



Faringdon Quaker Meeting

NEWSLETTER 134 October to November 24

Meeting Affairs

Shared Lunch Sunday 6th October

Meeting for Business for Worship Sunday 3rd November

Area Meeting for Church Affairs

November, Saturday 9th Swindon QMH starts at 10.30 am + Spiritual Nurture from 1.30 pm.

Faringdon Peace Group

AGM Wednesday 2nd October 7.30pm at the Friends Meeting House Lechlade Road, Faringdon

Annual Rally at USAF Croughton, (on the Oxon border with Northants, just off the A43 south of Brackley) Saturday 12th October from 12 noon Speakers from 1pm, to include Peter Burt from Spacewatch/Drone Wars UK, and Jeremy Corbyn (invited) Bring banners and placards.

Accessible toilet More information/car sharing Jennie: castle@myphone.coop Helen:

helen.holly007@gmail.com

Study Group

Sunday 13th October Simon - What did George Fox say?

Sunday 8th December – Andrea

Reading dates.

October 6 -Chris November 3 – Pat

October 13- Mark November 10 – Jenny S

October 20 -Shirley November 17 -Janie

October 27- Sue November 24 - Andrea

Collections

September to October, Quaker Social Action

November to December Quaker Congo Partnership

Quaker Congo Partnership

QCP UK has worked with Quakers in eastern Democratic Republic of Congo since 2009. This is one of the poorest areas of the world. Levels of poverty, malaria, malnutrition, infant mortality and illiteracy are high. There is little infrastructure, and, following the wars around the turn of the century, depleted militias roam, causing fear and bloodshed. And now, the region is also suffering from the outbreak of the more severe form of monkeypox, causing further suffering and deaths.

QCP has the following core projects: a rural hospital, supplying clean water, trauma counselling and peace building. They work in partnership with the Community of the Evangelical Friends' Churches in Congo, providing aid to those of all religions and none.

We will be collecting for this charity during November and December. Donations will be collected each Sunday. If you would prefer to support their work directly, here are the details needed

Account Name	Quaker Congo Partnership UK
Sort Code	08-92-99
Account Number	65725825

Gift Aid forms are available from website quakercongo.org.uk and should be emailed to quakercongo@gmail.com

Fundraising Event – book sale etc on the 31st of August,

It was a huge success in terms of money raised £265 for the National Friendship Fund for destitute Asylum Seeker. It was also a great opportunity for Friends to connect with one another and local community in Faringdon.

Riding Stride 14th September

On a sunny Saturday we opened our meeting house to striders and riders. We got two signatures! However, it was a welcome space for those “manning” the day to meet up.

Especial thanks to Jenny Smith and Emma

Rota's

The garden is both beautiful and biodiverse. Thank you to the gardeners. And please, if anyone wants to help, please speak to Val.

And Please consider signing up for the cleaning and welcoming rota.

Keeping warm and ventilated at Meeting

Now the cooler weather has arrived, I would like to ask Friends and visitors to ensure they have a warm jumper or jacket when coming to Meeting. Further increases in fuel costs are imminent, and we are already over-budget with electricity charges for the year. We need to strike a balance between comfortable temperatures and comfortable finances! In addition, we have been reminded that we need to ventilate both rooms adequately, so this means regularly opening the windows to create a through-flow of air.

I'll bring a couple of blankets and leave them at the Meeting House; feel free to borrow one if you want to be extra snuggly. And you should get a lovely warm feeling from doing your bit for the Meeting AND the planet!

Chris

Sadly, we mark the recent passing of two dear Friends, John Cottis and Charles Wickham.

Jenny Smith writes,

John Cottis

When I first moved to Wantage over thirty years ago, I rang John and Janie to introduce myself and to ask about attending Faringdon meeting. At some point in that very welcoming conversation, I asked about Sunday buses from Wantage to Faringdon, as I did not have a car. They told me not to worry, they would give me a lift. So, from the start, I experienced John's practical kindness and had many more experiences of it over the following years.

In writing this piece my instinct is to write of "John and Janie", because they were such a solid and complimentary partnership, supporting each other with such evident love and affection. All our hearts and sympathy are with Janie in her loss at this very difficult time.

John contributed to Meeting in many practical ways. Without the work of John and other Friends in Charney Preparative Meeting between 1975 and 1981, who revived interest in, and then use of, Faringdon Meeting House as a place of worship after nearly 100 years of secular use, the Faringdon Preparative Meeting we have now would not exist. This happened less than 10 years before I started attending the Meeting. It was typical of the humility of John and the others who re-established the meeting, that I only learnt about this great work in the last few years.

John brought with him from his professional career in local government an extensive knowledge of building regulations and planning law. He used this knowledge for the benefit of Meeting and Oxford and Swindon Area Meeting. John was very instrumental in one very significant endeavour, the legal recognition that the Faringdon Meeting House property is protected by a Permanent Endowment. This limits any moneys liberated by the sale of the property to being dispersed only for the benefit of the preparatory meeting. (My apologies if I have not stated this restriction correctly.) This provides the historic meeting house with significant protection against being sold off.

On a physical and apparently mundane level it was John who identified and acquired our comfortable padded chairs from a recycling centre, after the Meeting house's historic but solid wooden benches and hard black plastic chairs had been found too uncomfortable by some for an hour of gathered silence. I am personally very grateful to John for this act. Another example of a practical act for the benefit of all in Meeting.

What John did within meeting reflected his actions across his life as a whole. Talking with John over coffee after Meeting I learned of how he had taken part in the Aldermaston peace marches. Through John, those of us too young to have remembered them or taken part, learned of these public acts to promote peace and oppose nuclear armament in the 1950s and 1960s. John's response to the world's current tribulations showed that this was an active concern for him all of his life. He was also still discussing how the theory of continual economic growth was unfeasible in the long term, and that alternative approaches needed to be promoted. He was a stalwart member of the Faringdon Peace Group, but there will be members of the peace group who are better able than me to tell of his work in that organisation.

Since his death friends have spoken of the time, knowledge and support that John gave to them so that they could explore their faith and learn to trust in it. John and Janie have continued to provide that practical loving kindness that I experienced from them over thirty years ago.

But above these practical acts and concerns, it was in the gathered silence of a meeting that the strength of John's spirit was evident. This is not something that I can describe, being beyond words, but it was always there as an important counterbalance to all the practical assistance he contributed to Meeting. While he was not alone in creating its atmosphere of quiet strength, he was definitely one of those that formed its foundations and makes Faringdon Meeting such a special place to worship. Those of us who knew him must work to carry this gift forward.

Sue Douglas writes,

Charles Wickham

Charles was one of those exceptional people who seemed able to put his faith and beliefs into practise in an unassuming way, on a daily basis.

He was a thoughtful and committed Christian who acted as church warden at Fernham church for many years, but over recent years was drawn to Quakerism.

He was a skilled cabinet maker who worked to a very high standard however long a project took him; this didn't stop him agreeing to do all sorts of more humble practical tasks to help others including Faringdon Meeting, which often benefitted from his care and practical help, undertaking tasks simply because they were needed, and he could help. His life seemed to demonstrate a remarkable humility and simplicity. He was, as his partner described him, a true pacifist eco warrior.

George Fox

George Fox 400 years and still going strong. We will discuss George Fox on our study session on the 13th of October 2024 when we will share a quote from George Fox that speaks to our condition.

For a humourist look at George Fox. An American Meeting have produced a funny rendering of George Fox's message – at the same time given a pithy summation of his teachings

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=PhsvqbClaAs>

Thee Quaker, Podcast discuss George Fox and the founding of the Religious Society of Friends.

Emma followed in George Fox's footsteps venturing into 1652 Country.

Here is her account,

Pilgrimage in 1652 country



I wanted to visit Quaker country to connect with the origins of Quakers and hopefully experience a higher experience or greater connection to the spirit. I planned to visit most of the major Quaker sites in the region and join a meeting for worship each day of the trip.



I camped near Lake Windermere, and drove down to Clitheroe on the first morning, unfortunately the quaker house was not open that Tuesday, so I went to hike up Pendle Hill. As I approached the hill along an overgrown footpath, I noticed the route was marked for me with

foxgloves, which felt poetic, marking the route of George Fox. It was a hot still day, not a cloud in the sky and no breeze, this is the weather I normally love but not for hill climbing. I quickly began overheating and struggling, bothered by constant flies and I was still recovering from a bad cold, I felt overwhelmed and exasperated. Everything felt so hard, I was panting and said “I just want shade and a breeze” and as soon as I said this a small cloud crossed the sun and a light breeze appeared and everything felt easier, I was so humbled because I wasn’t expecting a moment like this, as my problems are so small in the grand scheme of things and so I promised myself I would no-longer complain. It was boggy and marshy at the base, and then as I began the steep ascent of the hill, I was literally walking in other people’s footsteps, how they had carved out little steps on the steep hill. Once I finally reached the summit, I was met with a large gravel path and many other walkers who had taken the paved route to the summit which I was unaware of. I saw at the top and eat some lunch while looking at the incredible views, some unchanged for hundreds of years, but some new features on the landscape like a beautiful large reservoir. On my decent I took a different route, again disused and overgrown, and discovered Fox’s Well, which now has a plaque commemorating George Fox, and a pewter tankard to take a drink of ice-cold spring water. I realised I had discovered this in the same way that George Fox had, finding the spring only on his way down the hill after a long journey and taking a rejuvenating drink.



The second morning I drove around Lake Windermere, having breakfast while the fog rolls over the lake at Bowness Bay and then walked along the National Trust shore bank and found a rocky outcrop in the lake to stand on and see amazing views of the entire lake, before driving to Swarthmoor. I passed Colthouse but I didn’t have time to stop, so I made a note to come back. I

went to Swarthmoor meeting house for morning meeting, which was a beautiful building and wood panelled room, surrounded by a lovely garden. I then walked to the Swarthmoor hall, which had only just reopened after covid and a renovation. The member of staff was so kind and wanted to know how they could make Swarthmoor hall serve the Quaker community more, and so I tried to think of helpful suggestions while touring the building. It was very simple, but the wood panelling and staircase was so beautiful, and it was powerful to be in the birthplace of Quakerism, so stand in a room where early meetings took place at the risk of arrest. I really liked the wooden travel bed that George Fox used. The garden was also really beautiful, with large trees and a wonderful café. I then found out about a local burial site where Elizabeth Fry is buried and went on an adventure to find this. It was over a moor along the peninsula, down a rural farm track to a stone wall. A simple plaque on the wall marks this as a burial site, as there are no headstones. There was an incredible tree growing out of the wall, curving in such an animalistic way, it felt organic, like a guardian dragon overlooking the graves. Opposite this graveyard was an ancient stone circle with the most incredible views over the moors and a small fishing town and then open ocean, I sat on the central stone looking out to sea and it was just so peaceful and awe inspiring, this incredible and ancient location where these early quakers were buried is so special, it feels like a world away. On my journey back to the campsite I drove along the coast and stopped to explore a marsh nature reserve covered in reeds which I had seen in the distance from the stone circle.



On the third day I had a long hike planned, so left early to drive to Sedbergh, which is England's book town, but unfortunately not as nice as Hay on Wye. A few years ago, they designed a Quaker trail, which is a long circular walk of around 10 miles and visits important Quaker sites in the area. It was raining on the journey there but stopped as I arrived, however these footpaths

on the Dales Way were very overgrown and the grass wet, so I was quickly soaked but it was a warm day, and I was content. I was steadily climbing in elevation, I got a little lost a few times as the path were a bit overgrown or not always well signposted, and there are so many different footpaths in the region. I then crossed a wooden footbridge high over a river which carved through the valley, and then ascended to Fox's Pulpit on the top of an exposed moor, I had planned to stop here but the wind was quite cold as it was so exposed and rain started to blow in, so I quickly began my decent and journey towards Briggflatts, crisscrossing the countryside until I reach the tiny hamlet of Briggflatts. The quaker house looks like a little cottage surrounded by rolling dales, entering through a little gate into the house. It is so beautiful, and a sense of peace instantly descended upon me, I just sat quietly in a wooden pew and took it in. I was cold, wet and tired but I had reached my destination. I spent some time here, just taking it in and feeling connected, as it is such a special meeting house.



On the final day I went to visit Colthouse and the burial ground, which is along a tiny country lane and surrounded by a working farm. The meeting house has this incredible old key, it's huge and ornate and instantly connects you with past generations who used the same key and attended the very same meeting house. The graveyard is still in use, with numerous simple headstones and it just feels so alive, with little benches for visitors, it was a special place. I then drove to Kendal to attend an afternoon meeting for worship, the meeting is held in the back of their meeting house, as the main part of the building houses the Quaker tapestries. It was a beautiful huge room, with high ceilings with large windows and bathed in light. I hadn't expected to enjoy the tapestries as much as I did, because they are modern and I wasn't sure I would gain much from them, but I was so wrong. They were beautiful and so many scenes covering different quakers and moments in history, it was a wonderful way to learn more about early

quakers. They also had an exhibit at the back of the room which has an old huge, embroidered bedspread, with different people embroidering different panels. Outside of the meeting house was a local market which I looked around, with a plant seller selling a beautiful yellow rose bush called Peace, which I took as a sign and brought it home with me to plant in the garden as a lasting memory of the trip to 1652 country.

Thank you, Emma, for such an interesting article. And thank you all for your contributions

