



# Almeley Wootton Quaker News

April– June 2023

<https://almeleyquakers.org.uk>

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## News From The Falkland Islands – A letter to Almeley from the Dawsons

It is just over a year since we left Hereford for the Falkland Islands so it is high time we gave you all a short update and a few photographs.

We were due to fly on 16<sup>th</sup> of May 2022 but got bumped to a later flight, that then got delayed 24hrs and then cancelled. We ended up flying on the 23<sup>rd</sup> May. The flight is around 18 hours, from RAF Brize Norton, with a re-fuelling stop at Cape Verde (2 hours in the terminal). This was new to us as the plane used to re-fuel on Ascension Island, which it has now started doing again following works to the runway. The RAF provide the air bridge to the Falklands with 2 flights a weeks. There is a commercial connection (LATAM) to Chile which has one flight a week to Punta Arenas, linking to Santiago.

We arrived to snowy days. Winter is a great time to arrive as this way you get a whole summer to look forward too. We had organised a car purchase, through an old friend, before we got here so we had our Land Cruiser straight away which makes a big difference here. Contractors often wait months for cars to become available.



*Our House*

Stanley became a city in 2022 with various celebrations coinciding with the 40<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the Falkland conflict. The city has grown with a lot of new housing since last time we were here (2005 – 2007). A lot of the bars, eateries and shops have stayed the same with a few changes. The Falkland Beer Works, our own micro-brewery, is a welcome addition.

Christina re-took her tour guiding certificate and spent the summer guiding tourists around town and on nature treks locally.

We have had various trips away over the Summer, both by car and FIGAS (Falkland Island Government Air Service). FIGAS use Britten Norman Islander planes to fly people around the islands landing on grass air strips of various quality! You book your flights and then they work out best routes notifying you the afternoon before – it often means landing at several settlements en-route.

**Sea Lion Island** – November half term was spent here. It's a good time to visit because the Elephant Seals are ashore pupping, the Orca's patrolling off shore and the rock hopper penguins sitting on eggs.

**Bleaker Island** – visiting an old haunt and catching up with an old friend and colleague. Bleaker is a beautiful low lying island with a large Rock Hopper Penguin colony and a very impressive King Cormorant colony with equally interesting group of Skua's predating on these. We also spent time watching the Sea Lion colony.

**Cape Dolphin** – The most northerly tip of East Falkland. The farm is run by an old friend of ours, we 'farm sat' over New Year. Lots of wide open spaces and off road driving exploring the wildlife of the Cape.

**Port Howard** – we took the new (to us) Ferry across to West Falkland for a few days staying in Port Howard. Charlotte's friend Scott lives in Port Howard. Being outside the requirements of the Road Traffic Ordinance he has his own Land Rover (at 14), it is odd when your 14 year old is



*Touring Cape Dolphin Jan 2023*

picked up by friends in their own car. West Falkland is half the land mass and has a population of around 100 people so without driving the kids simply wouldn't be able to get about. The Ferry these days is a proper drive on affair, in 2006 we visited the west and our Land Rover had to be winched into the hold of the Tamar (then supply ship)

**Little Creek** – Falkland Conservation Watch Group Family Camp, another weekend away. Barbeques, activities and exploration. A bit of Camp we know well as we used to visit regularly last time we lived in the Falklands. All the land outside of Stanley is known as (the) Camp.

**New Island** – Alan got to visit for work. Owned by Falkland Conservation, New Island has Black Browed Albatross colonies, Fur Seals and the usual collection of penguins. In addition New Island has an 'interesting' short air strip which needs the wind in the right direction. FIGAS restrict passenger numbers to 3 when landing on New Islands.



*Gentoo penguins in the dunes at Yorke Bay not long after we first arrived*

What else? Georgina and Charlotte go to FICS (Falkland Island Community School) Georgina is currently sitting GCSE's and if successful will be going to Chichester to do A levels. Georgina has Falkland Island Status, by birth, so this will be fully funded (accommodation, board, allowance and 2 flights home a year). Charlotte has made GCSE choices and starts the courses next September.

Florence attends IJS (Infant/Junior School & Camp Education). It is probably fair to say she has struggled to adapt to life here more than the others. There are lots of activities with swimming and the Watch Group etc.

20<sup>th</sup> May was our wedding anniversary. We got married at Cape Pembroke Lighthouse and this year we were actually able to go there. It is an easier trip these days, there wasn't a road out there when we got married. Unfortunately, due to lack of maintenance, we can't get into the lighthouse at the moment.

Other changes around Stanley include the de-mining. A lot of areas that used to be out of bounds are now available including lots of beaches and a penguin colony we couldn't visit before. We can be walking in the dunes and visiting the Gentoo penguins, often seeing dolphins in the surf within 10 minutes of leaving home.

Lots of Love from all of us

Alan, Christina, Georgina, Charlotte and Florence.

## **AM Residential in May: Music, efficient food provision, labyrinth-walking, and speaking in tongues?!?!**

Yes, in case you're wondering, there was loud music, speaking in tongues, ecstatic collapse and violent shaking – but not from the Quakers at Cefn Lea near Newtown! So, you can see that in more ways than one it was a memorable, and thoroughly enjoyable weekend. Forty Friends got together to meet friends old and new, and reinvigorate their spiritual lives in quieter ways than the other guests at the beautifully-situated residential centre. The evangelical Christian centre caters for 100s of visitors from the whole religious spectrum, and as you can see from the biggest cereal boxes I've ever seen, there were a couple of hundred of us there that weekend.



Although the noise at times was a bit of a challenge, we managed to sample different spiritual practices to spice up our inner lives, including: learning the benefits and purposes of walking a labyrinth, expressing our gratitude for being alive by means of a simple physical practice (enhanced by early morning Qigong sessions), mapping our spiritual journeys, and an experiment with light session. At one point we were even 'prayer bombed' by one of the other guests coming into our session and proclaiming all the wonderful things that Jesus does for us – never a dull moment! The Saturday evening session was the usual mix of funny stories, sitting in a circle trying not to get caught out by a tongue-twister, and singing 'Black Socks' about the benefit of the not having to wash them because they don't show the dirt!!

The usual Sunday morning worship was begun by walking the labyrinth, lovingly created for us by Young Friends and their helpers. That sounds wonderful and peaceful, you're thinking, but not a bit of it, the room we needed to get a huge labyrinth in was right next door to the music venue where 100 young Brazilian worshippers were singing lustily about Jesus to thumping rock music, which made the walls of our room literally vibrate with the energy. And believe it or not we managed to hold the labyrinth space and take the spirit of the music around with us. It wasn't one of the most spiritual experiences I've ever had but it was certainly charged with energy!

Joking aside it was a lovely weekend full of joy, and pleasure at being together again, in a beautiful setting, in comfortable rooms with good food and even better company. Roll on the next one in 2025; perhaps we might hope that the Quakers outnumber the other guests and perhaps we'll bring them some of our calm, quiet ways.

In friendship ... with ears still ringing

Maggie

## Joining a Climate Choir: Loving action to combat climate change

Friends and others joined together in London on 3 May to [disrupt the Barclays AGM through song](#). A group of 30 singers from recently formed Climate Choirs, all holding shares in Barclays and legally able to enter the AGM, stood up during the Barclays Chairperson's opening remarks to sing. They sang "Stop Right Now" (courtesy of the Spice Girls), with re-worked lyrics to draw attention to Barclays continued and reckless funding for new fossil fuel extraction. Several minutes of singing to the whole Barclays board followed before they were escorted out of the room.

Maggie



## A visitor from the past to the Burial Ground

When Friends arrived at the Meeting House on February 5<sup>th</sup> they were surprised to see a piece of paper wedged into the door. Closer examination revealed it to be a quick note and a Scottish £20.00.

The author, Mark Gradon had written that his parents John and Joan Gradon are buried in the churchyard and the money was a donation towards the upkeep of the burial ground. He said he used to live in Craswell and now lives near Inverness.

Mark left no address but Kate Binney has carried out some more research and found that Mark's brother, who lives in Australia, also visited the burial ground four years ago. She has his email so hopefully she can ask him for Mark's email address so we can say thank you.

David Briggs

## Online Security—some top tips

1. If you see a suspicious email, don't reply with your details or open any links or documents. Delete the email straight away. If the email claims to be from an organisation, phone them directly using the phone number found on their official website and ask them.
2. Visit your bank's website by typing their official web address in your internet browser – you can find this on letters from the bank.
3. Use anti-virus and anti-spyware to protect your computer from viruses.

[ageUK](#)

# A Quaker Furniture Maker: Almeley Wootton Meeting House Furniture

On 20<sup>th</sup> September 2022 I met with a group of furniture enthusiasts at the Meeting House. David Whiting had known from his grandmother's papers that some of the furniture was made by Alfred Reynolds of Ludlow and was acquired by the Meeting House after the renovation about 1957. This includes the small oval extending table and five light oak benches. At the Open Day in August we were visited by Roy Thwaitest (biographer), Andrew Boulton (film maker) and Francesca Bingham (Ludlow Museum). They asked if they could make a film of the furniture when the Meeting House was empty and invite Alfred's son, Garth Reynolds, to talk about his father and his own work as a skilled furniture maker. Garth confirmed that these six items were indeed his father's work made in the Arts and Crafts style. Recently there was a small exhibition in Ludlow about Arthur's furniture and an awareness that not very much is known about him, which they want to put right. Roy is starting to write a book about Arts and Crafts furniture and Arthur's contribution.

Arthur was born in 1903 in Bridport, Dorset and was a birth right Quaker. He took an apprenticeship in cabinet making and in 1931 moved to the "Quaker Experiment" at Brynmawr in South Wales. Here Quakers had built up a co-operative which included farming (pig and poultry) and also a furniture factory to provide employment in an area where poverty was rife as a result of the miners' strike of 1926 and the depression. Alfred joined the Paul Matt Furniture Company as an assistant until 1936. The furniture factory had become well known under Paul Matt who was the craft organiser for many of the unemployed social clubs. Paul Matt's furniture designs influenced Arthur who then developed his own Arts and Crafts style. Both Alfred and his wife, Helen, worked in the community and organised a youth club and encouraged young people to take part in crafts, walking and camps. Alfred then became the designer and manager of the business from 1936, when Paul left, until the outbreak of war. He served in World War II in a non-combatant role, having been assigned to the support unit for the Eighth Army battle group, stationed in Italy. He became a Major and was awarded an MBE.

After the war Alfred wanted to set up his own business and moved from Dorset to the centre of England to be near supplies of wood, which he could obtain in Birmingham, as well as making distribution easier. He worked in Bromsgrove and Halesowen before settling in Ludlow in Dinham House. In the late 1950s and early 1960s the company employed 18 workers. He exhibited at The Festival of Britain in 1951 and made furniture for well-known shops such as Heals.

Alfred died suddenly in 1960 and his son, Garth aged 26, took over the business and developed the style to suit the market; soon the firm struggled because making traditional craft furniture was not profitable or so fashionable.

Garth had to design to suit different tastes and markets. After a fire in 1977, Reynolds of Ludlow finally closed in 1980.

Both Alfred and Garth adhered to the Arts and Crafts influence and Quaker beliefs. This was manifest in how they treated their workforce and customers with honesty and equality. Garth explained that they rarely made a profit and paid equal wages to their workers.

When Arthur and Helen moved to Ludlow, they played a big part in the community (for example Alfred was instrumental in setting up the Ludlow Festival) and Quaker meetings were held in Dinham House. Arthur then bought what is now the Meeting House in St Mary's Lane – a house with a builder's store. Eventually it was converted into a Meeting House. Alfred was also Registrar and on the Premises Committee for Hereford and Radnor Monthly Meeting, so he would have known Almeley Meeting House well. It would have been natural for Almeley Friends to mark the refurbishment of the Meeting House in 1956-7 with new furniture made by Reynolds of Ludlow. Alfred and Helen (1907-1980) are both buried at The Pales.



Alfred Reynolds

### Testimony concerning Arthur Basil Reynolds (1903-1960):

Arthur Basil Reynolds ... had that strong sense of the indwelling spirit of God which perforce claimed kinship with everything good and of enduring value in other men and in the world at large. He worked for the continuity of the good life; and to preserve what was good from the past, to hold fast and perpetuate what was good in the present and to work for the hope of good in the future. He was a man of creative imagination, a craftsman with vision and courage who delighted in the work of his hands and was able to inspire others with the same spirit. He had the seeing eye and the unerring hand to translate the vision into actuality. As he walked the countryside a twig in the hedge would suggest a shape of grace and gaiety and his penknife would speedily produce a dancing figure of elfish beauty. All that he touched witnessed to this creative power. His training as a cabinet-maker was put to use in the workshops at Brynmawr during the unemployment and distress of the depression, when he worked with Friends and others to provide employment and thus to bring renewed hope and self-respect to the mining community. He became manager of the Brynmawr Furniture Makers, an undertaking that successfully produced worthy and beautiful furniture.

Hereford and Radnor Monthly Meeting, 1961



Evelyn Whiting states that two additional chairs were donated by Friends in Pennsylvania around 1957. There are two ladderback chairs in the Meeting House both in the Arts and Crafts style. One of them definitely dates from the same time as the Reynolds furniture, so did American Friends donate money to buy the two chairs? The style is similar to the Shaker chairs made by the radical Quakers who went to America in 1774. The larger chair has been identified as being made by Neville Neal by Mary Greensted, an Arts and Crafts Furniture expert who has written about Ernest Grimson (see below). The smaller chair is definitely not made by Neal and was not identified by Greensted.

Neville Neal's designs were influenced by the tradition of Arts and Crafts furniture passed down from the late 19<sup>th</sup> century. The traditional chair maker, Phiip Clissett (originally working in Herefordshire from 1838) encouraged Edward Gardiner, a local boy, to come to his Gloucester workshop in 1890 to learn how to make craft chairs with rush seats. Gardiner then moved to Warwickshire where Neville Neal joined him as a pupil in 1939. When Gardiner died in 1958, Neal moved to Stockton near Rugby. Neal's company was taken over by his son, Lawrence, after his father died in 2000 and he is still making chairs.

Garth Reynolds thought that the long dark oak seats in the Meeting House had been made by a local craftsman in the 19<sup>th</sup> century. As the Meeting House was partly used as a house in the earlier part of 19<sup>th</sup> century, they could date from the revitalising of the meeting house in the 1880s.

Kate Binney



### Take the Woodbrooke Learning Survey

Woodbrooke wants to hear about your experiences and understand what you want from a Quaker learning organisation. The Woodbrooke Learning Survey is an opportunity for you to share your thoughts and opinions on the topics Woodbrooke covers, delivery methods, your learning preferences and more. **Take the survey**

## Meetings for Learning

As with many of the best ideas, the germ for our current Meetings for Learning came from hearing about Abergavenny's very successful meetings on a similar theme – learning more about each other.

Our meetings have also stemmed from our Spiritual Life Report, which highlighted the benefits of knowing each better as an aid to our spiritual growth as a community of Friends.

We soon realised that condensing quite a number of years into twenty minutes might be a challenge and Ian Sterry came up with the idea of critical moments around which to hang parts of our lives.

We agreed that it has to be up to each Friend how they share and importantly what they choose to share with us.

It has been fascinating hearing how Friends have interpreted the brief and the differences between each speaker have kept the meetings fresh and interesting. We have been really delighted by the number of Friends joining each session.

If you have not yet joined us – please do. Meetings are on Wednesdays and start at 2pm and conclude ( of course) with tea and cake. Some Friends arrive earlier bringing a picnic with them. I

If you would like to contribute and haven't yet mentioned it, or been approached, please have a word with Kate or Rachel (Overseers) or Helen and Ian ( Elders).

Our thanks to – Jeff B, Carey, Janet, Ian, Maggie, Charlie, Frank, Sarah and Mark R for getting us off to a great start. Stella and David B are our speakers for July 26<sup>th</sup>.

Helen Briggs

## IT'S NOT ALL GLOOM!

For several months we've been scratching heads and worrying about the large and growing pot hole outside the Meeting House right by our disabled parking. But joy of joys – it's been filled in.

Whether it was as a result of reporting it or simply it was the turn of the road to be repaired we don't know but its great to face the next deluge of rain without it!

David Briggs



Almeley Wootton Meeting House from the air.

The quinquennial building survey has been carried out and we are now awaiting the report.

The 5years electrical survey report did not show up any problems

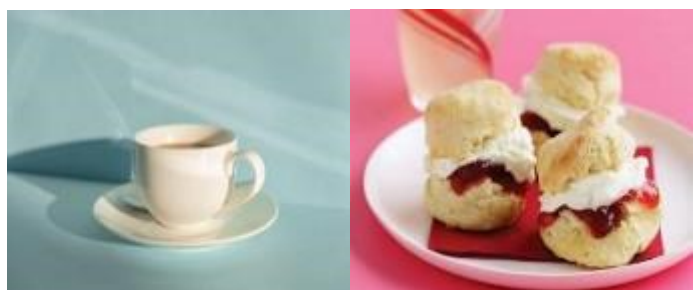
Premises Group

## Outreach

Please support this year's outreach afternoon and bring your friends too.

**SATURDAY 22<sup>ND</sup> July 2-5**

Come and enjoy a cream tea. Take time to relax and enjoy the atmosphere of the lovely Meeting House and Grounds.



Offers of help to Carey and Helen

A big thank you to all those who have contributed to the newsletter. Without your contributions I would not have been able to produce this issue.

David Briggs