

News & Views



Hampshire and Islands Area Quaker Meeting Newsletter

Spring 2018

CONGRATULATIONS!



The Quaker marriage of Friends Andy Cullis and Derek McGhee in Southampton Meeting House

Editor's Corner

Please send contributions for the next issue to Alan Abbott (Co-Editor) **by Friday 15th JUNE**, (ideally by e-mail to alanabbott88@gmail.com) or by post to 35, Frome Road, West End, Southampton, SO18 3LH.

NB. Reports should not be longer than about 500 words.

Book reviews, opinions, puzzles, quizzes, recipes, poems, drawings, photos ... all are welcome!

Note the deadline for the next issue, please!

From: Britain Yearly Meeting Annual Review 2008, “Moving Forward, Looking Outward”, p.14.

“From our history, we take inspiration

We have always taken a stand for peace and justice. Over two hundred years ago, we campaigned with others against slavery. Over fifty years ago, we campaigned alongside others against nuclear weapons. The tactics pioneered then, like petitions, poster campaigns and lobbying MP’s, are still in use today alongside new work made possible through electronic communication. Our experience, our testimonies and our institutional memory provide us with the inspiration to continue campaigning. From our history, we take inspiration.”

Threshing Meeting

By Audrey Chamberlain

An Area Meeting (AM) Threshing Meeting was held 10 February, Southampton Meeting House.

The scope included the current structure of AM; the pros and cons of changing it; the effectiveness of our current procedures; the reasons why it is difficult to find Friends to take on roles; the extent to which paid help would assist AM; how to improve communications to ensure that worship is at the heart of our organisation.

The threshing meeting facilitator drew our attention to the Quakers in Britain Leaflet ,"**Our Faith In The Future - facing turbulent times, Quakers in Britain seek a future where**

- * Meeting for Worship is the bedrock of living as a Quaker
- * A future where Quaker communities are loving, inclusive and all-age
- * All Friends understand and live by Quaker discipline
- * Quaker values are active in the world
- * Quakers work collaboratively
- * Quakers are well known and widely understood
- * We let our lives speak

"**Our faith in the future....**" leaflet is a word picture of what Quakers in Britain today would like the Society to be like in the future; leaving each individual, meeting or committee free to discern where they are today and then to decide on what actions they need to take to move their part of the yearly meeting towards this vision.

It is based on contributions from Quakers throughout Britain, and was approved by Meeting for Sufferings in 2015 & published in 2016 by Quakers in Britain.

To find out more go to: www.quakers.org.uk/future

*Copies of this leaflet are available from - **Quaker Centre Bookshop, Friends House, 173 Euston Rd. London NW1 2BJ***

email: quakercentre@quaker.org.uk or phone 020 7663 1030

The Marjorie McBain Trust

By David Harrison

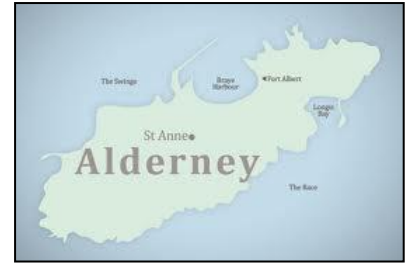
The Marjorie McBain Trust welcomes applications from Friends in unexpected need of financial help. All applications are treated in confidence.

Please contact David Harrison, Convenor, for more information.

E-Mail: convenormcaintrust@gmail.com or Tel: 01983 562938.

Alderney

By Struan Robertson



Alderney was the worst affected of the Channel Islands by the recent winter snow storms with the airport closed for four days and on-duty doctors stranded in Guernsey being returned to Alderney by the life-boat.

Alderney is the host island for the Spring CI Gathering on Saturday 28th April. Tony Biggins and Alec Davison of "Friends in Tune" will be present to lead a singing workshop. Tony and Alec were the mainstay of the Leavers who produced the oratorio "The Gates of Greenham". The Leavers were the Quaker Youth Theatre which was laid down in 2017 after sponsorship by the Rowntree Trust was withdrawn. "Friends in Tune" is planned to continue their music theatre tradition at local, area or regional Meetings. There will be about six new songs, which are tonal and tuneful and energetic, linked by readings covering a range of issues ranging from homelessness to wall-building and Brexit. The non-singers will be on a "word-smith" workshop to create new link readings, although there are pre-written link readings in reserve. It is planned to have a very informal sharing of the work at the end of the afternoon session in the Methodist Church.

The minimum numbers for the singing work-shop is 12. Alderney is a tiny Meeting and even with Friends from Guernsey and Jersey it would be difficult to raise the quorum. Jenny Hamon who is our enthusiastic singer is co-ordinating the planning of the singing workshop with Tony and the Alderney Voices choir of which she is a member. Fortunately members of the Alderney Voices choir would be able to supplement numbers even though it clashes with their first ever jumble sale. We are very grateful to Elisabeth Bellamy, the Methodist Minister, who has made the Methodist Church available for the singers and the Hall in the basement for everything else.

Considerable interest has been raised in the island at the idea of Quakers actually being enthusiastic about singing. We regard the program for the day as potentially a valuable outreach exercise.

From: Quaker Faith & Practice, Chapter 23 - 'Social Responsibility'

23.84. "Friends peace testimony challenges us all to be peace educators. We may not all be teachers, but we are all communicators, and we all need to be learners. Peace education should be seen as an integral part of our peace testimony. But it is essentially something one does, and not something one talks about... Learning, to be educated, means changing one's behaviour, and peace education therefore aims at changing our individual behaviour... We communicate our values by the manner of our lives, but how many of us negate the peaceful attitudes we fervently profess by our own aggressive behaviour?"

Eva I Pinthus, 1982

From: Advices and Queries

12. "When you are preoccupied and distracted in meeting let wayward and disturbing thoughts give way quietly to your awareness of God's presence among us and in the world. Receive the vocal ministry of other in a tender and creative spirit. Reach for the meaning deep within it, recognising that even if it is not God's word for you, it may be so for others. Remember that we all share responsibility for the meeting for worship whether our ministry is in silence or through the spoken word."

Alton

by Valerie Stubbington

As I look through my window at the miniature daffodils, which only yesterday were crushed out of sight by the snow, they are now standing straight on their small stems determined to defeat 'the beast from the east'. I think of humankind beaten down at times and yet determined to bloom again. Of course some will not make it, but we trust that many will and the cycle of life will continue. We send our love to all who are enduring bad times.



The early part of the year saw another peace march, led by Jo, that also gave a flavour of earlier Quakers' activities including their part in opposing slavery.

As winter enters spring we are running the course for 'Becoming a Quaker'. Apart from some of our own attenders it is drawing attenders from the Petersfield Meeting. The discussions, questions and activities are very fruitful and interesting. I have been going along, as one who went through the process a few years back and learned a lot from the experience; there are also people who have grown up in Quaker families. We are there to support the activities. We are finding the newcomers are making us think and see things from different perspectives. It will be interesting to see whether the participators wish to go further. It is certainly a stretching and renewing exercise for those of us who have been through it before.



Our meeting has received a gift of money to spend on the building; We have decided to refit and refresh the small meeting room across from the main meeting hall, which could do with brightening and a refit. This room is used in various ways. It is often referred to as the children's room, as the children have the use of it on Sundays. However, it fulfills many purposes, including the place where a smaller than Sunday group meet each Friday for worship. It also provides a place to congregate for groups as diverse as the Duke of Edinburgh teenage group and Alcoholics Anonymous group. The children are very much involved in the plans for the refit. They are hoping that their ideas and designs will be incorporated into a new and brighter room. In the photograph they are experimenting with designs for the curtains and cushion fabrics.

Nevertheless, the room must incorporate the needs of adult groups. There is also a small flat, which has recently been vacated; this too is receiving a makeover for the next tenant.

Recently I was lucky enough to spend some time at Woodbrooke and enjoyed listening to lectures, other Quaker's points of view and participating in discussions. It was my second visit and won't be my last. From there we drove to the Lake District where I visited the Quaker Tapestry. It is incredible. If you haven't been to either of them put them on your list of things to do.

Portsmouth

By Denise Bennett



Seven Days Without Prayer makes One Weak.

These words which appeared on a poster at a Unitarian Church were considered when Dennis Jutton spoke about Reflections of Prayer at one of our bring and share lunches. Dennis's talk concerned both public and private prayer – from vocal ministry to the silent prayer of lighting a candle. Prayer is often used in healing – sadly our meeting for worship and healing which was to be held on 3rd March had to be cancelled because of inclement weather. We hope to this will now happen sometime in June.

Recently at an Elders and Overseers meeting Sarah spotted a blackbird balanced on a snowy fence. It was an exquisite image. Speaking of images, Valerie and Richard Tite recently attended a course at Woodbrook College entitled Icon Painting as a Spiritual Practice which we are looking forward to hearing about when they share their experience with us at one of bring and share lunches. Still with painting in mind, a local art historian, Chris Martin has agreed to come along to talk to us. His subject – A Refusal of Arms: British Artists and Pacifism during the First World War, is planned for Sunday 24th November when the country will be remembering the end of the war. Some of the artists his talk will cover include Adrian Allison, Vanessa Bell, Roger Fry et al. Recently I reminded of our peace testimony when a Friend told me about a phrase, spoken by André Rieu who is famous for his Johann Strauss Orchestra, at his 2016 Christmas concert. These words were well received by the audience.

*I would like to take the rifle away
from every soldier and give him a violin.*

Hearing this statement and the wonderful response reminded me that words are one of our most powerful tools. Taking this further, I was very moved by the warmth of the statement made by Chichester Quaker Meeting which said:

Safe, Welcomed, Valued, Respected.

This was said as a welcome to those wishing to *fully participate in Quaker Meeting as their true selves, free from gender assumptions and stereotypes...* A Friend who attended the Celebrating and Supporting Diversity day, held at Chichester Meeting House on the 10th March to discover more about Quaker Gender and Sexual Diversity, explained the pattern of the day; how four Friends shared their personal stories followed by reflection. Later in the day a session on the Chichester Statement was held which was agreed should be posted up at the Meeting House.

Two extracts –

*we do not want to be divided by the words we use but rather
“feel where the words come from”**

*We rejoice in our own diversity and in creating a place where can listen to and connect
with one another and, “ helping one another up with a tender hand”***

This begs the question. Shouldn't we all be helping each other up with a helping hand?

* taken from John Woolman's Journal for 1763

** Isaac Pennington, 1667 Quaker Faith and Practice 10.01

Winchester

By Clarissa Palmer

The year started with a burst of youthful energy as twenty-five visitors from Young Friends General Meeting came from all over the country to spend the weekend in Winchester. In *The Young Quaker* Michelle Dumont writes on hospitality encouraging us to 'keep our hearts and doors open and to keep a place by our fire for an unexpected visitor...' The young Quakers felt warmly welcomed and enjoyed our hospitality; it was a delight to meet them and be invigorated by their enthusiasm and thoughtfulness.



The Meeting House has offered more permanent hospitality to Mahmoud Okal who fled his war torn Syria and arrived here via Egypt and Alton. He has a background in engineering and hopes to find work here while improving his already very good English.

Winchester Meeting's Peace and Justice Group marked Holocaust Memorial Day with a 'make tea not war' day. Visitors were encouraged to make white poppies, sow seeds for peace, view an exhibition of Quaker materials and peruse books and pamphlets on peace. The film 'Beyond Forgiving' by Howard Grace was screened throughout the day and gave rise to good exchanges on mediation and forgiveness in areas of conflict. A further challenge was one of choosing the right cuppa, so many delicious teas being on offer. Many hearts and hands made the day possible, in conjunction with Winchester University's interfaith peace making event.

Two days later, on Monday 29 January, a memorial meeting was held for Mary Sudbury in Winchester, followed by refreshments at the Meeting House, splendidly organised by Geoff, our warden, who coped admirably with the large numbers of family and friends gathered together to celebrate Mary's remarkable life. A poster created by Andrew Rutter honoured her with these words: 'Mathematician, teacher, Quaker. Challenging middle class stereotypes and school prejudice.'

Although 10 February was a miserable wet day our hearts were warmed when a young couple from our meeting, Eddie and Mike, united in a Quaker marriage held at the New Forest village of Woodgreen. The love witnessed by those who attended the meeting tempered the inclement weather. Mike being French the ceremony was bilingual but all shared the sentiment that a 'mariage pluvieux' is a 'mariage heureux'. A rainy wedding is a happy one, traditionally symbolising renewal and fertility.

On 27 February Doreen Pearce's funeral meeting was held at Basingstoke Crematorium; she died after a brief illness. Her poetry, read by family and friends, brought her light and a hint of African sun to a very wintery day.

Snow lowered the attendance to the Healing Day on March 3 but those who made it felt, as writes Irene Ashby: 'The beauty and stillness outside helped us to focus when we held those people and situations in the Light that were on our hearts. I was reminded of Jesus' words: 'Where two or three are gathered in my name, there I am in the midst of you.'

Maggie Alder contributes to Radio Solent's 'Daily Thoughts'. Her most recent 'Thoughts' were aired in the week preceding Holy Week. Their theme 'A Tough Start to the Year' references the difficulties her family is experiencing. She asks that Friends hold her in the Light.

Reflection upon looking at the first blossoms of spring or while peeling potatoes.

For all that may be known of God by men lies plain before their eyes; indeed God himself has disclosed it to them. His invisible attributes, that is to say his everlasting power and deity, have been visible, ever since the world began, to the eye of reason, in the things he has made. New English Bible Romans 1/19-20 Anon

Grave Talk

By Jean Everitt

The truth is that we are all going to die.

We don't like to talk about this and leave important questions unanswered until it is, literally, too late. But the practicalities and the emotions around death do need to be dealt with and GraveTalk provides a safe, relaxed and friendly setting where that can happen.

People can drink coffee, eat biscuits and talk about death. Where they can ask questions, share worries or just air their thoughts and break down the taboos surrounding death. Caring and compassionate conversations can happen no matter where we are on life's journey. This is not only for the old.

A successful GraveTalk pilot has recently been held in Fareham. Three café style meetings, featuring coffee, biscuits and conversation took place in three different venues. Members of the public came to share their thoughts, ideas and experiences in small groups supported by a facilitator and prompted by questions on a set of conversation cards. These helped start conversations that became wide-ranging. Sometimes it is easier to have 'deep' conversations with strangers whom one might never see again, than with friends or family.

Feedback from the participants said that they found it enjoyable, an interesting experience and valuable because it was not in general an easy subject to discuss. Humour and laughter were part of the atmosphere. The simple ground rules ensure that everyone's opinions are respected and valued and a facilitator on each table ensures no one person can dominate. This is a really 'safe place'.

The GraveTalk format was developed in an Anglican setting at Portsmouth Cathedral for people of all faiths and none. It is not a bereavement counselling or grief group. The organisers do not claim to be experts.

The impetus for the project came from members of the Fareham Quaker Worship Group, supported by the Reverend Carol Gully, Spiritual Chaplain from the Rowans Hospice, and Rachel Hicks, chairperson of Christians Together in Fareham.

Three further sessions of GraveTalk are now planned at Westbury Manor Museum Fareham on the second Monday of the month. The dates are 14 May, 11 June and 9 July between 2 and 4pm. Contact Maggie on 07932 354055 if you would like more information or email farehamdp@gmail.com. There is no need to book, just turn up and you will be warmly welcomed by the host and facilitators.

Romsey

By Ann Chillingworth

Romsey Worshipping Group held its first Meeting just over three years ago, in February 2015, with an attendance of seven Friends. To mark the third anniversary of that Meeting, we held a Bring and Share lunch on March 11th. This was attended by a total of eighteen people - some Friends including several from Southampton, other regular attenders and one visitor. There was a wonderful sense of unity in the room, which gives us confidence for our future.

One aspect of the Meeting which unites us is our giving. Since February 2015, we have been able to give almost £2,000.00 to small local groups and charities. Currently, we are giving to support Romsey Opportunities Group, which gives specialist help to under-five year olds with additional needs and to Romsey Citizens Advice Bureau.

Experience

By Sébastien Valax (Jersey)

It is about experience

In continuation with the reflection brought by David Lewis in the article "it's not about belief" I would like to share with Friends.

Like many of us, my mind tends to be very busy, almost constantly thinking through so many things, wanting to resolve what is unsettled in me, analysing or making assumptions, looking for answers, solutions, or just wandering about in a dreamy state... inwardly pushed by the impulses of emotions and feelings I am not aware of. It is as if I am so trusting in my mind, and identified with it, that it tends to be my default or automatic mode of functioning.

But I do experience another way of being. A way of not being caught in my mind. Stopping. Resting and sinking in the Present. Not carried away but aware.

Then understanding is not so logical, analytic, based on views and underlined/undermined by my emotional state, but there, 'beyond thought', there is a ground of peace, a place beyond space and time in the very centre of the here and now, a warm hearted open sphere where grace flows on and on... and there is freedom, there is light allowing me to touch a deeper, more whole understanding.

Is that an experience with God? Or presence? An experience with our true nature? Or shall we call it Something? Or is that something else? How may I call it to share with you about it?

Words may point to an experience but you will not understand unless, in some ways, your experience is resonating with mine. Words can be tricky and we can be caught by them and react.

Or maybe what we experience is so different!

As I started with this busy mind of mine, and let us say that it is our common state, then this experience of stillness can be often out of reach and just a vague memory. Or even if we did experience it, it is now covered by busyness, or tiredness, or there is something triggering us preventing us from settling... Or maybe we have not yet experienced it. We may think we did because we like the idea of it, but our thinking is so strong that to let go of it would be almost dying. Does that mean that this experience is too far away?

From this collective as well as personal experience with the divine/presence/stillness... Friends (and others) have been able to experience truth, peace, unity... this lived experience allowing them to bear faithful testimonies to truth, peace, simplicity, community, equality, ...

Today the challenge for us to gather in that experience is great. As great as it is much needed, for each one of us as well as for the community. What kind of peace shall we share if not from experiencing peace? What kind of discernment would it be if collectively we are not based in that space beyond our self with its partial views and reactions? This experience is our 'raison d'être' as Quakers, and maybe as human beings!

I find this experience, although profound and powerful, also subtle and sensitive.

Like water with particles in suspension in it, when the water settles and become clear: it is a marvel to see!

But we need some patience not to stir or disturb.

Trust in waiting together...