



*Alison & Tim relaxing in the sunshine before Area Meeting June 2009*

*photo: John Hall*

# **NEWSLETTER**

**SOUTHERN EAST ANGLIA AREA QUAKER MEETING**  
**February 2016**

## ***Diary Dates for February***

Friday February 5th Colchester Farmers' Market

Saturday February 20th to Friday February 26th National Chip Week

Saturday February 27th: Regional Gathering, Saffron Walden FMH.

Saturday February 27th to Friday March 11th Fairtrade Fortnight

<http://www.fairtrade.org.uk/en/media-centre/news/2016/fairtrade-fortnight-2016>

**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@essexsuffolkquakers.org](mailto:AMClerk@essexsuffolkquakers.org)**

## **Meetings for Worship Editorial**

### **CLACTON**

Sunday at 10.30 am  
1st Wednesday each month  
1pm-2pm with Soup & Cheese

### **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  
Thursday 12.30 pm  
(Bring Picnic,  
Tea/Coffee provided)

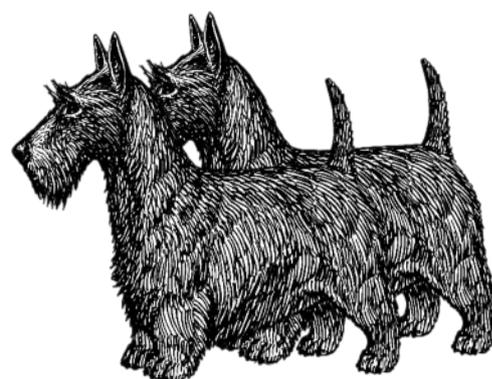
Dear Friends,

How very cold it is! We have been spoilt and have forgotten what it is like to be really cold. (and it makes us think more, about what it is like to be a refugee and wet and hungry.) I am indeed spoilt as I have a very good boiler which keeps me warm with no thought at all, courtesy of some excellent engineers from Poland, so I have personal reasons for thinking well of migrants! We have quite a number in Colchester now, some of whom are actually sharing the homes of Friends from our Meeting. But of course there are countless thousands who are not so lucky. An article in the current Friend gives an idea of what it must be like to live, for instance, in the camp at Calais.

I hope you had a good Christmas. I count my blessings as I have a large family and I see most of them very often, which is lovely, and I get taken

to their houses for noisy parcel openings and party food. Nowadays I don't go to the many festive gatherings at the Meeting House, but I know that a lot of fun is had by all. And serious business is done, as well. I have for many years held a short meeting on Christmas Day, which is always fascinating as you don't have any idea who or how many will come, but two little Scottie dogs are usually of their number.

News, please, by the middle of the month, to Valerie Graves, 12 Piper Road, Lexden, Colchester, CO3 3SF, 01206 578226.



Robert Parkes then reported on the Refugees in Colchester project. Fresh Beginnings has been sponsored by Area Meeting as well as Colchester Local Meeting with funds that they can use where appropriate. Four Syrian families arrived over the holidays and were welcomed at a tea party held at Colchester Quaker meeting house.

The meeting concluded after a minute of record about Local Meetings and their actions toward responsibilities outlined in *Quaker Faith and Practice*, chapter 4. Area Meeting responsibilities will be discussed at the March area Meeting in Clacton.

Please see the Reports in this Newsletter and the Area Meeting web site for all of the documents and information you need.

### **FIRST CONTACT**

FOR FUNERAL ARRANGEMENTS

CLACTON.....Ray Attrill

COLCHESTER.....Carol Holding

SUDBURY.....Peter Whiteley

### **Area Meeting Notes**

by Ann Webb

The January Area Meeting took place at Colchester Meeting House and was well attended with 28 members and attenders in total.

We welcomed Joy Ling (Harwich) into membership and there were several nominations and re-nominations as well as appointments of representatives/liasons to committees. (see the web site at [essexsuffolkquakers.org/business/](http://essexsuffolkquakers.org/business/))

Requests for attenders at several conferences were put forward. Please see the Area Meeting web site for the January Minutes and the Events page for times and dates.

There were discussions about helping with the Quaker Tapestry this Autumn (20 August – 4 September) when it was read out that Chelmsford Cathedral was sponsoring a visit. Requests were made to the Area Meetings to help with Stewardship of the exhibit and perhaps make a monetary donation to defray costs. It was agreed that Area Meeting would look into the matter further.

Robert Parkes gave the Meeting for Sufferings report which will be included in the Newsletter.

John Lewis gave the QPSW report. The theme of the conference was 'Castle or Community' and the plight of migrants/refugees and asylum seekers was the topics for discussions. Other discussions included the Peace testimony and how to remove the occasions for war. He enjoyed the conference and felt that there could have been more pertinent speakers who directly worked with the situations discussed.

## **Wild Spot**

from Valerie Graves

Until the cold spell started we had been having unseasonably warm weather, and plants and animals didn't know quite where they were: lots of birds were doing a bit of courting, and a ridiculous variety of plants were in bloom. But now everything is shuddering a bit and wondering what is going on. Snowdrops were in bud, but some of them have re-

treated back into themselves. Celandines do not care, they are very hardy, but most of the roses are budding fresh green shoots, and I think they will get nipped. A pair of blackbirds follows me round the garden in the mornings until I get some bread out for them, and if I am not quick enough they, and the robin, will chase me into the kitchen, where I do not want them in the least. It can be quite expensive, but I don't grudge it.



An Early photograph of Alison Bush

## **GCSE RE Visit**

Helen and John Lewis

This morning the Meeting House was visited by a class of 16 young people from Colne Community School, Brightlingsea, with two teaching staff. The visit was part of a GCSE religious studies course.

They were met by Helen and John with Les standing by in support. It was really pleasing to see that there was one familiar young face in the class, well known to us.

The children had a number of questions to ask of Quakers: what religion are we? The source of our religious authority? (their word, not ours), Atmosphere in the building? Form of service? Community activities? Views on

war? and View of gender and other differences? And they had lots of questions, including the knobbly old peace question, 'So what would you do if someone attacks England?'

When discussing same-sex marriage, a boy firmly put his hand up and told us his Mum is planning just that. It was a relaxed and productive atmosphere.

From the Meeting House the class went on to the Baptist Chapel, to St Helen's Orthodox Church and a Colchester Church.

For our part, we had the pleasure of reminding ourselves of what matters about Quakerism and the discipline of being gently probed by curious children, most of whom probably never went into a church.

## **From Peace Direct**

Thank you to supporters

John Lewis

The QCEA conference was, as you might expect, dominated by middle-aged Friends, sensibly dressed and full of conventional ideas. These are the wheels that keep Quakers rolling. But I missed the activism of youth, there was just a handful of young people. I yearned for fire and enthusiasm and was depressed by the future of Quakers.

A couple of days later in London, Helen and I had a wake-up. I need not have worried. There is fire, enthusiasm and young people full of energy in one of our peace groups. Colchester Friends will be pleased to know a charity we have supported for years, Peace Direct, is bubbling with young enthusiasm. And Peace Direct gives thanks to its donors, especially the Quaker donors like Colchester Meeting.

Peace Direct gives awards each year to peace groups that have seized a good idea and developed it. About 80 charities around the

world applied and we heard from just two of the special ones. The judges included Fergal Keene and they were searching for peace groups that have successfully demonstrated their ability to bridge divides, to bring together enemies and to overcome engrained hatred.

For a full account of the evening, go to the Guardian digital edition <http://www.theguardian.com/global-development-professionals-network/2015/dec/09/peace-israel-palestine-kenya-bosnia-peacebuilding>

Sadly visa restrictions prevented any peace groups from Africa coming to speak. We heard first from a great jolly Bosnian lady; although the civil war ended years ago, it is a land utterly divided, between Moslem, Orthodox and Roman Catholic, between nationalists from Serbia and Croatia. 'They never mix nor speak to the other. So she runs a string of children's classes that are mixed, called Genesis ( [www.genesisbl.org](http://www.genesisbl.org) ). One of her sad sidelines is teaching landmine awareness. She was, incidentally, horrified to hear that we have schools run by different reli-

gious groups. Her children grow up together.

Then for comparison a dour Israeli from Combatants for Peace ([www.cfpeace.org](http://www.cfpeace.org)). The simplest of ideas often need courage to carry out – this is an active group which brings together former soldiers and combatants from the Israeli Army and from Palestinian militant groups. They are not particularly popular on either side of the barrier, accused of treason, of talking to the enemy, they lead a tough social life. That is their contribution to peacemaking for the sake of their children and grandchildren.

Both these people are activists, not public orators, more used to negotiating with suspicious governments than making speeches in foreign languages so their blunt, unsophisticated English was all the more effective, delivered from the heart.

These are the people that Peace Direct supports. This is where your donations go. This is what the Meeting does to help avoid the causes of all wars.

## **S.E.Anglia Quaker Weekend**

Jenny Kay

November 18<sup>th</sup> to 20<sup>th</sup> 2016 at High Leigh, nr Hoddesdon, Herts

Website

<http://www.cct.org.uk/highleigh/introduction>

**Leadings: How can we walk with a smile in the dark**

Quaker Faith and Practice Chapter 29

This weekend aims to refresh, uplift and inspire us as individuals and as a community. It will be an opportunity to get to know each other better and to deepen our understanding of being part of a Quaker meeting. We hope to gain some ideas of ways in which we can further inspire our meetings.

There will be opportunities to share with others in small groups, to reflect individually, time to talk and listen to each other in a comfortable and caring place set in beautiful surroundings.

Peter Whiteley, Jenny Kay and Phyl Reid are planning the weekend. Please put the dates in your diary and keep them free. consider if you can lead a workshop, study session or leisure activity. We are investigating the possibility of a shared coach to get as many of us there with the minimum of effort and pollution as possible.

More details and the application form with next month's Newsletter.

## **A Splendid Christmas Present**

from Valerie Graves.

My youngest son, who is moving to Pembrokeshire (I shall see him very rarely, if at all) gave me a remarkable present, a sort of perpetual picture. It is about quarto sized, and shows an endless stream of family photographs. They come from my own collection and everyone else in the family: some are familiar but some I have never seen before. They are of people and pets and houses, at home or on holiday, lots of scenery and wildlife, some from Australia, Europe and America, especially South America where Tom often works, with

marvellous plants and wildlife like kangaroos and alpacas and weird insects and lizards, even an erupting volcano! Any number of babies who are now strapping teenagers or even quite elderly. Such a treat, I am sure I shall never get bored with it. Each photo remains on show for about 40 minutes and then changes itself, and if you leave the room it just switches itself off, so you don't have to think about it.



## **Advice and Query No.5**

Ernest Hall

Advice and Query No 5 urges us to “take time to learn about other people’s experience of the Light... As you learn from others, can you in turn give freely from what you have gained? While respecting the experiences and opinions of others, do not be afraid to say what you have found and what you value.”

Well I have found, as George Fox did, that the Christian faith as experienced within a Quaker Meeting for Worship, does ‘speak to my condition’. It would be an exaggeration for me to claim, like Fox, that my heart leaps with joy. But there is something very special about Meeting for Worship that brings me back week after week. A tiny ‘fish and cross’ badge in the lapel of my jacket unobtrusively expresses my unity with persecuted and often martyred Christians of every tradition world-wide. I hasten to add that I don’t endeavour to persuade everyone, or even anyone, else to embrace my faith, important as it is for me. I’m ready enough though to share it with anyone who wishes me to do so.

I have recently received a reinforcement of that faith from what I would once have considered a most unlikely source; from the

## **Baking Together**

Carol Holding

I am aware of the privilege of being able to meet the Newsletter copy deadline via email to the editor and with discussion last Sunday in All Things Considered how great good for all can come from unlikely scientific achievements such as work for warfare, but the last few days I have been greatly encouraged by how much good can also be engendered by simple old fashioned activities done together.

‘experience of the Light’ of the Swami Veetamohamanda who has visited Clacton Meeting House on three occasions in successive years, to join with us in Quaker worship and to explain to us the Vedanta tradition of Hinduism.

On each occasion he has attended our Meeting House 45 minutes before Meeting for Worship begins so that he can have the undivided attention of those who choose to join him. On the two earlier occasions I have been among them. This year though, age and infirmity defeated me. I accepted the kind offer of a Friend who drove me to Meeting for Worship at the usual time. I therefore missed the Swami’s talk. This was a great pity as this time it had been a discussion, with questions and answers, in which the Swami told his audience of his faith and of his ‘experience of the Light’ straightforwardly and without equivocation.

“Do you”, he was asked, “believe in the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead on that first Easter morning?” “I do”, he replied, and went on to express his conviction that Jesus was an incarnation of God and had been sent at that particular time because it was then that he was needed. “He would,” said the Swami, “come again, when he was needed.”

We all know how much we enjoy eating together and so how about baking together? especially if you have no common language.

Last Monday Mohammed, a master baker from Aleppo and his wife, Hadija and their youngest son Abdu came to our house to make bread with Tim. This is the family that we as Quakers have adopted and they were kindly brought to us by Rob Parkes and Hana from Homs who was invaluable as interpreter.

All sat round the table as they discussed the mixing of ingredients the different time scales of

How I wish that I had been there! I wonder what would have been his attitude to the remainder of the Nicene Creed? He certainly, even at second hand, strengthened and fortified my often shaky Christian Faith. It isn’t, I suppose, very likely that the Swami will come to Clacton again, and even less likely that I shall be still around if he does. But if he does come and I am still here, with sufficient mobility to get to the Meeting House, I’ll be among his disciples.

I demonstrate my Quaker faith by being present and taking part in Quaker worship every Sunday when this is physically possible. I empathise with, and pray especially for, the many Christians throughout the world who nowadays suffer and are martyred for no other reason than that they share my faith.

Even at second hand, the Swami had strengthened my sometimes shaky Christian/Quaker faith!



*A good photograph of John Tann*

including the yeast the kneading and proving times - Tim with his unweighed large amounts of strong brown Marriages Flour full of seeds and Mohamed with his smaller amounts of white? flour and some interesting flavour —Aniseed?

Mohamed's dough having risen was made into large quantities of smaller rings looking a bit like bagels, so many that I ran out of baking trays, When they were done we sampled them hot, when they didn't need any addition, and this followed by Christmas Cake and tea and much talk.

There was much talk of children and grandchildren and it made me ashamed to be sorry that we didn't see ours much. At least we knew that they were safe and I wanted to ask many questions about their vast family left behind but was afraid to make them sad. I also wanted to know about this terrible decision they had to make and the long journey

which followed but I expect all will be revealed when Love has healed things along with time. Our impotent outrage about the unnamed sufferers we see on television was somehow tamed by this close up chance to hold out the hand of friendship. It was enough to see the son's devotion to his dad who had been blinded by shrapnel and whose business

had been blown up. Whether or not he knows we know his history is less important I realise than to show we can help him to positivity and self esteem. Wanting desperately to show sympathy might be a less good start and made me understand what a brilliant name the local organisation that is helping "Fresh Beginnings" is.

## **Clacton News**

Margaret Ahmed

Towards the end of October 2015 five members and attenders of Clacton meeting began a Hearts and Mind Prepared course. Now halfway through, everyone is finding the course helpful in developing their spiritual lives, and also in learning about others' spiritual journeys. The group is being run democratically with each person in turn taking responsibility for facilitating a session.

A Meeting for Carols was held on 19<sup>th</sup> December to which about fifty people came and it was good to see the recently renovated Meeting Room so full. The theme of the Meeting was 'Simplicity'.

## **Castle or Community?**

QCEA looks at Europe

John Lewis

This conference was sponsored by QPSW and by QCEA (Quaker Council for European Affairs), the latter being the Friends' office in Brussels. 115 Friends from 21 countries explored the tensions between the vision of the founders of the Common Market and the protectionism which emerges under pressures from the outside or even from internal tensions.

Speakers urge us to know our own spiritual values, transcending national issues and borders. Fear and social mythology has to be examined and faced down.

There was a lovely mixture of carols and Bible readings, as well as the Nativity story told by ten year-old Olivia. Musician Adam Moore provided piano accompaniment for the carols and he also composed a beautiful song for the meeting about 'Simplicity' and the life of St Francis. After the lighting of candles and a brief time for personal reflection, Adam sang the 'Christmas Halleluia' which was very moving. Then festive refreshments, generously supplied by members of Clacton Meeting, were served. Silva Garton-Rogers and Carolyn Rogers worked very hard to organise this successful event.

In quiet contrast, a dozen people assembled at the Meeting house for a slightly shortened Meeting

Not so easy in oneself, and equally hard in others; as in individuals, also at a community level overt and outspoken leadership may be necessary.

One widely commended speaker was Molly Scott-Cato, MEP, (*Gloucester Meeting*). She is an academic economist who has added Quaker concerns to her duties at the European Parliament where she is EC Green Group speaker on the economy. She spoke about her work generally but I particularly liked her assertion that to "avoid wars and the causes of war" is itself a valuable financial rule, that is, to act in a Quakerly manner is good economics. She made the uncomfortable point that many refugees are trying to get to Europe to share in that wealth which Eu-

for Worship on Christmas Day. Those present appreciated this calm 'oasis' in amidst the busyness of Christmas. A special collection at both these Meetings raised £170 for Derek Crossfield House, a local, Quaker inspired, charity which provides accommodation and support for young parents.

Last year an extensive programme of repairs and decoration was carried out at the Meeting House. The Premises Committee will be meeting soon to consider what work may be needed in 2016.



ropeans took from their countries in past years.

Molly Scott-Cato recommended reading on her subject "*Debt or Democracy*" Mary Mellor, (Pluto ISBN 9780745335544 £19 pb).

Amongst 25 workshops and discussion groups I can only mention a few. The discussion groups were facilitated sponta-

neously by Friends so they inevitably varied in quality.

Asylum and refugees was a continuous subject of conversation during the conference and amongst the public; the workshop on this core problem would have benefited from a speaker who had current regulatory experience and also perhaps from a Greek or Balkan field practitioner. On the other hand we were introduced to David Forbes, (*Bull St Meeting, Birmingham*.) who has many years experience in refugee support in the UK.

I noted that there are Quaker meetings that have provided accommodation and financial support for some years to their local refugee groups, as we are doing. One meeting, (*Canterbury*) has organized mentoring at a skilled level, to provide longterm confidential support to those who arrived some years ago as well as recently arrived Syrians: listening, accompanying on request and supporting discretely.

A workshop on "Us and Others" was run by an experienced psychologist practitioner. She probed deep at our own assumptions (= prejudices ?) and guided us through the sensitive atmosphere when neither party quite trusts the other. Useful to us all in our daily lives and not restricted

to negotiating with wary asylum seekers.

Islam attracted some attention and a discussion group brought out the names of several Moslems who are prepared to speak to other religious groups, some known to Qavi (*Blackheath Meeting*) and to *Leicester Meeting*. It is important to seek speakers from 'the others' if there is any wish to talk about their religion to make sure we do not embed our own myths. Many Moslems are acutely aware of their secular challenges, and the strains they suffer in Christian countries (eg UK) or supposedly secular countries (eg USA, France).

QCEA itself came under scrutiny. After a couple of difficult years there are now new staff in place and even (brace yourselves, Quaker traditionalists) a transition manager to deliver secular changes which can be openly self-evaluated. They feel, in common with our Victorian forefathers, that there is no conflict between good business and good Quakers. QCEA was compared unfavourably with QUNO in Geneva, which has discerned its longterm role, carried out by longterm resident Friends.

This was an ambitious conference at a time of strains in the EC so perhaps the specifics of the ti-

tle were beyond our reach. Real support and guidance was given to QCEA, which is a tiny organisation; support, guidance and Friendship was given to small meetings across Europe such as Estonia and Moscow. A Friend from Poznan spent 18 hours in a bus to get to Brussels.

For us in our well-fed and safe worship, we may raise our eyes above our near horizons and think of those who worship with us and the challenges they must face daily. I spent only 2 hours in a train to get to Brussels.

Other references: *Hungry for Change* (Friends House). *To Trust a Spark*, Anne Bennett, ([www.postyugoslavink.com](http://www.postyugoslavink.com))

Palestinian Children in Israeli Prisons, (project of Norwegian Friends).



### **Clerk's Corner**

Alison Parkes

For those of us struggling to make ends meet, it can be galling to feel that service to others is expected of us, when we may wonder how to pay the bills, get a job or repair the car. It can be frustrating to see others enjoying the luxury of "doing good" when we are preoccupied with keeping a roof over our heads, coping with illness or putting food on the table. And for those of us who do not have these worries but who recognise their reality for others, it can also be hard to know how best to be supportive.

As Quakers we have always questioned social mores which place more value on such things as material gain rather than simplicity, or on status rather than equality. At a time when we or someone we know may be struggling with perhaps financial or health issues, this is precisely when we need to get to know one another better, so that we may be sensitive to each other and, in the oft-quoted words of Isaac Pennington, "help one another up with a tender hand" (*Quaker faith and practice* 10.01). It is in this way that we might help one another to live fulfilled lives and serve one another, and our community, better.

The revised website for Quakers in Britain [www.quakers.org.uk](http://www.quakers.org.uk) is worth a visit. It sums up the Quaker approach to service: "The Quaker faith is sometimes thought of as a do-it-yourself religion. There are no paid ministers or clergy in Quaker meetings. The work of the meetings is carried out by its members. This is done on a voluntary basis in most cases and is considered by Friends as ministry in the form of service." We take ministry to mean putting our faith into action. This can be through silent worship or witness, through supporting close family or friends in diverse ways,

and through serving the wider community. And for those who are “willing and able”, it can include taking on a Quaker role in support of your Local or Area Quaker Meeting.

What does it mean to be a Local Meeting?

Some of our Local Meetings (LMs) are confronting the question of whether they can be regarded as a Local Meeting. Discussions with Paul Parker, Recording Clerk for the Religious Society of Friends, have clarified that an LM needs only to meet three important criteria for it to be regarded as such: 1.)



Alison Bush as most of us remember her

right holding of Meeting for Worship;2.) robust way of handling finances;3.) a correspondence clerk to receive and disseminate information, e.g. from AM and Friends House, to Friends and Attenders.

Each of these criteria requires some “unpacking” in order to ensure they are being met. For instance, how do we ensure that there is “right holding of Meeting for Worship”? Does that require the presence of an appointed Elder or is it enough to make regular reference to our book of discipline, *Quaker faith and practice*? How do we define a “robust way of handling finances”? Sudbury and Earls Colne Friends have asked for help from AM Trustees to draft a Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) for the two LMs, which will set out how the responsibilities of each Meeting are being

met. Clarifying our responsibilities as LMs and AM is something that could both challenge and release Friends to serve their Meetings in new ways. Let us hope so!

If you would like more information about how the Meeting offers support in a range of ways, please talk to your Overseer or email [AMClerk@essexsuffolkquakers.org](mailto:AMClerk@essexsuffolkquakers.org) and I will put you in touch with a Friend to discuss local pastoral care.

The next Area Meeting will be held on Sunday March 13, 2.15 pm at Clacton Quaker Meeting House, 26 Granville Road, Clacton CO15 6BX. For more details, please see the AM website Business page [www.essexsuffolkquakers.org](http://www.essexsuffolkquakers.org). All are welcome, though if you are not yet in membership, please ask the Clerk for permission to attend.

### ***Fabulous Freedom v. Sunpredictable in Freedom***

As bright as the sun, I see everything is so fresh and alive the trees whistle in the wind. The birds sing their sweet melody it's just so magical! Music ringing through my ears people dancing and having a good time. Everything is so peaceful.

Everything is so dull and boring, no life, it's like I am trapped in the zoo and I don't know what to do. Every time I go outside the weather cries. The putrid smell is killing me. The deafening silence makes me sweat. Where is the colour? It's just all gone. Is life even worth living? Now all life is just about pain and misery I wish that someone can help!

Amber Kendall-Attrill

Introduction

We went for a walk in central Colchester, we were free to do whatever we wanted. Other countries are not free. They can't do what we do in our everyday life. We walked and ran across a bridge and trying

to make it for it didn't work. We done running and put ourselves in situations, what if you couldn't walk or run? We were free!

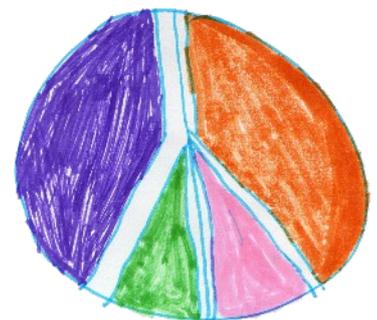
Freedom

To be free you can see views you can see trees you would be happy you would be excited. You are allowed to work. You can see birds you can jump in puddles. You are full of life, your life can change. What if you're not free?

Lack of freedom

if your life is not free you might not be able to see things like sites or views. You would be unhappy your life might change you may feel panicked, upset or even worried.

Katie Surridge



### ***Essex and Suffolk Regional Gathering***

at Saffron Walden Friends Meeting House

Saturday 27<sup>th</sup> February 2016

#### **Programme**

Our theme for 2016 is

**‘Answering that of God, what does love require of me’.**

The Refugee Crisis: Catherine Henderson of QARN will explore issues around the movement of peoples, the causes, the outcomes and action. This is a fast moving changing situation, and Catherine will be giving up-to-the minute news and advice.

11.30 Meeting for Worship

12.00 Session 1

1.00pm Lunch, bring your own, Saffron Walden Friends will provide drinks

2.00pm Session 2

4.00/4.30 Tea, provided by local Friends

Clerk: Susan Garratt

([sue@fairfield10.plus.com](mailto:sue@fairfield10.plus.com)) Tel:01277623271

## **Interfaith Gathering**

An Interfaith Gathering will take place on the 25th of February, from 7pm to 9pm in the Town Hall of Colchester. The idea has developed out of the quiet inter-faith work that has been going on in the town for some months in relation to the refugee crisis. The event is meant to be a way for faiths groups of Colchester-

and those of no faith - to talk to each other. It is billed as " a series of one-to-one conversations about religious matters (like a "religious speed dating"!)... The Mayor of Colchester will be hosting the event, and the Anglican Bishop of Colchester has already confirmed that he will attend. The aim is to welcome 100 people from as many congregations as possible as well as several athe-

ists and agnostics. More information should be available closer to the time. The organiser needs to keep an eye on numbers so if you think you would might attend please let Robert Parkes robertnparkes@gmail.com) know.

## **Refugee Working Group**

January update.

Robert Parkes

" To be truly radical is to make hope possible, not despair convincing" – Raymond Williams

In the last newsletter, I explained how the Area was working with Fresh Beginnings (FB), the Colchester-based refugee support organisation. It was announced at the end of last year that the town would welcome five refugee families escaping the war in Syria. The Council asked FB to take the lead on their settlement. In turn, FB asked a number of faith groups in the town, including Quakers, to each befriend one of the families. A day or so before Christmas, Alison and I were privileged to attend a welcoming gathering where we met four Syrian families who had arrived in the UK a few hours earlier. On Christmas Day, we visited "our" family in their new

home. On New Years Day, our working group organized a welcoming tea party for the families and their be-frienders. This can, I think, be best be summed-up in the thank you note we received from FB afterwards: " We had a good time with Syrians families and befrienders in the Quakers" house. Thank you very much for [those] who organised the New Year 2016 event. I was very blessed for the fellowship and warm welcome from that group community, we did sing an old New year English song [Auld Lang Syne]...God bless all of you who are welcome refugees and make them feel home. It is only God who will pay you back...".

Since then, we have met with the family several times. This has included a joyous afternoon of bread-making – and bread-breaking - around Tim and Carol's kitchen table. We are currently seeking to discern their longer term needs, in consultation with FB, and how we

might best utilize the £200 per month set aside as agreed by AM.

Of course, the refugee crisis extends way beyond the town and these shores. It is again on the agenda for Meeting for Sufferings in February. I continue to represent the Area on the campaign group <http://welcometocolchester.org/>.

Friends" generous purchase of the CD "Music in Colchester" raised over £120 which has helped support the group's most recent relief convoy to Calais. I'm part of a sub-group that is seeking to maintain the momentum of positive messages about refugees. This includes drafting letters for Friends to send to the local papers, etc. John Hall has had a letter published in the Clacton and Frinton Gazette. If you'd like to take part in the letter writing and would like to use the drafts please get in touch.

## **A Journey into Service**

Reflections on Meeting for Sufferings(MfS), December 2015

Robert Parkes

This meeting was spread over a weekend at Woodbrooke. We got through a great deal of business but it was also time for worship, fellowship, eating together and building a sense of community. The use of base groups meant I was able to get to know better the representatives from the other Area Meetings(AM) across East Anglia.

As usual, a set of the papers, including the minutes, can be found on the Quaker.org website

at <http://www.quaker.org.uk/our-organisation/meeting-for-sufferings/papers-and-minutes>. There is a lot to digest - it runs to 181 pages - so I have decided to make this report a personal reflection, hoping it gives you an insight into the spirit of the meeting as well as highlighting some of the key issues.

I came away with an enhanced sense of what it means to be a member of the Religious Society of Friends - to be a Quaker. I joined the Society here in Colchester. That makes me, formally, a member of Southern East Anglia AM, but my membership goes beyond here. I see myself as

part of the community of Quakers across the UK - Britain Yearly Meeting (BYM). It doesn't stop there either. I feel part of the world-wide community of Quakers. We received reports from Yearly Meetings abroad which we were urged to relay to our own AMs. They're all in the papers but if I was to pick out one it would be from Switzerland Yearly Meeting (at around page 100) which I found especially moving. I've attached it to this report.

I've titled this report a journey into service. This is because, for me, this is what it feels like to be a Quaker. In many ways it has been a natural extension of my working life. Others may feel the

same, I recall conversations I had about this with our recently departed Friend Alison Bush. For others, membership may be an opportunity to serve, possibly for the first time. Service for some Friends may necessarily be bound by their Local Meeting. For others it might extend to the Area Meeting. Yet others might be drawn to serve nationally, on one of the BYM central committees, for example. Some Friends may be led to serve overseas, as part of that worldwide community of Friends. Our Area, in fact, has something of a tradition of Friends going out into the world. Colchester Meeting heard recently from Jez Smith, Clerk to Geneva Meeting, who began his journey here.

The route into service is not the same for all Friends. Journeys are based on gifts and leadings, circumstances, and sense of readiness. Not all Friends are aware they could serve on one of the central committees. To help tap into this nationwide pool of talent, the way the Central Nomination Committee works is being reviewed. More detail can be found in the papers. It is hoped this will be a two way process. AMs and their nominations committees are encouraged to think about the service a person could do beyond the AM boundaries. At the very least Friends are urged to complete the Quaker Service Information Form. This can be found at <http://old.quaker.org.uk/quaker-service-information-form>

Membership is also about entering the life of the Society; becoming part of Quaker life. We heard about the work of the Quaker Life Central Committee which supports and strengthens us. This covers faith and practice, both spiritual nurture and the practical tasks required for the running of our Quaker meetings. The work of Quaker Life (QL) is being reviewed too, with a renewed focus on helping those Friends embarking on the journey: how can their journeys, based on their gifts and leadings, be enabled nurtured, supported, and sustained. To this end, QL has developed, and is continuing to develop, resources to help us. Being Friends Together is an example. See

<http://together.woodbrooke.org.uk/welcome.php>

As a key part of this, there is a keenness for Friends and Attenders to know more about our book of discipline, Quaker Faith and Practice (QFP). Reading it would be a good place start! A reading programme has been developed, it's not too late to catch up. It can be found at <http://qfp.quaker.org.uk/reading/>. Locally, Colchester is poised to start a Qfp study group.

When you start to read QFP it doesn't take long to see why it's called our book of discipline. Like many complex organisations, and the Society of Friends is no exception, we are bound together by a shared way of doing things, in our case honed over 350 years. In some instances, and there is no way of skirting round this, it refers to regulations. Like any vibrant, healthy organisation, policies and procedures are kept under review. This is one reason different editions of QFP abound. It is currently under preliminary review, subject to agreement at the next Yearly Meeting. The process is expected to take several years of careful discernment. We are urged to be active in this process, contributing as best we can, for example, attending those BYMs when it is considered. And if we have views, to voice them. Emerging issues we might like to think about include: The uses of new technology; the link between prayer and action and family, safeguarding, etc.

Outreach and what we are telling people about ourselves

Ways of administering small meetings. Experimental worship, for example all age worship and 'afterwords'

One pressing issue has already been addressed, revised guidance on making public statements. We finalized a new version which will go to BYM next year for adoption. It's in the papers and is attached to this report for us to use now.

A theme running through the week-end was the consideration of the health of our AMs, and some of the challenges they all seem to face, for example, the pastoral care of dis-

persed Friends/Attenders and the burden of looking after old buildings, which for some meetings seems to drain all their resources and energy. We were asked some uncomfortable questions. Just how diverse a community are we? Can the stillness of the meeting for worship be found elsewhere other than in our buildings? Have the demographics of the UK moved on and left the pattern of Meetings behind? Do the boundaries between AMs act as barriers to a greater sense of community, or are they portals to greater togetherness?

There is a lot to be cheerful about. There is an energy amongst Friends across the UK. Meetings are innovating. Whilst we are , geographically, one of the smallest Areas we are seen by others as lively and active. AMs are reaching out to work with their neighbours across traditional boundaries and the Quaker Tapestry coming to Chelmsford seems an ideal opportunity to develop this.

I will bring this report to a close with these words voiced in the meeting, *"To be truly radical we have to work at making hope possible, not despair convincing"*. They brought to mind the work we've been entrusted to do in support of refugees. Maybe it's Colchester's long tradition of offering sanctuary to the persecuted or that the original Harwich meeting was established to cater for travellers to the continent but the fact remains we are an outward facing Meeting. Let us hope we can long continue to be so.

## **Jane Carter**

Dear Friends,

The family of Jane Carter have now advised us of the arrangements for Jane's funeral, which will take place on Wednesday, February 10th at Risby Crematorium at 1.30 pm this is to be private, for close family only. The memorial meeting at Sudbury Meeting House (Wednesday, February 10, 3.15 pm) is open to all.

I hope we can help one another out with transport, if needed.

In Friendship, Alison Parkes