



Malvern Quakers

Newsletter

Winter 2012-13 December - February

Ducking our Responsibilities?

We are the generation who came to have cheap air flights, more than one car per family, central heating, air conditioning, food available from all over the world, low-cost manufactured goods and a host of domestic appliances designed to lighten our workload. A few voices may have spoken out about the implications of our modern western life style but the true cost of these innovations has only been realised in recent years. What has also been widely acknowledged is that this way of life is not sustainable.

An article in *The Friend* (2 November) uses the following definition of Sustainability: 'meeting the needs of the present without compromising the ability of future generations to meet their needs.'

The term Sustainable Living is increasingly heard in Quaker circles, forming the focus of our 2011 Yearly Gathering and the associated Swarthmore Lecture, as well as a central working party. In her impassioned plea to all of us to start engaging with these issues, Pam Lunn (the Swarthmore Lecturer) concluded her treatise with the main areas that we should focus our energies on (if you can't recall them, read on).

What a good thing we have a branch of the Transition Network in Malvern: Transition Malvern Hills. The job description of one of the founder members (Ginny Lee), who works at The Cube, is surprisingly similar to the Quaker priorities:

- 'Growing / Building up' the community and drawing more people in;
- Promoting the question of practical skills which (in Pam's view) we will need later as things become more difficult;

- Getting the message out. Pam describes this last one as 'Reframing the issues', *ie* redefining the situation as things develop, in order to reach and draw in different parts of society.

Many of us are making small changes but overall, as a Meeting, might we be shifting our responsibility on to Malvern Transition Hills? Could we be working more closely with people who share these concerns? Fortunately there is an opportunity coming up shortly, upon which we can surely build...

An exciting event is coming to Malvern from 1 to 3 March: **Malvern Science & Faith Weekend**, organised by the Science and Faith organisation and described as 'a multi-faith exploration of the theme of Sustainability'.

The keynote session, entitled **Spirituality of Sustainability**, will include a talk by Satish Kumar, a former monk and long-term peace and environment activist who has been quietly setting the Global Agenda for change for over 50 years. The session links to the main message from Britain Yearly Gathering in 2011: As a church, Quakers should seek to reduce our carbon footprint and see this as both a spiritual and practical imperative.

One of the events is at our Meeting House: **Project Earth Seminar** is designed to encourage faith communities to take action together. The weekend opens with a film *The Economics of Happiness*, preceded by a short input from people who come from different faith backgrounds, including Quakers, on how their faith has responded to sustainability and climate change.

Talking of climate change, let's get one thing straight: if winters seem to be getting colder how can this be evidence



Satish Kumar

of global warming? Apparently there is a relationship between melting arctic water and changing wind directions so that colder weather blows in from the East and does not benefit from the milder Atlantic winds. There is no doubt that 'extreme weather events' are more frequent and occurring in new locations. These changes demand action on a national scale, but rather than feeling overwhelmed and discouraged, let us join with people of faith and science who may be further along the route to making necessary changes. We should be able to both learn from and contribute to these explorations.

I am hoping that the Malvern Science & Faith Weekend will help galvanise more of Malvern than has, so far, been drawn into considering the issues. Surely Malvern Quakers would wish to be part of this important work.

Melanie Jameson

Comment: the Quaker testimony of simplicity is our personal witness; the Quaker testimony of justice is about the fair distribution of resources; the Quaker testimony to peace is more directly related to sustainability.

For more details of the Science and Faith Weekend see *Diary* overleaf, and scienceandfaith.org.uk

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 at 10.30am
Third Thursdays 12.00 noon (followed by bring-your-own lunch)

All events are held at Malvern Friends Meeting House unless stated otherwise. Please note that attenders should seek permission from Preparative Meeting to go to Area Meetings.

- Sunday 16 December
Special Meeting for Worship 10.30-11.00
 with Readings and Carols 11.00-11.30 - come prepared!
- Tuesday 25 December 10.30-11.00
Christmas Day Meeting for Worship
- Saturday 2 February 2.00
Peace Garden Meditation outside The Cube, Albert Road North
- Saturday 19 January 11.00-4.00
Hotpot Supper and New Year Celebration
- Saturday 9 February 11.00-4.00
Area Meeting at Telford Meeting House
- Sunday 10 February 3.00
Malvern Churches Justice and Peace Group
 Palestine/Israel conflict
- Thursday 21 February 2.00-3.30
Moving Prayer
- Friday 1 - Sunday 3 March
Malvern Science and Faith Weekend
- Friday 1 March 7.30
 Film *The Economics of Happiness*
 and discussion with a panel of different faiths
 The Cube, Albert Road North, Malvern
- Saturday 2 March 2.00
Project Earth Seminar
- Saturday 2 March 7.30
The Spirituality of Sustainability
 Talks by Satish Kumar and Rianne ten Veen
 St Matthias Church, Church Road, Malvern Link
 For full programme see leaflets or scienceandfaith.org.uk

OTHER REGULAR MEETINGS AND EVENTS

- Second Sunday in month
 9 December, 13 January, 10 February
House Meetings for Worship
 Contact Betty Hudson for details
- Second Monday in month
 10 December, 14 January, 11 February
Healing Group
 Contact Hazel Court or Mary Callaway for details

AREA MEETINGS 2013

- 9 February: Telford 11-16.00
 9 March: Bewdley 10.30-13.00
 12 May: Shrewsbury 1400-16.30
 11 June: Church Stretton 18.00-20.30
 13 July: Malvern 11.00-16.00
 8 September: Worcester 14.00-16.30
 9 November: Wem 11.00-16.00
 14 December: Bewdley 10.30-13.00

Notice

We are looking for someone with calligraphic skills to update our memorial records. Please contact either Helen Chiverton or myself (editor). **Peter Bevan**

Our Heritage

At our Area Meeting on 10 November we had a surprisingly long and unscheduled discussion on the significance of our buildings. The following is a summary of the discussion which highlighted both practical and spiritual considerations.

Amongst the practical considerations were a comparison of Swarthmore Hall with the Quaker Tapestry Project (now an independent charity); a recognition that the proposed new roofing installation at Friends House (now rejected) was to be mainly externally funded; and that Woodbrooke is an independent charity owned by the Bournville Village Housing Trust. Associated with these considerations was the issue of value for money.

There was divergence of opinion about the involvement of the National Trust with Swarthmore Hall. Several people were members and welcomed the greater openness and accessibility of the NT in recent years rather than 'pickling buildings'. Perhaps it was a lone voice that expressed the view that the NT enabled poor people of the 21st century to see how the rich people of previous centuries lived. The involvement of English Heritage is their wish to make detailed surveys of our historic buildings with recommendations for upkeep as part of their own long-term strategy. It was acknowledged that many properties (managed by National Trust and English Heritage) may have restricted opening hours and are 'staffed' by people with expert knowledge. Similar practical considerations are shared with most religious organisations.

There were a number of considerations around the theme of 'where prayer has been valid'. Some members considered that where a building is not lived in and prayed in it loses its soul whereas others maintained that there is an inherent 'spirit of a building'. Supplementing these perspectives was the suggestion that new buildings cannot have such a sense of place – an observation rejected by experiences in modern places of worship. Indeed where is home to a worshipping community?

Comment: I remember reading a long time ago that the difference between English and Celtic spirituality was that the English keep their Gods locked up between stone walls whereas the Irish Gods are free to roam. Perhaps an awareness of roots is far deeper than 350 years of our specific history and reverence and celebration are living processes which are a witness to that which needs no buildings at all.

Peter Bevan

Thought :One

A recent spoken ministry on the theme of death drew our attention to the following: a person who was near to death asked her grandchild, 'Do you mind if I go now?' The seven year old replied, 'It has been nice having you.'

Special Collections at Meeting 2013

- January: Shelter
 February: Dabane Trust
 March: Chernobyl Children's Life Line
 April: Stonham Housing Association
 May: Malvern Hills Young Adults Trust (Foyer)
 July/August: African Great Lakes Peace Initiative
 (a Turning the Tide Project)
 October: FOAG

Other months to be decided

QDDN - and us!

Earlier in the year Malvern Meeting supported Helen and me in attending a short course on End of Life processes and challenges, run by the steering group of QDDN. We were both inspired by what we learnt, about ourselves, Friends and life itself, including its inevitable ending.

We also learnt that we were incredibly lucky in belonging to a Meeting which gave us such wholehearted support and showed an open-minded interest in what we brought back.

As a result of this, we were invited to Woodbrooke to explore developments with the aforementioned steering group. It proved to be a very powerful, positive, practical and worshipful twenty-four hours. We began by clarifying the origins and aims of the QUAKER DEATH AND DYING NETWORK, which grew out of a letter to The Friend by Alison Leonard in 2009.

These include addressing the changing nature of end of life settings and timespan. They also wanted to explore the nature of mourning and the needs of mourners within our Meetings, the stresses of long term caring, how to create partnerships with health professionals, support for those nearing the end of their lives, spiritually, emotionally and practically. And in order to do these things well, we must first face up to our own mortality and organize, as advised by Advices and Queries, to prepare well for our earthly endings, and those of our loved ones. Another challenge is to return death to its place as a normal and inevitable part of living, within our own lives, within or faith groups and in society as a whole.

Session three was particularly powerful for me as it asked us to consider what we had to offer, and what we needed to support us in our service. Helen talked movingly of her desire to develop and deliver workshops leading to greater understanding and knowledge in preparing for the end of our lives. I felt more drawn to the individual and the personal. We both recognized the importance of F/friends who care for us and nurture us, and have fun with us! I also realised that working with children helped me to keep a healthy perspective on life from alpha to omega.

Session five on practical planning resulted in an enhanced steering group, with its own nurture group (ie I can make cakes and listen!); plans to develop a website dedicated to this theme; a group dedicated to training and knowledge-sharing; and a small group preparing for a stand/presentation for Summer Gathering/BYM at Bath in 2014... more cakes and listening!

Wonderful as it was to be cossetted by Woodbrooke, the amazingly powerful force was the quality of the worship, which held us as we struggled with personal and social conflicts and concerns. And, oh, the amazing depth and discipline of Quakers gathered together.

Liz Flanagan

Equipping for ministry

Helen Chiverton is now halfway through her **Equipping for Ministry** Woodbrooke-based course. Her current interest (and also her role within Meeting) is end of life issues. Both Helen and myself (editor) are interested in talking to members and attenders about the values that have influenced their lives – Helen for her interest in life paths and myself for newsletter articles. It is to be hoped that attenders and members will be willing to share some of their life experiences.

Peter Bevan

Decision Making and Social Justice

The **Justice and Peace Group** and **Amnesty International Malvern Hills Group** have recently held public sessions. The former was addressed by Professor John Hull from the ecumenical Queens College in Birmingham. He was concerned with the issue of social justice and the process of decision-making. I heard myself asking why it was so easy to identify options but so difficult to evaluate them. Presumably it is because my spirituality does not provide sufficient weight and focus to influence practical considerations or could it be that spirituality is concerned with the personal rather than the directly political?

The latter was the talk by Paul Rogers, Professor of Peace Studies at Bradford University (a Quaker foundation). War, I realised, was no longer a battle fought in foreign lands. The means of destruction (drones) are now controlled within the UK and, by implication, the focus of 'enemies' will therefore also be the UK. What a mess!

Our Area Meeting on 10 November also addressed the wider issue of political involvement. How we become involved ranges enormously. Even within our own meeting we have or had people with expertise who change local practices or sit on central Quaker Committees and then begin to have influence on the political and legal systems; others prefer to commit themselves to an alternative ideology (eg Transition) in opposition to existing frameworks of decision-making, while others demonstrate publically. Perhaps the most telling comment was by a member whose life was changed by attending a peace demonstration and seeing that Quakers were the only religious body present. His time commitments changed to give more emphasis to the activities of his new-found religious body.

2013 marks our 75th anniversary in Malvern.

2014 marks the recognition of the beginning of World War One – for which Meetings are asked to prepare.

Meeting House Yoga

The ingredients for a successful yoga session are quiet, warmth and cleanliness – ingredients that the Meeting House has in abundance. It is spotlessly clean, warm when needed and more than quiet – peaceful beyond measure and welcoming by the immaculately kept garden. It is a unique blessing with which we are able to totally relax and for which we thank all concerned very, very much.

Margaret Harris

Thought: Two

One definition of shiatsu is 'giving handfuls of love with hands full of love'. Empty hands moved by God.

Malvern Quakers Newsletter

Malvern Quakers Newsletter is edited by Peter Bevan and designed by Peter Thomas.

Please ensure that any items for the Spring Newsletter (March - May 2013) are given or preferably emailed to Peter Bevan at peterbevan@homecall.co.uk by 10 February.

If you would like a regular email copy of the Newsletter, please contact Peter Thomas at petergt@hotmail.co.uk.

My eighty-three Quaker years

Joseph Edward Sturge

My involvement with Quakerism began in 1929 in my mother's womb! My American mother, Grace Tower Warren Sturge, was a Friend by conviction (born Methodist) and a New Yorker. She had been appointed Assistant Clerk of New York Yearly Meeting with the remit of building bridges between the breakaway Hicksite Friends movement and traditional Friends in New York State. Mother was a beautiful person - serene, spiritual, caring, steadfast - a quintessential Quaker.

She met my father, Edward Pease Sturge, at the home of Quaker aunts in Birmingham while attending a study course at Woodbrooke. Father followed up their short romance with a written proposal of marriage, posted to New York by sea after Mother's return home (no airmail or transatlantic phones in those days). Father's proposal was accepted in writing by return of post. A ring followed by sea from London. They were married in Purchase Friends Meeting House in New York State.

Members of the south Gloucestershire-based Sturge family were among the earliest George Fox converts - Joseph Sturge 1st, who died in 1669, being one of their number. This started a Quaker tradition that has - in my direct branch of the family - remained unbroken.

Our life in Hampstead, London in the 1930s was tranquil. My parents, siblings and I would walk the steep uphill road to Hampstead Friends Meeting every Sunday. Standing out among my memories is the reassuring and spiritual presence of Corder and Gwen Catchpool on the Elders' seats. Sunday Meeting for Worship was a way of life.

Wartime

In the summer of 1939 Mother, sister, brother and I, and Florrie (a kindly 'mother's helper'), set sail for New York on the SS Queen Mary for a short visit to Mother's family - leaving Father behind in London. Whilst there war broke out, our return bookings on the SS Queen Elizabeth were cancelled as she was commandeered for troop ship duties and our American summer holiday lasted five years!

During our extended American sojourn we regularly attended Meeting for Worship at Purchase Friends Meeting House, some thirty miles north of New York City. It was a beautiful old clapboard wooden building in large grounds that also contained the former Hicksite meeting house now used for the children's classes.

In 1944 we returned to England in a convoy of over thirty ships, arriving in London in time for the doodlebugs and V2s. I was bundled off to Leighton Park School in Reading - the switch from East View Junior High in White Plains, New York to the life of a boarder at a Quaker 'public' boys school proving quite a culture shock - cold baths every morning, summer and winter, staff all addressed as 'Sir' and fellow students known only by their surnames. Every Sunday a large part of the student body walked in crocodile fashion to Reading Friends Meeting House - a distance of perhaps a mile and a half. Holding silent meeting for worship with a large phalanx of schoolboys fidgeting, coughing, sniffing and scratching their initials on the bench in front (mine included!) must have been enormously difficult for long suffering Reading Friends.

When I graduated from Leighton Park in 1948 military conscription was still in force. Friends had set up the FAU International Service as a post war follow-on to the wartime Friends Ambulance Unit. FAUIS provided an acceptable 'alternative service' for conscientious objectors. After getting through my CO's tribunal with parental support, I spent two years in the FAUIS, part of it in war-ravaged West Germany, working with the German Salvation Army in a health recuperation centre for children from the refugee camps.

Return to London

On returning to London I entered into a business partnership with a Quaker cousin whom I had met initially at Leighton Park School and then in the FAUIS, in the fields of sound recording and commercial radio. After ten years in the London showbiz scene I entered into another partnership, this time matrimonial, with Julie Ann Rider. We tied the knot at Hampstead Friends Meeting House. Soon after that a job opportunity arose in Montserrat, West Indies - an island with a long Sturge family connection, springing from a visit by Joseph Sturge VI in 1836 in connection with his anti-slavery campaigning.

The Montserrat Company - noted for lime juice and with strong Quaker and Sturge connections - had been taken over by a Canadian group who offered me a job with their management team. My thirteen years on the island saw me involved in many activities too diverse to list here but devoid of Quaker involvement as the nearest Meeting was in Port-of-Spain, Trinidad - 600 miles to the south. On the family front, two offspring were added (including another Joseph). Divorce and remarriage to Caroline Ann George (now deceased) brought me a second daughter and a stepdaughter.

We returned to the UK in 1974 and settled in Reading, where I renewed contact with Reading Friends and with Leighton Park School. There followed twenty-six years of active involvement with Reading Meeting, Reading Peace Group, CND, Christian CND, Cruisewatch, Nukewatch, etc and a career as an advertising copywriter. Then, following the break-up of my second marriage, I moved to Malvern in 2001. It was here in 2009 that I took my third plunge into matrimony - splicing the mainbrace with Elisabeth Aldwyth Watkins at Malvern Friends Meeting House.

My Quaker faith has provided a solid life path and has been the unifying thread throughout a varied, interesting and rewarding life that has given me the treasured bounty of four offspring and eleven grandchildren. I thank God for the opportunities, rewards and memories.

**ART
FOR
AMNESTY
2012**



Trevor Trueman, organiser of Art for Amnesty, and Felicity Norman of the Green Party, who formally opened this year's exhibition, share their enjoyment of the works of art!

Art for Amnesty 2012 took place at the Meeting House from 18 to 27 August, and raised £1,600 for Amnesty International - £100 up on last year.

A big Thank You to artists, stewards and all those who helped with the exhibition in various ways.

Subject to confirmation by PM, we hope that Art for Amnesty will run again next year. Provisional dates would be 17 to 26 August 2013. To celebrate the 75th anniversary of Malvern Meeting House, it has been proposed that artists should be invited, as an option, to enter works on the theme of Quakers.

Peter Thomas

Thought: Three

We are what we eat therefore what sustains us inwardly gives us outward strength and direction.