



Epping Meeting Newsletter October 2012



Editorial by Rebecca Fricker

With the days getting shorter, and the air distinctly chilly, it was good to be reminded of a beautiful summer walk the Fricker family took in Epping Forest with Christine one Sunday following Meeting for Worship and a tasty lunch at Christine's. The picture shows us under a kindly oak tree.

Perhaps next summer we should try and organise an Area Meeting picnic in the forest? Talking of Area Meeting, forms are now available for those who wish to book places for the 2013 High Leigh Gathering (Friday 19th – Sunday 21st April). If you have any queries about the programme please do ask.

The Leigh on Sea Area Meeting beach jaunt for the children provided inspiration for the current display on the children's noticeboard, also pictured in the newsletter, and Freddie has kindly dictated an article about it for us. I also want to share with you a picture of the potatoes grown by Alan and Freddie as part of a long process which started with Iris and Christine in the Children's Meeting. The weather meant we did not have to water them much but they did need protecting from footballs!

As good as it is to share pictures, an article by Angela reminds us of the joy of sharing both practical and fun gifts with those in need during the winter festive season. I am already looking forward to filling a shoebox! Please read below if you have no idea what I am talking about....



Quaker Quest 2012 at Epping Meeting by Judith Roads

This year we decided to go it alone rather than jointly with Harlow Meeting and we chose a run of three dates, with three different topics and a total of nine different Friends forming the panels of speakers. Our topics were: Quakers and worship; Quakers and how we live; Quakers, equality and diversity. We also experimented between a Sunday afternoon and a Saturday afternoon – we don't feel ready yet to offer the more traditional Quaker Quest time of a weekday evening. Perhaps that will come next year.

We have had visitors for each of our sessions, one or two returning from last year's event. Harlow Friends have supported us very strongly and this has made a difference both to our range of speakers and the warmth of welcome that Epping Friends wanted to provide. Our little meeting would be quite stretched to offer these events without the help of Quakers from elsewhere. We even had one speaker coming down from Cumbria for our final session.

Regardless of the quantity of enquirers who might turn up, the benefits are always tangible to the host meeting. It's a reason for generating lots of publicity, thus reminding the locals that we are still here and active. It also develops, challenges and strengthens our individual faith and our sense of community.



My First Visit to Birmingham and Woodbrooke by Christine Downes-Grainger

This feels like sitting down at the start of term, aged eight, to write about My Holiday.

Expertly scaffolded by Daphne from Bethnal Green, I did not have to find a ticket, platform, train, bus stop or bus for myself. My first half-hour in the city was spent in the pouring rain at the centre of a massive jam of stationary traffic. "These humans are crazy," I thought, "They can't even organize a traffic flow!" Eventually three buses inched their way up the hill to our stop, past the flow of cars and taxis that streamed out of the station every time the light went green, clogging up all the junctions.

At Woodbrooke I was determined to get full value. I was given a tour of the grounds and the lake outside by two seasoned visitors. I used the swing, walked the labyrinth in bare feet, added to the wildlife-spotted-compilation-list, bought some soap with no sodium lauryl sulfate in it (a rare find), looked at the library and book stall, read feedback and history notices, and did two pieces of jigsaw each morning. This was a new one for Daphne - she had not found the social room before. I even had time to ease myself from the quality comfort food that is presented first to the healthier diet options.

Regarding the course, what a weight off all our shoulders to learn that Nominations work is not a forlorn group sitting in a tiny room getting more and more desperate as everyone they approach turns down the opportunity to undertake the service that keeps our whole structure afloat. Nominations work is a creative joy. It is central to what a Quaker Meeting is. We seek to nurture gifts and talents and match them to opportunities and roles that will benefit both the individual and the Society. I am not being at all ironic here. It is a spiritual direction for us all that is essential for sustaining the community. The community we create is the reason we stay.

It is important that the Nominations committee avoids the temptation to take short-cuts or ask an inappropriate person. Nominees should be supported if they need it, not only while they discern for themselves whether they are happy for their name to go forward to Area Meeting, but also - if the nomination is accepted - while they are in the role.

Everyone on the course and the tutors were very open about all the problems we are facing now, with members and long-standing attenders having so many different claims on their time. Our systems were created in an age of more members. The era of generous pensions is gradually changing - this will take away a pool of active retired people.

I made a grand exit, discovering outside that my electronic door opening name tag was still in my hand, so my purple Oyster card-bus pass wallet must be in the locked collection box! I did not manage an Epilogue, and I do not need to try a Stannah stairlift yet. Reasons enough to return.

["Woodbrooke Library" by J. Applebee Copyright Creative Commons](#)

A High Leigh Book Club in 2013 by Alan Fricker

Following two years of the High Leigh Gathering having a speaker leading sessions around a theme, 2013 will see the return of DIY with people volunteering to lead sessions of their own devising.

While the programme is still under development there has been at least one item confirmed well ahead to give Friends the time to do some reading.

The suggestion of a book club style session was prompted by reading with interest reports of an activity of this kind by Sheffield Quakers (documented on their blog <http://sheffieldquakers.blogspot.co.uk/>).

The title selected is Gilead by Marilynne Robinson. Published in 2004 it went on to win the 2005 Pulitzer prize for fiction. I picked it from amongst the titles previously discussed in Sheffield as being one that other Quakers had thought would be an interesting book to read and discuss. It is summarised in an [article](#) for the Guardian Book Club "In 1956, as the Reverend John Ames nears the end of his life, he begins a letter to his young son. Like him, his father and grandfather served as ministers in the impoverished prairie town of Gilead, Iowa. The letter becomes a testament, recording the story of his own life and the tensions between his pacifist father and abolitionist grandfather, who fought in the Civil War".

The book is widely available with numerous copies available through Essex Libraries (and the London public library network) including an audiobook version if people prefer. It is also available cheaply second hand (you can go to <http://www.oxfam.org.uk/shop/books> if you are avoiding Amazon).

I hope that others will join me in reading the book even if they are not planning to attend High Leigh!

Christmas Shoeboxes – love in a box! by Angela Kenny

Operation Christmas Child is the world's largest children's Christmas project, run by the Christian relief development organisation, Samaritan's Purse. It is a very simple idea:

- take an empty shoe box
- cover it with wrapping paper
- fill the box with a variety of helpful, practical and fun things
- give a donation of £2.50 for its transport
- put a label from the leaflet on the lid and tick the age of the recipient
- pop on the lid and it is done!



The shoeboxes are distributed by volunteers worldwide to children based on need, regardless of their background or religious beliefs. It is an unconditional gift, asking for nothing in return.

I have been involved with the packing and checking of the boxes for many years now. There are Samaritan's Purse offices and warehouse in Buckhurst Hill and Harlow, so it has local as well as national roots. In Ongar we have used one of our churches as a temporary checking warehouse for several years and last year we checked over 3,500 boxes. Once checked they are sealed with special tape ready to go on the distribution lorries and straight through customs.

Several of my friends have attended shoebox distributions in Swaziland, Bosnia and Belarus, as well as other countries. The videos they bring back are both

heart-rending and uplifting. The joy and impact that a shoebox can bring to a child and the community is immeasurable.

During the year leading up to November a group of us meet every month to create things to add to the boxes from recycled items such as old CDs, video boxes, greeting cards and odd bits of wool etc. There is rarely nothing that comes our way that cannot be recycled into something useful and creative – starting with the shoe box itself! We also have friends who knit all year hats, scarves, mittens, bags, teddies to add to the boxes that do not include them. My friend and I raised £90 at a boot fair getting rid of unwanted clutter in order to buy lots of wrapped sweets to put in the boxes for a treat. There are never enough of these, or ironically toothpaste either!

We are always looking for volunteers to help with the making and checking of boxes and this year we even have our own warehouse given by a friend to use.

If you would like to know more then please come along to a coffee morning on Saturday 3rd November from 10-12 at: Unit 11A, Hallsford Bridge Industrial Estate, Stondon Road, Ongar CM5 0RX

The warehouse is open for helping hands of all ages from 14th November, Wednesdays, Thursdays and Fridays from 10-4pm and 7.30-9pm.

There is a box at Epping Friends Meeting house where you may add contributions of toothpaste, toothbrushes, small toys etc. Please take a leaflet which explains everything. Warning! This is a joyful habit and checking boxes can be addictive, but one of the best Christmas gifts you can give.

[Heart in a shoe box by edtrigger Copyright Creative Commons](#)

Children's Noticeboard by Freddie Fricker

Me, Iris and Christine done Leigh on Sea beach and sea on the children's noticeboard because we had been to Leigh for Area Meeting where I went for a walk and played on the beach with daddy, Javan, and Harold and Harvey and their mummy daddy from Walthamstow. In the picture there is palm trees, and the sun is shining and there are sea gulls. My favourite bit is the rock pools because I like rock pool life.



Dates for the diary (October - December)

Shared lunch (last Sunday of the month):

- Sunday 28th October
- Sunday 25th November
- Sunday 30th December

Local Business Meeting:

- Sunday 4th November

Study sessions (Second Sunday of the month):

- Sunday 11th November: Clerked discussion session on the interim report from the London-wide Boundaries Group
- Sunday 18th November: Spiritual Review
- Sunday 9th December: TBA

Area Meeting:

- Wanstead Saturday 24th November 2pm start

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

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