

Minutes of a meeting of Quakers in Yorkshire held at Sheffield on 18 October 2008

Representatives

Brighouse West Yorkshire: David Robson, Jeanette Hattersley, Lilian Wrigley, Jill Mollitt, Jean Elliott

Central Yorkshire: Arthur Pritchard

Craven and Keighley: Rodney Hooper, Chris Petrie, Evelyn Shire, Alison Tyas, Anna Young

Leeds: Peter Rice, Donald Purves, Janet Naudin, Audrey Acton, Eileen Fowler, Quentin Fowler

Pickering and Hul: Erica Rigby, Brenda Rigby

Sheffield and Balby: Romayne Gayton, Sue Goodson, Matt Robson, June Lewis, Frances Morgan, Chris Love, Roy Love, Maurice Wilson, Richard Hoare

York: Madelaine Kay, Margaret Vernon, Joyce Pickard, Barbara Robinson, Morris Robinson

Minute 1 Welcome

We have been welcomed to Sheffield by June Lewis.

Minute 2 Ecumenical Accompaniers (EA) Programme in Palestine & Israel (EAPPI)

Doreen Fotherby, an Anglican priest and EA, graphically showed us the 40 year occupation by photographs of an eight metre wall slicing through communities, splitting families from one other and from all local amenities. It does not follow recognised international borders, but cuts indigenous people from their own farmland and other work areas. We saw checkpoints, well inside the West Bank, creating enormous daily chaos as people take at least an hour and a half, twice daily to reach work, university or hospital.

We saw an example of the way that roadblocks, formed of huge earth mounds and effectively splitting a village in half, appear overnight and prevent Palestinians driving in their own locality. Meanwhile a newly built Israeli settlement nearby has its own modern road system, one which the Palestinians are not allowed to use.

Palestinians with land in the wrong place - i.e. near the security fence - are denied building permits. Being desperate, they build anyway. Forced demolition frequently follows, even if the house stands on land that has been in the owner's family for generations. We saw a house,

demolished because an alleged terrorist was inside, after the extended family had been given 15 minutes to get out. The father remains gaoled for at least 18 months. Doreen concluded by expressing her conviction that the occupation must end.

Matt Robson from Sheffield Meeting has acted as an EA twice. On the second occasion he concentrated on finding about and supporting the Israeli peace movement. He pointed out that the Israeli army is largely made up of young conscripts facing a situation they fear, without much supervision. The older women of the peace movement "Maxsonwatch" play a crucial role in calming the tensions and improving military behaviour at flashpoints, and in telling other Israelis what is happening in their name.

Matt also met bereaved parents working for peace. The group set up a telephone line Shalom-Salaam, after an Israeli dialled a Gaza number in error and found himself actually talking to a Palestinian. Bereaved parents see breaking down the psychological stereotypes and irrational fears about "the other side" as essential and these freephone calls as a way to do so. Through summer camps children can actually meet someone from the "enemy" for the first time. Matt gave us other impressive examples of Israeli attempts to promote peace but stressed that the numbers involved in the peace movement are very small.

We thank both our speakers for a very strong and disturbing presentation and are anxious to hear this afternoon what we can do.

Minute 3 Appointments

The Nominations Committee brings forward the names of the following Friends for service, or release, as indicated:-

Breckenbrough School Trustees

Released immediately - Ford Longman.

Released from 31 December 2008 - Barbara Jean Borthwick.

To complete a term of service from now until 31 December 2009 - Graham Ralph (Friargate).

To complete a term of service from 1 January 2009 until 31 December 2009 - Mike Cassie (attender at High Flatts).

The Mount

To serve a second term of 4 years from 1 January 2009 until 31 December 2012 - Susan Dickinson (Kirby Moorside).

North Yorkshire Standing Advisory Committee on Religious Education

To serve a second term of 3 years from 1 January 2009 until 31 December 2011 - Rebecca Clare (Ackworth).

Glenthorne Management Committee

To serve a first term of 4 years from 1 January 2009 until 31 December 2012 - Bernard Alloway (Huddersfield) [currently serving as a co-opted member].

These names being acceptable, our Friends are duly appointed.

We thank Friends who have been released for their service and also those who complete their

term of service at the end of the year.

Minute 4 Education Grants Committee

At our meeting held on 26 April 2008 it was reported that the Education Grants Committee had suggested that their work be taken over by the Finance and Trusts Committee (Minute 6). The Finance and Trusts Committee at their meeting on 5 July 2008 agreed to accept the additional responsibility.

We therefor agree that the responsibilities of the Education Grants Committee should be transferred to the Finance and Trusts Committee. The members of this committee are appointed to the Education Grants Committee and will in future be the trustees of the Rawdon Friends School Trust.

We thank the Friends who have served on the Education Grants Committee (Colin Henderson, Stuart Humby, Christopher Moore, Christopher Jones, Joyce Pickard, Gerard Wakeman). We also thank Edward Brown for his service as secretary to the Committee over many years.

Minute 5 List of Members

David Olver reports that the compilation of the 2009 List of Members is well under way. About a quarter of Local Meetings have submitted their lists. All other meetings are encouraged to send their data to Brian Bone as soon as possible. It is hoped to publish the List early in 2009.

Minutes authorising the printing of the names have been received from Central Yorkshire, Leeds, Pickering and Hull, Sheffield and Balby Area Meetings. Minutes are awaited from Brighouse West Yorkshire, Craven and Keighley and York Area Meetings.

Minute 6 Future of Quakers in Yorkshire

David Olver has briefed us on the likely future arrangements for Quakers in Yorkshire. Arrangements Committee recommends that the current pattern of holding quarterly meetings, usually on the third Saturday of January, April, July and October should continue. The aim will be to provide topics which cover the spirit and testimonies of Quakerism and add value to what is provided by Area and Local Meetings.

Now that the larger Area Meetings are registering as separate charities, it is likely that the Finance and Trusts Committee will recommend that Quakers in Yorkshire register as a charity, perhaps using our existing Yorkshire General Meeting Charity. The charity will be an umbrella for activities which cover the seven area meetings and include Quaker Outreach Yorkshire and the under 19's activities.

Minute 7 Ecumenical Accompaniers - part 2: What we can do

We are very grateful to Matt Robson and Doreen Fotherby for the useful QPSW/EAPPI list of practical and supportive activities that they have provided and for their comments on each. Friends may want to photocopy the list and pass it on. Hilary Brown, Gill Chadwick and Paul Raymond are all acting as EAs now, or will soon be doing so. We encourage Area & Local Meetings to invite them to speak on their return. Today's presentations has been all too fascinating and informative.

Minute 8 Northern Friends Peace Board

We have heard from Ann Bettys and Frances Morgan about the current work of the Northern Friends Peace Board. Ann Bettys is the current clerk of the trustees and Frances Morgan is the previous clerk.

The Northern Friends Peace Board was founded in 1913 to “advise and encourage Friends in the North about the active promotion of peace”. Since the start it has produced many publications to inform Friends and others on peace issues. Recently it has concentrated on “challenging militarism”, “building a culture of peace” and “roots of violence and conflict”. The work is done through programmes which raise awareness, support Friends in local activities and speak truth to power.

A conference was held at Huddersfield in March 2008 on “Tackling Racism: Building Peace”. This was the third in a series and proved very valuable.

Under the heading of challenging militarism, meetings for worship are held regularly at Menwith Hill and Fylingdales. Friends are encouraged to attend these meetings. Details can be obtained from the NFPB web-site (<http://nfpb.gn.apc.org/>), or from Philip Austin who is the Coordinator, based in Bolton. In the future, they hope to encourage more young people to take part in this witness.

We have worked in pairs to explore how Friends and Meetings can be involved in challenging militarism.

We thank Ann Bettys and Frances Morgan for their informative report.

Minute 9 Yearly Meeting Gathering 2009

We have welcomed Paul Parker and Lizz Roe who are the co-Clerks of the Yearly Meeting Gathering 2009 Planning Group.

The Yearly Meeting Gathering will be held at the University of York from 25 July to 1 August 2009. This is the first of two experimental events and is a fusion of Yearly Meeting, Summer Gathering and Junior Yearly Meeting. The theme will be “Creating Community: Creating Connections”.

We have heard of the plans for the event and the considerable work already undertaken by

the Planning Group.

We have considered in groups 3 sets of queries and advices which are intended to make us aware of the ways in which we can all be involved in preparing for the Yearly Meeting Gathering. Questions arising from the groups have been answered by Lizz Roe and Paul Parker.

A particular concern for us is how the strands of business, worship and community will be integrated. The aims will be to offer a programme which allows Friends to weave their way through the strands to form a strong community in which the discernment of the yearly meeting can be found. Material is being produced so that local meetings can prepare, share and contribute to the Gathering.

We thank Paul Parker and Lizz Roe for leading us in this informative session.

Concluding Minute

We thank Sheffield Friends for their hospitality today and look forward to meeting again in Leeds on Saturday 17 January 2009, God willing.

David Olver
Barbara Windle