



Support for Refugees March Colchester on 14 November

photo: Rob Parkes

NEWSLETTER

SOUTHERN EAST ANGLIA AREA QUAKER MEETING

December 2015

Diary Dates for December

Tuesday December 1st World AIDS day <http://www.worldaidsday.org>

Tuesday December 1st Prisoners for Peace day <http://www.wri-irg.org/co/01dec.htm>

Friday December 4th Colchester Farmers' Market - Colchester Arts Centre

Saturday December 12th Mass day of protest in Paris at Climate Conference

Saturday December 12th 14.30 Colchester Children's Christmas Tea

Saturday December 19th 3-4.15 pm Meeting for Carols Clacton Meeting House

Sunday December 20th, Colchester Meeting Christmas lunch

RELIGIOUS SOCIETY OF FRIENDS (QUAKERS)

Clerk to Southern East Anglia Quaker Meeting: Alison Parkes

c/o Colchester Quaker Meeting House

6 Church Street, Colchester CO1 1NF;

email address: AMClerk@essexsuffolkquakers.org

Web Address: www.essexsuffolkquakers.org

Meetings for Worship 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

SUDBURY

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

Dear Friends,

Christmas has come again! well, almost, and it certainly came with a nasty little bite, though better now. There will be no newsletter in January, but we shall have enough to amuse us, I daresay. All sorts of things have been happening, and a lot of them not very nice, to say the least, but some good things. We have some refugees actually safe in this area, and a lot of people are doing their best to make them feel at home. (There will always be some who will not, but you can't have everything).

Now that I am old I don't take quite such an active part as I used, in all the activities that go on in our Meeting House, but there certainly are a good many. We are fortunate in belonging to a large and active Meeting.

This is a good time for meeting up with all your family, and I'm sure I need not remind you that some, especially the old and people living alone, need someone to

keep an eye open for the lonely among us. Ours is the sort of area where you will always see little knots of people having a natter and a gossip, and we have some newcomers and an enormous amount of repairs and alterations going on.

Anyway, enjoy your Christmas, and tell us all your news. We'll be glad to hear from you by the middle of January.



Alison Bush

Our dear friend died on Wednesday 18 November. There will be a Memorial Meeting at Colchester Meeting House on Thursday 17 December, 2.30pm

drafting a Memorandum for Earls Colne in light of the new information. Sudbury finances were also discussed, in particular the fate of bequests to Sudbury meeting by deceased friends. We

FIRST CONTACT
FOR FUNERAL ARRANGEMENTS
CLACTON.....Ray Attrill
COLCHESTER.....Carol Holding
SUDBURY.....Peter Whiteley

Area Meeting

22.11.15

by Ann Webb

Three very important issues were addressed at this month's Area Meeting; the decisions about Sudbury Meeting, Lettings Policy for Local Meetings, and local involvement in the Refugee Crisis.

Sudbury meeting has been going through some changes due to ill health of some of its most faithful and long

serving members. AM Clerk Alison Parkes, in consultation with Paul Parker, the Recording Clerk of BYM, advised that it was not necessary to lay down Sudbury meeting, as was previously discussed, but that a Memorandum of Understanding could be created to distribute duties and responsibilities for all concerned. Colchester meeting has its own Memorandum (available on the AM website) and there were questions about

heard from Hazel Jones, Clerk of Trustees, about the legality of the designation of these funds and it was determined that we await the Charity Commission findings before proceeding on financial matters. Hirings and administration for hirings for Sudbury meeting will be overseen by a Lettings Agent Harcourt Powell and after reviewing their Lettings Policy the Area Meeting moved into an involved discussion about Colchester's minute to the AM.

Colchester Local Meeting has requested that Area Meeting advise on a Lettings policy, in particular a policy about whether to let to political parties. The general sense of the meeting was that due to the reputation of Quakers' successful ability to negotiate between all sides of political issues without bias, letting to political parties would tarnish that reputation unduly.

Christmas Poem

Joan Rew

"Christmas begins by recognizing each others gifts"

**Census summons,
Home to Bethlehem,
Royal David's line.
Inns impossible,
Strawy stable
Transforms to
Maternity manger,
Animals attend.
Star celebrates.**

**By U.A. Fanthorpe
Quaker poetess.**

Quaker Faith and Practice 15.16 asks us to also make sure that there be no division among Friends about this issue. Therefore, keeping with Quaker neutrality and to avoid hurt among the membership it was agreed to forgo letting to political parties and to adopt a similar policy to that of Sudbury's meeting house letting agent, Harcourt Powell. A copy of this policy will be available on the AM website.

Next, Rob Parkes spoke to the issue of refugees and asylum seekers in Colchester. The Refugee Committee who undertook the responsibilities of finding out how best to help found that a local group called

Fresh Beginnings was worthy of monthly support for their work in helping with many difficult areas of resettlement in communities such as learning English, transportation to appointments, and working in the community. It was agreed that £200 a month from Area Meeting would help immensely toward these needs.

Please see the Minutes on our web site for more detailed reports from our representative to Quaker Life Council, appointments and nomination to committees, AM Gathering at High Leigh 2016, and for dates of next year's Area Meetings. [Http://www.essexsuffolkquakers.org](http://www.essexsuffolkquakers.org)

Area Meetings in 2016

- 10 January Colchester
- 13 March Clacton
- 8 May Sudbury
- 10 July Earls Colne
- 11 September Colchester
- 27 November Colchester

Change of Address

Grace Ravasio, Kath Hewitt, Mary Smith and Karl Sage have all recently moved. If you would like their new addresses, please contact Hazel Jones (hazel.jones.1@btinternet.com).

Reminiscence

from Valerie Graves
I'm afraid I have often written about Christmas when my children were little and we were very hard up, but it is a fact that money doesn't often make it any more exciting. It is also a fact that as you get older you do tend to have rose-coloured glasses when going on about the past. But I

had a happy time yesterday remembering Christmas shopping in the Regent Street area, lovely shops like Liberty's and fun places like Carnaby Street and Cranks, which have all gone, with a friend (not as old as me!) enjoying thinking about how much we liked the National Portrait Gallery and the lovely restaurant

next door, halfway up the stairs.

I have to admit that it could be a dreadful slog, which I tackled with a rucksack, strong shoes and a list which had to be fulfilled before I could dream of going home. Not very romantic. (But it must be twenty years now since I was in London, and I tend to do my shopping from catalogues.)



Support for Refugees

Rob Parkes

Here are some more photos from the Support for Refugees' March through Colchester on Saturday 14 November.

This is the badge everyone was wearing. It is a bit tatty as I got very wet!

We had just started so not very wet

Striding out down North Hill; it had been closed to traffic. In Castle Park - only the police saw us at this point!



Wildspot:

Valerie Graves.

Yes, well, I am not just being cynical but my garden is a bit wild these days. Next door has a beautiful green

sward with not a single dead leaf on it, while mine has rather long grass and all the leaves that I have not got round to sweeping up.

However, it doesn't look too bad. My autumn cherry is a mass of pink blossom, and a lovely ceanothus* is in full bloom. There are quite a few roses, and happily, lots more birds have reappeared, not only thugs but nice little

creatures that I had sadly missed. The bird that my family call "the lady with red knickers" (the spotted woodpecker) is back on the nut holder. And, of course, my aggressive little friend the robin, who got into the kitchen the other day. (He did manage to get out without help.)

*supposed to flower in the spring.





A Bit of History from Clacton Meeting

Ernest Hall

I came across these old photos in my files and just wondered whether either, or even both, of them might be of interest to the December Newsletter.

One is of an early (1970s?) Meeting for Carols. This event – now attracting visitors from other Churches – began as a quite modest affair. A few like-minded f/Friends and their friends and relatives, gathered on a Saturday afternoon or evening near Christmas to sing carols and listen to appropriate readings. My late wife Heather is reading and I can recognise Hugh

Clunes (foreground left) and Winifred Salter (opposite, second from left) but that's all.

The other picture is of the annual pre Christmas sale at Clacton Town Hall organised in November by the Clacton Council for Voluntary Services (as it was in the early 1970s). For several years Clacton Quakers hired and ran a 'white elephant stall at this event,' stocked with donations from members and friends. It helped the Meeting's finances and, equally important perhaps, made our fellow-Clactonians aware that there was a Quaker presence in the town. On the picture Heather is 'manning' the stall on her own. Generally, I think, we found two f/Friends to be at each stall – oh! Perhaps it was me!

St. Nicholas

Joan Rew

The stained glass window is from St. Nicholas Church Tolleshunt D'Arcy that I visited recently with U3A.

Bishop of Myra, St. Nicholas, patron saint of children, became known as Santa Claus. There is a legend that he overheard a poor father telling his daughters that he couldn't afford a dowry for them. In their time, unmarried girls were often thrust into prostitution. Saint Nicholas came by in the night and threw a bag of gold coins through their window. This is why we have little bags of gold covered chocolate coins on our Christmas trees.



Quaker Life Representative Council

09 to 11 October 2015

Lucien de Leon

91 people attended, gathered around a central theme: The ground and foundation of a Gathered Meeting

Spending time together with them and the events we shared was a blessing.

Quakers were described, during the course of hill and dale on this Friday to Sunday journey, as a community of communities within communities; independent, individual units, overlapping and intersecting, allowing and embracing dissonance as well as harmony, each with their own particular needs and idiosyncrasies. The anarchistic vein (decentralisation, sovereignty and pluralism) in our meetings' nature, along with differing demographics, present certain challenges to centralised support work. Often what one needs or wants the other doesn't.

The driving questions, therefore, were:

What lies at the core of our Quaker life?

What is our relationship with Quakers and our meetings?

What is the ground and foundation of a gathered meeting?

How can that be Nurtured?

What is the jewel that we share?

Practical Tools - Smart phones, tablets, computers and apps.

Video conferencing was suggested by Central Committee as the way to go in the consolidation of all levels of groups. Given the large senior presence in our communities, who are less likely to use cyber solutions, coupled with many reasons standing in the way of an increased frequency of visits to "Quaker House" and video conferencing meetings there, Quaker radio, telly, youtube and DVDs were suggested as additions in order to strengthen our sense of community and help improve outreach. The creative use of land line telephones e.g. Quaker Phone, could also contribute.

Spiritual Behaviour - presence, connection, communication

The Common Good is so difficult to frame, that thoughts of General Good (serving the majority) and Public Good (basic biological needs and infrastructure) could easily hog the limelight. However, I am happy to report that we Quakers had our eye on the ball and did not let it escape our steely yet compassionate gaze.

Jesus and other persons, have through time, pointed out to us that the Common Good arises from, a sort of selfless selfishness: individuals working for one another's welfare, rather than finding physical things that absolutely everybody wants. Practising the principles expressed in the beatitudes leads to immeasurable happiness and joy for the practitioner as

well as benefiting those practised upon.

Common Cause and Common Vision supports equal but different people thriving together. Embracing pluralism, as we do, can lead to fear of the very things which may make a Gathered Meeting possible, e.g. inclusiveness, openness and good will. :-)

Allow and embrace dissonance as well as harmony. If we welcome the discomfort of conflict, if we permit and acknowledge contradiction, if we respect and honour strange or differing ideas and perceptions, dissonance can lead to progress and innovation if handled in a creative and constructive manner, i.e. if handled in a quakerly fashion.

Worship Awareness brings to bear a focus on our relationship with God, a powerful powerlessness at the centre of our organization giving us something exceedingly valuable to offer.

Worship Sharing requires participating and trusting Friends. This builds coherent relationships through attunement and alignment. We can engender trust through responsibility, humility and transparency.

After, sharing after silent worship, seemingly a dying practice, was mentioned several times by various people during the weekend. There was a sense of the good old days to the memory of it and it seemed to be held in high regard.

Drain the ego by refraining from competing and showing off. It leads to better more efficient meetings.

Belief comes from the German word *lieben*, which means love. If we believe something, we love it.

Nurturing The Foundations Of Our Meeting inspired thoughts concerning:

Most Quakers are not Quakers yet. One should realize that one gradually becomes a Quaker. It is a process of osmosis. Relearn talking and listening in your conversation with God. Find similarities with others and build on them. Don't let your meeting get too busy. Too many things to do will leave no time to ground it. Make it easy to be good, cooperate, etc.. We were told of the increase in sorted waste for recycling that occurred when a council authority made it easier for the citizens to do the sorting by somehow improv-

ing the system. We are Friends and should employ all that friendship implies. However, we started out as Friends of the Truth and spoke often and much about it. Presently we speak more about honesty and integrity. We need to get back to roots.

The QLCC employed a two way system of communication rather than decrees from the top down. Intimacy and efficiency was achieved by organizing us into 8 smaller Home Groups for deliberating, discerning and sharing after which all groups came together and shared with the entire meeting, the essence of their findings.

We also had Breton dancing and choir singing, which were good and fun lessons in cooperation, and awareness of the presence of others as well as bringing a lot of strangers closer in quick time. In Breton dancing we stand side by side holding the left hand of the person to the left, with

the right hand, like so: xxxxx. Then to the tones of a hurdy-gurdy, we all, of one accord, recede laterally with a curious hurrying gait. Try it sometime.

Dru Yoga was also on the menu. It struck me as being a fusion of callisthenics, Chinese energy exercises and yoga engaging mind body and spirit. It made me think of the Quaker Kindlers and their willingness to adopt new practices from many sources on their spiritual walk. 1 Thessalonians 5:21 Prove all things; hold fast that which is good.

Speaking of menus, Woodbrooke does Zen breakfasts. Whilst in the queue, a young lady drew my attention to a small notice informing that the eggs contained egg. The idea of eggs not containing egg grasped my mind, the innards of darkness met the crystal white light fairy and then... Thunder Perfect Mind.

AM Residential Weekend

18 - 20 November 2016

At High Leigh Conference Centre,

Hoddesdon, Herts, EN11 8SG

At the November meeting AM agreed the arrangements for the above weekend. It is hoped that at least 40 of us will gather for a weekend 'of waiting on and listening for the Spirit'. See Quaker Faith and Practice 29.02 which we

are taking as the guide to the weekend and the basis of our planning.

It was accepted at an AM Elders and Overseers Meeting that this would be an occasion for adults only. We hope that we might also provide a different event at another time of the year for families.

More details of the programme and a booking form with bursary

details will be made available early next year.

Please put this date in your diary and let the organisers know if you are planning to come.

Peter Whiteley, Phyl Reid and Jenny Kay



Refugee Working Group

Robert Parkes

Report to AM on 22/11/15

Background: In September, MfS released its statement on the refugee crisis—*“we hear the Spirit calling us to throw ourselves into the fray with all the love and courage we can muster.”* In response, AM set up a working group 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”* and also to consider the *“urgent need of those refugees still on the journey.”*

We are urged to take inspiration from Our Faith in the Future. Facing turbulent times, we seek a future, where, inter alia, we offer friendship to all and solidarity to the marginalised. We speak truth to power with love. We work collaboratively, well aware that we can't put the world to rights all by ourselves. We are called to live in the place where our 'deep gladness and the world's deep hunger meet'.

Colchester Borough Council has announced it will take, formally, five Syrian families, who are expected before Christmas. Former Afghan interpreters are being re-settled amongst us. There are other refugees already in our

community and more can be expected.

What's been happening:

We contacted Fresh Beginnings (FB), an existing Colchester-based refugee support organization. From them we heard of an immediate need, a Syrian refugee needing a home. For the last couple of months, she has been living with Alison and myself. In addition:

Jayne Meleschko has given 1:1 advice to another Syrian refugee who is a qualified doctor to help him practice in the UK.

The Colchester Art Group welcomed an Afghan artist to their sessions

Colchester LM collected over £500 for Pauline Roles (of St John's Church, Colchester) to take to France to buy food for refugees in Calais. When Pauline spoke to the LM about her trip we collected another £266.50

We linked up with Citizens UK, a network that kick starts communities into action for the common good. This led us to become part of Welcome Refugees Colchester, a group working with the Council to make Colchester a proper home for refugees. on the 14th November Friends joined the welcoming march in the town

FB needs to hold a pot of money to call on for petty cash emergencies, for example, a train fare for a refugee to get to a Croydon for a “linguistic analysis”. At its business meeting on the 15th November, Colchester LM agreed to donate the £266.50 it collected to FB and, in addition, give FB £200 per month.

By doing this we are collaborating with other faiths: C of E, Jewish and Islamic communities, Congregationalists, the URC. This is, Friends will recall, what discerning our purposes hoped we would do.



So what next? Some Friends have offered transport and to be-friend refugees. A welcoming tea has been mooted. FB say there is a continuing need for longer term accommodation, and for volunteers, especially, teachers. At the Activist day at Friends House yesterday we heard about the need to keep de-bunking the myths around asylum; and the call to surround refugees with love. The group's view is that we should seek to do that which is sustainable. What more can we do?