

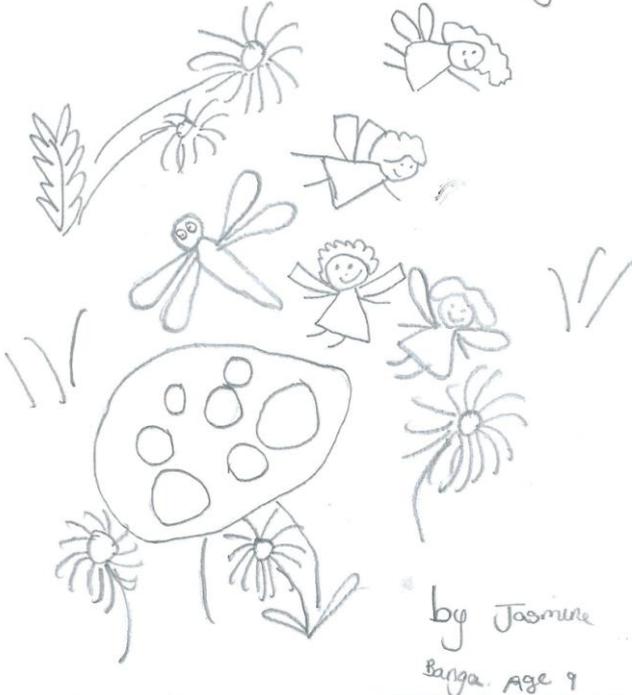
NETAM

NORTH EAST THAMES AREA MEETING

NEWSLETTER

JUNE 2014

Fairy friends
at Romford children's meeting!!



From the Editor

It was a bit of a shock when Christine Downes-Grainger kindly 'reminded' me that it was Romford's turn to edit the area newsletter. She forwarded me the guidelines and we have tried to rise to the challenge.

So, this edition begins with a focus on Romford Meeting, moves into some articles written by Area Members including some poems and concludes with some Local Meeting reports and related matters.

Romford Meeting is a small meeting with only five or six members who regularly attend and a similar number of regular attenders. We are strong spiritually and have a good community spirit. In addition there is a Children's meeting which meets most weeks and as well as the drawing on this page by Jasmine, the children have contributed to this newsletter. In addition I encouraged our regular members to write about themselves to give a picture of the meeting. They have all done so 'willingly' as you will see from Nora's contribution. We are at the end of a major refurbishment project consequent to our quinquennial and we are grateful that Six Weeks Meeting has been able to finance this. We are

now hoping to recruit a volunteer warden to live in the bungalow that adjoins the meeting house. Details will be circulated soon.

I am grateful too for the two contributions concerning **High Leigh**, news about a local **Bee Community**, a report about the work of **CPSW** and some **Grave News** from Wanstead. Clearly we could also publish an area collection of **Poetry** and then there are reports from **Bethnal Green**, with a supplement about **Encouraging Attenders**, and **Epping** followed by some **Forward Thinking** from our clerk, David Irwin and Judith Roads.

I hope you enjoy reading this newsletter, I have enjoyed compiling it and look forward to reading the next edition which will be published by Walthamstow in October.

In Friendship

Peter Rivers

Argie Bargie from Nora Kelson

When the Editor of this newsletter suggested that I should write something for it, I kept thinking but could not come up with anything interesting to write about. Then the idea of writing about Enid (see below) came to me, and it seemed a really good solution to what was becoming a bit of a problem in my mind.

I drafted it, then went to see Enid, then decided to re-write it, so I felt very satisfied when I sent it. When I got a message asking me for my piece for the newsletter, I wondered had I not done it right? No! Apparently the idea was that I and others should write about ourselves ... I have to confess to feeling somewhat deflated, and resolved not to give in. I had done my bit.

By the next morning my conscience was giving me trouble. I had only been asked for a short piece, why was I making such heavy weather of it? Reflecting on reasons, I had to admit to not feeling at all happy to have to write about myself. Maya Angelou, who has recently died, said ... "if you are always trying to be normal, you will never know how amazing you can be"... I know what she meant, but from where I'm standing I also know how amazing it can feel to be 'normal' or, avoiding the debatable and overused word, how great it can feel to blend into the background!

Born in Argentina, my Salvation Army upbringing was unusual. As a child my very blond hair stood out among my friends with thick, glossy, black hair. The mix of British, Swiss, Argentinian and other nationalities in my family all added to feeling different at an age when I longed to belong, to conform. I don't think I have been trying to 'be normal' ever since, but I guess I still prefer not to put my head too far above the parapet.

It was much later in life, though, that I understood that you don't need to be a Salvationist, blond 'argie' to feel different. So many people have that feeling of being 'the outsider' – the one who does not belong. The difference now is that, although I'm still reluctant to talk about myself, I have come to a place where I feel I belong. I belong to my table tennis group, to the folk club, to my other music groups. But I also very much belong to my Quaker community in Romford!

Enid, The Reluctant Recruit talks with Nora

Enid Holmes, a member of Romford Local Meeting for many years, is now 92 years young. Any age related limitations have not stopped her taking an active part in life.

Once a week she goes with a friend to a lunch club meeting, and a couple of months ago it was suggested she should give a talk. She entitled it "the reluctant recruit" about how she was conscripted to the Women's Services (ATS) at the tender age 20.

Her mother had died when Enid was six, and as a young person, close to her father and her aunt who brought her up, leaving home in that way was a real shock. Also, during this time her brother was taken prisoner when Singapore fell, and worked in the infamous railway. He was eventually reported missing, so that the family had no idea whether he was dead or alive. However, not all her experiences were negative, as she feels that her character and determination in life were strengthened as a result.

It was also during this period that she first came across Quakers. Without hot water for five weeks while in Yorkshire, local Friends opened their homes so that some of the girls could have a bath. It was to be a long time after, and as a result of the Falklands conflict, that she herself decided that Quakers were not as narrow minded as she originally thought, and after reading the introductory pack, came to meeting.

The talk must have been really interesting and well received (Enid has a keen sense of humour and she can be very amusing) because a few weeks after she was asked if she would consider doing another talk.

This time she spoke about Quakerism, which she illustrated with various examples of Quaker literature and outreach material. Again the talk was a great success by all accounts. Is Enid the oldest public speaker in this Area?

China, Bees and Textiles - Joan Watson

I spent the first 10 years of my life in China where my Grandfather was a missionary. My father was born there and we lived half the time on the banks of the Yangtze River and half in the Lushan Mountains.

My family and I returned to Britain in 1937 and settled temporarily in Guernsey, as my father wished to retire in China but did not want to take a family of five girls back to China, while the Chinese-Japanese war was still ravaging the country. Unfortunately he died the following year.

In 1940 we left Guernsey as refugees landing on my Aunts' doorstep – she took us in. My next ten years were spent in Liverpool and at Liverpool Art School, and later at the London School of Arts and Crafts.

For 20 years I worked in the Textile Industry in the North of England and during this time I took up Beekeeping.

I am very fond of the North of England but soon realised that the British Textile industry was heading for extinction, so I went to Huddersfield University for a year to do an education Diploma and came south to Havering Technical College where I worked for 20 years.

I brought my bees down South and had them on the flat roof of the gym for some time, until they swarmed at home-going time one day, and stung everybody they could find!! I bought some land for them and grew fruit trees.

While in the North I joined Quakers having met a few in CND and it was when I realised I would not be going back North that I attended Romford Meeting. When I bought my flat in Brentwood, I still decided to attend Romford although I knew a lot of the Brentwood Friends.

Rescued by Animal Lovers – Laurie Hilton



Those of you who are 'Animal Lovers' will appreciate the sad news when one of your charges comes to the end of their life. Over the years we have taken on a few rescue chickens and it has been wonderful to see them come from scruffy pale sad little things with hardly any feathers to healthy contented 'real' chickens pecking round the garden providing us with eggs much of the time. At first we were sad to see them fall sick and have to be killed but they have had a hard life the first year caged with lights on 24 hours a day to keep them in production so the time spent in our garden has in some way made up for that.

Last November after many visits to the vet Megan, our rescue dog, a much loved member of our household had to be put down, we have missed her. So now we have a new member Inca another labrador-collie rescue dog. She will never replace Megan but it is a great joy seeing her develop in her own way.

A Vocation Found – Anna Saunders

I started working with people with learning disabilities 23 years ago, I was 19 and not sure what I wanted to do- someone suggested CSV (Community Service Volunteers). I didn't know much about them but signed up! I was 'placed' in a long stay institution for people with learning disabilities, working in the leisure and recreation department.

About a month later I was living in the nursing home in the middle of Bromham hospital, the hospital housed about a thousand 'residents'. It was a brutal place, loud, chaotic, there was a lot of laughter and love but also a lot of violence and pain.

I loved the job but not the place - I found my vocation but was sure that there was a better way to support people. After a couple of years, I moved back to East London and worked in day centres and residential homes, mainly with people labelled as having 'challenging behaviour'. I find that people are usually a whole lot less 'challenging' if you listen to what they are trying to tell you - sounds simple but so many people find it so hard to do.

20 years later after training and practising as a nurse and social worker I am now a commissioner for a large local authority, much more office based but still trying to find that better way to support people and still listening to what people want. In times of decreased budgets it becomes more and more of a challenge but I have always liked a challenge and can't imagine ever doing anything else.

Up-cycling with David Harris - attender at Romford meeting

Over the past few years there has been a growing interest in the re-purposing of old and tired furniture. Not only to make it functional but to also make it a thing of beauty fit for a modern style-conscious consumer.

This isn't however just a trend for people that want the latest style, there is a more personal ethical story here. Many people have furniture that they just can't bear to part with, possibly because of the family history that goes with it or an unwillingness to buy new. For most it's a desire to be more environmentally aware.

Re-purposing or up-cycling these items can either give them a whole new look that makes you proud to own them again or you may give an object a completely different purpose; for example, I have taken a vintage tennis racket, removed the strings and replaced them with a specially cut mirror that fits the shape perfectly, the result, a truly unique mirror that any tennis lover will treasure forever.

My own relationship with up-cycling is through my business. We spend many hours, sanding, cleaning, painting and waxing old unloved furniture to make it desirable again. This could be old pine bedroom furniture re loved in a cream paint or a dining table and chairs hand painted in white with lovely newly upholstered seat pads.

More locally I have been lucky enough to be gifted several items, some of which were from the Epping meeting house. One item was a rather interesting table with the smallest of drop leaf ends. Once we deemed it fit for purpose we set about removing layers of old varnish, cleaning products and oil from fingers, we then carefully sanded the top right back to its original natural wood, a beautiful oak. We decided to nourish this with a lovely mid tone oak wax and treated the legs to several coats of a lovely green called sea moss.

We were very pleased with the results, such lovely colours. We were even more happy when an older couple from Southend fell in love with it. Now it's enjoying new meals and conversation and hopefully a new heirloom may have been created. We have also re-loved the centre table that we use in meeting for worship in Romford, a rather elegant shade of regency white.

What ever we do, we do it knowing that we have saved a practical and useful item from the scrap yard.

For more information and interesting articles try www.upcycling.co.uk

Wallflowers – Peter Rivers

I thought that I might get away without writing anything about myself, but there is just this small space left and I feel duty bound to follow Nora's steps and write something. I warmed to what she has written because I have also spent my life trying to be invisible.

I was born in Scotland and then lived in a remote part of North Wales until I was seven. I hated my first primary school and can see myself on the edge of the playground, watching. We moved to Shropshire where I had an idyllic childhood in the countryside. I was the tallest and thinnest boy in my grammar school from the third form and stood out in the crowd. I tried to hide my height and although I was academically able, I hated school. Amazingly I went to London University, where I blended into the crowd and so began my love of London. It was here that I first met the Anglican Franciscans. After graduation I went to Kenya as a volunteer and soon after my return I joined the Franciscans. I was a brother for twenty years.

One of the things that I now know I tried to hide was my sexual orientation. I was at school in the sixties when sexual liberation began but it was not okay to be gay. I sometimes think, "if only", but I have had a very fulfilled life and would not really want to change very much about it.

I moved to Upminster with Kevin, my partner, who I have known for more than 35 years. I began attending the parish church but felt moved to explore and visited the Romford Quakers. There is much that is familiar to me in the Quaker ways and I have flourished both at Romford and by becoming a trustee of Quaker Social Action. In October we are moving to Shropshire and I assume that I will transfer to the Southern Marches AM but it has been a privilege to be a member of NTEAM. Thankyou all.

Romford Children's Meeting

How exciting: I'm competing at the Olympic Swimming Pool! - Nathan Banga,

Hi, I'm Nathan and I'm 11 years old. I have been coming to Romford Quaker Meeting since I was about 6 years old and I have had lots of my birthday parties here. Everyone is really friendly at our Meeting and last Sunday at our shared lunch, I was telling everyone that I am particularly excited about the next 2 weekends (7/8 June and 14/15 June) and Peter asked if I would write a little bit about why ...

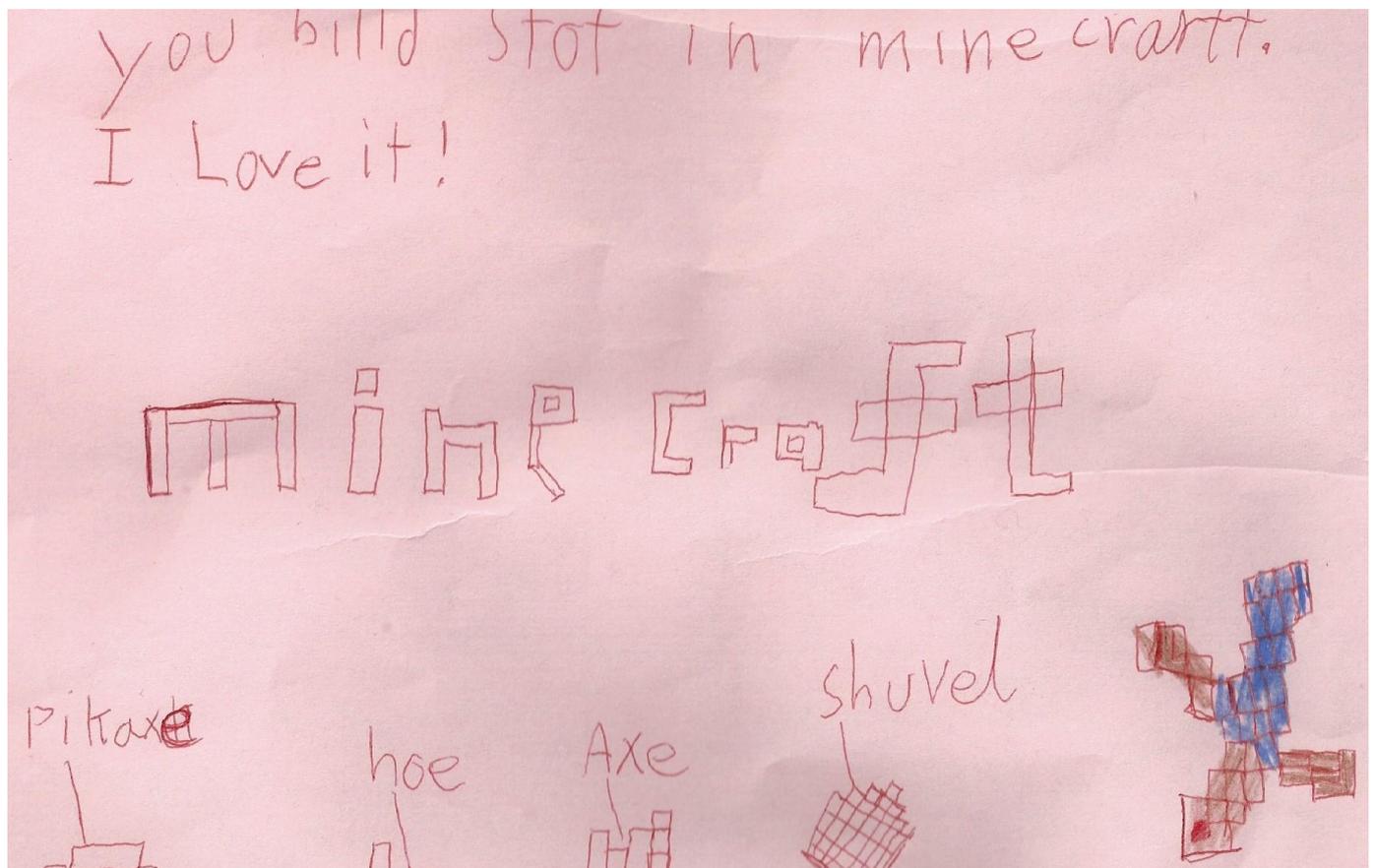
I swim for Romford Town Swimming Club and I train 5 times per week. My favourite stroke is breaststroke and my best race is the 200m breaststroke. I competed at the Essex County Championships at Basildon swimming pool earlier this year – it was very exciting and I wasn't sure I would get a bigger opportunity. But, in April, at a gala in Crawley, I qualified for the London Regional Championships which this year is being held at the OLYMPIC SWIMMING POOL! I am so excited (and a little bit nervous!)

I was lucky enough to see Michael Phelps swim there during the London Olympic Games and I can't quite believe that this weekend, I will be standing on the same blocks he stood on, ready to dive into the same pool he dived into! I'm not expecting to be quite as successful as him, but I am hoping I will get a Personal Best and know that it is a massive achievement to be representing my club at this gala.

Emily Harris

I go to a dance club.
It is called Starsise.
I have a teacher. she is called
MISS Petrina. she is kind.
By EMILY.

Jamie Harris



High Leigh 2014

"The Creative Spirit" Children's Programme - Freddie and Rebecca Fricker

At High Leigh I was happy to see all my friends again. First, in the children's sessions we were making puppets for the show. We made up two different drumming tunes for both of the Dragons: The Blue Dragon and The Red Dragon. In the performance I think we did quite a good job. I was in the Red Dragon.

It was QUITE EXCITING.

Another thing was that I got to play football. Ahh ... lovely football. I also got to play my favourite game which is Ping pong! My favourite session was Rainbow Paths. (Freddie)



I felt very lucky to help with the children's session this year. To witness 25 children of such differing ages (3 to 16 years) work for periods together in a spirit of collaboration, absorption and enjoyment was wonderful.

Chris's magic in visualising and overseeing the creation of dragons and spirits from paper, glue and paint was a joy, Saska's amazing "lets do a drumming workshop - right here" spirit was inspiring, and Anna's patience and ability to distil hundreds of pages of health and safety and safeguarding requirements into a workable process for our gathering was really valued (and to be applauded).

I know my bag of balls and hula hoop was also appreciated for the times we needed to stretch our participants and let them run off energy outside. Whether my "it's not a competition, everyone's a winner, but we *are* going to race" sessions were "Quakerly" is a debate for next time ... ahem ...

We would also like to thank those who braved the glue (and occasional ball) to come and assist! The Rainbow Paths activity, devised by Christine and Iris for the final session, was an excellent last (quiet) burst of creativity for the children as they turned a small group of trees into a sculpture with balls of brightly coloured wool.

We hope many of the children are able to spend time with their friends again next year! (Rebecca)



The Creative Spirit with Alec Davison - David and Ruth Crittenden

Just to let people know that we thoroughly enjoyed our visit to High Leigh at Hoddesdon. It was a good learning experience.

We did not know what to expect and slightly anxious as we did not know what type of people were going to be present, and how much to behave ourselves or just to be ourselves!!!!



The building was lovely and it was very, very clean. Tea and coffee and chocolate were provided in a kitchenette. However we brought a travelling kettle just in case.

The grounds were lovely and when one sat outside on a bench you could see the fountain and surrounding countryside. And one could hear different bird sounds as well some which we did not recognise. There was a very nice view and the hills that we could see in the distance. One could imagine being a Lord or Lady of The Manor and owning the place and having lots of garden parties with cream teas etc and the minuets being played by violinists.



To the left of the building there were woods and different lakes which we would like to explore next time we visit so we will book early to ensure a place. The weather was varied but mostly sunny.

In the mornings breakfast was a varied menu and the selection was very good up to a leisurely 10 am. Then there were events that we could choose to go to. We met many nice people, some of whom we will meet again, and the staff were excellent.

Several of the sessions were led by Alec Davison who was very enthusiastic and encouraged us to free ourselves from restrictive thinking, and make way for the creative spirit to guide us. We also found Angela and Kat kind and helpful in several of the sessions. There was a nice 'ice-breaker' first session on the Friday evening in which we sat in groups and related about ourselves briefly for 1 minute then moved around the room from group to group doing the same.

We had the choice of poetry and music, creative art and music that after one had visualised the picture that the music had conjured up for them we then went into groups of four and talked about the music and each one of us painted a picture what the music had conveyed to them.

There was also a Drama and music session as well, something that we had never done since school days.

So, slightly apprehensive about the drama, as we did not know as to what was expected, or the standard of acting, and also of making a mistake in front of other people. However I suppose all in the same boat, so to speak, we found this liberating, in freeing ourselves, a little, from our usual conformist selves. We had some free time Saturday afternoon that was good too. And mostly, most important, we felt at home even though we were among a lot of strangers we soon made friends.



So thank you to Angela and those who organised the event.

Brenda Geraghty gets the bug

In 2013 I took the opportunity provided by Miriam Gilbey's legacy and joined the local beekeeping association and went on a beekeeping course. I had been considering doing this for some time but the initial outlay seemed large in comparison with my estimation of my chances of success (not an optimist) so I had been procrastinating. A practical course at the local apiary followed the theoretical one and I later acquired a hive and a swarm to house in it. This sounds very simple and straightforward but as in all things it was a little more complicated and considerably more interesting. For a start, the hive I've bought is designed to be more akin to a hive that bees would make naturally in a tree than the commercial and hobby hives usually used these days. There is a movement

towards this more natural way of beekeeping but most people in the beekeeping societies use the commercial types of hive. So, I'm going against the flow on this front.

Basically the commercial type of hive involves rather more work for the beekeeper and much more disturbance to the bees in their active season. You would probably get more honey that way, but that wasn't my reason for starting this. Primarily I'm a gardener concerned by the huge decline in the general insect population - remember when after a long car journey, the windscreen was covered by dead insects? That has long gone.

So, courses done, equipment procured, now I only needed the bees. I had read the books, listened to the talks and discussed the theory. The only question now was, would the bees in a swarm behave as they should? I was somewhat apprehensive when I got a phone call one evening to say there was a swarm in a local garden and could I collect it. Kitted up, I set out, trying for the sake of the cowering householders to look like I'd done this many times before. I believe the bees must have read the same books as I did as they behaved impeccably and totally as predicted. Phew!

Once housed, this was the start of a learning curve that I'm not sure, listening to other beekeepers, ever stops. The concerns over whether to feed, treat for disease, expand the hive or if they'll even survive the winter - the list goes on. One thing I particularly like with my hive is that it has windows in the back which you can look through to see how well the bees are doing and how the comb building is progressing without disturbing them.

I'm very conscious of not making this article too long as I'm finding there is so much I could tell you about.

There was the mad frenzy of fending off the robber bees from another hive last autumn, relief when the smallish hive survived the winter and joy when I saw the masses of new bees this spring after the queen had started laying again.

Although very much a newbie I would strongly encourage anyone who is thinking of keeping some bees to take this opportunity. I have a town garden, not massive, but all the gardens around provide forage. I think that this is better than being in a farming area where, most of the hedgerows having disappeared, the bees are overly dependent on single crops. The Warre hive that I've been talking about doesn't need constant supervision but does provide us with continual interest. I say "us" because my husband has been totally drawn into this enterprise having built another hive just in case! In fact you could say that we've both got the bug now.



Would any friend or attender like to go on a
beekeeping course?

Thanks to a legacy from Mirian Gilby the Area Meeting has £2500 to spend on basic course fees (Level 1 £55) and start-up equipment costs paid (approx max £500)

Please apply to the AM clerk or treasurer

QPSW Spring Conference - Charlotte Holmes

I would like to take this opportunity to thank Area Meeting for supporting my attendance at this inspiring, moving, and eye opening conference. As a relative newcomer to Quakers this conference came at a time when I had begun to question how the activism of individual Quakers relates to Quakers in Britain as a national body, as well as to the peace and grounding I had experienced in meeting for worship. This conference went some way to answering this question, providing an insight into the work of QPSW (Quaker Peace and Social Witness) and an opportunity to reflect on what I could do towards peace and as social witness.

Key topics discussed over the weekend included: This Light that pushes me – Stories of African Peacebuilders; Ending fossil fuel dependency; Why do Quakers care about housing?; The new tide of militarism; Your faith, your finance; Quakers Asylums & Refugee Network; and Peaceworkers.

It's been six weeks since the conference however the words of Zawadi Nikuze, a Peacebuilder from the Democratic Republic of Congo, shared as part of the first workshop I attended, are still ringing in my ears ...

Give what you have.

If God has blessed you with a good smile

Give it to someone

Who is stressed who needs it.

If God has given you the courage of working with the vulnerable people

Go with them

Be near them...

Peace has no price.

Whatever you feel your heart is pushing you to do for peace

No matter how little it is

Do it

Because you just got today

We don't know what will happen tomorrow.

If you would like to know more about the work of QPSW, in the first instance please ask Friends at your local meeting, I was surprised to learn of all the activity that is already happening in my area. More info can also be found at www.quaker.org.uk/qpsw as well as the various pamphlets and publications circulated to meetings and members.

Grave Words - Melvyn Freake

What was it like being told to enlist during WW1? The centenary of WW1 led me to wonder about decisions Friends had to make about enlisting in 1916. Sufferings in September 1915 had stated: 'Our conviction that war is morally wrong is based on the revelation by Jesus Christ of the character of God and the worth of manhood; and we feel that we are bound by loyalty to Him to refuse to take part in the slaughter of our fellow-men.' The decision was, however, for the individual conscience and men had to balance the Societies' stated view against, for example, the campaign to give those out of uniform a white poppy.

I decided to see who, buried at Wanstead, fell into the time frame and track down any information I could find. Towards the end of the war, London Yearly Meeting asked Monthly Meetings to complete a record of war service for those within the age range. I was able to compare these forms with the records of those buried at Wanstead and come up with 16 names. The plan was to track down Tribunal or war service records, testimonies and any other information I could find. Tribunal records have been mainly destroyed but The Friend reported them. So did the Ilford Guardian.

I was recently working in the grounds at Wanstead and tidying up graves to keep ivy, brambles and

other uninvited guests at bay. This led me to read the inscriptions as well as tidying – making the job slower but more interesting. There were names of men who were not included in the records of service. There were names of those who were likely to be parents of those on the list. There were spouses of those on the list. There were women who never married but who may have lost a partner during the war. I now felt that just to look at those on the list was not enough.

Local and Area Meeting records of the years are surprisingly quiet about how Friends were feeling about and facing the issues. One man delayed his application because he was imprisoned because of his conscientious objection; and MM took their time before accepting him into membership. Another resigned his membership because he was a conscripting officer and his son had enlisted. In both cases the matters were reported as membership matters rather than because Meetings for Worship for Business were sharing together their struggles.

My original plan was to do this as a project for the Equipping for Ministry course I am doing at Woodbrooke. I have now decided that the work would be too time consuming to fit in this year. It also does not need to be completed within 2014. I am doing the course to decide what my ministry might be and I am therefore prioritising other EFM work and looking at a different project. But my investigations will continue on a slower time frame.

It would be interesting to hear what other meetings are considering doing. This can be original work. But it need not be. BYM and Woodbrooke both have plans and material that can be used.

Living in Epping Forest - Christine Downes-Grainger November 2013

We came here in 2008
Too busy learning the traffic flow
And which lane we had to be in
To notice the Forest much
Beside the road

2009, I had to be places on time
Helping mind the grandchildren
But a stag with full antlers
Crossed the Epping New Road in front of me
At eleven one morning

In 2010 I was too distraught
To look at what I was going past

But in the fourth year, 2011
When the bracken was down
And the leaves had fallen from the trees
And the brambles were dead above the ground
I was amazed at how far I could see
Through to places I did not know existed

Death, though painfully unwelcome, brings
clarity

To aspects that I did not even know were there
And now I love the reveal

When the bustling busyness of the leaves falls
away

And the green cloaks turn orange and gold
Strong, sinewy branches snake through the
trees

The dark supportive framework shows

The Angel Card said, *Someone you have lost
Loves you very much and is watching over you*
A robin or a butterfly, that will be their sign

The day is cold and wet
But a full red leaf floats gently and precisely
Onto the handlebars of a grandchild's scooter
As we walk home from school

They want you to be happy
I am

Love — By Martin Mason, written about 1662

The lines below occur at the end of a short tract entitled "An Expostulation with the Bishops in England Concerning their Jurisdiction over the People of God called Quakers," etc. Dated, "The 5th of the 7th Month [September] 1662. Very little is known of this Friend, though he suffered a good deal of imprisonment in Lincoln gaol. He was one concerned in the schism caused by John Perrot, about taking off the Hat in time of prayer; and he seems to have had some tender feelings towards him, as he wrote some verses to his memory.

Love is a vertue that endures for ever;
A link of matchless Jewels none can sever.
Had I the Tongue of Men and Angels too,
If Love were wanting what good could I do?
Love far surmounts all earthly Diadems,
Though deckt with Pearls, with Rubies and with
Jems;
Love is the life of all things under th' Sun,

Love must the Lawrel wear, when all is done.
Love's eye is tender, Love does gently draw
The mind to God, without a penal Law.
Love thinks no ill, Love never did invent,
Fines, Praemunire, Goals nor Banishment
For Innocents, Love hath no spleen nor Gall,
Love's like the Royal Sun; Love shines on All

Kingsgate Beach Cave - Angela Greenwood June 1999

I found this rather long poem written years ago and it reminded me that I miss our AM retreats, when we used to go to Charney Manor and other places, for a quiet weekend away from thinking and business, to enter the silence and just wait and see and perhaps reflect.

Several times in that peaceful state I found myself writing what turned out to be quite reflective poems rooted in the present moment experience of nature.

Having read this Cave poem through I realised that with just a little editing it expresses much of what I currently feel, and I like the evocative atmosphere of the cave, which is still vivid in my mind, and which gave birth to the poem.

If it is suitable I would be happy for it to be included in the Newsletter, with an introductory note perhaps, as to how it came about, and how I found it recently and discovered that the experience still felt alive and relevant (if you exchange Kossovo for Syria!!)

The cave
Is open to the sea
Protected from the storms
To come

To be present in each moment
Fully present
Until a new moment is born
Is all

Out on the island
The birds are flashing their wings
In the sun
Surrounded by waves
Breaking over the rocks
Chalky and white
Piercing the calm
Whispering sea
With twinkling white bubbles

Peace
A gentle breeze
Sun
And shadows
And memories
Of caves and chalk cliffs
And youth

The flies cling to the page
Waiting
Content just to be
Till the next time

Gliding and reeling
A seagull swoops
Over the rocky island
And up into its cleft
The coo of pigeons in the cave
Gagging together
Excited
Hopeful
Then calm

The ships
At rest on the horizon
Waiting for the tide
Suddenly
The birds all rise
And turn
And squeal away

What have they sensed
What subtleties
What connections

What hints and recognitions
Have we lost
This fast computer age

This age of communication
Somehow lacks communication
With the Source
With Nature
With the voice of things
which really matter

Such beauty in a quiet place
Shielded from the turmoil
of the world

Whilst far away in Kosovo
A desiccation reigns

We can not separate from them
Though we may wish to try
Our Shadows will stay with us still
And catch us unawares
Speak then
O 'Still Small Voice'
Tune up our senses
Once again

Until we see that shadow side
Hidden under our comfortable peace
The conflicts we see far away
The conflicts we deride
The conflicts we so readily 'disown'
Will really be inside

Light sparkling on water
Illuminating dark pockets in the cave
Reminding us perhaps
Of the underground
Of the shadow
Slowly we extend our shrunken selves
And reach out into life
And reach out into joining up
With others
Not pushing and rushing
But melding gently together
Like we always knew
But for generations perhaps forgot
Was how to be
Sharing with others at last
A sympathy
A symphony of harmonies
Amidst the clattering rush
Of busyness
Which sometimes feels so important
And blocks out
The Light

Here, look, a surprise
A song springs out
Unexpectedly Surprisingly
Inspiring hope perhaps in our
Wounded world
Our world so hard to help

Speak then
O Still Small Voice
Tune up our senses
Once again

Report on the Life of Bethnal Green LM March 2014

The past year has seen further growth in numbers at Bethnal Green LM. We were delighted in 2013 that two attenders applied and were accepted into membership, increasing to four the number of active members. Currently we have around six regular attenders. We value the presence and commitment of all who share in the life of the Meeting. Weekly average attendance at MfW rose from six in 2012 to seven in 2013. In recent months there have been new faces and visitors on most Sundays.

Daphne is in her second year as LM Clerk and Sue in her second year as LM Treasurer. From January 2014 Ray replaced Daphne as our representative on AM Nominations. Daphne became an AM Trustee in January 2014 and in this capacity has offered to be the Trustee overseeing AM documentation including role descriptions, policies and procedures. Saska Plowman has joined the High Leigh Committee and Gemma Tighe recently took on the role of AM contact for London Quakers. Charlotte Holmes will be an AM representative at the QPSW conference later this month.

We continue to hold a discussion group on the third Sunday in the month, and in November 2013, Daphne hosted an evening event where the Swarthmore Lecture 2013 was heard and discussed. We are keen to develop more opportunities like this for discussion/sharing, and have recently re-introduced Afterword after Meeting for Worship on Sundays.

In May 2013 our first midweek Meeting for Worship was held on the fourth Wednesday in the month at QSA. Ray Leary is our "duty elder" at these meetings. Following a trial period of six months, these monthly meetings are ongoing, and are followed by a shared lunchtime. One aim of this is to strengthen links with QSA. Members of the Meeting have volunteered with QSA in the past year, helping with office tasks and last November two members of staff from QSA joined one of our discussion groups to talk about their work in the local area.

In September 2013 we hosted one of the Quaker Quest meetings in the series organised by Wanstead and Walthamstow Local Meetings and held at Bethnal Green Mission Church. The subject was 'God'. Geoffrey Durham, Chandu Christian and Chris Evans were guest speakers. It was a good opportunity for the meeting to work together and plan the event, along with Friends from other LMs. Seven people turned up from Bethnal Green LM.

During 2013 we continued to explore different models of Eldership and Oversight. In August 2013 Daphne and Ray attended a Woodbrooke course on Eldership and Oversight in Non-Standard systems and facilitated a discussion on models of Eldership and Oversight at the AM Elders and Overseers meeting in October 2013. Following further discernment we felt it right to ask AM Nominations to consider bringing forward to AM the names of the four currently active members of our Local Meeting to serve as Elders and Overseers.

We believe good Eldership and Oversight are essential to the spiritual life of a meeting and to the growth of all participants in a Quaker Meeting. Several of us visited Florence Assie in 2013, though we are aware that we have little contact with other members we don't see at Meeting for Worship.

We feel challenged and uncertain as the Meeting grows. We are aware of the need to consider provision for children though none of us has experience of running a Children's Meeting. We sometimes feel isolated in our dilemmas about how to respond to the changing make-up of the Meeting. We wonder if there may be any possibilities for mentoring by long-standing members of the Religious Society of Friends, or for Eldership and Oversight to be shared across Local Meeting boundaries.

Daphne Stedman, Clerk, Bethnal Green LM

Meeting for Eating - Ray Leary (Bethnal Green Meeting)

How can we make the meeting a community in which each person is accepted and nurtured, and strangers are welcome? - Advice and Queries 18.

Sunday 18th May was quietly important for Bethnal Green Local Meeting. It was our first breakfast meeting, something we have been trying to organize for over a year, and it was the last meeting that Rex Regan will attend before he moves to Edinburgh.

Eight regulars turned up for breakfast. It took on an informal tone and it was good to see everyone interacting and laughing together. Five more people joined us for Meeting for Worship and the stillness and silence blended with the spring breeze and birdsong blowing in through the windows.

Rex had to leave early, but during afterword Sue Gibson recalled one of the first times she attended MfW at Bethnal Green. The talk then was of laying the meeting down, but Rex had said, "Let's not talk about this for six months." Now, three years on, the fact that all the chairs in the room were taken when Sue spoke reflected how sound that thought was.

It also highlights how far the meeting has come in a short space of time, which brings with it a number of challenges. Daphne Stedman, our clerk, is an important link to what has gone before as most in attendance now have been part of the meeting for less than three years. One classic Quaker phrase contains the words 'rooted' and 'new' and this seems to pose a puzzle: how can something be firm and solid but also embrace change?

Our meeting is struggling with this question as it grows. Realistically there are three active members at Bethnal Green, two of whom have been such for a little over a year. There are two ways the meeting could deal with this: we could pile all the responsibilities on to the shoulders of our clerk and leave her to get on with literally everything; or we can opt to share roles and take on duties that perhaps some would say we are not ready to perform. What Quaker Faith & Practice has to say about this is pertinent: "All members are part of the clergy and have the clergy's responsibility for the maintenance of the meeting as a community. This means helping to contribute, in whatever ways are most suitable, to the maintenance of an atmosphere in which spiritual growth and exploration are possible for all."

We need to ensure we are offering support to attenders, particularly as recent figures show that average attendance during May at our MfW has been eleven. We have worked hard at this, and between us attended four Woodbrooke courses to learn more about Quaker roles within the meeting and what is required to continue upholding it.

The challenges this brings are highlighted by the question of Eldership and Oversight. We have had support with this in the past but we felt it was necessary for us as a Local Meeting to take on the responsibilities and commitments E&O demands. We have looked at and discussed various models we could use, but at this stage of our development the only way we can truly be of service is in a corporate manner. This involves the whole meeting, making Eldership and Oversight a shared responsibility between the gathered group along with the guidance of members.

We had the opportunity to consider various ways of implementing this when we met at Woodbrooke with representatives of other meetings that have similar issues [around one hundred meetings nationwide have 'special pastoral arrangements']. From feedback we have received from attenders and enquirers Bethnal Green appears to be welcoming, and as the numbers who return continues to grow then our tentative steps seem to be heading in the right direction.

Now we are considering ways of encouraging attenders to be more involved.

There is a lot of energy and enthusiasm when we meet, and the breakfast meeting for me was a celebration of that. We are already talking of having two a month, and of finding a way that we could

have a social 'meeting for eating'. The introduction of afterword following MfW has encouraged more input from everyone as we seek to grow our community through acceptance and discernment.

As Quakers it's possible to say that we are attracted to 'the security of what is intimately known' and 'the challenges and entrancements of what is beyond us' [Seamus Heaney] and it is probably this tension that pushes us to look for 'a light to live by'.

Life of Epping Meeting Report May 2014

We are a loving, caring community, sometimes having attendance at Meeting for Worship of 8 – 10, but this may be up to 20. We are a concerned group of Friends and attenders. Our meetings for business and study sessions are well attended.

Our premises have had a leaking roof for many years causing extensive damage to the fabric of the building. When the first construction firm failed to replace the roof on the side rooms, we had to watch as water poured in. Some Sundays we expected to arrive and find the Meeting House had floated off down the High Street. Already hemmed in by furniture, books, papers and possessions piled high in the Meeting Room, we had to squash into an even smaller space when a plastic covered corridor was installed for the expensive drying out process.

In June we were delighted that many area meeting Friends, and friends of Friends came to our garden party in spite of cold, grey weather. In July we were saddened to lose our long-standing member Raymond Gates.

We hosted a tea party for twenty-seven members of the Victorian Society who were on an outing to Epping and Ongar. We felt this was useful outreach. We also celebrated Margaret Delves' 90th Birthday with a well-attended buffet in September. Nearly forty friends from four different meetings were present at our shared lunch between Christmas and New Year.

Most of the Meeting House now looks sparkling and inviting. We are all concerned about outreach and making our space and facilities known in our local community to create income from hiring.

Over the seven months when the refurbishment prevented full access to the building and garden, we were not able to develop our idea to open as part of the Quiet Garden Movement. Neither were we able to expand on the two Open Days we held with a fifteen-minute meeting for worship. One was at the time of the Epping Festival and one was in Quaker Week when the premises had been abandoned by the builders.

We are adapting to one of our active members, Cathy Rowlands, moving away in December.

We look forward to working together. We invite everyone to worship with us, and on the last Sunday of each month, join us at our Shared Lunch.

Judith Roads, Clerk, Epping LM

Possible triennial reports for AM? – David Irwin & Judith Roads

At our Area Meeting, we have fallen into the custom of asking for an annual report on the life of each Local Meeting when AM is hosted by that meeting. This arose back in the 1990s as a one-off when it was thought that Meeting for Sufferings might require such a composite report from each AM. We just never stopped expecting to receive such reports on a regular basis!

How would it be if we only asked for a report from each LM once in three years? Less of a chore? Or more of a chore because you couldn't rely on memory and had a more in-depth, searching report to write. But it might be more meaningful and less short-term in outlook. I've been given an insight into how other AMs tackle this and have looked to see how such a report could be put together by the whole LM and indeed planned for over the three-year period in view.

Here are some topics that a local meeting might have in mind at the *beginning* of the period (so as to be prepared three years later when the time came) :

- The meeting's social/fellowship life; what the children's group does; what the young people have been doing (ask the overseers, and others, to keep a general note or to minute these things)
- Spiritual nurture - description of the meeting for worship and nature of vocal ministry; the business meetings; discussion topics; the meeting's library (ask the elders and the librarian)
- Activism – what the meeting might have taken on and what some individual Friends might have got involved in
- How the meeting and how individual Friends have been working on sustainability issues; other news and comment regarding witnessing to our testimonies
- Premises news – the meeting house and garden (if there is a meeting house) or what the rented premises has been dealing with
- News of any special groups, such as a healing group or a Light group
- Courses some Friends have attended; courses some Friends have tutored on; any travelling in the ministry; outreach work.
- Supporting other small meetings nearby or fledging groups; support of the Area Meeting itself and its trustees.

Only large meetings would be likely to have something to say for each of these categories; no meeting should artificially create an event or start a project simply to be able to report on it. These things should have the feel of being 'in the life'. A list of 'What we Did' isn't all that interesting unless there is an evaluative feel to it too, and an honesty about things that perhaps aren't going or didn't go so well.

What do *you* think of this idea? Is it more preferable than our present system? Can you think of things going on in your meeting that I haven't mentioned? What might be the hindrances? Could we learn from each other in undertaking this type of reporting so as to move away from the purely superficial, towards those things which are eternal? What do we do that is Being Quaker and Doing Quaker in our local meetings?

Maybe you could take ideas to your Local Meeting for Business and send a minute for Area Meeting.