

REPORTS TO CIRCULATE

06-2021

**For Central England Quakers Area Meeting
to be held on 12/06/2021
by ZOOM**

**CENTRAL ENGLAND QUAKERS
MEETING FOR CHURCH AFFAIRS
Blended Meeting June 2021
on 12.06.2021 at 14.00 hrs
Cotteridge Meeting House and Zoom**

**Clerk: Alison Ironside
Assisting: Stella Roberts**

Agenda

- Opening Worship
- Representatives
- Membership Matters
- Memorial Minute
- CEQ Trustees Report
- Meeting for Sufferings Report
- Quaker Life Representative Council Report
- Peace Hub Report
- Es / Os Triennial Nominations Committee Appointments
- Nominations and Appointments

William Rowley,

30.6.1932 – 10.1.2021

William was a man of strong principles and many talents which he used unstintingly but unobtrusively in the service of Friends in a number of Meetings in different areas of Britain. He was also a dedicated family man. He was known for his quiet, calm wisdom and his willingness to help whenever needed.

His life was clearly shaped by his Quaker upbringing. He was born and grew up in Selly Oak and had one brother. His family attended Bournville Meeting regularly, often three times on a Sunday, and he later became a Sunday School teacher. After primary school he went to Sibford School and then became an apprentice at the Austin car factory in Longbridge, with the request to not work on Ministry of Defence contracts.

When he was eighteen William applied for membership and soon afterwards was asked to join Bournville Meeting's Finance Committee. In 1953 he was called up for National Service and registered as a conscientious objector, hoping to join the Friends Ambulance Unit. He was refused at his first tribunal but encouraged to appeal, where he was sponsored by a Bournville Friend and registered conditionally as a C.O. Having started with F.A.U. he was then offered the chance to go to India and accepted for "two years in the field".

When he went to Friends Rural Mission in Rasulia, India, he lived with the Robertson family there. He had already met Ruth and Eric Robertson and their small daughter, Ann, in 1951 in Bournville. William was extremely taken by the loving and caring nature of their family life, which seemed very different from his own rather austere upbringing. His work at the Mission was varied, keeping pumps and vehicles in good order, drawing on his resourcefulness and practical skills.

In 1956 he returned from India to the Austin works at Longbridge. Shortly afterwards he heard of Eric Robertson's untimely death, which upset William greatly. A year or so later he met Ruth again and after a while they married and William took on supporting Ruth and her four young children (Ann, Mark, Linda and Ian). Ann has commented on his bravery in doing this at the age of 25 and his total commitment to Ruth and her family. Later, William and Ruth had a daughter, Rachel.

In the 1960s William worked at Cadbury's, later at Tube Investments, and then with British Waterways in Cheshire and Gloucester until his retirement. He had a passionate interest in canals and waterways, as well as photography and many other subjects.

At all stages of his life he was fully involved with Friends. He was an overseer in Warwickshire Monthly Meeting for 21 years and Clerk of Northfield Preparative Meeting twice. For six years he served as Convenor of Premises for Oaktree House and later as Chair of the Committee until he left Birmingham. After being Assistant Clerk of Warwickshire MM for two years he became Clerk in 1981, though only for a short time because he moved to Cheshire that year for employment reasons.

He and Ruth joined Frandley Meeting ("Friendly Frandley"), where he became an Elder/Overseer. He served for eight years as Clerk of Cheshire MM – a very different experience from Warwickshire MM! Subsequently he became the MM Treasurer.

The next move was to Gloucester, where William was an Overseer and for 16 years the Preparative Meeting Treasurer, as well as being on the Premises Committee, where he faced the challenges of dealing with a listed building. He worked tirelessly to restore the building to the state he felt it required. He did many of the practical jobs in the Meeting House and also supervised the former warden, who valued his reliability and unflappable support, as when dealing with the breakdown of the temperamental boiler. She felt that William was "definitely the Quaker equivalent of a wonderful boss". She remembers him helping out at Oxfam lunches, in a blue apron, serving at table. He is also remembered for the hospitality he and Ruth offered in their own home.

He served as Assistant Clerk to Gloucester Monthly Meeting and later became MM Treasurer. He was described as "a power in the land of Quaker business". He had a reliable eye for ways of dealing with problems of finance and property.

In retirement, after 1996, he was occupied with the Greyfriars Housing Association, work he enjoyed until in 2006 he and Ruth moved to Streetly in the West Midlands area, to be closer to family. They joined Walsall Meeting and William became an Elder/Overseer. His practical common sense and wisdom were greatly valued and his spoken ministry was thoughtful, insightful and inspiring. His absence was keenly felt when he and Ruth moved later to a Care Home in Shenstone.

William was uncomplaining about the infirmities of old age and revelled in the use of his electric wheelchair ("my chariot") in the final stages of his life. His had been a life of help and service to Friends, family and all who knew him.

Barbara Groombridge
Jim Green.

The work of trustees in 2020

In 2020 the charity was challenged as the country faced a pandemic which changed the way we were able to continue our normal daily lives. Last year I presented the trustees report to area meeting in March just before the first lockdown. We were able to gather in Hall Green Meeting House, share food from the same table and sit quite close to each other, without masks. No one suspected that by the end of the month all meeting houses would be closed. Friends were unable to meet in person for worship for many months and we closed our doors to the many community groups who meet regularly in our buildings. We could not attend committee meetings, study groups or coffee mornings. The Peacemakers' office and the Peace Hub were closed, Priory Rooms directors decided to close their doors on the 24th March, and the Area Meeting office closed from Thursday 2nd April.

During the first few weeks, and in response to the unknown, developing situation, decisions were made 'on the hoof' by the clerk, the treasurer to trustees, the clerks to the employment, property and the finance committees, and other link trustees as was appropriate at the time. The trustee body was informed about these decisions via email as they happened and having ascertained that trustees can hold a Quaker Business meeting using video conferencing the clerk called a special trustee meeting to record the decisions made since we last met, to consider the current financial position and the next steps.

The trustee body is responsible to Friends in area meeting to ensure that the charity is managed as well as possible. Following the March lockdown this meant that we needed to respond to this new and unexpected situation. We are part of Britain Yearly Meeting and fortunately we were not on our own. The staff at Friends House were able to guide us through the information produced by the government, as they were responding nationally to this unprecedented situation. New guidelines and information were issued frequently, and trustees tried to help Friends in the local meetings understand what was relevant to them.

Who are we and what have we been doing in 2020 on your behalf?

Anne Austin (COT), Christine Bagnall (HAL), (from September 2020), Patricia Bradbury (STO), Jim Green (WAL), Janet Hilken (STO) (released from service in July 2020), Judith Jenner (COT), John Kimberley (BUL), Robert Morris (HAL), Tony Pegler (SUT), Gill Smith (WAR), Jill Stow (COT), Sue Thompson (COT), Peter Ullathorne (COT) and Fiona Waterhouse (SUT) (from September 2020) were trustees in 2020. At the end of 2020 there were 13 serving trustees. We held four trustees' meetings in March, June, September and November. There were 2 additional meetings in response to the Covid 19 pandemic. The first in April as we made our initial response and the second in October when we asked the question *How is the charity faring at this stage of the pandemic?* This was after 6 months of restrictions and the gradual easing of lock down during the summer months. However, it was shortly after this meeting that the West Midlands moved into 'high alert' and there were new restrictions but worship in person was permitted. Trustees reported to area meeting in March and November.

How did we respond to the pandemic?

Virtual meetings. Trustees quickly adapted to a new way of meeting, no longer able to travel into Birmingham city centre for trustee and committee meetings we were able to join from the comfort of our own homes and did not have to travel home. Trustees were fortunate because both the Peace Hub and Peacemakers had Zoom licences and were familiar with this technology. For some it was new, and we all had to learn a new way of meeting together. The five service committees: finance,

property, employment, records advisory and governance and compliance were able to meet as planned. These committees comprise Friends from local meetings appointed by area meeting and at least one trustee. Trustees are reliant on these committees to ensure the responsibilities of trustees are covered and keep up to date with any changes in the law. During the pandemic they each had different responsibilities to ensure the restrictions were followed.

Decision making. We became aware that decisions needed to be made between meetings during the course of this crisis and we had no idea what these might be. As far as possible the clerks of the service committees, the treasurer to trustees and appropriate Link Trustees were consulted by email, telephone or a virtual meeting held by the clerk to trustees. Our usual practice is to set up a small task group and ask them to come back to the next meeting. In the early weeks we needed to call on these Friends at any time during this crisis to make decisions.

The first decision was about joining the government's Job Retention Scheme (furlough), primarily for Peacemakers staff team. The second was setting up the COVID 19 Project Group to support local meetings re-opening their premises.

The link trustees offer oversight and support to the local meetings and branches. In 2020 this workload increased when the lockdown was eased and places of worship were allowed to open for public worship. Link trustees were asked to support the preparation for the re-opening to make the building COVID secure.

Throughout the year the committees' routine business continued as usual and in order to cover all of our responsibilities we had to work together, trusting that we were doing what we need to do. The service committees do most of the work and bring to trustees meeting mainly matters for discernment.

Trustees continued to search for a professional staff person to take responsibility for managing the routine work of the charity. During the year this changed from an operations manager role to principal officer. In the summer the recruitment group were ready to work with an agency to find someone to fill the role. However, when trustees met in October it was suggested that the Priory Rooms staff currently on furlough could be used to carry out some of the duties of the principal officer and other tasks to support the work of trustees. The recruitment and appointment of a principal officer was put on hold. By the beginning of November a Service Agreement was in place with the Priory Rooms company. Trustees were able to support them financially until the business is able to start up again and trustees were able to have their support for financial and property work.

Reflecting on the events of the year here is a snapshot of the challenges each of the service committees faced.

Property committee met four times during in 2020 and were pleased that Clare Peat (SEL) took on the role of clerk. The subgroups focusing on different areas of work and reporting to the full committee is working well and taking some of the pressure off the clerk.

There are fourteen meeting houses in the area meeting and as well as Friends holding regular meetings for worship they are hired to local community groups. When the buildings were closed by the government in March the buildings were empty for many weeks. They needed to be inspected regularly to be compliant with the insurers' requirements during the emergency. Advice was given to local meeting premises committees on care of unoccupied property. The property link friends (PLF) were asked to keep in contact with the local meetings. Trustees received copies of these briefings and they were able to support when needed.

Closing the buildings was relatively easy but the preparation for re-opening them was more complicated. The government produced guidelines and these included places of worship. These had to be adapted for our particular form of worship. Sitting in silence is quite different to congregations moving about and singing. Trustees decided to provide briefings for local meetings as well as guidelines to make the building Covid secure. A small team of friends worked on risk assessments for meeting for worship as well as hirers and employees, cleaning guidelines, one-way systems, COVID protection kits, social distancing and so much more. These were sent with Bulletins to local meetings between June and September and posted on the CEQ website. Link trustees were involved in the process to ensure the risk assessments were completed. Trustees also decided to pay for the signage needed in the building and asked local meetings to order what they needed for their building from one firm. The loss of income from hirers at the local meeting houses totalled £109K and this is being taken up with our insurers in 2021.

Routine work on the properties continued and the quinquennial surveys were able to go ahead as planned. The local meetings were not asked to complete the Annual Property Questionnaire in the autumn. Fortunately, the boiler replacement at the Bull Street property was able to go ahead during the summer months and caused little disruption. The Kings Heath building and land transfer, agreed in March, was completed during the lockdown. South Birmingham Friends Institute Trust made a contribution of £40,000 to the CEQ building fund for the upkeep of the building for another 10 years.

Finance committee meet quarterly when they receive and monitor the Management Accounts for 6 central funds. There are many other routine matters including the use of the Selly Wood House Fund. This exercised finance committee members and trustees during 2019 and in area meeting friends discerned that the fund could be used to support essential building work at Oak Tree House and the Woodlands bursary fund.

The committee oversees the consolidation of the Charity's accounts and all Local Meeting and Branches submitted their examined accounts by the 31 March 2020 deadline. The external audit of the accounts was undertaken virtually because of lock down restrictions. The 2019 CEQ Report and Accounts were approved by Trustees and submitted to the Charity Commission in September.

In November the Annual Briefing for Treasurers and examiners was held online for all local meetings and branches. This is a key meeting to help the local treasurers preparing for the end of year consolidation of the CEQ accounts. The new CEQ Handbook for Treasurers was launched at the meeting. It is designed to improve the support and training given to new Treasurers. Wendy Wolfendale and James Bradbury collect the local accounts, then prepare them for the auditor to examine and incorporate into the annual statutory accounts ready to send to the Charity Commission in September. Trustees and the treasurer to trustees prepare the written report and notes to the accounts.

The illustrated summary of the Report and Accounts "*Central England Quakers in 2019*" was produced by trustees with the help of Local Meetings providing photographs and their reports on their activities during the year. Distribution was very difficult in the autumn when few Friends were meeting in person. However, this year we put it on the CEQ website where it could be read or downloaded.

During the pandemic trustees were aware that there could be financial losses and during the 9 months the treasurer to trustees took on an additional task monitoring the impact of COVID 19 on CEQ central funds and reporting to the finance committee and trustees. This certainly helped trustees to understand our financial position and the impact of the decisions already made and consider what actions we needed to take. The loss of income in the trustees and salaries accounts was £22,000 for the year. Our treasurer reminded trustees regularly that our reserves policy makes

specific provision for a financial disaster and £100k of the General Fund investments is allocated to this risk.

At the November Area Meeting the treasurer to trustees made his presentation on forecasts for 2020 and draft budgets for 2021. The 2021 budgets for the Trustee and General Funds were approved by area meeting and the spending will be monitored by the finance committee. We are aware that in 2021 there is no gift from the Priory Rooms nor will there be in 2022.

During the year the question ***How we use our financial resources in view of the current risks CEQ is facing as we move into 2021?*** came to the fore. At the October area meeting there was an item, led by members of the finance committee, to engage area meeting Friends in this concern. This is the start of a process which will continue in this year.

Link trustees were asked to report to trustees how the local meetings with property were managing their loss of income from lettings. We reminded them they have a reserves policy for this eventuality. We also wanted to reassure them that if they were worried to speak to the link trustee. All the property belongs to the area meeting and trustees do have the responsibility.

Investment properties. The tenants at 51 and 53 Church Road, Redditch Meeting House and Bull Street car parking were given rent holidays during the emergency recognising that their normal businesses will be suspended, resulting in a loss of income £7,388 to trustees. Fortunately, all the 2020 rent for 1 Colmore Square was received.

Employment Committee held 7 meetings during the year and continued to keep up to date with employment regulations and many policies were reviewed and revised. Staff contracts were also updated and revised and the HR firm Roots HR was contracted to help with this lengthy process. The policies can be found on the CEQ website and local meetings and staff can access them.

The pandemic brought additional challenges. Introducing the new government scheme to pay 80% wages to staff unable to work during the lockdown was one of them. Wendy Wolfendale, responsible for the staff salaries account, was able to set up the scheme online. The employment committee needed to prepare new contracts for staff wanting to be furloughed and contact each of them. Five members of the Peacemakers team and some local meeting staff joined the scheme. Changes in the scheme over the months were responded to.

It was agreed that those on furlough leave should be paid their contractual salary for the time-being as it is important to maintain goodwill, so that as soon as the lock-down is lifted they are ready to return to work. Link trustees were asked to pay particular attention to the welfare of staff at linked meetings and branches. The Peacemakers' director, the AM secretary, and the Peace Hub coordinator were able to work from home. Before they returned to their place of work a risk assessment had to be in place.

Records Advisory Committee. The year of 2020 has certainly been a year of stops and starts. The year started well with a meeting in January and a further meeting arranged for April. Work continued on the next accession which was arranged for 23 March. Unfortunately, Covid-19 lockdown occurred on the same day but in advance of this possibility, the transfer had been cancelled as was another arranged for January 2021. The lockdown meant that the committee could no longer meet in person and no further work was undertaken on processing the records. They did, however, keep in touch with each other by email and had their first zoom meeting in October. Updates were sent to Trustees. A number of local meeting records were received which were placed in the strong room. Enquiries regarding our records continued to be received and some of these could be answered. Other people were directed to the Central England Quakers archive website via

the Library of Birmingham. Some enquiries will be followed up by the committee once the Library archives section is open. Even though the committee were not able to meet in person and carry on the processing work, it continued to have oversight of the records and deal with enquiries.

Governance and Compliance Committee. 6 trustees are members of this committee which met 4 times during the year. In 2020 the committee considered the following matters.

Safeguarding: The co-ordinators are invited to report to this committee and were able to share some of the feedback from the 2019 questionnaire the area meeting was asked to complete. It highlighted some of the weak points in our present system. BYM has produced a new safeguarding policy and the co-ordinators have been looking through this and will advise trustees on its implementation. It will come to area meeting for approval and there will be training for role holders and local meetings. The CEQ Safeguarding Link Trustee keeps in regular contact with the 2 safeguarding co-ordinators about issues of concern and reports regularly to Trustees.

Governing Document: The Charity Commission advised changes should be made to the Governing Document to take account of the use of virtual meetings for our routine business. These are now completed and all business meetings in the area meeting can be held virtually.

Memorandum of Understanding: This is the agreement between Trustees and the Local Meeting that all legal requirements are being met financially, with the upkeep of the property, in employment practice, keeping and storing records and personal data, health & safety as well as safeguarding children and vulnerable adults. For trustees it is important we have the assurance that the charity is working well and is compliant. The reports from all local meetings and branches were received early in the year and at the end of the year we started work on the 2021 version.

Risk Register: all service committees are asked each year to check their section of the risk register and it is updated. This year the committee produced a **Risk Management Policy**.

IT and data storage: This policy has not been completed and is an ongoing piece of work.

Priory Rooms is part of the trustees' responsibilities and the Directors of Priory Rooms (Bull Street) Ltd reports to trustees each quarter. The directors report to Area Meeting on its business activities and developments each year. The first two months of 2020 were normal and bookings good then the pandemic struck. Conference centres had to close 24th March and only in September were allowed to open, with restricted access. However, customers were hesitant to book. Not only has this resulted in loss of income but affected the staff team. Staff were furloughed and the centre manager and conference and events sales manager continued to work from home. Other staff were called in as required. Trustees were pleased in October that area meeting agreed to have a service agreement with Priory Rooms to employ the staff from November. There is now a conferencing facility in the George Fox Room which allows trustees unable to travel into the city to join others meeting in person at Priory Rooms. I am looking forward to using it in June.

During the year trustee work is undertaken by the five Service Committees to ensure we are doing things properly and I hope you get a flavour of how varied this is. Each trustee does not have to have expertise in every aspect of the work – it is a shared commitment and very much built on trust. The other side of the coin is that a trustee is able to learn new things and maybe discover an interest in something they never knew about – it is a learning opportunity. You will see from the list of serving trustees there are quite a few Local Meetings not represented. I encourage you to talk to Friends in your meeting about this way of serving the Area Meeting and talk to a trustee to find out more. I am grateful to all Trustees for their hard work and support during the year.

Judith Jenner, Clerk to CEQ Trustees

Meeting for Sufferings Report

Meeting held by zoom video conferencing on Saturday 10th April 2021

Main agenda items:

- Britain Yearly meeting Trustees
- The relationship between Area Meeting Charities and BYM charity
- Assisted dying
- Use of the terms 'overseer' and 'elder'
- Minutes from Area Meetings
- Simplification of central governance structures

Follow the link to find all the reports and papers of the meeting:

<https://www.quaker.org.uk/our-organisation/meeting-for-sufferings/papers-and-minutes>

Britain Yearly Meeting Trustees

Caroline Nursey, clerk of BYM trustees gave an update on the work of trustees since the last Meeting for Suffering. We heard more about the racism complaints raised by Friends House staff on social media: work is ongoing to review policies and procedures; an external organisation handled the complaints and no disciplinary action was required; trustees will be attending anti-racist training.

We heard that the name of the William Penn room at Friends House will be changed. This gave rise to many contributions from the meeting, most expressing unhappiness with the decision – are we writing William Penn out of our history? We were reminded that Meeting for Sufferings does not control the names of rooms at FH. Trustees have commissioned a paper looking at the history of the relationship between Quakers and slavery.

BYM contributed evidence to the Commission on Race and Ethnic Disparities which was disregarded, and we reject the findings of the Sewell Report.

The relationship between AM charities and BYM charity

In December 2020 BYM trustees asked MfS if it would be useful to have a Memorandum of Understanding between BYM trustees and AM trustees, as the relationship between them is not always clear. This was not a report to MfS but a request for help. The trustees working with staff want to consult, to listen and to find out what is missing, what AMs need and how to foster and nurture the relationship between AMs and BYM. Questions around safeguarding, finance, use of social media, reputation have already arisen. Friends are invited to join the consultation: they are keen to involve AM clerks, trustees, and Friends who have an understanding of charity trusteeship, and zoom workshops will be held starting in May.

Assisted dying

This was the principal item for consideration on today's agenda, seeking discernment on the question of support for legislation to enable assisted dying in the UK.

Three questions were given to focus our discernment:

- What can we say as Quakers about this issue?

- Where does this sit in our testimonies to truth, peace, equality, or in our view of life itself?
- Can we unite with others in supporting those for whom this is a matter of deepest concern?

There were many contributions and many anxieties, doubts, personal experiences were shared and heard. Personal experiences included Friends who have accepted a family member's wish to end their life, Friends who have worked in palliative care, Friends who have cared for or are caring for others with various illnesses, disabilities, or chronic conditions; those in constant pain, situations where palliative care is unable to relieve suffering.

It was very clear that we would not reach unity, but this should not be seen as failure – it is a strength of Quakerism that we are able to hold contradictions and allow difficult conversations to happen. Friends have a genuine wish to engage in a wide range of issues that the matter of assisted dying raises:

- The importance of talking openly about death and dying;
- The availability and effectiveness of good palliative care;
- The quality of life and care before death;
- Respect for the views and wishes of the individual, their family, and others.

Use of the terms 'overseer' and 'elder'

In 2019 MfS referred the matter of the use of the term 'overseer' to Quaker Life Central Committee; at our meeting today we received a minute from QLCC asking Friends to stop using the term 'overseer'. MfS united with the discernment from QLCCC and meetings are encouraged to experiment with the structure of roles and terminology until the end of 2022.

Minutes from Area Meetings

A minute was received from Manchester and Warrington AM asking us to increase our awareness of the plight of the Uighurs, the human rights abuses used against them in China. Friends are urged to campaign on this issue.

Simplification of Central Governance Structures

We received a paper from the simplification working group....simplification is actually a very complex matter! The working group identified our three core principles as i) setting a spiritual direction, ii) establishing strategic priorities and allocating resources, iii) ensuring that work is carried out effectively. New ways of approaching these are to be explored in workshops by MfS representatives in the next few months.

Other business

The report to BYM was agreed in the meeting with a few minor adjustments and additions; we sent a letter of greeting to Ireland Yearly Meeting; we heard an update from the Clerk of Yearly Meeting; revised terms of reference for MfS Arrangement Group were approved; terms of reference for a group to review appointment of members and attenders to central committees.

Cathy Khurana

CEQ Representative on Meeting for Sufferings

***QUAKER LIFE REP. COUNCIL**

Friday 16/4/2021 – 17/4/2021

Theme Title: *'For your comfort and discomfort'.*

Objective: to get Friends thinking about the topics discussed this weekend as a prelude to BYM.

*For more information on Quaker Life, see QFP, 8.08-11; also: 7.05 b: & 10.21.

New Reps:

For new reps, myself included, both days began earlier with a session to where new reps could ask questions and get technical support guidance about Zoom.

Saturday Morning First Session

1. Edwina Peart – Race

Co-ordinator of the Inclusion and Diversity Project at Britain Yearly Meeting

See her blogs at:

<https://www.quaker.org.uk/news-and-events/news/quakers-commit-to-becoming-an-anti-racist-church>

Discussion on Shamima Begum:

What barriers to empathy arise?2) What systems or barriers dehumanise Shamima for you?3) Can the UK continue to discard its criminals?4) Can the UK continue to disregard its role in international and home-grown conflict?

First Qu. 1.

All groups were asked to think about this question first:

What aspects of Shamima and her situation can you empathise with?

Our Groups' Responses – Summary

'She's a grieving mother of several babies. Age: 15, easily swayed, easy to make 'easy, foolish inappropriate decisions, the passion we perhaps have when we're that age.'

'I'm going to save the world' concept. Perhaps "comparable to the Pilgrim Fathers"?

Qu.2: -the manner of reporting; we've only heard her speak from a camp. Supreme Court: as with any court case, we, the public, just do not have the information, facts and legal knowledge which Judges have, as such, it's far too easy for we, the public, to pontificate on any court case which any certainty, esp. in such a complex case. Newspaper readers are all too easy to make a quick, snap decision as to why a Judge made the right or wrong decision in court. Yet, many hours, and much consideration, among several Judges, shows what a very complex matter this is. Judicial impartiality is key here.

INDIGENOUS PEOPLES DEVELOPMENT PROGRAM

Edwina shared a statement from Caricom:

See: <https://caricomreparations.org/>

"The governments of Europe committed genocide upon the native Caribbean population. Military commanders were given official instructions by their governments to eliminate these communities and to remove those who survive pogroms from the region.

Genocide and land appropriation went hand in hand. A community of over 3,000,000 in 1700 has been reduced to less than 30,000 in 2000. Survivors remain traumatized, landless, and are the most marginalized social group within the region.

The University of the West Indies offers an Indigenous Peoples Scholarship in a desperate effort at rehabilitation. It is woefully insufficient. A Development Plan is required to rehabilitate this community."

CONTEXT:

'For the home group session I have taken eight headings from the CARICOM ten point reparations plan. Each group should have one heading. <https://caricom.org/caricom-ten-point-plan-for-reparatory-justice/>

The question is: Please spend some time discussing what might come under this heading and answering the question, **what does love require of us?**

Some groups felt that:

The Relig. Society of Friends should call for a sincere apology for slavery.

Should be Religious Society of Friends write their own letter of apology, acknowledging that Quakers played their part in slave ownership.

Colonisation has led to genocide.

Saturday Morning – Second Session

2. Yvonne Estop-Wood on Gender

About Yvonne:

<https://qgsdc.org.uk/ourstories/yvonne/>

We discussed the need for society to accept trans people but also the need for us to empathize with women who feel it is intrusive for them to accept trans women in gendered spaces. For example, trans women haven't grown up as girls with the harassment that natal women are often exposed to.

REFERENCES:

Poems Read During the Weekend:

Grace Nichol's 'Give Yourself a Hug'

Poem: 'Wild Geese, from:

Gary Younge, *Who Are We - And Should it Matter in the Twenty-First Century* (New York: Viking press.) 2010

Political Speech – Layla Moran:

<https://hansard.parliament.uk/commons/2018-11-21/debates/BE06C5D4-E549-4F94-87B1-9B77F32EA155/Self-IdentificationOfGender>

Quaker References:

QFP 8:10

A&Q No. 31 & last line of no.

Some learning sessions can be provided on trans and non-binary topics, see:

www.YFGM.quaker.org.uk

Quaker Gender & Sexual Diversity Community:

<https://qgsdc.org.uk/uncategorized/constitution-of-the-quaker-gender-and-sexual-diversity-community-qgsdc/>

Trans Celebrities / Public Figures Discussed:

Jan Morris

Actor, Rebecca Root

Speech by Layla Moran MP

[Also discussed Grayson Perry and Eddie Izzard but the speaker wasn't sure that these two were the best celebrities to represent trans people.]

NOTICES:

Just before our meeting closed, we were informed of the following:

1. Farewells & Next Meeting:

The next Quaker Life Council Reps' Meeting will be in October and may be in-person.

2. Woodbrooke:

Some new online courses are about to go live.

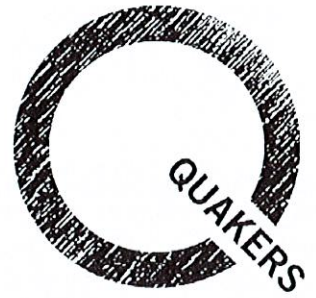
Woodbrooke Where You Are:

Woodbrooke tutors could come to us to lead sessions in-person and or provide blended sessions.

www.woodbrooke.org.uk/wwwya

Simon.Best@woodbrooke.org.uk

Lin Singh-Barrington
CEQ



Central England
Quakers

Peace Hub Annual Report 2020



In 2020 Peace Hub adapted to the challenging situation of coronavirus: opening up new audiences online, and finding ways to safely connect in person, to keep encouraging action for Peace.

Image: campaigners join together for a socially distanced walk to highlight the Tyseley Incinerator, stopping outside the Hub.

41 Bull Street, Birmingham B4 6AF

Tel: 0121 238 2869

Email: office@peacehub.org.uk

Website: peacehub.org.uk

Peace Hub is a branch of The Central England Area Quaker Meeting Charities, registered charity number 224571.

About Peace Hub

What is Peace Hub?

Peace Hub is a friendly, café-style space in central Birmingham, focussed on peace & justice. It is a semi-autonomous branch of Central England Quakers, or CEQ, (registered charity number 224571), with its own management committee, budget and bank account. The building is owned by CEQ, with the top two floors sub-let to Peacemakers (West Midlands Quaker Peace Education Project).

The organisation acts as a Hub for peace & justice activity in the city, connecting members of the public, activists, faith groups and NGOs with each other, via three main strands:

1. Normally, our drop-in space is open to the public three days a week, to spread awareness and encourage action around a series of peace & justice themes. In 2020 much of this work moved online.
2. We offer office support and expertise to voluntary and faith groups working for peace & justice, to multiply their impact.
3. We work with local and national NGOs to deliver joint workshops and engage a wider audience in campaigns for peace & justice.

Peace Hub aims to engage members of the public of all faiths and none. As a Quaker organisation our commitment to peace & justice (and the various themes) springs from our faith, and we are happy to discuss this with any of our visitors who are interested.

Vision Statement

As Quakers we are called to act for Peace and Justice. Peace Hub seeks to provide a centre from which an inclusive community is inspired to take up this call.

We aim for Peace Hub to become a Quaker-led service to the public that people of all faiths and none in Birmingham and the Midlands are glad to have. We hope that Peace Hub will become a place to which people naturally come when wanting to act for peace and justice, and provide a base for networks of peace-makers.

Aim & Objectives

Aim: A centre from which a diverse community in Central England is inspired to act for peace and justice.

Objectives:

We seek to meet this aim using a rolling programme of peace and justice themes, through which we:

- Inform the public on a wide range of peace and justice issues
- Stimulate dialogue with the local community about peace and justice
- Offer hope through positive examples of peace-making and justice-building
- Encourage people to act for peace by
 - Advocating for local, national and international structures that support peace and justice - as Quakers say: 'speaking truth to power'
 - Showing solidarity with peace-makers and justice-builders

We further support our aim through ongoing activities:

- Supporting community & interfaith cohesion
- Encouraging people to make peace in their own lives
- Upholding activists and groups working for peace and justice
- Explaining why Quakers as a community are called to act for peace and justice

Work & Witness at the Hub

One of Peace Hub's core strands of work uses a rolling programme of peace and justice themes to engage the public and encourage them to take action. For the duration of theme, our website and social media highlight relevant information and pose stimulating questions, along with simple actions that people can take part in (when we are able to open, there is a corresponding display in the Hub). The term 'visitors' below refers to online visitors to our website, social media accounts and Zoom events, as well as in-person visitors during the periods that we could safely open.

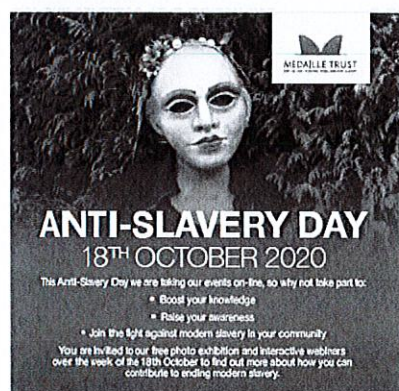
Each of our themes in 2020 highlighted a major international issue, breaking it down into more manageable portions with local or personal connections. We offered simple actions that people could take in their own lives, alongside a call to those in power to tackle the underlying issues.

In 2020 we explored a new theme: **Refuge & Freedom**, in partnership with Medaille Trust. The theme raised awareness of modern slavery both in the UK and around the world, offering personal stories of survivors and Medaille Trust's expertise on how to spot the signs, and take appropriate action. Visitors took action from sending a message of solidarity to calling for better regulation of supply chains to prevent slavery being used to produce the goods we buy. We also supported Medaille's activities to mark Anti-slavery Day in October (below).

A Burning Issue built on Climate Emergency declarations by Birmingham City Council and many other places in 2019. With a growing awareness of the seriousness and immediacy of this topic, visitors made a pledge to switch to more plant-based foods – backed up by calling on the council to convert their words on the climate emergency into real action.

Think Global, Act Local, Get Equal highlighted the issue of tax avoidance, and its contribution to economic inequality. Visitors were encouraged to support local independent businesses, and those who have signed up to the Fair Tax Mark (below), alongside supporting the Tax Justice UK campaign not to give Covid-bailouts to companies that avoid tax.

Be the Friendly Face of Brum contrasted the positive impacts that people arriving in our community have brought, with the 'hostile environment' they face. Visitors took action to show solidarity and welcome to people seeking refuge, as well as supporting an Amnesty International campaign for humanitarian workers being prosecuted in Greece for helping rescue people drowning in the Mediterranean (below).



Anti-Slavery Day

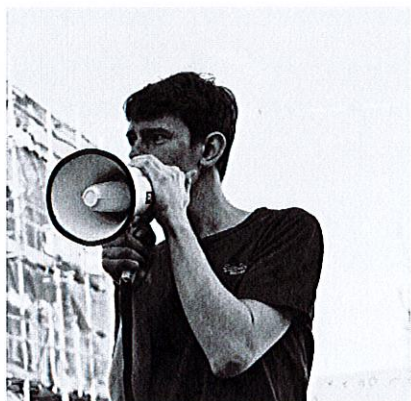


The Fair Tax Mark



Humanitarian workers
Sara & Sean

Partnerships & Reaching Out



Our partnership with **Footsteps (Faiths for a Low Carbon Future)** continued to be highly fruitful, and we supported them to run a number of online events, as well as one outdoor in-person event during the summer (following regulations at the time). These events helped us to reach a new audience, with over 300 people attending in total. At the heart of these events is bringing together faith communities to explore both practical actions to take for the environment in our own lives, and speaking truth to power about the climate emergency. They also provided a good opportunity to connect with young people, such as the Youth Climate Strikers, and young activist-poets Matt Sowerby (left) and Millie Gould.

Footsteps also offer a window into local government's approach to the climate emergency, as they were represented on the Birmingham City Council Route to Zero [Carbon] Taskforce, and gave regular updates on the successes and frustrations of this. These insights helped to inform a campaign on Birmingham's waste, calling for an end to the use of incineration at Tyseley, and instead reuse, recycle and compost/digest domestic waste. This campaign brought together **Friends of the Earth, Jai Jagat 2020** and **Climate Action Network West Midlands**, along with ourselves and Footsteps. This coalition developed relationships with local councillors, including via an outdoor meeting and walk in September (see cover image). In December a petition was presented to the full council with cross-party support, and conversations with the council are ongoing.

Effective partnerships in 2020 focussed on:

- **Climate Emergency**
- **Tax Justice**
- **The Arms Trade**
- **Responding to the pandemic**

We worked together with **CEQ Peace Committee** to run an online event on Tax Justice with over 30 participants. The event made good links between **Church Action on Tax Justice**, the **Fair Tax Mark**, trade unionists and local councillors, who are keen to certify Birmingham as a 'Fair Tax Council'. There were some simple actions to take away which we were able to highlight as part of our economic equality theme at the time.

We partnered with **Powell House** (the Quaker study centre in New York state) and **Quaker Roots** (supporting Quakers to take action against the arms trade) to run a transatlantic online workshop in October. Participants reflected on what we can learn from past peace actions, and considered how they would like to challenge themselves to take difficult actions for peace, in the context of a divided society.

During the pandemic, a broad movement came together to call on the UK government to **Build Back Better** rather than returning to business as usual. Peace Hub is supporting the 5 key asks, which overlap with many of our themes: secure health; protect public services; create a green new deal; invest in people; and build solidarity. The government has adopted the words, but there is much to do to turn this into action – Peace Hub has joined the ongoing **Quaker Peace & Social Witness BBB** programme, as well as the broader national network.

Early in the year, **Lifeline Options** began using our Resource Centre on Mondays and Fridays. The Hub is normally closed to the public during these times, so we are pleased to be making fuller use of our assets through this partnership. Lifeline Options aims "to meet the immigration, welfare and professional needs of asylum seekers and refugees in the West Midlands", particularly by providing legal expertise. This work also largely moved online after March, but we look forward to welcoming Lifeline Options back when it is safe to do so.

Unfortunately, plans to run Junior Peacemakers workshops in schools had to be postponed for the year. We are working together with Peacemakers on plans to bring these to schools when it is safe to do so, including making increased use of outdoor space.

Measuring Impact

In March, Peace Hub had to temporarily close its doors to the public, due to the coronavirus pandemic. Most of our work moved online with our website and social media accounts offering information on the theme and how people can get involved.

Building relationships between people remains at the heart of what we do. Whilst online working will be a useful tool in future, the periods that we were able to open in 2020 highlighted the importance of the 'cup-of-tea' factor in facilitating conversations about difficult topics and helping people to feel they are part of a community that cares.

We were able to reopen in September, with measures in place. Although these meant that the atmosphere of the Hub had to be somewhat sterilised, there was still interest from many of our regulars, who appreciated the opportunity to have a face-to-face conversation.

Having to close the Hub in the spring, and reopen in very limited circumstances in the autumn meant that we had far fewer in-person conversations about peace & justice with visitors in 2020 compared to recent years. In total we had around 200 interactions with 62 unique individuals in person.

During the times that we had to close, this was augmented with over 400 interactions with people via Zoom in workshops and webinars. These offered space for the type of direct, friendly conversations that are the hallmark of the Hub, albeit in a more structured manner.

Interactions with Visitors

200 400

in person

via Zoom

Online Engagements

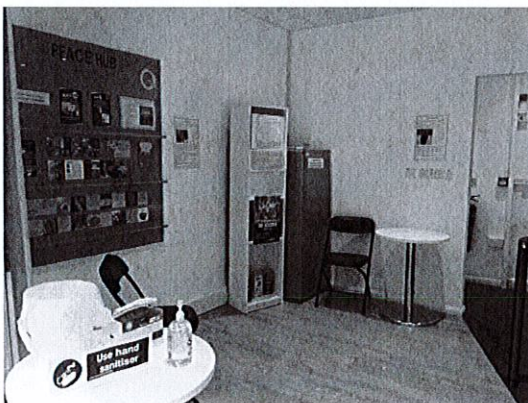
8000

via website & social media

Interactions both in-person and online largely focussed on:

- informing people about our themes;
- answering their questions;
- encouraging them to take part in our actions;
- and linking them up with other organisations working for peace & justice.

We also engaged people over 8000 times in 2020 via our website and social media – an increase of a third over recent years. These posts were largely replicating the information that we would have in the displays and actions at the Hub, and included many examples of online actions to take in support of peace & justice that users clicked through to.



Embracing the new normal

CEQ Peace Hub Accounts for 2020

	£ 2020	£ 2019
INCOME		
Peacemakers rent	7,020	7,020
Donations from individuals	3,218	4,274
Donations from Local Meetings/Branches	3,600	2,741
Legacy (Pam Williams) ¹	2,834	-
Grants from Trusts	4,000	3,000
Grants from CEQ Area Meeting ²	6,000	6,000
Grant from B'ham City Council (COVID-19)	2,000	-
Donations for use of basement	20	190
Recharges for consultancy work	1,048	893
TOTAL INCOME	29,740	24,118
EXPENDITURE		
Salary	15,405	16,204
Activities		
Workshops ¹	-	4,850
Marketing materials & outreach	79	176
Support costs		
Birmingham City Council Rates	381	867
Utilities, cleaning, maintenance	4,190	4,787
Insurance	613	584
Sundry administrative expenses	754	689
TOTAL EXPENDITURE	21,422	28,157
SURPLUS OF INCOME OVER EXPENDITURE	8,318	(4,039)
Fund balance brought forward 1 Jan	6,784	10,823
Fund balance carried forward 31 Dec ¹	15,102	6,784
BALANCE SHEET		
NET ASSETS (cash at bank)	15,102	6,784

Notes to the accounts

1. Due to the Coronavirus pandemic it was not possible to undertake the planned Junior Peacemakers workshops in 2020, and so the funds earmarked for 2020 workshops (including a legacy) have been carried over to 2021 (when we hope to resume this activity). This accounts for the higher than expected 2020 closing fund balance.
2. The Peace Hub building has been reclassified by CEQ as a "functional property" (heritage asset) and we are no longer required to pay CEQ Trustees for tenancy. The grant from CEQ Area Meeting has been reduced by an equivalent amount, with no overall impact on Peace Hub income and expenditure. Figures for 2019 have been adjusted for comparability.

Reserves Policy

Peace Hub has no investments or reserves. It aims to maintain at least £6,500 (up to 30% of annual expenditure) in its bank account to cover cash flow fluctuations, and to provide some protection for the staff salary. Aside from this, the budget for each year must be balanced with income sufficient to cover expenditure. Apart from a grant from Peace Hub's parent area meeting (CEQ), and the rent paid by Peacemakers, Peace Hub relies on voluntary contributions for its income.

Future Plans

2021 remains uncertain for all of us, but whatever happens, Peace Hub will continue to share information, ideas and action for peace & social justice.

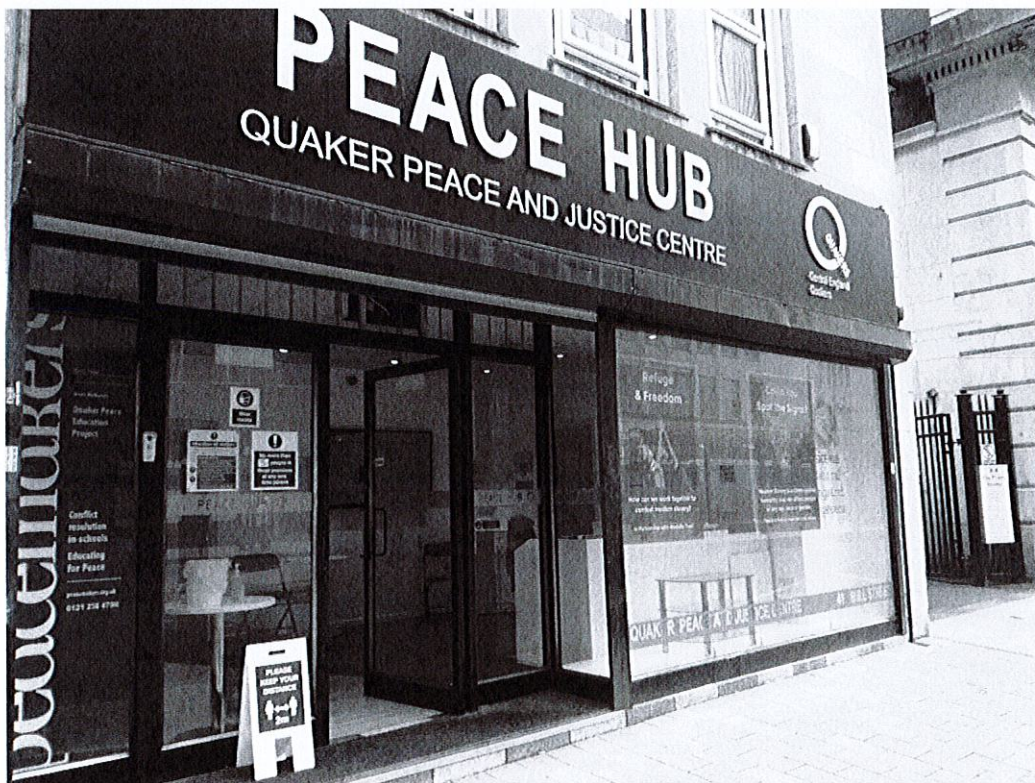
We look forward to welcoming visitors to the Hub again, when it is safe to do so. The past year has opened up a much wider audience to the possibilities of online connection, and we will continue to work with partner organisation on online events. However, we have been reminded of the transformative power of direct personal contact, and anticipate that people will be keen to connect face-to-face.

We have decided to focus on four themes for the year, including: the climate emergency, mental wellbeing and social inequality.

Throughout all of these themes, we will be making connections to the Build Back Better movement, and emphasising how our recovery from the pandemic is a chance to reshape our society around the things we value most.

The past year has highlighted and exacerbated existing social injustices. Polling¹ suggests that only 9% of people want life to simply return to "normal", and our collective response to Covid has demonstrated that people are willing to make significant changes for the benefit of the most vulnerable. We look forward to continuing these nuanced conversations and helping people put their desire for change into action.

1. [YouGov April 2020 on behalf of the RSA](#)



Looking forward to opening our doors for face-to-face conversations again



Central England
Quakers

Donate

Our work relies on support from people like you, who are passionate about peace and justice. Please consider making a donation using the details below:

- BACS transfer to Central England Quakers Peace Hub, CAF Bank, Sort code 40-52-40, Account 00024686
- Send a cheque made payable to "Central England Quakers Peace Hub" to 41 Bull St, Birmingham, B4 6AF.
- Donate securely online at peacehub.org.uk/donate

Please use the contact details below for more information (including how to apply gift aid for individual donors) or to inform us of a donation so that we can send an acknowledgement.

Stay in Touch

We welcome feedback, suggestions and opportunities for collaboration from our stakeholders.

Please feel free to contact our coordinator, Peter Doubtfire:

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Peace Hub is a branch of The Central England Area Quaker Meeting Charities, registered charity number 224571.