



Malvern Quakers

Newsletter

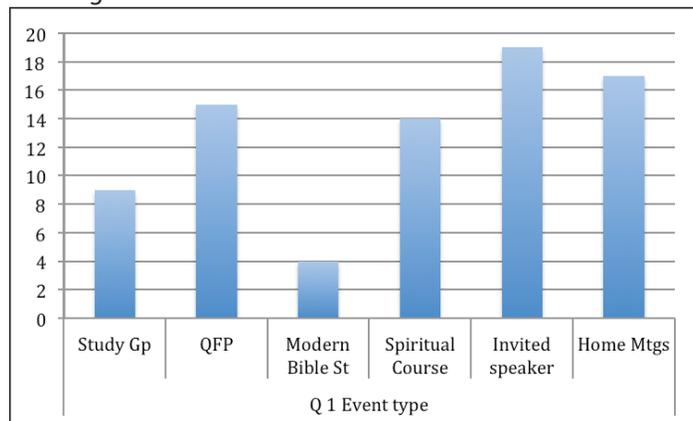
Spring 2014 March - April - May

Our Spiritual Development

Elders & Overseers invited views as to how best to provide for our Meeting's spiritual needs. The following is a summary of their findings and numbers of people interested.

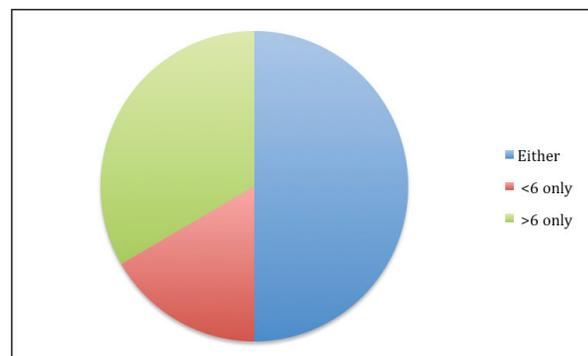
1. The types of event that suits us best:

- Quaker study group 9
- Quaker Faith and Practice 15
- Bible study 4
- Spiritual courses 14
- Invited speaker 19
- Meeting in each others' homes 17



2. Preference on the size of event groups

- 4 of us prefer smaller groups of up to 6 people,
- 8 of us prefer a larger group
- 17 of us are content with any group size.



3. The days and times that suit us best.

	Morning	Afternoon	Evening
Monday	2	2	5
Tuesday	4	4	6
Wednesday	2	7	9
Thursday	2	6	6
Friday	1	2	3
Saturday	2	2	4
Sunday	3	4	7

4. Spiritual themes that interest me.

Buddhism	Ecology	Ethics	Philosophy
Mindfulness			
Neuroscience			
15	9	9	10
Discernment	Walking the Labyrinth	Ministry	Witness
10	8	8	13
Quaker Universalism	Experiment with Light	Personal development workshop	Death & Dying
7	7	10	8
Healing	Spirituality & Sustainability	QCIR	
8	8	9	

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Malvern Friends Meeting House 1 Orchard Road Malvern WR14 3DA

Email: malvern@wsq.org.uk Website: malvernquakers.org.uk

All Welcome at Meetings for Worship:

Every Sunday 10.30 - 11.30am (followed by refreshments)

First Wednesdays at 12.00 noon - 12.40pm (followed by bring-your-own lunch)

Second Wednesdays at 8.00 - 9.00pm (followed by refreshments)

Selected events for your Diary:

Monthly Activities at Meeting House:

- First Wednesday: 12.00-12.40pm.
- Midweek Meeting for Worship followed by byo lunch
- Second Wednesday: 8.00-9.00pm.
- Meeting for Worship followed by refreshments
- Fourth Wednesday: 12.30-2.00pm.
- Discussion and bookshare

17 April at Meeting House 2.00-3.30
Moving Prayer

Kindler sessions in London

One-day events being held at Friends House by the Kindlers – a Quaker group which focuses on spiritual development and renewal.

These are monthly workshops under the heading 'Laboratory of the Spirit'

- Sat 15 March: Vocal Ministry in Meeting
- Sat 12 April: The Way of the Mystics
- Sat 10 May: Stories from the Heart

Cost £10 per workshop. Times: 10am refreshments for 10.30 start, ending at 5 p.m.

See the poster on the Clerk's noticeboard for further details or contact Friends House or your Overseer.

Being Quaker – Doing Quaker

Look out for more details of this forth-coming event in April/May

Roles in Meeting

The Role of Overseers (agreed by Overseers and Elders)

Your Overseer is your first point of contact – look at the list near the kitchen hatch to check who this is.

We are here to provide guidance, support and encouragement to enquirers, attenders and members alike.

Through informed and sensitive listening we aim to ensure that pastoral care takes place in our Meeting.

Please approach your Overseer as necessary; one area we are responsible for is help for those in financial need and assistance with funding to attend Quaker courses.

Membership

Total number of adult members and attenders within Area Meeting for 2013

Bewdley	40	Wem	10
Church Stretton	15	Worcester	43
Malvern	69	TOTAL	295
Shrewsbury	68		
Telford	51	<i>Total for 2012</i>	296

Encountering the wider Quaker family

Melanie Jameson

I have had a strong sense of injustice since I was very young. This feeling was strengthened years later as I became familiar with the difficulties and humiliations faced by many adults with dyslexia. I ran an adult dyslexia group in Lancaster for 11 years and tried to support them through the difficulties they faced, especially in the workplace. My biggest challenge came when I acted as an informal expert witness when one of the members came before the courts. It dawned on me that the criminal justice system (CJS) was a minefield for those with dyslexia and related conditions.

Having found that there was no official guidance on these conditions, despite the frequency of their occurrence, in any branch of the CJS, my main work since that time has been to try and rectify the situation. This has proved a somewhat lonely path but one in which I have had some success.

It was a relief when I came to Quakers in 1996 to discover Quakers in Criminal Justice, an informal network of Friends with concerns about the CJS. I began to feel that I had a CJ 'family' and was soon drawn into the organisation of their annual conferences. Then, in 2007, the invitation came to join a central Quaker committee: the Crime, Community & Justice Subgroup of Quaker Peace and Service.

Around that time I had my biggest breakthrough, when I was asked to draft guidance on Specific Learning Difficulties for the judiciary; this established my credentials. Nonetheless much of the work that followed was an uphill struggle, with milestones followed by setbacks, within an ever-changing and fragmenting justice system.

It is now six years on, and my second triennium with the central committee has just come to an end, leaving me feeling somewhat bereft. We had been engaged in a variety of interesting pieces of work from a major project (to gather and analyse first person accounts of custody) to discussing an avalanche of government consultations, in which the punitive element increasingly came to the fore. But what a privilege to be in a group of people with whom I felt a common bond, which was both supportive and strengthening.

I continue to keep a close eye on developments in the CJS. In the last few days I have finally finished a guide for staff working with offenders: **Releasing the Potential of Offenders with Dyslexia** (not everyone's bedtime reading!). It will be launched at the annual conference of my CJ 'family': QICJ.

I would advise anyone to take the opportunity to learn more about the breadth of our Quaker work, through courses and conferences, in our Area Meeting, at Britain Yearly Gathering, and in central work. A deepening awareness of Quaker commitment through the centuries to those caught up in the CJS has helped me to see how I fit within our prophetic framework and shown me that I am not working alone, as I had initially thought. My sense of justice – or injustice – has taken me on a long journey, and one that is not over yet.

Reflections on theology and Decision-making

Peter Bevan

I would not usually occupy this space with feedback from Suffering and Central Nominations as well as a day conference on Christian and Interfaith relations. However, as they all came together I felt challenged. Perhaps should be the case that all reporting back should be within a theological context.

We were reminded in Sufferings that it was not acceptable for public statements from Friends House to be mainly political. As David Boulton (a non-theist advocate) reminded us, we are not a humanist organisation and that non-theists are but one colour in a rainbow of thoughts. In the QCCIR conference David also asked by what authority do we share in public our 'faith in loyalty to truth' and deny 'belief in a proposition about the supernatural'.

Perhaps I have a choice between reporting as a vessel filled with light like the rising of the sun evoking the power of the unknown and encouraging the humble and unexpected. (as Phillip Gross suggested in the QCCIR conference) or engaging in an act of collaboration between my imagination and the thoughts and activities of those I work with. The clerk of Trustees described, within this second model, their role as 'a keeping cloud in a cloud of witnesses'. The clouds held together by trust. Trust being the glue of collaboration.

It is difficult for me to hold this trust when Sufferings is told quite clearly that the naming of the revamped Large Meeting House is not a matter for Sufferings and that decision to start the 5 to 10 year process of revising the Book of Discipline was made on the basis (or so it seemed to me) of 6 speakers (and not many others) who spoke to every item on the agenda. It is also difficult for me to keep in mind this trust when the 200 or so central roles decided upon each year are made on the basis of 'secret' discussions without prior consultation with the people concerned. I want the Society of Friends to be an open organisation with maximum consultation and openness to the unknown.

Sufferings is required to be visionary rather than preoccupied with decision-making so perhaps the above paragraph is irrelevant! To be visionary we are, David Boulton reminded us, is to experiment with faith. Experience by itself, often enhancing our self-image, needs to be tested and evaluated. We have to live with the anxiety of uncertainty that this testing demands. Rex Ambler acknowledged that within the freedom of silence there is a discipline in which we abandon images of ourselves so that the mysteries of life can be confronted. Do you seek God or do you seek images of God enhancing your own identity? The poet Phillip Gross asked that if the spirit of God moves me should I say so in ministry or should it remain hidden by avoiding the use of the words spirit and God?

To help move us forward it has been suggested that the concept of regional facilitators to local meetings be developed under the banner of 'vibrancy', which means a sense of identity which is strong and outward.

In retrospect, this attempt may have been too bold. For neither the power of the unknown or the stimulus of my imagination have been significant in my administrative roles. The least that can be said is that there is a sense of participating honesty which can only influence decision-making if there is some trust between us which enables us not to take the views of others too personally.

Corporate Identity

Peter Bevan

As of 24 January 2014 Malvern Quakers became detached from Britain Yearly Meeting as a legal entity. We now belong to a new charity called Worcestershire and Shropshire Area Quaker Meeting. The charity number is 1155482. This must be used in all correspondence with other agencies and individuals carried out on behalf of Area Meeting and Local Meeting. If payments are made directly to our Area Meeting then this is the charity number to use. If payments are made directly to Britain Yearly Meeting (Friends House) then their charity number is used, which is 1127633. The address of our Local Meeting (which has no legal status) is Friends Meeting House, Orchard Road, Malvern, Worcestershire WR14 3DA. Current local contact details for the new charity are: tel: 0800 011 3219; email: wsamqtrustees@gmail.com.

The contact person will vary in future depending on who is clerk of trustees to our Area Meeting, but the contact details will probably remain the same.

NB: This change is gradually happening throughout the UK so that eventually all Area Meetings will have changed their legal status – mainly to independent charities with the same legal obligations as all other charities nationwide (although I understand that at least one area has decided to become a charitable company). Britain Yearly Meeting is also an independent charity. Its legal responsibilities are for Friends House activities although it should be noted that the trading arm of Friends House, *ie*, hospitality (including lettings and catering) is its own independent company wholly owned by BYM.

Quaker Faith and Practice ch.4 still defines our relationship to BYM except that we are now accountable to the Charity Commissioners in relation to effective governance. This section of Faith and Practice is included in our own local trustees constitution. A new handbook for area trustees will be available later this year which will hopefully further clarify issues of accountability - in particular the role of AM trustees in relation to Area Meetings and Sufferings in relation to BYM trustees.

Quaker Meeting

Facing shafts of light without, within a brighter place we begin to whisper then to shout

Fractures of the outer core, dropping of the daily mask, conversations deep and raw are offered to thee.

Yet, who are we?

A worshipful few, speaking from the silence to ignite and renew,

Fractures of the outer core conversations deep and raw are offered to thee.

And thou?

Across the room, beams a smile.

No words now, Ministry done for a while, stillness heals the spirit sure and true, as for old and for new.

Rosie Adamson-Clark (Bolton Meeting)

as read recently at a Malvern Meeting for Worship

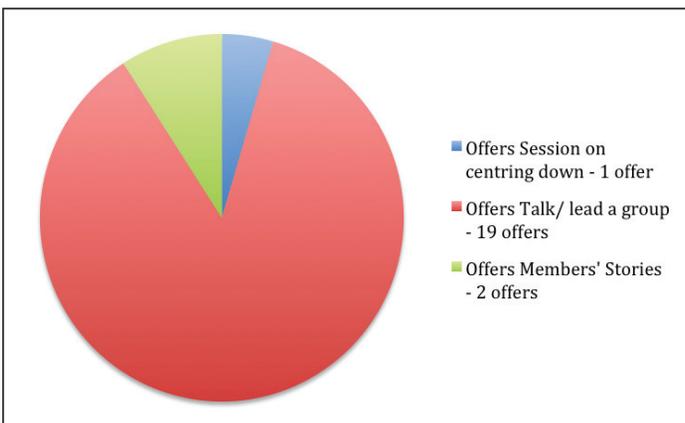
Our Spiritual Development

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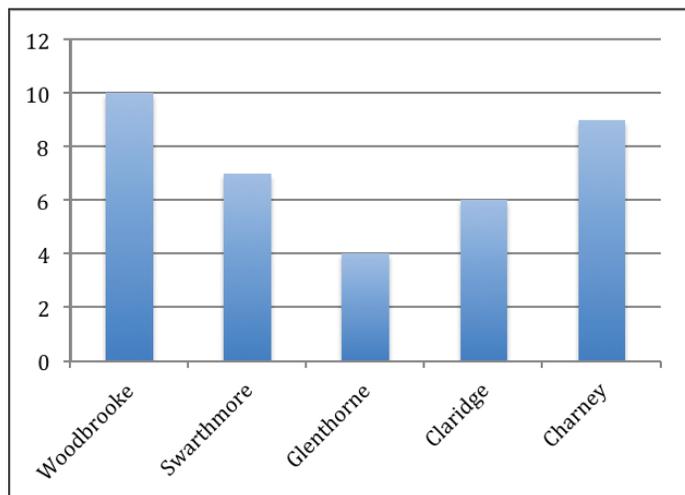
5. Things I want to find out about Quakers

Quaker History & Tradition	Woodbrooke on the road: Peace & Reconciliation	Testimonies	Why and when did we stop quaking?
14	8	5	4
Nourishing the LM	Outreach	Being a Quaker today	
7	3	18	

6. Things that members and attenders could offer in a discussion or study group



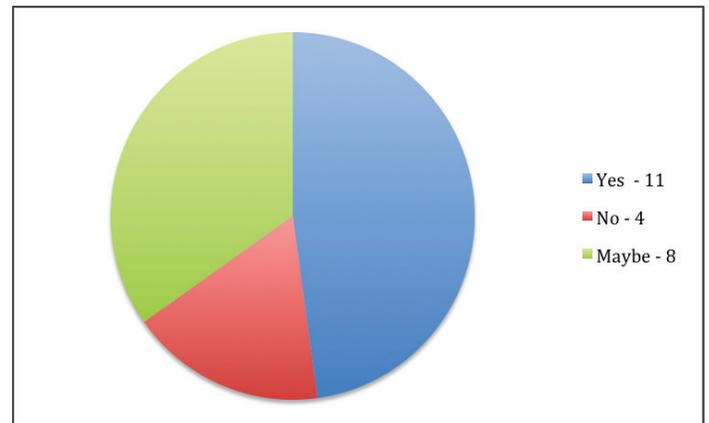
7. Residential course location of interest



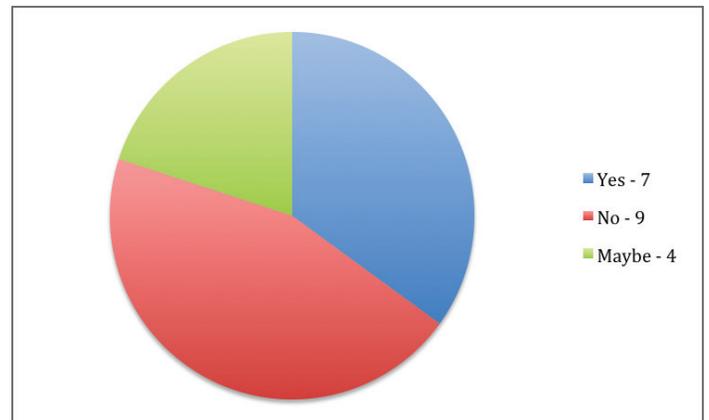
8. I would like more social events

Curry evening	Light-hearted music / walking / eating together	Anything creative	Circle dancing
8	14	5	3

9. Interest in an away-day (or weekend) together



10. I am interested in a 2014 re-run of H&MP (Hearts & Minds Prepared)



Thought for the Week

Published in Malvern Gazette on 17 January 2014

Although I have some reservations about the association of a church leader with elitism and militarism I was impressed this year by the Queen's speech on Christmas Day. To put contemplation, prayer and personal reflection at the heart of the message emphasized the significance of the discipline of silence in a distracted, noisy and money orientated world. Silence does not mean freedom from 'inner noise' of course. By 'inner noise' is meant all those thoughts which immediately come crowding into ones mind when we sit down quietly. The importance of sitting down quietly is to remind ourselves that we are more than our passing thoughts and that these precious times enable us to allow the deeper significance and purpose of life to emerge. Usually we are swamped by everyday life and do not allow ourselves to recognise these usually hidden values. These values are spiritual values. If we wish to claim that these values come from God then we must be careful not to symbolise God as an old man in the sky whispering to us and controlling our lives but an enabling and strengthening presence when we choose to listen.

Peter Bevan (Malvern Quakers)