



Lin Fountain and Peggy Lewis

Photo: Anne Watkinson

NEWSLETTER

SOUTHERN EAST ANGLIA AREA QUAKER MEETING

July 2017

Diary Dates for July

Friday July 7th, Colchester Farmers' Market at the Arts Centre

Sunday July 9th Area Meeting, Earls Colne

Weekend of July 22nd/23rd Protests against the DESI arms sales fair in London

<https://www.caat.org.uk/events>

From Friday July 29th Yearly Meeting Gathering at Warwick

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;

email address: AMClerk@essexsuffolkquakers.org

Web Address: www.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)

FIRST CONTACT

FOR FUNERAL ARRANGEMENTS

CLACTON.....Carol Holding

COLCHESTER.....Carol Holding

SUDBURY.....Peter Whiteley

Quaker Life Representatives Council

“Helping Seekers Find Quakers –
Being Worth The Finding!” 21-23
April 2017.

Eliza Jones

The council's purpose over the weekend - to look inwardly and test how we live our lives as Quakers and how we are seen to be Quakers in the lives of our colleagues, our families and friends and our local communities. The letter inviting us to attend Quaker Life Reps Council pointed out that like other faith groups in Britain, our Religious Society of Friends is facing challenges which come with being part of an

Editorial,

It has been a very hot and bothersome time, what with the weather and the terrifying fire at the Grenfell Tower, and all the sad facts about mismanagement and just not bothering to do more sensible things, which will give enough for many nightmares. But we must do the best we can for the survivors.

What it has done, too, is to see how people care for one another, and do as much caring as we can ourselves. We have a lot of Muslims in our midst now, and it is wonderful to see how well they are making out. Personally, I love to see all these “different” people in the town: I met a delightful young family at the doctors, and

ageing, multicultural and diverse population. Our Quaker message is that experientially we can know God directly in our lives. So what is the story we have to tell? What excites us, and our Meetings, about being Quakers today? How can we, as Friends, become a more visible presence where we live, learn and work? How can we be seen as Quakers, letting our lives speak as patterns and examples? How can we take our message and reach out more effectively in our own localities? We reflected on these questions in our home groups helped by our key speakers who considered these questions in their presentations.

Alistair Fuller, head of Ministry and Outreach looked at the big picture in his talk “Being Found, Being Worth the Finding”. The number of members has been falling consistently over years while the number of attenders are mostly holding so there are now more attenders than members. The number of children in meetings has fallen significantly and steadily. Yet the number of roles have increased in number and complexity leaving us with more work and fewer people to do it. These changes echo clearly the changes we

she told me how happy they all were to be in England.

Of course we have always had a fair number of Eastern people here, because of the University.

I am getting old now (93) and can't do as much as I used to, but there are lots of really interesting happenings going on at the Meeting House, as you will read elsewhere in this newsletter..... and send me your news by the middle of the month, please.



July Flowers

see in wider society; there is less and less ‘membership’ and people live increasingly ‘privatised’ lives, less linked to local community and extended family and with churches, faith groups and membership organisations all feeling the impact of this. So how as meetings can we strengthen our life together and be communities that are both easily found and worth the finding? An increasing number of Friends and meetings have recognised the importance of the link between the shared life of our meeting, our outreach/engagement with the wider world and our own individual, inner life, they each feed and are nourished by the other. A report on a cross section of Quaker meetings in Britain identified nine main practices as helpful and enriching in the life of meetings:

The centrality of worship, the root and fruit of well gathered meeting; creating opportunities to share spiritual experiences and learn more

about spiritual practices; being engaged together in a shared endeavour; taking time for food and fellowship; being an all-age community; offering welcome, encouragement and care; equality of voice and the sharing of responsibility; a willingness to talk about and acknowledge conflict; a willingness to be flexible, open and adventurous.

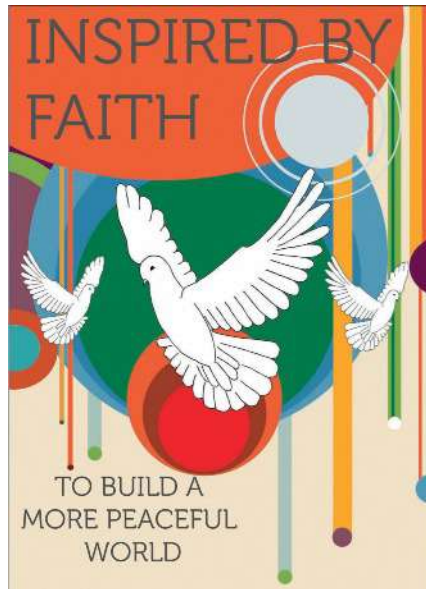
The second speaker, Kevin Redpath from Street meeting gave a report on how a small but very vibrant Local Meeting at Street is immersing itself in its local community and its activities. Worship, Social and Study have been a helpful guide in deepening them as a worshipping community. Strengthening the vitality of a Quaker Meeting is through the sharing of spirit-given gifts and they have understood as spirit-given gift any ability which helps build the spiritual community. "When we use our gifts we are fulfilling our ministry most effectively" and for them this has included sharing the resource of the Meeting House and garden with other faiths. Some points I took away for AM to consider

Common tasks help build community (Love our Meeting House Cleaning Day – polishing the wooden benches). What common tasks could our meetings consider exploring?

When their local community food bank ran out of food, they worked with one of the local churches to host a food-raising concert in the Meeting House. What are the needs of our immediate community that our meetings could support?

What stories can we gather about our local meetings and how can we use them?

Joanie Harrison from Peterborough, the third speaker, spoke about her experience as a hospital chaplain and gave a very moving personal testimony of how she walks the talk as a Quaker Chaplain. She is formally appointed for this paid post and is a full member of the Hospital Chaplaincy team baptising babies close to death, giving Communion and conducting funerals for other faiths including Muslims, Sikh and atheists. She



sees the main role of a hospital Chaplain as connecting with others in order to give spiritual support in times of crisis. She described her ministry as not having answers, but one of deep listening and spiritual discernment, being open to the promptings of love and truth, trusting to be guided and prompted.

This was yet another inspirational Quaker Life Representatives Council with many opportunities for sharing and learning from each other. I very much appreciate having been able to attend it. I hope many of you will be interested in finding out more about how other meetings are grappling with the same challenges we have been dealing with. I will be very happy to share with our local meetings what I have found out.

These are the questions discussed at QL Rep Council, and which meetings and Friends may wish to make use of amongst themselves:

Quaker Life Questionnaire

Question cluster 1

What is it about being a Quaker that excites or inspires you?

Is that reflected in your experience of local and area meeting?

Do your meetings nurture the spiritual development of young people? How do they do that?

Question cluster 2

Do the people around you know that you are a Quaker?

How do they know that?

Question cluster 3

How do visitors find your meetings?

Do you ask visitors how they found Quakers?

Do you have a sense that your local and area meetings welcome visitors? How do they do that?

Have you recently spoken to a newcomer? Let us know how it goes when you do.

Question cluster 4

Do you understand the role of Quaker Life in supporting meetings in their outreach and in-reach?

Are your meetings being supported by Quaker Life?

What tools do you need to reach out to individuals and communities?

Note from Alison Parkes, clerk: Area Meeting minuted that some Friends were surprised and dismayed that a keynote speaker at this event should be a Quaker chaplain administering sacraments, and the clerk was asked to clarify this with the organisers of the event. The clerk is in communication with Quaker Life and will report back in due course. It is important for Friends to know that this was not a reflection on Eliza's report, nor on the compassion and dedication shown by the speaker.



Stonemasons yard in Rickmansworth
Photo: Una Lawrence

Hearts and Minds Prepared

Hearts and Minds Prepared is a course of study of Quaker faith and practice that aims to help new and experienced Friends learn more about Quakerism.

Eliza Jones and I are going to hold a Hearts and Minds Prepared course for Friends and attenders in Colchester beginning in September 2017. I was a participant on the first Hearts and Minds Prepared course provided by Colchester Meeting, which was in 2004, and I found it so useful that I co-ordinated a course myself in 2006. Elders have decided it would be helpful to run another one now and I have offered to run it with Eliza's help.

The course is of 12 sessions, covering:

1. Setting out together
2. Meeting for Worship

3. Personal spiritual discipline
4. Ministry and ministers
5. Liberal Friends and our Christian inheritance
6. Our corporate testimony
7. Discernment
8. Corporate discernment and community
9. Personal testimony
10. Who am I? Personal spiritual journeys
11. Who are we? Challenges, changes and eternal truths
12. What 'being Quaker' means to us

The course is designed for groups where some Friends may do little or no preparation for sessions, while also offering a substantial personal study programme for those who wish to take advantage of it. It is useful to have your own copy of Quaker Faith and Practice or borrow one

from the Meeting House. Otherwise everything is provided.

Date, time and place

The venue will be my house (address below). The day and time of the 12 sessions, usually 2 hours each and a fortnight apart, will be a weekday or evening, depending on the preferences of who signs up.

Signing up

If you are interested, please could you let me know by sending me an email, leaving me a note in the Meeting House pigeon-hole, or signing up on the sign-up sheet that I will put on the noticeboard in due course? If you have any questions, please phone me.

In friendship

Robbie Spence, 19 Queens Road, Colchester CO3 3PD,

robbie.spence@btopenworld.com,
07920 137 934

Wildspot

Valerie Graves.

We are still having all sorts of peculiar things happening in the garden and the surrounding countryside: such beautiful roses, and the reappearance of things long forgotten, such as crocosmia, a pretty bulb which I thought had died out years ago! And a more flourishing crop of bindweed that I can only grind my teeth at, I don't like pesticides and poisons! I wonder if perhaps we are in for fearful frosts? Watch this space.



On Volunteering

A thought from the Clerk of Colchester Local Meeting

If you are a regular reader of the newsletter you will know that Colchester Local Meeting are looking carefully at what really needs doing to maintain a thriving Local Meeting for Worship and a community of Friends. In this modern world we recognise that while we have a good attendance on a Sunday, many are getting older and others busier. We are not a separate com-

munity from the world, but trying to live out our faith in this complicated and fast moving one.

One of the solutions we have embraced is to employ people to do the jobs that used to be done by volunteers. In Colchester we employ not only our Warden, whom many of you have met, but also cleaners, gardeners, builders, decorators, plumbers (when we can find them) and so on. Most of these jobs go unnoticed, except when they don't get done, then in come the com-

plaints, often to the Clerk, well what is she for?

I go into town as rarely as possible, I am an open air, country gal at heart, but last Wednesday I had a hour to spend between appointments. I decided to spend it in the Meeting House. The dementia café was in full swing, maybe I should have joined it, but seriously it was great to see our premises used in such a positive way. I was able to spend some proper time looking at the various journals we take as well as talk to others

there. Talking with the hirers, spending time in an armchair, raiding the library for resources about the tapestry, I realise how lucky we are to have such a conveniently sited and useful building, and a caring warden to oversee it so that it can remain open for people like me to drop in or be let for such worthy causes. Thank you Mervyn.

Thank you also to those other unseen workers who help keep us going. I was also able to meet our gardener, Lin Fountain (see photo), who with her son keep our garden sorted and also the burial ground. Thank you Lin and son.

But, employing people does not answer all our needs; some

needs require participation in a small way to support our community even if you are unable to organise things or give lots of time. We need assistant wardens so that Mervyn can have time off, even a couple of days a year from more people would help. The photo shows Peggy Lewis enjoying a sunny morning on her knees assisting Lin to keep us looking smart. Thank you Peggy. Freya Sandford is happy to have volunteers do a stint in the library. I wonder if Rosalind Kaye might like some help overseeing the kitchen. What do you like doing? Maybe just chatting with friends over a cup of tea? Well, someone may well have oversight of a Friend who can't get out who would love a visit

from someone for just that! You may have a specialism whose brains we could pick. You may be able to entertain us or help cater for a winter meeting for eating. Please don't hide your light under a bushel. Also, stop feeling guilty if you are too busy to help. Your presence at a Meeting for Worship makes it what it is. Guilt can be negative, your presence is positive.

We do have formal proceedings for appointing people to some posts like Elders and Overseers but this should not stop anyone for volunteering if they see something they would like to do or needs doing. Just have a word with the Clerk, a convener of a committee or one of the names on the list on the board.



A True Survivor

Shuntaro Hida
from Valerie Graves

The information, and the picture, come from the British Medical Journal, and is about a former Japanese army medical officer, a most impressive person. He was present at the bombing of Hiroshima, and suffered severe injury, including being piled up in a heap of dead and fearfully injured corpses. He did survive, amazingly, to a comparatively active life and a successful family life and medical career. Indeed, he lived to be 100!

After the war survivors were forbidden by the occupying US to talk about their experiences, and when, of course, they did, they were imprisoned, and all these things happened to Hida from time to time, but eventually he did do quite a lot of public speaking about wartime and, later, Fukushima, locally and eventually to the UN. The article can be seen in BMJ 3.6.17. The article adds greatly to my feelings about the vital importance of stopping the use for ever of nuclear weapons and nuclear power for ever and ever.

Safeguarding in our Area Meeting.

Friends, your Area Meeting Safeguarding Committee would like to bring to your attention that all Friends are asked to be aware of any issues which might come under the general term of 'safeguarding'. This is not restricted to such serious matters as physical, emotional or sexual abuse but includes unwanted (i.e.

uninvited) physical contact through touching someone anywhere other than on the hands, arms or shoulders, even when the intention is simply to show support, friendliness or acceptance. It also refers to any verbal contact which can be misinterpreted as an inducement.

We know that Friends are a well-meaning and forgiving people, but we are also aware that some of our fellow Quakers are

likely to suffer in silence what they regard as unacceptable contact because they don't want to upset the person who, however unintentionally, invaded their privacy. If you feel that you or someone you know is in this situation please do not hesitate to contact your safeguarding officers (in our AM they are Martin Rayner and Pam Harris) who will have a quiet conversation with both the imposing and the

affected person. Such conversations will always be kept entirely confidential, although if necessary one or the other member of the safeguarding team may be apprised of a concern.

While we hope that such issues don't arise we also feel it important

to raise your awareness of the possibility that they could occur and hope for your support.

If you want to read up on our AM safeguarding policy you can find it on our Colchester Quakers website.

Your AM Safeguarding Team.

Why Are We So Fat?

Valerie Graves

I came across this picture the other day: It shows a lot of quite ordinary people marching down a street in a small town in industrial Yorkshire. (My mother is in it). It was early in 1939, when we were in a peculiar sort of peace: we knew that war was coming and these people were going to join some kind of war work, such as fire-watching or first aid. I emphasise this because there was no food shortage or rationing yet, just very ordinary people. The point that struck me was that nobody was fat. If you were looking at a similar picture today at least a quarter would be noticeably fat -

whatever their age, and including a lot of children, and perhaps a fifth would be grossly obese. This would include every kind of person, rich and poor. Some of the obese would be very fat indeed, and all sorts of things have had to be made bigger and stronger, such as lifts and seats.

To quote an annoying saying, popular with one of my children: This is a statement of fact, not a value judgement. But I would welcome your comments.



Valerie's mother

A Real Concern

John Hall

Q-CAT, the Quaker Concern for the Abolition of Torture, has pointed out in its May briefing that the UK regulations on the export of equipment specifically used for torture are part of EU law; we might well be anxious about the consequences of a UK departure from the EU since these regulations could become even less stringent and transparent than they currently are. They cover not only exports but also the presence of manufacturers at arms fairs.



Southern East Anglia Area Quaker Meeting

Earls Colne News

Jenny Kay

On the fourth Sunday in May, Earls Colne Meeting welcomed three visitors from Maldon.

Jonathan and Julia King have a long association with Earls Colne. Jonathan made the hand rails for the ramp to the emergency exit, blending beautifully with the benches and Julia made the curtains. They brought with them a strongly scented rose for the table, perfuming the Meeting.

The two rose bushes in the garden are flourishing. Sadly neither are perfumed but they are both special. The Rosa 'Quaker Star' bred at the re-

quest of Northern Ireland Quaker Allen Pearson and named after the red and black Quaker Star, symbol of Quaker Peace and Social Witness and the American Friends Service Committee has pale orange flowers with red outer petals. The other I believe to be a 'UN Peacekeeper' Rose bred in 1995 has similar colouring.



Earls Colne roses



photos: Jenny Kay

Should Brexit matter to Britain Yearly Meeting?

Richard Seebohm 16.2.17

Out of interest Richard sent us the following document which Oxford Friends have considered.

Not all Friends voted the same way in the Referendum last year. Thus Meeting for Sufferings on 16 July minuted: We have taken time to reflect on the outcome of the EU Referendum held on 23 June, and to reflect on what Love requires of us.

Since then, some of the campaigning falsehoods (but not the emotional attachments) have fallen away, and at this stage in the proceedings it may be timely to speak out. Although some Friends may wish to see the whole process overturned, we can at least offer a statement of the Quaker concerns that colour our feelings about the negotiating process. Seen through the lens of our testimonies, Faith and Hope may be useful touchstones alongside that of Love.

As matters of Faith: Surely the arms trade should not be a major driver of our economy? Should we not take the Brexit opportunity to move resources from military hardware (including Trident) to our domestic pressure points (health, social care, prisons)?

And should not the UK contribution to the wider world become more people-based, with conciliatory diplomacy, peace-building and the promotion of social (including gender) equality as key features?

How can we maintain and strengthen the beneficial aspects of our historical relationship with the EU – for example by setting an example of probity, integrity and transparency in public life, and of the primacy of truth in all fields of communication?

How should Northern Ireland be safeguarded from violence as the border problem is addressed?

Turning now to Hope: How can we best engage with the Brexit negotiations to ensure that our key concerns are understood?

How should the EU-driven protection for workers, consumers and the environment which are now enshrined in UK law be safeguarded from a 'race to the bottom' under pressure in trade deal negotiations?

How should resources best be guaranteed for humane, expeditious and adaptable immigration and customs services?

Now that the EU seems closer to the risk of break up than to over-centralisation, can we hope that the remaining EU member states will introduce reforms that limit the appeal of extremist or populist policies? Would a

You may be able to work out which is which from the photographs!

version of the Quaker business method, rather than the rigidity of voting, speed the process?

How can our own education system adapt better to economic as well as social and cultural needs, partly by giving more emphasis to competences than to qualifications? Can free movement of students and mature academics be preserved?

Last but not least, Love: How should the interests and aspirations of the member nations of the United Kingdom be best respected?

Should the plight of industrial workers whose jobs have disappeared and of those in very low paid work be addressed by a move to a perhaps poorer but fairer society?

Can attitudes to non-UK citizens, those already here and those seeking entry, including refugees and asylum seekers, be on the basis that no one is of no account? What can we do to roll back the spread of intolerance?

How can the EU, with our encouragement, take measures to make life more worth living in countries handicapped by emigration, immigration or the euro?

We look forward first to the witness and service of our own Quaker community, but hope that our concerns will have responses in faith circles and the wider world.

Clerk's Corner

July 2017

Alison Parkes

If you haven't yet visited Earls Colne Meeting House, you might like to attend Area Meeting which will be held there on Sunday July 9 at 2.15 pm. The Meeting House is the oldest in use within our Area Meeting, dating back to around 1733, although Quakers have worshipped on the site since the 1670s. That makes it a significant site for Quakers from quite early days. George Fox was imprisoned throughout the 1650s to 70s, and other Quakers followed him to prison as well, whether for causing a disturbance, refusing to pay tithes or for blasphemy; after all, Quakers repudiated the church, ministers, sacraments and rites as irrelevant to Christianity, to the inward experience of the spirit.

The meeting room at Earls Colne is relatively unaltered, retaining much of its historic layout and a number of original or early features, including raised gallery seating and bench-

es. To one side of the building is the burial ground, where the headstones remain although they have been relocated. In 1986 a linked addition was built with toilets, kitchen and a committee room. Although built for and remaining in Quaker use, the building is also a community resource, appreciated by local people.

Recalling the early days of Quakers can help us appreciate the discipline which they were prepared to be imprisoned for. Today it can be difficult at times to access the strength of conviction with which early Friends stood up for their beliefs. Yet gathering together in quiet worship we can sometimes experience that deep connection. *Quaker faith and practice* has many passages which offer us glimpses which connect us with our past as well as our present and future; here is one:

Qfp 10.08 "After a leisurely and useful preparative meeting, Friends sat at a long table in the children's room to enjoy supper together. We depend on those who till the soil, and tend the

produce which forms our daily food, so it was good to remember them in thankfulness and for us to eat in fellowship the food mutually contributed, prepared and served. It was sacramental, in the sense in which Friends so profoundly believe. We spoke of those unable to be present, so that there was a sense of the entire meeting gathering in community.

"This feeling of community pervaded the weekend. In preparative meeting the allotment committee reported and outlined plans for an orchard in the upper section of our ground; the fruit may not remain to be gathered by us but the blossoms will gladden everyone. The entire ground is in our care: allotments, burial ground, lawns, and we see it as one unit together with the meeting house which it surrounds. Yet true significance lies not in the grounds and building but in the people: those who tend the flowers, the grass and the allotment; members of the poetry group (some of whom gave pleasure by readings after supper); the study groups; the gathering of younger people; those whose activities lie in other places... The gravestones speak of the past, of those who also served the meeting, whose lives are woven into ours, as ours will affect those still to come."

~ William G Sewell, 1977.



Southern East Anglia Area Quaker Meeting