



STAFFORDSHIRE QUAKER



WINTER EDITION, FEBRUARY 2020

QUAKERS IN STAFFORDSHIRE 1650-2020 NEW BOOK PLANNED

Preparations for writing and publishing a book on the history of Quakers in Staffordshire are now under way.

The editors, Berry Dicker (Lichfield), Cath Hayes (Uttoxeter and Burton) and Peter Holland (Stone) are appealing for your help. What do you think of the proposed list of contents? Have you any material or do you know of any which might be useful?

Anecdotes may be of value too!

Full details of contents are available from the editors. The main sections are:

1. Introduction

2. Quaker Life For example Sufferings case studies, themes such as action on slave trade, COs.

3. Individual Meetings To cover buildings, history, life today.

4. Quaker Burial Grounds Reprint of article by Denis Stuart
Appendix Reprint of Staffordshire section in Besse's Sufferings.



*'Woe to the Bloody City of Lichfield'.
A famous moment in the history of
Quakerism in Staffordshire: George
Fox preaching barefooted in Lichfield
Market Square 1651.*

INSPIRATIONS

- Hope
- Light
- Study groups, courses and conferences
- Pantheism

BURTON-ON-TRENT: THE QUAKER DIMENSION

For the first time in the 10-year stint of the current editor Staffordshire Quaker is delighted to report on the doings of Quakers in Burton-on-Trent! See pages 2-3.

This is not to say that Quakerism in Burton does not have a long history. Cath Hayes of Uttoxeter and Burton Local Meeting (see above) reports evidence that there were Friends

in Burton in 1665, and houses registered for worship in the early 18th century. Meetings had ceased to exist by the mid-18th century but began again in 1926.



In 1930 Friends bought an old brewery house for £800 and converted it into a Meeting House. They became united with Uttoxeter Local Meeting in 1973 and their Meeting

House was sold in 1975. They hired a room for meeting after this but, as numbers decreased, they started to meet in each other's houses, which they continue to do today. They are all long-time Members or Attenders, and one is an Elder.

Research for the new 'Quakers in Staffordshire 1650-2020' may reveal much more!

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STUDY GROUPS

BURTON FRIENDS INSPIRED

HOPE



Uttoxeter and Burton Local Meeting has an 'outpost' in Burton which meets fortnightly. Usually there is a discussion on a topic of interest, followed by a short period of worship. Friends report that at one of their discus-

sions they were inspired by the text of a talk given by Clive Wilson at a UN Association workshop on the UN sustainable development goals, attended by the daughter of Enid Slater, convener of Burton Meeting.

The text of Clive's talk and of his poem 'Hope' are printed below. He is the author of 'Designing the Purposeful World - the Sustainable Development Goals as a blueprint for humanity'.

WHAT WE MAY
NOT BE
CONSCIOUS OF
IS THAT HOPE,
IN TURN, DRIVES
OUR PURPOSE.

Why do we pause when we are amidst something inspiring? What causes us to take the time to watch the sun go down over the sea? Why do we linger in wonder under a starry sky? Why do we smile when we meet new-born babies or laugh at our pets when they show excitement as we return home? Why do we enjoy hearing stories of remarkable achievements or acts of great compassion?

The truth is that all these things inspire us and in their own ways they may serve to accentuate our hope for the future.

Hope is a powerful feeling born out of love for a future possibility. When we see beauty in nature we know how important it is for us and we want to preserve it, treasure it and create more possibilities for ourselves and others to enjoy it. When we hear of a wonderful innovation or acts of kindness, we are inspired because we know they are making the world a better place and we 'hope' for more of the same.

What we may not be conscious of is that hope, in

turn, drives our purpose. This is because it causes a shift in how we see our world. The premise of 'supercharged' is that the energy of our self, reacting with the energy of our context, is what drives our purpose. And it is our strength of purpose that fuels our performance.

Understanding these mechanisms enhances our consciousness. Understanding how hope works gives us the tools to change our lives and the world we choose to engage with.

How do you actually feel about what matters to you?

Pause for a moment and ask what it is you most care about. Check out the feelings that arise when you think of this. Do you feel anger, excitement, sadness? These are all legitimate responses. Pause to acknowledge them. Transforming energy into its most useful form.

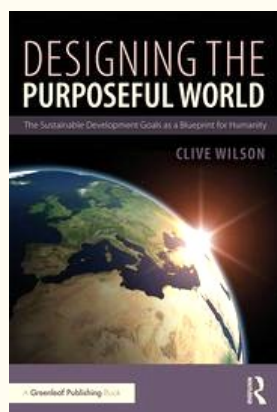
Now pause again, this time to identify what gives you hope regarding this thing you care about. Is it spending time with people you love?

Is it reading success stories about advancements in some technology you believe will be good for the world? Is it hearing about extraordinary achievements?

Whatever it is that gives you the most hope for the thing you most care about, ask what you would do to supercharge it, to enhance your sense of hope. Would a special trip with someone you love enhance your hope for a better relationship? Would investing in technology you believe in make you feel part of it – or do you need to bring your skills into play to support it in some other practical way? What if you could actually meet that person whose achievement you admire?

These are just a handful of scenarios. But hopefully they illustrate that we can transform energy, even negative energy, into positive energy through the power of hope. Think of this as a simple meditation that can be done at any time. It is a subtle but powerful transformation of any energy, any feeling, into inspiration.

(continued on next page)



BURTON FRIENDS INSPIRED (CONTINUED)

HOPE

A shift will happen – so what of it?

Hopefully you will consciously notice this energy shift. If you do, it's worth asking the next obvious question. Is there anything you need to do now? It could be as simple as fixing an appointment to see someone. And even if you're not conscious of the shift, it doesn't mean it hasn't happened. People with hope for a better world are more likely to respond positively than those who have lost all sense of hope or perhaps never had it in the first place.

Remember that each journey begins with a single step.

Even if you don't make a commitment to act in the moment, rest assured that the energy of hope will continue to work its magic. The greater your hope for the future, the more likely you are to respond positively to the situations you find yourself in – as they arise – and they will.

<p>Hope is a glimmer Faint picture of a world to come A future possibility Pure potentiality Fuelled by reality Inspired by divinity</p> <p>It informs our consciousness Guides our righteousness Converting the world we know</p> <p>From despair to optimism Away from criticism Towards encouragement And a world that was surely meant To become the reality</p> <p>Isn't that why I'm here?</p> <p>Surely the hope I feel Is more than passing sensation I sense that it's actually real It's probably what the nation Or even the world needs now Right now.</p>	<p>So tempted as I am To return to the job in hand I'll take a moment I shan't ignore my hope Nope I'll allow it To do the job it was meant for I'll feed it To nurture it</p> <p>I'll place myself in situations I'll go to all those places Listen to all those people Who feed my sense of hope</p> <p>For it is my treasure It is, beyond measure, The power behind my action The tread that gives me traction The way I communicate That causes attention And more of the same!</p>
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'ALL THINGS CAN BE MENDED'

Do not be dismayed by the brokenness of the world.

All things break. And all things can be mended.

Not with time, as they say, but with intention.

So go. Love intentionally, extravagantly, unconditionally.

The broken world waits in darkness for the light that is you.

Poem by

L. R. Knost

sent by

Geoff Goodyear,
Lichfield Local Meeting

ESPÉRANCE

When we visited France in 2018 to stay with our twinning friends, we stayed with an artist who had organised an exhibition of paintings and sculptures with her colleagues. She took us along and introduced us to several of them, including a sculptress, Anne Boisaubert, and we had a very stimulating conversation about her work.

Our talk developed into a discussion about asylum seekers which she had clearly thought quite a lot about. We mentioned a book that we had just read called "The lightless sky", written by *Gulwali Passarlay* (with Nadene Ghouri, Atlantic Books, 2015); it's the story of how Gulwali made his tortuous way from Afghanistan to England and highlights the difficulties that asylum seekers have on their travels – we can recommend that as a good, informative read. Anne then declared that it was her intention to illustrate the journey of two young children across the sea; a year later and it was realised along with a very expressive poem describing what she felt the two children stand for. The poem and the sculpture are simply called *Espérance* (Hope) and Rosemary spent quite a bit of effort teasing out the various levels of meaning in translating it into English.

Here are pictures of the bronze edition of the sculpture (550 x 350 x 400 mm) and the poem.

Mike and Rosemary Fox,
Wolverhampton Local Meeting



HOPE



They sail on a calm sea
Anchored in each other's arms.
Innocence, grace, openness, purity,
Childhood sublime, triumphant in incarnate splendour,
They are dawn before dawn, the first day...

Their eyes reflect infinity of sea and sky
A strange clarity which quivers and questions
Their solemn, serious gaze, so profound, so young...

Little angels, of limitless dreams and wings outspread,
Upon slender shoulders, within small hands held tight,
In young bodies that strain towards tomorrow,
They carry the Conscience of the world...

As already they know
here - there -
Famine, war, violence, "man's inhumanity to man" *
Crush the tender soul of childhood across the world.

They carry the names, laughter and tears
Of countless children
Whose destinies are played out and lost...

Together in their fragile embrace, they are
Light in the deepest darkness of the night,
Hope that hovers above the abyss,
A flame reborn from the ashes of oblivion,
Victory of Love over engulfing death.

The "adagio un poco mosso" of the composer of genius, **
The stifled yet sublime cry of the heartbroken poet, ***
The ultimate creative act of the artist struck down. ****

Their cry is hurled at our Indifference
The prayer of childhood to mankind,
Espérance, hope...

Translated by Rosemary Fox

* Robert Burns, 1784

** Beethoven: piano
concerto no 5 "adagio un
poco mosso" composed in
Vienna

*** Victor Hugo
'Demain des
aubes'
(Tomorrow at dawn)

**** Camille Claudel's
last work

'BECOMING FRIENDS'

A new attender at Stafford Meeting describes the experience, including the part played by the use made in study groups of the Woodbrooke 'Becoming Friends' pack.

The past year or so has been an eventful and interesting time as I've started attending my local meeting. It's all the things others have described better than me: a sense of rightness; coming home; acceptance; a challenge. However much I am excited by this last, and needing something new, God knows, I find myself continually grasping for familiarity. I read Quaker writings with wonder and enjoyment, but I seek out views that match my own long held prejudices. As there are no religious symbols, in the meeting room I make my own, when I need to, from the old, rough wood of our table, the rusty nails and even the light fittings! Should I have stayed at home, in the Church I was born into, forever feeling uncomfortable, like wearing a much-loved but ill-fitting shoe? (It's such a novelty to feel so conservative among Friends when I've been used to dropping off the left-hand end of general views!)

It's easy to join in, but "Becoming Friends" is HARD, despite the interesting course and the generous participation in it of Friends. The content and facilitation have been good, the readings and You Tube links enlightening, but the best part has been the small group discussions with others, attenders and members.

The course is wide-ranging, for those unfamiliar with it, there's input on Quaker history, writings, structures; there's exploration of the Testimonies and of our own understandings; questions to be addressed like, 'Would you describe yourself as a Christian?' Isn't this simply yes or no? Well apparently not, absolutely everyone in my group did eventually answer but, with provisos. The provisos showed more commonality than the answers, this wasn't a binary question for any of us.



So, the course has ended now and as ever I find I know a little more and a lot less. I guess I've had significant conversations with about a dozen Friends and all

I know with certainty is there are more than a dozen Quaker views on everything.

Yet, though I sometimes feel stuck in old grooves, I have learnt and have been changed by attending Meeting. (I turned 60 this year too, and I guess that resulted in a change of perspective too). When I came I was looking for Leadings, searching for the Common Mind in amongst the meeting. I approach life and meeting now waiting on the Light, rather than hopelessly seeking It out in the midst of Its brilliance. My soul is less like "a deer that yearns for running streams" and feels more "cradled in the palm of God's hand", sometimes anyway.

Becoming a Quaker is still a work in progress, one I hope will continue and reach its conclusion in time.

Meanwhile, my thanks to my local meeting and to all the Friends I've met at other Meetings and events. I'm so glad to be here now.

STUDY GROUPS

I APPROACH LIFE
AND MEETING
NOW WAITING
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RATHER THAN
HOPELESSLY
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OF ITS
BRILLIANCE.

Stafford Local Meeting holds study groups after Meeting on the third Sunday of each month. These last about an hour. To follow 'Becoming Friends' we are planning a series in which individual Friends will have an opportunity to speak about the sources of their own spirituality as a stimulus for discussion. We would welcome anyone else to these meetings.

Please contact us for more information.

David Morgan and Nigel Peckett, Stafford Local Meeting

YOUNG FRIENDS, BOOK OF DISCIPLINE, INTERFAITH, CLIMATE EMERGENCY AND MORE: THE WORK OF MFS

At December Sufferings it was young people's participation day. They joined us for opening worship and in the afternoon for closing worship, after giving a report on their day discussing discernment. I had a talk with a young man who was very switched on, which gave me confidence for the future of the Society.

While we were meeting the Book of Discipline Revision Committee were meeting at Woodbrooke.

Trevor Evans reported from Quaker Peace and Social Witness Central Committee on work on the climate emergency, sanctuary everywhere, challenging economic inequality, militarism and peace education.

Britain Yearly Meeting is a

member of Churches Together in England. Recently Hannah Brock Womack was appointed as fourth president, representing our group of reformed churches. However her appointment has proven unacceptable to some churches as she is in a same sex marriage. This has caused great upset and grief.

Ann Floyd reported for Quaker World Relations Committee. There are 377,000 Quakers. One tenth of which are in Europe which includes Britain. Over 50 % are in Africa.

Central Yorkshire AM has questioned the term Overseer, due to its association with the slave trade and industry. As yet no suitable alternative has been found. This minute has been forwarded to Quaker Life Cen-

tral Committee and the Book of Discipline Revision Committee.

Linda Batten gave the Britain Yearly Meeting Treasurer's report for 2020. There is a deficit budget with additional planned expenditure to support Quaker Meetings and committees. There will also be further capital expenditure on Swarthmoor Hall and improving IT systems as well as sustainability.

Anne Ullathorne was Clerk for MFS for the last time after six years. She thanked everyone for allowing her to be Clerk and said it had been a humbling and rewarding experience personally and spiritually and she wished that the peace and love of God would be with us all.

Rosemary Barnett
Stone Local Meeting

CONFIDENCE
FOR THE
FUTURE OF THE
SOCIETY

EXPERIMENT WITH LIGHT

In January 20 of us gathered at Wolverhampton Meeting House for an 'Experiment with Light'. It was Quaker and theologian Rex Ambler who in 1996 studied early Friends' writings, being curious to discover what made them so sure, so centred and so willing to suffer such privation to keep alive their faith. How did they bear the persecution and pain - their own and their families' and friends' - how was it that what they found was worth dying for? What was the Light within early Friends' consciences? (Such a contrast when we look at the Reli-

gious Society of Friends in Britain today).

More pressing on a personal level was a seemingly intractable problem of his own which he had been wrestling with for a long time. These factors, one intellectual and the other heart driven, led him to a thorough search of Fox's Journal and letters and successfully using his findings on his own problems. In 2007 there was a revision. 'Reflections on Experiment with Light', edited by John Lampen and William Sessions. Our day in Wolverhampton gave us the oppor-

tunity to learn about the concept of 'Experiment with Light', to experience a guided meditation followed by a reflective silent lunch, and to share our experiences at the end. We found this meditative day very inspirational. We are very grateful to the facilitators and to Wolverhampton Local Meeting for organising the event.

Further information can be accessed from the website www.experiment-with-light.org.uk

Rosemary Barnett and Marion Stanfield (Stone LM)



The words of George Fox

WILL WE SAVE THE PLANET?



By 2030 we should take all our energy as electricity from solar, wind & wave power. This must be for ALL our uses, lighting, heating, cooking, transport and all industrial processes.

Who are "we"? Not just Friends. Not just European Union citizens. Remainers and leavers included! Also everyone else worldwide.

As for gas and oil leave them in the ground with a thick layer of rock between them and the atmosphere.

Then anyone who tries to sink an oil well will be no better than a bank robber breaking into Fort Knox.

But will this happen? Although essential it is not guaranteed.

Many people have no idea how to start.

As for politicians are they "bovered"? They are preoccupied & obsessed with completely different issues, trivial in comparison. So climate change & global warming may rampage & run riot unchecked.

There is a distinct risk that as we approach the year 2200 the planet's ecology will support only a small percentage of our population.

As individuals there is one thing we can do to help as much biodiversity as possible to survive. We can establish patches of soil which are completely sheltered & are protected from erosion. Biodiversity is essential for the survival of any life.

THEN ANYONE
WHO TRIES TO SINK
AN OIL WELL WILL
BE NO BETTER THAN
A BANK ROBBER
BREAKING INTO
FORT KNOX.

The presence of ourselves, humans, and all other carnivores and omnivores is a symptom of a healthy environment. We are merely the consumers of the proteins & vitamins which plants

produce. Also we make a lot of waste for the bacteria & viruses to decompose. They convert urine and excrement from something toxic into something useful.

Previously I have written about the plant troughs at my house, the garden of Wolverhampton Meeting House & also the compost behind the retaining wall at Heritage Conserved (Commins, Waterfall Road, Llanrhaeadr SY10 0BZ – open to visitors at all times).

At my house I now have a larger trough which will hold 2 tons of compost 1 metre deep. Also it has a moat with 400 litres of rain water for irrigation. This is completely secure from evaporation. I do hope that Staffordshire Friends will visit this before too long, possibly the next time Area Meeting is at Wolverhampton.

This is work which should be done on a much larger scale.

So do not merely "hope for the best" i.e. take survival for granted. Work for it and prepare for the worst.

John Nicholls
Wolverhampton Local
Meeting

EARTH TESTIMONY



Ada (far left)
with other observers

INSPIRED BY 'FRIDAYS FOR THE FUTURE' IN MOSCOW

*This report is from
Ada Wordsworth,
the granddaughter of
Anne and Anthony Wilson
of Lichfield Local Meeting.
She herself attends
Hampstead Meeting*

Today I went and observed the Fridays for Future climate strike in Moscow. As a foreigner I am forbidden from participating, but I hoped to meet those who do participate and to offer them my support.

Mass climate strikes have not been authorised in Moscow, but nonetheless activists congregate every week to stage single person pickets, for which they queue. This is the same situation as in many other cities in Russia, though in a few protests have been allowed. To go from my English attitude of being afraid to storm a government building for fear of arrest, to the fear here of holding a placard is an extreme culture shock and one that I hope I don't get used to, and which never becomes normalised.

My overwhelming feelings were that of admiration and frustration. Admiration at the bravery and strength of those who organise and get involved with these, with the police always watching despite the lengths that are gone to in order to keep them legal.

My major frustration, aside from the obvious anger I feel towards the Russian state, is the response that this has had from western media – that

is, next to none. Climate justice is impossible to achieve without the combined efforts of all countries and by failing to offer our support, the UK is failing not only Russian climate activists, but the planet as a whole. Whilst what activists in other countries are doing is amazing and admirable, if Russia (the fourth most polluting country in the world, which contributes 5% of greenhouse gas emissions) does not radically improve its climate policies, the progress seen on a worldwide scale will be limited. We need to stand up and support our allies in activism worldwide, whether or not they are immediately visible.



'THE END OF THE
WORLD IS CLOSER
THAN YOU THINK'

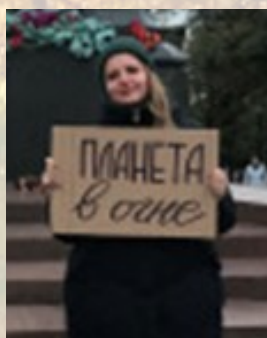
I've come away from tonight inspired by the amazing activists risking so much here for all our sakes, and tentatively hopeful that their campaign is growing. Some Russian media was present, as well as a French journalist writing a piece about the movement. Change is coming, in Russia as in else-

where, but change in Russia will be slow until protest is allowed.



'THE CLIMATE IS
NOT THE WEATHER.
YOU CAN'T HIDE'

I've also been thinking a lot about the UK's attitude to Russia and to Russians, and have once again been reminded that the Russian state does not represent the Russian people. Activism and social movements here are very much alive, and by buying into the idea propagated by so many sections of society that Russians are all the same and are all happy with the situation, we are letting the Russian government and its faux democracy win. People here are fighting back, and whilst their ways may not look from an outsider's perspective to be as radical as ours, in reality to simply stand with a picket here is as big a statement as to block a road or storm a government building is in the UK. As a fellow English expat I met at the picket put it – both in the UK and in Russia climate activists are pushing the law to its limits, the limits are just different.

THE FEAR HERE
OF HOLDING A
PLACARD

'THE PLANET IS
ON FIRE'

TREES, MEMORY AND TIME

EARTH TESTIMONY

Before memories, trees.
Imprinted by my eyes to my brain and my heart.
Born in mid-March, when seasons were seasons, branches tossed by March
against the grey or blue sky, clouds scudding.
Trees there, here, before Time was recorded by Man
Trees there, here, when Man is no more.
Trees unharmed by the bombs and fires of the Blitz.
Trees, if seemed harmed, surviving, thriving, beneath the ground,
out of human sight.
You cannot, will not destroy us.
Trees seeding themselves amongst the ruins in unreachable places in upstairs
fireplaces, chimney pots, bridges.
Trees that will create a forest!
Ancient woodlands, beloved by many.
A proposed new A2 will not destroy you.
The road can go elsewhere, the wood must remain.
The trees of my childhood, as seen above rooftops, as seen from my bedroom,
the cooing of wood doves.
The woods at the end of my grandparents' garden.
The tracks through the woods that I once knew so well.
Lying there, in my pram, beneath trees, watching buds burst on bare branches,
flowers bloom, leaves unfurl from multi-shades of green sunlight shining through,
to the dark plain green of summer, then the glory of the autumn sunburst col-
ours till the breeze and the the wind and the rain drive them into the ground.
Then the solid eternity of the skeleton of branches against the sky.
Trees there, here, from my birth to my death.
Trees before and trees after me.
My thanks to my eyes that I see, my thanks to all trees, that I love.

Margaret Crossland, Stafford Local Meeting

EARTH TESTIMONY

ARTICULATING OUR EARTH TESTIMONY

INTRODUCTION

We heard at a recent Area Meeting that of the first 1000 Extinction Rebellion arrests 100 were of Quakers. What is there about Quakerism which inspires such action? The use of the term 'Earth Testimony' has emerged more recently than our Peace Testimony and has yet not been as fully articulated.

One starting point for exploring it might be writings sometimes called 'pantheist', defined by the American Quaker Sharman Apt Russell in her *Standing in the Light: My life as a Pantheist* (2008) as 'the belief that the universe, with all its existing laws and properties, is an interconnected whole that we can rightly consider sacred'.

The religious experience of early Quakers, it is true, was more concerned with the importance of a personal relationship with a loving Father. Early Friends nevertheless also believed that God was in nature, and their form of worship allowed for a sense of unity with the whole of creation. Indeed, since the beginning there has often been an interplay between the ideas of 'pantheists' and those of Quakers.



GOD IS THE IN-DWELLING AND NOT THE TRANSIENT CAUSE OF ALL THINGS.

BARUCH SPINOZA

BARUCH SPINOZA

Probably the greatest 'pantheist' has been the Dutch philosopher Baruch Spinoza (1632-1677), a contemporary of George Fox. In *The Ethics* he argues that there is only one substance, which is absolutely infinite, self-caused, and eternal. He calls this substance 'God', or 'Nature' and he takes these two terms to be synonymous: 'Whether we say ... that all things happen according to the laws of nature, or are ordered by the decree and direction of God, we say the same thing.'

Although he was far more radical than Quakers there was some mutual attraction. There is evidence to suggest that he met Quakers, including Margaret Fell, in Amsterdam, and that he translated one of Margaret Fell's pamphlets into Hebrew.

WILLIAM WORDSWORTH AND ROMANTICISM

Wordsworth knew many Quakers and was a close friend of Thomas Clarkson, the famous Quaker anti-slavery campaigner. The publication of *Lyrical Ballads* by Wordsworth and Samuel Taylor Coleridge (1798) helped launch the age of romanticism in poetry. Wordsworth's early work has been described as pantheist. The concept of 'natural piety', mentioned in 'My Heart Leaps Up' and embodied in other poems such as 'Expostulation and Reply' have appealed to many Quakers. Of the latter he wrote: 'This poem is a favourite among the Quakers, as I have learnt on many occasions.' Bill Walley (Stafford Meeting) has given talks about the 'natural piety' poems in which he showed how they have been a building-block in his response to nature and the environment.

My heart leaps up when I behold
A rainbow in the sky:
So was it when my life began;
So is it now I am a man;
So be it when I shall grow old,
Or let me die!
The Child is father of the Man;
And I could wish my days to be
Bound each to each by natural piety.



ARTICULATING OUR EARTH TESTIMONY (CONTINUED)

EARTH TESTIMONY

RALPH WALDO EMERSON
AND TRANSCENDENTALISM

The romantic movement and other European influences shaped 'Transcendentalism', a new brand of pantheism, in the United States. Ralph Waldo Emerson (1808-82), the movement's guru, gave expression to his mystical relationship with nature in his book *Nature*:

In the woods, we return to reason and faith...I see all the currents of the Universal Being circulate through me; I am part or particle of God.

Emerson was a Unitarian, but when asked if he were a Swedenborgian replied: 'I am more of a Quaker than any-thing else. I believe in the 'still, small voice.'

He counted two other great figures in the history of American environmentalism, David Thoreau (1817-1862) and Walt Whitman (1819-92), as key members of his Transcendentalist band. The poet and naturalist Thoreau, of French-Huguenot and Scottish-Quaker ancestry, preferred life in the woods, and two years spent there produced his great work *Walden*. A grandmother of the poet Whitman was a Quaker, his parents shared in Quaker culture, and he himself was strongly drawn to such ideas as 'the light within'; his poetry, beginning with *Leaves of Grass* (1855) dealt with pantheist themes.

ARNE NÆSS
AND DEEP ECOLOGY

Spinoza's modern descendants have often moved away from any kind of religious language, but still have a powerful sense of there being something beyond a mechanical universe to which we should show reverence. One of the most important, the Norwegian philosopher Arne Næss (1912-2009), coined the term 'deep ecology'. According to him, every being, whether human, animal, or vegetable, has an equal right to live and blossom. It is in the ecospherical whole that our true ecological Self can be realised.

OPEN TO NEW LIGHT

Sharman Apt Russell herself has no problem with adapting traditional religious terminology: 'The pantheist', she writes, 'walks literally, every day, in the Mind and Body of God.'

This little pantheon of pantheists omits to mention pantheist thinkers in Europe going back to Ancient Greece, never mind the Taoist and Buddhist traditions. These sources might inspire Quakers of every kind, from extinction rebels to behind-the-scenes gradualists.

Roger Oldfield
Stafford Local Meeting



Sharman Apt
Russell

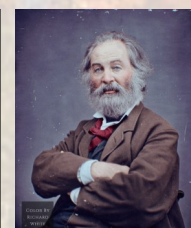
THE
PANTHEIST
WALKS
LITERALLY,
EVERY DAY, IN
THE MIND
AND BODY OF
GOD

I went to the woods because I wished to live deliberately, to front only the essential facts of life, and see if I could not learn what it had to teach, and not, when I came to die, discover that I had not lived. I did not wish to live what was not life, living is so dear; nor did I wish to practise resignation, unless it was quite necessary. I wanted to live deep and suck out all the marrow of life, to live so sturdily and Spartan-like as to put to rout all that was not life, to cut a broad swath and shave close, to drive life into a corner, and reduce it to its lowest terms..



David Thoreau

As for me, I know nothing else but miracles,
Whether I walk the streets of Manhattan,
Or dart my sight over the roofs of houses toward the sky,
Or wade with naked feet along the beach just in the edge of the water,
Or stand under the trees in the woods,
Or talk by day with any one I love,
Or sleep in bed at night with any one I love,
Or watch honey bees busy around the hive of a summer forenoon...
Or the wonderfulness of the sundown,
Or of stars shining so quiet and bright,
Or the exquisite delicate thin curve of the new moon in spring...
What stranger miracles are there?



Walt Whitman

QUAKER FORUM IN BIRMINGHAM



At the Quaker Mental Health Forum in Birmingham in October the facilitator suggested that mental health issues are often the 'elephant in the room'; people have difficulty talking about their own situation or listening to others. An interesting observation was that more men were attending than women, and three men went on to give their personal experience of mental health issues. They all referenced the positive impact Quakers had had on their experiences.

MENTAL HEALTH
ISSUES ARE
OFTEN THE
'ELEPHANT IN
THE ROOM'

The first speaker stated he was already under pressure, when he had a bad 'experience' at work leading to being 'sectioned' and diagnosed as schizophrenic. He described how he eventually found a Quaker meeting and felt there was richness in it. As he recovered from this episode he reflected on what had helped him. One of the most significant items he covered was IKIGAI, a Japanese concept that means 'a reason for being' or 'the reason for which you wake up in the morning'. For example

1. What you love doing
2. What you can be paid to do
3. What you are good at
4. What the world needs

He also realized he needed structure to his day, to be around people and intellectual stimulation in his life, he

currently works as a volunteer Quaker Chaplain in a University.

The second to speak described how as a child he had always felt 'small', shy, timid and that his parents had high expectations. His siblings were clever, sporty - successful. He eventually worked in a personnel department in industry, but always felt he had to put on a mask. At one point he ended up in prison "all my own doing", there he had time to reflect and met a Quaker Prison Chaplain. An important factor in his 'recovery' was that his sister did not desert him. He eventually realised he was unable to express his feelings. Although he felt rejected by two Quaker groups, in a third he felt accepted and went onto get good support. He now describes himself as being able to reach out to 'Friends' when they see he is not fine and this helps.

The third person explained that as an adolescent he felt isolated within the community he lived in. His father disciplined him with a strap and when he looked to him for encouragement was told words like "you'll sort yourself out, you don't need to be given anything". During some of his schooling he felt persecuted in a Catholic school as a 'Protestant Anglican'. Later he went into the police force and feels here he

became institutionalised and more isolated. As part of the 'culture' he worked in and marrying an air stewardess, alcohol started to feature more and more. He became a controlled 'alcoholic', colleagues covered for him even though he was posted as a firearms officer at a major UK airport. After retirement from this role his drinking and anxiety levels rose and he started to 'stockpile' alcohol, drinking throughout the day.

Over time his health was significantly impacted and he collapsed at home, needed resuscitation and after a long recovery stopped drinking alcohol for 3+ years. But with no support, counselling or monitoring 'This was doomed to failure' and he ended up drinking even more, feeling too proud to ask for help. Eventually his GP prescribed Diazepam and he attended Alcoholic Anonymous, where he felt he received understanding but no sympathy. Some days he travelled to more than one meeting to maintain his sobriety. He started to attend Quaker meetings where he found continued support enables him to take one day at a time.

Does *Faith and Practice* illustrate how we might feel about individuals who attend meeting and struggle with

(continued on next page)

QUAKER-LED COURSE IN STOKE: BOOK NOW

A two-day Adult Mental Health First Aid course will take place at Stoke Meeting House on Saturdays 14 and 21 March, from 9 am to 5 pm. It will be delivered by Jen Denson (Stoke Meeting) and Bev Smith (Quaker Life Mental Health Empowering Meetings Officer).

This two-day course (accredited by Mental Health First Aid England) qualifies you as a Mental Health First Aider, giving you:

- An in-depth understanding of mental health and the factors that can affect wellbeing
- Practical skills to spot the triggers and signs of mental health issues
- Confidence to step in, reassure and support a person in distress
- Enhanced interpersonal skills such as non-judgemental listening
- Knowledge to help someone recover their health by guiding them to further support - whether that's self-

help resources, through their employer, the NHS, or a mix

Format

- Learning takes place through a mix of presentations, group discussions and workshop activities
- Each session is built around a Mental Health First Aid action plan

Takeaways

Everyone who completes the course gets:

- A certificate of attendance to say you are a Mental Health First Aider
- A manual to refer to whenever you need it
- A quick reference card for the Mental Health First Aid action plan
- A workbook including a helpful toolkit to support your own mental health

More detailed information can be found at <https://mhfaengland.org/individuals/adult/2-day/>

Cost

The course (valued at £300 per person) is being offered to Quakers for £25 to cover the cost of the manual, workbook and reference card. Friends might ask their local meetings to cover the cost initially and if this is not possible then there are likely to be funds through Area Meeting.

Booking

The minimum number for a course to run is 8 and the maximum is 16. The minimum age requirement is 16 years old.

If you would like to attend the course please email Jen Smith at jhk.smith@gmail.com. We need to have bookings and payments by two weeks before the course starts (29 Feb 2020). Details of how to pay will be sent once you have made your booking. The earlier you book the better!

We suggest that Friends attending bring some food for a shared vegetarian/vegan lunch.



QUAKER FORUM IN BIRMINGHAM (CONTINUED FROM PAGE 12)

some of the normal 'customs' of meeting for worship? We were asked to consider QFP 10.19: "In a true community we will not choose our companions, for our choices are so often limited by self-serving motives. Instead, our companions will be given to us by grace. Often they will be persons who

will upset our settled view of self and world. In fact, we might define true community as the place where the person you least want to live with always lives!". During the groups to discuss the morning sessions, there was a feeling that the speakers had been reflective and given hope to situations around

people's mental health problems. There was much awareness that a lot of us have had similar challenges and none of us know what our future may hold.

K. B. W – P,
Stafford Local Meeting

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WOLVERHAMPTON MEETING: ASYLUM SEEKERS & REFUGEES

Wolverhampton Meeting continues to support local refugees and asylum seekers in a variety of ways, and this is what we have been doing in 2019.

Our Meeting is a Sanctuary Meeting, one of nearly 100 Meetings across the UK who have signed up to the Sanctuary Everywhere initiative. This is a Quaker initiative set up in 2018 charged with a threefold remit: to challenge racism, to help build a culture of welcome, and to work to change the law on destitution, detention centres and deportations.

Wolverhampton Quaker Meeting works closely with Wolverhampton City of Sanctuary who run a weekly Drop-in Centre popular with local asylum seekers and refugees. They come from many countries across the world, speaking many different languages and between 50 or 60 attend the Centre each week. The Drop-in runs for two hours each Wednesday lunchtime and other facilities are available such as an informal English language class, free legal advice once a month, weekly donated clothes and household items, and once a fortnight a cooked lunch planned and cooked by asylum seekers and refugees themselves.

The Drop-in Centre is run by volunteers who come from local churches and



community groups in and around Wolverhampton, and include Quaker volunteers from Wolverhampton, Telford and Broseley. From our Meeting, someone comes to teach English, another comes to serve coffee, and another comes to meet people and offer friendship; others would be very welcome to join us. During 2019 the Centre was held at Broad St Church in Westbury St, Wolverhampton; in 2020 we operate from St Mary and St John's Church Hall, Snow Hill, Wolverhampton. It goes without saying that anyone who volunteers at the Centre must register and comply with Wolverhampton City of Sanctuary Safe-guarding procedures.

The Drop-in Centre is the hub of City of Sanctuary work in Wolverhampton, and from that other initiatives develop. Befriending opportunities arise, where one to one support is valued by some asylum seekers who may have no-one to turn to.

The annual day trips and holidays that we arrange each summer draw their guests from Drop-in members. My husband Mike and I try and get there most weeks; gradually we have got to know members, and we are continually humbled and enriched by the people we encounter from across the world.

There's the doctor and his wife from Afghanistan who had to escape when it was no longer safe to remain in their troubled country and who travelled across continents to reach the UK; they are trying to get used to the very different life here, and they deeply grieve their adult son and daughter with whom they have completely lost touch. There's a young woman from Ethiopia who left her two young children behind with her mother, running away from a violent group who were after her, possibly for political reasons; she has apparently exhausted her claim for asylum and she

OUR MEETING
IS A SANCTUARY
MEETING



WOLVERHAMPTON MEETING: ASYLUM SEEKERS & REFUGEES (CONTINUED)

is homeless and destitute, dependent on donations from our Quaker meeting to survive; she sofa surfs and with poor English skills she struggles to understand the system, always asking for a house to where she may bring her children. There's a gay woman in her 50's from Cameroon where LGBT people face prosecution, who was nearly deported back there last summer but who was released after representations on her behalf were made to the Home Office. None of these people are allowed to work and depend on an allowance from the Government of just over £35 a week, or if refused asylum they are left destitute with no public funds whatsoever. The cost to their mental health and wellbeing while they wait months and sometimes years for a Home Office decision on their case can only be imagined.

We arranged three very successful holidays in 2019 at "Gelliwig", a residential activity centre in Porthmadog, North Wales. This is spearheaded by Keith, Director of the Centre, who attends our Meeting (see SQ October 2019). Three groups of asylum seekers were accommodated over a two-week period last August and had a wonderful time. Much time and effort go into organizing these trips and holidays and

we can always do with more help. All the individuals mentioned above had a place on one of the holidays and loved it.

We also arranged day trips over the summer to Clisett Wood in Herefordshire and a canal boat trip with picnic from the Wildside Centre in Hordern Road.



Through this work we have got to know the Quakers in Bishops Castle, Clun Valley Area Meeting. For the fourth year running, they hosted a full summer day trip to Bishops Castle, paying for a coach and laying on delicious food and entertainment for about 40 asylum seekers plus some volunteers. The day finished on farmland by a riverbank where a harpist played gentle music, and games for the children and a picnic tea were laid on. People could forget their troubles and feel happy for a day.

One piece of good news is the recent granting of asylum to F from Cameroon who Wolverhampton Meeting has been supporting financially since she was made destitute in 2016. She can now, five years after she arrived in the UK, at last begin to put the past behind her and get on with her life. She is profoundly grateful for the support from our Meeting.

We have established an Asylum Seeker Fund to help out in cases of crisis and hardship, and we are always very grateful for donations. In 2019 the fund was used to buy a second hand bike for an asylum seeker whose bike was stolen, to purchase books for a refugee at university studying law, to buy an ironing board, to make a gift to the Drop-in cookery fund for lunch ingredients, to support an asylum seeker in detention and to help with the costs of the Welsh holidays in addition to weekly destitution support.

Holidays and Daytrips will be arranged again in 2020 – please do get in touch if you feel you would like to be involved, or just to find out a bit more.

Rosemary Fox,
Wolverhampton Local
Meeting

AN ALLOWANCE
FROM THE
GOVERNMENT
OF JUST OVER
£35 A WEEK



ECOBRIK FROM PLASTICS: A WORKSHOP IN LEEK

LEEK MEETING HOUSE
10.00 - 1.00
SATURDAY 7 MARCH

Want to contribute to a solution to plastic waste? Eco-bricks are a powerful way to divert plastic away from landfill to produce a usable, useful product. In the workshop you will learn the principles, science and techniques behind ecobricking

from a GEA certified eco-brick trainer, and discover how, and why, this is an ecologically positive move.

Free event,
donations accepted.

To reserve a place contact
Linda Skellam
07710970744 or lin-da.skellam109@gmail.com

NB Places are limited



PLANTS, PAINTINGS AND TEAPOTS: OUTREACH IN STAFFORD

PLANT SALE

We are growing a lovely and unusual selection of garden and vegetable plants for sale in the fore garden of the



Meeting House from 10.00 to 2.00 on a Saturday in mid-May. Tough as old boots perennials, raspberry canes, aquatics and some really unusual specimens to excite even the most jaded gardener! Tea, coffee and home-made cakes will also be available. If you have a spare tray or two of something, bring them along. All donations most gratefully accepted!

ART EXHIBITION

Do you paint, print, sculpt or photograph? We are looking for six to ten artists to exhibit as a group in the middle room of Stafford Meeting House for approximately two weeks next autumn or winter.

This is the first such event and it is expected that the ground rules, themes and so on will be agreed between the participants and representatives of the Meeting House at the first get-together.

We would particularly like to invite F/friends from other Staffordshire Local Meetings to take part, though we are also happy to invite artists of other faiths or none whose work is sympathetic to a Quaker ethos.



It is hoped that this will become an annual event and may become a travelling exhibition in relation to other Meeting house which would like to partner us.

Al Higgins
Stafford Local Meeting

*For details of both events
contact Al Higgins
alhiggins@ymail.com*

CLOSING DATE FOR NEXT ISSUE: MONDAY 4 MAY BUT PLEASE START NOW!

ARTICLES ARE USUALLY A MAXIMUM OF ABOUT 620 WORDS LONG — ONE PAGE

GABI AND ROGER OLDFIELD

8 MENDIP AVENUE, STAFFORD, ST17 0PG

ROGEROLDFIELD@MYPHONE.COOP

STAFFORDSHIRE QUAKERS
ON THE WEB

WWW.STAFFS-QUAKERS.ORG.UK