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CONTENTS – VOL 167 NO 31

- 3 Article removed
4 After the bomb dropped
5 BP: was this inevitable?
Alan Kirkham
6 Free Schools are not free
Angela Walker
7 Independence from America at Menwith Hill
Mavis and Roger Iredale
8-9 Letters
10-11 Quaker community?
Laurie Michaelis
12 A form of joy
Shaun Swann
13 Revisiting Louise
Ben Rice
14 And the first of these is envy...
Tim Morgan
15 Vipassana – a personal journey
David Manclark
16 Q-eye
17 Friends & Meetings

Correction

On page 11 last week, in the story of the event at Bridewell in Bristol, the last line of a quote was omitted. The full quote is: 'Their courage is emboldening and has many resonances. Whatever injustices or inequalities we perceive in the world today here is encouragement. In honouring them we are repaid plentifully. Be brave, be compassionate, speak my truth, listen, *build friendship and love they are saying.*' (*The italics are the missing line.*)



Cover image: The memorial cenotaph in Hiroshima Peace Memorial Park is a concrete, saddle-shaped monument that covers a cenotaph holding the names of all of the people killed by the bomb. Photo: RinzeWind/flickr CC:BY. See page 4. **Images on this page:** Scenes from the Bamford community. Celebration of a birthday with a picnic (above) and a woodstack (below). Photos courtesy of Bamford Quaker Community. See pages 10-11.

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Subsequent note (added by Jez Smith, 5 August 2010): the article that appeared on this page in the paper edition has been removed.

After the bomb dropped

FRIENDS HOUSE, LONDON, is to host a major exhibition to mark the sixty-fifth anniversary of the bombing of two Japanese cities with nuclear weapons during the second world war. The exhibition, which marks the bombing of Hiroshima and Nagasaki, will be available from 2 to 12 August. All events, which include A-bomb photo panels, A-bomb artefacts and an A-bomb survivor testimony are free of charge. No prior registration is needed.

Quaker Peace & Social Witness assistant general secretary, Marigold Bentley, said the exhibition is timely given the current debate surrounding the future of Britain's Trident nuclear

deterrent. The exhibition is funded by Britain Yearly Meeting, CND and the Hiroshima Peace Memorial Museum. She said: 'I think it's an auspicious time to be hosting this exhibition because the UK nuclear weapons capacity – Trident – continues to be in the public eye. This exhibition is a reminder as to why we must continue campaigning against nuclear weapons.'

Christopher Wood of CND added that the exhibition, entitled 'After the Bomb Dropped: How Hiroshima and Nagasaki suffered', will underline the reasons for opposing nuclear weapons. He continued: 'The exhibition will poignantly explore the devastation

wreaked by nuclear weapons on human populations. When we see the catastrophic devastation caused by nuclear weapons the prospect of maintaining a Trident system that would allow for the possibility of such weapons to be used again seems absurd.'

Marigold Bentley added that one major aim of the exhibition will be to enlighten the young. She said: 'I would really like people to bring young people. Young people are not taught about Hiroshima and Nagasaki in school. This is an opportunity for them to get a sense of the horror of nuclear war and why we should never do it again.'

Raymond Mgzah

The Spirit Level under attack

AT A PACKED LECTURE room on 22 July at the Royal Society of Arts lunchtime event, Richard Wilkinson and Kate Pickett gave a spirited defence of their recent book *The Spirit Level*.

The event was a panel discussion in which Christopher Snowden and Peter Saunders offered statistical criticism of the book.

The hall was completely packed, reflecting the impact that *The Spirit Level* has had on political thinkers and actors from all political sides. Kate Pickett fairly poured scorn on statistical academic Peter Saunders' scathing attacks on their use of statistics.

The 2007 book, written for a lay audience not for professional statisticians, was more than a mere statistical account of the relationship between inequality and the level of social ills, but endeavoured with reference to many related studies to show how statistics helped demonstrate how a group of social ills such as homelessness, teenage pregnancies, homicide rates, mental ill health and so on were more prevalent where the gulf between high and low income were more prevalent where the gulf between high and low income strata was greater, as in the UK, arguing strongly in support of their use of statistics saying that she also teaches statistics at post graduate level. **Nöel Staples**

Image and reality

LAST WEEK'S FARNBOROUGH AIR SHOW was labelled 'a shop window for deadly weapons' by the Campaign Against the Arms Trade (CAAT). The event functioned as an arms fair from 19 to 22 July, before a weekend of air displays. Invited customers included the armed forces of Libya and Saudi Arabia. Defence secretary Liam Fox and business secretary Vince Cable addressed assembled arms dealers during the event.

'Contacts are made and weaponry deals are negotiated in private chalets arrayed as grandstands for the air displays,' said CAAT's Ian Pritchard. 'Do the crowds thrilling at the aerobatics realise that they are just witnessing the closing ceremony of a week of indiscriminate arms selling?'

Symon Hill

Armed helicopter.
Photo courtesy CAAT.



BP: was this inevitable?

At the moment BP has stopped filling up the Gulf with their leaking oil. One wonders if this leak was an unfortunate accident or the result of a culture change in the company. The ethical funds have in the past loved this company but now that support is draining fast.

Some ethical funds use a 'best of sector' approach to offer investors a less risky way of investing ethically. While John Browne was BP chief executive, the company was the oil company of choice for those funds that included oil in their portfolios. Their website confirmed their green credentials: 'In 2006 we adopted a set of environmental requirements for all new projects. The goal is to ensure potential issues like waste disposal, emissions reduction and discharges into water are thought through before a project gets underway and carefully monitored from then until the project's end.'

Under Tony Hayward, an out and out oil man, BP shifted away from the 'Beyond Petroleum' agenda. Controversially, he U-turned on John Browne's policy making an investment in the Canadian tar sands in December 2007. This controversial decision triggered a special resolution at the 2010 annual general meeting.

The recent history of the company does not make good reading for anyone concerned about the impact of oil companies on either the communities in which they operate, the environment or their own work force.

One has to wonder if the company's recent run of difficulties has anything to do with the move away from a genuine commitment to sustainability in both its search for new energies and its ability to work long term in a community.

Even during John Browne's leadership BP had started to have a worrying record but his commitment to sustainable energy and refusal to exploit tar sands meant BP stayed within the remit of the ethical investment community.

An F&C Investments spokesman said: 'We exclude BP from Stewardship and Ethical Bond [funds] for a range of reasons, but the company's past record in safety is one of these. The recent accident indicates we probably made the right decision.'

Tony Hayward has led the company away from a key environmental marker – to refuse to exploit tar sands oil. Environmentalists say this process is extremely damaging to the local environment, effects of global warming and needs high energy use. Investors were concerned about the extreme environmental impacts and high capital intensity of such projects. The company considers its *in situ* tar sands assets to be capable of delivery within strict environmental limits.

However, a major conversation on tar sands has been sparked within the UK and a lengthy debate on this issue took place at BP's recent AGM. Fifteen per cent of shareholders refused to support the management's view on this activity. If the company were to listen to this significant voice then one might hold out hope that they are beginning to change but...

So little confidence is there in BP now that King and Shaxon, a leading firm of ethical stockbrokers, said: 'In December 2009 we sold all client holdings in BP that we could.'

The last five years have seen an investment in sustainable energy – some £2.5 million, mainly in advanced biofuels, BP's wind

business in the US, solar power, and carbon capture and storage – however, put in the context of a turnover of some £158 million, this commitment is somewhat peripheral and seems to be declining. Tony Hayward closed the BP Alternative Energy's separate London headquarters in June 2009. BP subsidiaries are delivering core business but not seeking external publicity for their positive moves with quite the same gusto as displayed under John Browne. One has to wonder why.

Is it significant that their fines from the US authorities have been the highest in 2009 than at any time in the last few years? 2009 was the worst result except 2007 even discounting the large fine for the Texas City Refinery fire in five years.

Overall, the view of 'best of sector' has shifted for many of these reasons; a Rathbones Greenbank investment manager said: 'We prefer the likes of Statoil or BG who have a much bigger exposure to natural gas, a key bridging fuel to the low carbon economy.'

One wonders how any so-called ethical or socially responsible fund can continue to support BP. It's about real transparency, as Julian Parrot from the Ethical Investors Association, says: 'The key issue for fund managers is transparency about why certain stocks are held and what actions might be taken in the event of cases, like BP, where there is an apparent change in business policy'. Things grow best when the roots are fed by good nutrients. The nutrients of any good business are based sustainable business models. One wonders if the current situation isn't caused by a corporate shift in BP that has forgotten this basic fact.

**Alan Kirkham, director
Investing Ethically**

Comment

Free Schools are not free

There are many failings with our education system but Angela Walker argues that there is much that is good

The government's plans for Free Schools are contentious and recent articles in their favour have concerned me.

Free Schools are free in that they concur with current views of the free market economy. They are private schools paid for by the state to the detriment of the majority of schools. They are free to make decisions about who can be admitted and who excluded. They can decide their own policies but parents of children who do not benefit from these have no right to question them. They can employ staff on the open market and can ignore democratically negotiated employment practice.

Nearly all my thirty-five-year teaching career has been in state schools or other local authority educational establishments. In none of these do I recognise what Martin Layton describes (*16 July*).

My current school, a large comprehensive secondary, has, like most schools, a policy of positive inclusion for behaviour. We strive to foster compassion and reconciliation in helping students cope in difficult situations – does this sound familiar to Friends? As a large school we can employ a team of trained mentors working individually with children whose learning is affected by anger, abuse, anxiety or friendship issues. We teach children the purpose of rules that are necessary for a calm, well-ordered learning environment.

We may not be perfect and we sometimes have difficult issues with students that we are unable

to deal with. This happens in any school, even in faith-based academies set up with the 'highest' principles. When things go wrong state school students and their parents have recourse to support and intervention through the local authority.

Janice Fletcher Jeal's (*The Future of Education, 2 July*) ideal school building is environmentally friendly. Building Schools for the Future (BSF), an ambitious plan to build new schools and renovate old ones, has sustainability at the forefront of its designs. New schools that have been built have wind turbines, solar heating, rainwater collection and more. Unfortunately BSF's funding has been axed to fund the new government's Free Schools and Academies programme.

Janice's school would have allotments for children to grow their own vegetables. Come to my school, and many others, to see allotments where children discover the joy of gardening. Many schools are FairTrade schools, often at the students' insistence. Look on the 10:10 website to see how many schools are reducing their carbon footprint whilst learning about sustainability.

We take part in voluntary projects and my daughter's school is not unusual in having links with a school in a developing country. Her students, from a socially deprived area, have just returned from visiting their partners in a secondary school in rural Rwanda, broadened and enriched by the

experience. Fundraising by the British schoolchildren will enable the Rwandan school to build a dormitory so more girls can attend school.

Children have opportunities to learn to be good citizens and responsible members of their community. Citizenship lessons, part of the secondary curriculum, are just a starting point. In my own multi-ethnic school many students take part in interfaith projects such as Schools SACRE, a junior arm of the body that oversees Religious Education. Nearly all schools have student councils where the student voice is listened to.

There are many failings with our education system, but there is much that is good. Free Schools would not avoid all of the faults unless those setting them up would wish children to step away from the real world. We are limited by the demands of the 'authorised knowledge' curriculum but this is not all we teach. Creativity, inquiry, self-expression and individualism are in our schools too.

I would urge Friends to support our democratically governed local authority schools and value and encourage all that is good in them. Giving service to schools and expressing our Quaker values through involvement as school governors would be a far better way to support our children than to opt into a two-tier system of education.

Angela is a member of Leicester Meeting.



Independence from America at Menwith Hill

The Fourth of July, traditionally the day for the USA's celebration of Independence from Britain, is also the opportunity for a quite different annual celebration by Quakers from the North of England supported by many others: the Independence from America Demonstration held at the gates of Menwith Hill air base near Harrogate in Yorkshire. This year's demonstration outside the straggling collection of huge white 'golf balls', cameras and antennae attracted nearly 200 people on a windy day with occasional heavy showers across windswept landscapes of North Yorkshire.

The Campaign for the Accountability of American Bases (CAAB) has been operating since 1992 when it evolved out of a long campaign of protest at Menwith Hill that had been going on since the 1950s. It was the first campaign to discover and reveal that Menwith Hill (and later RAF Fylingdales) was to be crucially connected to the notorious US missile defence system. It is one of the 1,000-odd US bases outside the USA and the largest of the twelve situated in England. These bases are entirely under the control of US personnel, though the pretence is that they are RAF installations. There is little information about how they are used, but Menwith plays a key role in America's wars and domination of space. It presents a danger to the UK and is an insidious source of violence across the globe. It is completely unaccountable.

Lindis Percy, who was very much in evidence at our demonstration, has played a lead role in organising CAAB. She publishes a quarterly and informative newsletter free to voluntary subscribers. She has been arrested, harassed and imprisoned on many occasions for her leadership and has developed over the years

a remarkable knowledge of the legal and political challenges that campaigners have to face. Martin Schweiger, a local Quaker who prays weekly outside the base, led in the organising of this year's happy and peaceful event. Many other Quakers give their support.

Much in evidence were vanloads of bored police. Regrettably, not many of them heard comedian and investigative journalist Mark Thomas speak wittily of our right to protest at the invasion of our land by a superpower intent only on its own strategic advantages. Nor did they hear the solemn reading of 'The People's Declaration of Independence from America' cleverly modelled on the original 1776 declaration. Singers and groups entertained us with ballads, after a warm-up with communal drumming.

But this demonstration is important and serious. On Britain's 'green and pleasant land' stands a complex with at least 1,500 US intelligence collectors, who are clearly key players in the waging of global wars. It is a blatant challenge to our Peace Testimony, and it represents a huge encroachment on

the sovereignty of parliament and the people of this country.

Apparently the US and UK employees of this gigantic straggling spy complex chose to ignore the events, while the station commander refused to meet us and rejected the invitation to receive the 'red card' of collective comments, which Mark Thomas eventually presented to the gate policeman. But, as Mark said, at least we have the right in our democracy to criticise our government's craven attitudes to our occupier and to express the people's views, if only to a band of bored police officers and a few sheep.

Mavis and Roger Iredale

Mavis and Roger are members of Mid Somerset AM.



Mark Thomas handing the red card to the police.

Free Schools

Janice Fletcher Jeal has written a powerful plea for Quaker values in schools (2 July). In fact, it is, today, a plea for the sort of values that all schools might be proud to reflect.

This is only the latest example of how Quaker thinking has, over time, come to be accepted as good practice whether in education or in business or in other spheres of human activity. For contemporary evidence of that, we need only look at the current £5 note.

I hope that Janice will find the opportunity to visit one or more of the Quaker schools that already exist (in fact, she almost certainly knows Ackworth already), for she would find there communities working hard to reflect the ideals of which she writes. We can claim at Leighton Park and, I know, at the other Quaker schools of England and Ireland to have achieved many of the ideals that she lists, but not (yet) all: however, work is seriously in progress.

It is heartening to read such a positive account of what a Quaker Free School would, in Janice's view, look like, and to find it so recognisably in existence in many ways already. We know what strong views the issue of fee-charging generates among Friends, but we also know of the huge financial support the schools themselves give to needy parents and what invaluable outreach Quaker schools already provide to enable young people to create the world that Janice and we constantly dream of.

*John Dunston, head
Leighton Park School*

Martin Layton (16 July) gives a glowing picture of what a Quaker Free School might be like. If such a school were to come about where he suggests (in a deprived area) it could indeed be a 'good thing'. However, this should not blind us to the effects of the abandonment of the schools building programme.

The government has made it clear that funds for new school building will only be given to Academies and Free Schools. Thus there will be no means of Local Authorities ensuring a coherent provision of schools in a given area, with potentially wasteful overprovision. Free Schools are most likely to be set up where there are parents with the time, energy and abilities and organisational skills needed, and it is likely that deprived areas will not benefit as much as more affluent areas. I believe we should campaign for poor school buildings to be replaced or upgraded whatever type of school they are.

*Martin Quick
Stroud Meeting*

Nuclear energy

Friends are not alone in abhorring the misuse of nuclear energy over Japan in 1945 or the continuing stockpiling of nuclear weapons. This should not imply that the discovery of the splitting of the atom or the fusion of atoms cannot be harnessed for the use of mankind.

Some years ago a road vehicle carrying radioactive material from a Leeds hospital met with an accident en route to Sellafield. By contrast nuclear waste has been carried safely overnight by rail for forty years. A single nuclear flask is lowered into the well of a strongly constructed wagon such that the centre of gravity is lower than that of standard rail freight wagons. Dedicated locomotives haul one or more of these wagons alone. There is a speed limit of 40 mph. Before being put into use a train carrying flasks was deliberately crashed at 100 mph on a disused railway. The flasks suffered no damage. Thus at the outset the equipment was risk assessed for safety. It has performed effectively.

There are risks with any technology, and not least in the storage of radioactive material.

Perceived wisdom is that higher level nuclear waste is best concentrated at one site. The re-processing of civil nuclear waste should be complemented by a government guarantee that such material will only be useful for civil purposes.

Regardless of a predicted medium term energy deficit in Britain the continuing pumping out of dioxide carbons into the atmosphere across the world threatens life itself. While wave and tidal power is in its infancy and wind is irregular it saddens me that the green movement cannot embrace nuclear energy as part of a solution.

*John Melling
Inverness Meeting*

David Pawlyn (23 July) predicts that new nuclear power stations will be needed 'to keep the lights burning'. Perhaps this is true if we continue to use lights and electricity in our current profligate way, but there is a better alternative. Simply switch things off. No one needs to venture far without observing many ways in which the use of electricity could be easily reduced. We could get up earlier in the summer using natural morning light, instead of using artificial light in the evenings. We could turn off many of our street lights after, say, midnight, and rediscover the awesome beauty of the stars. We could shower less frequently, allowing natural oils and dead skin to help protect us against the midday sun. Just three ideas, I'm sure other Friends have other ideas. Together we can make a difference.

*Roy Vickery
Westminster Meeting*

*Subsequent note
(added by Jez Smith,
5 August 2010): the
letter that appeared
on this page in the
paper edition has
been removed.*

BP

I share Chris Walker's criticism of BYM's £500,000 investment in BP, its largest in any company. When *the Friend* broke the story this month, the image of an oil-stricken bird showed clearly enough what Quaker money has been supporting. How has a society committed to the integrity of creation freely chosen to support two energy giants – BP (for investments) and EON (for Friends House's electricity) – when many small eco-companies could have done with Quaker support on that kind of scale? Such investments might fund Friends' work but they undermine Friends' witness, which is based on committing to right relationship with God and the world in all the things we do. Quakers are engaged in a Holy

Experiment, not just good works, and the need to manage the affairs of the Society cannot trump what the Society is actually for. Quakers say true religion leads to respect for the earth and all life upon it. So let's get to it.

David Gee
justplainedavid@gmail.com

Further to recent articles on BYM's shares in BP, and concern about that, some Friends may already support Fair Pensions, the national campaign for responsible investment. It exerts pressure on the government, investors and companies, and also provides means for individuals to put pressure on the pensions funds of which they are members. Fair Pensions have recently helped supporters take action affecting policy both at Shell and BP on their tar sands projects. In addition, they are calling on the government to toughen standards for pension funds so that they can no longer get away by paying lip service to environmental and social issues.

Find out more at: *fairpensions.org.uk* or at Fairshare Educational Foundation, Trowbray house, 108 Weston Street, London SE1 3QB Tel 020 7403 7800.

Janet Toye
Oxford Meeting

Microsoft

Ken R Smith (16 July) says that the collaboratively-developed, free software Open Office is more in keeping with Quaker principles than the paid for Microsoft Office product. That's a very strange thing to say. Making and selling things for a fair price is not out of keeping with Quaker principles. In fact, early Quakers ran some fantastic businesses and I believe that the idea of fair retail prices was invented by Quakers. Microsoft Office represents astonishing value for money even at full price, and, of course, much of Microsoft's

value is ploughed into the Gates' foundation which is eradicating polio at the moment and will no doubt do other splendid things in future. Sounds quite Quaker principle-y to me. I don't work for Microsoft, by the way!

Adrian Dixon
Reading Meeting

Interfaith and interchurch

As a project for the Equipping for Ministry course at Woodbrooke, I am doing a study of Friends involvement in interchurch and interfaith groups across Britain and Ireland Yearly Meetings.

If any of your readers who are engaged in this type of organisation, formal or informal at local, area or national level would like to help this study by answering a short three-to four-page questionnaire, could they please contact me at the email address below. They should be representing Friends and meeting regularly with other churches and/or other faiths.

I am considering several questions. What is the scope and purpose of this work? How are good relationships best built? What issues are difficult? Is there a good reporting back process so that more Friends are involved? I hope to summarise the information gained from the experience of a sample of Friends.

Felicity McCartney
South Belfast Meeting
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Please include your full postal address and telephone number and a reference (issue, title) to articles. Please indicate whether you prefer your address, email or Meeting name or other detail to be published with your name. We reserve the right to edit letters.

Quaker community?

Laurie Michaelis reflects on nine months living in the Quaker Community in Bamford.

Last September, I moved into the Quaker Community in Bamford in the Peak District. After five years living alone and working from home, I wanted more intimacy and structure in my life and the discipline of daily worship with others. Although I knew there were conflicts and tensions among some members, the move felt right for me.

The community started in 1988. With the help of a Quaker bequest, eight Friends bought the old Derwent Valley Water Board headquarters with about 10 acres of semi-industrial land. They transformed the place. Offices and workshops became living space for over twenty people including family houses, flats, bedsits and guest rooms. There is a welcoming community kitchen, a tranquil meeting room, sitting room, library and shared washing facilities. Wasteland became productive vegetable plots, a thriving wildlife area and woodland. Members enjoyed a vibrant shared life and attended worship each day. The community also offered respite care for people with learning or physical disabilities.

Over the years the community supported its members through illnesses, family crises and conflicts, maintaining a strong sense of love and caring. However the shared vision, purpose and activity dissipated. By 2005 daily worship ceased. Incapacity or busyness prevented some members from attending and others no longer found nourishment in Quaker spirituality. Meanwhile, many members felt overwhelmed by the work needed to sustain the land, buildings and people. There were no structures to allocate roles and share responsibilities and while a voluntary approach seemed right for some, others struggled to know what was expected of them, leading to a mixture of resentment and guilt.

In 2009, when I joined, the community seemed to have rediscovered its soul. Several members regularly participated in evening worship, shared meals and

working weekends. Being part of this group has been good for me. I am happy living in a Quaker place. I have been energised by aspects that some members find difficult – our continuing reflections on the way we live and work together, questions about direction, and the need to work with difference. Perhaps most of all I appreciate the love and support that is always there for anyone in need.

But nine months after I joined, five of the thirteen members have left and six more are planning to go. Only the two of us who joined last autumn have not yet given notice. So why is everyone leaving? Some need a secure retirement home. Others say they feel



‘Community living is one of the central challenges in developing a sustainable, spirit-centred way of life.’



the community needs more than they can offer. And some are worn out by conflicts that have continued to dominate community meetings. We have now agreed that all of us will resign our membership, making way for a new group of Quakers to take over the community’s housing co-op structure and assets. That group may stay in Bamford or move elsewhere.

I am optimistic that a strong, spirit-led community will develop, learning from the successes and difficulties to date. Current members have various views on the causes of our disintegration. There are the challenges of sharing responsibilities for the land and buildings and the clashes of personality and communication style. Perhaps more important, we differ in our visions and purposes for the community. Some are concerned primarily with a relationship with the land; others are more focused on the worship and shared meals; and for some the place is simply their home, which they wish to enjoy without being involved in collective activity.

Community living is not safe or easy. Living with others exposes our growing points. Some of mine have been about learning to stop – to listen to others in the midst of a busy day or appreciate the rugged paradise that surrounds us. Greater challenges for me include learning to be part of someone else’s project, whether growing onions or fixing the roof, or taking another step in decluttering my life. But in our community we have been blessed with role models, always beckoning a little further along the path.

Quakers are now invited to join the new community. Some of the current group may seek to rejoin. There has been generous support from nearby Meetings. I hope the new group can find a vision and structures that give expression to Quaker testimony on community. For me that means a foundation in listening and answering that of God in each other. It also means having an outward focus, carrying a

Quaker witness into the world. Perhaps it could be an extended community offering a place for spiritual retreat and renewal, with a few long-term residents supporting and supported by members throughout the Yearly Meeting.

Community living is one of the central challenges in developing a sustainable, spirit-centred way of life. That doesn’t have to mean being self-sufficient. If we are to respond to global challenges, especially climate change, we must recognise and celebrate interconnection. Community is exciting and tremendously rewarding, a fantastic laboratory for human relationship and collective endeavour. It is difficult because, to make it work, we have to be awake to ourselves and each other. We also have to practise the spiritual discipline of self-forgetting – letting go of our preconceptions and attachments. As Parker J Palmer says, community is that place where the person you least want to live with always lives. It is also the place where you can discover your deep love for that person.

If you are interested in being part of a new Quaker community, please write to bamford-quaker@hotmail.com or Quaker Community, Water Lane, Bamford, Hope Valley S33 0DA.



Left: Harvest. Top right: an aerial view of the community site; bottom right: working on the windows. Photos courtesy Bamford Quaker Community.

Worship

A form of joy

Shaun Swann describes his first Quaker Meeting



Photo: Shaun Swann.

Worship space in the Quaker Centre in Friends House.

I had a few ideas in my head before I entered the worship room, about what a Quaker Meeting was like. One idea was that it was held in a large room with long lines of chairs going across it. Almost like the pews in a church. Another was that it was like a Sikh room of worship. Everybody would sit in a line in the middle of the room. Then we would all kneel. (I say *all* because I assumed there would be tens of people.) Then pray.

When I came into the room there were about ten chairs in a small circle. The room was hardly a church hall. I was amazed at just how wrong my thoughts on a Quaker Meeting were. I went over to one of the chairs and sat down. I looked around for a while and began to take everything in: the Bibles on the small round wooden table in the centre of the circle. The dim but comforting lighting. And the shape of the room that curved around the circle of chairs.

Everybody shut their eyes. I didn't for a few minutes. I still wanted to think about what was going on. There wasn't really

anything going on at all but I felt the need to look around and see what everybody else was doing.

After five or so minutes I shut my eyes too. I was relaxed. Normally I would just be bored of sitting with my eyes shut. This was pleasantly different though. I felt a really warm

I have always believed that in some way or another, if you are feeling happy or pleasant, then you are in the presence of God. Because from my point of view, God has given part of himself to us in the form of joy.

presence around me; something that made me feel happy.

I have always believed that in some way or another, if you are feeling happy or pleasant, then you are in the presence of God. Because from my point of view, God has given part of himself to us in the form of joy. All the good things in

the world are God. And the warm feeling I got when I sat in the worship room was telling me that I was in the presence of God, and that was the best feeling of all.

As I left the room I could remember how anxious I was to walk into a room full of about fifty odd people. It put a smile on my face. I could also remember that I was feeling quite dull. Not in the sense that I was bored or that I was ill. But that it was just another day. Things were average. I noticed the difference being in that room had put on my emotion and I was far more relaxed and happy. It was a true experience to be a part of and I'm glad I did it.

Although I may be a Christian and not a Quaker, I would definitely go to another Meeting again. The Meeting was, as I had previously explained, very enjoyable. And the thought of bringing myself closer to God is something that makes me very happy. Quaker or not; I am eager to go to another if it was to be like my first.

Shaun was doing work experience for the Friend.

Revisiting Louise

Revisiting Louise is like
Attending Spiceland.

Let me start with Spiceland.
It is simply a Meeting house.

It is on the hip of a field.
You come to it by way of dark lanes

The entrance is concealed by birches.
There is a false façade.

There is an element of surprise.
You are taken by the hand

Into a wooden room
With pews and a kitchen.

There are seven silent people
And wooden panelling

And a table with a Bible
And a vase of lupins

Utter silence. A little hiccup.
The whirr of a bee

In an old man's stomach.
An Adam's apple

Turning over in its sleep.
You are just about to leave

When somebody rises
And speaks their mind

And sits back down in
Silence. The leg of the chair

Moves a centimetre.
And nobody asks you

Why you're here or
What you think you're doing.

Ben Rice



Photo: John Hall.

Spiceland Meeting sent us this poem, which they wished to share. The poem was written by Ben Rice, Shell Young Poet of the Year 1991, now living in Australia. While the Louise he talks about is unknown, here is a bit about Spiceland Meeting House, reputedly the oldest Quaker Meeting house in the County of Devon, dating from about 1680. George Fox is reputed to have preached to over a thousand people in an orchard there, which has now become the new burial ground. Spiceland is built in a very rural place beneath the Blackdown Hills, in an Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty. Since 1970 it has been a part of West Somerset Area Meeting.

Ten Commandments

And the first of these is envy...

'You shall not covet your neighbour's house; you shall not covet your neighbour's wife, or ox, or donkey, or anything that belongs to your neighbour', Tim Morgan reminds us

Guilty as charged, I'm afraid. Guilty of the deadly sin of envy. Not the obvious sort of envy, mind you. I have never gone in for a lot of coveting. I certainly have not coveted my neighbour's wife; that is not intended as any reflection on my neighbour's wife, but I have had one of my own for more than fifty years and, amid a huge catalogue of mistakes, she was undoubtedly one of few things I got right. So my neighbour can rest easy in that regard.

I can honestly declare, too, that I have never coveted my neighbour's ox. Come to think of it, in Primrose Avenue there seems to be a distinct lack of oxen with which to test one's susceptibility to oxen-coveting. There are Ford Fiestas and Honda Civics and even a relatively new Jaguar, but a total absence of oxen or even donkeys.

But I am still well aware of that first and greatest surge of envy I felt when, as a child, we visited Grandma Edna every Christmas.

Like most Christians, even part-time Christians, I keep the occasional eye on my behaviour. I am wary of straying unforgivably far from the acceptable paths of righteousness. So far as that is concerned, those paths have proved to be somewhat elusive and I have had a conspicuous lack of success, but I do keep trying

So, getting back to the Christmas visits to Grandma Edna in Leeds. Grandma lived on a seriously rundown estate. Adults (parents and other such strange beings) seemed to be desperately sorry for her. Their compassion was utterly beyond me. To my five-year-old mind, Grandma Edna and her near neighbours were blessed beyond belief. To me, their environment was truly idyllic.

The tiny strip of land in front of next door's house was home to an ancient motorbike and a sidecar without wheels. Nobody objected when I climbed aboard the monster and convinced myself I was

reaching a hundred miles an hour. Also close to Grandma Edna's was a dead tree from which dangled a sooty rope begging to be climbed. Again no objections.

But beyond all this, beyond the wildest of my dreams, was the outwardly modest shop directly opposite Grandma Edna's house. This was Myers' Fish and Chips, presided over by the irrepressible Mr Myers, a rotund and jovial gent to whom I developed a lasting affinity.

As afternoon developed into early evening, an

aroma of such sheer enchantment wafted enticingly across the road as Mr Myers prepared to open for supper. I clearly remember looking around at Grandma's neighbours and experiencing an almost excruciating sense of envy.

Armed with the instruction to ask Mr Myers for two fish and six penn'orth, I would trot over the road into the steaming shop, alive with chatter and the sizzle of pure beef dripping and the exciting super-sizzle as another

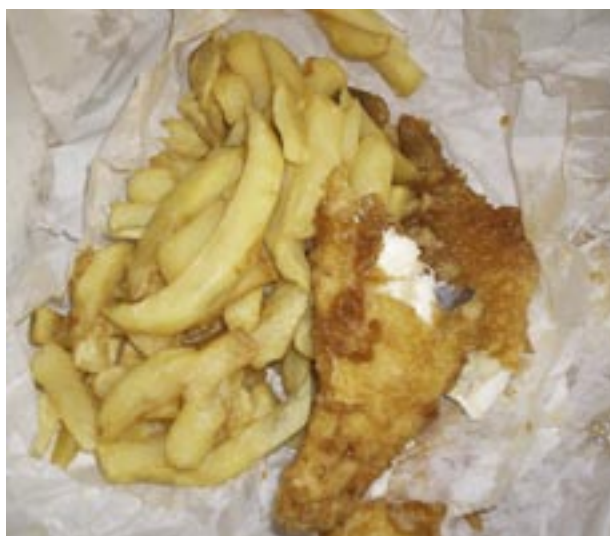
dollop of chips cascaded into the deep fryer. As he wrapped the goodies in the local newspaper, Mr Myers would give me a wink and wrap a separate paper of 'batter bits' and whisper from the corner of his mouth. 'Just for thee lad, and don't be telling tha grandma.'

As the time came to return to Cheshire, my pleadings to let Grandma Edna, or even one of her neighbours, adopt me fell on deaf ears.

Never in my life have I known such jealousy as that experienced on each visit to that happy place. Wives, oxen, Jaguars – they can keep them all. But to live opposite Mr Myers...!

I shall continue to strive for those paths of righteousness. I'm sure that Mr Myers will long ago have set up in Heaven. If I play my cards right perhaps I can visit him again.

Not too soon, mind you.



Vipassana – a personal journey

Vipassana is one of India's most ancient meditation techniques. Long lost to humanity, it was rediscovered by Gautama the Buddha more than 2,500 years ago. Vipassana means seeing things as they really are. It is the process of self-purification by self-observation.

The Buddha never taught a sectarian religion; he taught Dhamma, the way to liberation, which is universal. It does not rely on any symbols or anything outside of ourselves and has no creed or doctrine associated with it.

The tool used in Vipassana is our own breath; by practising Anapana we embark on an inner journey of self exploration. Developing a sharpened awareness one proceeds to observe the changing nature of body and mind, and experiences the universal truths of impermanence, suffering and egolessness.

Owing to the universal nature of Vipassana it can be practised by all people worldwide, at any time, in any place, without conflict due to race, community or religion, and it proves equally beneficial to one and all.

It was with this understanding that I set out on my personal journey and stayed for ten days at Dhamma Dipa, the Vipassana Meditation Centre in Hereford.

Continuity of the practice in seclusion is the secret of this technique's success. To fully grasp the practice and benefit from it disciplines and rules have to be set down.

Turning inward with the focus on self 'Noble Silence' is kept for nine days with no eye contact. The first three days of living in silence were the most challenging for me, taking time to quieten down. For all of the nine days of silence, thoughts and feelings were constantly my companions and as time progressed the chattering in my mind lessened. In the silence my self awareness increased and I was very much living in the moment. Reading and writing materials are discouraged and individual lockers are

provided to store all our worldly goods that would otherwise cause a distraction.

The timetable for the course has been designed to maintain the continuity of practice. Wake up time is 4am. With regular breaks the time spent in meditation amounts to thirteen hours a day. We are constantly reminded throughout the course to be 'equanimous'.

The accommodation is basic and comfortable and the food is simple vegetarian. The centre stands in its own grounds surrounded by the most beautiful and quiet countryside. From dawn to dusk the gardens are filled with birdsong and it is a joy to see the butterflies fluttering freely in the air.

Teaching and spiritual support is provided for by DVD and assistant teachers on location. The philosophy behind the teachings complement Quaker belief well. I find the commonality between Quakerism and Buddhism very interesting.

The inward experience of the meditation practice further confirmed my belief that the Kingdom of God is within. Vipassana provided the key to unlock the subconscious where all our life experiences are stored and my mind became the screen where memories were played out revisiting the people, places and things that help to make me the person I am today. As the spiritual leader SN Goenka reminds us, 'our salvation is up to us to work out'. There is an informed sense of personal responsibility that goes hand in hand with Vipassana and the Quaker spiritual path that I walk.

The Noble Silence was lifted on the tenth day. I felt a sense of calm and centred.

My ten-day experience at Dhamma Dipa retreat centre has helped to convince me that it is as a Quaker that I intend to live for the rest of my life.

David Manclark

David attends Leigh Meeting.



No friend

WHEN THE ARTIST James McNeill Whistler was a cavalry cadet at West Point military academy horses were assigned daily at random. A mettlesome steed known for throwing its riders was allocated to Whistler. Its name was 'Quaker'. 'My God,' said James, 'He's no friend.'

Table flowers

A CORRESPONDENT writes: 'I've been wondering about the origin of our having flowers on the table during Worship. I understand that flowers were first displayed by Helen Norman in pre-second world war years; can any readers elaborate upon this? What was her reason for this, and why did it become such a universal characteristic of Meetings within so short a time without much apparent documentation? How did Friends initially respond to this novel construction?'



Flowers on the table. Photo: Shaun Swann.

Wigan's finest

THE MUSEUM of Wigan Life opened earlier this year. A good place to visit anyway, but the surprise to one reader as he went in to the archive area was the contents of the display cabinet. Arthur Turtle, starting as a chapel-goer, becoming a conscientious objector for which he served time in prison, and then Quaker and clerk of Leigh Meeting. Letters, postcards and other such artefacts that made a Quaker stand out in Wigan – and not what our man had expected of Wigan history.

Vegan cookbooks

EYE RECENTLY RECEIVED two vegan cookbooks in the post, in response to an entry about vegan food at Yearly Meeting. *Eye* hasn't decided yet what to do with *Vegan Baking* and *Vegan Cake Book*, but knows that our Friend Laura Wirtz in Blackheath can manage without them. She recently invited *Eye* to a cake swap at VX, the vegan shop and café near Kings Cross station. Billed as a 'sugar-coated orgy', the event brings vegan bakers together from right across London and beyond.

A price on our heads

THE RECENT PIECE on parakeets reminded Valerie Whitby of a letter from her husband John, which was published in *the Friend* in May 1989. It explained that an advert in the *Taunton Express* had stated: 'PAIR adult Quakers, £650no.' John wondered if 'old stock' were being sold off to raise cash for the Taunton Meeting House Maintenance Fund and whether such an advertisement was better placed in *the Friend* to give fellow Friends an opportunity to make a purchase for their Meeting.

Daffodil ministry

OVER THE YEARS *Eye* has heard much ministry inspired by some flowers that a Friend spotted on their way to Meeting. And *Eye* had always known of this as daffodil ministry. So it was with interest that *Eye* recently learned that some people know this as blackberry ministry. Are there any other terms to describe such divine inspiration?



An inspiration. Photo: audreyjm529/flickr CC:BY.

**Quaker Tapestry
Free entry!
See back cover.**

Friends & Meetings

Marriage

Liz SCURFIELD and Martina WEITSCH 17 July at the Hotel de Ville, Grand Place, Brussels. Members of Golders Green Meeting. Joint Representatives at Quaker Council for European Affairs.

Deaths

Clarice Elizabeth BRINKMAN 13 July. Member of Minehead Meeting. Former member of Friends Relief Service. Aged 91. Donations: Quaker Social Action.

Selwyn MABLE 16 July. Attender at Croydon Meeting. Former member of Friends Ambulance Unit. Aged 93. Funeral at Croydon Crematorium 2.15pm, Friday 6 August.

David Albert PIM 9 July after a short illness. Husband of Jean, father and grandfather. Brother to Brian, Jonathan and Alan. Aged 79. Buried at Rosenallis Friends Burial Ground, Co. Laois, Ireland.

Changes of address

Ruth and Richard BUSH of Poole and Wimborne Meeting have moved to: 1 Lewens Close, Wimborne, Dorset BH21 1JJ. Tel (unchanged): 01202 882697.

Diary

AFTER THE BOMB DROPPED: how Hiroshima and Nagasaki suffered. An exhibition at Friends House, 173 Euston Road, London. 2-12 August. Free. Open 10am-5pm daily. Programme of talks, events, performances, see: www.cnduk.org

COMMUNITY BUILDING WORKSHOP SHEFFIELD Weekend 13/14 November. £50 (£30). Experience an inclusive, authentic group process, within a safe space. Details from Amila: 01335 370661 and 07812 601256 or email: commbuildsheffield@yahoo.co.uk

Meeting up

SINGLE? WANTING TO MEET THAT SPECIAL SOMEONE? Use the Meeting up column! Single entry £16.85 incl. vat for 35 words. 3 entries £39, 6 entries £66. Box reply service included. Replies forwarded 1st class. Please send all entries and replies to: (Box _ _ _), The Friend, 54a Main Street, Cononley, Keighley BD20 8LL.

MID-SURREY. An unattached woman (65) is looking to share common interests with an unattached man of similar age with Quaker values. My interests: walking, creating a peaceful garden, reading and meeting with friends and family. Replies please Box 926 c/o The Friend.

NORTH OF ENGLAND. Man, Friend, mid-70s, varied interests, practical, creative, artistic, seeks woman Friend to share a life of laughter, simplicity and adventure. Replies Box 927 c/o The Friend.

Notices on this page

Notices should preferably be pre-paid. From 1 July 2010: Personal entries (births, marriages, deaths, anniversaries, changes of address, etc.) £16.85 incl. vat. Meeting and charity notices (changes of clerk, new wardens, alterations to meeting, diary, etc.) £14.34 zero rated for vat. Max. 35 words. 3 Diary or Meeting up entries £39 (£33.18); 6 entries £66 (£56.16). Add £1.70 for a copy of the issue with your notice. Cheques payable The Friend.

Entries are accepted at the editor's discretion in a standard house style. A gentle discipline will be exerted to maintain a simplicity of style and wording which excludes terms of endearment and words of tribute. Deadline usually Monday morning.

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54a Main St, Cononley, Keighley BD20 8LL T&F: 01535 630230 E: ads@thefriend.org

jobs

THINKING OF RECRUITING A WARDEN or Resident Friend? Contact Quaker Life for friendly, helpful advice. Richard Summers 020 7663 1096. richards@quaker.org.uk

where to stay

GUESTHOUSES, HOTELS, B&BS

DORCHESTER ON THAMES B&B. Beautiful, historic village. Eight miles Oxford and Chilterns. £36-£38 single, £54-£58 double. 01865 341584.

EDINBURGH. City centre accommodation at Emmaus House. Tel. 0131 228 1066. www.emmaushouse-edinburgh.co.uk Email: info@emmaushouse-edinburgh.co.uk

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LLYN PENINSULA, WALES. Self-catering cottage, sleeps 4. Comfortable, well-equipped. www.nantmynytho.com 01758 713563. mair.nant@nantmynytho.com

NORTH DEVON/CORNWALL BORDER. Holiday bungalow. Sleeps 4. Beautiful coastal village. Good walking. 25% donation to BYM during 2010. 01288 331700. welcombedollimores@yahoo.co.uk

NORTHWEST SCOTLAND, Oldshoremore. Some vacancies September onwards. Friends' self-catering cottages, well-equipped, sleep 5. Glorious beaches. Hill and coastal walking. Peace. Dilys and Michael, tel. 01971521729.

PEMBROKESHIRE NEAR TENBY. Golden sands, castles, Coast Path. Two comfortable flats attached to 16th Century farmhouse, each sleeping 5. Peaceful environment. 01834 845868. malcolm.gregson@littlewedlockgallery.co.uk

WEST CORNWALL STUDIO FLAT Sleeps 2. Near Prussia Cove, St. Michael's Mount, coastal walks, beaches. 01736 799170. lee.stev@live.co.uk

notices

CALL FOR ENTRIES: Professor John Roberts memorial essay competition. Supported by Civilisation 3000 and NATO Watch. Open to nationals of all countries aged 18-25 on 31 May 2010. Title: To abolish war do we first need to abolish NATO? Awards will be made at the Shadow NATO Summit in Brussels on 15 November. Details: www.natowatch.org Entry deadline: 1 October 2010.

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accommodation

WANTED

LONDON (OR NEAR). Responsible, mature, female Friend and two well-behaved, oldish labradors seek accommodation with garden/near green space, for academic year 2010-2011. Possible work exchange. Ideas/suggestions welcome. References available. Email: jpkingsfisher@yahoo.com 07748 449662.

CLASSIFIED ADVERTISEMENT ORDER FORM

Do not use this form for Births, Marriages & Deaths - see p. 17

Classified advertisements should be **prepaid** and a minimum of **12 words** long. Send to **The Friend, Advertisement Dept, 54a Main Street, Cononley Keighley BD20 8LL** Tel/fax **01535 630 230** Email **ads@thefriend.org**

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Quaker Tapestry
Free entry!
See back cover.

miscellaneous

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the Friends Quarterly

Just out!

Issue three 2010

Writing "*Homosexuality from the inside*"
David Blamires

Christian roots and contemporary Quakerism
Rachel Britton

"*Quakers and the ecumenical agenda*" - another view
Frank Cranmer

The stranger who lives within thy gates
John Dunston

David Blamires . . . "Our central objective . . . in writing *Homosexuality from the Inside* . . . was to raise general awareness of some of the difficulties that homosexual people experienced in contemporary society.

Rachel Britton . . . "We can be a Quaker type of Christian without abandoning our intelligence or contradicting science. We can celebrate our Quaker-Christian roots without shutting out light from other sources"

Frank Cranmer . . . "Given wide diversity of belief within the Society, ecumenical discussions present a problem for Friends who do not identify with the Christian strand in the Society's history"

John Dunston . . . "What do Quaker schools have to say about the stranger in our midst? Indeed, what does it mean when a school calls itself Quaker?"

plus
Seebohm Rowntree on Fab 208

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Penny Dunn, Friends Quarterly, 173 Euston Rd, London NW1 2BJ.

**CLOSING
DATES**

Quaker Life Faith and Practice Conference 2010

Being Quaker – Doing Quaker

19 – 21 November at High Leigh, Hertfordshire

The closing dates for applications for this conference are as follows:

For bookings with children & young people under 18 – 26 August.

For adult-only bookings – 30 September.

Full details Carmel Keogh: 020 7663 1017, carmelk@quaker.org.uk
Application forms at: www.quaker.org.uk/being-quaker-doing-quaker-quaker-life-faith-and-practice-conference



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