



Almeley Wootton Quaker News

November—January 2021/22

<https://almeleyquakers.org.uk>

<https://smquakers.org.uk>

Dates for Your Diary

5th Dec 2021— MfWfB after MfW at Almeley.

(A 1 item agenda for essential finance/budget matters).

10th Jan 2022 - MfWfB via Zoom.

15th Jan 2022 - Area Meeting via Zoom.

23rd Jan 2022 - MfWfB after MfW at Almeley.

(Financial update).

14th Mar 2022 - MfWfB via Zoom.

19th Mar 2022 - Area Meeting via Zoom.

Treasurer for the Quaker Peace Studies Trust

The Quaker Peace Studies Trust works for a more peaceful world by facilitating the study of peace, and methods by which peaceful societies can be nurtured. We do this by funding research, teaching and study within the Peace Studies and International Development Division at the University of Bradford and other institutions of Higher Education in England and Wales. As we prepare for the retirement of our current treasurer next year we are planning to recruit a new board member willing to take on the role of Honorary Treasurer. To find out more about the role contact our Clerk Jeff Beatty at qpst@quaker.org.uk.

Almeley ~ The name of the village is derived from the word for "Elm Wood" with the medieval form of *Alme-*. At the time of the Domesday Survey (1086) it was known as *Elmelie*, but by the middle of the 11th century it was known as *Almeleia*. (Bruce Coplestone-Crow, *Herefordshire Place-Names*, British Archaeological Record British Series 214, 1989, p. 25)

The whole universe is contained in an apple wedge in a lunch box.

Apple tree, sunlight, cloud, rain, earth, air, farmer's sweat are all in it.

Delivery truck, gas, market, money, cashier's smile are all in it.

Refrigerator, knife, cutting board, mother's love are all in it.

Everything in the whole universe depends on one another.

Now, think about what exists in you.

The whole universe is in us.

"The Things You Can See Only When You Slow Down" [Haemin Sunim](#)

Submitted by Anne Bull

Internet

After many months , several messages and calls to BT we have at last got a working internet connection in the Meeting House.

Please do not move the router or turn off the switch on the socket adjacent to the bookcase as this could cause connection problems when switched back on.

A quick check of the wi-fi signal found that there was a reasonable connection in all areas of the building.

David Briggs

Almeley Wootton Local Quaker Meeting: Special Appeal for Britain Yearly Meeting (BYM)

We have been asked to explain again the difference between the annual donation made by each meeting to BYM and the Almeley special collection for 2021, a one-off gift to BYM, which is quite different.

Every year Almeley Friends at a Business Meeting through discernment and with guidance from the treasurer determine what our donation for the year to BYM will be. For several years we have sent less than the amount suggested.

This year has been a particularly challenging one for BYM and we are aware as the BYM treasurer has written that “Contributions from Friends and meetings are crucial to delivering the work that Friends want us to do”.

Based on our tabular return for 2020, Almeley’s suggested annual contribution for 2021 would be £7,200.00. Last year we sent £4000.00. At MfWfB in November we agreed to raise that amount to £5,500.00.

Additionally and separately, we decided in September to start a special appeal to try to raise enough donations from Almeley Friends to add to the annual contributions and hit the target of about £7,200. Thus we need to try to raise £1,700.00. We felt this was appropriate because for 18 months we have been unable to hold a charity collection each week after MfW. To give Friends a rough guide we suggested donations from Members of £35.00 and from Attenders of £17.50 but we did so in the full knowledge that Friends will make their own choice as to any amount, based on their own circumstances and feelings.

We are delighted to with response the appeal so far. Thank you Friends. It will continue until December 13th.

Helen Briggs on behalf of Elders and our Treasurer

Pity of War

On a grey day in mid-November three members of the Pity of War working group and one spouse found their way to an isolated workshop a kilometre outside Llanfyllin (about halfway between Welshpool and Bala). We were there to see the full size clay model constructed for the mould in readiness to make the final bronze in due course.

John Davies, who runs the foundry, together with his assistant Mark, explained the processes involved in enlarging the maquette (the small model of the eventual piece) using a



large pantograph to guide the application of clay on the supporting frame. As you can see from the photo, the piece is about two metres in height—taller than the average person.

The clay mould is then painted with a number of coats of wax, before having layers of plaster applied to the outside. To cast the statue, ingots of bronze are melted down in a furnace and then poured via a channel into the wax (between the clay mould and the plaster surround. The wax is melted and replaced by the liquid bronze. Once this phase is complete, and the bronze cooled and hardened, the plaster surround is chipped away, leaving the final bronze piece.

It was not without its significance that this visit took place the day before Remembrance Day—the day when the nation pays respect to all the lives lost by the military in conflict. We are working towards upholding all those civilians who have perished in wars: partly through the memorial whose cast we saw, and partly through a schools’ education programme.

Donations towards the project are always welcome (details at www.pityofwar.org/support-us)!

Kit Byatt

2022 The year of our 350th Anniversary Celebrations



The Interest group has been meeting since March to discuss how we might celebrate the 350th anniversary of our “cottage” first being used as a Quaker Meeting House. The ideas we have come up with have been many and varied but we think, if we manage to achieve them, it will be a benefit to us all as outreach, celebration and pride in our building and heritage.

Several group members were already engaged in putting together information regarding our Burial Ground, our American connections and the history

of our benefactor Roger Prichard together with stories of more recent Friends. Their research has continued and is likely to compose a major part of the two exhibitions planned.

Hereford Record Office have given over their display area for us to mount an exhibition from March 1st to April 30th. This will be a joint presentation. They have several records of interest e.g. an account book of 1682 but we will need to garner most of the material ourselves.

This display will no doubt form the basis for another exhibition which we will open to general interest in the Meeting House sometime in the summer.

We want the other local Meetings in our Area Meeting to feel involved in our celebrations and to this end several of us will be making a presentation by Zoom at January’s A.M. The July A.M. will take place in Almeley and plans are afoot to provide Friends with a stimulating, interesting and celebratory afternoon.

This brings to my mind the mantra we have been following to keep our minds focused!

“To interest, make aware and to excite”.

We are hoping to put on a couple of events open to the villagers as well as Friends. One of our builders has offered to give a talk on restoration of old buildings. His wife is an accomplished musician of Indian music and we are looking to avail ourselves of her talents perhaps with a concert supported by other musicians and performers.

Another proposal is a Quaker themed talk but who might give this and in what format is yet to be decided.

To involve the village children Carey is planning, with the school’s permission, to organise an enactment day, probably just after term’s end, when the children would dress up and present a short play for parents and Friends.

We are also discussing whether we might make some gift or other to the village to mark our relationship with it and our place in it.

Alton, Hampshire Local Meeting is also celebrating their 350th anniversary in 2022. We have been in touch with them and we plan reciprocal visits.

Most events are due to happen next summer. The Meeting House will be looking at its best after this year’s and next spring’s refurbishments.

June and July will be busy months. To encourage visitors we have talked about cream teas perhaps being on offer or the talks may be accompanied by cheese and J.T’s punch! While our history is what we are celebrating we also need to show that Quakers are very much active in the here and now and we have much, spiritually, to offer.

So hold yourselves in readiness for the tasks ahead whether it is stewardship duties, helping with the young people, coffee, tea or scone making.

Do you play an instrument, or sing, write poetry or are you artistic and could you perhaps illustrate the written exhibits?

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Do you have any old Quaker relics (no jokes please!) or books?

If we do manage all of the above we probably deserve a bit of a treat after the main excitements when we will let our hair down reminisce about all the good things that have happened, laugh about what went wrong (if anything!) and generally have a lovely shared meal together. What do you think?

Your Meeting needs you. Please volunteer your suggestions and time. We can only do a small part on our own.

Stella Sterry

On behalf of the 1672 Interest group

My Time As An Atheist by Jeff Glyn-Jones

Before applying to go to agricultural college I was given a live-in job working for a Catholic dairy farmer who was well educated but very down to earth. Over time he questioned me about my thoughts on various subjects and we would have long discussions about everything from politics to music, from sex to religion, and many other subjects, farming was in there somewhere!. What was disturbing and enlightening was him demanding properly thought out reasons for my simple, rather naive presumptive statements, so not only did he put forward alternative ways of thinking, but made me much more open to questioning all sorts of thing I had taken for granted. One of these was the simple strict Methodist doctrine with which I had been brought up. At no point did he try to push me into Catholicism but simply work out my individual beliefs for myself.

Later, at my Agricultural College in Devon, there were many clubs to become part of and I put my name down for several of interest to me. I was invited to Christian Union meetings, but felt very uncomfortable and somewhat later, through one of the members of, I think the rifle club, I was introduced to an unofficial atheists students group, which appealed to me at the time, and started to go with them to some of the open CU meetings at which we were meant to ask awkward questions!.

It was about this point that I was asked by a CU member if I would take a lovely Ghanian girl to a dance because she hadn't got a partner and was refusing to go. To my everlasting shame I said no. It wasn't because I didn't like her, she was cute and fun, but I was aware of what the reaction of my new-found, and perhaps somewhat racist Atheist friends might be! I may have been trying to think for myself, but that took courage that I didn't have.

These atheists attitude to people of very sincere beliefs made me question why I had come in their support, and over time I became aware that what I was doing was rejecting something that was very dear to me. As I often say, I was throwing the baby out with the bathwater. I stopped going to any CU meetings and tried to sort out my own beliefs. The Atheistic arguments against Christian faith, or faith in general, were very negative, and the agnostic attitude of 'sitting on the fence' did not appeal. A humanitarian perspective did appeal though I didn't know that terminology at the time.

I visited several different denominations, but none really fitted my new way of looking at life. Getting married to someone who was CofE meant that was where we ended up but I was never totally comfortable, declaring certainty in things that I was still uncertain about.

Despite having been responsible for Anglican services for 30 years, the life and teachings of George Fox reminded me of my own search for the truth, and Quaker ways are closest to my understanding of my Christian Faith. Maybe I'm still looking but it feels like home at the moment.!



George Fox 1624—1691

The Pales



On the weekend of the 20th and 21st November Friends across the Southern Marches Area Meeting took part in a tidy up of the garden and pond. The area was strimmed and willows coppiced. A clear up around the pond revealed several wooden benches, small adjacent flower bed - and a rather annoyed frog!

The before and after images show the results of a hard day's work.

With many thanks to Ruth Stanier of Hereford Meeting for the photographs.

The Pales – an update

When I became a Trustee for Southern Marches Area Quaker Meeting, almost a year ago, I hadn't anticipated that one of my Trustee roles would be to join with 3 other Friends to form the Pales Management Group (2) - a daunting prospect. It's a role that so far has been very challenging and a pleasure - the latter because I am part of an effective, hardworking and fun team.

My heart lies with Almeley's lovely Meeting House and grounds but over the last few months The Pales has started to tug at my soul in much the same way. Those of you who know The Pales will have also experienced its wonderful setting, as well the spiritual feeling that so many Friends described when there was a Threshing Meeting to consider its future.

The Threshing Meeting held earlier this year reinforced what a special and important place The Pales is to Friends not just in our AM but throughout the UK and even abroad. It is the oldest Meeting House in Wales in continuous use. Its burial ground and much of its history is well documented. The Pales does not have a Local Meeting to use it regularly, although AM hold a MfW there on the 3rd Sunday of the month at 3pm. Sadly, the cottage, which is attached to the Meeting House, is best described as uninhabitable and requires considerable expenditure before it can become a home again. Plans to develop the Pales and ensure it continues to be well used also require financial investment. It has become clear that AM is unable to provide such funding, especially at a time when there are so many humanitarian calls on us.

Following discernment at Area Meeting the brief to Trustees and thence to the 2nd Pales Management Group was to consider a range of options for the future of the Pales and to prioritise the option to work with Addoldia Cymru, Historic Churches in Wales. Addoldia Cymru is supported as a Charity by the Welsh Government. Their aim is to preserve the most important of the historic religious buildings in Wales. So far, they have 10 buildings in their care. They have shown great interest in The Pales and we have been tremendously encouraged in talking with them to discover that their vision for the Pales and their values closely match those of Friends in AM. The big challenge for them will be to raise the necessary funds and we as Friends will certainly want to assist in that endeavor under their leadership. We hope to hear more in December.

We have had to close the Meeting House at the moment, except for pre-arranged Quaker Meetings, due to the Covid restrictions, but the grounds remain open and are frequently visited - it's the perfect place to sit on benches, contemplate, draw and paint and even picnic.

Helen Briggs

Meeting of Friends in Wales, Away Weekend, 22 – 24 October 2021

I write this short piece in celebration of the above event, which took place with Friends from right across Wales and from England, too. The event took place in the shadow of Covid-19 with all the safety measures required to make the event safe, including lateral flow tests before and after the weekend.

Friends gathered at Plas Tan y Bwlch, the Snowdon National Park Environmental Studies Centre at the southern end of the National Park, which is within easy



reach of Porthmadoc. 36 Friends were resident and up to 16 more joined the residents each day. Plas Tan y Bwlch as one of the images shows has an impressive main house, built by the Oakley family, who made great amounts of money from the nearby slate quarries in Blaenau Ffestiniog, where the Oakley mine was the largest slate mine in the world. Inside there are large study rooms, a dining room and outside the stables have been converted into a lecture theatre, a large computer suite and a study room. The second picture shows a section of



the main corridor, with photographs of the Oakley family.

Friends arrived from 4.00 pm onwards, were given a brief tour in some cases and found their accommodation, which had been organised by the welcoming committee. After an early supper there were opportunities to relax and have some fun including Welsh folk dancing in the Oakeley (correctly spelt) room together with a musical interlude.

Saturday began with Meeting of Friends in Wales Meeting for Business, which was a blended meeting. In the afternoon there were two workshops – one by Karen Devine of the British Ecological Society on ‘Nature Based Solutions’ to the current ecological crisis and another on the ‘Slate Landscape of North West Wales’ given by David Gwyn – and space just to relax. After tea there were three workshops, ‘Footpaths to a Greener Life’, ‘Celebrating Waldo Williams’ and making greetings cards, as well as space for the exhausted just to relax once more. The evening was filled with more merriment, with Friends entertaining us with a puppet show, music, poetry and readings.

Sunday began with Meeting for Worship followed by Peace Education workshops – one in Welsh from Mid Wales AM and another in English by Friends from Anglesey. It is amazing how at primary level Quakers provide so much outreach in peaceful ways of living with one another. Afterwards the two groups



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came together to hear from Friends about the additional work being undertaken by Friends in Wales, particularly by the Peace and Peace Education Group. There was a plea that the work should be extended into the secondary sphere – students are perceived to be more difficult perhaps at this age, but also very receptive.

The weekend came to an end after lunch, but Friends had a truly restorative experience over the weekend after the long months of total or semi – isolation. Tears were shed, almost as an emotional release at meeting so many Friends once more. Friends gradually drifted away, with memories that will last until the next Away Weekend.

The organising committee was resolute in ensuring that whatever problems occurred in the planning would not spoil the weekend and they did not. Friends left on Sunday with smiling faces and the feedback on the event was very positive indeed. Anything within the poor structural organisation at Plas Tan y Bwlch was more than offset by the staff at the centre, who were always accommodating, even when the chef resigned on Friday evening! Friends just overcame the shortcomings at the centre by concentrating on the programme and the opportunities it gave towards new creating new ideas, and rooting old ones, in the fertile ground of creativity.

Jeff Beatty 9 November 2021

Thoughts about the Meaning of 'God' by John Titley

The past few months have been difficult. Having to spend time in bed and suffering from insomnia, I've had plenty of time to ponder issues which puzzle me. One issue is what do people actually mean when they speak about 'God'?

When a child I was told to be polite and kind about people's religious beliefs. Not to denigrate other people's deeply and sincerely held religious beliefs. Now as an adult I have come to believe that religions are no more immune from criticism than any other ideology. They have no right to special status. Claiming special status does not mean being entitled to it.

To understand what monotheists are claiming, we need to look at the belief that a God exists at a basic level. This is useful in two ways. For the theist it may help to understand a secularist viewpoint. For the secularist it reminds us that not everyone can be convinced by reasoned argument.

It is unnecessary to become bogged down with specific points of doctrine from the major religions. We do, however, need to address the most fundamental beliefs by all who believe in a supreme being. The fundamentals as I understand them are, a belief that the supreme being is the creator of the universe, is omnipresent, is omnipotent, is a being of love, is a perfect being and infinite. This entity is called God; but what does this tell us about the creature in question?

It is alien. It does not come from planet earth which makes it extra-terrestrial. This creature does not even come from our universe. It cannot come from our universe since it created our universe. In some unspecified way it existed when our universe did not. So, this creature is unimaginably powerful. Indeed, super powerful. Does this alien super being come from another dimension? Unfortunately, this leads to a religious contradiction. God we are told created space and time out of nothing. Out of a void. The universe is time and space. Time and space are the universe. It is fair to say that for us humans, 'time and space' and 'the universe' are synonymous. If this powerful alien super-being used its powers to create the universe, time and space was exactly what it was bringing into existence. So, the alien super being itself could not be dependent upon time and space for its existence. It would have to exist independently of time and space. Our human minds relate to this universe. We cannot imagine anything beyond time and space. Should anyone reading this not believe this, they should try and visualise something that exists without time and space.

Dear David Attenborough,

27/10/21

I love Blue Planet and Life on Earth!

I live in Orkney which is a small island in the north of Scotland. I live right by the sea and I love it! You inspired me because I want to be a marine biologist when I'm older! I have got a question, how can I help stop Climate Change in a simple, fun and easy way from Orkney?

Yours Sincerely,

Lucie Lee, Age 9.

p.s I have included an envelope,
please write back!
Thankyou.

Dear Lucie Lee,

Thank you for your letter
I can well understand your ambition
to become a marine biologist. &
If you do succeed in doing - but
I am sure you will find ways in
which you can help in the fight
to protect marine life

Best wishes

David Attenborough

from David Attenborough

Kate Binney's granddaughter, Lucie wrote to David Attenborough telling him how he inspired her and how she wanted to become a marine biologist. Kate is proud of her young granddaughter and is grateful to David Attenborough for sending a personal handwritten reply.