Malvern Quaker Meeting





Newsletter October 2024

Items for the next issue of the Newsletter will need to reach me by 29th November 2024.
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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More on Keeping Warm — **Richard Bartholomew**

We probably all share the concern about the likely loss of the Winter Fuel Allowance and the need for people in that position to check if they are one of the 800,000-odd NOT receiving Pension Credit who are entitled to it (Remember phone 0800 99 1234 to check this out).

Whatever the answer to that, don't despair as you may be able to get help through another Government scheme called the **Warm Home Discount**.

What might you get? £150 off your energy bill as a one-off if there are certain means-tested benefits. You don't have to do anything to claim it, you will simply see the £150 discounted off your bill. To check if your energy company is signed up to ECO 4 go to Warm Home Discount Scheme: Energy suppliers - GOV.UK (www.gov.uk). If not, you might consider if you would get a better deal with another energy company that offers it.

The next Government scheme to do with keeping warm is **ECO 4**, standing for **Energy Company Obligation 4**, which is operated by most energy companies, see Energy Company Obligation Grants - ECO4. ECO 4 is targeted again at people on means-tested benefits AND at a separate group of people not on those benefits but still on a low income and with a wide range of health conditions and is called LA Flex, see Local Authority FLEX & Delivery Scheme (LADS) - ECO4. This offers help with the costs of insulation which is a guaranteed way of bringing heating bills down. To claim, fill out the application on this webpage Apply for Eco4 Funding - ECO4 to see if you qualify.

Variable or Fixed Rate Tariff? Advisers like Martyn Lewis suggest that most of us will pay less for our energy if we move onto a Fixed Rate Energy Tariff now that the Energy Price Cap has come into effect. Contact your energy company about what they can offer you as a Fixed Rate Tariff.

Having Trouble Paying Your Energy Bills? Most energy companies now have special funds to help those customers experiencing financial hardship. Check the list of energy providers below and see what they are offering in terms of help. Here are some examples. Check with your company if it is not listed here:

- E**.On Next Energy Fund** offers grants to help with bills and to replace cookers, fridge, fridge-freezers or washing machine if broken or in poor condition - E.ON Next Energy Fund (eonnextenergyfund.com).
- **Octopus Octo Assist Fund** (£30m) offers grants to reduce bills, free electric blankets, standing charge waivers, £200 to replace Winter Fuel Allowance for those who have lost it. See Octo Assist: Bill grants and help schemes | Octopus Energy.
- **British Gas Energy Trust** has a £140m fund to help **ANY** energy user whether a BG customer or not, giving grants and energy saving advice.
- **Scottish Power Hardship Support Fund** £60m towards grants to clear arrears. What is the ScottishPower Hardship Fund?

Switching Energy Providers? Octopus offers a £50 credit against your next bill and claims it has the lowest tariffs this month (October 2024). See Octopus Energy Review 2024 - Get £50 Credit - Energy-Review.co.uk, an offer matched by **Ecotricity,** offering £50 voucher for switchers Switch to Ecotricity - Ecotricity

And remember doing all this will also keep you warm!

Advices & Queries No 21

Do you cherish your friendships, so that they grow in depth and understanding and mutual respect? In close relationships we may risk pain as well as finding joy. When experiencing great happiness or great hurt we may be more open to the working of the spirit**.**

"Can I Do Anything to Bring Peace to the Middle East?"

Richard Bartholomew

This is our desperate plea to ourselves.

Simplistic responses probably don't help, and the international community of the United Nations and other concerned nations are doing what they can, but many continue nevertheless to supply Israel with the arms by which it is pursuing its war aims in Gaza, the West Bank, Lebanon and Iran. Our government has at least suspended export licenses for some arms to Israel.

I take small comfort in the notion that we can do no harm, and some good in the process, if we continue to support Palestinian farmers trying their best to make their living by producing Olive Oil and other products like dates. Zaytoun (Arabic for olive) is the Fairtrade Cooperative that gets these products through the Israeli-controlled ports and airports and brings them to the UK. Shop via the Zaytoun website at Products - Zaytoun

In the last year we have given to the charity Medical Aid for Palestinians, and maybe that time should come round again. They are active in both Gaza and the West Bank see Medical Aid for Palestinians (map.org.uk)

Organisations working for Peace in Palestine **Richard Bartholomew**

Ian Cave spoke to us last year about his experience as a Human Rights Monitor on the West Bank before the Hamas attack on southern Israel in October last year, and the Israeli response, and sent me afterwards some links to organisations trying to work for peace in Israel/Palestine. I copy these links along with his caution that some of the images are shocking:

"Israeli & Palestinian peacemakers I'd suggest exploring are shown below.

A word of caution. The images shared on the Human Rights Defenders Instagram site are shocking in that sometimes they show bloodshed and dead bodies. So, it's up to you to decide whether you follow up on this. But they are the group which Zidan in my presentation is a part of and which share videos of these incidents to provide witness …

Community Peacemaker Teams in Hebron and elsewhere around the world https://cpt.org/programs/palestine

Originally called Christian Peacemaker Team, established by the Mennonites with which they still have strong links.

Military Court Watch https://www.militarycourtwatch.org/index.php

They do a huge amount to support Palestinians going through the Israeli military court system, following their detention, or to prevent house demolitions.

Roots-Judur-Shorashim https://b8ofhope.org/roots/ An Israeli led initiative between Settlers in a particular settlement in the West Bank to meet and get to know Palestinians living in the surrounding area. They aren't advocating to end the occupation but are at least helping people to get to know each other as individuals. Apparently, they also have staff in Gaza.

Fund raising https://www.jewcer.org/project/roots/

Jerusalem Post article about them https://www.jpost.com/Israel-News/An-oasis-of-roots-606205

Breaking the Silence https://www.breakingthesilence.org.il/

Veteran Israeli Soldiers testify and (under normal times) give tours around Hebron to show what soldiers in the IDF are told and what they do as part of the occupation. Currently, their website has a lot of testimonies from soldiers who were in Gaza before Israel withdrew in 2005. These are saying there has to be another way… I suspect this organisation has more funding than some of the others.

Special Collections

The Special Collection for September was Christian Aid. Liz Flanagan reported that £84 has been sent.

The Special Collection for November will be for a local family, as directed by St Mary's Church, Pickersleigh.

Rebuilding Community

Jon Critolph

Finally, the troubles and challenges of the past few years seem to be over. We were locked down, and getting together seemed to be a distant memory, and the wounds from that were slow to heal. I decided it was time to do something about this and started to encourage Quaker members and attenders to get together socially, and to start this off I organised a minibus (hired from Community Action Ledbury) which could carry up to 16 passengers on a trip. The first destination, bearing in mind the daylight hours were diminishing, was a family-run garden owned by a family that did landscape gardening. The time of year meant the garden had been decorated in readiness for Halloween.



With myself at the wheel, 15 people set off after Meeting on 20th October 2024 for The Whitlenge Gardens and after an hour or so we arrived safely, and everyone disembarked and headed for the gardens. The weather was extremely kind to us and the sun shone, keeping us all pleasantly warm. Around 4pm everyone was ready to head home, so we boarded the bus and made for Malvern. The route passed through Worcester where we witnessed the extremely high water and masses of flooding across the surrounding fields and racecourse.

The feedback from the day was extremely positive, and there was a call for more events like this.

So, looking forward, I plan to arrange a weekday evening trip to see the amazing Xmas lights in Bromyard. The plan would be to leave Malvern around 5:30pm and drive across in the minibus to Bromyard and do several loops around Bromyard town before stopping as near as we can to The Falcon Hotel where we will alight and enjoy a bar meal and a drink together. I am awaiting costs for the meals, but as the venue has a different bar menu every week it will be a lot closer to the date we depart when I will need to collect everyone's menu choice. We would look to return from Bromyard around 8pm. Date to be announced shortly.

Then looking a little further ahead into spring next year, I am planning a night away (weekend) in Llandrindod Wells at The Hotel Metropole, a wonderful spa hotel. We will leave around 9am on a Saturday and head for Brecon to enjoy a 3-hour canal boat trip before heading up to the hotel. We will have a bed, breakfast and evening meal deal and get full use of the hotel's swimming pool and spa facilities (https://www.metropole.co.uk/). Nearer the time I will put more details together and be able to advise on the costs. Please remember, if

you would love to take part but perhaps money might be an issue, please approach your pastoral care friend and ask for help with the costs.

Over 80s Pension

Richard Bartholomew

This is a little-known Government pension for people who are 80 years of age or over AND who get either a State Retirement Pension of less than £101.55 per week or no State Retirement Pension at all. You also had to attain State Retirement Pension age no later than 6th April 2016 (when the 'new' higher State Pension came in). If your State Retirement Pension is less than £101.55 then this pension will make it up to that sum.

To claim this bonanza, phone the Pension Service for a claim form on 0800 731 789