

Malvern Quaker Meeting Newsletter

August / September 2021



Contributions for next Newsletter by the end of September to

Elizabeth Rolph

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Meetings for Worship

Meeting for Worship is back in the Meeting House. Mask wearing and social distancing is still necessary, following advice from Trustees of Area Meeting. In view of this, there will be no coffee either, at least until September. A few friends continue to meet outside, and you can join one of the other Meetings in our Area Meeting by Zoom – Kevin and I have sampled Bewdley and Shrewsbury so far, and been made most welcome.

We will occasionally hold a Meeting for Worship by Zoom – the next one is likely to be Sunday 22nd August. The link will be sent in Malvern Meeting Matters.

Special Collections

Elizabeth Rolph

The collection for August is for **Money for Madagascar**. This is a UK based charity working with an NGO. They are currently feeding daily nutritious meals to all 650 kids in 2 primary schools in the of the worst areas. It costs £6 to feed a child for a month. New donations will help extend their feeding to get these children through the perilous months ahead.

Quakers have a long standing link with Madagascar. Two Quakers went over in 1867 under the auspices of the London Missionary Society (LMS), who had asked Friends for help. Friends took over responsibility for a particular area and from 1880 onwards took over much of the medical work that had been started by the LMS. They started

hospitals and medical centres and a girls' school which is still in use. Quakers stayed active in Madagascar until the 1960s.

The Quaker Madagascar connection is still alive but now in a very different form, through a development charity called Money for Madagascar, founded in 1986 by a former Madagascar volunteer, with the support of Swansea Quakers. It funds development work to the tune of around £250,000 a year. Our Meeting received an appeal in June to assist address the worst famine Madagascar has had for 40 years.

Following our Business Meeting in June, money from Special Collections no longer goes through the Treasurer. If you would like to propose a collection you need to 'sponsor' it – which means you are responsible for publicity and money collection. Jill Etheridge is kindly assisting me with this, as we are not often able to get to Meeting.

The Special Collection for June was **Chernobyl Children** and £136.60 was received by Jill. In July we raised £115.60 for **Women In Prison**. Melanie has dispatched a cheque to the charity.



At our May Business Meeting we agree to make an annual donation of £250 to the Quaker Mental Health Fund (formally Retreat York Benevolent Fund) and to ask for additional contributions from friends via the newsletter.

We have received the following from their trustees:

I am writing to thank you all at Malvern Meeting for your generous and extremely welcome donation.

The grants we make each year are totally dependent on our income, and donations such as yours make a real difference. They enable us to make grants to individuals for counselling, as well as funding Quaker led projects, which are aimed to support as many people as possible.

Your donation will help us carry on this vital work at a time when the mental health of so many is particularly fragile.

Please pass on the thanks and best wishes from our trustees to all at Malvern.

Quaker Council for European Affairs

At the May Business Meeting we also agreed to make an annual donation of £500 to QCEA. We have received the following:

Thank you for the donation. This is much appreciated. Highlights of QCEA's work in 2021 include

- *Publishing a report on mediation that will build on the recent book 'Dining with diplomats, praying with gunmen', and during 2021 they will feed this Quaker experience into the revision of the 2009 EU concept on mediation and dialogue.*
- *As part of a project with Newcastle University and part funded by the Economic and Social Sciences Research Council they are promoting the Quaker testimony to equality by developing a series short videos and guidelines on aspects of gender and inclusion in peacemaking. During 2021 they will find opportunities to run workshops with policy makers on these topics.*
- *Working with other faith based organisations and others to influence the EU Action Plans on both Human Rights and Asylum & Migration.*
- *Holding an international Peace Education Conference*
- *Gathering Climate Change Stories in highly militarised areas*

The COVID-19 pandemic has shaken the international political landscape, increasing opportunities for more radical advocacy to nurture bolder political ideas. In practical terms, QCEA have moved most of their meetings online and found it possible to create and maintain that distinctive tone and atmosphere for their meetings – a crucial part of the Quaker added value in Brussels.

Restoring Relations

All are invited to, and encouraged to come to, a meeting on Sunday 12th September, at 12.30 at the Meeting House. This will be a sharing of the insights from the Restoring Relations process with the whole of Malvern Local Meeting. It was hoped this would be preceded by a shared lunch, but sadly this is unlikely to be possible, so if you are coming to Meeting for Worship please bring your lunch to eat between the meetings. For more information please contact Hugh McMichael Mhughmcm.2@gmail.com

News of Friends

Welcome to **Elizabeth Evans** who has now settled permanently in Malvern, having been living mostly in Luxembourg, and **Lynne Jacob** who is moving to Malvern at the end of August from Birmingham.

Advices & Queries No 41

Try to live simply. A simple lifestyle freely chosen is a source of strength. Do not be persuaded into buying what you do not need or cannot afford. Do you keep yourself informed about the effects your style of living is having on the global economy and environment?

A Tribute to David Simmons

Jill Etheridge

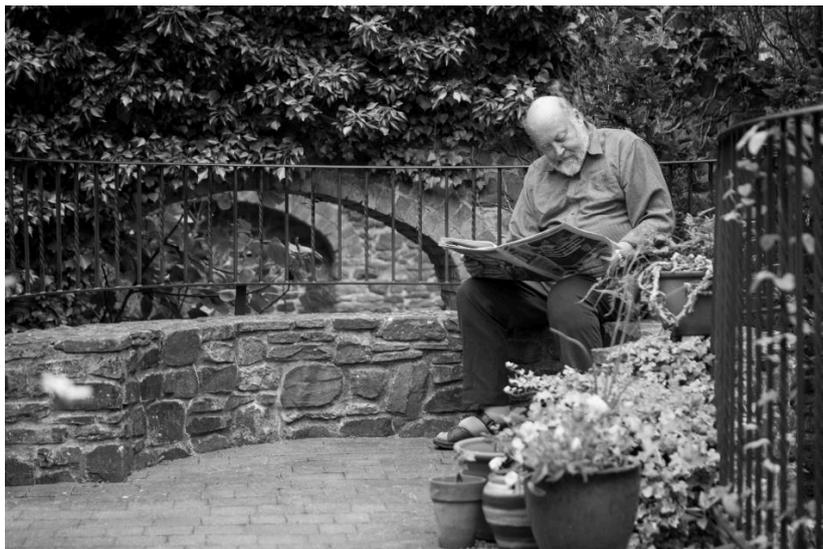


Photo from Cathrine Simmons, taken at her daughter's wedding

As I remarked when Paul Wyatt and I presided, as Elders, at David's memorial meeting: when I arrived at Malvern Local Meeting around autumn 1993, David Simmons seemed to me to be so much an established part of our Quaker scene here that I gained the impression that he had been in it for many years. It was only relatively recently that I discovered that he had only arrived here shortly before I did. His gifts offered in the service of Quakers generally, and our Local and Area Meetings in particular, were many and varied. After hearing of his death, Jackie Fowler wrote the following:

'David was also one of the most faithful attenders at AM, serving as a trustee for some time, I think. He used to travel by public transport whenever possible, even from Malvern to Wem and Shrewsbury.

We had many conversations over lunch at AM.'

I don't believe that I ever heard him give spoken ministry in Meeting for Worship; he was sometimes a man of few words. What is for certain is that he 'let his life speak'. He did take part eagerly in the various series of discussion groups that our meeting has

put on regularly and he found Hearts and Minds Prepared especially valuable and fruitful. I don't think there was much that David didn't know about Quaker history and procedures, and during my three years as Co-Clerk I valued greatly his guidance and wisdom as our Assistant Clerk at the table, until his deteriorating health made his attendance difficult.

As a very practical man, he was also a fount of knowledge on the wonderful industrial past to which well-known Quakers contributed so much. (I am reading a very interesting book about this at the moment.) Alongside deep thinking, astuteness and wisdom (he didn't always agree with the way central Quaker work was turning!) David had immense skills in construction and maintenance, and Mary Callaway – now living in Manchester – reminisced on this subject:

'I do remember him well, and how much time he gave to the care and repair of Malvern Meeting House; in particular, his battle with the squirrels up in the loft. I was more worried about David scrambling through the hatch when he was in pursuit, as he was quite hefty at the time!'

At an early stage in his illness, a few years ago, I visited him a few times in Worcester Hospital as well as at home. On one occasion we somehow got talking about the death and funeral of his mother. (I had remembered him faithfully visiting her down in Torrington, Devon, in my early years in Malvern.) After a while, not wishing him to be pessimistic about his own health, I said: 'Anyway, shall we talk about something a bit more cheerful now?' He replied: 'No, let's not for a few minutes' – and then demonstrated how well he answered the Query in Advices and Queries, asking '*Are you able to contemplate your own death...?*' He shared with me how he would like his memorial meeting to be, and added 'I'd like a woodland burial, and an offshoot of the handkerchief tree at Chiswick Meeting House to be planted there.' I had already heard on several occasions over the years about much older stalwart Quakers whose wisdom and depth he had valued as influencing him for good. I have to confess I was relieved when, a few months before he died, he relieved me of the rather tricky mission of obtaining such a sapling. However, when I found the scrap of paper with his original request, I was pleased to find confirmation that William Sewell had indeed been another of those who meant a great deal to David in the growing of his Quaker faith and life; for – relying on my memory - it was an extract of the words of this man that I had considered appropriate to read out at David's final earthly Meeting for Worship. I consider that David's loyalty was unparalleled in my experience. He is an irreplaceable, unforgettable Quaker who will be greatly missed and whose life example is an inspiration.

Simpler Meeting

Judith Badman

I recently attended on Zoom a series of talks on Simpler Meetings. They try to help us to simplify what we do so that the work is less onerous, posts are easier to fill, and Quakers have more time to BE Quakers rather than trying to get jobs done.

All of the talks in the series, along with their transcripts, are now available at www.quaker.org.uk/simpler.

Others might be interested in some of the ideas.



Yearly Meeting Gathering

Every year Quakers from across Britain get together to consider matters on a nationwide scale. This normally happens in London on the last weekend in May. Every four years this is extended to take place over a week, as a residential event, in a University campus, with associated activities and fringe meetings.

Yearly Meeting Gathering 2021 took place from 19 July to 8 August, all online. Around 2,000 Friends and Attenders took part. The theme was "*For our comfort and discomfort: living equality and truth in a time of crisis*". There are good reports in *The Friend*, and all the sessions are available to view at www.quaker.org.uk/ym/programme (go down to *Lectures* and *Introductions and Reports*). This includes the annual Swathmore Lecture, this year on the topic *Kinder Ground: Creating space for Truth*.

It would be great to have something about any of the sessions in the next Newsletter.

Active Peace Education on Malvern

Liz Flanagan

Rosemary and Andrew have done a great job in contacting schools and raising our profile through our new website, activepeace.org.uk, and with fliers. At present Rosemary and I, with a volunteer each, are booked to deliver 9 programmes in 4 different schools. The meeting is also supporting 2 schools who are accessing "Peer Mediation" through Peacemakers of Birmingham.

I was disappointed by the poor attendance at our introductory meeting in June but thank the four Friends who did come. We have taken on board some of the critical comments. However several kind friends have come forward since and offered very practical support.

At the next meeting we had a very successful working party preparing for our stall at Mappfest on Aug 7th. We have now met 3 new volunteers who are interested in working in schools with us.

Update from Rosemary

We had a really positive afternoon at Mappfest despite the pouring rain. It was an excellent community event and very well organised. We had a constant stream of people of all ages visiting the stall to talk about Active Peace, make peace bracelets and kites, or decorate hats. Many also wrote their ideas about peace on doves to be hung on our Peace tree, which we have borrowed from our Unitarian friends. There were a number of requests from teachers and parents for Active Peace to come to their schools. Hopefully we will be able to return to the festival next year with better weather.

Judith Badman writes:

On Tuesday the 22nd June, four of us turned up at the Meeting House to hear our team "Action Peace Education in Malvern" talk about their work and hopes for the future. I was fascinated by the way they achieve their goal, such as printed work booklets just for this project like: "Developing Self-Esteem, an Introduction to Ways of Coping when Life gets Tough". Children fill out the pages such as Owing our Feelings. Interesting games are in there too. How I wish I had had this project around when working with children years ago. So many of their pieces will help children who bully and are bullied and teach the essence of peace-making.

This is for me a project to boast about, a central part of my Quaker faith and I only wish more had been free to attend and support the group of Liz Flanagan, Rosemary Webb and Rafael Bate and Lumiel Cunin-Tischler. Well done all of you and I am so glad I found time to hear you all.

Quaker Peace Garden

Melanie Jameson

If you visit the Quaker Peace Garden by The Cube and walk along any of the four paths with flag up our testimonies, you will reach a circle of white stones in the middle, which surround an uninspiring space. What was once a bubbling spring was removed when it ceased to function early on in the Garden's life (The garden was relocated from a creation for the Spring Garden Festival to The Cube site).

For several years I have been considering how to fill this void on to which all the paths converge. One idea was based on the cheerful stones made by Brian (who occasionally attends Meeting, along with his Buddhist commitments) that you see dotted about town, bearing the message Take Heart.

This idea finally came to fruition during two cheerful sessions at The Cube last week when an artist led pebble-painting activities for families.



I had collected some larger pebbles from the beach at Clevedon so did some too. The idea was (for those who are prepared to abandon their handiwork) for these stones to sit in the centre at the centre of the Garden as a focus, including some smaller stones that visitors might wish to take home. Brian has been asked to decorate some larger stones that we could cement to form a base.



Hopefully this will be finished soon, so do come along, enjoy a coffee at the Garden Café and sit by the Quaker Peace Garden. It is well used and appreciated both by local people and The Cube management; you will see signage on the wall explaining

what we mean by Peace Simplicity, Truth and Equality so it is also good witness. At this time Jenna has stopped work as gardener and we welcome her replacement, Jo.

The Miracle of Quaker Prayer and Worship

Dick Stockford

This is the final part of Dick's writing about Quaker Worship and Prayer.

I found this account about as true as I could of my experience of Quaker prayer. It is both humble and mysterious, a sense that you can almost touch, but not explain.

Amen.

Descriptions of the "dark night of the soul" from the Spanish mystic John of the Cross (1542–1591) have become the marker by which many Christians measure their own experience of unknowing says Richard Rohr. John fits an entire life spent exploring God's mystery into memorable poetry, and even dares to call unknowing "an ecstasy"! Here are several stanzas from his poem "Stanzas Concerning an Ecstasy Experienced in High Contemplation":

I entered into unknowing
Yet when I saw myself there
Without knowing where I was
I understood great things;
I shall not say what I felt
For I remained in unknowing
Transcending all knowledge.
.....

4. He who truly arrives there
Cuts free from himself;
All that he knew before
Now seems worthless,

John's poetry, says Rohr, is exquisite in its humility—knowing that he does not know, can never know, and doesn't even need to know!

And his knowledge so soars
That he is left in unknowing
Transcending all knowledge.
.....

6. The knowledge in unknowing
Is so overwhelming
That wise men disputing
Can never overthrow it,
For their knowledge does not reach
To the understanding of not-
understanding,
Transcending all knowledge. [1]

[1] John of the Cross, "Stanzas Concerning an Ecstasy Experienced in High Contemplation," *The Collected Works of St. John of the Cross*, trans. Kieran Kavanaugh and Otilio Rodriguez (Institute of Carmelite Studies: 1979), 718–719.

Witness Remembering Hiroshima



On Saturday 7th August a Vigil was held in the grounds of the Priory, organised by Malvern Churches Together Justice & Peace Group. About twenty of us took part in a short service before standing facing Church Street. The photo was taken afterwards.

Glenthorne Guest House

Extracts from the latest Newsletter from this Quaker Guest House in Grasmere:

*Wordsworth described Grasmere as **The loveliest spot that man hath ever found** in his poem titled Farewell, which he wrote at Dove Cottage in 1802 (Just a few minutes walk from here). A recent guest, who had travelled all over the world on holidays, said that she felt the surroundings at Glenthorne were the most beautiful she had experienced. I have observed that it grows more lovely to my eyes with each passing year.*

We have been open since 17 May, operating within the UK government Covid guidelines. From 19 July we have decided, for everyone's safety, that not much will change at Glenthorne... the current measures for ventilation will carry on too. We will continue to reserve tables per bubble/group as much as we can. We are asking people to wear masks in the public areas, observe social distancing rules and windows are open where practical... and all food is plated and served to the table. All this has worked beautifully over the last 8 weeks and everyone has said they felt safe and cared for. See <https://glenthorne.org/>

