

# The Kingdom at Work Project



## *Bulletin 12*

November 2017

## Quakers and Business

Many of those seeking to bring their faith to bear on the world of work, not least on the life of their own workplace, struggle to identify what is the value-added dimension of the beliefs and values they espouse. Nor have the churches in more recent years offered much guidance and help in this task of discernment. The agenda of most churches seems to have become dominated by survival and ‘making disciples’. It has given little attention to the mission imperative of transforming the working world by means of the gifts of the kingdom which formed the heart of Christ’s message.

It is thus inspiring and encouraging to find that the Society of Friends, the Quakers, has over recent years been seeking to tap into its long heritage of ethical engagement with the world of work in order to bring the insights of that encounter to bear on the life of business. It is an outstanding example of how the energy of faith might begin to make the culture of work more human and how the experience of work can inform and enrich the meaning of faith.

In this engagement, the **Quakers and Business Group** is taking a lead. Its numbers are relatively small, though steadily growing. However, its gatherings, research, publications and the active involvement of its members in working life are having an impact out of all proportion to the group’s size.

It is thus a privilege for the Kingdom at Work Project to be a means of bringing the activities of the group to the notice of a wider audience across all churches. We hope that, through this edition of the *Bulletin*, many more people will be made aware of the meaning of a faith-empowered engagement with today’s world of work which the Quakers and Business Group is seeking to further. We also hope that this greater awareness will persuade those from every reader concerned about the transformation of the workplace to learn from and become more involved with the group’s endeavours.

After an introduction to Q&B, the first few articles in this *Bulletin* focus on the historical engagement of Quakers with the world of business, the remainder deal with the ethical stance of Quakers in business today.

**David Clark** (Project Co-ordinator)

# Quakers and Business Group - its origins, development and aims

Elizabeth Redfern

## Origins

You could say that the origins of the Quakers and Business Group (Q&B) go right back to 1918, very specifically at the end of WW1. Before WW1, Quakers had been heavily involved in business in the UK. The war turned this on its head for a range of reasons. These were partly due to conscience, and the awakening within Friends that their time should be spent working in and for the community as a whole in what we would call these days the public sector. 1918 saw the first of the Quaker Employers Conferences, to help think through the challenges ahead, and ran every 10 years until the end of WW2. After this Quakers and the business world were at a really low-ebb, with the steady disappearance of virtually all Quaker businesses, often through acquisition by non-Quaker businesses.



And yet there were Quakers sitting in local Meetings throughout the UK who owned their own - often small - businesses, or were employed in the private sector, or elsewhere where their daily lives required an understanding of business. There developed a feel amongst Quakers that these people were 'not the norm', and were actually sometimes criticised for not doing their bit for society, often by those who did not understand the basics of producing goods, job creation and paying taxes.

In the mid-1990s there developed a need for a Quaker group to represent these people - initially for networking purposes - where Quakers could come together and talk business and workplace-related issues in a safe environment: offering a good opportunity to learn from others. And thus informally the Quakers and Business Group began, centred mainly on learning and discussion events.

## Recent developments

Jumping forward to 2017, the group has come on a long way. It is now a 170 member – worldwide - Charitable Incorporated Organisation, and a Quaker 'Recognised Body' in the UK. There is also now a cousin group in the United States. The group promotes 'Quaker values in Business and the Workplace'. It is the group within the UK Quaker community that talks business and workplace language to the Quaker community and the outside world.

One major influence on the group has been changes in attitude generally since the financial crisis of 2008. Since that time the group has seen a significant increase in interest and membership of people from outside the Quaker community. We often hear comments such as 'We should learn from the Quaker businesses of the past', 'We lost something when those businesses disappeared', and 'We need to work in different and more ethical ways in the future'. We certainly do not say we are the only group focussing on doing business the ethical and respectful way. However, based on our Quaker faith and strong business history, we believe we have a significant part to play in the overall discussion.

## Principles

So, what does the Quakers and Business Group do now? We 'Promote Quaker principles in business and the workplace'.

These principles come directly from our Quaker faith, which starts with the understanding that God is in all of us whoever we are and wherever we are. You do not have to be a Quaker to be a member of Q&B, our group is for all faiths or none. Together as Quakers, we meet in

worship, whether at a Quaker Meeting House, at a Q&B event, at home, at our desks, or walking down the street. And we wait - together - to hear the word of God, or whatever spirit you feel talks to you. That spirit helps us to work out what is the right thing to do in our lives and encourages us to take action. We are also highly influenced by our Quaker 'testimonies' to Honesty, Equality, Simplicity, Sustainability and Peace.

### Practice

In a practical sense we run a number of projects, some of which have had a fair amount of publicity. These include the Quaker Bank Project and our two funded PhD projects which in themselves have now spawned off other major research projects. We also publish articles and a very popular book on basic day-to-day business ethics called *Good Business: Ethics at Work* [see review in this *Bulletin*] which is available in a range of formats, and is being translated into other languages. Then there are our annual events - the Gathering in the spring and Conference in the autumn. Both get an increasing number of Quaker and non-Quaker attenders, with high quality speakers and contributors, and explore subjects suggested by our membership. Last - and most importantly - we tell people we exist, both within the Quaker community and outside. For this we use modern technology such as a state of the art website - full of useful information - and social media, and good old fashioned but essential paper based items, such as posters and rack-cards.

Why is the group needed today? Well, there is still a need for a place for Quaker business people to come together, though thankfully the stigma of being in business has certainly gone from the UK Quaker community. There is also a need for people outside the Quaker community to come and discuss with us business and workplace matters, and understand how our faith influences our way of thinking and working. And of course Quakers are very keen to learn from others. We are all on a never ending journey. Come and join us!

Contact details - web site [www.qandb.org](http://www.qandb.org) or email one the of Clerks at [clerk@qandb.org](mailto:clerk@qandb.org)

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**Elizabeth Redfern** was the Clerk and Charity Chair of the Quakers and Business Group for six years to Spring 2017. She is a retired Chartered Engineer and software manufacturer. Elizabeth is currently a director of Friends House (London) Hospitality Limited, and acts as a mentor to new start-up businesses. She is a member at Northampton Quaker Meeting.

## Reflection on the history of Quaker business ethics

**Andrew Fincham**

The existence of a relationship between the Religious Society of Friends and ethical business practices can be traced back to its inception in the middle of the seventeenth century when most Friends were engaged in making and selling goods. George Fox was deeply concerned that the reputation of the Society should not be tarnished by accusations of dishonesty or malpractice which were typically thrown at the trading class.

The Society was especially vulnerable because of the emphasis placed upon a 'single standard of truth': all Quaker utterances, they maintained, were made in accordance with 'the Light Within'. Friends engaged in business were required to display a level of integrity in

commercial transactions which would justify their wider claim that their unsupported word had the same worth as those of others made under oath.

From the outset, Quaker books of discipline included specific advices on matters of business ethics, including: management of finances; keeping the spirit (never the letter) of agreements; paying what was due when due; warnings against fraud; ensuring customs, duties and state taxes were met; and forbidding bankruptcy as a redress. Additionally, Quaker disciplines set out to ensure all children of members had sufficient education for some useful occupation, while Quaker finances provided for apprenticeships and even seed capital for emerging businesses.

With the nineteenth century, Quakers extended their belief that there was 'God in everyone' to address rights of the individual, not least slaves and those imprisoned. With the rise of industrialisation, Quaker manufactures worked to ensure that their businesses' success was not at the expense of those who worked for them, a credo that was echoed in the nascent utopian socialist movement epitomised by figures such as Robert Owen, Joseph Rowntree, and Titus Salt, who saw in Christianity a duty for social reform.

### **George Cadbury**

In his family business at Bourneville, George Cadbury endeavoured to create an environment where all those he engaged with would benefit. In contemporary terms, his approach looked to see results across a 'triple bottom line', with positive outcomes for people, the environment, and the balance sheet. 'Positive outcomes for people' was pushed forward with early examples of employee benefits, including healthcare. This took the form of a Works Medical Department (1902) with a company doctor, dentist, and nurses. Nutritional supplements were provided in cases of employees who were underfed, and two free convalescent homes were run.

Cadbury had also taken note of the healthy advice in the Quaker book of Christian Discipline: *'It is part of our Christian duty to secure...a due measure of bodily exercise ... without which neither our physical nor our mental faculties can be preserved in a healthy condition'* and outings, gardens, and skating in winter, were supplemented by a gymnasium, swimming pool, and many sports clubs (with coach). Indoors, a work's orchestra was established in 1890 (1), while the factory kitchen provided meals for retired employees with up to 100 being served daily.

Financial matters were not neglected: welfare included paid holiday, sick pay, pension funds for men and women, a Women's' Savings Trust, and Pensioners' Widows' Fund; and an early unemployment scheme. The original fines scheme for discipline (replaced in 1902 with a record book and Suggestions Scheme) were paid into the sick club.

Cadbury's experience with Adult Schooling provided insight into conditions in the cities, reflected in his creation of Bourneville village with schools and recreational facilities but no taverns. Subsidised housing was provided, first for the foremen, and later for several hundred families.

Ensuring adequate financial return was built into the plan: while each house was of a superior standard, including plumbing, and cost less than £150, it was sold with a mortgage which ensured that the owner, over 13 years, would pay less than the equivalent rental cost.

Similarly, the Quadrangle of alms house cottages built on Mary Vale Road in 1897 was run by a trust endowed by rents from 35 houses.

### **The Quaker legacy**

Many elements of this holistic approach could be found across other Quaker businesses. They contain much in common with today's ideas on corporate social responsibility. Yet there may be a crucial difference between CSR (which originates through a form of cost-benefit analysis) (2) and the Quaker approach which arises from an entirely different motive - that of the 'Inner Light'.

Two observers of our last century, seeking to address the issue of whether Jesus was a social reformer, have come to the same conclusion. John Macmurray observed that such a question only has meaning in a dualist mode of thought, where it '*implies a contrast and conflict between the spiritual world and the material world*', which could not exist in a religious mind. (3) Quaker educationalist E.B. Castle identified the same flaw in the isolation of secular and spiritual lives:

‘... wherever it may be justly claimed that Quakerism has contributed to the spiritual and social welfare of men it has been when harmony has existed between the purpose of God and the social activities of Quakers.’ (4)

Today's Quaker, still following the 'Inner Light', must continue to cultivate that undivided mind in order to 'mend the world'.

### **Notes**

(1) The Bourneville Musical Theatre company lives on today as a corporate training facility.

(2) McWilliams, Abigail; Siegel, Donald (2001). *Corporate social responsibility: A theory of the firm perspective*. Academy of Management Review. 26: 117–127

(3) Macmurray, John (1939) *The Clue to History*. Harper and Brothers, New York. 43-44

(4) Castle, E.B. (1941) *The Undivided Mind*. Swarthmore Lecture. George Allen & Unwin Ltd, London. 53-54

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**Andrew Fincham** is a doctoral candidate in Theology and Religion at the University of Birmingham. He holds a Masters in Politics, Philosophy and Economics from Oxford University. His current work seeks to explain the links between Quaker values and commercial success during the long eighteenth century. A member of Britain Yearly Meeting, he edited *Cadbury's Angels*, a profile of the business practices of George Cadbury (IBiS, 2011).

## **Quaker principles and the workplace: a story from the First World War**

**Rachel Muers**

What difference did 1914-18 make to Quaker concerns in and about the workplace? It is well known that the First World War made Quaker traditions of nonviolence and pacifism more visible, more spiritually alive for many individual Quakers, and more central to the shared identity of Quakers in Britain. Less widely recognised, but just as important, is the shift in Quaker approaches to social justice in this period marked by the adoption, in 1918, of the document 'Foundations of a True Social Order' which still features prominently in the British Quaker book of discipline.



Many of the people who wrote the ‘Foundations’, members of the War and Social Order Committee of what was then London Yearly Meeting, had concerns about workplace organisation at the front of their minds. The committee, as it deliberated over the connections between social injustice and war, reflected on the strikes and industrial unrest in the years leading up to the war, on class divisions and wealth disparities within and beyond Quakerism, on the question of whether it was right for Quaker families to employ domestic servants - and on different visions of a just social order. The committee, and the document it produced, moved decisively beyond calling on Quakers to be good employers and responsible users of wealth - to raise questions about structures of power in and around workplaces.

One member of the committee who has earned a place in the history books for his application of Quaker principles to the workplace was Malcolm Sparkes (1881-1933). The manager of a factory in London, he was involved before the war in several schemes to improve employees’ welfare and to allow employees a greater share in the profits made by the firm. A series of strikes in the building trade in 1914 convinced him that there was a basic problem with the organisation of the industry. He was an employer who fully supported the aims of the trade unions and wanted those with a stake in the future of the industry to be involved in running it. On the War and Social Order Committee he put forward the ideas he was developing for ‘industrial democracy’, including the organisation of workers’ guilds in the building industry and a ‘National Industrial Parliament’.

Malcolm Sparkes’ desire for change in the workplace was linked to his deep pacifist convictions - and shaped by the time he spent thinking, with other Quakers on the War and Social Order Committee and beyond, about how the ‘seeds of war’ are sown in everyday life and in working practices. He stepped down from his role as managing director in 1916 when his firm decided to accept contracts from the Ministry of Munitions. Soon afterwards he appeared before a tribunal as a conscientious objector to military service. In the end, Sparkes spent nearly two years in prison as a conscientious objector, still working hard on his plans for peaceful and democratic working practices in the building industry. He had argued to his tribunal that working for peace in industrial relations was the ‘highest national service’ he could offer. He certainly saw it as an outworking of his Christian faith, motivated by the same vision of the kingdom of God, which led him to refuse military service.

As the ‘Foundations of a True Social Order’ document put it, in words that may well have been inspired by Malcolm Sparkes and others like him:

The spiritual force of righteousness, loving-kindness and trust is mighty because of the appeal it makes to the best in every[one], and when applied to industrial relations achieves great things...

Not through antagonism, but through co-operation and goodwill can the best be obtained for each and all.

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**Rachel Muers** is Senior Lecturer in Christian Studies at the University of Leeds. She is a lifelong Quaker and currently a member of Leeds Area Meeting. The research on ‘Foundations of a True Social Order’, on which this article draws, was supported by the Arts and Humanities Research Council through the ‘Everyday Lives in War’ research centre, and conducted jointly with Rhiannon Grant.

## How Quakers are putting faith back into business

**Paul Grey**

For Quakers, faith and business have been inextricably intertwined. Quaker values of equality, peace and justice, truth, simplicity and sustainability have been the backbones of Quaker businesses for centuries. For instance, in 1763, John Woolman urged Quakers to ‘live a simple life with careful use of the earth's resources’.

Quakers have an image of trustworthiness, frugality and prudence. Their commitment to truth led to their reputation for integrity in industry and banking. In 1825, Quaker firms opened the first steam railway from Stockton to Darlington. In the 1870s, Quaker chocolate empires began, run by Joseph Fry, Joseph Rowntree and George Cadbury. Trust in their business practices, their insistence on firm and fair prices, enabled Quakers to found thriving banking chains (1890s) – Lloyds and Barclays for example, and manufacturing companies, Reckitt and Colman.

### **Friends House**

Today, not all those companies are Quaker-run. However, the tradition of ethical Quaker businesses lives on at Friends House. Located on Euston Road, in central London, Friends House is the central office for Quakers in Britain and is a grade-II listed building, erected in 1926. In 2007, Friends House (London) Hospitality Ltd. was founded to provide fully managed facilities at Friends House. Facilities include 31 meeting rooms and event spaces, a 1,000-seater auditorium - The Light, café, bookshop, worship space, and restaurant. The company is the sole trading company for Quakers in Britain.



Swarthmoor Hall, the cradle of Quakerism, in Ulverston, Cumbria, is also looked after by the company. In 1652, Judge Thomas Fell and his wife Margaret provided protection and hospitality for early Quakers, notably George Fox, one of the founders of Quakerism.

Quakers are led by their faith to promote peace, justice, equality and sustainability. This is why the profits generated by the company's operations in London and Ulverston are gift-aided to the charity of Quakers in Britain. In 2016, £817k was gift-aided. That year was the most successful to date - a success rooted in Quaker heritage and values.

Elizabeth Redfern sits on the Board of Directors for the company. She states:

My interest in Quakers initially came from hearing about the successful and ethically-run historic Quaker businesses, such as Cadbury, Fry, Rowntree and Clarks shoes. Although by modern standards the treatment of their staff, customers and suppliers would be seen as fair but not outstanding, in their time they were seen as great examples and pioneering industry leaders. Today many businesses are trying to emulate their ethical standpoint within a modern context.

And this is exactly what Friends House (London) Hospitality is doing today: running a pioneering and ethical business in the context of the twenty-first century. After ten years in operation, the company's achievements prove that a business can be profitable and sustainable. As Chief Executive Officer, I have put it this way:

While many people have lost faith in business, we say that profit doesn't always have to be made at the expense of people or our environment. We call this 'the friendly way' of doing business.

In 2011, Quakers decided to become a low-carbon community and to encourage each other to live sustainably. A pledge directly reflected in the company's sustainable journey. Since 2009, the carbon footprint at Friends House has been reduced by 29 percent. To do this they use 100 per cent renewable energy, LED lighting and a zero waste to landfill policy. The company pay staff above the real Living Wage in London and Ulverston.

In 2015, the company introduced 'the friendly way' concept. This set of values expresses the company's commitments to the community, customers, suppliers and staff. It relies on four main values: heartfelt, loving, pioneering and responsible. The company's partnership with Douglas House Project (DHP) is a direct testimony to these values. DHP helps people diagnosed with personality disorder transition from hospital or prison back into the community. In 2015, the company helped them to set up a social enterprise bakery and offered them work placements at Friends House. Through this life-changing experience they acquired new skills and qualifications. Now trading as 'Chefs in the House', they sell tray bakes and fudge in Friends House café. In 2017, the company received the Support the Community award from the Sustainable Restaurant Association for its work with DHP.

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**Paul Grey** is Chief Executive Officer for Friends House (London) Hospitality Ltd., a position he has held since 2007. Paul has over forty years' experience in the hospitality industry. At 16, he started as an apprentice chef, and went on to work for Sodexo as the General Manager at the London Business School. Paul enjoys turning creative vision into reality and is passionate about people and the environment.

## **Putting Quaker practices into action in a small ethical business**

**Luke Wilde**

I grew up in Quakerism. I went to meeting regularly with my parents, and remember annual camps with Luton and Leighton monthly meeting fondly. Here and there, I experienced the Quaker business method – and I slowly developed an awareness and interest in the role which early Quakers played in industry. In my mid-twenties, working for a global management consultancy, I worked in and around the UN human rights organisations whilst simultaneously working with big multinational companies.

This gave rise to a conflict. While one day I would be immersed in the frustratingly political and bureaucratic yet humane and good intentioned world of the UN, the next I would be running a workshop on innovation for a client easily characterized as the 'bombmakers' – though they also made cars and commercial planes at the time. The conflict did not last long – within weeks I took the decision to withdraw from that profitable contract. This was not the 'done thing' in the consultancy at the time and may well have marked my card, but an early example of developing moral courage.



Moving on, my interest in the interplay between business and human rights developed. In about 2002, I organised a first public training course on business and human rights in a convent in West London. In 2004, I started the consultancy twentyfifty ltd. which I continue to lead. Now with a team of 15 spread across the UK, Germany and Switzerland, and working internationally, we are one of the more substantial consultancies in our field. Our discipline ‘business and human rights’ has built steadily over the years with an inflection point around the publishing of the UN Guiding Principles on Business and Human Rights in 2011 – the first global standard for corporate responsibility - and lately the UK’s Modern Slavery Act.

At twentyfifty, what we do is help companies put grand commitments to ‘respecting human rights’ into practice in their own operations and supply chains. We have worked with companies in many industries, food, finance, chemicals, mining and tourism to name a few. I am particularly honoured to include a number of Quaker-founded companies in that mix, including Cadbury’s. There we worked through the transition to the new ownership by Kraft, and later Mondelez, to bring Cadbury’s experience in supporting sustainable cocoa farming and support for thriving cocoa communities to a bigger scale. By the end of 2016, the Cocoa Life programme which Mondelez continues to support had reached 92,000 cocoa farmers in over 861 communities, with 21 percent of the company’s cocoa ‘sustainably sourced’. On course to have all its cocoa sustainably sourced by 2022.

In our own practice, we aspire to be an ethical business. This year this was recognized when we were awarded B-Corporation status – but we still have ethical dilemmas and I draw on my Quaker experience to respond to them. They are often about who we work with. In the past two years, we have had to consider whether to work with a tobacco company, a defence contractor and a GM seeds business. We have developed a process – inspired by the Quaker practice of discernment – and involve our entire team in determining our response. In these discussions, we are all equal, and I have no more say than anyone else. We give the time we need to find the course of action we can all support. If anything, in my role I push to avoid the easy answer of inaction. Tears are not unusual and the outcomes are not necessarily the obvious ones:

- We work in tobacco supply chains because there are many people still employed in conditions that can be improved;
- We offered training on identifying modern slavery to the defence contractor, but would not have undertaken a consulting assignment because our employees prefer to use their efforts elsewhere;
- And the seeds business decision may yet come down to whether we can influence the business model (probably not).

All this has echoes of the questions we were asking ourselves during the takeover of Cadbury’s as we looked for influence amidst the meeting of Quaker-bred Cadburys and modern Corporate America. I am glad we stayed in!

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**Luke Wilde** is Chief Executive of twentyfifty ltd. ([www.twentyfifty.co.uk](http://www.twentyfifty.co.uk)). He has worked in leadership and organisational development for over two decades, with a specific focus on corporate responsibility, human rights and sustainability since the year 2000. He is recognised as a leader in the field of business and human rights, in particular in developing practical approaches to implementing the corporate responsibility commitment of major businesses in the mining, finance, food and industrial sectors.

## A Quaker approach to business

Andrew Gray

Five years ago, when my second child was just several months old, I decided to leave my safe employment as a solicitor working for a large trade union law firm in order to set-up my own law firm.

What follows is not a boast, rather it is a fact: it is still highly unusual for such a junior solicitor as I was then to set-up their own firm. I had only been a solicitor for four years! Looking back now, perhaps it was because of my sense of mission - thanks to my Quaker compass – which has powered my business.

Such a momentous decision required careful planning and risk minimisation to the highest level. In the months before I left safe employment, the more I read regarding how to set up a successful business and about how to dominate in online marketing, the more I realised that Quaker values were going to be the foundations to the firm's likely success. After all, historically Quakers had been known to be brilliant business people, so all I had to do was to follow the numerous examples from Quaker history, right?

Since I was kindly asked to pen this piece, I have reflected on how and if my Quaker values have shaped my business. Forgive my list-structured points (us lawyers are very busy, don't you know!). I regard the following points as integral to our non-failure.

1. Our ethical approach – this week, I have been interviewing would-be trainee solicitors. When I ask them why they want to work with us, they tell me it is because of our 'ethical approach'. Parking for a moment what is meant by 'an ethical approach', I can tell you that having a commitment to sound business ethics *does* set a business aside from its competitors. The 'ethical approach' has not only attracted – and kept - brilliant members of the team, but it also is the hook for potential clients. It is our 'Unique Selling Point'.
2. Rejection of debt – although my law firm of course required some financial input from me, and the living of a fairly simple existence (for a middle-class person in the first world!) until it made a little bit of profit in year three, I have largely stayed away from overdraft facilities and commercial loans. As a result, our growth has not been meteoric; rather it has been organic and steady. Organic growth is easier to manage. The firm may have grown faster had I borrowed more money, but such debt-fuelled growth would, in my view, have been foolhardy.
3. Speedy payment of invoices – one of the best pieces of business advice which I received came from the entrepreneur, James Caan. He argued in a podcast: if you receive an invoice from a supplier and you are happy with the work, pay it immediately. By doing so, we have engendered trust with our suppliers, which has meant that they tend to like working with us. And when they like working with us, we tend to get a better level of service.
4. Transparency – although we are certainly not perfect on any level, we do endeavour to be transparent with clients, regulators, suppliers and colleagues - everyone. Our

logo is a ring. I would like to think that people who know our business, understand who we are, what we do, and what we are all about.

5. Collaboration – although I remain the only shareholder in terms of making key decisions (which makes me somewhat uncomfortable), I listen to my colleagues' opinions. It is not exactly Quaker business method, but we do not vote and do look for consensus wherever possible.
6. Pro bono legal advice – I distinctly remember that when a Polish-speaking legal assistant joined he could not understand why we provided so much free legal advice to migrant workers. If you ask him today, he would say that the more free advice we give away, the more new enquiries we receive, some of which lead to paying clients. Bad news may travel fast, sure, but in my experience good news travels faster.

I leave you with this anecdote.

Just before I went to sleep on the night before I came up with my firm's name, I was reading all about the history of Quakerism. During that read, I discovered that Quakers had previously been known as *Friends of Truth*. At 4 a.m. the following morning I awoke and decided to call my law firm *Truth Legal*. I do not much like the name but it does tell the reader what they might expect from their interactions with us.

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**Andrew Gray** is the founder of Truth Legal Solicitors in Harrogate. He is the Vice-President of the Harrogate and District Law Society, as well as a trustee at the Harrogate Hub which is a church-led charity. Andrew is a Quaker, attending Harrogate Meeting.

## Working at Faith or Faith at work?

**Robert Ashton**

My return to Faith started with a rhetorical question to myself. I was standing in the former home of Abraham Darby at Ironbridge on a sunny summer's afternoon. The question was this: if Quaker businesses very successfully balanced profit with social purpose in the seventeenth century, where the heck are they today?

My work as an entrepreneur had left me in no doubt that today, more than at any time over my career, is the time when businesses that are fair and equitable, with a strong social purpose, will flourish. Those that remain focused of profit alone will struggle to retain their market share. The resilience of the John Lewis Partnership and the collapse of British Home Stores illustrate the point well. Today, those who are fair to their workforce, suppliers and customers will increasingly win favour over those that are not.

Social media has given a voice to the consumer. The Primark £6m pay-out to the families of the 1,100 workers who died when the Rana Plaza garment factory literally fell down in Bangladesh was prompted by consumer expressions of outrage on social media. Suddenly, the true cost of cheap clothes became known.

So I felt moved to explore the Quaker movement and, as is so often the case, one thing led to another. I am now a member of the Norwich Quaker Meeting. Coincidentally, I had had a Quaker headmistress at primary school and my grandmother had attended a school founded by Quaker philanthropy. Friends tell me it was inevitable, but to me, my return to Faith came as a surprise.

God, as I now know, has a way of pulling the strings and making the right things happen, often in unexpected ways. I founded a social enterprise, Swarm Apprentice ([www.swarmapprentice.org.uk](http://www.swarmapprentice.org.uk)) in 2014, to provide opportunity to young people who slip through the education system. The man I hired as CEO is a Methodist; in fact his father is a Minister. As Swarm has grown, our friendship has deepened and our different slants on Christianity have guided our decision making. Swarm is not overtly a Christian business, but its approach most certainly is and that is most certainly helping the business succeed.

I turned 62 in August and have over the past fifteen or so years written nineteen books on business and entrepreneurship. As large publishing houses increasingly focus on volume sellers and celebrity authors, I saw an opportunity. Many people have skills and experience that can change people's lives for the better, but an account of their endeavours never gets published. Worse, many fall victim to the vanity publishers who do little to help market the books, just taking money from the hapless authors who fund books that never sell.

The Turnpike Press ([www.turnpikepress.co.uk](http://www.turnpikepress.co.uk)) was launched this summer. We work with authors to secure commercial sponsorship of the books we publish and they write. The first print run, when sold, repays the sponsor's investment, with subsequent profits are shared 50: 50 with the author. Sponsors have an interest in what the author has to say and so actively promote the book. If a book wins sponsorship, it is likely to be on message and get read. The first book we publish will be on charity leadership. The second will be a guide for parents and young people struggling with their mental health. Others are already coming along. The Turnpike Press does not have a conventional social enterprise structure, but it is upfront about sticking to Quaker values. We are transparent in our dealings, fair to both our authors and sponsors, and our summarised accounts will be published on our website for all to see.

I recently visited the Bunhill Fields Quaker Meeting. It is the oldest Quaker Meeting in London, with the movement's founder George Fox buried a few yards from the Meeting House. It was in the stillness of the Meeting there that the penny finally dropped. Last summer I asked myself where are the Quaker entrepreneurs of today. I realised that I have, in a very modest way, become one!

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**Robert Ashton** is the founder of Swarm and best-selling business author, charity trustee and entrepreneur who helps individuals, organisations achieve a greater positive social impact through economic self-sufficiency. He is a well-known commentator on social entrepreneurship. He has been described as a 'disruptive innovator', because he uses his unique ability to challenge the status quo. His personal web site is at: [www.RobertAshton.co.uk](http://www.RobertAshton.co.uk)

## Personal reflections on Quaker Business Practice

Izzy Thorne

### Self-employment and being Quaker

Quakers have always emphasised ‘integrity in personal conduct and service’ as an important part of our spiritual life. However it was only when I left my career in environmental conservation and started anew as a freelance facilitator that I began to explore what this phrase actually meant for me in terms of how I wished to set up and develop my new business.

As many people do when they become self-employed, I attended numerous workshops on the legalities of setting up a business, how to complete tax returns, ways of using social media to promote my new professional identity and maximise my business potential. However, although helpful on a practical level, each workshop left me feeling increasingly uncomfortable with how I was being encouraged to work and shape my business. Defining targets and outputs as well as creating an active presence on the internet is now considered to be the ‘norm’ for any business, and for many it is exactly right for what they wish to do. For me however, it felt the wrong way to go and was not the way that I wished ‘my life to speak’ [George Fox, 1652]. So how did I come to this view?

Being part of a Quaker community offers me time and space to reflect on how I can live a more spirit-led life. The stillness of Meeting for Worship, and the Ministry that often arises from the silence, helped a great deal. It continues to assist me to see more clearly the ‘truth’ of who I am and how I wish to be in the every day. Learning more about and experiencing the ‘Quaker way of doing business’ also helped me to recognise three key interests that have shaped who I am professionally, these being:

- my innate curiosity and interest in the way we communicate with and treat one another in the work place;
- how important open and supportive communication is in enabling me to become who I am and the way I work;
- my wish to undertake work that enables others to see and move towards opportunities to be kind, patient and understanding towards one others as well as themselves.

However, the ‘Light’ that helped me to realise this about myself is not just discernible in Meeting for Worship. It is also reflected in the lives of others both in deed and the written word. One such source of inspiration is *Good Business Ethics at Work* published by a group of Quakers, all of whom have worked, or are working in a variety of businesses run with the intention of making a profit [reviewed elsewhere in this *Bulletin*]. Using *Advices and Queries* (1) as their source inspiration, they developed a framework of ideas and standards that ‘addresses the ethical issues that we all face in our working lives and invites us to examine our personal conduct in business’.

For me, *Good Business: Ethics at Work*, a slim, unassuming green book, ‘speaks to my condition’ and gives me the confidence to shape the way I wish to work as a facilitator and workshop leader. I also feel better able to experiment with my own style of delivery and integrate many of the facilitation techniques I have experienced at Quaker Centres such as Woodbrooke (2) into secular settings. I have been fortunate to have been offered numerous



pieces of contract work by my previous employer, Cumbria Wildlife Trust - work that has enabled me to use a more gentle and reflective style of learning.

Earlier this year, I started work at the Quaker Tapestry Ltd. (3) firstly to train people wishing to become Volunteer Exhibition Stewards and, latterly, as maternity cover for the Operations Officer. Not only am I able to bring my experience of training volunteers to this role, I am also able to help extend a warm hand of welcome and hospitality to visitors of Friends Meeting House in Kendal, and the unique exhibition of the Quaker Tapestry. I am also surrounded by the inspiring stories of many Quaker businesses that are recognised as forerunners in fair trading, good business practice and care for employees. Not only is this environment enriching and providing me with an even deeper experience of how Quaker businesses are run, I am also learning to trust the Spirit and undertake work that gives life to my faith and nourishes my soul.

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#### *Notes*

(1) Advices and Queries, [Quakers](#) use the term *Query* to refer to a question or series of questions used for reflection and in spiritual exercises. Friends have used Queries as tools for offering spiritual challenges to the community for much of their history. Queries often take the form of a collection of themed questions that are read at the beginning of a time of worship or reflection.

(2) *Woodbrooke* is a Quaker study centre in Birmingham. As well as run learning programmes, it also runs courses in Quaker meetings, at other venues and online. The ways they offer Quaker learning have changed but the original vision remains the same. Encouraging and enabling ministry is at the core of our Quaker approach to learning, whether that ministry is faith, witness, love or service ([www.woodbrooke.org.uk](http://www.woodbrooke.org.uk))

(3) *Quaker Tapestry Ltd* - The Quaker Tapestry consists of 77 panels illustrating the history of [Quakerism](#) from the 17th century to the present day. The idea of Quaker Anne Wynn-Wilson, the tapestry has a permanent home at the Friends Meeting House at Kendal, Cumbria ([www.quaker-tapestry.co.uk](http://www.quaker-tapestry.co.uk))

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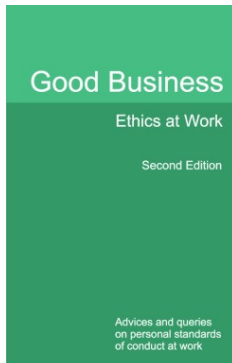
Since 1995, **Izzy Thorne** has worked in the voluntary and environmental conservation sector. In 2012, she left her profession for health reasons and started working as a self-employed freelance facilitator. In February 2017, she was offered a contract to train volunteers at the Quaker Tapestry in Kendal. She is now employed as the Operations Officer providing maternity cover.

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**For all matters relating to this *Bulletin* please contact -**  
Deacon Dr David Clark at: [david@clark58.eclipse.co.uk](mailto:david@clark58.eclipse.co.uk) or 01629 810172  
Hill View, Burton Close Drive, Bakewell DE45 1BG

## ***Good Business: Ethics at Work***

### **Book review**



This publication is probably the longest running and most successful project the Quakers and Business Group has undertaken in its twenty year history!

It is a 50 page book of straightforward everyday advice on how to do business fairly, respectfully and ethically. Coming from the Quaker viewpoint of treating all people as unique and valuable, it includes 37 specific sections of advice, each with a general introduction and a number of sub-topics. These focus on business from the point of view of the people involved, as in customers, suppliers, employees, employers and competitors.

Below are examples taken from sections on -

#### **Competitors:**

*Respect your competitors. Remember that together you are looking after the reputation of your whole industry.*

#### **and Money Matters:**

*Remember that payment is owed when the job is complete... Make sure you pay your bills on time.*

Neither of these examples is novel. However, as a whole, the book is an invaluable guide to a way of thinking and working that is crucial to running a business that people want to work in, work for and work with.

#### **First edition**

So where did the book come from? In the late 1990s, a number of Quakers and Business Group members found that they were often asked questions about an ethical approach to everyday business tasks and repeating answers to similar questions. However, they found that it was very difficult to find suitable texts to which to refer people - and it still is. So the obvious route forward was to write a digest of these questions and answers.

The format followed was that of the key Quaker text *Advices and Queries* - a publication that sets out some of the thoughts related to Quaker insights down the years. The first edition of *Good Business: Ethics at Work* was produced in 2000, with the subtitle 'Advices and queries on personal standards of conduct at work'. It was published as a low price paperback and sold mainly through the bookshop at Friends House, Euston Road, London. A copy was given to every local Quaker Meeting in the UK and to many other Quaker institutions and libraries worldwide.

That last paragraph makes writing the book sound easy! The reality is that it was a task of dedication and lengthy discernment in true Quaker style, with input from many people, including Friends in the United States. The writing was based around a number of principles. These included a concern that the content should 'spring from discerned experience and not quote from other sources: it is ministry. It seeks to advise and guide, rather than inform and educate.'

### **A second edition**

The book has been a success over the years and earning a modest reputation as a place to go for good solid advice. It has been used in a number of schools and business colleges.

In 2014 it was realised that hard copies were running out. This offered a good opportunity not only to refine the content and produce a second edition, but embrace new technology in publishing. So the content was reviewed and updated. It is testament to the skill of those that wrote the first edition that the book did not need rewriting from scratch. The revisions were - to slightly change the order of the contents, rewrite the introduction, refine places that referred to legislation that had either changed or was no longer relevant, and to update phrases into more current language. A second edition was then published. This included allocation of International Standard Book Numbering (ISBN) in both paperback and two e-book formats (epub and mobi).

### **Promotion**

The new edition opened up a whole new world for distribution, including all bookshops and on-line retailers. We gave copies to all the major national UK and Irish libraries, and those academic institutions in the UK and United States which have Quaker libraries.

Due to a concerted promotion project and the ease with which the book could now be bought, it began to generate interest further afield. We were asked for translations. Interestingly one of the first of such requests was for a Czech version, as the person concerned said that what we had written was virtually unheard of in that language. Next came a request for a Polish edition. In the future we hope to publish a Russian version and then editions in the major western European languages including French, German and Spanish. *We would be delighted to hear from anyone who could help us with these translations.*

We are also in the final stages of producing an international version in which we have avoided a UK centric context and refined the content for a broader audience. We plan to have this translated as requested.

We believe that this is a project which has a very fruitful future. We hope it will continue to be a source of sound business advice on the things that should matter to every one of us.

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To purchase a copy of *Good Business: Ethics at Work* (2014 second edition) - please visit your usual book or e-book supplier using these details - prices will vary:

ISBN (hardcopy) - 9781784560683

ISBN (epub) - 9781784568467

ISBN (mobi) - 9781784568474

The publication can also be read on our website at:

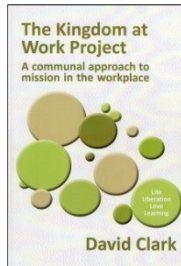
<https://qandb.org/resources/publications/ethics-at-work>

And for the translations at: <https://qandb.org/good-business-translations>

***The Kingdom at Work Project***  
***- a communal approach to mission in the workplace'***

**David Clark**

Peterborough: Upfront Publishing (£14.99 paperback; £8.99 e-book)



Unique in recent literature on faith and work in that its focus is the on the transformation of the workplace - founded on an innovative communal theology of the kingdom 'profoundly lay-centred' - a wealth of resources for practice - argues for a new mentoring role for chaplains and ministers in secular employment - a comprehensive mission agenda for the local church

This book 'may represent the beginning of another stage in the historic and contemporary Christian engagement with work'  
*(John Atherton in Crucible)*

'A brilliant work-book for the servant leader'  
*(Peter Challen - Sloan Fellow of London Business School)*

'An extraordinarily stimulating book... Its huge strength lies in the sheer comprehensiveness of the vision, combined with a myriad of practical ideas, structured responses and imaginative, evocative prayers.'  
*(Roger Walton - President of the Methodist Conference, 2016-2017)*

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**David Clark's has a web site and blog on the theme of 'the diaconal church'**  
<http://www.diaconalchurch.com>

Parts of this have considerable relevance to ministry and mission in the world of work.

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***Past copies of the Kingdom at Work Project Bulletin***

These can be downloaded from

<http://www.saltleytrust.org.uk/faith-and-work-in-theological-education-and-training/>

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| <b>No.11 (July 2017)</b> | <b>Ministers in Secular Employment</b>                                |
| <b>No.10 (Feb. 2017)</b> | <b>The Christian Entrepreneur</b>                                     |
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| <b>No.4 (April 2015)</b> | <b>The Kingdom at Work project – ten key questions</b>                |
| <b>No.3 (Dec. 2014)</b>  | <b>'Educating for Mission in the World of Work' conference report</b> |
| <b>No.2 (Oct. 2014)</b>  | <b>Faith and work agencies in the UK and beyond</b>                   |
| <b>No.1 (Feb. 2014)</b>  | <b>The Kingdom at Work Project and related initiatives</b>            |