Malvern Quakers Newsletter

Spring 2013 **March - April - May**

Ecology and Sustainability

The following thoughts have been stimulated by attending three sessions of the recent Science and Faith Weekend with its focus on sustainability.



At recent Meeting for Sufferings there was support for the newly established working group on sustainability, but the support was muted. There was, it seems to me, a certain thoughtfulness about the support. Yes, there were those who thought there was an element of bullying – of pressure to conform to a new ideology; while there were others who struggled to know how far to take the personal commitment.

The Economics of Happiness film stressed that we are in a global environmental crisis. The last time this country was in a crisis was about 70 years ago. Then petrol and food were rationed and labour was directed. Therefore I suggest a three-pronged political agenda:

1. rationing fuel to both domestic and commercial users
2. limiting child benefit to the first child only
3. legislating for companies to have a social as well as financial audit.

Such a strategy would probably take five years to start and 10 to 15 to implement. By this time we probably will be in a crisis. Not a crisis for us, of course, but for those who will inherit the earth. Forgive us our trespasses / our exploitation / our stealing. Our wayward and greedy passions lead to foolishness and a separation from Nature. Our personal identities are manipulated by commercial interests.

Concerns for the environment continue to be separated from our faith. Environmental issues are clearer for most of us and therefore are focused upon as a way of managing the anxiety generated by the our struggles with our faith commitment. Similarly it is easer to separate our work and personal commitments. I recently can across a distinction between truth and sincerity. We prefer sincerity because truth is more difficult. Perhaps the commitment of missionary zeal is necessary.

For myself these are political considerations based of intellectual appraisal.

At a personal level, I hold as a model a Quaker who quietly fasted during Lent and Ramadan and as she grew older got rid of almost all her possessions. Our attention was drawn by Satish Kumar to the dialogue in the Bhagavad Gita between inner and outer knowledge – between rational, thoughtful, understanding and compassion, friendship, reverence. There is no competition between the knowledge of harmony (science), the communication of harmony (art), the practice of harmony (spirit). Ecology is the study of wholeness – including economics. This reminds me of that dualism of knowing God within ourselves and then responding to God in others.

Peter Bevan

Malvern Friends Meeting House 1 Orchard Road Malvern WR14 3DA
Email: **malvern@wsq.org.uk** ***Website:*** **malvernquakers.org.uk**
All Welcome at Meetings for Worship: Every Sunday at 10.30am
First Wednesdays at 12.00 noon (followed by bring-your-own lunch)

Diary

All events are held at Malvern Friends' Meeting House, unless stated otherwise. Please note that attenders should seek permission from PM to go to Area Meetings.

AM	12 May
LM	28 April
BYM	24-27 May

Saturday17 March
World Café meeting with Transition using the Quaker Sustainability Toolkit

Thursday 21 March
Talk about Circles of Accountability at the Tolladine Centre, Worcester

Saturday 24 March
Creative writing and poetry at Meeting House

Monday 1- Saturday 20 April
Meeting House closed for external bookings to allow time for maintenance tasks

Saturday 13 April
Workday at Meeting House

Friday 19 April
Jazz and Swing with Laurence Llewelyn-Bowen at Bank House Hotel, Bransford in aid of Chernobyl Children Project

Thursday 16 May
Moving Prayer 2-3.30

Saturday 18 May
Quiet Garden Movement day (info@quietgarden.org)

Wednesday 22 May – Wednesday 5 June
Quaker tapestry at Coalbrookdale – volunteers wanted

Thursday 23May
Concert at Christ Church with ESO

Looking ahead
13-20 July
Civic Week and Malvern in Bloom Week

Did you know?

- There are 592 roads in Malvern and only 65 have neighbourhood watch coordinators. The service wants to expand to include crime prevention activities for children and support for isolated individuals.
- The Open the Book Scheme is now providing drama lessons based on biblical stories in six schools. There is a taster day on 20 April for budding actors.
- This year the national Chernobyl Children's Helpline is having to pay £86 for each child to enter the country to pay for individual visas.

The Repair Cafe

A community-led project to inspire repair, reuse and recycle

Jan and Chris Dyer

The third Malvern Hills Repair Café took place from 10.00am – 2.00pm on Saturday 16 March 2013 at The Cube in Albert Road North and was to be the final test of the idea that it should become a regular event in the Malvern calendar. It turned out to be another brilliant Repair Café, and busier than ever!

When the first Repair Café was held in early December 2012 we were not sure what to expect and had been warned that the initiative may not be well-received. Although Repair Cafés have flourished in Holland since 2009 and now attract government funding due to their social, environmental and economic benefits, they have not proved as popular in England and, as far as can be ascertained, Malvern Hills Repair Café is only the second one in the country.

That first event, followed by a second one in February proved the sceptics wrong. From the time the first visitor walked through the door, the Repair Café concept has caught the imagination of local people and the general feedback has been both positive and supportive. We were at the stage where we had to decide how regularly it should run to meet the obvious demand for its services - and now, the next four Repair Cafés have already been booked - 20 April, 18 May, 15 June and 13 July. Same day, same time, same place.

As Malvern's new community centre, The Cube provides the ideal location with its accessibility, spacious rooms and café. Our team of committed volunteer repairers is growing and can offer a wide variety of different practical skills. They take great pleasure and pride in tackling both challenging and unusual repairs which can vary from a broken wind-up toy to a wooden armchair, from a favourite Wellington boot to a DVD player. The success rate is high and, should an item be beyond repair or need specialist help, advice is given.

By providing this free repair facility, it is hoped that people will see their possessions in a new light, appreciate their value and discover that there is often no need to throw something away and replace with new! A Repair Café fosters a more resilient and self-reliant community and contributes to the ethos of sustainability promoted by Transition Malvern Hills and Malvern Quakers.

If you'd like to join us at this fun and social event, pick up some new skills while watching our repairers at work or help in any way, please email: **themalvernhillsrepaircafe@gmail.com**

The Worcester Christmas story

Jon Critoph

Like many, the run-up to Christmas just seemed to get busier and busier with demands on our time coming from work, colleagues, friends, family – and, somewhere in there, a small quiet internal voice asking for some 'me time'. I got the break I needed: it came in the form of my boss telling me there was no carrying any holiday over to next year so in the end this meant me taking half of December off on holiday. One day I decided to go to Worcester by train to do some last minute shopping for Christmas.



I strolled round the streets, busy with Christmas shoppers all rushing here and there trying to get the right gift for everyone in their lives. It did make me wonder if these people really stopped to think what Christmas was about and that it was not just another commercial event.

Whilst cutting through one of the city's many alleyways I came across a man who was clearly down on his luck and living rough on the streets. He was sitting on the ground, hugging his knees under his chin and looking down, with a small knitted hat on the floor for change to be placed in it. I listened as people wandered past, hurrying a bit as they passed and muttering things like 'get a job', 'you scrounger' and worse. I felt this was not the Christian spirit of Christmas that anyone was showing, so I went and got some money and came back and crouched down in front of him and said 'Merry Christmas' as I placed some money in his hat. He looked up at me and I had never seen such a pair of lifeless, forlorn and sorry eyes in all my life. I asked him what happened and how had he got there? The first thing he said was, 'It is my fault'. He told his story and it ended with the fact that after getting released from prison he had nowhere to go and no one he could turn to, so he lived in a multi-storey car park at night and tried to do his best to survive; and wherever possible raise enough money to get into a hostel for a bath, warm bed and some food, all for £12 a night. This seemed a mountainous climb from having just a handful of small change and a few pounds I had put in there.

As we talked I realised how close we all can be to this sort of existence and perhaps the reason why people scuffled by so quickly was that they realised somewhere deep inside this truth and were afraid. We talked a while and after a few minutes the guy asked me 'What would I do if I were in his situation?' and this really got me thinking. But it was the feeling inside that broke through and I said, 'I think I would need to start believing and trusting in myself and changing my beliefs from ones that thought someone did not value me and would walk by, to ones where I believed that people did care and were willing to help.' When he had listened to me he looked a little brighter in the eyes, as if a fire might be being rekindled. He said, 'So are to saying I simply need to change my beliefs?' and I replied, 'Well, it would be worth a try, wouldn't it, even if only for the next hour.' With that he said 'OK, I will!'

Within less than a minute a well dressed lady came across, opened her purse, pulled out £20 and handed it to him saying, 'I do hope you will spend this wisely.' Then just as she was about to go she turned back to him and said, 'Could I give you a hug?' He looked completely shocked that anyone would want to. They embraced warmly and all three of us had tears rolling down our faces as she stood and walked slowly on her way. I feel we were all changed by that event.

I had just taken part in my own Christmas story.

Reflections

Elaine Hugh-Jones

I was three years old when I decided to become a musician. My father was a good artist but my eyesight has always been poor (it was only five years ago that I had a cataract operation and can now see well for the first time). My gifts were elsewhere - perfect pitch has always enabled me to have an acute sense of sound. I love watching dancing but I always found myself providing music for (which at that time held its meetings in the United Reformed Church in Malvern Link). The minister told me that I was a natural Quaker so I began attending at Orchard Road.

I have been asked whether music enhances my worship. This is a difficult question because music has always been central to my life. Indeed I could say that music comes from God – I feel uplifted by the wonderful sounds. I put to music six poems by R S Thomas (with his permission) which have been performed in public and I find them inspirational. Although music is more technical it can be used to marvellous effect in praise. But prayer is different. It involves a different part of me. The silence and intensity of a Quaker Meeting is a true and perfect way to worship, give praise and receive guidance. This is the way I want to worship.

Free Fall

Peter Bevan

I was recently listening to someone who was describing his experience of a parachute jump which failed to open. He described the free fall as looking up to the stars and seeing the magnificence of it all (prior to rapidly holding on to another parachute). This put me in mind of an experience described by Coleridge (not always the dreamy poet!) in 1802 of his descent from Scafell to the ridge joining it with Scafell Pike.

'A ridge of hill lay low down and divided Doe-Crag from Broad-Crag – even as the hyphen divides the words broad and crag. I determined to go thither. The first place I came to, that was not direct rock, I slipped down, and went on for a while with tolerable ease – but now I came (it was midway down) to a smooth perpendicular rock about seven feet high – this was nothing – I put my hands on the ledge, and dropped down. In a few yards came such another. I dropped to that too. And yet another, seemed not higher – I would not stand for a trifle, so I dropped that too – but the stretching of the muscles of my hands and arms, and the jolt of the fall on my feet, put my whole limbs in a tremble, and I paused, and looking down, saw that I had little else to encounter but a succession of these little precipices – it was in truth a path that in very hard rain is, no doubt, the channel of a most splendid waterfall. So I began to suspect that I ought not to go on; but then unfortunately though I would with ease drop down a smooth rock of seven feet high, I could not climb it, so go on I must, and on I went. The next three drops were not half a foot, at least not a foot, more than my own height, but every drop increased the palsy of my limbs. I shook all over, Heavens knows without the least influence of fear. And now I had only two more to drop down – to return was impossible – but of these two the first was tremendous, it was twice my own height, and the ledge at the bottom was exceedingly narrow that if I drop down upon it I must of necessity have fallen backwards and of course killed myself. My limbs were all of a tremble. I lay upon my back to rest myself, and was beginning according to my custom to laugh at myself for a madman, when the sight of the crags above me and on each side, and the impetuous clouds just over them, posting so loudly and so rapidly to the northward, overawed me. I lay in a state of almost prophetic trance and delight and blessed God aloud for the powers of reason and the will, which remaining as danger can overpower us.'

[quoted on page 170 of *Land of the Lakes* by Melvyn Bragg; publ. Secker and Warburg 1990]



The Kendal Tapestries

Elaine Tilley

The Kendal Tapestries have always held a fascination for me. Over the years I've seen them many times in the Kendal Tapestry Centre and once in February 2007 when there was an exhibition in Worcester Cathedral.

In 2011 I decided that I'd attend a two day Foundation Course in Kendal to learn the basic stitches. Bridget Guest was the tutor. I chose a kit featuring two clowns. The course was enjoyable and passed by quickly. Several months followed before I completed it. I added a few things to make it personal eg the title of a song. Later in the year I returned to Kendal to do a Design and Lettering Course. I was glad to see Bridget again as she makes it all seem so easy.



This time I had to go along with an idea for a design. In my head I had a view of the Malvern Hills and a phrase from Psalm 121 'I lift my eyes to the hills'. The words and the hills seem to lift my spirit and that part of the tapestry was all that I did over the three days of the course.

In the following months I developed my initial idea. Over the years EIL, a Malvern-based charity, has had a profound impact on our family. We have hosted people from various countries. For the time of their stay we had the experience of enlarging our family to include someone from a different country and culture. We have a wealth of memories from this experience so I've included the logo in the centre base panel. Over the years I've also been touched by books written by C S Lewis and the music composed by Elgar. On the bottom left of my tapestry is a typical Malvern gas lamp made famous by C S Lewis in *The Lion, the Witch and the Wardrobe*. On the right is Elgar leaning on his bike and looking to the hills. A quote of his that is meaningful to me runs along the top.

I've had hours of interest working on the tapestries and would urge anyone to attend a course or view the tapestries either in Kendal, or at The Ironbridge Gorge Museum, Coalbrookdale, Telford, TF8 7DQ from 22 May to 5 June.

See also: **quaker-tapestry.co.uk/tapestry-tours**