



NEWSLETTER

December 2018

It has been a very busy two months since our last Newsletter. So many events have been arranged, and events attended, to provoke thoughts and discussions. Just shows what a quietly active Meeting House we are!

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- Baking Days!
- Peace Lecture – read Paul’s reflections on this thought-provoking talk
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- Inter Faith Planning Group – “Love Thy Neighbour” – does everyone interpret this theme in the same way?
- Regional Meeting – would George Fox have used Twitter?
- Area Meeting – Thelma is inspired by a play about Conscientious Objection
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- Why were Helen and Kate moved so much by a Forum they went to in Birmingham
- Voices of the Earth – Rebecca reminds us of the power of the natural world to inspire our imagination



Concentration!

A most heart-warming event was the start of Issy’s Baking Days. Issy says:

“It was fun. I will be here, apron at the ready on December 21st. Does anyone have suggestions for baking that day? Perhaps some mince pies. Everybody welcome” ... so how about some men joining in!



Having a cup of coffee after making pancakes

At Meeting for Worship, Imogen talked about the “compassionate-communities” project.

Imogen says that she thinks our Quaker community is a truly compassionate one: but the ethos of this wider ‘social movement’ is more about groups like ours as part of a bigger ‘thing’, and offering more that’s proactive to help lonely people interact with others.

The work of the compassionate-communities has a focus on health and well-being, with the premise that health is determined by a wide range of things other than the absence of disease.

<https://www.compassionate-communitiesuk.co.uk/>

Peace Lecturer and Commemoration



On Remembrance Sunday, a beautiful white poppy wreath was laid at the Chichester War Memorial by Gaele and Michael. It had the following inscription: *In remembrance of the military and civilians of all nations who have been victims of war. May we all work hard for peace*

On Saturday November 10th about 50 Friends and visitors attended the peace lecture given by Simon Keyes, Professor of Reconciliation and Peacebuilding, University of Winchester. The lecture was entitled **In praise of non-Remembrance: How should we remember and what we should forget in the commemoration of war?**

Paul reflects on what was said:

“It was a really thought provoking evening as evidenced by the sheer number of questions and comments. It made me realise that we are all more or less conditioned by the way we commemorate remembrance in this country.



In the introduction there was a quote taken from a recent BBC Antiques Roadshow programme which looked into the creation of the huge memorial graveyards in Northern France: “The gigantic graveyards bear testimony to what happens when governments and politicians stop talking to each other”. Simon wore a blue poppy which he said signifies for him the importance of remembrance but in perhaps less conventional ways. He began with a quotation from a poem by Charles Sorley written in 1914:

“When it is peace, then we may view again
With new-won eyes each other’s truer form
And wonder”

His main question was “Does Remembrance make the world a better place?”

He stated the importance of letting memories slip away in order to be ourselves. Trauma of the past can shape our identity in the present. There is a need, he argued, to relieve the power that negative memories have to trap people. “Remembering rightly” would help release us from these negative memories and positively transform our national identity leading to a state of joy and energy.

He did not approve of feeling obliged to conform to the traditional norms of remembrance. He then quoted from various poets, including Laurence Binyon and Wilfred Owen.

There were many questions and comments:

- * The role of the historian? Very important – not to over simplify but to explore the truth.
- * Instead of the word non remembrance perhaps use peaceful remembrance.
- * Young people of today may feel an obligation to feel sad but they have a generational disconnect.

Art Group News

The Art Group will be meeting at Sue and David's on Monday 21 January at 2.30 when future plans and direction of the Group will be discussed – do come along and contribute your ideas.



The Group had a very interesting afternoon reading the play 'The Meeting' which was on at the Minerva Theatre, Chichester in the Summer. Reading the play helped to illuminate the text in a very thought-provoking way. If you didn't see it and haven't read it, there are two copies in the Meeting House library and it is strongly recommended.

This leads on to an article about a Third Sunday event when everyone was invited to discuss the issues brought up by the play. Even those who had not seen the play were able to contribute. David (Hibberd) facilitated the discussion. He started with his thoughts and highlighted some of the issues.

"The play is set in 1805 at the height of the Napoleonic Wars and there is tension between the town's folk and a small Sussex Quaker community who are seen as unpatriotic because of their opposition to war and their refusal to celebrate victory against the French.

The play revolves around three Quakers, Adam a stone mason, Rachel, his wife, and Alice, Rachel's mother and three other members of their Meeting, James Rickman, his wife, Bidy, and daughter, Tabitha. Alice is profoundly hearing impaired and to communicate depends on sign language which only her daughter, Rachel, understands. Into this mix comes a young deserter who is introduced by Rachel to the Quaker community as a young man from a Yorkshire Quaker family. He is quickly accepted into the Meeting even though he struggles with Quaker language. He is employed as Adam's apprentice but his presence brings to the surface many of the doubts and conflicts into what looks, on the surface at least, like a loving and settled, if rather insular, Quaker Community.

I looked at the play as a Quaker and really enjoyed it but I was also left wondering how non-Quakers would view the play. However, looking at it as a Quaker, it challenges us to critically look at ourselves and not allow us to become too inward looking, insular and comfortable.

To me The Meeting does show us that if we trust our discipline and our discernment of our Meetings for Worship for Business we can overcome problems and see the way forward. It also challenges me to try to answer the following questions:

1. How do we welcome those who are 'differently abled'? How can we show that we value their contribution? What does 'inclusion' really mean?
2. How do we empower those who have the concern to act in ways that challenge our settled lives? Do we give them a voice and feel where their words come from and try to understand what they have to say to us and to society in general?
3. How ready are we to respond to conflict in our Meeting if it arose or do we feel this was all very well as part of the play but that 'that would never happen here'?

The discussion that followed was lively and interesting. Many people felt that "Truth" was at the heart of the play. The community in the play is on the brink of being destroyed when the Truth is not upheld. There was also discussion about the voice of the woman not being heard. The discussion ended with the importance of today's society to think about communication needs, and everyone's contribution being valued.

One of our Attenders has offered to write an occasional reflective piece for the Newsletter – here is the first one – enjoy reading it.



RAMBLINGS.....BY B.

“The Priesthood of all Believers.”

*“The Lord gave the word,
Great was the company of the preachers”
(Psalm 68.11)*

Shortly, I shall be attending a performance of Handel’s great oratorio, “Messiah”, and I was musing over some of the text as preparation. My eye lighted on the chorus from which the above quote has been taken which led my mind to the title of this article. This phrase was before me again when I read an article in the “Friend” which I shall refer to again in a moment.

This, I thought, required further thought! I consulted my Quaker guru and my attention was directed to the good old standby, QF&P. For instance, *“When early Friends, affirmed the priesthood of all believers it was seen as an abolition of the clergy; in fact it is an abolition of the laity...” (11.01)*. It continues with the concept that all members are part of the clergy and have responsibility for the maintenance of the meeting, community....and everything else in between it seems to me!

Absence of an ordained clergy is not to be taken as without either leadership or ministry. *“The gifts of the Spirit to us include both”* we are informed (12.02).

Headed ‘Priesthood’, 27.35-36 affirms that *“the priesthood of all believers is a foundation of our understanding of the church”* and that the Spirit of the Pentecostal apostles continues to empower all members of the church in a variety of ministries. Quakers would also affirm that if all are open to the power of love and light *“then they themselves become prophetic and priestly”*, thus the authority of church leaders is not relevant.

In conclusion I shall refer to the ‘Friend’ article (28th September,2010) that I mentioned earlier. This agrees that as Quaker members we all need to participate in, and take responsibility for, our religion. In helping us to fulfil this we need to have trust in, and dependence on God – we have His Grace and the community of Friends. But we need integrity of word, worship and action. (an abridged version of the article which, itself is from Geoffrey Durham’s book “The Spirit of the Quakers”, published by the Yale University Press.)

*“Their sound is gone out,
Into all lands.”*

(Romans 10:18; also included in the “Messiah”)

LOVE THY NEIGHBOUR: QUAKER INTERFAITH EVENT

On Tuesday 20th November at the Quaker Meeting House, Chichester, a stimulating evening was spent exploring how the theme of Loving thy Neighbour is interpreted by local Hindus (from the Vedic Society), a local Imam, Jews and Quakers.



After a light supper, speakers from the various groups represented spoke briefly on the theme. Whilst it might be thought to be a purely Christian concept, the idea of caring for each other in this way was shown to be both more ancient, being included in both Hindu texts from some 3,000 years ago and the Hebrew Bible of a similar age, and common to all the faiths present. Love and charity exist for Moslems, Jews and Hindus just as they do for Quakers and Christians.

About thirty people attended and the speakers were followed by a stimulating (and sometimes perplexed) discussion. If these ideas are so widespread, why are people so often at daggers drawn? For all that there was an encouraging feeling of unity throughout the evening.

For a full report of this Event please see the Inter Faith Planning Group Newsletter at <http://chichesterquakers.org.uk/quaksch/wp-content/uploads/2018/12/Newsletter-for-Interfaith-Dec18-1.pdf>

Regional Meeting

Jenny and Janet attended a very interesting Regional Meeting at the end of October entitled **Patterns and Possibilities in Digital Quakerism**. The day was led by Jon Martin.



His theme was obviously the Internet and Social Media and the part they can play in a Quaker Meeting House. He used the phrase “everything has changed, nothing has changed” to illustrate how early Quakers used pamphlets to spread the ideas of Quakerism – just as Google might be used today! In fact, he felt George Fox would have used Twitter to great effect!

Jon conveyed to his audience very well the possibilities of creating good communication networks and perhaps putting in place a different kind of Worship. Social media can be used in a very effective way so it should be embraced and not looked at in a negative way. As Jon put it in rather a provocative way “Must be there or be invisible”!

Jenny and Janet will be leading a Third Sunday discussion in February on this topic, together with ideas that were put forward at this meeting from Lisa at Friends House about digital record management. So come along and be inspired and excited by the possibilities!

Area Meeting

Thelma attended November's Area Meeting. After the formal Meeting there was a play called This Evil Thing. Thelma felt it was a really powerful production and says "*I wish our Meeting could have seen this play...*" So let Thelma tell us about it:



Michael Mears, 'actor, playwright and long-distance walker, presented this play about Conscientious Objection just before Armistice Day. He had researched conscientious objection for several years previously. He based his key C. O. on one Bert Brocklesby, a 25 year-old teacher and Methodist preacher who was also an 'absolutist'. The author had read Bert Brocklesby's 'Memoirs' and had spoken with his grand-daughter, Jill Gibbon. Bert had been imprisoned, starved, beaten and almost shot.

To see this play was a totally unexpected and amazing experience. Michael Mears, the sole actor, convincingly plays 52 different characters.

We see him at the beginning, standing on a bare stage except for 9 wooden crates and 2 upturned drawers he balances on when stuck in a ditch filled with water. He is tremendously athletic as he moves swiftly across the stage with different wooden crates to form a prison cell, a pulpit, an orator's platform, a bench.

Out from his pocket comes a feather, an officer's cap, a pipe. As Bert Brocklesby, he receives a white feather from a woman who calls him 'coward.' He replies with great dignity, 'No ma'am, we will not kill, but are ready to die for our beliefs.'

As Bert again, we see him derided and shockingly treated by a brutal officer. Then he receives an official paper announcing his imminent court martial in France, and a likely death sentence. Later, back in prison, he is brought a dish of potatoes to peel. When he knows they are for the soldiers' meals he refuses to touch them. As an 'absolutist' he will have nothing whatever to do with the military.

A pipe in his mouth shows he is now Bertrand Russell, the philosopher and distinguished mathematician who was also imprisoned for his pacifist stance. We see Russell sitting on a bench with the then prime minister, Herbert Asquith. Bert is explaining why he cannot take up arms. Mr Asquith seems to have little to say in return. He has just come from a game of golf!

There is a sound track of songs, gunfire and occasional news bulletins, but otherwise the speech and action are entirely the sole actor's.

It's hard to convey the emotions and the consummate skill of Michael Mears. 75 minutes did not seem a moment too long, after which he took a question and answer session. The play was first performed in 2017 at the Edinburgh fringe, and since then it's been shown all over the country in meeting houses, theatres, prisons, and also in America.

Around 16,000 Conscientious Objectors refused to sign up and about 70 died of illness and poor conditions in World War One. These words from their memorial stone in Tavistock Square are quoted on the programme:-

'To all those who have established and are maintaining
The right to refuse to kill,



New Economy Group

The main focus of the Group at the moment is on a partnership event with the University of Chichester. We have been invited to lead one of the sessions on the Ethics Module of the MBA in March and we hope the session will take the form of:

Quaker History and Values/Testimony
Quaker Business past and present
Quaker Business Meeting methods
Case Studies

One of our Attenders is now volunteering with the local Credit Union Boom.

Two Members also attended a very interesting and relevant talk recently by Graham Riches, Emeritus Professor of the School of Social Work, University of British Columbia. Kitty has written this summary:

Food Banks -Who wins, who loses, who cares



This was the title of the talk. Professor Riches grew up in the UK. He is particularly interested in issues of domestic hunger, food charity, social welfare and the right to food within Canada and the rich 'first world'. He has just written a book, which he calls a polemic, "Food Bank Nations: Poverty, Corporate Charity and the Right to Food."

He reiterated that sufficient food is one of the human rights agreed by the United Nations and ratified by Canada and the UK though not the USA. Food Banks should not be necessary except in emergencies. Yet in America and Canada and, beginning to happen here, Food Banks are an industry. There is an over production of food by agriculture

leading to supermarkets overstocking, the excess goes abroad as food aid or to food banks. This is "charity" and is tax deductible. The main company involved in this in America is Walmart, yet they do not pay their employees a living wage. Their UK subsidiary Asda sends its surplus food to the group of food banks called Fareshare. Other organisations such as those run by Trussell Trust a religious based organisation and our local bank, run by an evangelical church, rely largely on food donated by individuals. The solution is a political one, wages and benefits should be higher, so that people do not have to suffer the shame of resorting to Food Banks.

A little research, following the talk, finds there is a pressure group called "End Hunger Now" which, at present, is sending a petition to Downing Street asking the government to fix Universal Credit. The main reason why people have to use food banks is because of late payments of benefits. The Trussell Trust is also working to stop UK hunger and poverty and aims to make food banks only a response to an emergency, not a necessity. Whereas Fareshare's strap line is fighting hunger, tackling food waste, a slightly different emphasis.

Quaker Mental Health Forum

Kate and Helen attended this event in Birmingham in November, with its primary focus on Mental Health and young people. The Forum was an opportunity for Friends to share their experiences around Mental Health, to attend some workshops on management aspects and to bring back insights to their local meeting.

Kate and Helen felt "*It was a huge privilege for both of us*" and go on to tell us:



"The Forum was introduced by our National Mental Health Development Officer, Alison Mitchell who spoke about the current crisis in Mental Health and the effect particularly on young Friends. Then the rest of the morning was spent listening to 3 speakers; a young Friend with Bipolar Disorder, a Friend who works as College Wellbeing Officer whose own journey into becoming a Quaker helps her in her work and a Friend who cared for her daughter as she came through a serious eating disorder.

What stood out from these was how supported the 3 keynote speakers all felt by their faith, their MfW's and their fFriends, often at times of rejection by others. As the daughter of the carer had put it:- "It is the tenderness thing that sets apart the Quaker view of mental health."

We were both particularly effected by the words of the carer, but this is Kate's personal experience:

Although I have personally experienced Depression during my life and feel that this led me into working in Mental Health, it was caring for my son during the years when he first developed Aspergers, gradually learned to manage this to the best of his ability and since then has gone on to try and do the same with Gender Dysphoria that has enabled me to learn from my own difficulties in order to try and help her and hopefully others too.

I found the speaker's warm presentation of her talented, sensitive and eccentric daughter's slide into Anorexia Nervosa so moving. Having had a child with eccentric behaviours around food myself, along with other issues, and whose self-esteem problems and ongoing distorted bodily view have often caused me much distress, I strongly identified with the dichotomy over keeping a young persons trust while representing issues accurately to her health professionals, with feeling that one's own difficult feelings were often unrecognised and with the toll on familial relationships when one member's needs have to be prioritised and the rollercoaster of good and bad times lived through together.

I also agree that the journey does help you to re-assess your life priorities. As it seemed that this lady's journey was finally taking an upturn, she shocked us all with the news that her daughter had then suddenly died and she bravely went on to share her life learning from that also. I was one of those in tears at this point. She then informed us that the inspirational quotes we'd all been writing down that were scattered the rooms we were meeting in were those that had sustained her daughter through some of the most difficult times. I had already decided to read up on the works of 13th-century Persian poet and Sufi mystic, Rumi, which I have since done.

After lunch, we each attended different topics workshop and response groups.

Kate's topic workshop was about *Using the Environment for Healing in Mental Health*:

We were a group of about 10 and together we looked at creative outdoor experiences and their opportunities for walking and talking, spiritual and personal insights, building positive shared memories, interconnectedness and mutual support through reflection and meditation and counselling as a means of addressing mental health problems. Then as a group we built a labyrinth; walking the labyrinth is a spiritual practice common to the Ancient Greeks, Hopi tribesmen, Tibetan monks, Roman Catholics and many others.

Kate's Response Group of 6 were led through some reflections on childhood memories in pairs, a letter from older to younger self and a piece on someone who made a difference in our young lives. I wrote about my grandfather and learned something about my relationship with my mother.

Helen's topic workshop was *Compassionate Eating* in which her group explored how to use our everyday conversations around food and bodies as a route to compassionate self-care, forgiveness and non-judgement of others.

Helen's Response group was Singing in which she experienced the joy of group singing WHILE AT THE SAME TIME choosing to move physically between different harmony groups. Kate's group was located quite close to Helen's and we enjoyed also the joyful sound.



At the end of the day, we returned to the main meeting room, leading into worship.

Do we have a Quaker Concern to bring back to meeting? Something about a safe place to share difficult feelings and active listening.

Sustainability



Open Tuesday to Saturday.

Have you heard about a new enterprise in Chichester called **The Refillery** in Draper's Yard?

“Dried foods and cleaners without the packaging, pay for the amount you want or need!

Bring your own containers (or we do have paper bags!). We are passionate about the #zerowaste movement, and whether you want to reduce the amount of plastic packaging in your life, or you just want better value foods, we are here to help! Pop in and see what we have available. We sell anything from cleaning products to nuts and seeds, herbs and spices to grains, beans and pulses and lots more”

Voices of the Earth

Finally to finish on a very uplifting item. Rebecca gave us a wonderful afternoon of art and poetry in memory of Rachel Smith, but also to share with us a course she attends at Woodbrooke called 'Voices of the Earth'. Here is Rebecca's entertaining talk:



"As this name suggests this course is about the world around us. It is often about natural history, but can also be about anything you want it to be, involving art, poetry and both working together.

Philip and Zelig Gross facilitate this course. Philip is a renowned poet who has written many books and won the T.S. Elliot prize. Zelig is also a writer: she is the author of 'With a tender hand', a well known Quaker book on Eldership and oversight and in the Quaker library. Zelig helped us with our art work. Both are very friendly and helpful and good at bringing out the best in us. This year they were joined by Australian poet Sarah Rice. She also proved herself to be very imaginative, talented and a lovely person.

It was good to meet up with the others on the course and share experiences. We enjoyed meals together, shared worship and epilogue and explored the garden. The garden was an important part of my course. On our last night we had a bonfire and sang campfire songs I hadn't sung for ages. The most important room was the art room, where we spent most of our time. This was full of different sorts of materials and equipment. As the course progressed, it also became full of our art work.

Nature of course, was a very important source of our inspiration. Not only did we have the garden and its wildlife, but we watched a film about the wild spaces in Berlin, and how they were threatened by development. The ocean was also explored as a theme. Philip was involved in a collaboration of art and poetry. The art used the remains of old shoes from the ocean depths, such as worn out flip flops, bringing home to us the issue of plastic pollution.

Sometimes photographs could inspire us. We were encouraged to take pictures of the garden, not beautiful landscapes but of things which could easily be overlooked, such things having as interesting shapes or movement. The unimportant, or things which seemed unimportant was a very central idea to much of our work.

We explored the use of colour in art, and then worked in black and white. We made glyphs or meaningful shapes with Chinese brushes. Then we tried to decipher what shapes we had made. As a group exercise we were encouraged to 'take a line for a walk'. We made 'a tired line', 'a happy line' etc. We used pictures, materials and our own memories to create ideas for poetry, sometimes these were spontaneous.

Verbs were also used as a way of finding inspiration. We were shown ceramic sculpture where an A to Z list of verbs used. The verbs included words like 'to pour', 'to lift', 'to have and to hold'. These ideas of course could also be used for art and poetry, not just for sculpture.

We were asked to create a museum of the future. In groups we were asked to think about objects and things that would no longer exist in years to come. We were told that this exercise was only concerned with things that were close to home, such as handkerchiefs, photo albums, handwriting etc. The difficult bit was creating our object and coming up with an explanation."

We were all intrigued by Rebecca's contribution to this museum of the future – she felt that Patience and Wisdom were going to be extinct in years to come and she made a "box" to preserve them in.



Rebecca wrote this delightful poem and illustrated it with a wonderful collage

Reflections of ducks feeding at Woodbrooke

They move across the lake searching for food.
Tail up, orange limbs outstretched,
Upturned rowing boats,
Brown, grey and white.

Undignified.

They wouldn't thank me for capturing this moment.



Dark waters ripple, dots and curves,
Broken waves radiate, criss-cross, extend,
White stars glisten, flash,
Move across space.
Ring follows ring,
Orbits widen,
Ever increasing circles,
A black hole in reverse.

Obvious to the ever moving shapes of
The watery mismaze,
The ducks continue feeding.

Where clouds and leaves and sky and trees
Are mixed
On this crazy mirror.

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