



THE RELIGIOUS SOCIETY OF FRIENDS (Quakers) IN BRITAIN

THE SOUTHERN MARCHES AREA QUAKER MEETING

CYFARFOD CRYNWYR RHANBARTH Y GORORAU DEHEUOL

Registered charity number: 1134528

The Governing Document says, *'The object of Southern Marches Area Quaker Meeting is the furtherance of the general religious and charitable purposes of the Religious Society of Friends (Quakers) in Britain in the area of Southern Marches Area Quaker Meeting and beyond.'*

Quaker faith and practice (5th Edition - London, 2013) is the current Book of Christian Discipline of the Yearly Meeting of the Religious Society of Friends (Quakers) in Britain and contains guidance on the right ordering of Britain Yearly Meeting of which Southern Marches Area Meeting is a constituent part.

It strengthens our witness as a religious society and encourages us in our living of the testimonies. It inspires us to action, corporately in our meetings or individually and in groups. It searches our spiritual depths and refreshes our spiritual life as individuals and corporately. It reinforces the sense of community in our meetings QF&P 6.01

Our Governing Document refers directly to it for guidance and the way that we work. (See also <http://qfp.quaker.org.uk/> for an interactive version of Qf&P).

Throughout this document the abbreviations; Area Meeting, AM and SMAQM refer to Southern Marches Area Quaker Meeting; BYM and YM refer to Britain Yearly Meeting and Qf&P refers to Quaker Faith & Practice

The purpose of this document is to help SMAQM Nominations Committee with their discernment and to describe to Friends who are approached with regard to this role the extent of the role and the demands that it will place on anyone who is appointed.

Job/Role Description: Registering Officer for Marriages

The Registering Officer's primary role is to ensure, on behalf of the Society, that proper marriage procedures are followed. The Registering Officer supports couples wishing to have a Quaker wedding through the process and has responsibilities to both the Area Meeting and to the civil authorities.

1. List of main responsibilities:

- To ensure that proper internal and external marriage procedures for opposite sex and same sex couples are followed
- To ensure that the current Marriage Registers and Certificates are safely and securely stored and that completed registers are appropriately archived.
- To support the couple's preparation for marriage, through meetings and in conversations.
- Helping to ensure that the wedding day runs as smoothly as possible,
- To maintain a long-lasting interest in the couples married in the care of the meeting.
- To work with elders to support the couple during the planning and preparations for the marriage and thereafter

2. Administrative tasks involved (e.g. preparation, reports, arranging meetings, records):

- Meeting with the couple
- Completing a comprehensive folder of forms available on the Quaker website.
- Requesting completion of forms by designated Friends e.g. AM Clerk completes a form confirming the appointment of the date, time and place of the proposed marriage
- Completing quarterly returns for the local registration district (this is determined by where the registering officer lives)
- Completing annual returns for Friends House

3. Frequency, location and types of meetings involved:

- Frequency of meetings really depends on the preparedness of the couple but there would be at least two face to face meetings before the day of the marriage.
- Location is dependent on where the couple live, their ability to travel and the availability of appropriate places to meet
- Meetings for clearness are often used as part of Quaker marriage preparation.
- Meetings may involve elders as well as the couple and just prior to the marriage other significant players.

4. Approximate monthly time commitment:

- Very variable and so requires some flexibility in commitments. The present post-holder was appointed 2.5 years ago and until this year had no marriages – the commitment with no marriages is about 2 hours a year plus the training at Woodbrooke: preparing for and recording marriages would vary depending on the need for meetings but would over a period of 5 or 6 months amount to about 36 hours/marriage – quite a lot of travel time in that if the post-holder lives in very different parts of the area and the marriage is held somewhere like The Pales.

5. Legal requirements, if any, relating to post:

- Marriage Law – this varies considerably in different parts of Great Britain. Chapter 16 of *Quaker faith & practice* sets out procedures for Wales. www.qfp.quaker.org.uk contains the most up to date information.
- Registering Officer's appointment is agreed with the Registrar General: the law requires that only the Registering Officer for a specific geographical area can sign the Register of Marriages (civil authority documents)

6. Trienniums expected (and progression):

- One, but often more; experience in this service can be helpful

7. Training needed to start, and ongoing:

- Woodbrooke Quaker Study Centre offers a residential training course 'Being a Quaker Registering Officer'.
- There is excellent support from a designated officer at Friends House
- There is a Quaker Registering Officers' Google group where information and experience is shared and questions can be asked.
- Chapter 16 of QF&P is reviewed and updated regularly to ensure that it is line with the law.
- There is a comprehensive handbook that is also regularly updated.

Personal Qualities and abilities

8. Personal qualities and skills needed:

- An open, sensitive and approachable manner,
- A clear understanding of the legal and procedural requirements of marriage according to Friends' ways
- An eye for detail and an ability to recording information accurately
- An understanding and respect for confidentiality.

9. Technical, computer use or administrative skills needed

- Forms can all be filled in by hand but some computer skills an advantage (e.g. downloading or forwarding documents on the Quaker website)
- Use of email very useful for agreeing details, arranging meetings etc.
- Ability to drive and access to a car very useful

10. Experience needed, or desirable:

- No direct experience required as there is good support and training.
- Attending a Quaker wedding an advantage

11. Is membership required?

- Yes

12. Knowledge of Quaker Business Method required?

- Very helpful but not essential.
- Periods of silence used in meetings with the couple but there is generally a need for open and free dialogue.

Support in place for the post holder after appointment

13. Sources of support (including identified 'mentor/s'):

- Experienced registering officers in other Area Meetings
- Registering Officers e-group

14. Quaker Faith and Practice references:

- Chapter 16 of Quaker Faith and Practice gives detailed information on Quaker marriage procedures for same sex and opposite sex couples and the role of the registering officer – it is important to use the latest version.

15. Other helpful sources of information and guidance:

- Registering Officers Handbook www.quaker.org.uk
- Considerable support, advice and resources are available from the Support for Meetings Officer, Quaker Life
- Other useful publications are Committed Relationships (volume 6 of the Eldership and Oversight handbook series published by Quaker Books) and Quaker Marriage (by Edward Milligan, published by Quaker Tapestry Booklets, Kendal)
- A conference for registering officers is held about once every five years.

16. Help with expenses:

- From Area Meeting Treasurer, on request

Comments and helpful information (e.g. from previous post holder)

- If possible a hand over meeting with the previous post holder is very useful.
- There is a lot of support for this role but as every marriage is different there will also always be an element of new learning and a very special experience.

Rewards to be found in this service:

The rewards include a sense of being of real service to Friends, the satisfaction of a job well done, and the gift of being closely involved with a couple in the preparation for and celebration of a Quaker marriage. It is a very real privilege.

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