

Ipswich & Diss Quakers *Area Meeting Newsletter*



Ipswich



Diss

January 2013



Leiston



Bury St Edmunds



Felixstowe



Needham Market



Woodbridge

Ipswich & Diss Quakers

Area Meeting Newsletter

January 2013

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Eagle-eyed readers may have noticed a change between this and recent Newsletters as a different font is now being used. Comic Sans has given way to the more traditional Times New Roman – with Verdana employed on the cover.

Comic Sans, you may recall, looks like this and if you prefer it to Times New Roman, please let me know - we could always go back to it.

If, on the other hand, you think that there are many more important things to be concerned about, why not write an article about one of them for inclusion in July's Newsletter? The deadline for contributions is Saturday 22nd June. Humorous offerings are also welcome...

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2013 Calendar

Sun 20 Jan Area Meeting at Woodbridge, 2pm
Sun 17 Mar Area Meeting at Ipswich, 2pm
Sun 19 May Area Meeting at Diss, 2pm
Sat 22 Jun Deadline for contributions to July Newsletter
Sat 20 Jul Area meeting at Needham Market, 2pm
Sat 21 Sep Area meeting at Felixstowe, 11am
Sat 16 Nov Area meeting at Bury St Edmunds, 11am

Area Meeting News

A number of deaths during the past half year have to be reported: Joan Young a member of Diss Local Meeting, died in June, and Dunkin Schultz (Needham Market LM), Shirley Hanton (Felixstowe LM), Geoffrey Soar (Ipswich LM) and Penelope Bray (Leiston LM) all died in August.

On a happier note, Andrew Sterling and Norma Laming have been accepted into **membership** and Helena Woddiss (Ipswich LM) has transferred her membership from Kingston & Wandsworth Area Meeting to ours. Meanwhile Joan Hobson and Imogen Wedd have transferred out, to South Wales and West Kent respectively.

A happy note was also struck in August on the occasion of the marriage between Mark and Helen Taylor at Bury St Edmunds Meeting House on Saturday 25th.

New **trustees** have been appointed for the Area Meeting: Nic Wright (from Bury St Edmunds), Simon Lamb (Diss), Diane Sawyer (Felixstowe), Clive Bach & John Randall (Ipswich), David Cadman (Leiston), Angela Schultz (Needham Market) and Enid Kimes (Woodbridge).

A **Media Group**, consisting of Jill Segger, Christina van Melzen and the clerk, Lucy Pollard, has been appointed, to give a Quaker response to current events.

To AM's delight, Honor Turner from Woodbridge LM, has been nominated to attend **Junior Yearly Meeting** and will report back.

On **financial matters**, it is likely that local meetings will be asked for a contribution of £50 per member to Area Meeting funds. A Meeting Houses Fund is also to be set up, seeded by a bequest of £695 for this purpose from Pen Bray.

Various charities have now been consolidated into one: the **Ipswich and Diss Area Meeting Charities** now subsumes the former AM Property Charity, the Richard Waynforth Trust and the Agnes Moss Bequest Trust. Enid Kimes is the treasurer of the new body and there is a full list of members in the minutes of July's AM meeting.

Thought is being given to ways of deepening the **spiritual life of Area Meeting**. One idea to have emerged is to consider engaging with the 'Made of Money' programme, to deepen the life of the spirit through service. This Quaker Social Action programme, which Norma Lamming spoke to AM about in July, involves setting up training courses to help low-income families become more confident in money matters. Not all local meetings have felt confident to deal with this, but AM has asked Norma, helped by Rachel Bach, to take this forward by contacting other local organisations, with a view to recruiting more people to train. An application for financial support will be made to the Suffolk Foundation.

We have been invited by the Anglican diocese of St Edmundsbury & Ipswich to contribute to a book celebrating the centenary of the diocese in 2014. The book will highlight one hundred objects from places within the diocese, through which the history of Christianity can be traced. As objects don't really feature in Quaker practice it was agreed to contribute a photo of, and paragraph about, the Quaker burial in Woodbridge for possible inclusion.

Local Meeting News

Bury St Edmunds LM

There have been two major events since the last newsletter, the first on August 25th when our Friend Helen Roberts married Mark Taylor who has been an attender at Meeting for some time. Many elements came together to make a special day. The Meeting House was beautifully but subtly decorated for the wedding, which was attended by many Friends and friends together with members of the bride and groom's families. The catering was so lavish that there was enough left over for the couple to invite everyone who had been unable to attend the marriage itself for a second wedding breakfast a day or so later. Some of the delicious cake (designed to give a patchwork quilt effect) even made its way into the Meeting House the following Sunday. It almost came as a shock when the food eventually ran out! We all wish Helen and Mark years of peace and happiness together and with their family.

The second event was a series of four Quaker Quest sessions which took place in November, thanks to a great deal of effort by the Planning Team. The subjects were Worship; Money and Integrity; Christianity, and Peace. Three speakers spoke at each session and we were pleased and grateful to be joined in this endeavour by Mike Medhurst and Angela Schultz from Needham Market and Giles Barrow from Woodbridge Meetings. We welcomed a dozen or so 'Questers' to each Saturday afternoon where they listened to the talks, had the opportunity to discuss in small groups and also to question the panel. Following a half hour Meeting for Worship, tea and homemade cakes (in some cases – your reporter cheated!) were served around small, intimate, flower decorated tables and the participants talked long into the afternoon. I spoke to several Questers who said they were really going to miss these Saturday afternoons and wanted us to keep going.

Putting on what amounts to a couple of days of actual Quest obviously requires much involvement and many hours of work from the Meeting. There is planning, hosting, speaking, welcoming, catering, room organising and tidying up afterwards to be done and Friends responded to the challenge with enthusiasm.

We have continued with our sessions of Personal Spiritual Journeys after MfW, on each occasion giving a Friend an opportunity to present some thought provoking discourse, enabling us to know and appreciate each other more fully.

In December we will be hearing about recent trips taken to Russia and Canada by Friends. I am assured that these talks will be accompanied by ethnic, seasonal fare, so definitely plan to be there.

Finally a Friend from Bury Meeting is visiting a Quaker prisoner in Highpoint on a regular basis for MfW. The prisoner has also been joined by another who is interested in the Quaker way. The latter is about to be released and has arranged to attend a Meeting once he is outside. We wish him well and will continue to support our Highpoint inmate who is making as good a use of his time as is possible in these rather uninspiring surroundings.

Germaine Hanbury

Diss LM

Since July Friends in Diss have averaged 15 - 20 at Meeting for Worship. We have held a couple of evening meetings to share our experience of Quaker life with our newer

attenders. This has focussed us all on the journey we share. We plan to continue these discussions in the New Year.

Our bi-monthly collections have been for the renovation of Winchester Meeting House, Ekta Parishad and latterly the Quaker Housing Trust Bursary Appeal. There is also a local initiative, administered by the Citizens Advice Bureau but financed chiefly by Churches Together in Diss, called The Common Purse. This supports people who are waiting for benefits, which can sometimes take weeks to process, by supplying them with vouchers purchased from the Co-op with which they can buy food. We held a sale in support of this project in the Meeting House, and there were so many items left over that a few Friends held a table-top sale the following month.

A social highlight of the summer was a garden party to celebrate the 87th birthday of one of our attenders. Tommy's garden in one of the more remote parts of high Suffolk was a joy (once one had found it) and the weather was all that it should be for a perfect English garden party – the icing on the chocolate cake melted!

As many of you may know, Diss Quakers own a shop in the town, which unfortunately has stood untenanted for well over a year now, a scenario seen again and again in our small towns. However in June the trustees were approached by the Corn Hall Trustees who were looking for a temporary venue in which to house a youth arts project. We have been overjoyed to have the building used for such a joyful community project.

We are looking forward optimistically to a New Year which will begin on the 6th of January after Meeting for Worship with a shared lunch and some home-grown entertainment.

Christina van Melzen

Felixstowe LM

Near the end of December 2012, Pauline and Peter Jackson hosted a 'Christmas' meal for all our members. I believe there around 12 to 14 of us there, not including our hosts. (My hazy memory shows how good it was – I had no interest in counting numbers that evening.) Pauline and Peter are vegetarians and the meal was superb, but the biggest treat was actually being in their period cottage. Peter is a sculptor and painter, and he and Pauline are interested in all forms of art. When the talk in the living-room waned we wandered through Peter's studio admiring his work and Pauline pointed out other pictures on other walls, some by Peter's son Kurt, who is a renowned West Country artist, and one or two by Brian Whelan, a Norfolk-based painter, also extremely well known. Thus the evening included, as well as a season's festive meal, a feast of culture.

Garry Kilworth

J. Shirley Hanton

February 1934 – August 2012

For many years Shirley Hanton was a much loved and respected member of the Area Meeting as well as Felixstowe Meeting. She had been a primary school teacher in Felixstowe and when she retired she became involved in a number of outside interests in addition to the Society of Friends. For many years she was involved in the Portage Scheme which had very close links with MENCAP and involved the support of families who had children with severe learning disabilities; as well as the W.I. and other local community activities such as art and craft.

In 1999 it was Shirley's enthusiasm which encouraged Quakers in Felixstowe to start a recognised Meeting in the town. Her home was often our meeting point for study groups and craft evenings. Her spiritual guidance was evidence of her own convictions, and her commitment to the Meeting was something many of us respected and felt moved by.

Over many years Shirley has been an advocate for fostering closer relations with other local faith communities and I am sure her memory will live on in our hearts for years to come.

Jim Cadbury

Ipswich

Live Adventurously, says Quaker Faith and Practice. And that is what we did on Friday 12th October, welcoming to our Meeting House, a huge school visit of around 150 year 9s from Dovercourt and Harwich School (that's the 13-14 years age group to the rest of us). Four of us, John Randall, Rachel Bach, Heather Bruce and Verna Duncan waited with trepidation that morning for the first batch to arrive. We wondered what on earth we had let ourselves in for once we realised how many were coming, and firmly decided that we certainly could never ever possibly do it again. How wrong we were! It turned out to be a most profound and moving experience and something that had a deep and lasting impact on all of us who were privileged to be there.

The students didn't all visit in one go, but were grouped into four lots (we managed only three in the end due to time limitations), spaced over a period of time during the day. Each visit was fairly short so there wasn't time to spend getting too deeply into Quakerism. There was certainly no time for a history lesson or a lecture on Quaker worthiness and good works, nor did we wish to do that. We were very aware that the students would come from a wide variety of faith backgrounds and from no faith background at all. Instead we warmly welcomed each group into our meeting room where they all sat down to join us in a meeting for worship. Their teacher, who kept them well organised, gave a short introduction and a few of us spoke very briefly of what Meeting for Worship means to each of us, what draws us to come and possibly what we experience when sitting together. Heather also spoke a few words about our testimony to live simply and Quakers' commitment to being a low carbon community. We tried to keep it brief and personal so that the students could relate to what we had to say.

The main focus of the visit was for all of us to sit in Meeting for Worship together, albeit for only a few minutes. The majority certainly had never had the experience of sitting quietly and peacefully. Inevitably there was a certain amount of fidgeting, shuffling and suppressed giggling especially at the start, but the power of the experience had a profound effect on the group - they mostly quietened down and the silence deepened. The Elders shook hands and the teacher asked the students about the experience, what they felt about sitting there, etc. I personally found each of the three short meetings that we held that day were the most enriching and deepest worship that I have experienced for a long time. I truly felt that we were all upheld in the spirit and encompassed by something beyond words. After all 14 year olds aren't alien beings to be wary of, they are lively young human beings at a different stage in life with their own thoughts, feelings and opinions. We felt privileged to be able to reach out and spend some time with them. We hope that the students went away having experienced something a bit special and different that day.

We will certainly do it all again!

Six Ipswich Quakers gave out leaflets during the military parade through Ipswich on November 5th. The leaflets were not at all provocative but merely asked people to also remember the thousands of innocent people who are killed or wounded.

Frances Blackwell then gave a Quaker point of view to Radio Suffolk on Armistice Day.

Rachel Bach and Eric Walker

Leiston LM

I write this having not been to Meeting from mid-August to mid-November. An ankle fracture kept me housebound for that time, but Friends kept me informed when they visited. It was an interesting experience for me; to not be able to go, but to feel part of the Meeting nonetheless.

Another Bring and Take sale took place during Quaker week. This has now become a regular twice a year outreach event.

A lot of building work has been done in the Meeting House. The leaking skylight in the Neave Room has been repaired and as the result of the Quinquennial inspection other repairs are being done and also some of the heaters are being replaced.

In November we were pleased to welcome members from the Woodbridge Meeting, made homeless on Remembrance Sunday from their usual meeting place. Frank made his usual delicious soup for lunch afterwards. Leiston LM also hosted the AM, after which another delicious lunch was served. I was able to go so I can bear witness to this!

In December, we had a Meeting for Worship which included the interment of Pen Bray's ashes in the burial ground. Jeremy Greenwood became the 'honorary elder' for the occasion, and the Meeting House was full. Pen's family attended and it was good to meet them all. Pen is very much with us still.

So now, at the time of writing, preparations are afoot for Christmas; the traditional programmed meeting and the Christmas Day meal in the Meeting House of course, but also, perhaps, a Mexican band.

Deborah Thornton

Needham Market LM

Our Sunday Meeting location at Christchurch has many advantages and opportunities. We have been involved in setting up a food bank in Stowmarket, and a box in the porch has donations from both church and Meeting.

Each year Christchurch holds a Christmas tree festival, and this year we had a tree to celebrate peace. We provided paper doves on which visitors were invited to write a message of peace. Over 50 doves were written with messages seeking peace in Palestine, and in particular in Bethlehem. Afghanistan and Syria were also cited. The child who had written "peas at Christmas" perhaps didn't want brussels sprouts.

We continue to have a regular average attendances at Meeting of 6, with occasional visitors taking our numbers higher.

Individual members are working with sex offenders, musical production, welfare benefits etc.

Geoffrey Brogden

Woodbridge LM

Woodbridge Local Meeting has been able to share worship with quite a few visitors and more regular attenders over the last half of the year. Average numbers meeting on a Sunday morning do seem to have grown lately. On our behalf, two of our members have increased their involvement in the local Churches Together group, including attending 'story assemblies' in primary schools and assisting with the collection of items for the food bank

operating from the Salvation Army Hall. This has raised our profile with local church goers. In addition one of our monthly appeals was, unusually, on behalf of the adjacent St Mary's Church tower repair fund. One of our number is also a very active member of this church.

We are now holding a regular midweek Meeting for Worship in the Seckford Alms Houses in Woodbridge. These take place on the third Tuesday of the month at 2:15pm for 2:30 and are well attended.

Further to Karl Gibbs' visit to us for the Vibrancy in Meeting session last June, we held a Question and Answer session on the 7th October for those wishing to deepen their understanding. Three Friends with varying backgrounds and experience spoke briefly about themselves and their Quaker faith. This was then opened for comments and questions during which the session evolved into a general sharing that provided insight for those newer to the Meeting and deepened our sense of community. It is hoped that we will follow this in 2013 with four local Exploring Quaker Faith and Practice sessions possibly with a view to running a future Quaker Quest series.

On the 21st of October we enjoyed a balanced talk on Sustainability by a local small-holder and were inspired by her large collection of books.

The Shire Hall where we meet was unavailable on the 11th November as it is used for the town's Remembrance Service. A group of Friends were made welcome by Leiston Meeting and shared lunch afterwards. The Shire Hall was also at the centre of the cycle Tour of Britain's visit to Woodbridge during the summer. It was difficult to approach the town, but as the room was still available to us, the Sunday Meeting went ahead amid the crowds albeit with a smaller number of Friends than usual.

We look forward to welcoming Friends to Woodbridge again for the forthcoming Area Meeting on Sunday the 20th January.

Joy Porter

REPORTS

Meeting for Sufferings

Much has been dealt with in the last two meetings, from the sharing of Registering Officers between Area Meetings (local trialling and testing is endorsed) to nuclear waste at Cumbria (Sufferings to support Swarthmore LM in their efforts to gain government commitment to better containment).

Major discussions have concerned fostering the vitality and spiritual depth of the Society, and our attitude to sustainability.

Supporting the Vibrancy of Meetings project is seen as a way forward on the first of these. Trustees have recognised a change in the demographic of the Society: older

Friends, more steeped in traditional ways, are gradually dying out, whilst newer Friends and Attenders are less familiar with Quaker discipline and governance. The reasons for people attending meetings for worship have become more varied and increasingly individuals are alone in their families in pursuing their faith. Representatives recognised that some meetings are struggling and stand somewhat isolated.

There is concern that Area Meetings are becoming detached from the centrally managed work, with a disconnect between local worship excitement and the Society as a whole. Area Meetings are no longer vibrant yet are still the link between the local and national. There remains a need to thresh the role of the Quaker organisation and its committees; we need to be able to counter the “very local” Society and re-create a sense of wholeness. *Should we develop a joint volume of the Framework and the Advices and Queries for use in our meetings?*

The Society’s attitude to sustainability has also exercised MfS. Two members of the ‘Minute 36 Group’, dealing with the issue, were present in December, plus Sunniva Taylor, the staff member taking this work forward from BYM 2011. The Group members asked for help in finding a way forward and clarifying their role and their task. Their first question was whether this really is a spiritual issue for Friends. Only 40% of meetings responded to their survey and there was much discussion about why this would be. MfS representatives are invited to find out what the reasons are (in very simple terms, rather than long explanations) from the LMs in their own Area Meeting and to identify any further support they might need in living out this commitment.

There was a call for greater Spirit-led stewardship on a concern that was felt to be urgent and overwhelming for some. It was acknowledged that this concern is not seen by all as a Spiritual one, but it was agreed that any examples of good practice and new ideas could be passed to Sunniva Taylor. The Area Meeting might be a more effective level to consider the spiritual angle of the commitment and coordinate efforts to eliminate the isolation of individual meetings. Links with other faith groups might also help raise the spirituality of Friends’ approach to this.

Fuller reports on the October and December meetings have been lodged with the Area Meeting clerk, should anyone wish to know more.

Based on reports from Elaine Green

‘Speaking Truth to Power’

Quaker Action on Alcohol and Drugs (QAAD) Conference

Sandra Hobbs and Helena Chambers of QAAD began the conference by suggesting that addiction and gambling are issues within our wider society which we as Quakers may not stand apart from. Quakers have a responsibility to improve society and, as religion is about the whole of life, we should take social action by lobbying MPs to achieve social justice. Lauren Parkes introduced us to the Leaveners group, who mounted an amusing & illuminating history of Quakers ‘Speaking Truth to Power’ and how it has developed through different times.

Whilst I had supposed that I might be the only recovering alcoholic Quaker amongst the 40 or so people attending the conference, I found that there were 7 other alcoholic addicts, and members of other 12-step fellowships. One alcoholic relapsed whilst there. However, it transpired that - despite the title of the conference - we were there to explore gambling, and the consequences of de-regulating casinos in the 2005 Gambling Act.

On the second day we looked at where our ‘Truths’ come from. Quakers and representatives of other faith groups led us to conceive of a ‘Coalition of the Willing’, i.e.

people willing to change the *status quo* of a political system which allows gambling to be advertised as a desirable thing, targeting ‘problem’ gamblers in regions of increasing poverty & austerity. We were given instances of the lobbying of MPs and the effectiveness of such actions in yielding social changes. Emphasis was placed upon using the spirit of love rather than arguing for the sake of winning an argument, for love and humility will overcome hostility and opposition.

After the 2005 Gambling Act, QAAD, other faith groups and The Daily Mail successfully lobbied to get the potential number of new proposed Super Casinos ‘capped’ to no more than 15. The gambling industry duly shifted the focus of its attention to source money and gamblers in other ways. We currently face the ‘Truth’ that there may be as many as four betting shops from the same chain within half a mile of each other. Some of these now use F.O.B.T.S (Fixed odds betting terminals) which are a much greater threat to ‘problem’ gamblers. There is now no longer any need to prove that there is a demand for a new betting shop: they can be put up at will. The amount of money taken at terminals is now greater than that taken ‘over the counter’.

The suggestion was put forward that Quakers could be using Facebook and other social networks to set up survey pages, showing how many betting shops have been opened in their areas over the last seven years, since the Act was passed. Local Authorities may well be stymied in rejecting planning applications for such premises, however, as the ‘category code’ for betting shops is the same as the one used for banks or estate agents: the code specifies ‘Financial Services’. We should press to have this code changed for one which more specifically implies gambling.

Anglicans, Salvation Army, United Reformists and Methodists’ work and input all contributed to this conference. We examined how our experiences of addictive behaviour can inform the ‘Truths’ we share. We then went on to explore how best to convey our Truths to the media and politicians. One speaker had become directly involved in a Council of Faith’s committee, monitoring a casino which has been built right between two major educational facilities in Middlesbrough. He showed us how casino managers had been encouraged to identify and exclude problem gamblers, and to encourage the borderline to ‘self-exclude’. He is urging these managers to develop their own social responsibility policies, and to implement them.

The third day dawned bright and clear. We held a plenary meeting at which all were free to speak. The 12-Step fellows of AA, NA, FA and Al-Anon, for addicts and their families, finally got a word in edgeways, and spoke up about their truths regarding alcoholism and addiction. There was a lively interplay between those who seek to promote ‘prevention’ through social action and those of us who mop up the aftermath of addiction. Sandra Hobbs concluded the conference with a quotation from Mark Twain: “If you go fishing for love bait your hook with heart, not mind.”

With Love, Peace and Light.

Adrian Bird

Including Everyone

Report on a Quaker Disability Equality Group course held at Peterborough Meeting House in November, with course tutors Eleanor Tew and Jackie Fowler.

Gathering at 10am on a wet and windy day, we had plenty of time to meet each other and chat before the course formally started. We were there to explore the spiritual, social and practical implications of the query: “Across the Yearly Meeting there are many Friends

who have a disability, how do you faithfully uphold our testimony to equality in relation to these Friends?”

The aims of the course were to include all in the life of the Meeting, and to deepen our understanding of disability.

In small groups we tried to define disability, mentioning invisible as well as more obvious problems, such as: lack of confidence, of fluency, of knowledge or IT skills; poverty or difficult family circumstances. Being in a minority group can also be disabling.

We were then given two official definitions. From the Disability Discrimination Act: “A person has a disability if he has a physical or mental impairment which has a substantial and long-term adverse effect on his ability to carry out normal day-to-day activities.” And from the British Council of Disabled People: “inability to perform an activity within the normal range for a human being, because of an impairment.”

A member of our group gave another definition: “Disability is having needs which society is not ready to meet.”

We were given the leaflet printed by the Quaker Disability Equality Group (QDEG), describing and explaining how the group got started. Its aims, achievements so far and future plans were stated. Ways of supporting the group were indicated:

- *Members and attenders are invited to join and there is no joining fee, but donations are welcomed*
- *Local Meetings can make an annual donation and thus become a Supporting Meeting. This is an efficient way of giving financial viability to QDEG*
- *Ask questions within our own Meeting about how we can faithfully uphold our testimony to equality in relation to Friends with disabilities*
- *Join the email group to enable networking and sharing among members*

Later we considered case studies and tried to find ways of solving particular problems, such as those caused by grief, depression and anxiety as well as the practicalities of physical and sensory impairment. One conclusion we came to was that all medical conditions affect how we cope socially. The key to dealing with these difficulties is having good relationships within the Quaker community.

We also acknowledged that in suffering there is a spiritual dimension from which we can sometimes gain insight: that someone with a disability has much to contribute to the spiritual life of the meeting.

After lunch we shared and celebrated successes:

- access improvements with ramps for wheelchairs; electric door openers; taxi services; greeters to arrange dropping off or meeting people; flexibility with arrival and departure times
- wheelchair users having the choice of where to sit, like everyone else.
- seating suited to needs, e.g. lumber rolls to aid comfort
- extra Meetings in the homes of those who cannot travel to the MH; Meetings held at different times.
- Ministry being written down and shared with someone who has memory problems
- hearing loops and large print copies of the Bible, Advices and Queries and QF&P.

Our next task was to find solutions to a given problem. My group’s scenario was about someone who was losing their sight and who wanted to attend a study group, but was finding that the new energy saving bulbs were not bright enough for them to see.

Each group acted out to the rest of the course members, a scene depicting their given problem and it became clear that some common reasons for disability-related needs not being met were:

- ignorance of what the needs are
- the needs being misunderstood, ignored or forgotten
- the cost being considered too high – in time, energy or money
- conflicts between the needs of different Friends and / or of the wider community.

Next came a short break followed by time to consider what we individually, and as Meetings, could do to improve things, before a short closing period of worship.

My own list of things to do includes: reporting back to Meeting; finding out if we are a Supporting Meeting; joining the e-mail group, and finding out current needs of my LM. Reflections on the needs of Bury Meeting – and others?

Several adaptations have been made in our building to accommodate wheelchair users, those with mobility problems and those who are hard of hearing. But disabilities change and those who use the building change and we need to regularly check that we are meeting everyone's needs. I suggest sending out a questionnaire to everyone who uses the MH to get an up-to-date picture of the situation. It might also be helpful to call a meeting, which looks purely at disability and equality concerns

Gabrielle Rutter

<p style="text-align: center;">R.S.P.B. ABC Minsmere, Minsmere by the sea - Avocet, Bittern, Sizerwell C. <i>Pam Gosling</i></p>
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VIEWS and THOUGHTS

Morality in public life

In Britain today, many people are angered by the destructive greed they have seen among those with power and influence within our society: bankers, CEOs of multi-national companies, politicians and media barons. At the same time, austerity measures are falling disproportionately on those who were not responsible for the financial crisis and who have the fewest resources with which to resist.

People across the board are experiencing a strong sense of injustice, and are looking for a better way. There is a hunger for a more ethical structure to our common life, and a searching for values around which we can unite.

As Quakers, we can offer at least a stimulus to this search. By upholding our testimonies to truth, simplicity, equality and peace in our personal lives, and by demanding the highest standards of integrity and honesty from our public figures, perhaps we can offer a different perspective and a basis for debate - even perhaps, for a national conversation. However, we can only challenge others if we ourselves are prepared to adhere to the same standards we expect of them.

We can only be truthful if we inform ourselves as far as possible. Recognising complexity, we can try not to make broad-brush statements about particular groups. We can remember that imagination, kindness and a willingness to listen are all essential components of truthfulness.

Our understanding of truth may change over time, but it cannot be changed at will by politicians or anyone else. There are basic standards of honesty, openness and integrity that, as individuals and as citizens of a democratic society, we try to uphold. We are reminded by Jesus' Sermon on the Mount that it is the least powerful who are blessed.

Ipswich & Diss AM media group, December 2012

Investing in a Quakerly Way

QPortfolio is a new way of buying shares in ethical companies. I heard of the idea a while ago and thought that other Suffolk Quakers might like to hear of it. The website address is <http://www.qportfolios.co.uk/>.

My impression is that with this system one would be paying a smaller amount in administration charges than by buying shares in other ethical funds - and also the people choosing which shares to buy seem to be much more accessible to comments than is usually the case.

The QPortfolios are a set of ethically screened investment fund packages managed by King and Shaxson Ltd., overseen by a Governance Committee of Quakers.

Launched in 2011, the QPortfolios are the brainchild of leading sustainable investment expert and Quaker, Alan Kirkham. With over twenty years of experience in this field, Alan has focused on many fields of socially responsible investment such as pensions, mortgages, health insurance, life insurance and investment packages.

There are two sizes of package: one portfolio which holds between £25,000 and £150,000 and one which holds in excess of £150,000. Each investor owns their own portfolio of shares; however, each portfolio will be managed in parallel with the others. This means that the investor remains the beneficial owner of the underlying assets.

Although each portfolio may have a different amount invested, the make-up of that portfolio will be the same. The £25,000-£150,000 portfolio will consist of fewer companies in order to ensure a sensible level of holding.

The QPortfolios will contain a mixture of company shares and corporate bonds. This has the benefit of lowering the total cost of running the portfolio as no fund charges are incurred. It also gives the investor access to investments that have high minimums which they could not get access to when purchased individually.

Investors will have purchased their own portfolio of equities and corporate bonds. These can be cashed in at any time or can be placed under the management of another investment manager.

The Ethical Profile

There is an emphasis on finding companies that are open to influence on matters of concern to Quakers. An initial investment environment has been set but this is open to challenge by individual investors. Any concerns will be raised with the companies and a response will be provided to the investor.

There are obvious initial areas of exclusion such as armaments, unfair trade with developing countries and pornography, and others will be added as the investor group makes its voice heard.

However, the portfolios are not essentially exclusion based. They look to invest in companies whose activities are acceptable or who are open to discussion on the areas of concern. "We see the influence that this Quaker voice has goes directly to the heart of the City". This is one of the most important purposes of the portfolios. Using data from a number of external sources, the Governance Committee has set the initial ethical profile for this scheme and, because investors will have influence over the ethical criteria, it will

develop to reflect their concerns.

The Governing Committee has given King and Shaxson a detailed ethical investment mandate which aims to maximise exposure to companies with positive ethical practices and to minimise exposure to companies with poor records in any area of social responsibility.

The Committee will be continually working with King and Shaxson to campaign particularly on issues such as links with arms, companies, environmental policy and employment practice.

For more information about the ethical criteria, please contact the Chair of the Governance Committee, Alan Kirkham

Eric Walker

The Importance of Being...

In the early 19th century it was customary for new parents to reach for the Bible in their search for a name for their baby, which must have been very useful to one Nottingham miner and his wife. They had already had to find names for eighteen sons and daughters when a grand final pregnancy resulted in babies nineteen, twenty and twenty-one. The Bible did not let them down. They found the perfect names for their triplet boys in Daniel, chapter 3 – Shadrach, Meshach and Abednego. Abednego became a renowned bare-knuckle fighter and was later equally renowned as an evangelist although, unlike his parents, he never learnt to read the Bible which had provided his name.

Subsequently the Bible seems to have slipped from favour as regards naming, though some years ago a friend told me that if he had had three daughters he would have named them Faith, Hope and Charity. As it was, he had three sons and called them Tom, Dick and Harry. The second son, now in his fifties, still considers that he drew the short straw.

So some recent names are perhaps not quite as way out as they may appear. Through a number of years I have had the pleasure of knowing, amongst others, the following: Georgia, Carolina and Virginia. (The fourth baby was a boy – Nevada. He was almost Dakota.) Then there were the brothers Ford and Mercedes, and their dogs – not Rover, but Chelsea and Arsenal. I have also known Fate and Destiny, Spring and Summer, and Paris and Rome. But no Brooklyn!

My gold medal, however, goes to an American mother who named her daughter Briana. She liked the name so much that she called her second daughter Briana. She liked the name so much that she changed her own name to Briana.

Glenda Goulding

[Glenda has been a school governor for a number of years!]

Night Train From London

I always have some trepidation about travelling on late weekend trains back to Ipswich from London. On previous journeys I had witnessed several instances of unruly behaviour but on this occasion the carriage I was in seemed a quiet one. However, one minute from departure six men in their late twenties came in, settling into seats close by, one opposite me. Immediately the noise level rose. I carried on reading but noted that their choice of language was reasonable, their drinks non-alcoholic and that they quickly agreed to share the cost if the ticket inspector insisted on one of them paying for his lost ticket.

Talk continued, mainly of places visited in London: they appeared to be on a stag night. Then they discussed whether to have a few beers back in Ipswich, or to go on to a night club. By now two of them were sprawled across their seats, 'sleeping it off'.

After a while I stopped reading, as one of them started to tell the others about the 'Alpha, The Meaning of Life' course he was attending. A relatively serious discussion followed, which embraced God, Mormons, other religions and the fact that the course participant admitted going to the local church on Sundays as it would help his child to get into the nearby Church of England Primary school. One of them noticed I had been listening intently and asked me directly if I was religious. Now Friends are not noted for proselytising but as I had been invited to join in, I did so. There then followed a long discussion about Quakers, their history, beliefs and form of worship. Surprisingly no one objected when I stated our total opposition to all wars.

The discussion widened to cover the church's attitude to homosexuality and whether Steve Wright, the convicted murderer of five Ipswich 'street workers', could be forgiven, if he confessed, repented and tried to atone, in the rest of his life, for what he had done. Just to balance the discussion, one of those 'sleeping it off' was obviously partially awake, punctuating our conversation with the occasional expletive and repeatedly telling us his negative views of all religions.

By now we were on Christian name terms and I noticed that a woman who got on at Colchester turned round several times to observe us, probably as surprised as I was by the subject matter. On three occasions the ticket inspector approached and each time they gave dire whispered warnings to the one who had lost his ticket. Each time the inspector went straight past, without stopping.

I shook their hands as we parted at Ipswich. Though I would like to conclude by saying one or more of them has subsequently visited our Meeting, to my knowledge none has. It was, however, an interesting and stimulating way to pass the journey - and also a salutary lesson to me not to judge others on first impressions, even on a late night weekend train back from London.

Richard Stewart



1915

The weary gleaner
dragging her skirts
in the early dew
turned homeward.
A baby on her arm,
a child clinging
to her free hand,
a bag of corn
on her back.

The cottage door
stood wide, a boy
puny but grown
sat at the table
tired head on tired hands.
Potatoes on the hob
tended by a girl child
soon to be sent
into service.

Father stood proudly
uniformed and framed
above the hearth.

Christina van Melzen