Malvern Quaker Meeting





Newsletter April/May 2024

Items for the next issue of the Newsletter will need to reach me by 28th June 2024.
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@malvernqualermeeting.org.uk

---

Showing the Way: Geoffrey Durham on 'Discovering Quakers'

Elizabeth Rolph

In his recent letter to this magazine (29 March) Gerard Bane asked some questions that matter to me. 'Why are Quakers in decline?', he writes. 'Is it their ageing population? … Are apparent outsiders put off by Quaker activism? … Are people put off because of Quaker beliefs? Or are people put off by the apparent lack of beliefs?' I sympathise with Gerard's anxiety, which seems to me to be realistic and urgent. And, as an activist who has been working for over twenty years on public engagement with Quakerism, my experience tells me there is one simple, unfortunate answer to all his concerns: most British people haven't discovered enough about us even to be put off. The vast majority know nothing of our beliefs, nothing of our ageing population, nothing about us at all.

Fifteen years ago, I was one of a small group who undertook a survey of a representative sample of 1,000 British adults, to discover how Quakers were seen by the general public. We were led by David Smith, a professor of Market Research at Hertfordshire University, and supported financially by the Joseph Rowntree Charitable Trust. Being part of the process was an unforgettable experience for me, and I found the resulting snapshot of the public's beliefs about Quakers to be profoundly instructive.

The findings that most interested me came from the people who said they had already known something about us before the survey began. And, of those, it was the 'Don't Knows' who most conspicuously caught my eye: forty-eight per cent didn't know we were involved with social action; thirty-eight per cent didn't know we allowed people from outside into our

communities; thirty-three per cent didn't know we were involved with peacemaking. Yet, on the other hand, two people in one hundred claimed that Quakers had 'considerable' relevance to their lives. That percentage represented approximately 400,000 people in the UK, and it gave us hope.

We don't seem to have been doing much to encourage those 400,000 people since, however. Our last tabular statement (published at Yearly Meeting in 2023) put the total number of members, attenders and children at 22,863, down 618 on the year before. And a closer look at the figures revealed that there were 3,158 fewer of us than there had been just five years earlier. So, it seems to me that Gerard Bane has good reason to be worried.

But I am a natural optimist. I refuse to despair – and there may be good news just around the corner. I am a member of a new initiative, **Discovering Quakers** (DQ), which enables members of the public to learn about Quakerism by talking directly to us without necessarily committing themselves to attending, and helps them into their Local Meetings whenever they feel ready to experience Quaker worship …

See https://www.discoveringquakers.org.uk/

Through this, 3,907 people have so far signed up to receive our emails, 1,171 people have completed an online quiz to discover how our values chime with theirs, and 1,400 unique visitors come to our website every month. There (www.discoveringquakers.org.uk) they find over sixty blog posts and video recordings, as well as a worldwide calendar of online Meetings, so they can experience Quaker stillness wherever they are, even if there isn't a Meeting house close by.

And that brings me to the latest DQ initiative … We have written to every Quaker group, asking if they are willing to take part in a new scheme that will connect potential enquirers directly with their local Quaker community … It's early days for us, and there's much more that we want to achieve … We aim shortly to become a Quaker Recognised Body and at some point in the near future to begin campaigning for donations, because becoming known on social media can be costly. But, as Gerard Bane implies, it is precisely that – becoming known – that has eluded British Quakers for far too long.

Special Collections

The Special Collection for April was Chernobyl Children, and Melanie reported that £87 was collected and that we donated £120. In May, the Special Collection was for FOAG. The total amount collected was £151.70. The Special Collection for June is for Worcester Samaritans.

Remembering Betty Hudson

Elizabeth Rolph



At this time of year, we always think of Betty Hudson. Soon after we moved here, she invited us round for tea and asked if we'd like to dig up a rhododendron that she no longer had space for. So, we now enjoy it in our garden.

Active Peace Education Work — Liz Flanagan

Extract from an article from Malvern Parish Primary School newsletter:

Sadly, Year 3's Peacemakers work has come to an end; the children have been working on increasing their self-esteem, and we, in school, have really enjoyed seeing the progress that the children have made, both individually and collectively. Their kindness really is showing in class. In fact, Liz Flanagan, Peacemaker teacher, has been so impressed with the class that she has made them a gift, the 'magic kindness carpet'. Thank you, Liz and team, for all your support this term; we very much look forward to working with you next academic year.

Little Friends — Rosemary Webb

Our primary aim at Little Friends is to make our families feel welcome. Each month we choose a different theme with stories, games, crafts and refreshments all fitting into that theme. The themes enable us to teach how particular Quaker values might be important in making the world a better place. Recently we have learned about Alpacas and Llamas, Sunshine and Stories.

June's session helped us to learn how we all need stories not just to entertain us but to teach us new ideas, to understand other people's lives and to help us relax. We acted out the parable of the Lost Sheep and used Rumi's elephant story to learn how we must listen to other people's experiences and truths in order to get a better understanding.

Coming soon!

Parachute Fun - The Roman Empire Strikes Back

2-4pm in the Meeting House

Cost £3 per session

Wednesday July 24th. The Empire Awakens

Wednesday July 31st Revenge of the Sixth

Wednesday August 7th The Rise of Claudius

Each session looks at a Bible story featuring a different Roman Emperor as well as lots of fun info about Roman life.

There will be the usual format of themed Parachute games, followed by a Parachute drama with good quality crafts and games to conclude.

Watch this space!

If you wish to book a session for any 5 to 10 year olds you know, please ring 01684565708 or email Rosemary on rosemaryefwebb@gmail.com

Advices & Queries No 17

Do you respect that of God in everyone though it may be expressed in unfamiliar ways or be difficult to discern? Each of us has a particular experience of God and each must find the way to be true to it. When the words are strange or disturbing to you, try to sense where they come from and what has nourished the lives of others. Listen patiently and seek the truth which other people's opinions may contain for you. Avoid hurtful criticism and provocative language. Do not allow the strength of your convictions to betray you into making statements or allegations that are unfair or untrue. Think it possible that you may be mistaken.

Help from the Government for Paying for the Cost of Energy/Fuel.

Richard Bartholomew

There are several schemes in place:

Winter Fuel Payment-which is paid automatically to all those born before 25/09/1957. If you are in this position, then your payment should be added to your bank account normally.

Warm Home Discount-for which you are eligible if you get the Guarantee Credit element of Pension Credit OR you are on a low income and have high electricity costs. This should come as a £150 discount off your electricity bill PROVIDED that your energy company is signed up to this scheme. To check if you need to switch on these grounds alone, see the list of energy companies signed up at Warm Home Discount Scheme: Energy suppliers - GOV.UK (www.gov.uk)

Cold Weather Payment- which is paid if you get certain benefits, and the temperature drops to 0 degrees or below for 7 successive days. The relevant benefits are Pension Credit, Income Support, Income Based Job Seekers Allowance, \income Based Employment & Support Allowance, Universal Credit or Support for Mortgage Interest.

Household Support Fund-which is Government money administered by the County Council towards energy and other costs. The way to access this source of help is via Act on Energy at **actonenergy.org.uk or 0800 988 2881** but beware that this is released in various tranches, and you may have to wait till the next lump sum is released.

Other Steps You Might Take

Pension-if you are of pension age (i.e. receiving State Retirement Pension), but that and any other pension is not giving you enough to live on, then apply for Pension Credit to top this up, and if successful you may also qualify for the **Warm Home Discount** above. To apply, go to Pension Credit: How to claim - GOV.UK (www.gov.uk)

Disability (Retirement Age)- if you are over 66 and disability or health is making your life difficult, then apply for **Attendance Allowance by** requesting a form be sent to you by contacting:

Attendance Allowance helpline Telephone: 0800 731 0122

Disability (Working Age)

1. if you are of working age but your health prevents you from working, then apply for **Employment & Support Allowance** see Employment and Support Allowance (ESA): How to claim - GOV.UK (www.gov.uk)
2. If you are between 16 and 66 years of age, whether working or not, but a health condition or disability limits your life and mobility, then apply for **Personal Independence Payment** on Personal Independence Payment (PIP): How to claim - GOV.UK (www.gov.uk)

Want Some Help Claiming??

Contact Citizens Advice next to Prospect View Medical Centre on Pickersleigh Road or on **0808 278 7891 (Adviceline).**

Dell House Garden Open Days — Elizabeth Rolph

Our next charity open gardens are Wednesday 5th June and 3rd July, from 2pm until 8 pm.

Free Smoke & Carbon Monoxide Alarm Installation Service — Richard Bartholomew

Hereford & Worcester Fire Brigade provide this service to those who regard themselves as having some sort of disabling condition, or who live with such a person, or who are 75 years old (or more!). They will check that any existing alarms are working and if not replace them and install others, if you don't have enough in the right places. Carbon monoxide alarms, too. They will also do a fire safety check on your home and advise about the best evacuation routes.

Ring 0800 032 1155 to make an appointment for a home visit NB you will see them arrive as they turn up in a fire engine, so get your grandchildren round too!

Why? Because having working smoke detectors cuts the risk of death or serious injury dramatically. So, if you should not qualify for the free service, make sure that you get an alarm installed anyway.