



Spring is definitely here

Photo: John Kay

NEWSLETTER

SOUTHERN EAST ANGLIA AREA QUAKER MEETING

May 2017

Diary Dates May

- Thursday May 4th County Council elections
Colchester Meeting House is serving as a Polling station
- Friday May 5th Colchester Farmers' Market at the Arts Centre
- Sunday May 14th Area Meeting - Sudbury
- Monday May 15th International Conscientious Objectors Day
<http://www.ppu.org.uk/coday>

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;

Web Address: www.essexsuffolkquakers.org

email address: AMClerk@essexsuffolkquakers.org

Meetings for Worship

CLACTON

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

Harwich

2nd and 4th Sundays 10.30 am
St Nicholas' Church Hall,
Stour Road, Bathside CO12 3HS
Contact: Ros/Tony Eaton 01255
880500

COLCHESTER

Sunday 10.30 am
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)

Editorial,

Dear Friends,

I think we can say "Welcome to Spring!" In fact we could really do with some rain, but let us be more grateful. Last week we had All-Age Meeting, with a remarkable number of children, which we don't always get, and it was lovely to see several from my former Children's Class, with



children of their own. And some visitors and newcomers

There is no lack of interesting events to come to, and of course some of us will be going to Yearly Meeting. But all these will be reported elsewhere in due course ... News, please, by the end of the month, and enjoy your holiday.

Wildspot

from Valerie Graves

Several of you will have noticed all kinds of plants, such as crocus, popping up all over the lawn. But, sadly, I have also noticed several big shrubs, and even trees, looking dangerously dry, indeed some already dead. It is never too late to help with a bit of water, they may respond with new growth from the bottom. Another strange thing is that lots of them seem to be more brightly coloured than usual. Just enjoy it without bothering why.

FIRST CONTACT

FOR FUNERAL ARRANGEMENTS

CLACTON.....Carol Holding

COLCHESTER.....Carol Holding

SUDBURY.....Peter Whiteley

Clerk's Corner, May 2017

Alison Parkes

Advices and Queries No. 6 asks: "Do you work gladly with other religious groups in the pursuit of common goals? While remaining faithful to Quaker insights, try to enter imaginatively into the life and witness of other communities of faith, creating together the bonds of friendship."

Recently a number of Friends from Colchester Meeting attended an event to celebrate the contribution of everyone connected

with Fresh Beginnings, one of the organisations supporting refugees in Colchester. At a party to mark the final weeks of residency in their building on Whitewell Street (before classes moved to the Bunting Rooms off Head Street), there were probably over a hundred people present. Students, teachers, volunteers, befrienders - all met for a lunch that crossed many national boundaries: Nepalese, Syrian, Afghan, British, and more. One of the staff members bravely organised us all to have egg-and-spoon races, to much hilarity.

It is through the work of Fresh Beginnings that our AM has befriended two Syrian families. Apart from acting as befrienders, Colchester Friends

are also teaching English at Fresh Beginnings and helping to improve the conversational English of 'our' two families. The importance of the refugees learning English, in order to access everything else that life in Britain can offer them, cannot be overstated.

The plight of the Syrian families has also brought together several faith groups who are eager to welcome the Syrians into our area. Recently a few Colchester Friends attended an event at the Priory Street synagogue to commemorate the holocaust; for a short while we shared in the perspective of the Jewish community, remembering the devastation and sorrow of the holocaust and the loss of so many Jews during World

War II. We hope to return the invitation to the interfaith community and host a modest event at Colchester Meeting House, which may lead on to other opportunities to meet and work together in the future.

The next Area Meeting will be at Sudbury Meeting House on Sunday 14th May at 2.15pm – all are welcome. Edible contributions to Area Meeting tea will be much appreciated by Sudbury Friends. If you need or can offer transport, please let

Friends know. Consider attending Meeting for Worship in the morning: bring a packed lunch, then stay on for AM. The agenda will be available from LM Clerks and is posted on the Business page of the AM website (web address is on the cover of this newsletter).



Our faith in the future

Colchester meeting looks hard at itself

Anne Watkinson, Clerk

We received 49 replies, of whom 37 were members, from the 120 questionnaires we gave out earlier in the year. This excellent response shows Colchester Friends care about the future of their meeting. The results are not numerically valid but were very interesting and in some cases rather chastening. Friends value Meeting for Worship highly not only for the silence and the ministry but also the friendship. They were not always able to come for various reasons, often prevented by infirmity, or needing to spend time with their families.

We found out that Friends also value social gatherings and would welcome more, but would like more spiritual input and study groups. Some Friends attend other faith communities and enjoy the music, different views and style of services. Our interfaith and refugee activities are appreciated.

Some things work well, even 'keeping going' is valued. Despite their dislikes, most people still

come and as we know, we have relatively strong attendance on Sundays of around 40. Inappropriate ministry is disliked, some feel the lack of spiritual guidance and some cannot hear what is said. There is a realisation that we have too few people to do the jobs needed, some feel guilty at their lack of ability to help and others dislike feeling pressurised. We know attendance at business meetings and Area Meeting is not reflected in the numbers that come on Sunday morning.

What has become clear is the lack of knowledge or understanding of Quaker procedures. Not all respondents knew what went on at these other meetings, how decisions are made or what Elders and Overseers do, who their Overseer is or what Nominations committee is for. Meetings for new members explaining right ordering are requested. While committee membership is seen as difficult, they are seen as necessary but are they fit for purpose? Do people know what is involved? Task and finish groups or more individual jobs are suggested.

It was good to find people appreciate verbal notices and the newsletter, although the Yahoo

group is not popular. A significant number appreciate direct emails.

There were many comments on the building, finding it fit for purpose but in need of TLC. Suggestions ranged from brighter cushions to a complete rethink with professional experts. The toilets came in for a lot of criticism as did the foyer. Disabled access, the hearing loop, heating, ventilation and a lot more, all came in for comment.

Needless to say, the page where friends could offer their expertise or services was the least well answered. We thank all Friends who replied, especially those who took the trouble to write separate pages, some telling of their past service. A longer version of this summary is available as is the complete breakdown of responses. Just ask, email is preferable but hard copy is also possible.

We are looking forward to our Threshing Meeting on Saturday where we can look ahead, knowing that our Meeting is appreciated, if in need of change to cope with the 21st century.

Friend Tim Newell on Restorative Justice

John Lewis

Years ago we were privileged to visit Grendon Prison, whose governor was Tim Newell. Grendon has been a therapeutic prison for 60 years; it is Grade B i.e. moderately high security, for 800 men and all those men have volunteered to be there.

Those familiar with Glebe House will have some idea of the atmosphere. No uniforms in sight. The visitor may be confused: Am I being welcomed by a prisoner or by a prison officer? And the meeting is convened by a life sentence prisoner who seems to be on equal and first name terms with the only staff member we can identify.

As Tim says, when things go wrong, punitive seems to be part of the Anglo-Saxon psyche, piling pain on pain on pain in an expectation of things somehow turning up better. Pain on the victim of the crime, pain on the community around, including the offender's family and pain on the offender. So we now put more people in prison than any other European country, more by a mile.

Grendon Prison (rather like Glebe House,) followed another route: ask not who did what, instead ask what's happened. Ask who has been affected and how they are feeling about it. From that naturally follows "What can be done to make those

people feel better?" And empowering them to express an answer. And, of course, to get it done if possible. Sometimes all that is needed is a sincere and heartfelt apology.

This stuff is harder than it sounds and any one individual may struggle with his inner demons for a couple of years before progress. To understand the feelings of a victim is hard, very hard, and for those who have had a difficult upbringing it may be the first time in their life that the feelings of others has become a discussion subject. The regular meetings in a therapeutic community are utterly democratic, communal and permissive and ultimately face reality and openly admit accountability for past actions. The comparison with a Quaker business meeting is revealing.

Open discussion of these inner feelings is unknown to most of us. Perhaps those who go to AA meetings, or those who have undergone drug recovery programmes will understand, but for most of us there are untouched and certainly unspoken depths to our feelings which we never ever disclose.

So restorative justice, or being locked up in a therapeutic prison, is a hard and searching challenge that only the emotionally mature can handle.

Since retiring, Tim Newell has been involved with Community Chaplaincy an organisation which provides a mentoring sys-



tem to ex-prisoners. (www.communitychaplaincy.org.uk). The analogy with Glebe House is their move-on programme. Without support and help, a prisoner, clutching his £50 discharge allowance that must last him 2 weeks, easily slips back into his former life. Help may be needed by the released prisoner for housing, jobs, family reconciliations.

And to Escaping Victimhood, (www.escapingvictimhood.com) yet another attempt to help us break away from our punitive attitude, but this time by supporting the victim of serious crime, helping the victims reclaim their lives. Those who have suffered attend residential workshops which are intended to give the victim the emotional tools to put their traumatic suffering into that part of their mind and life that enables them to move forward with their lives.

Tim brought the long talk to an end with Advices and Queries 33 "...Bear witness to the humanity of all people, including those who break society's conventions or it's laws ..."

Change of Email Address

Carol Holding would like all Friends to know that she has changed her email address from the "orangehome" one to "carolholding7@gmail.com."

Paraprosdokians are phrases or sentences that lead us down the garden path to an unexpected ending, here's one I like.

"Going to church doesn't make you a Christian Any more than standing in a garage makes you a car."

Threshing Day

These show the Threshing Day held at Colchester Meeting on 22nd April 2017 when two Friends from Quaker Life: Judith Roads from Epping Meeting and Elizabeth Bayliss from Maldon Meeting facilitated the day.

These photographs have all been taken by John Hall



Freya Sandford, Carol Holding, Judith Roads and Elizabeth Bayliss



Judith Roads and Elizabeth Bayliss



Tim Holding, Lucien De Leon, Kate Powis, Jet Grömmel and the 4 Friends above



"Those brownies looked good during an impromptu coffee break!"



Jan Squire adds to the list of things we plan to implement



"The discussion continues into the end-of-day tea."

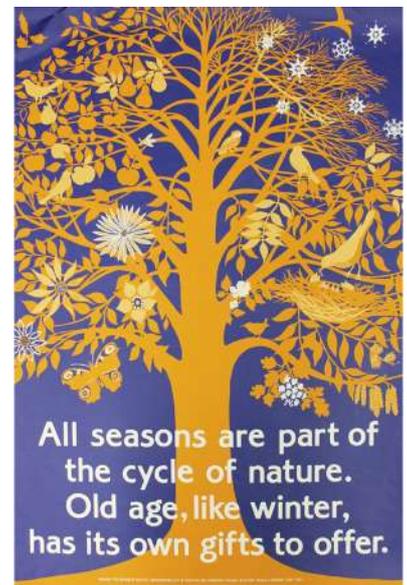
Our Syrian Friends

Peggy Lewis

Our Syrian friends, Khadija and Mohammed, find it almost impossible to get out of the house except for short practical trips to the supermarket. With Mohammed being blind, Khadija cannot manage to go out with him on their own. They feel isolated.

Could you help them to feel more engaged with their surroundings by taking them out in your car for a few hours? This would help them to feel settled.

Please contact Peggy Lewis or Alison Parkes with your suggestions.



A Mnemonic for our Quaker Testimonies

Dave and Una Lawrence

Just S S T E P

Justice

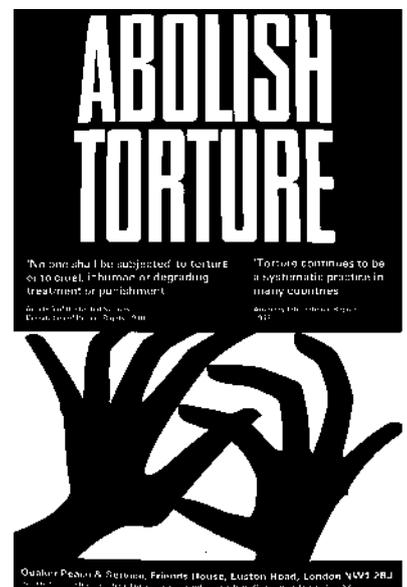
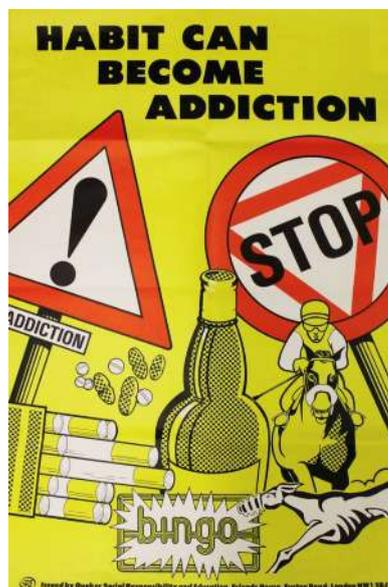
Simplicity

Sustainability

Truth

Equality

Peace



Thought you'd like to see these old posters from QPS and QSRE

Membership and the Area Meeting

Jenny Kay

Membership is an aspect of my work as an overseer which is pre-occupying me at the moment as I work on producing the 2017 version of the printed list of Members and Attenders. In the process I am also contacting those members who are no longer seen in Local Meetings and exploring with them if continuing in membership is meaningful for them. Membership is also the subject of an article in the Friend, 28 April 2017 and the topic which I spoke on at the Area

Meeting of Elders and Overseers held on Saturday 29 April. (Quaker Faith & Practice 11)

Elders and Overseers meetings are held in confidence. This was, unusually, an open meeting. In addition to elders and overseers from Colchester and Earls Colne were 7 members and 3 attenders from Colchester. It was an opportunity for questions about the roles of elders and overseers which are undertaken by members only and a chance to explore aspects of membership with the wider group.

Our membership is held by the Area Meeting which is responsible for maintaining an official register

of members and its list of attenders and children not in membership together with any published lists. (QF&P 4.10 f-i) This involves administration, a level of confidentiality and data protection. Our AM register of members is kept as a card index, in a metal box held in a locked cupboard. The list was digitised many years ago but changes in overseers and technology have since rendered that obsolete. Local Meetings hold complete lists which include attenders and children, supplying the information to AM as required for the BYM tabular statement at the end of the year. All applications, accept-

ances into membership, members change of LMs, resignations, removals from the list and deaths are recorded on the index card when authorised by AM minute. Hopefully the published booklet will be available in the not too distant future.

Overseers encourage attenders in the consideration of membership. Area Meetings are allowed flexibility in handling applications. SEAQM continues to use the practice of appointing visitors, through overseers, to meet with the applicant and to report to AM. The visit was the way used by early Quakers. In 1661 two Colchester Quakers met with Giles Barnardistan at his home, the Lodge Wormingford. He became a leading Sudbury Quaker.

Zelie Gross in her book, 'With a Tender Hand, a resource book for eldership and oversight' poses the question 'Does membership matter? It is more than an individual matter. It matters to our Meetings. How can we encourage and sup-

port active membership so that it doesn't become a burden?

"... membership has its elements of commitment and responsibility but it is also about joy and celebration". Zelie Gross



Turkish gumtree (*Liquidambar orientalis*)

Earls Colne News

Jenny Kay

Third Sunday (Easter) saw 14 of us at Meeting for Worship, each of the chairs set out was taken. Six visitors joined the eight regulars. A small enough number for a 'go round' to introduce ourselves when some extraordinary connections emerged. We especially welcomed a young Friend from Nottingham.

We are having a major sort-out of the Meeting House, hopefully to the benefit of hirers and Quakers alike. While working through the accumulated paperwork John Derring uncovered some interesting finds. A September 1984 Newsletter containing the testimony written to his father Charles Derring (more about Charles and Marjorie in a later Newsletter) and a

report on visits to former Coggeshall Monthly Meeting properties which included Earls Colne. To quote:

Earls Colne was not visited as the Clerk is well aware of the MM involvement there where Friends still await fairly minor alterations which will bring simple modern conveniences to this property.

It seems that 'fairly minor alterations' grew into the extension and refurbishment which we value so much today.

The old benches are still in the Meeting room. We found a safety notice written by John Tann Clerk in 1991.

TO ALL USERS OF THE MEETING HOUSE Friends are sorry recently to see the broken bench in the Meeting House. No doubt you saw that someone had

secured, temporarily, the broken bench with sellotape. These benches are part of the original furniture and are more than three hundred years old. We have now had the benches repaired. Friends are very concerned for the safety of all those who use the Meeting House and ask that careful supervision is maintained. We are particularly concerned that small children should not use the benches on which to climb in case they get hurt or the benches get broken ...

Sadly we have no children in Earls Colne Meeting at present but a local children's music group is held regularly in the Meeting House during term time.

17th Century Recording Clerk

John Hall

Friends House Library has just made available the library of the second Recording Clerk, Richard Richardson. He could speak Latin, Greek, Hebrew, French, German, Dutch, Arabic and Ethiopic ! How's that for scholarship?

There is an excellent article about the library online at <https://quakerstrongrooms.org/2017/04/28/a-17th-century-recording-clerks-library-richard-richardsons-books/>

Conscientious Objection

John Hall

Extract from the 1673 Rhode Island and Providence's Exemption Act

“ No person that is or hereafter shall be persuaded in his conscience, (and by him declared) that he cannot nor ought not to train, to learn to fight, nor to war, nor kill any person nor persons shall at any time be compelled against his judgment and conscience to train, arm or fight, to kill any person nor shall suffer any punishment.”

This was over 80 years before the UK allowed very limited conscientious objection and 243 years before Corder Catchpole was imprisoned for refusing to join the military.

Children

from Valerie Graves

I think I have told you that I have a new great-grandchild, another little boy for my youngest granddaughter. Poor girl, she did want a girl! But we hope she will not go in for another try. I now have eleven great-grandchildren and feel very fortunate, as I know so many old people who seem to have no relations to speak of, or not near by. I know a good many who have relations from different nationalities, and it is remarkable how well even very small children can cope with this.

Richard Richardson, Quaker

Richard Richardson had a background in teaching. As a schoolmaster he was tried at Chelmsford and imprisoned from 1670-1672 for teaching without licence and refusing to take the oath of allegiance. In 1674 he was appointed as master of a school for the children of poor Friends at Devonshire House, Bishopsgate. He assumed the role of Recording Clerk of the Society of Friends in 1681. His learning was valued by Friends: George Fox consulted him in 1679 in prep-

aration for his tract on marriage True marriage declared or Severall testimonies from the reccord of Scriptvre concerning the true marriages and such as are not according to the truth. Among other duties, he was responsible for procuring two copies of every book written by Friends and one copy of every book written against them, as minuted by the Second Day's Morning Meeting in 1673 – the foundation of this Library's remarkable and comprehensive collection of Quaker publications.

(From the website, Ed.)

