

# **North East Thames Quakers Newsletter (July 2013)**



## **Contents:**

**Equipping for Ministry:**

**Melvyn Freake**

**Celebration of the Life of Geoffery**

**Hemmingway: Leigh Meeting**

**High Leigh All Age Conference 2013:**

**Angela Greenwood & Comments from Isobel and  
Jasmine**

**Economic Mythbusters: Daphne Stedman**

**Amy in Thailand: Amy Cawson**

**Quakers Together Day: Margarete Briggs**

**Diary Dates: Sept – Dec 2013**

## **Advices and queries**

*7. Be aware of the spirit of God at work in the ordinary activities and experience of your daily life. Spiritual learning continues throughout life, and often in unexpected ways. There is inspiration to be found all around us, in the natural world, in the sciences and arts, in our work and friendships, in our sorrows as well as in our joys. Are you open to new light, from whatever source it may come? Do you approach new ideas with discernment?*



## Equipping for Ministry

Equipping for ministry (EFM) is a two year course run from Woodbrooke, the Quaker college/centre in Birmingham. It involves an introductory weekend, two summer residential weeks, and a minimum of six short courses over the two years. These cover the areas of Quaker spirituality, evolving traditions and living in the world. Each student has their own tutor and there are various on-line opportunities. There is also gentle encouragement to do a project. I estimate the financial cost to be well over £2,000; the cost in time is what you make it but needs to be considerable.

The title reflects Quaker understanding of ministry. How do we understand our faith? How do we translate that in the way we live with each other? How do we talk about our faith and encourage others to talk about theirs? How do we live our lives? I see all these as aspects of ministry.

Why am I doing it? Well, I retired last year and decided that I spent quite a lot of times doing 'Quaker' things. Most central is meeting for worship, including business meetings at both local and area level. But then it goes on to membership, trusteeship, premises jobs and all the occasional things we get involved in.

These have the capacity for deepening my spirituality and understanding but they do not, I believe, directly address it. It is too easy to get caught up in the job to be done. I can feel that I am at meeting to do things for the meeting rather than to meet God and myself. Sidetracked into remembering to do some particular task, speak to someone, arrange a business meeting.

These jobs need doing. In the absence of a paid minister or manager we have to do them ourselves. For various reasons, many Friends do not take on jobs that need to be done. This can overload the willing volunteers with a potential detrimental effect on their spirituality. This has happened to me.

So, having made some space in my life by stopping paid work, I felt the need to stop and take account of my direction. Forty days in the wilderness sounds attractive but I am not going to do that. EFM for me is taking an equivalent period of time over two years to explore my direction.

After the introductory weekend in early January, there has been a big gap until the residential week at the end of July. We were offered participation in an on-line retreat but this didn't really work for me – computers are something I retreat from rather than with. I've done one course on Thomas Kelly and Maggie and I just returned from a Franciscan retreat (not part of EFM). Both have had a powerful effect.

Things are going slowly but well. I think the course needs to involve me in spirituality in our Quaker meetings and Quaker activities. It will not have worked if it is just an internal cleaning and clarifying. I hope that we will all feel and see the benefit. I am aware of others who have done the course and can see benefits from them.

By letting you know I have started on this journey some of you may ask how it is going and get the latest bulletin. I wrote an allegory in January about a tired old pot plant being returned to the garden centre for reviving. It was kept in for the weekend, observed, given compost and fertiliser, and sent home to grow, with an invitation to be brought back regularly for more care and TLC. I wonder what will flourish. Friends with green fingers can help my growth.



*Melvyn Freake*  
*Wanstead Meeting*

## **Celebration of the life of Geoffrey Hemingway**

**12<sup>th</sup> February 1921 to 2<sup>nd</sup> December 2013**

Geoff was an inspiration and joy to be with. He was a man with a ready smile, steadfast integrity, and a way of making you feel special. He lived his Quakerism fully, and managed to combine a deep commitment with an infectious sense of humour, all without fuss and display. He was always helpful, quietly doing everything no one else was doing. He let his life speak.

Geoff was born in East London and the family moved to Leigh on Sea when he was four. As a teenager he became a Christian pacifist. When war began he went to a public meeting at the Quaker Meeting house in Leigh and decided he would like to serve with the Friends Ambulance Unit (FAU) abroad. He registered as a conscientious objector but this was not easy. He needed to make two attempts and get a letter of support from his Methodist church. Then there was a frustrating delay before the FAU had a job for him and that was in farming. During the delay he changed his allegiance to the Quaker Meeting becoming one of only four people still in the area.

In 1942 the FAU sent him abroad to a variety of different jobs, first in Sicily and then southern Italy and he very much enjoyed the work and getting to know other FAU members. His last job with the FAU was to take surplus army fabric to the nuns to make clothes for the poor. Before he left this grew into quite a major project in almost all the churches in and around Naples. He stayed on after the war to work with the United Nations Relief and Rehabilitation Administration (UNRRA), which after living on picket money, enabled him to earn enough for the fees to go to university at the London School of Economics.

After a spell working in England he went to South Korea to join a relief team organised by American and British Quakers, 1953-56. His main role was in establishing hospital and health administration, and here he met his future wife Ann, a midwife from Dublin. He also helped Korean women, recently widowed in the war, to build their own homes using wattle and daub and rammed earth. When he visited in 1997 he was pleased to see some were still standing. He was also very delighted, not long before he died, to be sent some photos of their time there. Some time after his

return from Korea he was ‘head-hunted’ to chair the Work Camps Committee at Friends House.

Geoff and Ann set up home in Leigh on Sea and he worked at the Hammersmith and West London College where he lectured in, and published a book on, Business Finance. He and Ann, already in their late thirties to forties, had three children, two girls and a boy. While the family were young there were five boys, recommended by a social worker friend, who came to stay from time to time for a holiday by the sea. One of them, who has made good, is still in touch. Later, when he was a prison visitor they occasionally invited (ex) prisoners to come when they were released from prison, either for a few days or for a meal once a week.

Geoff and Ann supported the Medical Foundation for the Victims of Torture and saw an appeal in their magazine for people to offer holidays to refugees. They also offered holidays through Chris Gwyntopher’s Spare Room system. Their visitors, some deeply traumatised, benefitted from the friendship, generosity and trust they received, and several become personal friends. Geoff would sometimes support their residency applications.

Geoff never became a member of the Society of Friends, preferring action to talk and committees. He was described as “more Quaker than a Quaker.” If he could see anything which needed doing he was always the person who worked behind the scene to see that things worked smoothly. He has given tremendous service as unpaid caretaker of Leigh Meeting house for 50 or more years, seeing to bookings and payments and getting estimates for work done, and seeing it through. After secondary glazing in the 1970s he was involved in insulating the roof. He looked after the garden at one time and made compost bins for it. When dustmen no longer collected from dust-bins he made it his job to come to the Meeting House on collection day to put out the black sacks. He emptied the collection boxes after Meeting always rounding up the figures to bank, keeping meticulous records.

Geoff has always been an expert re-cycler. He was “green” long before it was fashionable. He collected wood from skips and brought it home in a wheelbarrow to use, first on an open fire, then in a wood burner in the living room. Four years ago they moved to a more manageable bungalow where they put in solar panels and

another wood burner. He has never owned a car. He used his garage as a work place for his handiwork.

He also used his wheelbarrow on his regular trips to the allotment. He grew vegetables in both the allotment and his garden and loved to give his fresh produce away. Even a few months before his death Geoff was thoroughly and carefully digging a builder's bag full of sharp sand into his garden, really pleased to have been able to finish the job. He was a staunch member of Leigh Allotments Orchard Group, which has planted a collection of old Essex fruit trees.

As well as his work in the FAU and in Korea he has always had a deep concern for world peace. He organised and made the props for a peace float in the Southend Carnival for several years and he and Ann went to stay twice at the peace camp outside the American cruise missile base at Molesworth. He was a keep member of the Campaign for Nuclear Disarmament and a founder member of the Southend Christian Peace Group, for which, among other things, he organised annual vigils outside Southend library, with posters and leafleting for the Campaign Against the Arms Trade. He made sure there were ample supplies of white poppies for distribution each autumn. Southend Stop the War Campaign began life in his house. At the age of 81 he was one of the million marching against war in Iraq, just the last of many demonstrations that he attended.

Geoff was very involved with the United Nations Association (UNA). As treasurer he used to organise collectors on an annual basis. Sometimes there were so many 'coppers' in the boxes he would take them to the bank in his wheelbarrow. He never worried what people thought! On Street Collections for Amnesty International, Geoff's tin would always be groaning with coins. This was partly because of the hours he would put in, but it was also testament to the fact that people instinctively trusted him, responded to his delightful smile and accepted the clear and sincere way he would explain things to them. And all that carried through into talks he would give to a variety of groups on Amnesty and the United Nations Association. Southend Amnesty Group had a stall at Shoebury East Beach where a Black Gay Pride event was taking place. T-shirts came from Head Office carrying the Gay, Lesbian, Bi-sexual and Transgender logo of a rainbow and the words 'Love is a Human Right.' Geoff promptly removed his shirt and donned

the Amnesty one, spending the afternoon chatting to the visitors and giving out leaflets.

Geoff was a quiet and regular presence with Ann in Meeting and someone who inspired absolute trust. He worked quietly and efficiently at whatever task he set himself, always with integrity. He did so much for the Meeting but always in a self-effacing manner. His was a faith lived out quietly and significantly in experience. He was loved by children and adults alike.



**Leigh on Sea**

Meeting for worship is held

Sundays at 10:30 at *Friends*

*Meeting House 18*

*Dundonald Drive Leigh*

*on Sea Essex SS9 1NB*

## **High Leigh All Age Conference 2013 'Unleashing our Power, Sharing our Gifts'!!!**

This year our All Age Conference was a self-help affair, and what a range of talents and gifts we had to share and enjoy together!

We tried to ensure that for every session there was an option of something creative, something 'meaty' to discuss, and a spiritual and experiential option for the adults and often 2 or more children's options.

This year our Friday evening ice-breaker was a book swap, which proved to be very engaging, offering a chance to talk at some depth with your chosen books original owner about something they were passionate about – as well as take away a great read!! I have certainly enjoyed my book. It was also exciting to discover who had chosen 'your' book!!

We were lucky to have plenty of inspiring children's volunteers, and I was particularly impressed with the confidence and enthusiasm and the discipline of the children this year.

On Saturday evening we had our usual ceildh, and it was delightful to watch the children perform their puppet plays (with home made puppets) they had created earlier in the day.

In addition to our usual dancing, we also had a pianist and several (amateur) musicians who played a little jazz, and a wonderful handbells 'concert' of 3 pieces learnt just a few hours previously!!

There was also a visiting Jazz band resident at High Leigh over the weekend celebrating and saying farewell to their 90 year old and much beloved keyboard player, and a few of us went over to listen to their impromptu music later on Saturday night. It was a privilege to share those minutes with them.

The 'spiritual' sessions this year included an introduction to mindfulness, an 'experiment with light' and a gentle yoga session, plus an in-depth reflection on truth. For some of us the weekend also had something of a 'retreat quality'.

I guess there will always be a feeling of regret that there were sessions we couldn't attend due to clashes of interest. I would love to have gone to the session on the Middle East for example, and to have done some felt making. (I saw someone else's wonderful creation).

As for the children they just loved the den making. Their enthusiasm was palpable – and very serious!!!

The scavenger hunt during meeting for worship was a great idea – very engaging, and I was so impressed by their very quiet and disciplined entry into the silence holding their little trophies, and later sharing them.

So a big thank you to all those on the committee, and to everyone who helped in so many ways to make High Leigh once more such a delightful, creative and inspiring time. Someone commented to me

that she felt it was particularly stress free this year! Of course it was not without some ups and downs, but I personally found the committee very supportive, resilient and hardworking to be with over the weekend.

Thank you



*Angela Greenwood (convenor)  
High Leigh All-Age Conference 2013*

From Isobel(Val's daughter)



My point of view - High Leigh didn't disappoint, even 12 years on from my last visit. The activities this year were varied and enjoyable although returning as a parent of two young children I tended to enjoy the puppet making, the den building and the scavenger hunt with them. This visit was not really about me taking part in the adult workshops but seeing how much my children loved the activities laid on for them. I returned to share the magic of High Leigh with them. It worked as they have already asked to return next year.

*Jasmine's point of view - I really loved the den building and making a 'soup' out of leaves in the can they gave me. I made a friend (Imogen) and we hid in the willow trees and she helped me make the den. I made a cave lady puppet and all the children did a puppet show and I stayed up with the other children.*

Jasmine & Issy

## **Economic Mythbusters Course**

Sue Gibson and I recently took part in the seven-week on-line "Economic Mythbusters" course. The course was delivered by the New Economics Foundation with input from QPSW. Each week there were talks by experts on the current economic situation and opportunities to ask questions and take part in discussions with other course participants. Some key aims of the course were to enable participants to be more informed about our national finances/expenditure and more confident in challenging government and media rhetoric on the UK economic situation. Here are a few surprising facts we learned:-

- Britain's national debt is smaller now than for most of the last 300 years and the UK has not defaulted on its debt at any point during the last 250 years.
- Austerity has not worked – it is self-defeating. Spending will reduce national debt.
- Tax competition (where countries compete to lower taxes) does not support a successful economy and is always harmful.
- The proportion of national income spent on welfare has remained surprisingly constant in the past 20 or so years.
- In 2011-12, 20.8% of benefits expenditure was spent on employed people on low incomes. (The cost of housing is a real issue here.)
- In 2011-12, only 2.6% of benefits expenditure was on able-bodied unemployed people.

The course and recommended reading was extremely informative. With QPSW input, we were challenged to consider some fundamental questions such as what are the levels of economic literacy amongst our politicians and journalists and what would a “good economy” look like?

### **Further Reading**

If you read only one thing on this topic, I would recommend the report by the Baptist Union of GB; the Methodist Church; the Church of Scotland and the United Reformed Church called: “The Lies We Tell Ourselves: ending comfortable myths about poverty” (published 2013; downloadable from internet).

### **Our Area Meeting**

At Area Meeting in May, the report given on Meeting for Sufferings made reference to the effects of austerity measures (cuts) specifically on those on low incomes.

### **AM minute 13.68 (second part)**

“We question the call for ‘austerity’, when this is merely a disguise for calling the poorest in society to carry the burden of cuts to public welfare. Friends are urged to continue to send to the

Recording Clerk examples they have come across in their lives, working or voluntary, of the effects of the cuts or how better the financial crisis might be handled.”

Would it be useful for us as an Area Meeting to pool our experiences/knowledge about the effects of the cuts or how the financial crisis might be handled better? Are Local Meetings routinely discussing social justice issues? One small step Bethnal Green LM has taken is to join Housing Justice. Is there anything else we as an Area Meeting can do?

**Daphne Stedman (Bethnal Green LM)**  
1 July 2013

## AMY Cawson in Thailand

In August 2013, I am moving to Thailand for 12 months to teach English (TESOL) in a secondary school with the organisation Project Trust. This volunteer work will take place in Muang Samsip, a rural community in the North-East of Thailand, close to the border of Laos.



In addition to teaching English in the classroom, I hope to offer the students more opportunities for improving their education outside the classroom, with an array of extra-curricular activities. During the school holidays, I will also be involved in other projects, such as providing assistance in a special needs school, teaching in a monastery or community projects. This extra involvement will allow me to wholly engage with the local community there to enable me to develop strong bonds with the students and their friends and families.



Travelling to another part of the world, completely out of my comfort zones and unknown to me, will stretch me in more ways than one. What I hope, and what I have found so far through fundraising and preparation, is that such volunteer work has come to light through my Quaker

background. From my involvement in young Quakers since 11 years of age, I have been introduced to and moved by the social work of Quakers both locally and worldwide. By teaching young Thai students the English language and helping them to grow into individuals through other extra-curricular activities, I hope to introduce to them the values I have developed through Quakers.

I have been involved in Quakers from the age of two, which has encouraged me to live adventurously in the Quaker spirit. My parents always took me to Children's Meeting and at eleven I attended my first Summer School at Saffron Walden Friends School. After four years at Summer School, I started attending Senior Conference at Sibford School. Young Friends have played a major part in my life. From Friends Southern Summer Events, I became involved in Junior Young Friends(JYF), London Link and Junior Yearly Meeting(JYM). At 15 I took on my first role of responsibility on the committee of JYF, which I have been a part of for 3 years. When I was 17, I became a Base Group Facilitator at Senior Conference and at 18 became a Base Group Facilitator at JYM last April at Kidderminster working with Simon Colbeck who was one my mentors. From attending Children's Meeting, Summer School, Senior Conference, Junior Yearly Meeting and other events likewise, I have listened to influential Quakers and organisations such as Amnesty, talk about how the values peace, simplicity, truth and equality are essential for human development. This is what has encouraged me to take part in this volunteer work and this, I hope, is one of the fundamental aspects I will bring to my Thai students.

The full extent of how this year in Thailand will affect me is still unclear. I hope that being part of the local community in Muang Samsip will develop my spiritual understanding of how other people live and work. I have grown up with Quaker influences my whole life and as well as introducing this to the Thai community, I hope to learn from them and expand my own values. After returning, I hope to continue my work with Young Friends. I have been offered a place at York University to study Philosophy in 2014 and when I was at Yearly Meeting Gathering at York in 2009 I was impressed by Friends in York. I know the University has a strong Young Quaker movement and I hope to be involved with this. I hope that my life experiences so far, added to my experiences in Thailand, will develop my own spiritual understanding and this in turn will affect my personal development and my further involvement with Quakers in later life.

Project Trust has over 40 years of experience sending school leavers, like myself, overseas to volunteer in over 60 different countries. For this opportunity, I needed to raise a total of £6,400. £5,400 of which will go directly to Project Trust, divided between my travel expenses, support overseas, training and insurance, as well as their operating expenses and recruitment to

help other young people in years to come. £1,000 will go to the cost of my visas, inoculations and other expenses that I might incur.

So far I have raised around £5,400 through fundraising and sponsorship, especially from Quaker Trusts such as North East Thames Quaker Trust, George Gorman Trust, John Bodycock Trust and support from the local Jack Petchey Trust through my involvement in school projects, a Quiz at Harlow Meeting House and finally my own savings from having a part time job at Sainsbury's. <http://www.hertsandessexobserver.co.uk/News/Bishops-Stortford/Bishops-Stortford-sixth-formers-Far-Eastern-adventure-20130606145250.htm>

This volunteer work with Project Trust is a culmination of all the activities I have been involved with mostly through Friends. I am very grateful for the support from everyone in helping me reach my fundraising target.

**Amy  
Harlow Meeting**

*Quakers Together Day*  
*On Saturday, 14<sup>th</sup> September 2013*  
*10am to 4pm*  
*At Wanstead FMH*



*Landscapes of the Spirit*  
***This will be the third 'Quakers Together Day' arranged by AM Elders. It will offer an opportunity for Friends and Attenders to reflect together on our spiritual journey using the Appleseed process.***

***We will use a variety of ways such as pictures, creative arts-based responses and worship sharing. None require artistic ability or talent.***

***The day will be facilitated by Kirsty McQueen and Margarete Briggs.***

***The format will be the same as in previous years.  
Tea, coffee, juices, biscuits and cakes will be provided by Elders. Please bring a lunch to share with all.  
Once again we suggest a contribution of £5.***

***Please return the slip by Friday, 31 August 2013 to Margarete Briggs,  
11, Home Close, Harlow, Essex, CM20 3PD or e-mail  
[mbcamino.06@gmail.com](mailto:mbcamino.06@gmail.com)  
I/We***

.....

***of (Local Meeting): .....***

***would like to come to the 'Quakers Together Day'***

***on Saturday, 14.9.2013 from 10am-4pm at***

***Wanstead Friends Meeting House.***

***Contribution of £.....enclosed/pay on day***



## Diary Dates Sept – Dec 2013

<b>September 2013</b>			
Sat 14 <sup>th</sup>	2 – 4 pm	Wanstead	Quakers Together Day
Sat 21 <sup>st</sup>	am	Harlow	NETAQM Trustee committee
Sat 21 <sup>st</sup>	2 pm	Harlow	Area Meeting
<b>October 2013</b>			
Sat 5 <sup>th</sup>		Friends House	Meeting for Sufferings
Wed 9 <sup>th</sup>	7 pm	Walthamstow	AM Elders and Overseers
Wed 16 <sup>th</sup>	7 pm	Wanstead	AM Finance Committee
Wed 23 <sup>rd</sup>	6 pm	Romford	Area Meeting
<b>November 2013</b>			
Sat 23 <sup>rd</sup>	am	Wanstead	NETAQM Trustee committee
Sat 23 <sup>rd</sup>	2 pm	Wanstead	Area Meeting
<b>December 2013</b>			
Sat 7 <sup>th</sup>		Friends House	Meeting for Sufferings