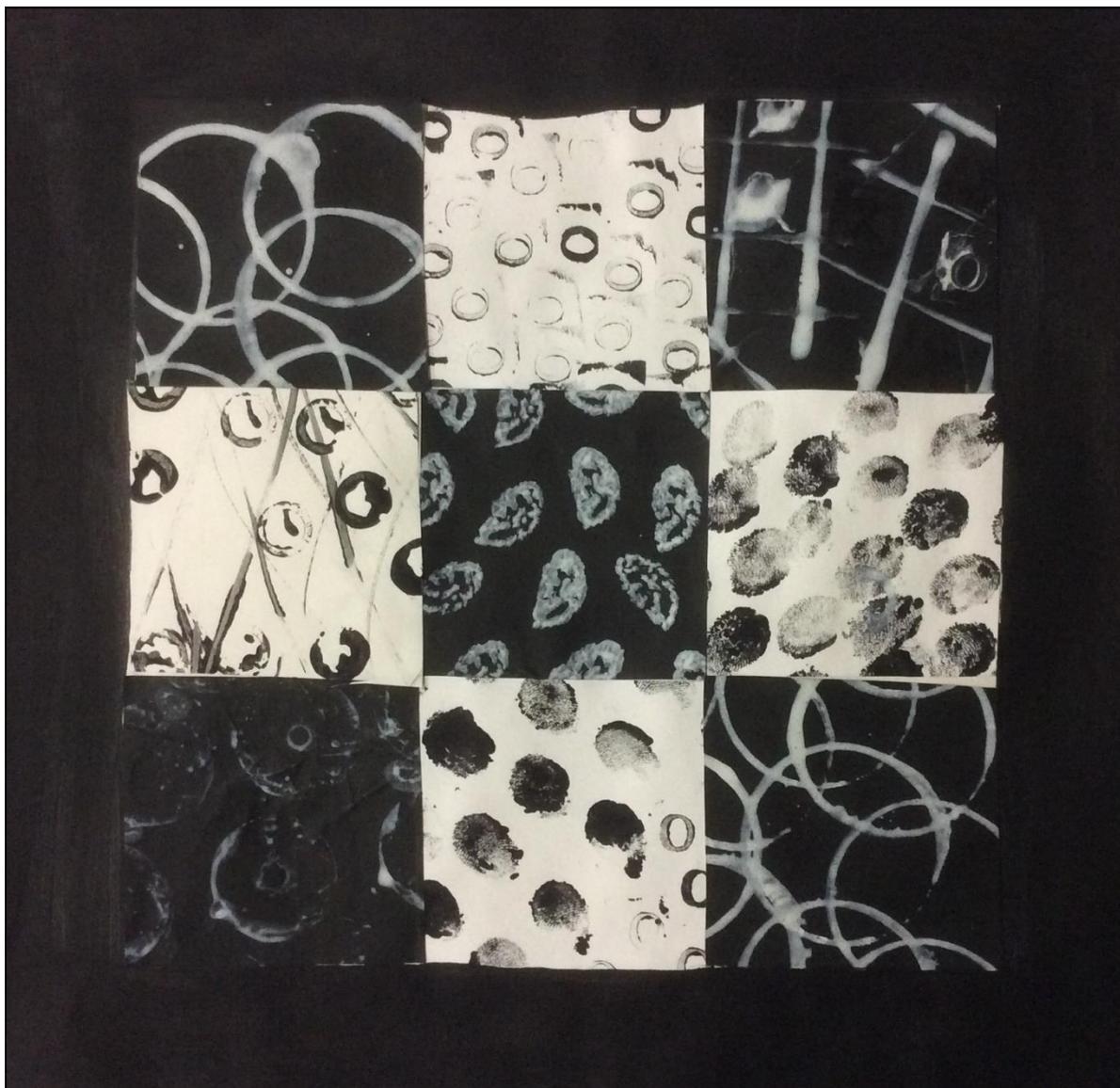


# North East Thames Area Meeting Newsletter

October 2017



Light and Dark art workshop, Wanstead January 2017



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## Quaker Faith and Practice 3.03

*Our meeting communities vary in size and in the circumstances and experience of their members. Sometimes we may need to vary the ways in which we manage our meetings for church affairs in order to make better use of the talents, time and energy of our members....We should be open to learning from the experiments undertaken by other meetings.*

The sense of the meeting

### **Asylum Monologues by ice&fire theatre group (Sunday 1st October Epping Meeting)**

What do Lilian's desire for education, Rose's funeral costs, and Adam's displacement by the war in Darfur have in common? This is what a hushed Meeting Room, full of people, spent a sometimes harrowing but very moving Sunday afternoon finding out as Epping's offering to the local community during Quaker Week.

ice&fire explore human rights stories through performance. "Asylum Monologues" involves volunteer actors, part of the Actors for Human Rights network, performing the stories of asylum seekers living in the UK. The interwoven narratives explain, in the asylum seeker's own words, the circumstances which forced these very different individuals to leave their home countries and their personal experiences of living, and claiming asylum, in the UK. We heard how the promise of education or work can trick people into leaving loved ones, and the need to escape a violent war can lead to a desperate journey and further violence. How women's bodies are exploited for monetary gain, sometimes with complicity from those they thought they could trust, for the gratification of men seemingly oblivious to the horror they are enabling. How asylum seekers, rarely aware of the rights they have, are dependent on "good Samaritans", who sometimes perpetuate further violence, in lieu of assistance from a state system which veers from inhuman indifference to active hostility. Following the lives of these young people we learnt about a job market abusing undocumented workers, the cruelties of detention, and the hopelessness and boredom of waiting for Home Office decisions. Small slivers of hope came with an encounter with a charity specialising in assisting female

victims of modern day slavery but it was horribly clear how much more work needs to be done.

Discovering that to date only Lilian has been granted asylum was heartbreaking – and emphasised how important the work of the Refugee and Migrant Forum of East London (RAMFEL), explained to us by a volunteer / trustee who attended the performance, is in supporting asylum seekers in our local area. We collected £163 for RAMFEL and further information regarding donations and volunteering can be found on their website.

<http://www.ramfel.org.uk/wordpress/>

We welcomed Friends from Harlow and Wanstead, people from our local interfaith communities, and members of the public to the well-received performance.

“I thought they were very good at getting us to feel what other people's lives might be like.”

“I thought it was well organised and a very powerful performance. The content was in parts quite shocking due to the suffering so many have to go through. I thought the method of delivery was very powerful.”

“I thought it was a moving performance; it was good to be opening our minds and hearts to the lives and suffering and joys of our fellow humans; and it was good to have 3 stories for variety and interest.”



## **Area Meeting 17.100      Chris Gwyntopher arrest**

We have heard read the following minute from Wanstead LM:

17/66 Arrest of our Friend Chris Gwyntopher

We record the arrest of our Friend Chris Gwyntopher on 5 September 2017 when witnessing for peace at the Defence Sales Equipment International Arms Fair. A Meeting for Worship was being held on the road and verge when Chris and 9 others were arrested for willfully obstructing the highway. Chris was released on 6 months conditional discharge and fined £85 court costs and £20 Victim Support Surcharge.

We ask AM to consider reimbursing our Friend for these costs incurred while supporting our longstanding commitment to peace witness.

We have heard the minute made by the Friends concerned, and attach a copy to this minute.

We forward this minute and the attachment to AM, so that it may be sent on to Meeting for Sufferings.

We concur with the Wanstead Local Meeting minute and agree to reimburse our Friend from Area Meeting funds.

We support the commitment Friends made in their minute made at Friends House 18/ix/2017 regarding the 2019 Arms Fair and hope that they will be given an opportunity to present this to Meeting for Sufferings

Noting that certain facts in the Wanstead minute and Meeting for Sufferings minute 17/10/105 may have to be clarified we forward this minute to Meeting for Sufferings.

## Refugees, transportation, imprisonment

The following is a paper written by my sister, Professor Caroline Forell, University of Oregon Law School. It includes correspondence between my late mother, Judith Mainwaring (nee Jacklyn) Forell, and her (late) twin – and only sibling - Bob Mainwaring Jacklyn.

I think this paper resonates with our Quaker concerns regarding refugees and prison, and so I have included this in this newsletter.

### ***Rebels' Choices: The Lives of Jane New and Ellen Murphy as Convicts, Thieves, Domestic and Wives in Colonial Australia***

*“Well-behaved women seldom make history”* Laurel Thatcher Ulrich

#### I. Introduction

##### A. Ellen Murphy and Jane New

If the British hadn't arrested and transported both sides of my family to Australia, I wouldn't exist.

It seems like I've always known the family story of the British arresting and shipping my German-born father (then a 16-year-old refugee living at an Anglican seminary), from England to an internment camp in the Australian Outback in 1940.<sup>1</sup>

British transportation<sup>2</sup> of my Tasmanian-born mother's ancestors is a much more recent discovery. In April 1988, my mother stopped by my house to share a letter from her brother Bob who lives in Hobart, Tasmania. The letter contained extraordinary family news. To my astonishment my Uncle Bob's letter<sup>3</sup> said:

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<sup>1</sup> The Dunera Affair: A Documentary Resource Book 400, Edited by Paul R. Bartrop with Gabrielle Eisen (1990), lists my father as Gotthold Karl Forell.

<sup>2</sup> A brief history of transportation. See Bruce Kercher and Tony Rayner.

<sup>3</sup> Letter from Bob Jacklyn to Judy Forell, March 26, 1988.

“Dear Jude: You will have seen the enclosed sheets before you read this . . . . I wonder what you will think of the news of our Mainwaring ancestors in Van Diemen’s Land<sup>4</sup> – especially in light of your reading of “*The Fatal Shore*”!<sup>5</sup> George and Ellen M. were the parents of our grandmother Elvie Jacklyn and I had no idea that they had been convicts until [our cousin Bob Mainwaring] spilt the beans. . . . by showing [me] the results of an enquiry he had sent to the Archives Office . . . . What he got back was a sheet of paper about George [Mainwaring] and a sheet of paper about Ellen [Murphy], setting out their essential convict records. . . .

[U]ntil recently [Australian] convict ancestry had been such an embarrassment<sup>6</sup> that . . . a cover-up story was invented, so that after one or two generations the knowledge itself, within the family, became lost. . . . The few Mainwarings I have talked to so far . . . had known almost nothing about George and Ellen. [O]ur grandmother Elvie was the youngest of [George and Ellen’s] 10 children. . . .

Thank goodness we can now look openly at our Australian past – at such things as the fascinating drama of Ellen Murphy’s life, hidden away all these years. . . . She was undoubtedly high-spirited and no amount of Solitary Confinement (in a darkened cell, by the way) on Bread and Water, which was said to be dreaded by the prisoners, seems to have had the least effect. . . .

I have become quite absorbed over Ellen Murphy. Perhaps it is a pity she was not to know that she would have a doting great-grandson. [N]ot a great deal has been recorded about the females and as far as I know, no female convict has left an account of her

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<sup>4</sup> Van Diemen’s Land is the name for the penal colony that the British established in the early nineteenth century that is now Tasmania, the island state of Australia located off the southeast coast of the mainland.

<sup>5</sup> Robert Hughes, *The Fatal Shore: The Epic of Australia’s Founding* (1987).

<sup>6</sup> The embarrassment and shame was called the “convict stain.” Robert Hughes, *The Fatal Shore* xi (1987). See also Tony Rayner at 5 where he notes:

“Until the late 1970’s there was still quite strong taboos in Tasmania about discussing convict ancestors . . . . This even had an official edge to it: the Archives Office of Tasmania refused access to all convict records until they received a written undertaking that no name or other material that might identify an individual convict was to be published or disseminated.”

experiences in Van Diemen's land . . . . Great pity.”

Accompanying this letter were the rap sheets of my great-great-grandparents George and Ellen. Because transportation involved a penal system that kept detailed records, there is a wealth of information on Australian convicts, people who, because they were often economically deprived and illiterate, would ordinarily have disappeared from history. George Mainwaring's record was short: convicted of theft of fire tongs in 1834 and sentenced to seven years transportation to Van Diemen's Land (VDL), he became a free man in 1841 with no recorded offenses during his penal servitude.<sup>7</sup>

Ellen Murphy's record was an entirely different matter.<sup>8</sup> At the age of thirteen she was convicted in separate trials for stealing four books and four and a half yards and of “jean” material. As a result she was sentenced to a total of fourteen years transportation “out of the country.”<sup>9</sup> The domestic service that convict women were assigned to do while serving out their sentences clearly did not sit well with Ellen. During her nine years in the penal system, she served 20 different masters and committed 25 separate offenses. Her transgressions led to punishments ranging from reprimands to months of solitary confinement on bread and water.

Like my Uncle Bob, I was smitten by this spunky Irish Catholic girl.

From the moment I knew of Ellen's existence I wanted to write about this example of a female rebelling against the law and social conditions of her time.<sup>10</sup> But I was stymied by a sense that whatever I wrote would not focus enough on law to constitute legal history instead of genealogy. In 2005 I spent two months in Hobart, Tasmania reading as much as I could about female convicts and the law. I pored over the records of Ellen and the other 185 female convicts that arrived with her from England on “The America” in 1831, looking for patterns in their conduct and treatment.<sup>11</sup> I haunted the Tasmanian Archives. I found clear evidence that Ellen's stubborn refusal to do what the law required of her, regardless of the legal consequences, was at odds with the penal system's rapid domestication of

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<sup>7</sup> Cite to his rap sheet.

<sup>8</sup> Cite to her rap sheet.

<sup>9</sup> Cite to her rap sheet.

<sup>10</sup> My long term interest in women & law: Ellison, Robinson, Rabidue, Nearing, Harris, Bryant and articles and books.

<sup>11</sup> Point out patterns such as on the town not following this when arrived in Australia

most female convicts. But still I felt that there wasn't quite enough law to justify an academic article.

This newsletter was edited by Peggy Forell on behalf of Bethnal Green Meeting.

I would like to thank Rebecca Fricker for her article, and Area Meeting for its Minute 17.100.

The next Area Meeting Newsletter will be edited by Epping Meeting and is due in February 2018.

*"Conscientious objection is not a total repudiation of force; it is a refusal to surrender moral responsibility for one's action."*

Kenneth C Barnes, 1987