



Almeley Wootton Quaker News

November—January 2020/21

www.almeleyquakers.org.uk

Dates for Your Diary

Meetings for Worship are continuing online via Zoom at 10:30 each Sunday. Thank you Maggie Taylor-Sanders for hosting each Meeting.

MfWfB 5th November at 6:00pm. Via Zoom. Login details to follow

Area Meeting 14th November 2020 via Zoom. Details to follow.

Absent Friends

In these times when we cannot meet in person at our meeting house we welcome news of Friends.

Veronique Avon is enjoying working at St. Michael's hospice in Hereford and has passed her 6 months probationary period, She would like to thank meeting for holding her in the Light in her work at the hospice.

Sue Harris has continued her singing groups on Zoom, Throughout the summer they have met outdoors in friends' gardens.

Brian Holly has been in touch. He is well and busy on a project with the Herefordshire Interfaith Group. Brian sends his best wishes to Almeley Friends and says 'I will keep in touch and one day, when this is all over, I aim to attend meeting again from time to time.'

Olive Bennewith shared with Friends the very good news that her grandson, born 6 months ago requiring bowel surgery, is now thriving.

Friends were very pleased to hear that **Marion Gillet's** Grandson, who was ill earlier this year, is also well on the road to recovery. Marion

has now settled into her new home in Edinburgh.

Rachel and Frank Cosgrove tell us that Daniel and Jo got married on September 27th with three days to prepare! The Registrar kindly offered to marry them on the Sunday afternoon just before the rules changed which meant that they could have thirty people there rather than fifteen had it taken place a day later. It was a glorious autumn day which meant that we were able to spend time after the ceremony in the gardens at the back of The Grange in Leominster where the wedding took place. It was a really lovely venue and everyone enjoyed sharing the day with the happy couple.

Sheila Satterthwaite is recovering well from not one but two recent falls. The first resulted in a cracked tibia. During the most recent fall, Sheila fractured her ulnar. Despite these accidents, she remains her usual cheerful self. Please can we hold her in the light and wish her well .

Mary Whittall has been in regular contact. She is coping well with the restrictions although as with all of us there are times when perhaps it isn't very easy. The fact that she lives in the centre of Weobly helps because there are always people passing her house and they can stop and have a chat. She has developed a new skill in cutting her own hair!

Maggie White is well though frailer and has difficulty with her hearing. Her short term memory is not good but she still has good recall for events and people in the past. Maggie sends her love to everyone.

Friends have been pleased to welcome **Gary Houlihan** to the outdoor MfW. Gary lives in Kington and has been in regular touch with our Meeting since lock down started.

Britain Yearly Meeting 2020

Not since 1668 has anything prevented Quakers holding Yearly Meeting. Not world wars. Not Spanish flu nor other pandemics. Now the public health crisis around COVID-19 has disrupted plans for the high-point of the Quaker year.

Britain Yearly Meeting (BYM) will now take place online on the afternoon of Sunday 15th November 2020. This was confirmed by Meeting for Sufferings held online and attended by Maggie Taylor-Sanders. BYM 2020 is online only and consists of two sessions separated by a break. In the first session a range of necessary business will be considered. The second session will consist largely of an extended Meeting for Worship. Each session will last approximately one hour. This short Yearly Meeting will be able to deal with only the most essential business. Consideration of substantive topics will be deferred until Yearly Meeting 2021. If you wish to attend, registration is required and there is a maximum participation of 1,000 people due to the limitations of Zoom. Registration will be phased, to make sure that all those Friends whose attendance is essential to the holding of Yearly Meeting and any invited visitors have places, before general booking opens. Details will be announced in Quake! and via the usual communications channels. Registration will be a simple online process, and allocation of places will be on a first-come-first-served basis.

Library News

The Quaker Centre Bookshop and café opened on 1st September 2020.

The bookshop is currently only able to ship directly from the website and can only ship titles that are listed as 'in stock'

<https://bookshop.quaker.org.uk/>

Library of the Society of Friends.

The Library of the Society of Friends will remain closed until 2021. They have been closed since 17 March 2020,

Faith for the Climate



Faith for the Climate, a multifaith national network exists to encourage, inspire and equip faith communities in their work on climate change. Climate Change is the biggest

and most urgent challenge facing humanity. People of faith see creation as a gift, and believe we have a sacred responsibility to care for and protect the Earth's climate for future generations. Faith communities have a unique role to play, in our work and witness, alongside and in partnership with secular environmental organisations, enabling people of faith to live out their calling by acting to protect the climate

<https://faithfortheclimate.org.uk/>

Quaker Peace and Social Witness Central Committee

Quaker Peace and Social Witness Central Committee (QPSWCC) has been developing a new strategy for 2020-2025 and are almost there. At their 20--22 November meeting they hope to have the strategy agreed.

They have already agreed the broad outlines of a new strategy: the vision, mission, principles, faith, work themes and approaches for the new strategy, together with an overview of the way QPSW will work towards peace and climate justice. They are now looking in more detail at what they realistically hope to achieve in building a more peaceful and sustainable world over the next five years.

The two principle work themes they have chosen for the next 5 years are Peace and Peace Building and Sustainability and Climate Justice.

They are now consulting with sub-committees and groups, with staff and with other Quaker bodies about the work that should be done over the next five years and the way this should be governed and owned by Friends.

Jeff Beatty

Quakers financial challenges

Quiet Company – the Quaker company that runs Friends House London and Swarthmoor Hall in Cumbria – has not been able to operate for much of this year. Income will be much reduced, down by around £3.5m this year. Without Quiet Company's usual £1m trading profit to help fund the charity, savings must be made in staffing costs.

BYM hopes to avoid compulsory redundancies (but this option may need to be considered) while protecting the services BYM provides to support Quaker communities and work for a sustainable and peaceful world.

Staff have been consulted on ways to protect jobs while reducing staff costs (that account for more than half of BYM expenditure) such as introducing a pay freeze.

BYM staff have now been invited to take up measures such as voluntary redundancy, reduced hours, working from home on regional pay scales, unpaid sabbatical and additional leave purchase.

As agreed at our MfWfB in September, Almeley Wootton made a contribution of £4000.

Friends and supporters can help sustain Quaker work through making a donation online.

<https://www.quaker.org.uk/our-organisation/giving>

A Birthday Cartoon

Zöe Cook's late grandparents, Edward and Gwendolen Smith, were Quakers in Kington for many decades. For her grandmother's 90th Birthday, a member of Almeley meeting house, called Dominic, designed a fantastic card which her dad, William, still has today. Zöe contacted Almeley Quakers to enquire if anybody knew who and where Dominic was.



ground. A young Zöe once asked John Titley if he would place a letter on her grandparents grave which he gladly did.

Logs to Burn

The logs that in the shed you'll find
Have left their woodland world behind.
They're cut and dried three years or more
And regimented roof to floor.

But logs that lurk in the Dingle dark
Are a veritable Noah's Ark!
They're home to every mini beast,
A creepy, crawly, fungal feast!

I sleep like a log most nights, it's true,
But sleep, like logs, is varied too.
Some nights are lifeless, dusk to dawn
And leave with just a stretch or yawn.

But others – ah, the home of dreams,
Imagination bursts the seams!
So, 'Sleep like a log' – I wish you well,
May your nights burn bright with tales to tell!

Carey Glyn-Jones

Both Kate Binney and John Titley knew Dominic. His name is Dominic Poelsmar and he came from a Dutch family. After Almeley he attended Hereford Meeting but is no longer on their list. John said that "When I last saw Dominic Poelsma he was living at Upper Ffynnonau, Colva, Kington". Dominic was a professional cartoonist known as Clive. He produced cartoons for several national publications. Dominic now lives mainly in Kington and is not in good health.

Edward and Gwendolen Smith are interred in Almeley Quaker burial

Looking Forward to 2022



At these present times it is difficult to plan, to look forward with optimism, to think what we might be doing in a couple of years'

time. However I've just started doing that! On our gate, as we open it, we see 1672., some indication of just how long Friends have been worshipping in Almeley (it might have been taking place in local houses even earlier) but in 2022 we are planning to celebrate a symbolic 350th anniversary.

But how? Let us together come up with a few ideas. We don't know that things will be like the 'old' normal by then but let us start with that premise.

In celebrating it would probably be right to mix both outreach and 'in house' happenings. Here are a few ideas of my own to throw into the mix!

An exhibition of Quakers through the ages open to the 'public' but emphasising our modern relevancy. Perhaps this could include an open day when we would invite M.Ps, other churches/faiths locals etc.

A project to raise £1672 ~ maybe individual Friends helping raise the money. Sponsored cupcake making, doing small tasks for others, chutney selling, biscuit making, sky diving ~ what can you think of? The final sum raised should have a 'purpose'. What could that be? I'm sure the local papers might run a short article if it was interesting enough.

A pamphlet (maybe a book is too ambitious?) on the history of Quakers in Almeley and stories about individual Friends. I remember Kit once had some useful info from the county archivist who had access to old record/minute books.

We were involved in a lovely evening of a similar anniversary in Cambridge a few years back. Short talks by different Friends talking about life in George Fox's days. Education, arts,

farming, religion, science, law to name a few. We ate food and drink of the time and played/ listened to music of the era.

There is a small committee already set up to help with planning but the idea is for it to be a Meeting event so come up with your own ideas to put into the proverbial melting pot!

It is only 14 months till 2022 and judging by how quickly 2020 has gone by....

It would be lovely to think that we can look forward to a year of celebration by then rather than of hardship and sorrow.

Stella Sterry

John Gibbs's funeral 12th October 2020



John died on 1st October and his family had the difficult task of organising a funeral from afar and around the present restrictions. Sixteen of John's family led by Margaret were present as well as seven Friends from Meeting, a family friend and the funer-

al directors. It was a very moving occasion. Kate introduced the Meeting including the words of Margaret Fell (19.61) and Anne then read William Penn (22.95). Several of the family also took part: Margaret read one of John's poems, two grandchildren played music on a guitar and sax, another granddaughter read a poem by R. S. Thomas and his brother-in-law read the prayer of committal as the coffin was lowered. John's son, Mike, and his brother-in-law ministered about John's life. The silences were very still and deep, accompanied by bird song and the occasional passing tractor. The rain held off which was a great help. John was remembered with love and great admiration for his long and fulfilled life. We will miss John and will continue to hold Margaret and her family in the Light.

Kate Binney

Musings ~ A Personal View

By John Titley

One benefits of the current lockdown is that I have for several months been spared 'doorstepping' by eager, naïve, wide-eyed, lovely devout people whose first utterance is something like, 'We are here to talk about GOD.' My response is usually 'What do you mean by GOD?' ensures that any further conversation rapidly goes downhill and is of short duration. I recall two well-meaning folk who the moment I opened the door energetically proclaimed, 'We would like to talk about Jesus.' My response of 'Oh dear! what's he done now?', was not what they expected, was unhelpful, went down like a lead balloon and in retrospect was perhaps unkind. I suppose they have a right to advertise their belief, just as I have a right to challenge it. I'm not too sure where these 'rights' come from, but that is a different discussion. I no longer believe in the biblical God. I did when I was a child. My mother was a kind and devout Anglican and perhaps, unknowingly, I strived to please her. So, like a sponge, I soaked up everything I was told - and a few of the stories were interesting. Not anymore. 'He' - not a 'Her' or an 'It', does not seem to be at all likable, a quick look at the misogyny, racism, genocide, bellicosity and narcissism attributed to him/her/it in the scriptures certainly bears this out, and I'm certainly not going to change my values to accommodate a Supernatural Being cobbled together by humankind over millennia, to accommodate their contemporary world view, although it may have made perfect sense to Bronze Age nomadic goat herders with a limited view of their environment. Looking through our 20th Cent prism, we may think them illiterate. But they were not stupid. Those people were as intelligent as we are. Certainly they were not on a major trade route, but they would have had local trade routes which connected eventually with the wider world. Stories, ideas and the occasional object of wonder would surely have trickled into their milieu. As they sat round their

fires at night contemplating the reality they were living in, human imagination must have blossomed and the foundations of scriptural myths, legends and magic laid. However, just because I no longer agree with scriptural beliefs does not mean that I haven't learned a great deal from the scriptures, on what might be called my meandering trek from Sunday School child to non-theist Quaker. Over time, many theists I've had contact with, seem to have a kind of existential awareness that I haven't readily found in many other people that I have talked to, which has been really refreshing. I have learned how people learn to believe in themselves, their communities, and their ideals. I might not believe in the biblical God, but I can believe in the positive aspects of people who do. And what of the scriptures? Undoubtedly one of the great western texts, full of prose and poetry. Yet if the magic and mythology is stripped away, we have millennia of human thought, ideas, imagination and experience that is still relevant to the contemporary human condition. Even to a cynical non-theist like me!

(I look forward to receiving musings from other Friends for future editions. Ed)

It is because the learning process is continued throughout life that Friends are seekers as well as finders - not one or the other, but both.

Extract from:

Ruth Fawell, Quaker Faith & Practice 26.18

Yearly Meeting Gathering 2021



For anyone who did not book for Yearly Meeting Gathering in 2020 but would like to attend in 2021, booking will

reopen on **11th January 2021**.

YMG 2021 will take place at Bath University on 31st July–6th August 2021.

Might this be an opportunity for several Almeley Friends to attend together?

Zooming

We owe much in Almeley Local Quaker Meeting to the vision and determination of Maggie Taylor-Sanders who, on realising in March at the outbreak of Covid-19, that our lovely old Meeting House would need to be closed for many months, set about working out how a Zoom Meeting for Worship (MfW) could take place.

During the last seven months Friends have met on Zoom each Sunday; numbers have varied between 15 and 25 and many join early for a friendly catch up before the Meeting begins.

This brief report owes much to Maggie and to other Friends. Overall comments from Friends, in writing and in person, indicate that they have found Zoom to be a good and enjoyable experience. Some openly admit that they have been surprised by at how well it has gone.



The successes

Friends comment on the quality of worship and the profound depth that the meeting can reach. We have shared some extremely thought provoking and spiritual ministry and many of us have found it easier to minister than we expected it to be.

The use of Zoom has saved both time and fuel in travel and sits well within our testimony of sustainability.

Zoom has made it possible for Friends who would have been unable to attend the Meeting House in person to join a meeting. It was wonderful to see Jane Walsh at several MfW before her sad death and to connect with Marion after her move to Scotland. It meant we kept in touch every week with Morag and Richard, who were living with their son in Scotland during lock down. This increased flexibility for Friends with mobility and health issues is a key benefit and one that will merit further consideration as time goes on.

Many Friends have commented on the joy of seeing the faces of others and of the opportunity before meeting to catch up on news. We've observed that notices after MfW has changed; whilst it is still the forum for sharing news, events and information it has also on occasions been used for after thoughts - and has taken ministry to another level. In a time of constant change emanating from the Covid restrictions the Notice time has provided an essential space to consider immediate issues, such as using the Meeting House grounds for MfW.

The challenges

Initially technology was a challenge. We have been heartened by both the persistence of Friends and by the levels of help that have been given to support each other. There are Friends though with access to neither the technology nor the skills to use it. Online skills for some of us need constant practice and coming to them later in life is simply too difficult for some. Friends who use tablets remind us that are only able to see four faces at a time.

The downsides

Joining MfW from our homes, especially when everyone is muted, can make for distractions and concentration can be a problem. Several of us noted that extra discipline is required to switch off. Our lives are often busy and without the journey to the Meeting House it can be difficult to find an opportunity to prepare mentally for Meeting.

We have to accept that some friends have extremely valid reasons for finding MfW via Zoom difficult and not for them. The intensity of looking at faces on the screen can be off putting. Some have found it can increase a sense of loneliness. Others find that it is too removed from the experience of MfW in the Meeting House and that it lacks the spiritual aspect that they value. There is for some a suspicion that the software is maliciously used for 'data harvesting'

Opportunities for the future

There is obvious scope for running Meetings for Learning on Zoom. Those Friends who have attended AM and Meetings of Friends in Wales know already how effective the ability to divide into up into breakout rooms online for discussion can be. It takes away the need for travel especially on cold winter nights.

Now that many of us are becoming used to Zoom we are beginning to see a future in which we could join the same the Meeting in the Meeting House or on Zoom – a notion that maybe we would have shied away from a year ago.

While our aim will always be to be as inclusive as possible as one Friend put it "It is important to remember that whatever way we hold MfWs there will be some who are advantaged and some who are not". Zoom meetings have opened up possibilities for some that were not there before.

In conclusion

We need to continue to evaluate how we use Zoom and to explore its potential whilst at the same time acknowledging the great importance for many of us of face to interaction. We face uncertain times and Zoom has been very successful in sustaining and developing our Meeting. We know though that many will echo the parting comment of one correspondent "to be able to meet together in our Meeting House, to share a cuppa and even a hug will always be the best!"

Helen Briggs

White Poppies

We will have to be inventive about the distribution of White Poppies this year.

Some Friends are concerned about wearing one, and simply want to make a donation to the Peace Pledge Union to further its work. I would suggest that those friends donate direct to the PPU, as we are doing for other charities at present. (I can let you have the details of how to do this).

If you would like a white poppy to wear, then I have a supply which I bought last year, and I would be happy to post one (or more) to you on request. The poppies cost me 60p each and second class post is 65p, so it would be nice if your donation via me exceeded £1.25 for an individual poppy.

(cheques payable to I F Sterry please)

Alternatively, are there any volunteers to take a handful for sale to neighbours or at events they may be attending (so that we can save on postage?)

Jan Sterry

email sterry@waitrose.com

Post cheques and maybe a SAE to Winnows, Little Burlton, Burghill. Hereford HR4 7RQ

Perhaps the most neglected of all the Advices is that we should live adventurously. If there is one wish I would pray the Spirit to put into our Christmas stocking, it is warmth, openness, passion, a bit of emotion that doesn't mind making a fool of it self occasionally.

Gerald Priestland. Quaker Faith & Practice 21.25

Climate Emergency

I Zoomed into the Pales lecture titled The Localist Revolution given by Scott Bennett on 5th September 2020 and found it interesting and thought provoking .

Scott presented us with an extensive range of facts and figures showing there are extinction of species and global heating events going on around us which threaten human existence. He gave many facts and figures and concluded "It is Not Your Fault"!!

Initially I found this questionable. But he moved on to show how the Covid crisis was teaching us some valuable lessons, not least that delay in taking action was not the best way to go.

He showed how supply chains of goods in our economically globalised world present serious risks to food and energy security as well as increasing carbon footprints. Scott gave the example of UK and Germany exporting tons of toilet rolls to each other which is surprising and surely unnecessary.

Then Scott turned to consider the essential **Local Revolution** that he challenged us to join. He suggested five steps that should be taken:

1. Build social capital.
2. Show leadership by local authorities telling the truth.
3. Set out a vision for localisation.
4. Make the revolution happen (Wales and the Border are perfect for localism).
5. He proposed that 5 demands be placed on our local authorities

If you have managed to read so far you may feel that you are doing as much as you can to join the local revolution especially in this time of Covid.

I suggest that Scott should have gone one step further by inviting each one of us to address the Climate Emergency as individuals. Here are a few questions to start you thinking.

- a. Are you supporting local shops and tradesmen as much as you can?
- b. Can you reduce food waste or help others to do so?
- c. If you use a car can you reduce the number of trips you make?
- d. Can you reduce the energy used in your dwelling without risk to your health and wellbeing?
- e. Have you talked to the younger members of your family or neighbours to see what

they think - and are doing about the Climate Emergency

Covid will be with us for the foreseeable future and a return to a Pre-Covid "normal" is very unlikely. We should consider what the new normal might look like and do our best to place the emergency of climate change at the very heart of the problems which we face.

Do look at the lecture for yourselves. Perhaps one day, when we can get together we might discuss it further, swap ideas and lower our carbon footprint.

The talk can be viewed at <https://thepales.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/2020/09/palestalk2020.mp4>

Mark Robinson

Almeley Friends Meeting House

I thought I'd re-check the oldest (still used) Quaker meeting houses from the Historic England website (I went up to 1675).

Hertford is indisputably the oldest Friends Meeting House (FMH), after that it's not quite straightforward. Almeley appears 6th in the list by age, but one of the others was used by the Methodists for nearly 100 years and two more are only listed as being 'around' or 'probably' 1670. Intriguingly, Alton is the same age as Almeley, but claims to be older - how they 'know' that, I've no idea!

I think we can safely say that Almeley is in the top five of continuously used FMHs, In any case, it's only two years younger than Hertford..

David Whiting

I would like to thank all those who have sent contributions for this bumper quarterly newsletter which covers a wide range of topics.

I am planning to produce a special edition in December. I would like for all Friends to submit a festive greeting message, poem or picture/photo for all other Friends. I can then incorporate these messages into one publication to circulate. I look forward to receiving your messages by 11th December for publication a week later

David Briggs