

The Quiet Word



The Quaker Stall at Hyde Park Unity Day

Leeds Quaker Events

Sunday Meeting for Worship 10:45 at all Leeds Meetings with exception of Ilkley which is at 10:30am and fortnightly house Meetings at Otley (contact David Robson 0113 3188084 for details)

3rd Sunday- Teenagers Meeting + 12:15pm talk & lunch at Carlton Hill

4th Sunday Breakfast Meeting – shared breakfast 9am, MforW 9:30am Carlton Hill

Wednesdays 8pm – mid-week Meeting for Worship at Rawdon QMH

Fridays 11am – coffee morning 11am to 12 noon at Carlton Hill QMH

Saturday 24th July 2pm Universal Worship Service at Rawdon QMH

Saturday 30th July 7:30pm The Kenwood-Herriott Duo ‘Rawdon QMH Amnesty concert’

Saturday 30th July to Saturday 6th August – Yearly Meeting Gathering, Canterbury

Sunday 11th September – 1.15pm Leeds Area Quaker Meeting at Adel Meeting House.

Topic and workshop on will be ‘Sustainability’. Lunch from 12:15pm

Saturday 24th September – the 2011 annual outing will be to Bradford Peace Museum and Bradford Quaker Meeting.

Saturday 16th September - Quakers in Yorkshire Gathering at Ackworth School including an activity day for children and young people under 18.

Sunday 25th September 7:30pm The New World Ensemble ‘Rawdon QMH Amnesty concert’

The ‘Quaker Week’ and outreach programme of activities planned in Leeds so far is:

07/08/11 Leeds Pride – Carlton Hill Friends will be providing a Quaker presence

10/09/11 'Heritage Open Day' at Adel QMH
11/09/11 'Heritage Open Day' at Rawdon QMH
21/09/11 'World Peace Day' planned showing of a Peace Video at Roundhay QMH
24/09/11 visit to the Bradford Peace Museum and Bradford Quaker Meeting
02/10/11 3pm Public Space Meeting for Worship / Quaker Peace Vigil in City Centre
05/10/11 Quaker Quest evening at Carlton Hill
08/10/11 afternoon 'Leeds Alternative Fair' at Carlton Hill
08/10/11 provisional date for a 'Family Quaker Quest Day' at Ilkley QMH
09/10/11 'The Quaker Business Method' topic of LAQM held at Roundhay
12/10/11 an evening with the Quaker Theatre Company performing "George Fox and Margaret Fell get stuck in a lift" at Roundhay QMH
16/10/11 Quakers in Yorkshire Gathering at Ackworth School

Otley friends hope to respond to an invitation from Whaton's Primary School to raise the profile of Quakers with their children

Send your events to LAQM co-clerk, Robert Keeble and Quiet Word Editor, Ben Wood e-mail: punkrainbow@hotmail.co.uk or alternatively call **07780 755 729**

Leeds Area Meeting Outing to Bradford **Saturday 24 September**



10.40 train from Leeds to Bradford Forster Square station, arriving 11.00
10:21 train from Ilkley, (Shipleigh 10.44) gets into Forster Square at 10.53.

On emerging from Forster Square station on to Cheapside, turn left, cross over, carry on down the hill, and then cross over Kirkgate to enter Market Street, passing round Barclays Bank. Hustlergate is the first turn on the right. Piece Hall Yard is a further turn off on the right. The Peace Museum is at 10 Piece Hall Yard, Bradford BD1 1PJ (across from Waterstones bookshop, off Hustlergate)

11.10 am. Arrive at Bradford Peace Museum for a visit of c. 90 minutes, including a talk by the curator. Please note that, unfortunately, a climb of about sixty steps is needed to reach the floor on which the museum is located (there is no lift).

On foot, the meeting house is perhaps 20 minutes walk from the Peace Museum, up hill towards the end. By bus, the route is 640 or 641, which goes from Market Street (stop M6A) to Little Horton Lane.

c. 1 pm. Arrive at Bradford Friends Meeting House, Russell Street, Bradford, BD5 0JB (between Trinity Road and Melbourne Place, off Little Horton Lane). Bradford Friends will provide refreshments in the form of drinks, but **please bring your own lunch**. A member of Bradford Meeting will talk to us about the meeting and the meeting house.

c. 2.30 pm Visit to the National Media Museum enjoy a final drink together and for those that want, see an IMAX film / explore the museum.

Please note: there may be minor amendments to the above details – please check the poster in your Meeting House or with your LM clerk.

Other Area Meeting News

[Economic Justice and the Sustainable Global Society: A Woodbrooke, Northern Friends Peace Board and Quaker Peace & Social Witness Programme](#) is to take place consisting of a conference on Saturday 24th September 2011, 10.00am – 5pm at Friends House, London followed by a weekend seminar from Friday 4th - Sunday 6th November 2011 at Woodbrooke. The aim of the programme is to examine the centrality of economics and economic justice to the achievement of a sustainable peaceful global community

Anyone may attend the Saturday conference, but Area Meeting is seeking a representative who can attend the day conference and weekend seminar and then report to our December LAQM. If you would like to represent Leeds Quakers (full costs upto £300 is available for one person), then please contact Leeds Area Quaker Meeting co-clerk, Robert Keeble.

Trying to appoint a representative to the above detailed conference was one of the things we failed to do at our Leeds Area Quaker Meeting on 10/07/11, but what we did do (apart from our session on Assisted Dying which is reported elsewhere) is . enjoy a mid afternoon tea break which provided the opportunity of meeting old and new friends, as well as a quick stretch in the wonderful garden. Returning to our afternoon together, we then considered how best to respond to an invitation from Leeds Jewish Community regarding the Quaker Boycott of West Bank Settlement Products and were delighted that no fewer than nine friends volunteered to be part of such a meeting. We also received the accounts for 2010 – in short, as Leeds Quakers we had a shortfall in income of about £7,500 and our treasurer, Owen Claxton-Ingham told us that there was concern looking ahead as our future income is very uncertain as Age UK will be leaving Carlton Hill at the end of the year and our room booking income is presently much reduced on previous years.

Openness and transparency in our membership process has not been something that we have been good at in the past, but we tried to address this at what proved to be a ground breaking gathering at which we invited all friends to stay and be part of the process. Two friends from

Carlton Hill have applied for membership, including Sophie Bevan who was able to read out her letter of request to the gathering. This was warmly received by those present, along with the membership request from Bridget Robson. We arranged for two Friends to meet with both Sophie and Bridget and report back to a future Area Meeting. We also received the report from the two Friends who visited Kat Browning. Non members were asked to observe the process of discernment and were able to witness many Friends speaking warmly of their experiences with Kat. There was unity and we were able to confirm/affirm what is a reality already, namely, Kat is a Quaker and this is part of her identity.

How can we prepare for our own death?

Quentin Fowler

It is not death that a man should fear, but he should fear never beginning to live.

Marcus Aurelius (Roman Emperor and Stoic Philosopher)

It has been said that nothing is certain in this world except death and taxes. Perhaps we can leave taxes for another occasion and concentrate on “death”. Death is a subject that few of us care to think about, unless it stares us in the face. We are encouraged to make a will, and this many of us do. We may consider what should happen to our body when we die, whether we should have a “green” burial, or whether our body should be given for medical research.

But how many of us think about the events that may precede our death rather than follow it? For those of us who are comparatively healthy, it may be very difficult to envisage the circumstances of our death. I imagine we would all wish for a “good death”, although we might not all agree as to which elements go into it. For many, it could be a wish to die at home, free from pain, and having one’s nearest and dearest around one, or at the very least not to die alone. If considerable medical care is needed in the final stages of an illness, a hospice is an option many would favour.

So, how can we prepare for our dying? One way is to complete a “Lasting Power of Attorney” which is a legal document. It allows you to appoint someone that you trust as an ‘attorney’ to make decisions on your behalf. Attorneys can make decisions for you when you no longer wish to or when you lack the mental capacity to do so.

Another way is to complete a document called an “Advanced Decision”, and which used to be called a living will. It is also sometimes called an advance directive. An Advance Decision is used to show what medical treatment you want to refuse or consent to if you lose mental capacity in the future. Although you can't use it to ask for specific treatments, you may use it to consent to certain treatments if they are offered. An Advance Decision to refuse treatment which is valid and applicable at a time when a person lacks mental capacity is the same as a refusal of treatment by a person who has capacity.

For more information about Advance Decisions, go to the “Compassion in Dying” web-site at www.compassionindying.org.uk

Valuing Quaker Education

Anna Needham



Friends feelings about their schools, tends to be split, between supporters (usually including old scholars) and those who have little interest or feel strongly, that we as Quakers should not be providing an education for an elite group of children whose parents can afford to send them there. I fall somewhere in the middle of these groups. I started off being somewhat negative but having lived in Ackworth, where I was a member of the local Quaker Meeting , the wife of a member of staff and a parent of children at the school, I see the schools more as a resource which we under value. As I understand it, all the schools are self supporting, and those fees, which we feel so uncomfortable about, run the schools with enough leeway to provide bursary funds to Quaker children and like most private schools, they offer reduced fees to the children of staff. So six years on since I moved away from Ackworth, I was very interested to go back to see what was happening in the school. First change is that now (for the first time) Ackworth has a woman as head and I felt that there was a fresh breeze as Katherine Bell has clearly settled into her role. She spent the first year listening to what everyone had to say, before making any changes. There were new faces too in Ackworth – a new member of the senior team was out there, meeting people, welcoming all of us to the Meeting House with a handshake. English was the special topic this year.

We were taken, in small parties to see an English lesson taught by the new head of English and to the Junior school, where we saw another imaginative lesson. Involvement, participation and enthusiasm were palpable, in both lessons. Each group was taken round by some of the students, and as usual, talking to the students was extremely interesting. I asked one young man (not from a Quaker family) whether he thought there was any difference in being at a Quaker school to any other well runs school. His assent was deafening. “I really feel valued as a person here” and what about Sunday morning worship – did he resent having to go to Meeting? “No” he really liked the quiet. Of course, everyone is on their very best behaviour on general Meeting Day, but even the most jaundiced of us, on that beautiful May morning could not fail to be moved by those confident, courteous and lively young people.

So far, all very positive. On the financial front, Ackworth, like all Independent schools is feeling the pinch of the times, which has pushed them to look at how they market the school and this has lead to a successful launch of a website. Well worth looking at. How do they market themselves? By stressing the unique value of a Quaker education. When I was at Ackworth, there was one colleague (not a Quaker) who stressed the value of outreach. The

majority of overseas pupils are from Mainland China, from influential families and one day will probably be in influential positions themselves. Will it make a difference that they went to Ackworth rather than Eton or Harrow? Ackworth is a good all round school and we should be supportive to the enthusiastic staff and pupils who seem more positive about Quaker values than we always are ourselves.

The Power of Forgiveness



At the Risk and the Criminal Justice System Quaker Conference Leeds May 14th 2011 Marian Partington, who's sister Lucy was a victim of Fred West, spoke movingly of her journey towards forgiveness. Here is an extract from Marian's talk to ponder on.

Contemplating the meaning of 'risk' brings to mind a sense of danger, the challenge of choice and also a sense of adventure. It implies being 'on the edge', exposed 'to the chance of injury or loss' but within this position of danger there is also an opportunity to discover a vulnerable, trusting, vital way forward. Each moment that passes is full of significance and the opportunity for change, if we choose to look, if we choose to act. My sister, Lucy, disappeared on her way to catch a bus in Cheltenham on the evening of December 27th 1973. She was in her last year of studying English literature at Exeter university and was hoping to do a postgraduate course at the Courtauld institute in medieval art. In March 1994 her remains were unearthed in the basement of 25 Cromwell street. She went into the public domain as one of the 12 'West victims'. She had been abducted, raped, tortured, dismembered and hidden for over twenty years¹.

My work has been about reclaiming Lucy, my sister, from the Wests and the media and laying her to rest. It has been about allowing and facing the rage, grief and fear (especially on even day Chan Buddhist silent retreats). It had been about connecting with the West's humanity and refusing to go down the far easier and more predictable path of demonizing them. It has been about aspiring towards bringing 'something positive' out of this terrible demolition.

My deep intention and commitment to know, be moved by and changed through my experience of traumatic loss has been answered by astonishing, unexpected spiritual,

¹ Marian Partington, *Salvaging the Sacred* (London: Quaker Books, 2004) ISBN – 13: 978 08245 353 7

economic and human support. Gradually, during the last seventeen years, my ability to trust and love, to feel glad to be alive and grateful to all those without whom this could not have happened, has been truly deepened. Gradually, I have grown to face, accept and integrate the unresolved pain of the past. I have tried to connect with and imagined something of something of Lucy's suffering, and later, Rosemary West's suffering. I do not wish Rosemary West more pain. My need is to hear what Rosemary West is feeling, to know what is alive in her. I wish her well.

The risk of working towards forgiveness seems to be the most creative, liberating way forward because it allows me to find a positive relationship with my own suffering which can be beneficial to others. In this way I can use my life to transform the cycle of violence. I have come to accept that the challenge is daily, in everyday life. I aspire to become more forgiving and compassionate.

This transformative process continues to change and grow through my work in prisons with the Forgiveness Project² since 2007. I work with a team (a minimum of three) as a story teller and a facilitator during the three day workshop that has been recently renamed RESTORE (restoration, education, storytelling, team building, openness, respect and empathy).

Eldership and Oversight: The New Triennium

Barbara Parry, Convenor of LAQM Elders and Overseers

Have you been asked to consider serving as an elder or an overseer for the new triennium? Are you wondering whether to say yes? It might help you to look at some of the following thoughts, which emerged in an Area Meeting Elders and Overseers meeting in 2008, just before the beginning of the present triennium. Elders were deemed to have "responsibility for holding the meeting prayerfully, taking the temperature of the meeting and encouraging spiritual activity, but we were reminded that eldership, like oversight, is a responsibility shared by everyone in a meeting. The system should work for us all, and if elders and overseers normally meet separately, they should sometimes come together to consider general spiritual nourishment and ways to facilitate the nurture of all Friends from the newcomer to the most seasoned."

The responsibilities of overseers could be classified into four groups: "(1) looking at the spiritual-social life of the meeting, (2) outreach, (3) membership and (4) encouraging attendance at meetings for church affairs." In a larger meeting there could be "specialist roles, such as children's overseers and overseers with special responsibility for newcomers. We were encouraged to stand back from time to time, to keep a perspective on challenging situations, and to remember that we needn't take personal responsibility for solving every difficulty. . . . In challenging situations, there may in the end be no solutions, but we can maintain a commitment to walk alongside."

Some important words were identified as "listening, empathizing, encouraging, responsibility, communication, discretion and commitment". An overview of the responsibilities inherent in these roles can be found in *Quaker Faith and Practice* 12.05-12.15, but the way in which

² www.theforgivenessproject.com

they are carried out will vary from meeting to meeting, depending on the size and profile of the membership. To get a more personal view, ask one or two of the current elders or overseers in your meeting what the role has meant to them and how it is carried out in your particular meeting.

If you have not been asked to take on one of these roles, or if you are coming to the end of your service as an elder or an overseer, have a look at *Quaker Faith and Practice* 12.18, from Yearly Meeting in London 1851:

“Nor would we limit the performance of these duties to those who occupy such stations; we are all to watch over one another for good and to be mutually interested one for another, being united together as lively stones in the spiritual building of which the Lord Jesus Christ is the chief corner-stone.”

Area Meeting is changing.....



As Bob Dylan once assured us ‘the times, they are, a’ changin’. We want to make Area Meeting (AM) far more engaging and interesting for all Friends. Many changes are being looked at and presently we are experimenting with ‘topic’ based meetings, a tea break mid way through the meeting and a more transparent process when we consider membership matters. Area Meeting is no longer the Trustee body of Leeds Area Quaker Meeting (LAQM) as we now have Trustees. Unless our Trustees wish to seek guidance from AM, this now releases AM from the responsibility to consider legal and financial matters at our meetings. How to improve Area Meetings is the main topic to be considered at Meeting for Sufferings in October and our October AM in Leeds is to be led by Young Friends who have prepared a workshop called ‘Quintessential’ which is aimed at improving our unique and distinctive Quaker Business method.

All LM’s have been asked to consider the day, time and frequency of LAQM meetings in 2012 and the following responses have been received. Otley: suggest that all AM’s should be held on a Sunday, Adel agree that seven meetings seems right, and that these should be on Sundays. ‘We hope that Friends will continue to hold and support a Christmas Party’. Rawdon: the meeting considered that Sunday was the most appropriate day to meet and that fewer meetings with less administration and more opportunity for spiritual growth might be a way forward. Ilkley: we propose that Area Meetings are held every other month in 2012 (ie six times a year) and consider that Sundays are preferable to Saturdays. Roundhay: we feel

that the present balance of Saturdays and Sundays is about right, and the timings and frequency are appropriate. Carlton Hill: it is felt that despite the poor attendance at the March AM which was held on a Saturday, a mixture of Saturdays and Sundays is advantageous. Also, in 2012 Meeting for Sufferings is planned to be held on the 1st Saturday in February, March, July, October and December, BYM is the last w/e in May and Quakers in Yorkshire gatherings are to be held on 21/01/12, 28/04/12, 21/07/12 and 20/10/12.

Day, time and frequency of LAQM in 2012 : In taking all these views and information into account, at our next AM in September, the clerks will be bringing forward the suggestion that we agree to hold 6 rather than 7 meetings in 2012 with five on a Sunday and one taking place on a Saturday (possibly an all day gathering focussing on spiritual growth). In addition, it will also be suggested that one LM be asked to arrange a Christmas Party. The dates suggested for meetings in 2012 will be: Sunday 12th Feb, **Saturday** 24th March, Sunday 13th May, Sunday 8th July, Sunday 14th October, Sunday 9th December

Suffering: ‘inside’ in Palestine and on the streets of London.....

Robert Keeble



Meeting for Sufferings is the national gathering of Quakers that is held five times a year at Friends House, London. Eileen Fowler and Robert Keeble are the two representatives from Leeds.

At the beginning of Meeting for Sufferings on 04/06/11, we were issued with ‘Bust Cards’ ie cards that tell you what to do if you are arrested by the police. Being arrested is not something that I associate with a Quaker Meeting, but this tied into the main item considered in the morning which was ‘Radical resistance and The State’. This session was introduced by Steve Whiting and Sam Walton of Quaker Peace and Social Witness (QPSW). As preparation for the session we had been encouraged to watch the ‘Turning the Tide’ video which can be found at quaker.org.uk/nonviolence. Turning the Tide (TTT) is a programme of QPSW that promotes the understanding and practice of nonviolence for positive social change. It has worked with many groups including Trident Ploughshares, Camp for Climate Action, G8 and G20 protests. Sam told us about his own personal experience including at the recent student protests which involved ‘kettling’ and use of CS spray by the police. We

expect the police to prevent crime, but it was of great concern to hear from a young man that he felt that the police had now mistakenly started to seek to prevent protest as well. Concern about violent policing of protest events was expressed by many friends and we were reminded that similar police tactics were used during the Miners' Strike. We recognised that the police are capable of far better as that they have exemplary training in dealing with very difficult situations so the problem would seem to be at a senior level where the tactical decision is made to kettle or arrest large numbers of protesters by force.

During the lunch slot we were able to see the initial architect's plans for the redevelopment of the Large Meeting Room at Friends House. These looked very exciting, in brief, it is planned to create a lot of natural light in the room by having a big glazed area in the ceiling and to create flexible seating which can be arranged in different ways to better meet the needs of the different groups using the building.

In the afternoon we looked at a minute received from Cornwall Area Meeting on the decriminalisation of drugs. The Minute read '...the effect of criminalisation is to take the focus away from the individual and their personal, medical and social condition and regard them simply as an offender who must be punished.....the UN Office for Drugs and Crime recommends treating drug dependency through health care, not punishment.....let justice indeed be forgiving, compassionate and restorative.' We asked the QPSW to consider how best to respond to this minute before we return to this matter at a future meeting.

Finally, we returned to look at the issue of Boycott, Divestment and Sanctions (BDS). A total of 23 Area Meetings have sent minutes to Sufferings on this matter. The vast majority give broad support for the decision to boycott goods from the illegal Israeli Settlements in the occupied west bank. Many friends have found the QPSW website very helpful in identifying goods to be boycotted. A number of meetings are engaging in a dialog with the Jewish community in this country and we were encouraged to look at how we might also do this.

Some Thoughts from the Editor: A Quaker Theology of Peaceful Sustainability

Ben Wood

At YMG at Canterbury this year, Friends will be encouraged to reflect intently upon the notion of 'sustainability' and what are moral responsibilities are as humans (and Quakers). For a long time I have been intrigued and challenged by the very notion of 'the sustainable' and have finally come to the conclusion that the best way to talk about it in a 'Quakerly' way is through the Testimony to Peace...

In first inspection the Peace Testimony may seem like a strange place to break into the issue of sustainability. After all when we speak of 'sustainability' we are normally talking about 'the realm of nature' which is often violent and cruel. Being aware of the necessary brutality by which so many creatures on this planet live day to day, should generate in us as Quakers some uncomfortable questions around matters of sustainability-especially the suspicion that we 'green' Friends might be romanticising the environment a bit! By saying we want to be

‘sustainable’, most of us don’t just mean recycling or refusing to go on that package holiday to Faliraki; we also tend to mean fostering ‘biodiversity’. Of course this is a nice way of saying that we want to sustain lions with plenty of gazelle or ‘sustain’ the blackbird at the cost of the worm. We cannot consider sustainability unless we confront the messy and unpleasant means by which creatures are sustained. As a community dedicated ‘peace’ how do we reconcile ourselves to our Quaker vocation to ‘care’ for the world if that means we capitulate or even enhance systematic violence against other creatures?



Edward Hicks, *The Peaceable Kingdom*

The heart of this problem is fundamentally a spiritual one and it has a technical term- *theodicy*. This is the rather dry word philosophers and theologians give to a series of crutch question including- ‘if God is good and loving, then why did S/he create a world where creatures have to eat each other to stay alive?’ In the light of such a world, The Peace Testimony (and the accompanying notion of a loving God authorising it) just seems like ‘pie in the sky’ rhetoric or soft hearted romanticism. Surely, in the face of such evidence, talk of a peaceful world is simply nonsensical? Why pretend to go against the grain of the universe?

In order to make sense of the Peace Testimony in such brokenness, we must first try to foster an attitude, very much central to the experience of early Friends. This was the startling claim that the true destiny of the world is to be found in God’s redemptive action (a Living Presence of Love and Truth) which was in the process of restoring a broken world to the point of a Peaceful Creation. This sort of powerful claim is always going to be open to the accusation (even from some Quakers) that’s simply unrealistic and ultimately there is no hard evidence for this ‘peaceful destiny’. I think such a criticism emerges, at least partly, from a misunderstanding of the theological frame in which many early Friends were working. They did not offer the Peaceful Creation as a sugary pill, to diminish or trivialise the brutality and bloodiness of the present life; indeed early Friends thought in deeply Biblical terms and saw the suffering of Jesus on the cross as a primary model through God’s action was expressed. Things are being worked out, but they are being done so painfully. As Paul says in his letter to the church at Rome- ‘[w]e know that the whole creation has been groaning as in the pains of childbirth right up to the present time’ [Romans 8:22]. If George Fox had realised (along with modern biology) that 22.5 million years ago half of the marine animals in earth’s oceans became extinct, he would probably have understood this too as part of the birth pains of a

harmonious creation that was being built, but was not yet born. If a critic had then suggested to George Fox that the Almighty was taking his time he probably would have grumbled back scripture; ‘With the Lord a day is like a thousand years, and a thousand years are like a day. The Lord is not slow in keeping his promise’ [2 Peter 3:8].

Of course this doesn’t fully take away the bite of the criticism. Indeed, it is impossible to prove anything about final destinations- but it is perhaps worth reflecting upon the following line of thought. The Enlightenment philosopher Benedict Spinoza wrote in his famous treatise *Ethics* that – ‘Each thing, in so far as it is in itself, strives to maintain its own existence’. We see from experience that the largest multi-cellular organism to the smallest amoeba, weaves boundaries of protection around itself; attempting to ride changing in order to sustain and replicate their being. What could this be telling us? While the natural world looks fundamentally conflicted on the surface, under its bloody exterior there is in actual fact a deep instinctual longing for ‘peace’. If you define peace in terms of the ability to sustain self and species then both the lion and its prey are in actual fact both seeking peace in a broken world. I would go even further and suggest that this instinct is not arbitrary or meaningless but is actually an intuition of the way things ‘should’ and ‘shall’ be. Deep down in our makeup we desire peace to prevail, even when, paradoxically, we commit violence.

What does all this theology mean for sustainability? Above all I think it places any dealings we have with the natural world into a bigger context. Our work in attempting to maintain ‘the beauty and variety of the world’ as *Advices and Queries* puts it- is about helping to usher in and support the Peaceful Creation. We care about the world because the world is ‘meant’ to be a place of ‘care’. We want peace in the world because the world is ‘meant’ to be peaceful. Recognising that such inherent peacefulness sits beside the trials and ambiguities of a suffering world helps us understand how we should live in the intervening space between the present, and what many Friends’ felt to be the world’s final transfiguration.

We must live in faith and hope, realising that sustainability is not a perfect science. We will not be able to fix every problem, we can’t heal every act of damage; quite often the best we can do (given human capacities) is a botched-job. We cannot rescue every species, win every fight against time or degradation, nor can we live in a world without trade-offs and hard choices. As the first generation of Apocalyptic Friends might have told us; true sustainability will only come with the breaking in of the Peaceful Kingdom when, ‘The wolf will live with the lamb, the leopard will lie down with the goat, the calf and the lion and the yearling together; and a little child will lead them’ [Isaiah 11:6]. Until then, all we can do is try hold things together as best we can, anticipating and practicing the course of peace; walking lightly, softening our footprint, reducing the suffering of the world in the ways best suited to our dispositions. There is no one prescribed form of being sustainable, any more than there is one way to live. Each Friend can offer something different in challenging injury and suffering, each helping to visualise a world beyond violence and exploitation.

Testimony to the grace of God in the life of Freda Gill (1920 – 2011)



Freda Gill, nee Vessey, was born in Leeds in 1920. As a young girl her life centred very much round the Methodist church and community in Woodhouse, where she was a member of the Brownies and The Girl Guide Movement.

Freda married her cousin, Dick Vessey, and moved to Canada with him. Freda also lived in Germany and Austria where Dick's work took him. She had three children: Steven, David and Susan. During all the time Freda lived in Canada, she kept in close touch with her best friend Kath (later known as Kay) who had married Arthur Gill. In 1975 Kay died of a brain tumour and Freda lost Dick round about the same time. Arthur assumed the role of correspondent with Freda and soon asked her, by letter, to marry him. By this time Freda's children were grown up, although Sue was only about 20. Freda had a home and a job, and it must have been a hard decision, and a brave move, to leave her family and her life in Canada, where she had lived for 22 years. She accepted the challenge and came back to Leeds to marry Arthur in 1977.

Freda quickly adapted to life in this country, especially taking on the role of mother and grandmother to Arthur's two daughters and his three grandchildren. She gave loving support to Arthur's sister and family and to his brother's daughter. In due course there were seven grandchildren (and later seven great-grandchildren) and Freda, along with Arthur, enjoyed having them to stay and taking them out. She maintained contact with her own children and grandchildren, visiting Canada, sometimes with Arthur, a number of times over the years. She was a great support to her cousin, who also lived in Leeds.

Freda's concern extended beyond the family. In time she made many close friends in this country. She became a counsellor and worked with a team at Oxford Place Methodist Mission with adults who were trying to come to terms with abuse or problems in their childhood. As well as helping clients she often supported other counsellors when they were distressed by the work they were doing. She was obliged to retire from this service when she reached seventy, but was well remembered and greatly appreciated by her former colleagues right up to her death. When the counselling came to an end Freda became active in the Friends of Cookridge Hospital.

Freda came to Adel Quaker Meeting with Arthur in the early eighties. She immediately felt this was her spiritual home and soon became a Member of the Society. Freda was an

Overseer for two periods – from 1991 to 1994 and from 2000 to 2003. There is little doubt that Freda's concern for Friends in the Meeting was greatly appreciated. One Friend spoke of how helpful Freda had been to him, when he first came to Adel Meeting. He was very depressed at the time, and Freda invited him on several occasions to her home, where they spoke together at a deep level. Other Friends at Adel have mentioned how, at critical points in their lives, Freda was there for them, to listen and to offer them her warmth and friendship.

The Search for Peace and Dignity

Iona Lyons



Many Friends are currently wrestling with the moral issues surrounding assisted dying. Watching loved ones in pain or misery has been a heartbreaking experience for many of us. Our Friend Iona Lyons shares her personal story....

My Grandma is 93. Her name is Val, she was named Mabel but she never liked that so everyone called her Val Valentine, I remember Mum calling her LouLouBelle I think that was an affectionate term. My Grandma used to come and visit me in the various cities I've lived: Liverpool, Nottingham, and Leeds. She was in her 70s then, up from Kent, we'd visit museums and she'd walk around the city while I was working. I'd give up my bed and sleep on the floor and listen to her rumbling snores all night. She was a wise, knowledgeable woman, would quietly accept my decisions on my life and would only comment if I told her something directly. The last letter I received from her was written in pencil on a tissue. She wrote about how she was in MacDonald's. It was busy: families, young people rushing in and out. She noticed another old lady sitting quietly eating. She said that it felt as though they were the only still things amongst the maelstrom of chaos around them. Two rocks in the swirl of a river. She said that they both looked at each other and this moment was recognised by the two of them. Old amongst the younger, ignored, just passed by.

My Grandma is in a home now; she doesn't recognise her daughter and son that visit. She has to wear nappies because she can't control her bowels. She cries a lot, in anguish, but no one knows what the problem is. The last time my Mum visited, my Grandma held her hand and said 'I just want to go'. Was that a moment of clarity in the confusion of her mind? I don't think we know. I wish for her to have a peaceful end.