



*Paul Parker from Friends House Video "Celebrating Quaker Work"*

# **NEWSLETTER**

## **SOUTHERN EAST ANGLIA AREA QUAKER MEETING November 2014**

### ***Diary Dates for November***

All of November World Vegan Month  
Saturday November 1<sup>st</sup> Colchester Quaker Sale  
Friday November 14<sup>th</sup> World Diabetes Day  
Sunday November 16<sup>th</sup> Area Meeting; Colchester  
Wednesday November 19<sup>th</sup> International Men's Day  
Tuesday November 25<sup>th</sup> International Day for the Elimination of Violence Against Women  
Saturday November 29<sup>th</sup> International Day of Solidarity with the People of Palestine  
Monday December 1<sup>st</sup> International Prisoners for Peace day

**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 Editorial**

### **CLACTON**

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

### **Harwich**

2nd and 4th Sundays 10.30 am  
Nicholas' Church Hall,  
Stour Road, Bathside  
Contact , Audrey Hind

### **COLCHESTER**

Sunday 10.30 am  
Wednesday 12.30 pm  
(Soup and Cheese Lunch)

### **EARLS COLNE**

1st, 3rd & 5th Sundays 10.30 am  
10.30 am

### **SUDBURY**

Sunday 10.30 am  
Friars Street, Sudbury  
Thursday 12.30 pm  
(Bring Picnic,  
Tea/Coffee provided)

Dear Friends,

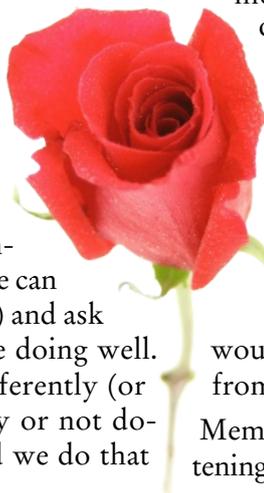
This weekend we put the clocks back and are, in theory, approaching winter. I am sure you hope as fervently as I do that it will be like last year and not the one before, though we had enough rain and floods. (We have already had some appalling winds and rain.) And, of course, Christmas is coming, though we have one more newsletter before that, so I will not mention it.

Nothing much to be thankful about: we hear fanciful news about lots of new jobs, but less about most of them being on short hours and bad pay, so there is increased need for food banks and other support. I get very tired of hearing about scrounging immigrants and very little about asylum seekers who desperately need help. (I have a granddaughter who is a judge dealing with legal aid, who tells a very different story) And you have only to look at

the number of people with foreign-sounding names, whose parents or grandparents came thankfully to Britain in times of trouble (think of the Kindertransport in the 30's) who became useful and valued Britons.

We have an active Meeting with all sorts of happenings which you can read about elsewhere, as (being aged) I don't get to as many as I would like. Paul Parker, always an inspiring speaker, spoke recently at Sudbury, and we had an open house during Colchester Heritage Week, when we always get a lot of visitors. Next week it will be the Colchester Sale, when I shall do an overall and take the money for lunches, always worth eating! If this comes out before then, don't forget to come, especially for the books and plants and jam.

News, please, by the middle of the month, to Valerie Graves, (for contact details, see AM List of Members and Attenders).



triennium where we are smaller and more streamlined we are to see how we can be more efficient (QFP 7) and ask ourselves 1. What are we doing well. 2. What could we do differently (or what are we doing badly or not doing.) and 3. What should we do that we are not doing now.

House of Commons on Gaza on 13th Oct where we would be represented, and that BYM next year would be at Warwick University from 29th July to 5th August.

Memories of feeling we were a listening but mainly rubber stamping or even a passive or negative group that had been bothering me since the morning when we heard minutes from meetings Devon area in particular full of passion and poetry which had come to us in our papers and had seemed to be rushed along so we could get on with our introspection, was suddenly and passionately overturned in the afternoon.

The speaker who did this initially was Joy Croft who admonished us for asking AMs to consider these concerns due to lack of time. We must not constrain the spirit and we must care for this planet and we need to be talking and listening more with other bodies with less resources and time spent on com-

There was talk of discernment of our priorities and the need to be visionary and for communication, and a look at our functions, 19 of them (A-S in QFP), a report from Trustees and treasurer and from the lobbying act calling for transparency on what is spent in the run up to elections etc. and most tellingly from the sustainability group by its convenor Jamie Wrench reminding us we are all responsible for implementing the terms of reference of the Canterbury commitment and a total change of lifestyle is being asked for.

Notices reminded us that our next meeting will be in the large meeting house on 6th December, that a new set of posters was out for Quaker week, that there would be a debate in the

<b>FIRST CONTACT</b> FOR FUNERAL ARRANGEMENTS CLACTON.....Ray Attrill COLCHESTER.....Carol Holding SUDBURY.....Peter Whiteley
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## **Meeting for Sufferings**

Carol Holding

Meeting on 4th October 2014 was described as a stepping back meeting to reveal what we are doing and how. Assistant clerk Anne Ullerthorne introduced this session by stressing the primary role being to assist the meeting by members of sufferings meeting in groups around the country where clerks have been to give guidance every week in the last year. Kate Green from the support group said that it had given the group a changed view of MfS, giving a sense of feeling useful and making it become a transformative experience. As we are more than two thirds through the current

mittees. Others spoke of our resilience as a species and we must focus high. We have gone badly wrong but we are intelligent and can work from the grass roots doing what we are called to do. Where are our posters about what Quakers think about the bombing of Iraq? The website is not enough. We should go back to Area Meetings with this our prophetic stirring up. Persist. Churches

together in Cumbria looked at the wider picture and things changed. The spirit looks to reality and action not fear. We are known for what we do but we do not tell why. Talk to your children about ethics and sustainability. De Clutter.

We had been in small groups in the morning and it was good to open up then but it was not until the afternoon that this outpouring began and the

seeing as one (as seen at YM 2009) showed us that this will would find a way. It was dangerous to give us this space but it is what we needed. The minute does not reflect the passion of the afternoon. Perhaps it could be channelled through the arrangements group. It was suggested that we might use the word God instead of Spirit occasionally.

## **News from Clacton**

Ernest Hall

### **Forthcoming Events**

Last month I reported that Swami Veetamohananda of the Vedanta Movement, who had visited our area in May and had, after telling us more about Vedanta, had shared our Meeting for Worship on Sunday 11th May, was paying another visit to north-east Essex at the end of November and that I hoped to be able to give further details of this visit in the November newsletter.

We now know that the Swami will visit Clacton Meeting House again on Sunday 30th November. At about 9.30 am he will give a further talk on his Vedanta and interfaith work and will, as before, join us for our usual Sunday Meeting for Worship at 10.30 am.

We look forward to the Swami's visit and warmly invite all readers of the newsletter to join us on that occasion.

All readers of the newsletter, and their friends and relatives, are also invited to our annual Meeting for Carols at 3.00 pm on Saturday 20th December (the Saturday before Christmas). Silva Garton-Rogers and Carolyn Rogers, who organised last year's extremely successful event are already making their preparations for this year's. As always there will be singing of popular carols, readings by Clacton f/Friends and periods of Quakerly silence, followed by tea, mince pies and other seasonal delicacies, and friendly chat. Last year's event, with a well-filled Meeting House and representatives from virtually every Christian tradition in Clacton, was considered to be one of the best ever – both en-

joyable as a social event and deeply spiritual.

Make a note in your diary and do join us on that occasion – and bring your family and friends.

### **Premises news**

Health problems made it impossible for Jane Welfar to undertake the responsibilities of warden as we had hoped. She has now vacated the flat and Clacton f/Friends offer her every good wish for the future. We hope soon to be in a position to let the flat at an appropriate rental and hope that this will improve our financial position.

It has for some years been the practice of Clacton Friends to have a collecting plate on the table in which, when Meeting for Worship ends, f/Friends and visitors can if they wish make a contribution to either a Quaker or a local charity. Collections went to a different charity each month and considerable sums were donated by this means. We have decided that, at least for the time being, these voluntary donations should go towards the running costs of Clacton Quaker Meeting. An exception is to be made for our Meeting for Carols. The collection for that occasion will, as has been our custom, be given to Crosfield House which provides temporary accommodation and support for inexperienced young mothers. Central to the 'Christmas story' is the plight of a temporarily homeless young and inexperienced mother! The home was named after Derek Crosfield, a weighty Colchester Friend who took an active and generous interest in Clacton Meeting.

During November we hope to have the driveway and approach of our Meeting House resurfaced at a lower level so as not to be a cause of damp-

ness to the building. We also hope to have our new external notice board installed during that time.

### **Finally**

At the conclusion of a not-very-cheerful *News from Clacton* it is nice to be able to record that we have recently had very well attended and 'well centred' Sunday Meetings for Worship and have attracted two or three new attenders who seem to be sympathetic to Quaker values and attitudes and attracted to our Meeting.



### **Help find missing books please.**

Peter Whiteley

Many of you have appreciated the fellowship and insights gained from participating in "Hearts and Minds Prepared" courses over the years. Sadly there are now so many books that haven't been returned that the packs are now almost unusable. Please search your shelves for the following books:-

"Discernment" by Patricia Loring. (Pendle Hill 305)

"Beyond Consensus" by Barry Morley. (Pendle Hill 307)

"What Jesus means to Me" by 19 Friends (Friends Quarterly July 2003)

"Tradition and Transition: opening to the sacred yesterday and today" (Woodbrooke Journal 9, 2001)

(Each has a sticker in the front saying "included with permission in *Hearts and Minds Prepared*, a learning package..... Please return books found to the pigeon hole of Peter Whiteley.

Thank you Friends).

## **Wildlife: An Unknown Apple**

from Valerie Graves

John Tann, most knowledgeable of orchard owners, told me that they were given an apple that someone had found on the runway of an airport, and he was not able to place it. It was a most attractive looking fruit. I am not sure if they tasted it, but a graft was taken and it grew. This must have been last year, and now there is a thriving little graft which has produced one apple, like the original one. Again, they are not sure whether they will taste it, but they will cherish the little graft and see what happens. Watch this space! life is very exciting in the slow lane.



## **Answering the Queries**

John Hall

Two hundred years ago, Quarterly Meetings [now Regional Gatherings] used to last from two to four days. They were devoted almost entirely to reports from Monthly [now Area] Meetings about how the Queries were answered in local Meetings. During the year, the Quarterly Meeting examined the answers to every one of the Queries. So that meant that the Preparative Meetings had to cover all of the Queries over the course of the year.

Today the Queries are mixed in with the Advices and are somewhat different to the ones considered in 1814 but we still have 26 of them. Usually one Advice or Query is read during a Meeting for Worship once a month, when the local business meeting is to take place. So, only about 10 a year get considered. And, as far as I can recall, they only very rarely get to be the subject of our business meetings. Is this sufficient for our education and discipline? While I am sure Elders keep an eye on them, how often do *all* Queries get drawn to

the attention of all participants in our worship?

Let us take one example: the religious basis for our Society. There are five relevant Queries which, if taken together and slightly rearranged, would read:

The Religious Society of Friends is rooted in Christianity and has always found inspiration in the life and teachings of Jesus. How do you interpret your faith in the light of this heritage? How does Jesus speak to you today? Are you following Jesus' example of love in action? Are you learning from his life the reality and cost of obedience to God? How does his relationship with God challenge and inspire you? Do you try to set aside times of quiet for openness to the Holy Spirit? Are you open to new light, from whatever source it may come? Do you approach new ideas with discernment? Do you work gladly with other religious groups in the pursuit of common goals? As you learn from others, can you in turn give freely from what you have gained?

Would it be helpful to return to the practice of considering the Queries and reporting our answers to Area Meeting?

## **Overseers at Woodbrooke.**

Ellen Cohen.

I took this course as a necessary duty so was utterly unprepared for the stimulating, engaging experience I had.

These opening words anchored us in a shared experience. Quaker Faith and Practice 10.20

"One of the unexpected things I have learnt in my life as a Quaker is that religion is basically about relationships between people. This was an unexpected discovery because I had been brought up to believe that religion was essentially about our relationship with God." George Gorman 1982

This focussed our diverse overseers experience in meetings from 6 to 100 people from the U.K., Canada and Sweden. Who could imagine the range of activities? Ever played Worship Rummy??

Sharing our experiences deepened our skills in Welcoming, Integrating, Spiritual Development, Behaviour, Crisis Management and Mutual Support (including Admin.)

We shared the problem of losing newcomers, uncommitted attenders and less active members. Together we identified groups at our meeting requiring specific oversight. S.Q.I.F. was new to me- Single Quakers in Families, as was Satellite Quakers. Those living alone covered the widest age range. Regret was expressed for regular attenders who go unnoticed till they stop coming. Mental illness is an issue. A case for a distinct oversight for different groups would minimise loss and promote integration into meeting.

Labels like attender, member or overseer may exclude activists. Some meetings have co-overseers who regularly update overseers on welfare issues. We agreed that all

who show an interest or aptitude in befriending activities should be gratefully encouraged after a reality check by an overseer. No meeting is awash with surplus activists. If "oversight is for everyone" means anything we will move towards practicing equality as all give help. Overseers lists reflecting their own interests succeed too. E.g. Long term members of meeting know far more about other long termers than anyone else and their oversight will be deeper and mutually rewarding. At the same time, newcomers wonder what in the world Quakers are. Silence and ministry then coffee is bewildering. A 15 minutes "What do Quakers do" or an "Afterwards" offers answers to "What am I supposed to do in silence?" "Why do people speak in the silence?" "Does your faith make you happy?"

Social groups which have grown out of meeting are a rich resource

to integrate the new, uncommitted and occasional attender. Such groups are informal and flexible loops to meeting. Overseers ask a group regular to help introduce and integrate a newcomer into a group they've shown an interest in. You'll be pleased to know that overseers find this a load off their shoulders not a burden. Helpers too could grow into oversight as their service deepens.

We were so engaged with multiple relationships within our meeting that we almost forgot our own. Overseers are so busy we neglect the essential role of mutual support. No time, no communication links, no informal get-togethers contribute to exhaustion and burn out. Overseers need to care for each other as well as serve meeting. We are supported in this by Quaker Faith & Practice 10.19

"In a true community we will not choose our companions, for our choices are so often limited by self-serving motives. Instead, our companions will be given to us by grace. Often they will be persons who will upset our settled view of self and the world. In fact, we might define true community as the place where the person you least want to live with always lives."

Parker J Palmer 1977

## **The Future of Quakers in Britain**

by Paul Parker  
John Lewis

Hello, Friend and what is your name? And your yearly meeting? And what is your ministry?

Thus, so he said, was our Recording Clerk addressed at World Gathering. He well knew what is meant by ministry (QF&P 10.05), not just what we speak, but our every activity which "leads us into closer communion with God". And this, it seems, is where the future of Quakers lies.

Paul Parker talked to the Area Meeting at Sudbury on 19<sup>th</sup> October. Not a full Meeting House, which is a pity for those who missed an entertaining and thought-provoking afternoon, and for those who have not yet admired the new Sudbury Meeting House. Without such inspiration how will Friends be adventurous enough to modernize Colchester Meeting House?

It is likely that Paul is right, our society is indeed in a phase of change, but perhaps no more than the changes in the last 25 years. Some are seeking change, but as much change as in those Billy Graham days? Amidst the widespread secularisation, have Quakers suffered more than others? In fact the accepted views are that evangelical groups of all sorts

have flourished so perhaps he is right to feel relaxed that Quakers have not diminished any more, proportionally, than other big west European religions.

We are certainly changing in our own demographic: from mostly birth Quakers and all-Quaker families formerly, we have developed into mostly Quakers-by-conviction. What brought these new Quakers through the door? Apparently it is just a small number of Friends who introduce most of these new Friends and first bring them through the door. How would it be if we all started introducing newcomers? What if even half of us introduced someone new? Instead of 13,500 Friends we would have a hundred thousand Quakers. Friends, what do you feel about that?

Some things of Quakers do turn newcomers off. There is no point in using namby-pamby language, some things are turnoffs. How welcoming are we to newcomers? Really?

Why, oh why do we insist on using obscure difficult jargon words, even when speaking to children or newcomers? Sufferings? Overseers? My own feeling is that we sometimes

use odd language without thought, by habit.

Visibility is often a problem. Sudbury Meeting House is an inspiring example. It looks welcoming and even if closed, a passer-by can stand under a sheltering canopy and ask himself why he is there. How does the questioning wanderer feel in Colchester? Dark in the winter gloom. Bushes uncut. The light over our carved stone name unlit. Easily within our control.

What is harder to change is our current membership: white, middle class, mostly comfortably off and highly educated. It is understandable that the existing membership subconsciously expects newcomers to be like themselves. But it does take a real effort to do something different. If we really do wish for younger members,



for those from different sections of society, from the poor and needy, we will all have to think hard how we might do this. We may have to think adventurously and take decisions that carry risks. Some courage may be necessary. How comfortable will we be with the different.

Conversation afterwards with Paul Parker generated some interesting thoughts. There are Friends that have meetings with a meal on Saturday evenings, for example. We are grateful for the stimulus our Recording Clerk has given us. This is just one small part of his complicated job, which ranges

from representations to the government to clerking BYM Trustees. And he has a family and a local Meeting who value his presence. We acknowledge the personal sacrifices which he is making and thank him.

### ***The way I see it.***

John Kay

We live in a world where people feel very insecure; in an atmosphere of having to justify oneself to fit into the requirements of league tables and hostile assessment and harsh judgement. Even television programmes nowadays rely heavily on the process of knock-out-competitions in many spheres of activity, throwing people off every week until the champion emerges.

Unfeeling societies create special categories into which the people may be consigned whom they wish treat badly. Discrimination then seems to be justifiable.

Competition for "the best" runs as a continuous thread through an unforgiving society and the feeling of "Schadenfreud" is commonly met. Capitalist ideology

knows the price of everything and the value of nothing.

Self awareness is important but seeking after perfection is too much concentration on oneself and may easily lead to expecting as high an unattainable standard from others as you expect from yourself, which you and they will never attain.

To have a reasonable and working knowledge of our own worth is nevertheless necessary before we can find our true ministry in life. That is to do and to be what we know is right.

Some faiths rely on the self abasement of the personality to a supreme being who is all powerful. I cannot accept this as a life choice, it seems to easily shift responsibility from oneself to something else, human freedom of action deserves better treatment than this.

It is by no accident that people coming to Friends describe it as feeling "like coming home."

Quakers believe that religion can provide a supportive atmosphere in which individuals, hurt by society, as most of us have been at one time or another, may regain self-respect and a feeling of self-worth which all people have a right to expect.

It helps to be aware of a feeling, bred of the Spirit within, that there is an intrinsic worth in ourselves, with all our imperfections, before we can be part of a supportive community for others. This can only be based on what we are and what we do, and to know that to do the best we can do, is good enough.

### ***About Beatrix Potter***

(1866-1943),

from Valerie Graves

No, not wildlife, though she was passionately interested in all wildlife, especially fungi and lichens. (You probably didn't know that). She led a very lonely life in a wealthy Victorian household, but with interests in painters and painting, and she became a proficient painter herself. (They were Nonconformists, but Beatrice was attracted to Quakers).

She kept small pets, things like rabbits and hedgehogs, and amused herself by draw-

ing very accurate portraits of them. The famous little books started by her writing letters to the children of a much-loved former Nanny, about the antics of her pets, dressed in clothes but in no way comic. (She had previously sold drawings for things like Christmas cards). She had also sent some of her beautiful paintings of fungi to a learned society, who were entranced by them but could not accept them as her work as she was that despicable thing, a Woman. Some indeed were pre-



viously unknown but they were ascribed to someone else and she was not even allowed to attend the meeting where they were first shown.

So she concentrated on her animal stories, which developed into the series that we all know, and earned her a great deal of money (though she shunned publicity). Her family spent long holidays in hired houses in places like Scotland and the Lake District, where she got to know wildlife intimately, and in middle age she was able to

escape to the Lakes, where she married a country lawyer and became a sheep farmer. Unsurprisingly she became an expert and prize-winner with her Herdwick sheep. A great story. Her Journal, in unbreakable code, was eventually decoded and makes fascinating reading.



*This is a Herdwick*

### **Clerk's Corner**

Alison Parkes,

Southern East Anglia Quaker Meeting Clerk

"I like porridge but I don't want to be defined by it!" This was one of the 'one-liners' delivered by Paul Parker, Recording Clerk for Quakers in Britain, when he spoke at Sudbury Meeting House on Sunday, October 19, on the topic 'the future of Quakers in Britain'. His talk will, I think, have furthered and deepened the task we have set ourselves to discern our purposes as an Area Meeting. So what does define us?

Paul challenged us to read and reflect on Advices & Queries No. 27, beyond its well-loved first sentence: "Live adventurously. When choices arise, do you take the way that offers the fullest opportunity for the use of your gifts in the service of God and the community? Let your life speak. When decisions have to be made, are you ready to join with others in seeking clearness, asking for God's guidance and offering counsel to one another?"

The full Advices & Queries requires more of us than to go sky-

diving or learn Swahili, as valuable as they may be in broadening our horizons and recharging our batteries. How might we apply honest (and adventurous) appraisal of our gifts and capacities to "the service of God and the Quaker community"?

For some of us, honesty might help to release us from certain tasks; for others it may inspire us to do more. Advices & Queries #27 emphasises the importance of joining together as a community. Paul went on to refer regularly to Quaker Faith and Practice Chapter 10, which develops the chapter title, "Belonging to a Quaker community".

How would you describe the silence of a Meeting for Worship? For Paul, the silence is "edge-of-the-seat", where anything can happen. It's exciting, it's uncertain, and it's adventurous. So although there may be times when waiting in the Light is deeply peaceful and quietly satisfying, we can be alert to the sense of anticipation which Paul describes. And of course, Meeting for Worship for Business offers many opportunities for surprises! It is in the discernment of our business meetings that we especially need one another to "be

ready to join with others in seeking clearness, asking for God's guidance and offering counsel to one another".

Paul raised the question, "How can we make being Quaker a part of the whole of our lives?" Some of us are only just dipping our toes into the water of what it is like to be Quaker; others are happy to swim in the sea of it. We must be tender with one another as we discover what we want to do and what we can do. And the same goes for us as Local Meetings and as an Area Meeting, if we accept the challenge of Paul's final question to us, "What is the ministry of your meeting?" So we are back to considering what defines us as an Area Meeting. We will be continuing the discernment of that question at future AMs. I hope to see you there.

The next Area Meeting is on Sunday, November 16, at Colchester Meeting House, 2.15 pm. The meeting will include a showing of a 15-minute DVD about the work of Quakers in Britain. The meeting will focus on questions about the Long Term Framework (2015-20).

## Book Review

Carol Holding

Friday 24<sup>th</sup> October 2014

Carol Holding

Only four people turned up for this but it sparked an interesting discussion.

John Lewis brought a book by A.C. Grayling, an academic writer and occasional broadcaster, called "Among the dead Cities". This is very much against the "just War" theory ( which is now being applied to the Trident development, with in depth reference to the allied bombing of Germany in World War Two. This book is now in our library.

Jet Grommel shared a book "From a Wounded Heart" which was a sym-

pathetic collection of experiences of Gay and Lesbian people, compiled by a Mennonite.

Les Wood told us of a lucid book by Geoffrey Durham who worked for the BBC and was at one time married to Victoria Wood, entitled "Being a Quaker".

Carol Holding spoke about the 2014 Swarthmoor Lecture, now in the library. The book is written by Ben Pink Dandelion and is a thought provoking picture of Quakers as they were and are now, with some useful discussion topics for meetings.

## What to Wear at a time of National Remembrance

Jenny Kay

Red Poppies? White poppies? Both red poppies and white poppies? No poppies? A Quaker for Peace Badge?

Who to contribute to? The British Legion? The Peace Pledge Union? All or one of the many Peace organisations? Quaker Peace and Social Witness?

Reference:Advices and Queries No. 31



## Wildlife: Can this be Climate Change?

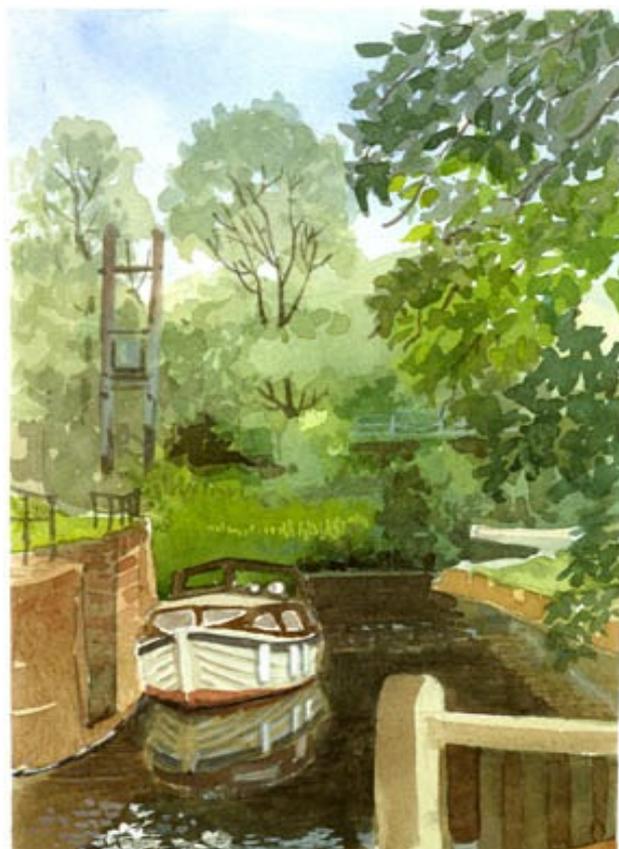
from Valerie Graves

I have hollyhocks with fully-developed seedheads and, further up the stem, new flower buds opening. Spring-flowering ceanothus also has seeds but is covered with its lovely blue blossom. Things like aubretia, giant poppies and many others are in full bloom. Curiously, there is no sign of

emerging spring bulbs such as we often see about now.

Another thing is bird behaviour. This morning I saw two robins hopping affectionately about together. Robins, perhaps the most belligerent of birds, never have anything to do with one another except, perhaps in very frosty times, or briefly when courting.

Wrong messages are everywhere!



*River Stour at Sudbury watercolour  
by John Kay*

"I mourn the loss of thousands of precious lives, but will not rejoice in the death of one, not even an enemy. Returning hate for hate multiplies hate, adding deeper darkness to a night already devoid of stars. Darkness cannot drive out darkness: only light can do that. Hate cannot drive out hate, only love can do that."

Martin Luther King  
from Joan Rew