



Malvern Quaker Meeting Newsletter

June 2020



On line Meeting for Worship in April

Diary & Updates

We are holding an online Meeting for Worship every Sunday, 30 minutes of worship followed by 'afterword' and news of friends. Let me know if you would like to join us, or if you would like some guidance on using Zoom.

A Meeting for Worship for Business will be held in July using Zoom. The suggested date / time is Wednesday 1st July, at 7.30. Items are likely to include an update from Nominations Committee, Meeting House charging and letting policy, subscription to the Worcestershire Faith Forum and support for Lyttleton Well.

Area Meetings: A provisional date for another Meeting by Zoom has been set for Saturday 20th June. Details to follow. This is in addition to the Meeting programed for 11 July.

Paul Wyatt has made the difficult decision to step down as Area Meeting Clerk. Lynda Prescott is able to continue the role on her own, with support from Local Meeting clerks.

The Meeting House is currently closed to lettings. It is currently anticipated that no bookings will be taken until August at the earliest.

The deadline for next Newsletter is Thursday 25th June.

Elizabeth Rolph

Newsletter@malvernquakermeeting.org.uk



Special Collection for June

Help change governments' minds, free prisoners and stop executions.

Please contribute directly, <https://www.amnesty.org.uk/>

Online Meeting for Worship

Elizabeth Rolph

Here are extracts from a Questionnaire I completed on behalf of Malvern Meeting.

The last Meeting for Worship in the Malvern Meeting House was on Sunday 22nd March, a small meeting with us all sitting well-spaced. On next day we knew that this could not continue, and Martin Layton, from Bewdley Meeting, set up an on-line meeting for the 29th March, to which all in Worcestershire & Shropshire Area Meeting were invited.

It was clear from the response that it was worth holding an on-line Meeting for Worship for Malvern Meeting. As Co-Clerk, with the help of my husband, we set up an informal meeting for people unfamiliar with Zoom to try it out, and then had our first on-line Meeting for Worship. Initially there were 16 – 18 people, including some who never or rarely came previously. An E-mail now goes out to 26 people, all of whom attend regularly, average now is 23 attending. This is more than have recently been attending the physical Meetings.

The quality and depth of the Meeting has increased as people got used to it. The feeling is that settled down after the first few weeks and is now working well. The level of vocal ministry has been similar, and has included readings from Advices and Queries and Quaker Faith and Practice. Several have commented on the benefits of being able to see (nearly) everyone's face, with a name attached.

Here are some comments I have received or which have been shared in the afterword.

It is a good way that still allows us to connect with fellow members and attendees, share both some quiet time together listen to ministries and converse with one another afterwards. It is OK and better than nothing but I much prefer a proper face to face meeting. I hope they will return soon. The experience is nowhere near as deep as a true meeting goes and there isn't in my opinion the same level of connection.

I loved the solidarity and power of the mutual silence. The obvious respect and love for each other during the reflection and the eager longing for communion with humanity and the Earth was beautiful and strong. I was so grateful to be there (New attender).

There was a sense of connection, different from the physical meeting but there was a sense of tranquillity.

After a meeting in which there was no spoken ministry:
Bringing all the people into my own home is both surreal and comforting. I was delighted and surprised with the depth of the silence.

Silence is golden – it was as good as ever. It is precious to have a silent meeting from time to time.

Betty Hudson

Betty died peacefully at home on 1st May.

The funeral was on Tuesday May 26 at Evesham crematorium, but only family and Liz Flanagan and Richard Bartholomew as Elders were able to attend. Liz read out tributes from friends at Malvern Meeting:

Words to describe Betty; warm hearted, caring, wise, reliable, trustworthy, straight talking, grounded, fun, unflappable.



Betty was such a kindly and rocklike presence that it's hard to come to terms with her death. She seemed an enduring part of the landscape, vigorous and engaged to the end. She was the salt of the earth, quietly doing vital work such as the FOAG project. I also appreciated her sense of fun and picnics in her garden. I will miss her dependence and centering presence at Quaker meetings.

Sharing activities with Betty over the years taught me much about how to relate to others whose choices differ from mine.

Despite Betty being involved with so many organisations and good works, she always found time to care for people with the personal touch. I so often heard of Betty visiting, telephoning or writing to folks in any kind of need.

For me I find it hard to believe that there are no more Sunday afternoon dog walks, with tea and cake. But I've also lost a fellow Elder whose wisdom guided us through some tricky patches. Betty will leave a big hole in the middle of our meeting, but then she will leave a lot of big holes, no more so that in the heart of this grieving family.

At the end of the funeral Liz read this Celtic Blessing

Deep peace of the running wave to you.
Deep peace of the flowing air to you.
Deep peace of the quiet earth to you.
Deep peace of the shining stars to you.
Deep peace of the infinite peace to you.

May the road rise up to meet you.
May the wind always be at your back.
May the sun shine warm upon your face,
May the rains fall soft upon your fields.
Until we meet again,
May God hold you in the palm of His hand.

To watch the funeral, go to www.obitus.com. Login, using Username **the5385** Password **817332**

The family has let us know that Quakers will be very welcome to attend the memorial service to be held at Hanley Castle (date to be arranged).

Other tributes:

We had Betty very much in our minds at our online Meeting for Worship on 3 May. It was said that she is probably the longest standing member of our Meeting, and she had stayed with us to the end, including being at all our online Meetings for Worship.

I received the following when news of her death was circulated.

It was only last week that she telephoned to enquire how I was and we talked about childhood friends of mine who had been at Sidcot with her. Her concern for many is well known and others can speak to that better than I but I was always grateful to her for the support she gave to my wife during her last days (Michael Morris)

We had not known her very long but will remember her with fondness. We hold her loved ones in our thoughts (Lumiell and Robert).

I was saddened to hear of the death of Betty. She was such a lovely person and a good friend to me when I was able to get to the meeting and to the events at her house. I hold her in very high regard. At least she didn't suffer and was active as ever. Please pass my condolences to the family. (Sue Chatfield)



My mother, Averil, moved to Albion Lodge in Hanley Swan in 2017. She came to Meeting for a while and Betty befriended her and brought her to meeting when we were unable to. She continued to visit her, and kept in touch by phone during lockdown. I remember a visit to Betty's lovely home where she chatted to Averil and Kevin and I dug out a rhododendron she had offered us. It seems appropriate that it flowered in its new home for the first time this year, and we will always remember Betty when we enjoy it. (Elizabeth Rolph)

The preparation of a testimony

A valued part of the Quaker tradition is writing a testimony concerning the life and service of a deceased Friend. It is the responsibility of the Area Meeting to arrange for the preparation of this, on the recommendation of the Local Meeting. This will be considered at the next Area Meeting.

If the testimony is considered likely to be of benefit to a wider group of Friends or to the Society as a whole, it may be forwarded to a Quaker gathering or to Yearly Meeting. This should not, however, be an automatic decision. Its value as an inspiration to other Friends is not dependent only on its relevance in a wider rather than a local context. (Quaker Faith and Practice paragraph 4.29)

Advices & Queries

The advices and queries are intended for use in our meetings, for private devotion and reflection, as a challenge and inspiration to us as Friends in our personal lives and in our life as a religious community, and as a concise expression of our faith and practice readily available to enquirers and to the wider world.... Local meetings should give periodic consideration to the ways in which advices and queries can be used. (Quaker Faith and Practice 1.05 & 1.07).

The Elders of Malvern Meeting have asked that one be included in each Newsletter, and we have now got to no 30 – a rather appropriate one at the moment. In addition, the suggestion has been made that people may wish to reflect on them each Sunday when we are not having our usual Meetings for Worship. If you have been doing this, you should now have got to number 18 for 31st May.

30: Are you able to contemplate your death and the death of those closest to you? Accepting the fact of death, we are freed to live more fully. In bereavement, give yourself time to grieve. When others mourn, let your love embrace them.



A pdf copy of The Friend dated 22nd May was included with the e-mail sent out on the 21st May (it is always dated for the Friday but usually arrives on the Thursday). If you didn't read it, have a look now, particularly for **Judith Badman's** letter.

She was asking for information about a Quaker, Kathleen Schmitz-Hertzberg, who helped German Jews before and after the war, yet there is no reference to her in Friends House library. A friend of hers, Kurt, had told her of his escape with his mother on the kindertransport put there by Kathleen. Earlier she had helped Kurt's father get out of Dachau and to England where the English interned him on the Isle of Man. Judith had met and is now in contact with the family, and hopes to hear from others who she saved, and ensure something is included about her in Quaker records.

Report on Woolhope Dome Community Woodfuel Co-op AGM 2020 **Eoin McCarthy**

Eoin attended this (on-line) on the Meetings behalf as we invested £10,000 with them in 2012. We had £2,170 repaid in 2018.

Summary of Director's Report

The overall situation remains broadly similar to previous years. The biomass boiler at Canon Frome Court has been running well apart from one period of downtime, and the Society continues to operate at an annual loss. No member interest is payable for this year and no capital return is proposed. They remain on course to pay back members capital over time but are not predicting any significant interest payment over the life of the project.

The profitability of this energy co-operative depends on three things:-

1. The price of oil – the lower the price the less income from HMG's Renewable Heat Initiative
2. Seriousness and duration of breakdowns of the boiler or system - especially during the winter, the time of greatest demand and income from users
3. How warm the winter is also influences demand and income.

The prospects for a return Malvern LM's investment.

This investment was made on the basis that capital would be returned with interest, over the 20 years to 2033. This was based, among others, on an assumption about the price of oil over the 20 years. Shale oil and fracking had not then been developed.

A relatively depressed oil price for some years is now a real prospect. On this basis, the consequences for shareholders look less positive than in earlier years.

Whilst it is not in prospect, were the co-operative to be liquidated now, the return to shareholders, who have received no dividends so far, would be about 82%.

If you would like the full report please e-mail Newsletter@malvernquakermeeting.org.uk

News from Andrew Jameson about QCEA

At Britain Yearly Meeting last year I became Publicity Secretary of the British Friends of Quaker Council for European Affairs. We had planned a special event this Spring with the

Director of QCEA (Andrew Lane) in Oxford who was to visit and speak at a regional meeting, but it was cancelled because of the virus crisis. At a recent Zoom committee meeting including Andrew we discussed plans for the future post-covid.

After this discussion I shall be working on fund raising for QCEA as well as information to Quaker meetings in UK etc. Andrew Lane is an interesting person, ex-police, young and energetic.

Watch this space!

Some thoughts on Covid

Mike Townson

Mike has recently started attending the on-line Meeting for Worship with his wife Lucy. He wrote this for their parish magazine.

There are many lessons to be drawn from the Covid-19 pandemic sweeping across our planet. One is the danger of purely national(ist) responses, and another is the urgent need for international co-operation.

Inherent in this second lesson is also the need to be aware of what is going on in the rest of the world - which is extremely difficult when we are tied up in our own concerns and the existential dangers each one of us faces (albeit to varying degrees). But it cannot be avoided.

This week marks the fifth anniversary of Pope Francis' encyclical *Laudato Si'* with its subtitle "On Care for Our Common Home". We are called to take this duty of care seriously, and not just remember it when things are going well for us.

When we are in a bad place - which many of us are - it is difficult to acknowledge and accept that others are in an even worse place, and when we have the water up to our necks, it takes an extraordinary effort to reach down and help someone who is actually drowning. Yet this is what we are asked to do.

Covid-19 is affecting us badly, and we are facing an economic recession. However the pandemic is going to have an unimaginably more devastating and destabilising effect on the world's poorest countries, which do not have the resources to deal either with the disease or with its fall-out. For example, annual health spending per head in the UK amounts to about \$4000 - and we are finding that difficult enough to manage. In Senegal it is less than \$50 - and that is not the lowest figure in Africa. We are worried about a lack of critical care beds. In Malawi there are a total of 25 beds for a population of 17 million people.

The situation is further aggravated by generally low levels of hygiene and nutrition in the world's poorest countries, which mean lower levels of immunity and thus heightened susceptibility to disease. Food systems are already under strain in poor countries, not least as a result of the climate emergency, and the vulnerability of these systems are further heightened by the coronavirus pandemic.

Recent history shows us that what happens in the world's most fragile places has knock-on effects, whether it's through uncontrolled migration, terrorism or global instability. Leaving the virus to spread unchecked in the world's most fragile countries, and free to circle back round the world, is in no one's interest. Nor is economic collapse and instability in the poorest nations.

As if all this were not enough, Covid-19 is not the only pandemic affecting our world. There is another one raging right now - cholera. It is now mainly ignored in the West, but in other parts of the world it has never gone away. Between 2017 and January 2020 over 2 million cases of cholera were registered in Yemen, 29% of them in children under the age of 5. Yemen, a country afflicted by a war from which British arms manufacturers have profited greatly.

Tuberculosis is another scourge, and one effect of Covid-19 is that health resources will be diverted away from dealing with TB. It is estimated that up to 6.3 million more people will develop TB between now and 2025, and 1.4 million more people are expected to die as cases go undiagnosed and untreated during lockdown.

So what is to do? Governments and international organisations are going to have to do some serious rethinking about aid priorities; the way that funds have been released to deal with the fall-out from Covid-19 in this country and others shows that funds can be made available. We can lobby our politicians to this end. At a personal level we need to become more aware of what is going on and reach into our pockets to support charities seeking to alleviate the distress caused by Covid-19. And last, but by no means least, we can pray.

PERSPECTIVES on PRISON in LOCKDOWN

Melanie Jameson

Various people in Meeting have asked me how prisons are coping on during the lockdown and what arrangements are being made.

So, a quick overview: firstly, the End of Custody Temporary Release (ECTR) scheme for prisoners near the end of their sentence. It was the government's stated intention to ease overcrowding and lessen the risk of the spread of Covid-19 by releasing around 4,000 prisoners who fitted various criteria. This is insufficient to resolve the year-on-year overcrowding but at least it's a start. Single cell provision for all was another aim.

The main challenge of ECTR soon became clear – release them to where? In fact only those with suitable home addresses to return are even considered for ECTR. Electronic monitoring is also put in place.

On Radio 4's 'World Tonight', Robert Buckland (Secretary of State at the Ministry of Justice) repeatedly dodged the question of how many people had been released under ECTR. Questioning in the Lords was more successful; it emerged that only 389 people had benefited from this initiative, less than a tenth of what had been announced.

Another policy was the consideration of prisoners for release on compassionate grounds, who could be categorised as medium- or high-risk. Pregnant women are one group whom campaigners are highlighting. Another issue relating to women is the lack of female-only accommodation on release, despite frequent requests to remedy the shortfall.

The situation in the prison I visit provides a snapshot of how one establishment is coping. Prisoners are let out of their cells for an hour a day, for exercise and showers, always in their 'family' of eight from the same wing. One wing has managed to negotiate two x 30 mins instead of one 60 mins slot. No activities are available and support services are very limited: no mental health, probation or education staff are allowed in. The equivalent of Samaritans – 'Listeners' - cannot operate and just two chaplains are on duty any one time. They have to undertake statutory duties, administration, welfare and bereavement visiting - no-one else is on hand to undertake these last two important roles. Unlike in some other

prisons, these residents cannot have ipads to view 'streamed' funerals which they have been unable to attend.

Prison psychologists say that this 'Covid' regime represents a fascinating experiment that they could never have envisaged and that they would never have got permission to run. There are unexpected consequences. I was interested to hear from our Quaker Prison Chaplain that incidents of self-harm and suicide attempts have lessened over this period. This has been attributed to the restrictions leading to less (if any) bullying and indebtedness due to gambling and purchase of 'spice' and other drugs. This highlights the damage done by the pervasive nature of intimidation and widespread drug-use under normal circumstances.

Four books, summarised in a New Statesman article paint an unflinching picture of prison life (SEE <https://www.newstatesman.com/culture/books/2020/05/why-british-prisons-aren-t-working>) One of the authors, convicted of defrauding HMRC, makes the observation that society has let people down long before they end up behind bars and that many prisoners have simply fallen through the cracks, or been unlucky in the circumstances of their birth. He writes: *The British public has developed a sadistic mindset towards prisons and fiercely resists any policies that actually rehabilitate offenders. Even on a purely economic basis, the state of our prisons doesn't make sense. Reoffending costs the UK a staggering £15bn a year.*

Finally, what do Quakers have to say in the present situation? Our Recording Clerk, Paul Parker, working with Grace Da Costa our Parliamentary Liaison Officer, have written to key government and opposition figures with the following messages:

- Take further measures to reduce the risks posed by overcrowding by temporarily ending short-term sentences. Quakers support the [Revolving Doors' campaign](#) on this.
- Give priority within the early release measures to people in prison who are elderly and or have underlying health conditions.
- Provide practical support to ensure that the release of people in prison is not delayed by factors such as lack of suitable accommodation or a scarcity of tags.
- Make sure prison chaplains and prison visitors, including those who are Quaker, can provide for pastoral needs in a safe and enhanced way.

Times, Seasons, Places & Quakers

Richard Bartholomew

From time to time you may hear (or may even hear yourself saying) "... but Quakers are not people for times and seasons." I often find it helpful to dig around and try to find the source of our history, and maybe you do too- so here is my attempt at a summary at what seems like a pretty significant 'time' for humankind, in the midst of the pestilence as we are.

One of the early developments of our Quaker spirituality was the development of the shared experience that ALL of life was sacred and blessed, and that this experience was defied by ideas that one day (Sunday) or one season (Easter) was 'holier' or more significant than another. We are told in the Old Testament that the Sabbath and its proper observation was a critical part of Bronze Age Jewish agrarian society. In context, when life depended wholly on growing crops in a hot and dry climate, then enforcing one day off from this hard labour was no doubt a great relief and the duty to make religious observance on that day a chance to change focus and keep the toil in the fields in perspective.

Thus the Quaker idea of not being 'Sunday Christians' but 'all week Christians' was a break with the religious tradition of the 17th Century, and rightly much more challenging to live all of your life, and not just one day a week, by the same principles of love for God and humankind that the example of Jesus taught.

So as the Society of Friends settled into a more stable state by the end of the Civil War, Friends had dispensed with even the idea of giving special status to either Sundays or to the traditional festivals of the Church calendar, so when a Parliamentary ordinance had been passed in 1644 banning special Christmas church services many Friends would have agreed with this position, although it was not universally popular by any means.

Aside from the core experience that all of life was sacred, there was also a concern to break any link with the pagan, pre-Christian past given that the Pope had ruled that the Christmas festivities were to be observed when the mid-winter feasting of pagan times (the festival of Yule, and the Unconquered Sun-Sol Invicta) were celebrated. This was to overlay Christianity on that persistent pagan idea that in the dark, cold time of year it made sense to get together with family, the clan, the village to celebrate with light, food and drink the fact that the days got longer from the end of December and another growing year was beckoning.

Don't forget either the renaming by the early Quakers of the names of the days and the months, sometimes still seen in our minutes where Sunday becomes First Day and January First Month, because our day and month names are all based on pagan deities Sunday the day to worship the Sun, January named after the Roman god Janus who looks both ways forward to the New Year and back to the Old Year and so on.

Thus to Quakers and places. Many of us will already be feeling a sense of loss at not being able to gather on First Days and other days of the week at our Meeting House. It has rightly recently been listed by English Heritage as an architectural gem and gives to many of us a sense of calm, quiet and centred-ness which we seek in our collective worship. Whilst the Quaker view of place is rightly that no place is more sacred than another, nevertheless we know from experience that whether it is our Meeting House, or a particular spot on our Hills or somewhere else may have special qualities for us. Thus it seems to me that the challenge for 2020 is going to be to develop what early Friends saw as the Light Within in our spiritual practice, wherever we happen to be-whether at home in our favourite arm-chair, or in a hospital bed.

For me clues as to how to do this come from different directions-maybe the first is to realise that the Quaker saying of 'holding someone in the Light' is a literal clue and I try to see those people that I am specially thinking of in my mind's eye bathed in the Light as they turn in its blessed rays. It does me good for sure and I have hope that it does them some good too.

The other way is of course the use of a repeated phrase or saying, the mantra, and everyone has their favourites, Some of mine are "Be still and know that I am God" (Psalm 46:10) and that lovely invocation from Mother Julian of Norwich "All shall be well, and all shall be well and all manner of thing shall be well" (Revelations of Divine Love). There is also from the Orthodox East the Jesus Prayer which goes "Lord Jesus Christ, Son of God, have mercy on me a sinner" which is on the lips of the millions of Orthodox believers as they go about their daily lives often said under their breath, or just in the mind.

These times inevitably make us think of loved ones near or far, and of ourselves, and how tenuous is all of our grip on life. I am reminded of a section of Pilgrims Progress regarding Mr Valiant-for-Truth that was read at both of my parents' funeral services and which I find heartening now as I found it then:

"I am going to my Fathers, and tho' with great difficulty I am got hither, yet now I do not repent me of all the Trouble I have been at to arrive where I am.

My Sword I give to him that shall succeed me in my Pilgrimage, and my Courage and Skill to him that can get it. My Marks and Scars I carry with me, to be a witness for me that I have fought his Battles who now will be my Rewarder.

When the day that he must go hence was come, many accompanied him to the Riverside, into which as he went he said, Death, where is thy Sting? And as he went down deeper he said, Grave, where is thy Victory?

So he passed over, and all the Trumpets sounded for him on the other side."

So in these days that challenge us all as to how to live to our best let's also remember those other words of John Bunyan, who met George Fox in some gaol or another, and let neither 'hobgoblin nor foul fiend daunt our spirit.'

My war in Barnt Green

Andrew Jameson

Written 7 May 2020

My war was spent half moving between RAF bases with my parents, and then, when my sister Sue (TV actress) came on the scene, at my Granny's house in Cherry Hill Avenue, Barnt Green. She had moved out from Raglan Road, Edgbaston to avoid the bombs. We were just south of Brum on the railway line to Worcester. The most obvious sign of the war was the German bombers flying over to bomb the Midlands, the sound they made was an undulating roar of their 3-motor engines (not in sync).

Mrs Bunn from higher up the Avenue was our local Air Raid Warden. She would parade up and down blowing her whistle disturbing everybody. She claimed to be descended from Henry de Bohun who tried and failed to kill Robert the Bruce at Bannockburn. Our village only received two bombs and the only casualty was a horse, surprising really because the massive Austin works was just over a small hill to the North. The Austin works was extremely proud of the fact that their camouflage was so good that not a single bomb fell on it. Long after the war a party of German car manufacturers visited it, and at the end, they said, "You've shown us the museum, now where's the factory?"

Barnt Green village had a good choice of shops including a grocer where the money was put in a pot and zinged along a wire to a lady in a glass box, who zinged back the change. Our favourite was Mr and Mrs Dix's sweet shop where we were allowed to use our sweet coupons. One day I was puzzled to see a squad of soldiers pulling all the railings off the little front gardens in the village and carrying them away.

The railway line was (is) a trunk route and I remember standing on the platform with Susie watching the green-painted ambulance trains pass by, full of Americans! When they saw us a shower of sweets, gum and coins came out of the open windows and we ran to pick them up.

On the actual Victory Day, there was great consternation, what could we do to mark the occasion. Mother remembered we had a British merchant navy flag, all red with a Union Jack in the corner, so we opened the landing window and pinned it to the outside window sill with drawing pins.