

Religious Society of Friends (Quakers) Cheadle Hulme Meeting

Annual Report for the year ending 31 December 2015

Cheadle Hulme Meeting is not a large one. Normally there are a dozen or so Friends at Meeting for Worship on a Sunday and the meeting community consists of about twenty people. We were encouraged that during the year we gained a few new attenders.

We ended 2014 with a review of the state of the meeting and gradually through this year some of the new initiatives we had envisaged began to bear fruit.

A *Facebook* page was set up early in the year and a couple of sessions were held after Meeting to introduce Friends to this aspect of the web. We also maintain an active presence on the new Area Meeting website which was set up towards the end of the year.

There have been several Meeting outings through the year, which help to strengthen the meeting community but also provide opportunities for learning and reflecting on Quakerism. In February a group attended the performance of *Out of the Silence*, a dramatic presentation of the experience of conscientious objectors in the First World War, in Disley and were very enthusiastic about it. We did contemplate arranging a performance in Cheadle Hulme but this hasn't happened yet. In August a group visited the Quaker Tapestry in Kendal; in September a group visited Brigflatts Meeting House, Firbank Fell, Sedbergh and Preston Patrick Meeting House; in October and November two groups attended performances of *Baked Alaska*, a satire on climate change; and then in November a group visited the Peace Museum in Bradford. These were each very enjoyable and informative events and we hope to undertake further such visits in 2016.

Churches Together in Cheadle Hulme now alternates its bimonthly meetings between a business meeting and a 'worship and praise' meeting. In July we hosted the 'worship and praise' meeting and shared the experience of a Quaker Meeting for Worship with some planned readings early in the meeting. This was well attended and seemed to be appreciated. Earlier in the year we hosted one of the Churches Together soup, bread and cheese lunches in aid of Christian Aid and we participate in other fund-raising activities for Christian Aid, the sponsored walk, the sponsored swim and the house to house collection. In January, during the week of prayer for Christian unity, Churches Together held an evening when each church was invited to share a song based on a psalm and a group of us took part in this.

We are actually quite a musical meeting as several of us sing in one of Taylor Giacomini's choirs and, as is now usual, Taylor led us in singing after meeting for worship on the Sunday before Christmas. At the beginning of October, Mike Nash was joined by his friends Bernie Thomas and Roger Parker for an evening of (mainly) Quaker songs at the meeting house and we were pleased to welcome Friends from other meetings to this. There was also singing at the party held at the end of September to celebrate Peter Eccles' seventieth birthday and retirement.

At the end of 2014 we decided to change our method of fund-raising for the various other bodies we support as the regular weekly collections were raising very little. We now have a Quaker and Local Projects Fund and Friends are encouraged to contribute to this when making a financial contribution to the meeting. Through the year we had several lunches after meeting to raise money for this fund. The idea is that at the end of each year we will consider together where to send the funds raised.

We had two meetings for learning after meeting for worship: a session listening to the 2014 Swarthmore Lecture and another session when Ann Lewis shared something of her spiritual

journey. Towards the end of the year we decided to join in the reading of *Quaker Faith and Practice* which is being encouraged nationally as part of the consideration of whether a new edition is needed; a group of us began to meet before meeting for worship on the third Sunday of each month to do this.

Recently a book of photographs of people associated with the meeting which we had given to John and Margaret Postle for their Golden Wedding was returned to the meeting and an evening was held with Alan and Evelyn Ingram to look at this and other photographs and reminisce about the meeting. So many people have contributed to the life of our meeting. This year we lost Hildegard Brooker who died in June. She was born in Vienna but came to Britain in 1939 and was first part of our meeting when her parents were wardens of the hostel set up by the meeting during the Second World War. Hilde was buried in Sale Meeting House and a Quaker memorial meeting was held in Emmanuel Church, Didsbury.

Some Friends in the Meeting have supported outreach activities organized by the wider Quaker community in this area. These include the vigils for equality which were held in the run up to the General Election and again during the Conservative Party Conference in Manchester; the interfaith songs and readings for peace and justice event held in Stockport before Christmas; and the local Quaker/Jewish dialogue group. Friends have also attended courses and Woodbrooke.

Although we do struggle to find people to do some the jobs which need doing, this report shows that are a more active meeting than we sometimes realize.