

THE QUIET WORD



Up and Coming 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

Mindfulness Meditation Group: Do you feel very busy and struggle to find time for yourself? Does the pace of life feel too fast? Come and try a simple meditation practice which offers you a chance to experience inner peace. This group is intended for anyone who would like to begin or develop their mindfulness meditation practice. It is a drop-in, weekly secular (non-faith) meditation group. £6 per session. Concessions and pay as you go available, or get a session free when you book and pay for 6 sessions. Please bring a mat and cushion with you.

Location: Inkwel, 31 Potternewton Lane, Leeds LS7 3LW

Time: Tuesday evenings 6.00-7.00pm. This is an on-going group. Suitable for beginners and more experienced. Please contact Shona at: shonalowe66@hotmail.com or on: 07583865922 for more details and to check forthcoming group meeting dates.

16th July: Quaker Criminal Justice Group- contact Phil O'Hare for details

philomena.ohare@virginmedia.com

Dates and Locations for Up-and-Coming Otley Meeting

Otley Friends very much appreciate the visits of those who are able to come over The Chevin or down the Wharfe. **Please note that we have changed our time of meeting and have brought it forward to 10.45.**

July 1: 59 Riverside Park, LS21 2RW

July 15: 1 Redlands, Billams Hill, LS21 2DZ

August 5: 37 Harecroft Road, LS21 2BG

August 19: 1 Redlands, Billams Hill, LS21 2DZ

Subject to confirmation and possible change: check with Clerk of Otley Meeting

RAWDON AMNESTY CONCERT SERIES 2012. All events at Rawdon Quaker Meeting House, Quakers Lane, Rawdon LS19 6HU.

Admission free, donations to Amnesty International.

Friday 13 July 7.30pm. Shakespeare on the Lawn

Theatre of the Dales, directed by Jess Neale, transports us to the fantastical world of Shakespeare's imagination in an outdoor performance of A Comedy of Errors. Some seating, but feel free to bring a cushion, blanket or deck chair.

Saturday 11 August 7.30pm. Story-Telling

Stories of the Love of Liberation (Vaiyu Naidu's new work from epics and remembrances of things past) and Mischief from the Middle Ages (Martin Riley, librettist, playwright, storyteller and ex Punch & Judy Professor's Assistant).

Saturday 15 September 7.30pm. The Bridge Singers

Folk songs from around the British Isles performed by this celebrated choir from Nottingham.

Sunday 7 October 7.30pm. Ristoretto

A concert by musicians from the world of Opera North: Colin Honour, principal clarinettist of the English Northern Philharmonia, with Bibi Heal, soprano, Liz Wyly, viola, Claire Sadler, double bass and Martin Pickard, piano.

Sunday 28 October 7.30pm. Schubert and 20th-century America

Music by Schubert, Barber and Copland, performed by Jane Anthony, soprano and founder of Leeds Lieder+, Marion Raper, pianist, and David Riley, first violinist for Opera North.

Sunday 11 November 7.30pm. Scriptophilia

A celebration of the sources, compulsions and consolations of writing, performed by Peter Spafford,

writer and actor, and Richard Ormrod, Yorkshire Jazz Musician of the Year 2012.

Saturday 1 December 7.30pm. Remember the Snow

A play for voices and musicians, written by David Griffiths especially for this 21st anniversary of the Rawdon Amnesty Series.

Sunday 16 December 7.30pm. Bradford Music Club

Performances by an informal group of amateur musicians who meet monthly at Rawdon Meeting House and welcome anyone who would like to perform or be a member of the audience.

Further information from David Griffiths (07903 145093), Barbara Parry (0113 2503867 barbaraparry@waitrose.com), or Diane Exley (0113 2502051 edianex@btinternet.com)

If you would like to contribute towards the next QUIET WORD Please contact Ben Wood at punkrainbow@hotmail.co.uk

Editorial Apology: For all of you avid QW readers out there, I apologise that the present edition has come out a great deal later than I originally planned! Thanks to all who contributed to another bumper Newsletter!

Making the Stranger Welcome



Meetings are now happening between Leeds Quakers and the local Jewish community as a result of the boycott of goods coming from the illegal settlements in the Occupied Territories. We are in the process of building mutual trust so we can start to explore the more difficult areas

Making the stranger welcome appears to be something that happens naturally at the Sinai Synagogue. On Friday 25th May 2012 a group of local Quakers were able to attend the Chavurah service and were invited to part take of the excellent meal that followed. The service was very different from the silent worship that is central to Quaker services, so it gave us a lot to think about. A short film was shown about how one Synagogue struggled to find the tenth man required for the service to start. After a lot of frustrated effort the man they needed came unsought and was nearly rejected, before he could bring the drive and energy to revitalize the Synagogue.

A group of Quakers and Jews in Leeds are meeting to try and build some bridges of understanding between the two communities. We have discovered that there is a lot in common historically. Minority groups that were barred from many social activities and career choices, struggling to have our marriages and funerals recognized as valid and legal. In Leeds today we continue to share an enthusiasm for life in all its richness as well as the same documentation for marriages. Of course there are some areas of difference. Leeds Quakers hope that the dialogue that has started will continue to give us confidence that we can appreciate and value each other. I look forward to future meetings with the Leeds Jewish / Quaker group; although I suspect that some of the most useful insights will come, like the tenth man in the film, unbidden. May we jointly have the wisdom to recognize opportunities when they arise. Leeds Quakers thank Sinai Synagogue for making us so welcome.

Martin Schweiger, Clerk

Roundhay Meeting

136 Street Lane

Some good things do happen in Prison



Helen White told the recent meeting of the Criminal Justice Group about the increasing emphasis on Safer Custody in HM Prison Leeds. Prisoners who elect to join the three week course (often those with mental health issues, those who are being bullied or those who want to come off drugs) take part in a variety of courses, from anger management to assertiveness to tai chi and yoga.

Helen is their yoga teacher and told us the way in which the men learn to listen, concentrate and to stretch their bodies – often un-supple from injuries, bad beds and pumping iron. By the end of the three weeks they are able to perform the yoga exercises themselves without supervision and have learned relaxation techniques. To help them continue to use their new skills, the Prison Phoenix Trust provides them with free, illustrated booklets and posters (and even “Yoga without words” for those with illiteracy problems) of the various poses. It is thanks to the Prison Phoenix Trust that Helen teaches in Armley Jail. They support her financially as the Prison has so little funding for these ‘add-ons’. Helen also teaches Prison staff members.

It was inspiring to hear that such a positive aspect of prison life is available in however small a way. Apparently yoga is taught in 93 of our prisons. The Prison Phoenix Trust is a charity; if you wish to support it, you will find details on www.theppt.org.uk/

The next meeting will hear from Heather Noga of the Offender Health Research Network (16/7/12)

Phil O’Hare

Some Reflections on Same-Sex Marriage



In 2009, at the conclusion of a long process of shared consideration and reflection in which our Meeting played a significant part, Quakers in Britain agreed to recognise marriages between same-sex couples, and to celebrate them in the same way as marriages between opposite-sex couples as far as the law allowed. Quakers also committed ourselves to work for a change in the law, so that the reality of same-sex marriage, which we as a religious community already recognise, could also be recognised in law. On the basis of our experience and our faith we affirm that same-sex couples, just as much as opposite-sex couples, can be given the gift and calling of marriage. We cannot deny this if we are to remain true to our deepest beliefs and our experience of God. **(from AM's response to the government consultation on Equal Marriage)**

The meeting itself was unremarkable- some ministry, a bible reading, a few minutes for afterthoughts. But during notices, a lady stood up holding a clipboard saying she had bought in a petition against gay marriage and only needed two more signatures to fill the last page. I was horrified. I had always felt that Meeting was a really diverse group of people who all accepted each other's differences, and I had assumed that all Quaker meetings and Quakers were like that- non-judgemental, accepting and considerate. I now find myself feeling like I've accidentally become a member of something that doesn't represent my views, and the incident has left me questioning how tolerant one needs to be of opinions you find challenging.

I think the anti- gay marriage argument has elements of complete misunderstanding. From the arguments I have read, people's concerns seem to be about what constitutes a 'proper' family and a proper relationship. Surely divorce is considerably more damaging than same sex marriage? I feel that the whole issue is making mountains out of molehills, and is yet another example of people not being truthful about their feelings about minorities. Other people's marriages will not affect me in any way, so I don't see why this issue is of concern at all.

Sophie Bevan

In the discussions about marriage processes in religious groups one word which does not seem to get mentioned much is gender. Quakers have always had an unusual view of gender roles; spiritual,

if not social, equality has been accepted and claimed. Thus the Quaker marriage, apart from the use of 'wife' and 'husband' has traditionally used two equal declarations. The important bits of the human relationship are the same for both, as the relationship with God is the same for both. This seems to me to be a point worth remembering when talking with other groups who see more innate gender differences than we do, and attach these to marriage. And we are more open to the idea that gender roles are learned, and we can all learn different things and interpret male, female or whatever within the group without much challenge.

Susan Robson

Something I find difficult to understand- but genuinely want to understand is the extent to which same-sex marriage evokes fear and anxiety in quite a few people. Is it fear of losing something? Is it a sense that people in same-sex relationships are thought to be in some way 'lesser' in their capacity for love and commitment? My view (from my more fervent gay lib days) is to suggest that the best way of tackling this is through visibility.

When someone asks about my personal life I don't evade the fact that I'm in a committed same-sex relationship. Sometimes this can be a difficult thing to do (especially when you fear people's reaction). Homophobia is diminishing but it's still a concern for gay, lesbian and increasing bisexual folk. But for me part of the truth testimony is learning the art of openness and the way in which truth is a healing and affirming thing. The more heterosexual couples and singles get to know people in same-sex relationships, the more they will see that same-sex couples have the same joys and difficulties as everyone else. So in a funny way you can see the way the testimony to truth and the testimony to equality are linked here.

Ben Wood

[The Kindlers' Workshop at Carlton Hill, 19th May 2012: a report
in snapshots](#)

Rhiannon Grant



Creation,

Morning shower warm

Sensing well-being and joy

Meet the day with hope

*resting, She listens
and changes each thing She hears
frogs spawn, ferns uncurl*

*unseeingly carved
some die, some thrive, some get by
awesome anyway*



I am momentarily distracted from the contemplation of a walnut when my neighbour manages to crack hers open and eat it. Part of the outer circle, I move around to meet my next conversational partner in an exercise familiar from Quaker Quest trainings. We do not pause for niceties but dig straight in to traditional Christian theology and the meaning of the Incarnation – for us and for the world.

Light out of darkness

*Voice, speech, song out of
silence*

Ceaseless flowing

We are asked to consider 'beauty'. My mind stumbles, stuck on the beauty industry which I have rejected but cannot escape. Later, over lunch, we begin a discussion about appearance and ways of dressing which I hope to one day have the chance to continue; how are we plain now?

People throw around a few long words: pantheism, panentheism, and some technical terms: Original Sin, Incarnation. Some are deeply familiar and well loved: Spirit, Gaia, and some of them are new to me: Original Blessing, Cosmic Christ.

Of all the pictures around the room, I choose one of an oak leaf against a blue sky.

Whispering wheat field

The smell of harvesting dust

Memories of summer

Spoken into being

Order out of chaos

And we sow that's God



Towards the end of the day, we were invited to write haiku with the title 'Creation'. Scattered around this page are some of them.

Some Thoughts from the Editor: 'Times and Seasons' After All



Friends will routinely say to newcomers that we don't do 'times and seasons'. They might follow up by saying that Friends are called to find the Spirit at all times rather than simply setting aside a specific day or time for 'religious stuff'. In this vein, spirituality is not about mere ritualistic routines but must depend upon active seeking in order to make one's religious life fruitful. In this context our Sunday Meetings for Worship are set for instrumental and cultural reasons, rather than spiritual ones. We don't attach anything 'magical' to Sundays, nor do we think that we're less affective Quakers on Wednesdays. Nor do Quakers fixate on what we might call religious theatrics. You're not going to find 'smells and bells' in your average Quaker Meeting. In practical terms however, the lives of individual Friends and their Meetings are positively littered with special times and little acts of devotion which keeps the ebb and flow of 'high day' and 'holiday' found in other churches surprisingly intact. What about Carlton Hill's own All-age Christmas Meeting for Worship, or Rawdon's Amnesty Concert Series? Or again Carlton Hill's Good Friday coffee morning? How might we seek to explain these apparent incongruities to new attendees? Aren't these time-specific rituals?

One way of approaching this strange mismatch is to try and dissect what early Friends were trying to say when they rallied against the conformity of 'times and seasons'. For first generation Quakers, the biggest shadow cast over their lives was that of the Established Church (backed by both Parliament and the Crown). A sort of administrative machine for saving souls, the Anglican Church of the 17th century attempted to mediate and control the spiritual lives of the English people through its publically-sanctioned ceremonies and offices. Yet Friends saw this organisation for what it was; a sham designed to support the powerful rather than offer spiritual succour. With a class of wealthy clerics at its head, the Church seemed a million miles away from the simple life of Jesus and his disciples which George Fox and James Nayler wanted to emulate.

By refusing to take part in the liturgical calendar these first Quakers asserted their independence against those who wanted to crush their Meetings and destroy their radical

theology. In contrast to the repetitiveness of state-sanctioned rituals, they were intent on following their own 'light' with integrity- seeking direct and unmediated relationships to God. The anti-ritualism of early Friends was born out of a desire for religious liberty from stifling conformities of both Catholicism and mainline Protestantism. Thus, Quaker talk about 'times and seasons' was meant less of a prohibition and more as a positive statement of the fruits of Friends' discernment. Early Quakers didn't need priests and pomp to feel their religious experience validated. They wanted to do away with everything which separated them from the deep root of their experiences; of a God who had 'come to teach the people himself.'

What are Quakers to do with this legacy today? Should we 'go back to basics' and throw out the bits and pieces of fixed rituals which have developed in our Meetings over time? Or should we just ignore the idea and celebrate sacred days like other religious communities? Here is my take. I don't think the Quaker stance against 'times and seasons' should prompt us to throw out cherished rituals, nor open the flood-gates to 'Easter mass in the Meeting House'. Rather, we need to walk a more demanding a third way by making the distinction between *ritual* and *ritualism*.

Ritualism is at heart the desire to resist change at all costs. It is a hardness of the soul which relishes in the inflexible and familiar over the possibility of transformative change. Hanging on the coat-tails of ritualism are the devils of complacency and inertia which tie us to that which comfortable without challenge and to so much 'dead wood' rather than fostering reverence for life as a living, changing tree. So pernicious is ritualism that it poisons vibrant conviction with clunky procedures and the free-flow of belief with dusty dogmatism. A stand against 'times and seasons' will not protect us from ritualism, especially if our stance is just a routine formula or nervous reflex rather than something we have looked for ourselves and found to be *true*.

It is all very well for a weighty Friend to object to Christmas Meeting for Worship on the grounds of Quaker faith, but if the said Friend has been sitting in the same seat week after week for three decades, then it is arguable that he is more in danger of the dead-hand of ritualism than his Christmas-celebrating fellow Quakers! Our historic stance should operate less as a prescription and more like an early warning system which alerts us to the staleness of our spiritual journey. This could mean letting go of some of things we are accustomed to and as *Advices and Queries* recommends 'live adventurously'.

What about ritual? For me one of the most refreshing approaches to this subject can be found in Emma Restall-Orr's book *Ritual: A Guide to Life, Love and Inspiration* (2000) which charts the rites of the contemporary Druid tradition through the circle of the year (see front page picture). Resisting the heavy yoke of ritualism, she describes 'ritual' in terms conducive to a Quaker understanding of worship; not as a series of half-conscious and repetitive acts but as a succession of 'gathered' moments, given over to the seeking clarity. As Restall-Orr writes:

Ritual is that pause which is the moment when we move from the natural swirls and surges of life into the sanctuary of the sacred circle. There our focus is intentionally directed, our

thoughts concentrated, our experience and actions acutely enhanced, before the barriers dissolve again and we slip back into the currents of creation. The ritual circle is like a training place where we focus on life, issue by issue, carefully stepping for a moment, stone by stone, clearing our perception, profoundly aware. Dismissing life's distractions, we bring our attention to the search for inspiration, waking ourselves to see the world as inspired and sacred. (p. 207)

Such attentiveness to the sacredness of life can be fostered anywhere and in myriad forms. We can see the world differently through the 'ritual' of meditative stillness, prayerful walking, or the ceremonial use of image, music and art. This increased sensitivity the sacredness of life can also be found in our seasonal times together as Friends which are cultural means of assisting us in strengthening our fellowship. If Yule, Easter, Wesak, Evensong, or Summer Solstice help us as Quakers to deepen our 'circles' of Worship on Sundays and throughout the week, then we should treat these things with reverence rather than with unease. If these focal points draw us further into the beauty of Quaker silence then we should welcome the opportunities that ritual brings. In such openness it is important to recognise that the shared discipline of Quaker Worship is fundamentally a ritual too, but so simple is its core that ritualism finds little purchase. Given this generous interpretation contemporary Friends should not be afraid of using ritual tools to enhance their faith. This does not mean we should give into ritual for ritual's sake, much less prescribe it. We must use Quakerism's original aversion towards customary prescription creatively and in accordance with the situation as we find it.

Given such a middle course, what might we deem good ritual, not merely for ourselves, but for others? In Quaker terms we might say that 'good' rituals always preserve the sense of deep stillness through which the seeker and the Spirit can encounter one another. If a fixed point of focus, or a particular set of actions, leads to the strengthening of such experience, ritual can be seen to facilitate sanctity.

Ben Wood

Quaker Service Memorial Trust – urgent appeal for help



The Quaker Service Memorial Trust (QSMT) is preparing for the completion in summer of the memorial to members of the Friends Ambulance Unit and Friends Relief Service, located at the National Memorial Arboretum in Staffordshire. To mark this there will be an exhibition of the wartime and post-war service (1939-48) by members of the FAU and FRS on display at Yearly Meeting, and afterwards at the entrance to the Arboretum during the first two weeks in June. The memorial is due to be inaugurated on 15th September, around which time it is hoped to have the exhibition on display again. Invitations will be sent to those who contributed to the memorial, and to former members of the Friends Ambulance Unit, Friends Relief Service and families. QSMT urgently need the help of Local and Area Meetings to locate them.

If you have this information or know of those with FRS/FAU connections unable to attend the inauguration so that contact can be made about their experience and possible memorabilia.

A QSMT website will shortly be launched to keep Friends informed of developments. Please contact **Anthony Wilson, Clerk of QSMT, with any information, queries or donations: email gaialane60@hotmail.com, 10 Beacon Mews, Lichfield, Staffs, WS13 7AH, telephone 01543 258016**

**David M Robson,
Co-clerk,
Leeds AQM**

Dying and Death - the Last Taboo



The 12 May 2012 saw some hundred people gathered at the Conference Centre, Oxford Place for *Dying and Death - the Last Taboo*, the one day conference organized by Leeds Quakers. Professor Jan Bernheim gave the keynote opening lecture on Comprehensive End-of-Life Care: the Belgian model of synergistic legal physician-assisted dying and palliative care. Professor Bernheim is a distinguished medical oncologist who is now a part-time professor and researcher in medical ethics and end-of-life issues at the End-of-Life Research Group at the Vrije University, Brussels.

Belgium has dedicated health services for end-of-life care, and palliative care which are the most developed world-wide, and second only in Europe to the UK. It also has the Life End Information Forum, with doctors, nurses and paramedics. This is similar to the Support and Consultation for Euthanasia, in the Netherlands. The Forum provides information to the public on all aspects and options available, it trains health professionals, and provides consultant physicians for second independent opinions following a request for euthanasia.

The 2002 Belgian law on euthanasia defines euthanasia as the intentional termination of another person's life at that person's request. This is in effect Voluntary Euthanasia. There must be repeated consistent requests, in writing, from the person concerned. It must also be without coercion. The person has clearly to be in "intolerable" and irreversible suffering, physical and mental, the cause of which is an irreversible medical condition. The person concerned must be duly informed of alternatives, including palliative care. The termination is carried out by a medical doctor, following consultation with the nursing team and a competent colleague. The doctor remains always with the person till death. The whole procedure has to be accountable. A report has to be sent to the Federal Control and Evaluation Commission. One can foresee that in the UK a similar body would be needed and would link a similar procedure to Coroners and inquests. Professor Bernheim emphasized that the underlying ethic of the law is procedural rather than prescribing what has to be done.

Following the Belgian Law, the Netherlands introduced their similar law in April 2002, and Luxembourg in March 2009. So the Benelux countries constitute the test bed for these laws and procedures. Professor Bernheim made it clear that Physician Assisted Dying is part and parcel of Palliative Care.

"Palliative care and euthanasia are neither alternatives nor antagonistic . . . Euthanasia may be part of palliative care ... Care givers are fully entitled to ethical limitations, but they must be expected to state these limitations candidly, clearly, and above all in due time. "

It is important to point out that what is described, vis-a-vis the Benelux countries, that is, Voluntary Euthanasia, or as Professor Bernheim has described it, Physician Assisted Dying, has to be distinguished from the situation in other countries. In the US States of Oregon and Washington, the law on Assisted Dying governs terminally ill, mentally competent, dying patients who are legally required to self-administer the life-ending medication. In Switzerland the law on Assisted Suicide allows assistance to die to chronically ill and disabled people who are not dying but who are aware that a terminal situation probably awaits them. We are not discussing Euthanasia as it is usually defined, namely, the administration of life-ending medications or procedures by a third party not necessarily with the consent of the patient. That is ending life without explicit request. We are not going down that road and that is why there is no Slippery Slope.

The Benelux model of end-of-life care shows in fact that there is no Slippery Slope. The law and the procedures go so far but not further. The model is comprehensive in that it covers all deaths. Many take place within the category of palliative care as we understand the practice in the UK. The most significant fact to emerge is that patients in palliative care in the Benelux countries know that, should they reach a particular point in their lives, they have the option to request Voluntary Euthanasia. This leads to an enhancement of their well-being and some patients, paradoxical though it may seem, actually live longer. So Professor Bernheim showed that this is how the Benelux model works and how it can be objectively described as a system of integral palliative care.

Professor Bernheim made it clear that trust and confidence on the part of the public essential and this is why the Forums mentioned earlier are important in relation to the public's attitude to the law. Equally important is the attitude of the medical profession. In Belgium a large majority of physicians agree that the euthanasia law beneficially influences their work in end-of-life situations and that a patient's request for voluntary euthanasia is absolutely part of good end-of-life care.

Professor Bernheim showed a deeply moving clip from the documentary film "Epilogue", directed by Manno Lanssens. We saw a terminally and irrevocably ill patient who had chosen voluntary euthanasia. Accompanied by the family doctor who oversaw the whole procedure and surrounded by family and friends we witnessed a serene death and a humane end to suffering. This was a profound demonstration of the Benelux model in action.

Ben Francis

Adel QM

Information: A DVD of the day has been made and will be available by the end of August and copies (price £10) can be obtained from Judy Kessler. judyed.kessler@sky.com