



Bath Quaker  
Meeting

## Bath Quaker News Oct 2018

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# Quaker Week and WWI commemoration

Quaker week at the beginning of October starts a run up over five weeks to the WWI 100<sup>th</sup> anniversary commemoration on 11 Nov. This month's issue includes

- reports on Quaker week events
- including a debate at the Friends Meeting House on how to commemorate of war resistance
- the first two articles in a series by Laurence Tindall offering an artist's perspective on war memorials
- other WWI related events coming up including a Quaker's one man show at the Ustinov.

Meanwhile Bath Quakers are preparing for appropriate and respectful participation in the civic/British Legion Armistice Day event on 11 November.



*We'll commemorate them on the beaches: director Danny Boyle announced plans to remember fallen soldiers in a national programme of beach art.*

## Debate: how do we commemorate war resistance (and why does our white poppy wreath keep vanishing)?



*The panel: Professor Lois Bibbings, Major Dick Beath, Judith Eversley (moderator), Kate Macdonald and Diana Francis.*

Bath Quakers hosted a discussion and debate on commemoration of resistance to war on 4 October, organised by the academic and author Kate MacDonald. The occasion was Quaker Week, and the event was triggered by the disappearance each year of the white poppy wreath laid by Bath Quakers in memory of all those who lost their lives in war at the Bath Cenotaph Armistice memorial.

An accompanying exhibition in the Friends Meeting House showed stories of conscientious objectors and the lives of others affected by resistance to war. Copies of Kate's new book [\*The Conscientious Objector's Wife\*](#) were available for sale and signing. Other panellists included [Professor Lois Bibbings from the University of Bristol](#), the experienced serviceman and former Bath mayoral consort Major Dick Beath, Bradford on Avon Quaker and Bath Stop War stalwart Diana Francis.

Lin Paterson read Bath & NE Somerset Council's formal policy on war commemoration which was clear and inclusive, remembering all victims of war entirely in line with the dedication of our own white poppy wreath.



*An accompanying exhibition shared a range of conscientious objector stories.*

*William Heath writes:*

How we commemorate war is a lively and important topic, and it's important we broach it locally in a discussion format. The demographic in the room on Thursday was atypical; it was largely full of Quakers (some with their doubts about the peace testimony). The panel was full of pacifists, apart from Major Dick Beath who single-handedly held up the role of conventional counterparty (speaking generally for the military, but sharing an abhorrence of war).

Attendance was reasonable in terms of numbers and the discussion flowed, but it did not have the diametric opposition of views that can flare up on a Saturday morning when angry militarists confront Friends protesting war outside Bath Abbey. The other side didn't show up. And it was hard to focus on and progress the specific point of how we commemorate resistance to war when so many bigger questions are unresolved. For example: is modern war futile; is Britain an inappropriately militaristic society?

Commemoration more broadly is national news with the WWI centenary. The inimitable [Danny Boyle, who captured the national mood with the London Olympics opening ceremony, is about to take over beaches for a "Pages on the Sea" event to commemorate lives lost.](#)

In Bath we will meet under our imperial Cenotaph, with its uncomfortable theological message of a distinct crusader sword imposed on an stone cross. Military men will shout and stamp their feet, actions we tend to associate with the starting of wars. We could wish for a softer perhaps truly secular occasion, perhaps in silence, perhaps run by the professions that deal with the aftermath: terminal care nurses or undertakers.

But Friends will be there, participating respectfully by kind invitation of the Royal British Legion and entirely in line with council policy on commemoration.

This time we'll place both red and white poppy wreaths, to commemorate the military and their families and all victims of war in the hope of peaceful resolution to future conflicts. If and when - as seems likely - it's stolen again it will underline there's still a debate to be had about how we commemorate wars. Quakers are ready.

## **Sculptor Laurence Tindall on art and war memorials (1/5)**

*The sculptor and stonemason Laurence Tindall, a Bath Quaker, writes:*

Having heard that I have had a little experience with war memorials the editor suggested that I write these short reflections in three parts for *Bath Quaker News* as we approach armistice day and the 100th anniversary of the end of World War One.

I have to tell you that my own efforts as an artist have received very little favour in this arena over the years. I have run into some pretty hot water on occasion. But I have also felt very privileged to be able to conserve some memorials for the families and communities that value them highly.

As a nation we prefer our public art and our monuments to be as undemonstrative, even as bland as possible. We are not a nation of extroverts and tend towards evasiveness and self depreciation in nearly all things. Even our greatest heroes are buried in the common graveyard next to Joe Bloggs and Edna Nobody, and so it is with war memorials. These will be neutered of all the reality of warfare let alone the emotional turmoil of depicting the extended collateral damage that engulfs civil society during these events.



*Guernica: moving and powerful anti-war oil painting done by the [Spanish](#) artist [Pablo Picasso](#) in Paris 1937.*

This is immediately problematic for anyone who wants to ask those awkward and rude questions about what actually happened. You know - the stuff the soldiers don't want to talk about when they get home; the stuff that makes them cry and wake up with night terrors. Not that I am asking every war memorial to look like Picasso's *Guernica* although it is a very good war memorial and now stands in a specially made gallery in Madrid as a symbol of pain and reconciliation.

Any good artist will want to engage with the emotional content of any subject and Picasso was a good artist. In contrast it is strange how emotion is allowed in holocaust memorials. One of the best is the Judenplatz Holocaust Memorial in Vienna by Rachel Whiteread. It's an inside out library of a few thousand terminated stories.



*Rachel Whiteread's Judenplatz Holocaust Memorial in Vienna is also known as the Nameless Library.*

Even at Theresienstadt in the Czech Republic a figure of a young woman with a bag over her head tells you all you need to know about that place.

Why when we represent our war story do we have an angel and a couple of sentries in starched uniform standing with rifles pointed at the ground?

## **War memorials and the rude questions they avoid (2/5)**

*Laurence Tindall continues:*

My mother and baby brother survived a bomb near their house. When they were rescued, they walked out down a road lined with cardboard coffins.

Where is her story memorialised in the civic space? Is it too strong to call this a conspiracy of silence? Why is the military story the only story to be venerated? Why is that story so redacted and censored?

Anyone who has had a relative who has been in the front line of battle, or knows someone who has seen the aftermath of a blasted city and experienced the tragedy of refugees, and has bothered to ask those rude questions, will know that the reality and truth of war is not there when they look at most war memorials.

But some war memorials do pull the veil away and let us see the truth. Some memorials do engage in storytelling. There is the Kindertransport sculpture by Frank Meisler and Arie Oviada in Liverpool street station. In the city of Liverpool there is the blitz memorial by Tom Murphy, and also the Christmas truce football match by Andy Edwards. These are not particularly great works of art but are great and brave feats of commissioning in the face of our tendency to obscure the reality of war under a construct of bland nothingness.



*Kindertransport sculpture in Liverpool street station*

You will, if you work hard, find more examples, but they are far fewer than the thousands of official cenotaphs at the heart of our communities and a thousand more statues to this that and the other person, group or event that have no emotional content whatsoever and no real story to tell.

This is not only an appeal for a little bit of truth but also an appeal for some good art.

## **Report on the “End of Life Matters” series**

*Hazel Mitchell writes:*

What do we call the course? Bath Meeting did not like “Death Cafe”, so we just let things evolve, and we came up with the above title. As this gave the acronym of “ELM” the outline of an elm tree behind our wording was incorporated on the advertising poster – the bright idea of a Bath Friend.

The planning committee first met in September 2017, including two retired doctors to add their expertise. We met four times in all, with much telephone use as well, and were able to begin the series on 4 April 2018. We decided to vary the time and day of these meetings, in order to allow as wide a membership as possible.

We intended a course which would aim at two outcomes. One was the practical approach encouraged by Friends:

*Approach old age with courage and hope. As far as possible make arrangements for your care in good time, so that an undue burden does not fall on others”*  
(Advices and Queries No.29)

To cover some of the topics, we invited a representative from “Lasting Power of Attorney Made Simple” and a spokesperson from Dorothy House Hospice on their wonderful work. Our session on “Planning your own funeral” was an introduction to the practical implications, but in groups of three or four it was also an opportunity to look in greater emotional depth and spiritual meaning.

Our second aim was to make it possible for members to express feelings about dying and death in a safe place, confidentially. Here we asked the lead Chaplain from the Royal United Hospital in Bath to talk about her work and the nurse trainer of staff caring for dying patients.

Although presentations were formal, practical matters crossed over into the emotional aspects, which we pursued often in the full group but also in small groups. Numbers varied between six and 12 so our small group work meant we could easily talk and not be overheard by others in our large meeting room.

One of our main resources was the Church of England set of questions called “Grave Talk” which were an excellent lead into feelings. Our main resource however was the life experience of the members. Someone suggested our session entitled “Summing Up” would be a valuable opportunity to consider what had been learned and what was still to explore. It was felt there was value in being glad that a dozen of us faced the “last taboo” at least enough to ask some questions, and not forgetting to convey the enjoyment we had in learning from outside speakers and from each other. We didn’t tackle every possible aspect of the issue thus leaving space for a re-run. We collected a list of possible topics such as Assisted Dying, the Afterlife, Advance Directives and chaplaincy work both in hospital and university.

Over the period of the course we collected or had recommended, a large number of books and leaflets. It was a densely packed A4 sheet list which still did not include all the details, and of course we already possess a library section on the topic. This list is now available.

Did it do what we wanted? We need the 20 members who attended one or more sessions, to give their responses. Certainly one person found communicating with her family about these matters had become slightly easier. Hopefully we could all think more openly and honestly about what our needs were.

Unknown author – “Really, we’re all just holding hands and walking home”

## **Quaker week: Juliet Prager on why Quakers matter**

This year's national Quaker Week kicked off in Bath with a talk by Juliet Prager, deputy recording clerk of British Quakers.



*Juliet Prager at Bath Friends Meeting House for Quaker Week.*

The national Quaker Week theme is "room for more". Juliet spoke of her own generations of family half-Quaker and half not, of personal experiences of Quaker Meetings, and of the importance of Quakers as community.

"Each of us brings our own experience because that's all we can bring," she said. "And each of us takes away our own experience, because that's all we can take away." Speaking about the role of Quakers as a body in the world today she discussed three "tested concerns" and shared endeavours.

The first was about refugees and the work of the Quaker Asylum and Refugee Network QARN and the emergence of the Sanctuary Everywhere movement to challenge Britain's immigration policies, and the trend of Quaker Meetings such as Bath to become Sanctuary Meetings.

The second was the long journey towards same sex marriage, from the 1963 publication of *Towards a Quaker view of sex* to the 2009 decision in York to celebrate marriage equality.

Her third example was the growing "meaningful but fun" Campaign against the arms trade (CAAT) protests at the DSEI arms fair. Last year the Art the Arms Fair event had sold a donated Banksy artwork and raised £230,000 for CAAT.

Her talk was followed by a lively question and answer session. Many thanks to Juliet for coming out west and getting Bath's Quaker week off to a perfect start.

## **Childrens' Meeting sets our signs and symbols for peace**

*Judith Eversley writes:*

At our Children's Meeting on Sunday 9th September, we looked at peace signs and symbols. Some are familiar: the white poppy, the rainbow flag, the dove of peace with or without her olive branch and the CND badge.

We looked for other symbols and found the Shalom-Salaam-wordmark  
Shalom/Salaam wordmark: a square made up of the words for Peace in Hebrew, Arabic and English and we learned the words and tune for the song Shalom, Shalom.



*Nell-Corse assures us that anyone looking at her peace signs poster upside down would see the CND symbol as it should be.*

In Japanese culture, we then learned, the bell has a special significance for peace, so Nell added a peace bell to her poster.\*

That is particularly relevant this week because on the morning of Friday 21 September, a group of children will sound the huge Japanese peace bell outside the UN headquarters in New York to mark the start of the International Day of Peace. Since 1981 the 21st September has been designated by the UN as a world-wide day of peace and non-violence.

## Diary

Sun Oct 7 **Area Meeting** at Bath FMH

Sat 13 Oct **Quaker Day of Quiet** Kelston Roundhill (contact Katie for details)

Sun 14 Oct to Sun 21 Oct world-wide **Week of Prayer for World Peace** (starts with Bath Interfaith Group service for the Week of Prayer)

Th 18 Oct **Open for Transformation: celebrating the Quaker way** FMH; simple supper 1830, workshop 1930-2100

Wed 24 Oct - UN Day - **Humanitarian Cost of Arms Export Promotion; Yemen**  
Paul Tippell of UN Assoc; 1930; free (follows Bath UN Association AGM at 1900)

Tue 30 Oct **Climate Crisis and Human Security** - Molly Scott Cato MEP Free; booking essential [climate-crisis.eventbrite.co.uk](https://climate-crisis.eventbrite.co.uk) 1930

Wed 31 Oct **Prof Lois Bibbings inaugural lecture on history of non-violence** Priory Road Lecture Theatre, Bristol

Th 1 Nov **Open for Transformation: our spiritual experience** FMH; simple supper 1830, workshop 1930-2100

Fri 2 Nov 1930 **Digging the Dirt** play by Multistory Theatre Company

Sun 11 Nov **100th anniversary of end of WWI**. Bring along war poem; read, share, talk about how it makes us feel. Enquiries: Stephanie

Tue & Weds 13 & 14 Nov **This Evil Thing** by Michael Mears, Ustinov Theatre. Starts 2000

Fri 16 Nov **Open for Transformation: identifying our gifts & needs as a Meeting** FMH; simple supper 1830, workshop 1930-2100

Th 29 Nov **Open for Transformation: how our Meeting works** FMH; simple supper 1830, workshop 1930-2100

Th 13 Dec **Open for Transformation: living the Quaker way** FMH; simple supper 1830, workshop 1930-2100

### Further ahead:

**BYM 2019** 24–27 May - London

If you have diary dates please have speak with or email the editors, or [if you're reading online click here & type them in](#).

### Worship at Friends' Meeting House York Street

Sunday 1100-1200; Tue 1800-1830; Wed 1030-1100

### Regular Events

Every Sunday	11:00-12:00	Children's Meeting
1 <sup>st</sup> Sunday of Feb, Apr, May, July, Sept, & Nov	13:00	Meeting for Worship for Business (Preparative Meeting)
1 <sup>st</sup> Sunday	10:00-10:30	Friends Fellowship of Healing
2 <sup>nd</sup> Sun odd months	13:00	Poetry Group
4 <sup>th</sup> Sunday	13:00	Shared lunch

Articles to [wmheath+BathQN@gmail.com](mailto:wmheath+BathQN@gmail.com); please include photos.  
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