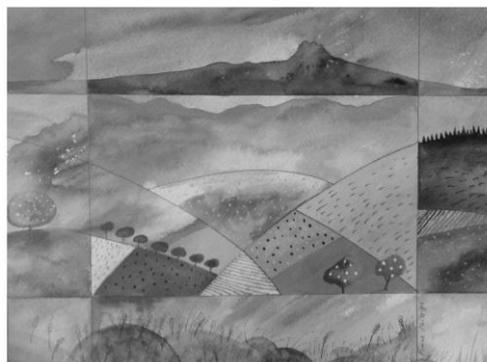


WEST SOMERSET AREA MEETING
QUAKER NEWSLETTER
MARCH 2019

Vibrancy in Meetings

**Different
Meetings,
Meeting
Differently:**



**Saturday 16th March 10.30am – 4.30pm
Taunton Quaker Meeting House TQ13 7QE**

West Somerset Area Meeting hosts a day with 'Vibrancy in Meeting' staff, joined by Simon Best from Woodbrooke.

Our world is changing; "Our Faith in the Future" opens with the words "In turbulent times ...". Are we ready to meet the challenges that are facing us, within and beyond our Quaker communities? How can we work together, towards bringing about the "peaceable kingdom"?

Spend time with Friends, considering new ways of 'Being Quaker together': perhaps a chance to 'return to our radical roots'?

During the day we'll have a chance to explore the essence of a "Quaker Meeting"; to share differing experiences of worship; to hear about some ideas from Quaker writers and to begin designing what different patterns & experiments might look like. This day is not necessarily about 'simpler meetings', but rather about 'differing ways of coming together'.

There is no charge for the day, but please bring a contribution to share for lunch, if you are able. There is an option to stay to cook and enjoy a supper together afterwards.

BOOKING INFORMATION OVERLEAF

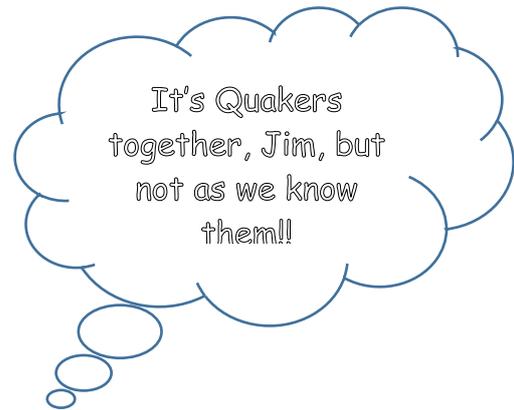


Vibrancy in Meetings – booking information

Interested?

**To book a place contact Pip Harris
piph@quaker.org.uk or 07422 973 089**

Please let us know if you'd like to stay for an early supper afterwards, and if you are interested in staying locally with Friends on the Friday or Saturday.



Further to the Vibrancy in Meetings day, Pip Harris writes:

Here is a lovely link shared via colleagues and Ben Pink-Dandelion from Wess Daniels who has put in a link to an easier access version of his work on “convergent renewal”. Some of it might be good to look at as part of the March day?

.... I have been working primarily within the Quaker tradition around the idea of “Convergent Friends” and how to remix faith traditions in ways both faithful and new. I decided to create this eBook because I believe these concepts have broader application and I believe that we need strong, rooted communities of faith right now.

Therefore, I believe that you might be interested in this [new \(free to download\) eBook](#) I put together based on a talk I gave earlier this year. In the talk, I worked hard to distill down what I believe are some of the key ideas and implications of “remix” for faith communities.

I send this in a spirit of collaboration and sharing. I'm not asking for anything back and feel free to disregard if you don't have the interest or time. I hope is that you might find something encouraging and/or useful in here, even if you disagree with the main ideas, or don't have the time to read the whole book. I'd love to hear feedback from you or to learn that the ideas in here were shared and/or remixed in ways useful to your work.

Here is the link to my blog post where you can find both ePub and PDF formats:

<http://gatheringinlight.com/2018/11/20/new-ebook-remixing-faith-now-available/>

May God continue to bless the work you do.

Love and Light to each of you,

Wess Daniels

**MINUTES OF WEST SOMERSET AREA MEETING AT TAUNTON MEETING HOUSE
26th JANUARY 2019**

19/01 Reading

The reading during our worship today was from 'This We Can Say' 1.2 by Jenny Spinks.

19/02 Local Meeting Representatives.

Spiceland: Ali Dominy, Pat Ebdon, Sheila Whitlock

Taunton: Sheila Harvey, Pat Bazley

Ilminster: Huw Morgan, John Gray

Bridgwater: Gilly Lee

Wellington: Marian Dawson

Burnham: Unable to appoint

20/02 Membership Matters

(i) The annual Tabular Statement has been circulated to Local Meetings. Our Membership Clerk reports that there has been a small drop in the numbers of members and attenders in our Area Meeting over the last year. Three deaths have been recorded and one person received into membership. We now have two more children under the age of 16 in the AM.

(ii) Christine and Christopher Lawson's membership has been transferred to Sussex East Area Meeting by certificate at their Area Meeting on 12th January 2019. Certificates of Acceptance have been received from Sussex East, dated 13th January 2019.

(iii) We have heard from Zoe Ainsworth-Grigg that she wishes to resign from the Society of Friends. The Area Meeting accepts her resignation with regret but wishes her happiness in her chosen path. It was agreed that the clerks would write to Zoe to thank her for all she has brought to the Area Meeting during her membership.

19/04 Nominations

The following nominations were accepted by Friends at the Area Meeting:

(i) Carinne Allinson of Burnham Meeting has asked to lay down her role as Quaker Life alternate representative. Ali Dominey's name has been put forward to replace her.

(ii) The name of Vicki Ross has been put forward to serve on the Taunton Meeting House Management Committee.

(iii) Sue Brownlie of Bridgwater Meeting has asked to lay down membership of the AM Business Team. Meg Winfield's name has been put forward to replace her.

(iv) Alyson Allen has asked to lay down her role as elder of Ilminster Meeting. The names of Eve Northey, Margaret Stenhouse and Anna Mullett have been put forward to serve as elders at Ilminster. The names of Huw Morgan and Elspeth Waldie have been put forward to serve as convenors of shared oversight.

(v) The name of Sue Brownlie has been put forward to serve as an AM Trustee.

(vi) Rosemary Dagley and Anna Mullett have laid down their roles on the AM Nominations committee. The names of Gilly Lee and Margaret Stenhouse have been brought forward to replace them.

19/05 Reports

Meeting for Sufferings.

The report by Fran Hicks has been circulated. Fran spoke to AM about three of the main concerns which were addressed at the December meeting. Firstly, the boycotting of goods

from the Occupied Israeli/Palestinian Settlements and the request to Trustees to ensure that no investments are made in these Settlements. Also the amount of work involved in bringing such a concern to public notice.

Secondly, addressing the issue of sustainability, BYM wants to enable Friends to take their part to ensure that the Society is working towards sustainability in Local Meetings and in all parts of our lives.

Thirdly, how Trustees are supporting BYM's overall work within the vision 'Our Faith in the Future'. 'A simple charity supporting a simple church'.

The full report will be published in the Newsletter.

LM Responsibilities

We thank Minehead, Spiceland and Taunton meetings for their responses regarding the fulfilment of their LM responsibilities as given in Quaker Faith and Practice 4.33.

19/06 Citizens UK.

We have received the following minute dated 04/12/2018 from Trustees regarding financial support for Citizens UK:

18/52. As requested by the Area Meeting, consideration was given to subscribing to Citizens UK. It was agreed to recommend to the next Area Meeting on 26th January 2019 that the Area Meeting subscribes to the proposed Somerset Chapter of Citizens UK and pay a subscription of £500 for 2019 to match that of Taunton LM, such payment to be reviewed annually.

We were given examples of how Citizens UK is working and could work to support our communities. Finances are needed to enable the work of Citizens UK to be carried out. In spite of some reservations it was decided that the Area Meeting would agree to the donation recommended by Trustees.

19/07 Notices

Worshipping Together at Burnham on Sunday March 3rd.

Launch Assembly of Citizens UK on 26th March 6-8pm at Richard Huish College, Taunton.

Wednesday 6th February 10am. Silent meeting at Taunton Meeting House to support the Stanstead 15.

Sunday February 3rd 2.30pm at Dillington House, Ilminster. 'The Remarkable Life and Times of William Penn' with James Evans.

March 23rd. As part of their preparations for Yearly Meeting, Spiceland Friends invite us to join them at a screening of 'Pride' at the Tivoli cinema in Tiverton at 3.30pm.

19/08 Closing Minute

We thank Taunton Friends for their hospitality today and hope to meet again on Monday March 4th for the next Business Team Meeting. The next Area Meeting will be on Saturday April 13th at Wellington Meeting House.

QUAKER VOLUNTARY ACTION WORKING RETREATS

Dear Friends,

In this cold winter weather, it's perhaps time to start thinking ahead to the summer! Quaker Voluntary Action has a number of working retreats taking place which you can take part in: for the first time, we'll be in Calais volunteering in the Help Refugees Warehouse from 15-19 July; between 26-31 August we will gather at a Quaker-run ecofarm in Emilia Romagna, Italy - another first for QVA; repeating previous fruitful visits we will be working in the gardens at historic Quaker centre Swarthmoor Hall in Cumbria (23-27 September), and facilitating an intense but 'life-changing' (according to previous participants) trip to Israel-Palestine in October (14-25).

Details of the first two of these opportunities can be found on our website at <http://qva.org.uk/retreats/> Details of the Swarthmoor Hall and Israel-Palestine working retreats will be publicised in the next fortnight: watch this space!

Bursaries are available for all our working retreats - please do ask.

You might also be interested in reading reflections on recent working retreats, now up on our new blog: <http://qva.org.uk/blog/> (There's also a wonderful poem by Anneke Kraakman inspired by our Swarthmoor Hall working retreat last autumn, entitled 'This Earth is a Garden'. See *overleaf. Ed.*)

QVA's mission is to enable participation in spirit-led volunteering that makes a practical and social difference. This year's theme for reflection at all our events will be 'God in the movement of peoples', and indeed much of our work will focus on supporting those forced to migrate - a concern to many Quakers across Europe at a time of division and, in many places, humanitarian crisis. QVA tries in a small way to build community and work for a more just and peaceful world - we hope to see you soon on a working retreat.

In Friendship,

Hannah Brock

Working Retreats Coordinator for Quaker Voluntary Action

E: hannah@qva.org.uk | M: 07530 844611 | W: www.qva.org.uk

Please note I work part-time, so may not be able to reply to your message immediately. Please call the mobile number above if it is urgent!



THIS EARTH IS A GARDEN, INSPIRED BY A QVA WORKING RETREAT



Quaker Voluntary Action Gardening Retreat , October 2018, Swarthmoor Hall

The Cool of the Day
Do you like my garden so free?
Through the gate we worked, in the cool of the day, weeding, composting
Finished the task in one day
We walk in the labyrinth,
in the orchard,
in the quiet garden.
We walk
Could you live in this garden?
You may live in this garden if you keep the waters clean.
Damsons, apples and pears
You like barrowing the compost to the side of the burn?
Prune the climbers along the wall of the Hall?
I like forking the nettles and the docks with two friends
Around the apple trees we are a team
We do the same the next day.
We like Chi Kung every morning
Worship in the Hall every morning
Reflection every evening
We cooked and cleaned, saw the sea and listened.
Why had we come?
What is the Journey of Gardening good for?
To work with others, get through a crisis, be part of something
To feel one's body work, to think, to see the birds in the sky
To honour the history of this land
To work in silence, to prove it can be done pure and free ... to be free.
My motivation – but the others?

Anneke Kraakman, inspired by the song "Now is the Cool of the Day", performed by Coope, Boyes and Simpson

EARTH ACTION GROUP UPDATE

When we met on 24th January we knew of the recent IPCC report which makes very clear the need for action to restrict global temperature rise to 1.5C over pre-industrial levels. We are nowhere near that so it is imperative that we all, from international organisations to individuals, play our part. So here are 3 initiatives all can join. Quakers now expect all their central committees as well as other parts of the Society to include as a central part of their work a commitment to sustainability.

JOIN THE GLOBAL QUAKER CLIMATE ACTION MOVEMENT



Image: Erik Dries

Friends World Committee for Consultation is embarking on a project working with Friends worldwide to strengthen our environmental commitment and amplify our voice through a global Quaker sustainability movement. We strive to live in right relationship with all creation and live in a sustainable way on the earth.

HOW ARE YOUR LOCAL MEETING SUSTAINABILITY PLANS COMING ALONG?

At the July Area Meeting last year we agreed that each Local Meeting draws up a sustainability plan to consider how both the Meeting and its members can work towards meeting the expectation of the 2011 Canterbury Commitment. It is likely to be a continuing work rather than a one-off unalterable statement but we hope that all meetings can bring to Area Meeting where they have got to. We said that this would come up in spring 2019 –hopefully Area Meeting Business Team can schedule it for the 13th April AM.

Taunton have started the process and heard from Spiceland Friends who have applied for Eco Church status – this is a useful way to look at the various aspects of sustainability – not just the buildings but also how the Meeting and its members manage in areas such as energy, transport, finances, links in the community and politically.

If your meeting is not far advanced, please feel free to seek advice from those in the Earth Action Group and/or Spiceland Friends. (Regular members of the EAG are John Ainsworth, Fran Hicks and Paul Brandon from Taunton, Huw Morgan from Ilminster and Ann Jordan from Minehead. We would love other Friends to join us.)

THE IPCC REPORT AND EXTINCTION REBELLION

We hope most Friends are aware of the IPCC (Intergovernmental Committee on Climate Change) report which came out in the autumn and made clear that urgent action is needed in the next 11 years to prevent the worst effects of climate change. Quakers in Britain and beyond are committed to working with others to move to a carbon neutral situation by 2030- a very tall order which our government with its focus on Brexit has yet to endorse.

Out of this has rapidly grown a new organisation Extinction Rebellion with groups across the world willing to take direct action (including a willingness to be arrested). There are active groups in Taunton and elsewhere in the south west and an initial public meeting drew 120 people with more turned away. Some local Quakers have done the training in Non Violent Direct Action but the groups need supporters and people willing to be at public events even if they are not willing to take potentially arrestable action. There is support from Quakers nationally. Do look at the Extinction Rebellion website (<https://rebellion.earth>) or Facebook site.

DECLARING A CLIMATE EMERGENCY

There is an initiative to get councils to declare a climate emergency as a first step to committing to reduce emissions in line with the need to be carbon neutral by 2030. You are asked to write to your local county and district councillors to support this. The process has already started in both Devon and Somerset County Councils and the Green district councillor in Taunton Deane is presenting a motion to the new Somerset West and Taunton Deane District Council. In several areas such a motion has been passed with support from all parties.

MEETING THE MP

Unfortunately, the group planning to meet Rebecca Pow MP have not yet met her. The original January date was postponed (probably as the MPs had extra days in parliament) and it is now scheduled for Friday 8th March.

COME AND JOIN US

The Earth Action Group includes Friends from three Local Meetings. We know there are Friends in all of our Local Meetings who care about the earth and take steps as individuals to keep their carbon footprint low in many ways. We would love to have somebody from each LM join us so if you are able and willing to do so – whether just for one meeting or on a regular basis- do come along. We have tended to meet on Thursday afternoon at 2.00 at Taunton (as some of us like to be at the Taunton Drop in Silence between 12.30 and 1.30 and it is also the day of the weekly Farmers Market). We next meet on 28th February.

John Ainsworth
Convener of Earth Action Group

TAUNTON QUAKER MEETING HOUSE: SPIRIT OF PLACE

The original Meeting House, a dark early-19th Century building in the centre of Taunton, was in a run-down condition when the decision was made in 2014 to redevelop it to be fully accessible and visually outward-looking, and to adopt the most sustainable standards in the use of materials and energy. Our vision was to provide a place for the benefit of Quakers, community groups, and commercial hirers. If any building can be said to have a sense of the life of the spirit, we hope this sense will always form the backdrop to all the activities that take place here.

The Meeting House now contains three rooms of varying sizes plus a welcome area and kitchen. The two upstairs flats are let out. The rent from these, together with the income from hiring out rooms, helps cover the considerable costs of the redevelopment and the maintenance of the building. Audio-visual equipment is available in two of the rooms. We employ a part-time (three days per week) non-resident



warden, and a cleaner for one morning per week. The success of this venture relies on a large number of volunteers from across the Area, ranging from the day-to-day maintenance of the building and garden, via attention to all the equipment, to the work carried out around financial and management matters, as well as the emergency call-out rota. We are grateful for the participation of so many people in this.

The Meeting House offers all its users a quiet setting, but this contrasts with the busy times when several groups of hirers need to share the Welcome Room and kitchen, especially during break times. Also, we are constantly needing to keep a balance between maintaining the Meeting House as an open and welcoming place and having to keep it locked for safety because of its secluded location on the one hand, and between having its rooms readily available for use and achieving maximum occupation on the other. We are constantly reminded of the necessity of repaying loans through commercial hiring and keeping the building available for community groups, some of which would otherwise struggle with finding suitable accommodation in the centre of Taunton.



The number of groups using the Meeting House has been increasing, and with it our income. Before the redevelopment we were receiving about £5 000 per annum in revenue; in 2018 this figure had risen to about £20 000. The core use by Quakers centres on Meetings for Worship Sunday morning and evening, and on the Drop-in to Silence sessions at Thursday lunchtime. Children make use of the medium-sized room during the Meetings for Worship on the fourth Sunday in the month. In addition, a number of

other meetings of Quaker groups from across the area take place here during the week. Currently an average of about 20 outside groups have bookings with us each month, Somerset County Council and various NHS Trusts being amongst our regular hirers. Community groups, such as Macular Degeneration Society, the Egyptian Society, Cygnus café and various Trades Unions are examples of other users, and Yoga, meditation, counselling and training sessions also take place here. Citizens UK and Taunton Welcomes Refugees are examples of community groups in which Quakers are involved, and, additionally, some hirers appreciate the anonymous and confidential nature of the Meeting House. We also offer the use of the Meeting House to some groups for free as a form of donation, after careful discernment.

The garden, which is cared for by a group of volunteers, is enjoyed by a wide variety of people, ranging from the groups that spill out onto the terrace from a sun-filled meeting room, to passers-by who enjoy moments of peace on its two benches. We have even had a beehive, and are hoping that the bees will return this summer. Rough sleepers regularly spend the night on the benches, in a



sheltered but unauthorized peacefulness, although occasional noisy episodes are a reminder that town centres are not always idyllic places when most of us are safely tucked up in bed.

This Meeting House may not match the timelessness of an ancient parish church or the sense of awe in a large cathedral, but we feel that here is a location where all activities can be grounded in the spirit of place.

Sigurd Reimers is co-clerk of the Meeting House Management Committee.

Lynn Shorthouse is the Meeting House Warden.

A FAIRER SOCIETY FOR SOMERSET

This is the title of a mini-conference being organised by Somerset Unite Community, on Saturday 23rd March 2019, at the Albemarle Centre, in Taunton.

We want to involve organisations and individuals in Somerset who are keen to organise against an austerity-led Government which is causing so much devastation to our communities in Somerset.

As well as speakers, there will be workshops and the day will finish with a session where we plan a way forward together.

So far, we have identified the following four topics for workshops to consider: Public Transport; Welfare Reform; Cuts to Children's Services; How Should Local Authorities Fight back?

The day will run from 11am-4pm. There is no charge, and tea and coffee will be supplied. Participants will be asked to bring their own lunch, or visit the many nearby cafes and pubs.

To book:

<https://www.eventbrite.com/e/a-fairer-society-for-somerset-tickets-56563408678>

<https://www.facebook.com/events/2208487362748339>

REPORT ON MEETING FOR SUFFERINGS NOVEMBER 2018

This was an extended meeting: being the annual residential at Woodbrooke. It felt really good to begin to get to know, much better, my fellow committee members and to swap idea and initiatives, to share with you now.

On Friday afternoon those of us who could make it had an introduction to the particular joys and challenges of large meetings for worship for business and were reminded that the overriding aim is always to “grow spiritual community”.

The particular matters for the committee this weekend were

For Information

1. Press release on banning investments in the occupied territories
2. Reports from the central and standing committees (QCCIR, QWRC, QL, QPSW)
3. Reports from other European YM's (France, Netherlands, Ireland, Norway, Germany)
 - Draft Report on Sufferings (to be finalised at next meeting ready for BYM)
4. Trustees Report
5. last minute paper on gender - for next meeting

For Decisions

- To nominate five members of Sufferings to hear an appeal about a membership matter
- Church Government Group recommendations for changes to the current edition of F&P.
- QL recommendations to the role of CYP advocates for inclusion in F&P
- Registering Quaker Recognised Bodies (can supply list: mostly schools)
- Review Group recommendations for changes to the work of the Committee on Clerks (a group for nominating the key roles in BYM)
- The way forward on our Sustainability Commitment, especially whether to lay down the Sustainability sub- committee.

We also had Saturday afternoon and evening to reflect together, in our area groupings, on the reports from central committees, with particular reference to their relationship to the work in our AMs and LMs and, in the evening, to share good initiatives and challenges from our different meetings. So from all of this I would like to highlight three things I think may be of particular interest and relevance, and other recommendations.

- The journey of a concern from Devon AM to an interview, by Paul Parker, our Recording Clerk, on the Today programme to 7 million plus listeners.
- The development of our Sustainability Commitment to be a low carbon community
- How Trustees support the vision for BYM going forward (Our Faith in the Future), through the construction of a strategic plan with clear objectives, for the operation of the different central committees, LMs and AMs to create “A Simple Church supported by a Simple Charity, to reinvigorate Quakerism”

Journey of a Concern

Devon AM wrote to MfS about BYM Trustees investment policy in relation to the Israeli Occupied Territories in Palestine. MfS sent their minute to QPSW and QCCIR in 2017 for advice.

In July of this year, MfS reaffirmed the decision, made in 2011, to boycott settlement goods until such time as the occupation ended and added that whilst understanding that at present Trustees held no investments in such goods “we encourage our Trustees to amend their policy to **ensure** this remains the case.”

In November, a press release was issued: "Quakers in Britain have today become the first church in the UK to announce it will not invest"

Anne Van Staverens from Communications dept. gave a fascinating report on the logistics and time it takes to mount a successful press campaign.

The issue needs thorough research in order to prepare for the range of questions likely to arise in response to the article and to any interview, especially given the sensitivity of this subject.

The date for release needs to be carefully thought through to make sure it doesn't clash with other important events, and for maximum effect.

It was circulated to press worldwide, other faith groups/ ecumenical groups and others.

The second page of The Times gets approx. 4,000 plus readers. On social media there were, at the time, 700 shares and 688 comments. The Today programme, 7 million plus listeners. The large amount of interest that was generated had much to do with the kick back from the Board of Deputies of British Jews, who objected strongly. This had in turn implications for QCCIR, who manage the Quaker involvement in the Ecumenical Accompaniment programme, which might be threatened by taking such a stand. Helen Rowlands, acknowledged the risks which would be monitored, and affirmed our commitment to live adventurously.

We were encouraged to speak to the communications department about any issue we need help with sharing.

We were issued with a chart of all the communications the dept. has issued over the year. This came about as a result of a concern that Sufferings adopted in 2014 that we "speak out more". I am very happy to circulate copies of the table to any who are interested.

Development of Sustainability Witness

When I last reported on this subject Sufferings had been asked to consider the report by the group set up to review the work of BYM Sustainability group. It concluded that there was an urgent need to integrate sustainability in all sectors of the centrally managed work and in Local and Area Meetings: to this end it recommended that the Sustainability group be laid down and that Sufferings be given the task of overseeing the integration of the work.

However, the SG was already in the process of planning the Sustainability meeting at Swanwick (attended by Anne Jordon from this AM), and the different departments and Trustees had not yet met to work out the implications of the recommendations, so it was discerned that it was not yet time to lay down the SG.

However, at this meeting it was agreed that this should now go ahead, and Arrangements Committee be given the task to check reports come regularly to Sufferings.

Woodbrooke has been asked to work with QL, QPSW, and others to get proposals together to motivate us, possibly through a mixture of national on site events, regional events and on line courses, to reach as wide a range of Friends as possible.

This feels exciting and very necessary given the extremely short time we have to get our Quaker and national house in order in terms of climate change which we know year on year is accelerating through feedback loops.

QWRC reminded us of the impact our lifestyle has on Friends across the world.

I reported that we in West Somerset have asked each LM to come up with a plan and suggested using Eco Church, as a way forward. This also gives us the opportunity to link with other churches, as Spiceland has done. Central England reported that one of its meetings has Silver status. Bristol is working with a broad range of groups.

How Trustees supports the overall work and witness

I was impressed with the way Trustees, working with management meeting, have been able to tease out the crucial priorities going forward, informed by the overall vision "Our faith in the Future"; YM

minutes on Sustainability (2011 and 2017); Inclusion and Diversity (2017); and to simplify while revising the Book of Discipline (2018); our charitable objectives (F&P 8.03), the Strategic plans of QLCC, ad QPSW; feedback from role holders who need less administrative burden and staff who need to understand the organisation's priorities in order to future plan; the risk register and the history of Quakers in Britain which inspired their overarching title of "A simple charity supporting a simple church".

All this, held together by a lovely diagram!

Some recommendations

- * For greater understanding and engagement between AM and the central work, Kathy and I would love to invite you to join us when we meet to consider the agenda and papers before a meeting, and to share with us before we report back to AM, especially anyone else on a central committee, a QL rep, QPSW correspondent, Trustee or with a particular interest in the areas under discernment. We will put, in the newsletter, and send out, the items likely to come up in 2019
- * QWRC reported that they would love to hear about, and encourage, contacts between British and international Friends, and to share this on their network. Such contact and inter visitation is mutually enriching. European Friends are particularly accessible to holidaying brits, and can be more easily reached by train!

Fran Hicks

Meeting for Sufferings is the standing representative body entrusted with the care of the business of the Britain Yearly Meeting through the year.

Meeting for Sufferings (MfS) has a visionary and prophetic role for all Quakers in Britain. It decides the priorities and sets the direction of the Yearly Meeting in the Long Term Framework. Meeting for Sufferings also plays a vital role in fostering communication throughout the Yearly Meeting and in reviewing and testing concerns referred to it by area meetings. It also gives guidance on policy issues referred to it by Britain Yearly Meeting's trustees.

CITIZENS SOMERSET FOUNDING ASSEMBLY

You are invited to the Founding Assembly of a powerful new alliance of civil society organisations

Citizens Somerset

18:00-20:00, Tuesday 26 March 2019

Richard Huish College, South Road, Taunton, TA1 3DZ

A Citizens alliance brings together a wide range of civic institutions which together use their collective power to act on a range of issues, build accountable relationships with politicians, civil servants and business leaders, and rebuild and strengthen communities.

And the first of the local alliances is West Somerset Citizens. Among our founding members are:

West Somerset Quakers, Taunton United Reformed Church, King's College, Richard Huish College, Taunton Deane and South Sedgemoor Methodist Circuit, Taunton Welcomes Refugees, YMCA Taunton, Taunton Mavericks and The Diocese of Bath and Wells.

Refreshments provided. Tickets are free and can be booked here:

<https://www.eventbrite.co.uk/e/citizens-somerset-founding-assembly-tickets-51811079333>

CITIZENS UK

Communities organising for power, social justice & the common good

IN LOVING MEMORY

From the Editor: It was always a source of joy to me when John Anderson sent a contribution for the Newsletter. His writing, warm, humane, pithy and profound, never failed to engage and stimulate thought, witness an email I sent him in November 2018.

Dear John, So here I am on the train to Nottingham reading a wise and witty letter to The Friend. And turns out it's from you!

Here is a favourite piece from John.

GRANITE

Sharing confidences with a rock may seem crazy but in reality there are few things more straightforwardly sensible: since rocks make exemplary listeners it almost invariably proves an enjoyable (and sometimes enlightening) experience. I should say “used to prove enjoyable” for I haven’t engaged in a petrological discourse for many years: I’m probably mistaken but it is as if now I already know what would be said.

Rock is monumentally patient and non-judgemental. Rock has been around long enough to have witnessed the bulk of human frailties and follies. Rock never interrupts but remains massively impassive whatever you say; you can’t shock a rock. Rock is reliable; always there when needed; never over sympathises or cuts one short; never takes offence or becomes irritated when one misses an appointment; charges no fee. Rock never makes an observation or voices an opinion unless specifically requested (even then only if it is something one cannot work out for oneself and, often, not even then). Why seek out a therapist or guru when a rock is waiting patiently on my confiding?

Further, on the rare occasion when rock speaks, it is always something worth remembering or rather something impossible to forget. And I mean rock. When walking in the Lake District or Snowdonia or on Dartmoor one is conscious of an ancient solidity. Whereas Mendip limestone forms a completely different impression on the soles of the feet and traversing the mushy meadows of the Somerset levels is like walking on water.

In short it is with granite that I used to make my most fruitful conversation and mainly in the rugged landscape of West Cornwall.

I am strolling down to Lamorna Cove; dappled sunshine sifts through the branches of overhanging oaks where a parliament of rooks are in raucous debate; meanwhile I can hear the small river (where there were then still young trout to be seen) talking quietly to itself. Arriving at a kink in the road I notice, for the first time, a huge boulder projecting out over the steep side of the cutting and feel powerfully drawn to climb but recognise, on the instant, that such a mountaineering feat is way beyond my physical capability.

I stand for a few moments lost in the strangeness of this encounter and feeling a complete wimp: the granite so ancient, adamant and steadfast; I so fearful, soft and transient. Finding a voice, I speak or rather declaim, “I am weak and this is beyond me but I promise to do something very difficult very soon.” I receive no response but do something difficult very soon – the exact nature of which escapes me right now though I know it was something that most people would have no problem with – and remember that it was something I would never have dared to think I had the courage for.

I may (memory once again distorted and diminished by time) have recounted this small triumph, possibly shouting to make myself heard above the corvine cacophony. Whatever was the case rock (no surprise) remained massive, impassive and uncommunicative.

At this time, I am holidaying in Cornwall for a couple of weeks – every morning taking a stroll down to the Cove and, on the way, passing the time of day with my imposing friend who remains ponderously taciturn. On my last day, feeling that our conversation had been more than somewhat one-sided, I shout, loudly enough to produce an echo. “SAY SOMETHING!” and receive immediate response in a low lugubrious tone. “I have been here a long time!”

And, of that instant, I am gifted a powerful impression/vision of the West Penwith granite underpinning this sacred landscape and, in particular, the projecting tongue of headland (of which my massive and impassive friend forms a minuscule part) protecting the Cove from fierce Westerlies. I sense what it is like to resist, over the millennia, the eroding and ever encroaching ocean – and doing so in silence (it is wave and wind that make all the noise).

Surfacing from this vision of patient endurance I find myself thinking of the crumbly Jurassic Coast (nothing but a pushover for the modest waves of the English Channel) and the contrast.

I have experienced other close encounters but, being possessed of a couple of thoughts on the subject and wanting to bang on a bit, that one example will suffice.

Confabulation with inanimate or apparently insensate entities has brought me ample reward. So herewith, from the depths of my untutored and very partial experience, I dare to offer a few tips to those who have not yet tried the experiment.

Say, in the words of ASJ Tessimond, “all, all, all you did not mean to say; all, all, all you did not know you meant.”

Say it loud. Shout if you must: it is not that rocks are hard of hearing, just that they have a lot of other sounds demanding their attention. There is precious little return in whispering sweet nothings to a cliff.

Be succinct if you can but long winded if need be – as has been mentioned rocks are patient listeners, never interrupt, will not comment unless requested and, even then, but infrequently. Your confidences are safe with rock though sometimes you may be kept waiting for a response.

Speak. Ask. Wait. Experience what eventuates.

I have also found shouting as loudly as I can in the presence of rocks (but not directed at any particular rock) to be an invigorating and liberating few minutes well spent. The words I have given forth on these occasions have been in Swahili – learnt from a Kenyan ex-espatriate: “SHENSI!” meaning (I am reliably informed) excreta and “MARIDADI!” meaning beautiful, gentle, appropriate – which of the two depending on my mood. No doubt if you try the shout the right word will come out!

There are many other ways of spending time with rocks. In the cases of monoliths and stone circles I have been, on occasion, bidden to lean against, sit down at the foot of like a child or give an enveloping hug to. Mostly however it has felt right to just stand quietly and rest in the awareness of the countless number of my ancestors who will have come to such spots to unburden themselves of joy and grief or seek advice and healing.

I have, for many years taken, rock as exemplary; I (in common with many other Quakers) rightly make a virtue of flexibility but sometimes, in the effort to see things from the point of view of another, approach perilously close to a spiritual flabbiness. So allow me to heap some further praises on rock.

Rock is adamant and steadfast. Rock is patient and suffers long. Rock resists the ravages of time and weather. Rock does not blunder about the world seeking to impress other rocks. Rock accumulates moss not wealth. Rock is what remains when the soft stuff has been washed away. Rock is reliably present and is not going anywhere anytime soon. We all need some grit and gravel in our thinking – some granite at the core.

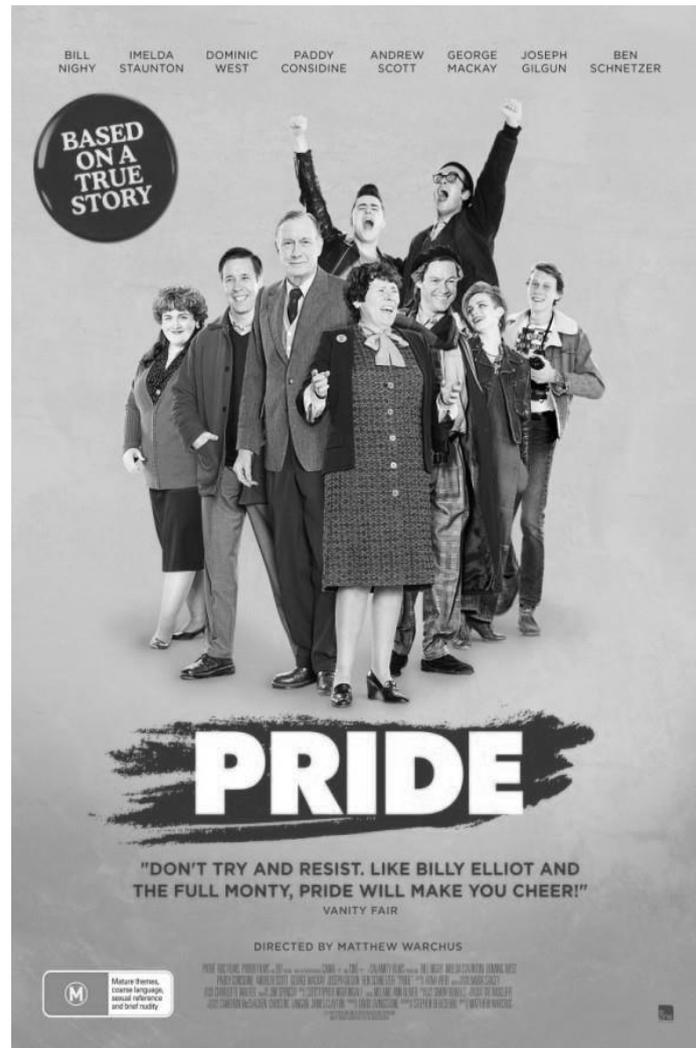
It is no accident that Jesus gave his top disciple the nickname “Rocky.”

John Anderson



Lamorna Cove

COME TO THE CINEMA!!



It's the summer of 1984. Margaret Thatcher is in power and the National Union of Mineworkers is on strike. At the Gay Pride March in London, a group of gay and lesbian activists decides to raise money to support the families of the striking miners. But there is a problem. The union seems embarrassed to receive their support. But the activists are not deterred. They decide to ignore the union and go direct to the miners. They identify a mining village in Wales and set off in a minibus to make their donation in person. And so begins the extraordinary story of two seemingly alien communities who form a surprising and ultimately triumphant partnership.

Spiceland Quakers would like to invite you to join them for a special showing of **PRIDE**. The film has been suggested as part of preparation for **Yearly Meeting 2019** and we feel that it is a great way to kick start our preparation – AND – to get to share the experience with Friends – AND –

Any queries do contact Ali Dominy – 07810768557 or alidominy@aol.com

PRIDE will be shown at 3.30pm on Saturday 23rd March 2019 at The Tivoli Cinema, Tiverton. Tickets £5

Tickets available via phone: 01884 255554 or website: <https://tiverton.merlincinemas.co.uk/film/46069-pride> or on the door – subject to availability.