



Epping Meeting Newsletter March 2016

Editorial by Rebecca Fricker

It is my belief that the "Reading Quaker Faith & Practice" study sessions, intended to enable us to discover together how our book of discipline can speak to our condition and deepen our spiritual lives, have been a success. Epping Meeting Friends, both longstanding and new, have taken the opportunity to reflect on the suggested chapters and then participate in stimulating and engaging considerations in a spirit of openness and tolerance.

The practice of hearing a paragraph from the relevant chapters each Meeting for Worship, instigated by Elders & Overseers, has led to reflective Ministry and I am conscious that my own knowledge of the red book is deeper as a consequence.

With Yearly Meeting Gathering on the horizon, I have been thinking about Mary Hughes (1860–1941) mentioned Chapter 6:

Anyone who lived with her during April and May knew how intensely Friends' Yearly Meeting was on her mind. It was as important to her as 'going up to Jerusalem'. For weeks beforehand it came into her prayers in the morning, at meal times and with friends. She wished that God's power would be in the meetings, that people would go forth from them with a new vision of God's work for them, a new sensitiveness towards their fellows, especially the distressed.

Rosa Hobhouse, 1949

Every time I feel daunted by the documents in advance I think of this passage and the importance of attending with heart and mind prepared.

Finally, to celebrate 6 years of Epping Meeting's Newsletter it seems fitting to have the lives of a couple who have been married for 60 years as our Meet the Meeting feature!

Meet the Meeting: Iris Blay by Jackie Blay

Iris was born just before the start of World War Two. She was known as 'titch', having an older brother and sister. She lived in a terrace house a few yards from the River Thames in Oxford, with an outside loo and a tin bath in the back room. She can recall the Yanks being in Oxford during the War and 'do you want gum chum' being a frequent phrase. She was the Coronation Queen and kept her Crown for many years!

She met Jeff when he came to collect Labour Party dues from one of her neighbours. Iris was brought up in the Church of England and married Jeff in her local church. They left Oxford and worked on a small holding, where her first daughter was born. Iris says she never wants to look at another leek! Jeff then got a job at Reaseheath Agricultural College, where her second daughter was born. Due to Jeff's change of job a move was made to Eynsford and then to Hailsham.



It was in Hailsham that Iris first became interested in the Society of Friends, and as a family attended the meeting in Eastbourne. After being attenders for some years they were accepted as Quakers. They then moved to become wardens at Wanstead Quaker meeting House for a number of years. They eventually moved to Chingford and became members of Epping meeting.

Iris has had various jobs, mostly in retail, working her way up from sales assistant to office manager. The low point was being made redundant from this post, but quickly got a new managerial position with Clarks Shoes, of course originally a Quaker company.

Iris has a lot of craft based hobbies, she also enjoys pottering in the garden, but mostly I think she enjoys her outings with Jannet. She also attends a weekly yoga class, which she enjoys.

While at Wanstead Meeting she was a volunteer for St John's Ambulance and was able to help at the various voluntary organisations that rented the meeting house. Iris has been Treasurer for the meeting, and is now an Overseer, a role she enjoys but can prove challenging at times.

Meet the Meeting: Jeff Blay by Jannet Blay

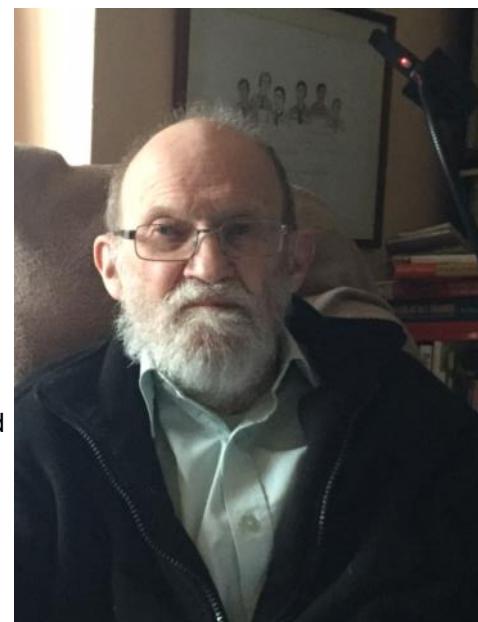
Jeff's earliest memory is of being pushed in a pram with his sister Jenny. His mother used to walk from East Oxford to West Oxford via the high street to visit her Mother. Jeff's father worked as a college scout, and he waved his mop out of the window when they walked past.

Jeff remembers the Second World War being declared when he was in church with his sister. It was the day before his 9th birthday.

Jeff was raised in the Church of England, but he refused to be confirmed when he was 10.

Jeff enjoyed gardening at school, and recalls the playing field being dug up in order to grow vegetables. He always wanted to be a farmer, as he loves the land and animals. At just 14 and a half years old he started work as a farm labourer.

In 1947 he obtained a scholarship to Sparsholt Agricultural Institute.



Iris is the love of his life who, he met in 1954 and they married in 1956. He also has two daughters the eldest born in Bedfordshire, and the youngest born in Cheshire.

Jeff attended his first Quaker meeting in Eastbourne in 1967. When they lived in Hailsham Jeff went to a Labour Party meeting where he discovered that 5 out of 9 members present were Quakers. So he went home and told Iris, and she obtained more information from Friends House. Iris and Jeff attended for a few years before becoming members.

In 1969 they moved from Sussex to London, and Jeff became warden of Wanstead Meeting House, which none of the Blay family enjoyed. The highlight of his employment years was the 7 years he worked as a union rep.

Jeff enjoys the Epping meeting because he says that it is a very pleasant meeting.

Over the years, Jeff has had many interests:

- Magistrate for 25 years
- Local Councillor for 4 years
- Fabian Society Weekend and Winter schools
- Committee member of the Thomas Paine Society
- School governor for over 35 years.
- Director of Republic
- Director of Age UK Waltham Forest

Jeff also worked daily on his four allotments which he has recently given up, but he still enjoys gardening at home. He also enjoys the Internet, and spends many happy hours browsing on his iPad. With an occasional game of patience included!



Stop Trident Demo in London by Freddie Fricker

On Saturday 27 February, my mum and I went on the trident march! I observed that there were loads of people and when I got home I found out that that it was 10s of thousands of people! I hope I go on a march like this again!

The thing I enjoyed the most was when there were loads of people with drums behind us! Also there was a chant which went:

“1234 We don’t want nuclear war 5678 spend the cash on tea and cake”

The placard we were holding said:

“Cut War Not Welfare”

My opinion on trident is that it’s bad and we should scrap it.

Wanstead’s “Super Sunday” by Alan Fricker

The last Sunday in February saw a group dash down to Wanstead for a performance by Plain Quakers of their play "For conscience sake".

The two handed play explored the situation of conscientious objectors at the time of the first world war set in the light of our increasingly militarised society. We heard about the different people affected and their reasons for refusing to participate to a lesser or greater extent. It was an engaging way to learn more on this topic and I hope it will also find audiences outside of Quaker circles. It was very timely as the hundred year anniversary of the start of conscription passed recently.

The white feather diaries (<http://www.whitefeatherdiaries.org.uk/>) are using journals from the time to recreate in real time the experiences of conscientious objectors at the time and are well worth a look.

Being Friends Together Study Session 2: Social Responsibility by Rebecca Fricker

November found 8 Friends gathered together reflecting on how Quakers put their faith into action as part of a session on Chapter 23 of Quaker Faith & Practice. The spirited discussion meant we only had time for the “It spoke to my condition” activity but I feel that we certainly ended the hour with a greater knowledge of the range of beliefs within our meeting.

The extracts which spoke to Friends included:

23.05 William Charles Braithwaite 1919	“Evils which have struck their roots...”
23.10 Gordon Matthews 1989	“We need both a deeper spirituality...”
23.18 Joseph Rowntree 1904	On the need to search out causes of poverty
23.19 Queries 1964	“Are you working towards the removal of social injustices?”
23.20 Richard Allen 1984	Formation of the Child Poverty Action Group
23.21 Yearly Meeting Statement 1987	On inequality
23.62 Edward W Fox 1969	On identifying and applying Christian values

Although Friends differed in their personal response to each extract, and the role of the individual, the market and the state in people's lives, we were able to unite around the final sentence from London Yearly Meeting's 1978 Statement:

“John Bellers reminded Friends that God would not send his angels to solve our problems; it is we who must seek the solutions with God's guidance, and we who must do the job”

Being Friends Together Study Session 3: General Counsel on Church Affairs by Rebecca Fricker

There was a slight expectation that our study session on Chapter 3 of Quaker Faith & Practice might be a little dry. However, the 7 Friends who gathered to consider which passages spoke to their condition experienced a thoughtful and inspiring discussion on the nature of our Meeting for Worship for Business and the role of the clerk.

Extracts which spoke to Friends included:

3.02 “This does not mean that laughter and a sense of humour should be absent from our meetings for church affairs”
3.03 “We are enjoined to live adventurously, but experiment must be grounded in the experience of generations of Friends”
3.09 “It is not expected that any Friend should attend every meeting or sit upon innumerable committees”
3.09 “On taking your seat try to achieve quietness of mind and spirit”
3.10 “Value the meeting as a social occasion”
3.11 “...uphold those at the table in prayerful silence”

We considered how easy individuals and the meeting find it to follow advice given in 3.08 to 3.11 and whether we need to pay more attention to what is required of us. Our conclusion was that while we thought we understood, respected and generally followed the advice strong feelings could sometimes waylay us.

We also discussed the importance considering our history and looking to the future, the need to know the advices and queries, the role of Friends House, and the effect of being a charity on our governance and freedom to act as we might wish.

Being Friends Together Study Session 5: Other Quaker groupings & Yearly Meeting by Rebecca Fricker

Despite 5 and 6 being the two shortest, and perhaps most information heavy, Chapters in QF&P a lively discussion was still had between the 8 Friends who attended this study session.

We considered the role of the chapters in providing essential history and explanations on key Quaker Groupings in the UK and they were felt to be key in illustrating the changing use of terminology and structures used by the Religious Society of Friends to carry out its business.

A preference for the splitting of the red book back into faith, or discipline, and practice, or church governance, was expressed by several people as it was felt that it was the governance sections which dated more quickly and having them as separate would assist in the updating process.

Our considerations of the work undertaken by Britain Yearly Meeting in session and its impact on the wider world led to discussions on equality and same sex marriage and slavery, the present housing crisis, and Trident. What was really interesting to me was how the expression of different views on these subjects, combined with explaining to an attender how the structures “worked”, actually illustrated how Quaker decision making happens even when there is not ready consensus between those present.

I read 6.09 Purposes and functions as I feel it spoke to those gathered in our Meeting House:

No organisation or planning can produce a good Yearly Meeting if those who attend come for an inadequate reason. When the Religious Society of Friends gathers for its annual assembly, it does so because it seeks to come to know the mind of God on the various affairs to be brought forward... We are ordinary people, with the shortcomings of ordinary people, and there is laid upon us the necessity of patience with one another in all our gatherings, and especially in Yearly Meeting, and the willingness to accept the imperfect arising from our human limitations.



Positive Money “How does Money Work?” by Rebecca Fricker

Although I follow and support the work of Positive Money I still learnt a lot from the presentation and discussion they facilitated at Loughton's Lopping Hall on 3 March 2016, organised by the Epping Forest Green Party but open to the public, on their campaign to remove the commercial bank's power to create money – giving it to a body independent from both the government and financial institutions instead.

Interesting facts:

- Only 3% money in circulation is physical, the rest is electronic money in the form of credit and loans created by commercial banks
- Banks do not lend “savers” £ to “borrowers”, they just create figures on a screen which then disappear when loans are repaid
- Only 1/10 MPs understand how this system works!
- Between 1997 and 2007 only 8% of created money went into the real economy – 51% went into mortgages and 31% went to the financial sector
- The main effects of the current system are asset inflation (particularly in the housing market) which fuels inequality
- The “housing shortage” narrative, blamed on immigration and low building, is a myth. The number of houses has kept pace with population but it is just that housing is now unaffordable for many people

For some short, but very informative, films on the topic please visit <http://positivemoney.org/>

Dates for the Diary March - June

Study Sessions:

Sunday 13th March led by Christine
Chapter 10: Belonging to a Quaker meeting & Chapter 11: Membership

Sunday 10th April led by Rebecca
Chapter 12: Caring for one another & Chapter 17: Quaker funerals

Sunday 15th May led by Alan
Chapter 16: Quaker marriage procedure & Chapter 22: Close relationships

Sunday 12th June (TBC)
Chapter 13: Varieties of religious service & Chapter 20: Living faithfully today

Shared lunch:

Sunday 27th March

Sunday 24th April = CANCELLED DUE TO HIGH LEIGH

Sunday 29th May

Sunday 26th June

Next Local Business Meeting:

Sunday 8th May

Sunday 5th June

Area Meetings:

Sunday 20th March: Leigh on Sea 1.30pm

Wednesday 18th May: Romford 6pm

Saturday 25th June: Wanstead All day

Other:

High Leigh Gathering Friday 22nd – Sunday 24th April

Britain Yearly Meeting Friday 27th – Monday 30th May

Informal lunches

These will be held on the second Thursday of the month at different venues around Epping Forest, please speak to Iris or Margaret for details of location and timings.

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: Alan Fricker

