



Trident Demonstration

photo: Rob Parkes

NEWSLETTER

SOUTHERN EAST ANGLIA AREA QUAKER MEETING

February 2015

Diary Dates for February

Wednesday February 4th Clacton Meeting for Worship 1.00 pm

Friday February 6th Colchester Farmers' Market

Monday February 9th, 19.30hrs Colchester Quakers Trident campaign group meeting

Monday February 16th to Sunday February 22nd

UK National Chip Week <http://www.chips.lovepotatoes.co.uk/>

Saturday February 21st, 18.30hrs Colchester Quakers Curry Night gathering

Sunday March 8th International Women's Day <http://www.internationalwomensday.com/theme.asp>

<https://twitter.com/womensday>

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@northessexquakers

Meetings for Worship

Clacton

Sunday at 10.30 am

Harwich

2nd and 4th Sundays 10.30 am

Nicholas' Church Hall,
Stour Road, Bathside

Contact , Audrey Hind

Colchester

Sunday 10.30 am

Wednesday 12.30 pm

(Soup and Cheese Lunch)

Earls Colne

1st, 3rd & 5th Sundays 10.30 am

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.....Ray Attrill

COLCHESTER.....Carol Holding

SUDBURY.....Peter Whiteley

Editorial

Dear Friends,

Christmas is over, such an exhausting time but I do enjoy seeing all my family. Now is a time to do all the useful things, mend socks, write to people you forgot to send cards to, try to get the garden in some sort of order, and hope that it is not going to be quite so cold as it seems likely to do. I have to admit that I did not enjoy the winter before last.

Our Meeting is full of ideas for self-improvement and possible local activities. We have quite a lot of newcomers, some quite young, and a few more children (though we would love to have lots more). We have a thriving Food Bank (but how shaming it is to know that its use has gone up threefold). I am too old now to take part in most of these activities, and I am not as good as I was, at remembering names.

I expect I have already bored you by enthusing about my vegetable box, which arrives every Wednesday and gives me great encouragement to try out unfamiliar things. They give you suggestions and some of them are quite bizarre, using spices that I do have in my cupboard but have

probably never tried. I used to be very conservative in my tastes and have never been a big eater, but watch this space!

Eight small girls, mostly great-grandchildren, between the ages of eight and fourteen, all with January or February birthdays, were taken to the Pantomime by my eldest son Chris, who was grandfather to most of them. They had a marvellous time and shouted their heads off, singing the song on the screen. There is no doubt of the huge value of letting your hair down, sometimes. But there is often a downside and in this case it was a small boy, aged only four, who was not invited (his older sisters were) and spent the afternoon at my house which he usually loves, in a monumental huff. Oh dear!

News, please, by the middle of the month, to Valerie Graves, (for contact details, see AM List of Members and Attenders). And a happy new year!



A reminder of what Sudbury Meeting House once looked like

Photo: John Kay

Meeting for Sufferings

Carol Holding

As given at AM 11.1.2015

The Meeting began as usual with a deep meeting for worship in which we considered the lives of the Friends (many over 90) who had served in the past and who had died since our last meeting in October. One of these was Alistair Milner who was still currently serving and another was Patricia Russell of Witham Meeting which gave extra poignancy especially as we were joined by Young Friends for this.

The Concern for Tax Justice brought in minutes by several Area Meetings gave great food for thought and we are urged to stand up against the usual plea "It's legal" even though its not right morally, and to be aware that it is not only "other people" but to be aware of our own personal practices.

Brighthouse meeting in Yorkshire brought a concern that we should persuade local government by our vote to use compassion and support QARN (Quaker Asylum refugees network) and to work to combat Islamophobia locally.

Trustees brought to our minds the Government Lobbying Act and whether or not we should register as Quakers. We cannot opt out of the system and then stop large organisations having a disproportionate influence on it. We should register but make it clear we may not modify our spending and speaking truth to power. It is not just about spending thresholds but the act is not even handed and it is not known if it is possible to deregister later.

Being defined in terms of money is the wrong way but we indulge in political activity because we are im-

pelled to do so by our religious beliefs. By registering we are saying we wish to be clear. The answer to the question "What happens if we cross the £400,000 threshold by group action (we are not likely to exceed this on our own) was "Not sure" but if deliberate it would go to court. It was suggested we accompany our joining up with a strong statement. The law itself may change and we recognise it has many flaws. Collaborative action will not put individuals at risk and we upheld trustees in this decision.

The main topic in the afternoon was the work of The Retreat in York introduced by John Miles who spoke of the Quaker view there "Everyone is unique, precious, a child of God" and of the specialised care and dedicated staff there. A film was shown of the 98 bed hospital and the many clinics

and well respected ethos excellence of the care and teaching on mental health. Dan Anderson the medical director, a doctor, will come to talk to Area Meetings about this work and David Smith spoke of the work of the Tuke Centre. They and Jenny McAleese, chief executive officer, answered questions such as "Is the work reproduced any where else?" and "is the money still going to be available?" IT is unique in its person centred wholistic approach but has had and is having a huge influence on mental health work. Where the finance will come from in the future is however is always a worry.

Area Meeting

Liz Hurley

Our new A.M. Clerk, Alison Parkes, welcomed us to the first AM business meeting of the year and Friends and attenders who have been present over time were pleased to see a number of less familiar faces amongst us. At the start of the Meeting, Alison gave a timely reminder of the conduct of business meetings and that this was a 'Quaker Meeting for worship for business.'

After fifteen minutes of silent worship, we started with 'Appointments' followed by 'Membership matters' Attenders left the room for this item

A report from Martin Pennock clerk to Quaker Life and Richard Summers, general Secretary gave us a clearer picture of the work of QL and its links with meetings and children and young people. Sharing stories and spiritual journeys and support with membership, Eldership and Oversight JYM, library and prison chaplaincy, and in particular End of life

The Meeting began as usual with a deep meeting for worship in which we considered the issues and assisted dying. We are not all of one mind on these issues and Jocelyn Burnell assistant clerk said telling our stories was more inform-

but on their return we were all glad to welcome Jet Grömmel as a member. There was then a short report on the Tabular Statement which is updated at the beginning of the year and returned to Friends House in London for the usual annual membership survey required by Yearly Meeting.

A small group of F(f)riends has been looking into the possibility of the Area Meeting having a website. Other nearby Area Meetings have them, as well as local Meetings. An explanation and discussion took place and the meeting felt there would be many benefits and that the AM should go ahead with this idea.

ative than a Questionnaire. The many contributions covered all end of life problems such as Dementia and not just death.

This Meeting was the first Meeting for Sufferings had held in the large Meeting House since its renovation. It is beautifully done with many of the old features and most impressively the bringing of the old gallery into the main body of the room. There were teething problems with the heating and the microphone systems, but the feeling of space as well as intimacy was well achieved.

Three reports followed, the first being given by Carol as representative for Meeting for Sufferings. Les Wood had attended an 'Inequality conference' at Woodbrooke and highlights from his report were read out. Lastly, Robert Parkes reported on the 'Alternatives to Trident' group in our Meeting, reminding us of the webpage on the Colchester Meeting website and of a rally in Trafalgar Square.

There were a few more business matters for the Meeting before it ended and we repaired to the Parnell room for the usual friendly AM tea.



News from Clacton

Ernest Hall

Christmas at Clacton

For Clacton f/Friends Christmas celebrations began on the previous Saturday when we held our now-traditional *Meeting for Carols* at the Meeting House at 3.00 pm. Thanks to the efforts of our Gardening Friend Janet Thomas, and her husband Rodney, the Meeting House looked appropriately 'Christmassy' for the occasion.

Our *Meeting for Carols* is essentially a celebration of the very beginning of the Christian Faith but, like all Quaker Meetings, it is a celebration to which folk of different Christian traditions, different faiths, or of no faith at all are made warmly welcome. The Meeting House was comfortably filled with nearly fifty of us. It wouldn't be quite true to

claim that there was 'standing room only' but late comers certainly had to look for a seat.

The programme, prepared by attenders Silva Garton-Rogers and her friend Carolyn Rogers, consisted of readings of the story of Jesus Christ's nativity, singing of well known and popular carols (at which we were glad to have our Quaker voices supplemented by those of more vocal Christian traditions!) and periods of 'Quakerly silence and stillness'. The youngest readers were nine-year old Olivia, Silva's grand-daughter and eleven-year old Amber Kendall. The oldest was in his nineties!

The *Meeting for Carols* concluded with tea or coffee accompanied by mince pies and other Christmassy delicacies and friendly chat. Every one agreed that, as on the previous year, *Meeting for Carols 2014* had

proved to be a thoroughly enjoyable social occasion as well as being an event of deep spiritual significance. We are grateful to all those who contributed to its success, particularly to Silva and Carolyn.

The collection after the event raised about £90.00 for the residents of Clacton's *Derek Crosfield House* where temporary accommodation and support are offered to young and inexperienced mothers and their babies.

Christmas Day Meeting for Worship

As is our custom, there was a slightly shortened Meeting for Worship at 10.30 am on Christmas Day, to celebrate and give thanks for Jesus Christ's nativity. Despite the fact that a number of usually regularly-attending f/Friends (including myself!) were absent from Clacton for Christmas, there were twelve

present on that occasion; rather more than there have been at Sunday Meeting for Worship. I am sure that those who were able to be present enjoyed their Christmas lunches all the more for having done so.

Mary Smith

Mary Smith, a long-standing and once very active member of our Meeting has recently been prevented by ill-health from attending. It has therefore been very gratifying and inspiring to have her with us at several Sunday Meetings for Worship during December and January, and at the *Meeting for Carols*. We all wish Mary well as we move into the New Year.

A change of address

Susan Hanson's email address is now available from Ernest Hall, (details in AM List of Members and attendees). Emails addressed to her former

'btinternet.com' address will not reach her.

Some Good News

The flat above our Meeting House has been let on a six month renewable lease to David Oakley with effect from 13th December 2014. Over a month has now elapsed with no complaint from either side, so there is every reason to hope that we shall have a long and happy relationship.

'First Wednesday' Meetings

We were very sad when, about a year ago, circumstances compelled us to discontinue the 'First Wednesday of the month' half-hour Meetings for Worship followed by a 'soup and bread-and-cheese' lunch. They had been part of the Meeting's life for several years and, although they rarely attracted more than five or six worshippers, they were greatly appreciated by those of us who attended them. They also attracted folk who were interested in Quaker faith and practice but were daunted by the

prospect of being expected to sit still for a full hour!

Now, thanks to the initiative of Janet Thomas, there is a distinct possibility that they will again become part of Clacton Quaker life. Janet has been asked to consider the possibility of reviving the Meeting and to this end has arranged a 'pilot Meeting' on Wednesday 4th February to start at 1 o'clock.

A warm welcome is offered to any readers of the Newsletter who care to join us. At the pilot meeting we will give further thought as to whether or not the First Wednesday in the Month lunchtime Meetings are to be restored. I intend to be there and very much hope that it will mark the resumption of what could be a valuable piece of outreach as well as an oasis of calm for f/Friends in the middle of a busy week.



Reply to 'A Comment'

Mary Grocock

Is the crux of Bob Crowley concern, (Newsletter December '14), and I have heard it from other people too, whether we need a nuclear deterrent or not? Perhaps some Friends would ask, "What deterrent should we employ if Trident is not renewed?"

In beliefs like pacifism or assisted dying, I think that having chosen one's stance it has to be at the end of that road. If for example you decide that suicide for the terminally ill is right, then if the man next door smothers his grandmother to get at her money, the believer's faith should stay firm. Cars crash but no one, or very few, wish to prohibit driving.

My view is that manufacturing, stocking or using nuclear weapons is ethically wrong. Take stocking, the activity behind deterrence and imagine a large nation, or indeed a small one with

a hefty arsenal of nuclear warheads.

Now consider the motives of the agents behind those weapons. They desire power, wealth or territory; I can't think of an aspiration where they don't want to preserve this earth for their own purposes. Even Isis intends to impose its Sharia law *on* the planet. It's no use to any of these powers if it is destroyed.

If we were able accurately to assess the effect upon climate and on land of those nuclear actions that have already happened in World War II and in known and unknown weapon tests, we might have some conception of the consequences to just one such power pressing its nuclear button in aggression towards another. There is evidence to support this view.

Nuclear warheads are of no use against personal attacks like those recently in France. The costs of replacing Trident could be spent to positive ends, and Bob Crowley will know as much about that as I do.

American Indians and Education

from Valerie Graves.

This is an extract from a recent Quaker Voices article, but one which I have met in the printed works about the Indians of about 1750, of which there are many, all showing the kindness and courtesy shown to the English and other invaders of the time. These invaders, rather patronisingly, offered some University places to Indian young men, and the quoted article is a very polite and tactful reply, saying that Europeans have no knowledge or skills whatever of living in the wild, could not even run, never mind look after themselves. They very gently suggested that they would be happy to educate some young Europeans themselves, in some elementary skills.

Later, of course, the Europeans described Indians as rough and rude, and that they should be eliminated. An extensive litera-

ture exists, and is generally well known, of how Europeans did succeed in removing Indians from almost all their old hunting grounds, and repaid their courtesy with lying promises and destruction. Not a happy memory, and even worse, of course, in Australia, India and Africa.



Learning and Sharing

Quaker Life Representative Council,
17 – 19 October 2014

Eliza Jones

I attended my first Quaker Life Representative Council feeling slightly apprehensive. Although I had looked Quaker Life up and read that it was “Working to strengthen and sustain the fabric of Quaker life within our Yearly Meeting”, I still didn’t feel very clear about what this actually meant. Over the course of the weekend as we shared news from our meetings, worked in groups familiarising ourselves with the latest resource “Being Friends Together” and had all sorts of conversations over meals and cups of tea it began to make sense. We had come together from 69 different area meetings, representing a cross section of Quakers in Britain, to get to know each other, share and learn from each other as well as to inform, feed into and provide feedback on the work Friends House staff were doing to support and nurture meetings.

I was quite struck by some of the contributions in our first session sharing news from our respective meetings. The phrase “spiritual hospitality” was used by one Friend to describe what Quakers offer and she went on to talk about feeding the Spirit. This set me wondering what a Quaker tea for the Spirit would look like! Another Friend told us about the “pop up” meetings they held in public spaces, literally

Happiness, some thoughts

Ernest Hall

Those who spend their lives seeking happiness for themselves are destined never to find it.

Happiness is a by-product produced while striving for some other purpose - the happiness of one’s husband, wife or other long-term partner for instance.

We frequently don’t realize how happy we have been until we no longer are.

When, like me, you are very old and living alone and even if,

again like me, you have a loving family and wonderful friends, you’ll find that it is the very happiest memories of the past that bring you closest to tears.

There’s a quote from the German poet Goethe that I have remembered for some seventy years : ‘Lieben und geliebt zu werden, ist das höchste Glück auf Erden’

Which loosely translates as ‘To love and to be loved in return is the greatest happiness (or good fortune) that this world offers’. I have found it to be very true.

taking over public benches and sitting in silence while one of their numbers kept watch and explained what was going on to interested passers -by. For another friend hearing the new meeting house manager taken on to implement a more commercial approach to lettings state that “Everything you do is worship” was especially reassuring. I found questions such as “Is area meeting a community? Are our meetings, meetings for learning where personal stories are shared and journeys of personal development take place?” particularly challenging.

Richard Summers, General Secretary of Quaker Life gave a stirring introduction to the theme of the weekend Being Friends Together, emphasising the importance of community in our spiritual development. As Quakers we live the truth of our connection with the Divine, and we need to do this in community. Religion is about our relationship with each other. Our relationship with God expresses itself in our relationship with others and this feeds back and nourishes itself in our relationship with God. Meaningful communication between members, engaging with each other in a meaningful way is the most important thing that makes a community/meeting work. For any meeting interested in learning together, the Being Friends Together is an excellent resource that will help with this. It offers a wide range of approaches to help meet-

ings engage in learning. Resources are organised around four themes – **Spirit**, (Deepening the life of the Spirit together); **Tradition** (Exploring our living tradition together, for deepening a meeting’s understanding of the Quaker way); **Community**, (Growing as community together, connecting with the wider Community); **World** (Engaging with the world, being in the world together).

Southern East Anglia area meeting has been exploring how it is called to engage in a more meaningful way with the wider community. At both area and local meeting level Days of Discernment of purpose have been held with this in mind. This resource can provide our local meetings with a framework to further explore and develop together what they may be called to do.

For example the theme, **World** (Being in the world together) considers what we understand by Quaker testimony, how we discern and respond to leadings, speak and act in faithfulness to our testimonies and ground our witness in worship, with pathways including economic justice, peace and sustainability. A wide range of approaches are used: learning by doing something together; creative drawing, painting, craft activities; discussion; external speakers; sharing stories; reading/watching; group work; spiritual practice and reflection.

Food Banks Are Not Enough:

Practical Steps To Challenge Inequality
29 November 2014

Keynote talk by Suzanne Ismail,
(Quaker Peace & Social Witness)

Les Wood

So many of the things we Quakers are concerned about, things such as Foodbanks and homelessness, are rooted in excessive economic inequality.

For many people in the UK the situation is dismal. Our country is currently one of most unequal countries in the Organisation for Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD). In 1977 the richest 5% of individuals received about 17% of our national income. That was pretty much the best annual achievement of the century. In 2007 the richest 5% were receiving a huge 30% of our national income and in the OECD league table of good economic equality the UK had sunk to 27th out of 33 countries. Since 2007 we have had the impact of the recession and various austerity policies. The Prime Minister announced in 2012 that the UK was at its most equal since 1986. But it's important to put this into context.

It's quite normal in countries like the UK for inequality to fall during a recession. In 2012 the 50p tax rate was reduced for the highest income earners, good news for the rich. In the following year serious Social Security cuts occurred, poor news for the poor. Statistics for 2012 showed an increase in inequality which is forecast to continue worsening.

The poorest are becoming poorer and the richest even richer. We see the downside of this on our high streets and in our communities every day. Some positive news is that the subject of Economic Inequality seems to be gaining political weight. It feels as if everyone is talking about it. For instance:-

Kate Pickett and Richard Wilkinson did much to get the issue onto the political agenda with their book 'THE SPIRIT LEVEL'. They made a convincing case that we would all be better off, on a whole range of social and health indicators if we were all a lot less unequal. Over the previous summer there were many debates about the book 'Capital

in the 21st Century' by Thomas Piketty, the French Economist and we had the Pope tweeting that 'inequality is the root of social evil'

There are also others, who aren't usually associated with the struggle for social justice, who are talking about economic inequality.

For example, the International Monetary Fund has been voicing fears that in some countries high levels of economic inequality are damaging economic growth. For several years the World Economic Forum has highlighted Economic Inequality as one of the biggest challenges facing the global economy, not for reasons of social justice but because it sees inequality as creating political instability and po-



litical instability, in turn, creating instability in business.

What can we as Quakers say or do about Economic Inequality? Do we have something distinctive to say? Some Friends feel that we need to speak out more often. Others feel that we need to refine our collective thinking about the subject. There are Friends who say that this is not a core Quaker concern but Equality is one of our testimonies, and therefore has to be a core concern.

In the view of Suzanne Ismail we do have something distinctive to say and a firm basis for acting.

Firstly. The level of economic inequality makes a huge difference to our material circumstances. In 1917, nearly 100 years ago, London Yearly Meeting discerned that "the development of Man's full personality should not be hampered by unjust conditions nor crushed by economic pressure."

Secondly. Economic inequality makes us less able to relate to each other. It is as if the people at the two extremes of the economic spectrum live on different planets.

Thirdly. We need to speak out because of our concern for the sustainability of natural resources.

Many believe that our hyperactive consumer society is a major factor in the depletion of natural resources and climate change. Kate Pickett and Richard Wilkinson argue that inequality drives a 'competition for status' which in turn fuels consumerism. Cut the inequality, they suggest, and we will lessen the strain on the planet's resources.

What can we do? Suzanne Ismail is saying that we need action on many different levels so the following 4 points are things worth considering.

1. We need action on social security. We need a safety net that is based on the principle of human dignity. There are many reports of failures in the benefits system such as poorly applied sanctions, housing benefit caps and delays with assessments etc. These are driving people deeper into poverty and through the doors of our food banks. No political party appears willing to be honest, straightforward and transparent about the future of our social security system. There's growing evidence that some of the recent reforms are not working. The Affordable Homes Bill, a private members bill currently creeping through parliament, seeks to abolish the worst aspects of the system's failures. We should press our MPs to support it.

2. We need action to build a better tax system. The most immediate action should be against both tax avoidance and tax evasion. Tax avoidance is selfish and socially irresponsible behaviour which probably needs a drastic change in the attitude of the public towards it. Tax evasion is criminal behaviour and its prosecution needs to be fully funded and enforced. The major problem with our tax system, it seems, is it is far too complicated.

3. We need action to make a Living Wage the least that can be paid. Millions of working people are paid less than this and so need Social Services benefits.

4. We need action to build fair markets for services and goods. The poor pay more than they should for basic needs through the 'Poverty Premium'. This is defined as 'the additional cost for essential goods and services that peo-

ple living in poverty end up paying as a result of their low incomes’.

QPSW is concerned about fuel poverty and is working with ‘Fuel Poverty Action’ (FPA) to promote their ‘Energy Bill of Rights’ so that everyone has access to affordable clean energy. The Bill of Rights also focuses on the need to stop people being forced into using prepayment meters. These are an expensive method of payment and a difficult system to get out of. Looking at fair markets more broadly, Church Action on Poverty is calling on The Department for Business, Innovation and Skills to develop a wider strategy for reducing the Poverty Premium in relation to food, fuel and finance. We should support organisations that are not making a profit out of the Poverty Premium.

Clerk’s Corner

Alison Parkes, Southern East Anglia Quaker Meeting Clerk

Quaker Faith and Practice 2.85

The meeting for business cannot be understood in isolation; it is part of a spiritual discipline.

John Punshon, 1987

Over the past 18 months we have been engaged in the process of discerning our purposes as an Area Meeting. We have before us the prospect of business meetings at which we hope to reach unity regarding our purposes and how we choose to put our faith into action. We can each do our best to prepare for these meetings, firstly by participating in the discernment of our Local Meetings, and secondly by ensuring that we come ‘with hearts and minds prepared’ to Area Meeting.

As I sit at my desk preparing this “Clerk’s Corner” I have a powerful sense that whatever I might have to say has all been said before, and so much better! I quoted above from John Punshon, and he develops his insight in Quaker Faith and Practice 2.90:

What is required is a willingness to listen to what others have to say rather than to persuade them that one’s own point of view represents what is right and proper. It also requires restraint. The reiteration of one point by several Friends each in their own

This is a difficulty seen in many of the areas highlighted by ‘Church Action on Poverty’ and a lack of access to finance is a major problem underlying the Poverty Premium; so getting involved in a local Credit Union would be a really positive step.

In conclusion, there are lots of ways in which, as a society, we can act to reduce economic inequality. But political will and commitment are major problems. It is going to be politically easier to address what’s going wrong at the bottom of the inequality spectrum than at the top, at least in the short term. There are lots of other people talking about and working in the area of economic inequality, and we should endeavour to connect with them.

way lends no weight to the point. What the meeting must learn to discern is its rightness, not how many people support it...

When conflict comes, as it does, and the temptation to compromise, to seek consensus, is resisted, the sense of divine guidance is unmistakably registered. New possibilities for a way forward which nobody has thought of emerge out of discussion. Postponement and delay settle minds and assist the process of coming to a united mind. Above all, those who take opposing views come to find that the discipline of waiting has mysteriously united them.

The following extract, by Isaac Penington, is one I often return to for inspiration and support:

Give over thine own willing, give over thy own running, give over thine own desiring to know or be anything and sink down to the seed which God sows in the heart, and let that grow in thee and be in thee and breathe in thee and act in thee; and thou shalt find by sweet experience that the Lord knows that and loves and owns that, and will lead it to the inheritance of Life, which is its portion. Isaac Penington, 1661 (Quaker Faith and Practice 26.70)

How might we prepare for Area Meeting in March? At this meeting we will be considering the extent to which we have fulfilled our responsibilities as an AM. We will refer to QFP 4.10, which sets out a list of AM responsibilities. Please study this list so that we

Colchester Food Bank

Linda Hurr

Colchester Foodbank Manager

We would like to thank everyone who has supported us by donating food, money and time. In the four years between October 2009 and October 2013, we distributed a total of 53 tonnes of food. In comparison last year statistics are startling. In 2014 we distributed 68 tonnes of food which are quoted equated to feeding a total of 5634 Colchester people, including 2231 children. We would like to believe that demand might level out or decrease in 2015, but with further benefit changes due to come into force early this year, the reality is that we will probably have even more people in need. So please continue to support as we help those who find themselves in an unexpected and sudden financial crisis.



can evaluate where we are and what we are led to do next. Copies of Quaker Faith and Practice are available for loan from every Meeting House, or you can read it on the Quakers in Britain website: <http://qfp.quaker.org.uk/>

We will be drawing together various threads of prior discernment, using AM Minutes 2014/39 ‘Discerning our purposes’, 2014/46 ‘Discerning our purposes: next steps’ and 2014/71 ‘Long-term Framework consultation’ to guide us, as well as the talk given by Paul Parker at Sudbury Meeting House last October. These items are reported in 2014 newsletters between June and December, and are available from the Files section of the Colchester Quakers Yahoo group (in the folder “March 2015 AM Calling letter”); the minutes are stored in the AM minute book in the Colchester Meeting House office or available on request from me.

The next Area Meeting will take place at Clacton Meeting House on Sunday, March 8, at 2.15 pm.

SEAQ

Area Meetings in 2015

all begin at 2.15 pm

8 March - Clacton Meeting House

10 May - Sudbury Meeting House

12 July - Earls Colne Meeting House

13 September - Colchester Meeting House

15 November - Colchester Meeting House

All are welcome. Refreshments are provided after the meeting.

Non-members are requested to ask permission to attend from the Clerk, Alison Parkes.



A Real Quaker

from Valerie Graves

My husband and I joined Quakers in the 1960's. We had been greatly impressed by the publication "A Quaker View of Sex", such a wise, quiet and sensible book! (but not relevant to what I am writing today). We met, and were captivated by, a middle-aged Quaker we met at the meeting we joined. Dorothy was the wife of a farmer who also ran an old water-mill, run by an old Quaker milling family. She was a large person in every respect, tall, rather loud-spoken, kind and friendly to everyone, very well-informed and able to keep up a discussion on almost any topic with children, teenagers, foreigners, old people, on equal terms and with much laughter. She never talked down to anyone, but she was rarely defeated by any topic, though

never shocked or dictatorial. She was usually dressed in heavy tweed suits, but I don't think she was interested in clothes. She just loved people.

Her house was always full of people, all sorts of people. It was a large house which always had room for one or two more, refugees, homeless, overseas or home-grown, and there was always enough to eat, very often rabbits which she or her family had shot on the farm. And I expect she could always find a coat or some boots from somewhere, if you didn't have any.

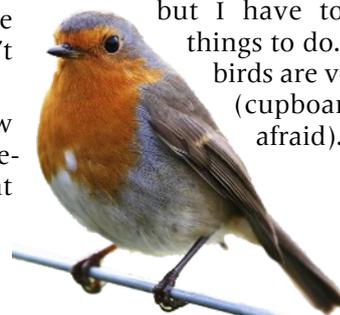
I could go on, but I will only say how fortunate I feel to have known someone like Dorothy and to know that people like her do exist.

Wildlife in the Cold

from Valerie Graves

The usual bag of some plants being put off by the cold and some ignore it: you will have your examples. Here there is an antirrhinum in full bloom, and primroses, but snowdrops a bit late and shy. There were two robins outside my back door on the morning of Jan 20th, but only one since then. This particular robin is very friendly and follows me all round the garden, I daresay I could persuade him to take food from my hand,

but I have too many other things to do. A pair of black-birds are very friendly too. (cupboard love, I'm afraid).



What Quakers believe

John Hall

The December Area Meeting Newsletter contained a criticism of the process of spiritual reviews. It was said that any Quaker "will make their own decision on what it means to be a Quaker today." It seems to me that there is a misunderstanding contained within that view.

Quakerism has, almost from its beginnings, incorporated the idea of the Spirit within each person, informing Friends on what their individual understandings might be. However, also from the seventeenth century, Friends have had behavioural tenets, i.e. comprehensive ideas of how Quakers should behave in the World, the Society, their Meeting and their families. A spiritual review will encompass

these. It will not be an examination of what any individual Friend believes. Today, Quakerism in Britain, apart from the Friends in Christ minority movement, does not approve of challenging an individual Friend's belief. What a spiritual review might do is invite a Meeting to examine what religious belief means to it. This is particularly important given the kind of dichotomy identified by Ben Pink Dandelion in last year's Swarthmore Lecture.

Then there is the idea that there is individual freedom to decide how one should behave. This is an anarchistic view and while it is open to anyone to hold such views, it does not marry with being part of an organisation. Willingness to be "open to new Light from whatever source it may come" cannot be misconstrued to mean that "anything

goes." There is a Quaker way of acting. Sometimes that overlaps with other humanist and religious ways, but there has always been the idea that Quakers stand outside conventional approaches. It is what makes Quakerism unique. It is why one can feel at home in a Meeting not one's own.

Although it is quite right to say that there is and must remain freedom in Quakerism, that freedom is not license to act totally outside the conventions which define the Religious Society of Friends. It is not without significance that Friends refer to *The Discipline*. But that discipline is not about anybody telling a Friend how to behave or what to believe. It is about ensuring what being Quaker means. And what better way to do that than by a spiritual review?