

Craven & Keighley Area Meeting Newsletter

Winter 2013-14

The gastronomic indulgences of Christmas give way to food for thought: your Area Meeting newsletter, packed with assorted calorie-free goodies. Lighter dimensions to the menu have been included, the better to keep some balance when all around is dim, cloudy and damp. Thank you to everyone who contributed to this edition. It was my intention to publicise an event in Leeds called "Enough is enough"; the launch of a documentary film based on a book of that title about ethical financial issues, but have just discovered that, two weeks away, the registration is full. I shall be reporting on this in the next newsletter.

Pam Elstub

Revising Quaker Faith and Practice

Our faith has been expressed, particularly in writing, very differently as Friends have evolved over the last three and a half centuries. We have had an opportunity to look at our current concern regarding our Book of Discipline in the context of a short course at Woodbrooke (6-8 December) on "The Birth of Liberal Quakerism: 1861-1921". Great changes took place among British Friends over this time and were reflected in books of discipline at its beginning and end. Comparing extracts from each was an interesting and informative part of the course.

The 18th Century had been a period when Friends had become more cautious after the passion of the first 40 years. They were often labelled "Quietist", in which there was a denial of self – a self-emptying to let God in – and a metaphorical "hedge" to keep the corrupting world out. This included plain dress and speech and forbade anything, music for example, which would excite the emotions. Ministry was not quiet; indeed it was often offered in strange tones and was usually spoken by named Ministers who were recorded from 1722.

During the early Victorian period Friends became more evangelical, emphasising the authority of scripture and mission. The debate between the "Quietist" and "Evangelical" Friends was strongest between 1830 and 1855. Membership of the Society in Britain had declined from 80,000 in 1680 to 30,000 in 1850, in part because Friends were disowned if they married a non-Quaker or if two Friends, impatient with the delays due to the lengthy approval processes of Friends, were married by a priest rather than in a special Meeting for Worship. During this period many Friends were engaged in the world; not only commercially, but as Quaker MPs, though the latter were unable to act as elders while doing so! However, the practice of disownment for marrying out, the injunction against MPs acting as elders and many other prohibitions had ceased by 1861 when the fourth edition of "extracts from minutes and epistles of the Yearly Meeting" was published with its short title "Christian Doctrine, Practice and Discipline".

Both Quietists and Evangelicals Friends could find lineage with early Quakers, as could the "Liberal" Friends who were becoming more dominant in the second half of the 19th Century. Friends had been able to go to University and join the professions after 1870, so the leadership was now much better educated and influenced by biblical scholarship, geology, Darwinian evolution, advances in psychology, and much else.

Experience, not scripture, became the primary authority for “truth”, as reflected in the use of the phrase “inner light” and other mystical language to describe what they were doing in Meeting for Worship. Quaker faith was seen as necessarily relevant to the modern age; Revelation was “continuing”, not fixed at either Biblical times, nor those of early Friends, and thus a journey; and God’s revelation was progressive. Ministers were no longer recorded.

By the end of the 19th century there were three types of Quakers on both sides of the Atlantic: the old-fashioned Quietists who still wore plain clothes and practiced plain-speaking, Evangelicals who had fairly fundamentalist views of scripture, and these modern, science-based Liberals. In 1892, a young Friend, John Wilhelm Rowntree, gave powerful ministry at London Yearly Meeting in which he pleaded for greater understanding of the spiritual struggles of young Friends who were attempting to reconcile their Quakerism with modern life. In 1895, he was a key speaker at the Manchester Conference on the subject of “Has Quakerism a Message to the World Today?” A series of Summer Schools followed, the first attracting 600 Friends. Woodbrooke was established on land and buildings donated by the Evangelical Quaker, George Cadbury in 1903. The first of the annual series of Swarthmore lectures was given by the American Friend, Rufus Jones in 1908. Other influential Friends whose writings were discussed on the course were Caroline Stevens and William Braithwaite. Extracts from the writings from all of these can be found in *Quaker Faith and Practice*.

The modern Society of Friends emerged gradually over the 60 years between the 1861 and 1922 books of discipline. These were in three parts: Christian Life, Faith and Thought in the Society of Friends; Christian Practice; and Church Government. Extracts were no longer restricted to the formal minutes and epistles of the Yearly Meeting. They contain many contributions from individual Friends “Advices and Queries” were included for the first time, many being earlier versions of those in our current book of Discipline.

There were schisms in North America as evangelical and modern friends formed separate yearly meetings. These divisions were thankfully avoided in Britain. The “mission” preoccupations of the evangelicals became the work for peace and justice at home and service abroad for which Quakers are now renowned. Some Quietists continued with the main elements of the hedge. Except for a few diehards, they gradually died out. But all three groups – Quietists, Evangelicals and Liberals – were Christian, united in their *experience* of meeting God in Meeting for Worship and seeking God’s guidance when making collective decision which were agreed and recorded in a minute written during the meeting at which the decisions were reached.

At first glance it seems that the differences among Friends today are much greater than those among these earlier Friends since our members now include those of many faiths and none. But after attending this course, we feel that they are less significant than we had thought. There is no doubt that today, when many friends lack a belief in an external “God”, finding words which capture the essential continuity between us all while acknowledging these differences will be very difficult because we have to express them in words. However, this weekend has shown that it was their shared *experience* which united Quakers in this period and enabled them to find the words for the 1922 books of discipline, and we are confident that we will find them too.

When “Reviewing the book of discipline” was considered by Settle Local Meeting last month it was recognised that although substantial changes in our faith had happened since the last revision, we were reluctant to suggest a wholesale revision now because (a) things are still

changing quite rapidly and (b) the revision process would absorb a lot of energy. We were, however, very aware that chapters 2 (Approaches to God – Worship and Prayer) and 3 (General Counsel on Church Affairs) in particular, are critical to the continued health of the Society, but no longer adequately reflect the variety of ways in which we describe our experience in, and about, worship. Chapter 3, on our meetings for church affairs, is perhaps in the most urgent need of revision and/or additional material. “Seeking the will of God” is the most helpful way some Friends still find to express what we are doing; but it is not so for others. We are mindful that when the revision process does start, we must focus on our experience and not the words we use to describe it and take care to avoid hurting each other. We look forward very much to continuing this discussion at Local, Area and YM levels.

John Geale and Pat Saunders, December 2013

Some thoughts about New Year exercise resolutions:

Walking can add minutes to your life.

This enables you at 85 years old to spend an additional 5 months in a nursing home at £2,400 per month.

My grandpa started walking five miles a day when he was 60.
Now he's 97 years old and we have no idea where the heck he is.

I joined a health club last year, spent about £250 - haven't lost an ounce.
Apparently you have to go there...

Every time I hear the word 'exercise', I wash my mouth out with chocolate.

We all get heavier as we get older, because there's a lot more information in our heads.
That's my story and I'm sticking to it.

Source: various from internet

Nurturing Spirituality (15-17 November 2013)

Course facilitator: Alex Wildwood

I noticed the advertisement for this course at a timely fork in the path of my spiritual exploration. Thoughts along the lines of “am I different, awkward, misguided or just weird?” had been circling like vultures for weeks in my mind. For some reason the issues surrounding being a Quaker had assumed edifice-like proportions, built of concrete that threatened to imprison me. In a spirit of desperation I signed onto this weekend, thinking “if this doesn’t convince me it’s OK to be the way I am, I’m taking a Quaker sabbatical”.

During the introductory session of Friday evening, my nervous mood was rapidly relieved. One after another, participants shared the reasons for their attending the course, revealing remarkably similar motivations and misgivings. These confessions seemed to serve as a model for the more self-conscious to relax and allow greater freedom of expression. Humour became more evident as we worked together, and set in more freely over the weekend.

On Saturday we explored what we meant by spirituality. In the exercises that followed, it was immensely reassuring that Alex allowed plenty of choice as to how much (and whether) to reveal oneself to the main group. "Mapping our journeys" provided an opportunity to manifest visually our processes of spiritual development. Charts, diagrams and various works of expressive art resulted, but were not always shared with others. The customary free afternoon allowed me inwardly to process the intense experiences of the morning. Later, we explored in a similar way, but individually in our own spaces, what activities helped or hindered our spiritual growth. This again could have been a potentially disturbing process, but in the privacy of my room it became an exercise that brought peace and acceptance.

What a riot of enjoyment the evening turned out to be! In the preparatory paperwork for the course we had been encouraged to bring something that spoke something of our own unique spiritual nature. Creativity sprung into life around the room, and music, jokes, poems and readings were shared and celebrated.

On Sunday we examined our "consecrated intent", answering questions such as "What is the next step I feel led to take? Are there practices I would now like to adopt?" In our final worship-sharing the sense of a gathered meeting was almost overwhelming.

I am indebted to Alex Wildwood for providing an environment of joyful and loving support within his workshops, allowing me the freedom to formulate my inner processes and express myself more fully than I would have dreamed possible.

Pam Elstub

Meeting for Sufferings held 7th December 2013

The minutes are available on the BYM web site (try this link: <http://www.quaker.org.uk/sites/default/files/MfS-mins-Dec13-final.pdf> If you cannot access this and would like to read them and / or after you have read them, you wish for further amplification, please contact me.

The agenda included a report from clerk of BYM Trustees who informed us that there are to be no new visions for Swarthmoor Hall; the National Trust and the Quakers have differing objectives. Peter Ullathorne (BYM Treasurer) and Jennifer Barraclough also presented the Budget and Operational Plan 2014 (paper MfS 2013 12 04). Paul Parker, the Recording Clerk spoke about the Tabular Statement (paper MfS 2013 12 05) which he was sure could contain information for proactive planning and decision making.

How did the day impact for me fresh from a transatlantic flight and three trips up Ingleborough with groups of 11 year olds? The subject of education was a focus on the agenda following up a concern of West Cumbria AM, and David Day presented the background to this. There was a 'keynote' reading from QF&P 23.85 in our opening worship. The passage ends; 'The two qualities which are most important to children of today are hope and imagination. Hope to believe they can change the world they live in and imagination to find ways to do so.' Further consideration is advised, QF&P 4.5: Affirming the personal value of each individual, encouraging mutual respect and consciously developing the skills and attitudes involved in creative conflict resolution must be regarded as an important educational priority...' We heard from Rose Oliver, a young teacher of junior children, and remembering my personal circumstances within the previous 48 hours I felt empathy. She

was attempting to deliver the National Curriculum through the mesh of her personal understanding of Quaker Values, but the effort was daunting, for that prescribed programme was inspection informed, inspection lead and inspection prioritised.

We noted later in small discussion groups that some of these Quaker values are shared with other religious groups and that we should search out and join partnerships where appropriate; energy should not be wasted reproducing 'parallel' resources. It occurred to me that we need to make sure that we are all expressing our Quaker values consistently; I think that people can become confused by different language idioms. There is a need to use our resources in support of those working in the education sector, and as individuals we could make time to listen to the teachers we know in our meetings and get involved as volunteers while supporting them in their lives.

There were reports on other European Yearly Meetings, also from the Minute 36 (Canterbury) Commitment Group an interim report (paper MfS 2013 12 09).

We received Minutes not taken elsewhere (Papers MfS 2013 12 10a and a, b, c and d). This included minutes from a number of Area Meetings reporting on Welfare Benefit Cuts.

Other minutes included:

One from Swarthmoor (SW Cumbria) AM regarding nuclear waste disposal. (paper MfS 2013 12 10b)

One from Yearly Meeting Agenda Committee Separated Minutes regarding discernment of agenda topics for Yearly Meeting Gathering 2014 and Yearly Meeting 2015 (paper MfS 2013 12 CC1)

One from young people October 2013, from the consultation of 38 young people who met alongside Meeting for Sufferings 5.10.13 (paper MfS 2013 12 11).

During the day we also heard about the plans for the new electrical substation to be positioned on the front doorstep of Friends House and the issues that influenced the renaming of the refurbished Large Meeting Room.

With peaceful good wishes Christopher N.G.Hart

Gathering for Action – welfare cuts and inequality: Conference Report

From 25th–27th October 2013, fifty-eight Friends, including members and attenders, Quaker Peace & Social Witness (QPSW) staff and committee members, met at Woodbrooke Quaker Study Centre to share different ways in which Quakers are responding to the social security cuts, and to consider how we might respond locally and nationally to the cuts and to the wider issue of growing inequality in the UK.

The conference was 'as-led' - an allocated Woodbrooke weekend whose subject is chosen by Britain Yearly Meeting in response to matters of current and urgent concern. The conference aimed to strike a balance between providing information and working together to consider what Quakers could do.

We heard about the effects of the cuts on individuals and families. We talked about the need to take urgent and practical action, and many suggestions were given. We reminded ourselves of the need to build the confidence and self-esteem of vulnerable people, and to pick up and challenge language and public discourse which stigmatizes or discriminates against those

claiming benefits.

Some Friends reported feeling isolated in their concerns, and suggestions were given for involving others and for linking with those active in other meetings. Nationally we were challenged to support these actions by linking people together, by providing opportunities for shared learning, or by providing an 'umbrella' to bring together fragmented actions into a coherent movement.

We heard ideas for working at a more systemic level - holding local politicians and service providers to account, encouraging more engagement in politics and promoting greater understanding of, and engagement in, our economy. We also talked about personal agency, and how we might contribute to a more equal society through making ethical choices about our personal finance.

There was a recurring theme of working with others and of building alliances - with faith groups, advice services, charities, activists' networks and others, to better inform our own work and to uphold the important work that many others are doing.

We heard that the Quaker way is to speak from experience, and that we must think long-term in our commitment to changing the society that we live in – taking time to learn about and define our role within the wider movement, and to build the ethical and spiritual argument for change. We acknowledged the tension between the need for careful discernment, and the need to move quickly to alleviate the suffering of those most affected by inequality in the UK.

We discussed suggestions for large scale collective action at a national level, and received requests for support for those working locally. Some of these suggestions will need to be discerned by committees, some can go ahead immediately, and others may be achieved by linking Friends to existing initiatives.

This report gives a brief outline of the conference.

The current reality

On Friday night, we heard from Judith Moran, Director of Quaker Social Action. She told us about some of the indicators of growing inequality in the UK, and case studies of people directly suffering from the cuts. She outlined the changing response to poverty over the last century, and argued that, while research continues to highlight the problems, and charities continue to provide some relief, there are no 'obviously enduring mass movements for change'. She challenged us to consider our response, using a metaphor of babies floating in a river, to decide whether we are rescuers (taking immediate action to alleviate suffering), fence builders (putting in place barriers and safeguards to reduce the likelihood of suffering), or tackling the root source of the problem (challenging the political, economic and social conditions which enable these problems to occur).

Judith answered questions, and we spent time hearing from Friends, themselves affected, or in touch with those affected by the welfare cuts and other cuts made in the name of austerity. We were reminded to be aware of those suffering from the impact of the cuts within our own meetings as well as in the wider community.

Structural drivers of inequality and our response so far

On Saturday morning, we heard about national level work from Margaret Bennett of QPSW

Central Committee, including the work of the Quaker Housing Trust, and of the Economic Issues programme of Quaker Peace & Social Witness, which currently focuses on corporate regulation and ethical finance; and is involved in campaigns around trade, tax, fair pay, and Israeli settlement trade. We heard that the Economics, Sustainability and Peace sub-committee has recently committed to ‘discern and support work on the deep roots from which these crises and injustices spring. This includes articulating a vision of a kinder and more equal society; one in which Quaker testimony can flourish’.

We then heard from Suzanne Ismail, QPSW Programme Manager for Economic Issues, on the structural drivers of economic policy; the increasing inequality in the work place; unfair distribution of profits, low pay and tax avoidance.

Our Stories – ‘What do we have to share and what do we bring’

Also in the morning, we shared, through ‘action forums’, some of the initiatives which Friends have initiated, or are involved with locally.

Ten volunteer Friends were chosen to speak for three minutes on activities that they or their meeting are doing. We heard about accompaniment and advocacy for people with disabilities going through ATOS medical assessment appeal tribunals; donation of winter fuel payments into a fund for the relief of poverty; economic justice groups looking at the underlying reasons for poverty and how to challenge welfare cuts; cities of sanctuary for asylum seekers; a mobile library for the homeless; Credit Unions; listening days and one-day advice centres in the Meeting House; campaigns and petitions to prevent closure of local facilities and ideas for improving the democratic process.

In the evening, eight Friends offered to start a conversation in an ‘open space’ on a subject of interest to them and we were encouraged to choose one or drop in on several. The conversations were: voting and civil society, the organization of a mass protest march, the effect of welfare reforms on vulnerable families, sustaining activity with joy and dignity, citizens’ income, linking activities within and without BYM, how our housing system creates poverty, and testing concerns within Meeting for Sufferings.

Friends also shared ideas on a ‘sharing wall’ and contributed further during plenary sessions and the final meeting for worship for business.

Exploring tools for change

On Saturday afternoon, three workshops offered different approaches to help Friends examine our values and attitudes and to explore what tools were available to try to bring about change. ‘Street School Economics’ explored ways of talking about, and engaging people in, economics, ‘True to Our Values’ explored the role of values in creating movements for social, political and economic change, ‘Promoting an Inclusive Society’ examined a toolkit to help Friends to question, challenge or support social policies.

Moving forward

On Sunday, we finished with a meeting for worship for business, where Friends were asked to consider what they could do where they were; what could they make happen nationally; and what support was needed to make things happen in the future. Many excellent suggestions were voiced. It was clear that Friends wish to be linked in their actions and for their work to be part of a wider movement. Suggestions were made for action as individuals,

as meetings, and as a society, some of which will need to be discerned through Quaker process, some of which can happen immediately. Clerks wrote a minute to try to capture our thinking during the event while looking forward to what Friends might achieve in the future. The minute (copied below) was sent to QPSW Central Committee, with a request that it be forwarded to Meeting for Sufferings.

Staff noted the numerous suggestions and have set up a web page with material from the conference <http://www.quaker.org.uk/cuts-oct-2013>.

Clare Wood November 2013

Who turned the lights off?



For the last few weeks I have been troubled. An article in one of the national newspapers warned that the Government was considering cuts in power use between the hours of 4 and 8pm for high energy use industries. The aim was to maintain the domestic power supply during peak usage hours, for cooking dinner and TV viewing. But why should such a plan be suggested?

The answer lies in present issues surrounding our power stations and EU directives on emission targets. Our present coal powered stations are not meeting the criteria and so are being closed. Alongside the closures lies the lack of expansion in other forms of energy generation; probably due to the financial climate influencing a reduction in investment in areas requiring heavy resources.

Germany is a country which has influenced my life in many ways, mainly from having been stationed there in the army for some years. The impressive way in which this prosperous country has managed its energy generation continues to inspire me and my wife, most noticeably during a recent pre-Christmas holiday there. Despite suffering the same forecasted deficits of the global financial downturn, Germany has been quietly getting on with increasing investment in sustainably sourced renewable energy, while reducing that obtained from nuclear power stations to zero by 2022. Targets for renewable energy supply are 35% by 2020, 50% by 2030, 65% by 2040, and the ambitious target of 80% by 2050.

Judging by the views from our car windows on our way to our destination in early December 2013, the plan seems to be gathering pace. Everywhere we looked there were wind turbines, up and running or being built, often within national parks including the one where we were staying. On investigating the internet, Germany currently has around 23,000 land based wind turbines, and generates 13% of its total energy needs from them. Towns and villages are usually surrounded by wind farms, and private houses, industrial buildings and farms have their roofs covered with plentiful photovoltaic (PV) panels. Large PV installations cover waste land and sometimes farmers' fields. In the latter case the installations are raised up so that sheep or cattle are able to graze underneath. Biomass generators are often used to boost nocturnal power supplies, although the country has an advantage in that the vast majority of hills are covered in forestry. We found out that on two days last summer 50% of the entire country's energy needs was supplied from renewable sources.

So if they can do it, why can't we? The complexity of the answer would probably take an expert a week to explain, and it's certainly beyond my resources even to attempt the feat. However, the issue that springs to my mind is this: what price a "nice view" when the power fails and you can't have a cup of tea? Thinking locally, we have lots of south-facing hills on which to put PV panels, areas where trees can be grown for biomass and lots of wind for turbines. What do you think? Don't all rush at once.....

Michael Elstub

Ref: [Renewable energy in Germany - Wikipedia, the free encyclopedia](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Renewable_energy_in_Germany)
en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Renewable_energy_in_Germany

Archivz

From the Minutes of Settle Monthly Meeting

1666-1700

Quaker 'Dress Code'

7th day of the 6th month 1695

Frends disallows of long rufes, shews of buttonholes& butons and no holes: gatherings in coatscirts cros pockettholes & butonsw in coatlaps: Caypes on coate necks: hattbands of divers & different Coloures also fringes & buckes on them and also Neesless buckles and nailes on bridles and Sadles and crupons: and twbuttons in one place together on Cuffes and pockettholes as things needless & superfuious.

(Ref: Brotherton Library, Leeds Univ., Quaker Collection Carlton Hill MS. H1 p.173)

Margaret Fell was later to condemn such prohibitions as 'poor, silly stuff.'

Contributed by Jean Asher, Settle LM