son of God.

The silent worship at the end of the evening gave ample time to reflect on what had been said. Newcomers often find sitting in stillness is a demanding, if not excruciating exercise: the mind races and wanders, feet tap the floor, mundane thoughts come and go. With a bit of persistence, sitting still has nonetheless offered me a few moments of perfect mindfulness, and I found some of the ministries given ranged from being touching to suddenly bringing the utmost clarity to thoughts previously muddled in my brain. It is an extremely difficult process to pin down, surely one which takes years to master, but the rewards certainly are worth the awkwardness and initial feelings of inadequacy.

Quaker Quest left me a little more open-minded to the idea of being wrong (a very good thing, as I am one of those dreadful people who very much like to be right), a little bit more open-minded, and eager to explore the idea of "that of god in everyone" within a non-theist frame. If you had told me I would be interested in Quakerism a year ago, I would have doubtlessly laughed and said "not in a million years". But here I am: an atheist and non-Christian who's not too sure what to do with a sudden and unexpected attraction to the Society of Friends. As I reflect on the chain of events which led me to write these words, I can only say that life does indeed work in mysterious ways.

Jessica Read [Guardian columnist] January 2010

Quaker faith & practice: extract of the month

This advice on the conduct of our Quaker business meetings has much to say to us all; it is also a reminder, both salutary and encouraging, that early Friends too were imperfect. Why else was it necessary to explain these things to the readers?

For the preservation of love, concord and a good decorum in this meeting, 'tis earnestly desired that all business that comes before it be managed with gravity and moderation, in much love and Amity, without reflections or retorting, which is but reasonable as well as comely, since we have no other obligation upon each other but love, which is the very bond of our society: and therein to serve the Truth and one another; having an eye single to it, ready to sacrifice every private interest to that of Truth, and the good of the whole community.

Wherefore let whatsoever is offered, be mildly proposed, and so left with some pause, that the meeting may have opportunity to weigh the matter, and have a right sense of it, that there may be a unanimity and joint concurrence of the whole. And if anything be controverted, that it be in coolness of Spirit calmly debated, each offering their reasons and sense, their assent, or dissent, and so leave it without striving. Also that but one speak at once, and the rest hear. And that private debates and discourses be avoided, and all attend the present business of the Meeting. So will things be carried on sweetly as becomes us, to our comfort: and love and unity be increased: and we better serve Truth and our Society.

[1678, Wiltshire Quarterly Meeting] *Qf&p* 19.57

York Area Meeting and Miscellany

Membership Matters

Death: Alison Ashcroft [Acomb LM] aged 92.

Resignation: Stephen Campbell [Friargate LM] has resumed his status as attender.

Transfers in: We warmly welcome:

a) Elizabeth Scurfield and Martina Weitsch from North West London AM [Golders Green LM] to York AM [New Earswick LM] and

b) Sandra Hall's returning to York AM [Friargate] after her work had taken her to Surrey and Hampshire Border AM.

New Member: We warmly welcome into membership Paul Whitmore [Harrogate LM].

Trustees' June Meeting

The Financial Reports for the previous year are always a significant item at the June meeting of the Trustees. We were pleased to note that York Area Quaker Meeting is in a strong financial position.

Our audited accounts show that total **income** rose by £5,638 to £378,912 in 2017.

Our income from schedules and collections rose by 21%; our income from lettings rose by over 16% - the second successive annual rise of over £20,000 following the completion of the building work at the Friargate Meeting House.

Expenditure at £303,313 was higher than in 2016 (£287,680), giving net incoming resources before other recognised gains and losses of £75,599.

The closing funds of the charitable company at 31 December 2017 were £6,175,946 of which £5,784,543 were endowment funds (mostly buildings), £13,592 were restricted funds and £377,811 were unrestricted funds.

Other matters relating to finance included setting up a group of Trustees to reflect on how substantial bequests and legacies are distributed, given that York Area Quaker Meeting is a single charitable unit, and adopting a policy on giving to non-Quaker UK organizations (which Local Meeting clerks will have already received).

Trustees recognize the value of Treasurers from Area and Local Meetings sharing experience and information and welcome the support they have given to the new arrangements for looking after our meeting houses, which will start in 2019, and the agreement that meetings of treasurers will now be held twice annually.

Over recent years Friends have devoted much time and effort to thinking about and planning for new property arrangements. Trustees welcomed the Working Group on Property and Property Finance report and accepted all the recommendations therein. The next stage in planning passes to the new AM Trustees' Property Committee whose membership will include trustees and one Friend from each Local Meeting.

The European Union General Data Protection Regulation came into effect on 25th May; Trustees considered and adopted a new YAQM Data Protection Policy which incorporates the Data Privacy Notice presented to Area Meeting in session on 13th May. The policy can be viewed on the Area Meeting website www.yorkquakers.org.uk

Finally, we were delighted to learn that a family from Syria is being housed in Waller House (the former Warden's house for Friargate), we noted the good progress made towards completing the Local Meeting sections of the revised Health & Safety Policy and agreed that hirers of our meeting houses need to provide a signature undertaking to follow appropriate safeguarding procedures.

David Roberts Clerk to Trustees

AM Trustees' investment decision welcomed

We received our Trustees' annual report and accounts, both of which were very encouraging. Part of the minute read: "[David Roberts] passed on the very welcome news that Trustees have responded to a question raised by a member of Acomb LM by reviewing York AM's policy on investment in stocks and shares. As a result York AM has now divested from fossil fuels entirely. It has also adopted a more stringent ethical investment policy as a whole. It now excludes entirely weapons, nuclear power, tobacco, alcohol, gambling, fossil fuels, cosmetics tested on animals, and countries where there are human rights abuses. Instead, our AM will be focusing on investments in companies with declared policies for minimising waste, recycling, protection of the environment and which have anti-discriminatory and fair employment practices. We are delighted with this news."

Erosion of Truth

A very good meeting on 17 July started the consideration of this issue within our AM. There were 27 Friends present and all local meetings were represented. We explored various aspects of the theme but one problem that kept coming up was that of distinguishing between fact and lies in the media, social media and the pronouncements of public figures (notably including politicians). The discernment will continue at AM in September; several of the Friends present will report on the discussion in more detail. In the meantime, I would like to draw your attention to my own blog (sorry for blatant self-publication) which is accessible here: <https://rationaldebateblog.wordpress.com> I started this some time ago and have been rather remiss in terms of the frequency of posts. The intention is to pick up issues/themes and look at the facts behind them and to analyse them and comment on the issue on the basis of facts rather than hype. This is difficult; and one of the reasons I have written so little recently is because since the Brexit vote I seem to have lost my voice a bit.

I would like to widen this vehicle for rational debate and invite Friends from the AM to share posts there, too. I can either post them as guest posts (if you send them to me with any visual media attached) or, if you are familiar with Wordpress, I can add you to the blog as an editor so you can post your own posts.

I would want to keep the rational tone (which I have tried to maintain - you tell me how successful I have been!) and would want to continue to exercise a bit of control on that level. But otherwise, I'm very happy to have a wide variety of posts which attempt to maintain debate without shouting and consideration of facts without hype.

Over to you! **Martina Weitsch** [New Earswick] mweitsch@icloud.com

Update from the Quaker Centre Manager

In my discussions with some of our Local Meetings several themes have already emerged. These are broadly along the lines of Quaker community-building, Quaker action and spiritual engagement.

One suggestion is that the Quaker Centre should offer more opportunities for shared spiritual exploration and deeper spiritual experience of Quaker testimony. It has been proposed that we could start by having a series of three sessions early in 2019 to seek an answer to this question: 'How can we nurture the seed in York Area Meeting?'

In addition to traditional Quaker worship, we might explore the value of other ways of nurturing the seed within - such as Experiment with Light, Listening Spirituality, Quaker Focusing, Appleseed etc. If you are interested in being involved, please get in touch with **Cath Harvey** or **Madeleine Kay** at Friargate.

York Quakers mark the centenary of the end of WW1

As a contribution to the City's 'York Remembers' season marking the end of the war in 1918, we are putting on two events for both Quakers and non-Quakers. These have been organised by a York-wide Quaker committee. We want to use this opportunity to look beyond the history and consider a more peaceful future for the world.

Sat 6 October *Lifting the shadow of WW1 and prospects for peace today:* a day conference at Friargate Meeting House from 10.00 am - 5.00 pm.

An interactive day of lectures and workshops bringing together academics, local historians, poets, and individuals involved in promoting peace.

Lecture topics:

Long Shadow of War Britain 1918 -1979 (Simon Ball, Leeds History Faculty);

The Hidden Legacies of War (Trudi Tate, Cambridge English Faculty);

The Development of Arms Control (Nick Ritchie, York Politics Faculty);

Can we Build a more Peaceful World? (Ben Griffin, Veterans for Peace).

Workshops: from Past to Future: these will respond to the history and literature of WW1 and also consider ways of resolving or avoiding future conflict.

Our second event will centre on the issue of resolving or avoiding conflict:

Saturday 17 November: Peace Now - the personal dimension: a day of workshops at Friargate Meeting House from 10.00 am - 4.00 pm.

Participants will develop skills for practical peace-making, conflict resolution and non-violent communication in four workshops.

Workshops will focus on:

Nonviolent communication (Roswitha Jarman);

Listening for a new world (James McCarthy);

Conflict resolution in schools (Lydia Noor and Gillian Darton);

Being Peace (Lynda Williams).

Each speaker will introduce and teach peace-making skills with group activities.

Costs: October conference £15; November workshops £12; (each is £7 for students).

We are able to keep costs low as we have been given the use of Friargate free and we are also hoping for other Quaker support. October 6th falls in Quaker Week so our event will be an outreach opportunity - invite your friends!

Application forms will shortly be available on a flyer distributed to local Meeting Houses and around York, or can soon be downloaded from yorkquakers.org.uk or by emailing friargate@yorkquakers.org.uk. We will need your help to stage these ambitious events. Please email Brenda at tomtecards@btinternet.com if you can steward or serve food and drink on either day.

Anna Baldwin, Ros Batchelor, James McCarthy, Brenda Tyler

Woodbrooke on the Road at Harrogate

Don't forget to get your autumn off to a stimulating start by signing up for the opportunity to be part of this event on 1st September.

Martin Lyon on: Let Your Life Speak.

Book via Barbara Penny barbaraepenny@gmail.com (£10 towards the day's expenses).

Arrive for 9.30 hot drinks ready to start at 10 am on the big questions:

Are we challenging injustice?

Are we heeding the call to act?

Come and be inspired.

Friargate Miscellany

Glenthorne Weekend October 28-30

22 Friends have so far signed up for this weekend away in the Lakes (see July QV). We really want to fill the house completely and are very happy to include Friends and their friends from other Meetings in the AM beside Friargate.

Email friargate@yorkquakers.org.uk or grahamandalison@hotmail.com or ring 630734 urgently. We will send in final numbers to Glenthorne Quaker Centre and Guesthouse on August 6th. Do look at the website if you don't know this lovely corner of Grasmere.

Graham Ralph, Anna Baldwin, Ruth Corry

Friargate August Diary

5th	Sun	Carecent Collection of Food and Toiletries	Friargate	After MfW
10th	Fri	Bishophill Group: begin reading "God, Words & Us" ed. Helen Rowlands	8 Manley Close (Theodore Bacon)	12.30 (bring own lunch)
12 th	Sun	Exploring Quakerism <i>all welcome</i>	Friargate	9 – 10.15 am
19th	Sun	Soup and Rolls	Friargate	12.00 noon
19th	Sun	Gardening Group	Friargate	After MfW
26th	Sun	Attenders Group	Friargate	12.00 - 12.45

10.30 Notices: 1st, send to Huw Still 07915 607903 huwstill@gmail.com or David Laverick.(see below)

Remaining Sundays: send to Chris Love 01904 758344 chris234love@btinternet.com

Breakfast Meeting: Notices to: David & Margaret Laverick 01904 798 050 or hobgate39@gmail.com

Collections: 5th,12th, Refugee Action York; 19th, 24th, War Resisters International.

Worship in York Area Meeting

Time	Location	Frequency
10.30-11.30	Acomb, Friargate, Harrogate, New Earswick, Thirsk	Weekly
9.15 – 10.00	Friargate <i>worship is preceded by breakfast at 8.30</i>	2 nd & 4 th Sunday
10.30-11.15	Lamel Beeches	weekly
11-11.30	The Oaks	Weekly
10.30-11.30	Knaresborough	2 nd Sunday
8 pm	Eastern Villages:	3 rd Sunday

Weekday Worship in York Area Meeting

Tues	11.45	Hartrigg Oaks	Weekly
Wed	2.00	University Quiet Place, Heslington West: <i>all Friends welcome</i>	Termtime
Wed	12.45 -1.45	Friargate: bring your lunch, followed by MfW at 1.15	Weekly
Thu	10.45	Knaresborough, Gracious Street Centre <i>1st Thu, for 30 mins.</i>	Monthly
Thu	12.30	Harrogate <i>3rd Thursday of the month, for 30 minutes</i>	Monthly
Thu	9.30	The Retreat	Weekly
Wed	11.30	Acomb	Weekly

Contacting Quakevine

Editorial: Barbara Windle (bwindle@waitrose.com 01904 481977. 13a York Street, Dunnington)

Page 8/Diary: Julia Terry (jhterry10@gmail.com 01904 656634 13 Belle Vue Terrace YO10 5AZ)

Local Contacts: Anna Baldwin, Louise Brown, Sally & John Bourton, John Abbott, Meg Forrest

Please send items in Word, Trebuchet 12. The editor may select & edit all contributions.

Deadline for next issue: 12 noon, Sunday July22nd