



Epping
Local Meeting

Epping Meeting House Newsletter October 2011

Editorial

Welcome to our third newsletter! It has been a busy summer for Epping Friends and I hope the following reports provide a taste of some of the activities we have participated in, including Yearly Meeting Gathering at Canterbury and some interesting study sessions locally.

As a Meeting we have been asking ourselves lots of questions and we know there are, as always, some challenging times ahead. However, it feels like we are in a good place at the moment and there is a sense of renewal evidenced by the current “spring cleaning” of the meeting house.

The idea behind this newsletter was a form of outreach - to provide regular news, and details of events, for all those connected with Epping Meeting House. Outreach was the theme of High Leigh this year and Epping and Harlow have taken this on board with the following events which we hope you will be able to attend...

Quaker Quest: a spiritual path for today that leads to peace and social justice – simple, contemporary, radical

Epping and Harlow Quaker meetings are jointly running two sessions of Quaker Quest.

These events are a way of bringing Quakerism and Quakers to the attention of people who may be interested but not necessarily thinking of attending a Quaker meeting. It's a finding-out of what we do and what we think, including our different ways of being a Quaker today. Everyone is invited to come and find out more, whether you have any knowledge or experience of Quakers or not.

Epping: October 29th (2.30-5.30) 'Quakers and how we worship'
Harlow: November 19th (2.30 – 5.30) 'Quakers and how we live'



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High Leigh All Age Gathering 2011 – Speaking our truth: reaching in, reaching out Alan Fricker

A good number of Friends from across the North East Thames Area Meeting came together in April for our annual gathering at High Leigh.

Geoffrey Durham was an excellent speaker. He offered a series of inspiring sessions challenging us to consider how we might make it more likely people in the world at large would gain an awareness of Quakers. He quoted research showing that people often have a limited or no understanding of what Quakers might be up to – this is particularly the case amongst younger people. If we want Quakers to still be around we need to be less reticent and more ready to articulate what being a Quaker means to us. It was fascinating to try and fathom out answers to questions that often arise “What does it mean to be a Quaker?” “Why silence?” and so on. Having been involved with Quakers for a relatively short time I have had some practice at this but it was thought provoking to hear the wide range of responses from other people.

Alongside all this there was plenty of time to catch up, slow down and join in with the wide range of art, fun and questions with the younger friends present.

Garden Party (Sunday 10th July) Rebecca Fricker

While a smaller affair than last year's Garden Party, it was still a pleasure to open up our beautiful garden and share it with Friends and friends! Cathy's tasty scones, along with the music and dancing provided by Francis and Allan, were much enjoyed. Efforts for providing plants, cakes, preserves and produce to sell deserve a special mention and thanks to those concerned. Next year we shall hope for better weather and aim to have more guests...



Yearly Meeting Gathering, University of Kent, Canterbury (July 30th – August 6th 2011) Cathy Rowlands

Three members of Epping Meeting - Margaret Delves, Judith Roads and myself – attended Yearly Meeting Gathering this summer. The Yearly Meeting sessions were held for the first time in the big top, which could seat all 1,500 gatherers, although the Yearly meeting sessions had considerably fewer. I attended all the Yearly Meeting sessions and, as in previous years, was impressed by the ability of the clerks to draft minutes that distilled the feeling of the meeting.

Apart from the Yearly Meeting sessions, there were talks, study sessions, special interest groups, craft sessions, meetings for worship, circle dancing, films, star-gazing... The hardest thing was deciding what to do! I realised two years ago at Yearly Meeting Gathering in York that it is a mistake to try to fill every moment with activities, so I also had quiet times on my own or just sitting and talking. It was good to meet Friends I had met at York, and I was especially glad to meet a Friend who had known my parents when they lived in North Wales.

Margaret and I were together in standard half-board accommodation - I was glad Margaret was close when I discovered I had not packed any nightwear! Margaret was able to lend me a dressing-gown to save my blushes on my way to the shower until I was able to walk down to Canterbury and buy an emergency nightie. We saw Judith and other Area Meeting Friends occasionally in the dining room or the big top, but with so many around it was easy to miss people.

Highlights for me were Pam Lunn's Swarthmore Lecture and the labyrinth with its view over Canterbury and the cathedral. Biggest disappointment was missing out on the star-gazing – although I had packed the necessary torch I had forgotten to check the battery!

Yearly Meeting Gathering Session on Economic Justice. Minute 23: Economic Justice (unchecked minutes, August 7th 2011) Allan Edmunds

How can we renew our commitment to our testimonies of truth, justice, integrity and equality, and discern action to take our witness forward?

We have heard today of a number of initiatives in which our yearly meeting is involved: the Ethical Trading Initiative and the work of Quaker Social Action. We have shared something of our experience, ideas and discernment from around this YM...

As individuals, and in our meetings, we must return to the place from which testimony comes, to open ourselves to the Spirit and to wait humbly in the light. Together, we can help one another to overcome our inertia.

We rededicate ourselves to a corporate discipline of waiting and opening to the leadings of the Spirit on the issues before us at this yearly meeting. We ask Meeting for Sufferings to keep this in view over the coming year.

The Quaker Council for European Affairs has recently produced a briefing paper 'Sustainable Growth or Growth vs. Sustainability'. This examines the relationships between resource use, climate emissions and economic growth.

E.g. A zero growth economy: Put simply the dilemma is this "To resist growth is to risk economic and social collapse. To pursue it is to endanger the ecosystems on which we depend for long term survival". This briefing summarises what the report says about this dilemma. The next briefing will attempt to look at some of the proposals to address this dilemma via alternative economic strategies/structures.

E.g. How the economy works: At its simplest level the economy works as follows. Firms use people, buildings and materials to produce goods and services. The revenue from the sale of these goods and services allows firms to provide people with income. People offer their labour in return for income which allows them to buy goods and services and to save. The savings are used to invest in companies either directly or indirectly (through banks etc) on the understanding that there will be a return on this investment. Investment is necessary to improve or replace worn out buildings and equipment and to improve efficiency – generally through labour productivity, i.e. producing the same quantity of goods and services with fewer people. This means fewer jobs unless output increases which at a national level means growing the economy. Efficiency also leads to cheaper goods which in turn stimulates demand and promotes growth. The driver of efficiency is the profit motive, i.e. a desire to increase the difference between revenue from sales and the costs associated with production. This enables a better return on investment which in turn attracts more investors thus enabling greater efficiency

up to a point. After a while the optimum efficiency is reached and what is required is innovation. Novelty – the production of newer, better more exciting goods – then becomes the goal of firms, driven by demand from consumers

Did I find the day's session too much like Labour Party policy? No, more like the Greens. I see only Liberals objecting to calling for more borrowing from efficient countries, and Tories will not offer UK as a growth-engine, together avoiding hopes to be paid back by our future generations.



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“Listening to the Light: How to bring Quaker Simplicity and Integrity into our lives” by Jim Pym. A Book Review by Michael Seymour

I have attended courses led by Jim Pym at Claridge House and have been impressed by the breadth and depth of his knowledge on spiritual issues and his practical approach based on experience.

Jim is a Quaker, Buddhist and Spiritual Healer. He has also worked as a professional musician, was manager of the Friends Book Centre in London and is Clerk of Quakers Uniting in Publications and a founder member of the Friends Interfaith Group.

He has packed much information and practical suggestions into the 192 pages of his book and, as a fairly recent Attender, I have highlighted certain areas which seem particularly relevant based on my limited experience.

He refers to Quakers as those who literally "listen to the Light" and allow the fruits of their practice to govern their everyday lives. He says that sharing the discoveries made is the purpose of his book.

He refers briefly to the history of Quakerism including the contributions made by George Fox and William Penn. The Advices and Queries are set out in full as an Appendix and these and other sources are cross-referenced in the text.

He describes the silence in Meetings for Worship as the great unifying factor among Friends, which he feels is beyond words and thoughts. Silent Worship is, for him, that from which everything springs and the greatest source of our strength. He mentions specific Meetings

for Worship and finds "meetings for worship for business" a particularly effective way of working.

He regards Quakers willingness to see "That of God" in everyone as one of the central tenets in living our lives. In his view "That of God" and the "Light" are one but acknowledges that not all Quakers identify this Light with Jesus.

In his wide ranging brief and detailed analysis he refers to the Testimonies, which he describes as the public statements of principles discussed throughout Quaker history and which reflect Quakerism as a way of life.

In my opinion Jim has a special ability to integrate many spiritual traditions and encourages the reader to draw on them as he has done over many years.

Listening to the Light has been important in Jim's spiritual journey and he hopes that he has managed to convey a picture of Quaker Life and thought today in his book. It is available from the Meeting House library and I recommend it as a possible source of new insights and suggestions.

Preparation for Yearly Meeting Gathering (Sunday June 12th: Study Group) Allan Edmunds

Two groups of 3 each seemed a dispensable part of the YM advised plan that would have taken approximately 1½ hours. To fit our usual hour, we began with 10 minutes for each of us to make notes on what in our lives shows concern for the natural world, and the interaction with Quakerism. Our open discussion was about climate change, population, vegetarianism, living witnesses, and how to avoid preaching and coercion. The Chinese population will be passed by the Indians because they endured, at seriously coercive cost, a one child decade.

I found this local session so much more rewarding than following the lines of some AM minutes submitted for two of the published sessions leading up to a (maybe Quaker) Labour MP's lecture, adding up, apparently, to his party political views on UK cuts. The like-minded don't mind calling for more borrowing from efficient countries, hoping to be paid back by our grandchildren. Economic justice is the session heading, and it may set up Marxism against John Rawls' ideas on justice as fairness.



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Future of Epping Meeting House and 'green' suggestions (Sunday August 14th: Study Group) Christine Downes-Grainger

Our August discussion group, led by Jeff and Judith, was a lively session with everyone having something to say. Jeff challenged us with two key questions – Do we need a Meeting House, and if yes, how much Quaker money are we prepared to put in to support it? These topics followed through the Yearly Meeting Gathering theme this year of sustainability: sustaining our meetings, premises, Society, community and ultimately the planet.

Participants in the group offered a wide variety of opinions. Some said that it was people who were more important in their experience of attending Meeting. Others said that Epping Meeting House had a special atmosphere they had not found anywhere else. Renting a room in another town might make travel easier for some but it would not by itself increase support. We learned of a group of Quakers who had sold all their buildings to a charitable management company and of another meeting that had found a charitable partner to lease and develop facilities in the building. This allowed Friends to keep a small section for their own use.

Jeff expanded on a variety of greening ideas made in recent years, most of which he explained seemed prohibitively expensive to put in place. Putting fruit trees in the burial ground was welcomed. It was also recognized that if we did raise funds for carbon friendly measures, for example double or triple glazed windows and doors, then we could promote ourselves as a building with 'green' features in any drive to increase lettings. Jeff had no intention of letting us off the hook though and brought the session to a close by returning to the two central questions.

We agreed to explore ideas and bring more detailed suggestions to the November study group. On reflection later, I felt that although not stated precisely as a conclusion, a feeling emerged that as current custodians of such a valued and historic building, we must first make greater efforts to find ways to maintain it and reduce its carbon footprint.

Dates for the diary (October - December)

Shared lunch (Last Sunday of the month): October 30th, November 27th

Local Business Meetings (First Sunday of the month): October 2nd, November 6th

Study sessions (Second Sunday of the month):

- October 9th: Advices & Queries
- November 13th: The future of our Meeting House (continued from August)

Area Meeting:

- Wanstead: Tuesday October 11th 6.30pm (tea from 5.45pm)
- Harlow: Saturday November 12th 2.00pm

Other:

- London Quakers – Creating a Vision of our Future (Saturday 5th November, Friends House, Euston)
- Churches Together in Epping & District - Peace Service (Sunday October 16th at 4pm, Theydon Bois Baptist Church)

Receiving the newsletter in 2012

The next issue of this newsletter is due in January 2012. Please let me know in person, by email or telephone (0208 508 8369) if you have a preference to how you would like to receive it:

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Finally, do get in touch if there are any errors, or you have any contributions or suggestions!

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