

*The Book of Christian Discipline of the Society of Friends from 1883 held in the Woodbrooke Library*

## Report to Sussex East Area Meeting from Meeting for Sufferings 2<sup>nd</sup> December 2017

*Peter F. Bolwell - Hastings LM*

**Meeting for Sufferings convened at Friends House on 2nd December.** This was also a Young Friends Participation Day, when young Friends from around the country were also holding meetings and activities of their own but would come to join us in Meeting from Sufferings for certain sessions at intervals during the day, discovering the nature of the business we do and how it is conducted, and also joining in or deliberations from time to time with valued contributions of their own.

We heard of two new entries for the "court register" which maintains records of the literal "sufferings" of Friends who have witnessed for

their faith, a way in which we keep alive the tradition of the reason why Meeting for Sufferings was first established in the 17th century. The cases we heard of today both involved Friends from Yorkshire. One, Ian Bray, had been arrested while taking part in a demonstration in London for clean air. He was kept in custody for a week, then prosecuted and given a conditional discharge with costs to pay. The other case concerned Barbara Penney, who was taking part in a demonstration outside the American military base at Menwith Hill when an American

civilian drove a vehicle out from the base and struck her, causing significant injuries. The driver concerned was in fact prosecuted for this but was acquitted at his trial.

Of particular interest to our Area Meeting was the concern about paying taxes for war, which was discussed at Area Meeting in Uckfield on 14th October and forwarded to Meeting for Sufferings. Meeting for Sufferings decided to forward this matter to Quaker Peace and Social Witness for advice before having any discussion on taking the matter further. Another issues on which our Area Meeting had become

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*Continued...*

involved was a Minute from Devon Area Meeting asking for Britain Yearly Meeting to ensure that we did not hold any investments in companies who were profiting from the Israeli occupation of Palestinian territories. At the same meeting on 14th October Sussex East Area Meeting had sent a Minute to Meeting for Sufferings supporting this concern. In response we heard from the Treasurer of Britain Yearly Meeting trustees to say they held no such investments.

We then considered a document called "Sanctuary Everywhere Manifesto" produced by QPSW. This calls for human rights standards to apply to migrants, for an end to indefinite detention and the closure of detention centres, and an end to arbitrary deportation. After some trenchant criticism from the floor (myself included!) of parts of the wording which were inadequate, the document was accepted. The final text as amended has not yet been published but will no doubt appear on the Yearly Meeting website in due course.

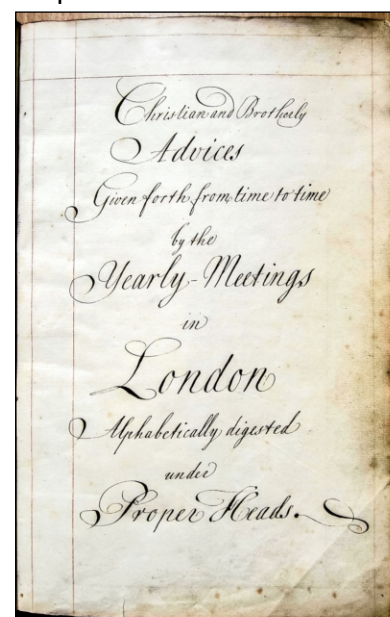
On financial issues generally the Treasurer informed us that Yearly Meeting had incurred a small operating deficit last year of £672 which was easily met from reserves. There did not seem to be the kind of panic and gloom we had heard previously about the parlous state of Yearly Meeting's finances, though this will obviously depend on current levels of income and contributions being maintained.

We heard that the committee which was set up to consider whether a further revision of Quaker Faith and Practice was

required have now come down on the side of definitely recommending revision. Moreover this is not going to be the kind of minor "tweaking" we have seen in previous recent editions or just the addition of procedural reforms but a wholesale, root and branch reworking. Even the format is likely to be radically different, with the text of the book itself dealing simply with basic principles, so as to explain for example why we do things the way we do, but with the nuts-and-bolts details of practice and procedure excluded from the main volume and being published separately in a series of leaflets which will be easier to keep updated.

This is likely to be the biggest shake-up of our basic reference book that we have seen in a generation. However it is going to take a while before this comes into effect. First Meeting for Sufferings will recommend the revision to Yearly Meeting in 2018, then if (and only if) Yearly Meeting agrees, it will then be sent back again to Meeting for Sufferings for a committee to be set up to do the actual work of revision. It was made fairly clear that one of the aims of the proposed revision would be to accommodate the views of Quakers who have no belief in God and who apparently feel under-represented in the current texts. There were heartfelt pleas from the floor that though new texts may be included to reflect these views, nevertheless existing texts which are familiar and are loved and treasured by many Quakers should not be discarded. It will remain to be seen whether these feelings will be taken into account.

Finally there was news of some interesting legal shenanigans concerning the infamous Lobbying Act. of 2014 which is widely acknowledged to have laid a disproportionately heavy burden on the charitable sector as compared with corporate interests. One of the quirks of the legislation is that when Theresa May called the "snap" election earlier this year, all campaigning activities which had occurred over the previous 12 months back to June 2016 fell foul of the Act retrospectively, even though nobody could have foreseen the election being called at that time. The Act is deeply unpopular among opposition political parties as well as the charity sector, and Yearly Meeting is currently in negotiations with several charities to consider if any form of joint action would be practicable in order to put pressure on the government to amend it. Watch this space!



An early version of Advices & Queries - Woodbrooke Library



## Ellis Humphrey Evans - Hedd Wyn

Keith Harcourt

I am indebted to Canon Giles Fraser for bringing a Welsh War Poet to my attention via his piece in the Guardian Newspaper <http://bit.ly/2ACNYnJ> which I recommend as an excellent read.

Ellis Humphrey Evans was a Welsh Farmer, Poet and Shepherd from Trawsfynydd just the other side of the mountain from where our Friend Betty Raymond lies buried in Wales. His Bardic Name Hedd Wyn which can be translated as Blessed Peace, was awarded to him in 1910. Though he was a Non-Conformist pacifist, when one of the family had to go to the war in 1917, he, though he was 29, took the place of his younger brother Robert. He submitted a poem titled "Yr Awr" (The Hero) for the National Eisteddfod by post under the pseudonym "Fleur de Lys", as he was on his way to France. He died in the first three hours of the battle of Ypres on 31<sup>st</sup> July 1917. The poem won him the Bardic Chair for 1917, and by tradition it is a physical chair, which that year was hand crafted by Flemish craftsman, Eugeen Vanfleteren (1880–1950), a carpenter born in Mechelen, Belgium, who had fled to England on the outbreak of war and had settled in Birkenhead. When Fleur de Lys was announced as the winner no one rose to claim the chair and the ArchDruid announced that Hedd Wyn was amongst those killed in action. The chair was draped in black and presented to his parents. The Eisteddfod of 1917 is now referred to as "Eisteddfod y Gadair Ddu" ("The Eisteddfod of the Black Chair").

Hedd Wyn's poem Rhyfel which translates as "War" captures the futility of conflict.

Rhyfel (War)

Why must I live in this grim age,  
When, to a far horizon, God  
Has ebbed away, and man, with  
rage,  
Now wields the sceptre and the  
rod?

Man raised his sword, once God  
had gone,  
To slay his brother, and the roar  
Of battlefields now casts upon  
Our homes the shadow of the war.

The harps to which we sang are  
hung,  
On willow boughs, and their  
refrain  
Drowned by the anguish of the  
young  
Whose blood is mingled with the  
rain



Cerny-en-Laonnois War Cemetery covers 13,515 square metres. Christians, Muslims and Jews of French, German and Russian extraction lie here.

## The Peace Museum

Keith Harcourt

**The Peace Museum is the only museum in the UK which is dedicated to the history and (often untold) stories of peace, peacemakers and the peace movement in the UK.**

Key elements of their work are educational outreach and promoting community cohesion in partnership with community agencies. They use the collection of 7,000 artefacts, banners, posters and videos to inspire people to see peacemaking as an active endeavour.

The museum is open on Wednesdays, Thursdays and Fridays from 10am–4pm at 10 Piece Hall Yard, Bradford BD1 1PJ. Visits at other times can be arranged if booked in advance.

Do have a look at their newsletter <http://bit.ly/2DOrzEI> which has details of events in 2018 as well as their blog <http://bit.ly/2Cc3AyP> If you are in Bradford why not visit?



A small snippet of the collection at Bradford Peace Museum. Photo: The Peace Museum ©

## Sussex East Area Quaker Meeting Report of Trustees for Second Quarter of 2017

John Thurley

### Governance

The trustees met on 29th April, 23rd May and 24th June. Trustees have made an application to the Charity Commission for the Area Meeting to be registered as a Charitable Incorporated Organisation. We expect this will take effect with effect from 1 January 2018, when all assets of the Area Meeting will be transferred to the new organisation.

### Finance

Trustees continued to keep the state of the whole Area Meeting's finances under review. The main work in the period was the preparation of the 2016 Annual Accounts. The accounts had to be reworked in the light of advice from Quaker Stewardship Committee in Friends House and our professional advisers. Trustees agreed to include substantial provisions in the 2016 Accounts to show spending on repairs to Herstmonceux Estate that was agreed in 2016 but not paid until early 2017. Trustees re

categorised Area Meeting funds and reviewed the Reserves Policy. Trustees agreed to create a Property Fund (replacing the Berta Wilson, Beatrice Chaplin and Building Reserve Funds) and a People Fund.

The review of investments and financial controls was ongoing.

### Risk

The risk register was updated and kept under review.

### Bexhill

Bexhill Friends are clarifying quotations for the replacement of the flat roof.

### Lewes

Trustees approved detailed proposals to tackle outstanding repairs and maintenance of the Meeting House. This included employing a building maintenance company to plan and schedule the work. High priority work will start in the summer.

### Eastbourne

Trustees endorsed the Meeting's proposals to recommence hirings of the Meeting House later in the

## Shackleton's House

Following publication of my photo below, Anne Johnson emailed to say, "You may not know that John and Jane Pettigrew of Eastbourne Meeting used to live in Shackleton's house..."

Camilla Pyers-Pennant, also emailed, "Ernest Shackleton also lived in Sydenham, SE London where I used to live and there is a house with a plaque there too...."



## Letter from Carrie

*Carrie Comfort - Local Development Worker - Vibrancy in Meetings Project (Friends' House) attended AM at Uckfield on 14th October and sent us this email afterwards. Can anyone help?*

Dear All,

It was good to see you this weekend. This is just to thank the AM and Uckfield Friends for having me along on Saturday. It was a busy day and I appreciated their welcome & hospitality.

I also wanted to flag up, given the AM concern for peace, that a Friend in Maidstone has a leading that West Kent Friends have discerned to

support, by looking at having a stall at a summer event/show in Paddock Wood, called 'War & Peace'. Friends were not sure how much peace was regarded in this.

<https://warandpeacerevival.com/>

They are looking for Friends to support this by coming to help man the stall for a day or half day between 24-28 July.

Would you be able to forward this out to see if any Friends are interested in coming along? If they want to contact Sue Laidlay, clerk of Maidstone meeting, [sue.laidlay@hotmail.com](mailto:sue.laidlay@hotmail.com) or myself [carriec@quaker.org.uk](mailto:carriec@quaker.org.uk) either is fine.

In Friendship,

Carrie

020 7663 1166 (direct)

07422972975 (mobile)