



# Malvern Quaker Meeting Newsletter

May 2020



On line Meeting for Worship in April

**The Meeting House will not be open for any purpose apart from funerals and all other events are cancelled.**

We are now holding an online Meeting for Worship every Sunday, 30 minutes of worship followed by 'afterword' and news of friends. Around 20 people are attending and finding them valuable. Some are joining us who have not attended the physical meeting much recently. Let me know if you would like to join us.

The deadline for next Newsletter is Tuesday 26<sup>th</sup> May.

**Elizabeth Rolph**

[Newsletter@malvernquakermeeting.org.uk](mailto:Newsletter@malvernquakermeeting.org.uk)

**Special Collection for May: Howard League for Penal Reform**  
***Less crime, safer communities, fewer people in prison.***

Prison fails to tackle the underlying causes of crime, and they campaign for meaningful change in the criminal justice system, work to transform prisons, campaign to improve policing and reduce the criminalisation of children in England and Wales and work to ensure fairness for women.

Please give directly: See <https://howardleague.org/>

## Area Meeting Update from Lynda Prescott, Co-Clerk

On Saturday 25 April we held our first online Area Meeting, facilitated by Martin Layton (Bewdley LM) as our Zoom 'technical host'. We reminded ourselves of some of the essential elements of Meeting for Worship for Business and how we could adapt our Quaker Business Method for an online context. The agenda for this extra Area Meeting was deliberately short and fairly straightforward, so that we had a chance to accustom ourselves to online processes.

Encouragingly, there were 30 participants in the meeting, from all Local Meetings apart from Wem.

1. Membership: we recorded the death of Jill Hawkes (Bewdley LM) on 10 April. We also recorded the transfer of Gill Pennington's membership from Central England AM and welcomed her to Worcestershire and Shropshire (Worcester LM).
2. We agreed to Shrewsbury LM's request that a testimony should be written to the grace of God as shown in the life of Jenny McIntosh.
3. Update on small group considering pastoral care and the role of attenders in our Quaker Community: despite the upheavals of the last few weeks, the small group appointed at our last AM is forging ahead with its work, meeting by teleconference. The group has appointed Jackie Fowler and Paula Kingston as its co-clerks.
4. We agreed to donate the £400 already paid for the QPSW conference that had to be cancelled to BYM funds.

Next Area Meeting: Saturday 16 May, online (timings to be announced)

We hope that we will still be able to welcome Paul Parker, the Recording Clerk of Britain Yearly Meeting, to part. During the current AM we shared some ideas for topics we hope to discuss with Paul, and the small group on pastoral care is also formulating some questions for him. All attenders and members are very welcome to join us at Area Meeting, as always.

## Peter Thomas



### From Tony and Heather Matthews

It was indeed a privilege to be able to attend Peter's funeral at the Meeting House on April 1<sup>st</sup>.

The meeting had been carefully and thoughtfully planned by Peter and Barbara, but of course they had not reckoned with the virus. As it was, there were seven of us inside the Meeting House, with several more upholding us from outside the building or from their own homes. The chosen music, ranging from Mozart to the Beatles, and the reading, *Sea Fever* by John Masefield, were just as planned, but the sunshine and the birdsong, and the quality of the silence, were all gift.

It is a meeting we will never forget, and, after so much trauma, let us all hope that it has allowed Barbara to find a deeper peace.

## And a few words from Barbara



Peter was proud of being a Devonian and enjoyed visiting the county as often as possible, delighting in coastal and beach walks. Holidays abroad also beckoned and many of these were enjoyed by train - a passion for which, both real and model, he had enjoyed since childhood.

Trained as a social worker he found time in later life to graduate in Graphics Design. The skills learned were utilised for the benefit of many organisations not least Malvern Concert Club where he was also Concert Secretary.

Peter loved company especially with good food and wine, but he could be equally quiet, content by himself. He was a great cook, a great lover of music, a wordsmith, a meticulous organiser (albeit an incredibly untidy individual), a man passionate in his beliefs, a presence to be missed.

## Welcome to Rose Critoph

We should have welcomed Rose into our Meeting on the 24<sup>th</sup> April. We look forward to meeting her in person at some point in the future.



## Message from Malvern Individuals for Peace and Campaign Against the Arms Trade [www.caat.org.uk](http://www.caat.org.uk)

The 'Defence and Security' Expo, 3CDSE, is still planning to go ahead on July 14 & 15 at our Three Counties Showground. This is despite concern from local residents and ignores government guidance on combatting the Covid-19 pandemic.

We note that other events at the Showground beyond this date have been cancelled, and accuse the organisers of putting profit ahead of public safety.

The website [www.3cdse.co.uk](http://www.3cdse.co.uk) refers to '2000 decision-makers and 100 exhibitors'. The latter include some of the world's biggest arms manufacturers who are also sponsoring the event – such as BAE systems, whose supply of fighter jets to the Saudi air force contributes to the humanitarian disaster in Yemen. The overt aim of 3CDSE is to connect local and regional businesses to these 'big players'.

Faced, as we are, with an international health crisis and on-going climate breakdown, we call for the cancellation of this ill-conceived event and the re-direction of 'leading edge technologies' & 'strategic thinking' to address our real needs.

Please contact [melanie-jameson@outlook.com](mailto:melanie-jameson@outlook.com) if you can help spread this message.

## Woodbrooke Online

Richard Bartholomew has just started the free three week online course '*Radical Spirituality: the Early History of the Quakers*'. He recommends it for anyone interested in, or bemused by, the origins of the Quaker movement. It is led by Ben Pink Dandelion and Betty Haglund from Lancaster University and Woodbrooke. To enrol go to [www.futurelearn.com/courses/quakers](http://www.futurelearn.com/courses/quakers)

### Introducing myself

**Joanne Bates**



I have been attending meetings since September last and have found peace, kindness and an awareness of others which needs to be grown and appreciated by everyone. I also love the attitude of Quakers where the 'get up and do it' philosophy as opposed to bemoaning, criticising or being plain apathetic is useless and wasteful.

I find the A & Q to be particularly helpful in dark moments.

I am living here with my husband these past 3 years, in Malvern for the second time; I moved here in 1990 with Phil shortly after we married in April of that year. We had been forced home from our residency in Dubai due to the Gulf War. Our first daughter, Rosanna, was born in May 1991, followed by a second daughter, Sarah, in 1993. Rosie had started to attend West Malvern School and "Leapfrogs" nursery but as Sarah's arrival had been 'divine intervention' we needed a larger home. So, having been gazumped on a property in Malvern in a very stagnant market, we moved to the Welsh border near Hay-On-Wye for 20 years, which we loved. I have some Welsh blood on my father's side and when we stood on the Malvern Hills, it was always West and the Black Mountains which called to us - the flat, Severn Valley was never so appealing as we have a preference for hills and vales.

As children left home for university and work, our own work (involving much travelling to Europe) was becoming more difficult and tiring as we were older and also had elderly parents in Warwickshire and Oxfordshire. This led us to considering moving back to Malvern as it was equidistant between the mothers and we had loved the 6 years that we spent here - both our daughters were born in Ronkswood hospital, as it was then so there were many good memories as well as being a beautiful place to live. Coincidentally, we live right opposite our old house in Cowleigh Road and can see the bedroom where our daughters slept. It was a little spooky at first but now I find it comforting.

I, like my husband, Phil, am a musician and also compose music; I used to write jingles for GWR radio network at The Old Smithy recording studio in Kempsey and also have music on Discovery Channel. Other works include music for an installation at the NEC, a Musical Drama which was performed at Brecon Theatre with one song getting into the final of 'Best Song' category in 1996 when Julia McKenzie, Björn Ulvaeus (Abba) and Peter Ustinov were judges. I have written songs and musical plays for schools where my daughters attended and was a pt freelance music teacher at Crossgates school in Wales for two years. Private piano, singing tuition and workshops all made up my livelihood at different times.

Phil and I played a couple of songs at the Friends Christmas social gathering in December and I performed one of my poems. I was also an impromptu accompanist on the piano (and Jon on trumpet) at the carol singing - although I think not all were at ease with it not being a cappella.

I am a member of XR Malvern but I have less time to devote to it of late as I have begun a practitioner level course with the British Academy of Sound Therapy. We would have been in Europe now, performing but these are strange times and we have no way of knowing when that will be possible but the silver lining is that I have more time for study.

I laid the Quaker wreath at the war memorial (after only one attended meeting) due to other Friends being ill - Andrew Jameson was very helpful and guided me through it.

Yesterday, I also subscribed to 'Roots of Resistance' as this is close to my heart.

I am 60 next month and my husband, 67 but he is not attending meetings with me at this time. We are using this time to redecorate our flat and be at home - something that we miss quite a lot as we are usually based in Berlin for months during the summer.

## **This is the time to be slow**

Excerpt from the book by John O'Donohue, *To Bless the Space Between Us*, read at Meeting for Worship on 19<sup>th</sup> April.

This is the time to be slow  
Lie low to the wall  
Until the bitter weather passes.

Try, as best you can, not to let  
The wire brush of doubt  
Scrape from your heart  
All sense of yourself  
And your hesitant light.

If you remain generous,  
Time will come good;  
And you will find your feet  
Again on fresh pastures of promise,  
Where the air will be kind  
And blushed with beginning.

## **Thoughts on the Pandemic**

**David Edwards**

The UK is one of the most densely populated countries in Europe with the largest city by far, London a global hub (into which 190,000 people flew from Wuhan and other Chinese cities between January and March 2000) with three times the population of Berlin for example, therefore our infection rates from coronavirus are high as a result. This was to be amplified by the return of skiers from the pandemic mixing bowl of the Alps, I was skiing in

northern Italy in the week up until 19 January, Alpine ski resorts attract people from all over the world who then return to their respective countries.

The countries which have fared best in dealing with the pandemic are Hong Kong, Taiwan, South Korea and Singapore (some also densely populated) who spend a considerably lesser proportion of their GDP on health than the UK. They do, however, have the advantage? of having been seared by the SARS epidemic in 2003 and outbreaks of other viruses (which did not really affect us) and consequently they have planned for this eventuality. They also have smaller more agile bureaucracies and a more socially cooperative culture (I have a friend in Hong Kong, they locked down weeks and weeks before we did).

It seems to me that tactically the health service in this country has done remarkably well in swiftly repurposing hospitals, maintaining staff morale and reallocating their skills and with the impressive help of the military have resurrected the tradition of isolation 'Nightingale' hospitals in this country.

Strategically our efforts to deal with the pandemic have been particularly hampered by past failures in forward planning (unlike the smaller far eastern countries) as we were concentrating on the possibility of a flu epidemic /pandemic with lesser transmissibility rather than what we have now. It was at this stage years ago that the current problems in acquiring and providing PPE should have been addressed with less reliance on it being produced in China and the establishment of contingency /redundancy in supply and production in this country (including for drugs and vaccines) for when it could be needed. In addition Public Health England has been revealed as a sleepy unresponsive organisation keen to keep control to itself. The problems of overcentralised rigid bureaucracies protective of themselves and politicians from all parties without enough insight produced this problem rather than so-called austerity. The contrast with the decentralised more agile insurance funded health service in Germany is telling and the difference isn't just about the total amount of money spent on health.

The UK government tragically ignored the evidence which began mounting in January that a pandemic was on its way (not helped by the reticence of WHO to sound the alarm) the UK therefore lost five or six weeks in which it could have prepared more thoroughly for what was to come.

It is not as if we have not been warned over the past decades by Bill Gates and others that this was almost an inevitability. 7 billion humans are forcing the rest of the animals on this planet much closer together hence the evolution of viruses deprived of their natural habitat in other animals. South-eastern China with its densely populated areas/cities with animals such as pigs and geese being raised in close proximity, unsanitary food processing and marketing conditions and a repressive and paranoid government machine (controlled by the CCP) has produced most of the respiratory diseases of the last decades.

However, ordinary people in this country and others have largely responded remarkably well to something which is outside their own previous experience. It is a tragedy but until 3 weeks ago the number of total deaths from respiratory diseases, Covid 19, influenza and other pneumonias actually were less than the average for the previous five years. All that hand washing has reduced the transmissibility of other viruses, and no doubt will do so in the future since I think that the hygiene and social distancing measures we have been instructed in will become ingrained in our behaviour for a generation and hopefully also the kindness and concern that we have increasingly been showing each other.

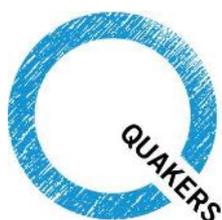
Unfortunately there has since been a collateral effect from Covid 19 which has increased the number of deaths during the last three weeks above the seasonal norm. It would appear the people are dying with rather than from Covid 19 or from other causes largely because they are fearful of attending hospital or are in care homes.

It is perhaps ironic that concern regarding global warming which has removed some of the oxygen which might have maintained our pandemic alertness should now be somewhat in remission as a result of the global lockdowns.

### **Quote from Dick Stokford**

*‘Somewhere within the soul there is silence. Attain unto it.  
It is a pearl of great price.’*

Wellesley Tudor Pole, a spiritualist and early British Bahá'í.



### **Update from QPSW**

Because of the financial impact of the Covid-19 pandemic the trustees have taken the decision to furlough around two thirds of all staff, including a number of QPSW staff. This measure will protect jobs and ensure that Quakers in Britain can continue to serve current and future generations of Quakers.

### **Adult Safeguarding**

I am is on this Board for Herefordshire. I have received some advice leaflets on victim support. Please contact me if you would like them; they are not county-specific.

[richardbartholomew@myphone.coop](mailto:richardbartholomew@myphone.coop)

### **Richard Bartholomew**

### **News from Lyttelton Well**

We received an appeal letter from them back in March. This reminding us of their café, bookshop and the work of their counselling service, (which is subsidised by other parts of The Lyttelton Well), and that without the support of Churches and individuals across the town none of this could happen.

The Well is now effectively closed. Most staff have been furloughed, but they are still a collection /distribution centre for the Foodbank. People can still phone in and order books and other items.

This lockdown situation will inevitably have a significant effect on their finances. They do need our support now more than ever. If you used them before the lockdown, or went out elsewhere for coffee, why not support their PAWS – Pound A Week Scheme. An individual contributing what they might spend on 2 cups of coffee a month raises £52 in a year (£65 if it is gift aided). See <http://www.lytteltonwell.co.uk/support-us/>

## Helping Refugees

Jon Critoph

I've been following a really interesting project by Chiltern Area Meeting - buying a house with a legacy left by a couple when they died. 22 refugee families have now lived there for a temporary period before they have been found permanent home. Do contact me if you want to know more.

## Holiday cottage with a view of the future and a view of the sea

Richard Bartholomew

In November Last year, I and my wife Liz went to stay in a cottage by the Pembrokeshire coast advertised in The Friend. This cottage, Sunset by name for its orientation, is one of several owned by local Quakers all converted from farm outhouses.

As well as having a lovely setting and view of the sea what was particularly good about Sunset Cottage was the fact that it was well-insulated with double glazing all around and had pleasingly warm underfloor heating from the air-source heating system and electricity largely from the solar panels.

As well as providing immediate comfort after a day out it also was a signpost to how we are all going to have to live in the very near future if we are to respond creatively to the climate emergency. Back in the 1960s we were told that North Sea Gas would be the answer (the question was I guess back then "Is there an alternative to being dependent upon oil and coal for our energy needs" now it is clear that gas is as carbon dioxide-producing as the oil and coal always was, and that we are going to have to get rid of our gas central heating boilers sometime soon.

Sunset Cottage shows us our future challenge, we all will need to live in houses or flats that are 1) double (if not treble) glazed and draught-proofed and 2) we will have to have either air-source or ground-source heating, and this will have to be the new standard not only for newly-built houses but also that for the existing housing stock too. Some parties in the 2019 General Election saw this and offered grants for us to get our houses in order should they get elected as the governing party whilst others are not. They however were not the parties who now form the UK Government, so we will need to push them on this as on many other things.

We had a lovely break and I would heartily recommend supporting these Friends to both provide great holiday accommodation but also in pointing us towards the future. For further information go to <https://stonescottages.co.uk/>

## Greetings from Glenthorne

Clerks received a newsletter from Glenthorne Guest House letting us know that it is closed until further notice. Jill sent a personal response and had a lovely reply from Terry Winterton, who asked her to pass on his greetings to our Meeting.

## Advices & Queries No 29

Approach old age with courage and hope. As far as possible, make arrangements for your care in good time, so that an undue burden does not fall on others. Although old age may bring increasing disability and loneliness, it can also bring serenity, detachment and wisdom. Pray that in your final years you may be enabled to find new ways of receiving and reflecting God's love.



## Videoin the Dell House

**Elizabeth Rolph**

Being unable to share the garden with guests and NGS visitors we're putting some Virtual Tour videos of the garden together. For a bit of fun, and to learn to use the camera and editor, here's a selection of out-takes...

<https://youtu.be/VfDLCFGOZR8>

## And if you want to do some gardening...

**Richard Bartholomew** has had a call from a friend of his daughter who has just done a transition from being the national plant-buyer for Aldi supermarkets to going it alone and she has found a niche in acquiring from nurseries stock that would be thrown away. So:

Not able to get plants for your garden or window box? Then Hortihenley will take your order and deliver to the Malvern area.

You will be supporting a new business set up by Katie Morris, who used to buy all of Aldi's plants from around the world and who went to school in Malvern.

Katie is saving quality plants grown by nurseries from being thrown away because garden centres are not open at the moment.

There is a delivery charge of £7.

See <https://hortihenley.godaddysites.com/>

## Just Algorithms Action Group (JAAG)

**Eoin McCarthy**

In 2019, concerned at the social injustices caused by the unfettered creation and use of automated rule based systems, bots and algorithms in Universal Credit, I was upheld in this concern by Malvern Local Meeting (Minute 9, 3-2-19).

JAAG was founded as a member organization in late 2019. We constituted it with a simple set of Rules that include our Aims, set out below.

The founding members came together through membership of the Quakers and Business Group. Our principles and working methods are rooted in Quaker values and we intend that to remain the case, while recruiting members from outside the Society.

JAAG is establishing links with other bodies active in this area: professional institutes, academic departments, legal firms, government and non-government organizations, regulators and media groups.

Our bid for Joseph Rowntree Charitable Trust funds, submitted March 2020, is to support a rigorous, independent review of algorithmic decision-making systems used in the Universal Credit system, to identify risks and propose mitigation measures

Our principal objective is to bring together and build a large and influential group, to promote practical solutions to the complex problems we face. The proposed Universal Credit (UC) project is expected to provide a springboard for other projects and campaigns.

Extract from JAAG Rules

The aims of JAAG are to:

- a) discover and raise awareness of what modern (including rule-, algorithm- and AI-based) decision-making systems are being used for and their potential for unjust use;
- b) discover and explain, in ordinary language, the processes being used to create, modify, implement, and use them;
- c) share our concerns about the consequences of not having an ethical and regulatory framework, supported by standards and protocols, which can be applied to all aspects of the development, implementation, and use of these systems;
- d) help develop and put into operation a best practice protocol for all categories of user;
- e) help promote a professional body for commissioners, designers, auditors, and users of rule-based systems and algorithm enabled systems;
- f) work together with others to bring about beneficial change, initially in the United Kingdom.

We are still at an early stage of development - we haven't even got a website yet. Our bid to the Joseph Rowntree Charitable Trust (JRCT) is for an ambitious project. It will be some time before we hear the result, but the fact that JAAG is a brand new organization, with no track record will obviously be to our detriment. This is not an insuperable problem: our bid sets out the competence and experience of our proposed team. But it will help our cause considerably if we can show a rapidly growing membership.

We are therefore approaching personal contacts and the response so far has been very encouraging. We expect to reach a total of about 40 or 60 members this way and will then issue invitations more widely.

Whether or not our bid to JRCT is successful, we will be embarking on fund-raising from other sources, as there are some activities which we want to pursue which will be outside the scope of the Universal Credit Investigation.

If you would like more information or you are willing to become a member of JAAG at the annual subscription of £20 please contact [eoim.mccarthy@decisionstrust.org](mailto:eoim.mccarthy@decisionstrust.org) .