



## Minutes of the Meeting held Saturday 26<sup>th</sup> October 2019 at Newtown, Powys

### 2019.24: Addoliad agoriadol / Opening worship

During our opening worship number 31 of *Advices & Queries* has been read in Welsh and in English.

### 2019.25 Welcome and attendance

We welcome 34 Friends here today as recorded on the attendance list.

Area Meeting representatives today are:

- South Wales AM :Deborah Rowlands and Jess Morgan
- Southern Marches AM: Helen Briggs (prevented). David Briggs will report.
- Mid Wales AM: Helen Porter (prevented). Gethin Evans will report.
- North Wales AM: Angela Arnold (prevented), Ruth Moore Williams, Frances Voelcker and Martin Hughes

Our elders today are Angela Ormrod and Stevie Kray. Our translator today is Steffan Wiliam.

### 2019.26 *Calon & The Friend*

Angela Ormrod will write a report of this meeting for '*Calon*' and Christine Trevett will write for '*The Friend*'.

### 2019.27 Minutes of record of between meetings' decisions

i. The clerk of focus group forwarded to the clerks of MFW a letter from the Civil Society Forum on a No Deal Brexit. After consultation, the clerks felt that it was appropriate for the clerk of Focus Group to sign this, rather than the clerks of MFW.

ii. It was decided at the meeting of clerks of Wales that the following minutes be sent to all associated Area Meetings:

*Minute 1 of clerks' and trustees' meeting 090919*

How can Meeting of Friends in Wales (MFW) be vital to Quakers in Wales? What key concerns that energise Friends can MFW support at an all Wales level? MFW clerks look forward to

receiving responses from Area Meetings by the end of December 2019, on the MFW Focus Group Report from the Aberystwyth Meeting of February 2019, which outlines these issues. We hope AMs will be able to identify those issues which concern and motivate Friends in Wales and which MFW might be in a position to take forward.

*Minute 2 of clerks' and trustees' meeting 090919*

We have heard from Helen Oldridge about the plans for a hub of Britain Yearly Meeting staff based in local areas. We agree that this will be discussed in Meeting of Friends in Wales in October and that any Expression of Interest from MFW and its associated Area Meetings (for a local hub) will be submitted after that date. We agree to send this minute to all associated Area Meetings and local meetings.

iii. During the summer, the clerks of MFW received an invitation to send a submission to BYM agenda committee. The submission was written in consultation with the clerk of Focus Group, and bore in mind the discussions at the last two meetings of clerks and clerks of trustees of MFW and AMs associated with Wales. Peter Hussey, as clerk of focus group, was asked to attend the committee, to speak to the submission.

iv. MFW Trustees appointed Huw Meredydd Owen to liaise with Cardiff Meeting about their development scheme, in addition to Deborah Rowlands and Gordon Blackburn.

## **2019.28 Minutes received since our last meeting**

We have received the following minute from Agenda committee in response to our submission to that committee:

At a meeting of Yearly Meeting Agenda Committee Held at Friends House, 173 Euston Road, London NW1 2BJ 27-29 September 2019

## **2019.09/07 Discernment of agenda topics for Yearly Meeting Gathering 2020: part 2**

We have worked together in groups to develop our thinking on agenda topics for Yearly Meeting Gathering 2020, starting to develop ways in which the emerging themes might evolve into an agenda. The themes which we started to discern at Yearly Meeting in 2019 remain with us. We need to find a way to combine these, drawing the links between them out and developing our consideration. We are reminded that we are not required to plan for a particular conclusion, but that our preparation for the yearly meeting gathering must simply allow space and time for the spirit to speak.

We need to help friends to prepare to be together in community. We want to get excited about welcoming friends to our meetings, and to our yearly meeting. We have heard that Quakers have

some tools and established methods for engaging with difficult questions. How can we create arenas of trust in which those questions can be engaged with, and how can we help friends to move away from polarised debates in which issues are perceived as win or lose? Could we start from a position which sets out what we do know about these difficult questions, as a way of starting out positively? Can we find a way of sequencing learning, upskilling and discernment effectively, to move towards meaningful action?

We have heard some names of friends who will be invited from other yearly meetings to join us at our gathering. We hope that they will be able to join us. How can we make best use of their methods, their insights and their gifts, both before and during our gathering? We make up a small part of the world family of friends, and we should not be afraid to ask for help in our corporate discernment.

We have heard several times about ideas for panel sessions which allow consideration of particular issues from an international, national and local perspective.

We thank the representatives of committees and other bodies for sharing in the discernment today.

YMAC will take what has been produced and discussed and continue to work on it as we move towards yearly meeting. We send this minute YMAC 2019 09 07 to the committees and other bodies represented, noting that our discernment will continue over the coming months.

Siobhan Haire, Clerk

Peter Hussey attended agenda committee and reports today that many there had read the Focus Group paper: *Some thoughts on the cultural differences between England and Wales*.

There is a need to consider the question of transgender with love and care. Young people will be invited to contribute more to the life of Yearly Meeting.

We have heard from Friends that they would welcome more of a focus on sustainability. We need to ensure we use our skills to resolve conflicts between ourselves.

## **2019.29          Nominations and appointments**

### **i. Nominations brought:**

The convenor of Nominations Group sends us the following report:

For the **residential in 2021**, we bring the following names:

- Medi James *LM Aberystwyth AM Mid Wales;*
- Chris Holmquist *LM Penarth AM South Wales;*

- Jill Evans *LM Lampeter AM South Wales;*
- Jules Montgomery *LM Machynlleth AM Mid Wales;*
- Mike Clark *LM Llangollen AM North Wales;*
- Frances Voelcker *LM Porthmadog AM North Wales;*
- Jeff Beatty *LM Almeley Wootton AM Southern Marches*

These Friends to serve immediately and until the end of the Residential weekend in October 2021.

For the **Wales Focus Group** representative from North Wales, we bring the following name:

- Gerald Hewitson, *LM Holyhead AM North Wales* to serve from 01.01.20 – 31.12.22

For the **Resources Group**, we bring the following names:

- Ruth Harding *LM Cardiff, AM South Wales;* to serve from 01.01.20 – 31.12.22
- Carey Thomas *LM Swansea, AM South Wales;* to serve from 01.01.20 – 31.12.22
- Frances Voelcker *LM Porthmadog, AM North Wales* to serve from 01.01.20 – 31.12.22

We have not currently found a Friend to serve as Co-clerk, but Ruth Moore Williams has agreed to be nominated as additional assistant clerk. Neither have we found another Trustee. The Trustees are focused on their work and as a team work well together. We would like to find someone to serve from Mid-Wales.

These names being acceptable, they are hereby appointed. We ask Frances Voelcker to convene the first meeting of the residential planning group.

#### **ii. Nomination for the nominations committee:**

Sue Shreeve and Deborah Rowlands were appointed to be a search group for two new members of nominations committee and were asked to bring names to our October meeting. They report that they have so far been unable to find anyone from Mid-Wales or Southern Marches willing to accept nomination to this key role.

However, Sue Shreeve (MWAM) and Peter Hussey (SMAM) have both agreed to be link the between their AM nominations committees and MFW nominations. In the circumstances, we agree that the search group could see if they can fill the vacancy from either NWAM or SWAM. We ask them to report at our February meeting.

#### **iii. Nominations sought:**

- Someone to liaise with Cytûn for the National Eisteddfod in Tregaron, August 2020. We ask MWAM to appoint someone on our behalf, so that there is no delay in joining any group formed by Cytûn.

- ii) A liaison person for the Royal Welsh. Jeff Beatty volunteered to be responsible for this role and his offer was gladly accepted.
- iii) Trustee from mid Wales Area Meeting.

### **2019.30 The Recording Clerk Paul Parker**

Paul Parker, our Recording clerk, has led us in a discussion about the possible future shape of the structures of staffing the work of BYM and of cooperation between the central work and MFW.

The vibrancy in meetings programme has been very successful in walking alongside meetings, working closely where meetings are. Britain Yearly Meeting (BYM) and Woodbrooke trustees have decided to work together to put a Local Development Worker within reach of every meeting, and to experiment with hubs or clusters, throughout the country. Some things will stay in London: Friends House works hard for Quakers and brings in income. Some of the political work needs to be done in London, but supporting meetings is better done where meetings are. The implications are large and need to be worked through but we need to lessen travel in response to the climate emergency, and work more locally. We talk about living simply but our structure is complex.

There are big changes in who we are: there are fewer Quaker families and more single Quakers. The median size of Quaker meetings has fallen from 24 to 18, but there has been a growth in very small meetings. There is a shift in people's desire for this type of meeting, where people can come together, trust and commit.

We have discussed the problem of Yearly Meeting Gathering (YMG) falling in the same week as the National Eisteddfod. Yearly Meeting (YM) has asked for a review of yearly meeting, so matters may improve in the future.

There have been experiments for particular groups of Quakers, for example teenagers, with the growth of weekly or fortnightly teenage groups concentrating on the concerns of young Friends, such as climate change. We will need to consider whether BYM could support MFW in being more active in influencing the political process.

There is a communication problem, with much work being done centrally, but not reaching the individuals interested in a particular matter. Newsletters can be sent directly or news can be sent via social media. We need two way information, so need to communicate both ways.

The Local Development Worker is a lone worker at present. As the new model is rolled out, there may be several workers who could work either from a particular place or who could meet together to support each other. We need to be communicating as the process develops so that we don't get stuck. The simpler the structure the cheaper to run.

We have concluded that we would wish to apply for a cluster or hub to be created within Wales, which could recognise and respond to the particular needs of Wales as a devolved nation with laws as well as customs which are different from England or Scotland. We would wish to be involved in the development of any such cluster and where it would be placed. We hope that all meetings

interested will become involved in the conversation. We send this part of the minute to the Recording clerk.

### **2019.31 Trustees' report**

Deborah Rowlands, clerk to trustees, has spoken to the report which has been circulated via email, which is here in print today and which will be attached to these minutes.

### **2019.32 Memorandum of Understanding between MFW and AMs**

A draft Memorandum of Understanding between Meeting of Friends in Wales and Associated Area Meetings will be circulated to all four Associated Area Meetings following this meeting. Area Meetings are invited to send comments and suggestions back to the administrator, Jules Montgomery by the end of January 2020. As MFW is also in discussion with Britain Yearly Meeting about a Memorandum of Understanding between MFW and BYM, we hope to coordinate this work so that all areas are clear and well organised.

### **2019.33 Reports:**

The reports have been circulated via email and printed copies are available today. They will be attached to these minutes

#### *i Meeting of MFW and AM clerks and trustees 09.09.19*

Catherine James has spoken to us about the need to recognise that the community to which we belong is larger than the local or area meeting. Do we respond to the spiritual needs of our country? We are few in number and we need to have an emphasis on change in the way we work. We have been reminded that Friends began with an agenda for change and for political action.

We have heard of the idea of asking for Trustees to cover a larger area than the Area Meeting, possibly all of Wales, in which case we would need to consider how our charities would merge. We need to consider this matter in relation to the English Meetings in our Associated Area Meetings. We recognise the need to be an open and not a closed community in Wales. We ask Area Meetings and MFW Clerks and Clerks of Trustees to continue to consider this matter under the umbrella of MFW in liaison with the Stewardship Committee and our Local Development Worker.

ii a. We have received a report from Jeff Beatty on the Quaker presence at the Royal Welsh Show. We thank him for his report.

ii b. We have received a report from Catherine James on the Quaker presence at the National Eisteddfod. We thank her for her report.

iii We have received a report from Peter Hussey on the Yearly Meeting Arrangements Committee Meeting on September 28th. We thank him for his report.

iv We have received a report from Angela Ormrod on the Quaker Life Rep Council residential weekend. We thank her for her report.

### **2019.34 Aled Eurig: Opposition to the Great War In Wales**

Aled Eurig, our speaker today, has spoken of peace initiatives in Wales, particularly by Quakers, over the last two centuries. Aled Eurig's father was a Conscientious Objector (CO) in the second World War, which brings the subject close to his heart.

About 1000 men in Wales were COs in World War One. At the beginning of the war, Thomas Rees, head of Coleg Bala Bangor (the theological college) took on the responsibility of forming the initial response to the war. He also founded Cymdeithas y Cymod - the Fellowship of Reconciliation. Six groups were formed in Wales; by the end of the war there were more branches. It was formed to bring together people who objected to war. George M L Davies was a key person in this.

'Y Deyrnas' was a paper set up (in Barmouth) to object to the war. It had more influence in the Welsh speaking areas of Wales: for example in Blaenau Ffestiniog 70 copies were sold a month, in Trawsfynydd, 60, showing how strong the objections were. Areas where the Independent Labour Party was strong were also strongly against the war.

The tribunals had little sympathy with COs. There was a great variety in the attitudes taken by COs, and therefore a lack of strength as a body, with some with political and others with theological objections. The established church was in favour of the war, which created tension.

There were Absolutists who refused all service and who were imprisoned often. Three Quakers in Wales were absolutists. Aled Eurig paid tribute to Gethin Evans' work in writing about the Quaker response to the war at this time. Other COs were not imprisoned but were sent to prisons as work camps where the work and the conditions were appalling. On Dartmoor there was an eclectic mix of many threads of COs' standpoints. They were joined together by a sense of opposition, whatever their roots.

There were several workcamps in Wales: Llandeusan, Tumble, Y Gelli and Penderyn where COs were sent. Many were academics who were very unsuited to this work. The attitude to COs varied. The Tumble for example was very friendly towards the COs, and Y Gelli was also kind. In Merthyr Tydfil there were meetings of thousands every few weeks, protesting against the war. The biggest group of COs in Wales were Christadelphians: the government had agreed to this, as they were willing to work in munitions factories.

The theological colleges were influential in the growth of the numbers of objectors. The government wanted to avoid any further increase in the number of objections by forming a medical corps in 1916 so that COs would join and become medics in the army.

The view of COs varied: some called them shirkers and cowards, others called them martyrs and celebrated their courage. The effect of World War one was to change the view of COs: by World War Two tribunals were more professional and saw that there were levels of objection. The legacy of COs strengthened the peace work done in Wales during the twenties and thirties; the women's petition, the founding of the Urdd, the support for the League of Nations.

We have found this talk very illuminating.

### **2019.35      Dates and venues for meetings in 2020**

- February 22, 2020: Lampeter: Focus Group report on cultural diversity and gathering Friends working in roles into groups
- June 27, 2020: Bangor: Focus on Young Friends
- October 24, 2020: Abergavenny: Groups of Friends with concerns; simpler meetings

### **Final Minute**

Catherine James was thanked for her years of service to MFW as clerk and for her support for Tricia in her new clerking role.

Signed: Catherine James (co-clerk) Tricia Bridgewater co-clerk) Jane Harries (asst. clerk)