

# News & Views



Hampshire and Islands Area Quaker Meeting Newsletter

Winter 2017-2018

## DON'T MISS IT! 2018 AREA RESIDENTIAL

*By Maggie Alder*

Sometimes on a Saturday morning the dining room at Winchester Quaker Meeting House sees an excited group of people from around our area, eyes shining, sometimes interrupting each other, sometimes pausing thoughtfully. We are the planning group for the Area Residential, scheduled for 24<sup>th</sup> - 26<sup>th</sup> August 2018, at Park Place, close to the village of Wickham, Hampshire.

Hampshire and the Islands organises a residential weekend every three years, and we have held it at this quaint and hospitable convent/conference centre for several years. This year we have taken as our aim and theme QF&A 10:01: "Our life is love, and peace, and tenderness; and bearing one with another, and forgiving one another, and not laying accusations one against another; but praying one for another, and helping one another up with a tender hand." Isaac Penington, 1667. We are planning creative seminars, reflective seminars, times of light entertainment, outdoor activities and indoor activities, fun, friendship and fellowship. Non-Quaker partners and family members are welcome, and children come for free.

At this point we would love it if you were to do two things. First, as soon as you have your 2018 diary and calendars, block out that weekend so that you do not mistakenly commit yourself to some less exciting activity that weekend. Secondly, if you are interested in leading a seminar, please let us know. Maggie Alder, Winchester local meeting is the convener of this group, and your local representatives are Peter Grant (Andover), Ian Bartlett (Winchester), Diane Kivi (Alton), Marlène Canton-Taylor (Isle of Wight), Cecilia Withers and Mark Redman (Southampton).

See you on the 24<sup>th</sup> August, if not before!

## Editor's Corner

Please send contributions for the next issue to Alan Abbott (Co-Editor) **by Friday 23rd MARCH**, (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!

# It's Not About Beliefs

by David Lewis

What do Friends believe? What do I believe? What do you believe? And why would the answers to these three questions be different?

Last September I attended a course at Woodbrooke about Diversity of Belief among Friends and its impact on practice. It was a large course with 18 participants, 5 speakers and 2 facilitators and concentrated mainly on our theological diversity. There were lots of references to the work of the committee thinking about a revision of the 'Red Book' (Revision Preparation Committee) and its 'Theology Think Tank'. The 'Think Tank' was a group of Friends, theist and non-theist, theologians, bloggers and those who had not written publicly about theology. The group was asked by the Revision Preparation Committee to meet and talk about their differences. It has now been laid down. By the time this article comes out, Quaker Books will have published *God, Words and Us* which contains some of their thoughts.

Craig Barnett, Sheffield Meeting and the Revision Preparation Committee, started off the course by explaining why he thought the question 'What do Quakers believe?' was the wrong question. It comes from a model that says individuals have a belief and then act on it: we believe God is present in all humans and act accordingly. Craig said this was not what early Quakers were offering. They did not profess an alternative theology but an immediate experience. Instead of a two link chain, Craig proposed a three link chain. A circle of three words: Practice, Experience, Community each moulding and expressing the other. His example was from Sheffield Meeting which had become lax about late-comers; the meeting 'started' at 10.30 but Friends thought it OK to arrive any time before 11.00. This practice affected a person's experience of MfW and an individual's experience in turn affected the community. Sheffield addressed this with a 'reset' of its discipline about times.

In discussion the course members suggested modifications to the three link model. First it might be spiral, or spring shaped; second a person could start on it at any of the three points; and third (this came later from Helen Rowlands) what mattered was the intent and the model might circle around that word. Helen reminded us of the Pennington quotation 'The end of words is to bring people into knowledge of things beyond what words can utter'. She would bracket actions with words. I am not sure Craig embraced all these modifications and he did not hear Helen speak.

Craig's other concern was about stories. Previous generations of Quakers had a shared knowledge of the Bible. They might use the imagery in different ways, interpret the text differently, and take different actions as a result. But the story, the vocabulary, was shared. In today's MfW, Ministry came from different traditions: we might hear the word 'Goddess' from the pagan tradition(s) and not know if saying 'God' to ourselves was a correct translation. Craig said a consequence of this was the emergence of the question, 'If MfW is not a gathering of a faithful people, meeting in reverence and surrender, what is it?' Is it a safe space in which individuals can re-charge batteries, pray, read or reflect on their moral purposes? And, if so, what happens to the community that worships? He thought the consequence was that, instead of using a shared story/vocabulary, we now used shared cultural assumptions about each other to keep the community together. A Quaker was 'a person like me whom I am comfortable sitting alongside'. And our membership practices reinforced this form of selection.

Craig said the answer was not expulsion, or a split. We needed the different stories to keep our discernment open to new life. The answer was to organically grow within our meetings a new post-Christian story. Rather than getting rid of contentious words, we needed to understand each other better and make explicit a shared vocabulary of old and new images, old and new words, so that, for example, 'Goddess' came to have a meaning understood by all Friends.

The morning of the following day was taken by Sam Barnett-Cormack, Lancaster meeting, talking about 'The Will of God? What God?' He asked, if there is no Divine Being guiding their decision-making, what do Friends think they are doing in a Business Meeting? He asked the group how many thought there was such a God; five put up their hands and two thought there was certainly no God. The rest were unsure. However, towards the end of the morning, after an explanation of the word 'Panentheist' (God is everything in the world plus something extra), most said they were comfortable with that description. We also learnt a new word from the Dutch, 'Ietsist'. This has a capital I not an L as appears from a sans-serif type face and comes from the Dutch 'Iet' meaning 'something'. Many in the room felt comfortable when described as a 'something-ist'.

Sam said there was a huge range of mental models of God within Britain Yearly Meeting. Non-theists ranged from having a humanist/rationalist approach to the existence of God (there probably isn't one) to mystics who were in close touch with 'something'. Similarly theists ranged from belief in a Christian God and a Trinity to those who were in close touch with 'something'. He said, to laughter, that we had probably been 'worshiping' with 'non-Theists' for many years. He urged us to share with our meetings our beliefs and understanding of what 'worship' and 'God' meant.

Sam asked: if there is no distinct entity called God, with a will of his/her own, how then can we describe Business Meetings as seeking 'the will' of God? He suggested that phrases such as 'The right way forward' or 'The sense of the meeting' could be used without requiring belief in a single, willed God. These phrases were not the same as 'consensus' because a spiritual activity was distinct from a secular consensus. Sam felt that using the phrase 'Will of God' implied there was a 'right answer' for which the meeting is seeking. The other phrases described a more creative approach.

Helen Rowlands, Cotteridge meeting, gave us more information about the work of the Theology Think Tank. She said that doing Quaker theology involved experience, not abstract notions. Before they met the members of the think tank had written about the experiences that brought them to Quakers, not the beliefs. Faith had emotional connotations and the group recognised that for everyone it was necessary to bring one's whole life to the conversation and have a safe place in which to do that. This had been very hard work emotionally and intellectually.

These conversations, both over the web and in person, had revealed the variety of experience and belief within the Theist and non/Theist groupings – and also that many in both places really disliked the labels they were given. In fact labels were unwanted, unless the Friend labelled accepted it. Helen also said it had been apparent that we needed to learn more about the Quaker past, the stories we had forgotten and the historical context in which what were now contentious texts had been written. Faithfulness to Quaker processes of discernment and business would help us find a way through. Indeed all three speakers emphasized that a close adherence to our Quaker discipline in meetings was of fundamental importance. Helen recommended two pamphlets by Rex Ambler, *The Quaker Way* and *Resolving our Differences*.

There were two other speakers whose contributions were at a tangent to the discussion in this account. Howard Saunders spoke to us about his worship at a Buddhist Sanga and how that had changed his life and his service to Quakers. On the last morning Diana Lampen spoke on 'Listening to the Heart'. She is a wonderfully open and wise Friend. From her talk I noted a quotation from *The Gospel According to Jesus*, 'Jesus showed us Love as the present and only tense of the verb God'.

# Regional Gathering, on Saturday 28th October, 2017, at Southampton Meeting House

*by Rita Leighton (Co-clerk R.G.)*

About 50 Friends gathered at Southampton Meeting House at the end of October when Rhiannon Grant, a member of the Revision Preparation Group, came to lead a day on “exploring Qf&p”. She was an excellent speaker and gave us plenty to think about when, after lunch, we divided into three groups and each discussed one of three topics:

“Theological Diversity” – what do you do in Meeting for Worship, and where did you learn the words you use to describe your spiritual experience?

“Technological Possibilities” – How do you access information now – paper, computer, smart phone? If our “Book” of Discipline could contain art and music as well as words, what would you want to find there? And

“Authority” – when you consult Qf&p do you feel required to do what it says? How does this vary between different sections and circumstances?

All these topics sparked lively discussion, and would probably prove a good source of material for Meetings after shared lunches, or other occasions when Friends meet for discussions of mutual interest.

The next Regional Gathering will be held in Bournemouth in April, 2018, when the topic will be to do with our history as told by the Quaker Tapestry.

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## 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: [convenormcbaintrust@gmail.com](mailto:convenormcbaintrust@gmail.com) or Tel: 01962 861285.

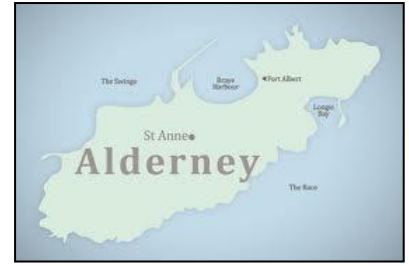
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### From: Advices and Queries

**No. 41:** Try to live simply. A simple lifestyle freely chosen is a source of strength. Do not be persuaded into buying what you do not need or cannot afford. Do you keep yourself informed about the effects of your style of living is having on the global economy and environment?”

# Alderney

By *Struan Robertson*



On Remembrance Sunday we held Meeting for Worship at Pottery House as usual whilst Peter May, representing Quakers, read the Gospel at the British Legion Service in the Anglican Church. Friends went to Sapper Onions' grave at 12 Noon for a short service led by Elizabeth Bellamy (our present Methodist Minister) who has done so much in resurrecting the ecumenical activity on the island. British Legion protocol decrees that Sapper Onions' name is not included in the Alderney Roll of Honour; but as he died clearing German mines in Alderney after it was liberated his death has particular significance for the island. His death has particular significance for Friends because its circumstance guaranteed he did not die in the act of trying to kill some-one else. This service was initiated by Arthur Mignot with Quaker support. Arthur was British Legion Chaplain in the UK during his service as a Methodist Minister. Unfortunately Arthur's deteriorating health meant that he was unable to attend.

Alderney Friends have been active on the ecumenical front in the lead-up to Christmas. There had been considerable distress and perturbation amongst the Alderney Catholic's caused by teething troubles relating to the simultaneous appointment of Father John Lavery, the new parish priest, and six contemplative Franciscans nuns who are to form "A power house of Prayer" known as an "Adoremus Centre" to strengthen spiritual life within the diocese of Portsmouth. The Alderney Catholic's had been without a resident priest for about six years during which time they were served by a rota of three priests from Guernsey.

On the W/E of the 2/3rd.December they were visited by Canon Michael Dennehy the Vicar General {second in command} of the diocese to hear about the problems. There was to be an open meeting in the Catholic Hall at 1100hrs on the Sunday to which non-Catholics were welcome to attend. At informal conversation we had been told that prayer was the only way Quakers could help; but Alderney Quakers as a whole are not comfortable with intercessory group vocal prayer. So we decided to cancel 1030 MfW at Pottery House and go to the Catholic Hall as our witness for peace.

In the event there was no organised enquiry or discussion but much sporadic voiced anger. Father John insisted that the two priests would only listen to individuals, not the Catholic congregation as a group. A number of Catholics did so. When opportunity presented itself I spoke to the Vicar General to confirm that the distress the Catholics felt was palpable in the island community and I gave him my contact details. I also button-holed Father John to arrange a morning coffee with me in the coming week.

I had a courteous and friendly hand-written letter from the Vicar General to say that he was now fully aware of the issues and the depth of feeling in the Catholic community; and that Father Jon would be addressing these in the coming weeks. I had a two hour coffee session with Father John with a promise to return when "the shouting and the tumult dies"

Meri Cradock will be returning to the island in January to live in North Star in Victoria Street which probably means there will be no more lemon drizzle cake for sale on the stall at its drive way.

# Alton

by Valerie Stubbington

Since the last article in June the meeting has been together and as individuals journeying onwards.



Several of us attended the Yearly Gathering and Meeting at Warwick University, which I think we all found stimulating and spiritually developing. It was my first experience. I was not prepared for the feeling of togetherness and awe I felt sitting in the huge auditorium, for the opening, with a chattering group of probably a thousand people, who at a sign fell silent for fifteen minutes. The joy I felt that I was now part of this group whose lives were dedicated to living their beliefs. The week provided so many choices of activities and lectures from 8.45am to 11 pm. Problems with the world were discussed, but always with upbeat ideas to challenge despair. A small child gave me a ribbon to wear to remember the homeless and we examined her many badges about challenging the wrongs in the world. An elderly gentleman explained his personally designed electric chair and told me about the work he had done to make his home environmentally efficient; he was now sharing that knowledge with his community. I went to bed each night feeling happy stimulated and connected.

In early autumn a Quest was organised on Living Adventurously; it was attended by local people who expressed interest; it was also of interest to members and attenders to learn more about those who were speaking.

Alton Quakers and the wider community have taken part in two Peace Walks through the town. Led by Jo Osmond, the walks traced the history of the Alton Quakers following the trials and tribulations of the town's peacemakers. The walks made the local paper with pictures. A third walk will take place on January 7<sup>th</sup> 2018 meeting at the Alton Burial Ground at 2pm. This walk will feature the town's contribution to the abolition of slavery and other forgotten aspects of Alton's history. Jo has written a small book called 'Alton Peacemakers' that also features people you may remember or have heard of: Joyce Preddel, George and Phillis Mann, Bob and Mary Hockley. Copies of this book are available from Melanie Butlin at Alton Meeting costing £5.

There are plans afoot to give the children's room a makeover and to improve sound proofing. The children are excited and involved with the plans, drawing designs and deciding on curtain fabrics etc. This should all take place early in 2018. Other plans for the Spring are ideas for discussion and /or workshops.



The end of this year has seen our usual monthly shared lunch become a Christmas lunch with entertainment. Many of the children played instruments or sang and Rosemary Russel, whom many of you will know, played the piano to accompany Carol singing. Hence from our youngest Quaker, Lowenna, to one of our oldest, Rosemary, the meeting came together.



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## Andover

*by Chris Coffin*

Our last contribution to News and Views was at the end of 2016 when we were looking for a new meeting place and wondering if the Well-Being Centre run by Andover Mind (which was not otherwise being used on a Sunday) could accommodate us. Their offer seemed fine as a temporary measure, but we soon resolved problems over heating and storage and are now regarding this as our home. Although in the town centre there is little traffic on a Sunday along Westbrook Close – the odd Domino Pizza delivery car and police vehicle excepted, but those distractions are soon on their way. And although we can see and be seen through the shop window, we are far enough back from the window itself for this to be a problem. It is an unusual venue for a Quaker meeting but it always feels welcoming. We'd be glad for you to join us.

But the Centre is not able to host larger meetings, and we have been pleased to use the Andover Guildhall to host Area Meeting in September and also a public meeting we ran as an outreach event in November (thank you, AM, for meeting the cost of room hire and the speaker's expenses). For the latter we invited Maria Huff, a Quaker from Banbury who had been in Israel and Palestine (mostly the latter) as an ecumenical accompanier with EAPPI. We were pleased that in response to advertising the event to local churches, and (thanks to some younger people associated with the meeting) putting Facebook connections to good use) we attracted an audience of 45 on a Sunday afternoon. Maria gave an excellent talk, and handled questions, including some difficult ones from those asking why, since God had given the land to the Jews, did the Palestinians expect to have any rights? We have thoughts of arranging another event in Autumn 2018. We hope you will be able to come.

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# Guernsey

by Jenny Dumont



We were pleased to welcome Friends from Alderney, Jersey and Hampshire to the Channel Islands Meeting held here on 30 September. Following a short Meeting for Business, we all enjoyed a talk entitled *Light and Dark and Living in Antarctica* with some links to our testimony on sustainability, facilitated by Jo Arendt. Jo has been on several trips to Antarctica where she studied the effect of light levels on melatonin and sleep patterns. She showed us some spectacular pictures from her visits.

We had a shared lunch at the Meeting House which included vegetarian soup prepared by the Caritas Community Cafe. Michelle Dumont who volunteers for the charity gave a short talk about the work they do within the community and a collection was taken for them. Kate and Sebastien from Jersey meeting were so interested in Caritas that they recently made a return visit to Guernsey to spend the day with them and find out more about their work.

Optional afternoon activities included a walk through St Peter Port and into St Martin on the cliff path or a visit to the Guernsey Tapestry and Guernsey Museum. Many of us then met in the evening for dinner at a local restaurant.

We were pleased to welcome some of the visiting Friends at Meeting for Worship on Sunday morning. It was good to be able to spend time with other Friends although the weather could have been kinder!

Michelle Dumont continues to represent the Area Meeting at Young Friends General Meeting. She attended YFGM in Bristol in October. The meeting reflected on what we could do ourselves and with our local communities to support wider changes to create a fairer world which reflects our Quaker values. Michelle was nominated to be co-clerk of YFGM at this meeting and has since undertaken the online 'Being a Quaker Clerk' course through Woodbrooke.

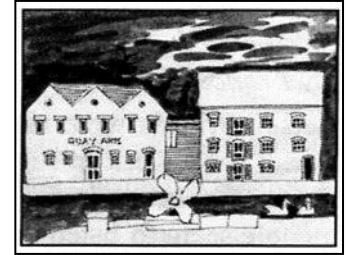
Recently we had another collection for the Salvation Army who provide Christmas Day lunch for people who are on their own at Christmas. The money collected was passed on to the local Salvation Army Major who was very grateful for our support.

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# Isle of Wight

Sent in by Bob Matthews



## “Months”, he said – A sad story

Tuesday, October 17 was the day of the big operation at Southampton General Hospital, to be performed by the highly regarded Professor Underwood. It would take more than five hours, and involved 4 small cuts in the belly area for keyhole surgery, and a long cut in my back for open surgery. The cancer in my oesophagus would be cut out, and the stomach pulled up to join the healthy tube. From the theatre, they would take me to the high dependency unit for two or three days, to be followed by at least another week in an ordinary ward before I would be fit for discharge.

They took me to the theatre ante-room about 11am. A little clear liquid was injected into an arm the lights seemed bright, and I saw a mask being put over my mouth and nose. After a second, I remember no more.

I came to in the ward where I had stayed the night before. A clock said 5-30. Feeling very woozy, I tried to assess the situation. I could feel some smarting in the belly area, presumably from the keyhole cuts. I couldn't feel anything different from my back. I tentatively felt it as much as I could with a hand. It felt as normal. Why was I in this ward? Shouldn't I be in the high dependency unit? I called a nurse and asked what was going on. She didn't know and called a doctor. He didn't know, but he phoned the surgeon. The surgeon had decided not to proceed with the operation and he would come to talk to me in the morning.

That night, I slept fitfully. I could think of no good reason for not proceeding with the operation. In the morning, the Prof explained. With the keyhole camera he had looked into my stomach, and there were unusual dots to be seen. It happened that an oncologist was observing the op, and he realised the significance of the dots – cancer growing through the stomach lining from outside. So the surgeon had decided not to proceed any further with what would be a very arduous op that would probably turn out to be pointless.

'What's my life expectancy?' I asked him. “Is it months or years?”

“Months”, he said.

Robert Matthews

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**From: “Quaker by Convincement” by Geoffrey Hubbard; pub. Penguin Books, 1974.**

“ .... the plain fact is that the poorest of us is better off than millions of our fellows in other countries, and most of us are, by world standards, disgustingly rich.....

The tradition of Friends in this matter of money and the world's goods is admirably moderate. Friends were never given to extremes of giving away all their goods or to the piling up of fortunes. Whether they had much or little, they viewed their possessions as held in trust, not for their own or their children's benefit but for the Lord's work. They therefore gave up all articles of luxury, living plain and simple lives in plain, simple surroundings.....”. p.136. (Chapter 3, “Materialism”).

## One Day.....

How beautiful it will be one day

This world of ours, the plains, the mountains, the seas.

When we are gone, no more humanity, no more disease.

If spared the animals and insects of land skies and water  
can live again, secure in the routine of survival.

Those plants transported and nurtured,  
free to bloom again at will. Such colours.

Who then will follow to live amongst this paradise.

To share the joy, to breathe the scents, to feel the breeze.

To be immersed in lakes and streams.

Never again to endanger its existence but to care for it  
with love as god intended.

Valerie Bevan

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**From: "A Quaker Response to The Crisis of Climate Change": June 2009. Leaflet - QPSW, Friends House.**

"The Earth is God's work and not ours to do with as we please. We recall Gandhi's saying, often quoted by Quakers: 'Live simply that others may simply live.' As a Quaker community, we do try to live what we believe, guided by the values of simplicity, truth, equality and peace. Too often we fall short of honouring them. Climate change is challenging us to ask anew what our faith leads us to do."

## Jersey

*Sent in by Judy Mantle*



The two most senior members of Jersey Meeting (both firm friends) are Ruth Pilkington and Joy Nursey. Ruth attends Sunday worship regularly but due to ill health, Joy has been unable to join us for some time. It was a real treat when Joy was able to come to Meeting on 20<sup>th</sup> August, along with her daughter Helen and granddaughter Hetty. She has been able to attend a few times subsequently.



### **Some thoughts on an Attender's personal journey** *(by Richard)*

Since an early age I have lived in various places, my main concern was making money, seeing the world and having somewhere nice to live.

Amongst various jobs I worked as a civilian on a navy base and eventually owned & sold a couple of properties. I went to sea working on cruise ships for six years traveling around a lot of the world and amongst other things witnessing the student uprising in China's Tiananmen Square. I found it interesting reading the article by Denise in the Summer issue where she mentioned the Navy base where I worked & it was interesting how we had different views about the same place & took different paths .

I came to Jersey for a weekend and decided, as if you talk to many people is often the case, to stay for a summer instead of going back to sea and I'm still here! I got myself a job in a hotel and later a better job (my Jersey apprenticeship I call it).

Whilst I have worked hard for many years, I never lost the sense of that, sometimes, it's the simple things in life that can make you happiest. Some never realise that health is more important than money, that though money helps to keep a roof over your head and good food, there are things in life that are a lot more important.

If you are a Quaker perhaps you are more close to understanding this than others.

The Quaker way of thinking is the most acceptable way to try and look at life, although I do struggle with some of the concepts. I admire such Quakers as George Fox, Cadbury & conscientious objectors etc. that I have read about, as real people that did not conform with the majority but did not use it as an excuse to opt out, and actually still make a difference for the good of society.

I remember as a child going to a Quaker work camp where you worked for a charity and I remember it very well with fond memories and when thinking of where I could meet some more interesting people, Quakers came to mind. Whilst with curiosity I have tried various different places of worship, the simpleness of a Quaker service is much more beneficial than someone standing in a pulpit looking down at you, saying thou shall do and not do.

After some thought, I have cut my hours at work and the first thing I have decided to do is actually volunteer at Woodbrook Quaker retreat in April. I will be working in the Organic gardens perhaps the start of another journey! I will then be walking part of the Pilgrims Way in Spain with some friends. I will write a report on how it all goes.

Am I just having a midlife crisis? Although I don't think I am, as I have no desire to own a Harley Davidson or wear a medallion!

Happy Christmas & New Year to you all.

Richard

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We are proud to see that Gabriel Carter, a member of our Children's Meeting, has been contributing to the Opinion columns of our local newspaper, The Jersey Evening Post. Well done, Gabriel!

We are very happy that Jersey Meeting now has a larger number of children than we have had for many years and we thoroughly enjoy those weeks when the children attend for scheduled All Age Worship, followed by a pot-lunch lunch. The last of these for 2017 was held on 17<sup>th</sup> December. A good time was had by all.

Every year in Jersey there is a Christmas Tree Festival, which is held in one of our parish churches. Our meeting took part again this year with a tree which was bedecked with shells and fishes. The theme was 'Fishes for Wishes so the tree was decorated with shells - ormers, scallops (for pilgrimage) and other shells with a star fish on the top of the tree. There was a box of decorated paper fishes for people to write their Christmas wishes on the back (for themselves, the community and the world) and then hang on the tree. It was much appreciated and we thank Angela for leading everyone in this.

# Portsmouth

By Denise Bennett

## *Hope*

*Hope is the thing with feathers  
That perches in the soul,  
And sings the tune without the words,  
And never stops at all.*



This first verse of a poem written by Emily Dickenson was read at our Meeting for Worship held on 17<sup>th</sup> December when hope was our chosen theme. Looking back to 2017, we can reflect on this theme and the occasions when we have tried to bring hope to those in need.

We hope we have helped bring some small comfort to the refugees in Portsmouth by collecting and distributing toiletries to the *Friends Without Borders* group who regularly attend the centre in All Saints Church. After our excellent and informative talk by Sue Adeyemo, a volunteer worker, we decided that this was one, very practical way in which could contribute those in need. Consequently a large box of supplies was delivered just before Christmas. The talk described the drop-in refuge as a place of safety where simple food, practical help and advice, toys for the children to play with and companionship could be found for those seeking a helping hand.

We all need hope and reassurance in this tough world. I am always fascinated by the way the words of our posters are always inspiring. One of the most recent ones said *In Turbulent Times Be A Quaker*, something which has never been easy to do. Another read *Disarm For Life* which echoed Area Meeting which took place on the 11<sup>th</sup> November when forty people came to the meeting house, with many staying on in the afternoon to watch the film 'Watford's Quiet Heroes' about a courageous group of men who resisted the call to arms in WW1.

Still on the theme of hope, it was heart warming to read the measured and thoughtful letter written to Portsmouth News by Vida Henning explaining about the significance and history of the white poppy, in response to two very negative pieces which had appeared in the paper earlier in the same week. Her message was clear and ended with a quote from Martin Luther King.

*There is nothing, except a tragic death wish, to prevent  
us reordering our properties, so that the pursuit of peace  
will take precedence over the pursuit of war.*

Two sad pieces of news to impart in this newsletter are the deaths of Hazel Rouse and Richard McGlynn. Quakers attended both the funeral of Hazel and the memorial service for Richard. Hazel will be remembered as a quiet person who loved bird watching – and Richard as an optimist who, in his cheerful way was dedicated to serving others.

Finishing on a more joyful note, literally – one high spot of the last few months was on World Quaker Day when, gathered together with the large felt globe spread on the floor a Friend broke into song by singing – *He's got the whole world in his hands...*

The message of this spontaneous song, which we all joined in with, was something to put our trust in – something to give us hope.

# Romsey

*By Ann Chillingworth*

Our twice-monthly meetings have continued with a steady core of local worshippers and ongoing support from Southampton Friends. We have a good relationship with the management of the premises at 9 Love Lane, where the room is usually made ready for us and help is at hand if a problem arises.

Mike Perks has had to retire from his very active role in the Meeting but is usually able to join us on Sundays. We are grateful for Mike's energy in establishing contact with other Romsey worship groups and hope to build on what he has done to make the Meeting known in Romsey.

At the time of writing, our next meeting is fortuitously scheduled for the evening of 24<sup>th</sup> December, a time to be especially thankful for fellowship and being together.

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# Southampton

*By Frank Boulton*

Arrangements are nearing completion for a Syrian family of five (including three teenagers) to move into the cottage at the beginning of January 2018. Rita Leighton and Trish Roscoe will link with Southampton City Council for the arrangements and support for the family.



Southampton City of Sanctuary. We have been informed that several Quaker Meetings have become Sanctuary Meetings within their local community. This issue was discussed at Area Meeting in November where it was minuted that local meetings consider being a sanctuary meeting. As well as the Syrian family referred to above, several Members of Southampton Quaker Meeting are already involved with other issues concerning the Southampton City of Sanctuary initiative and this will continue.

Arrangements for Street Pastors' use of the Meeting House lobby as a temporary 'safe space' for them occasionally to help users of the 'night-time economy' (principally the night clubs in the vicinity of London Road and Bedford Place) are also at an advanced stage. It was hoped that this might be available before Christmas but there have been delays mainly because some equipment had to be installed in the Meeting House.

The Meeting House Library is being re-organised. Recent surveys have revealed how little the Library has been used as a 'lending resource' in the classical manner, so there has been a significant cull, particularly of those books dating before the year 2000; and those remaining will focus particularly on Quakerism. Many of the remaining books are quite short and include pamphlets too small to have their title displayed on the spine, so are being displayed facing the front. It was agreed that all the Swarthmore lectured form 1950 will remain available.

Romsey and Hythe Meetings continue to be held – Romsey on the second and fourth Sundays of each month, and Hythe on the third Sunday.

We had our annual 'seasonal social' after Meeting on Sunday 17<sup>th</sup> December where, led by Rita Leighton, several Friends – including children – entertained an enthusiastic audience.



# Winchester

By Clarissa Palmer



Looking through the photos in our Meeting House Matters newsletters it's clear that our garden is a place of communion and joy, shared by many people. Friends, residents, visitors, community groups and interested passers-by are all nourished by its peaceful engaging atmosphere. The Meeting's stated aim for the house and garden is that they be 'a focus of community-based activities which have a positive effect on people's lives.' Testimony to this was the children's beautifully prepared picnic in August. Blessed by good weather we sat in the garden sharing delicious food, while all ages happily discussed this and that as they consumed unlikely amounts of cake.

Heritage open day, made possible by many generous volunteer hours, continued the theme of the house and garden's role in promoting a deeper understanding of Quakerism to the wider world. Despite the lure of croquet, a labyrinth and cream teas in the garden over 450 visitors were deeply engaged by the exhibition explaining the contribution Quakers have made to the world. They were equally enthralled by Andrew Rutter's fine illustrations and informed words explaining the house's architectural value; the sensitive art installation by Madeleine Page offered a time for contemplation and a tangible expression of a gathered meeting while the children's stained glass showed 'the light' shining in their hearts. There are many false assumptions still at large about Quakers — Winchesteronline website, which claims to be 'your local guide for Winchester and Hampshire' is a fine example of computer generated confusion, just below the Meeting House name and address is a bright yellow advert stating 'This is not a typical dating site', possibly true but... — so the heritage open days are a great opportunity to introduce the wider public to essential Quaker beliefs while discovering the spirit that gives the building its special quality. And to learn that if Quakers wear funny hats it's by and large because they've chosen to do so not because it's a religious obligation.

'Blessed by the spirit', a day of stillness amongst all this activity led by Andy Stoller and Mary Murgatroyd, was a perfect moment for Friends to quietly reflect on blessings and to find spiritual nourishment. Art, writing and walking the labyrinth all helped deepen the experience.

*In turbulent times: be a Quaker* was the theme of our national Quaker Week this year. Meetings were encouraged to organise outreach events. Winchester was offered two evenings of free informative performances in St Lawrence Church. A trio of musicians and two narrators presented an evening of words and music, *Trills and Tribulations*, which explored the relationship between Quaker worship and music. A week later audiences enjoyed *Tales from the Meeting House*, another evening of discovery in the company of the engaging storyteller Cindylou Turner-Taylor, who performed *Quaker Myths and Legends as you have never heard them before* focusing on Quaker experiences of war genocide and apartheid.

The Peace and Justice group held regular vigils in solidarity with refugees, on occasion sharing the moment with Arthur Wood of Bard Buskers who recited poetry to raise funds for refugees. Winchester Friends are working towards being a sanctuary meeting and hope to offer a room to a refugee in the future.

A Christmas party was held in early December where carols and good cheer were shared by all.

# Reflexions on attending CI Meeting in Guernsey

*By Kate De La Mare*

Sebastien & I attended C I Meeting held in Guernsey at the end of September and both felt blessed by the moments of friendship and sharing we experienced over the week-end.

Travelling on the Friday I was still hobbling about, disabled by a bout of lumbago, making me especially thankful for the warm & kindly welcome once again offered to us by Ann & Tom le Pelley at their home. In staying with Friends, the extra time for deepening our connections is very precious to me.

The next day, getting ready to go to Meeting, my eye was caught by the beautiful certificate of renewal of marriage vows hanging in the le Pelley's home - and talking to Ann about this recent celebration they had shared within Guernsey Meeting especially touched my heart at this time when Sebastien and I renew our journey together.

Arriving at the meeting I felt uplifted that we were so well supported by the attendance of members of our AM's CI Group. Later in the afternoon I really valued the time made possible for getting to know fFriends better as Tom & Ann opened their home to those who'd like to gather there; Sebastien enjoyed going for a walk with fFriends guided by Helen Shorey, others were accompanied by Keith Dumont on a visit of the local Occupation Tapestry.

Sebastien and I were delighted and inspired to hear Guernsey Friend Michelle Dumont as she described the work of a local ecumenical charity which had provided the soup and bread for our lunch. The charity works especially alongside vulnerable young adults – growing food, and running a community cafe in the town. They hope eventually to find a property where day to day life might be shared. We felt a tremendous resonance with the kind of project we feel called to in Jersey. Through Michelle we have since then been in touch with the Guernsey project leader and hope to meet with him soon.

On the Sunday we benefited from Meeting for Worship before the boat brought us back to Jersey ... where we walked along St Aubin's Bay to First Tower where we had arranged to meet my daughter at a church function. Getting there in advance we each met with a very friendly man who asked us many questions - and on discovering that we were looking for land to work, said he may have some to offer us!! and we each agreed to pray on it. This conversation seemed to flow in continuance with things we had shared over the week-end, and we both felt quite overwhelmed with the sense of Providence at work in all our recent encounters.

Please hold us in the Light as we continue in our efforts to be faithful in discerning our calling to work with the land, alongside others & in ways which can be easily accessible to vulnerable people.