



From The Centre

Autumn 2011

The Newsletter of Central England Area Meeting

Editorial

Firstly, we thank those readers who replied to our questionnaire. We have taken note of the comments you made, and tried to incorporate your suggestions. For example, many Friends have asked for a quick crossword. In this edition you'll find the crossword as usual, but there are now two sets of clues - the traditional cryptic clues for puzzle buffs, and more straightforward clues for busier Friends. Both sets of clues lead to the same answers, which will be published as normal next time.

We feature news from meetings, especially on Quaker Week, and information on some of the growing points within our AM, including the revitalisation of Hartshill Meeting. We record the presence of Central England Friends at the site of the Quaker Service Memorial at the National Memorial Arboretum at Alrewas. There are weighty matters brought to our attention by the Asylum group and the Elders and Overseers support groups, as well as individuals. We include also articles from Friends describing inspirational journeys and events. Of course the coverage is uneven, as always, and we know some items inevitably arrive just too late and have to be held over, but this is your newsletter – so if you want to see things in it, send us them – as many of you promised to do in response to the questionnaire!

John Cockcroft, Michael Eccles and Liam Tully
Editors

Editorial	1
Out and About	2
Mental Health in our Meetings	2
A Journey at Hartshill	3
Medical Justice – freedom from torture	4
Reflections on Yearly Meeting Gathering at Canterbury	5
Illustrations	6
In the steps of George Fox	7
The Spirit Cage?	8
Crossword pages	10-11
Palestine/Israel	12

Further copies of this newsletter are available by arrangement from the AM Office. Articles for possible inclusion in future editions should be sent to the editors, preferably as email attachments, via Area Meeting Office. All articles, which may be edited, are included at the sole discretion of the editors. Views expressed are not necessarily those of the Area Meeting or the editors.

Out and About

Friends have been making themselves known in the community!

At the Sandwell Community show on 28/29 August Friends had a stall promoting the new Quaker worshipping group at West Bromwich. The group meets for worship every first and third Wednesday of the month at the Wesley Chapel, High Street, West Bromwich.

Many Meeting Houses were open for the weekend of Heritage Open Day, just before National Quaker Week. Warwick Friends report that they opened this year, as in past years, on the Saturday and Sunday of the Heritage Open Days. They got a lot of people through the Meeting House and garden and offered them refreshments. Hall Green also opened their doors on this occasion, as did Bull Street on Saturday 1st October.

Several meetings, including Selly Oak, Barnt Green, Edgbaston and Sutton Coldfield, had open days and/or special Meetings for Worship during Quaker Week, but it was the meetings that literally went out into the community which seem to have attracted most public interest.

Walsall Friends had their traditional market stall, selling bric a brac and giving out Quaker literature.

Although strictly outside our AM now, we're pleased to note that Stratford-on-Avon Friends had the Quaker Showkit outside the Shakespeare Memorial Theatre on several days during the week 1 – 7 October. Warwick Friends organised a programme of events throughout the week, with a silent vigil for peace in the Market Square on Saturday 1st, and an event on Quakers and Peace on the Tuesday evening, as well as advertising their meeting for worship on Sunday mornings. The vigil, in the market place on Market Day, was felt particularly to have had an impact.

Mental Health in our Meetings

CEAM elders and overseers recently held a half-day event to look at the issues around mental health in our meetings. The event was organised jointly by Elders Support Group and Overseers Support Group. Keynote speaker was Jane Muers, from Leicester Area Meeting, an experienced clinical psychologist who has been involved in a number of courses at Woodbrooke.

Jane began by reminding us of George Gorman's observation, made in 1982, that "religion is basically about relationships between people." Mental health is an aspect of all of us and mental health issues affect everyone at different times in different ways. Jane preferred to speak of difficulties, problems or distress, rather than illness. The mental well being of people in our meetings affects the whole meeting community. She emphasised that we can help but not fix, and returned to this point both in relation to individuals and to our Meetings as a whole. The meeting later divided into small groups for discussion. It was, necessarily, a brief look at a wide range of issues, but for those who came it was a really valuable experience. There are many situations we recognise today as being to do with mental health. We are not experts (well, most of us!) and we need to set limits, but we can use our Quaker insights in the service of one another and of our Meetings. "It's all there in Quaker faith and practice" as Jane put it.

"In the depth of common worship it is as if we found our separate lives were all one life, within whom we live and move and have our being." (Thomas Kelly Qfp 2.36)

Elders Support Group/Overseers Support Group

A Journey at Hartshill

When I moved from Bedworth to Atherstone nearly four years ago I was very much involved in the life of Coventry Meeting. Gradually after the birth of my daughter I began to visit my nearest meeting, Hartshill. At the time it couldn't have felt more of a contrast to attending an inner city meeting such as Coventry. Hartshill had greatly dwindling attendance at morning meeting and the meeting was being maintained mainly by two very dedicated long-time members with another very committed Friend running a Sunday School. Some mornings there might be two Friends at meeting for worship, sometimes none.

However, there was a small group of us who attended when we could and we felt we could commit to seeing the rejuvenation of the morning meeting, wanting to see the meeting having a future and being very aware of the significance of the meeting being just three miles from George Fox's birthplace at Fenny Drayton. The Quakers have been a great influence within the village of Hartshill over the last 400 years, including the Quaker boarding school which once stood on the site of the meeting house as well as the programmed evening meeting which still takes place each week with around 15 attenders.

It was at this point, in summer 2010, when I took on the role of clerk. Although it felt very daunting I felt encouraged by Friends from across the Area Meeting and I later attended a clerking course at Woodbrooke. We began holding monthly business meetings again and alternating the times of these to involve attenders at evening programmed meeting too. By autumn 2010 the attendance at Sunday morning meeting had become more regular with 4-5 Friends and some of these Friends felt it was the right point in their spiritual journeys to become members of the Society.

In the spring this year we welcomed some regular new attenders to meeting and in July we worked with the fantastic support of the Quaker Quest team to hold a one-day Quaker Quest event. This was very successful and through this, and the following support at meeting for worship of Coventry Friends, our numbers have now grown to a regular weekly attendance at morning meeting of around 10 Friends from a total group of around 16 regular members/attenders.

I have found my involvement with Hartshill over the last couple of years challenging. It has felt like quite a commitment at a time when I am bringing up a young family. It has also been a learning curve, especially being involved in the organisation of much needed building work to bring the meeting house into the 21st century. Friends at Hartshill have enthusiasm towards the future of the meeting. We have a heritage committee beginning to develop the vision to see Hartshill as a heritage centre for the region and this year saw the planting of a George Fox heritage garden. Friends at Hartshill have even begun planning a Quaker tapestry style panel and will be holding a stitching workshop to develop skills to take the project forward. I have found the growth of the meeting exciting to observe and a privilege to be involved with. What will the next two years bring?

Clare Barnett

First World War Centenary in 2014

Planning has started for the WW1 centenary in 2014. The Centre for Post-Graduate Quaker Studies has already been approached by Birmingham Museum & Art Gallery to join in a network of education and heritage organisations making preparations for this commemoration.

Peace Committee have responded to this. They feel that it is important that the pacifist story be told. Any Friends wishing to be involved in telling the story of Friends and other peace organisations during WW1 should contact Peace Committee either directly or through Area Meeting office.

Medical Justice – Freedom from Torture

Those few Friends who attended the event organised by the Central England Area Asylum Group on 1st October benefited from the extensive knowledge and experience of Emma Ginn, the tireless full-time co-ordinator of the organisation Medical Justice.

Medical Justice was set up by a doctor who had supported a Zimbabwean torture survivor who almost died as a result of a hunger strike during his detention at Harmondsworth in 2005. They are now a network of volunteer medics, solicitors, barristers, ex-detainees, and detainee visitors, dealing with around 1000 cases a year on a shoestring budget. They arrange for independent doctors to visit detainees in Immigration Removal Centres, document evidence of torture, help detainees to challenge the denial of adequate healthcare in detention, and help detainees find legal representation. With their experience from individual casework, they conduct research and audits, write themed reports and raise public and parliamentary awareness.

Recent reports include ***Detained and Denied: the clinical care of immigration detainees living with HIV***, and ***Outsourcing abuse: the use and abuse of state-sanctioned force during the detention and removal of asylum seekers***.

Even those of us who feel that we know about the situation amongst asylum-seekers were shocked by some of the details she gave us from Medical Justice's recent report "**State Sponsored Cruelty**", about the situation of children in immigration detention. Key findings included:

- 141 cases involving children in detention 2004 – 2010;
- 48 children witnessed violence, mostly during removal attempts; 13 were physically harmed as a result of violence in detention;
- 48% of the children involved were born in the UK;
- 92 children had physical health problems that were exacerbated or caused by immigration detention;
- 38 children were separated from their families, sometimes for weeks;
- in around 50 cases children were not given appropriate protection from infectious diseases in the countries to which they were being deported, and some children were alleged to have been administered inappropriate and dangerous malarial prophylaxis in attempts to ensure their removal from this country;
- 74 children showed signs of psychological damage, 34 showed signs of developmental regression, six expressed suicidal ideation and three girls made suicide attempts.

In spite of government promises, children are still being detained. At the time of our meeting, Emma reported that the health-care section of the operating standards for detaining families and children was blank. Although the detention is limited to 72 hours or 7 days "in exceptional circumstance", NGOs fear that the UKBA will revert to their full powers to detain indefinitely. The UKBA is fighting Medical Justice in the Court of Appeal to over-turn a High Court ruling that zero-notice removals are unlawful.

In the week before our meeting, a Birmingham asylum-seeker with three children was subjected to an aggressive dawn raid at 05.30 a.m. She alleges that she was assaulted in front of her children, and was then subjected to three deportation attempts. She was released after Medical Justice obtained a High Court injunction.

If you are shocked by these and similar stories; if you care about the plight of asylum-seekers in an increasingly unfriendly British society where people are increasingly preoccupied with their own problems; if you would like this concern to have a higher profile in our Area Meeting – we would welcome you in the Asylum Group, either as a member or as a contact person to disseminate information and requests for action in our Meetings. Please contact the clerk, Barbara Forbes (forbesbarbarae@yahoo.co.uk) if you wish to become more involved in asylum concerns.

Reflections on Yearly Meeting Gathering at Canterbury

Maud Grainger:

One of the lasting memories for me has to be sitting outside the gathering tent in the shade of the tree's greeting old friends and meeting new ones. It is at gatherings like YMG where you can bump into Friends from across the country. The theme of the gathering was one close to my heart and the commitment made to work towards being a low-carbon, sustainable community is one that will drive to me look at my own life as well as how I affect the lives of others in my community and the world I live in.

Ellie Coss:

I wasn't sure what to expect from Yearly Meeting Gathering. It was the first residential Quaker event I'd been to that wasn't specifically for Young Friends, and I was also a new mother, trying to negotiate the Under-19s programme (which I thought was fantastic). I had so much going on outside the sessions that I found it hard to focus on the business; something made harder by what felt like a lack of cohesion and adherence to the Quaker Business Method throughout the sessions. In the first half of the week, I struggled a lot with finding my place in the community, and working out how everything fit together. All that changed on the Do Something Different Day in the middle of the week. I intended to have a quiet day, but went to a session led by the Woodbrooke Good Lives group almost by accident. It was an Open Space session, on "What is a Good Life in the age of Climate Change and Peak Oil?" This turned out to be the best session of the week for me, giving me the opportunity to work out what it was that I felt about the theme, and why I was struggling to feel part of the community. It helped me to work out what God wanted of me from the week, and how I felt about the spirituality of sustainability. I found it easier to centre down in the following sessions, and felt challenged to really start trying to lead a more sustainable life. This was particularly important to me as I find it hard to play an active role in my Meeting, living some distance away and not being able to attend very often. Finding my place in the YMG community and taking away inspiration and determination has helped me to once more feel part of the Quaker community.

Michael Eccles:

I was inspired to be with so many other Quakers at the same time – around 1700 including 250 of so under-19s. I was also inspired by what the Quaker business method can do for us when we use it well. I didn't feel that we always used it well throughout the week but at times we really did; in the session where we decided to be a low carbon sustainable community and also when we agreed new text for some chapters of *Quaker faith & practice*. There was so much going on, and much of it at the same time, so I decided that I would focus on trying to attend the yearly meeting sessions and if I managed anything else it would be a bonus – in the end I didn't really have a chance to do many extra sessions but I did get to almost all the YM sessions. I admire the people who seemed to be always on their way to some interest session or another! A final highlight for me would be the one non-YM session I did go to which was stargazing. Something I've never really done before, but to sit in a field and look through telescopes and be told what I was looking at was great. We even got to see Saturn's rings.

16 – 30 (ish) ?

Birmingham Young Quakers meet every Wednesday at Selly Oak FMH.

Arrivals from 6:30 for a 6:45 Meeting for Worship, followed by food and fellowship at 7:15.

Contact maudgrainger@googlemail.com or Facebook: Birmingham Young Quakers.



Central England Quakers gather at the site of the Quaker Memorial at the National Memorial Arboretum on 15 October



Hartshill Meeting House - built in 1972 to replace the old Meeting House, now a private house, which stands nearby

In the Steps of George Fox

Ever since I read of Swarthmoor Hall being revitalized and opened up in the 60's I have thought of going there. Family commitments and some inertia, which was increasing as I got into my eighties, stopped me from acting. Then in May I saw a notice in Quaker news with an invitation to spend four days there and follow in Fox's footsteps. There was less than three weeks to the off. I mentioned the idea to my non-Quaker son who said he didn't think Quakers went on pilgrimages.

Were there any places left? I could not contact anyone who knew at Swarthmoor, not until the next week. Could I get an advance train ticket? No good trying until I knew I had a place. Eventually less than a week before it started I was offered the place. I was too late for the cheap ticket but this was a once in a lifetime opportunity. I had found there were frequent trains with only one change and an open ticket would give me more flexibility.

I set out in reasonable weather and enjoyed the journey especially the bit over the sands of Morecombe Bay. A short taxi ride from Ulverston station took me to Swarthmoor Hall. I was familiar with the building from pictures, but it looked less formidable and more welcoming than they showed. I was greeted by Jocelyn Gaskell and given a cup of tea as soon as I arrived and advised to look around the garden until my room was ready. Soon I was shown to it. One of a pair of bedrooms in a newly converted bungalow, which had been a cow shed. There was a bathroom and a large kitchen sitting room. It was all plainly but comfortably furnished with everything anyone could want.

At four o'clock everyone, eleven of us from all over the country, assembled in the sitting room of the main house with tea we had fetched from the adjoining kitchen. The Resident Manager, Bill Shaw, welcomed us officially and told us about the programme. Jocelyn Gaskell, the resident voluntary Friend was also there. It was she who had welcomed me at first. Bill gave us a potted history of the Hall and we were told about the arrangements for meals and picnics and invited to explore where we liked, although there would be a guided tour round the garden just before the evening meal. Bill is a very good talker and raconteur and an enthusiastic eco-gardener and has all sorts of plans for future crops. Later we ate a very good fish or vegetarian meal in the converted barn, provided by an outside caterer. At nine fifteen there was Epilogue in the Hall's parlour, which was furnished with 17th century pieces. That was an awesome experience.

The next day after a good breakfast provided by the hall staff we picked up our packed lunches which Bill himself had helped to make. We had had to choose our fillings the previous evening. We all got in the minibus to go to Pendle Hill, which was over two hours away. The lowering clouds began to drizzle but spirits were high. We called in at Settle Meeting House to be met with coffee and tea. On to Pendle Hill through the mist and drizzle. The moors looked beautiful but very bleak and would have fitted with George Fox's feeling of depression. We parked on the road beneath the hill but its summit was invisible. Dressed in our rainproofs we walked a rough but fairly level path to a farm and a gate onto the hill. I looked up at its steepness and at the sky which was blacker than ever and decided that although my spirit was strong my flesh was too weak and turned back to the bus with two others. The rest carried on up into the mist with their picnic. We ate ours in the dry and wondered how the others were doing. After two hours they returned soaked but remarkably cheerful, having had a Meeting for Worship on the top and had their picnic. After they had taken off their jackets and over trousers. I hoped that George Fox had had a drier day for his excursion, with none of our modern rainwear and no transport but his own legs. We returned to Settle and were given a talk on the Meeting House and were able to look over it as well as being entertained with tea and cakes. That evening we had another excellent vegetarian meal and good conversation as we got to know each other better. We then had a guided tour of the Hall with explanations of how it had been altered over the years. Judge Fell bedroom and study were still as they had always been, also the bedroom known as Fox's, with even, his hefty travelling bed. I was so tired, in spite of not having climbed Pendle Hill, that I had to miss the Epilogue and slept well.

On the Wednesday we set out for Sedburgh and Brigflatts Meeting House. This is said to be the oldest in the north. We wondered where the oldest in the world was. It was built in 1675, before the Act of Toleration on 1689 when nonconformist places of worship were officially allowed. It was in an idyllic setting in a tiny hamlet with rolling fields round it. It had galleries on three sides, which seemed unusual. The warden told us its history then settled us for a short Meeting for Worship. This was I felt, a prime example of a gathered meeting. Although it did not sit well with George Fox's rant against 'steeple houses', there was an inspirational feel to the building. I felt that the presence of all the worshippers who had built and used the place were there to help me on. Afterwards we braved the rain, which had started again, to visit the children's rooms across the road beside the stables. This had been run as a school for hundreds of years. We then went on to Firbank Fell and as the rain had stopped for a while we were able to get out of the bus and climb the short distance to the summit. Not so bleak as Pendle and very evocative as we stood on the actual rock where Fox had preached. The wind was blowing very hard and it felt somewhat precarious, so we retreated to the lower level where some had their picnic in the lee of a wall round what was left of a burial ground. The rest ate in the bus again. The rain returned as we left to go to Kendal. There we were to see the Quaker Tapestry exhibition. This was in the vast Meeting House, such a contrast to the small early ones we had visited previously. We were warmly welcomed but were swamped by coach load of church ladies who were visiting at the same time. It was quite a struggle to get round. I did see some sections I had not seen before, and the railway exhibition, which was a bonus. Back to a tasty bean casserole. As I was not so tired as the night before I welcomed the chance to explore the Hall again, this time with the help of an audio cassette on headphones and at my own pace. I also was able to appreciate another epilogue in the evocative parlour.

Thursday was our last day and rather sad. We seemed to have become part of the family of Swarthmoor Hall. After breakfast we went to Swarthmoor Meeting House, about half a mile up the road; this was a barn that had been bought by George Fox, shortly before his death, because he envisaged a time when Swarthmoor Hall might not be available for worship. It was a very plain light building. The windows had been enlarged in 1829. There was a new community meeting room attached, which had been converted from stables very recently. We walked round the adjoining burial ground and the warden explained that it wasn't until the nineteenth century that Quakers started to use gravestones. Then the minibus took us to Sunbrick Burial Ground on the coast, where Margaret Fox was buried in an enclosure with no gravestones except hers, which had been put up two hundred years later. The day was dry but overcast and windy and we soon left after token ice creams on the beach. A farewell Meeting for Worship was held in the parlour, attended by several of the paid and voluntary staff and some trustees. We had a buffet lunch all together before dispersing to our homes.

I came to Swarthmoor motivated by curiosity but left with a profound sense of having been on a true spiritual pilgrimage. I felt truly inspired by all the Friends who had started their journeys in the seventeenth century.

Diana Williams

The Spirit Cage? – Sunday 4 September 2011

Quakers from Coventry and Hartshill Meetings have come to Woodbrooke this weekend for refreshment. Our theme has been diversity – not so much the diversity of society in general but the diversity of Quakers. We have been reminded of (or surprised by) how different the majority of Quakers worldwide are from the liberal Friends of the UK. Most of the world's Quakers have programmed Meetings for Worship, are evangelical and firmly Christian. Within our own Meetings we have realised that one area of difference is whether we feel able, individually, to speak about 'God', whether by that name or by any other, such as 'Spirit', 'Truth', 'Reality' and so on.

This past week I have read poems from two different scriptures. First, in the Sikh scripture, I read a verse in which God is described as the cage, the cage that protects me, the parrot, from danger. Then, in one of the Psalms (in the scripture that Jews and Christians share), I found the psalmist calling on God to set him free from the snare or trap that evil-doers had set for him.

I found myself wondering whether God, Spirit, Truth, Reality is a protective cage or the one who sets us free. Is there a contradiction? Can't both be true?

This is more or less what I felt moved to share as ministry in Bournville Meeting. Afterwards, at lunch in Woodbrooke, Tim Brooke reminded me of Sidney Carter's song 'Catch the Bird of Heaven', and I felt the bird/cage metaphor lift off again. Does anyone else remember it?

Catch the bird of heaven,
Lock him in a cage of gold;
Look again tomorrow,
And he will be gone.
Ah! the bird of heaven!
Follow where the bird has gone;
Ah! the bird of heaven!
Keep on travelling on.
Lock him in religion,
Gold and frankincense and myrrh
Carry to his prison,
But he will be gone.
Chorus

Temple made of marble,
Beak and feather made of gold.
All the bells are ringing,
But the bird has gone.
Chorus

Bell and book and candle
Cannot hold him any more,
For the bird is flying
As he did before.
Chorus

Notes:

The poet, Kabir (loved by Hindus, Muslims and Sikhs): 'You are my cage, I am your parrot, What can the cat of death do to me?' (Adi Granth p 323).

Psalms 31: 4 'Take me out of the net which is hidden for me, for thou art my refuge.' Sydney Carter (born 1915) © 1969 Stainer & Bell Ltd. 8.7.8.7 Trochaic & Refrain

So, our Woodbrooke weekend has left me with an image of myself as a bird, and of Spirit as a bird. In retrospect this image connects with our Saturday evening session of sharing poems, pictures and other treasured items from our spiritual journeying. Unable to think of what else to share, I had brought a weaver bird's nest, a wonder of intricate, durable construction. Then, as if on cue, on Woodbrooke's lake during the Sunday morning garden tour, I watched a moorhen swim to its nest with a little strip of 'building material' in its beak.

I have come home with the contented and exhilarating memory of a re-integrating weekend among friends – human and avian!

Eleanor Nesbitt

From The Centre Quaker Crossword Number 9: Summer 2011: solution



**From The Centre Quaker Crossword Number 10: Autumn 2011
Non-cryptic clues – set by Tryfan**

Across

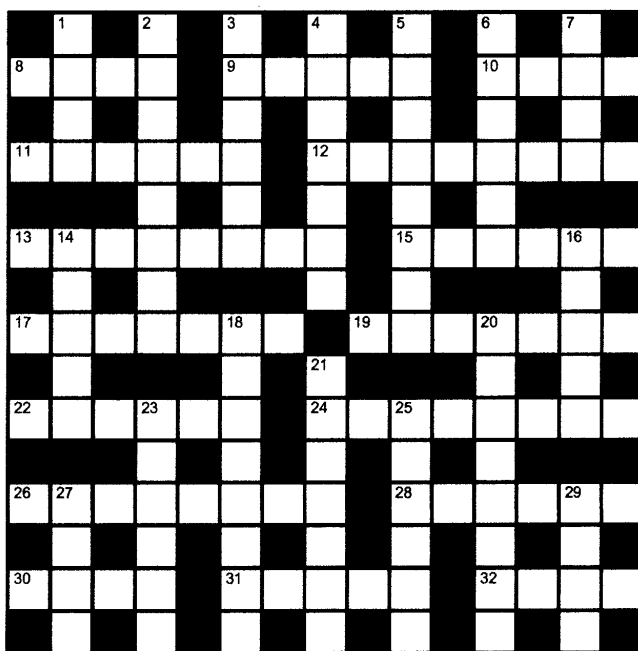
- 8/9/10 Place in Shropshire (13)
- 11 Italian city (6)
- 12 Cornish port (8)
- 13 People making 27 (8)
- 15 Live in a certain place (6)
- 17 not glued any more (7)
- 19 Vehicle removing waste from fires (3,4)
- 22 See 27 down
- 24 Good periods of time (4,4)
- 26 Type of film projection (8)
- 28 Glen (6)
- 30 Shape (4)
- 31 Step (5)
- 32 Curved structure (4)

Down

- 1 Fuel used by 13s (4)
- 2 Illuminated at night (8)
- 3 On fire (6)
- 4 Muddle (7)
- 5 Birds (8)
- 6 Extras (3,3)
- 7 To scheme (4)
- 14 Person extracting 6 across (5)
- 16 See 21
- 18 Ice chasm (8)
- 20 American car (8)
- 21/16 Shropshire Quaker(s) (7,5)
- 23 Mental images during sleep (6)
- 25 The river flowing under 27/22 (6)
- 27/22 Town in Shropshire (10)
- 29 Every single (4)

Cryptic clues are on the next page

From The Centre Quaker Crossword Number 10: Autumn 2011
Set by Tryfan



Across

- 8/9/10** A lockable door manufactured for site of 21/16's 27 works (13)
11 Place of star crossed lovers and a couple of gents! (6)
12 Crazy Alf's outlet in Cornwall (8)
13 All three 21/16s were shilling liquidizers? (8)
15 Live eiders at sea (6)
17 Free United Nation's food (7)
19 Art embraces forged cash - needed after 13 have finished? (3,4)
22 See 27 Down
24 of your life like bad debts say (4,4)
26 Bewildered American observed in picture palace (8)
28 "Five Go Bowling" here - 10 (pin?) (6)
30 Body build (4)
31 One step on the way to heaven? (5)
32 bishop part of 22 (4)

Down

- 1** Narcotic used by 13 (4)
2 Lot of lid off like 27/22 will be at night (8)
3 Marking on fire (6)
4 Fleece blend tangle (7)
5 Avians' space romps? (8)
6 Poles on total love supplements (3,3)
7 Allotment plan (4)
14 Young person was heard to excavate 8 (5)
16 See 21
18 About right - Eva's second note will make ice crack (8)
20 Call round after acid solution for motor car (8)
21/16 Fractured arm had by Arab Quaker in 8/9/10 (Could be I, II or III) (7,5)
23 Wants visions (6)
25 Sabrina shattered nerves below 27/22 (6)
27/22 Metal spanner cast at 8/9/10 over 25 (10)
29 Every fruit has top cut off (4)

These are the cryptic clues - non-cryptic clues are on the previous page

Palestine/Israel

Ann Farr wrote a number of newsletters during her service as an Ecumenical Accompanier in Palestine/Israel. The following extract from her newsletter for Holy Week 2011 is sadly still very relevant. Please consider taking the actions Ann suggests. Contact her via AM office for further information or to download other newsletters.

The Palestinian Church Leaders: tell us that during Christian feasts there is an overwhelming Israeli military presence in Jerusalem that both prevents people from getting near the holy sites and creates a military, rather than spiritual, atmosphere.

They ask: how their candles and prayers can be a threat to Israeli security.

They call on: 'all our leaders, friends, brothers and sisters around the world to continue exerting pressure on Israel, to end its military occupation of this land and to respect international law and human rights.'
Kairos Palestine message from Jerusalem and Bethlehem 3rd April 2011

Please take action on behalf of Palestinians denied freedom of movement and worship

Action:

As individuals and communities please:

Pray for a Just Peace in Palestine and Israel

Write to:

- your MP and MEP
- the Israeli Ambassador in your country:
<http://www.mfa.gov.il/MFA/About+the+Ministry/Diplomatic+missions/Web+Sites+of+Israeli+Missions+Abroad.htm>

Express your concern at the denial of Human Rights and the contravention of international law and ask for:

- the right of entry into Jerusalem for all Palestinians in the West Bank and Gaza, especially to access holy sites for worship
- an end to Israel's occupation of the West Bank and Gaza

Equality

A West Midlands branch of the Equality Trust has been set up following an initial meeting at Bull Street FMH on 1st June, followed by a launch event, followed by what was officially described as "the first AGM", also at Bull Street, on 5th November. Wow! Although not a Quaker initiative, many local Friends are involved in this venture. The group advocates greater income equality, basing its work on the findings reported by Richard Wilkinson and Kate Pickett in their book *The Spirit Level*¹. (Has your Meeting library got a copy?) The group, which covers the West Midlands region, plans to meet again at the Priory Rooms on Wednesday 11 January 2012 at 7.30pm. For further details go to equalitywestmidlands@gmail.com.

¹ Richard Wilkinson and Kate Pickett *The Spirit Level – Why Equality is Better for Everyone*. Penguin Books 2010.