

*April Flowers*

# **NEWSLETTER**

***SOUTHERN EAST ANGLIA AREA QUAKER MEETING***

***May 2015***

## ***Diary Dates for May***

Friday May 1st to Monday May 4<sup>th</sup> Yearly Meeting at Friends House, Euston <http://www.quaker.org.uk/ym>

Thursday May 7<sup>th</sup> Election Day Colchester Meeting House is serving as a polling station

Saturday May 9<sup>th</sup>, 1500hrs

"Prisoners of Conscience" and "Extraordinary Rendition" plays at Colchester Meeting House Sunday May 10<sup>th</sup> Area Meeting: Sudbury

Friday May 15<sup>th</sup> International Conscientious Objectors Day

[http://www.ppu.org.uk/nomorewar/a\\_conscientiousObjection/coDay2.html](http://www.ppu.org.uk/nomorewar/a_conscientiousObjection/coDay2.html)

Saturday May 23<sup>rd</sup> Colchester "Pasta Night" social evening

Sunday June 7<sup>th</sup> at 1500 Cavendish Consort concert at Colchester FMH

***RELIGIOUS SOCIETY OF FRIENDS (QUAKERS)***

***Clerk to Southern East Anglia Quaker Meeting: Alison Parkes***

***c/o Colchester Quaker Meeting House***

***6 Church Street, Colchester CO1 1NF;***

Web Address: [www.essexsuffolkquakers.org](http://www.essexsuffolkquakers.org)

***email address: AMClerk@nessexsuffolkquakers.org***

## Meetings for Worship

### CLACTON

Sunday at 10.30 am

### HARWICH

2nd and 4th Sundays 10.30 am

Nicholas' Church Hall,  
Stour Road, Bathside

Contact , Audrey Hind

### COLCHESTER

Sunday 10.30 am

Wednesday 12.30 pm

(Soup and Cheese Lunch)

### EARLS COLNE

1st, 3rd & 5th Sundays 10.30 am

### SUDBURY

Sunday 10.30 am

Friars Street, Sudbury

FIRST CONTACT  
FOR FUNERAL  
ARRANGEMENTS

Carol Holding, Helen Lewis,  
Peter Whiteley

## Editorial

Dear Friends,

Yes, it is Spring again, and as so often we are horrified to read of thousands of refugees trying to cross the Mediterranean to reach what they suppose is safety and a new life, but though it makes a fortune for the traffickers, it usually ends in death for refugees, or at the very best, for life in some sort of camp. I read a very sensible article in the paper this morning saying the “elephant in the room” which everyone tries to forget, is the enormous numbers of children involved, and the plain and brutal fact that what these people need most is cheap and accessible contraception. Indeed the very idea of limiting your family is repugnant to many of the cultures involved. Think about it!

By the time you read this the election may be over. I do hope the new government will be prepared to accept some stark facts like the incredible rise in the need for food banks. Another fact is that a Health Service chronically starved of money cannot cope with the increasing need for it. Undoubtedly we need more nurses and medical staff and GPs, but you cannot get

more of them unless you pay attention to what they need. I was a country GP in the middle of the last century and it was a good life, no problem finding new staff and students wanted to go into general practice — not now. More money won't help.

Our Meeting, happily, is buzzing with life and activities and a lot of Friends will be off to Yearly Meeting any minute now. I used to be active in all sorts of ways, but now I am old I can't manage things as I used. But I can still write about them, so keep your news flowing in.

News, please, by the middle of the month, to Valerie Graves, (for contact details, see AM List of Members and Attenders).



## Meeting for Suffering

Carol Holding

28<sup>th</sup> March 2015

My last meeting of the triennium felt quite emotional and although the list of names read out in Meeting for Worship of past MfS reps who had died since the last meeting were mostly in their nineties, one, Christine Davis, was only seventy which was quite sobering. The first item of business, the trustees report given by Jennifer Barraclough, was about relationships and getting to know each other as friends as well as colleagues. Paul Parker explained the long running employment dispute regarding the move away from a Zero hours contract involving three people. All union (Unite and Acas) legal and Quaker processes are being followed and love and trust and restraint are needed and appreciated. Peter Ullerthorne told us the figures: being £5m expenditure on the large Meeting House, Staff costs £5m and pension scheme £4,959m. with charitable

objectives £6.5m. Investment being £23m with general reserves at £13.5m.

Peter Christy updated us on the work of his dedicated group on the Longterm Framework. The Consultation phase is completed from 27 AM. contributions and 71 individuals. He said the Young peoples' “post cards from the future 2020” and their hope of a bigger society more easily accessed (two of their revealing visions) from their December meeting were inspirational. He quoted the Robert Burns poem “To a Louse” as an example to envisage how others see us and urged plain simple language with a minimum of Quaker speak and also to be as concise as possible—an A4 focussed statement with separate but widely accessible bits for the detail. The brief statement stresses the “how” rather than the “what” (though the latter is useful to those unfamiliar with Quakers) strategic rather than specific but with stated shared goals.

The main item of business was the presentation of the Quaker Concern for the Abolition of Torture by Jane

Laxton and Juliet Morton. Torture is illegal, immoral and degrading to both tortured and torturer and an assault on the divine in people. It is a deep spiritual malaise in society and not effective. Truth cannot be elicited by torture which is not a deterrent and weakens the society that condones it and error rate is high. We must make it not just a minority concern but involve AMs with the updated leaflet and the ten questions for discussion and the interactive plays.

Contributions from friends reminded us that Torture flourishes in secret and not always political. One Friend was sexually abused by father and tortured by mother as a child. and we must ask it is to want to torture another human being and to “pluck the plank from your own eye before removing the mote in the eye of others.”

Another emotive subject is QARN Asylum and refugee network presented to us by Tina Mosely. “That which is morally wrong cannot be politically right “ Destitution was

often for more than six months and sometimes for more than two years and whether for economic reasons or because of trafficking is often invisible. There was valuable sharing of how these people could be treated. Bolton and Bedford contributions included collecting toiletries and children's stuff and suitcases for Yarlswood inmates. Newcastle has a refugee centre and the meeting has a cupboard for unwanted clothes. Penarth, Swansea and Cardiff a Friends and neighbours group. Other friendship groups, and a retired barrister offered services free. Help with refugees in the Mediterranean and with students. Mount street meeting in Manchester offered reception from October to April with a warm drink and a biscuit and Leicester meeting helps with the City of Sanctuary movement and the Red

Cross. Central England make people aware that this evil can happen here and to stand against the word "bogus" that gets attached to Asylum seekers.

Doncaster has free hand massage & consultations with doctors every Thursday. Work with other Faith groups on night shelters, focussing on single women addressing their fears concern with unaccompanied minors and the gay and lesbian intolerance in Uganda were also mentioned. Islamophobia, problems with extremists and the difficulty of distancing ourselves from public opprobrium need to be taken up at national level.

Friendship associations and twinning rather than solidarity groups are more positive - Hertford spare Womens' Meeting room is used by Mus-

lims every Friday and we can let our local Mosque know we are there for them. Let History guide us by being aware that some Muslims in Turkey are longing for the Ottoman Empire under which different faiths got along together as did Yugoslavia under Tito and USSR under Gorbachev repressive as those regimes appeared to outsiders.



## News from Clacton

Ernest Hall

### Our premises.

It is good to know that building work on our Meeting House is now almost complete. Our driveway has been completed and our new Notice Board installed. A photograph of these took pride of place on the front page of last month's Newsletter. They are every bit as good as they look, and have been universally admired. As the user of a mobility scooter I can also testify to the difference that the smooth surface of the new driveway makes to ancient bones and arthritic joints!

The ceiling of the small Meeting Room has been repaired and the flooring of that room, of the Meeting House kitchen, and of the passage between them has been replaced, again to everyone's satisfaction. All that remains to be done is to replace the timber threshold strip that divides the two parts of what was once our 'children's room', and for us to decide whether or not we wish to retain the folding screen that could be used divide that room. I have been a member of the Meeting since 1956 and the only time I can recall the screen being used was in the early 1970s when, for a brief period, we had both a Children's Class and a

Young People's discussion group on Sunday mornings. Even then, the screen was of limited value since it was by no means sound-proof.

We are all eager to get the small room into Quakerly use again. It will, we hope, be used for the 'First Wednesday in the month' lunchtime Meeting on 6th May and on subsequent 'First Wednesdays', and for Area Meeting Teas when required. Hazel also suggests that we might form a Book Club to meet there three or four times a year to discuss reactions to *Quaker News* or to *Books of the Month*. Any other ideas?

### First Contact for Funerals

In 'News from Clacton Meeting' last month I mentioned that, among other unfilled appointments, we had been unable to find anyone willing to serve the Meeting as 'First Contact for funerals'. We learn with gratitude that Carol Holding of Colchester Meeting is to undertake this duty for us. Carol is a Friend with a wealth of understanding who will be well able to support those in need of help and advice.

Ray Attrill, who had been our 'First Contact' has passed all the information about Clacton f/Friends funeral requests and preferences on to her. Carol's own contact details are to be found in the recently published '*List of Members and Attenders*'.

### A Visitor from the USA – and from the Past!

In my wife Heather's Quaker Children's Class in the late 1960s and early '70s was a little black girl called Joanna Browning. I remember her best as a lively and endearing eight or nine year old. She grew up, married an American serviceman and emigrated to Maryland USA. She and Heather corresponded with each other until Heather's death in 2006 and I have done so, though a lot less systematically, since.

At the end of March she returned to England to visit and spend a few days with her brother and sister-in-law in Clacton and then visit her mother and sister, now living in London. She said that she'd also like to see me again. So I took her out to lunch (at the *Bowling Green, Weeley*) and, over a very good meal, we had a most enjoyable chat about old times, about the Meeting and, in particular, about the Children's Class.

Joanna Best (formerly Joanna Browning) is now a widow with a grown-up daughter and three grandchildren. I was amazed at her memory of what was a relatively short period of time nearly fifty years ago! She remembered, and remembered the names of, my two sons, Pete and Andy, Mary Musgrave's two daugh-

ters Judith and Serena, and our late Friend Joyce White's daughter, Heather Bissenden as she then was. Of the adults she remembered particularly, as well as Heather and myself, Stuart and Doris Hunt, Eileen and Louis Plater and our Friend Margaret Purrett's mum and dad, Hugh and Florence Clunes. She asked me to pass on her very best wishes to all of those who are still with us.

She doesn't now attend a Quaker Meeting but she left me in no doubt that Clacton Friends, and the Children's Class, had made a deep impression on her and that, although she has never actually been a Quaker, she has throughout her life observed and valued what I think of as Quaker principles. I felt deeply honoured that she had wanted to spend an hour or two in my company.

### On the Web

In her after-Meeting notices Hazel Jones has drawn our attention to the recently launched Area Meeting's web-site [www.essexsuffolkquakers.org](http://www.essexsuffolkquakers.org) which carries information about Clacton and Harwich Meetings as well as Sudbury, Earls Colne and Colchester. It certainly is worth finding, not least because it carries

in its entirety, the latest edition of this Newsletter.

While you are browsing the web don't forget Clacton Meeting's own web site [www.clactonquakers.org](http://www.clactonquakers.org) which, thanks to the enterprise and computer skills of our Clerk Hazel Jones and her son Tony Treloar, has been 'on line' for over a year.

### Wednesday 6th May

Yes, it's the day before the General Election. It is also the 1st Wednesday in the month and the day on which our 'First Wednesday Mid-day Meetings for Worship' will be resumed. Don't forget, the time of the Meeting has been changed from 1pm to 12 noon. There will be 30 minutes of normal Quaker worship followed by a frugal meal. It is anticipated that the Meeting will break up at about 1.00 pm

All will be welcomed. It is a splendid opportunity to reach out to those who may be attracted to Quakerism but are a little daunted by the prospect of the possibility of a full hour of prayerful and expectant silence.

## A Timely Tale

John Hall

While walking down the street one day a Member of Parliament is tragically hit by a truck and dies. His soul arrives in heaven and is met by St. Peter at the entrance.

'Welcome to heaven,' says St. Peter. 'Before you settle in, it seems there is a problem. We seldom see a high official around these parts, you see, so we're not sure what to do with you.'

'No problem, just let me in,' says the man.

'Well, I'd like to, but I have orders from higher up. What we'll do is have you spend one day in hell and one in heaven. Then you can choose where to spend eternity.'

'Really, I've made up my mind. I want to be in heaven,' says the MP.

'I'm sorry, but we have our rules.'

And with that, St. Peter escorts him to the elevator and he went down, down, down to hell. The doors open and he found himself in the middle of a green golf course. In the distance is a club-

house and standing in front of it are all his friends and other politicians who had worked with him. Everyone is very happy and dressed in evening dress. They run to greet him, shake his hand, and reminisce about the good times they had while getting rich at the expense of the people. They played a friendly game of golf and then dined on lobster, caviar and champagne. Also present is the devil, who really is a very friendly & nice guy who has a good time dancing and telling jokes. They are having such a good time that before he realizes it, it's time to go. Everyone gives him a hearty farewell and wave whilst the elevator rises....

The elevator rises and the door opens in heaven where St. Peter is waiting for him.

'Now it's time to visit heaven.' So, 24 hours pass with the MP joining a group of contented souls moving from cloud to cloud, playing the harp and singing. They have a good time and, before he realizes it, the 24 hours have gone by and St. Peter returns.

'Well, then, you've spent a day in hell and another in heaven. Now choose your eternity.'

### Two missing – and sadly missed – faces

We have missed Mary Smith and Jacqui Wilson from our recent Sunday morning Meetings for Worship. Both have recently had spells in hospital but both are now in their own homes. They are in our thoughts and prayers. We very much hope that they are both on the road to recovery and will soon be fit enough to join us again on Sunday mornings.

Joanna Best



The MP reflects for a minute, then he answers: 'Well, I would never have said it before, I mean heaven has been delightful, but I think I would be better off in hell.'

So St. Peter escorts him to the elevator and he goes down, down down to hell. When the doors open he's in the middle of a barren land covered with waste and garbage. He sees all his friends, dressed in rags, picking up the trash and putting it in black bags as more trash falls from above. The devil comes over to him and puts his arm around his shoulder.

'I don't understand,' stammers the MP. 'Yesterday I was here and there was a golf course and clubhouse, and we ate lobster and caviar, drank champagne, danced and had a great time. Now there's just a wasteland full of garbage and my friends look miserable. What happened?'

The devil looks at him, smiles and says, 'Yesterday we were campaigning.. Today you voted.'

## **Derek Crosfield House in Clacton**

Silva Rogers

Clacton Meeting still continue to support Derek Crosfield House which is located not far from the Meeting House. We still think of it in relation to Derek Crosfield although it has, for quite a few years now, been part of the Family Mosaic group. Derek Crosfield was a "weighty Friend" from way back and those who knew him remember him with affection.

Family Mosaic provide housing and care for very young single parents and their babies. The tenants usually stay for about six months to a year in small flats, sometimes with their partners but mostly on their own with the babies. They then are helped to find accommodation for themselves.

They are given much needed guidance in caring for their babies and basic do-

## **Spring !**

from Valerie Graves

I could have called it Wildlife as my little garden is very largely of plants that have arrived there on their own initiative, but I do rather work on the principle of letting them get on with it in their own way, and not struggling too hard with plants that are not enjoying themselves. That said, I did have it laid out in the beginning to a well-thought-out plan, with shrubs and gravel in the front, a paved patio and a small lawn at the back, a good-sized pond and then an area of trees and shrubs at the back. Personally I think it's lovely, and it is exciting to go round and see what is happening, but some of my neighbours think it is a weedy mess!

Which it is, of course. But I do pull up quite a lot of ivy, and I do draw the line at dandelions and huge thistly things. Right now the back garden is full of lovely purple honesty, and alkanet (dark blue) and little violets and forget-me-nots and periwinkles. But there are hardly any hollyhocks. Usually I have lots of huge ones, but they are meant to be fairly short term things. There are enough left for me to collect a lot of seeds to plant again in the autumn.

mestic and general life skills, which is often lacking from their own home environment.

The Meeting gives all monies collected in December including the Meeting for Carols gathering which is always well attended, to Derek Crosfield House and this goes towards whatever is needed at the time. Sometimes equipment for the kitchen or communal area, sometimes funding trips to the Zoo or a Christmas meal out.

I feel that the main role as Meeting representative is to provide a listening ear for the staff and to chat with the Mums (occasionally single Dads) and babies, and just to let them know that Clacton Friends still care and support them in our own small way.

I collected the original seeds from some enormous hollyhocks lining a narrow passage in the village of Cley in Norfolk. They are the single-flowered sort, much less likely to get diseases than the double- or frilly-flowered ones.

My pond is full of tadpoles, now swimming free and about to turn into tiny frogs like little jewels which spread all over the garden. I have an obliging grandson (now in his forties) who is prepared to get into the pond and clean out masses of very smelly mud. My garden is a real adventure playground: I go out there every morning and amaze myself finding out what has come up since yesterday. (but we do need rain). Then there are the birds, but I'd need another whole chapter for them.



*Norman Frith 7. 2. 1914 — 22.3.*

## **Sudbury News**

Betty Scrivener

On Tuesday, April 14 Norman Frith aged 101 was buried according to Quaker Face and Practice at Wanstead Meeting House, the Meeting House that Norman had designed.

It was a lovely sunny day and his wish to be buried in Wanstead burial ground was granted. He had worshipped there for many years. After the internment Sylvia released a white dove, the symbol of peace. A more comprehensive account of Norman's varied life will appear later

## **Norman Frith's Funeral**

Jane Carter

The day was Norman's all right! Each dawned with a cloudless sky.

Sylvia had travelled with him in the hearse. Unfortunately not horse-drawn, due to traffic regulations on the M11. Our destination was Wanstead Meeting House, Bush Road, London E.11, which Norman had designed in 1969 to replace the original timber building a former Archery Lodge and previously the local Meeting House, on the edge of Wanstead Flats and Epping Forest. There are four hexagons on a single storey, each leading internally from one to the other on all looking out and up. Everywhere is evidence of practical necessity. Light filling the Meeting Hall, the library, rooms for business, the kitchen and so on.

Meeting for Worship was enhanced by spoken memories from local Friends who remembered Norman during the time when he was living close by in Dalston. The burial ground is a very generous haven, with many gravestones assembled round two sides. Sentinels of familiarity, waiting for others to join them as the years go by, and to welcome Norman home.

## From Norman

Sylvia Frith read this at Norman's Grave-side as he had asked her to. Then she released a white dove.

I find the idea of the Spirit suffusing everything that I know, everything that I feel and everything that is beyond me, immensely exciting. The idea that the Oneness, which I had previously only sensed emotionally, could become an intellectually comprehensible reality, was so awe inspiring that I needed to welcome it in my own words, so here they are.

## Moderation

Joan Rew

In the March Newsletter, Alison Parkes talks about being asked whether Quakers approve of alcohol. She explained that "most Quakers today are comfortable with it in moderation". I was reminded of a quote that always makes me smile. Years ago, Stanley Hills (master builder) a prominent Member said, "Friends practice moderation to excess!"

## John Tann's Funeral

from Valerie Graves

I have often thought that funerals (as long as they are not tragic) are much more fun than weddings! People look shocked, but it is quite true. At weddings you often don't know anybody, and nobody talks to you, but at the end of a long life you meet all sorts of old friends and can exchange funny or happy memories of an old friend.

This was certainly true of John Tann's funeral on 20 April. I met so many old friends and lots who knew me though I had no idea who they were. John Dering whose mother rescued Earls Colne Meeting House from dereliction after the war, and Jonathan King, builder and handyman from Maldon Meeting, now with a shock of white hair and a beautiful white beard. He used to drive around with a pony and cart and was always ready to give rides to children at garden parties. He is currently taking the roof off John and Joan's cottage with a view to replacing it with modern tiles: Joan

## Veni Creator Spiritus

Come Creator Spirit, in the beauty of your forms,  
In the rose-clear promise of the dawn,  
In the proud banners of the evening west,

In the star filled canopy of night.  
Speaking through them, you speak to me.

Come in the clean washing of the rain,  
In the clean sweeping of the wind,  
In the crystal sparkle of the beck,  
In the calm mirror of the tarn,  
All of these are part of you, and part of me.

Come in the power of the lightning flash,

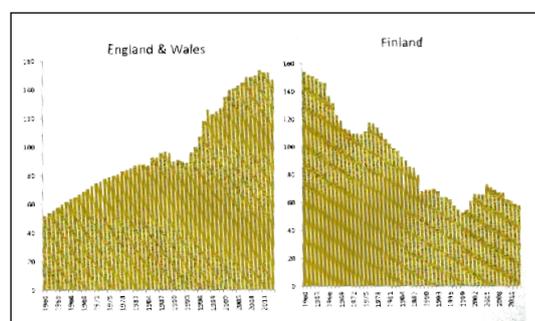
In the unanswerable voice of thunder,  
In the proud anger of the cliff-stopped wave,  
In the fatal beauty of the deep white snow.  
I feel your strength in them, as part of me.

Come in the music of the spheres,  
In the long silences that speak your name,  
In the inevitable sleep of death, but,  
In the rainbows promise of rebirth,  
As part of you, how can I cease to be?

Norman Frith 7.2.1914 - 22.3.2015

## What is it comparing?

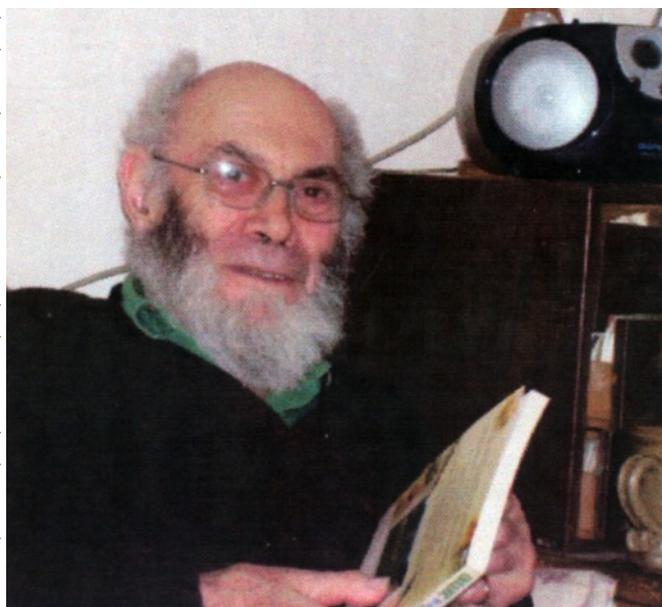
Supporters of our good Friend Juliet Lyon and the Prison Reform Trust will know. Others earn a small prize if they can guess without turning to the back page.



tells me to come with a helmet! I shall be seeing her on Thursday. She tells me how disappointed John would have been to miss all the mess and excitement! But I thought she was looking much less tired. The funeral was at Colchester Crematorium, but was conducted after the manner of Friends, which works very well. There was a good deal of ministry and many happy meetings between old friends, and we gathered together afterwards in the pleasant garden in bright sunshine. Joan would have liked to ask people back to their home, but not only was it a bit precarious because of the roof, the electricity board had chosen that day to turn the electricity off! But we had a happy get-together in the crematorium garden.

(It reminded me of another funeral many years ago, a sad one of

a young woman with asthma. She and her husband had been very active in the local Morris Dancers, and during the service they danced up and down the aisles in full Morris costume, and "The Lord of the Dance" was played. I don't think it would have been suitable in a church, but it seemed completely appropriate there, at the crematorium).



## ***Impressions of Texas*** ***Derrick Russell***

We visited the city of Sugar Land, Texas for a fortnight at the end of March. Sugar Land is to the west of Houston, which you reach after a ten hour flight. As the name suggests, Sugar Land was once the site of sugar plantations. Today it is really an affluent offshoot of Houston. Any descendants of the slaves will now live probably towards the eastern downtown area of Houston itself. That said, Houston prides itself on being multicultural. In Sugar Land, we mostly sampled the population in supermarkets and restaurants. About half the people we saw were Mexicans, but there were also many Asians and some black people. The suburban streets are virtually empty except for the occasional service van. Everyone uses their car or 'truck' to go about. This would be essential in Summer. The trunk roads seldom have pavements and resemble motorways with flyovers and underpasses. In Sugar Land every commercial building can be reached by car. The buildings have a blockhouse style, giving an impression of great solidity, which must be reassuring in the case of banks. People live in large detached houses with sunblinds and air conditioning, and often a swimming pool. The most affluent streets have huge Spanish-style mansions. One such is the estate left to the Museum of Houston by the Hogg family. The grounds are laid out in a traditional style and more particularly the interior of the mansion is furnished in 18<sup>th</sup>/19<sup>th</sup> Century style reminiscent of Christchurch House in Ipswich.

The climate of this part of Texas is subtropical. The most comfortable times to visit are Spring and Autumn. Summer is hot and humid and Winter is dull, wet, but not particularly cold. Even in Spring, the insect population is thriving. You would not sit on the grass or go barefoot. You must bargain for cockroaches in the house. Traps are set to catch them before they get too big, in which case you might not see any. Usually the floors are bare except for a few thin mats, which is probably just as well. The birds are different from ours, although I did see one house sparrow. Ducks have longer necks and legs, and

like to sit on roofs and chimney pots in the late evening sunshine. They try to settle on palm trees without much success. Some birds have red bodies. Jackdaws are everywhere, but these are different too. They have a fan shaped tail and make a beautiful sound. Pelicans can be seen flying in threes if you go eastwards towards the port of Galveston, about two hours' drive. Behind the fish market there, you can see pelicans floating in the sea waiting for scraps. The ones I saw were unexpectedly a mottled beige in colour, but whether this was due to oil film pollution I do not know. Trees are different too. A kind of olive tree which does not however bear fruit was very common. We also saw a rhododendron tree. The grass is mostly coarse in texture and not very dense. Palm trees and plantains grow as in Greece. The vegetation stays green as heavy showers can come at any time during the year.

We visited Brenham, a traditional Texas town, the site of much destruction during the Civil War. In the shaded main street we visited an ice cream parlour, which had significance to those of us who could identify the Connie Francis and other late '50s background music. I suspect most ice cream fans and their young parents did not appreciate the retro nature of the place, although perhaps they had seen the film, "Back to the Future". Relatively close was a replica of the unfinished wooden hut where was signed the declaration of independence of Texas from Mexico, which resulted in the Mexican Wars of 1835.

Texas became an independent country for a time, until it joined the Union. Only then was it safe from re-annexation by Mexico. In 1836 was the siege of the Alamo, with Davy Crockett versus the forces of Santa Anna. In many ways Texas still considers itself to be an independent country. It is very big, as big as France, Germany and the UK combined, and its oil-based economy has until lately been insulated from recession. Cattle ranching still thrives in the interior, and they grow pink grapefruit on a large scale. There is no income tax, but sales tax. People worry about what their health plan covers.

Texas is quite a musical place. The restaurants often have a country and western band playing. We went to one outdoor "antiques" sale where a group was playing from the back of a suitably worn-out looking Chevrolet flat-bed lorry. There is a pervasive sense of nostalgia and greatness.

We dined in several restaurants and noted the preference for Mexican food and seafood. Steaks and burgers were also on offer. Finally, the cost of petrol seemed to be about 60 pence per litre. Generally retail prices were high. Some supermarkets were exceptionally good, I would say equalling French supermarkets. Coming home, the journey is a little quicker, nine and a half hours, but the jet lag was worse. Surprisingly the route taken by aircraft is largely over land, following the North American coastline up to Labrador, and crossing the North Atlantic from there. We were glad to get home.



## Customer Feedback

I have come to believe that when a company reaches a critical size it metamorphoses into an entity that ceases to have any real regard for the rights or welfare of the individual customer that made it successful in the first place. For some reason the department that used to deal with customer complaints has taken on the features of a shrinking violet and no way of contacting them by email at all, sometimes not even by an overpriced telephone call.

I therefore nowadays usually address the Sales Department, (You can *always* contact the Sales Department directly).

To the Head of the Sales Department

Please pass this email back to customer services.

It is in response to a request for customer feedback on 01/04/2015.

Nowadays I do not usually reply to any email address that carries a "no reply" address as I consider that to be a rude way of addressing anyone. I also will not waste time on a form that allows a

programmer dictate how I should fill it up and will not let me proceed through it as I see fit.

The reason I send this is purely because I wish to record, in my own words, my appreciation for the excellent and patient way in which xxxxxxx dealt with my enquiry and completely to my satisfaction.

Very happy as usual with the service I receive but not the way that feedback is asked for and carried out.

John Kay

## Answer to John Lewis' Puzzle:

A comparison of the prison populations per 100,000 population of England & Wales and of Finland from 1960 - 2013.



## Clerk's Corner

Alison Parkes,

Southern East Anglia Quaker Meeting Clerk

Reaching out to others

At Area Meeting in January, we heard Carol Holding's report from Meeting for Sufferings (MfS) and minuted (2015/06): "Friends at all levels are encouraged to strengthen the bonds of friendship with the Muslim community and stand up to Islamophobia." MfS revisited this topic in March, where representatives shared examples of how Friends are doing just that. They described personal initiatives as well as messages of support from meetings to local mosques and synagogues. They considered the value of interfaith work and of being inclusive. These considerations challenge us all to find appropriate ways to reach out beyond our Quaker meetings and find what unites us with our neighbours.

At a recent Woodbrooke course, "Exploring Eldership and Oversight", a tutor read an extract from *Quaker Faith and Practice* which, I think, applies to us all in terms of our Quaker community, as well as to the larger community beyond: "All of us in the meeting have needs. Sometimes the need will be for patient understanding, sometimes for practical help, sometimes for challenge and encouragement; but we cannot be aware of each other's needs unless we know one another. . . Loving care is not something

that those sound in mind and body 'do' for others but a process that binds us together. God has made us loving and the imparting of love to another satisfies something deep within us." (QFP 12.01)

Knowing one another, loving one another, and serving one another as a community, both as Quakers and beyond, is not always easy or convenient. At times in our lives there will be limits to what each of us can do. The important thing is to keep asking what we can do, what love can do, and to keep seeking solutions.

This applies to the plight of migrants desperately trying to cross the Mediterranean. Quakers in Britain have written an Open Letter to the Prime Minister expressing their deepest concern:

"Quakers in Britain have been shocked and angered by the needless deaths of thousands of desperate people in the Mediterranean in recent months. Every human life is a precious gift to be treasured – each person a child of God – and the loss of just one diminishes all of us. It is immoral to use the threat of loss of life as a deterrent to migration.

"We urge you as our Prime Minister, in your work with other European leaders, to ensure that Britain, one of the richest countries in the world, plays its part in preventing these unnecessary drownings and addressing the economic inequality and violence which leads to these desperate attempts to reach a new home." The

letter is signed by Paul Parker, Recording Clerk, Quakers in Britain.

Quaker Asylum and Refugee Network (QARN) and Quaker Council for European Affairs (QCEA) have previously called for safe paths to legal protection and protested against the cessation of funding for the Search and Rescue Operation in the Mediterranean.

This tragic loss of life will be very much in the hearts and minds of Quakers as they meet for Yearly Meeting at Friends House in London (1 to 4 May).

The next Area Meeting will be held on 10 May at Sudbury Meeting House, 2.15 pm. All are welcome. Attendees are requested to seek permission to attend from the clerk. I hope to see many of you there.

## Newsletter

If you are one of the people who were expecting the newsletter by email and were disappointed at not receiving it, please take the trouble to inspect the SPAM folder in your email program. Many programs automatically put little used addresses directly into this folder so do check it and make sure that my address is included among the "good ones."

John Kay