



Art Exhibition 4th November Colchester QMH

Photo Anne Dowden

NEWSLETTER

SOUTHERN EAST ANGLIA AREA QUAKER MEETING

December 2017

Diary Dates for December

Sunday December 10th International Human Rights Day <http://www.un.org/en/events/human-rightsday>

Sunday 17 December, Christmas meal at Colchester

Monday December 25th at 10 30 am Colchester FMH Meeting for Worship

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
12 noon

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

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

<p>FIRST CONTACT FOR FUNERAL ARRANGEMENTS</p> <p>CLACTON Carol Holding COLCHESTER Carol Holding SUDBURY Peter Whiteley</p>

Editorial

Dear Friends

We have come round to Christmas again and how quickly it comes round when you are older compared to the dragging of days when you are small. A rather small sad meeting today with news of illness among Friends notably both John and Jackie Hall but we must hope for better things. It was good to have Tim Holding with us in the best of spirits but less good to find

Poem

Reflections on a silent meeting for worship Colchester Nov 2017

Dave Stanbury
We sat in a circle
Listening for the echoes of grace within
For a while nothing seemed to be happening
The sun fell on our faces
Faint noises filtered from outside
No one spoke

Our minds reached across memory
s landscape

the remains of an obvious burglary piled against the side door. We look forward to the Christmas Lunch and to family gatherings. There will be the usual short Meeting on Christmas Day for half an hour from 10 30. My very best wishes to you all. No newsletter next month but have a good time and a happy new year and send me all your news by the middle of January to Valerie Graves

Ranging over hedges fields and meadows
Returning to the hive with beads of sticky wisdom

And then like a snowfall at night
The silence settled around us in deepening drifts
And rose to fill the space between us with a rich presence
Afterwards we shook hands and bought jars of wild honey from the bees that live in the Quaker cemetery

Meeting for Sufferings

MfS Friends Meeting House
Manchester 6th October 2017

Robert Parkes

1. As meeting houses go Central Manchester meeting is big seating up to 400 people although on this occasion I counted about 100 those attending MfS and a good number of Friends who had come for the day keen to see the main representative body of Quakers in Britain in action. I felt privileged to be in such an historic building that occupies a central place amongst Manchester's civic buildings. It became famous when it was used by Friends

tending to the victims of the Peterloo Massacre which took place on fields nearby. Recently it became both a gathering place for those protesting outside the Conservative Party Conference held just around the corner and a pop up cafe for the police who were guarding the event.

2. The agenda led on naturally from BYM what does God require of us. For some Friends Quaker action means doing something physical and not without personal risk. The Court and Prison Register tends to be a standing item this time we heard of about a dozen Friends who are up before the courts on a variety of charges

mostly to do with peaceful protesting against the arms trade. For other Friends action may mean listening to the stories of victims of forced migration. And for others still their calling may be simply upholding those Friends who are able to be more active. As we heard all is deeply grounded in worship reflection and deep discernment. worship and action spring from the same spiritual source.

3. One of the recurring themes at MfS is how best to fund Quaker work. This time there was also consideration of how best to do work. A lot of Quaker work is done centrally other work lends itself to being

more distributed. But maybe there are other ways too. Working more with other faith groups or across AMs for example. A phrase I wrote down was liberating Friends for service. I understand this to mean enabling in a variety of ways Friends to do what God requires of them. For example making sure those Quaker activists who get arrested are well supported by the Society spiritually and materially.

4. Our discernment also turned to the issue of diversity and inclusion. At BYM we had begun to consider diversity in our committee and organisational structures

and particularly to look at how Quakers can remove barriers and actively seek wider participation in the full life of our meetings. It is recognised this might be a long journey. Different meetings are at different places along this journey. I'm not sure there is as yet a common understanding of what diversity and inclusion means. We need to be open to the Light to guide us. As a way to begin to think about diversity in our meetings we were invited to take back 3 questions.

a. In what ways is your meeting or committee or group already diverse,

b. In what ways could it be more diverse,

c. What would help it become more diverse. What are the opportunities and barriers.

As a meeting we may wish to address these questions. How we do it is up to us. We were

invited to respond and give feedback only when we as a meeting feel able

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

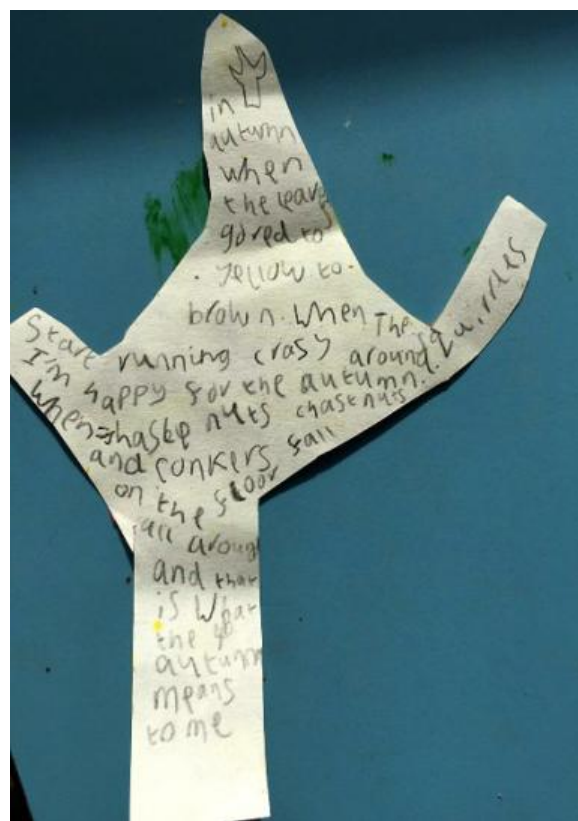
Children's Meeting

Anne Watkinson

I took these rather colourful ones at our recent all age worship. We only had 4 children present. Theme Autumn but it was a good morning. A young man of 7 years old, Benjamin Powell, not only did some of the art work but wrote the poem on the hand shape. He then was moved to stand and read it out as min-

istry, very moving from one so young.

It reads, "in autumn when the leaves go red to yellow to brown. When the squirrels start running crazy around I'm happy for the autumn. When hazel nuts chestnuts and conkers fall on the floor all around and that is what autumn means to me."



Clacton News

Janet Thomas

Our spirit led Meeting for Carols service organised by Silva Garton Rogers alongside her friend Carolyn Rogers refreshments provided by Susan Hanson will take place on Saturday 16th December at 3pm until 5pm. This particular style of meeting for Carols has been a highlight at Clacton for the last few years now and we look forward to it. Everyone is welcome why not bring your friends and enjoy.

The Art Club continues to flourish and is thoroughly enjoyed by all those who attend. It takes place on the last Friday of each month 11pm - 3pm bring own lunch and project paper available. The first Wednesday Meeting for Worship is from midday until one o'clock. Both Meetings take place in the cosy front room which now boasts the four Quaker Tapes-

try prints two from Alice and Fred Walker and two from Ernest and Heather Hall. In addition Ernest Hall has bequeathed 'The Presence in the Midst' which depicts Christ hovering ghostlike over a Quaker Meeting. There is also a print from Grace Ravasio of a wheel of Quaker sayings. The library like everything else mentioned was moved from the main Meeting Room while redecoration took place and has thus been acquired by a process of osmosis rather than Quakerly deliberation. This is a good in one way but not so good in that not everyone has occasion to see them. Please do take a look when you can.

What is definitely good is to see the bronze chrysanthemums whose colour and in particular smell always evoke Autumn for me. They are making an appearance at Clacton in the

next few days along with other Autumnal decoration.

We always enjoy the presence in our midst of Father Anthony Spooner formerly of St James Church Clacton. He has considerably enriched our Meetings. He prefers to be called Anthony which is friendly of him if you get my meaning or see what I did there as the young people say. For those who do not traditionally Quakers eschew titles even Mr and Mrs. We also have Mary and Ian from Christchurch United Reformed Clacton who have become dear friends attending our Sunday Meeting once a month in addition to both Meetings mentioned above.

We are very grateful to Area Meeting for all their support in this last year in helping us to thrive and look forward with prayer and hope to 2018.

A divinity student named Fiddle
Said Please I don't want a degree
It's Quakerly just to be Fiddle
Instead of being Fiddle D D

From The Sun of Quaker Laughter compiled by William K Sessions

Very pertinent to a paragraph in News from Clacton

Janet Thomas



Wildspot

from Valerie Graves

It is cold hard frost outside and all my radiators running full steam thank goodness for that but less so for the bills to follow. We have had such mild times that I have for instance quite forgotten what it used to be like in my childhood in Yorkshire. The cat

used to sleep with the firewood in the bottom oven and one slithered down the icy hill in the car hoping someone had left the gate open.

I still have a few roses in bloom and I have never seen so many berries everywhere. And a huge crop of cranberries which I have to say I don't want. But very few insects and no honeybees.

This is a Paraprosdokian

I hope you like it.

John Kay

War does not determine who is right only who is left.

Earls Colne News

Jenny Kay

On 4th Sunday in November, after 30 minutes silent worship, Antoinette Arnold led us into a Worship Sharing session on prayer with an opening reading from Quaker Faith and Practice, 2.23 by Harold Loukes. This passage quotes the familiar words from George Fox: 'Be still and cool in thy own mind and spirit from thy own thoughts.' Harold describes prayer as love:

Prayer is not words or acts, but reaching down to love: holding our fellows in love, offering our-

selves in love; and being held by, being caught up in love.

Each one of us, we were eight in number, spoke in turn of our personal experiences of prayer, from childhood, through other religious groups to our current understanding of prayer as Quakers.

The book sent to us from Friends House, 'God, Words and Us' is being passed round the Meeting with the recommendation from three of us who have read it to date that we might use it for a future study group session.

CONFERENCES in 2018

QCCIR Conference

Quaker Committee for Christian and Interfaith Relations (QCCIR) is to hold a conference at **Woodbrooke**, March 16-18, 2018, with the theme "The Changing Face of Faith in Britain, how should Quakers respond?"

QPSW Annual Spring Conference

Quaker Peace and Social Witness (QPSW) is holding its Annual Spring Conference on 23-25 March 2018 at the Hayes Conference Centre, Swanwick, Derbyshire. The theme is "Journeys of Witness." Friends interested in attending either of these conferences are asked to contact the AM Clerk.

Area Meetings

14 January - Colchester, 11 March - Clacton,
13 May - Sudbury, 8 July - Earls Colne,
9 September - Harwich, 11 November - Colchester.

Old Meeting Houses

Valerie Graves

A long time ago maybe in the early 90s I was volunteered to be General Meeting Clerk, a post that has disappeared now but in fact was quite fun. I was responsible for 18 meetings some quite big like Chelmsford but a good many really tiny. I visited them all in turn at an ordinary meeting. Some had only a few members and some met only occasionally. I particularly remember a packed meeting at, I think, Dunmow which had arranged to have a speaker from Quaker Social Service. Two delightful black girls who taught us how to make elaborate hats. It was hilarious. I often wonder if any of the serious weighty ladies in the audience actually went home and had a go. But even if they didn't it certainly didn't do Quakerism any harm. All the same I am sure that few of these old buildings are still in use. But some, like Earls Colne though small still has regular happenings. I have a leaflet about old Meeting Houses in our area.



A Happy Story

from Valerie Graves

This was in the Guardian the other day about a group of refugees from Syria who came under some kind of sponsorship scheme and were sent to Narberth a small town in Pembrokeshire with nothing but the clothes they were wearing. There are no mosques there and very few if any Muslims but they said they soon felt at home. They were all in desperate need of dental care which

was provided. Ahmad was given some rescue chickens and children went to school. Language was a problem as they have to learn Welsh as well as English. It is hoped to settle 20 000 Syrians in due course. Local people have saved up money in all sorts of ways and have started all sorts of things like knitting groups. The important thing is the good feeling which is evident. The future is not entirely safe but there is good hope. Long may this experience spread.

Notes from the Area Meeting,

Colchester, 19.11.2017

Jenny Kay

Appointments

As December 2017 is the end of three-year terms of service the list of appointments was relatively long. Charles Bather, Eliza Jones and Alison Parkes are continuing to serve as elders at Colchester, Robin Hart at Sudbury, Simon Banks and Robert Crowley as Elders/Overseers at Harwich and John Kay, newly appointed elder at Earls Colne. Betty Scrivener is re-appointed as overseer at Sudbury for an 8th term along with new overseer appointments; Jayne Adams and Diana Naylor at Colchester, Antoinette Arnold at Sudbury.

John Lewis was appointed a trustee and Jenny Kay as Clerk to Trustees. Valerie Graves was re-appointed Newsletter Editor, now into her 9th term and John Kay as Assistant Website Manager. Friends released, Helen Lewis, Sylvia Frith, Robert Parkes, Peter Whiteley were thanked for their service.

Annual Report and Accounts 2016

Peter Whiteley presented the Annual Report on behalf of Trustees for the year ending December 2016 and Tom Tebbutt, AM Treasurer, presented the Accounts. The report explains our Structure, Governance and Management, as well as activities and priorities of the AM. Our priorities are guided by the document "Our Faith in the Future" and these include, for instance, our support for Fresh Beginnings and Glebe House.

The Annual Report and Accounts will appear on the websites of the AM and Charity Commission. Whittles will be retained as our independent examiners for the year ended 31 December 2017. Trustees have asked that Local Meetings prepare a report for incorporation into the 2017 AM report to the Charity Commission. Guidance will be provided on what to include.

The minute recorded that the work done on our behalf by our Treasurer and Trustees maintaining the functioning of the AM was gratefully acknowledged. The involvement and awareness of all Friends in the work of trustees is an important obligation of being a member of the Religious Society of Friends.

Meeting for Sufferings Report

Robert Parkes presented his report from Meeting for Sufferings held at Friends Meeting House, Manchester, on 6th October 2017. The report, containing questions on diversity and inclusion for Friends to consider can be found in full elsewhere in this Newsletter.

Quaker Life Representatives Council Report - the minute read:

'Eliza Jones reported on Quaker Life Rep Council, which met at Woodbrooke in October 2017. The theme of the conference was "Shape Shifting - New Models of Quaker Meeting and Community." We might consider 'gospel order' as a stool with three legs - the inner light, the functioning of church committees and social testimony. We are asked to consider whether there is a particular leg our meet-

ing needs to pay attention to. Our focus should be what is needed, not what is expected. Using our gifts is more important than structure. Recognising what we have is the first step.

We ask that elders and overseers consider Eliza's report at their upcoming joint meeting, and explore how the questions raised could be more widely considered amongst Friends in our LMs. Eliza is willing to meet with Friends to discuss these ideas further. We thank Eliza for her inspiring report.

You may read Eliza's report in full at the AM website. As the report had been circulated before the Area Meeting it has not been included in this edition. Anyone who has not had a copy please request one from Jenny or John Kay.



Teapot & Flowers, Jenny Kay

About Time

from Valerie Graves

Oh dear, my watch has stopped, I am surrounded by people who do not need a watch who know the time by more modern means but I am archaic and have grandfather clocks which have to be wound up and I have this quite cheap little watch which is always exactly right and I never give it a thought. I expect it just needs a battery but I am quite lost and disoriented without it, I have had it for years.

Dwindling Numbers

Dave and Una Lawrence

During this spring and summer we have been made aware of the difficulties we are having as a result of falling numbers amongst the membership. In particular there are fewer members available to accept the various responsibilities and positions that need to be filled, so that we can manage to run our groups as well as we would like.

Una and I 'found' Quakers late in life, we had tried out different churches and groups but none seemed to be right for us; that is a shame because we now feel so much at home with the Friends we now know, and so much in tune with the values as expressed in the Quaker 'testimonies'.

What is more to the point is that many people we speak with, whether church goes or not, agree strongly with these views. In particular we find that young people are very interested indeed.

Could we learn something from the more outspoken and evangelical religions?

Without being evangelical, I do feel that we have a certain responsibility to share what we stand for with others. Quakers could be the group that they are looking for.

The words below summarise what we have found at Colchester, Earls Colne and at many other meetings of friends here in the U. K. (We did need help with the wording, layout and content, as it is now published below. This is about the 10th draft!)

We believe that if these few words, were dropped through letter boxes in the area, it could touch the hearts and minds of those who already share our beliefs.

In fact we suspect that it would be useful if many of the leaflets we publish, were distributed in this way.

In leaflets / postcards:

At Earls Colne Quaker Meeting

We found friends who follow the Christian way of life, always open to the spiritual wisdom of other faiths and taking inspiration from the arts, sciences and the natural world.

They valued their personal experience of, and relationship with God, whatever the term 'God' may mean to each of them.

They celebrated personal differences and respected the life journeys of others; they acknowledged the sacred in everyone.

In their quiet worship, they seek the leadings of love, justice, simplicity, equality and peace.

They are aware of the spirit of love at work in their daily lives, and seek ways of actively living out their beliefs.

The Quakers began as a movement in the 17th century. Early Quakers were dissatisfied with, and challenged the religious practices of the time.



Scottish Wisdom

At the Elders Meeting last night I read a quotation extract which came from a Scottish Cathedral source not a Quaker one but it seems to embody many Quaker aspirations

The Elders suggested that I send it to you for inclusion in the next Newsletter

Julia Usher

Imagine a spiritual community that brings people together from all sorts of backgrounds and traditions

Imagine the unity

Imagine a community that celebrates diversity seeing our difference as strength

Imagine the excitement

Imagine a community that creates heaven on earth rather than waiting for another life

Imagine the integrity

Imagine a community that invites questions rather than forcing answers

Imagine the openness

Imagine a community that honours inner wisdom and collective imagination

Imagine the empowerment

Imagine a community that seeks to be the change it wishes to see in the world





Art and Crafts Exhibition

Colchester Meeting House
4.11.2017 Jenny Kay

Twenty-nine contributors; Friends and others associated with the Saturday Painting Group, submitted 41 framed pieces, 36 folios, small sculptures and pottery. A few artifacts were sold along with re-

freshments and cakes, flowers and gifts. The exhibition was well-received and the Colchester Tapestry display attracted much interest. The day was an occasion of Friendship and fellowship and drew some new first-time visitors to the Meeting House.

Photos: Anne Watkinson & John Kay

