



Roundabout Central England



The newsletter of Central England Quakers - October 2021
centralenglandquakers.org.uk

Finding Quiet Wisdom



Artist Catherine Holland reflects on her journey into Quakers, alongside her painting career.

I have worked for myself much of my life, and while running a business in Oxford I met Jenny Buffery. She influenced me a great deal, with her quiet wisdom, and breadth of knowledge. I had been seeking a place to meet people like the rebirthers I loved, and gradually it dawned on me that Quakers might just fit my need. I was very nervous and didn't dare to enter where a lunchtime meeting was already in progress, but I returned another day. From there I attended the breakfast meeting mainly, as this fitted with my

lifestyle at the time, which involved a lot of travelling.

I met some wonderful people at Oxford meeting, so when I moved back to Solihull, I headed off to the Meeting here. It was so different, but gradually I began to realise that these were the same calibre of people I had met in Oxford, and I have grown to love them dearly, and appreciate their support. Last year I had the opportunity to decide to practice my art full-time, so I decided to take advantage of that moment. It's a big journey, and one that's been a long time coming. I'm glad I am here.

Coventry City of Culture

Gyll Brown explains how Coventry Quakers have been involved in the 'City of Culture'.

Coventry is City of Culture 2021 (running from May to May because of Covid19) and Coventry meeting house held an open house during a two day event staged by City of Culture in co-operation with the Royal Shakespeare Company (RSC) on 10th–11th September along with many of the Faith venues in or near the City Centre. There was a display, refreshments and an opportunity to ask about the Society of Friends.



All participating venues, including the meeting house, were decorated with recycled plastic ribbon in the famous Coventry Blue.

A good number of Coventry Friends helped to prepare for the day. Five were present at an outdoor meal for the participating faiths on the Friday night and five others took part in the city's ceremony of light on the Saturday evening, others were spectators.

Gillian Waddilove, clerk of the meeting was interviewed outside the meeting house about the event for Sunday Live. Only two of the venues featured anyone speaking, so we felt very included.

The RSC staged a moving play in four parts and four locations. The forecourt of Coventry Meeting House was chosen for one of the scenes. It featured a young Sikh couple, newly arrived in 1978. During the dialogue, some of our main Quaker standpoints were voiced. The

play has been shared on the Area Meeting Newsfeed and can be viewed on the Website

Meanwhile three Friends have been representing us on the *Sacred Space* initiative, an ongoing project in the city. The project held a faiths event in Swanswell Park on Sunday 12th. A busy time for Coventry Quakers.

News from the Revision Committee

Rhiannon Grant reports on the ongoing work of the Book of Discipline Revision Committee.

The twenty-five members of the Book of Discipline Revision Committee - two of us from Central England Area Meeting - were asked by Britain Yearly Meeting in 2018 to produce the successor to Quaker faith & practice. This isn't just a new edition (our current book of discipline, Quaker faith & practice, also known as the big red book or QF&P, has had five editions in print and more updates on the website), but a whole new book - or maybe more than a book.

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We have been asked to work prayerfully, joyfully, creatively, and boldly, looking at all the topics covered in the current book. Our first focus has been the church government or 'how to run things' sections, which have mostly only been revised a little at a time since the 1950s, with predictably patchy results. Another major responsibility is to look at what is not in the current book and needs adding. New developments in science and our understanding of the world mean we need to say more about the environment and social justice, changes in the demographics of our Religious Society mean we need to explain more from the beginning rather than assuming that everyone just knows how things work in Quaker circles and all the technological change since the current book was finalised in 1994 means we need to look beyond print to publishing options which in-

clude websites, apps, music, video, images, hyperlinked text, and more.

That's a lot of work and it'll take us years! But we have made a start. We've identified topics which need more work, including some like discernment which will crop up in lots of places. We've found some things, like membership, which may need more conversation within the whole yearly meeting community before we know what needs to be said about them at the moment. We've written draft text on a few topics, some to stay on file until we get more confidence about the tone of the book, and some to start testing with a few Friends who have specific expertise. We're looking at how we can split things up, so that we have core material which focusses on the principles and supplementary material which goes into detail. And we're collecting material: you can send us suggestions, of writing or pictures or videos or anything, through our form: <https://forms.quaker.org.uk/qfp-idea/> or submit creative work inspired by the current book to our Open to New Light project: <https://padlet.com/bdrc/OpenToNewLight>

Find out more about the Revision Committee as a whole at: <https://www.quaker.org.uk/resources/quaker-faith-and-practice/revising-quaker-faith-practice>

Heritage Open day at Stourbridge

Maris Vigar reflects on Stourbridge Meeting's Heritage Open Day (HOD) on Saturday 12th September:



This year's HOD theme was *Edible England* and at Stourbridge Meeting house we welcomed 95 visitors. A gorgeous banner designed by a Stourbridge Friend wel-

comed them all. The weather was perfect; our allotment produce sale in the garden was well supported by Friends and visitors alike and our lawn and garden which we are in the process of wilding was much appreciated.

We held a sale of arts and crafts created or designed by members of our Meeting, with some beautiful Chinese style paintings, and lovely recycled cards, as well as items made in collaboration with a Ugandan community.

Refreshments included extra special treats, with homemade, fruity, mostly vegan cakes and biscuits which went down a storm with everybody. There was a display in our Main Room of 30 panels from the Loving Earth Project, with messages to the world leaders gathering for the CP26 climate change summit in Glasgow in November, which led to many conversations with our visitors

Heritage fans come mainly to learn about our historic Meeting House and its origins. The many photos that illustrate the story of our comprehensive restoration of several years ago add fascination. But we also get many questions about Quakerism which not many know much about and I get much pleasure in telling them what I know. It is not hard to convey esteem for this special building and also the shared sense of privilege Friends feel, and must have felt throughout the centuries for it still to be standing. As with all our Meeting Houses we are custodians for future Quakers and visitors to love and enjoy them for generations to come.

It was a wonderful weekend; most of the produce on our stall was sold. Our large banner has been removed, as reluctantly has our lovely Heritage Open Day poster. They have already been replaced by our own Christian Climate Action / Extinction Rebellion Bridge posters, to welcome the Bristol to Glasgow Pilgrims arriving shortly.

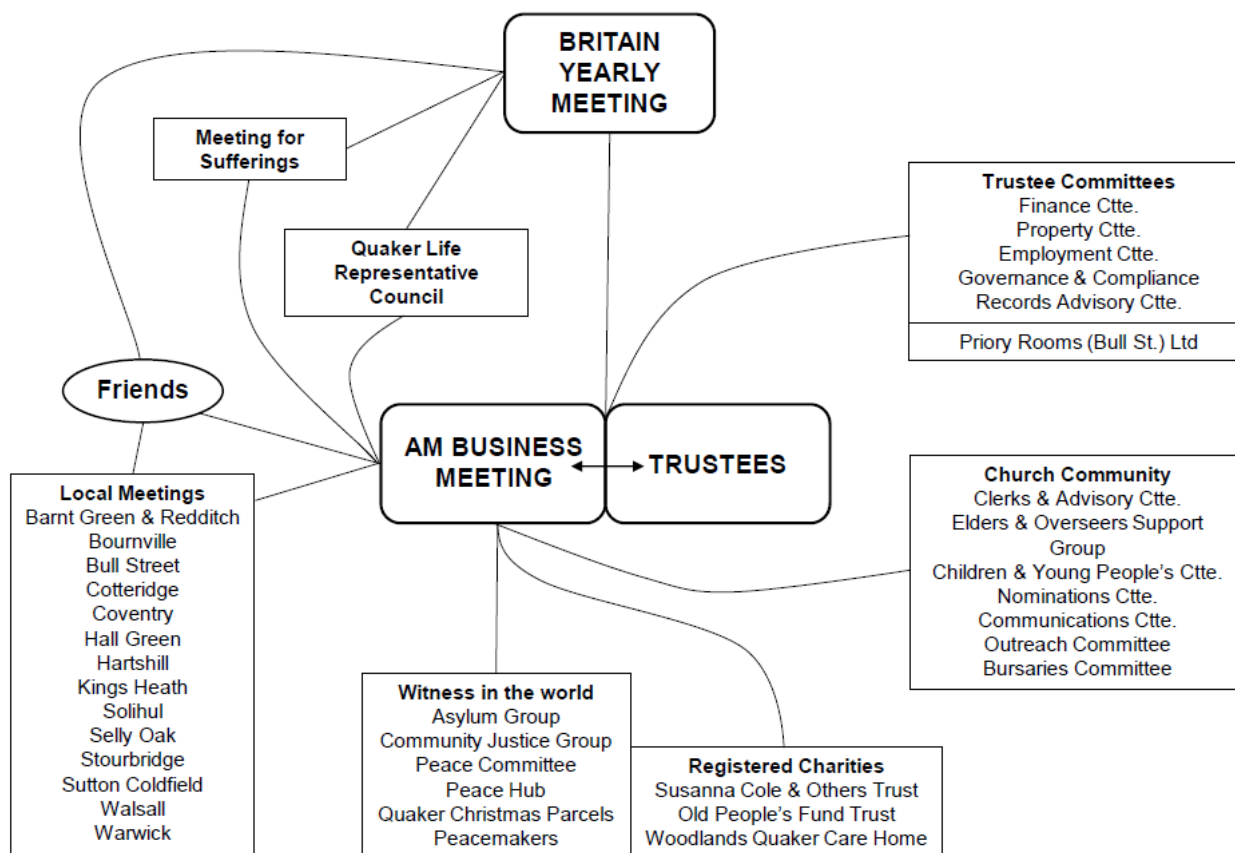


What is the structure of Central England Area Quaker Meeting?

Donald Stubbings provides a visual guide to structures in our Area Meeting (AM):

Some Friends will have a clear understanding of how the AM is structured and how it works. But many will have a less clear idea. Over the past few years, Friends have created diagrams to us understand these things. One of these diagrams is below. Hopefully, it gives a clearer understanding of the AM's structure and its relationship with Britain Yearly Meeting, local meetings, committees and supported organisations.

CEQAM – Simplified Communications and Committee Structure (May 2021)



Bournville gets Creative for Climate Justice

Bournville Quakers have transformed the giant cedar tree in their grounds with a knitted cosy to highlight climate issues as COP26 approaches. Members of the meeting produced hundreds of six-inch squares to contribute to the installation and thought-provoking messages have been placed on nearby railings with knitted bunting.

Postcards have also been produced, which can be sent to MPs.

The tree, which was planted in 1948 to mark Dame Elizabeth Cadbury's 90th birthday is the largest of its kind in the region. Friends had plenty of opportunities to talk with members of the public about climate change on Saturday



Photo by Donald Stubbings

September 11th when the iconic building opened for heritage open day and over 600 people came to visit it. Notices encourage visitors to take photos of the work, put them on social media and talk about the issues. Post-cards have also been produced, which can be sent to MPs.

CEQ Climate Emergency Action supports Small Footsteps relaunch!

This August Central England Climate Emergency Action offered financial backing for three Small Footsteps events. Two of them were held in the Birmingham and Black County Wildlife Trust's Ecopark in Small Heath and one at Streetly Methodist church. They furthered the building of a relationship between Footsteps and the wildlife trust, which is building a new resource centre at the Ecopark and is keen to build links with local communities, especially faith communities.

Footsteps (and Small Footsteps for children) is the climate change action project of Birmingham Council of Faiths. Previously in 2016 and 2017 it had organised week long courses at Fircroft College in Selly Oak (pictured).



The day and half day sessions offered this year built on that experience. However the young people who ran sessions last time have moved on with their lives and a new approach was thought to be needed.

The 2021 events have been judged successful. One youngster told his grandmother that he had had a great time. When asked if he had

known anybody there he replied no, so the other children there had become his friends

Chris Martin , who helped with fundraising for the 2016 sessions commented that 'Interfaith work requires tenacity and a preparedness to work around problems and challenges. The rewards, though, come through the way in which working together builds relationships and seeing youngsters benefit'.

Poetry Corner

Ring road

by Eleanor Nesbitt

*Listen! Listen for the ringing ring road voices:
legionaries' oaths in all the dialects
of empire, on the march to Baginton;
Danes with Canute, rampaging through;
Godiva starkly offering to ride, and then
those pious, paunchy priors. Hear Prior De-
ram,
1480, castigating Coventry's poor
for poaching fish and fowl from Swanswell.
Fast forward, 1927, can you hear
the Larkins moving into genteel 'Penvorn'
near the railway station, once immortalised
by Tennyson and, some day, to be remem-
bered
by their son?*

*Ring road voices: even the headlong, head-
strong
rush of heady traffic cannot drown them out.
Quarrymen sweating, swearing as they heave
red blocks of stone for churches, churches,
churches –*

*St John the Baptist's, Holy Trinity, St Mary's
and*

*St Michael's, for the Guildhall and all those
high,*

unnecessary spires; quarrymen swearing,

*sweating for Franciscans (where's their pov-
erty?),*

*for Benedictines, Carmelites (whose White-
friars house*

now trembles at the traffic coursing past

its landmark sandstone walls).

Shh! Listen for a pistol shot – it's Mary Herbert's, 1642.

She and her Cheylesmore women fill the quarries so

the soldiers of the king can't lurk in ambush.

Do they hear, from a hundred years before, Cornelius, Robert, Thomas, Joan and Lawrence praying

God's mercy as the flames burn up their bodies and their heresy.

Faith can still stop your traffic in its tracks.

Remember 1999, when turbans and salwar kamizes

briefly turned your ring road saffron, blue and every other hue,

because the Khalsa's tercentenary drew

our Sikhs in thousands to the War Memorial Park.

Belfast's John Hewitt eulogised our eager city's

'blatant roar, its famous steeples and its web of girders as image of the state hope argued for'.

Brian Redknap engineered your pioneering loop,

your flyovers and bridges (and tunnelled out some subways for pedestrians).

But what of you, James Brindley, your canals that carried silk and coal? Your basin has been severed

from the city's hub. And where are you, James Starley

and your sewing machines and bicycles

that changed our city and transformed our world?

Ah, here you are, in every differential gear, in every vehicle that weaves this ribboning road.

Where are you now, George Singer, Thomas Humber,

Alfred Herbert, Siegfried Bettmann (whom we ostracised

For being German, not for being a Jew)?

Triumph, Daimler, Jaguar – greets rolling round and round

and round the ringing road,

till it falls quiet.

After one hundred years of drones and solar cars,

ring road, you will fall quiet, your tarmac breaking up

with buddleia, willow herb, and all the flowers of grass.

Those couples strolling round on summer days will sometimes shiver, wondering if they hear stampeding earthbound metal beasts on wheels,

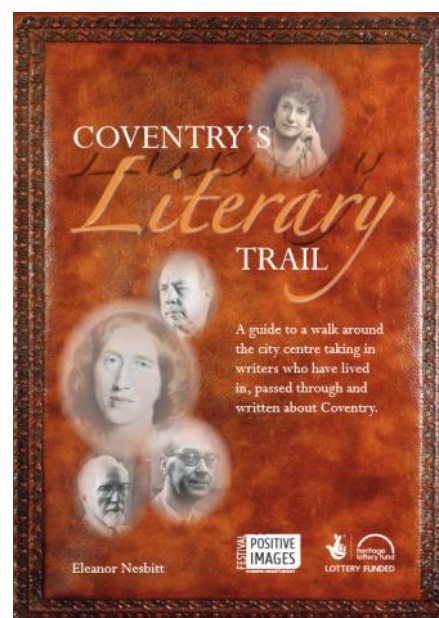
in each one's stomach passengers en route to somewhere else, before we learned that any time

is now and anywhere is here and 'nothing, like something, happens' everywhere.

Listen! Listen for the ringing ring road voices

This poem is packed with references to people and events that happened along the route of the present Coventry ring road.

You can explore the references to Philip Larkin and Tennyson's mentions of Coventry railway station and John Hewitt's praise for Coventry further in Eleanor's 'Coventry Literary Trail Leaflet', available online.



Behind Only Four Walls

by Vicky Cowell

If you ever find yourself

Behind only four walls

Feeling trapped

Or literally

In a lockdown maybe

With only ugliness to look at

Surrounding you

Maybe

Damp

Cold

Alone

Or troubled by

Others

Noisy and annoying

Maybe even hurtful

I hope you remember

The beauty of days gone by

Perhaps the taste of apple pie

How your friends love you

*How the heron stands strong and majestic in
the lake*

How the water flows in the veins of the earth

Patient in streams

Mighty in the rolling seas

Always arriving

Every molecule in its rightful place

How the trees grow greenly, gayly

We presume

In love with the sky, the sun

Living just to live!

*Without nightmares of axes, timber or high
speed trains*

How the blue tits and also the pigeons

Yes even the pigeons

With multi-coloured wings

sing Life's morning dreams

Our Cities

Attract them

Pests maybe

Or the Dove's brother

I hope you have some poems in your memory

To recite

If that's your thing

In tedious hours

Exercises to do

Songs to hum

I pray strength to every sinew

Breaking up the hours

*I hope you remember the face of your loved
ones*

Not just with sight

But can feel the memory in your fingers

But maybe the touch of their face

*Like the scene from *The Little Princess**

The 1995 version

Their hand in your hand

I hope you remember

The beauty

In every cell of your body

How Joy is still beating your heart

Pumping your blood

If you are there for peace

Or something just that you believe in

To right some grave wrong

*Choirs and choirs of angels are singing for
your release*

For you to

Burst forth

& dance your dance

Others singing, praying,

willing to join you

You are not alone

Even as you may be alone

Millions are singing

Your tune

Notices & Dates for your Diary

Autumn Bible Study Sessions

Those who have attended in the past will be delighted to learn that our Friend Hilary Johnson is planning an autumn Zoom Bible study series of three sessions on the subject of 'Jesus the Ultimate Scapegoat / the root of violence in society'. If you are interested in attending please contact Claire Bowman, who will be facilitating as before.

Could you offer a talk or activity to the Central England Youth Group?

Did you know that Central England Area Meeting has a youth group for young people aged 10-18 that meets monthly, usually on the first Saturday of the month, from 6-8pm. Currently between 10 and 15 young people attend.

We would like to hear from you if you have something of interest that you could talk to the youth group about or if you have a skill that you could teach us.

Could you tell us about a concern you care about, voluntary work you do, about another faith or another country, about your spiritual journey, about a role you have held within Quakers? Could you teach us to make bird boxes, cook a special dish, craft etc etc?

If you feel you have something to share that our young people would be interested in please email Helen Waters helenwaters1083@gmail.com or phone / message her on 07876163356

Area Meeting-wide online worship

A small group has begun a weekly online AM-wide Meeting for Worship, **Sundays at 5pm**. There is half an hour for silent worship and then half a hour as led: worship sharing or connecting with each other.

For Zoom details please contact Vic Grainger (details in the blue membership book).

We hope to run this for 6 months as a trial period.

Quaker Mental Health Forum

Quakers in Central England are invited to join this national Quaker Mental Health Forum taking place within our area .

Come in person to **the Priory Rooms on Saturday 9th October 2021 from 10:30 to 16:00**.

Speakers and workshops on the themes of Anchors, Storms and Harbours.

There is no charge. To book, contact Alison Mitchell on mhdo@quakermhfund.uk

New Name, Same Newsletter

Did you notice the new name for this newsletter 'Roundabout Central England'? Hopefully this conveys that we are sharing news from around the area meeting, rather than out 'from the centre'. If you or your meeting have news to share, please let us know at website@centralenglandquakers.org.uk