



STAFFORDSHIRE QUAKER



SUMMER EDITION, JUNE 2010



Six Stone hats reach Easedale Tarn (see page 2)

STONE INSPIRED

- *The beauty of Easedale*
- *A welcome for 'little folk'*
- *The poetry of Wordsworth*
- *The English heat*

CELEBRATION



On 30 May Stafford Meeting helped Albert Adams to celebrate his 96th birthday. He has lived in Stafford all his life, and been a member of Stafford Meeting for well over 60 years. He became a member of the Society of Friends in 1946.

Along with other Friends such as Olive Prest he was

heavily involved in organising the International Friendship League group, which used the Meeting House in the immediate post-war years, seeking to offer a welcome for overseas people with all sorts of backgrounds. He is delighted that someone who attended the group at that time, over half a century ago, plans to visit him soon; she was a trainee nurse from the Caribbean who met her future husband at meetings of the group and later become Mayoress of Kettering when her husband became Mayor.

Albert's working life was spent at English Electric, and later at GEC Measurements, where as an electrical engineer he made a notable contribution to the development of the operations of the town's major employer of the time.

During the War he was a conscientious objector, following the Quaker pacifist tradition.

For many years he was a Quaker Minister at Stafford Prison.

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ROLLING STONES

Members of Stone Meeting recently spent a weekend at Glenthorne Quaker Centre and Guest House at Grasmere in the Lake District

Thomas, representing Stone Children's Meeting on the Lake District trip, clearly received special treatment - the road sign says 'little folk'.



While most of our party climbed up to Easedale Tarn I took the opportunity for a real rest. I read *Hercules and the Farmer's Wife*, a book by Chris Wadsworth published last year. She has a prestigious art gallery in Cocker-mouth, made so by her genius at spotting talent in unlikely places, and promoting and becoming engrossed in the artists. Please read this book.

In meeting on Sunday one of Wordsworth's 'Lucy' poems came to me again:

*She dwelt among the untrodden ways
Beside the springs of Dove,
A maid whom there were none to praise
And very few to love:*

*A violet by a mossy stone
Half hidden from the eye!
-- Fair as a star, when only one
Is shining in the sky.*

*She lived unknown, and few
could know
When Lucy ceased to be;
But she is in her grave, and, oh,
The difference to me!*

Wordsworth had found someone special in an unlikely remote place. and Chris Wadsworth had done the same, both great artists in their own fields who have changed my thinking.

Joan Holland, Stone



'I COULDN'T
WATCH, I
COULDN'T BEAR
THAT PAIN'

Glenthorne was wonderful...my first visit there and although I was inspired...it was too hot for putting pen to paper...or finger to keyboard. (I have written) the following now that I, and the weather, have cooled down:

*I watched with trepidation
the Dispatches programme
and shared some pain
with South African girls
and it lingers still in this*

*green and so pleasant land
I spoke to others
to share my upset
and they replied
oh no I couldn't watch
I couldn't bear
that pain. I had to
turn it off*

*which small candle
can I light
how can I forget?
what can I do?*

The stark contrast between our lovely weekend and the lives of those girls who are being raped in South Africa is difficult to live with. I hope my rough and ready poem brings a response with some practical suggestions for myself and others to be able to help in some way.

Janet Mason, Stone

A GLOBAL CALL FOR COMPASSION

Janet Mason has also pointed out that the 'Charter for Compassion' was launched in Cape Town last month. This Charter was drawn up after Karen Armstrong, a British writer on comparative religion, was awarded the TED prize in 2008 and

called for the drawing up of a 'Charter for Compassion' in the spirit of the Golden Rule. The Charter suggests that the principle of compassion lies at the heart of all religious, ethical and spiritual traditions, and calls upon all men and women to

restore compassion to the centre of morality and religion. Compassion is the path to enlightenment, and indispensable to the creation of a just economy and a peaceful global community. To sign the Charter go to www.charterforcompassion.com.

OUTREACH HAS MANY FORMS

TRANSITION GARDEN

In our last issue Leek Meeting reported that they had offered their garden to Transition Leek. These extracts from an article by Transition Leek form part of Leek Meeting's double-page spread in 'Spark' (see page 4)

When we took over the Garden it was waist deep in weeds, brambles and nettles. Our first job was to clear the site. We decided we would use sustainable methods, in line with Transition principles, so we are using "person" power rather than petrol powered machinery where possible.

We are not using any pesti-

cides, artificial fertilisers or weedkillers. Where possible, we are working with the natural state of the garden – for example only digging out weeds, where really necessary. And composting everything, of course! This is permaculture.



We have planted apple trees (one named after George Fox), soft fruit bushes, vege-

tables and insect-attracting flowers.

We will be working with Staffordshire Wildlife Trust and young people from Leek College to build a pond to attract wildlife – hopefully some frogs that will eat the slugs for us! We plan to use the seeds from this year's crops to plant next year.

We are building a path and gate which will link the Garden with the Quaker Meeting House, so that we can have a joint open day in the summer when the Meeting House has been restored.

A JULIAN MEETING

Nigel Peckett has started a Julian Meeting in Colwich. He has not persuaded anyone to come to a Quaker Meeting yet but he keeps trying!

A Julian Meeting is usually 6-15 people of various denominations, both lay people and clergy. They meet in a house, church or chapel. A brief reading, or a piece of music, leads into about 30 minutes of silent contemplative prayer. This may be followed by a time for tea or coffee and conversation.

Julian Meetings vary and are free to do things in their own way. Our main guidelines are that a meeting is based on contemplative prayer in the Christian tradition and welcomes people of all de-

nominations. We teach no specific method of meditation. We encourage people to find what is right for them; to discover how they can integrate contemplation into their daily prayer life and how personal and group contemplative prayer can enrich each other.

Those who attend usually take a full part in the life of their own church, but some have no formal church links. Local and regional quiet days or retreats, and an annual national retreat, enable wider sharing between people from several Meetings.

Contemplative prayer has been described as listening for God; opening ourselves to God; waiting silently upon God. Other descrip-

tions are meditation, contemplation, or "the prayer of quiet". In contemplative prayer we seek to be aware of the presence of God and to remain silently and attentively in that presence, completely open to God.

The movement was named after Julian of Norwich, a fourteenth century mystic. Her writings are sometimes used at meetings.

We meet at 8pm on the third Tuesday of the month at St Michael and All Angels in Colwich. The meeting runs for about 30 minutes with a cup of tea afterwards. If interested contact me on 01889 881 558 or nigel_j_p@yahoo.co.uk

Nigel Peckett, Stafford

'CONTEMPLATIVE
PRAYER HAS BEEN
CALLED LISTENING
FOR GOD'

OUTREACH: WE CAN ALL DO IT

'Make happy those who are near and those who are far will come.' Chinese proverb.

The message of this conference was very clear – without outreach the Society will find it very difficult to maintain all the departments in Friends House which deal with our concerns, national and international service as well as being there for each Meeting.

I did a survey at Meeting before going to conference and asked everyone to say why or how they had first come to Meeting and on a second page why they had continued to come. Mostly people came from personal contact, sometimes through the peace movement – often from using Meeting Houses for other activities and on reading our notice boards they were curious and felt this could be for them.

A major professional survey was conducted to find out what those outside the Society thought of us. Some observations: 77% of those

interviewed had heard of us but some thought us strict and puritanical – even evangelical – avoiding modern technology and old-fashioned. Very few had an informed view.

There is a view that people will find their way to us but if people have confused, mixed impressions of us this will block their approaches, so we need to make known who we are clearly using all means at our disposal.

One approach is Quaker Quest, which will be presented to Area Meeting at Stone in October. This is only an introduction, but trained Friends from East Cheshire are prepared and willing to guide us through the process of encouraging enquirers. Woodbrooke has set up a scheme 'Becoming Friends' to fill the gap between Quaker Quest and supporting new enquirers. For further information see www.woodbrooke.org.uk/becomingfriends.

We have something of value – REAL FRIENDS. Don't

keep it to ourselves:

1. Talk about it when appropriate – don't be a bore!
2. Practise Friendship – hospitality, caring, listening and being aware. This will help our light to shine!
3. Use local media to advertise events when we can welcome others. Do short articles with maybe an Advice or Query or attitude to something that concerns the community.
4. Make our Meetings welcoming places, showing that everyone is valued, and don't take it for granted that people understand Quakerism – they don't.

Each Meeting can run discussions for new attenders and if help is needed from outside the area then Friends are available – contact Quaker Life at Friends House.

The entertainer Geoffrey Durham spoke to us about the survey and at the end offered us this anagram: FRIENDS MEETING – FREEING MIND SETS.

Joan Holland, Stone

'MAKE HAPPY
THOSE WHO ARE
NEAR AND
THOSE WHO ARE
FAR WILL COME.'

OUTREACH: QUAKERS ON SHOW

LEEK

The last Staffordshire Quaker contained an article about Quakerism written by Linda Skellam for the Leek Interfaith magazine 'Spark'. For the latest issue of 'Spark', to be given out at the Leek Show, Leek Meet-

ing was offered a double-page spread. The spread includes the following extracts (on pp 5-6), along with one on climate change by Rob Horton of Stafford, and one about the Transition Leek allotment in Leek Meeting garden (p. 3).

WOLVERHAMPTON

Wolverhampton Meeting will use the Quaker Show Tent at the Wolverhampton Show at West Park on July 10-11. Displays will include ones on the West Midlands Peace Education Project and the Woodlands.



At the Leek Show

OUTREACH: THE PRINTED WORD IN LEEK

WHO ARE THE QUAKERS?

Who are the Quakers? What do they believe? What is their relevance in today's society?

The Religious Society of Friends, later known as Quakers, was formed in the mid-17th century, a time when there was much religious and political dissent.

The founder of the movement was George Fox (1624-1691), who spent his childhood in the village of Fenny Drayton, Leicestershire. He had become disillusioned by the attitudes that

he saw within some of those who claimed to be Christians. He felt so strongly about this that he responded to thus set out, at the age of nineteen, in search of spiritual alternative, and he spent the next four years travelling across the country.

It was during this time, while travelling around Westmorland, and Pendle Hill, that he encountered the Westmorland Seekers, a group of people who were also all "eagerly awaiting fresh light in their search for truth". Several meetings took place, at which he

spoke and preached his beliefs – and it was through these meetings, in 1652, that the Quaker movement took shape.

They encouraged people to listen to the spirit of God in their hearts, and obey its guidance in their daily lives, remembering also to follow the teachings of Christ. He told them that the spirit that had inspired the scriptures to be written was still "working and living in the hearts of men and women, ready to reveal fresh truths", and reminded them that their bodies were "the living temples of a living lord".

QUAKER TESTIMONIES

The Quaker Testimonies have been formulated to express the ways in which Friends try to live their lives. They express Friends' belief that "true human fulfilment comes from an attempt to live life in the spirit of love, truth and peace".

They are also continually evolving, and take into consideration changing circumstances that occur within a changing world. For example, early Quakers would have been concerned regarding such issues as payment of tithes, and taking oaths, where later the issues of slavery, capital punishment

and prison reform were at the forefront

The testimonies that are used today comprise of the following:

Truth and Integrity
Equality and Community
Simplicity
Peace
The Earth and Environment

EARTH AND ENVIRONMENT (EXTRACTS)

Although this testimony has evolved and gained importance with the realisation of the impact of our lifestyle on the earth it is a concern Friends through the ages have been aware of. For example John Woolman (1720-1772) said: "The produce of the earth is a gift from our gracious creator to the inhabitants, and to impoverish the earth now to support outward greatness appears to be an injury to the succeeding age".

Friends are encouraged to be mindful of the environmental impact of their lifestyles. *Advices & Queries* 42 states: "We do not own the world, and its riches are not ours to dispose of at will...." Meetings are encouraged to be mindful of the impact of the Meeting Houses themselves. Many Meetings work on sustainability, monitoring their carbon footprint, and aiming for improvements.

Some Friends choose not to own a car, some refuse to

fly, and some become vegetarian or vegan. *Advices & Queries* 41 says: "Try to live simply..." The ability to respond in a spiritual way to life depends on the ability to be free from material concerns. Quaker simplicity also creates an awareness that our standard of living is sometimes achieved at the expense of others. And it means nurturing other priorities in our lives.

Articles by Linda Skellam, Leek (see page 4 for context)

'QUAKER
SIMPLICITY
MEANS
NURTURING
OTHER
PRIORITIES IN
OUR LIVES'



John Woolman

OUTREACH: THE PRINTED WORD IN LEEK



For the context of the article from which these extracts were taken see page 4.

For a number of years I would describe myself as a seeker, not really sure what I was looking for but believing one day I would find it. I learnt long ago that sometimes you have to take a step back and wait because you can look too hard and not see. This is what I did, the lead for me came in the form of being given a calendar from the Quakers Panel on exhibition in Kendal.

I sent off for the enquirers pack from the Religious Society of Friends (Quakers) website and clearly remember reading everything at least 3 times before I went along to my first meeting. Initially when I left that first meeting I didn't notice anything any different but slowly I became aware of a feeling of renewal, of life's worries and burdens being lifted from my shoulders. This is something I continue to experience.

Leek meeting house has a long history and you get a feeling both when you enter and in worship of the presence of the many friends who have worshipped there over the years. Quakers believe that there is God in everyone. Worship is a response to that awareness of God. Whilst you can worship alone it is through the joining with others and the expectant waiting together that the deeper sense of

God's presence is discovered. In meeting you seek to obtain a gathered stillness so all may feel the power of God's love drawing you together.

Attending Meeting has become an integral part of my life. It isn't something that happened over night but something that has developed and will I believe continue to do so during my life time – a journey in every true sense. I believe that whatever the difficulty or problem that arises the answer will be given. All our lives are a mixture of joy and sadness, good times and bad times the important bit for me is knowing that there is a hand to guide me through.

“Yet if I may hold thy hand in the darkness it is enough, since I know that, though I may stumble in my going, thou dost not fall.”

Some times that answer comes through someone's ministry, sometimes from the Quaker Faith and Practice and sometimes through the silence.

No 7 of advice and queries says “be aware of the spirit of God at work in the ordinary activities and experience of your daily life. Spiritual learning continues throughout life and often in unexpected ways. There is inspiration to be found all around us in the natural world, in the sciences and arts, in our

work and friendships, in our sorrows as well as our joys. Are you open to new light from whatever source it may come? Do you approach new ideas with discernment?”

No one meeting is the same as you do not know who if anyone will be led to minister or what that ministry will be. When I first ministered I had the strong lead to stand but having done so I was not at first sure what I was going to say. The words came. Afterwards I couldn't recall what I had actually said other than hoping that what I said made sense to others.

I have recently applied for membership. Writing the letter was very emotional for me. How do you put a life times experience into one letter and what reason do you give to explain how you arrived at this point? Simply put my answer is that I found what I was seeking and where I want to be – a way of worship, a shared community, a way to live my life. I also believe that I was lead on to this path and it is through the journey and my previous experiences that I was able to recognise what I had been looking for. Sometimes I wish it had been sooner but on reflection I acknowledge that I probably would not have been ready then, like many things the time has to be right.

Jane Heath, Leek

‘I FOUND WHAT
I WAS SEEKING
AND WHERE I
WANT TO BE’

QUAKERS RESPOND TO CLIMATE CHANGE

Quakers, as many other people, like to act from truth. Ascertaining the facts about climate change, though, is not always easy and can take time and effort to sift through the mixed messages in the media. As in other groups, there are those in Quakerism who take the time and effort to find out the truth, and, realising the implications, want to share their concern with fellow Quakers and others.

The overwhelming conclusion of a thorough examination of the scientific evidence (despite the doubts cast upon it in recent months) is that we human beings have unintentionally managed to alter the environment that sustains us to the extent that our survival as a species is now in question.

How then to respond to the huge and complex challenges thrown up by what turns out to be our overuse of fossil fuels? Cheap oil and gas has given us the comforts we have become accustomed to – warm homes, flexibility of individual travel, flights abroad, food, clothes and consumer goods from around the world – on the assumption of no harm done and of endless supply. We now know that neither of these assumptions is true and our level of comfort is at the expense of the climate, biodiversity and poor people around the globe.

One response would be to do nothing in the hope that it will go away. It won't, of course. Some countries are already affected and our grandchildren and great grandchildren will also face the consequences of inaction now.

The Quaker testimonies (the values we try to live by) to peace, equality and simplicity challenge and support us as we think through adjustments to our lives and the world's trading methods to avoid wars over resources, not to have our comfort at the expense of others' very basic human needs and to harmonise ourselves with nature.

One initiative is for Quaker Meetings to hold a workshop to engage with the issues outlined above in detail and hopefully find positive ways forward that encourage community and mutual support, rather than selfish individualism. The workshops are led by members of the Quaker Living Witness Project who have given time to studying the issues. (Link to website: <http://www.livingwitness.org.uk/>)

Another venture is the 'Good Lives ...don't have to cost the earth' courses at Woodbrooke Quaker Study Centre in Birmingham. (Link to website: <http://www.woodbrooke.org.uk/pages/good-lives.html>)

A Sustainability and Peace Programme to increase understanding and commitment to environmental sustainability has also been started nationally amongst Quakers as a response to the increasing enthusiasm for action. This will support and supplement existing initiatives and find ways of speaking out with a confident Quaker voice on climate change. (Link to website: <http://quaker.org.uk/new-programme-explores-links-between-sustainability-climate-change-and-peace>)

Amongst Quakers worldwide, a Global Change Consultation is taking place. (Link to website: <http://www.fwccglobalchange.org/>)

We live in undeniably challenging times. Radical and deep changes are needed globally and there is a lot of work to be done. Wonder for the glory of this world, though, can inspire and give hope for happier lives for all.

Rob Horton, Stafford, and Living Witness Project

(Link to website: <http://www.staffs-quakers.org.uk/>)



'WONDER FOR
THE GLORY OF
THIS WORLD
CAN INSPIRE
AND GIVE HOPE
FOR HAPPIER
LIVES FOR ALL'

HOUSES FOR THE EARTH



'Do you fancy a visit to the Hockerton Housing Project?' my eldest daughter phoning from her home at Southwell in Nottinghamshire asked. 'The what?' 'You know, those eco homes just outside Southwell.' Which is why I found myself standing in a grassy car park on a very blustery showery day.

The Project has 5 houses set in 26 acres of land. We started off in the vegetable patch which was very productive, irrigated by run-off and rain water collected in a small pond and pumped by solar energy into a storage tank. From there we walked to a man-made reservoir the size of a large pond, which stores water – rainfall and run-off from the roofs of nearby outhouses and the land. The water feeds by gravity to a filter filled with 4 foot of sand and supplies all the houses' non-drinking water. We carried on walking down the hill, past the sheep grazing and the rooster with his harem of hens in a small wood. We could see what looked like an embankment and presumed this was another reservoir, but on climbing this embankment, covered with fruit bushes and trees, discovered we were actually standing on the roof of the houses and what looked like railings were actually photoelectric cells producing electricity from sunlight. We could look down on the lake which at one end holds the reed beds for dealing with effluent from the buildings and in the

rest was host to several species of wild fowl. To one side in a field were two wind turbines turning in the stiff breeze.

We were taken inside one of the houses, which are in a row, rather like an urban terrace each with their own individual garden

(reminiscent of 'The Hobbit') looking out onto the lake. We entered into the first small room which serves as a porch and the outside door was closed before the door into the house proper was opened, acting rather like an airlock. The impression was one of light and space. Running throughout the building was the air conditioning system – large earthenware pipes hung on chains from the ceilings – which took fresh air from outside and returned the stale air. It all involved a Baxi heat exchanger. The living space consisted of a utility room; a kitchen/dining area; a lounge; 2 bedrooms, which because of the sloping earth roof had a mezzanine floor where the children's beds stood leaving the floor space below as a free play area; a study; a bathroom and a master bedroom with en-suite bathroom. Running the length of the house was a large conservatory with the only form of heating in the building, a wood burning stove. Although the temperature is pretty constant all year round, in the winter the conservatories can be a bit chilly and several of the house owners had installed

small wood burners. In the kitchen there were two taps on the sink, one for washing etc. and the other for drinking water which is gathered in copper pipes from the roof. Apparently visitors have drunk from the wrong tap, but have lived to tell the tale.

The tour finished with a slide show on the building of the project and how the various systems work. The project provides all its own water and 75% of its electricity. Planning permission had been the worst obstacle they faced. Starting in 1993 it had taken over 4 years before it was granted and had continued to be a problem as the site of the wind turbines was a compromise and they are not able to generate to their full capacity. The irony is that the project is now used as a consultant by planning authorities for other schemes. Each house is owned by the people living in it (there was one up for sale when we were there). Each householder agrees to do 300 hours per year working on the project – gardening, tending the animals, taking tours round etc.

More information at www.hockertonhousingproject.org.uk. If you do go I recommend that you also visit the little gem that is Southwell.

Beatrice Lance, Uttoxeter

'THE PROJECT IS USED AS A CONSULTANT BY PLANNING AUTHORITIES'



NETWORKING FOR PEACE: QPSW CONFERENCE

The aim was to make attenders and new Quakers in particular aware of the QPSW programme. My own aims were to discover more about Quakers, after attending Stafford meeting for about a year, regarding faith and discernment.

Some initial observations:

- God was rarely mentioned
- It felt odd to be able to strike-up belief-related conversations with anyone I bumped into
- Everyone has doubts
- QPSW is a lot larger than I expected: 10 representatives were at the conference and each represented a different project.
- The event and QPSW came across as highly professional but in a nicely understated way

Each of these contributed to the great inspirational and possibly spiritual impact – if the two can be separated. I think it's fair to say that most people felt God, or whatever name/concept we choose to use, at work.

In the key-note speech Val Ferguson gave some historical context, including the fact that, at the time of its formation, there were other religious organisations but the Society was relatively unusual in expanding rapidly and surviving. The testimonies have contributed, by being constantly in development and somewhat imprecise. Success, in terms for

example of the peace testimony, may not be fully achievable but we cannot give up, whether it's climate change, child soldiers, Palestine, or any other issue. The 'Turning the Tide' project provides support and training. Val spoke about the 'tree of non-violence' that starts with ourselves and pointed out that success does not depend on us individually and each person's role is likely to be different. I feel that the networking theme was well represented here.

Val pointed out that QPSW projects are initiated in response to requests for help. For me this is significant as I am suspicious of 'missionary zeal'. The scale of the projects varies from the support of local meetings to fundraising in the UN. Some projects are long term and others very short: each year there is some turnover and networking with new partners begins. Various speakers indicated that Quakers have a reputation for effectiveness in achieving lasting peaceful solutions, for example in East African communities, following the Rwandan genocide. There are 0.5 million Quakers in E Africa!

The style of campaigning is also well managed. Stuart Morton oversees the South Asia project that includes 9 or so countries. He described the skills involved in planning and implementing conversations between adversaries to get the right mix of local participants and keep

them on-board. He recommends that you never start cold, i.e. establish personal links with local people, and maintain their trust because things will go wrong sooner or later. He pointed out that wherever you are it's imperative to involve young people in order to get continuity. It was apparent that part of the purpose was to show us how such skills could be brought to bear in our own meetings. Someone from Sheffield said their meeting is supporting Sheffield as a City of Sanctuary for asylum seekers. She was interested in the skills and knowledge of the facilitators who made it clear they were available to give advice.

Somewhat comically, the Christian Society from the local US air force base was spending a family weekend at Swanwick. Our group's reactions varied from surprise, through cynicism, to acceptance. The USAF view was that they too are on a mission towards peace.

The weekend was invigorating. Each person had to take what they needed and avoid being overawed by phrases or concepts. It contributes to the support of local groups by planting ideas and stimulating action, particularly when Meetings are often small and unrepresentative of the larger population. I have found greater confidence to discuss spiritual matters in other settings.

David Morgan, Stafford

'I HAVE FOUND
GREATER
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MATTERS IN OTHER
SETTINGS'

PART OF A LARGE FAMILY: QUAKER LIFE CONFERENCE

This was my first QL conference, and I was amazed at the amount of work done on our behalf. It felt good to be part of such a large family. It has been said that other faiths invest in bricks and mortar - we invest in relationships. Meeting each other on committees, on courses, or at work in the world - amazing things can happen when 2 or 3 or 100 meet.

'Becoming Friends' - accompanying newcomers as they explore their spiritual path, is a new venture, and one in which we were encouraged to become involved. 'Explorations', a way of discovering and developing gifts and strengths in our Meetings, was recommended. It is helpful if someone not connected with the Meeting works with us - often seeing potential we have overlooked. Information about these two ventures can be obtained from Friends' House or the Quaker website.

We were reminded that Quaker Week (2 - 10 October) is an opportunity, not an obligation. The theme this year will probably be Peace. We could hold a study group to share how we would answer questions that might arise. We were assured that it is not that young people are not interested, but that they don't know about us, and perhaps we should address this issue?

We heard about the new Quaker Centre and were urged to visit, reminded that groups can get cheap rail travel; a group means three or more. Groups that have already visited told us of the welcome they had received.

Then there was News of Meetings. There was a moving account of a Meeting which experienced unexpected conflict. There was anger and deep hurt. Friends

spent eight months using existing tools - Es and Os, Meetings for Clearness, Threshing Meetings, an outside mediator - there was an impasse. So they made sure everyone had been listened to and felt loved, and they left it to God, holding the Meeting in the Light. They found that postponement and delay settled minds, and that the discipline of waiting united them.

The other news that interested me particularly was of Jenny Routledge's concern to regain Eldership - has this become a responsibility we fear? She is trying to bring back the role of the 'accompanying Elder', who will travel alongside a Friend testing a concern, or an idea. A thought regarding Eldership was that Elders should go into MfW five minutes early in order to hold each member of the Meeting in the Light, reminding them of their role in upholding their Meeting, and of the support they can offer each other.

Creating Community and Connections happened at QL conference, and we were shown the network of support that is available in all aspects of our Quaker lives. There are not enough people to do the work they would like to do. If anyone has the time and energy to help, contact the QL Network at Friends' House.

Maggie Jeays, Stafford

'WE WERE
REMINDING OF
OUR
RESPONSIBILITY
TO TEACH
NEWCOMERS
QUAKER WAYS'

We were entertained by a hilarious enactment by Young Friends of how a Meeting for Worship for Business should not be run. Of course, there was a serious reason for this, and we were reminded of how far we sometimes stray. It was interesting that YF put so much stress on MfWfB.

We were reminded of our responsibility to teach newcomers Quaker ways - an Elder could accompany a newcomer to AM and guide them through a business meeting, showing how waiting and listening are key to our business methods, and how we uphold our clerks as they try to find the sense of the meeting. Signing Minutes shows the authority of a gathered people; by standing and saying our name before we speak we are not excluding those who are new. Too much informality can kill the system. Above all we should ask ourselves "Would I do this in a MfW?" What Quaker gifts or treasures or processes might we teach more actively to newcomers and to each other?

STAFFORDSHIRE FRIENDS IN PRINT

SPIRIT RISING - YOUNG
QUAKER VOICES

This book was created by Quakers Uniting in Publications in the US to bring together poems, prose, pictures and photos from young Friends from around the world and all branches of Quakerism.

The description for submissions was "The writing and art included will focus on the personal spiritual experiences, beliefs, and identities of contemporary young Friends. While we are thrilled to receive a wide variety of work on different topics – and while we remain open to the guidance of the Spirit and any change in focus it may bring – we do want Friends to be aware that we are generally looking for explicit Quaker content."

I became aware of the project after seeing a letter in *The Friend* asking for more submissions from the UK. I had written a poem (see inset) after finding Friends and decided to send it. I was trying to describe how I see God or the Spirit or the Light or whatever you choose to call it, as for me it is all one and the same.

I was later emailed by the

editorial team explaining that my poem was to be included. I feel very privileged to have the opportunity both to appear in such a book and to read the thoughts of other young Quakers from so

I am

I am the light and the dark

I am life and death

I am hope when there is no hope

I am solitude and a great crowd

I am joy and sorrow

I am a friendly word and look

I am a kiss and a touch

I am first love and love after many years

I am the wind that touches your face

I am the thunder and the lightning

I am the bird in the sky and the fish in the sea

I am spring summer autumn winter

I am the sun on a cloudy day

I am the seas and the rivers

I am the land and the creatures

I am the beginning and the end

I am

many different backgrounds.

The book was published in April and contains over 200 submissions from young Friends from 17 countries.

Although at the time of writing I have only read part of it I am already fascinated. I was

aware that there are many Quakers in other parts of the world and that they have different ways of worshipping but I am being more surprised by some of the similarities of thought at a fundamental level even though some of the basics of worshipping may be different.

Some of the pieces have really spoken to me and some have challenged me. I suspect that it will be considering these more challenging pieces that will prove to be the most important in helping me on my spiritual journey.

The young Friends writing in this book are the future of the Society both in the UK and across the world and reading the submissions gives me a great hope for the Society as a force in the world in all its different ways.

Stafford FMH has a copy of the book or it is available from a US book shop

- www.quakerbooks.org/. More details of the project are at: www.quakerquip.org/youthbookhome.

Gayle Yeomans, Stafford



'THE YOUNG
FRIENDS
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THE SOCIETY'

CHARLES MORGAN

Peter Holland of Stone Meeting has published a collection of poems by Charles Morgan (1894-1958) (see *The Friend*, 14 May 2010). Although forgotten now, as novelist,

playwright and critic, Charles Morgan was a major force in English literature. He had many Quaker friends and was drawn by our spiritual values. In his career he published a small number of poems which, according to

his son, explored 'the eternal verities'.

Peter has brought these poems together for the first time. His edited *Collected Poems of Charles Morgan* is published by Scarthin Books.



Portrait of Charles
Morgan by Augustus
John

VIRTUAL TESTIMONIES?

Advices & Queries 34 reminds us to take our responsibilities as citizens seriously: "do not shrink from the time and effort your involvement may demand". This time and effort could leave no space or energy to respond to the other 41 As & Qs. At the other extreme, it is now easy for those linked to e-mails to find ourselves signing letters and petitions at the touch of a key. I do it myself, on two networks especially: Avaaz, and Jewish Voice for Peace. Avaaz sends a stream of petitions round the world, which usually express pretty much what I find myself thinking about topical issues; so I sign, as one of maybe 100,000 or more people, and am then asked to forward the mes-

sage to others - which I don't do. Jewish Voice for Peace (JVP) is a US based group with strong links to people in Israel/Palestine, calling for peace with justice in the Middle East; it receives abusive material from Zionist organisations. Its introductions to its 'round robin' letters speak from the heart, describing the causes of successive concerns. It is easy to sign their letters, though I take care not to take on the role of a US citizen.

Is this all a bit too easy - involving very little of the time and effort quoted in A&Q 34? If my support for JVP from a safe distance in the UK gives them a little more encouragement in

their stand, does this justify such painless action? Avaaz tried to assess the impacts which their petitions and campaigns had made, and found they were positive: so is the effect of all those signatures which they collect actually greater than the sum of their individual parts?

I suppose the conclusion is quite simple: sign, but don't think that that is the end of the matter. And I am still uneasy at forwarding these petitions to others, when I know their commitment is much greater than just hitting a few more keys. How real is the risk of our testimonies becoming 'virtual'?

Anthony Wilson, Lichfield

CHURCH BLOOPERS

These bloopers appeared in church bulletins or were announced in church services:

- The Fasting & Prayer Conference includes meals.
- The sermon this morning: 'Jesus Walks on the Water.' The sermon tonight: 'Searching for Jesus.'
- Ladies, don't forget the rummage sale. It's a chance to get rid of those things not worth keeping around the house. Bring your husbands.
- Remember in prayer the many who are sick of our community. Smile at someone who is hard to love. Say 'Hell' to someone who doesn't care much about you.
- Don't let worry kill you off - let the Church help.
- Miss Charlene Mason sang 'I will not pass this way again,' giving obvious pleasure to the congregation.
- For those of you who have children and don't know it, we have a nursery downstairs.



AREA MEETING CALENDAR 2010

10 July, Stafford (changed from Leek) No afternoon agenda set
11 September, Wolverhampton, QPSW?
9 October, Stone, OUTREACH
11 December, Lichfield, trusteeship and governance?

INSPIRED? Responses to the themed AMs might make good material for future editions of Staffordshire Quaker!

CLOSING DATE FOR NEXT ISSUE: SEPTEMBER 26

ONE PAGE TAKES ABOUT 620 WORDS (IDEAL MAXIMUM IN MOST CASES)

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