Malvern Quaker Meeting





Newsletter May 2025

Items for the next issue of the Newsletter will need to reach me by 27th June 2025.
Past editions of the Newsletter are on our Meeting website www.malvernquakers.org.uk.

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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

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Britain Yearly Meeting 2025 — Melanie Jameson

There are two quite different ways of experiencing Britain Yearly Meeting (BYM): via all the bustle and interactions of physically attending or the 'remote' experience of participating via Zoom. Liz Flanagan chose the former, I chose the latter.

My BYM started at the end of April, with a series of presentations from a number of Quaker Recognised Bodies, including my own Quakers in Criminal Justice in which we focused wholly on how to safely integrate former prisoners into Quaker Meetings.

I had also registered to hear QUNO and QCEA; I am always very impressed by their combination of professionalism and Quaker 'quiet diplomacy' in their international work in which they uphold Human Rights and the rule of law in troubled times.

One presentation near to my heart was Climate Justice, which, I learned, is a coalition between the Faith in Action team and Woodbrooke. Their priorities are supporting 'Make Polluters Pay, 'Insure our Futures' (which concerns companies insuring fossil fuel extraction) and Interfaith Advocacy and Collaboration. We agreed that Peace and Climate Justice are often interrelated.

A few weeks' pause, then BYM itself unfurled with business sessions and all-age worship together with the Swarthmore and Salter lectures. I'll write about the lectures in the next newsletter.

How would one describe the experience of joining such a massive gathering via Zoom? There tended to be at least 600 people in the room and often around 300 on Zoom. The projection onto the stage, views of the room as a whole and focus on the speakers was

excellent, as was the sound quality. The clerk did her best to make us 'Zoomers' feel included, and we were expected to keep to the same discipline as those physically present.

The first of the two 3-hour BYM sessions I attended was on Saturday morning, entitled Radical Peacemakers, opening with a montage I'd been asked to contribute to – my points were that we need to think outside the box and align ourselves with other fellow-travellers. I find that there is a big overlap between Quakers and Extinction Rebellion, both working on the same areas (such as Insure Our Futures). Ministry reminded us that we will often need to feel uncomfortable and that there may be a cost.

Monday morning was devoted to the issue of Palestine/Israel and whether we could now describe the military action as 'genocide', which was clearly defined. Phrases included 'collective punishment' and 'the dismantling of life-sustaining systems'. A long statement was tweaked, ensuring that we acknowledge and condemn anti-Jewish hatred and admit our historical role; the final words were stark: 'We are led to believe that genocide is underway'.

Britain Yearly Meeting 2025 — Liz Flanagan

A Personal Experience of BYM 2025

Arriving early and alone on the Friday afternoon was probably not the ideal way to start the weekend. I recognized nobody and nobody felt like talking to me. I did not find the first session that evening inspiring although I acknowledge the importance of planning ahead, appointing Friends to important posts etc. I found it hard to stand up in the vast space of The Light as "a sole Friend attending from their meeting" until I heard a whisper of "That's Liz" and knew that I was not really alone at all. Once the 2 EAPPIs spoke of their experiences in Palestine the sense of the Meeting became apparent. But I had not signed up for any hot food and was hungry.

Next morning our brilliant Clerk, a driving instructor in real life, reminded us about the need for courtesy and respect for all the staff at Friends House. "Can you smile?" she asked, and from then onwards there was a lot of smiling. It was a delightful surprise to see our Friend Mel appear on the big screen talking about radical peacemaking. Then an EAPPI announced that it was indeed genocide happening in front of our eyes. Normal procedures followed. Fascinating to welcome visitors from other communities and religions.

I was glad that I had arranged to stay to hear the Swarthmore Lecture given by Emily Provenance. A light touch, great descriptions, profound understanding of the human psyche and an inspiring account of travelling, physically, socially and spiritually. Wow! Making communities is a challenge laid on us I believe now.

Sunday morning and I travelled by the very noisy Northern Line from Nine Elms to Euston. On the way I made a point of speaking to a very helpful Sikh, a group of beautifully behaved Polish schoolgirls and a harassed young mother from India. Then I joined a thousand plus Friends worshipping online and in person. The children and their parents and helpers sat

on the floor below me and I remembered the All-age worship sessions I had organized in the past. And then I remembered my oldest grandson's welcome to Colchester Meeting twenty-five years ago. It seems to me that young children absorb the quiet of the meeting and gently get on with their busyness.

Soon it was time to leave… to relieve the dog-sitting family across the common and let said grandson have his bed back. But next year Cally and I plan to arrive early Saturday morning, and I am not going home till Monday afternoon.

Advices & Queries No 27

Live adventurously. When choices arise, do you take the way that offers the fullest opportunity for the use of your gifts in the service of God and the community? Let your life speak. When decisions have to be made, are you ready to join with others in seeking clearness, asking for God's guidance and offering counsel to one another?

Suffrago

Andrew Gray

I'm Andrew Gray, a member of Harrogate Meeting, and I'm writing to share a project I have co-founded called Suffrago.org.

Inspired by Quaker values of truth, integrity, and community, Suffrago offers a quieter, more thoughtful way to engage with public life. At a time when noise and division dominate many social media platforms, Suffrago aims to inform, empower, and encourage respectful dialogue.

One feature allows Friends to easily find and contact their local MP, along with clear, reliable information about their record. You can view your local dashboard here:

https://www.suffrago.org/uk/west-worcestershire

Andrew Gray

Member of Harrogate Meeting

Co-founder of Suffrago.org

Special Collections

The Special Collection for May was The Yemen Charity UK Emergency Relief Appeal, see https://www.yemenrelief.org.uk/**.** A total of £190 was collected.

The Sunday collection for June is Age UK. While the local Worcestershire and Herefordshire branch has now sadly closed services across the district are available provided by Age UK wivern.

See HTTPS:// www.ageuk.org.uk/wyvern/

It is for this branch that we will be collecting.

We have received letters of thanks from FOAG and from Paul Sartori Hospice at Home for which we had collected in memory of Betty Hudson and Dick Stockford, respectively.

Epistle from Britain Yearly Meeting

Held at Friends House, The Frontier Centre in Northamptonshire, and online from 23 to 26 May 2025.

Dear Friends everywhere, we send you our love and greetings.

Gyfeillion annwyl ym mhobman, anfonwn atoch ein cariad a'n cyfarchion.

What is your message of peace for the world?

What brings you a sense of inner peace?

To explore these questions, around 1,000 Quakers met at Yearly Meeting this weekend as an all-age community. We are encouraged that for many this was their first time at Yearly Meeting. The contributions to our discernment from the thriving young people's programmes have lifted our hearts, as have the gurglings of the infant with us in our worship.

Recent Yearly Meetings have focused on Church Governance. We now see ways forward, as we develop structures that we trust will help our shared discernment. This year's agenda is firmly rooted in our historic peace testimony, and we have asked ourselves deep questions about what it means for us today. We have listened in hope, and have opened ourselves to new learning, trusting in the leadings of the Light.

We are reminded that the central message of the New Testament is one of love. We are called to challenge tyranny; and to love everyone, even those who do bad things.

This is an anxious time for the world, even more so now than when we met last year. We have been challenged to welcome, accept, and nurture the radical peacemaker in ourselves

and in others. We have also explored how we, as Quakers, address violence and conflict in our communities.

To help our discernment, we have seen a film about the different ways in which Friends are called to bear witness to our Peace Testimony. We have also heard prepared ministry from a number of Friends, including those who have seen violence and oppression at first hand while giving service in Palestine and Israel as human rights observers. Reflecting on what we hear and read about each day has inevitably stirred deep and painful emotions.

We have spent much time praying about the situation in Gaza. Quakers have a long tradition of speaking truth to power. We have done some heart-searching and some heart-breaking, and our discomfort contributed to deeply gathered worship. We have been moved by the Spirit to speak out. We urge Friends to read the full minute, which has been written in love for all those affected.

This year's Swarthmore Lecture, A Testimony of Community, has nourished our discernment. We have spent time in worship considering how we live together in our various communities; there are many things we might do to build peace within them. The work begins by finding peace within ourselves.

The promptings of love and truth in our hearts are pushing us to step outside our privilege, comfort and security. Can we do this in a spirit of adventure and joy? How radical can we be while retaining tenderness and not doing harm? We each have a different appetite and capability for radical peacemaking; we can all contribute.

We recognise that to secure lasting peace we must address the complex causes of conflict, including poverty and hunger, injustice and distrust, fear and disempowerment. To create a fairer world, we must get better at sharing. In doing this work we remember Jesus' advice to his disciples to be "as wise as serpents, as gentle as doves" (Matt 10:16).

As a final shared activity, many of us who were in London have taken advantage of being together to stand in silent worship around Friends House. We held signs which had messages of hope for world peace on the outside and hopes for personal peace on the inside.

This Yearly Meeting has been one of great joy at meeting each other in the spirit, deep sorrow at conflict in the world, and determination to live out our Quaker witness.

Signed in, and on behalf of, Yearly Meeting

Reading from Quaker Faith and Practice — Elizabeth Rolph

I read this from Quaker Faith & Practice at Meeting one Sunday recently, and a couple of people commented on it:

> *Prayer is experienced as deeper than words or busy thoughts. 'Be still and cool in thy own mind and spirit from thy own thoughts', said Fox. It is marked by a kind of relaxed readiness, a 'letting-go' of the problems and perplexities with which the mind is occupied, and a waiting in 'love and truth': the truth about oneself, the truth about the world, deeper than the half-truths we see when we are busy in it about our own planning and scheming, the love in which we are held when we think of others more deeply than our ordinary relations with them, the love that at root holds us to the world. Prayer is not words or acts, but reaching down to love: holding our fellows in love, offering ourselves in love; and being held by, being caught up in love. It is communion, an opening of the door, an entry from the beyond. This is the point where secular language fails, for this cannot be spoken about at all: it can only be known.*

Harold Loukes, 1967 (2.23)

Dell House NGS Open Day — Elizabeth Rolph

Kevin & Elizabeth raised around £1,000 for nursing and health, and gardening charities when they opened their garden in May. There is another opportunity on Wednesday June 4th. Why not take the opportunity to come around 3.00 and enjoy tea on the terrace, maybe with others from Malvern Meeting.

If you missed this opportunity and want to look round another time, just get in touch. Elizabeth.rolph@flatlandic,net

