



Social Sunday Gathering at Wivenhoe

photo Anne

NEWSLETTER

SOUTHERN EAST ANGLIA AREA QUAKER MEETING
June 2017

Diary Dates for June

Friday June 2nd Colchester Farmers' Market at the Arts Centre

Monday June 5th World Environment Day
https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/World_Environment_Day

Thursday June 8th General Election day Colchester FMH is serving as a Polling Station

Tuesday June 20th World Refugee Day <http://www.unhcr.org/refugeeday/>
<https://twitter.com/refugees>

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

email address: AMClerk@essexsuffolkquakers.org

Meetings for Worship

CLACTON

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

Harwich

2nd and 4th Sundays 10.30 am
St Nicholas' Church Hall,
Stour Road, Bathside CO12 3HS
Contact: Ros/Tony Eaton 01255
880500

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)

Editorial,

Dear Friends,

Welcome to the beginning of summer at this most troubling time, with upsets and violence all over the world, and people leaving their homes and their country, fleeing violence and horrors, and crossing the sea in great danger, hoping to find acceptance and a new life in another country. Let us hope we can accept them with loving kindness, as I am afraid not everyone is prepared to do.

As always, this newsletter is full of all sorts of activities at the Meet-

ing House which we will enjoy, and it is nearly time for Yearly Meeting. I think I have told you that my family has a new baby, my eleventh great-grandchild, now about three months old, which is very exciting.

News, please, by the middle of the month. It seems to have been a very disturbing time lately, with very peculiar weather and hold-ups on both road and rail, almost total stoppage on our A12 today, also problems with cyber attacks so that hospital staff have been reduced to paper and pencil. What next!



More socialising

Anne Watkinson

FIRST CONTACT

FOR FUNERAL ARRANGEMENTS

CLACTON.....Carol Holding

COLCHESTER.....Carol Holding

SUDBURY.....Peter Whiteley

Colchester Clerk's Report

Alison Parkes

Apart from the usual activities, April saw us having a Threshing day. The photos showing Colchester Meeting hard at work were in last month's newsletter. Most of this report is taken from Phyl Reid's report to our Local Meeting for Worship for Business, thank you Phyl.

28 friends met following the circulation of the questionnaire to find out what local Friends considered important. It was called 'Hopes Dreams and Action',

Building Connections for a Shared Future. We had two facilitators from Quaker Life, Elizabeth Bayliss and Judith Roads. We worked in small groups seeking to find the way forward in answer to the question "what would our meeting be like in 25 years" Everyone had the opportunity to talk freely, to voice concerns and ideas. The day continued with many thoughts, ideas and hopes being expressed and written up for the whole group to view.

The outcomes covered the following:

- The bedrock of our meeting is our Meeting for Worship.

- People value and welcome the Silence and fellowship.
- Ideas expressed were for small groups
- Upholding -pastoral care
- In the light – spiritual
- Social – meals and social events.
- Updating the building
- Outreach
- Governance

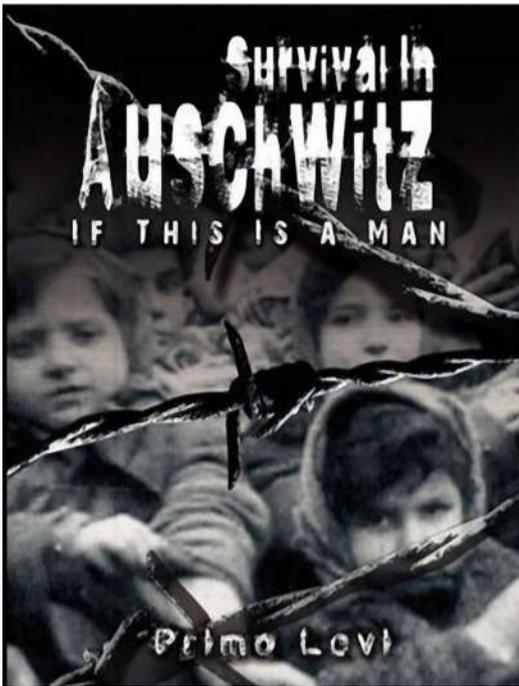
We recognised that we are an ageing community and that somehow we need to simplify our procedures and structures as fewer people come forward to take on roles of responsibility. Are the multitude of roles we seek to fill sustainable?

The task and finish group is now laid down and Local Meeting for Worship for Business has selected some areas which we feel we can take forward. Two small Task groups will look at what jobs are really necessary for the life of the Meeting and arranging a session for newcomers and attenders to prepare a short leaflet on 'how it works in Colchester. Our premises committee will

look at the long list of ideas put forward for improving the Meeting House. Phyl, as convener of Overseers will liaise with those wishing to participate in small groups of upholding, worship sharing, weekday Meetings for Worship and so on. We are going to experiment with the timing of business meetings, possibly those with a short agenda following on from Sunday Meeting for

Worship without a break as they originally were. Already a Social Sunday is arranged for May and we hope volunteers will come forward so that we can meet informally maybe monthly through the summer.

We can't change everything at once and we may find that some things work really well and others add to our problems, we won't know until we try.



“If This Is a Man” & “The Truce”

John Lewis

I am sorry I did not go to the Colchester synagogue to mark Holocaust Memorial Day but privately I made up for it by re-reading Primo Levi's “*If this is a man*”.

Before I went to Palestine, I was warned that any Jew will assert, and feel deeply, that the Jewish people are entitled to one safe place on earth and Israel represents that sole place of safety. This is an accepted fact amongst Jews but it is a novel idea to many Europeans, even after years of publicity about the Holocaust.

So I would recommend Primo Levi's book as an introduction to this core belief of any Israeli and most Jews worldwide. Of course he is known as a great 20th century novelist, but have you read his first book ?

Levi was an anti-fascist partisan, young and naïve, and was captured at the end of 1943 in northern Italy. As a Jew he soon found himself on a train with about 650 non-military Italian Jews heading in cattle trucks from Turin towards the Auschwitz complex of camps.

A few days later 96 men and 29 women are recorded as entering the labour-camps around Auschwitz from that train. The remaining 525 were gassed or otherwise murdered upon arrival. The arresting first line of Levi's narrative is “*It was my good fortune to be deported to Auschwitz only in 1944, that is, after the German government had decided, owing to the shortage of labour, to lengthen the lifespan of prisoners destined for deportation*”.

The first half of his book is an account of life in the concentration camp. It is written dispassionately, apparently with no bitterness, no anger, with no claim on your pity, but humane, full of understanding, of human weakness and of intensely moving incidents of human strength. Every individual receives care

and thoughtful understanding, whether prisoner or guard. At every level, this is a humbling tale.

The second half of the book, titled “**The Truce**”, is a contrast. Auschwitz and its surrounding camps were liberated by the Red Army in January 1945 and the survivors, diseased half-clothed scarecrows, wandered in eastern Europe, amongst the chaos of millions of starving displaced people trying to go home or avoiding going home. This part is downright funny. It is a racey read in a day. Primo Levi deploys the same sympathetic observance in his fellow travellers, but now their objectives are different – they are all in the same boat. (My father was in charge of a DP camp elsewhere at this confused time.) Every nationality in Europe stealing, conniving to survive and taking advantage of the turmoil and overall we start to respect our race in a different way. But now survival has become likely, there is time for sharing and good humour. We are indeed a remarkable race.

Levi arrived back home in Italy in October 1945, one of 3 survivors from that train of 650 which had left Turin less than 2 years earlier.

He resumed his old job of chemist at a paint factory but his experiences had unleashed him. Within a year this book was writ-

ten. He struggled to find a publisher – it was a time for reading of heroic battles and simple victories, not masterpiece studies of human behaviour. Finally 2500 copies were printed, of which 600 were lost in a flood. It was another 10 years before this book became known internationally.

Primo Levi should have a contemporary word:

“Many people – many nations – can find themselves holding, more or less unwittingly, that every stranger is an enemy. ... like some latent infection it betrays itself in random disconnected acts ... when the unspoken dogma becomes the major premiss ... at the end of the chain is the Lager. Here is the product of a conception of the world carried rigorously to it's logical conclusion; so long as the conception subsists, the conclusion remains to threaten us. The story of the death camps should be understood by everyone as a sinister alarm signal.”

You will be moved by this book. Not for the elegant language which is, after all, partly thanks to sensitive translator. Nor for the sensitive analysis of the writer's fellow humans. You will be moved by the underlying assumption, with many examples, that the human race has qualities that we must cherish and preserve.

Clerk's Corner

Alison Parkes

Recently I dipped into Chapter 24 “Our peace testimony” in Quaker faith and practice (Qfp). There are 60 passages in this chapter, so it is quite a lot to digest. Several early passages (24.04-09) were written during or after specific conflicts: the English Civil War (1660), the War of the Austrian Succession (1744), the Napoleonic Wars (1804/5) the South African War (1900), the First World War (1915) and the Second World War (1943). It is sobering to reflect on how many wars the world has seen, and how many wars and internal conflicts the world is currently experiencing.



Wildspot

Valerie Graves

It has been a remarkable time climate-wise. We have been a bit short of rain (slightly better now) but I have never seen quite such enormously large amounts of flowers: shrubs looking like brilliant pink or yellow cauliflowers, or crocuses all over the lawn. I have three white amaryllis flowering for a second year in my

conservatory, and they cannot really be affected by the outside air. Several roses flowering, and irises in the pond, that haven't flowered for years. A large purple mullein has appeared in a pot, but all the yellow ones seem to have vanished. (I didn't know you could have purple ones) It is as if some kind of goblin is playing tricks.

As Britain Yearly Meeting approaches the task of drafting a new edition of Qfp, I wonder how we might draft a modern response to the peace testimony. While we continue to uphold the words of George Fox (1651): “I lived in the virtue of that life and power that took away the occasion of all wars... I was come into the covenant of peace which was before wars and strife were” (Qfp 24.01), we are challenged to express it in terms that reach out to others. How might we offer this covenant of peace to those who don't recognise it? To those who have been taught hatred instead of love? To those who have experienced hatred instead of love? To those who seek to destabilise the world through terrorist acts, rather than to find the com-

mon humanity that binds us together on this planet?

In the aftermath of the Manchester suicide bomb, in which 22 people (including many children) lost their lives, Quakers in Britain have added their voice to a statement produced by the Interfaith Network for the UK. You can read the full statement on the Quakers in Britain website; here are two points it makes:

“It is vital that we all – of every age and background – work to build bridges and positive relationships and to enable difficult issues to be addressed and worked on – always seeking to avoid the use of violence to resolve issues.

We know that each time a terrorist attack occurs, groups within society become the target of

abuse or even attack because of terrorist actions which claim, or are perceived by some, as having a link to them. We must stand, likewise, against this. An attack on one is an attack on all."

During Meeting for Worship recently, Colchester Friends heard a reading of Qfp 24.53 (J. Duncan Wood, 1962), which begins: "It should be the goal of understanding to pierce first through the thin

layer of superficial familiarity and then through the hard rock of differing customs, habits and beliefs to discover the real humanity that lies beneath."

We have a lot of work before us, Friends.

The next Area Meeting will be at Earls Colne Meeting House on Sunday 9th July at 2.15pm, all are welcome. Edible contributions to Area Meeting tea will be much ap-

preciated by Earls Colne Friends. If you need or can offer transport, please let Friends know. Consider attending Meeting for Worship in the morning; bring a packed lunch, then stay on for AM. The agenda will be available from LM Clerks and is posted on the Business page of the AM website (web address is on the cover of this newsletter). Attenders are welcome; please ask the clerk for permission to attend.

Forced Migration

Robert Parkes

A reflection on the Woodbrooke conference 'Forced Migration: how can Quakers respond'

In February I was at Woodbrooke at the above event hosted by the Quaker Asylum and Refugee Network(QARN), the Quaker Council on European Affairs, Quaker United Nations Office, and Quaker Peace and Social Witness.

The conference saw the premier of a new powerful play by the Journeymen Theatre called "The Bundle". Commissioned by QARN it is based closely on the story of a real woman, Adilah, and her three young children, and her journey from domestic persecution and denial of human rights, including abduction into a forced marriage and subjection to a life of servitude. Adilah takes the ultimate risk in plotting her escape to the UK. Here she finds a home but it is not a happy-ever-after: she also encounters the Home Office's 'hostile environment' for asylum seekers and refugees, promulgated by the then Home Secretary, Theresa May.

The play does not shrink from portraying characters, ordinary English people, who are unsympathetic to the plight of refugees. In one scene a man is visiting the doctor. He complains of overwhelm-

ing symptoms. *"It's the bile, doctor, the bile, the bitter bile rising up in me. It's consuming me up".* The doctor asks what could be causing this. *"It's them doctor. All of them "forinners" (for he has a Black Country accent). "They're filling up the waiting room. There's no space left. They're tekkin' over the place".* This is a funny but also disturbing scene, tragic as well as comic. In discussion with the audience afterwards, the players explained the man is hurting - it's a cry for help.

This prompted some discussion about how immigration affects the existing population. Many people see forced migration as one of the great humanitarian crises of our time. It has been taken up by this Meeting as a Quaker concern and Friends locally are working with others to extend the hand of welcome. But not every-

one sees it like this. This led to a session on how we should respond to those who, like the man visiting the doctor, are not sympathetic. Some of us talked about how we might initiate difficult conversations with those who are hurting, feel left-behind, and overwhelmed; and whether we were equipped to do so. The players, for example, saw the need to perform the play in front of difficult, challenging audiences, but acknowledged it was no easy feat to take it beyond the "Quaker bubble".

There were, I regret, no ready-made solutions I can report on. On a positive note, I can report that the event was an important milestone in the development of a spirit-led position of Quakers in Britain, that will be considered by our Yearly Meeting in August. Meanwhile, what could we do lo-



cally? Would we wish to invite the Journeyman Theatre to perform this play? How could we take it to a wider audience?

We were reminded of Quakers of Advices & Queries 33 and 32 and perhaps that is the point to conclude this report:

Are you alert to practices here and throughout the world which discriminate against people on

the basis of who or what they are or because of their beliefs? Bear witness to the humanity of all people, including those who break society's conventions or its laws. Try to discern new growing points in social and economic life. Seek to understand the causes of injustice, social unrest and fear. Are you working to bring about a just and compassionate society which allows everyone to devel-

op their capacities and fosters the desire to serve?

Bring into God's light those emotions, attitudes and prejudices in yourself which lie at the root of destructive conflict, acknowledging your need for forgiveness and grace. In what ways are you involved in the work of reconciliation between individuals, groups and nations?

Meeting for Sufferings

Friends House (FH), London,
1st April 2017

Robert Parkes

In many ways this MfS felt like a prelude to BYM, a combination of hope and optimism as we look forward to living out our Faith in the Future but also very mindful of the challenges that face Quakers in Britain today.

Many of these challenges revolve around the maintenance of our structures, both in terms of our buildings and of our organisation. The Heritage project revealed that some 46% of our meeting houses are listed buildings. The attendant stewardship of this estate bears down on us. This might be one of the reasons why Area Meetings (AMs) are increasingly reporting that it is difficult to find Friends to serve as trustees, to a lesser extent, treasurers, and to sustain the work of governance generally. Added to which, some AMs have inherited complex governance arrangements which add to the burden on trustees and to the number needed, e.g. where there are separate trusts and charities linked to the AM.

In response, Meetings have been innovating in various ways, e.g., buying in professional support or asking a neighbouring AM if they can help fill a trustee post. Yet they are still struggling. One rep-

resentative spoke of the real risk of their AM fragmenting and I'm hearing more and more the phrase "drifting into congregationalism". Elsewhere, we hear of meetings where there is insufficient understanding and support for Quaker governance in general and the legal accountabilitys of trustees in particular: an AM cannot function as a charitable body if it does not have enough trustees.

All this is compounded by the demographics of the Society. It remains predominately white and middle-class. It is also ageing, which means a shortage of Friends with the good health and time available to carry out these roles. Or, to put it another way, too many jobs: too few people. Meanwhile, Quakers abroad look to us in Britain for inspiration, in terms of spirituality, on sustainability and upholding Quakerism across Europe, for example.

Faced with these challenges, Quaker Stewardship Committee is keen to promote and encourage a conversation about future governance, which it believes is both necessary and urgent to secure a sustainable governance model for

future generations. There is, as yet, no national picture to guide discernment. Part of the answer might be for some AMs to merge. However, it is felt that addressing these problems one at a time and without a long-term vision for our governance risks missing opportunities and making a decision in one area that closes off options in another. And, in our haste to adapt we should guard against losing sight of gospel order. In other words, let's not throw the baby out with the bath water.

What can we do in the meantime? On a personal level, I'm looking forward to BYM. It's a way I reconnect with Quakers around the country and abroad. One practical measure being suggested is to make better use of trustees' annual reports, for inreach and outreach (our trustees are already thinking about this, by the way). If a report includes what an AM is doing to fulfil the Canterbury commitment, this can be read-off by BYM centrally, to avoid the need to contact AMs separately. Another idea is a standard format for these reports, so



that key information from AMs is gathered in a consistent and regular way without the need for extra separate surveys or correspondence.

Looking beyond these shores, we were urged to help enrich understanding between Friends worldwide and engage more in Quaker issues around the globe. The Quaker World Relations Network has produced a new factsheet, attached. This gives a number of suggestions on how individual Friends and meetings can help.

As usual, a full report of the meeting and papers can be found on the dedicated MfS pages of the Quaker.org website.



Two more from Social Sunday

Anne Watkinson

Area Meeting 14.05.17

Notes from the minutes

Jenny Kay

Twenty nine of us gathered in the cool of the ancient meeting room. Shortly into the meeting the twenty three members present had increased to twenty five as we accepted David and Una Lawrence into membership, swelling the numbers in Earls Colne.

We were able to confirm our belief that we have carried out our responsibilities as Area Meeting acknowledging the work done on behalf of many of us by relatively few Friends.

We then gave time to the work being carried out to support refugees in Colchester. Robert Parkes spoke first on the Conference on Forced Migration which he and John Lewis attended in February, reported in full elsewhere. The minute which we will return to expressed it all.

Robert Parkes gave us his feedback from the Robert shared his response to a play, presented by the Journeyman Theatre called "The Bundle"... We feel moved to consider how we might make "The Bundle" available to as wide an audience as possible. Possible venues include the Headgate Theatre, Mercury Studio Theatre, Essex University, Castle Park open-air theatre, the Town Hall and potentially schools. Mary Grocock is willing

to coordinate interest in this proposal. Friends are asked to contact Mary to offer their support.

We are reminded that within East Anglia a notable amount of bigotry and antagonism is expressed. We are also reminded that some of our fellow citizens may be bereft, disengaged and disconnected. How might we counter this in our own back yard? How can we better inform ourselves to know and understand the perspective of those whose experience is so different from our own? How far can each one of us put ourselves in the place of those who are impoverished?

Mary Grocock and Freya Sandford then spoke about the ways in which our befriending group is supporting refugees in the town through help with speaking English. Freya explained how Fresh Beginnings has organised lessons for teachers to help them prepare to teach English. Freya described a lesson she attended which was



entirely in Mandarin. A general expenses claim form will be designed so that small expenses, such as petrol and stationery, of the befrienders, as well as other Friends, can be claimed.

The AM had previously allocated £5000 for a micro-credit scheme, initiated by Refugee Action Colchester but now is in abeyance, subject to further consideration.

We agreed that the £5000 should remain available for the use of the group in the hope of new proposals.

In response to Robert Parkes report on Meeting for Sufferings the minute ended:

We are interested in engaging with Friends worldwide and will consider how we might do this. The Quaker World Relations Network is one source of suggestions. Eliza Jones will look into possibilities; Friends are invited to pass their suggestions to Eliza.

Karl Sage thanked the meeting for the opportunity to attend the March QPSW Conference as our representative. He described a workshop on militarisation which informed Friends of militarisation in schools and the government funding to schools for running cadet forces and a small-group focussing on rape and torture which led to a discussion of how to raise young men in the modern world. Eliza Jones' report on the Quaker Life Representative Council, elsewhere in this Newsletter, led to a questioning as to the appropriateness of the keynote speaker, a Quaker employed as a hospital chaplain. The clerk was asked to request clarification from the organisers.

After learning of the closure of Walden School it was time for tea.

Earls Colne News

Jenny Kay

This year 2017 is special for Earls Colne Friends. It is 70 years since the re-opening of Earls Colne Quaker Meeting. The Meeting House was requisitioned for the use of the RAF during the war. In 1947 Charles Derring was reunited with his wife Marjorie and son John who had been evacuated to Earls Colne, Marjorie's family home. Charles had joined the Religious Society of Friends while in Leeds in 1934. He became involved with the Northern Friends Peace Board before moving to Forest Gate to work as the superintendent of the Bedford Institute. With the support of few local Friends Earls Colne Meeting House was re-opened and the Quaker Meeting has been in the care of the Derring family since then.

Charles worked tirelessly for the Local Meeting integrating it into the Christian life of Earls

Newsletter by Email

John Kay

I have had a computer die on me taking all my current stuff with it. I had backed up the main information so I was able to recover all my email addresses. I need to separate those addresses for those who are not Friends from those who are. It may be that I have lost a few in the process, so if you usually

The Spaces In Between

Valerie Graves

This was an article that I wrote last month and I was pleased that it attracted some interest and was even published in Quaker Voice - very gratifying, but although I had

get an emailed PDF of the newsletter from me and you haven't received one by Saturday 3rd of June, please send me an email telling me so.

Those Friends who have sent me anything for the June newsletter so far, please resend it so I am sure to get it. I already have one piece from John Lewis as he heard me ask at Arca Meeting.

many comments about important spaces, nobody grasped the point about the size and other details about the strange and immeasurable spaces within and around the atom: that we do, in fact, live in a completely unknown space. It takes a bit of thinking about.

Colne in partnership with the Anglican and Baptist churches. As a Meeting we are hoping to re-engage with the community by joining in with Heritage Open Day on 9 September and to explore the possibility for an ecumenical meeting with the other churches later in the year.

The idea for an exhibition of Earls Colne Quaker History is enthusing us to start some research. We hope to have something to show by the AM in July when it is our turn to host the Meeting. We grow in strength as with great joy we have added David and Una Lawrence to our membership list.



Charles Derring (1901 -1984) at Earls Colne