Diary Dates for October

October 2015

All of October Black History Month http://www.blackhistorymonth.org.uk
Friday October 2nd Colchester Farmers’ Market
Tuesday October 6th National Badger Day
Friday October 16th World Food Day https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/World_Food_Day
Saturday October 24th Clocks go back overnight
Saturday November 7th Colchester Quaker annual bric-a-brac sale

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

Marigolds Photo: Joan Rew
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

**SUDBURY**
Sunday 10.30 am
Friars Street, Sudbury

FIRST CONTACT
FOR FUNERAL ARRANGEMENTS
Carol Holding, Helen Lewis,
Peter Whiteley

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**Editorial**

Dear Friends,

Round about now, or certainly by mid October, I shall be welcoming a time of change and new beginnings, which has always seemed to be a happy and exciting time. At school one moves up into a new class, or perhaps starts at university or a new job. Perhaps you are not sure about it, a bit scared? I had a delightful letter from a great granddaughter, thanking me for something, and she said that the new term started the next day and she would be in year 7, her sister in year 5, and her little brother in year 1 (he had been in reception before). What an exciting prospect, they are all at the same school!

Our Meeting is full of activities: last week we had the local Heritage Week and we are always gratified by the large number of visitors who drop in and want to know all about us and what we do. We usually have some kind of exhibition and perhaps a short film, and of course cakes and coffee. It is fun but remarkably tiring.

The next thing (not till early November) will be our Sale. We were in two minds whether to hold it, as we do not get the local people that we used to, but I believe it was decided that it was a worthwhile thing to do, and everybody was urged to make cakes and jams, but not to bring bric-a-brac which is often, I’m afraid, mostly rubbish which nobody wants. Do come!

There are a great many activities, especially in this time of anxiety about migrants and financial losses, and Friends House issued a very worthwhile notice about where Friends should stand in this unhappy time. Ask to see it.

Where are we going, and what is going to happen?

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

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**Area Meeting Report**

Ann Webb

Area Meeting for 13 September 2015 was held at Clacton-on-Sea meeting house with 25 members and attenders present.

Noted was the death of Faith Widdicombe, with a spoken testimony by Betty Scrivener to her life and faith and we honoured her with a moment of silence. Les Wood was admitted into membership and Philip Cox was released from membership. Bob Crowley asked to be released as trustee to the Richard Waynforth Trust and Martin Raynor was appointed to serve the remainder of the triennium. Eliza Jones was appointed Area Meeting trustee for a triennium. Representatives this year to QPSW are Pat and Jan Squire, to QCEA is Jet Grommel, and to Quaker Life is Lucien de Leon.

The meeting discussed bringing to a close the concern about Discerning our Purposes. We’ve spent two years on the issues of where our money is spent, meeting houses, and local charitable giving. The consensus was that we do not ‘close’ it so much as leave it open to continuing discernment for each LM to bring to the AM’s attention should another issue arise.

There was much discussion about how to help Sudbury meeting in the event of Henry Ruse’s stroke. He handled most of the financial work for Sudbury and his presence is sorely missed. A group was formed of two trustees and the Area Meeting Clerk to discern the next steps for Sudbury meeting.

Hazel Jones gave her last report as Area Meeting Trustee Committee Clerk as she is coming to the end of her triennium.

Rob Parkes gave a report from the November Meeting for Sufferings. He reported the outcome of the Long Term Framework discussions and read us six notes about our faith in the future as outlined by Friends House: meeting for worship, inclusive communities, understanding and living Quaker discipline, Quaker values in the world, working collaboratively in the world, and making Quakers well known and understood to others. The LMs are to keep this under review and discussion. MfS also discussed the refugee crisis but we saved that for the next Minute.

John Hall presented his research about the Refugee and Asylum
The Refugee Crisis

“Quakers assert that all human life is precious – each person is a child of God and the loss of one diminishes us all. In this severe crisis, we hear the Spirit calling us to throw ourselves into the fray with all the love and courage we can muster.” - Meeting for Suffering’s Statement in reaction to the unfolding refugee crisis

How have SEAQM Friends responded to this call? At Area Meeting in September we agreed to set up a working group of Friends to monitor the situation, draw up a provisional list of Friends who could offer accommodation or support in other ways, and consider both the immediate and the complex long-term issues facing refugees who may come to our Area. This group includes our Friends Peggy Lewis, Mary Grocock, Tim Holding, Carol Holding, Jayne Meleschko, Robert Parkes, Helen Lewis and John Hall.

What has happened so far? In support of refugees abroad, Friends at Colchester Meeting have responded to a call from other town-based organizations such as the Refugee Relief Project, to provide winter clothes, boots, blankets, shoes, etc to send to refugees on perilous journeys. See http://www.colchesterdeanery.org.uk/docs/RefugeeRelief-2-4Oct.pdf

Colchester Friends have also collected £550 in donations. By the time you read this, hopefully, the urgent-ly needed items will be on their way to Calais and beyond. Sadly, this is unlikely to be a one-off need. If you’d like to know more or would like to make a financial contribution please get in touch with Tim or Carol Holding.

In support of refugees who have arrived in the UK, we have begun to work with Fresh Beginnings, a voluntary organisation based in Colchester, that provides practical help to refugees and asylum seekers in and around North Essex. There is more about them at http://www.freshbeginnings.org/. They have indicated some ways in which we could be of help, such as: offering accommodation, volunteering at their centre, “befriending” refugees, helping them find their way in a strange town and, for many, a totally new culture. Ideas that have come forward include: preparing a “Rough-guide” to Colchester and inviting refugees to the Saturday Art Group.

At this stage we’re putting together a database of what help Friends could, realistically, provide that is within both theirs and the AM’s capabilities, and above all be sustainable. If you think you could help in some way or would like to know more please get in touch with any member of the working group.

Robert Parkes
Convener
SEAQM Refugee Working Group.

Summer Arrangements

- For Colchester Meeting please get in touch with Tim or Carol Holding.
- For the Saturday Art Group please contact Sally Fordham.
- For Fresh Beginnings please contact Helen Lewis.
- For the Refugee Relief Project please contact Robert Parkes.
pare a programme for Clacton’s traditional ‘Meeting for Carols’. This event has been extremely successful for the past two years and we all hope that it will be equally successful this year. F/friends will recall that the Meeting House was full and that our unused-to-hymn-singing Quaker voices were supplemented by those from churches with a more vocal tradition. Our Meeting for Carols is to be held on Saturday 19th December in the afternoon (probably, I think, beginning at 3.00 pm). It’s not an event to be missed – please make a note in your diary.

Our Meeting for Business Affairs decided that, in accordance with Quaker tradition, we would have no Christmas tree or other Christmas decorations this year. Our Clerk is to find out whether or not the Meeting wishes to have a shortened Meeting for Worship on Christmas Day.

Farewell – and thank you F/friends
This, dear F/friends will be my last ‘News from Clacton Meeting’ though I very much hope that someone else will replace me. Old age and infirmity have at last caught up with and overtaken me. I’m sorry about that.

In a now very long life I have done lots of different jobs (I find it almost incredible that for seven years, 1939 till 1946, I was a soldier!) The only real skill I have ever possessed is that of stringing words together into a readable narrative. I have been more than usually blest in having been able, in ‘News from Clacton’, to exercise that skill into my mid-90s. Thank you dear f/Friends and Area Newsletter readers – and farewell. I hope to continue attending Meeting for Worship but am withdrawing from all other activities.

Silence
John Hall
Colchester Meeting
In 1685 (translated into English in 1688), the Spanish Roman Catholic mystic Michael de Molinos wrote in his Spiritual Guide, “There are three kinds of silence; the first is of words, the second of desires, and the third of thoughts. The first is perfect; the second is more perfect; and the third is most perfect. In the first, that is of words, virtue is acquired. In the second, namely, of desires, quietness is attained. In the third, of thoughts, internal recollection is gained. By not speaking, not desiring, and not thinking, one arrives at the true and perfect mystical silence, where God speaks with the soul, communicates himself to it, and in the abyss of its own depth teaches it the most perfect and exalted wisdom.” It is not hard to see the influence this had on Quietist Quaker thinking so that, in 1806, Thomas Clarkson was able to write, "The Quakers contend that silent meetings form the sublimest part of their worship. The soul, they say, can have intercourse with God. It can feel refreshment, joy, and comfort in him; it can praise and adore him, and all this without the intervention of a word."

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A Frightening Time
from Valerie Graves
This newsletter is not the place for politics, but the endless crowds and crowds of migrants escaping unbelievable horror at home does not get any less, and one wonders how it can possibly end. My own Slovakian relatives have experienced it themselves, but a good while ago now, and their cousins are now living in every corner of the world. I expect every one of us has some “foreigners” in their background, or family members living in faraway places, and this can bring nothing but good. My own father had six uncles who all went to live in far corners of what then was the Empire: some made lots of money, most didn’t! But we know nothing about them. My own youngest son is about to leave Essex and live in the farthest corner of Wales (Pembrokeshire). I shall miss them terribly, but at least now we have things like Skype. Nothing stays the same! I shall do my best to welcome migrants who come to Colchester, but I am afraid there are lots of people who will not.

2015/45 Death of a Friend
Area Meeting Minute
Faith Widdicombe, a longtime member of Sudbury Meeting, died in July. Faith, an active and gentle Friend, was given a green burial at a woodland burial site near Cambridge. A memorial meeting for Faith was held at Sudbury Meeting House on Friday, September 11th, followed by refreshments provided by her son.
**Wildspot: Where Have The Birds Gone?**

From Valerie Graves

I suppose I had just not noticed, what with being busy and enduring spectacularly awful rain, but then realized that my birdseed and other foods were not going down as they usually do, and saw that there are very few birds about, except large noisy creatures like magpies and pigeons. No squirrels, either. This usually means that there is a predator about, a sparrowhawk, perhaps. But only for a day, usually.

It is still only September, not particularly cold, so one can’t blame frosty weather or anything like that. We do have a few tits and the occasional sparrow, but nothing like the noisy crowd of small birds or the middling size ones like blackbirds or starlings. My dear old friend, the robin, is still to be seen, a most faithful chap who waits for me on my doorstep first thing in the morning, for the bits of bread I always give him, but then he disappears. It is very sad. True, there are noisy builders nearby, but we have had them before.

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**Science or Religion**

From John Hall

In his book, *The Great Partnership: God, science and the search for meaning*, the Chief Rabbi, Jonathan Sacks tells two very-short stories as an introduction to his description of the differences between science and religion. They are:

“A great Jewish mystic, the Baal Shem Tov, compared atheists to a deaf man who for the first time comes on a violinist playing in the town square while the townspeople, moved by the lilt and rhythm of his playing, dance in joy. Unable to hear the music, he concludes that they are all mad.”

“A fellow scientist visited Niels Bohr, the Nobel Prize-winning physicist at his home and saw to his amazement that Bohr had fixed a horseshoe over the door for luck. ‘Surely, Niels, you don’t believe in that?’ ‘Of course not,’ Bohr replied. ‘But you see - the thing is that it works whether you believe in it or not.”

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**Refugees in History**

Philadelphia Friends in the 18th Century.

Hundreds of refugees sought an asylum among us, having been driven from their homes by the horrors of the French revolution. Some of these were persons of wealth and refinement, but in their sudden flight from their native land, they had left money and friends behind them, and arrived at Philadelphia in almost abject poverty, ignorant of the language, to find its people stricken and afflicted with the presence of a loathsome disease.

To open the doors of hospitality to these sufferers at such a time, was but to jeopardize the lives they had fled to preserve; and thus it happened that those who in happier days had lived luxuriously at home, were forced to find shelter under tents in the land of the stranger. The camp of the French refugees was located at Cæmac’s Woods, in the vicinity of Twelfth and Poplar streets, then far “out of town,” and of course away from the pestilence.

The sad situation of these helpless strangers excited the deepest sympathy of our community. Daily visitors to the camp supplied the most destitute among them with the necessaries of life, and ministered as best they could to the sick.

*From the Friends’ Intelligencer 1871*

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**Quote**

From Charles Bather

And so while the great ones depart to their dinner, the secretary stays, growing thinner and thinner, racking his brain to record and report what he thinks that they think that they ought to have thought.

A. Bryant
Twenty eight people attended the meeting. They were mainly Friends and there were also people who came due to the ad in the paper, someone who had picked up the leaflet, and a local historian who had come to the 12 September Heritage Open Day. We are grateful to Gabriel Carlyle and Emily Johns, the two speakers from Peace News—and they were pleased with the turnout. Thanks are also due to Mervyn for setting up the room for us, to Jane for laying on the tea, and to Peter and Rob for helping with the preparation. We sold several books and posters. We have one copy of the book for the library and of course the set of poster are ours to keep and lend to anyone who may be interested in displaying them in public.

The talk was a celebration of people who had taken steps that were imaginative and creative—as well as principled and often dangerous of course—to challenge the war. We heard stories of great personal courage by individuals from wide backgrounds: from socialists and feminists in Britain to anti-colonialists around the world. The focus on the detail of a few personal stories made the talk come alive more than, say, a history lesson that would have tried to cover the entire range of anti-war activities in all the ten posters. Also, the interactive format made it more than a lecture.

We also learned of the divisions among groups that you might have expected to be more unanimous in their anti-war activities: socialists and feminists who disagreed among themselves. There was a reference to the fact that one third of Quakers were involved in the war—but that might need a bit more research as I may have misunderstood it.

There is a plan to keep the posters up in the Parnell room till Quaker Week (nationally in the week around 3 Oct).

In friendship,
Robbie Spence

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All war propaganda consists, in the last resort, in substituting diabolical abstractions for human beings. Similarly, those who defend war have invented a pleasant sounding vocabulary of abstractions in which to describe the process of mass murder.

Aldous Huxley

Quaker Faith & Practice

How does it speak to you?
Jenny Kay

The Book of Discipline Revision Preparation Group is inviting us to join in with reading and getting to know Quaker Faith & Practice (QF&P). The group have put together a programme for reading/study to be used in groups or as personal spiritual reflection. This programme is yearly meeting wide with a calendar suggesting a chapter for each month starting in October and finishing April 2017. The group has produced a leaflet setting out the programme with questions for reflection. Woodbrooke will provide supporting material through the ‘Being Friends Together’ resource bank and The Friend will run regular articles. Look out for the leaflets in your meeting houses or visit www.quaker.org.uk/readqfp for more details.

How we participate or not and what we do with our responses to the reading is up to us. This is not a consultation exercise but a learning one. The Revision Preparation Group has discerned that ‘this is an important preliminary step before a decision is sought about any possible revision’. Here the questions seem to me to be: are we familiar enough with our book of discipline? how do we make use of it in our personal lives and in all of our meetings together? Could we get to know it better? Would following the programme give us clearer idea of what authority QF&P holds for us and if it still serves its purpose.

Some of us are happy to work through programmes, others prefer a more serendipitous approach. If you thinking about how to take part, the programme begins as follows:

October - 21: Personal Journey
November - 23: Social Responsibility
December - 3: General Counsel on Church Affairs
Meeting for Sufferings
5th September 2015
Robert Parkes
Report to AM on Sunday 13th September
This follows my second time at MfS as the Area’s representative. I’ve been giving some thought to how I can report back in a way that can be of most use. The calling papers tend to be posted, in advance, on the Quakers in Britain website. The minutes are usually posted on that website within about a week, and there at http://old.quaker.org.uk/meeting-sufferings-5-september-2015-final-minutes-and-other-papers. And there’s also a good summary in the 11th September issue of The Friend. Rather than replicate what’s already out there, I’ve sought to focus on items I think have most relevance and immediacy and where AM may need to respond.

The unfolding refugee crisis. This was brought to the MfS agenda on day one. A draft statement had been prepared by QPSW Central Committee. MfS approved the final version. It’s on the main Quaker website at http://www.quaker.org.uk/news-and-events/news/quakers-urgently-call-for-safe-paths-for-refugees, and now also on the SEAQM website.

This is fast moving concern. Much of the Quaker work centrally is being led by the Quaker Asylum and Refugee Network (QARN). Friends around the country are applying themselves to the concern locally. At MfS, we were encouraged to think about ways Friends could welcome all those seeking asylum in their area according to their abilities and opportunity. This could include keeping in touch with their local Council, MP and MEP on relevant issues. It was considered by our AM on the 13th September.

Our faith in the future. Friends will recall how this Meeting contributed to the review of the Long Term Framework 2009-14. As well as drawing on Meetings around the country, the review group went out of its way to take leadings from younger Friends. This has culminated in a six point statement. It’s not so much a vision of what Quakers do but how we go about in the world, and is being called “Our faith in the future.”

MfS sees it as guide for its future discernment and decisionmaking: it’s been forwarded to BYM Trustees and to central and standing committees, asking them to use it as a template for their work and to reflect on progress with it in their reports; and it’s been forwarded to Yearly Meeting Agenda Committee for information.

MfS has commended it to Local and Area Meetings. It is hoped it will serve as a template for them too—each meeting discerning where they are today and deciding what they will do, as a part of BYM, to move towards this vision. “Our faith in the future” replaces the earlier Framework for Action, but there are parts of the old one that are still relevant, which will be explained in supporting documents that will follow in due course.

Evans and the Quakers
Bacon Evans made a speech in a Pennsylvania town inhabited (though he did not know it) largely by summer day, and next to the Meeting-house was a chicken farm.

As Bacon Evans was speaking, a hen appeared at the open door of the Meeting, clucking, and slowly walked down the centre aisle, still clucking. Bit by bit, Bacon Evans noticed that members were paying more attention to the hen than to his words, so he stopped, put his hands on his hips, looked directly at the hen, and said, “And what hast thou to lay before the Meeting?”

Joys of Christian Humour
Judson K. Cornelius
Clerk’s Corner

Alison Parkes,
Southern East Anglia Quaker Meeting Clerk

Our Faith in the Future

Several months ago, our AM contributed to a discussion about the Long-Term Framework, which has now been agreed by Meeting for Sufferings. This 6-point document is to be known as “Our Faith in the Future”. LMs, Elders and Overseers, and groups such as the Colchester discussion group “All Things Considered” (which meets after meeting for worship from time to time) are asked to consider how they might respond to “Our Faith in the Future”, and to bring their findings to AM.

Matters which concern us as individuals and as LMs and AM are coming to the fore and will require our gathered discernment. At AM in September we heard from Betty Scrivener, clerk of Sudbury Meeting, that Sudbury Friends are struggling to cope with the management of lettings and other financial matters, since Henry Ruse’s valuable assistance is no longer available. We send Henry our good wishes for his recovery, while recognising that the time is upon us to find alternative ways to manage everything he has, until recently, been doing. Sudbury Meeting is at a crossroads, and AM will help to support it during this period of transition, into a future which we expect to gradually become clear.

For refugees who have left a desperate past and are enduring a desperate present, the future is anything but clear. John Hall presented to AM his research into local agencies offering support to asylum seekers and refugees. A working group of Friends has been set up to monitor the situation, draw up a provisional list of Friends who could offer accommodation or support in other ways, and consider both the immediate and the complex long term issues facing refugees who may come to our Area. We were reminded of the urgent need of those refugees still on the journey, and these will be considered by the group.

As we consider how we are being led, as individuals and as meetings, it may be helpful to make use of our book of discipline, Quaker Faith and Practice (Qfp). A group of Friends has been appointed by Britain Yearly Meeting (BYM) to prepare for a possible revision of Qfp. They have discerned that an important preliminary step is for Quakers across the country to read and get to know our current book of discipline, before a decision is sought about any possible revision. They have devised a calendar of reading Qfp chapters as a suggestion, a prompt and an encouragement. For instance, for the month of October, the suggested chapter is Ch. 21 “Personal journey”, which seems entirely appropriate. If you would like to find out more about the calendar of suggested reading and also supporting material provided by Woodbrooke, then please visit the Qfp website: www.qfp.quaker.org.uk

Quaker faith and practice 23.09:

We are all the poorer for the crushing of one man, since the dimming of the Light anywhere darkens us all. ~ Michael Sorensen, 1986

The next Area Meeting will take place at Colchester Meeting House, Sunday November 15 at 2.15 pm. All are welcome; attenders are requested to ask the clerk for permission to attend. To view previous AM minutes, visit the AM website: www.essexsuffolkquakers.org

Please note: Advance agenda information and matters to be considered at the next Area Meeting are on the AM website: Business page: Next meeting - Advance agenda information