

Quaker South Asia Interest Group (QSAIG)

Notes of the Annual General Meeting

held on 18th October in Leeds (3.55- 4.25 p.m.)

Present: John Evans, Cora and Rob Gallagher, Phil McCowen, John McConnell, Tracey Martin, Graham and Harriet Mortimer, Stuart Morton, Liz and Martin Schweiger, Abu B. Siddique (Bachchu), Anne Smith, Maggie Waterworth.

Apologies: Ruth Baker, Gerald Conyngham, Stephen Petter, Stephanie and Ram Ramamurthy, Penny Robbins, Norman Smith, Sue and John Smithson, Pat Saunders, Pete Squires.

The minutes of the 2013 AGM have been placed on the QSAIG website (www.qsaig.co.uk) and were accepted.

2014/01 Convenor's Report: Stuart Morton

1. Preamble:

- a. At the beginning of the QSAIG meeting, earlier in the day and as part of a Meeting for Worship, part of Quaker Faith & Practice (13.19) about Listed Informal Groups was read aloud.
- b. Before lunch we have been grateful to learn about John McConnell's concern for marginalised children in Myanmar which has developed into a UK Charity "Scholarships for Street Kids". www.s4sk.org.uk
- c. We have also listened to, and engaged in discussion with, Tracey Martin of the QPSW Overseas Peacebuilding sub-committee. She outlined recent thinking about Quaker Peace & Social Witness' (QPSW) South Asia work. QPSW Central Committee has not come to a decision about whether or not new work in the South Asia region will be developed. At present, there is no dedicated member of staff for this work, Gerald Conyngham's two year contract having ended in December 2013.
- d. Short notes of the QSAIG meeting prior to this AGM will be recorded below.
- e. We thank Liz and Martin Schweiger for their warm and wholesome hospitality today.

2. Communication role of the Convenor:

- a. Two QSAIG Newsletters (January and July) have been published. They can be found on the QSAIG website.
- b. Stuart Morton, as a former QPSW staff member for South Asia, has liaised with QPSW over some matters relating to the S. Asia work.
- c. Following a phone call from Archana Gour in India, Stuart informed Friends World Committee for Consultation (FWCC), QPSW and QSAIG members of the death of our Friend, Dilawar Chetsingh in Noida, New Delhi on May 31st 2014.
- d. Stuart drew QSAIG attention to the Purple Fields Productions (films) initiated and sustained by a Quaker in Somerset, Elspeth Waldie. See <http://www.purplefieldproductions.org/> One of the films is a fictional film about

the power of disabled people in Bangladesh. Its title is: "Radio Bhai". QSAIG has purchased a copy and we have the permission of Elspeth to loan it to group members who wish to view it.

e. Stuart has met, and spoken with, Madeleine Patterson, who worked in public health in Pakistan in the 1990s. He was also interviewed by Norman Smith who is working on material for a biography of Marjorie Sykes, a Quaker educationalist closely associated for many decades with the work of peace and justice in India.

2014/02 Treasurer's report: Anne Smith Anne presented the financial statement (27.10.2013- 17.10.2014). There was a closing balance of £412.67. The accounts will be examined in due course. We agreed that in principle, anyone requiring financial help with travel to QSAIG meetings should apply to the Treasurer well in advance of the QSAIG meeting. Early bookings of coach or train would help to reduce costs and whenever possible these reduced fares should be used. Membership is £10 p.a. for waged persons, £5 for unwaged or senior citizens. We than Anne for her work on behalf of QSAIG.

2014/03 The Aims of QSAIG We have given some preliminary thought to the aims of QSAIG. Britain Yearly Meeting require this clarity from Listed Informal Groups. The Convenor read a draft and was asked to circulate it. Responses on matters of principle should be sent to the Convenor within two weeks of the receipt of the draft. A sub group made up of the Treasurer/Membership Secretary (Anne Smith) and Liz and Martin Schweiger are asked to finalise the wording. A hope was expressed that the draft could be made more succinct. Once finalised, these revised aims will be forwarded to the Assistant Recording Clerk at Friends House. (See the ** below for the final version of the aims prepared by the sub group.)

2014/04 Other QSAIG activities

a. The Group were grateful for the work of Liz and Martin Schweiger in organising a QSAIG table at the Yearly Meeting Gathering in August 2014. This was staffed by a number of QSAIG members. Printed copies of the July 2014 QSAIG Newsletter were distributed. A number of new people expressed interest in QSAIG; their Email addresses will be added to our membership list by our Membership Secretary, Anne Smith.

b. QSAIG Website (www.qsaig.co.uk) We thank Martin Schweiger for managing the QSAIG website. He asked members to send news and/or other material to him in order that the the website could be kept up to date and relevant.

2014/05 QSAIG Officers

As there has been no additional offers of service from QSAIG members, last year's officers were confirmed in their positions for a further year i.e. Convenor: Stuart Morton, Treasurer: Anne Smith, Website Manager: Martin Schweiger

2014/06 Future Newsletter

Stuart Morton said that he would produce one Newsletter, instead of two, in the

coming year. The aim would be to have this ready by May 2-4, 2015 when BYM takes place in London. Material would need to reach Stuart by 7th April 2015.

Date of next Meeting: October 24th 2015 in Birmingham – Stuart Morton to arrange.

Aims of QSAIG:

To assist in the building of a peaceful, just and sustainable world inspired by our Quaker faith and focussing on the South Asian region*, by:

- a Sharing information and understanding in order to inform our actions
- b Supporting individuals and groups, in Britain or the wider world, which act to progress QSAIG's main aim, including the work of Quaker Peace & Social Witness (QPSW) in South Asia
- c Sustaining relationships with those in the region that continue to value the support of Quakers in Britain

** For the purposes of QSAIG this includes Afghanistan, Bangladesh, Bhutan, India, the Maldives, Myanmar, Nepal, Pakistan, Sri Lanka. (in this list, only Myanmar is not a member of the eight nation South Asian Association of Regional Co-operation – SAARC – though it has expressed an interest in becoming a member).*

Short notes of the QSAIG meeting held on October 18th 2014 (10.30 a.m. – 3.55 p.m.)

In addition to those present at the AGM in the last part of the day, Chris Bem was present for this part of the meeting. Each person introduced themselves and their connection with the S. Asian region. We were pleased to welcome a number of people who were attending QSAIG for the first time.

Scholarships for Street Kids: John McConnell spoke, with the help of a powerpoint presentation, about the beginnings and the development of this deeply moving initiative. www.s4sk.org.uk

Tracey Martin, Co-Clerk of the Quaker Peace & Social Witness (QPSW) Overseas Peacebuilding sub-committee, spoke about the most recent peace training work in Pakistan (December 2013) conducted by her Co-Clerk, David Mowat. David also travelled to Nepal and spoke with some members of the QPSW initiated South Asia Peace Alliance (SAPA). Discernment is continuing in QPSW Central Committee regarding a broader remit into which some work in South Asia might play a part. (This would be in addition to the ongoing conciliation work being carried out by QPSW in North East India.) We searched together for ways of understanding what future QPSW work in the region might

be and Tracey noted points that she felt were significant. She welcomed further suggestions. QPSW Central Committee will meet in November 2014 to consider Peacebuilding sub-committees minute asking for guidance on strategic considerations to take into account at February 2015 sub-committee retreat which will consider a way forward.

Margaret (Maggie) Waterworth gave a powerful and well informed insight into aspects of education in India. Maggie works for substantial periods of time each year in India, particularly in the field of helping to train teachers. She has written articles in the last two QSAIG Newsletters about some of this work.

Rob Gallagher spoke about some aspects of transport planning in Dhaka, Bangladesh, where he has recently been working. He has again visited Gono Unnayan Prochesta (GUP - People's Development Programme).

Phil McCowen supports a women's project in Kashmir (on the Pakistan side of control) and has involvements in broader forms of peace and justice work.

Stuart Morton would be hosting a visit of Rajagopal P.V. (of Ekta Parishad- Unity Forum) in Birmingham on October 27th and Rajagopal would be speaking at Friends House on November 10th. Ekta Parishad had been one of the two Quaker nominations for the 2014 Nobel Peace Prize.

Stuart Morton
13th November 2014