

REPORTS

in advance of Area Meeting February 2017

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Meeting of The Northern Friends Peace Board, York, November, 2016

Global Nuclear Weapons Ban Treaty

Janet Fenton introduced the work undertaken to set in motion the plan to establish a Global Nuclear Weapons Ban Treaty. She emphasised that this is about the destruction nuclear weapons are capable of doing to this planet and has asked us to bear in mind their enormous potential: today even a 'small exchange' would be 100 times greater than Hiroshima. She pointed out that it is the countries which do not hold nuclear weapons that have been the source of attempts to control them. She told us that the Scottish dimension is crucial, but that this is essentially an international issue which our government is not addressing.

Janet listed for us the series of UN initiatives to ban or control nuclear weapons. Article 6 of the current Non-Proliferation Treaty was signed by nuclear states but has not advanced in any significant way: there are now nine nuclear states where there were five when the treaty was signed. She pointed out to us that the only way this can be changed is to alter the perceptions of the people in power so that they can understand fully the threat of the very existence of these weapons, for example the huge risks of an accident the weapons pose, which is in fact increasing given the introduction of computer involvement in protective systems. Janet reminded us that nuclear weapons free zones do exist – in Africa, for example – but efforts towards the Middle East were scuppered by the US despite the efforts of Ban Ki Moon. She made clear that emergency medical care would not be able to give any assistance in the case of an accident involving a nuclear weapon (because of radiation dangers) and that chaos would result.

Janet told us that three international conferences were called by non-nuclear countries looking at the possibility of an international treaty; these led to a resolution in the UN and subsequently open ended conferences and working groups drawing in civil society. Janet herself has attended as a representative of the Women's International League for Peace and Freedom, established after the Hague Conference held in 1915. Although the UK and other nuclear states have boycotted this process, individual diplomats did in fact attend. Decisions were made by consensus and a resolution drawn up that recognised the security interests of nuclear weapon holding nations. Despite these efforts the Australian delegate moved for a vote; the original resolution was then carried in favour and was taken to the UN in New York. 123 states did in the end support the resolution with 38 (the nuclear weapon states and their close allies) voting against.

Janet urged Friends to support further action by holding our parliamentarians to account: helping them to listen, to understand that the resolution is workable and to recognise the dangers of nuclear weaponry. Janet has listed questions that we can ask our MPs: about how we select our diplomats; why the UK did not enter negotiations on the issue; whether they will send someone willing to support the process on the 5th December; why Scotland's views are not represented. She also urged us to talk to people and to get the issue into the press.

Veterans for Peace

We were joined by Michael Elstub from Settle Local Meeting. Michael is a member of Veterans for Peace UK (see <http://vfpuk.org/about/>). Michael told us about the basis and activities of VfP. VfP was founded by Vietnam veterans, and now has a representative in the UN, and were invited into membership of the International Peace Bureau in Geneva. In 2011 a chapter was formed in the UK. Members are required to sign up to a full statement of the aims of the organisation.

Michael shared something of his own personal journey: it began with seeking sponsorship for his studies, as a broke dental-student; continued with the army providing him with finance for his degree, and then his required stint in the forces. In 1979 the army taught him that there was no way of protecting the population from nuclear weapons. He told us that he then became an open peace campaigner in uniform and survived for five years before being given the choice between resigning from the military, or from the peace organisations he had joined; he did the latter officially but not in his personal views. He finally left in 1990 but remained on reserve, still campaigning for peace. Ten years ago he became a Quaker and a conscientious objector. His final conversion to opposition to nuclear weapons happened in Meeting.

Michael explained to us the Statement of Intent of VfP: this statement identified the UK as a prime driver for war, and that war is not a solution to the problems of the world, and lists the actions designed to liberate the citizens of the UK from the consequences of the 'War System'. Friends are encouraged to draw on VfP members who are willing to speak to groups, particularly of young people and in schools, to provide a vital counterbalance to the view of the armed services that is provided by those involved in publicity and recruitment.

Quaker Peace and Social Witness

Sam Walton gave a brief report on the work for peace and disarmament and for peace education undertaken on behalf of Britain Yearly meeting. He told us of the continued work of opposition to recruiting 16-year-olds in Britain as 'child soldiers'; numbers of these are increasing but there has been progress in Scotland where attention and debate is a productive way of de-normalising the practice. He told us of a resource being developed on taking action on militarism produced by QPSW. He also encouraged us to become involved in peace education, which QPSW can help resource and guide.

(Report based on the Clerk's Minutes, edited by Christopher Bagley).

For information on the nuclear weapons ban treaty <http://www.icanw.org/>

Ackworth General Meeting report

Friends,

I attended Ackworth General Meeting on 14 May 2016 on your behalf.

The General Meeting received the detailed reports from the Head, the Clerk to School Committee, and the Treasurer (which are available from the School or myself). Over the lunch period, members of General Committee were given a tour of sports facilities followed by a discussion of the ethos guiding sports provision at Ackworth.

I am happy to report that the Ackworth School under its new head teacher Anton Maree has become much more active in building links with the local community. Over the past year, the School has become more engaged with Quaker concerns raising them in Morning Meeting. For example, the school recently held a session on the plight of Syrian refugees. Students heard directly

from a Syrian refugee about his experiences. In cooperation with the 'Breaking Borders' charity, the School is helping a Syrian refugee Mohammed to complete his A-Levels in order to study medicine. The School is paying him a small stipend so that he can support his family while he is completing his schooling. Such initiatives reflecting Quaker values are really encouraging. Anton Maree asked representatives to assist School with securing additional financial support from their Area Meetings or other sources to further such efforts. Indeed, I learned at the QARN Forced Migration conference last weekend that QARN plans to lobby Quaker Schools to provide more places for Syrian refugees.

The reports assured representatives that the School continues to offer excellent education to its students. Ackworth students excel academically as well as in sports particularly Squash. The clerk to School Committee David Bunney concluded his report by asking representatives to "report back to their Area Meetings that there is a vibrant spirit in Ackworth School that represents the best in Quaker education and measures up well with other Quaker bodies in espousing the Quaker ethos."

Nevertheless, I would like to raise a number of concerns:

The Clerk to School Committee David Bunney announced that the School Committee is planning to propose to General Meeting 2017 that Ackworth School should become a Public Limited Company. In his report, he outlined that School Committee had been urged to contemplate this step at urging of the School's auditors and received legal advice on the pro and cons of incorporation. The General Meeting minutes state: "This [information] will be available and sent out with these minutes for representatives to share with their Area Meetings for review in the context of a full proposal for incorporation being made to this General Meeting in 2017." However, this information has not to date been sent out and I am therefore not in a position to share them with you. I remain concerned about the School Committee's disregard of General Meeting. You may want to consider how you feel about the proposed changes in principle.

The report by the Treasurer revealed that the School has been forced to write off considerable bad debts arising from fee arrears over the last few years. As a consequence, the School has had to introduce a rigorous debt management system. The School continues to offer fee reductions to over half of its students. Nevertheless, this has forced the School Committee to raise school fees substantially yet again.

A special committee reported that the School intends to regularise its relationship with Britain Yearly Meeting and apply to become a QRB as soon as Meeting for Sufferings has approved the process. Paul Parker recently visited Ackworth School.

I would like to add a footnote to my report. As your representative, I was asked by Disley Meeting to raise that meeting's concern about the living wage. My email on this subject to the Bursar at Ackworth School of 8 December 2016 has gone unanswered. Ann Morgan (Lancaster Meeting, Living Wage Campaign) tells me that the Living Wage Campaign has similarly contacted the School and not so far received a response.

Till Geiger

Meeting For Sufferings Report 4 February 2017 by Andrew Backhouse

- 1) Two Friends were recorded as suffering for conscience sake including Sam Walton for breaking into BAe to try to disarm planes bound for Saudi Arabia.
- 2) The **BYM Sustainability group** reported and Friends talked about the difficulty of getting local Friends active/concerned, changing lifestyles, and how sustainability relates to our spiritual experience.
- 3) Pendle Hill AM is concerned about **fracking**, and there will be an open meeting for worship on Pendle Hill on May 6th at 2pm. Meeting for Sufferings minuted the importance for governments and us to act to keep fossil fuels in the ground and move to more renewables if we are to look after the planet and reduce climate change. This includes local meetings and AMs disinvesting.
- 4) **Truth and integrity in public affairs** was raised by Pendle Hill AM in relation to government overturning local decision making, and from QPSW on the lack of transparency and integrity in government, relating particularly to the introduction of cadet forces in schools including Scotland without approval.
- 5) We received the **Quaker Housing Trust** triennial report – really exciting to see what has been done with their funds to help local housing concerns and it makes one wonder what we should be doing/could be doing in Cheshire on this.
- 6) **YM 2017 agenda** was brought to our attention – trying to provide time within it to reflect and 'anchor' the experience, and looking at how we work with others to make a difference. They are hoping for plenty of young people being nominated for Junior Yearly Meeting.
- 7) A **Response to the Current International Situation** was tabled as a draft statement on behalf of the Yearly Meeting in regard to building of barriers between people. It can be found on the BYM website in full:

"We are a people that follow after those things that make for peace, love and unity". Quakers in Britain see these values once again under threat, not least from recent developments in the USA.

We condemn all acts of government which set people against one another, which discriminate against people because of who they are or where they were born. We reject

policies which condone suspicion and hatred; which turn away those who need and depend upon our help. We were not put on the world for this, but to be a people of God, to live in harmony with each other.

There can be no peace without justice; no love without trust; and no unity without equality. Our faith urges us to welcome the stranger as our equal and friend, feed those who are hungry and shelter those who are homeless, needy and frightened.

Alongside Quakers in the USA and the American Friends Service Committee, we stand with those whose lives are blighted by racist, discriminatory policies and those whose faith is denigrated by association with a tiny violent minority. We pray for the courage and steadfastness that will be needed as we uphold our testimony of equality, justice, peace, sustainability, and truth. For us, prayer is inseparable from action.

Humanity deserves leaders of integrity and conscience, ready to be held to account by individuals and institutions, national and international. We pray for those in positions of power. We call on them as public servants, to work with all of good faith to build the world we seek, to fertilise the soil in which the tender shoots of peace, love and unity may flourish..

Meeting for Sufferings Statement 4th February 2017

“Alongside Quakers in the USA, and their [American Friends Service Committee](#), we stand with those whose lives are blighted by racist, discriminatory policies and those whose faith is denigrated by association with a tiny violent minority.”

The full statement from [Meeting for Sufferings](#) held at Friends House, Quakers' central offices in London is here:

“We are a people that follow after those things that make for peace, love and unity’ (Margaret Fell, writing to Charles II in 1660). Quakers in Britain see these values now under growing threat around the world, not least from recent developments in the United States of America.

“We condemn all acts of government which set people against one another; which discriminate against people because of who they are or where they were born. We reject policies which condone suspicion and hatred; which turn away those who need and depend upon our help. We were not put on Earth for this, but to be a people of God, to live in harmony with each other.

“There can be no peace without justice; no love without trust; and no unity without equality. Our faith urges us to welcome the stranger as our equal and friend, feed those who are hungry and shelter those who are homeless, needy and frightened.

“Alongside Quakers in the USA, and their [American Friends Service Committee](#), we stand with those whose lives are blighted by racist, discriminatory policies and those whose faith is denigrated by association with a tiny violent minority. We pray for the courage and steadfastness that will be needed as we uphold our testimony of equality, justice, peace, sustainability and truth. For us, prayer is inseparable from action.

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- Meeting for Sufferings statement

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Peace Education Project

Introduction & Summary

The small group of AM friends who produced this report felt that we should bring this proposal to AM at this very early stage for wider discernment. We realise that at present it is mainly a large vision with a few concrete targets. Also that it comes from a small group who will need additional capacity from within AM and more widely to progress very far. We hope AM will help with the discernment process at this early stage, and have included some suggested areas for discernment towards the end. We are then happy to go and do further work that can be brought back to AM if AM feels this is a direction our Area Meeting should be going in.

1. This proposal arises from our shared Peace testimony (Advices and Queries 31 and 32)

31. We are called to live ‘in the virtue of that life and power that takes away the occasion of all wars’. Do you faithfully maintain our testimony that war and the preparation for war are inconsistent with the spirit of Christ? Search out whatever in your own way of life may contain the seeds of war. Stand firm in our testimony, even when others commit or prepare to commit acts of violence, yet always remember that they too are children of God.

32. Bring into God’s light those emotions, attitudes and prejudices in yourself which lie at the root of destructive conflict, acknowledging your need for forgiveness and grace. In what ways are you involved in the work of reconciliation between individuals, groups and nations?

Background

2. Many of us have been led to further our shared testimony through individual involvement as Peace Campaigners, Ecumenical Accompaniers etc. ECAM is a longstanding supporter of the Northern Friends Peace Board.

3. In recent years, ECAM has supported the work of the Peace Strategy Group in providing an alternative narrative to the current World War I commemorations highlighting the forgotten history of Conscientious Objectors. Thanks to the efforts of Celia Davies and Pat Baker, this project resulted in an exhibition at Macclesfield Library, a number of poetry workshops in local high schools, the publication of the resulting poems in the anthology ‘Worn with Pride’ and the commissioning of a musical work by Taylor Giacomini, performed by young people.

4. Further, focussing on schools, many meetings have distributed the ‘Teach Peace’ Pack and also the ‘Conscience’ and ‘Conviction’ teaching packs. We have sought to engage with local schools in various ways, such as Frandley taking schools assemblies and Disley Meeting organising workshops at the Poynton School Year 13 Peace Day in September for

several years now. A careers leaflet on Conflict resolution and peace building skills, their usefulness to many careers, and the chance to specialise in peace work was developed and used in a high school careers fair. Members of East Cheshire have also attended training and conference events run by QPSW Peace Education team and the UK Peace Education Network (which includes QPSW, Pax Christi, CND and others) to develop skills and understanding of successful peace education work around the country.

5. One striking point that emerged is that in some parts of the UK there are established projects offering regular peace education support to local schools. These projects have usually been started by local Quakers and include Peacemakers in West Midlands, LEAP in London, CRESST (Conflict Resolution Education in Sheffield Schools), and the Mid Wales Peaceful Schools Project. However in other parts of the country, including the North West there is no such offer to schools.

6. Lessons from the Mid Wales Peaceful School Project and how we might start to develop something in our region was the subject of one of the group sessions at November's Regional Gathering, and this was well attended by people across our six AMs. Building on the interest at Regional Gathering, a small sub-group of the ECAM Peace Group (Gill Alcock, Pat Baker, Till Geiger, Ann and Rachel Lewis, Phoebe Spence) met with Ellis Brooks from QPSW Peace Education assisted by a Turning the Tide facilitator for a half-day in January to discuss ideas and formulate a possible plan for future action.

7. In this session, we reviewed our past activities, pooled our knowledge of similar projects (CRESST, LEAP (London), PeaceMakers (West Midlands), Mid-Wales etc), surveyed available resources and skills, and discussed various possible paths to take what might be our shared concern forward.

8. We felt that our next step was to report back to Area Meeting for further discernment and hopefully support.

9. The discussions identified some salient points:

- what does Peace Education consist of? It can range from thinking about what peace is through to skill training in skills such as conflict resolution, peer mediation etc.

- what do we feel comfortable doing? What are our skills? Some in the group are happy to work directly in schools. Others are more comfortable helping organise one off events, or helping schools to access resources and people from elsewhere. These different preferences are likely to come up when looking beyond the small group to other potentially supportive people. We also note that working directly in schools may require more capacity building for ourselves before we can offer this, compared to organising one off events or promoting and facilitating resources from others to our local schools.

- what can we learn from existing projects? – projects elsewhere offer models of working, materials to use and training/shadowing opportunities for us. In terms of scale, some projects like CRESST, LEAP and the West Midlands Peacemakers are now well established projects that have grown in scale and scope after many years experience, often with AM support over several years. Others like Mid Wales have started in the last couple of years and are much more modest. They for example have a format of offering 8 one hour sessions in primary schools.

- what is our capacity and who else would we work with? The group has some people who can give time but it is likely that more will be needed. The advice from QPSW and Turning the Tide was, in the early stages of project planning, to start as a small group from one AM.

Also perhaps to be quite small in proposed geographical area to start with. We note that established projects elsewhere often involve non Quakers drawn to this kind of work. From the Regional Gathering we have a list of potentially supportive Quakers from other AMs over a wider area than East Cheshire. Manchester and Warrington AM have an embryonic Peace Group and have said they hope they can support this initiative in some way. We also have some contacts with other organisations such as Warrington Foundation for Peace and CND Peace Education which have some overlapping interests although often their expertise is in very particular issues eg violent extremism.

Proposal

10. We now would like to bring a proposal for a Peace Education Project (PEP) forward to Area Meeting for discernment. The Turning the Tide facilitator encouraged us to consider both a large overall vision and concrete goals for the next twelve months and we include these in the proposal for AM.

11. The overall vision would be to develop a 'Peace Education Project' that schools in our region would know about and feel confident in working with. The project would offer more than one option to schools, building on existing activities we already have experience of but also offering new elements, such as skill building in pupils, for which we ourselves would be developing new skills. By offering a range of activities we hope to respond to a variety of needs in schools, including nationally driven requirements. The project would not rely totally on Quakers to deliver and so we would seek to build a strong network of partners to take this forward.

We propose to develop two main aspects: peace education in its widest sense and skills training e.g. in peer mediation. Delivery would be in some cases through one-off events and in other cases through a programme of work with a school or schools.

As part of the peace education strand, we would approach primary schools to offer assemblies or enrichment activities building on the Peace Pack. This might involve story-telling and encourage understanding of the nature of conflict and the importance to promote peace. For secondary schools, we would seek to develop and facilitate a day-long programme of peace-related workshops involving other peace groups, and also offer sessions with school history societies. This activity would be modelled on the Poynton School Peace Day.

On the skills development strand, after capacity building of ourselves, we would seek to develop and offer a peaceful schools programme to interested schools, based on the successful model of other organisations in the Midlands and Mid-Wales. As our own capacity developed we would aim to offer training in skills such as peer mediation. Through such training we aim to equip students to resolve conflicts non-violently and thereby develop important life skills.

12. In order to develop and deliver the Peace Education project, we will need to draw in other Quakers and non Quakers over time into a network with the capacity to deliver. We also will need to develop a network of partners with schools and the wider community. This has resource and financial implications. For example volunteers may require training in skills (public speaking, story-telling, publicity, networking, peer mediation). Funding would be sought from both Quaker and non Quaker sources as the project developed.

13. In order to move towards this vision we suggest the following targets for the next 12 months.

a. We propose to give this project an independent identity as the PEACE EDUCATION PROJECT under the care of ECAM. By this we do not mean setting up a separate legal structure at this stage but rather giving it a name and identity, with for example a webpage and a leaflet so that those interested know where to approach us, and which can act as publicity for reaching out to schools.

b. Activities could be targeted at a limited number of geographical areas in the first year – possibly Macclesfield /Poynton; Northwich/Warrington and/or Stockport. The idea of a geographical focus is to promote ideas and thinking amongst clusters of schools.

c. On the Peace Education side a target would be to develop and offer a Peace Day event to at least one high school, drawing on the experience of the Poynton Peace Day.

d. On the Skills Development side one target would be to build our own local capacity by enabling one or preferably more people to gain training and shadowing experience. There are several opportunities nationally to gain this. A second target would be that by the end of twelve months we have identified at least one school that wishes to have a programme of peace education sessions delivered.

e. On the networking side the target would be to make or strengthen contact with other interested Quakers in the region, with other local groups interested in peace education type work, and with further individuals referred to us via QPSW, NFPB etc in order to explain our vision and seek potential supporters and/or colleagues.

14. Members of the Peace Group have offered some time and are prepared to commit to certain activities. Ellis Brooks from QPSW Peace Education has offered to support our plans by providing training and assistance in designing a website. Clare of Turning the Tide offered to assist the project in future with advice, meeting facilitation and training. QPSW and some of the more established Peace Education projects are offering training this year.

15. Although this project is at an early stage, we are bringing it now to East Cheshire AM for discernment, and hope that ECAM's discernment may consider the following:

- is this a project that ECAM wishes to support?
- is the scope and vision (11 and 12 above) good enough, too ambitious, inadequate?
- are the targets (13 above) ones that ECAM is comfortable with?
- does ECAM have particular priorities within the overall scope we have outlined?

16. If ECAM discerns that it does wish to support the further development of this project a number of practical issues to consider may be:

- how do we ensure we can draw on the expertise and contacts of ECAM members who may be parents, governors or teachers? And those who may wish to help in the design and delivery of the project?
- should this initiative, as it develops, report to AM, to Trustees or to the ECAM Peace Group? Would it help if we did further research on how similar Quaker peace education projects have set up their reporting structures and then come back with a proposal for a structure?
- is it timely for Trustees to consider quite soon issues around insurance, safeguarding etc?
- does ECAM wish to agree some start up funding towards the costs of e.g. travel, training etc and ask the project to come back in due course with a more detailed budget for consideration?

Report of Course "Being a Quaker Clerk" held at Woodbrooke
27-29 January 2017

This was a well planned Course charting the stages of the life cycle of the Quaker Meeting for Worship for Business. It was important to begin with clarification of the underlying principles especially the discipline of bring Spirit led, not ego led.

There were 7 sessions throughout the weekend with a recurring theme for successful Clerking, namely preparation. First of all taking time to prepare all aspects of the agenda and aware that a likely outcome may be a task to be performed or more information to be acquired. Also noticing that some items may more usefully be dealt with in an alternative more appropriate forum.

The Course then focussed on the Meeting itself ,when, following a preparative silence the Clerk enables Friends to respectfully share opinions, thoughts and feelings. We learned that it was helpful to have drafted a "skeleton" minute before the Meeting which could be modified/rewritten following the prayerful process of discerning the will of God in the sense of the Meeting. The latter can then be requested to accept the completed minute. This we practised in small groups which led into questioning and helpful discussion e g how to deal with the many and varied difficulties and outcomes which may arise during the Meeting. It was then that we fully appreciated the knowledge ,wisdom and skill of the tutors and also sharing the experiences of other Course members. It was interesting hearing of the varied structures of Clerking which are used in other AMs. A successful Meeting ends on time with information being disseminated, tasks allocated and minutes agreed and signed.

I had gone on the Course in some trepidation whether I would be able to absorb everything in the programme in such a short time. However it was reassuring that while I have much still to learn I found I had already picked up via osmosis over the years more information than I realised. And there will always be the wonderfully detailed Course Handbook to guide me when necessary.

Many thanks to ECAM for providing me with the opportunity to attend this Course.

Joan Armstrong
Clerk to Trustees

Forced Migration: How can Quakers respond?

Quaker Asylum and Refugee Network conference,
Woodbrooke Quaker Study Centre, 3-5 February 2017

Like many Friends, I have been appalled by the plight of the Syrian refugees over the past few years and become increasingly concerned about the wider “migrant crisis” in Europe at the moment. Equally worrying has been the fact that the rising public concern about this issue has contributed to the rise of populist nationalism in many countries and arguably leading to the Brexit vote in last June’s referendum. The migrant crisis and referendum result has pushed the questions of ‘who belongs?’ and ‘who should belong?’ to the top of the political agenda making this conference particularly timely. Since 23 June 2016, I have personally become concerned about being possibly forced to leave Britain after living and making my home here for over thirty years. Anxieties fuelled by the recent decisions of the Trump administration reflecting the general hostile environment towards refugees and (forced) migrants. My personal concerns about these issues led me to attend the QARN Forced Migration conference last weekend.

At the conference, about 150 Friends reflected on the current work undertaken by Quakers and others in this field, attended workshops to learn more about different aspects of the issues, and discern how Quakers should respond. These issues and concerns directly relate to many of our shared testimonies of peace, truth, equality, and social justice. I was heartened to learn about the work of Quakers are doing in this field. For example, the Quaker Council for European Affairs and the Quaker United Nations Office are publishing helpful reports providing valuable information as well as campaigning for refugee and migrant rights at international level. At a local level, many Friends are helping to establish cities of sanctuary transforming the hostile environment into one of welcome and personal support for many refugees and asylum seekers. This work has been documented in a recently published QCEA/QARN report entitled ‘Quaker faith in action: Friends’ work in the area of forced migration’ (available at:

<https://www.qcea.org/2017/01/new-report-on-european-quakers-response-to-forced-migration/>). The report shows that there many things that we can do individually to help refugees.

For me, a highlight of the conference was the performance of the new play “The Bundle” by Journeyman Theatre which retold the asylum case of a Chechen woman who fled with her children to Britain. This harrowing play brought home to me the personal dimension of forced migration.

The deliberations at the conferences helped me to make sense of current developments and to gain a better understanding of current government policy which is deliberately creating a hostile environment for refugees, asylum seekers, non-European migrants and more recently EU migrants. As part of the hostile environment, these policies regard all asylum seekers as potentially illegal migrants despite the protections afforded to them under the Refugee Conventions. The shared concern about the growing government’s hostile environment led the attendees to adopt a strong minute calling for a Quaker Statement on Forced Migration which I would urge all Friends to read (available at: <http://www.qarn.org.uk/homepage/minute-from-the-forced-migration-how-can-quakers-respond-conference-5-february-2017/>).

Membership Clerk's report to East Cheshire AM

February 11th 2017

I mentioned to our Clerk recently that I was always on the look-out for 'novel' ways of presenting this report. The words had barely died on my lips when the latest idea took root.

Chapter 1.

This 'novel' tells the tale of membership matters during 2016.

The number of members at the beginning of 2016 was 169, the lowest level since, well, maybe never.

Chapter 2

By the end of the year it was discovered that the number of members had risen to 174.

Chapter 3

The number of Friends who transferred their membership to elsewhere was two. Both were called Elizabeth. One had moved to Australia many years ago and the other had moved to Yorkshire.

Chapter 4.

However, it was not all moving away. Two men and four women had taken the plunge and decided to join the joyfulness of our very own Area Meeting. Some of these folk had long been associated with Quakers and one or two were fairly new to our way of doing things. Another man decided to regularise his position by transferring his membership from a neighbouring Area Meeting. So welcome again to John, John, David, Emma, Hilary, Linda and Sarah.

Chapter 5

There then appeared in the Membership Clerk's mind the realisation that during the whole of 2016 there had been no deaths of members recorded, a most unusual occurrence.

Chapter 6

It is with thanks that the work of the Local Meeting Clerks is remembered. Their furnishing of numbers of attenders - when added together - came to 128. These are essentially subjective estimates. This number is a smidgeon less than in 2015 but more than the two years before that. The figure of 128 includes 33 children.

There appears to be no hard and fast way of deciding who qualifies as an attender but the Big Red Book does give some helpful advice.

Chapter 7

All the details referred to have been recorded on a form known as the Tabular Statement and have been sent electronically to Friends House some weeks ago. A paper copy is retained and is available for inspection by contacting the Membership Clerk. The Membership Clerk did not get around to dealing with the Tabular Statement until around Christmastime but thankfully it all fell into place without too much difficulty. Being fond of anagrams he realised that the letters of 'Tabular Statement' could be re-arranged to read START LATE BUT AMEN.

The End