Malvern Quaker Meeting





Newsletter October-November 2026

Items for the next issue of the Newsletter (in Word format please) will need to reach me by ***27th November 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*.

Meeting for Worship at the Peace Garden

Elizabeth Rolph & Jill Etheridge



We were delighted that 15 people came to the Meeting for Worship on October 6th. The background noises of the building site did not detract from it, indeed if anything this enhanced the Meeting. Ministry included reference to the Quaker testimonies carved in the stones, holding in the light others involved in building works and those living in chaos and confusion. We were also reminded how fragile communication by normal technology can be, which makes it all the more important to foster communication at deeper levels, since we are all one. Most of us then enjoyed drinks and a chat in the Cube café.

We will hold another Meeting for Worship there in April, and hopefully monthly from then until October.

Who Is Kate, and Why Did She Write a Quaker into Her Last Novel?

Kate Macdonald

Peter B keeps asking me to participate in the Wednesday 'Show and Tell' after Meeting for Worship, and I keep having to refuse. I hope this will explain why, give some background about who I am and explain why I put a Quaker into my writing.

I have a regular Wednesday volunteering stint at Hartlebury Castle, 40 minutes' drive away, for Birmingham Museums, where I identify archaeological finds handed in by metal detectorists and write the formal descriptions for the British Museum's Portable Antiquities Scheme database. I used to be an academic editor for English Heritage, and I love researching the bits of crumpled and rusting metal that turn up on my desk.

As well as being an editor, a large part of my career was spent researching and writing about British publishing history and print culture of the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. I was a university lecturer at the Open University, at Ghent, and for a couple of years at Louvain-la Neuve and at Reading. I lived in Belgium for sixteen years, due to my husband's job in European air traffic management. I taught British literature and culture to Belgian students (who are formidably good at English), ran the university's English drama group and set up a creative writing club. In 2015 I decided that since my paid teaching was fizzling out, I would turn publisher, which led to me setting up a small publishing house of my own in 2017. I ran Handheld Press for seven years, publishing 48 titles, bringing out new editions of lost stories and forgotten authors: mostly novels and short stories, and some memoirs and biographies. In 2023 I decided that I'd had enough of the publishing industry, and I would take my own writing more seriously.

I have always written. My primary school teacher told me that I would be a writer after I'd won some kind of national story prize in Primary Four, and when I was sixteen, I won the Scottish Youth Theatre Playwriting Competition, beating Ali Smith. Those are my only prizes, and I didn't really do any writing for myself until 2000 when I wrote an important memoir (for me) about bereavement. I completed my first novel in 2014 or thereabouts (dreadful: never to see the light of day), and then I began writing science fiction and fantasy short stories. My first published short story was selected for the annual anthology *Best of British Science Fiction* in 2019. In late 2019 I started writing about witches in Shetland, and this grew into a contemporary fantasy novel. I decided to self-publish it in 2024, having by then taught myself everything I needed to know about book publishing. It's still selling well, with several Scottish bookshops reordering it and its sequel novellas regularly each year.

My second novel is quite different: still fantasy, but historical. *Radical Magic* is a pre-Regency adventure set in Bath and London, two cities whose geography and history I know well. It also has a Quaker protagonist, Miss Pertinacia Goodwill, who is a secret Lady Investigator for the Royal Society, and a haughty Elfin gentleman who discovers the evils of slavery (you will remember that Elfins* have stolen humans into slavery for millennia). What is a Quaker doing in a fantasy novel with Elfins?

A Quaker character was not in my planning, but she arrived unexpectedly in a lavender dress, to wait in the anteroom of the Royal Society for a meeting with Sir Joseph Banks, alongside another lady, the young and apparently widowed Mrs Constancia Priddy.

> The two ladies sit in the Anteroom together for a further twenty minutes – the large wall clock tells them so – in silence. Constantia looks at the light falling from the window onto the polished parquet floor. The lavender lady sips her cordial.
>
> Sir Joseph does not come.
>
> Then the lavender lady breaks the silence. 'May I ask, are you a Friend?' she asks.
>
> 'I – I beg your pardon?'
>
> The lavender lady looks at Constantia. 'Perhaps I have not explained myself. Are you one of the people called Quakers?' Her tone is challenging.
>
> Constantia realises that she must make her position clear. 'I am the daughter of a Canon of the Cathedral at Wells in Somersetshire, and a Churchwoman. Why do you ask?'

> The lavender lady smiles. 'Your ability to sit still in contemplation for twenty minutes without fidgets is unparalleled in my experience of ladies who are not Friends.'
>
> 'You had not been trained to sit through my late father's sermons,' retorts Constantia, and then regrets her pertness. But the lavender lady is now smiling at her and her deep-set eyes are friendly.

Pertinacia, once she arrived in the novel, was a bracing tonic. Poor Conny had been mourning her lost husband, but Pertinacia offers her encouragement and a more congenial place to stay in London. She suggests that since Conny is on a mission to hunt down the wicked fairies whom she is convinced have kidnapped her husband, then she would be admirably suited to help Pertinacia in her work for the Royal Society to detect evidence of fairy infiltration into human dwellings. Pertinacia is an early scientist in a world where magic is fading and science is in the ascendancy.

She regrets her name, given to her, she tells Conny, by her parents at a moment when they must have been devoid of sense, but she lives up to its promise. Her father left the Friends in a huff some years after Pertinacia's birth, but she was brought up in the Society and remains steadfast in her conviction that looking for that of God in all whom she meets is the right way to treat the world. She is also willing to accept that she might be mistaken. In the plot both she and Conny are dead set on a particular course of action that the reader can see will be ruinous. It is only when Pertinacia realises that she is wrong, and that they must change their efforts, that the plot begins to career towards its resolution.

Having a Quaker character in my novel was a great help in discerning what would happen next. I'm a great believer in character-led plot development. If a character behaves naturally and remains true to the principles from which they have been formed, then they will be more believable than one walking through a pre-determined plot without being impacted by it. Pertinacia's Quakerism is the code by which she lives, and whose principles she upholds. She is active in an anti-slavery society, she is accustomed to speaking to large gatherings, she treats people of different classes and degree with the same consideration, and she is not afraid to speak truth to power. With such a set of personality traits, she was a joy to write.

My books can be read about more fully on my writing website, and you can order the paperbacks from my online shop, The Peachfield Press. The ebooks are available in all the usual ebook places.

* Sylvia Townsend Warner's story collection *Kingdoms of Elfin* (1977, which I republished with Handheld in 2019) reimagines traditional fairies as an amoral species of haughty, courtly Elfins, engrossed in their own interests who regard lumbering humans as cattle.

Trip to Yarpole Gallery Café in the Church and then onto Croft Castle or Ludlow

Deirdre Mackay Clark

On Saturday October 10th at 9.45 nine of us sallied forth in the 'trusty minibus plus intrepid chauffeur Jon C', to quote Bryan R on a previous trip.



We were fortunate with the weather, and it was a delight to view the glories of the Worcestershire and Herefordshire countryside from our vantage point on the bus.

Several of us remarked upon the beauty of the many fine trees, which, mostly, didn't appear to have suffered too much from the spells of extreme heat and drought.

Coffee time saw us arrive at Yarpole Church, which is in the centre of this picturesque Herefordshire Village. What a warm welcome awaited us at the Church door, where we were greeted and ushered into this unique conversion of a religious space. It combines facilities such as Community shop /post office/Gallery Cafe, enabling the successful functioning of the Village and its surrounding areas. An array of delicious homemade cakes, cheese scones, tea, coffee, and cold drinks were served at our long table with its white cloth and flowers. There was much convivial chat amongst ourselves and the locals.

Another gem not to be missed is the separate bell tower, with its glowing medieval floor tiles.

Jon C informed us that Yarpole means fishpool and so we journeyed on to nearby Croft Castle, where substantial fishpools are to be found in the wooded valley. You approach the Castle through a splendid avenue of mature trees.

The four of us who had opted for Croft Castle waved the others off to Ludlow and made our separate ways to explore different areas of interest, agreeing to meet up later.

Two chose the Castle area, another to explore the fishpool valley, and I made for Croft Ambrey, a long-time favourite haunt of our family and friends from 40 years of living in Herefordshire.



On heading for the Ambrey, you pass through long lines of Spanish sweet chestnuts planted at the time of the Armada, with their magnificent twisted sculptural branches. Then through swathes of peaceful woodland to the deep vallum surrounding the great presence of this ancient hill fort. Finally, on clambering to the top your rewards are manifest - tremendous skyscapes, birdsong, tiny shimmering harebells whispering in the breeze – heavenly! These days so very peaceful.

On returning to the café I met up with the others for yet more tea, cake and interesting chat and looked forward to joining up with everyone back on a warm and welcoming coach.

John tackled the very narrow lanes, accomplishing masterly reverse driving on encountering a massive toad-like piece of agricultural machinery, that bore down upon us. Not surprising in this hard-pressed working agricultural county.

A very happy band arrived back at the Quaker Meeting House.

I feel that this is a trip that could be repeated, as it has so much to offer.

A very big thank you to Jon C from all of our party.

Advices & Queries No 23

Marriage has always been regarded by Friends as a religious commitment rather than a merely civil contract. Both partners should offer with God's help an intention to cherish one another for life. Remember that happiness depends on an understanding and steadfast love on both sides. In times of difficulty remind yourself of the value of prayer, of perseverance and of a sense of humour.

A Modest Proposal for Quaker Yarns

Kate Macdonald

A monthly woolly crafting group to meet in different Quaker Meeting Houses in Worcestershire and Shropshire Area Meeting.

Who?

- Quakers and the wider public
- Anyone who wants to work with wool with purpose
- Children will be welcome if they attend with a parent or another carer and can entertain themselves or take part in the wool work.
- Quaker Youth Group members
- Members of other community groups

What?

- To make useful things from wool for Quaker-adjacent causes. These could include hats and blankets for neonatal units, hats for prisoners, scarves, socks and hats for unhoused people.
- Future projects might include some craftivism, for example making banners and postbox toppers to support Quaker concerns such as peace, reconciliation and community.

When?

- Depending on the local host meeting, this could be a morning, an afternoon or an evening, during the week or at weekends.
- These will have the scope to become regular events in various locations, so the Quaker Yarns might flourish into a set of regular meetings in different places each month.

Where?

- Quaker Meeting Houses in Worcestershire and Shropshire. **Bewdley LM has begun with a session on Tuesday 3rd November, 10am-2pm**. Worcester LM is also planning their own session.
- Will Malvern join in?

Why?

- to have a social occasion and have a nice time
- to offer an opportunity to work on meaningful projects by making things for others
- to be productive
- to learn new skills
- to make new friends
- to get to know our communities better.

If you're interested, talk to me!

Growing Meetings, Events, Youth Group — Hilary Topp

Greetings from Birmingham, on another beautiful, sunny, autumn day. Read on for news of the final few role holder support sessions of 2026, and events happening locally and nationally.

But first…

It's now 3 years since all 15 Local Development Workers began working together, across Britain, to support Quaker communities to grow and thrive. As you may know, each of us has our own 'patch'. I work with four Area Meetings (Gloucestershire, Central England, Staffordshire and Worcestershire and Shropshire) and 34 Local Meetings, offering practical support and encouragement to members, attenders and role-holders, as well as LM and AM communities.

As we start to gather data to measure the impact of our work, it's pleasing to note that based on the latest tabular statement there has been a genuine positive shift towards growth. In the 12 months between 2024 and 2025, out of 19 regions, 15 of them increased their attendance numbers. Recorded attenders rose from 7,173 in 2024 to 7,684 in 2025, an increase of 511 people, or about +7.1%. About 74% of the growth came from adult attenders, and about 26% came from children not in membership.

An interesting observation is that the long-term, adult-attender growth is not concentrated in the obvious large-city Quaker centres. Some of the strongest growth is in smaller or more rural Area Meetings. As this trend continues, I'm finding that some communities are shifting from talking about managing decline, to instead talking about how to plan for and manage growth.

As your local development worker, I can support you in growing and developing your community. This could be a conversation or one-to-one support, a short session after Meeting for Worship, or a half day workshop, or away day on a range of topics dependent on what you feel your community needs. I use a variety of approaches for this, including coaching, spiritual reviews, appreciative enquiry, facilitated discussion, worship sharing, threshing meetings and very often a mix of all of these. I enjoy getting out and about and meeting new people, so please get in touch and we can arrange a phone call, Zoom call or a conversation over a coffee.

I can be contacted via hilaryt@quaker.org.uk or please text me on 07579 853884 **and I'll arrange a phone chat or an online/in-person meeting.**

Sometimes a casual conversation leads to a great idea so feel free to get in touch, even if you haven't really got a reason for doing so!

News and events

***Invitation to a day workshop on Nominations, 24 October, Birmingham – for anyone involved or just interested in how Quaker nominations work.**

Central England Area Meeting are holding a day-long workshop exploring nominations. Friends from neighbouring area meetings are warmly invited to join them. More

information on the attached poster. To book your place (in person or online) please email admin@ceaqm.org.uk.

***Invitation to a day workshop on 'Strong, loving communities' 14 November, Birmingham**

How can we strengthen trust and connection within Quaker communities? How might we build the capacity and skills needed to navigate difficulty and hold difference in a loving way? This day, hosted by Quaker Life and Restoring Relations, will include discussion, exploration and workshops to help Friends understand and experience a range of ways to help strengthen our Quaker communities. Strong, Loving Communities | Quakers in Britain

***Invitation to: Yearly Meeting, Saturday 21st November 2026 at Friends House, London.**
Yearly Meeting is for all Quakers in Britain, members and attenders. Whether you have been to yearly meeting lots of times, or this would be your first one, you are very welcome. Yearly Meeting 2026 | Quakers in Britain

Children and young people are warmly invited to join the youth programmes for the day, and we expect to spend time together as an all-age community. We encourage families to book early so that children and young people can share in a day that promises to be fun, community building and spiritually enriching. Booking for the children and young people's programme closes on Monday 2 November. Children and Young People at Yearly Meeting in London | Quakers in Britain

***Reminder for the remaining Role Holder Support sessions for 2026**.

These hour-long online sessions are held by some of the Local Development Workers. The remaining dates for this year are:

Treasurers: Wednesday 4th November

Nominations: Thursday 5th November

***Invitation to young people to come along to Quaker Youth Group**

Quaker Youth Group is open to young people aged 10-18 in the West Midlands area and offers a welcoming and inclusive community to explore faith and spirituality and have fun together. It's open to everyone – you don't have to be a Quaker. Recent sessions have included a board games night, a canal boat trip, zipwire and abseiling, crafts, discussion, and there's always lots of food too! The next Youth Group meeting will be on 7 November at Selly Oak Meeting House in south Birmingham for an afternoon of games, discussion, a bonfire and food. Not to be missed! For more information or to be added to the email list contact Helen in the CEQ office admin@ceaqm.org.uk.

YOUR VERY GOOD HEALTH!…… Jill Etheridge

- not a phrase you hear Quakers saying very often, perhaps because of Advices and Queries 40 drawing attention to the harm that can be done by 'alcohol, tobacco and other habit-forming drugs '!

In the media we have heard warnings that flu epidemics started earlier this year; crisis levels of hospital admissions could occur this winter etc. etc. It's also sad to reflect that the lifetime

risk of cancer has now increased to one in two, whereas, when I did my Health Creation Mentor training under Dr. Rosy Daniel in around 2010, it was one in three. That's an alarmingly large increase in a fairly short while.

With all this in mind, I am prompted to enquire through the Newsletter whether there is any interest in my repeating my day of exploration at our Meeting House, entitled 'Help yourself to Better Health '. There is much that we can do; and you know the old saying: 'An ounce of prevention.....'

Special Collections

The Special Collection for October was for **St Giles Trust** and a total of £ 126 was collected.

Correction to Sunday Collection for November **Annette de la Cour**

It was announced last week by me in error that the Sunday Collection for November would be for War Child. Instead, it should have been Malvern Families in Need who we collect for every November. As there are five Sundays in this month, we will now collect for Malvern Families in Need from next Sunday and revert to War Child in December. Money collected for them last Sunday will be held over until next month.

Outing to Kelmscott Manor, 26th September

Elizabeth Rolph



This was a lovely day out. It was fascinating to learn more about William Morris, who made Kelmscott the home for himself and his family. I did not realise he was hailed as one of the first eco-socialists, dismayed at the environmental impact of industrialisation. He believed that social equality and respect for the natural world should go hand-in-hand and are independent. I also like his quote:

'*I do not want art for a few, any more than education for a few, or freedom for a few.* '

I couldn't help wondering what he would think of the world today.

There was plenty of time left after looking round the house, and initially I wondered if we would be there too long. But the weather was perfect, so we enjoyed just sitting, chatting, and of course having tea and cake.



The journey back was more eventful than expected – it was cross-country anyway, but we got to a road closed sign with no directions. Excellent driving from Jon along narrow roads and round lots of bends directed from others trying to work out where we were. Very scenic, but we were pleased when we got to the main roads!

The next outing is on Saturday, 7th November to Bryn Mawr Museum, where they manufactured furniture, including the chairs we have in our own Meeting. See www.visitwales.com/attraction/museum/brynmawr-district-museum-531151

150 YEARS

Melanie Jameson

This October I have attended two very different 150-year commemorations – one marking the foundation of my university (initially, just a college) and one celebrating 150 years of worship at a Malvern church.

Bristol University opened its doors on October 10, 1876 (one hundred years before I graduated from there with a modern language degree). It grew from a university college to an ever-expanding seat of learning as more departments appeared, gaining a royal charter as the University of Bristol on May 24, 1909.

I go to alumni events now and again and was aware of the growing excitement around the development of the rather bleak area round Temple Meads station, inconveniently located a distance from the heart of the city of Bristol. This has become 'Temple Campus', which is reached simply by walking through the tunnel under the railway station, from which all platforms are accessed. You emerge into a square, with water on two sides and dominated by an impressive building. This new postgraduate and community building was where our anniversary was marked, with a menu of lectures in the round, with slides projected onto screens all around the room.

I chose (1) advances in neurology and (2) the history of the site: 'Temple' refers to a mediaeval Knights Templar chapel on the spot and 'Mead' is meadow. This plot of land went from a thriving cattle market, plague burial ground, huge new post office which had an afterlife as a derelict canvas for graffiti artists. This was then demolished when the land was purchased by the university.

Closer to home, St Joseph's Catholic Church was excited to mark 150 years, with the Archbishop Bernard Longley, former and current priests from the area, children from the adjoining school, guests and parishioners. My son worships there so I had decided to attend anyway but checked I could also represent Quakers. The promise of a community feast was also a draw!

What a varied service: singing by the children, modern hymns, enthusiastic thanks from their delightful priest - Father Naz (whose Malawi accent I can now follow much better) and a room bursting at the seams. Just before the mass, a rhythmic African beat was piped into the church and a group of women in bright traditional African dress, swayed into the room, up to the front bearing gifts of food. The ethnic diversity of St Joseph's is one of its strong points, and the presence of babies, toddlers and children always special.

Last Sunday felt much like C of E services I have attended in the past, but the sense of family and community was much stronger – although that might simply be St Jo's. How many services include singing Happy Birthday to parishioners and include dancing?

Finally, let's skim through some more important events for 1876. Here goes:

- Queen Victoria took the title of Empress of India
- Britain's purchased shares in the Suez Canal
- Legislation was passed to restrict child labour

- Paid life peers (Law Lords) were established to strengthen the judicial functions of the House of Lords
- The Settle–Carlisle Railway opened in Northern England
- The Mothers' Union was established

This unexpected history lesson (potentially useful in a pub quiz section) concludes my article, enabling me to put my two '150 years' events into context.

Quaker Faith & Practice **Melanie Jameson**

In what ways are you involved in the work of ***reconciliation*** *between individuals, groups and nations?*

'Nations' is rather a stretch, but much against my better judgement, I have become increasingly concerned about the ongoing and possibly increasing level of conflict within the Malvern Hills Trust.

Working with two friends, I have prepared a statement to be read aloud at their forthcoming AGM (Nov 12) in the hope of highlighting the disquiet/confusion/exasperation of local residents and emphasising our desire for some sort of rapprochement to enable the Trust to perform its functions effectively.

Week after week in the Malvern Gazette, we read letters from opposing factions and the increasing alignment of local political parties. I am not on Facebook (thank goodness) but gather that the debate is live there too and has even prompted a lively article in Private Eye.

If anyone is minded to contact me to offer support on melanie-jameson@outlook.com you would be most welcome. This would not mean delving into decades of controversy.

They are where they are, but do need to move forward more positively, so something has to change, probably with professional help.

A note to any Trustees reading this: *please can you keep this initiative to yourself for now, until the AGM when it will be in the public domain*.

Saturday 21st November 2.30-4.15 pm

"Does our faith justify breaking the law?...

in conversation with Rev Sue Parfitt "

At the Meeting House. Free entry with donations to Medical Aid for Palestinians and refreshments.