



THE DORKING GRAPEVINE

Dorking Quaker Meeting

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Quote for the month is from Quaker Faith and Practice 10.20, by George Gorman (1982):
One of the unexpected things I have learnt in my life as a Quaker is that religion is basically about relationships between people. This was an unexpected discovery, because I had been brought up to believe that religion was essentially about our relationship with God.

Dates for your Diary

Midweek Meeting	12.45-1.15pm	Every Wednesday , followed by simple lunch
Sunday 8 March	After MfW	Traidcraft stall in Meeting House
Sunday 8 March	6.30pm	Meeting for Worship at Park House, Leatherhead
Tuesday 31 March (Note change of date)	7.30pm	Study Group in Meeting House on <i>Quakers and the General Election</i> (See page 2)
Saturday 21 March	11.15am	Regional Meeting at Lewes MH on <i>Influencing the Politicians</i>
Sunday 22 March	After MfW	P&SW Shared lunch (see page 2)
Sunday 12 April	6.30pm	Meeting for Worship at Park House, Leatherhead
Friday 17 April	7.00-9.30pm	Hustings in the Meeting House
Sunday 26 April		Leith Hill Walk from Capel MH (see attached leaflet)

Note there is no meditation meeting in March. The next one will be in April - date to be confirmed.

Notes from PM on 1 March (and special PM 8 February)

The January/February collection for Woodbrooke raised £104.00. The Lenten lunch held in the Meeting House on February 20 raised £142.50 for Christian Aid.

For the *March collection*, our **Peace and Social Witness Committee** have chosen the **Ibanda Literacy Schools in Uganda** (see page 3)

Advices and Queries read. *Dorking Sunday*: January no. 33, February nos. 2, 38. *Dorking Wednesday*: January nos. 2, 34; February nos. 18, 33. *Leatherhead*: None.

The treasurer, Rosemary Elias, explained the **Meeting's Accounts for 2014**. We had been able to do essential maintenance of the building, but will have to reduce our contribution to BYM from £6,000 to £1,000 this year, in order to cover further essential maintenance work and replenish our reserves. Contributions were slightly down from 2013, and Friends and attenders are asked to consider whether they could manage an increased contribution to Dorking Meeting funds this year. The accounts were approved subject to independent examination.

Su Johnston, for **Premises Committee**, outlined the **work on the roof and damaged plaster in the large meeting hall, approved at the special PM on 8 February**, which is due to start early March. Premises will also deal with the other work arising from the discussion of the Accounts. Friends were asked to think about whether it is time to dispose of the carpet in the large Meeting Room, which is now quite old and stained. The future of the two water butts is to be discussed with the Green Team. Overflowing water butts can cause serious damage to brickwork and foundations. Unfortunately our downpipes are non-standard and do

not allow us to fit the special overflow devices that should prevent this. Also, little use appears to be made of water from the butts.

Bob Humphreys and Lois Lodge introduced the question of whether we should make **contact with the Dorking Muslim community**. The matter had been considered by Churches Together in Dorking, but not carried forward. Lois explained that CTD is really a Christian rather than an inter-faith body, and in any cases CTD initiatives only happen when one Church takes a lead and invites others to follow. It was agreed that Lois will speak with members of the Muslim community, initially just extending the hand of friendship, but with a view to possibly arranging some joint activities with them. It was noted that we do not have much experience in inter-faith work. However, other meetings do, and in particular Roger Baker has been involved with inter-faith initiatives in Crawley. We ask our Clerk to invite Roger to come to Dorking Meeting one Sunday, and lead a short discussion afterwards from 12-12.30 pm.

Rosemary Elias updated us on the **Dorking Food Bank**. It is hoped this will be in operation from early June, and the associated website should be up and running within a week or so. Volunteers are now sought – it would be good to have another Quaker involved – and there is also a need for further funds for set-up expenses.

Invitation from the Peace & Social Witness Committee



Friends are invited to the P&SW shared lunch after meeting for worship on Sunday 22 March. We'll be asking for your input so that we can put flesh on the bones of some ideas we have, and update you on where our plans have got to. We have, for instance, seen drafts of the panels for the Dorking Museum WW1 exhibition due to commence in August 2015. The Quaker perspective, ambulance and relief work are well represented. We think that working to 'rehabilitate' the white feather during September, when there is the International Day of Peace, might whet the public's appetite to find out more about Quakers, in advance of Quaker Quest in

October. And the idea of knitting white poppies is out there. So do come along. Your talents, whatever they may be, can be put to good use.

Lois Lodge

Study group TUESDAY, 31 March, 7.30.p.m. Quakers and the General Election 2015

Our next study group on Tuesday, 31 March, provides the exciting opportunity for us to debate what individual Quakers believe to be the key issues concerning them about the general election, polling day, 7 May. Our study group also provides the chance for each of us to consolidate our thinking on vital issues and to sharpen questions with which to confront, face-to-face, our local parliamentary candidates, scheduled to attend the CTD Hustings meeting in our Meeting Hall, Friday 17 April.

Just a few of the issues you may feel inclined to discuss in our study group, prior to the Hustings, include: the environment and sustainability, economic inequality, 1%/99% comparisons, tax evasion/avoidance, social benefits, homelessness, international conflicts and UK responses, Israel and Palestine, racial/religious intolerances, disabilities, the European Union, and now second jobs for MPs! Please bring along any other items that may be bugging you, and find out at our study group how your fellow Quakers may feel about them.

Please come along on 31 March. We are not likely to find ourselves discussing such important issues for another five years!

Bob Humphreys

Quaker Quest in Dorking

This is advance notice, so you can note the dates in your diary! Quaker Quest will be run in our Meeting House on four **Friday evenings - 9, 16, 23, and 30 October**. There will also be a big day of preparation and training **on Saturday 5 September**. More details to follow in due course.

Catherine Carr

The March Collection for Ibanda Literacy Schools in Uganda

John Lampen has supported the Schools for ten years, and encouraged our support on his visit to Dorking Meeting last year. The literacy school started in a refugee camp in Uganda in 2002. It has expanded from there, so that 307 children and 364 adult learners were being taught on 6 campuses in 2014. They have been as self-sufficient as possible, with local resources and volunteers. Our funding will go towards paying salaries to the teachers.

(Photo of Primary School, Ndoragi, Ibanda, Uganda from U-tube)



Detention, Destitution and Deportation: Gathering Quaker Energy to speak Truth to Power – An Attender’s experience of a Woodbrooke weekend.

In February I went to this conference organised by the Quaker Asylum and Refugee Network (QARN). It aimed to inform, share experiences of supporting those oppressed by the UK asylum system, and explore ways to actively facilitate change.

I had some additional personal aims - being a new attender I wanted to see an example of how Quakers put their values into action, and also make some contribution myself. Over the past twelve years I have had contact with detainees in immigration detention as part of my NHS role as a specialist in complex trauma. I also provide professional support to the caseworkers of the Gatwick Visitors’ group who support detainees in immigration detention at Brook House and Tinsley House on the perimeter of the airport.

The weekend was very well organised with about 60 people participants, and full-on for the whole weekend. There was the usual mix of keynote sessions by outside speakers and a variety of small groups and plenary groups. It was clear that Quakers are not always a quiet group(!), and most seemed impressively already well informed and involved in practical helping or political activism.



Tinsley House (from <http://www.gdwg.org.uk/tinsley-background.php>)

What was new, most surprising or shocking for me?

About Detention: Most asylum seekers live in the community whilst their asylum claim is being considered. But around 10% are considered to have straightforward cases on the basis of a single pre-screening interview by a UK Border Agency (UKBA) case-worker. A quick decision is anticipated so the person enters the Detained Fast Track process (DFT) and is held in a detention centre. In fact many of those fast-tracked are vulnerable people with complex cases, victims of torture, trafficking, gender-based violence or persecution, cases needing expert examination and detailed consideration before a just decision can be made. Access to justice is compromised by the speed of the process which means that finding legal representation, gathering evidence and preparing a good case has to be done within just a few days. Over 90% of those on DFT have their asylum claims refused and then are allowed just two days to appeal against the decision. A report from a Parliamentary cross-party enquiry about this almost unlawful practice has just been released on 3 March.

Many other asylum seekers will spend part of their time in the UK in immigration detention. There are no time limits – we differ from all other members of the EU in this. Some people are detained for as long as two years awaiting a final ruling. This is both costly and inhumane, and worse than prison for some, because of the lack of training, education and work facilities. Psychological services are minimal (or currently absent as in our two local Immigration

Removal Centres at Gatwick), and the self-harming and suicide attempts are everyday occurrences.

About Destitution: Whilst waiting for a decision in the community, asylum seekers are found accommodation by the UKBA, but they are not allowed to work. They are provided with an allowance of about £5 per day, not enough to meet essential needs. On average people will spend about 18 months on this allowance. Failed applicants staying on in the country will lose their accommodation and the allowance, effectively becoming homeless and destitute. Those given leave to remain will also lose the allowance, and it can take some weeks before regular benefits are assessed and start to be paid out. These people can also become temporarily destitute. Less detention, and permission to work, would be better for the asylum seekers and the UK economy. On humanitarian grounds the current allowance whilst waiting needs to be increased.

About Deportation: The Immigration Removal Centres, where people may spend months before deportation, are now contracted out to security or facilities firms such as Centrica, Mitie or G4S. They also provide escorts for transfers and deportations. Some staff are ex-prison officers, others have no previous experience of detention environments, or training in people management skills. Day-to-day control is no longer in the hands of the Home Office, and inspections by HMI of Prisons can only recommend, not impose, sanctions. This leads to unsafe practices involving asylum seekers, who are already feeling unsafe, being further traumatised. Sound governance must be restored, and more scrutiny of the contracted firms is needed.

Positive Action: After hearing so much depressing information about how the UKBA deals with those seeking sanctuary in the UK, it was a relief to hear, sharing in the large group sessions, of all the creative ways in which Quakers are already active in this peace work, and that QARN is working with many other groups in the Detention Forum to get the issues above onto the political agenda and influence change. Details of those activities and what might be taken up locally are far too numerous to note here, but excellent notes of this conference will soon be available on the QARN website and a further meeting is planned in Birmingham on 18 April. I learnt a lot, about the topic, and about Quakers, in this intense and at times painful weekend and came away feeling tired, but pleased to have made the effort! I'd be happy to share more about the weekend, or more generally on this topic, if anyone wishes to discuss things further.

Refugee Tales

Incidentally from 13 to 21 June this year there is an opportunity to support the Gatwick Detainees Welfare Group. You could join, for one or more days, a nine day walk from Dover to Crawley and/or attend one of the events being laid on each evening, with music and readings by writers and poets plus a true story of the experience of refugees, asylum seekers, detainees at one of the centres like

Gatwick, or ex-detainees. See the notice on the Meeting House notice board, or the website www.refugeetales.org, for more information.

Theresa MacIntyre

Reflection from our Elders

GREATNESS IN GOD'S SIGHT

The greatest men are but fractions of men. No one is endowed with all gifts. Everyone has his own particular excellence or ability. No two have precisely the same gifts and no two are called upon to fill precisely the same place in life. The lowliest and the humblest in endowments is just as important in his place as the most brilliantly gifted.

J.R. Miller, *In Green Pastures*, 2005 Edn. p.48.
(Among Muriel Dale's favourite readings)

Bob Humphreys (For the elders)