

Carrs Lane Fair Trade

Chairman's Report for 2020 Annual General Meeting

I am pleased to present my report for 2020, even though it has been the hardest year's to write. Not only because of the effects of Covid, but also because we had absolutely no ideas about what the future held, such as government rules for daily life and learning to have virtual meetings, coping with Zoom for those of us less tech savvy. There were plenty of helpers in this respect! Indeed, I had a shock to hear on Monday 22nd March that the building was to be closed that afternoon at 2pm.

We had already cancelled our AGM for 2019 which had been planned for that very morning. It was postponed to November 4th for a Zoom meeting. We had also heard that the *Traidcraft Roadshow*, due to take place in Wylde Green URC on Saturday 21st March had been cancelled. It was with very mixed feelings that we all received this information, as Traidcraft was looking forward to showcasing their new products in the Spring Catalogue. We were also looking forward to tasting their new foods.

Pat Davies and I were again invited to the Spring event at the NEC. It was very interesting to be able to see that other organisations were selling products under the Fair Trade umbrella.

It was especially good to meet up with one of Traidcraft's former employees and a good friend. She was running the Namaste stall. Traidcraft is still purchasing some of their crafts.

We had two large deliveries which included lots of Easter gifts to be delivered to the Church building. Fortunately, I managed to contact Traidcraft to divert their delivery to my house, so that we could then deliver them to customers, many of whom live in my vicinity. In addition, another volunteer offered to deliver goods for us as she is a keen walker. Our customers were very grateful for this service.

Several of our customers continue to buy goods from *Traidcraft* using Mail Order. This information had been regularly featured in our church notices. Thus, people were able to keep up to date with the current situation regarding Traidcraft goods and how to access them in the new circumstances. We hoped that these messages would spread the information to our loyal customers and beyond, as we had few contact details for many of our regular shoppers - we knew their names and regular shopping lists, but had no need of any further details with which to contact them until now.

During this time of Lockdown, we were considering what the future might hold once the dangers of Covid were past, even though in no way could we re-open the shop under the current government rules.

We began to consider how we might open again post Covid and thought it best to cut down the number of days and hours we were trading. We thought a rota could be made, to keep each volunteer still participating in Sales. Each one was contacted and all were willing and eager to return. Even those with paid employment were keen to play their part in running an efficient shop as were the rest of us.

The situation has meant that there was cancellation of the usual events across the city which we had found invaluable in creating and sustaining the interest in Traidcraft and fair trade in general. Interaction with other like-minded people was an encouraging benefit at a time when life may have been challenging; in addition, we found the telephone a very useful tool!

Moving on it was decided we should hold a Committee Meeting in late September 2020 to discuss the future of Carrs Lane Fair Trade Shop. Neil Johnson was kindly willing to chair this important meeting to which two of the Church Elders were invited. As one of them was

unable to attend she wrote a paper for consideration at the meeting. After some discussion a vote was taken and we took the very sad decision to close Carrs Lane Fair Trade Shop at the end of 2020, as this was the end of our financial year. All the stock therefore had to be sold by this date, enabling Joan Duffield to complete her Treasurer's Report. Joan and Derek Duffield devised a scheme to get all the remaining stock sold, including what had been bought prior to Covid restrictions coming into force. We ended the year having sent a cheque to *Traidcraft Exchange* to cover the remaining balance.

We acknowledge the support from the Church at Carrs Lane, the Ministers and Elders who assured us that Traidcraft and Fair Trade in general would remain part of the Mission of The Church at Carrs Lane. The Mission group of the church promised to see to that.

Grateful thanks are due to all our volunteers, including Committee members and especially Joan Duffield, our Treasurer, who has worked tirelessly and very reliably over many years to make everything run smoothly and our shop to be such a success for so long.

We would also like to thank Anne Veitch for a sterling job as Minutes Secretary. We also acknowledge the help and friendship of the regular staff who worked in our building. Last, but certainly not least, we thank our loyal customers, many of whom have supported us with their regular shopping over the years. We hope they will be able to continue to support Traidcraft and the Fair Trade Movement

Finally, we hope to be able to arrange a celebration with staff from Traidcraft, our volunteers and loyal customers over the years, once circumstances allow.

In the meantime, keep in touch with us and with one another. Whatever the future holds for each of us - in God we trust.

Joan Davies

March 2021