



STAFFORDSHIRE QUAKER



AUTUMN EDITION, OCTOBER 2012

MEMORIAL TAKES SHAPE



See page 7 for the latest news

In the picture Anthony Wilson (Lichfield) and Helen Lockwood (Stone), both members of the Staffordshire Area Meeting working party are standing by the foundations of the Quaker Service Memorial at the National Arboretum in Staffordshire. The inauguration, postponed from September because of bad weather conditions at the site, will now take place on 20 April.

- *The Memorial is coming*
- *George Fox in Wales*
- *The meaning of silence*

QUAKER TREASURES IN MID-WALES



This tapestry, on display in the museum at the information centre in Dolgellau, tells the story of the remarkable impact and aftermath of George Fox's appearance in the town in 1657.

Stafford Friends' recently visited Dolgellau and were guided to several points on the Quaker trail around the town. Some buildings on the trail are shown on the map on the tapestry. See page 6 for a full account.

TURN FROM DARKNESS TO LIGHT AND KNOW THE SPIRIT OF GOD IN YOUR HEART.

SWEAR NOT BY ANY OATH BUT LET YOUR YEA BE YEA AND YOUR NAY NAY

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QUAKER WEEK, OCTOBER 2012

HOLDING LEADERS TO ACCOUNT: SUSTAINABILITY AND NONVIOLENT SOCIAL CHANGE IN KENYA



Laura (right) speaking at an infrequent gathering of Quaker peacebuilders working in Africa. Zawadi Nikuse, a peacebuilder and reconciliation worker in North Kivu, Democratic Republic of Congo, translated Laura's words into French.

Over twenty Stafford Friends and visitors were deeply impressed with a memorable event held in Quaker Week. Laura Shippler Chico, Programme Manager for Quaker Peace and Social Witness work in Africa, led a workshop at Stafford Friends Meeting House. She focused on her programme's support for Kenyan Quakers and others who are building skills and strategies in active non-violence.

She took us through examples of the teaching techniques used, and told stories of some of the most interesting and successful campaigns in Kenya. We heard about about the boda boda

(motorcycle taxi) drivers who put a stop to fraudulent registration scams, the farmers who took on a bank when drought ruined their crops, and community members who have stalled the construction of a dam that would displace 50,000 people. First, though, we were asked to say what we would do in some of the situations she described. A challenging and stimulating experience.

Laura finished on a note of hope, hope that non-violent action for change is on the cusp of achieving a transformation in the way conflict is dealt with at grass roots level in Kenya.

“SOMEWHERE WITHIN OUR IMPERFECT SELVES, HOWEVER HIDDEN UNDER LAYERS OF GRIEF AND LOSS AND TRAGEDY AND DISILLUSION, THERE IS SOMETHING GOOD, SOMETHING WISE, SOMETHING KNOWING. AND IT IS THIS KERNEL THAT PUSHES US TO KEEP STRUGGLING TO FIX OUR BROKEN WORLD”

LAURA SHIPLER CHICO

OPEN HOUSE IN STAFFORD

Stafford Meeting held an open day as part of Quaker Week.

One visitor was the County Equality & Diversity Officer, interested in how the cuts affect faith groups' involvement in charitable work.



An Anglican minister, in Stafford by narrow boat, was taken with John Woolman's words on a poster on the wall and made her own copy: 'There is a principle which is pure, placed in the human mind, which in different places and ages hath

had different names. It is, however, pure and proceeds from God. It is deep and inward, confined to no forms of religion nor excluded from any, where the heart stands in perfect sincerity.'

ONE WORLD WEEK IN STAFFORD

'One World Week' is a Development Education Charity. Each year, 'The Week' is an opportunity for people from diverse backgrounds to come together to learn about global justice, spread that learning and use it to take action for justice locally and globally.

This year's week is from October 21-28. The theme is 'Sharing Destiny - Moving to One World'.

Margaret Crossland of Stafford Meeting informs us that **Stafford's 'One World Week Jamboree' will be held between 11.00 am**

and 2.30 pm on Saturday 20 October at Church Lane Evangelical Hall (opposite the Soup Kitchen). There will be food and music from around the world.

The event is organised by Stafford One World Week



WHAT'S NEXT IN LEEK?

Linda Skellam of Leek Meeting reports that her Meeting did not do anything for Quaker week itself, but that an **open day** is planned for **27th October**, when the Meeting will be borrowing the exhibition about the Quaker Service Memorial at the Arboretum (see page 7).

Linda also has the idea of holding an open day featuring the history of Quakers and chocolate manufacturing. She asks whether anyone knows if there are any resources available anywhere on this subject. She can be contacted at linda.skellam1@sky.com



DEMONSTRATION: A DURABLE SHELTER, EASY AND CHEAP TO MAKE



Across the world many people need a shelter which is better than a tent or a shack.

Also they need something they can make for themselves with the minimum of tools and skills.

Furthermore they need accommodation which can be dismantled, packed completely and transported manually on a trolley. Just think of the Palestinians in the occupied territories,

liable to have their houses demolished at any time. They need something better and cheaper than a caravan which they can make, adapt, dismantle quickly and move easily.

I am making a prototype, and this will be demonstrated at **Wolverhampton Friends' Meeting House at midday on Sunday 25 November**, just after Meeting. Now I want as many people as possible to come and see the prototype shelter. If this is going to be developed as it deserves I shall need the interest and help of others.

As regards specifics, the shelter has one room of floor space 7 feet by 5, and 6 feet high. It weighs about 100 kilos (2 hundredweight) and its materials cost about £200. Larger shelters can be made of the same design. Also shelters can be placed side by side and back to back to form a terrace.

So please do come to Wolverhampton on 25 November - phone me (01902 726333) and I may be able to arrange some lunch. Looking forward to seeing as many people as possible.

John Nicholls, Wolverhampton

KWA-ZULU NATAL 'FANCY STITCH' COMES TO STONE



Jill Jones (Stone Meeting) is contact for an exhibition & sale of African products in Stone on 14 November.

MAMA
IGNATIA ...
CARES FOR HER
CHILDREN,
GRANDCHILDREN
AND THE
ORPHANS OF
RELATIVES WHO
HAVE DIED OF
AIDS.

In the Lebombo mountains in a remote part of South Africa there is a small business run by a group of local women. It now gives hope to over 420 women who can earn a small income to support their families. They call themselves 'The Fancy Stitch Group'. Most of the work is done at home in small houses scattered over a wide area. Beautiful embroidered cards, photo frames, bookmarks, large pictures, keyrings etc are produced between their normal daily chores of fetching water, growing vegetables and caring for their children. From small beginnings the Fancy Stitch artwork has progressed further than their wildest dreams – a few years ago an exhibition was held at SOAS in London.

Mama Ignatia is a good example. She cares for her children, grandchildren and the orphans of relatives who have died of AIDS. She lives



with this family in a cluster of simple thatched huts very far from the nearest town, has no electricity, cooks on an open fire, has to fetch all her water and carefully tends a vegetable patch which helps to feed many mouths.

Life is a struggle particularly in the dry winter months.

But Mama Ignatia has Fancy Stitch in her life – this makes a huge difference. She is the leader of 50 women in her area who form a satellite Fancy Stitch group. The women come together every month from the surrounding hills, singing as they walk, bringing the work they have embroidered and beaded during the last weeks. A member of the Fancy Stitch management team attends, to fetch the completed products, pay the women, advise about new orders for the next month, give artistic guidance, bring lunch and news of the outside world. This joyous occasion is the highlight of the women's month – there is lots of laughter, catching up on gossip, feeding children, sewing and exchanging design ideas. The money they earned is vital for them and their families and as Fancy Stitch members they are taught about HIV/AIDS prevention and helped to get treatment if they are HIV positive.

AIDS is an enormous problem in this poverty-stricken part of South Africa – approximately 42% of the population are HIV positive. Life expectancy is 39 years. There is almost no opportu-

nity for employment in this part of Kwa-Zulu Natal, the women are forced to rear their children and orphans single-handedly on little or no income.

The exhibition will be held at Stone Railway Station, from 12.00 to 6.00 pm on 14 November. A wide range of embroidered products will be sold as well as wooden utensils and unusual beaded animals, jewellery, flowers and keyrings. Light refreshments will be available. There will be illustrated talks to give an insight into the everyday life of the Fancy Stitch members.

The sale will be run by volunteers who have worked with Fancy Stitch for 7 years and have seen how important this self-help group is for the women of this area – children can now go to school and are dressed in the correct school uniform, there is more food in the households, leaders have emerged in the community, AIDS education is given to groups of women, water projects have been undertaken and emotional support given to the sick and dying. Fancy Stitch gives hope!

All the money raised goes directly to the women in Kwa-Zulu Natal. Fancy Stitch is a registered South African charity. Entry to the exhibition is free and all are welcome. For further information ring **Jill Jones on 01782 791016.**

MARCHING AGAINST DRONES



Members of Lichfield meeting joined with people from Queens College, the Anglican and Methodist training college Birmingham, and other like minded people from across the country in marking Drones week.

Anthony Wilson and I were present on October 6th at the beginning of a march from the UAV engines fac-

tory at Shenstone near Lichfield. The march was going to the the drone body factory at Leicester and then on to RAF Waddington at Lincoln.

Currently Britain has drones that operate from the Nevada desert but soon they are to purchase British drones manufactured in Shenstone and Leicester and operate them from RAF Waddington.

The march started with a rally at Shenstone. After having sustaining soup provided by Shenstone Methodists, we marched approximately eight miles to Tamworth along the old A5.

Both of us wondered whether our legs would last out and had been given back up telephone numbers in case we needed rescuing but we managed without any

trouble at all.

On the way we had opportunities to get to know more about our fellow marchers. There were about 14 people at this beginning stage. Four of them were hoping to complete as much of the route as possible including a recently retired Friend from Kirby Moorside and an enthusiastic woman in her twenties from St Leonard's on Sea who had made her own way to Kabul and heard first hand of death by drones. We could only offer our support as 8 miles was about our limit. We left them at Tamworth Methodist church which provided the welcome tea and cake at the end of the first day.

Paula Knight, Lichfield

... HAD MADE
HER OWN WAY
TO KABUL AND
HEARD FIRST
HAND OF DEATH
BY DRONES

WRITING AGAINST DRONES

This briefing on drones is taken from the national Quaker website

Drones represent a worrying new frontier in warfare and raise a number of grave concerns: high civilian casualties, targeted extra-judicial killings, kill decisions made half the world away and even the possibility of drones killing without human involvement.

In 2010 QPSW peacemaker Mary Dobbing co-wrote the

report Convenient Killing: Armed Drones and the 'Playstation' Mentality" as part of her placement with the Fellowship of Reconciliation (FoR). The report is available on the FoR website .

The Drones Action Network, of which QPSW is a founder member, is asking Friends to write to their MPs raising their concerns. The military use of Armed Drones is a new issue, and there is very little information available. What is

known is patchy at best.

The suggested letter is focused on getting a number of specific pieces of information about Drones into the public domain, and can be found at www.quaker.org.uk/action-drones-suggested-letter.



QUAKER FOOTPRINTS IN A GREEN LAND



On the Quaker trail around Dolgellau.
Our guide, Catherine James, is third from the left.

Both George Fox and members of Stafford Meeting have been to Dolgellau!

Fox wrote that he came over Cader Idris from the south in 1657: 'on this hillside I could see a great way; and I was moved to sound the day of the Lord there; and told John ap John, a faithful Welsh minister, in what places God would raise up a people to set under his teaching. And we came down to a place called Dolgelly.'

As a result of his visit many people in the area became Quakers, but after heavy persecution a lot of them left for Pennsylvania.

Catherine James, a Dolgellau Quaker, has been the prime mover behind the establishment of a 7-mile Quaker trail around Dolgellau, which has display boards at several points of significance

in the history of early Quakers in the area. Most of the sites are those of buildings, including houses in which prominent Quakers lived. Welsh Yearly Meeting was held in at least one of them.

Eleven of us from Stafford Meeting, and a spouse and a partner, travelled to Dolgellau by minibus on 6 October to investigate this fascinating piece of Quaker history. The route became greener with every mile, and the landscape in which beautiful stone-built Dolgellau nestled was glorious.



We started with cups of tea in Catherine's home, and then visited the museum of Quaker history (see page 1). Afterwards we visited the key points on the Quaker trail, with Catherine as a very authoritative guide.

One stopping-point was the former Quaker burial-ground, later taken over by Independents. One friend was tickled to find a gravestone indicating that a wife had died before her husband, with the message 'Peace, perfect peace'.

We ended the day with more refreshments in Catherine's home, and saw an impressive outreach film about Quakers in Wales.

Catherine is very willing to guide any further visitors around the trail. Some Stafford Quakers would like to return to do the 7-mile trail as a complete walk: it looks very attractive. The whole experience is highly recommended to other Friends.

I WAS MOVED
TO SOUND THE
DAY OF THE
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PLACE CALLED
DOLGELLY
,

MEMORIAL: FOUNDATIONS, EXHIBITION, INAUGURATION



The Area Meeting's original concern for a memorial to Quaker service in the National Memorial Arboretum included supporting leaflets for visitors: since then, the Quaker Service Memorial trustees have been working with Manchester University's Humanitarian and Conflict Response Institute (HCRI) to produce an exhibition which is available for local meetings round the country to borrow. Such has been the interest that five sets (twelve banners which roll into their stands for transport) have been produced by our printers in Stafford, and are being located in London, Manchester, Edinburgh and we hope Bristol. They are now available for local meetings in Staffordshire, and the **first public display will be at Leek on 27 October.**

Our HCRI colleagues have produced a display which is of a high professional standard, able to stand scrutiny

in public libraries, civic centres and even galleries: so meetings are encouraged to explore local possibilities. It is designed to be free-standing, but there is always scope for Friends to serve as stewards; there are leaflets and a sheet of FAQs dealing with its subject matter, along with a model press release worked out between the Trust and the National Arboretum last June, when it was on display there for a fortnight. Its focus is Quaker service during and after the Second World War, through the Friends Ambulance Unit and Friends Relief Service; it extends to the award of the Nobel Peace Prize in 1947, the Quaker United Nations Office, and recent work in areas of conflict round the world.

We also hold video recordings of past members of the FAU and FRS speaking about their experience, and its impact on them. The HCRI set is complete; those

filmed by trustees were shown at Area Meeting on 9th September, and are still a work in progress. Members present can speak to the impact which they made: the matter-of-fact way in which the service was given, and its effect on those around them. Meetings are advised to provide their own viewing equipment, as it is not practical for the Trust to supply this; these recordings can be shown with or without the exhibition itself being on display.

The completion of the memorial itself has been delayed by the rain during the summer: while water was lying wellington-deep at our site, it was not possible to lay the foundations. These have now been completed, and our contractor is cutting the lettering prior to installing the stonework over the winter. The inauguration event will take place on **Saturday 20 April** next year: all AM members will be invited, and there will be a call for help with meeting visitors at railway stations and at the Arboretum.

To borrow the exhibition, contact Anthony Wilson at 10 Beacon Mews, Lichfield WS13 7AH; 01543 258016; gaialane60@hotmail.com. It is stored in Paula Knight's garage in Alrewas, and will fit into the boot of most cars.

Anthony Wilson, Lichfield



The foundations of the Memorial are in place

OUTREACH: EXPLAINING FAITH IN ACTION



Edited article by Linda Skellam of Leek Meeting for the Leek Interfaith magazine.

Quakers are often inspired to paths of service through attendance at meeting for worship. Here Friends experience a sense of the Spirit within that 'leads them into ways of life and understandings of truth'. A. & Q. 8 says: 'We can worship alone, but when we join with others in expectant waiting we may discover a deeper sense of God's presence.' And 34: 'Remember your responsibilities as a citizen for the conduct of local, national, and international affairs. Do not shrink from the time and effort your involvement may demand.'

REMEMBER YOUR
RESPONSIBILITIES
AS A CITIZEN

The **testimonies** and A & Q prompt an awareness of areas of concern that can lead to action. The Peace Testimony evolved as a response to the 'personal experience of the love and power of Christ' of the early Quaker founders, and has been a source of inspiration for Quakers through the ages. The Testimony of equality, which recognises that all people are of equal worth, also inspires Quakers to work to help those suffering from injustice.

Quaker Peace & Social Witness is the part of the society that acts as a 'hub' for action for peace and justice. Working in partnership with non-violent social justice groups, QPSW are involved in projects across

the globe. The focus is to confront injustice and prejudice, and enable better understanding to create a better future. Rather than avoiding conflict, non-violent action focuses on the root causes. Below are examples of the work:

The West Midlands Peace Education Project works with schools to educate young people in non-violent ways to deal with conflict.

Friends established a **centre in Geneva** in the 1920s following the establishment of the League of Nations after the First World War. This was re-established in 1948, along with an office in **New York**, as Quaker offices to the United Nations. Acting as advocates, QUINO facilitates negotiations that are 'informal and open', enabling discussions that allow delegates from all sides to put their points of view. There are three main areas of work in Geneva: Disarmament and Peace; Human Rights and Refugees; Global Economic Issues.

Friends are involved in the **Ecumenical Accompaniment Programme** in Palestine and Israel established in 2002 as an interfaith group in response to a call by the Heads of Churches in Jerusalem, and Palestinian and Israel. The EAPPI supports volunteers to accompany Palestinians and Israelis going about their daily work and on their way to school,

'offering protection through nonviolent presence'.

The Joseph Rowntree Trust was founded in 1904 by Joseph Rowntree, funding grants to organisations involved in work within the community. Having the foresight to realise that these needs would change over the years, the foundation has been able to change according to the times. Currently it offers grants to individuals and projects that work towards a peaceful world, political equality and social justice.

The **Quaker Housing Trust** offers grants to social housing projects for building new accommodation or upgrading existing homes. In 2011, 19 small social housing projects over the country benefited. Examples include West Kent A.M., where the Meeting House was converted to create accommodation for 'young persons at risk', and grants for a sheltered housing project in Reigate enabled the installation of new fire doors and an alarm system.

Quakers are increasingly concerned about the **environment**. Friends are working with local, national and international organisations to tackle these problems. Leek Meeting has loaned a portion of the garden for use as an allotment. Managed by the Food Group (part of Transition Leek), the area sports many healthy vegetables. Later the group is holding two 'apple days'.

SIT DOWN IN PURE STILLNESS AND SILENCE

From a Quaker invocation by Alexander Parker, 1660

The first that enters into the place of your meeting... turn in thy mind to the light, and wait upon God singly, as if none were present but the Lord; and here thou art strong. Then the next that comes in, let them in simplicity of

heart sit down and turn in to the same light, and wait in the spirit; and so all the rest coming in, in the fear of the Lord, sit down in pure stillness and silence of all flesh, and wait in the light. Those who are brought to a pure waiting upon God in the spirit, are come nearer to the Lord than words are ...

FROM SILENCE TO PEACE

Although one might expect a Catholic to begin with faith as the prerequisite for the spiritual life, in these lines Mother Teresa begins with silence

The fruit of silence is prayer,
The fruit of prayer is faith,
The fruit of faith is love,
The fruit of love is service,
The fruit of service is peace.



BUT THE SILENCE IN THE MIND



The Welsh poet R.S. Thomas, though an Anglican priest and Welsh nationalist, often seems to speak as a Quaker. The Friend who showed Stafford Friends round the Quaker trail in Dolgellau (see page 6) pointed out that Barbara Prys-Williams runs courses on R. S. Thomas at Woodbrooke. Here is one of his poems.

But the silence in the mind
is when we live best, within
listening distance of the silence
we call God. This is the deep
calling to deep of the psalm writer,
the bottomless ocean
we launch the armada of
our thoughts on, never arriving.

It is a presence, then,
whose margins are our margins;
that calls us out over our
own fathoms. What to do
but draw a little nearer to
such ubiquity by remaining still?

SILENCE IS

Poem by Sacha for Wensleydale & Swaledale A.M. schools poetry competition, whose theme was silence.

Silence is when the spitting fire is burning
Silence is when the big door slams
Silence is when the snow flutters from the sky
Noises is when a glass smashes and crashes to the ground
Silence is when I cuddle my teddy
Noise is when I splash around in the swimming pool
Silence is when the Quackers are silent for an hour to think. Sh! Ssh!

SILENCE!

Pat Hurley, the author of this passage, does not claim to have a faith, but Joan and Peter Holland of Stone Meeting believe it says a lot about silence which will appeal to Friends. Pat Hurley has known Peter all his life.

In this silence is awareness of its limitless expansion
in a twilight, flawless, pacific and without glare.
Silence is empty until it is filled with prayer
almost noisy with meaning, yet without uttered word.
No need for speech or contact between communicating souls
in fear of breaking and defiling this divine gift,
only silent cries of recognition of discoveries in common.
Thoughts floating free being absorbed into the ether;
intangible frail fragments, looming near and fading away.
A sacred silence, conducive to hearing and listening,
for knowing and feeling a presence with the voice of God.
The heart hears, heeds the message which becomes a revelation.
As any witness to this healing reality, we live in love and hope,
seeking and finding silence as relief from useless noise;
so quiet, so lovely-not escaping, but in place to face difficulty.
Allowing and creating silence is to provide a haven of peace,
a chance to reflect, be cleansed, and renewed in mind and body.

ALLOWING
AND
CREATING
SILENCE IS
TO PROVIDE
A HAVEN OF
PEACE

LARA, BORN 1975, DIED 2012



Pat Conlong of Stone Meeting received some letters and notes by Lara, the daughter of a friend. In 2011 Lara was diagnosed with motor neurone disease. She died in August of this year. Lara, her two young daughters and Jona her husband had lived a simple, sustainable life, spent for many years in volunteer work in Cuba. On their return they settled in Northumberland and lived in the same way. Through the children's early years Lara worked as a researcher for the CPRE. Pat has shared Lara's moving writings, produced from April of this year, with members of Stone Meeting. The writings are 'so very beautiful, honest and insightful, representing the innermost thoughts of a young person who knows that she is dying'. Many of Lara's values 'fit beautifully with the Quaker way of life.' Extracts are published below.

1. What a strange thing for me to do a one size fits all letter. I have always hated them and loved very personal communication, but strange times, strange measures. There has been such a warm, nourishing flood of people reaching out to me, people offering what

they can, a hugely disparate range – the words and images, tiffin and legwarmers, and wild mountain thyme are a massive part of what sustains and resources me and keeps me afloat (...)

This is a time of new learnings and compromise, after all, I have always disliked the word 'compromise', it has always seemed weak and dirty to me but I am busy seeking out the good in it now - the strength and wisdom it can contain - because, of course, there are so many things that I have to accept, and the choice of how to do so is still mine

2. I want to paint a picture of where and how I am because I want to be brave and honest and connected. This is important to me above all, I suppose to a large extent I am bewildered and still in shock. Bewildered that this is happening in my body.... I who have revelled in my lithe strong body... been so very fully in my body, so comfortable in my body. I, who has had such a sense of movement in my self image, and of feet planted firmly on the good earth, such a strong sense of myself as a strider, a do-er, that it is a massive challenge to hang on to my sense of self now so much has gone and will go (...)

Who is Lara if she cannot talk or write? I have stayed upright in this wheelchair but the threat to communication is the hardest thing of all. I do see connection and response, as the most important thing and I find the idea of my mind, still busy and creative within me but without the channels to get it out crumbling. I find that bewildering too. All the inward senses completely intact, able to take in but not to give out. ...

Holly gave me a poem:

Were I able to shut

My eyes, ears, legs, hands

And walk into myself

For a thousand years,

Perhaps I would reach -

I do not know its name -

What matters most

And sometimes I can feel that and see the possibility of that solitary wisdom ... and at others I think that it is not possible for me who defines myself by my place within all things on the earth and above all by my connection with other people (...)

So yes, bewilderment is still a massive part of it every time we go out I find myself amazed, staring at all the

WHO IS LARA IF SHE CANNOT TALK OR WRITE?

LARA (CONTINUED)

people, young and old, thin and fat, standing tall or round shouldered, who can walk and probably will continue to be, because a body and a mind can't unlearn 37 years of perfect strength and ability and determined independence so quickly. I suppose this is the key - I am not redefined by this disease, even though my present reality is (...)

Most of all (apart from bewilderment) I just feel sad, just impossibly Sad at times - for myself - trying hard to steer the path between compassion and self pity - and sad for Jona, Carla and Nancy, and my Mum and Dad, my Grandparents and (...)

I used to dream so much of eroticism and difference and it is endearing, and now so very painful to realise how base and simple what I want is - to love watching my girls grow, to grow old with Jona, to have long grey plaits. I so love the movement through the stages of a lifetime (...)

Jona and I hold tight to each other. We have ten years of very solid partnership between us and he is so good at making me feel the continuing mutual give and take

between us. Nancy and Carla give us such a framework of normality and happiness to hold on to (...) They are brilliant and beautiful and give me everything to live for. I do feel calm and full of trust that they will be OK and I feel very proud of the very strong bedrock in them both, so full of love, so sure of their rightful place in this world ...

I have resolved to be beautiful in this wheelchair wearing my embroidered tops from Mexico and huge impractical earrings which have not been worn when I was not in the chair, planting and digging. ...

3. A few weeks later, Lara is no longer able to write or use her machine and her mother takes over.

It is good for me and everyone who knows me that so many children will have an understanding of disability and grow in empathy, that most important of emotions. I didn't realise that a paralysed body can still feel everything, urges, emotions, instincts to move. These are completely undiminished. Thoughts and expectations of able-bodiedness still stay so very much alive! (...)

I suppose that this will be the last letter that I write with pen or machine. How many thousands of letters I have written in my life! I have to trust that you will all still know that I will always in some part of me be reaching out to respond, share, give, receive, even when there seems to be only silence and stillness even if you don't hear from me again.

4. This poem by D. H. Lawrence, provided by her mother, ends her letters

And still among it all, snatches of lovely oblivion and snatches of renewal

Odd wintry flowers upon the withered stem, yet new strange flowers

Such as my life has not brought before, new blossoms of me.

I am still trying to see it like this and hope that I will do so till the end, but always a beginning too.

I WILL ALWAYS
IN SOME PART
OF ME BE
REACHING OUT
TO RESPOND,
SHARE, GIVE,
RECEIVE, EVEN
WHEN THERE
SEEMS TO BE
ONLY SILENCE
AND STILLNESS



SPIRIT, HUMILITY AND PEAS

Q. How do Friends start a race?

A. Ready.... set.... go when the Spirit moves you.

Q. What do you get if you cross a Quaker with a Jehovah's Witness ?

A. Some bloke who knocks on your door ... and then says absolutely nothing for an entire hour.



*'I AM PROUD TO BE
A HUMBLE QUAKER'*

From the website of Swiss Friends

Elder Silas took Friend Ezra to see his big crop of peas. His garden was at the end of a long meadow. A very long meadow. Occasionally he would bend over and pick a stray pea on the path, which showed him he was going the right way. Finally Ezra said, 'Friend, their must be shorter way to your peas!' To which the Elder replied, 'There is no way to peas. Peas is the way.'

AMEN TO THAT LIKE, AMEN

In his book 'Trial Run' Dick Francis describes an intelligent, enthusiastic, communist architect coming to terms with the reality of his divided loyalties. He writes 'Not to believe what one believes one ought to believe is a spiritual torment as old as doctrine'. Thank God for Quakers!

Jean Marengi, Stone

A Unitarian in New Mexico tells this story: The kindergarten class was discussing 'prayer', and the children seemed aware that the way you end a prayer was with 'amen'. Does anyone know what 'amen' means, the teacher asked. There was a long silence. Then one little boy piped up, with appropriate, computer-age gestures, and said, "Well, I think it means, like, 'send'".



SOME EVENTS IN 2012-2013

20 October One World Week, Stafford (see page 3)

27 October Leek FMH open day (see page 3)

14 November Stone Fancy Stitch exhibition and sale (see page 4)

25 November Wolverhampton Friends; Meeting House shelter demonstration (see page 3)

20 April Quaker Service Memorial Inauguration. (see page 7)

AREA MEETING 2013

9 Feb Stafford

9 March Stoke

11 May Leek

13 July Uttoxeter

14 Sept Wolverhampton

12 Oct Stone

14 Dec Lichfield

CLOSING DATE FOR NEXT ISSUE: JANUARY 27, BUT PLEASE START NOW!

ONE PAGE TAKES ABOUT 620 WORDS

GABI AND ROGER OLDFIELD

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