



# Malvern Quakers

## Newsletter

Winter 2013-14 December - February

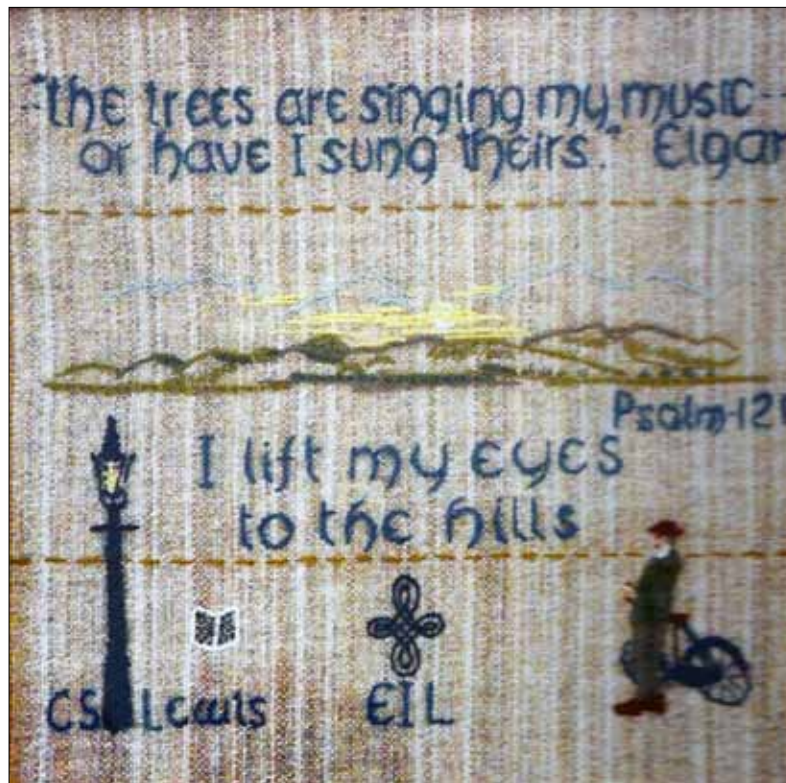
### A Story in Stitches

Peter Bevan

This year has seen the publication of *A Story in Stitches* by Elaine Tilley (printed and published by Aspect Design, 89 Newtown Road, Malvern). It is a spiritual autobiography in which Elaine shows how her interest in the art and craft of tapestry making has reflected some aspects of her personal journey, and her family relationships. The booklet is marvellously illustrated and shows how Elaine and her mother worked jointly on many of the canvasses. In many ways it is an act of remembrance of her family life.

Amongst other significant sayings Elaine highlights some words of King George VI: 'I said to the man who stood at the gate of the year, Give me a light that I may tread safely into the unknown. And he replied, Go out into the darkness and put your hand into the hand of God. That shall be to you better than Light and safer than a known way.'

Her involvement with the Quaker Tapestry came late. This record of



social history fascinated her. In 2011 she attended a two day Foundation Course in Kendal to learn the basic stitches. Bridget Guest was the tutor. Here she chose a kit featuring two clowns and several months followed before it was completed. A further workshop found Elaine focussing on that well-known phrase from Psalm 121: 'I lift my eyes to the hills.' The words and the hills lifted her spirit and that part of the tapestry was all

she did over the three days of the course. She describes how, in this panel, she has integrated a number of her current sources of inspiration such as her involvement with EIL (Experiment in International Living) which has had a profound impact on her family - hosting people from various countries. She has included their logo in the centre base panel. Over the years she has been touched by the books of C S Lewis and the music of Elgar. This tapestry therefore also includes a typical Malvern gas lamp made famous by C S Lewis in *The Lion, the Witch and*

*the Wardrobe*, Elgar leaning on his bike and looking to the hills and an Elgar quotation: 'the trees are singing my music - or have I sung theirs?' which echoes in her heart.

She is looking forward to her next venture which may well include symbols from different faiths, following a visit by Churches Together in Malvern to a temple in Birmingham. We wish her well on her journey.

**Malvern Friends Meeting House 1 Orchard Road Malvern WR14 3DA**

**Email: [malvern@wsq.org.uk](mailto:malvern@wsq.org.uk) Website: [malvernquakers.org.uk](http://malvernquakers.org.uk)**

All Welcome at Meetings for Worship: Every Sunday at 10.30am

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

# Diary

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 1 December

**Fairtrade Stall after Meeting for Worship**

Saturday 7 December 14.00-14.30

**Meeting for Worship at the Peace Garden**  
(outside Malvern Cube, Albert Road North)

Saturday 7 December 19.30

**Concert** with music by Elaine Hugh-Jones  
St James Church, West Malvern

Sunday 8 December 10.30-11.00

**Meeting for Worship for Business**

Wednesday 11 December 20.00-21.00

**Evening Meeting for Worship**

Saturday 14 December 10.30-13.30

**Area Meeting** at Bewdley Meeting House

Sunday 15 December 10.30-11.30

**Special Meeting for Worship** with songs, poetry and readings

Saturday 21 December

**Marriage of Sarah Colloby and Sean Haacke**

Wednesday 25 December 10.30-11.00

**Christmas Day Meeting for Worship**

18-25 January

**Week of Prayer for Christian Unity**

Saturday 8 February 11.00-16.00

**Area Meeting** at Shrewsbury Meeting House

7-9 March

**Science and Faith Weekend** including Joyce Burnell (Quaker)  
For full programme see leaflets or [scienceandfaith.org.uk](http://scienceandfaith.org.uk)

## OTHER REGULAR MEETINGS AND EVENTS

Second Sunday in month

**House Meetings for Worship**

Contact Betty Hudson for details

Second Monday in month

**Healing Group**

Contact Mary Callaway for details

First Wednesday in month 12.00-12.40

**Meeting for Worship**

Fourth Wednesday in month 13.00-15.00

**Discussion Group**

Contact Liz Flanagan for details

Please contact organiser for venues and/or any exceptions to dates

Keep up-to-date with our website  
[malvernquakers.org.uk](http://malvernquakers.org.uk)  
and check white notice board in library  
for further events

## Seeking God 1

If anything marks Jewish biblical interpretation it is the diversity of approaches employed and the multiplicity of meanings produced. This is expressed in the famous rabbinic saying: "There are seventy different faces to the Torah" (Num. Rab. 13.15 and parallels), meaning that biblical texts are open to seventy different interpretations.'

(seventy symbolizing a large and complete number)

[from the Introduction to The Jewish Study Bible, Oxford, 2004]

### THE FAIR PENNY CAMPAIGN

'I'd pay an extra penny per pound in income tax to protect the most vulnerable from austerity cuts.'

(initiated by Wanstead Quakers)

[www.thefairpenny.org.uk](http://www.thefairpenny.org.uk)

## Seeking God 2

Describing his poetic sense of purpose R S Thomas wrote that his primary aim was to find out what it meant to use the word 'God' in our time with all the discoveries and changes which have come about in the human intellect; allowing the heart to migrate as on a pilgrimage rather than be enclosed and tied down. We cannot bear to look in the face the fullness of God's creation without losing our senses. Only in a soundless darkness in the shadow and shelter of God can the riches of the earth, the sea and the immensity of the sky be received and blossom. For Thomas there was an unseen life towards which we strive. - a truth that passes understanding.

[adapted from pages 138, 159 in *Poets Meeting* by W J McGill publ. McFarland, London, 2004]

## 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 2014) are given or preferably emailed to Peter Bevan at [peterbevan@homecall.co.uk](mailto:peterbevan@homecall.co.uk) by early February.

If you would like a regular email copy of the Newsletter, please contact Peter Thomas at [petergt@hotmail.co.uk](mailto:petergt@hotmail.co.uk).

## AREA MEETINGS 2014

Saturday 8 February: Shrewsbury 11.00-16.00

Saturday 8 March: Bewdley 10.30-13.00

Sunday 11 May: Church Stretton 14.00-16.30

Tuesday 10 June: Bewdley 18.00-20.30

Saturday 26 July: Telford 11.00-16.00

Sunday 14 September: Malvern *time to be confirmed*

Saturday 11 October: Worcester 11.00-16.00

Saturday 13 December: Bewdley 10.30-13.00

## The Light of Reason A Conversation with Ben Rowntree

Peter Bevan

I was reminded by Ruth Rowntree<sup>1</sup>, Ben's wife, that Unitarians, like Quakers, were formed in the seventeenth century. While Quakers were more interested in light, Unitarians were founded by Priestley – the discoverer of oxygen. Their commonality is their emphasis on experimentation. Another way of putting it would be to say that both were concerned with exploring the boundary between reason and prayer. In the frontispiece to *A Study of the Work of Seebom Rowntree 1871-1954* by Asa Briggs (Longman, 1961), Kurt Hahn (a headmaster of Gordonstoun School) wrote: 'The world of action and the World of thought are divided today, often even hostile. I pin my hope to those few men who feel called upon to both think and act.' B. Seebom Rowntree was Ben's grandfather. It is noted that amongst the many commitments to the Society of Friends, Seebom organised a meeting at Woodbrooke in April 1918 which was attended by 80 to 90 Quaker employers (an interest which Ben continues).

Ben has a clear memory of a family dispute which led to him leaving the family home in his teenage years = and being supported by his maternal grandparents. This was his coming of age. His schooling included both the discipline of Gordonstoun and the liberalism of Dartington Hall (the tension between the two perhaps fitting experiences for any child of a Quaker family). Prior to studying economics at Cambridge University he did National Service. This was in defiance of both his family and York Meeting - to which he was still attached. He served in the Royal Navy patrolling the Mediterranean. His commitment to thinking that there is a need to protect our country by military means has often put him at odds with the Society of Friends.

Most of Ben's working life has been in industry – often managing factories which were not performing well. His overriding impression of work is the continuous confrontation with the unions. He describes his management style as being more of a mediator than a confronter. He is convinced that if it is possible to get a group together that can discuss the issues (pay, conditions of service, maintaining standards, monitoring shop floor supervisors) then it is possible to move forward. When asked how his work was influenced by Meeting for Worship he was clear that it gave him time to think - Worship was an opportunity to consciously think through specific problems.

Prior to moving to Eckington, Ben and Ruth regularly attended Jordans Meeting although he is not formally a member. He feels that Malvern Meeting has more of a pacifist than a religious emphasis. He is particularly aware of this distinction as he remembers that his father used to spend an hour before Meeting preparing ministry and that his grandfather spoke at every Meeting. Ben gets strength from reflecting on the teachings in the Bible and elsewhere and the implications of this for our daily lives. He understands the Spirit to be the manifestation of these reflections, *ie* the active component of God in Man. He can be uncomfortable with spontaneous ministry and likes the more planned teaching / ministry of the Unitarians with which he and Ruth share their time.

<sup>1</sup> In 2004 Ruth published a closely researched and extensively illustrated book identifying a number of networks linked to Unitarianism called '*Religious Devills*' of Hampstead (published by Harris Manchester College, Oxford).

*Thanks are due to Ben for enabling the installation of the loop system in the Meeting Hall.*

## Making Sense of a Holiday in Morocco

Peter Bevan

'How do you know what it is that you are looking at?' asks one of my guide books to Morocco. Do I use my eyes as X-rays to sense, understand and categorise the world or do I let the world come to me with soft receptive eyes – accepting what is before me without trying to understand? (See Alain Herriott's website: Quantum Touch). Certainly the latter requires more trust. But how do I know what I am looking at if I cannot accept what I see? When I see only men working in shops, hotels, restaurants and other tourist activities how do I understand this information? When local people can walk across a desert landscape in the dark and arrive safely how do I make sense of this ability? When I wish to buy in a market/souk (or indeed do not wish to buy) do I accept the poverty which is in front of me, the possibility that the person selling may be a relative of my guide (or indeed the guide himself when not with me) or do I revert to some prejudged notion of being taken advantage of (as well as a recognition of my own lack of ability to know the value to myself of what is in front of me)?

To this attitude of mind are the implications of mobile phone reception becoming nationwide effective in the last seven years and the internet only widely available in the last two years. This contrasts with the women tending their gardens in the oases without even looking up as I walk past; and the dream of my desert guide to have a horticultural farm where the land is fertile and the water available; and the knowledge that what must be millions of date palms have to be hand fertilised in order to produce a reliable crop; and the largest solar-powered electricity generator in the world.

Observing tanners, weavers, potters, metal workers, herbalists, millers and bakers at work prodded my mind into some deeply embedded ideal of self-sufficient communities where everyone works for a day a week for the benefit of their local community. Here the imam asks of those at prayer to spend an hour after the service cleaning up the grounds (in their best clothes) in preparation for Ramadan; and, indeed, the knowledge that for 4 weeks after I left all the people I had met would not eat for 14 hours a day in order to purify themselves and remind themselves of the need for compassion and generosity. The disapproval of body exposure (and the rudeness of some tourists in exposing their bodies), and the resistance to making pictures of living people through photography both give further indications of the moral strength of this society. (In looking through my photographs I was struck, in retrospect, at how few of them featured people).

Perhaps it is not surprising that while the UK tends to define itself in relation to the sea, its island location and landscaped gardens, Morocco will tend to define itself in relation to water and the desert. The juxtaposition is vivid and the oasis its symbol. It is the source of fertility, of life, of community. Not only are the oases rich with pomegranates, almonds, walnuts, apricots, apples, dates but the sensuousness within the gardens and flowing waters is the invitation after a day with the goatherds on the barren hillsides or the hot, dust-blown desert. For outside these refuges the sun is not the fuel of alchemy but the power of purification and destruction. Life has to be hidden from its power. The rivers of Marrakech and the irrigation canals of the desert are mainly underground and the people themselves still live behind high walls within which fountains play, blue jacaranda red hibiscus, multi-coloured bougainvillea flourish and family life continues unseen to the outside world.

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## Holding the Keys to a Heritage Erratum and Addendum

The summer newsletter indicated in the Michael Morris family tree that Margaret Fell (1614-1702) was the daughter of Anne Askew. In fact she was the granddaughter of Anne. The parents of Margaret Fell were John Askew (son of Anne) and Margaret Pyper. Margaret married Thomas Fell in 1632 (at 18) and had 8 children. She married George Fox in 1669. She was in prison for 10-11 years (compared to Fox's 6-7 years). Her only sibling (also Ann(e)) was mentally ill for much of her life and Margaret Fell's father fought for the Royalists during the Civil War. Her life, in this remote part of the Lake District was not simple!

There is some doubt about whether Margaret Fell is a direct descendant of Anne Askew the martyr. However, the following is part of a description of Anne Askew being so crippled by torture that she had to be carried in a chair to the pyre before being burnt to death with three fellow heretics in Smithfield.

'Then they did put me on the rack, because I confessed no ladies or gentlewomen to be of my opinion, and thereon they kept me a long time; and because I lay still, and did not cry, my lord chancellor and Master Rich took pains to rack me with their own hands, till I was nigh dead.

'Then the lieutenant caused me to be loosed from the rack. Incontinently I swooned, and then they recovered me again. After that I sat two long hours reasoning with my lord chancellor upon the bare floor; where he, with many flattering words, persuaded me to leave my opinion.'

Anne Askew didn't talk, and the act of torturing a woman shocked contemporaries so much that it has never been officially repeated.



Above: A wood engraving of Anne Askew's execution  
[courtesy ExecutedToday.com/2009/07/16/1546]

Below: Swarthmoor Hall, home of Thomas and Margaret Fell



## Quaker Camp at Cliffey Farm, Hanley Castle, July/August 2013

This summer three Area Meetings of the Society of Friends - Luton and Leighton, Hitchin and Herts and Jordans (Bucks) set up their month-long, annual camp on Rabbit Meadow, between Cliffey Wood and The Brickpits. This is a site that is very much enjoyed by all the campers.

Large tents were set up for meals and socialising and the camp was occupied for a week to 10 days, in turn by families and individuals who are associated with these Area Meetings. At weekends the numbers often reached over 100! There is a rota for camp chores including food preparation and cooking. Provisions are sourced locally and Severn End Estate provided the wood for cooking and camp fires.

Activities such as Craft sessions take place in camp and there is a daily "Meeting for Worship", often around the camp fire. Outings include walking expeditions, visits to places of interest and swimming, which is particularly popular. Some campers also attend Local Meetings on Sundays. Visitors are always welcomed in camp.

This year's rental fee was donated to local Charity FOAG (Farmer's Overseas Action Group) which six Worcestershire farmers and their wives set up in the early 1980s to support projects in Uganda. [foag.co.uk]

The picture shows campers taking part in the 'Camp Olympics'.

### LEND WITH CARE

A scheme to develop micro-finance in the developing world, initiated by Care International UK and backed by The Cooperative.

[lendwithcare.org](http://lendwithcare.org)

## Making Sense of a Holiday in Morocco

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I found that it became less difficult to see the world through the eyes of the everyday spirits that, as Ben Okri vividly describes, come and go in a seemingly unpredictable way (but are, in fact, embedded within the human and natural environment). Indeed, if I were to follow his example I could suggest that the spirits of womanhood are seeking freedom through attachment and commitment rather than being trapped within their bodies and social functions. Okri invites us not just to receive the world with soft eyes but to enter the invisible spirit world of cause and effect - challenging which senses we use to perceive and make sense of everyday reality.