Malvern Quaker Meeting





Newsletter July/August 2026

Items for the next issue of the Newsletter (in Word format please) will need to reach me by ***28th August 2026****. Past editions of the Newsletter are on our Meeting website www.malvernquakers.org.uk. Mary Corfield newsletter@malvernquakermeeting.org.uk If you are not on the Meeting's email list and would like to be, or have changed your email, please contact emailadmin@malvernquakermeeting.org.uk.*

Discussion sessions — Elizabeth Rolph

Two successful discussions have been held between Meeting for Worship and Shared lunch on the 4th Sundays in June and July based on the questions being used in *Discovering Quakers* posters and website. The session in July looked at **'What happens in a Quaker meeting?'.**

While thinking about how to introduce the discussion I choose a few readings from Chapter 2 of Quaker Faith and Practice (2.02, 2.11, 2.35 and part of 2.53 below)

… God said, 'Be still, and know that I am God'. Then came the conflict of thoughts for the morrow, and its duties and cares; but God said, 'Be still'. And as I listened, and slowly learned to obey, and shut my ears to every sound, I found, after a while, that when the other voices ceased, or I ceased to hear them, there was a still, small voice in the depths of my being that began to speak with an inexpressible tenderness, power and comfort.

This particularly spoke to me because I sometimes use the words '*Be Still and Know that I am God*,' at the beginning of Meeting, to which I add '*Be still to know that I am here*'.

We then had an enriching time of sharing experiences of Meeting for Worship.

At the end of the session, it was agreed that this was a good time for such discussions, and that they should continue.

There is some overlap in the remaining *Discovering Quakers* topics. Ones which could be the subject of discussions are:

Why do Quakers sit in silence? – Discussion to be led by Melanie on August 23rd.

What do Quakers believe?

What are Quaker values?

Is Quaker practice different from meditation?

If you would be interested in leading a discussion based on any of these, or if there is another topic you would like to lead a discussion on, please let me or Jill Etheridge know.

Swarthmore Lecture

Ten of us watched this at the Dell House. Titled *Tangled Roots: Navigating the Complex Legacy of Early Quakers* Stuart Masters explores the faith and practice of the first Friends and the tensions within Quakerism. He argues that engaging with these issues would help Friends better appreciate the diversity present within the global Quaker family and enable them to discern how to respond to these dilemmas today.

There was a great deal to take in, and we felt each of the four topics he structured the lecture round could form the basis for discussions. These are:

1. Inward Experience and Received Tradition – how should we balance the inward guidance received in the present with the beliefs and practices inherited from the past.

2. Communal Order and Individual Freedom – how should we balance the need for a cohesive community and a clear identity with a culture that values and encourages each individual member.

3. Quietist and Charismatic – how should we balance a quiet, inward, and contemplative spiritual practice with a powerfully active and embodied life within the world.

4. New Creation and the World – how should we balance the desire to play a constructive role within wider society with the need to resist its violent, unjust, and destructive ways.

Four copies of the book have been purchased for the Meeting Library. Please borrow them, and if you feel able to lead a session, please let me know. We felt these need longer than the time available on Sundays for discussions; the time after mid-week meeting was suggested.

Woodbrooke are running an online Book Club over four sessions from October to February.

See https://www.woodbrooke.org.uk/courses/book-club-tangled-roots-navigating-the-complex-legacy-of-early-quakers/

If you are interested in this and would be willing to lead discussions after each zoom session, Meeting would happily cover the cost.

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.

Oily Monster Roams the Streets of Birmingham (see photos) **Melanie Jameson**

Extinction Rebellion (XR) has many offshoots, concerns and subgroups including river pollution, bio-diversity loss, soil health and regenerative farming.

The one I am drawn to is 'Insure Our Survival', calling out those companies that continue to insure fossil fuels, especially the new excavations.

This is because the message I'm hearing again and again from climate scientists is that fossil fuels should be left in the ground and that releasing the carbon stored in the earth or under the sea is a major contributor to the escalating climate crisis. Weather forecasters now commonly refer to the fact that these prolonged heat waves and extreme weather events are being exacerbated by man-made climate change, with dire results affecting food production, health, livelihoods and lifestyles.





XR events in London are often more than I can manage, but a day in Birmingham is do-able. Last month I therefore hopped on the train and joined the throng gathering for the 'Insure Our Survival [not Our Destruction]' march that took in key insurance companies that have not yet divested from insuring fossil fuel activities. As always, drummers set the tone and drew attention to the event – until they were upstaged by the Oily Monster– a huge puppet supported by three people. Leaflets were distributed and the public engaged. Yet another element was the now familiar Red Rebels, mute arresting figures, who made their way slowly and gracefully to places of special interest pointing accusingly at the offending premises and, in this case, mourning the sick planet carried on stretchers to the centre of a public space and attended by 'Planet Medics' who failed to revive it. Their other-worldly presence is always very moving.

The event was written up by our local XR group as follows:

XR groups across the Midlands area combined in Birmingham on Tuesday 21st July to highlight the role that some insurance companies are playing in exacerbating climate change and nature loss.

The Institute of Actuaries warn us that entire regions are becoming uninsurable as climate change leads to food system shocks, water insecurity, heat stress and infectious diseases.

UK insurers paid out £1.2 billion for weather related claims in 2025, 14% higher than 2024.

An "Oily Monster" and Red Rebels led a short procession around the Colmore area before the Planet Medics street theatre sought to resuscitate The Earth, and the Dice of Destruction were rolled to demonstrate the impact of climate change and the cost to the insurance industry.

A recent report by the Government's Joint Intelligence Committee has said that nature loss and climate change threaten the UK's national security.

Insurance companies such as Allianz, AXA, Chubb and Zurich must stop insuring fossil fuel projects which are fuelling these emergencies.

Special Collections

Awaiting the total collected for Shelterbox. The total collected for **Arcos** was £204.

The Special Collection for August is for **Freedom from Torture** www.freedomfromtorture.org. FfT stands with torture survivors, providing vital therapy and support and fighting for change together.

The charity also provides expert medical evidence for asylum claims.

Two Very Different Books I Have Read Recently **Jill Etheridge**

I commend **Old Rage** by Sheila Hancock.

This book came to me, passed on by a Quaker from Leominster, temporarily living in Elgar Court for convalescence, who had asked for pastoral care while there.

You may know that Sheila Hancock is a Quaker who was married to the late John Thaw (a.k.a. Inspector Morse!).

The story of Sheila's life so far is a disarmingly frank account, liberally served with humour. There are a good many references to her Quaker allegiance and what it means to her.

Quakers in Britain - a century of change, 1895-1995 by Alastair Heron

On a more serious note... I'm very glad that, as I steadily clear out books to save my children the bother when I move to the next dimension, I came across a book I bought in a second-hand bookshop in Cumbria. I had a feeling I'd never had time to read it - until I found light pencil markings I'd made in the margin!

I have been re-reading it slowly, as I think this is what it deserves. Having myself come to Quakers around 1990 when living in Hereford and having far too busy a life to permit reading much at that time, I hadn't been aware how very much Quaker worship and ways had changed over that previous century. It really is a most interesting read, and I greatly value all that I have been (re) learning, and the insight and understanding it has given me.

For instance, it gives some context to the few years when, in Malvern Meeting, I felt somewhat disapproved-of if I mentioned the word God in ministry. At a time when our guiding book *Quaker Faith and Practice* is once again being revised, Alastair Heron's book provides much illumination. I gather from the library catalogue that we have a copy. I heartily recommend reading this.

This Year I will do Something

Prisoners of conscience, human rights advocates,
Imprisoned by tyrants and tied in cells.
The suffering's so great and I am so small, I feel so impotent
I can ignore it all.
I can ignore it all.
Do something! Cry for earth, our mother.
Feel the heart of Gaia, for there is no other.
I take small actions that give me traction
Look the dragon straight in the "I".
I won't let one day go bye.
For I cannot ignore it and just do squat
I won't let one day go bye.
For I cannot ignore it and just do squat
You are --and therefore I am.
A who man
a You-man
Who I am is connected
Where no being is rejected.
Seeing through the illusion, that we are all sold,
of separation, alienation which keeps us cold.
Do something! do something! whatever you can.
Lean to the light. be a human, be a man.
Can you be content if your brother, sister, mom and dad
Are abused, addicted, depressed or mad
What is another? Why are you sad? Are you an other?
Significant other, a br other, a m other, stressed
living in an other land, without a proper brand.
Not in an exact space, no clear face so easy to dismiss
A shadowy phantom. missed in the mist don't exist!
Embrace the other, steer into the skid,
Tell your kids what you did:
in the face war, the skin war, the gender war and
the class war.
Find your warrior round the S bend,
in the shadow,
open to the blend you are the other.
Imbibe it my friend.
Imbibe it.

Unmaking Mary: Shattering the Myth of Perfect Motherhood — Hugh McMichael

Last week, Annie and I undertook a 2-day retreat on being an imperfect mother. This was at a very special retreat house in Leicestershire (Launde Abbey) and led by Chine Macdonald who often speaks on Thought for the Day (Radio 4). There were 11 mothers, 1 mother-to-be and Hugh! Annie tells me that initially the mothers were suspicious of my presence but gradually accepted me!

There was much emphasis on the fatigue and exhaustion in the months after giving birth. There was a general acknowledgement of 'mistakes' in later years. The image of a perfect Virgin Mary can undermine 'our' sense of failures in our parenting. The discussions focused on the realities of 'our' experiences.

Chine seemed focused on the very real exhaustion of 'any' mother. When I – hopefully gently - talked of possessive mothers, it was taken up by many. When I talked of mothers' reactions when they themselves were damaged people, I felt that was largely ignored – maybe such people were 'others'.

But who does not carry some damage?

I am very clear about at least some of the 'damage' which I brought into my fathering – whatever my best intentions!

I was much reminded of Khalil Gibran's poem:

> "Your children are not your children. They are the sons and daughters of Life's longing for itself. They come through you but not from you. And though they are with you, they belong not to you."

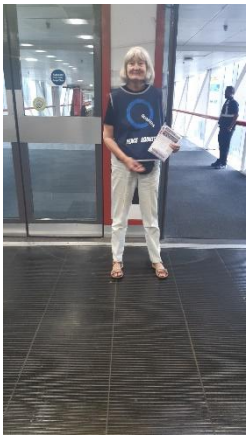
I talked of caring with RESPECT as opposed to caring with CONTROL – all stuff stimulated for me by the retreat.

Monthly Witness/Outreach Event at the NEC — Melanie Jameson

The monthly witness against the annual Specialist Defence & Security Convention (SDSC-UK) continues. For the second year this international showcase will be held at the NEC, so this venue is the focus of our activity. For our July visitation we were equipped with leaflets pointing out the contrast <Craftware NOT Warfare> based around the current NEC exhibition on Quilting. Previous pairings were <House Construction NOT Destruction> whereas the Toy Exhibition flyer showed photos of children playing with toys, contrasting children in the devastated ruins of Gaza. Our flyers always provide a few details about SDSC-UK and a link to our https://sites.google.com/view/stop-sdsc-uk.

On Thursday July 30th a faithful band of six gathered in the space between the upper part of Birmingham International Station and the entrance to the NEC; we were soon busy engaging passers-by as groups surged past with each arriving train. The majority of our encounters were positive, leading to short conversations or 'passive', ie simply accepting a leaflet.

Two of us sported Quaker tabards; another participant was Pete, Director of the PeaceHub which is connected to Central England Quaker AM. Pete had designed and printed this month's leaflets. These regular events are clearly low-key and may appear to have little impact, but the effect is cumulative, as we know from the termination of SDSC venues at the Three Counties Showground and then at Telford International Centre. Hundreds of leaflets find their way on to the NEC premises, month after month – we distributed around 300, maybe more, this time. Press releases appear in local papers, and more residents of the West Midlands and beyond become informed of this otherwise secretive Convention, now confirmed for February 9-10, 2027.



As happened last year, we shall raise our profile as the February date draws closer, but for now the twin messages are: *Your Specialist Defence & Security Convention is <u>not</u> below the radar* and *We are not going anywhere!*

"A Hardening of the Oughteries" — Andy Boldero

We had a lovely piece of ministry in Meeting today, that prompted me to think of this quote.

Father Gerard Hughes (Scottish Jesuit scholar) spoke in his writings about a "hardening of the oughteries".

We should try to do everything with meditation and love, using our senses as windows on our souls, not because we ought to…

Easier said than done, but nonetheless a great way of looking at life's challenges while being kind to ourselves.

Little Things & Unhistoric Acts — Richard Bartholomew

Looking Back at St David's Day 1st March

It's difficult to know much about this character who was, we understand, important for the early Celtic church in what we now know as Wales, but in his time was just the western part of the post-Roman province of Britannia. He was said by his biographer, Rhygyfarch, to have a father who was prince of Powys (the British entity that was based on the Roman town of Viriconium/Wroxeter south of Shrewsbury), his mother Non (also a saint) was also of a royal family in the area of what is now Pembrokeshire, and he was said to be a Water-Drinker. This seems to have come from his practice of not only drinking water but also practising the penance of standing neck-deep in the local rivers. At this stage of the development of the church, it seemed that early British saints like David founded individual churches, some of which are traceable in their village names even if they are not still dedicated to him. His Celtic name was Dewi and in Herefordshire, just over the Malverns, there are the villages of Much & Little Dewchurch where the churches are still dedicated to him as well as the village church of Dewsall, where the Normans changed the dedication to St Michael & All Angels. One thing I learned about Dewi/David as I sat in his cathedral was that as he was dying in his monastery his associates were bewailing his impending death, and he calmed them by the statement "*Just do the **little things** that I have taught you*". This simple injunction

suddenly made small things no longer unimportant or indeed particularly small after all and calls us beyond the ego's pursuit of grand achievements. We must not overlook the countless "little" moments of our lives like conversations with the marginalized, care for the poor, and simple acts of love.

This reminded me of something else that I read recently that George Eliot wrote in her novel 'Middlemarch', *"The growing good of the world is partly dependent on* ***unhistoric acts****; and that things are not so ill with you and me as they might have been is half owing to the number who lived faithfully a hidden life."* This is more of the same message from another wise person, so perhaps unlike President Trump we cannot claim to have stopped 8 wars in the last year, but we almost certainly will have carried out those little things and unhistoric acts that transform our lives as we transform others' as we do them. This is not a call against engaging with the wider issues that face us, but it is an urge to take seriously those acts that we take almost without realising them and of which we don't see the importance.