



STAFFORDSHIRE QUAKER



SUMMER EDITION, JULY 2012

ALL THE FUN OF THE ARMS FAIR?

A very personal account from Nina Carter-Brown, granddaughter of John Moxham, Wolverhampton Meeting. She works for a fair-trade company.

I can't put into words how much I am against the International arms fair, and the fact it is the British government who host it every 2 years at the Excel centre in East London using some tax payers money. When in London, we saw pictures in a newspaper of delegates 'trying out' some of the arms on offer. This makes me feel sick, their purchases are ultimately going to end up killing people, as well as being sold to both sides of a conflict and oppressive regimes, there's no denying the motivation is money and political gain (of loyalty from certain nations, valuable natural resources and power, among others). It must be stopped which is why I went to protest outside the Excel centre and on the tube, I went with the aim of wanting to disrupt some of these sales, or at the very least begin to make people question what they were really doing there.

The Excel centre is huge,



but what we were standing against seemed much bigger. I was not there alone, being part of the SPEAK affinity group including friends from Bradford, meant I was surrounded by a number of wonderful others all acting together. Prayer was a core part of our actions too. For me it becomes a constant petition against injustice and a connection with something outside of this world, therefore carrying with it a hope of possibility for change and for good.

There were many and varied actions in which to participate including a candle-lit silent vigil the night before the fair in the grounds of the Excel centre, a prayer walk where we marked in chalk around London the sites where V2 Bombs (similar to drones) fell in the 2nd World War.

We sang songs of peace on the tube, squeezed in-between arms traders from many countries on their way to the fair (they didn't join in, but I think I might have seen some foot-tapping, or maybe I just wished I had!). Somehow when we stepped off the tube we were able to walk up the steps of Custom House station alongside the delegates, to the entrance of the Excel centre where we handed out stickers with pictures and quotes about the horrors of war, offering the arms traders a 'thought for the day' and singing as they entered.

We were eventually moved on by security. Then accompanied at every step by a new friend from the DLR (security) we got back on the tube one stop down and walked to the other entrance where
Continued on page 10

DOVES & CRANES

- *SPEAK for peace*
- *Memorial for peace*
- *Sadako for peace*

INSIDE THIS ISSUE:

ARMS FAIR	1 & 10
THREE DEAR FRIENDS	2
MEMORIAL & CRANES	3
PRAYER & POETRY	4-5
PRISON & LIGHT	6-7
SACRE	8
ISRAEL & PALESTINE	9
BADGERS	11

AVERIL EXLEY

Averil Exley, a longstanding member of Stoke Meeting died in February.

Averil was 84, the wife of Colin, and mother of Simon, Martin and Jonathan.

She often attended Staffordshire Area Meeting, and participated fully in its life. The photograph shows her at an Area Meeting gathering at Dovedale 20 years ago.



NAOMI ALEXANDER

Naomi Alexander of Stafford Meeting died in June.

At her funeral there was a wealth of affectionate ministry. Her daughter Heather told the story of how Naomi's house was once burgled. Naomi's comment was: 'I feel sorry for that burglar. There's nothing in our house worth pinching.'

At times non-Quakers were inspired to use imagery very familiar to Friends: one said that when you met Naomi it was like entering a circle of light.

Sue Cook, former member

of Stafford Meeting, reminded us of how Naomi had thoroughly enjoyed the extensive celebrations for her 90th birthday last year. During a celebration at the Meeting House we all sang 'Happy Birthday'. As Sue pointed out, many people, when faced with such attention on their birthdays, tend to look down at the ground if to suggest that this does not really have anything to do with them. 'Naomi didn't', said Sue: 'She conducted.'

Clarice Dawson of Stafford Meeting used to tell the story of a Quaker wedding. At one point she felt it was



Naomi was a fine musician, very well known on the folk dance scene. Tunes she had composed were played at her funeral.

time to have just a little bit of alcohol. She felt embarrassed about doing this with so many Quakers about, so she went with her glass to hide behind a door. There she found Naomi doing exactly the same thing.

THREE DEAR FRIENDS

ESTHER ROBINSON

Esther Robinson of Lichfield Meeting died in June at the age of 98.

Members of Lichfield Meeting have written to say that 'Many of us in Staffordshire will have very fond memories of times spent with Esther, even though we didn't meet her until she was well into her 80's! She was a member at Lichfield Meeting from around 1995, having

previously been a member at Sutton Coldfield Meeting and also Bull Street. She has not attended Meeting for several years because of health problems. Her sister Dorothy is now a member at Lichfield.'

The 90th birthday cake in the photo is inscribed to 'Tessa, Countess of Cannock'!



15 SEPTEMBER: MEMORIAL INAUGURATION

After two years' work the Quaker Service Memorial Trust has achieved its goal. The Memorial has been built, with the aim of commemorating the work of the

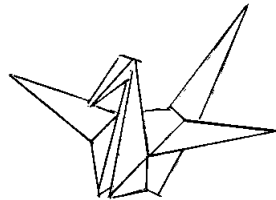
Friends Ambulance Unit and the Friends Relief Service. The inauguration ceremony will take place at the National Memorial Arboretum on 15 September.



CRANES FOR THE MEMORIAL

The theme for the Children and Young People's Meeting at Stone in September, is Peace and Reconciliation. With a view to this, the children will be looking at (amongst other things), the story of Sadako and The Thousand Paper Cranes. We are hoping to make as many origami cranes as we can which will then be displayed at the Inauguration of

the Quaker Service Memorial. Stone Friends have been asked to make more cranes but thought that other Staffordshire Meetings and Friends may also like to be included in the project.



If anyone would like to try their hand at folding an origami crane then please contact Helen Lockwood on 01785 286612 (Helen.lockwood@hotmail.com) who can provide photocopies of the instructions and sheets of origami paper. For anyone unfamiliar with Sadako's story Helen will gladly provide a synopsis of this too!

Lezley Williams

CRANES OVER THE SOW

Here are the beginning and end of a longer poem by Roger Oldfield of Stafford Meeting. He intended to read it at his trial for breach of the peace at Faslane. This was not allowed, but a friend distributed copies to everyone in the courtroom anyway!

His involvement in the Trident Ploughshares movement was inspired by Alison Crane, former member of Stafford Meeting, and her surname links with the theme.

The Sow is the river running through Stafford.

Sadako, we gave you leukemia
When Little Boy fell from the plane
But you dreamt a new Hiroshima
And papered the world with your cranes
So swords would be beaten to ploughshares
Sadako, you set the world free
So each could sit safely on Sowside
In peace 'neath her own apple tree



Chorus:

But cranes are in flight over Sowside

To warn of the hawks high above

And call us to open our dovecotes

And turn the skies white with our doves



And then I saw cranes in that courtroom

Sadako, you touched every heart

Police, clerk and JP and lawyers

All struggled to step from their parts

Your spirit was in them, Sadako

For each and all of us knew

My innocence came from a future

Where no child would suffer like you

Sadako you spoke origami

'Leukemia is only for me

Never again Hiroshima

My one thousand cranes are for peace'

So Trident we'll beat into ploughshares

Sadako, we'll set the world free

And each shall sit freely on Sowside

In peace 'neath her own apple tree



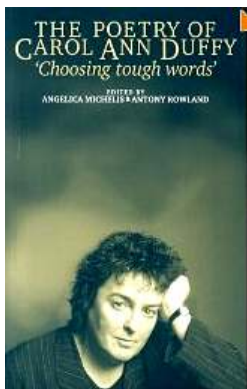
Statue of Sadako Sasaki in Hiroshima Peace Park.

PRAYER AND POETRY

A recent Area Meeting focused on prayer, and there was wide-ranging discussion. Lezley Williams of Stone Meeting was reminded of this poem by the poet laureate Carol Ann Duffy, which she finds stimulating.

Carol Ann Duffy once lived in Stafford, and attended Stafford Girls' High School at the time that Clarice Dawson was head-teacher. The two did not however always see eye to eye.

Clarice was a member of Stafford Meeting.



Some days, although we cannot pray, a prayer utters itself.

So a woman will lift her head from the sieve of her hands and stare at the minims sung by a tree, a sudden gift.

Some nights, although we are faithless, the truth enters our hearts, that small familiar pain;

Then a man will stand stock-still, hearing his youth, in the distant Latin chanting of a train.

Pray for us now. Grade one piano scales console the lodger looking out across a Midlands town.

Then dusk, and someone calls a child's name as though they named their loss.

Darkness outside. Inside, the radio's prayer -

Rockall, Malin, Dogger, Finisterre.

QUAKERS AND POETRY

This article is one of a series which Linda has written for the Leek Churches Together magazine.

In contrast with the early Quaker attitude towards music, poetry seems to have been acceptable as a medium for expression, and from the early years to the present many Friends have been inspired to communicate their ideas in this way.

James Nayler (1616–1660) was a prolific writer who regularly put pen to paper to express his spiritual ideals, and his articles covered many aspects of spirituality. In a poem written in 1659, he expresses his feelings regarding his time in prison:

In the night, by thy presence in the day of trial when I was beset in darkness, when I was cast out as a wandering bird, and when I was assaulted with strong temptations, then thy presence in secret did preserve me, and in a low estate I felt thee near me.

Possibly the best known include John Greenleaf Whittier, an American Quaker, who wrote the

words to “Dear Lord and Father of Mankind”, Welsh Quaker Waldo Williams and the American Walt Whitman.

Whittier was born in 1807 in Massachusetts into a Quaker family. He began his writing early, and by the time he was twenty his poetry was regularly published. He was an active campaigner for social reform, and a lot of his work reflected his commitment to the anti-slavery movement. Towards the end of his life

‘FROM THE EARLY YEARS TO THE PRESENT MANY FRIENDS HAVE BEEN INSPIRED TO COMMUNICATE THEIR IDEAS IN THIS WAY’

*A long, slant splendor downward flowed.
Down glade and glen and bank it rolled;
"The River Path" by John Greenleaf Whittier*

QUAKERS AND POETRY (CONTINUED)

his subject matter changed, with his focus more on his religion, rural life and nature. This is reflected in the opening words of the hymn "O brother man enfold to thy heart":

O Brother Man, fold to thy heart thy brother:

Where pity dwells, the peace of God is there;

To worship rightly is to love each other,

Each smile a hymn, each kindly word a prayer.

Waldo (Goronwy) Williams (1904 –1971) was one of the leading Welsh language poets of the 20th century. He was also a notable anti-war campaigner and Welsh nationalist. His work was influenced by Welsh hymns and poetry, and he belongs to the Welsh tradition of the "bardd gwlad", or folk poet. In fact, much of his work reflects the harmony and peace that he observed in local communities.

In particular, it was the co-operative and peaceful way of living that he had seen in action in the farming communities in the Preseli Hills, that inspired in him a feeling of belonging, and a desire that people should live together in peace. His poem *Mewn dau gae* (In two fields) celebrates his moment of realisation of this:

Till at last the whole world came into the stillness

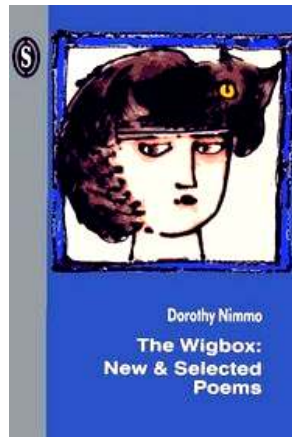
And on two fields his people walked,

And through, and between, and about them, goodwill widened

And rose out of hiding, to make them all one...

Walt Whitman (1819 – 1892), poet, essayist and journalist, is considered as one of America's most successful 19th century poets. He is America's world poet - a latter-day successor to Homer, Virgil, Dante, and Shakespeare. In *Leaves of Grass* (1855), he celebrated democracy, nature, love, and friendship. This monumental work chanted praises to the body as well as to the soul, and found beauty and reassurance even in death.

Dorothy Nimmo (1932 - 2001) was winner of the Cholmondeley Award in 1996. After gaining an MA



in Creative Writing from Lancaster University she stayed at the Pendle Hill Quaker Centre for Study and Contemplation, and was subsequently caretaker of the Friends Meeting House in Gloucester, and the Friends Meeting House in Settle, Yorkshire.

Contemporary poet Sibyl Ruth had been writing for many years before she saw a connection between her poems and her faith. Inspired by a meeting with Derek Nimmo (also a Quaker) she began to see the links between her writing and her Quaker beliefs. In a radio programme in 2011, she spoke about aspects of Quaker writing. These included reference "to the publishers Anne and Peter Samson about the writing workshops they organise which draw on many of the principles of Quaker meeting; to Gerard Benson, the co-founder of *Poems on the Underground*, who became a Quaker quite late in life; and to Philip Gross, who wrote 'The Quakers of Pompeii'."

In a project organised in America, contributors are being sought for a new book entitled "Gathered: The Anthology of Contemporary Quaker Poetry". It is aiming to give a voice to contemporary Quaker writing.

Linda Skellam, Leek

WHITMAN'S
LEAVES OF
GRASS
CHANTED
PRAISES TO THE
BODY AS WELL
AS TO THE SOUL

LIGHT IN THE CELL

This moving letter was published in 'The Friend'. The 'next prison' referred to in the article is Stafford Prison.

Dear Editor,

I am not sure many letters come from this sort of establishment. Maybe this is the only one or one of the few. But it was important for me to relay the fact that 'The Light' can reach into the darkest of places.

I came into prison around sixteen months ago. I am a first-time offender in his forties. To say that my life fell apart at that time would be an understatement.

I am guilty as they come and totally deserving of my punishment for the destruction that I have caused. Because of my selfish actions many people have been left upset and emotionally scarred. I

pray for them every day.

On coming into prison, first at HMP Hewell in Redditch, I was in pieces. Some would say quite deservedly. I had lost nearly all I loved and cared about and most people had instantly turned their back on me. I was on the edge.

Then I met a lovely Quaker lady. She did not judge me. She didn't hate me. Every Friday she would come into the wing and listen. Talk. Support. Pray for me. If it had not been for her I honestly think that I would have become another unfortunate prison statistic. I owe my life to her.

She explained the Quaker way to me and brought me back into the light. She pulled me back from the brink. To her I will be eternally grateful. I was a little sad when I was transferred to another prison, but we



have stayed in touch. I just wanted to say thank you.

When I arrived at the next prison I was glad to hear there was a small 'Friends Meeting' here and I met someone with as much compassion as the lady at Hewell. With the help of her and the massive help from the other clergy here I can see a light at the end of the tunnel. Life is worth living.

It just shows that 'The Light' can shine and reach into even what one may think are the darkest places.

Stephen

'THE LIGHT'
CAN REACH
INTO THE
DARKEST OF
PLACES

BEING A QUAKER PRISON CHAPLAIN

This report for Central England Area Meeting gives insight into a Quaker chaplain's work, and has references to Staffordshire.

On 10 May 2011 I was appointed by Central England area meeting to be Quaker Chaplain at HMP Birmingham (Winson Green). It took a number of months to get my security clearance from the Ministry of Justice, despite having been a Magistrate for 30 years, a Probation Board member & Chair

for 9 years, and a member & Chair of the Independent Monitoring Board at Blakenhurst Prison for 12 years. My three previous employers all had to write references, Friends House had to verify my appointment and there were numerous forms to complete, which needed obscure details such as my parents' place of birth!

Having finally met the criteria I was booked onto a week's induction course,

which covered every aspect of prison life. This was followed by further training to be able to use a radio and carry keys.

I was eventually welcomed to a multi faith team consisting of four full-time Chaplains (Anglican, Imam, Roman Catholic and Free Church) and numerous other sessional (part-time) Chaplains including Buddhist, Sikh, Jewish, Hindu and Pagan faiths.

BEING A QUAKER PRISON CHAPLAIN (CONTINUED)

I had assumed my role would be to visit Quaker prisoners, and possibly hold occasional Quaker meetings. However, I quickly found I was being asked to undertake “statutory duties” which according to prison rules must be carried out daily. From time to time I am “Duty Chaplain” which means I carry the Chaplain’s radio to answer all emergencies and ensure that duties such as the following are completed:-

- Visit the Care and Separation Unit and speak to all prisoners held there.
- Visit Healthcare (a residential hospital on 2 floors) and speak to all patients.
- Visit the Reception Wing and speak to all prisoners who have arrived overnight, check on their religious beliefs, if any, and ensure their needs are met,
- Collect and process any prisoner applications.
- Download messages from the 2 Chaplain phone lines at least twice a day and process the information.

To my amazement I am now considered a “core” member of the Chaplaincy team, and have been involved with strategy days, where we are attempting to plan for the future of the team and decide how we can best serve prisoners and staff.

I have attended the carol service and concerts, and I

regularly prepare and take a programmed Quaker meeting on “J Wing” – a unit for the elderly and vulnerable, who do not have access to the Prison Chapel. This service consists of bible readings, hymns sung to a CD, other readings (including from Q F& P) and prayers. These services are proving popular, with half the residents of J Wing (including the only Quaker in the prison) now attending regularly, and the prisoners participate in various ways,



from getting the room ready, operating the CD player, taking turns to do readings and helping to serve refreshments after the service.

You may be wondering why it is necessary for me to report on my work in such detail at this time. Well, HMP Birmingham recently became a private prison and is now run by G4S, who are about to open a brand new, large prison called HMP Oakwood in Featherstone. I have been asked if I would be prepared to do some sessional work at this new jail, and the Head of Safer Custody at Oakwood has invited me over to talk about what might be involved.

I was obliged to point out to my Coordinating Chaplain (Julian) that this new prison would fall into a different Area Meeting – i.e. Staffordshire - and that that A. M. should be approached about appointing a Quaker Chaplain. However, Julian was keen for me to undertake this work, at least initially, as G4S is hoping to share staff across the 2 sites, prisoners will be transferred between the 2 prisons (so I would already know them) and as I have had the necessary training, I am ready to start immediately!!

As I hope my opening paragraph demonstrated, not only is the process of appointing Prison Chaplains very protracted but it also takes a long time to establish trust and credibility with colleagues, prison officers and prisoners. I consider it to be a privilege for a small denomination like Quakers to be asked to be part of a Chaplaincy team from the opening of a new prison. Although Staffordshire A. M. might wish to appoint their own chaplain for this new prison, the personal invitation extended to me provides a unique opportunity to establish a Quaker presence within the prison, which should not be missed, and I hope that the 2 A.Ms concerned will support my appointment for a transitional period.

Patricia Bradbury,
Stourbridge Meeting

‘IT TAKES A
LONG TIME TO
ESTABLISH TRUST
AND
CREDIBILITY
WITH
COLLEAGUES,
PRISON OFFICERS
AND PRISONERS’

SACRE AT WORK

After a year and a half of representing Staffordshire Quakers at the Standing Advisory Committee on Religious Education, I felt it was time that I shared some informal thoughts on the committee, its functions and concerns.

SACRE's remit is to guide the provision of RE in Staffordshire schools, both in terms of providing the agreed syllabus followed in the county, the monitoring of provision and attainment and offering professional development to school staff. Representatives of all the main faith groups are represented, with Christian denominations predominating. We also have a humanist representative, and at the last meeting discussed whether the humanists should be afforded full membership rights rather than being co-opted. I felt that, as R.E. in school explores issues around living one's values, humanism did have a place; to exclude people because they did not believe in a deity is a very narrow view of R.E. which would deny many pupils access to information about a view which they hold. It also threatens the place of some other groups, such as Buddhists, on SACRE which would be fiercely condemned.

Because the group is involved in education, our work is very subject to political pressures. A very distressing item from the last meeting noted that there was no formal support for teachers in Special Schools with respect to developing worship. I expressed the view that we upheld that of God in everyone, not that of God in everyone with a normal I.Q. and were, therefore, concerned at a cut that might deprive an already disadvantaged group of opportunities to engage in a meaningful spiritual experience. Despite the cut-backs, it seems that Religious Education is thriving in Staffordshire thanks to a very committed advisory teacher and some very hard-working teachers.

Instances of inter-faith contacts are seeded and sustained by SACRE; a very moving instance of which was an invitation to speak at the Holocaust Day Memorial service held at St Mary's, Stafford, at which members of the Jewish congregation of Stoke-on-Trent were present and read the Kaddish (prayer of mourning) in Hebrew. Other examples include the facilitation of visits to sites of worship, conferences, guest lectures and exhibitions around the theme of faith and practice. These seem to be useful ways of stimulating debate

and raising awareness of religious witness in our county. One county-specific initiative has been the development of resources to support the use of the National Arboretum as a teaching resource about faith. The Society's presence in its memorial will, therefore, stand as a significant piece of outreach in the context of this work; information about the memorial has been shared with the advisory teacher who is developing this work and has been positively received.

Whilst it isn't always easy to combine active participation with other demands on my day, I have found membership of SACRE interesting, and very fulfilling. I would like to close by thanking Staffordshire Friends for the opportunity to represent them at SACRE.

A full report of SACRE's work in 2011 can be downloaded from www.education.staffordshire.gov.uk/Curriculum/Subjectareas/ReligiousEducation.

Jane Essex, Stafford

'RELIGIOUS
EDUCATION IS
THRIVING IN
STAFFORDSHIRE'



A PILGRIMAGE IN ISRAEL/PALESTINE

In March two of us from Lichfield Meeting joined a locally arranged pilgrimage to Israel/Palestine. During our stay we visited the desert village of Khan al-Ahmar, which lies east of Jerusalem through the Judean hills and just off Route I, the Tel Aviv to Jerusalem highway. The village is home to Bedouin Palestinians of the Jahalin tribe. They left or were expelled from the Negev (the stories vary) in the early 50s and have settled in various locations in the Judean desert near East Jerusalem. Their nomadic lifestyle has eroded over the years as the amount of land available to them has contracted. Now many of them, including the villagers of Khan al-Ahmar, are reliant on UN food aid for their survival. This is because they live in Area C of the West Bank thus placing them under Israeli civil and military authority.

The villagers are regularly subject to a variety of injustices and indignities at the hands of the authorities. For example, an Israeli settlement, which is home to a number of very powerful and influential settlers, has been built quite close by and its sewage pipe runs along Route 1. The ventilator cap to the sewage pipe was left open just below the village, flooding the surrounding area with an unspeakably foul stench until the men of the village took action and closed it down.

For us to gain access to the village our coach driver had to make a fast and illegal stop at the side of the high-



way and we had to scramble quickly over the barrier to reach the access path. This is what the Bedouin children travelling to school have to do on a daily basis. Their nearest school is in Jericho, 14 kilometres away. In the two years prior to the construction of their own school (for the younger children only) four children were killed on this highway. So they built a school on site; constructed of mud and old tires. The construction of the school was supported by a number of NGOs. However, whilst it was in progress the Israeli Government issued a stop-work order and later a demolition order. At the time of our visit the demolition order had been stayed in the High Court but the community was being punished nonetheless. The punishment took the form of the denial of work permits to the men who are culturally the sole breadwinners, and the threat of imminent relocation to a site adjacent to a municipal rubbish dump.

We visited the school and could only admire the work being done in such a primitive and limited setting. Suffice it to say that we would not even consider it as a place of education for our

own children or grand children.

We have just learned that on Sunday 6 May, the Israeli Civil Administration (ICA) issued eight eviction orders to the Kurshan compound of the Khan al-Ahmar Arab al-Jahalin Bedouin community. The orders affect the eight families of the community, who have been part of a recent shelter rehabilitation project, designed to replace sub-standard shelter with eight residential structures. The Kurshan families have used this location seasonally since the 1960s, and have been permanent in their current location since 1992. The ICA officers informed those present in the community that “the community had built illegally, and that Area C was not for Palestinians.” Furthermore, ICA informed the Az-Zayyem Arab al-Jahalin Bedouin community on 3 May, that a demolition will take place in their community, effective immediately, following the lift of an injunction order protecting the structures.

For more on the plight of the Jahalin Bedouin visit www.icahd.org

Rosemary Crawley &
Juliet Metcalf, Lichfield

‘THE VILLAGERS
ARE REGULARLY
SUBJECT TO A
VARIETY OF
INJUSTICES AND
INDIGNITIES AT
THE HANDS OF
THE
AUTHORITIES’

ALL THE FUN OF THE ARMS FAIR? CONTINUED FROM PAGE 1

many delegates enter. We held banners saying 'peace' and 'buy now, kill later' before we were again moved off the 'private land' by security and police.

In preparation for the next day, 3 of us had made a big banner which stated: 'This is a dead end, there is another way, go in the way of true peace.' It was made with the intention of blocking the stairs leading to the entrance of Excel at Custom House station. We had been charity shopping the day before to buy 'arms trader outfits' so we didn't stand out, although if I looked as uncomfortable as I felt, I might as well not have bothered! We got all the way to the station, trying to avoid eye contact with police and security, but as soon as we stepped onto the platform we were made to go the opposite way up the escalators to the other entrance. We had not realised there was an alternative way in, so after loitering at the oyster card point and walking to a bus stop just outside the station (opposite a police van), we decided to go for it anyway because ours was an important message that needed to be read by people entering the arms fair. We walked to the top of the escalators just as a train came in, putting the banner over our heads so it fell open across our backs and super-glued our hands together. When we couldn't stretch the entire width of the escalators, we moved further along the walkway towards

'THERE IS
ANOTHER WAY'



'We will absolutely NOT tolerate this criminality, this violence on our streets ... and now on behalf of the government let me welcome you to DSEi.'

the Excel centre, kneeling down and blocking access to the entrance.

I was not prepared for what came next.... arms dealers in suits, with briefcases, on their knees, scrambling through the banner and between us, quite aggressively. If it wasn't such a sad reflection of the mentality of those delegates, it would almost be funny. After a while the police moved us to the side, we were told we'd been bad, or broken some laws on the DLR's property or something like that. I wasn't really listening, just thinking if we are breaking laws for kneeling to pray, what on earth are they doing letting this arms fair happen?

In a final act of non-violent protest, we walked to the taxi entrance gates and knelt to pray, but a couple of police told us to move. They didn't want to get rough with us, and apparently you need permission to pray, so they escorted us back to the 'designated protest site'.

We held our banner to be read by oncoming car passengers whilst saying the litany of resistance.

After that, I felt I couldn't do anymore and we had done everything we could in hope and in faith, trusting that maybe one of our actions struck a chord with someone entering the arms fair and as a result they might journey honestly inside themselves to the core of their humanity, and from that point decide whether they can continue. I pray they decide they can't.

Back in Bradford we have begun talking about longer term campaigns, and have come up with ideas for actions at the next fair, although ideally it wouldn't be happening again. I would encourage you to join us in body if you can, and prayer/encouragement if you can't, but until then we can all pray/hope/act for an end to the atrocity in our beautiful world that is the arms fair. There IS another way.

FOR THE LOVE OF..... BADGERS



Although my sanity has had to be questioned over the years, a fact I am happy to admit, friends and family thought I had relapsed when I produced a very grainy, very blurry camera phone shot of a badger I had stumbled across in the garden at 2.30am. The permanent holes in the lawn were dismissed as squirrels, although in hindsight they must have been very short sighted as the holes were always in the same place! Still, I kept the light alive that maybe, just maybe "they" were wrong.

Last summer a mysterious hole appeared at the bottom of the bank in the back garden. "They" then explained it away as rabbits or foxes. Problem was that foxes are rather whiffy and there was no apparent stench. Somehow I just knew it wasn't.

As usual it took another member of the animal kingdom to teach this human something about the amazing world in front of us. I have 4 cats. All boys. All rather lazy, so when one of them

dives through the cat flap at high speed you investigate. Whatever had surprised the cats was large, noisy and definitely hungry judging by the rather disconcerting sounds coming from the undergrowth. A snuffle now and then. A crack as some poor nocturnal creature met its Maker.

Having had a couple of beers earlier I was emboldened to rescue my cat's honour – they were peeking from the porch – and face down their aggressor. Down the lawn I strode, and came face to face with Mum badger and two young cubs. The first cub, bold as brass, walked past me and started rooting around for grubs. The second, more wary, stayed with Mum.

I was captivated - love at first snuffle. These overgrown weasels had stolen my heart and I have been privileged to watch them grow into adults over the last twelve months. Mrs Badger later adopted an orphaned cub so I was treated to the sight of all 4 feeding together one night. As the cubs grew they retained their wariness of me which is a good thing. Man is their only enemy.

So now in 2012 I have the pleasure of watching the two young adults each evening devouring the peanuts and other badger acceptable food they are given. I've learnt what they will eat and what they won't. Meat is in, broccoli, courgette and fish are out.

I can stand within 3 feet of them but no closer. I can't speak badger - a complicated series of chattering noises and grunts - but if I give them the vocal signal I have used from the beginning they know that it's me and I mean them no harm. My attempt at crawling on all fours around the garden resulting in a jolly good telling off from the bolder of the two.

In the end these creatures have more right to be here than us. I'm glad that at least this clan can live with me.

Lisa Pearce, Stafford



'LOVE AT FIRST
SNUFFLE'

CAT VISIT

Friends from Stone Meeting are hoping to organise a trip to The Centre for Alternative Technology in Machynlleth, Wales, on Saturday 22 September. If

anyone else is interested in joining them please contact Pat Conlong on 01785 812410, before 1 August, for further details.



MORE THAN YOU BARGAINED FOR?

Terry Pratchett & Neil Gaiman,
'Good Omens'.

The world will end on Saturday. Next Saturday in fact. Just before dinner, according to The Nice and Accurate Prophecies of Agnes Nutter, Witch, the world's only completely accurate book of prophecies written in 1655. The armies of good and evil are amassing and everything appears to be going according to the ineffable Divine Plan.

Except not everyone wants the world to end so it's up to Aziraphale, an angel ("now where did I put that flaming sword again") and Crowley, a demon ('gives people real guns, ensures no one gets hurt') to try and stop it.

I first read this book when I



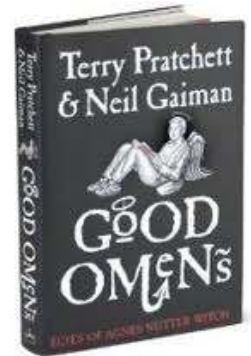
was in my teens and loved the comedy; the characters are all so well written and believable (even the bit parts) but reading it again as an adult I've picked up so much more.

It has a distinctly Quaker feel to me now although both authors are humanist/atheist, the balance between good and evil (can a demon and an angel really become friends?) can be seen throughout the book.

I still love the fun elements of the book, just what do the four horsemen (well bikers) of the apocalypse do when they're not riding out to the end of the world, is it really possible to drive down Oxford Street at 90 miles an hour and just what does a hell hound look like? But I also love the thought of an angel seeing the good in a demon (and a demon seeing the bad in an angel!).

I would recommend this book to anyone especially in the light of a possible TV mini-series next year it's a great laugh and you might just get more than you bargain for out of it.

Gayle Yeomans, Stafford



HOLDING UP THE LIGHT

Question: How many Quakers does it take to change a light bulb?

Answer: Thirty-three: One to raise a concern at Preparative Meeting that the light bulb is no longer working. Ten at PM to set up a light bulb replacement subgroup to send a report to Area Meeting. Three to work on the subgroup and report to AM. Fifteen at AM to discern that the right way forward is to change the light

bulb. One to report back to Meeting that the bulb is going to be changed. One person to change the bulb. One person to write an article for the AM newsletter about changing the bulb. One to write a letter to *The Friend* saying that the decision about changing the light bulb had not been in Right Ordering.

Discovered by Lisa Pearce, Stafford



Editors' note:

Personal counsellors are of course much more efficient than Quakers. It only takes one counsellor to change a light bulb - though certainly the bulb must really want to change.

CLOSING DATE FOR NEXT ISSUE: SEPTEMBER 30, BUT PLEASE START NOW!

ONE PAGE TAKES ABOUT 620 WORDS

GABI AND ROGER OLDFIELD

8 MENDIP AVENUE, STAFFORD, ST17 0PG

ROLDFIELD@BTOPENWORLD.COM

STAFFORDSHIRE QUAKERS ON
THE WEB

WWW.STAFFS-QUAKERS.ORG.UK