Malvern Quaker Meeting





Newsletter August-September 2026

Items for the next issue of the Newsletter (in Word format please) will need to reach me by ***25th September 2026****. Past editions of the Newsletter are on our Meeting website www.malvernquakers.org.uk. Mary Corfield newsletter@malvernquakermeeting.org.uk If you are not on the Meeting's email list and would like to be, or have changed your email, please contact emailadmin@malvernquakermeeting.org.uk.*

How To Be a Peacemaker in the Era of Hybrid and Undeclared War? Questions not Answers. Richard Bartholomew

It has not been uncommon in recent years, in fact since the death in London in 2006 of Alexander Litvinenko, the Russian dissident, by means of radioactive poisoning-supposedly by the Russian state, to hear the following statement: "Russia is waging an undeclared war against the UK", further evidenced by the poisoning of the Skripals and Dawn Sturgess, in Salisbury in 2018 supposedly by two agents of the Russian Military Intelligence Service (GRU), who came to Britain on false passports and went to Salisbury as tourists to admire the Cathedral. Whilst the Skripals survived, Sturgess did not, having been given a 'perfume' bottle found by a friend in a bin who sprayed some on her wrists.

The poisons used were in the realm of those which are made for military purposes, so it appears that these were not just criminal acts but those sanctioned by a Government. If it is as it seems that a foreign state is attacking people in our country, then how do those of us traditionally committed to the peace movement react or even think about these things? Not very clearly or comprehensively as far as it appears, and I include myself in this lack of response.

Put these events and others that are being attributed to Russia on one side for a moment and instead think about the ways in which our society is regularly being subjected to cyber-interference, or cyber-bullying or even cyber-warfare. A record 204 nationally significant cyber-attacks were handled by GCHQ's National Cyber Security Centre in the year to September, up from 89 in the previous 12 months. It is not always clear who may be behind all these incidents, but GCHQ advise that other states (e.g. Russia, North Korea & China) are likely behind some of them, and then there are Organised Crime Groups behind others.

In the last 6 months we have also seen increases in various attacks on Jewish people and institutions that police are suspecting may be being orchestrated by foreign states like Iran, as well as by individuals fixated by violence against Jews or other groups. Certainly, police seem to suspect a link to Iran in the case of the arson of the 3 Jewish ambulances set alight in March in Golders Green.

There again we have what seems to be a deluge of attacks by men obsessed with violence against women and their domination and coercive control. In the background are malign actors such as the brothers Andrew & Tristan Tate now waiting extradition from the USA to the UK for various misogynistic crimes - but there are many more.

Just today the news reports that illegal Israeli settlers in the territories occupied by Israel after the 1967 war are terrorising and trying to force out from their homes peaceful and law-abiding Palestinian Arab families - clearly with the approval of the Netanyahu Government in Tel Aviv and apparently with the collusion of the Trump Government in Washington.

All in all, for people committed to peace-making such as Quakers, amongst many others, the picture and the construct of the debate around the current issues involved somehow seem more complicated than whether to be a Conscientious Objector in 1914 or 1939; nevertheless, I don't wish to underrate the difficulties involved in facing up to those issues in the 20th century or demean the bravery of those taking them then.

I don't pretend to have any adequate answer to the questions that I raise and that troubles me now. Certain things though are clear to me, for example, the importance of the Active Peace Education initiative from Malvern Meeting. At the same time, it seems clear that the Aid that has supported development schemes in the third World is crucial and shameful that our Labour Government has whittled these down so much.

How do we understand the so-called undeclared war of Russia against our country?

But what should our response as peacemakers be to the continued cyber-assaults from all sources?

How can we support Ukraine to maintain its threatened independence?

How can we better educate young men and protect young women against the continued assaults of the 'Manosphere'?

Answers on a postcard please!

Advices & Queries No 40

In view of the harm done by the use of alcohol, tobacco and other habit-forming drugs, consider whether you should limit your use of them or refrain from using them altogether. Remember that any use of alcohol or drugs may impair judgement and put both the user and others in danger.

Visit to Hampton Court Gardens **Andy and Ros Boldero**

Luckily for all concerned, it was a little cooler than previously as the sun was slightly hazy. 14 Friends set out from the Meeting House shortly after 12pm and were on site in time for lunch - top marks for the organiser!

Hampton Court Castle is a large stately home on the banks of the river Lugg, near Leominster. It was bought in 1994 by American businessman Robert van Kampen, who created the impressive entrance gate and established the walled gardens. He died in 1999, but the formal gardens were opened in 2000.



looking back at the front of the house across the lake

Hampton Court Castle was then sold in 2006. The castle is now solely a wedding venue, but the gardens are open to the public everyday through the season.

Hampton Court Gardens include an organically managed kitchen garden, a formidable yew hedge maze, with a secret tunnel running from the sunken garden to the tower in the centre of the maze, a Dutch garden, island pavilions and 150-year-old wisteria arch.

There is an excellent cafe, play area, and there is a waterfall that you can walk behind (you won't get out the other side completely dry, but that's part of the fun!)



Apart from a large, grassed area around the house and cafe, there are riverside walks, one of which takes you to a lake in front of the main house - we mustn't carp on about how dry it all was! We had lunch in the cafe; others had brought picnics but there was plenty of space both inside the cafe and out, with picnic benches on the lawns.

We had the unexpected advantage of a falconry display, which provided hands-on experience for everyone to see these most noble of birds - not only up close but actually sitting on your hand or flying very close to you, if you were brave enough to volunteer!

On the gate to the walled garden is a quotation from Isaiah 58.11 which is extremely appropriate at this moment in time!



"……AND THE LORD WILL CONTINUALLY GUIDE YOU AND SATISFY YOUR DESIRE IN SCORCHED PLACES -

AND GIVE STRENGTH TO YOUR BONES AND YOU WILL BE LIKE A SPRING OF WATER WHOSE WATERS DO NOT FAIL…"

We returned at 4.30pm after a most enjoyable and rewarding time. A big thank you to Jon Critoph, from all who were there.

Recent Visit to Hampton Gardens

Bryan Ratcliff

Thanks to our intrepid chauffeur John C. and his trusty minibus, after Sunday Meeting on August 16th fourteen of us embarked on a shortish journey of around 45 minutes to Hampton Gardens near Leominster. Having arrived, we split up into smaller groups (as tends to happen on such occasions) to enjoy the many delights on offer.

Of particular note are the gardens themselves, which are delightful – not too showy or ostentatious, but generally "natural" in their planting. There is plenty of variety to see here plus, amongst other additional features, a waterfall you can walk behind and stepping stones up a stream awaiting the more adventurous. There is also open parkland to enjoy.

One surprise was how healthy the majority of flowers, shrubs, etc, looked given the prolonged drought conditions we have had recently. Fortunately, although the weather was sometimes sunny, sometimes slightly overcast, it wasn't too warm or humid and so it was comfortable walking around during the early-to-mid afternoon hours that we were there.

Several of us came together around 3.00pm for an unexpected treat – a display of falconry involving a Harris hawk, followed by an Indian Eagle Owl and then a falcon of mixed breed. Plenty of people, including lots of children, volunteered to have these beautiful birds demonstrate their amazing flying skills, eg, by landing on an outstretched arm protected by a leather gauntlet. As time ticked by after 4.00pm, we gradually came together near the minibus for a final group photo. The photographer (by the way) was Liz's granddaughter Melissa.



Arriving safely back in Malvern it was clear that everyone had thoroughly enjoyed themselves and that the trip was yet another example of good old-fashioned Quaker fellowship.

PS There are still places available for the trip to Kelmscott Manor on Saturday 26th September, so book early to avoid disappointment.

Special Collections

The total collected for Shelterbox was £174, and for Freedom from Torture was £179. There was a one-off 5th Sunday collection for Médecins sans Frontières [MsF] in view of the fuel crisis of £60.

The Special Collection for September is for **Quaker Social Action** https://quakersocialaction.org.uk/.

QSA helps people on low incomes in east London and across the UK to seek solutions to the issues affecting their lives. It is an independent charity inspired by Quaker values like equality in their work against poverty and injustice. QSA takes social action by providing practical solutions for people facing the multiple and varied impacts of poverty by listening and responding to people by creating services wherever they are most needed.

What is the "People's Emergency Briefing"? **Andrew Jameson**

You may have noticed a film being shown in church halls around Malvern recently. Its title is the "People's Emergency Briefing", and Melanie and I saw it recently at St Andrews Church, Malvern. This was the third showing here, by popular demand. It is emphatically not a "popular scare" by fanatical groups who wish to create a scare amongst the population. It is a sober estimation of the consequences of global warming and the increased release of carbon dioxide (CO2) into the world's atmosphere.

The film stems from a meeting held by 10 leading scientists in Westminster Hall on 27 November 2025. About 1,200 politicians and leaders from business, culture, faith, sport and the media attended and learned from acknowledged experts of the threats to life that are posed by global warming, and the on-going destruction of the natural world, plants and animals, with which we share this planet. Many cosmonauts have commented, looking at the small blue ball of Earth from space, that this is our only home, and how vulnerable it appears.

The film that is being shown around the country is an attempt to bring to public notice the dangers of continuing to proceed in the way we are doing now. Most importantly, we learn that we have many of the solutions already but the window of opportunity to implement them is closing. Some of us prefer to believe that the problem does not exist, "climate varies all the time, droughts and floods are natural events". The scientists tell us that what is increasingly happening now is a series of extraordinary events. The warming of the Arctic, for example, is likely to lead to the failure of the Gulf Stream, and southern England will have a winter average of minus 20 C. Britain will lose the native animals it has already too few of. The frequency of heat waves and ferocity and speed of wildfires is something we have not seen before. These are not just going to stop of their own accord.

Do take a look at the useful summary from the original National Emergency Briefing in Westminster on the link below, which takes nine key areas and presents Key Issues and Key

Solutions for each. These include Weather Extremes, Tipping Points, Food Security and Energy Transition.

https://drive.google.com/file/d/1P9uT3P_EPZ5JP3xk5YuK_OYjGOGGTOES/view

That of God in Everyone — Elizabeth Rolph

Part of *Thought for the Week* in the Friend 24th July caught my eye. The piece is about Rufus Jones, an American Quaker who championed 'new Quakerism', through extensive writing, editorship of Quaker periodicals and the first Swarthmore Lecture in 1908. He studied George Fox and subtly re-interpreted his writings. Fox called on Friends to answer whatever of God might be present in anyone. Jones changed this to the belief that there is that of God in everyone, which is what most of us would use as a fundamental statement of Quakerism. It seems we owe quite a bit to someone many of us haven't heard of.

The Food on Our Plate — Richard Bartholomew

In the last week with the hottest day of the year, we saw pictures of combine harvesters working in very dusty fields, but much earlier than normal as the harvest had to come in early due to the lack of rain. A warning has been made several times in the last week about how there will be food shortages.

It has got me thinking about how we end up with what we do have on our plates. Of course, many people will grow a bit of food in their window box, garden or allotment, but not many of us will be able to live just from that source.

So, if there is going to be less food around, how will we fare? Not so bad if we can just pay higher prices which is "the market's" traditional form of rationing, clearly favouring the better-off. Even then, if our main source is a supermarket serving thousands, it is not clear how our particular needs might be met.

I then started to think of the advantages of having a delivery from a local food producer, and I will give as an example the one that Liz and I use, Litte Marcle Organic Produce. They not only grow food locally to certified organic standards but deliver each week in their electric vans. In our case we get a small veg box for £12, and it occurs to me that knowing the person who is growing as well as delivering the food may be one of the best ways to ensure that what reduced harvests there may be are shared with us. I don't imagine that we will be shielded from any price rises, just that we have a personal connection with the producer.

If you want to explore getting a connection with a local food producer, there are several around for you to research and choose from, but I can recommend John at Little Marcle Organic Produce on 07970 296153 or WWW.LMOP.FARM

Having just had surgery I certainly appreciate our produce being brought to our front door rather than having to haul them from the car whilst balancing on a crutch.

Why do Quakers sit in silence? **Melanie Jameson**

This was one of the subjects that the Discovering Quakers initiative identified as a Frequently Asked Question.

Is it an end in itself or a means to an end?

We shared some thoughts about it before shared lunch on August 23rd and looked at excerpts in Quaker Faith & Practice

Friends in the group contributed why they found that sitting in silence was important to them:

- To make space and allow for insights
- To get closer to God and to listen
- Alternatives, such as chanting a liturgy, are distracting and we may not agree with everything in the text
- It stops the busyness
- We can dive in and see what comes to the surface
- It gives us time to <u>be</u>

The following QF&P reflections all shed light on the subject: 2.01, 2.12-2.17, 2.68 and especially these final two: 20.11 and 26.12.

And Raphael's poem, Quaker Silence is the thing, reproduced in an earlier edition of the newsletter, was a good way to end.

From the Librarian **Mary Corfield**

Following the showing of this year's Swarthmore Lecture, four copies of the book have been purchased to facilitate the discussions of the lecture that have been arranged. Those copies have been placed in the library on the new bookcase for those interested in leading a discussion. ***Please remember to sign it out when you take one****.*