

## **Review of Warwick Quaker Community Café October 2017**

The purpose of this report is to review the past year and to look at possibilities for the future.

- **THE CAFÉ MANAGER**



Paul Lively manages the café as a franchisee, paying 10% of its turnover to the Quaker Meeting. He says that while the café is by no means a gold mine, he makes enough from it to meet his needs. He values quality of life over making money and at present running the café fits in with his responsibility for the welfare of his elderly mother. He is happy to continue running the café for the foreseeable future. Paul is willing to answer any questions about any aspect of running the café.

- **THE VOLUNTEERS**



At present we have 15 volunteers, enough to keep the café running efficiently, although we would always welcome one or two more. The volunteers are very loyal and many are willing to do extra shifts at holiday times. They enjoy a free lunch during their shift, and squeeze in for a buffet lunch party at the convenor's home before Christmas, and a restaurant meal provided by Paul in the new year. We are lucky to have such a dedicated work force. (Only 3 are Quaker).

- **THE CUSTOMERS**



There are several regular customers who use the café, including a blind lady who comes every week to do the crossword with Paul, a recent widower who comes several times a week and a married couple who travel frequently from Leicester to visit the café.

There are now two knitting groups who meet on Mondays and Thursdays, and the sewing group on Fridays.



We provide drinks and meals for the various classes and orchestra who meet on the premises, the Mind groups who use the buildings and other informal groups who meet regularly. Many of the customers are women, who feel that the café is a safe environment for them to come to.



Paul also caters for small lunch parties of up to 20 and has recently catered for a W.I.party. One of our volunteers organises a monthly party for a group of ladies (mostly widows) who meet to celebrate their birthdays and other occasions. In November Paul is providing a buffet lunch to precede a talk about local work with refugees.

- **FINANCE**

Although the turnover of the café dropped over the first 6 months of the year it has now come back to around the previous year's level. Paul has not generally increased prices this year. We unfortunately lost a few regular customers through sickness or death, but the footfall does seem to be recovering with some new groups of users. We have had to replace the large fridge and a microwave this year as well as paying for a few minor repairs, but we are due to hand over between £2,500 and £3000 to the Quaker Meeting at the end of the year to cover the expenses it pays. The equipment and facilities of the café are assets owned by the Meeting, and are used for Quaker purposes as well; soup and roll, shared meals, area meeting tea, and this year, an away day for the yearly meeting when it was used to serve morning coffees, lunch and afternoon teas to about 35 visitors.

- **FUTURE PLANS**

**Voucher scheme.** We have been considering introducing a voucher scheme where people in food (or other) need could be given a voucher to exchange for a meal in the café. These could potentially be distributed by the food bank or the Citizens Advice Bureau. The café committee has discussed this and thought 3 different types of vouchers could be provided, for soup or a sandwich or a main meal, all to include a hot drink. We would need to liaise further with the Warwick Food Bank and to run a trial to see if there is uptake and if the scheme is viable. If it is vouchers could be bought and donated by customers, Quakers, possibly area meeting or other organisations. Quakers would, of course, receive 10% of any extra takings. It is in the planning stages at the moment and we would value the input of this meeting.

**WiFi** We have looked into the possibility of starting a computer club in the café to help our (mainly elderly) customers with I.T. A survey of customers showed that it would be welcome. However this could not go ahead because the WiFi in the café is not good enough to support several users, in fact it is hard for a single user to get it. Customers increasingly expect the café to provide WiFi. We

would appreciate advice from the Meeting as to how this could be remedied, the possible cost and source of finance, so that we might be able to start a computer club at some point.

- **CONCLUSION**

The café has been here for 26 years and has a good reputation in the town. It is known as a safe and relaxing place to come with a warm welcome, a lovely garden and no pressure to spend a lot of money. It is a first point of contact for people who enquire about Quakers and Quakerism. It is a business but also a community of volunteers and customers who find friendship and happiness together.

As in all businesses trade fluctuates, but the trading position has stabilized so that the café will be able to make a similar financial contribution to the Meeting as last year. We are considering ways to increase the footfall and hope the café continues to enjoy a vibrant life.

The Café Committee

Convenor: Marilyn Biles