



# STAFFORDSHIRE QUAKER



AUTUMN ISSUE, OCTOBER 2023

## SEEKING TO KNOW ONE ANOTHER ...

### EDITORIAL

It is generally via our Local Meetings and our Area Meeting that we enter most immediately 'into the joys and sorrows of each other's lives'. *Staffordshire Quaker* can, hopefully, also help us to 'know one another in the things which are eternal'.

It is a privilege as editor to receive the many contributions in which F/friends explore their deepest concerns, and this issue is no exception. Stephen Petter again draws on wide experience of the workings of the Society to consider ways in which they might be improved. Cath Hayes reports an inspiring climate action. John Nicholls again seeks to engage us in deeper appreciation of biodiversity. Peter Kent-Baguley writes authoritatively about fairtrade.

Reliance on digital copies of SQ may mean we skip over articles. Could Meetings name printed copies to ensure that everyone receives one?

*How can we make the meeting a community in which each person is accepted and nurtured, and strangers are welcome? Seek to know one another in the things which are eternal, bear the burden of each other's failings and pray for one another. As we*

*enter with tender sympathy into the joys and sorrows of each other's lives, ready to give help and to receive it, our meeting can be a channel for God's love and forgiveness.*

*Advices and Queries 18*

### THE ABILITY TO TRUST

A Staffordshire Friend writes very personally (pp 4-5) about childhood abuse and the need to be able to trust others when trust has been broken by those who matter most.

### WHAT MATTERS TO FRIENDS

Stoke Meeting believes the Quaker way has much to offer people seeking spiritual solace in these turbulent times, and a way of being compatible with a world on fire. Stoke Meeting is changing the format of a monthly meeting to include insights and information about what matters to Friends and why. We hope this will encourage increased attendance and new growth. For more information, see Facebook Stoke Quaker Meeting.

Angela Glendenning,  
Stoke Meeting

### HEALING



The grandfathers of Cynthia Ong (who is Sabahan) and Yoshio Baba (Japanese) were among those deliberately killed in Borneo in World War 11. On pages 6-8 Anthony Wilson traces an extraordinary journey of reconciliation.

### COMMITMENT

Helen Buckroyd (pages 12-13) considers whether she can affirm her commitment and belief in the beautiful and transformative power of meeting without becoming a member.

'THE BEAUTIFUL  
AND  
TRANSFORMATIVE  
POWER OF  
MEETING'

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## OPENING UP IN UTTOXETER

Uttoxeter Meeting House opened once again for Heritage Open Days on 16 September, along with Redfern's Cottage Museum opposite and St. Mary's R.C. Church around the corner.

We had around 40 visitors, the furthest being holiday-makers from Cambridge staying in Leek. As has happened before, some visitors had information about Quaker families in the area, which is interesting for us and for the museum archives.

Next year's Heritage Open Days are 6-15 September. Several visitors asked in

particular about the origins of Quaker worship, and so next year being the 400th anniversary of George Fox's birth would seem a good time for other Meetings to open up. Registration usually begins early in the year. Even if you haven't an historic Meeting House, a

display of archive material not usually on show would be acceptable I'm sure. Details, when available, can be found at [www.heritageopendays.org.uk](http://www.heritageopendays.org.uk).

Cath Hayes, Uttoxeter Meeting



NEXT YEAR'S  
HERITAGE DAYS  
ARE 6-15  
SEPTEMBER

## A SPECIAL VISITOR IN LICHFIELD



All from Lichfield Meeting unless stated. Back: Juliet Metcalf, John Babb (Wolverhampton), Geoff Goodyear, Janet Baker, Stephen Langford (Stoke). Front: Peter Holland (Stone), Paula Knight, Anthony Wilson (Lichfield Meeting, living in Sabah, Borneo), Win Sutton (Wolverhampton), Helen Lockwood, Berry Dicker

*Berry Dicker (Lichfield Meeting) reported a special event in June*

Today Lichfield Meeting had a shared lunch to welcome Anthony who arrived back in the UK yesterday. He is here for about a month before returning to Borneo. After

meeting Anthony told us something of the history of Borneo and his life in Sabah.

He and Anne have a wonderful house there, high on a hillside so that their windows are level with the forest canopy. Anne certainly seems very settled

there and has attentive and skilful carers.

This photograph was taken by Helen Buckroyd of Lichfield Meeting and it is of those present. Anthony is of course seated in the centre.

*See Anthony's article about an extraordinary journey in Sabah on pages 6-8*

## MAKE POLLUTERS PAY

The September 14 issue of 'Quake' drew my attention to national 'Make Polluters Pay Action Day', of which I was not aware. As it fell on 23 September, the first day of Quaker Week, and I had nothing planned, I looked up nearby events. Most were leaflet distributing, which I felt might lead to more litter on our streets. However, the one which caught my eye was the one over the border in Ashbourne, organised by Ashbourne Churches Together. It was entitled 'Vigil for the Climate' and so I went along. There were around 30 of us, the others all from Ashbourne.

The spokesperson then explained what the vigil was all about, for passersby: that governments at COP27 in 2022 agreed to create an international Loss and Damage Fund, following campaigns by people in the Global South who are being most affected by climate change. He explained that the fund is now empty but that pressure must be put on those industries continuing to make huge profits to pay into the fund, whilst polluting and causing damage to people who have done the least to cause the climate crisis. He said, "We're calling on the U. K. Govern-



The vigil began with the lighting of candles whilst we sang, to recorded music, the words on the right, set to the well-known tune. These words were written for the Greenbelt Festival in 2022 and the One World section of Ashbourne CT had permission to use them. I felt how wonderful it would be to have them sung in schools and churches.

ment to commit to making global polluters pay" and then invited local people to write to their MP.

The meeting continued with a short prayer, followed by silence. It felt good to be part of a peaceful meeting, for which I have 'Quake' to thank.

Cath Hayes, Uttoxeter Meeting

All things bright and beautiful,  
All creatures great and small,  
All things wise and wonderful,  
The Lord God made them all.

The purple-headed mountains,  
The rivers running by,  
Are filled with deadly toxins,  
Cascading from the sky.

All things bright and beautiful,  
All creatures great and small,  
All things wise and wonderful,  
We humans trashed them all.

Each little flower that opens,  
Each little bird that sings,  
Is tainted with the plastic,  
We've thrown into our bins.

All things bright and beautiful,  
All creatures great and small,  
God who made the universe,  
Looks out on us appalled.

The typhoons in the winter,  
The burning summer sun,  
The changes to the climate,  
Have only just begun.

All things bright and beautiful,  
All creatures great and small,  
All things wise and wonderful,  
We humans trashed them all.

The rich man in his castle,  
The poor man at the gate,  
All people high and lowly,  
Will suffer the same fate.

All things bright and beautiful,  
All creatures great and small,  
God who made the universe,  
Looks out on us appalled.

God gave us eyes to see them,  
And lips that we might tell  
The choices we are making,  
To turn the world to hell.

All things bright and beautiful,  
All creatures great and small,  
All things wise and wonderful,  
We humans trashed them all.

## UNDERSTANDING THE IMPACT OF CHILD ABUSE

*We publish this article by a Staffordshire Friend in the hope that it will lead us to a deeper awareness and understanding of the horrific consequences of child abuse*

On reading the articles on page 11 of the Staffordshire Quaker Autumn October 2021 Edition I feel I need to respond to the articles about violence on women.

I am writing this to explain why it's not so easy to disclose and that even within Staffordshire Quakers there is a need for further work and understanding with regards to violence against women.

A few years ago I attended a Staffordshire Quaker event where I subsequently disclosed the sexual abuse and rapes I had endured at the hands of my father as a child. I had repressed memories that had been triggered when my experience had been validated by my sister. I'd had no memory of the abuse or rapes for over 20 years. However there were patterns of behaviours that I had that gave an indication that I had been severely affected by the abuse. The loss of childhood memo-

ries is a common indicator, so when I did disclose to somebody at Staffordshire Quakers, they told me that they did not believe me, because I had not remembered this for 20 years, I was really upset, and it has been hard to trust others with this knowledge since then, but on occasion when it's been needed I have spoken about this on a need to know basis, and only to those I feel I can trust, as this has questioned my ability to trust others, which due to my experiences I think is understandable. Those that should have been trustworthy (i.e. my parents) had been flawed. If you can't trust those closest to you, who can you trust? And this is where the root of the issue to disclosing rests.

The ability to trust has been broken by those who should have been trusted and asking for a disclosure needs that impaired ability to have complete blind faith in others. If this was compared to a physical impairment, then it's like asking a person with no legs to get up and walk. It's just not possible without a lot of support and aid.

Now I am not saying that

the person who didn't believe me would not have been supportive and caring had they realised the truth and they were questioning my experience based on their own experience. What was lacking was knowledge and understanding of abuse, the impact such abuse has on the brain, memory, behaviours, trust etc.

According to the Crown Prosecution service: Of those who disclose rape research has shown that false allegations of rape are rare. A CPS report published in 2013 showed that over a 17 month period there were 5651 prosecutions for rape and, during the same period, there were 35 prosecutions for making false allegations of rape.

An acquittal does not automatically mean there was a false allegation; it means that the jury was not satisfied beyond reasonable doubt that the offence was committed.

It may take time for a rape victim to come forward and report. The trauma of rape can cause feelings of shame and guilt which might inhibit a victim from making a complaint.

IF YOU CAN'T  
TRUST THOSE  
CLOSEST TO  
YOU, WHO CAN  
YOU TRUST?

**NSPCC**

EVERY CHILDHOOD IS WORTH FIGHTING FOR

## UNDERSTANDING THE IMPACT OF CHILD ABUSE (CONTINUED)



This fact was recognised by the court of appeal in RvD (JA) October 24 2008 where it was held the judges are entitled to direct juries that due to shame and shock victims of rape might not complain for some time, and that a late complaint does not necessarily mean that it is a false complaint.

So bearing these statements in mind it is highly unlikely that a disclosure is false.

To understand the impact child sexual abuse has on a person, it might be a good idea to check out the NSPCC website: <https://www.nspcc.org.uk/what-is-child-abuse/types-of-abuse/non-recent-abuse/>

There is also an interesting booklet available from the Cumbria NHS website. <https://web.ntw.nhs.uk/selfhelp/#abuse>

The other point is that the onus is being put on the female victims to come forward, instead of the aggressor. Does this sit well within our commitment towards Equality? Should we also be encouraging men who have committed such acts to come forward? Should we be focussing on how to prevent the men from getting into such a state that they feel their only option to resolve their issues is with their fists?

My last point is in regards of the work being done to update safeguarding across the Quaker network of Britain, with a potential new model of safeguarding policy for trustees to consider. I take a great interest in safeguarding matters, as when I was a child there was no safeguarding procedures. Had there been so my life could have been very different, as I did disclose to a teacher. As there was no

safeguarding there was no record of this within school records. The teacher did not believe me because they had not had any safeguarding training what so ever.

Even if all that was done back then was for the teacher to have written out what I had disclosed, regardless of if they believed me or not, then it would have been enough for the police to act and charge my father with rape now, even after 20+ years. Now I have made a formal complaint to the police even though that account would be over 20 years old now. It was reported as I was not the only victim.

But this is why it is so important to have a good safeguarding policy that is easily available to all and why it is so important to keep records of disclosures. Not just of children but of all.

THE ONUS IS  
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AGGRESSOR

The *Safeguarding Procedures and Toolkit* agreed by Staffordshire Area Meeting in March 2022 is in the Member's Area on the Staffordshire Quakers website:  
[www.staffsquakers.org](http://www.staffsquakers.org)

Berry Dicker (Area Meeting Safeguarding Trustee) and David Morgan (Deputy Safeguarding Co-ordinator) have run training sessions for all Local Meetings in Staffordshire over the last two years.

## A JOURNEY OF RECONCILIATION AND HEALING

*The background to the events commemorated in this account present a picture of imperial hubris: British, which could not conceive of Singapore falling to Asian forces, and Japanese, who believed their Greater East Asia Co-Prosperity Sphere represented liberation from Western rule. No surprise that the occupied countries experienced exploitation, not benefits.*

The coach driver was intrigued: for some time he had been driving parties to a WW2 cemetery in Sabah, Malaysian Borneo, but always in national groups – Australians, Sabahans, U.K., sometimes Japanese – never a mixed group like ours. We came from all four territories, brought together by a shared wish to address wounds which have not healed over the generations since loved ones from the families involved had been deliberately killed in the war. Our daughter in law Cynthia Ong grew up knowing that her grandfather, great grandfather and five uncles had been executed by Japanese troops in May 1945: there was a major killing of English speaking Sabahans before the expected allied invasion.

Three people's experiences of loss and survival were at the heart of this journey, which centred around the allied prisoners of war death marches of early 1945. Cynthia Ong co-ordinated the careful planning. Sadaoki Furui was the grandson of Baba Masao the general at the time, not responsible for the policy but unable to pre-

vent this and other war crimes, for which he uniquely apologized. He was executed by the Australian authorities while the previous general was not charged. His second grandson Baba Yoshio and two great grandsons

by Australian troops. By escaping, his father Dick was one of six survivors of the 2,400 prisoners; already ill and starving, they were driven along crude jungle paths and left to die or be killed as they fell. He married the



Shared meal: great grandsons of General Masau Baba, Ken Wilson and Cynthia Ong, Alison Saunders and Richard Moxon, son of another death march survivor.

took part. The third was Richard Braithwaite, Australian, whose father was one of six survivors from the Sandakan prisoner of war camp. Neither Sadaoki Furui nor Richard Braithwaite lived to take part in the journey which they had conceived together with Cynthia and helped to plan: their families took their place.

Two books record the experiences from those wartime years. Richard Braithwaite's "Fighting Monsters: an intimate history of the Sandakan tragedy" is an account of events before, during and following the Australian and British POWs' death marches from their camp in Sandakan on the east coast of Sabah into the interior, to avoid the expected invasion

widow of his closest friend, who died. The book presents a full account of how such atrocities can happen in wartime when 'the other' is dehumanized, as relevant today as eighty years ago. The author's widow, daughter and granddaughter took part, as did Dick's second son John, wife and daughter; John has worked with Friends in the course of reconciliation initiatives in conflict situations. The son and wife of another survivor Bill Moxon contributed much to our fellowship.

The second book, "An End to a War", presents the experience of Ueno Itsoyoshi, a Japanese soldier evacuated along the same route: two thirds of his own battalion were amongst the 9,500

A SHARED WISH  
TO ADDRESS  
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## A JOURNEY OF RECONCILIATION AND HEALING (CONTINUED)

troops who died with no support from the army command. The book is a sensitive account by a conscript who left Japan ready to die for his Emperor but witnessed callous disregard for the lives of his companions: no heroics, but a growing recognition of common humanity amongst the suffering around him. Richard Brithwaite brought the book to the attention of an English-speaking readership, and Ueno Itsuyoshi's son-in-law was with us on the journey. The great nephew of one of Ueno's fellow conscripts who died filmed our journey, which experience featured on Japanese TV soon after his return. Two Japanese women (see photo) instrumental in uncovering the story of allied POWs in Japan contributed much.

In the anarchic chaos which followed the military collapse preceding Japan's national surrender on 15 August, Australian troops ordered a death march of disarmed prisoners of war through country where Murut communities had been brutally evacuated: fewer than half the prisoners survived revenge attacks. Records of this, and the numbers, are disjointed, and not 'official'; the events are still recollected locally. There is no memorial, but this featured in the background of our reconciliation. Much of the public response to the wartime experience has been to allow enough time to pass to forget or avoid the memory, with no

scope for proper understanding, forgiveness and healing. So the first stage of the journey was to visit the sites in Sabah where atrocities had taken place and share the full narrative behind them: current accounts are built around victors' / victims' stories, embodied in materials which carry no texts in Japanese. Questions and discussion between participants were a welcome alternative, offering new perceptions which included all those drawn into the conflict. For Friends, this provides an additional dimension to our testimony to truth as an element in our witness to peace.

Four days of travelling and sharing meals together, with a round-up of the day's im-



AW with Kouji Ueno, son-in-law to author Itsuyoshi Ueno, Noriko Murata and Taeko Sasamoto of the charity Prisoner of War Research Network Japan

pact each evening, brought true fellowship. Before the participants moved on to Japan where more family members could join, we drew on a cherished Sabahan

tradition. People sharing a common purpose gather round an 'oath stone' to make their public commitment: in our case, to bringing reconciliation with harmony first between our families, then spreading more widely between our countries. The stone, on Ong family land and facing the iconic Mt Kinabalu, is crowned with the inscribed names of those intimately involved in the events which we had been commemorating: Japanese, Sabahan and Australian mingled together in alphabetical order – as far as we know uniquely, and certainly testimony to our vision of a world at peace.

Anthony Wilson,  
Sabah, August 2023

### AFTER THE EVENT: Japan

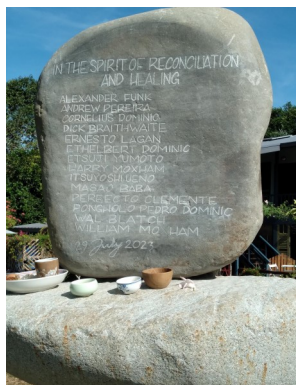
The Ong estate is developing into KampOng Campus with trainings hosted by the Forever Sabah Institute: within two weeks of the journey's conclusion, a group of students from a Japanese university on a study tour unexpectedly found themselves gathered round the oath stone. In common with post-war generations, they had no awareness of wartime events beyond the atomic bombings: the experience, they said, served to throw light on their own family backgrounds where only dark shadows from the war remained. The stone opens a path not only to shared memory, but healing.



The oath stone, placed as a symbol of reconciliation. Mt Kinabalu is in the background.

TESTIMONY TO  
OUR VISION OF  
A WORLD AT  
PEACE

*Continued on page 8*



Oath stone's inscribed names, facing Mt Kinabalu.

## A JOURNEY OF RECONCILIATION AND HEALING (CONTINUED)

AFTER THE EVENT: Sabah

The people of Sabah suffered grievously during the war, with tens of thousands of deaths. Families have unspoken stories of individual and group atrocities during the Japanese occupation, with starvation caused by crop appropriation by hungry

soldiers exacerbated by the allied food blockade and American bombing which devastated the towns and destroyed what infrastructure there was left. Japanese tourists now come and go, oblivious. The new oath stone's focus on Australian-Japanese reconciliation may

be the starting point for more stones promoting healing for Sabahans themselves: a movement which would need to involve Japanese participation as equals, sharing the Sabahan experience. A modest start is beginning to take shape.

## FACT, OPINION AND CLASP

This evening I attended a meeting of CLASP. That's the rather silly title of what could better be called Churches Together in Staffordshire. There were representatives from Church of England (of course!) Methodists, Baptists, Roman Catholics, United Reformed Church and some lesser-known Black-led churches. The visiting speaker (in London – the meeting was via Zoom) was a young apparently upward mobile Catholic priest, bound tomorrow for a European Catholic Synod in Prague. Pope Francis has organised a massive world-wide consultation to bring fresh, relevant ideas and concerns to Rome, to make their church more open. This priest, Jan Lavotnik, spoke mainly about his work representing his church on Churches Together in England (CTE). He spoke of the warm relationships experienced by the representatives of the different churches. When questions were invited I told him I knew many Christians find Quakerism hard to accept. I said I'd heard that there had been a problem over the Quaker representative on CTE. He

gave a frank answer, after first having said how much CTE values the Quaker contribution. (A Quaker is chair of the Trustees of CTE, and a Quakers is one of the six Presidents.) But he said the dispute to which I had alluded had been very, very painful. Several evangelical churches had refused to accept the Quaker rep as she was in a same-sex marriage. For a time her chair remained empty. Later she was admitted but not allowed to vote. Eventually the matter was resolved and Jan said that they all felt they had learned a lot, if only how to cope charitably with fundamental differences.

Actually the same sort of division occurs when Quakers meet internationally. I experienced it when attending a World Conference. First, liberal Friends were appalled by what some of the Evangelical Friends said, then Evangelical Friends were reduced to tears when they learnt about liberal Quakers. But the process of reconciliation was a powerful learning experience.

CTE actually changed their constitution to help persuade Quakers to join them in the early 1990s. Even though many ordinary church-goers would say Quakerism is not Christian, the other church leaders recognise that we are. In fact I would say (not to be published outside our walls – it may sound boastful) Quakerism is closer to the teachings of Jesus, and Quakers act more as He would have it, than most other Christians. I think it very sad that so many Quakers claim to be non-Christian, or post-Christian, when in theology and in practice they are so very Christian. Our problem is our lack of an effective teaching ministry. Most Quakers do not know enough about Quakerism.

In October I am to attend Quaker Life Representative Council, on representing our Area Meeting. If anyone wants to offer me advice or wants me to raise an issue please contact me. (steve.petter@yahoo.com)

Stephen Petter,  
Wolverhampton Meeting,  
AM CLASP representative

MOST QUAKERS  
DO NOT KNOW  
ENOUGH ABOUT  
QUAKERISM.

## SIMPLIFICATION OF STAFFORDSHIRE AREA MEETING

*Here Stephen Petter  
(Wolverhampton Meeting)  
suggests ways to address  
problems faced by  
Staffordshire Area Meeting.  
The article was first  
published on the 'Quakers  
Unbound UK' website, a  
'forum for British Quakers  
and Quaker sympathisers  
in Britain to talk about  
the sort of thing that  
British Quakers like to talk  
about ...'*

I missed out on the recent consultation on simplification of our Area Meeting, but I dare to offer a further suggestion. While attending Quaker Life Representative Council some ideas occurred to me, arising from what had been said during the conference. Our problems in Staffordshire Area Meeting are found throughout Britain Yearly Meeting: our declining and ageing membership, the difficulty nominations committees experience as they try to fill our many roles, and the burden of our Meeting Houses. Without our attenders (who do much more than attend) many more meetings would have expired.

I regard BYM's abolition of Recognised Meetings (RMs) as unfortunate. But we could administer our Local Meetings (LMs) much as if they were RMs. There is a process by which a LM and its AM can agree on which of

the duties of a LM can be neglected or be accepted by its AM. This is by Memorandums of Understanding (MOUs). Each LM (reduced to the form of an RM) would need to have one or more Elders attached to it, appointed by and reporting to Area Meeting. This is the case at present, but I envisage the link between Elders and AM would be much closer. (Where I refer to AM I mean AM together with Trustees.) AM would remind LMs of factors they need to consider such as safeguarding and data protection. Almost all the administrative responsibilities of an LM, including membership and finance, would be taken on by AM. AM could use employees to undertake much of the work. Our AM (or at least our trustees) might merge with those of neighbouring AMs so as to share resources.

LMs would continue to meet in Meeting Houses but could as well meet elsewhere, including in Friends' homes or only on Zoom. New LMs could more readily be established. There could be frequent advice and continuous support from Quaker Life to every Elder, not dictating doctrine but seeking to deepen spirituality and nurture our Quakerism. Quaker Life Representative Council seeks to do this but reaches only a small proportion of all Friends.

As for Meeting Houses, I suggest firstly that Trustees should accept all responsibility for the maintenance of the buildings and grounds, and also perhaps also the furniture and fittings including electric equipment. In practice Trustees could engage a property maintenance company to undertake the practical work and even manage room hiring. Their contract could require the company to offer reduced rates to agreed charity hirers and near-zero charges for RSoF activities.

This model would have most of us in small religious worshipping groups, relieved of most administrative burdens. Hopefully, each would be assisted by Quaker Life to deepen our spirituality and assisted by Quaker Peace and Social Witness in engaging in local and other activism.

An additional suggestion occurs to me. It is that we hold Area Meeting sessions in one location, whichever is most convenient. Maybe Stafford Meeting House or maybe even a commercial venue. To familiarise ourselves with all our Meetings we could schedule joint Meetings for Worship in each one in turn.

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## WILDFLOWERS, BUTTERFLIES AND BEES

I have personal friends Irene and Robert Bailey. They live close to the Long Mynd south of Shrewsbury. On their land they have a 4½ acre wild flower meadow.

Perhaps next June, when the birds are most numerous, there could be a visit by some Staffordshire Friends and a few of Wolverhampton's asylum seekers.

In 1971 while on a camping holiday Irene and Bob saw a derelict cottage. It was unoccupied and they enquired about buying it. In the solicitor's office, while doing the conveyancing they learnt that a dwelling of some sort had stood on the site from the early 1700s.

There was a considerable amount of ground with the cottage, to their surprise. Some was sold off to finance work on the house; just under 7 acres remained, which they let for grazing for some years.

Time passed and the grass in the main field became poorer and as this happened wild flowers, the seeds of which must have been dormant in the ground for many years, began to appear. Shropshire wildlife became interested in the area and it was registered with Shropshire council as a wildlife site with the main field of 4½ acres as a designated wild flower meadow. Nothing has been planted or

brought in and more and more species appear each year including primroses in the early spring yellow rattle, meadow sweet, knapweed and orchids in the summer and devil's bit scabious in August/September, a very valuable food source for bees and butterflies. The field is alive with insects which in turn attract small mammals and many birds. Over the years it has become a very special place, not just for Irene and Bob and their family but to many local people and visitors as well.

John Nicholls  
Wolverhampton  
Meeting



## THE LATEST FROM OUR LOCAL DEVELOPMENT WORKER

*There are now Local Development Workers supporting Quaker worshipping communities across Britain. Staffordshire's Local Development Worker is Hilary Topp, who covers the West Midlands and North West (South).*

*Here, hot off the press, is her latest report on her work.*

HOW DO WE  
TELL EACH  
OTHER ABOUT  
ALL OF THESE  
OPPORTUNITIES?

Welcome to your next update from your Local Development Worker, with news of what I've been up to, a few things I've been thinking about, and dates for your diary.

I've enjoyed visiting some more local meetings and getting to know Friends in my LDW patch. Over the summer and early autumn, I've been helping to plan and facilitate away days and workshops, and supporting Area Meetings as they plan for the future.

One of the themes that has emerged from conversations with Friends and meetings is communication, both with other Quakers and with the wider world. There are so many wonderful things happening – shared lunches, guided meditations, climate vigils, quiet days, campfire

meetings, new children's meetings, family and friends picnics, walks, open days, Woodbrooke days, exhibitions, bible studies, contemplative prayer, warm welcome spaces, film screenings, open-air worship. How do we tell each other about all of these opportunities? How do we welcome people new to Quakers? How would they get to hear about it?

I recently happened to click on the 'Find a Quaker Meeting' page for my own meeting and was surprised to see that it said 'Children's Meeting – No'. We actually do

## THE LATEST FROM OUR LOCAL DEVELOPMENT WORKER (CONTINUED)

have a children's meeting every week. I have emailed [updates@quaker.org.uk](mailto:updates@quaker.org.uk) to get it changed and would gently encourage you all to check your own entry and send in any updates needed. I am very happy to support you with any questions around websites, social media or anything else, and if I don't know how to do it, I can find someone who does.

**GETTING OUT AND ABOUT**

I'm keen to get out and about and be available to Friends across my 'patch'. Do you have a midweek meeting for worship, groups or events that I could come along to? Could I be based at your meeting house, or a local café, for a day, so that Friends could call in for a chat? Please get in touch.

**MIDLANDS REGIONAL GATHERING**

There are plans for an all-age regional gathering for Friends in the Midlands. This is just in the early planning stages, and we would love to know if you think it is a good idea, and if you'd like to help. Ask me for more details.

**YOUNG FRIENDS REGIONAL MEETING**

Young Friends Regional Meeting (YFRM) is a group of Young Adult Quakers in

the North West of England and surrounding areas. It is aimed at 18-25 year old young Quakers who either grew up in or are now living in the Northwest and surrounding areas.

The next weekend will be 26-28 November at Manchester MH. Their email address is [young.friends.regional.meeting@gmail.com](mailto:young.friends.regional.meeting@gmail.com) and they would like to add enquirers to their WhatsApp group.

**SDSC ARMS FAIR IN TELFORD**

Telford Friends will be organising a Meeting for Worship on Thursday 2 November as part of a day of action against the SDSC Arms Fair at Telford International Centre. More details to follow. To sign the open letter and receive updates on the campaign go to [STOP-SDSC-UK](https://www.stop-sdsc-uk.com) ([google.com](https://www.google.com)). See page 16.

**DATES FOR YOUR DIARY****WED 27 SEPTEMBER, 7.00 PM**

Midlands Quaker Climate network. More details from Sarah Shaw [sarahs@quaker.org.uk](mailto:sarahs@quaker.org.uk).

**WED 11 OCTOBER, 7.30 PM**

'Hilary's patch' drop-in.

Register here: <https://quaker.zoom.us/j/8445444444>  
register/tZYpf-2sqzluG92\_UPM  
fws4YvNK\_0tA5cslx

**MON 13 NOVEMBER, 7.30 PM**

Children, youth and families zoom call - for anyone interested in building inclusive all-age communities.

Register here: <https://quaker.zoom.us/j/8445444444>  
register/tZloceivq  
DkvEt38s6Wg-4J92\_lnXO3o-7DA

For Friends who don't have internet access, when you register (or you could ask a friend to register for you), you will be sent the Zoom link and phone numbers to dial into the call from a landline or mobile phone. If this still doesn't work for you then I look forward to meeting you in-person soon, or we can arrange a time to talk on the phone.

**HILARY TOPP**

Local Development Worker,  
West Midlands and North West (South),  
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DO YOU HAVE  
A MIDWEEK  
MEETING FOR  
WORSHIP,  
GROUPS OR  
EVENTS THAT I  
COULD COME  
ALONG TO?

## THE 'WHY' OF MEMBERSHIP

What I really like about the Quaker world is the desire to ask fundamental questions.

At the very moment when I am grappling on a personal level with whether to ask to become a member of the Society of Friends, that very question is being debated by Quakers the length and breadth of the country. The questions being asked are simple, significant but not very easy to answer.

Meeting for Sufferings has asked Quakers to address four questions:

- ◊ Why membership?
- ◊ What is membership for?
- ◊ Is it still necessary?
- ◊ If it is, what form could it take?

I am limiting myself to addressing question number one as that is a thorny and sufficient question in itself for me.

From the moment of attending my first Quaker meeting about 18 months ago, I felt as if I had come home. One friend said to me that some people have been Quakers all their lives without realising it.

That felt so true.

I didn't and don't always find the silence of meeting for worship an easy place in which to be but it is a safe place, often a place where my spirit is refreshed and where it is possible to be in touch with what I call my 'true self': that inner core which could be described, using the language of George Fox, 'that of God' within me. It's not only feeling at home with my 'true self' but also feeling connection with the true selves or 'that of God' with the other friends present which then transforms into something bigger and even more wonderful.

Feeling this way over a period of time, why have I not yet actively pursued membership? I couldn't really answer this question until I attended an online Woodbrooke Course called 'The Why and What of Membership' facilitated by Ben Pink Dandelion on 12<sup>th</sup> July this year.

Almost like a revelation, when I learned that the early Quakers did not have membership it felt like that was my answer.

It simply was not necessary at all. Being a Quaker had nothing to do with membership to an organisation. It simply meant how you live your life- what you do. For the time being that satisfied me.

We had discussions about membership within my local meeting. I listened carefully to the opinions and feelings of other friends but my view remained the same. In our meeting, there is no distinction between attenders and members. I felt that as an attender I could fully commit myself to the life of my local meeting. This made me feel even more strongly that there was no necessity to become a member.

That is until during one meeting for worship in late August by chance, I picked up and read *Quaker Faith and Practice 11:01 – The Meaning of Membership*. Why had I not read it before? I am always amazed by the clarity of expression in this beautiful book. The first place to look when asking a question about membership- you would have thought!

I realised that I had overlooked something very

WHAT I REALLY  
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## THE 'WHY' OF MEMBERSHIP

obvious and very important. Membership is not just about me and how I feel but is also about the meeting.

"In asking to be admitted into the community of the meeting you are affirming what the meeting stands for..." If someone is accepted into membership, that I anticipate, would feel like approval from the meeting. Conversely, asking to be accepted demonstrates your approval of the meeting. It is a two-way process and I had not been ready to view it in that way.

So, is there anything holding me back now? I do want to show that I affirm what the meeting stands for and to declare my "willingness to contribute to its life." Then I realised a stumbling block. In our local meeting discussions, several friends had raised the issue that some friends feel that their sense of belonging comes from the relationship and sense of community with their local meeting rather than area meeting.

Unfortunately, that is the problem for me. I do feel very attached to my local

meeting. As a full-time employee and breadwinner, I feel that Saturday is the only day when I can commit to my close family with whom I live. As area meeting always takes place in Staffordshire on a Saturday (or at least has during the 18 months whilst I have been attending my local meeting) and it is also a lengthy meeting taking up the best part of the day, I have not attended area meeting. As a result of this, I have not had the opportunity to become attached to area meeting in the same way as my local meeting.

If I chose to become a member and were accepted, I would feel obliged to attend area meeting on a fairly regular basis as membership has to be of an area meeting not a local meeting. Regrettably such attendance would feel burdensome at present.

I then wonder whether this constant returning to the question of whether to apply for membership is more deep-rooted within my consciousness. I now ask myself whether I can actually affirm my commitment and belief in the beautiful and transformative power of meeting without becoming a member.

Maybe exploring my thoughts and feelings openly about membership in writing is my way of saying to you all now that I love meeting for worship, that it has become a central part of my life and that I am very keen to contribute to and support the "spiritual growth and exploration" of everyone.

But I still haven't completely ruled out applying for membership!

Helen Buckroyd,  
Lichfield Meeting

MEMBERSHIP IS  
NOT JUST  
ABOUT ME AND  
HOW I FEEL BUT  
IS ALSO ABOUT  
THE MEETING.



## FAIRTRADE: AN UPDATE

This article was written to emphasise the importance of Fairtrade within the bigger, global need for change, if the Global Sustainable Development Goals are to be achieved.

I wonder how many remember the excitement and optimism arising from the seminal EARTH SUMMIT held across the Atlantic at Rio de Janeiro in 1992. The nations of the world, seemingly united around the need for serious attention to the dete-

facilitating economic growth to benefit all people, had been launched. Or had it?

1992 was a key date for another urgently needed organisation, one that could begin the long road to challenging the inequity of the current so-called *free-trade* world trading system. It was the year that the UK Fairtrade Foundation was established by the joint action of six NGOs, namely, CAFOD, Christian AID, Oxfam, Traidcraft, World

Fairtrade; indeed, all of the Green & Black CLASSIC chocolate bars remain organic and Fairtrade. However, their newer VELVET range is NOT Fairtrade but instead is covered by Mondelez International's COCOA LIFE system.

Incidentally, Green and Black was started in 1991 by a couple in their London flat, using organic cocoa beans from the Dominican Republic. They sold the company to Cadbury for £20m in

### SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT GOALS



THE LONG ROAD  
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TRADE* WORLD  
TRADING  
SYSTEM.

riorating health of planet Earth had agreed to the need for urgent action. Following further international gatherings, 17 Sustainable Development Global Goals were agreed with a Global Sustainable Development Report produced every four years by a panel of 15 eminent scientists drawn from the nations of the world to map progress on the goals.

The united mission to save planet Earth from destruction, while at the same time

Development Movement and the National Federation of Women's Institutes.

Fairtrade has always emphasised gender equality, sustainable communities, reducing inequality, and in fact almost all of the United Nations' 17 sustainable development goals are reflected in Fairtrade objectives.

1994 saw the launch of the very first Fairtrade product: Green & Black's Maya Gold chocolate bar, which is still

2005. In 2009 Cadbury 2 with its subsidiary Green and Black, was bought by the multi-national conglomerate, Mondelez, whose focus was maximisation of profits. Factories in the West were closed, and production shifted to countries with significantly cheaper labour costs.

By 2016 Mondelez replaced the Fairtrade commitment with their own certification system, COCOA LIFE, a vastly watered-down fair trade system, allowing com-

## FAIRTRADE: AN UPDATE

panies to retain more money at the expense of producers.

The rejection of Fairtrade by Mondelez was followed in 2020 by Nestle pulling Kit Kat production out of Fairtrade cocoa beans and sugar. Nestle was bombarded by a storm of protest with more than 300,000 signing a petition, MPs speaking out and numerous NGOs protesting about the multinational's self-interest. Nestle's Fairtrade sourced cocoa beans from the Cote d'Ivoire only amounted to 2.5% of its total global purchases of cocoa, and yet Nestle produced 800 million two-finger KitKat bars annually. That fact vividly illustrates how much more Nestle and other companies could do to source more Fairtrade cocoa beans, and how much more we might do to encourage them via boycotts and purchases that are limited to Fairtrade products. It is certainly feasible on our end, because now there are plenty of other chocolate bars that are Fairtrade.

Sadly, the Global Sustainable Development Report for 2023 contains numerous examples of targets being missed through insufficient commitment to their attainment by states and multinationals similar to the examples of multinationals reneging on their commitment to Fairtrade outlined above.

The report emphasises the

importance of the commitment to peace: "Progress on Goal 16 (Peace, justice and strong institutions) is threatened by rising levels of conflict, war and instability. Progress across the Sustainable Development Goals relies on peaceful and inclusive societies with access to justice for all and effective, accountable and inclusive institutions."



Palestinian olive tree, symbol of peace

With dramatic climatic changes occurring unpredictably, many rural economies are severely affected and were it not for the institutionalised support structures of Fairtrade, communities so affected would be reduced to abject poverty without a means of existence. Added to such unpredictable phenomena, state-based armed conflict exacerbates the problems faced by so many farming communities. In Palestine for example, harvesting of dates and olives is all but impossible, with water supplies severely restricted, access to the groves subject to physical attack and export of products subject to arbitrary restrictions; members of the Palestine Fairtrade Association miraculously manage to rescue

what is rightfully theirs. Life under apartheid would I suspect challenge the best of us.

Yet, during his talk on "Reconciliation" at the Embrace the Middle East event at St Martin's in the Field on 6th September, Archbishop of Canterbury Dr Justin Welby, chose not to recognise the reality of conflict and the violence of the apart-

heid regime of Israel and Occupied Palestine, despite the extensive reports of the USA-based Human Rights Watch, Amnesty International and Israel's B'Tselem detailing the apartheid system which affects all aspects of life there.

*Goal 16 should be seen as an enabler for other Goals* – it is an important condition for successful pathways to sustainability. On the other hand, the absence of institutional capacity and continuing violent conflicts in many parts of the world severely constrain the achievement of the Sustainable Development Goals.

Peter Kent-Baguley,  
Leek Meeting

GOAL 16  
SHOULD BE SEEN  
AS AN ENABLER  
FOR OTHER  
GOALS

## ARMS FAIR IN TELFORD

Telford International Centre is to host this fair (mentioned by Hilary Topp, p11) on November 1-2, organised by the UK's Specialist Defence and Security Convention. It was held over the last five years in Malvern. John Babb (Wolverhampton Meeting) reports that a small group of people, mostly Quakers from Telford, Shrewsbury, Malvern and elsewhere, is planning action. Telford Quakers are planning a vigil/meeting for worship outside the Centre. They have no plans to lie down in the road

and get arrested, but simply to witness for peace. Other groups may take direct action, but that is not certain at this stage. It is likely that the vigil will be on 2 November. The planning is being aided by Ellis Brooks, who works for Quakers/BYM as a peace educator.

Telford Quakers will welcome the support of Quakers from other meetings. An open letter has been prepared for all to sign, saying 'SDSC exhibitors include companies linked to the Sau-

di-led coalition's war in Yemen and the resulting humanitarian crisis, to anti-democratic surveillance and repression, and to the drone bombings, night raids and the killing of civilians in many countries'.

John will send further information when available.



Protest at the Malvern arms fair.

## QUAKER MONDEGREENS?

'In the name of the farmer under the sun and the whole experience, amen'. This misinterpretation by a child of a well-known prayer was reported on a recent Radio 4 'Sunday' programme.

Listeners wrote in with their own 'mondegreens', misinterpretations or mishearings of phrases that give them new meaning.

One reported a three-year old child, thinking of incense, saying during mass 'There's a lot of nonsense here today'.

Another remembered that as a child herself she had thought God was called Harold Wishart: 'Our father, Wishart in heaven, Harold be they name'.

Another had thought that when his father sang from the Messiah he was singing 'Come for tea, my people, saith your God'

It makes one wonder what children in and around our Meetings might be making of Quakerspeak without us knowing. Maybe something like ....

Walk cheerfully over the earth and swing a cod in everyone.

Are you open to new light, from whatever sauce it may come?

Our life is loving peas.

Our Friend freaks my mind.

Our Friend is not turd.

'igh hopes ... oh!

They were married in the manor of Friends

Add vices and queeries.

Roger Oldfield,  
Stafford Meeting



CLOSING DATE FOR NEXT ISSUE: END OF JANUARY BUT PLEASE START NOW!

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

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