

Blackpool Meeting Remembered

Sadly, there is at present no Quaker Meeting in Blackpool or the Fylde. The Blackpool Meeting was laid down early in 2012 when the last four Friends could no longer support it.

Blackpool Meeting was settled in 1904 and at first grew slowly, gathering in a room over a shop in Counce Street in central Blackpool. Not until about 1930 was the little rented upper room filled. A site for a meeting house was acquired at 30A Raikes Parade where in 1932 the Meeting House was built at a cost of £1,600, the meeting room and classroom well proportioned, restful in colour and form.¹

This was very well attended in the 1930s and 1940s by people opposed to the war who welcomed the Quaker peace testimony. As well as Sunday morning meeting, worshippers from other churches came for Sunday night services with hymn singing. Old Blackpool Friends had tales of the appalling hardship and abuse endured by conscientious objectors and their families, unemployed and held in contempt. Yet they also had good memories of a meeting house full of people of all ages.

In later years, the meeting house was used every day of the week by various Alcoholics Anonymous groups and their support groups. For this the Friends charged them deliberately small rents, seeing this as a vital social service in a town shamefully described as the alcohol capital of Lancashire. Before the meeting house was sold, care was taken to be sure that all the AA groups had found suitable places to meet.

Anne Ashworth

1. David M. Butler, ed, The Quaker Meeting Houses of Britain, Vol.1 pp. 293-4 (Friends Historical Society 1999)