

WEST SOMERSET AREA MEETING QUAKER NEWSLETTER MAY 2019

THE LAUNCH OF THE CITIZENS SOMERSET CHAPTER OF CITIZENS UK & WSAT AS AN ALLIANCE



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**MINUTES FOR WSAQM AREA MEETING APRIL 13th 2019
WELLINGTON QUAKER MEETING HOUSE**

Clerk: Martin Wall. Assistant Clerk: Philip Parratt

19:25 During our opening meeting for Worship A&Q 18 was read.

19:26 Local Meeting Representatives.

Bridgwater	John Sivyer
Burnham on Sea	Carinne Allinson
Iminster	Huw Morgan, Margaret Stenhouse
Minehead	Unable to appoint
Spiceland	Ali Dominy (prevented), Sheila Whitlock
Taunton	John Ainsworth, Angela Ayres
Wellington	Marion Dawson, Elizabeth Aveline
Elder for the Meeting	Marian Dawson

19:27 Membership matters.

a) We record the death of John Anderson died 8/2/2019

John was a long standing and supportive member of Taunton meeting and will be much missed.

b) We record the death of John Spencer died 06/07/2017.

c) We record the death of Becky Elliott died 16/01/2018.

Both were long standing members of Iminster Meeting and are much missed.

19:28 Nominations.

Representative to Sidcot School General Meeting.

AM nominations has brought forward the name of Meg Winfield to serve for a triennium. We appoint Meg for the triennium from 13th April 2019.

19:29 Reports:

a) Meeting for Sufferings –

i. Following from the concern from Southern Marshes AM on “The Post Truth World”. Neither of our representatives were able to attend the February meeting of Sufferings where this concern was considered in the light of feedback from Area Meetings. MfS consulted within Yearly Meeting but was unable to unite on a response. MfS asked Area Meetings to respond locally. We ask that LMs who discussed this concern send their reports to Avril Silk for inclusion in the AM Newsletter.

ii. *Report on Meeting for Sufferings 6th April 2019 (Fran Hicks). Fran spoke to the report which will be published in our Newsletter. Following a report from the Vibrancy in Meetings Project we are asked to consider how the options proposed in the report might support Quakerism in our areas. Clerks will forward full details to LMs for their discernment.*

iii.

b) Churches together in Somerset. (Kathy Gollin and Margaret Stenhouse)

Kathy Gollin and Margaret Stenhouse attended the AGM of Somerset Churches Together on 23rd February at Wedmore. It was a joyous occasion and we encourage Friends to consider offering service as WSAQM representative to this very worthwhile organisation. We are committed as a Society to working co-operatively with others in response to “turbulent times”. A report of the meeting will appear in the Newsletter.

c) Outreach Conference (Helen Parfitt)

Helen Parfitt from Taunton meeting had attended a Quaker "All-age outreach" weekend conference at High Leigh, Herts in February. This was lively and challenging including the question of whether an individual saw "someone like me" within a meeting. The discussion moved between encouraging people to a meeting in a definite time and place and sharing Quakerism in different ways (eg. stand up comedy on the Saturday night). Helen will share more at a date to be confirmed. We welcomed Helen's report and thank her for attending the conference.

19:30 Sustainability –

- a) With regard to AM July 21st 2018 Minute 18/47, part of the minute reads - We ask Local meetings to bring forward a Sustainability Plan to a future AM in the Spring of 2019.

We have received reports from.

- i. **Bridgwater** - "Bridgwater Meeting will continue to encourage and support individual members in living their lives in an environmentally sustainable way particularly with a view to limit their individual carbon usage. The Meeting has been informed that the 'Sustainability Toolkit' is available for members to download from the website and that this informs individual action."
- ii. **Burnham** - We don't own a Meeting House and have a very light footprint, as we only meet once a month and are so few. As individuals, we are all doing what we can.
- iii. **Minehead** - We agree to report to Area meeting that we have started our discussions about the sustainability of the meeting (and its members). We shared individual suggestions of members and an audit of actions we have taken in the Meeting House. We agree that we still need to consider formulating a plan for the meeting and include looking at whether we could consider becoming an eco-Church and also setting individual targets. We agree to make this the subject of our discussion meeting on April 28th. We think it would be useful for Area Meeting to hold a special Area Meeting to share Local meeting plans.

We ask that Meetings who did not submit a report on a Sustainability Plan endeavour to produce one. The reports will be published in the Newsletter.

- b) How should WSAQM respond one year on from our Special Topic AM on Sustainability?

We have heard from local meetings of the progress they have made in developing their sustainability plans and are encouraged by their work so far. However, we know there is much more to do, especially in view of the recent IPCC report with its urgent message to reduce carbon emissions substantially. The Earth Action Group is happy both to monitor what Local Meetings are doing and to offer support. Taunton has started the process of applying for Eco Church status and Spiceland has already done so. That provides a solid framework for such a plan. A small group of Friends met the Taunton Deane MP, Rebecca Pow, and had a friendly exchange of views and were pleased that she is willing to hold an environmental forum for local groups at Taunton Meeting House in May. Several Friends have been active in the local

Extinction Rebellion groups and it is hoped that West Somerset Friends can give this organisation support as has Britain Yearly Meeting.

Clerks will undertake to arrange a Special Topic Area Meeting on Sustainability with the Business Team to include making Sustainability a more central part of our AM organisation.

19:31 Citizens UK – Progress Report.

We have received a report from Fran Hicks in which she records the launch of the Citizens Somerset Chapter of Citizens UK. The alliance is well represented with faith groups and schools, and the event was extensively covered in the media although the local press was disappointing. Transport, Housing and Street Safety are the current concerns that the chapter hopes to develop. A full report will feature in the Newsletter.

19:32 Treasurer’s report.

The Treasurer reported on WSAQM Accounts for 2018 and AM budget 2019. Full copies of these will be sent by the Treasurer to LM Treasurers or Clerks.

19:33 Fulfilment of Duties

Reminding LMs (who have not already done so) of the obligation to report to AM using QFP 4:33.

We have received a report from Ilminster Local Meeting – Responsibilities of Local Meetings 2018-19. They have tried to carry out our duties as set out in our Book of Faith and Practice as faithfully and diligently as their ability and means will allow. The meeting has taken a new approach to Duties of Oversight with the formation of two ‘home groups.’ This has enabled friends to meet in each other’s homes while addressing the factors of mobility, access and geography.

19:34 Closing Minute.

We thank Wellington for their hospitality and hope to meet again in Minehead at 10:15am 20th July.

Notices

From AM Calendar:

Sun	May 19 th	Worshipping Together at Ilminster
Mon	June 3 rd	AM Business Team Taunton
Sun	June 16 th	Worshipping Together at Spiceland

From Business Team Minutes:

19/17 Martin Wall told us of progress made in setting up a Joint Area Meeting on Mental Health to follow on from last Year’s Special Topic AM. A meeting is arranged Saturday October 5th at Taunton MH involving Mid Somerset, N Somerset, and W Somerset AMs, and inviting AM attendance from Bristol and Exeter.

Dr Quinton Deeley, the Chair of the Spiritual Section of Royal College of Psychiatrists, will speak on how his spirituality and his practice complement each other, and on issues concerning the current state of Mental Health Services in the UK.

19/22 We remind LMs with Worshipping Together Meetings in the Calendar that they should prepare a Life of Meeting report to give in the Notices period at the end of the Worshipping Together Meeting.

SUSTAINABILITY PLANS

With regard to AM July 21st 2018 Minute 18/47, part of the minute reads - We ask Local meetings to bring forward a Sustainability Plan to a future AM in the Spring of 2019. We have received reports from Bridgwater, Burnham and Minehead (noted in the April 2019 Minutes). Ilminster's report follows below and we ask other Local Meetings to send their reports..

Ilminster - Regarding the Quaker Sustainability Commitment:

These days, Ilminster Friends meet in rented premises behind the cafe and shop "Sweet Surprise" in Silver Street, Ilminster. Neither the building nor the water and energy services are therefore ours to modify or control. However, since we have never had a Meeting House of our own, the situation has never been otherwise.

As a result, Friends have realised for quite a time that any contribution the Meeting makes to the Quaker Sustainability Commitment will have to come by individual Friends reducing their own use of energy for transportation to make a difference to the overall energy use of the Meeting.

By sharing transport to the various Events arranged within our Area Meeting and without, and to Garden visits arranged by our **own** Meeting and to **other** events of interest to our Members, Friends cut down on the use of fuel. Indeed, Friends **always** strive to share transport, including to Meetings for Worship, whenever this is practicable.

Of course we appreciate that any use at all of the internal combustion engine will add carbon dioxide to the atmosphere and exacerbate Climate Breakdown but humanity has yet to devise a way of getting around that uses no energy at all.

To keep our carbon foot-print as small as possible today, Margaret Stenhouse and myself - (Margaret as driver and and I as redundant navigator) have, of course, shared transport to this Area Meeting in Wellington.

Until we secure our own premises I fear that this approach will remain our Meeting's contribution to our Quaker Sustainability Commitment.

Huw Morgan



THE POST TRUTH WORLD

Iminster Local Meeting

18/21 Southern Marches concern about “post-truth world”

Truth has always been an integral part of Quaker philosophy. It is important that we speak out against the current thinking that truth does not matter. It is difficult to know how we can influence politicians, but we feel that Area Meeting should support this concern.

Minehead Local Meeting on Truth and integrity in Public Life

We have met on two occasions to consider the Concern of Southern Marches AM minute on the post truth world. We agree there is a lack of straight forward dealing in many aspects of public life including government, local government and companies. The difficulty we have is in the many examples of the many half-truths published by the media newspapers radio, television and social networks.

- We should live honestly ourselves – that’s where to start
- We should continue to speak truth to power
- We should be courageous in doing so
- We should not ‘hold our peace’ but we should speak out
- We should continue ‘making space for truth – as in Quaker offices in Brussels, Geneva and New York – and other centres of government
- We should persist in questioning about what we have NOT been told regarding an issue
- We should make a point of engaging in discussion with those people with whom we do NOT agree, to fully understand their case

At the discussion this morning the following points were raised. One was that Quakers have the advantage of being believed already. Over passage of centuries they have gained the reputation for honesty and reliability, diligence and accuracy.

The structure for this exists in Friends House and throughout the Quaker network. Our offices in New York, Geneva, Brussels and London are centres for networking between most unlikely mixtures of political, national, and religious groups.

We feel the following action is required

- 1) Nationally statements should be issued from Friends House condemning obvious misleading /untruthful information from whatever source.
- 2.) Local meetings should be advised of statements issued under 1) above and advice given on local action that could be taken.

Faith Cartwright

Taunton Local Meeting

Draft Minute of Taunton LM Discussion on Post Truth 13.08.18

On August 13th, six of us from Taunton LM met to discuss the Concern brought to MfS by Southern Marches AM concerning restoring truth and integrity in the public sphere. Friends in Southern Marches AM are concerned about the lack of honesty in public affairs and how this impacts the way we live Quaker values in the world.

We looked at three questions posed by MfS:

1. In our experience, would we say we’re living in a post-truth world?

We decided that we have been living in a ‘post-truth’ world for some time, so this isn’t entirely new. What is new and very concerning, is the way in which senior politicians (for example) quite brazenly set out to confuse established facts with their feelings on a topic, making it difficult for their electorate to distinguish fact from fiction. We didn’t feel that ‘everyone’s

viewpoint was equally valid', where unsubstantiated claims were being made and that supporting evidence should be sought and weighed openly. "We are all entitled to our own opinion, but not our own facts". Easy access to social media for everyone who wants it means that false or misleading information can rapidly gain currency, often internationally. That would not have been possible before the invention of the world wide web. We also thought that our democratic system of politics is in jeopardy when the general population stop believing what politicians say, or instinctively mistrust them.

2. If we share Southern Marches' Concern, what commitment can we make individually and corporately to taking this forward?

We definitely wanted to do something, but we're only too aware how unrealistic (and possibly unproductive) it could be, to act alone locally. We thought that existing organisations, such as Citizens UK, could be a vehicle for challenging 'fake news' and other statements made by public bodies which affect local issues. We need to explore other ways of joining with others in our town and surrounding area to challenge statements that are untrue or unsubstantiated.

3. Is there something particular that Quakers are called to do? If so, what is this?

Nationally, we felt that the Truth and Integrity in Public Affairs group at Friends House should possibly be resurrected, or even Quakers putting our considerable weight behind the setting up of a widely respected and accredited 'fact checking' agency, independent of any party politics, which would be a 'gold standard' for testing claims made by any public or government body. We didn't see that we need a separate Quaker voice to speak nationally, but rather put our energy into collaborating with other groups, of all faiths and none, so that lies and lack of integrity can be identified to the widest possible range of the electorate.

OVERSIGHT AND ELDERSHIP IN WEST SOMERSET

Taunton: We have five Home Groups of six to eight people. Each group decides when, (usually about every six weeks) and where they will meet. Each group has links such as children or people who for various reasons cannot come to a group meeting for whom the group has pastoral care.

Taunton has two Oversight Conveners They are responsible for setting up the groups every three years and changing membership as necessary. four times a year. On the fifth Sunday, there is a shared lunch and a Meeting for feedback from each group and a chance to air any problems.

This seems to work well for Taunton Meeting and gives everyone a sense of shared responsibility for Oversight and the chance to get to know a small group within the Meeting in depth.

Taunton has three Elders who understand their role in traditional terms and two Co-Clerks.

Spiceland: has a 'Central Group' of six members - each member taking a turn in carrying out the Eldership role. They also have small informal groups depending on interest. There are satellite meetings enabling a wider involvement.

Bridgwater: has two Elders and two Overseers. They all care for each other and ensure that no one is left out. There is a lot of 'role shifting'.

Wellington: has three Elders and two Overseers who meet quarterly and at other times as needed. The Meeting is beginning to grow and is enjoying the presence of children. There is a good response to needs and the post-Meeting time is used to find out what these may be.

PURPLE FIELDS

Extracts from their current newsletter

Our newly appointed Overseas Director and Trustee, **Kevin Waldie**, discovered a family connection to PFP (hint: spot the surname). With that, Kevin's 'enduring love of Africa' and his extensive experience of film making and international development, we just knew it was meant to be!

We are delighted and honoured to have received a generous legacy from tireless PFP supporter, Janet Spicer

Look out for the **Ilminster Book Sale**, another **Scavenger Hunt** courtesy of the very dedicated Hunt family, and our call out for volunteers; could you be the **press officer** we're looking for?

'Me en You, One People' hits the road



The Future View Film Group in Sierra Leone has been hard at work organising screenings in towns and villages, distributing the film to local video shacks, and even getting the film shown on TV. The stories and reports they're sending shows the impact the film is already having.



Lisilojulikana becomes Chosadzwika

Our crowdfunder campaign and the generosity of so many supporters has meant that the work to dub the voiceover of 'Lisilojulikana' into Chichewa for Malawi is very nearly complete. DVDs of the re-named 'Chosadzwika' (The Unknown in Chichewa) will be available soon, but you can watch it right now on the PFP website!



Tanzania - we welcome our newest team member

We're delighted to welcome Annatalia Mgulunde to the PFP team. Annatalia takes on responsibility for organising screenings of 'Lisilojulikana' across Tanzania and joins us after previous roles as an outreach worker on HIV and health based programmes.

THE BORDER MEETING

Dear Friends,

The Border Meeting is an annual event where Quakers across Europe come together in September to worship and discuss issues from an international perspective. I attended for the first time and found it a truly inspiring event.

This year the subject for discussion is Quakers and Arts. How do Quakers relate to arts in past centuries and today?

Yours in Friendship
Russ Chapman (Ilminster Meeting)

The preparation group cordially invites you to the 2019 border meeting.

The theme is "**Quakers and Arts**". How do Quakers relate to art, in the history of the past centuries and today? And what do we do with it?

The border meeting will take place from the 6th to 8th September 2019 at Beziningscentrum (Reflection Center) Regina Carmeli, Kollenberg 2, NL- 6132 AL Sittard, Tel 0031 46 888 95 93.

We have found our Friend Erik Dries to be a speaker and to guide us in a number of activities throughout the weekend. Would you also like to contribute, or bring examples of how Quakers deal with art, please report this on the registration form or send a message later to border.meeting@gmail.com.

In the summer we will send further information about the program.

The working language depends on the person offering something. There are always people who can translate. Announcements will be in Dutch, German and English as much as possible.

The costs for the weekend are 100/120 euros for a double or single room, including meals, bed linen and towels. Every room has its own toilet and shower. Children are free, but unfortunately a separate children's program cannot be provided.

You can only register using an online form:

https://docs.google.com/forms/d/e/1FAIpQLSeIP4YI5mjWdeo3ImELAongmRvrjYsuJxgql_tZDZqw5ltfsQ/viewform

Do this as soon as possible (but no later than mid-June). The centre has 39 sleeping places. For additional questions, please contact border.meeting@gmail.com (contactpersons: Els Ramaker / Joke Hofman).

Please transfer the amount applicable to you at the same time as the registration to:
Quakers, IBAN: NL65 TRIO 0212 3772 64, BIC: TRIONL2U, stating "Border meeting 2019".
(If you don't have a euro account, please inform us about that and bring the contribution to the gathering.)

Please forward this mail to others who might be interested.

In Friendship,
The NWE 2019 Quaker border meeting committee
Frieda Oudakker, Joke Hofman, Els Ramaker, Martin Touwen

QUAKERS IN BRITAIN

Facing the crisis of climate change

Quakers host Greta Thunberg and support climate activists

Swedish climate activist and Nobel Prize nominee Greta Thunberg urged everyone to listen to scientists and face the crisis of climate change. She was welcomed to Friends House by young Quakers. Quakers in Britain hosted the event targeting the imminent climate emergency.

Speaking to a packed and lively audience in Friends House, London, Greta Thunberg said: "Why should we study for a future when we have our future taken from us? Why should we go to school to learn facts when facts don't seem to matter?"

She was asked how she deals with those who deny climate change. "I don't," she said simply. The audience hung on Greta's every word. The sixteen-year-old is a global figure yet she said it was not about her. "This is a movement, not an organisation. We don't have titles. I am not a leader, just a part of the movement. No-one is irreplaceable."

Anna Taylor from the UK Student Climate Network said it was not about being party political but the government must change its priorities.

Caroline Lucas MP implored everyone to put people and planet before profit. "We need more truth and honesty. We can see what is happening and we need to act. Sea levels are not the only thing that is rising," she said. "We are rising too. Greta has shown what action looks like."

Afterwards, reflecting on a week which has seen record numbers of climate activists arrested, including Quakers, for their part in direct action, Paul Parker, Recording Clerk of Quakers in Britain, said: "We uphold all those in the climate movement who are impelled by conscience to break the law to avert this disaster. We recognise the urgent need for people of all faiths and none to stand up for climate justice and urgent action."

"We do not own the world, and its riches are not ours to dispose of at will. Quakers in Britain are committed to becoming a low-carbon, sustainable community. We know that our privileged lifestyles contribute to the problem of climate change, even though the impacts may be most strongly felt elsewhere in the world. Many Quakers and Quaker meetings have made changes to reduce their impact on the environment, but there is much more which can be done. Direct action is needed to create pressure for change."

"For climate breakdown to be averted, however, requires more than changing our personal behaviour. Governments and businesses must show bold leadership. Quakers in Britain call on our government to take urgent, far-reaching steps to end the UK's contribution to climate breakdown."

Limiting global temperature rises to 1.5C above pre-industrial levels requires bold actions to match the UK's promises in the Paris treaty. The response so far has been inadequate to the scale of this challenge. We can no longer ignore the need for change."



CITIZENS SOMERSET AND WEST SOMERSET AND TAUNTON

On Tuesday 26th April 2019 the Citizens Somerset chapter of Citizens UK and WSAT as an alliance therein was launched at Richard Huish College with 278 in attendance. This is the thirteenth chapter of Citizens UK (others are being planned for this year) - the first in the West Country and the first in a predominantly rural area.

Launching the Alliance as Citizens Somerset means that we honour the wider range of some of our organisations, such as West Somerset Quakers, the larger reach of the Methodists and the URC and the Diocese of Bath and Wells. It also gives the capacity to set up other chapters, besides WSAT, such as Bridgwater and Sedgemoor or Minehead and coast etc. and to represent a greater group of citizens in any negotiations with the County Council and the District Councils.

The organisations presently represented by the Alliance are ourselves, the Diocese of Bath and Wells, the Methodist Circuit and Temple, the URC in Taunton and the wider area, Kings College and Kings School, Wellington School, The Mavericks (for those that don't belong to an organisation that is signed up), and Taunton YMCA. Queens, Castle School, Courtfields, Bridgwater and Taunton College, Somerset Credit Union, YMCA Dulverton and the RC Church are all considering membership, with others in the pipeline.

At present we have £14,000 pledged which, with additional funding from the lottery, for other expenses such as training (the six day training costs £500), means we can employ Hero Austin one day a week for a first year.

I was at her interview and feel very confident in her ability to steer us forward with enthusiasm, clarity and creativity. Her six-year track record of leading the organisation Peach, in Newham, East London, using community organising to identify and work with issues such as the blight of rough landlords, and general deprivation, and getting Peach to the table as a key player in housing decisions across the district, is truly impressive.

The launch had good coverage on television news channels but the reporting from the Gazette was poor, and needs our attention for the future.

The decision to bring in other voices at the launch, to show a range of issues of concern across the area, didn't work in the form it took, mainly because we hadn't seen the substance of what was to be said beforehand and because our timekeeper didn't keep the speakers to time. This made the event too long and some people left before the last group had presented on street safety, which was a real pity.

However, over all, most felt it was a great success and a good launch for our new alliance, with three significant areas for campaigning –

- **Transport** (for which there will be a mass bus riding action on April 29th, and several schools working up their own actions,
- **Housing**, which has been well researched but now needs to focus on a winnable action
- **Street Safety** which is in a similar position.

Our group of Taunton members - Charles, Pauline, Vicki and John Ainsworth - met to share reflections on the launch and to begin to address the Membership Plan for the coming year.

This asks us to consider how Citizens can support the work that we do, and lists four possible ways - supporting our **Social Justice work**; our **development of leaders**, **strengthening our institution**, and **building relationships** with other groups, and asks us to rank these in priority order. We thought that the first and last were our top two, Social justice commitment and working with others, with leadership development and strengthening our community as the last two, but are open to other suggestions.

We are asked to write a plan for the year ahead, and this we will do and bring to your attention for verification, and to list three SMART objectives.

We know that, as in all planning, we need to sit lightly to our arrangements, letting love be our first move. We hope that more of you will feel prompted to get involved in the campaigns, and to consider local or national training to support this.

Fran Hicks

REPORT OF AGM OF CHURCHES TOGETHER IN SOMERSET

Representing WSAQM, Kathy Gollin and Margaret Stenhouse attended the AGM of Somerset Churches Together at Bagley Baptist Church near Wedmore on 23rd February 2019. The business of the AGM was briskly dealt with in under thirty minutes and representatives were then free to take part in a number of different workshops. Between us we attended one on Labyrinths, Circle dancing, Creative Prayer, Ignatian Prayer and Christian Meditation. The language used throughout was Christian but not evangelical. Communication was matter-of-fact and the assumption was that we were all coming from the same tradition albeit from different denominations. We spoke with Anglicans, Baptists, a Methodist and Salvation Army. It was a very interesting day and witnessed to the document on the Quaker vision "Our Faith in the Future: Facing turbulent times Quakers in Britain seek a future where Quakers work collaboratively.... We value the important work of others. By engaging with them we are already changing the world. We want to break down barriers; we refuse to pre-judge who is or is not an ally".

There will be three more meetings of the group this year: 29th May, 18th September and 20th November. These meetings usually take place in St James's church, Taunton. If you are interested in becoming a WSQAM representative on this worthwhile organisation, please contact Kathy or Margaret for more information.

Margaret Stenhouse



MEETING FOR SUFFERINGS REPORT APRIL 2019

The agenda this meeting comprised the usual items: Nominations, Court and Prison Register (in which Extinction Rebellion featured twice), organisations applying to become Quaker Recognised Bodies: this time -The Mount School, Green Olive Trust (which provides help to disadvantaged children in Western Kenya) and the Quaker Music Network. Also Minutes from AMs - Bournemouth and Coastal who brought a concern about the state of the National Health Service. (There is a booklet they produced and more information if you need it and want to support them). Also Meeting of Friends in Wales shared their concern about the effect of Brexit on the country, (which will probably come back to Sufferings later) and of course the Trustees report.

The substantive business was, however, from the Inclusion and Diversity project, delivered by Edwina Peart, and the Vibrancy in meetings project, reported on by Trustees, the Vibrancy team and the Charities Evaluation Service

Vibrancy

Trustees reported that having heard the report from the Vibrancy steering group and the Charities evaluation service, they were pleased to learn that, in the regions where this had happened, LMs and Quakers felt stronger, more confident, more connected and sustainable.

The question Trustees asked themselves was how the essence of the work could help achieve the priorities which they are working towards; a "Simple church supported by a simple charity to re-invigorate Quakerism". They needed to find affordable, sustainable and spirit-led solutions for the whole of the yearly meeting. This meeting was a chance for them to hear from Sufferings reps, in order to help their deliberations in June.

The project was set up as a joint initiative between BYM and Woodbrooke as one response to the challenges we face as a society such as declining and aging membership, the growing demand placed on role holders and research findings which have indicated an uncomfortable disconnect between some aspects of local and national work.

The presence of a vibrancy worker had given meetings the confidence to try things differently, such as the way they run MFW, making meetings more accessible, improving provision for children and families, reducing the demand on role holders.

The ability to build personal trusting relationships with the same person over time was felt particularly important: certainly for me.

Feedback from the project resulted in a new charging system for Woodbrooke on the road courses (Sandra Berry spoke of how she wanted costs not to deter people from accessing the learning opportunities Woodbrooke had to offer). The project also inspired Quaker Life to set up its "Simpler Meetings" project (something I hope Peter may report on next time: he is in Exeter at this very moment addressing this issue). LDWs are also now contributing to reviews of QL's work on conflict and on CYP's work: so it is very much a two way process.

We were presented with two main options that Trustees are considering

1. a phased roll out of the Vibrancy project across the country over about five years, with LDWs initially responding to local needs and YM services to a more consistent 'national approach' which, over time, would change so a greater proportion being delivered locally.
2. With this option there would be a greater emphasis on further decentralisation so that more YM services would be provided from locations outside Birmingham and London, possibly creating a network of regional Hubs. This could be tested by piloting one or more regional hubs for a period of

around three years. It is possible that although there would be cost implications to any changes there might also be savings if space created at Friends House could then be let commercially.

We were asked, as reps to bring back to you, for consideration, the question

“How might the options outlined above, support Quakerism to thrive in our areas?”

I would be delighted if, in your LMs you would give some time to this and I will ask the Clerks to forward the full text along with the minutes. (the full report can be obtained on the Sufferings page item 13 from the agenda papers.)

Inclusion and Diversity (I'm adapting the minutes here)

Yearly Meeting asked us to consider diversity in our committee and organisational structures and to think of ways in which Quakers can remove barriers and seek wider participation in the full life of our meetings. Edwina Peart, Inclusion and Diversity Co-ordinator, presented a second report to MfS, describing information gathered from the diversity and inclusion survey and from the national gathering on diversity and inclusion held at Woodbrooke. Around 1600 people responded to the survey and were a self-selecting sample. Edwina has more work to do on analysing the results, but on Saturday she shared some further reflections about ethnicity, gender and class in particular. She has found Quakers are, at their core, a community of people committed to a loving, simple and rich-in-the-spirit way of life. We spent time in seven separate groups considering the following questions:

1. Does anyone have a claim on the universal?
2. Do Quakers think that everyone should aspire to become middle class by middle age?
3. What makes for a welcoming welcome?

A report will be compiled from feedback received from the groups. In the concluding plenary session we reflected that some things are visible and others invisible – those in a dominant group are not always aware of their dominance. We need to know ourselves and the ‘baggage’ we hold to enable us to be truly welcoming of others. “Jesus asks us to love each person, whoever they are; not necessarily to agree or approve, but to love at a deep level. There should be no ‘other’ – we are all family.” We are reminded of the importance of listening to each other at a deep level. We heard that diversity, inclusion and privilege will be considered at Yearly Meeting in May and we will return to the matter again.

Trustees finance

We also heard from Linda Batten, BYM treasurer. The annual report and accounts for the year ended 31 December 2018 were agreed by Trustees the day before and headline figures are that both income and expenditure are down on the previous year. The loss of £3million for the year includes a stock value loss of £2.3million and the reserves, of which two thirds are held in property, stand at £77 million. Although about £5million was gifted by Friends in 2018, Quaker support was actually down by £0.75million. We continue to be supported more by deceased Friends than by those alive today! The Hospitality Company provided a record-breaking £1.3million of income. The accounts will be available in full for Yearly Meeting in May and we are encouraged to read them.

Fran Hicks

FOLLOWING ON...

In response to AM April 13th 2019 Minute:

19:29 a) ii). *Report on Meeting for Sufferings 6th April 2019. Fran Hicks spoke to the report:*

Following a report from the Vibrancy in Meetings Project we are asked to consider how the options proposed in the report might support Quakerism in our areas.

Arrangements Group has considered this carefully. It knows that AM agendas are full and believes there is limited appetite for another significant 'consultation' at this time. Friends in local meetings are working to address inequalities in very many ways; circumstances vary widely and while some meetings may feel inspired by Bournemouth Coastal AM to take similar action, others may not. Members of MfS will recall that Quaker Peace and Social Witness has programmes working on behalf of and with Friends, focusing on economic and social justice; and staff can work alongside and support local Quakers in their witness. So, Arrangements Group suggests MfS could encourage AMs to reflect on this, and consider whether to take action, or to link up with Bournemouth Coastal AM – but that this should be optional, and without any expectation that the matter would come back to Meeting for Sufferings. Bournemouth Coastal AM has prepared three documents which may be helpful, which are all available from the Bournemouth and Coastal AM website <http://www.quakerbournemouth.org/upcoming-events/> • Our calling to uphold a universal, public provided Health service – a summary of the concern, its substance and history • Facts and Figures related to the concern • 'What the NHS Means to Me' – stories and poems collected at a Swanage Quaker outreach event in June 2018.

Here is the minute:

MfS/19/04/08 National Health Service We receive minute 19.02 of Bournemouth Coastal Area Meeting, which has adopted a concern to uphold a universal, publicly provided Health Service. This has grown from and builds on local circumstances, including proposed changes to health services in Dorset. We forward Bournemouth Coastal AM's minute to Area Meetings, encouraging them if appropriate to learn more about the concern and to consider taking action. AM clerks are welcome to read documents available on the Bournemouth and Coastal AM website, and to contact the AM's clerk for further information.

Here is the link to the papers on vibrancy

<https://quaker-prod.s3.eu-west-1.amazonaws.com/store/ef27c4d773b7c45865c814147d1f8df9cd834f88151a11711689f3549b90>

and here is the minute:

BYMT-2019-02-10 Vibrancy in meetings Roger Clarke, Clerk of the Vibrancy in Meetings Steering Group, Suzanne Ismail, Head of Networking and Engagement, Quaker Peace & Social Witness, and Sarah Griffith, Project Development Officer, have joined us for this item. (a) Vibrancy in Meetings Steering Group report. We receive a report from the Vibrancy in Meetings Steering Group (BYMT-2019-02-10a), that Roger Clarke has introduced, together with the Vibrancy in Meetings Project Evaluation Main Report produced by NCVO Charities Evaluation Services in January 2019. Most of us have joined a webinar to hear directly from the evaluator. The Steering Group concludes that the Vibrancy in Meetings programme works. Local Meetings, and Quakers in the pilot regions, feel stronger, more confident, more connected and more sustainable as a result of the activity of the local

development workers. The evaluation of the Charities Evaluation Services is unequivocal in highlighting the benefits, and we celebrate this achievement. (b) Vibrancy Beyond the Pilot update We receive a paper to update us, and the Woodbrooke Trustees, on progress made in developing and testing options for locally-based work at the end of the current Vibrancy in Meetings pilot programme that Suzanne Ismael has introduced. (c) Consideration of options We are grateful for the work to date of the Vibrancy workers, the Vibrancy in Meetings Steering Group and the Beyond the Pilot Group. We recognise the value of the work in pilot regions and we must find a way to take forward the benefits. The central question for us is how best the essence of the vibrancy work can help us achieve the priorities that we have identified towards "A simple church supported by a simple charity to re-invigorate Quakerism". We have to find an affordable, sustainable and spirit-led solution for the whole of the yearly meeting and not only in the pilot areas. We ask that work continues on the options to bring costed possibilities to our June 2019 meeting where we can consider them alongside Woodbrooke trustees. We are pleased to hear of the consultation with other bodies that continues to take place. We are not sure that any of the options are yet quite right. Option 3 (full Yearly Meeting coverage of present model) may not provide enough support to the local workers who need to benefit from each other's support and skills. Options 4 (local & Yearly Meeting team) and 5 (regional teams) may be too heavily weighted with specialised skills to meet the local needs, but we have heard that there may be a sweet spot within them that should be developed and tested. We have worried that there may not be enough Friends available with the community-based skills needed to carry out the vibrancy work across the country, but we are reassured that there are many talented people who would welcome the chance to work for BYM outside London. We have also discussed management and are sure that any future vibrancy workers should be part of a clear management structure meeting local needs within a nationally agreed framework. Like many people working in the voluntary sector, they would be living out their values within their working life. Specialist skills will still be needed. 7 We ask that the modelling explores the inter-relationship between a national programme of local vibrancy work and centrally delivered services. It should also look at how the transition could happen from the current model to a future model. It should also explore the cost implications, ensuring that the long-term model is affordable and sustainable and that any short term overall increase in costs can be appropriately covered from reserves. We send this minute to the Vibrancy in Meetings Steering Group, Woodbrooke Trustees and Quaker Life Central Committee.

Fran Hicks



The Vibrancy Team at Woodbrooke

ANNOUNCEMENTS FROM TAUNTON MEETING

Somerset Citizens will hold a workshop on 'Turning Issues into Action' at Temple Methodist Church, Upper High Street, Taunton TA1 from 6.00 pm to 8.00 pm on Monday 13th May. This practical event is intended for those now joining the first three major topics (transport, homelessness and street safety) and for those with ideas for new topics to learn how to design effective action. For further information and to book a place email somerset@citizensuk.org or phone Richard Weaver from Citizens Somerset on 07377 815073.

Project Q (cohousing for the climate crisis, aligned with Quaker principles)
The second public meeting about this will be in Taunton, Somerset on 18th May 2019 - - - BOOK NOW!

Quaker Meeting House, Bath Place, Taunton,
Somerset TA1 4EP Saturday 18th May 2019

Contact: julian@projectq.community

"!We are seeking people with energy and determination to set up Project Q, a new cohousing group with the aim of helping others as the climate crisis unfolds. This meeting will enable us to determine our core values and the features we wish to have in the property we buy together. If you want to come, please email Julian Brooks to book in, then you will receive booking details (the venue is walking distance from Taunton railway and bus station). Please say on your email if you'd like to bring children and if you have any disability requirements. Limited spaces, so book in soon! We are aiming for thirty people, but there is space for sixty.

£20 per adult including lunch - pay at the door. We will provide tea and coffee on arrival and in the afternoon. Offers to bring home-made cakes very welcome! For lunch we will provide a vegan stew made as far as possible with local vegetables – all organic of course. There will also be optional kindly-kept stewed meat that you can add to the stew if you wish. And pudding! "

Charles Henderson

**GASTROTRICHS – A NOT UNUSUAL STORY IN 34 WORDS...
250 WORDS***

Our beaches of shining sand are kept more or less clean by billions of tiny creatures living off the organic detritus that is constantly being swept up and sifted by wave and tide. Without their incessant microscopic busyness our shores would be surrounded with nothing but mudflats.

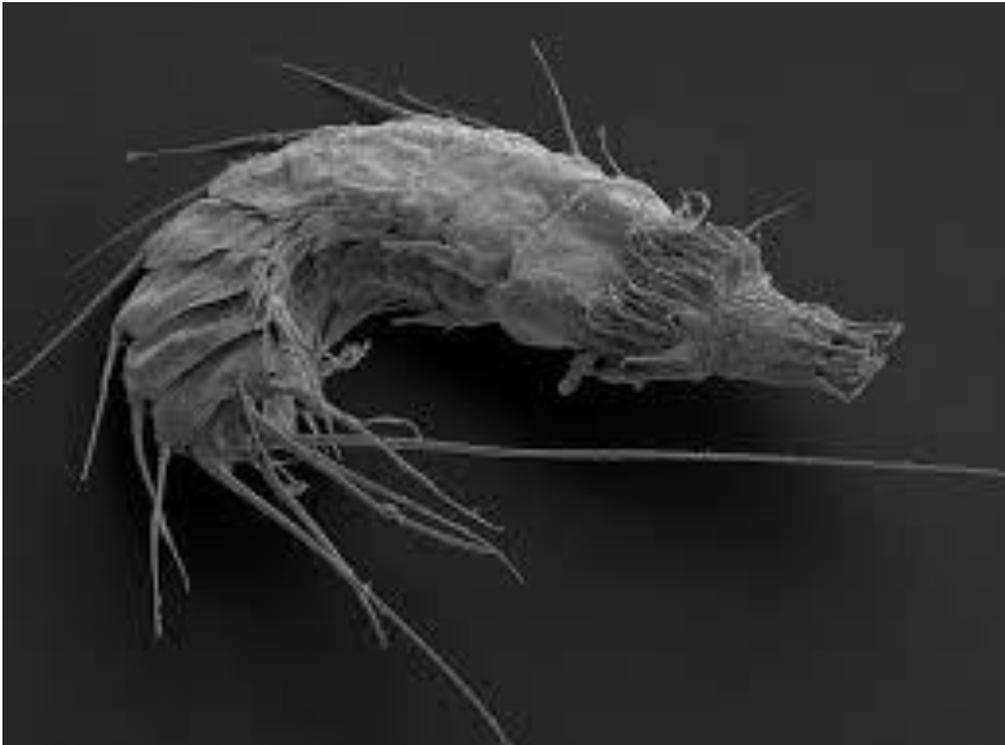
For these sand dwellers life proves, literally, a daily grind and they have evolved many different strategies for survival among the shifting grains. One group, the gastrotrichs (of which there are over 700 known species), have evolved a novel way of getting about. A minute gland secretes a blob of cement which fixes it momentarily to a grain of sand. Then another equally minute gland secretes a solvent so that it can unstick itself and, by repeating the process sequentially, move on and navigate through what must seem, on its scale, a landscape of tumbling boulders.

My friend is just 45. He left his wife and children for a younger woman some fifteen years ago and now he is leaving this younger woman for yet another even younger woman.

There is nothing unusual in this story. We, men and women alike, get by as best we can in our often unstable situations: instinctively cementing some new relationship before finally abandoning the old: purposing to be the one moving on rather than the one left behind.

And we all too often, only too readily, forget that the objects of our various attachments and detachments are not inanimate silica but living and feeling flesh.

John Anderson



*Also baffled! Ed.



Turning Issues into Action



This workshop is for people with ideas for campaigns to learn how to design effective actions.

18:00-20:00, Monday 13 May 2019

Temple Methodist Church, Upper High St, Taunton TA1 3PY

For more information and to book your place please email:
somerset@citizensuk.org or phone Richard Weaver from Citizens

Somerset on 07377 815073

Tea and coffee will be provided.

Communities organising for power, social justice & the common good