



OAKHAM FRIENDS NEWSLETTER

AUGUST AND SEPTEMBER 2010

Hippo Style Quaker Outreach in Gaol Street !!!!!

EPISTLE FROM BRITAIN YEARLY MEETING, 28-31 MAY 2010

To all Friends everywhere

We send you loving greetings from Britain Yearly Meeting held from 28th to 31st May 2010. Quakers of all ages from Britain and other yearly meetings gathered at Friends House London. It has been a joy to "see one another's faces" and to bring the spirit of celebration from our Yearly Meeting Gathering last year in York into this year's consideration of our ongoing work. Worship in different settings and groups has been deeply grounded.

At the beginnings of our sessions individual Friends have responded to the questions: Why am I a Quaker? How am I a Quaker? Their joy and commitment have formed a strong thread linking the different agenda items, Quaker work can pick us up and turn us round, strengthen and transform us. There is such a variety of things to be done that everyone can feel they have something to give, in money, time and energy. When we give from our hearts, we are enriched and we deepen the lives of our communities. It is good to be challenged to contribute our gifts; it is a sign that we belong. We have asked ourselves hard questions about the ministry of giving. Do we give enough to notice the impact in our lives? Each of us is called to give in proportion to what we have. Do our attitudes to money challenge or mirror those of the world around us. Our money may unlock opportunities for service.

Our *Framework for action 2009-2014* asks stronger meetings to help weaker ones. Sharing otherwise burdensome tasks makes service a joy and helps to build our Quaker community. A priority of the Framework is using our resources well, whether they are of people, money or buildings, and we are excited that many meetings are engaging creatively with this aspect of stewardship. We have seen a model of what vision can achieve in the creation of the new Quaker Centre. It opens Friends House to the world. With money, time and love, the Large Meeting House might also be rejuvenated.

We have reflected on our engagement with the political process in its widest sense. We have a ministry of listening and mediation. Our own daily decisions about the way we live are part of our witness. Quakers have messages to share on justice, equality, simplicity, integrity, peace and sustainability. Let us speak out passionately to the world for the values inherent in our testimonies. Our challenge is to convince those in power that equality benefits all.

Our effective political action following last year's decision on same-sex marriage has shown us that Quakers can act fast and network effectively. Our Quaker heritage still carries weight, we must continue to live up to it.

We have agreed the principle that journalists should be admitted to Yearly Meeting in session, leaving decisions on detailed procedures about this to an appointed group.

The richness of this yearly meeting's life has grown from many points, enveloping and deepening the main sessions. It has been good for us to be together, we are strengthened by sharing our experience of serving our community and the world. We feel inspired to become our best selves and act with God's guidance as agents for transformation. What matters is that our lives should speak, as 'living minutes' of this yearly meeting.

Signed in and on behalf of Britain Yearly Meeting Liz Burch, clerk

The Yearly Meeting (28-31 May 2010) in session asked that the following briefing from Gillian Ashmore, Recording Clerk, be copied to all meetings for information.



Same sex marriage update: Gillian Ashmore, Recording Clerk.
Monday morning 31 May 2010

At Yearly Meeting last year in York you asked Meeting for Sufferings both for a change to *Quaker faith and practice* to introduce equality between same sex and opposite sex couples in Quaker marriage and also to engage with our governments to seek a change in the relevant laws so that Quaker same sex marriages could be recognised as legally valid, without further process, in the same way as opposite sex marriages celebrated in our meetings. At that stage we did not know what might be possible or how long it would take to achieve legal change.

Very soon after Yearly Meeting we learnt that Waheed Alli, a Muslim peer with a track record of campaigning for gay rights, was proposing to introduce amendments to the Equality Bill to enable civil partnerships to take place in religious premises. He was not seeking to impose this on all faiths but simply to allow those who wished to host civil partnership ceremonies to do so. For him it was a matter of both gay rights and of religious freedom, a principle which proved vital in the debates.

I asked Meeting for Sufferings whether they wished to support those amendments which would be a step towards equality between same sex and opposite sex couples, but would not be exactly what Yearly Meeting had asked. Meeting for Sufferings agreed that they wished to support the amendments.

At that stage, back in last October, our aim was simply to grasp an opportunity to air in debate, to get on record the Quaker position on same sex marriage. We were not thinking the amendments would succeed in a cautious House of Lords where the bishops and the religious right appeared to hold sway. But we set about our Quaker campaign with energy and persistence. We gained support from the Unitarians and Liberal Judaism, the Clerk of Meeting for Sufferings and staff met the Minister, we met civil servants, we approached individual peers. One member of the Oxford meeting mobilised extraordinary support from from academia and the liberal wing of the Church of England and bombarded the media. Separately we sent a brief to all peers on behalf of Quakers, Unitarians and Liberal Judaism.

Sometimes efforts like these go straight in the bin. It was not less than thrilling to listen to the debates at Committee Stage and Third Reading in the Lords and hear from speaker after speaker in a quite full House supporting amendments and referring to the Quaker position. Government and Opposition moved from rejection at Committee stage, to allowing a free vote at Report Stage which secured a very large majority in favour of the amendments, with peers staying long past 11 pm to hear the result. The permissive nature of the amendments-not forcing anything on faiths who were opposed-was crucial to success.

What is the position now? Nothing is ever straight forward in legislation! The Equality Act 2010 contains an amendment to the Civil Partnership Act 2004 creating a new power to make regulations enabling the registration of religious premises for civil partnerships. The provision only applies in England and Wales. Meeting for Sufferings last December asked General Meeting for Scotland on the Yearly Meeting minute and they have formed a group to take matters forward in Scotland.

The last government promised a wide consultation on draft regulations which we hope will still happen later this year. This will require our continuing attention so that we can influence the way civil partnerships will be performed in meetings so that we can come as close as possible to full equality for same sex and opposite sex marriages. And beyond that, of course, will come the longer wait to seize opportunities to achieve full legal equality for same sex marriages.

WHAT HAVE WE LEARNT FROM THIS PROCESS?

First, that the strength of the Yearly Meeting decision was crucial. Because the decision Yearly Meeting took was so clear, it gave confidence to those who were called on to carry it out.

Second, that we can work well in partnership with like minded churches, while respecting the position of others. Again, the Yearly Meeting minute was clear about that.

Third, that Quakers can be mobilised and act fast. We have networks and we can use them.

Fourth, that our Quaker heritage still carries weight. We are known for our integrity. We must not de-value that; we must live up to it.



On a lighter note!!!

There are other ways in which "our Quaker networks" can be used!!!!
A few weeks ago we sat having our breakfast and we were watching a hedgehog in our garden scuttling to and fro carrying nesting materials from one part of the garden to another. She was busy for at least an hour and we thought we would like to do something to make her stay in

our garden more comfortable!!

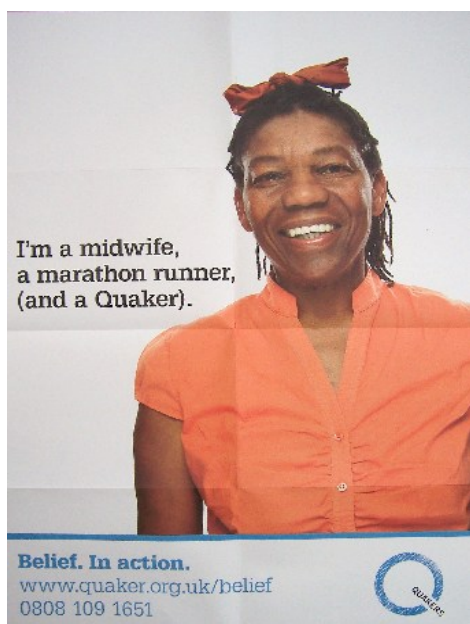
So we turned to our very own local Quaker hedgehog expert..Daphne. I e-mailed some pictures and an explanation and she was as thrilled as we were!! She telephoned us and suggested that we might feed her, especially if she is having babies!! Two days later Daphne turned up on our doorstep with a deluxe feeding station and gave us advice about how to keep the cats out and what food and drink to provide!



It does not look like much especially with the "cat repelling brick additions", but it works and our friendly hedgehog continues to visit each night and eats a small carton of cat food. She spends all day in her nest about a yard away against the fence. No sign of babies as yet!!

" Quakers can be mobilised and act fast. We have networks and we can use them" !!!!

Don and Wendy Amphlett



I'm a midwife,
a marathon runner,
(and a Quaker).

Belief. In action.
www.quaker.org.uk/belief
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QUAKER WEEK 2nd to 10th October 2010

Quaker Week is an opportunity for keen meetings to do some outreach. This year's week is focusing more heavily on our peace and social witness work than it has in the past.

The poster and advertising campaign is built around individual Quakers who have put their faith into action. It is hoped that Quaker Week 2010 will provide a chance for meetings to explore these themes more deeply in their outreach work.

I thought we might produce a special newsletter this year in which individual members and attenders of our meeting describe how we feel we put our faith into action !
Have you any other ideas? Let us share them.

Don Amphlett

Thoughts on attending the *Considering Membership*

weekend at Charney Manor

My weekend at Charney Manor was for me a delightful, gentle raising of awareness. What remains with me the most, now, a month later, is the difference between being in possession of information - the facts - and knowing things through experience

I knew, for example, that Charney Manor was beautiful, but seeing the building for myself was another matter entirely, not to mention the furniture, gardens and surrounding countryside. And of course I knew that there were many other meetings and many other Quakers, but meeting this group, and especially hearing their varied experiences of being a Quaker, brought home some of the reality of that in a way that reading about it simply couldn't have done.

I began attending the meeting in Oakham because I liked the idea of sitting in a group in silence, but I now see that there is far more to discover, and that it will largely be an experiential learning. For example, I continue to bring to mind being at the Area Meeting last Sunday, so each one of these experiences is living with me and becoming a part of me. Thank you to all.

Gillian Riley



New to the Meeting House Library

There are four new books going onto the library shelves in July. These are:

"The Case For God" by Karen Armstrong

"The Spirit Level" by Richard Wilkinson and Kate Pickett

"Silence and Honey Cakes" by Rowan Williams

"Where God Happens" by Rowan Williams

There are still one or two texts that I will get as and when they become available. My thanks to Don for his steady stream of suggestions for acquisitions. If anyone else has ideas for other texts please let me know by email at chrispatdawson@yahoo.co

Chris Dawson



Do you recognise anyone?

***Do you recognise where this
Photograph was taken?***

Sheila supplies some of the answers

Look carefully and you will see that the wedding photograph was taken in the Meeting House garden backing on to Gaol Street. Earlier this year there was an exhibition by "Hidden Treasure Photography" at the Victoria Hall, and one of my neighbours came home to tell me that there was a Quaker wedding in the exhibition.

Naturally I had to go and take a look! I spoke to Allan Grey, who runs "Hidden Treasure Photography" He told me that the photo had been taken in by Betty Clarke, the mother of Richard Clarke, artist and potter, who has owned the Old House Art Gallery in the Oakham Market Place for some 30 years and is the third generation of his family to trade in Oakham.

I called on them and she loaned me the photograph. The groom is her father-in-law Ernest Clarke who came from Derby to marry Nan Hibbert a member of a well known Rutland family. They were probably married in Oakham Parish Church, and we believe that at that time the Quaker Meeting House was used by the C of E church as a Sunday School. We think that the couple held their Wedding Reception at the Meeting House. The photograph probably dates from about 1910.

There is a copy of the photo in the Meeting House and if anybody can provide any further information about the Clarke/Hibbert families we would be delighted to hear from you.

Sheila Browett



QUAKER CRAFT EXHIBITION AND SALE

Recently Marriane was clearing out some of her old paperwork and came across some newspaper cuttings about the Craft Exhibition and Sale held at the Oakham Meeting House back in 1996. These were passed around after the Sunday Meeting for Worship and several people showed interest and Davina said, "Why don't we have another one?"

Ideas were tossed around and a number of people said they would be willing to contribute craft work of various kinds if Davina was willing to organise a small group to set the ball rolling!

It was then suggested that the exhibition could be held on a couple of days during Quaker Week in October and could be used to illustrate our "Faith in Action" which is to be the theme of this year's Quaker Week. Perhaps funds could be raised to go towards our usual annual charitable giving.

If you are interested in giving Davina a hand to organise things; If you are willing to provide exhibits or items for sale; or if you have any thoughts or ideas to contribute please let us know.

Davina Fairweather / Don Amphlett



Gardening at the Meeting House

Please put the date in your diaries - 25th September at 10 am.

Please come and bring secateurs etc. so that we can tackle the shrubs
The courtyard is very overgrown.

Sheila Browett

Events and Dates for your Diaries

August

- Sun 1st **Meeting for Worship 10.30 am**
Lammas Day (Pagan Harvest Festival)
- Sat 7th Coffee Morning at the Meeting House 10am to 12 noon.
- Sun 8th **Meeting for Worship 10.30am**
- Mon 9th International Day of the World's Indigenous Peoples
- Thurs 12th *Start of Ramadam (Muslim)*
- Sun 15th **Meeting for Worship 10.30am**
Assumption of the Blessed Virgin Mary (Christian)
- Tues 17th *Birthday of Marcus Garvey (Rastafari)*
- Sun 22nd **Meeting for Worship 10.30am**
- Mon 23rd International Day for the Remembrance of the Slave Trade and its Abolition
- Tues 24th *Raksha Bandhan (Hindu)*
- Sun 29th **Meeting for Worship 10.30am**

September

- Thurs 2nd *Janmashtami-Krishna Jayanti (Hindu)*
- Sat 4th Coffee Morning at the Meeting House 10am to 12 noon.
- Sun 5th **Meeting for Worship 10.30 am** Followed by Local Business Meeting
Paryushana (Jain)
- Wed 8th International Literacy Day
- Thurs 9th *Rosh Hashanah Jewish New Year (Jewish)*
- Fri 10th *Eid-UI-Fitr - End of Ramadam (Muslim)*
- Sat 11th Heritage Open Day Oakham Quaker Meeting House 10.00 am to 4.00 pm
- Sun 12th **Meeting for Worship 10.30 am**
Area Meeting for Business at Leicester 1.30 pm
- Sat 18th *Yom Kippur Day of Atonement (Jewish)*
- Sun 19th **Meeting for Worship 10.30 am**
- Tues 21st International Day of Peace
- Thurs 23rd *Sukkot The Feast of Tabernacles (Jewish)*
The Autumn Equinox (Pagan)
- Sat 25th Gardening at the Meeting House. All Volunteers Welcome
- Sun 26th **Meeting for Worship 10.30 am**
- Wed 29th *Michaelmas (Christian)*
Hoshanah Rabbah (Jewish)
- Thurs 30th *Shemini Atzeret (Jewish)*