

Minutes of a meeting of Quakers in Yorkshire held at Bootham Junior School, York on 25 April 2009

Representatives

Brighouse West Yorkshire: Jean Elliott, Jill Mollitt

Central Yorkshire: Andrew Brown

Craven and Keighley: Sylvia Boyes, Alastair Cook, Chris Petrie, Evelyn Shire, Alison Tyas

Leeds: Judith Acton, Angela Dale, Janet Naudin, Donald Purves, Peter Rice, Edward Starkie

Pickering and Hull: Dena Hebditch, Winifred Smith, Heather Ubolley

Sheffield and Balby: Keith Burdett, Maurice Wilson

York: Hilary Evens, Nicholas Evens, Susan Hartshorne, Ann Holt, Peter Jarman, David Rubinstein, Ann Strauss, Kurt Strauss

Minute 1 Testimony

We have had read to us a testimony to the Grace of God as shown in the life of our Friend Ralph Candelatt Hirst. We agree to endorse this testimony and thank the Friends who prepared it.

Minute 2 The Work of The Retreat

Sheila Moore of Friargate Meeting, co-chairperson of The Retreat Governors, has reported to us on developments over the past 4 to 5 years since the last report was given. The other co-chairperson is Rob Griffiths of Harrogate Meeting. There are 24 Governors of whom four are appointed by Quakers in Yorkshire. The Governors appoint Directors, of whom there are nine. The Directors are the decision makers and the majority of their number must be Quakers.

The Retreat strives to bring together all aspects of care to create a peaceful, proactive and positive community. At the present time there are 100 beds of which 87 are occupied, none of the occupants are Quakers. There are 280 employees at the hospital of whom three are Members and one is an Attender.

Sheila told us about the work under the headings:

(1) Matters of direct relevance to Friend which included the development of a multi-faith room, the work with inmates at HM Prison Full Sutton, green policies and social responsibility initiatives;

- (2) Finances which are sound, if not always secure, as they rely on NHS referrals for 90% of their income. Surpluses are used to fund developments;
- (3) Staffing where changes have kept up with best practice;
- (4) Clinical developments where the latest inspection met all standards bar one (and that nearly) and risk management has been improved. There was one unfortunate suicide in 2007 which is always a risk in any psychiatric hospital but lessons have been learnt from it;
- (5) Upgrade of areas is a continuing programme to improve old buildings and make good use of the extensive grounds for recreation and therapy. A new project is establishing a low to medium secure unit for females as a joint venture with another organisation.

Sheila said that everyone at The Retreat was pleased to have regained the respect and regard of other professional health bodies and they try to incorporate Quaker principles and values in all they do.

We then broke into four groups looking at: (a) clinical aspects and referrals led by Gill Smith; (b) spirituality and the work of The Retreat led by Annie Borthwick; (c) detained patients and the Mental Health Act and its use led by Sheila Moore; (d) models of recovery led by Rob Griffiths

We have been impressed by the range of healing undertaken at The Retreat and the commitment to personal approaches to care. We strongly support all the staff, directors and governors in their important work. We thank Sheila Moore and the group leaders for their interesting and informative reports.

Minute 3 Glenthorne Welcome Project for Asylum Seekers

Anne Tunnicliffe has told us about the Glenthorne Welcome project which aims to provide respite breaks for asylum seekers and refugees.

2008 saw three pilot weekends which offered holidays for refugees. The Quaker ethos is embedded in Glenthorne and extends to the Welcome project with 'befrienders' who facilitate all aspects of the weekends. Many challenges had to be overcome. The comments of participants has been very positive and they seem to have benefited from the breaks.

Financially, the project has been successful due to the generous donations from Northern meetings and Friends who responded to the Appeal last year. There are to be further weekends this year and it is hoped to continue the project in the future.

We heard in detail from Liz Watson about the first weekend where she was the main befriender. She told us of the tragic backgrounds of the refugees who currently live in Blackburn. The participants benefited from the peace and beauty of the Lake District and were able to relax in friendly surroundings.

We thank Anne Tunnicliffe and Liz Watson for their reports and for telling us about this fantastic project.

Minute 4 Finance and Trusts Committee

The annual report for 2008 from the Finance and Trusts Committee have been distributed and is filed with the minutes. The year saw relatively low levels of activity in the finances of Quakers in Yorkshire. Work has started to consolidate the accounts of Quaker Outreach Yorkshire, Yorkshire Friends Holiday School, Junior Holidays and the Link Group.

The Committee has prepared a draft governing document so that Quakers in Yorkshire can be registered as a separate charity. This is needed following the registration as charities of the larger area meetings. The charity would include all the QiY groups, i.e. Quaker Outreach Yorkshire, Yorkshire Friends Holiday School, Junior Holidays and the Link Group. It would give a formal recognition to the present governance arrangements. The draft will be consulted on widely and will need the approval of all the seven area meetings as well as ourselves before implementation.

We thank the Committee for their report and service on our behalf.

Minute 5 2009 List of Members and Attenders

The 2009 List of Member and Attenders was published in March and about 550 copies have been distributed to meetings and members at a cost of £5 each.

Brian Bone, who compiled the List, has thanked everyone who assisted him in a task which he found enjoyable because he was able to interact with so many friendly Friends.

Minute 6 Appointments

The Nominations Committee brings forward the names of the following Friends for service.

Breckenbrough School

We appoint Mike Casey (High Flatts) and Graham Ralph (York Friargate) to serve first full terms as trustees and governors of Breckenbrough School for four years from 1 January 2010 to 31 December 2013.

Bootham School

We appoint Mike Stanger (Kingston & Wandsworth) to serve a second term on Bootham School Committee for four years from 1 January 2010 to 31 December 2013.

Minute 7 Yearly Meeting Gathering

We have been updated on planning for the Yearly Meeting Gathering in York as follows:

Registration:

(i) Residential: Anyone hoping for a residential place should send in a booking form quickly; the remaining places are very limited. Gatherers will hear about their booking at or around the end of April.

(ii) Non-residents: Large numbers of non-resident Gatherers are expected. The practicalities of an event including Yearly Meeting and a huge range of daily activities mean it is important that non-residents should book in advance. This will ensure the right accommodation, facilities, refreshments etc are available.

Everyone who books will receive a Welcome Pack, Documents in Advance and Epistles and Testimonies.

Reminder:

Every member of BYM is entitled to attend any business session of the Yearly Meeting as of right.

Suggested donation:

Residential Yearly Meeting involves considerable extra resource and organisational costs, including a substantial charge for Central Hall. The cost of a day visitor attending Yearly Meeting sessions and some of the many other day and early evening activities is calculated at about £30 daily. Day visitors are asked to consider this cost to BYM when deciding what will be a suitable donation for them to make.

Visits:

Planners are grateful for the many Yorkshire Friends willing to help make the visits work, whether as group leaders or as part of a meeting offering hospitality. The Planning Group has now decided which visits are to go ahead, so the Visits sub-group will be contacting everyone who will be involved. The following 8 visits (one is a local visit) have been cancelled as numbers of those booking were uneconomic: Cruckley Farm, Day at Seaside, Fountains Abbey/Studley Royal, Moors & Coast, Moors Railway, Leeds Medical Museum, Helmsley & Rievaulx, Rosedale Ramble, (Brunswick Nursery). All others will go ahead.

Minute 8 Bootham School

This was a joint presentation. Dinah Peryer, clerk of Bootham School Committee, expressed her pleasure in welcoming us to Bootham Junior School and updated us on various changes. She introduced Andy Woodland, the new bursar, who outlined a very healthy financial position over the year to 31 August 2008, the surplus topping £1 million. Current forecasts are conservative but reflect faith in a sound future.

Bootham's Head, Jonathan Taylor, explained the genesis of the Junior School before handing on to Sue Ratcliffe, the Junior Head, who spoke about developing Quaker values within the school and their practical application in the curriculum, in activities and in worship opportunities. We very much enjoyed hearing some of the Junior School choir singing under Judith Campbell's leadership. Jonathan Taylor then went on to quote from the 2008 ISI report, which was very complimentary about both achievement and ethos at Bootham. He told us of considerable renovations and improvements to the school fabric and the challenges the school presently faces. Head and deputy head students - Bethan Ratcliffe, Harry Aubrey, Harriet Andrews and Doug Rose enthused - and inspired us - about key aspects of their life as students at Bootham - music, art, sport, many activities (including School Council and Peacejam) and Quakerism. Harry was one of ten Bootham students at Junior Yearly Meeting in 2008.

Jonathan Taylor ended with an appreciation of Diana Gant's friendship and by thanking Dinah Peryer for her work for Bootham. Dinah retires from Bootham School Committee in August on health grounds and will be succeeded as Clerk by David Laverick.

Quakers in Yorkshire also thank Dinah for the invaluable service she has given on their behalf. We wish her well.

Minute 9 The Mount School

Danielle Palmour, clerk to The Mount School Committee, described the school as buoyant and as contributing significantly to the wider community. She spoke of the transformation of Tregelles and College buildings under Diana Gant's headship. Diana's graciousness during the transition to the incoming principal, Julie Lodrick, has been enormously helpful.

Diana Gant reflected on education as a transformative and holistic process. The Mount should continue to engage with those thinkers who do not easily fit a conventional system. She told us of the AQA Baccalaureate and the Extended Project Qualification and showed us how these both enable students to study more profoundly whatever topics interest them and encourage the community service activities that are so strong at The Mount. We were given a flavour of the great variety of individual and group achievements and interests within the school. Diana ended with her gratitude for all the help and support she has received as Head.

We thank both Schools for their reports and we wish Diana Gant well in the new phase of her life.

Concluding Minute

We thank Bootham Junior School for their hospitality today. We look forward to meeting again in Hull on Saturday 17 October 2009, God willing.

David Olver
Barbara Windle