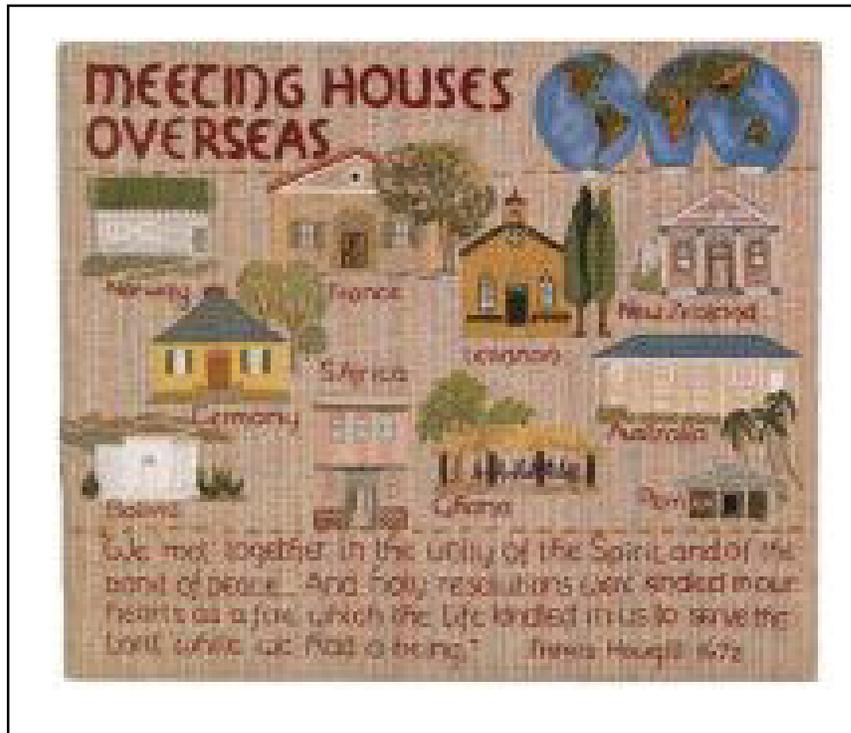


Staffordshire

Quaker

Summer edition
July 2008



One of the 'Quaker Tapestries' on display
See page 8





On Saturday May 3rd the wedding of David Hallmark and Tammy Gelder took place at Wolverhampton Meeting House.

About 90 family and friends were there to celebrate the event and to sign as witnesses.

On the day the Meeting House Garden was at its best and the sun shone.

A buffet was laid on for anyone not going on to the reception at Woodcross Social Club. After which David and Tammy left for their honeymoon in Poole, Dorset.

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Ecumenical Accompaniment Programme in Palestine and Israel (EAPPI)

EAPPI works under the auspices of the World Council of Churches, and all UK volunteers are organised by Britain Yearly Meeting.

Zee Zee Heine, who had spent 3 months as an Ecumenical Accompanier in Palestine/Israel spoke to us about aspects of life there which we don't hear from the media. This was an open meeting, and we were joined by members of the Lichfield Inter-Faith Initiative.

Palestinians have to endure daily oppression as they go about their lives. Often getting to work or school involves crossing an "Israel-only" road through a checkpoint. For the Israelis this is a security check – for the Palestinians another delay. Zee Zee told us how women, whose voluminous garments would appear to provide ideal concealment for a gun or bomb, are almost always "waved through", whilst men and boys undergo a lengthy wait to be searched. To add to the uncertainty, temporary checkpoints are erected and dismantled apparently at random. She also instanced the problems created by issuing of ID cards and travel passes for different areas. Both ID and travel passes are required for checkpoints, but anyone in Nablus, for example, who requires a travel pass is unable to obtain one without travelling outside Nablus, which is impossible without a travel pass. Small wonder residents feel they are in prison.

On the positive side, Zee Zee told us of a number of organisations on both sides, who alone, or jointly, actively work for peace, and to improve the daily life of Palestinians - by raising awareness; challenging the militarisation of civilians and the glamorisation of the military; re-telling the true history of the conflict; supporting bereaved families, conscientious objectors and other prisoners; holding peace vigils, sitting in front of bulldozers to prevent destruction of homes – the list seemed endless.

From a list of suggestions for action, Zee Zee encouraged us particularly as individuals and meetings to write to our MPs (a draft letter provided by Zee Zee Heine will be available from Win Sutton, Wolverhampton Meeting), and a member of the audience urged us to purchase Zaytoun, Palestinian "Oil for peace" both organic or non-organic, (available through Traidcraft or via www.zaytoun.org, as a practical way of boosting the Palestinian economy).

Alison Samuels and Win Sutton

Anthony Wilson mentions that a dozen members of the Lichfield Inter-Faith Initiative attended the event as visitors.

QF&P 24.57

The follower of Jesus is to discover and then promote the Kingdom of God. That Kingdom has two tenses: it is already here, in each one of us; and it is still to come, when God's goodness becomes a universal norm. We are to live now 'as if' the Kingdom of God were already fulfilled.

Peace begins within ourselves. It is to be implemented within the family, in our meetings, in our work and leisure, in our own localities, and internationally. The task will never be done. Peace is a process to engage in, not a goal to be reached.

Sydney Bailey, 1993

Quaker Peace and Social Witness Annual Conference

Peace, Justice and the Environment I

When I was nominated to go to the QPSW Conference at Swanwick I was delighted as it would be a chance to find out more about Friends at first hand. Then came the doubts! I'm out of the habit of taking notes, writing reports and being in study groups: would I remember how to do it properly and have I anything to contribute? I'm not a fully paid up Quaker: would it show? And would it all be just too religious?

I need not have worried. People were all friendly and there was no sense of "them and us" as speakers, staff, members, attenders, old hands and new all mingled in a way I had not really experienced elsewhere. The periods of worship were as simple and deep as I had come to expect.

The purpose of the conference was, "to provide a spiritually-based framework in which participants are informed, inspired and encouraged to consider challenging topics". In particular it provided a chance for newcomers to the work of QPSW to find out something of what Friends do across the world. Of the 130 or so participants at least three-quarters had not attended such a conference before, and many, like myself, were attenders just dipping a toe in the water.



Of course, one short weekend cannot possibly do justice to the huge range of QPSW work, so the focus of this time was on the environment and the implications for peace and the social justice of environmental degradation. The presentations took the form of keynote addresses, brief overviews of national and international work, workshops giving greater detail of specific programmes and base groups for discussion and support. I confess that I found it hard to take it all in, and yet this was only a small part of what QPSW does.

So, what were the highlights for me? First of all was Jonathan Dale's address, "Growing from the Testimony", bringing some of the thinking of the Testimonies Committee about the affect of climate change on global inequalities, injustice and violence. To hear how the original Quaker Testimonies to Truth, Equality, Simplicity and Peace relate to how we as individuals and as societies live - or could live - was challenging and humbling. We must act now!

The second highlight for me was a very serious but light-hearted plenary session in which Teresa Parker from the Human Security programme baked a cake before our very eyes, on the stage. This parable illustrated how the project uses ingredients (i.e. recourse from various Quaker programmes) to make a cake (i.e. the case for justice, peace and sustainability) which will be acceptable to such movers and shakers as the World Bank, the IMF and global transnational corporations. As Teresa said, "They have eaten Quaker cake before. Perhaps they will enjoy this one too". While we discussed the implications of what we had heard, the microwave oven worked its magic and produced a fantastic chocolate sponge cake, a visual reminder of how QPSW can use its resources and influence to bring about change in the corridors of power.

The lasting impression of QPSW that has stayed with me, even as the details fade, is of an enormously hard-working body of people basing all it does on the integrity of living in the light of the Quaker Testimonies. It convinces me that I must know more about how Quakers live, and to continue among Friends.

Chris Francis

Chris is a retired bereavement counsellor who has been an attender at Stoke meeting for a number of years



Quaker Peace and Social Witness Annual Conference Peace, Justice and the Environment I

I was very privileged to be given the opportunity to attend the QPSW conference. This particular conference had been advertised as particularly useful for newish Quakers and 80% of those present had never been to a QPSW conference before – 115 present.

There were three plenary Sessions:

1) Introducing Quaker peace and Social Witness

General Introduction to the range of work undertaken by QPSW.

2) Growing from Testimony - Jonathan Dale

Jonathan was a member of the Testimonies Committee 2001 to 2007. Its aim was, “to keep the flame of our testimonies alive and vital”.

He is particularly concerned with the need for a specific testimony on the environment.

His talk is best described in his own words:

Can we be recognised as a community of resistance, resistance to the self centred continuation of ways of living that seem almost certain to lead to immense harm, not least to those who are the poorest and those not yet born?

A testimony to the environment has many interconnections with all the other testimonies: for example simplicity-unless we in the richer world reconnect with simplicity, it is hard to see how we can meet the challenge of both ecological sustainability and global justice.

Similarly, how can we achieve equality if production of biofuels diverts from food production leading to reduced food supply and increased food prices. Some may feel that capitalism cannot find solutions because it has inherent tendencies to both inequality and consumerism.

The document on the long-term framework finds no place for further work on the environment-“Are Friends fiddling while the planet burns?”

3) The Human Security Project

Joint session by staff members to illustrate by cake making on (stage!) that global security should be about long term resolution of root causes of insecurity and conflict - dialogue rather than confrontation.

I also went to the workshop by Kat Barton on the same subject which was more detailed. Trying to tackle/contain such outbreaks cannot solve the terrorist threat. Paul Rogers of Bradford University proposes a paradigm that social injustice leads to conflict and co-operation between groups/nations leads to an absence of fear. The main threats to global security today are climate change, competition for resources, marginalisation of the majority world and global militarism.

We need to release funding on military spending to help to resolve /ameliorate the other three threats.

I also went to a workshop by Geoff Tansey on Quaker action at the UN in Geneva , particularly about world trade and working for global equality.

Both of these workshops recommended “ Global responses to Global Threats - Sustained security for the 21st century”, by Abbott, Rogers and Sloboda, Oxford Research Group 2006. (Updated version, “Beyond Terror :The Truth About The Real Threats To Our World” April 2007)

Also QPSW has produced notice board material on Sustainable security, which would be useful for schools and general use - priced £15.

Overall I came away with a very crammed brain, a desire to be more active and having met a wide variety of very interesting people.

Paula Knight

Paula is a recently retired social worker who has been an Attender at Lichfield meeting since going to Quaker Week 2007

Tools With a Mission

Tools with a Mission (TWAM) is a Christian Mission which collects, refurbishes and sends all manner of tools to many parts of the world. Its aim is to help people in developing countries to learn skills which will enable them to provide for their families, begin and maintain small businesses. This increases their independence, their feeling of self-worth and contribution to local economy. For the past twenty-four years it has sent an increasing volume of carpenters' kits, mechanics' kits, sewing machines (both manual and electric) with accessories and many other sorts of tools abroad.

TWAM's Headquarters are in Ipswich but many people throughout the country act as collectors. Some are able to effect initial refurbishment but all tools are eventually sent to Ipswich from where they are packed into containers, destined mainly at present for Uganda, Kenya, Zambia and other parts of Africa.

As TWAM's work has grown, it has established a medical department in Bury St. Edmunds under the leadership of Mike Coleman (Tel: 01284-702236). Recently in response to educational needs, it has begun to collect school books and at present is launching a Scholar Pack Project. This invites interested people to fill a plastic wallet (provided by TWAM) with papers, pens, rubbers, pencils etc. to help primary school pupils.



In addition, TWAM has begun to teach Africans how to make ferro-cement water tanks to collect rain water and avoid having to travel miles to collect water from often dirty pools or rivers. Its latest project is developing a "rope pump".

There are only two collectors living in the Staffordshire/West Midlands area but both would be willing to collect tools. The only ones not required are garden tools and computers. Old duplicators are also useful.

Martin Humphries, TWAM's Administrator would be willing to supply further information and Fred Stainthorpe of Willenhall (Tel: 01902-417065, email fredandjohn@hotmail.com) is willing to collect tools within a reasonable distance of his home or to receive them at 16, Thompson Street, Willenhall. Anyone wishing to see pictures of TWAM's work can visit their website at www.twam.co.uk

I am also happy to give talks about the work of TWAM to any interested local group.

Fred Stainthorpe

Fred Stainthorpe is a retired Baptist minister who served with BMS World Mission in the Congo. He is currently Moderator of Green Lane Baptist Church, Walsall, while they await the arrival of Bob Morris in September

QF&P 27:12

The unity of Christians never did nor ever will or can stand in uniformity of thought and opinion, but in Christian love only. Thomas Story 1737

Along the paths of the imagination the artist and mystic make contact. The revelations of God are not all of one kind. Always the search in art, as in religion, is for the rhythms of relationships, for the unity, the urge, the mystery, the wonder of life that is presented in great art and true religion.

Horace B Pointing, 1944

The Quaker Tapestry

In February a number of Friends went to Chester Cathedral to see the travelling exhibition of the Quaker Tapestry. Those of us who went to Chester enjoyed a good day. The tapestry was a revelation to those who had not seen it before and a treat for those who had. A number of Friends said that they would now like to visit the tapestry at its home in Kendal.

The tapestry is a story in embroidery in much the same way as is the Bayeux Tapestry. But it is not just an academic history, it is celebration of Quaker's ideas and experience, skills and achievements since the time of George Fox until the present.

Each panel depicts a different story in a different time in social history. The tapestry was never designed to show the whole history of Quakerism over the last 350 years. It just dips into Quaker history every now and then to celebrate the event or life of Friends from that period in time.

It took 15 years to complete (1981 - 1996). The project continues to inspire others to take the needle and draw the thread and the workshops at Kendal have become very popular with students of all ages wanting to learn the secrets behind the stitches in order to create their own panels, small and large.

On average it took about two years to embroider a panel. However one of the Scottish panels was completed in 8 months and another panel sewn in Kendal took many years to complete!

A chance meeting in 1991 between Anne Wynn-Wilson and Marion Winchester, a member of Kendal Meeting resulted in the tapestry finding a permanent home in Kendal. Anne was looking for a venue to house the Tapestry for permanent exhibition and Kendal Meeting had been looking for a good use for their Meeting House, a Grade II listed building, which was too large for their needs. Kendal is in the heart of what is known to Quakers as '1652 Country', the area in which Quakerism was born. Kendal Friends continue to use the Meeting House for their worship on Sunday morning and Friday afternoon and many of the local Friends can be found stewarding and volunteering their time to help look after the visitors to the exhibition.

There is an item of local interest in the tapestry. The panel shown on the front page of SQ was worked on by Sylvia Stanyer of Wolverhampton Meeting.

Like all the participants she was given a small area to sew with the specially adapted stitch used throughout the tapestry. Sylvia informs me that on the panel called 'Meeting Houses Overseas' (reproduced on Front Page) she sewed the 'SES' in 'HOUSES', the fir trees, and the outline to the New Zealand Meeting House.

How the Quaker Tapestry began

In January 1981, Anne Wynn-Wilson began teaching a boy at the Quaker Meeting in Taunton. Her intention was to make a long frieze, illustrated with stories about Quaker personalities from history. Jonathan, then aged eleven, knowing that Anne was an embroiderer asked "Can we do it in embroidery?" This seemingly impossible request became a reality with the help of enthusiasm, co-operation, skill and the determination of many.

During the first months the background woollen fabric was woven in Somerset, more than 120 coloured wools were chosen, and the embroidery style and technique established which enabled everyone who wished to join in the creativity to do so; whatever their previous embroidery experience.

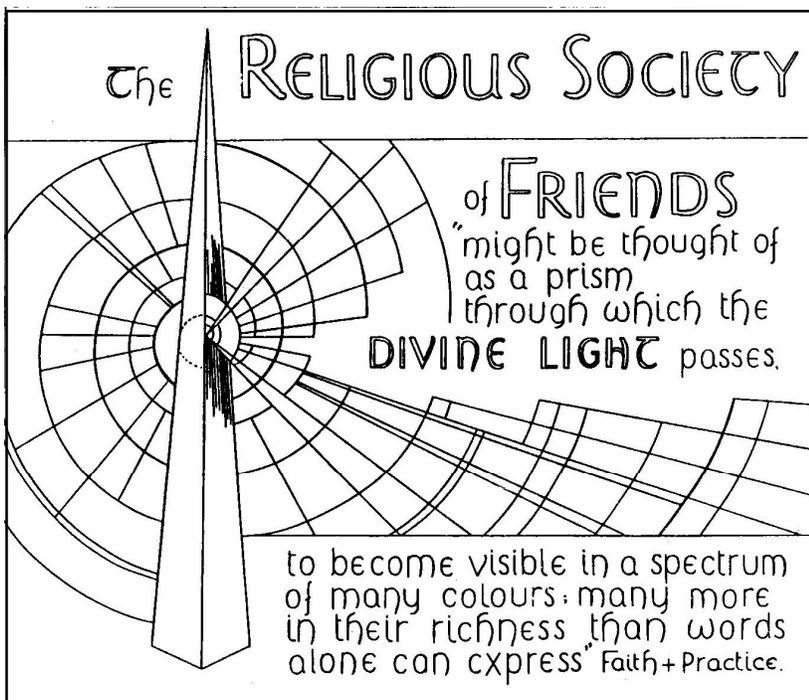
The Taunton children, and the adults, contributed to nine of the 77 panels of embroidery and over the years many other Quaker meetings in this country and overseas have become involved in the project.

Some people preferred to help in the research work. There were four main designers and many small groups of Friends agreed to complete the embroidery in the accepted style and colours.

The Quaker Tapestry today still provides opportunities for workshops, holidays, exhibitions, education, publishing, television programmes and above all the sharing of new skills and enjoying good friendship.

From the exhibition handbook.

The Prism



This is the title panel of the Quaker Tapestry. The intersecting spiral symbolises the centring on prayer and our extending life of experience and service. As the light strikes a prism and breaks into many colours, so there are diverse ways of responding to the Divine Light.

"Light" has always been used as a symbol of purity and knowledge. From the beginnings of Quakerism, Friends' teaching was of the belief in the "Inward" Light, in "that of God in everyone."

Death and the Right to Die

At Wolverhampton meeting we have been considering four contemporary issues in the light of our Quaker Beliefs. Death, dying and the right to die was one of these discussion sessions.

Obviously death has always been with us and no doubt for generations consideration of whether we have the right to die when we wish to, has been thought about and discussed by people of differing ideas, values and faiths. So why see it as a contemporary issue which needs to be explored again? Improved medical treatment and care means that we can be kept alive for many more years and the latter stages of life have become more prolonged and often more complicated. Now many of us have the possibility of living well beyond our three score years and ten. That of course raises the question but will we want to if we are no longer able to lead lives which are useful and meaningful and do not put an impossible strain on those who care for us. If people feel ready and wishing to die should they be assisted to do so?

Passages from Faith and Practice were used to remind us that death is a very spiritual event, we shared our own experiences of the dying and death of family members and friends, we considered papers from the Humanist Society and Dignity in Dying to define the different forms of Euthanasia and which are legal in this country, and the usefulness of the "living will". We considered what circumstance would make us wish to die. A paper from the Alzheimer's Society provided a good summary of the Mental Capacity Act 2005 and the recent article in The Friend, "A dignified way to go?" by Nancy Mottram provided much food for thought. We were pleased to support our friend Keith, editor of the Staffordshire Quaker, who responded to the letter by Alison Leonard inviting any Friend to join a group to consider writing a booklet on The Quaker View of Dying. Contributions to the discussion were thoughtful and offered different views on this issue.

Palliative Care for everyone who needs it was stressed regardless of income or where one lives.

The session gave me and other Friends much to think about. And what was 'the sense of the meeting'? Did we draw any conclusion? No, but the healing prayer "Give us the courage to face whatever we have to face," which was offered in our final silence perhaps expressed where we stand at the present time.

Kay Herbert

QF&P 21.48

I am convinced it is a great art to know how to grow old gracefully, and I am determined to practise it ... I always thought I should love to grow old, and I find it even more delightful than I thought. It is so delicious to be done with things, and to feel no need any longer to concern myself much about earthly affairs ... I am tremendously content to let one activity after another go, and to await quietly and happily the opening of the door at the end of the passage-way, that will let me in to my real abiding place.

Hannah Whitall Smith, 1903

From the Editor

My thanks to all of our contributors.

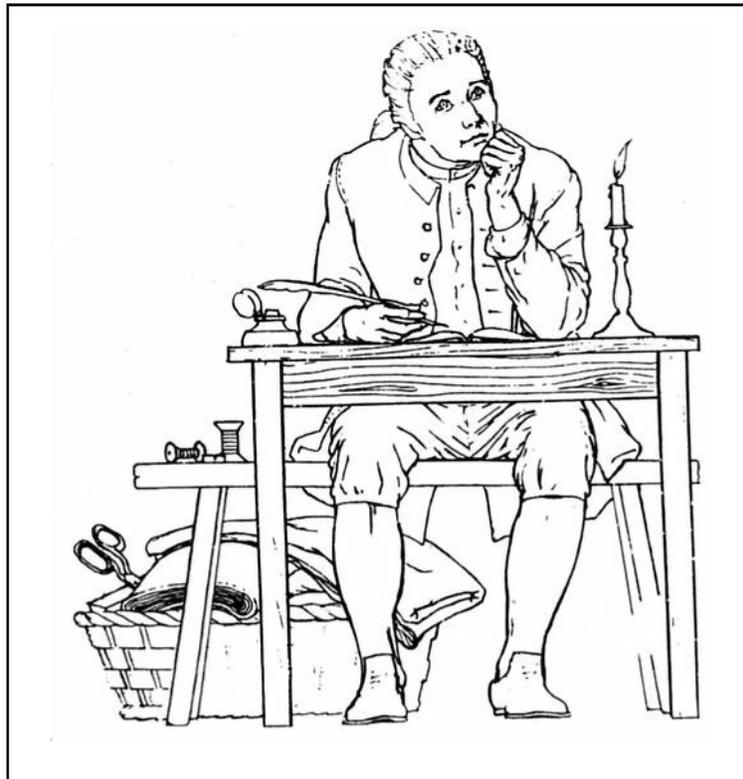
You will have noticed that there are two reports on the Quaker Peace and Social Witness Conference at Swanwick. I received two and as they are written from such differing viewpoints decided to publish both.

Our guest contributor this month is an old friend of mine, Fred Stainthorpe from Green Lane Baptist Church, Walsall. His work with Tools with a Mission is worthwhile and valuable. I became an 'old age pensioner' in June, and I cheerfully donated the engineering tools that I had gathered over forty plus years.

If you haven't had an article in the SQ so far, would you consider sending me something? Also, I am always short of artwork, photos, poems and 'fillers'. And if you do send an article, consider if there is a picture which would go with it.

Deadline for November edition is October 18th.

As always all formats accepted,
either by email or by post
(See back page for details)



John Woolman
From the Quaker Tapestry

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CLASP

Our Friend **Harold Yardley** informs us that CLASP (Churches Linked Across Staffordshire and the Potteries) now has a website which means that up to date information will be constantly available.

The latest CLASP forum happened too late for a report in this issue of SQ, but details of this and future events can be seen at :

www.clasptogether.org.uk