Malvern Quaker Meeting





Newsletter November-December 2024

Items for the next issue of the Newsletter will need to reach me by 31st January 2025.
Past editions of the Newsletter are on our Meeting website www.malvernquakers.org.uk.

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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

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Making Wreaths for Malvern's Memorials — Kate Macdonald



In early November Elizabeth and I met at the Dell House to make white poppy wreaths. We made large rings out of stout garden wire and an old wire coat-hanger and started with laurel clippings from the Dell House gardens. Elizabeth tied in her sprigs of laurel in a way that certainly looked like how the Classical Greeks and Romans had made theirs. I stuck to weaving, relying on the tension from the whippy end of one sprig to simultaneously anchor another.
Meanwhile Mel had supplied us with forty or so white poppies, ingeniously cut out of white felt with a black paper square and threads of black cotton at their centre. We tied the poppies into the laurel and did some discreet patching of bald spaces.
Kevin had made two labels for the two wreaths to be laid at the war memorials. Liz took the third wreath for the children to finish assembling with their own label. The Dell House kitchen smelt like a florist. It was a very pleasant way to do something so constructive.

White Poppy Collection — Melanie Jameson

This year's White Poppy collection, from our meeting and in town, raised £111.64 which was rounded up and dispatched to the Peace Pledge Union, who have seen an overall considerable increase in sales this year.

Advices & Queries No 24

Children and young people need love and stability. Are we doing all we can to uphold and sustain parents and others who carry the responsibility for providing this care?

Malvern Local Quaker Meeting
Treasurer's Update November 2024 **Paul Wyatt**

In preparation for our Meeting for Business 15.12.2024 in which a financial budget will be part of the agenda, I thought it would be useful to update Malvern Meeting about several issues and developments I feel we will need to address and take note of.

I will circulate via e-mail a proposed budget for 2025 prior to our Meeting for Business.

Firstly, I draw your attention to the letter from Paul Whitehouse (Britain Yearly Meeting Treasurer) about New Contribution Materials. See below.

We made a contribution to Britain Yearly meeting of £4000.00 in lieu of several years where we did not contribute as a Local Meeting.

We will need to review our contribution for 2025.

Secondly, there have been developments with Gift Aid collections by Local Meetings.

His Majesty Revenue and Customs (HMRC) no longer accept Gift Aid contributions from Local Meetings.

All Gift Aid contributions have to be made via Area Quaker Meetings. Our Area Meeting Treasurer and trustees are addressing this for future claims.

If you are a HMRC taxpayer and wish to contribute to Malvern Quaker Meeting I will be circulating more info. I suspect this will be a form of some sort.

We most certainly will be making a Gift Aid claim for 2024 for all those who have indicated they wish their contributions to be Gift Aided.

Thirdly, our Area Meeting Treasurer and Trustees are considering a financial reserve policy for each Local Meeting. This is likely to be £7,000.00 or so. I will address this in our budget for 2025.

Finally, thank you for your contributions to Malvern Quaker Meeting. They are very much appreciated and needed.

NEW CONTRIBUTIONS MATERIALS ***Paul Whitehouse***

Dear Friends

It's been a pleasure to meet and communicate with so many of you in my second year as YM treasurer. 2023 was a better year for us than 2022. We spent more on the central work discerned by Friends.

It was also a year where the diligent work of our new finance team put the accounting issues of the previous year firmly behind us, and the auditors were happy with what they found. Staff and trustees have been working hard this year to make the best use of our strong reserves position, deciding how we can make prudent but effective use of those reserves to deliver Quaker work.

Swarthmoor Hall has benefited from continued investment and this year re-opened in time for the George Fox 400 celebrations.

Thank You

I want to thank you for your service on behalf of the yearly meeting. Contributions from Friends and meetings are crucial to delivering the work that Friends want us to do. The commitment of meetings to fund Quaker work has been inspiring. In 2024, 76% of those responding to the treasurers' survey reported that their meetings plan to give the same amount or more than they did in 2023.

Celebrating Quaker Work

We have much to celebrate in this year. Many of your meetings held events for George Fox 400. While celebrating our history, we also celebrate the future - a future where all Friends work together to ensure our testimonies of truth, peace, simplicity, and equality are present in the world.

The best way to help sustain Quaker work is by encouraging Friends and attenders to give regularly throughout the year. If everyone were to contribute £20 per month (or £240 per year), it would ensure that BYM receives the contribution from Friends to deliver the work Quakers believe is needed.

We know that not everyone will be able to afford this. Some of us already giving at this level should be encouraged to consider whether we can raise our own contribution to share the cost of Quaker work in an equitable way. Although we were able to increase spending on Quaker work last year, we will not be able to keep doing this without an increase in membership or funding numbers.

Contribution Materials

Our new contribution material focuses on 'Celebrating Quaker Work' with information about how funds are spent and examples of Quaker work. You will find a full range of contribution material to support you at http://www.quaker.org.uk/contributions, including a video and slides.

Please share these materials with Friends in your meetings. They show Friends the Quaker work done thanks to their generosity. If you have any questions or need support, please get in touch with our fundraising team at contributions@quaker.org.uk. They will be happy to help.

Thank you again for all you do to encourage Friends to give and support Quaker work.

Special Collections

The Special Collection for December was for local family, as directed by St Mary's Church, Pickersleigh. £302.50 was collected on Sundays, made up to £450 from Meeting Funds. This will make a big difference to 9 families in Malvern.

The collection for December is Medical Aid for Palestine. http://www.map.org.uk/

Quaker Participation in Europe **Andrew Jameson**

The right-wing project to tear Britain away from Europe politically, commercially and culturally, is still in progress. Soon we shall be obliged to give our fingerprints when travelling to Europe (yes, really). Frequent travel to the EU (for business, cultural or domestic reasons) has been made much more difficult, and we may need a visa to visit.

Meanwhile a little bit of England in the EU, the **Quaker Council for European Affairs,** is still there in Brussels. It is staffed by British and European Quakers working together on important European issues. I expect you noticed that elections for the European Parliament were held this year? They took place in July, and 719 MEPs entered the European Parliament, just over half of them for the first time.

As you know, each national political party functions in the European Parliament by joining a group on the political spectrum from left to right. Up to now, there were seven of these groups. However, since this year's election the far-right group has split into two, so there are now eight in all. When we were in Europe, we were in the European People's Party, which was centre right and Christian Democrat.

Quakers in different parts of the world take part in political processes by acting in the background, lobbying for practical political processes and providing forums for opposed parties to meet away from party politics. It is well known that the Ulster Good Friday Agreement may possibly not have come into being if Ulster Quakers had not offered a space where the parties could explore genuinely useful policies which offered a way forward.

Coming back to the European Parliament, QCEA launched a project this Autumn to offer a warm welcome to new MEPs, EU Commissioners, political advisers and their staffs in the European Parliament. The project included training sessions in essential skills: listening, handling difficult conversations, mediation and negotiation, and political collaboration. This autumn, to take one example, Paul Ingram has given training days on collaborative politics capable of addressing current crises. These courses are a powerful reminder that policy and legislation are deeply connected to the human experience and the preservation of our shared planet. Perhaps we could consider doing something similar for the new members of the Mother of Parliaments?

QCEA www.qcea.org for further information, newsletters and donations.

A Tale of Two Cities (Birmingham and Telford) **Melanie Jameson**

When you imagine an Extinction Rebellion (XR) event, do you envisage scruffy, bedraggled youths with piercings or a group where at least half are aged 50 plus and many of them, Quakers? Well, in my experience it is the latter.

This certainly held true in the first of two events in which I participated in November. On the surface this was a jolly procession of drummers (58! I counted) and people dressed to convey floods (rubber rings, blue fabrics) or fire (flame coloured clothing). A few of us were dressed smartly as insurance company employees. What on earth was going on?

A recent target of XR has been companies who insure the fossil fuel industries; this action has been moderately successful with Zurich, for one, disinvesting and others now considering their strategy. On a sunny Friday, our procession weaved its way through central Brum, stopping outside four corporate buildings that housed relevant insurance companies. A speaker made the clear link between fossil fuels and climate instability leading to increasing risk of floods and fires. Long swathes of blue fabric were wafted like waves as

some of us, geared up with snorkels and rubber rings, swam amongst the rising waters. As one of the insurance company employees, I shouted into my phone, "We can't keep paying out for these floods – we must change our policy and stop insuring fossil fuels"! At the next stop, flames were to the fore as this segment of the crowd conveyed the flickering of wildfires. A magnificent Oily Monster puppet (pictured), that took three people to manoeuvre, took pride of place. And, whenever we moved, we were accompanied by the rhythm of all those drums. So, an enjoyable few hours, but with a very serious message.



OK, Telford isn't a city, but I thought it made a good title for my piece; this was the venue for my second outing. Most of you know of the Three Countries 'Defence and Security' Expo that after five years relocated to Telford. Now expanded to a three-day event and renamed the Specialist Defence and Security Convention (SDSC-UK), I felt a responsibility and interest to see how this day of protest would play out, since I had initiated the actions in Malvern. I never expected to get drawn into activism but the arrival of international arms traders in Malvern in 2018 demanded a response.

The Stop SDSC-UK WhatsApp group had been growing in participants and was, as last year, facilitated by a Friends House staff member. But this time it was not someone coordinating things on top of a day job, but Joe Holtaway whose role in Quakers is leading on activism/climate-related work. As always, we were well supported by the Campaign Against Arms Trade (CAAT) outreach worker, now a good friend of mine.



Given the daily atrocities in Gaza and the surrounding areas, it was inevitable that last Wednesday (Nov 20) felt more like a pro-Palestinian event than an arms fair protest. Palestinian supporters were the largest cohort. Again, Quakers were out in force, and we held a meeting for Worship near one of the entrances to the Telford International Centre (TIC). Thank goodness there were enough of us this time, upward of 150, to stand at both TIC entrances and also by the main road between them. The structures that had supported the Oily Monster were refashioned to their original form, a gigantic Peace Dove.



By far the most moving section of the day was the actions of the Red Rebels. Have you come across them – they were on the Malvern Hills a few weeks ago? An off-shoot of XR, they dress entirely in red with whitened faces, all identical except for varying sizes, and process slowly in silence with choreographed movements. In a heartbreaking display, they carried representations of dead babies to a central spot while someone read out some of the names of babies and infants who have been killed in Gaza. Each 'baby' was passed to the leader who, with an expression of deep grief, placed it tenderly below a tree growing on the nearby slope opposite the main TIC entrance, before returning for the next one. Nobody moved, and many had tears in their eyes. Inside the nearby building were at least four major companies who produce weaponry that has been sold to Israel.

It was still an hour before delegates at SDSC-UK would start to leave, so the next part of the programme was a march through the large shopping centre, without any placards, with the aim of handing out leaflets to inform the locals who were largely ignorant of was happening



in the TIC. Then we would stage a 'die in'. This was a good chance for me to carry the second of our two white poppy wreaths (the first had been placed next to the 'babies'). So, I was right at the front and could see, as we approached the automatic doors into the shopping area, that they were being locked. Shoppers were unable to leave or enter. Plan B came into operation: a die in on the (wet) pavement outside. It is quite impressive when around 70 people drop to the ground on a hand signal – and slightly worrying when police step over you! There were certainly a lot of police around that day – far more than could ever have been needed, whatever we had planned. When I spoke to a few at the end, saying they must have had a very boring day, the reply was that they needed 'to keep us safe'. From what?



When asked to speak or provide quotes during the day, my themes were the role of the solicitors behind these arms events - Harrison Clark Rickerbys - along with the series of actions which contributed to the 'Defence and Security' Expo abandoning Malvern Showground. Finally, as daylight faded, it was time to line up at both entrances with placards on show for departing delegates.

Two very different days, but both part of my interpretation of bearing witness.

Quakers in Criminal Justice Highlights Prisons Week with The Good, The Bad & The Ugly

Adrian Smith and Melanie Jameson

This well-known film title was adopted for QICJ's contribution to Prisons Week 2024 (without the splendid theme tune, unfortunately). We were joined on Zoom from all over the country.

First Mike Nellis (Emeritus Professor of Criminal and Community Justice and QICJ Committee member) spoke to us about '**the Good**' which turned out to be the Barlinnie Special Unit in Glasgow which operated from 1973 to 1994, 'a rehabilitation programme so good it was cancelled'. It handled just 36 prisoners in its 21 years' existence, mostly violent lifers, considered incorrigible, who a few years earlier would have been hanged.

Barlinnie SU was conceived as a therapeutic community, inspired by HMP Grendon and Ingleside Hospital. The prisoners included Jimmy Boyle, then 29, who was the first to respond to Joyce Laing, Scotland's first trained art therapist, who arrived at the Unit on a motorcycle. Jimmy found he had a talent for sculpture, was allowed to visit Edinburgh Gallery and got commissions for public sculpture which caused outrage in some quarters - - how did this equate with punishment? In 1982 an art exhibition foreshadowed the Koestler exhibitions of prisoners' work, still thriving today.

But how can rehabilitation be delivered in the current prison system which is bursting at the seams?

For '**the Bad**' we heard Liz Bridge, former Quaker Prison Chaplain (QPC) at HMP Wandsworth. She told us that the prison was built (like many others) before the days of electricity or running water and faced the basic problems of overcrowding, underfunding, and a tremendous 'churn' (men on remand now form one-fifth of the total prison population

– 800 at Wandsworth). The water supply is uncertain, men are often unable to wash or shower or receive a change of clothing. Sewers are overloaded, providing channels for vermin and cells on the ground floor are flooded after heavy rain. There is no communal space, no private areas for confidential talk and men are banged up 23 hours a day, some behaving aggressively when finally unlocked. The staff are young and inexperienced, and don't stay long. Some days only 40% of those scheduled to work turn up for duty. Conditions have been condemned by the Chief Inspector of Prisons and the Independent Monitoring Board leading to 'urgent notification'.

Liz, with a concerned group, has set up the Wandsworth Prison Improvement Campaign (WPIC) with the following aims:
(i) to see that prisoners receive their medication on time, and attend hospital appointments
(ii) to campaign against vermin
(iii) to institute an effective maintenance programme
(iv) to combat inadequate hygiene, by facilitating changes of clothing / dependable laundry
(v) to ensure easy access to books.
So far there has been progress with (i) and the target for refurbishing showers is 2029!
The only education course running is 'English as a Foreign Language', but even that is undermined by a lack of staff.

Prisoners considered a suicide risk should be checked every 15 minutes, but hard-pressed officers often tick the list without doing the checks and Support Officers receive just two weeks additional training, which does not include First Aid. One, left in charge of a wing of 250 men singlehanded at night, discovered that one man had hanged himself. The WPIC always attends inquests from Wandsworth; it is always the same coroner, clearly disgusted by what he hears. One third of the men are mentally ill and half suffer from addictions. 'Listeners ' are often unable to operate as there is no-one to unlock them nor a private space. £3-08p is allowed for food per man per day with poorer inmates unable to afford top-ups. We also heard that Probation Officers can now recall on their own authority, and may do so 'to play safe', as many are young with crushing caseloads.

The starting point for '**the Ugly**' was the relentlessly negative portrayal of prisoners in the tabloid press; recently there was an outcry when men released early under the 'reducing overcrowding scheme' were seen celebrating outside the prison gates. Hopeful signs include the appointment of James Timpson as Prisons Minister and the announcement of an Independent Review of Sentencing. I led this session and stressed that this Review MUST include sentence deflation – we are out of step with the rest of Europe – and accept that deterrence doesn't work, whereas rehabilitation and desistence do.

Three Friends were asked to speak on 'answering that of God in everyone'. Tim Newell, former governor of HMP Grendon and Swarthmore lecturer, spoke of the therapeutic prison, a space to reflect on the seriousness of what you have done. Sarah Lane. former QPC, noted that only 1% of prisoners receive any help for unresolved grief. The silence of a Quaker Meeting, and the spirit of acceptance found there, is greatly appreciated. Our own Hugh McMichael spoke last, pointing out that violent homes breed violent children. People who score 4 or more Adverse Childhood Experiences are 30 times more likely to attempt suicide. Other Friends made further contributions: that stress in childhood modifies our brains; those affected are continually scanning for threats. We were reminded of the need to speak not about 'bad people' but bad BEHAVIOUR.

We moved on to the QICJ's concern for welcoming former prisoners into Meetings. One option for those with certain license conditions is attending a midweek Meeting, without children. Arrangements should be made at Area Meeting level, involving the Safeguarding

Coordinator. A Receiving Group should be appointed. Guidance is being prepared by QICJ. Concluding remarks were made by Ben Jarman, this year's Swarthmore Lecturer. He stressed the implications of exclusion and the need for Friends to get close enough to learn directly from prisoners.

Tenth Anniversary of Silence Inside — Melanie Jameson

On Friday December 13th there will be a special commemoration in HMP Long Lartin: it is ten years since our Quaker Prison Chaplains founded the Quaker-led Meeting known as 'Silence Inside'. There is talk of cake! None of the men I knew from the start are still with us. A few stopped coming, others have been transferred, one took his own life, one died of cancer after becoming a member of the RSoF (his ashes are in the Evesham LM burial ground, where we held his memorial meeting). The current group has bonded well; I am looking forward to the event.

Faith in Action Newsletter — Bridget Holtom

A recently received pack of information from Bridget Holtom at Quakers in Britain working on peace, social and climate justice included a link to enable Friends to sign up to receive the monthly Faith in Action Newsletter https://www.quaker.org.uk/quaker-faith-in-action.