



# STAFFORDSHIRE QUAKER



AUTUMN EDITION, OCTOBER 2009

## FRIENDS AND FAITHS

REMEMBERING JULY 7

## INTERFAITH EVENT IN STAFFORD

- Remembering the bombings
- Muslims and Jews on adjacent stalls
- Quakers involved



Members of local faith groups at the July7 event. Maggie Jeays of Stafford Meeting is in the centre.

First they came for the communists, and I did not speak out  
- because I was not a communist;  
Then they came for the socialists, and I did not speak out  
- because I was not a socialist;  
Then they came for the trade unionists, and I did not speak out  
- because I was not a trade unionist;  
Then they came for the Jews, and I did not speak out  
- because I was not a Jew;  
Then they came for me  
- and there was no one left to speak out for me.

These famous words from Pastor Martin Niemöller in 1945 were read by Hifsa Iqbal (third from left on photo), the Muslim representative at an event to remember the bombings of July 7 2005. For the Quakers Maggie Jeays read a public statement made by Aotearoa/New Zealand 1987 Yearly Meeting :

... We will struggle to remove the causes of impasse and confrontation by every means of non-violent resistance available ... What we call for in this statement is a commitment to make the building of peace a priority and to make opposition to war absolute.... What we advocate is not uniquely Quaker but human and, we believe, the will of God. Our stand does not belong to Friends alone - it is yours by birthright ...

Some Quaker impressions on page 2

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## FRIENDS AND FAITHS

REMEMBERING JULY 7

A number of Stafford Friends were involved in what turned out to be an inspiring event on July 7, the anniversary of the 2005 London bombings. The day was organised as part of a national day of remembrance, reflection and reconciliation by the Stafford Interfaith Group, of which Maggie Jeays of Stafford Meeting is a member. Originally formed by the police as part of a Staffordshire-wide initiative in order to help combat race hate crime, the group now meets about four times a year. Its current co-ordinator is a Muslim, Hifsa Iqbal.

On the day Stafford Market Square was filled with rows of colourful stalls displaying information, pictures and symbols from the wide range of faith groups represented in Stafford and the wider Staffordshire community - Muslims shared space with Jews, Buddhists with Hin-

dus. There were Rastafarians and members of Christian denominations. The Quakers found themselves next to members of the Baha'i faith, and were surprised and pleased to find how much they had in common.

At midday the Bishop of Stafford, Gordon Mursell, gave an address. This was followed by readings from the scriptures and teachings of many of the different faith groups - two extracts are given on page 1. Music and drama were on offer throughout the day, much of them provided by students. Friends later said how heartening it was to see so many young people involved.

It was hoped that there would be plenty of interaction with passers-by but the weather and the music tended to drown participants' voices. There was however a big audience for

the readings, and as one Friend said the value lay in the co-operation and friendship between people of diverse beliefs, and the fact that this was demonstrated in public. Many of the participants visited each other's stalls and showed a desire to learn from each other.

For Rob Horton of Stafford Meeting just the fact that the event happened was the significant thing. It was important that the police were behind it and genuinely believed that it could make a difference. 'What stays with me', he said 'is the sight of Jews and Muslims on adjacent stands.'

The Interfaith Group now wants to build on its success by holding a similar event on July 7 next year.

By members of Stafford Meeting

'DO YOU WORK  
GLADLY WITH  
OTHER  
RELIGIOUS  
GROUPS IN THE  
PURSUIT OF  
COMMON  
GOALS?'

ADVICES AND  
QUERIES. 6

## FRIENDS AND FAITHS

ENGAGING WITH ISLAM

Given our discussions last year you might like to hear about an Islamic conference I attended in Wolverhampton, the award ceremony for Imams who had completed a training course. Many Imams arrive from abroad not speaking English or knowing a great deal about British systems, institutions or the local community. A Home Office re-

quirement now requires incoming Imams to demonstrate a level of competence in English. Some years ago the Mosques started a training course, which included English language proficiency, learning about British institutions, information technology training and briefings on the law.

One speaker was rather vehement about the fact that despite policies and procedures giving Muslims certain rights managers may ignore these, causing resentment. This speaker also expressed some homophobia. The rest of the conference I thought represented real positive, thoughtful leadership for the Muslim community.

## ENGAGING WITH ISLAM (CONTINUED)

The conference included singing of Sufi poetry, recitation of verses of the Koran, and speakers. Halfway through there was a break for Maghrib, the 4th compulsory prayer of the day. In Ramadan, which has just ended with the celebration of Eid, the daily fast is broken at the time of Maghrib.

The contribution of two outside speakers, Dr Attaulah Siddiqui and Imam Shahid Raza OBE, was really forward-looking. Dr Siddiqui said that if the Muslim community did not learn about other cultures and religions where they lived, and did not learn to communicate with them, we were in for another Serbia, Rwanda or Armenia. Four key things led to difficulties for British society generally in relating to Muslims: the nature of their relationship with The Prophet; their view of the Koran as a revealed text; Sharia law, linked by non-Muslims with stone-throwing and limb-chopping (a crude misrepresentation); and how women are seen in Islam, where cultural practices have at times overtaken what the Koran says. Muslims need to engage in dialogue over these things. He spoke about the things religious cultures shared and the importance of basic humanity and caring for human beings, saying repeatedly that human dignity was not negotiable. In the Mosques and more generally a great deal of time was spent look-

ing at the past and the future (the day of judgement). Muslims needed to be more aware of and engaged in current affairs.

Shahid Raza also emphasised the importance of communication but in the context of a changing world. He spoke of globalisation, how Muslims must engage with the reality that Mosque congregations were no longer of one skin colour or ethnicity, and how Imams had to speak to their entire congregation, basically saying that Muslims had to engage with multiculturalism.

An Imam spoke on 'The role of women in Islam'. All answers were in the Koran, which said that husband and wife should have equal respect. Early Islam gave women rights, where they had had none previously. Verses in the Koran say men and women should be equal in respect. Women have rights to obtain education, to work and to negotiate terms of marriage, and can refuse an offered marriage.

Touchingly the last speaker was a ten year old boy, in a beautiful gold kurta. The Chairman, Dr Khushid Ahmed CBE, introduced him as a glimpse of the future. He spoke on children's rights. Parents, he said, had a right to respect from children, but children have a right to time,

attention and right teaching from parents. His proud dad gave him a hug and a kiss on his return to his seat.

There were only 3 Muslim women there (all community workers, all veiled to some extent) and over 50 identifiably Muslim men, though a much larger proportion, presumably Muslim, went into Maghrib. The women prayed in a separate room. Others, like me, weren't Muslim, including several community workers I knew and some wearing dog collars. The police were well represented; their speaker talked of the importance of working together for a safer community and world.

Apart from Wolverhampton City Council's Assistant Chief Executive no women were among the 12 speakers. A Muslim told me that for all the talk of equality in the Koran 'they wouldn't let wives come to an event like this'.

As it was overall such a positive event I thought it worth sharing.

Berry Dicker  
Lichfield Meeting



'HUMAN  
DIGNITY IS NOT  
NEGOTIABLE'

## FRIENDS AND FAITHS

INSIDE SACRE

The Religious Education syllabus for Staffordshire has recently been revised. The last comprehensive revision was in 1997, some 12 years ago, which is not surprising since it is a fairly lengthy process, involving widespread consultation with RE teachers, the Student Council for RE, and the Standing Advisory Council for Religious Education (SACRE) for Staffordshire.

During the consultation period, I (as the Quaker representative on SACRE) expressed the view that the existing syllabus seemed to imply that belief and doctrine were central to all faiths, when in fact that is not true. I pointed out that it is not true of Quakerism and that many newcomers to our meetings often take many months, even years, getting their heads around this fact. I also pointed out that the first precept of the Buddhist Order of Interbeing states "Do not be idolatrous about or bound to any doctrine, theory or ideology, even a Buddhist one." My purpose in making these comments was not to get the Quaker way into the syllabus, but to ensure that children were made aware that belief and doctrine are not central to all faiths. Unfortunately, my comments were misunderstood by one member of SACRE who thought that I was proposing that we should teach children spirituality and meditation. This

misunderstanding was soon sorted out and I eventually gained approval for a slight amendment to the Curriculum Aims section of the syllabus, in that the words 'spiritual insights' or simply 'insights' were inserted in several places. For example, where reference was made to the impact of belief on actions, it now refers to "...the ways in which belief, spiritual insights and values are expressed by individuals or groups". Although I feel that much more could be done within the syllabus to draw out the more mystical, less conceptual, approaches to faith, I am pleased to have achieved a small step in that direction.

The final stage in the process was the approval of the revision by SACRE. For this to happen each of its four sub-committees (i.e. Church of England; Other faiths, including Quakers; Teachers Associations; and Local Authority representatives) had to independently approve the revision. This was achieved with minor revisions proposed by the Teachers Associations.

The revised syllabus was then formally launched at a special event in Stafford attended by some eighty RE teachers and members of SACRE. We and other faith groups presented displays and leaflets etc to help provide resource materials for

the teachers. Our display was attended by myself and Susan, plus Peter and Joan Holland. At the risk of being guilty of pride, we felt that ours was the best display on show, but we accept that we may be mistaken. Although little free time was allocated for the teachers to browse the displays and chat to attendants, many teachers came and viewed the display and collected materials including copies of 'Advices and Queries' and 'Martha and Mary'. We had interesting conversations with several teachers, some of whom openly admitted their ignorance about Quakerism, even to the extent of believing that we died out many years ago.

I felt that the launch was a very worthwhile event, but clearly we still have much work to do to make our continuing presence, faith and practice known, not only to the general public, but also to RE teachers!

Bill Walley  
Stone Meeting

'WHILE REMAINING  
FAITHFUL TO  
QUAKER INSIGHTS  
TRY TO ENTER  
IMAGINATIVELY  
INTO THE LIFE  
AND WITNESS OF  
OTHER  
COMMUNITIES OF  
FAITH'

ADVICES AND  
QUERIES. 6



## SOMETHING IN THE AIR: LEEK QUAKERS AND OTHER FREE THINKERS



*Nigel Tringham (right) at the launch of Volume 13 of the Victoria County History*

This was, to us and a dozen other Quakers, the encouraging title of a talk given to some 50 people (in Leek) by Nigel Tringham, the editor of the Victoria County History of Staffordshire.

The VCH is a national series founded at the end of Queen Victoria's reign. It aims to provide an authoritative account of every town and village in England from pre-history to the present day. The plan is for Staffordshire to be covered by 20 volumes, of which 13 have been published. They are written by staff at Keele University which manages the project in partnership with the County Council. Work has started on the 14<sup>th</sup> volume.

Nigel Tringham spoke almost entirely about individual Quakers in the Moorlands together with some Quaker history. He noted that Leek was the centre for Quakerism from 1660 to the 1680s. Membership at meetings was 20 at Whitehough (near Ipstones), 30 at Basford and 20 at Leek. The

1689 Act of Toleration led to the establishment of the current Meeting House in the 1690s. By 1735 there were 70 families in Leek Meeting.

Nigel provided some photocopies of documents held by the County Record Office and the William Salt Library. The first was an account of the earliest Quaker missionary in the Moorlands, Richard Hickock. He 'translated' the extract to us: it read as follows. 'The first time the said Richard Hickock came into the Moorlands he was moved to go to Leek steeplehouse and there, standing upon a form, to serve the word of God to the people, was violently thrown down backwards and his head broken, then hauled into the graveyard and thrown off the graveyard wall into the street.'

There were also copies of two disownments, of Elizabeth Finney in 1729 and John Hammersley in 1731, for marrying out of the Society. In reply to Nigel Tringham's questions we thought that disownment applied only to membership and not to a formal separation from family.

Much of the rest of Nigel Tringham's talk was about a Margaret Brindley who was

severely harassed by her aunt for showing an interest in Friends. The aunt wore a black hood and green apron: this was clearly at the time perceived as being threatening, but no one knows why that should have been so.

We also were given copies of the approval for the marriage of Margaret Brindley with Samuel Lucas and the names of witnesses to the marriage of their son James Lucas to Alice Key in 1760.

After the talk there were a considerable number of questions; Friends present contributed to providing some answers.

We all enjoyed the talk very much. In making her thanks Teresa Randall, the County Archivist, also expressed her gratitude to Quakers for the quality of their record-making. We were among the best (and she clearly hoped that we would maintain our reputation!)

Joan Holland  
Peter Holland  
Stone Meeting



*Volume 13 at its launch!*

'BY 1735 THERE  
WERE 70  
FAMILIES IN LEEK  
MEETING.'

## CHILDREN AND YOUNG FRIENDS - 1

### MY PILGRIMAGE TO SWARTHMORE HALL



*Henry and Freddie Essex with a friend - said by their family to be a relative of enquirers in York!*

In April I attended a four day pilgrimage to Swarthmore Hall, it was a very fun week and I learnt a lot about the origin of Quakers.

When I arrived at the station I was a bit downhearted because I had to make the trip from Crewe to Kendal on my own, I later found out that if I had gone one more carriage on I would have found many other Quakers

but, oh well. Once I had arrived at Swarthmore Hall and unpacked after that we all got to know each other with the usual games and activities. I can't remember exactly the order that we did the activities. However one of the days we spent at the hall we did a treasure hunt in which we had to go around and learn little pieces of information to solve clues.

Also we had a day out in Kendal where we bought presents for our secret friends and then one of my favourites, having a bonfire and telling stories, singing songs and playing. Overall I had a very enjoyable time as well as a brilliant learning experience.

Freddie Essex,  
Stafford Meeting

### MY EXPERIENCE OF JUNIOR YEARLY MEETING

'A GREAT DAY  
FOR QUAKERS  
EVERYWHERE'



*Logo sketched by Henry after attending the business meeting on gay marriage.  
Blue 'Q' on a pink background.*

Arriving at York station some time after three, I was given immense joy by the simplicity of the station, and two smiling "youth" Quakers who were there to greet us. Then after taking the bus down to the university (getting off one stop too late was wholeheartedly deliberate on my part) we came to the main hall, where a vaster number of Quakers were residing. We were given a timetable in our packs and the keys to our dorms. After creating the first bit of mess on the floor for the week, we came back to the hall and were given a talk, by a father of two homosexuals and one heterosexual. It was an entertaining and thought provoking talk and first introduced us to the issues that we would be tackling throughout the week. We then were taken to our "base groups". These were groups which contained only

"youths" and this is where we discussed things that had occurred previously, from talks to just finishing off games or activities.

The other type of group that we had was a "home group" which was a YMG group and not just JYM, so there were people from teens up to retirement in there. While for the most part this was a good idea, a slight criticism of this was that it did draw attention to the fact that aside from these groups, there was no real interaction between young and old save the excursions. I can't really talk in much detail about what other people did; I know some went to Fylingdales for a peace watch, however some people went for more mundane things such as going to Flamingo Land, although I suspect that my slightly negative attitude towards that was *mainly* because I didn't get to go

there. I myself went on a walk through the dales with a group of other people. Though the walk was lovely, there was a very unfortunate incident early on with someone accidentally treading on a wasps nest which left three of our expedition bed-ridden for several hours.

In regards to the big issue (gay marriages), what can I say? The end result was very pleasing and a great day for Quakers everywhere, the decision to go ahead was almost unanimous. Only one person stood up in the meeting to say they thought the motion was incorrect. I think this BYM was wholly successful and a metaphorical pat on the back for all.

Henry Essex,  
Stafford Meeting

## CHILDREN AND YOUNG FRIENDS - 2

### CADBURY, HERE WE COME!



Cadbury World was great. Stone Quakers went to Cadbury World and it was great. At the end all the Quakers had a little pot of melted chocolate with their

own toppings. It was a great finish to a lovely day.

On the train all of the children got a piece of paper with questions on. We all

had to answer all of the questions. I had a great day.

Olivia Wilkes  
Stone and Stafford Meetings



*George Cadbury  
(1839-1922),  
Quaker founder of the  
original 'factory in the  
garden' in Bournville*

The day at Cadbury World was very interesting. With a step by step history and free chocolate along the way everyone was kept entertained.

The tour was very true to its Quaker roots and references were made along the way, as well as a whole section dedicated to how Quakerism had affected the company.

Even better, we all got a cup full of liquid chocolate to make the day perfect.

Jenny  
Stone Meeting



QUAKER  
FAMILIES -THE  
CADBURYS, FRYS,  
ROWNTREES AND  
TERRYS - ALL  
CHOSE COCOA AS  
THE BASIS FOR  
THEIR FAMILY  
BUSINESSES.  
THEIR AIM WAS  
TO PERSUADE  
THE POOR TO  
GIVE UP  
ALCOHOL IN  
FAVOUR OF THE  
HEALTHIER  
CHOCOLATE  
DRINK.

A beautiful sunny day heralded the trip to Cadbury World organised by Stone Meeting.

The young people were given fun questions to complete on the train prior to arrival. You would be

surprised how many words can be made from the word chocolate.

We all enjoyed the Cadbury exhibition, particularly the interactive sessions.

As we waited on the platform for our train home our ears rang with laughter and the sunshine was reflected in the faces of the young people. New friendships were made and a great day was had by all.





'ARE WE QUIAKERS  
CHALLENGING  
THAT STATUS  
QUO?'

## WHAT DO WE HAVE TO SAY ABOUT THE EARTH?

### CLIMATE CHANGE - RESPONDING TO THE CHALLENGES

There seems to be increasing awareness amongst Quakers and the population as a whole that climate change is a major issue. People are wondering what the implications might be and Quakers are considering their response based on facts – the desire to act from truth.

The 2007 Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC) report – the most authoritative science available – indicated that climate change is happening and that the human race is causing it by burning fossil fuels (coal, oil and gas). This causes the release of carbon dioxide (CO<sub>2</sub>) which builds up in the atmosphere. Carbon dioxide is one of the atmospheric gases (the so-called greenhouse gases) which hold the sun's heat close to Earth. We need so much, but increasing concentrations are causing too much heat to be held. The more heat, the more energy there is in weather systems – the number of weather-related catastrophes has increased in line with average global temperature rises. In a review of research since 2007, climate change scientists reported this spring that impacts were happening faster than previously predicted, the melting of arctic sea ice being a prime example. This could lead to the release of methane held deep in the northern oceans. Methane is a far more powerful greenhouse gas than carbon dioxide and will speed up climate change even more.

The latest evidence indicates that an 80% cut in carbon dioxide emissions by 2050 will not be enough, that, ideally, we need zero emissions as quickly as possible and that we need to capture and store some of the existing atmospheric carbon dioxide to help return its concentration to a safe level.

The challenge of these truths is daunting and complex. Even if we (the human race) started to decrease emissions and capture CO<sub>2</sub> immediately (currently emissions are still increasing despite previous international agreements) there is a time lag before the weather might stabilise. We will still be (and already are) faced with pressure on water, food, living space and energy resources on a global and local scale.

Governments know that radical action is needed but are still in 'economic growth at all costs' mindsets partly because they consider that's what makes their populations happy. Are we Quakers challenging that status quo? Are we thinking through the radical economic and social changes necessary for an equitable global society that would face the issues co-operatively? Are we engaging with what simplicity might mean in the light of the challenges we face? Or, as Neil Endicott of the Quaker Council of European Affairs, puts it in his article 'Sustainable energy security' in the 'Good lives' issue of

Friends Quarterly (May 2009) 'What is the more powerful force in our lives – the moral conviction of Quaker faith or the subtle power of social norms?' The difficulty lies in that the social norms (of our energy use) are not seen as a moral dilemma (but rather as an accepted and acceptable way of living) until we realise the huge problems fossil fuel exploitation is causing, not just of climate change but also of conflict and denial of opportunity in some of the supplier nations.

Woodbrooke is developing its 'Good Lives' programme, Living Witness Project is helping Quakers and Quaker meetings engage with the issues (and I as Area Meeting representative am happy to talk, correspond or come to your meeting) and the current 'Zero Growth' events will aid our consideration of economic aspects. Hopefully, all this and/or other sources of inspiration and strength will help us be 'patterns and examples, taking responsibility for our environmental impacts, and engaging in local, national and international politics' (A framework for action 2009-2014).

A future article will look at ways out of this seemingly inextricable conundrum.

Rob Horton  
Stafford Meeting

wrobw.horton@yahoo.co.uk



## WHAT DO WE HAVE TO SAY ABOUT THE EARTH?

### CLIMATE CHANGE - RESPONDING TO THE CHALLENGES

A meeting on this theme was held at Warwick Local Meeting on Sunday 12 July. It was led by Pam Lunn of Woodbrooke. This meeting was very useful. Although planned for Warwick Local Meeting it was worth attending by people from outside Warwickshire. This report is being sent to all of Staffordshire's Local Meetings. Please display it as a poster in your Meeting Houses.

The following is a summary of the points raised:

- Technology will not maintain our current levels of consumption and lifestyle; neither will so-called 'green technology'.
- Concerning oil consumption about half of exploitable reserves of oil have been consumed. New discoveries of oil are about one third of current consumption.
- Climate change SHOULD forbid us from burning any more oil.
- There are uncertainties about the supply of energy, water and food.
- Artificial fertilisers depend on oil. Could organic fertilisers replace nitrates?
- How resilient are our communities to a sudden failure in the supply of energy, water and food?

Consider the recent:

- ◊ Oil drivers' strike
- ◊ Flooding of power-stations, threatening loss of electricity and refrigeration.
- Supermarkets have a supply of food in stock which could last less than one week!

So how can our Meetings increase and improve the resources of our local communities?

- Among other things we can lobby our Local Authorities about their plans and reserves for contingencies and emergencies.

We should demonstrate and emphasise the improved quality of lifestyles which are less affluent and less hectic:

- We can adapt the example of Weight Watchers:
- ◊ Develop a motivation to make a change and reduction
- ◊ Monitor something which you can count
- ◊ Measure and record savings
- ◊ Join a support group
- There are now 4 'Rs' to improve lifestyles:
- ◊ Reduce purchases and consumption

- ◊ Reuse and repair as much as possible
- ◊ Recycle for new uses everything which cannot be repaired
- ◊ Reforest! Plant as many trees and establish as much new woodland as possible. The Woodland Trust is raising funds to buy land for new forests.

- Leamington Transition Town (transition to self-sufficiency) is involved in education in secondary schools
- Emphasise our own practical and constructive efforts
- Be well informed about problems instead of merely complaining
- Otherwise negative feelings undermine constructive efforts
- Walk and cycle as much as possible
- If you keep a vehicle use it only when necessary. Aim to fill the tank only three times a year!

John Nicholls,  
Wolverhampton Meeting



'CLIMATE  
CHANGE IS  
CHALLENGING US  
TO ASK ANEW  
WHAT OUR  
FAITH LEADS US  
TO DO'

SUSAN SEYMOUR  
CLERK, MEETING FOR  
SUFFERINGS,  
AT BRITAIN YEARLY MEETING



‘ECONOMISTS  
SEE NO LIMITS  
TO GROWTH -  
EVER.’

NEW SCIENTIST,  
OCTOBER 2008

## WHAT DO WE HAVE TO SAY ABOUT THE EARTH?

### A ZERO GROWTH ECONOMY

At the Zero Growth Economy Conference at Friends House on 26 September our purpose was to consider the effects of a Zero Growth Economy on the environment and people and to consider the right relationships between them. It was chaired by Jocelyn Bell Burnell. This was an open conference for Friends and others with a particular interest in the subject and a preparation for Area Meeting representatives who will be attending a later two day seminar at Woodbrooke. 350 people attended. We will be considering these matters in our Area Meeting for our representative, Paula Knight, to take forward. We experienced intensively factual presentations by four expert speakers:

**Miriam Kennet and 2 other members of the Green Economics Institute** referred to Herman Daly's ideas, development without growth, and JS Mill – growth versus development. The OECD no longer tries to measure economic growth etc, because the effects of “growth” are blurred between gain and loss. We need to consider the net effect of our strategies.

**Richard Douthwaite, an economist**, said that ‘the stark choice is not growth or no growth, it is share or die’. If developing countries need growth we need to

shrink. We reached peak oil last year and need to accept the implications. He supports the ‘Cap and Share’ principle. This places a limit on the global production of fossil fuels which tightens each year to ensure that the concentration of greenhouse gases does not increase global temperatures so much that the world begins to warm because of its own processes.

**Duncan Green, Oxfam Research Director** declared himself pro-growth, with limits. There is evidence that high levels of wealth do not bring greater happiness – on incomes above \$15,000 – 20,000 we do not live longer, happier lives. In the rich world we can therefore forego growth so that the poorer countries can develop. *“In recent memory, a combination of pressure from below and enlightened leadership from above has produced some remarkable exercises in redistribution. In several East Asian countries, for example, elites have embraced the long-term case for equality, to prevent social division and to stoke a thriving economy.”*, a quotation from his book *“From Poverty to Power”*.

**Alastair McIntosh, Quaker social activist and Scotland's first professor of human ecology**, produced a change of pace – he woke us all up by charging round the large raised

dais making train noises and finally crashed in to the exit doors at high speed. Not all the audience appreciated his demonstration of our “train crash” approach to present problems, ie either deny the risk or panic. He cited illustrations showing that the Western mind tackles the crisis in the head; the Eastern mind sees it in the Tao. A broad generalisation perhaps, but we should not deny the truth within the concept. Our efforts, he said, should focus on the spiritual as much as on recycling.

**Three issues** are left clearly in my mind from the speakers and the following broad ranging panel discussion:

\* We should take seriously the Islamic (and early Christian) attitude to money – usury is wrong.

\*Economics and approaches to climate change are inextricably linked.

\*The personal changes required to meet the global warming challenge were compared by a speaker to the level of change of lifestyle we needed to accept during WW2. This provided a more manageable, less hysterical, challenge than I have ever heard before.

Win Sutton  
Wolverhampton Meeting

## WHAT DO WE HAVE TO SAY ABOUT THE EARTH?

### A ZERO GROWTH ECONOMY (continued)

*Comments from the five Staffordshire Friends who attended.*

'I was very impressed with the standard of speakers. I liked the Oxfam man very much (grounded and practical) but I think that Alastair Macintosh was the high point because the gloom of the previous speakers was lifted up by the spiritual dimension. I bought his *Hell and High Water* to inspire me.'

Paula Knight, Lichfield

"My question was: 'Can we have employment and welfare without pollution, debt and the waste of resources?'"

I liked the answer from Alastair McIntosh: 'Yes, if we exercise foresight and choose wise frugality instead of destitution.'"

John Nicholls,  
Wolverhampton

'My impressions of the conference? Depressing. Challenging. Stimulating and in some ways inspiring. It was certainly great to see that so many people came and are interested in the topic. That softens the blow a bit. You feel that lots of other people are concerned.'

Gabi Oldfield, Stafford

'Nothing showed me more vividly that the traditional model of economic growth is crazy than an example given by one of the speakers from the Green Economics Institute. She pointed out that the catastrophic Exxon Valdez oil spill off Alaska in 1989 actually led to a growth in GDP in Alaska because of all the investment in clearing up the pollution.'

The conference showed me not that there is some ready-packaged alternative to the economic growth model entitled 'a zero growth economy' but that we have to explore a range of complex possibilities together if we are to steer a more rational and moral course.'

Roger Oldfield, Stafford

It was a worthwhile day. The speakers talked a lot about global warming but were less clear, and not necessarily agreed, on zero growth. The conference was long on facts - there were perhaps too many - but it was good on inspiration.

Win Sutton,  
Wolverhampton



'WE NEED TO RE-PROGRAMME THE SOFTWARE OF THE COLLECTIVE PSYCHE AND THAT INCLUDES ... ALIGNING OUR CONSUMPTION TO A PATH WITH HEART.'

ALASTAIR MCINTOSH,  
QUAKER SPEAKER AT  
THE CONFERENCE.

## TAKING THE CONFERENCE FORWARD

This conference was a part of a programme of activities organised jointly by QPSW and Woodbrooke. This programme has been planned to allow Friends to reflect on the kind of world we need to live in if we are to halt environmental degradation, looking specifically at the impact of our economic system on the environment. In part it is about preparation, spiritually and practically, for the end of our current way of life.

The learning engendered by the programme is to be shared through a seminar at Woodbrooke from 30 October to 1 November. Paula Knight, our Staffordshire representative at this seminar, will be reporting in the next issue of Staffordshire Quaker. For Quaker discussion on these issues see [www.quaker.org.uk/quakeronomics](http://www.quaker.org.uk/quakeronomics) [www.quaker.org.uk/quaker-response-crisis-climate-change](http://www.quaker.org.uk/quaker-response-crisis-climate-change)

### Books by the guest speakers:

Richard Douthwaite, *The Growth Illusion*

Duncan Green, *From Poverty to Power*.

Alastair Mackintosh, (1) *Soul and Soil* (2) *Hell and High Water: Climate Change, Hope and the Human Condition*

For material from the Green Economics Institute see [greeneconomics.org.uk](http://greeneconomics.org.uk)

## SUPPORT FOR LOCAL EVENTS

The meeting on the topic of the response of Friends to climate change (see page 9) was one of the best meetings I have been to in years.

Unfortunately the meeting at Warwick Meeting House was on a very small scale. It occupied just one hour between meeting for worship and lunch. Only about a dozen people participated and I was the only person from outside Warwick LM. With a little more support this could have been an all-day event catering for fifty or more Friends from the three counties of Quarterly Meeting, Staffordshire, Leicestershire and Warwickshire. The response from several Friends has

been that they wished they had been informed of this event in advance so that they could arrange to attend and participate.

So I suggest that a committee be formed whose purpose will be to publicise, support and report any special event, for example anything which involves an outside speaker. Perhaps a General Meeting, which would meet whenever necessary, would meet this need.

Consideration should be given to one other factor. Setting up and maintaining a General Meeting will be a completely task from 'laying

down' the old Quarterly Meeting. So perhaps Staffordshire should take the initiative and then start negotiations with Leicestershire.

Staffordshire may be the smallest AM in GBYM but we have a great deal of 'get up and go' – quality counts! So we have a lot to contribute to a quarterly or general meeting. If we cannot revive anything with Leicestershire and Warwickshire then perhaps we should consider some sort of merger with Shropshire and Worcestershire.

John Nicholls

COMMENTS ON  
ARTICLES IN  
THIS OR  
PREVIOUS ISSUES  
ALWAYS  
WELCOME

### NEXT EDITION

We would like to devote much of the next issue to coverage of the range of social and good-cause activities in which members of local meetings are involved. It was agreed at September Area Meeting that this would be a good thing to do.

At the moment we are aiming to publish the next edition in February, so ideally we need contributions by mid-January.

### SNAIL MAIL OR E-MAIL?

If you would like your Staffordshire Quaker to be sent by e-mail (in Publisher 2000 or as a PDF), please e-mail us to let us know.

### COMMENTS AND CONTRIBUTIONS

Comments  
Drawings/artwork  
Photographs  
Poems  
Articles long and short  
Extracts from Faith and Practice or elsewhere

All welcome!

IDEAS OR CONTRIBUTIONS FOR FUTURE EDITIONS TO

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