



Bath Quaker
Meeting

Bath Quaker News: [*Rough winds do
shake the darling buds of*]
May 2019 Issue

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Bath Quaker News May 2019

Young Friends take part in London climate summit

A party of a dozen young Friends from Bristol and Bath travelled to London for a lively and packed youth climate summit at Friends House on 22 April. The event featured Green MP Caroline Lucas and young Swedish activist Greta Thunberg.

Greta Thunberg started the schools strike for climate action. The 16 year old Swedish schoolgirl is emerging as a transformative climate activist, and has addressed the European Parliament, the Pope and British MPs and party leaders in the last month.

Two young west country Friends, Pearl and Sam, introduced the event, which included an energetic hour-long Q&A on climate issues and how to effect change.

The event was organised by British Quakers with *The Guardian* and a range of environmental groups. Further reports are [available on the British Quakers' web site](#), and [on The Guardian web site](#). A [video of the whole event is available via Guardian Live](#).

Our MEP Molly Scott Cato was key in conceiving the event. The trip for young Friends from Bath and Bristol was organised and supervised by Kirsty Philbrick, Quakers' Bristol-based youth development worker for SW England. Massive congratulations and thanks to them and to all involved.

Meanwhile: There's a call out for Friends who'd like to share their skills and interests with the next generation. This is aimed not at the "usual suspects" but rather at those who do not have children aged 11-18, and are not currently engaged with the youth project. The Volunteer Training Day for the Quaker Youth Development Project takes place on Sat 8 June in Bristol. More info from our Quaker Youth Worker Kirsty Philbrick: kirstyp@quaker.org.uk or Gwyneth Evans (the West Wilts & East Somerset Advocate for work with Children & Young People) on gwinian@gmail.com

Bath Quakers convene packed-out B&NES climate hustings

Over 100 people packed out the Bath Royal Literary and Scientific Institute for a local-election hustings on the theme of climate and environment. Conceived by Lin Patterson, the event was convened and supported by Bath Quakers.

Speakers from Bath Independents, Conservative, Green, Labour and Liberal Democrat set out their positions and took questions from a highly engaged audience. The event was chaired by Methodist Minister the Rev Ian Souter.

Some prospective candidates raised the tension between living in a heritage city and doing works on energy efficiency. This later drew a sharp response from the

Bath Preservation Trust ([see their web site](#)) which pointed to work it had done including *Warmer Bath*, award-winning guidance prepared with the Centre for Sustainable Energy. There is clearly discussion to be had here. The evening was filmed, which will provide a helpful start point.

Dozens of those present signed up to start a loose citizens' network to keep the future council focussed on this agenda and to ensure that promises made to the electorate are kept.

Bath Quakers have moved; Bath Quaker life goes on

William Heath writes

We moved! At the end of March 2019 we said goodbye with mixed feelings to our historic quirky architectural gem in York Street. Goodbye to the lovely ceiling lights, to noisy neighbour's fans and bellringing, and goodbye to the responsibilities. Hello to an eminently suitable and welcoming new space, care of our new landlords the Bath Central United Reform Church, and to a new stage of Quaker life in Bath.

The new meeting space works well. It's a good size for now, quiet, and accessible. We're adjusting to different timings, storage arrangements and acoustics. We have a new collection bag, ably crocheted for us by our Treasurer Sally Harris. We can share coffee afterwards with worshippers from BCURC, or use our own space. That comes with a piano which lets Friends show off some hidden talents.

It what may be a sign for the future Bath Quakers have been highly active in other ways. Young Friends undertook a memorable trip to London to hear young climate activist Greta Thunberg, and Bath Quakers convened a lively climate hustings at BRLSI which proved an eminently suitable location (see reports).

Liberated from the cares of historic building maintenance, we look forward to seeing how the energy and life of Bath Quakers evolves next over months and years to come and where this takes us.

What goes on in a Meeting for Worship?

As Quakers we're often asked what actually happens in a Meeting for Worship. Here Katie Evans offers her answers in a short series of pieces. First she starts with a challenge of language.

When I first considered applying for Quaker membership, I was put off by a Friend saying with authority that Quakers are united by their practice of worship and in understanding that spoken ministry comes from God.

At the time I didn't, couldn't believe in a God who dictated ministry as if sending divine Sunday morning text messages. I went home that day in tears, gutted: I'd thought I'd found a spiritual community but perhaps Quakerism wasn't for me after all?

Ten years on I'm now an elder and regularly catch myself saying something similar when I try to explain Quaker worship.

I still don't believe in a dictating God directly scripting spoken ministry, but the idea of spoken ministry coming from God is meaningful to me in a different way. I worry that my attempts to explain this may be as crushing for seekers as my Friend's well-meaning words were for me ten years ago.

Here I have a conundrum, one that's familiar to many Friends: religious language can go stale, becoming hard and unpalatable. But without it we can lose touch with the depths of our tradition; we risk being left with a thin superficiality that isn't very nourishing either.

Crafting fresh, digestible expressions of our spiritual tradition is, to some extent, a process of trial and error in each conversation. I am encouraged to give it a go by Harvey Gillman's words:

"...if someone comes asking for bread, we cannot say, sorry we are too busy discovering our own riches; when we have found them, we'll offer you a few. Our riches are precisely our sharing. And the world is very, very hungry." - Quaker Faith & Practice 28.10

So, what am I doing in meeting for worship?

There is a sort of attentiveness that can be present without grasping, that lets a flower unfold and delights in the bloom rather than plucking and dissecting the bud in a dissatisfied expectation of petals. The still, quiet attentiveness of a nature watcher in the woods that lets the wildlife emerge. This is the frame of mind, the mode of being, I hope to shift into in meeting for worship. And then I ask gently: what's here?

My awareness of 'what's here' often starts with what is within me, but it doesn't stop there. It expands to an awareness (or at least to an openness to awareness), often wordless, of what is here within the gathering of people present that day, and sometimes to those not physically present too. Perhaps some people's awareness expands even further to a sensitive attentiveness to the condition of society and the world at large. That isn't generally the case for me, but I could believe that it is for others.

I'd describe the 'what's here' of the group gathered in worship as analogous to an orchestra playing together. There is an endless variety of sounds a group of musicians can make, likewise every meeting for worship is different. Sometimes there's a harmonious interweaving and the music swells and flows. Sometimes it's unsettled and discordant. There might be a single instrument providing a dramatic central focus, or a motif might emerge from a subtler layering together of several instruments. Most, sometimes all, of this is a silent music, unvoiced. I often wonder if others are 'hearing' the same 'tune' as me in a meeting, but it feels awkward to ask this over coffee after meeting....*to be continued...*

Bath Quakers reflect on the Stansted 15 verdicts

by Ella Jones

A group of activists, otherwise known as the Stansted 15, chained themselves to a grounded plane to protest a wrongful deportation. Ella Jones asked some Bath Quakers for their reflections on the Stansted 15's near miss under terrorism charges.

During the recent Stansted 15 trial, fifteen peaceful protesters were close to being convicted under terrorism laws after chaining themselves to a grounded plane full of deportees to prevent them being forced out of the country. Quakers were quick to respond to the protesters' needs, upholding core Quaker values of peace, equality, integrity and truth.

Chelmsford Quakers offered solidarity and support throughout the long-awaited trial results, giving the protesters places to sleep and eat. One of the fifteen was a Quaker from Brighton.

Bath Quakers held extended meetings to discuss the trial outcome and to “hold them in the light” at their time of need, says Christine Goodgame-Nobes, who has been part of the Quaker community for at least thirty years.



Ian Wootton and Christine Goodgame-Nobes

“The law that was imposed was really a sledgehammer to crack a nut, because they weren’t in any way, terrorists,” says Goodgame-Nobes. “The law as I understand it had been set up after the Lockerbie bombing, which was a real terrorist outrage.”

The Quaker booklet *Advices and Queries* book gives a detailed overview of the values involved in Quaker faith and practice. Its advice includes

“bear witness to the humanity of all people, including those who break society’s conventions or its laws.”

Quakers believe we must work to bring about a just and compassionate society. This is what the Stansted 15 were aiming to do by protecting those in danger of deportation.

UN Human Rights Experts believe that the near-miss terrorism charge was most likely threatened as a deterrent to prevent other citizens from partaking in similar offences, according to *The Guardian*.



David Goode

In response to this, David Goode, a longstanding attender and recently member of Bath Quakers says he was “relieved that they were not actually going to be imprisoned. Clearly there is a big issue with the title of legislation, which doesn’t seem to be appropriate at all.” Goode suggests that had the case been assessed under another judge with a different approach, it “could have been absolute hell for them.”

Many believe that the Stansted 15 were fortunate to receive extended community service sentences in place of potentially life-long imprisonment under terrorism charges.

Quaker attender Ian Wootton takes a different view. While the maximum potential sentence might have been a extreme “from a legal perspective there is a logic or rationale behind thinking of it in that way..if this group of people have been found guilty of breaking the law, then the law should run its course,” he said.

Meanwhile, at the Quaker United Nations Office, support has been shown towards a new agreement regarding migrant rights. The Global Compact agreement is working towards safe and orderly migration, bringing attention to the divide between UK citizens and migrants as “dehumanising.”

This agreement aims to push for a more welcoming environment for migrants to Britain, suggesting that immigration detention should be used as a last resort, and for a short time only.

The support shown for migrant rights was highlighted by the actions of the Stansted 15 which, Wootton says “our meeting has sympathy for,” as well as “sympathy in general towards people who dissent due to strong feeling.”

Advices and Queries also suggests we must

“respect the laws of the state but let your first loyalty be to God’s purposes. If you feel impelled by strong conviction to break the law, search your conscience deeply.”

Lawrence Tindall discusses when he was arrested for partaking in a protest as part of the Christian’s Against Nuclear Disarmament (CND) group.



Lawrence Tindall

As part of what he calls a “motley Crew of about twelve or fifteen” Tindall joined protesters in invading an airbase in protest of weaponry use. “We drove the van to the end of the runway, threw a roll of carpet over the razor wire fence and walked in,” he explains, “it was like Moses parting the red sea.”

The case was eventually dropped, Tindall says, because the police could not remember which individuals they had arrested. “Don’t get me wrong,” he continues, “the police are very good at what they do, but they don’t really know how to handle peaceful protests.” Tindall says he felt “it was important to make the protest as just an ordinary member of society.”

You can sign up for Bath Quaker News at the web site

Friends - indeed anyone – who are online can sign up for news at BathQuakers.org. That means you get an email any time a new piece is posted.

As Sally Harris for example wrote to say: “I’ve only recently signed up to getting a notification when you post, and now very much enjoying reading all the latest news...” If you need help just ask the Editor.

Diary

2 May *Open for Transformation #2: Celebrating the Quaker way*

16 May *Open for Transformation #3: Our spiritual experience*

30 May *Open for Transformation #4 Identifying our gifts and needs as a meeting*

Sun 2 June *Area Meeting* in Bath, Percy Hall, BCURC, Grove St

Sat 8 June *Youth Volunteers Training Day*. Contact Kirsty Philbrick
kirstyp@quaker.org.uk / 07849 803493 or Gwyneth Evans gwinian@gmail.com

13 June *Open for Transformation* #5: How our Meeting works (or might work)

27 June *Open for Transformation* #6: Living the Quaker way

Chocolate Quarter Meeting for Worship 1100-1130 each third Sunday in the month; after discussion group at 1030. Colin Graham 0117 986 1277 for info

Further ahead:

BYM 2019 24–27 May, London

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

Worship at Bath Central United Reform Church

Sunday 1030-1130; Tue 1800-1830; Wed 1030-1100

Regular Events

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

*Articles to wmheath+BathQN@gmail.com; please include photos.
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