



Epping Meeting Newsletter March 2015

Editorial by Rebecca Fricker

Liberty:

- Being free from oppression or imprisonment
- A right or privilege
- The power to act as you please

Speaking to the children at Epping Primary School, Christine and I tried to leave them with the idea that education leads to liberty and how lucky we are to live in this country where children are required to attend school and there are strict laws preventing routine child labour. Reading "Harry's Last Stand: How the World My Generation Built is Falling Down, and What We Can Do to Save it", written by Harry Leslie Smith – a child of the depression and veteran of World War 2, and our latest "Meet the Meeting" left me with the same thoughts. But also fear. Fear of returning to a country with no social security or universal health care, a country where the system is bullying the unemployed and ill, a country where many are relying on food banks to feed their families, and a country where the NHS is being privatised by politicians with no mandate to do so. This coming General Election is so important and I am pleased to see Friends House is holding hustings – Alan and I have booked to attend two of the three – let us know if you have any questions you want us to ask!

Wrap up Trident by Freddie Fricker

Me, my Mum and my Dad went on the "No Trident March".

Before we did that we had lunch and went to the British Museum. At the British Museum we went to the African part. We did this because I'm doing Africa at School. My favourite part was a movie and it said that a type of cloth that a lady would wear meant "You've left the door open so the cat has eaten the doughnut".

Afterwards we had some curry. It was really, really, really (x1000) nice.

When we got to the trident march it had started without us. We ran and we managed to get in beside some nice ladies. Crazily, the scarf was totally pink! Half-way around I started to get cold so I wrapped up in the scarf! Then I put it on behind me like a cape and said I was "Pinky Man"!

Amazingly we managed to wrap up the Ministry of Defence and the Treasury. It was a really cool, fun day!



Meet the Meeting by Rosalie Bridge

I spent my early life living in an industrial city in modest circumstances. During the war the privations of rationing were relieved by visits to my maternal grandparents where I met other members of the family. My grandmother was a dressmaker who worked at home; making, mending and altering clothes, it was a good occupation in difficult times, and useful to working people who came to the house. Some became her friends and acquaintances, she was always interested in people but never gossiped.

Poor health and safety at work, and poor social conditions in the early twentieth century meant that my father had lost several siblings in infancy and his father by the time he was twelve. He started to work when he was fourteen and helped his mother financially until her death when I was a baby.

Non conformist churches were to be found everywhere in the city. In my village I was taken to the Primitive Methodist church by my neighbours children. When I grew older I went to the Wesleyan Sunday School where we heard the Bible read and enjoyed the Whitsuntide Anniversary for which we wore a new white dress and where we celebrated with a lot of singing in a children's choir. Many working families enjoyed wearing their Sunday Best, meeting friends and singing hymns on their day of rest.

After the war the skyline changed when factories became productive again. The bottle ovens used to fire the pots poured out smoke from the coal burning inside. This was drawn from the local coal mines. From my bedroom window at night the sky was lit by fire and steam from the iron and steel works. The hot slag from the molten iron and steel was hauled away by a little train pushing the full bogey along a track to the tip where it poured out making a red glow. This occurred always at the same time each night until the 1970's when the smelter was shut down.



Time was marked by a siren every eight hours calling the workers to begin their next shift. Many of our neighbours worked there and could be seen walking to and from work. Every weekday morning and evening women walked to catch the bus to work in the potteries where they decorated and finished the pots. One of my uncles put the finished ware into crates packed with straw.

During the war my father worked on munitions, when it ended he returned to his trade as a tool maker. This required cutting steel using a micrometer for accuracy with attention to detail. Life for my mother was a struggle because of disabilities from birth. I spent a lot of time with her because I had no sisters and two younger brothers. I remember her telling me about the soldiers who were suffering from shell shock when they returned from the first war. She showed compassion for others with disabilities and great courage when she was ill or injured and at the last when facing a early death.

I have some happy memories from my childhood of playing outside in the fresh air. The

pleasure of reading and being taken to the library, of learning to grow plants and gardening, being supported by my mothers intellectual gifts and sense of humour. I remember the luxury of listening to the radio after school, to hear the sound of the orthodox liturgy at Christmas and Easter, Bishop Anthony Bloom's address and children's hour when the BBC service was at its best.

A childhood illness was a time of change, with a spell in hospital when the NHS was born which led to being in Birmingham for a few months where new experiences and ideas took root. Recovery and a change of school marked a transition from childhood to adolescence. At my new school a friendship led to my attending the village Church. These changes widened my horizons and enriched my life. This led to new friendships and built on my knowledge of the bible, through weekly attendance at the liturgy and the festivals which marked the churches calender.



During the next few years I met some young people at the church who would play a part in the next phase of my life. As time wore on I became aware that I had few friends at school , those I met at church went to the local high school where they learned French and Latin and would be prepared for entrance into higher education and I began to feel on the outside. When I left school at fifteen and went to work for the regional Electricity board the feeling of existing on the edge was confirmed.

The next few years at home were fraught in conflict with the values of the working class ethic. In this the present interests of the family take precedence over the future of the individual, these were enforced by an authoritarian parent. My father thought that marriage to a man would solve all his problems and would not cost him anything. The task of how to move on without jumping from the frying pan into the fire at a time when women's wages and opportunities were poor exercised me considerably. My father believed in corporal punishment and I spent a lot of my early life trying to avoid this.

When I met my future husband and found that we shared some interests and our families shared a similar class background was a good beginning; however life and happiness is like a patchwork quilt made up of many colours and textures. The next years were marked by both weal and woe with the birth of my sons and the death of my mother.

We left the Church of England and through meeting some friends we went to our first meeting for worship. Then we moved to London when my husband changed his job and my children went to school. We attended Walthamstow meeting and I became a member in 1974.

In the 1980's the meeting was affected by changes in the funding for adult Education and changes in the use of Friends Hall to run vocational courses including using the room for computing where we met for meeting for worship. At the time the meeting was strong and contained many friends who had gifts and experience and it was galvanised into searching for another place to meet, the rest is recent history.



What can we learn from being a secret visitor? By Rebecca Fricker

Following correspondence in *The Friend* regarding the welcome given to visitors at different Quaker Meeting Houses I thought it would be fun to treat our visit to Broadstairs QM, made as part of our half-term holiday to Kent, as though I were a secret visitor.

Broadstairs Meeting House is in a converted bungalow and the garden looked beautiful with spring flowers in the unexpected February sunshine. We were given a warm welcome on the door and shown where the facilities are. There is no children's meeting but they were happy for Freddie and I to come to the first five minutes and last ten – even showing us which door was the quietest one to use.

Despite a bustling start to Meeting for Worship, with late-comers visibly surprised by visitors (there were other unexpected visitors that Sunday besides us) the Meeting very quickly became gathered. Freddie was noticeably affected by this and told me it had felt like flying.

In the small library Freddie and I talked about liberty and slavery as preparation for this year's High Leigh and to spark ideas for the assemblies Christine and I were planning at Epping Primary School.

Afterwards we had a chance to chat to different people over tea, coffee and "purple" squash. It was a real pleasure and we have promised to go back!

So having been a secret visitor I can offer the following advice:

- Show visitors the facilities and layout of the Meeting House
- Explain your Meeting's routine (e.g. start time, afterward, notices, time for coffee etc.)
- Let people know what any collections are (I was confused as to why people were putting money in a bowl on the table as they entered Meeting for Worship – turns out that is how they do their collections)
- Give people space to sort themselves out but do talk to them!

Study Session: Celebrating the Quaker Way by Alan Fricker

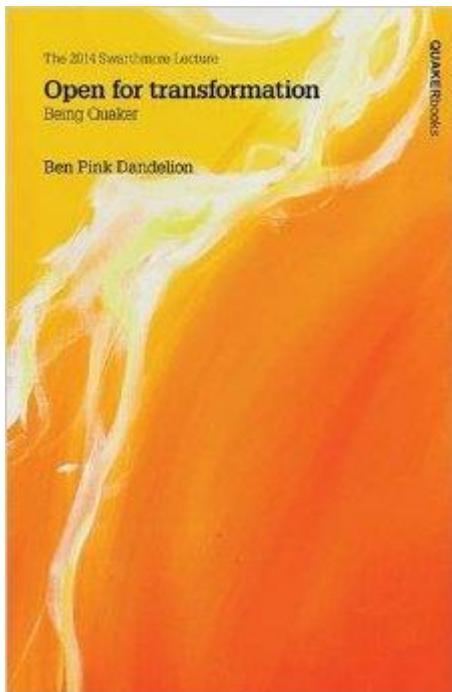
This was the first of our sessions making use of the “Reflecting on and engaging with the lecture” chapter of *Open for transformation* the 2014 Swarthmore lecture by Ben Pink Dandelion (freely available to watch online at <http://tinyurl.com/Swarthmore2014>). I was really pleased that the meeting agreed to make use of these sessions as I found the lecture powerful and well timed for us as we seek ways to move forward together.

The session came with quite a lot of guidance. I felt this was helpful to remind us of how we might help the session along. As most people at the study session knew each other quite well it could be easy to relax a little too much and this helped stay on track. On the negative side, it took a little too much time and, as a result, we failed to get through all the material.

Working in pairs we considered two initial questions – “why we come to meeting for worship” and “what we celebrate about Quakerism”. It was good to have the opportunity to understand what brought us together. We then considered individually, and as a group, where we wanted the meeting to be in ten years time. I made notes from the group discussion and these included – a welcoming, cheerful community, twice as big as at present. More open and less centralised. More representative of the community we sit in.

We ran out of time for “next steps” really but I have the note - value of now – which feels important. We need to be attentive to our current experience and appreciate what we have while seeking to look to the future.

Study Session: Our Spiritual Experience by Rebecca Fricker



We answered the following questions in worship sharing mode:

- What is your experience of convincement and transformation?
- What have been the key moments in your spiritual journey?

We decided to answer the second first but it felt like an artificial division as nearly everyone covered both together – experiences of convincement and transformation being key moments in everyone’s journeys, especially since many of us are “Quaker by convincement”.

All of us spoke and shared our varied experiences – I felt we had a real sense of “know each other in that which is eternal”. Hearing people’s histories gave us fresh insight and we learnt new information about each other – for example the privilege someone had to hear Bertrand Russell lecture!

Several of us shared our first experiences of giving ministry – with the common characteristic of actual Quaking!! Several people also expressed the view that religion is all about relationships.

Issues addressed by Ben Pink Dandelion in his Swarthmore lecture and book were raised, not consciously, but enough to confirm that Ben has identified questions other people are asking.

Library News

We have more new books on our shelves – three of them recommended reading for our next High Leigh weekend with Kevin Bales. Reviews of any read would be gratefully received!

Kevin Bales	Disposable People: New slavery in the global economy
Jean-Robert Cadet	Restavec: From Haitian slave child to middle-class America
Adam Hochschild	Bury the Chains: The British Struggle to Abolish Slavery
Simenon Honore	We are One: Manifesto for Humanity

Dates for the Diary

Study Sessions: "Open for Transformation"

Sunday April 19th Identifying our gifts and needs as a meeting – Rebecca

Sunday May 17th How our meeting works

Sunday June 14th Living the Quaker way

Shared lunch:

Sunday 29th March 2015

Sunday 26th April 2015

Local Business Meeting: Sunday 10th May 2015

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

Editor: Rebecca Fricker (beckirees(a)hotmail.com) Layout & Pictures: Alan Fricker

