

# 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: 37 Harecroft Road 15 September 1 Redlands, Billams Hill. Because of holiday absences this locations is still subject to confirmation. If Friends plan to visit please telephone 0113 318 8084 - David Robson - to check venue.*

### September

**Saturday 7<sup>th</sup>** Light Group at Adel Meeting House, 7:30.

**Saturday 21<sup>st</sup>** LAQM coach trip to the National Arboretum and the new Quaker Peace memorial. Departing 9.30am from Adel and 10am from Carlton Hill and returning to Leeds for 6pm.

**Saturday 28<sup>th</sup>** Leeds Quaker Cycle Ride in aid of PAFRAS departing Carlton Hill 9.30am via Leeds Canal and Rodley Nature reserve to Rawdon Meeting for lunch then departing Rawdon at 1pm for a quick drink at Adel QMH, then via Eccup reservoir before arriving at Roundhay QMH at about 4pm.

**Saturday 28<sup>th</sup>** at Roundhay QMH an Open Day between 2:30pm and 5pm; with a charity stall, bookstall, children's' activities, refreshments, video showings and a Graffiti Wall.

**Sunday 29<sup>th</sup>** at Rawdon QMH The Harmony Choir will lead the work shop at which everyone will be encouraged to sing. It is hoped to raise a considerable amount of money for PAFRAS.

### October

**Wed 2<sup>nd</sup>** at Adel QMH there will be a 'light group' meeting experience the worship experience of early Quakers.

**Thursday 3<sup>rd</sup> Oct** at Carlton Hill. Quaker Quest evening with refreshments at 6.30pm and a 7pm start

**Saturday 5<sup>th</sup>** at Ilkley QMH a one - woman play by Lynn Morris of Stourbridge Meeting, entitled "Lover of Souls" –it's described as a dramatic evocation of the life of the 17<sup>th</sup> century Quaker Elizabeth Hooton

**Saturday 5<sup>th</sup>** Quaker Quest at Roundhay – 12noon to 3pm -a spiritual exploration for anyone wanting to discover more about Quakers.

**Sunday 6<sup>th</sup> October** at Rawdon QMH. Rawdon Quakers will be hosting an Amnesty concert at 7.30pm – a recital by professional Leeds pianist Julian Cima

**Sunday October 6<sup>th</sup>** Otley Quaker Meeting will hold its second 'open morning' from 10.30 to 12.30 at Otley Courthouse. Information, questions and refreshments for all ages. Short Meeting for Worship from 11am.

If you have any contributions for the **Quiet Word** please send them to the editor, Ben Wood at [punkrainbow@hotmail.co.uk](mailto:punkrainbow@hotmail.co.uk)

## LAQM: Sunday Oct. 13<sup>th</sup> 1.15pm

*All members and attenders are invited to Leeds Area Quaker Meeting at Rawdon Quaker Meeting House 10.45 Meeting for Worship followed by 12.30 Shared Lunch*



### Workshop led by Vicky Ackroyd of Purple Patch Arts on: Mental Health and Vulnerable Adults

- 1.15pm opening worship
- 1.30pm workshop
- 3pm tea break
- 3.15pm business as led
- 4.15pm Tea with Rawdon Friends and depart**

## VIEW INSIDE A KALEIDOSCOPE

*Seek to know one another in the things which are eternal*

*(para 18 Advices & Queries)*



At a recent discussion group with Friends considering Quaker Advices and Queries, we were seized by the Advice to ‘seek to know one another *in the things which are eternal*’. It is a peculiarly archaic turn of phrase and we puzzled over how to interpret the Advice.

On the face of it ‘eternal’ equates to the opposite of all that is impermanent and transitory, so we immediately picked up a strong sense of a reference to something deep and elemental – though whether this might relate to personal attributes or to shared experience remains open to interpretation.

From that expression, ‘the things which are eternal’, we stepped into the unfathomable territory of ‘Eternity’ – and found ourselves well and truly out of our depth!



It has been suggested to me since that discussion & after related ministries in Meeting that I might like to jot down a few of my own thoughts. Sitting before this blank space, I am conscious that a print deadline imposes on me a finite time in which to collect some communicable musings on the weighty question of ‘things eternal’. Conscious also that such musings are quite likely to be interminable and inconclusive, I have set myself a limit of 360 minutes to come up with something. I like the irony of the situation.



Now, I don’t consider myself a religious person in any conventional sense. Browsing the internet in search of the ‘eternal’ in cyberspace, however, I stumbled upon a Biblical reference which offers this tantalizing thought:

*. . . [we] look not at the things which are seen, but at the things which are not seen: for the things which are seen are temporal; but the things which are not seen are eternal*

( 2 Corinthians 4:18)

I find the notion of looking at the ‘unseen’ quite arresting, whilst the link between the unseen and the eternal suggests something ‘other’, which is forever here, there and everywhere and yet never visible to the human eye. Our ‘looking’ (or ‘knowing’) must extend beyond what we commonly understand by these terms.

Like the unassuming kaleidoscope, these words offer a view much larger on the inside than on the outside.



Underlying any contemplation of Eternity is the inevitable, gnawing awareness of our mortality. As a concept, infinity has and continues to be formulated by mathematicians and hypothesized about by scientists and philosophers alike, whilst the voices of writers and creatives of all kinds, resonate through ancient times to the present day, speaking to us most powerfully when they speak of basic human experience, of feelings, behaviours and interactions, which recur over time, albeit against changing backdrops.

My personal view of Eternity is that it is ever-present and is something in which we are all bound up. It is as much something which we give as something which we receive. We live in the present, able only to guess at the future and have a highly subjective (often distorted) sense of the past. But we in the present live in the knowledge that we are building on the past and providing the foundation for the future. Our own life experience enriches us and we, in turn, pass on something of our experience to others, which extends our individual lives well beyond that which is our own immediate experience.



The same passage in Corinthians as mentioned above draws attention to our ‘inner being’ and suggests that the effect wrought by time can seemingly work in opposite directions:

*... though our outer man is decaying, yet our inner man is being renewed day by day*  
(2 Corinthians 4:16)

This perhaps offers another key to how we might seek to know one another ‘in the things which are eternal’. That is, through the undressed Inner Self.



To return to the Advice that we should ‘seek to know one another in the things which are eternal’: it seems to me that the most meaningful, most precious connections I make with others can be both sudden, brief and as dazzling as a bright flashing spark,

intense but soon extinguished, as well as slow and mellowing, glowing embers to be gazed upon with hypnotic effect. They are at their most intense when they are open, free, deeply felt and honestly expressed. Such connections require deep trust and faith.

I know immediately when something or someone touches me deeply, without necessarily knowing why – and without needing to know why. Some might call it instinct or intuition. Some might put forward a more scientific analysis. It is not something which is controllable or predictable. But it is readily recognized whenever it is experienced. Might this be an experience of the ‘things eternal’?



The Advice is wonderfully ambivalent. It urges us to know one another in the things which are eternal, without necessarily requiring commonality, understanding, agreement or consensus between ourselves. There can be deep differences between us, as well as common experiences, and these must equally be taken on board if we are to ‘know’ and care for each other well. Perhaps this is what I understand as ‘true love’ (itself an over-used, much debased and outworn phrase). It is often beyond our comprehension, immeasurable, unfathomable. In a word: eternal.

My self-imposed deadline has long passed and I am still here. Pondering. My childhood Self marveling still at the view inside the kaleidoscope.

**Kathryn Oubridge, Ilkley Meeting  
September 2013**

## [Some Thoughts from the Editor: It's Hell on the Internet](#)

The internet can be a deeply saddening place at times. All that knowledge, art and culture at people’s finger-tips, yet in thread after thread, one observes bile, tribalism, homophobia, misogamy and racism. Even the hallowed halls of metropolitan liberalism are not immune; go to the comments section of the *Guardian* website and you’ll soon discover a species of ‘informed bigotry’ which is no different from the comments section of the *Mail Online* in tone, if not in substance. The recent media coverage of the cyber-bullying of people on *Twitter* highlights the stark Janus-faced nature of the internet; yes it can bring people together, but it can also bring out some of the worst aspects of human nature imaginable. One of the most distressing features of online existence for me, as a Quaker and theologian, is the sheer rapidity of the



accusation that ‘so-and-so is going to hell’. There are a series of ‘hot topics’ on every internet message-board which guarantee that someone is going to make the allegation- if you let a discussion roll on for long enough. It’s the religious counterpart to what internet forum-goers call Godwin’s Law: *given enough time, in any online discussion—regardless of topic or scope—someone inevitably makes a comparison to Hitler or the Nazis*. Homosexuality, abortion and alternative religions tend to be the reddest of rags to this mass of angry but exceedingly zealous bulls.



But, you ask, why are you so bothered by these comments? After all it’s just the internet- if you don’t like what someone is saying, you can always log out right? May be so- but the internet provides a powerful window into the psychological structure of culture- perhaps the most powerful portal of its kind since the invention of the printing-press. It allows people to publically express very personal feelings and irritations almost instantaneously and anonymously, to vast audiences. In this way, it reveals very deep attitudes of the psyche which are often obscured by habitual personas in everyday life. If there are visible multitudes of people in the online world who are in the business of condemning their fellow human beings to eternal agony- what does that say about their levels of empathy? And what drives so many people to resort to the language of ‘hell’ in the first place? Put like that- invoking hell on the internet matters; because it touches on something we Quakers have always been opposed to- namely the *logic of retribution*.

Given our historic (some would say Jesus’-shaped) commitment to peace, how can Friends counter the implicit sadism of these online ‘hell-junkies’? The question possesses added urgency when one remembers that behind the monitor these are real people who live ordinary lives, and the casual cruelty of the online world can have very real effects in the off-line world as well. For me, the first part of dealing with this fixation on hell is to recognize that its proliferation on the internet is a symptom of

something much wider than a few disgruntled web-users. Hell is a global industry with its celebrity-preachers offering tips about how you and your family can avoid perdition. The televangelists and pop-prophets of doom make a lot of money out of half-baked descriptions of torment- much like the Medieval Church of old.

The concrete results of this transnational Gospel of damnation are the calculated uses of hell-fire to bolster fragile egos and extend political agendas. Every kind of 'social undesirable' can be neatly consigned to the sulphurous slopes of Hades- conveniently robbing them of their dignity and agency. Gay people, Muslims, feminists, neo-pagans, evolutionists and the campaign team of Barak Obama, can all be swiftly de-humanised once they are placed in the 'going to hell' box. There has been no better tool discovered by the devil to make human beings believe that '*loving your neighbour as yourself*' is harmlessly conditional. 'I don't have to try and love you' this satanic logic goes, 'I just have to love people who agree with me.' Put pointedly, Hell is a way of showing 'two fingers to common humanity. It's a way of shutting-down empathy in favour of self-justification. Nothing could be more morally corrosive.

This attitude is often made worse in cyber-space- where the critical distance of screen and text allow people to forget that their fellow users are also people, and as a result, bad 'chat room' theology bubbles up. Yet, I don't think we're helpless against this tide of religious-inspired invective; far from it. I firmly believe that Quakers can contribute towards creating a counter-story to condemnation brimstone if we are willing to dig into the recesses of our own spiritual tradition. In the face of a narrow sadistic Christianity, Friends need to renew their confidence in the intensity of Fox's original mysticism. As Fox tells us in his *Journal*:

*I saw the infinite love of God. I saw, also, that there was an ocean of darkness and death; but an infinite ocean of light and love, which flowed over the ocean of darkness. In that also I saw the infinite love of God, and I had great openings.*

These beautiful words give us a flavour of our vocation as Friends in the epoch of mass opinion. We are called to kindle a light which conquers spaces of fear, vindictiveness and pain. In other words, we are called to make the world a little less like hell and a little more like heaven. The God at the centre of this task is not some snug tormenter (the kind you often find on the trollish internet forum) but the tender Father revealed through the person of Jesus. This is the same man who is said to have 'descended into hell' to free captive people [1 Peter 3:18-20] and to have established a community incapable of being overcome by hell [Matthew 16:18]. If Jesus is the victor over hell (as these bits of scripture suggest) being a Christian is definitely not about revelling in schadenfreude for the condemned. It is about summoning a different reality- the Good News that 'each one of us is unique, precious, a child of God'. Being a Christian means patterning one's life under the expectation that love

can conquer hatred, and that life can overcome the logic of death. Making such a declaration is not an easy task, particularly an age where the channels of information and opinion are so mind-bogglingly vast. How do we break-through all the noise? Like the early Quaker pamphleteers, we must not walk away from the task of explaining to others the treasures we have discovered in silence. We must not abscond from the Lamb's War- even if proclaiming the Quaker Way seems futile in the endless chatter of modern life. Instead of feeling overwhelmed by the enormity of the internet, we need to ask ourselves (as individuals and as a community), how can we utilize the internet for Quaker spiritual reflection? In a society where our online presences are becoming increasingly central- how do Quakers use the internet conscientiously? And how might we use it to generate better theology? Perhaps what Friends really need is a new Advice- one which encompasses the ethical and theological questions posed by the online world. At present *Advices and Queries* challenges us to think seriously about such diverse issues as alcohol and drug-use, gambling and our environmental impact. Perhaps in the next revision of *Quaker Faith and Practice* we need a sustained exploration of what a culture post-internet is like, and what opportunities and challenges lie ahead regarding its use. True- it can be hell on the internet but it doesn't have to be.

Ben Wood

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## Open Day and Autumn Fair

Saturday 28th September

2:30pm - 5pm

Come along and find out about Quakers  
Charity stall in aid of St George's Crypt  
Refreshments, Children's activities, Peace Wall

How to find us: 136 Street Lane Leeds 8





## Why was there no rioting in Chapeltown, Leeds in August 2011?



On Monday 8<sup>th</sup> August 2011 Tottenham had erupted into rioting; there was much media coverage and the expectation was that rioting would spread to other cities. It did, but not to Leeds. The Leeds Quaker Criminal Justice Group invited a panel of speakers to a seminar on the anniversary of the riots to explore how and why riots occur, how they are policed and why Chapeltown didn't follow other copycat rioting.

The academic approach was covered by Dr Paul Bagguley of Leeds University whose speciality is the sociology of protest. He explained that traditionally riots were thought to be an expression of irrational behaviour, of a crowd with a collective mind. This model is still followed by both politicians and the media, yet crowds are often rational as to who and what they target. They do, however, often have common factors behind them such as economic and political frustration, particularly if the perpetrators feel excluded or inadequately represented. But this doesn't necessarily lead to violence; the violence comes with a trigger, for example the death of the man in Tottenham. Riots involve a variety of people - young men being those involved in the violence, with women, children and older people being those involved in the most common activity of riots – looting.

Superintendent Keith Gilert is responsible for Community Safety in Leeds and dealt with how the Police deal with Public Order. The Police are trained to preserve the peace; this is based on the original Peel principles which include only using force after persuasion, advice and warning are insufficient. One important aspect of dealing with disorder, in all its variations, is the importance of the Human Rights Act which gives everyone the right to peaceful protest. The Police must maintain their impartiality whatever their views on the protest and be aware that public perception of their methods can be all important. In dealing with public disorder proportionately

the Police take into account what is 'normal' for that community; something that only comes from local knowledge and involvement. They need to be aware of how local tensions express themselves and what might be a local trigger. They aim to prevent escalation from disorder to serious disorder to riot and are trained and equipped for this. There is a national model of the tactical options, each of which is designed to achieve the preferred outcome. All riots eventually diffuse and settle.

Following this, the seminar went on to hear from the people involved directly in Chapeltown on the night of the Tottenham riots. They were Chief Inspector Melanie Jones who was the senior officer on duty in the Chapeltown area that night, Claude Hendrickson and Lutel James both of whom are local residents and who have been community activists in Chapeltown for many, many years. They have worked with C.I. Jones in the past as they all strive to improve dialogue and trust between the police and the public.



There was a nation-wide expectation that the riots would spread and this applied to Leeds. Tensions in Chapeltown were made worse that day by the shooting of a young man who was well known to the local youngsters and they had gathered together because of this. There was a police presence which included a dog-handler. The officer's perception on the ground was that the crowd at the scene were in danger of contaminating a murder scene. The dog was deployed but unfortunately slipped its lead and a young person was bitten. This increased tensions. They decided to 'face off' the Police. C.I. Jones had gone off duty but returned. Claude and Lutel went to the Police Station and, knowing how the youngsters trusted them, persuaded the Chief Inspector to give them one hour to try to diffuse the situation. Things were beginning to hot up, a car was on fire and some adults had joined the youngsters.

Claude and Lutel worked tirelessly (till well into the early hours of the next day and the following one) to persuade the youngsters of the possible effect of their actions. They pointed out that once they had a criminal record their futures would be blighted for the rest of their lives. But they made it clear that the responsibility for their actions was theirs. As Claude and Lutel had worked in Chapeltown on many aspects of their lives, day after day, the youngsters trusted and respected them and listened and eventually dispersed.

The next Saturday Seminar is on November 23<sup>rd</sup> at 9:30 for 10 am until 1:00 pm on “Challenging Assumptions”. The speakers will be Dr. Lisa Buckner, Senior Researcher at Leeds University, Jenny Hathaway Senior Communications manager at Health and Social Care Information Centre (until recently Communications Manager of Involve Yorkshire and Humber) and previously Manager of Crisis, and Peter Richardson the CEO of Leeds Asylum Seekers Support Network (LASSN). They will be challenging us to consider how statistics are used and misused, how the media can distort or promote and how a significant population group can be affected by these actions. For further details contact Judy Kessler on [judyed.kessler@sky.com](mailto:judyed.kessler@sky.com)

Claude and Lutel made it plain to the audience that they were not Community Leaders but Community Activists. They are very concerned for the future as they see the Government cuts curtailing employment prospects and, as the gap between rich and poor widens, more and more disillusionment. They have less and less funding to carry on their work which was so effective, not just for the youngsters but also having an influence on their siblings and even on their parents and grandparents. There was a general air of gloom amongst the audience as future riots seem inevitable.

[Philomena O’Hare, August 2013.](#)

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## Leeds Quaker Coach Trip Saturday 21<sup>st</sup> Sept.

### National Arboretum, Staffordshire

**Departs Adel QMH 9.30am and Carlton Hill QMH 10am**



Enjoy a picnic, explore the arboretum, visit the new memorial to the Friends Ambulance Unit, meet local Quakers, hear the story behind the memorial and be part of a memorable Meeting for Worship with friends. Depart 4pm and due back in Leeds before 6pm. **Cost:** Children £0, Students/unemployed £5, **Adults £10 or £15 (you decide)** **Bookings:** to Robert Keeble 0113 2422208 or add your name to the sign-up

sheet. **Staffordshire's National Memorial Arboretum is now home to the first monument in Europe remembering Quaker service during World War II.**

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## LAQ Meeting: Cherishing Our Quaker Past

**Leeds Area Quaker Meeting** arranged a special meeting which was held on 18/08/13 to consider our views on the future of Swarthmoor Hall, a place that played a very important role in early Quaker History. The Swarthmoor Hall Project Group was set up in 2012 by Britain Yearly Meeting Trustees to look at a longstanding suggestion from Quaker Life that Swarthmoor Hall might be run in partnership with the National Trust and also to suggest other ways in which the Hall might be developed.

The subject was introduced by David Robson (Otley) and Janet Davidson (Rawdon), a member of the Project Group, outlined some of the thinking of the Project Group, and noted that the suggestion about a partnership with the National Trust was only one of many suggestions. We considered the four options put forward by the Project Group:

- *retaining the status quo: the Hall remains under the care of Quaker Life through Quaker Life Central Committee and Swarthmoor Hall Committee*
- *enhancing the status quo: the Hall remains under BYM management but uses the expertise in management and governance available from other trading elements of BYM to give clearer focus to practice at Swarthmoor Hall and bring it into line with other areas of BYM's operation*
- *partnership with the National Trust: management is transferred to the National Trust, with a joint BYM/NT governance committee*
- *a hybrid of options 2 and 3: whereby option 2 is implemented and reviewed annually, while keeping open negotiations with the National Trust. A partnership with the National Trust may be considered at a future date.*

Various views were put forward, including some written responses from Ilkley Friends. In a wide-ranging discussion we explored the potential of Swarthmoor Hall and how this potential could be developed. In the course of discussion we recognised the extent to which we are or are not familiar with what goes on at Swarthmoor Hall and we welcomed Janet's elucidation on several points. We could see the benefits of National Trust involvement with regard to promotional activities, but were wary about what this relationship with the National Trust might entail in terms of the development of Swarthmoor Hall as the historic centre of the Religious Society of Friends. On balance we felt more in favour of option 2 (above).



SWARTHMORE HALL.

We spent much of our time thinking about the ways in which opportunities could be made for the development of Swarthmoor Hall. We are concerned about the ways in which Swarthmoor Hall can be used for spiritual, educational, and outreach purposes. We stressed that it should be made clear that Swarthmoor Hall is open to Quakers and non-Quakers alike.

[Veronica O'Mara and Robert Keeble – LAQM co-clerks](#)

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## [The Environmentalist Agony Uncle #1: What's the most environmentally friendly way to travel from Leeds to London?](#)



*This is the first in a series of columns hoping to help those with nagging questions about ecology, sustainability, environmentalism, or whatever word you might use. The Carlton Hill Sustainability Group is behind the decision, but articles are welcome from all f/Friends – please get in touch with me, and you can find my email address below.*

You'd be forgiven for thinking: 'Uncle Pasc, you dummy, it's **walking** of course' – end of article! You may well be right, but nothing can be presumed to be carbon



neutral. Your walking boots, raincoat and rucksack may very well have ‘indirect emissions’; in other words their production will have required carbon to be pumped into the atmosphere. The same goes for going by **bike** – imagine its possible carbon cost in manufacturing. And don’t forget the food you’ll be eating along the way, which also ‘carbonly culpable’. My point is that many things aren’t ‘environmentally friendly’, just less bad for the earth. The article should therefore be renamed: ‘What’s the *least environmentally unfriendly way to travel...*’

This aside, what we really have in mind is transport. I shall also put aside the possibility of the **horse and cart** because that is a little silly. Straight out of the window can go the **flying** option, which from Leeds-Bradford Airport is an irritatingly possible and inexpensive possibility, but unthinkably harmful. Flying pumps out around 0.6 tonnes of carbon, which in turn has an effect of 2.7 times the original figure. This, because of the height at which the carbon is emitted (the upper troposphere) has a worse and more direct effect on the atmosphere. The choice is therefore between **car**, **coach** or **train**. Let’s have a look at these in turn.

Leeds to London by car, like coach, is around 197 miles, but the former is surprisingly carbon unfriendly. In a five year old Fiat Punto, this would inflict 0.05 tonnes into the atmosphere. Taking other website results into consideration, this really are the maximum emissions figure I could find. Motor efficiency, wind resistance, average speed and number of passengers notwithstanding, this is roughly the carbon cost if you’re travelling alone. The real contest for me, and the one most pertinent to old carless me, is **coach vs. train**. Given that the train should be a shorter mileage (c. 186 miles), it appears that the train option is slightly less harmful. This accords with the general guideline that electric (i.e. train) beats direct carbon emissions. Yet this depends on how much of that electricity is powered by coal, gas or renewables, (a problem worth its own Agony Aunt/Uncle column.) Taking the train costs about 0.052 tonnes of carbon, and the coach appears to be a little over that, but not by a significant degree. There is one more option: canal boat. My friend tells me this is becoming a serious method of transport for haulage. I can’t work out the carbon output for this, rendering this entire paragraph rather pointless. But according to one internet forum visitor, Leeds to Richmond involves just under 280 miles,

*279 locks, at least 7 moveable bridges, 29 small aqueducts or underbridges and 10 tunnels . . . This will take 157 hours, 57 minutes which is 17 days, 4 hours and 57 minutes at 9 hours per day.*

And the maximum speed is 4mph. What poetry!

-- Pascal Ansell, Carlton Hill Meeting

[pascalansell@gmail.com](mailto:pascalansell@gmail.com)

Links:

<http://www.see.leeds.ac.uk/misc/scienceandtourism/>

<http://calculator.carbonfootprint.com/>

<http://www.eastcoast.co.uk/about-us/carbonfootprint/>

<http://www.canalworld.net/forums/>

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## Quakers urge nonviolent response to Syria crisis



As Parliament is recalled to debate the unfolding crisis in Syria, Quakers in Britain have made this statement:

“Quakers in Britain are appalled by the suffering and loss of life on all sides in Syria. We understand - and share - the wish of the international community to take some form of action to reduce the bloodshed, but we strongly urge those who are tempted to respond militarily to think again.

Air strikes will kill people just as surely as chemical attacks. All weapons must seem equally abhorrent if it is your family that is being killed. Punishment for use of specific kinds of weapon is no justification for further acts of war or for supplying yet more weapons. New participants in a war will breed new hatreds. Experience of other conflicts shows that supposedly simple or 'surgical' military interventions usually become messy and hard to end.

We are convinced that even when some kind of victory is claimed, the deep harm done by violence always outweighs the supposed benefits. We beg those in power to work with diligence through the United Nations and all diplomatic channels to bring peace nearer. We challenge them to use their resources and imaginations creatively. Please don't fall into the old trap of thinking that taking any action is bound to be better than doing nothing. “We will pray for peace in the region, and continue to voice our deep opposition to war. “

**Signed Paul Parker, Recording Clerk, Quakers in Britain**

## Quaker Life Representative Council April 2013



Once again thank you, Friends, for the chance to go to Woodbrooke as your representative. I don't know if you realize what a good time I have there – meeting so many interesting and congenial people from all over the country, sharing delicious meals, sitting with Quakers from all over Britain in silent worship, listening to challenging talks, wandering in the beautiful garden, enjoying long conversations about everything under the sun and finally crashing to sleep in a cosy bed with zero chores to look forward to in the morning. What could be better? Then I come home to tell you about it, trying to encapsulate the inspiration and the enthusiasm I felt. So here's my summary. The focus at this Council was on discovering our own gifts, our "Spirit-given gifts invested with grace and the power to transform" and using Nominations Committees to help Friends develop these through service to their Meetings.

Nominations can, and should, foster spiritual growth. Instead of searching through a list of members and attenders for people who might accept service in a particular role, it was suggested that the work of Nominations should be more about discerning Friends' spiritual gifts and asking the question 'in what area would that Friend's gifts best grow and contribute to the Meeting?' If Nominations is unable to identify a person for a given role, perhaps it is the role which needs to be changed or even set aside. Spiritual growth within the Meeting takes precedence over traditional roles. Our main speaker was Bruce Swain from Philadelphia whose travelling ministry this year is taking him all over Britain speaking about discovering our personal spiritual gifts.

These we all have, sometimes unrecognized or self-diminished, often downplayed through what he called a British modesty or unwillingness to put ourselves forward or 'boast'. We took part in two interesting and illuminating small group exercises to uncover our personal gifts. Both involved careful listening and telling our own stories. From these stories group members were able to discern qualities which we ourselves might never before have acknowledged or appreciated. The process was a discovery of 'this is the truth, of which I am,' an encouraging experience. (These

exercises are available: if LMs would like to use them, please ask me [juddle70@hotmail.co.uk](mailto:juddle70@hotmail.co.uk)).

All Friends were asked to discern their own gifts – a useful questionnaire is available if LMs would like one. All ages and experiences have something to share, not necessarily vocal or mobile! And the most liberating thing is to acknowledge “*yes, I am good at that, I can do that!*” instead of being ‘British’ and diffident, hiding our light. I have various useful bits of paper and references if Friends would like them to help with thinking about Nominations or possibly holding a LM workshop or Food for Thought discovering personal gifts. I recommend the text of Bruce Swain’s presentation in the May issue of [Quaker Voices](#) and the website [www.spiritgivingift.com](http://www.spiritgivingift.com). [In October 2013 there is a course at Swarthmore for anyone on a Nominations Committee.](#)

[Judith Sayer. Ilkley Meeting. \(Area Rep. QLRC Spring 2013\)](#)

## Holiday school 2013

Is Quakerism about to go “Whoosh!”? This was our theme for the week, and based on the discussions we have had, the answer may just possibly be “yes”. It was fitting that for Holiday School’s 80<sup>th</sup> anniversary year, we gathered in a Quaker school to explore Quakerism, to consider what it means to us, how we can explain this to others and be a force for good in the world.

We started with an interactive session run by Guy Milner, which gave us an opportunity to listen to several members of Holiday School talk about their experience of Quakerism. Although we are each on our own individual spiritual journey and levels of attendance at local Meetings vary, common themes emerged: shared values, an appreciation of silent worship, a sense that Quakerism has something special and important to offer each of us and the wider community.

Martin Ward was our next speaker, getting us thinking about nature, power and responsibility. He drew on his experience as Chief Plant Health Officer to stimulate discussion about our stewardship of the environment. We considered Advice 42, which includes the sentence: “Work to ensure that our increasing power over nature is used responsibly, with reverence for life.” Power does not always fit comfortably with Quakers and yet we are challenged to take on responsibility and accept power when it can be used in a positive way.

The “Whoosh!” theme was inspired by the Quaker Life conference held last year. Our understanding of what was meant by “Whoosh!” was deepened by the session led by Paul Parker, Recording Clerk of Britain Yearly Meeting. He was one of the Friends at

that conference and has been instrumental in communicating these ideas to Quakers in Britain and beyond.

We were asked to imagine what the UK may be like with 600,000 Quakers in it, 1% of the population – equivalent to the percentage at the end of the 17<sup>th</sup> Century. The idea that our “experience-based religion is increasingly what many people are looking for” rang true and we thought about how we can welcome newcomers. Are we ready to change and adapt as we grow in numbers? How welcome do we feel in our meetings? What steps could be taken to truly welcome more people to join us? We practiced answering the question prompted by saying “I am a Quaker – Ask Me Why.” It was an inspiring session and we hope to be ready to respond when asked about our faith.

On our fourth day, we learnt more about our heritage in a session on plain dress led by Kate Pearson. As we look around we are a diverse, colourful bunch so what would plain dress mean to us in a modern world. We thought about the impact on the environment associated with some clothing production and the working conditions of those producing garments. While we may not wear a uniform of plain dress, we can make ethical choices and live out our testimony of simplicity.

Even our game this year tapped into the theme as we made weird and wonderful contraptions to make Quakerism go Whoosh! And encourage investment from Holiday School’s own Dragons.

Throughout the week we have built our community. In our activity groups and nest groups we have shared wonderful moments of hilarity, creativity and tenderness. In our socials we have played, danced and had fun. Holiday School is such a special, amazing place we will sad to leave. But Holiday School will not leave us. Our 80<sup>th</sup> anniversary celebration was a great reminder of how ex-Holiday Schoolers are part of an extended community with Holiday School holding a precious place in their hearts. Our event took a surprisingly energetic and energizing turn as we were entertained by visiting Nairobi dancers and shared dancing with them when cultural differences and the spoken word was no barrier to openness and joy.

We end the week tired, not really wanting it to end, but full of hope that we are indeed in a time of transition with Quakerism ready to go Whoosh! George Fox’s words of 1656 are as relevant now as they were then:

*“... be patterns, be examples in all countries, places, islands, nations, wherever you come, that your carriage and life may preach among all sorts of people, and to them; then you will come to walk cheerfully over the world, answering that of God in every one.”*