



Roundabout Central England



The newsletter of Central England Quakers - February 2022
centralenglandquakers.org.uk

The Beauty of Life in the Everyday



A new artwork at Kings Heath Meeting celebrates 'the beauty of life in the everyday'.

In May 2018 the ashes of Lynda Paterson were scattered in the garden of Kings Heath Meeting House. Prior to her death Lynda became a member of Winchmore Hill meeting but as the daughter of Ernest and Louie Gough she was closely associated throughout her life with Birmingham and Moseley Road and Kings Heath meetings. Her husband, Jim, made a generous donation which we used to commission a mandala for the garden from Quaker mosaic artist Caro-

line Jariwala to stand in memory of all the previous members and attenders of these meetings. The mosaic was installed in October last year and Jim and his family visited in December. During ministry in meeting for worship Jim commented on the skill and love shown in the creation of the mandala and how the fragments of crockery and glass revealed that 'the beauty of life can be seen in the everyday and sometimes in the ordinary.' We thank Jim for his gift and hope that all our visitors will stop to reflect as they admire the beauty of the mandala.

17th Century Black Country Quaker, Abraham Darby the First memorial monument

Janet Hilken & Phil Dahl explore a piece of Quaker history with the support of the Black Country Fund.



The monument

Abraham Darby, also known as Abraham Darby the Elder or Abraham Darby the First, was born into an English family whose involvement with Quakers was established from the earliest days of that movement. Abraham and his family played an important role in the Industrial Revolution. He is mainly remembered for developing and perfecting a method of producing pig iron in a blast furnace fuelled by coke rather than charcoal. This was a major step forward in the production of iron as a raw material for the Industrial Revolution.

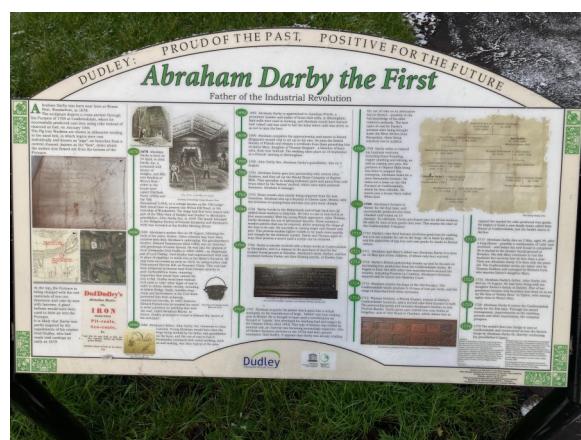
supporting and celebrating the life and testimonies of the Religious Society of Friends

Born in Birmingham in the 1690s, Abraham Darby 1st was apprenticed to Jonathan Freeth, a fellow Quaker and a manufacturer of brass mills for grinding malt. Here Darby would have seen the use of coke to fuel the malting ovens, preventing the sulphur content of coal contaminating the resulting beer. This method also avoided the use of the scarcer charcoal as a fuel. On the basis of these two insights, Darby went on to develop the coke-fuelled blast furnace in 1709. In due course, he had estab-

lished two blast furnaces, one of which has been preserved and can be visited at Coalbrookdale Museum of Iron. Freeth encouraged Darby to become a highly active member in the Society of Friends, and he did and remained so all his life.

To commemorate Darby's contribution to the industrial heritage of Dudley and the Black Country, Dudley Metropolitan Borough Council has designed and installed a monument in Woodsetton in Dudley North, close to the extensive limestone mines from which vast amounts of limestone were quarried to help in the smelting process. Beneath the hills of the Wren's Nest and below Dudley Castle, those mines are vast and extensive and are like underground cathedrals.

Janet Hilken and Phil Dahl, both of the now laid-down Dudley Meeting, liaised with Kieran Casey who has actively pursued this project on behalf of the people of Woodsetton, whom he represented on the Dudley Council for several years. Through the "Black Country Fund" set up on the closure of Dudley LM, ex-Dudley Friends and Central England Quakers were able to make a contribution to the memorial. The information panel includes information about the continuing presence and activity of Quakers in the Black Country.



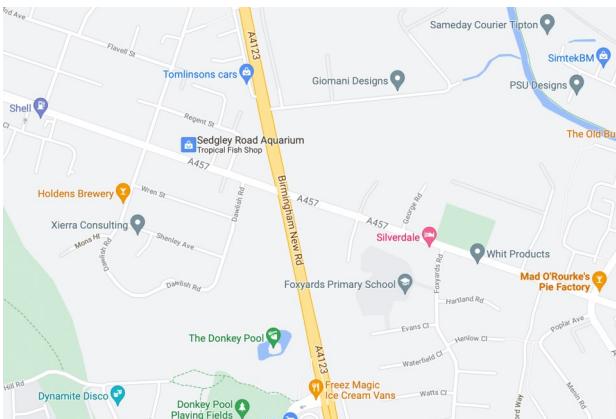
Information provided at the monument

This is just one example of how the Black Country Fund can achieve its founding purpose of supporting and celebrating the life and testimonies of the Religious Society of Friends across the whole Black Country. The Fund is

currently the only way to commemorate the active Quaker presence in Dudley from the 17th to the 21st Centuries. Founded in 1674, Dudley's Quaker Meeting House was where Abraham Darby was married in 1699.

As a result of the impact of the COVID Pandemic, Local Meetings in the Black Country may currently have real needs for financial support. Some funds can help realise their continuing plans and projects for outreach, resources or shared activities, such as equipment for online 'blended meetings'.

Your first points of contact with any ideas, plans or grant requests are Janet Hilken (STO) or Phil Dahl (AML), whose contact details can be found below. The map shows the monument's location.



NB: Contact details for both Janet and Phil have changed since the latest 'blue' Membership book was published. janet@hilken.co.uk pdahl173@icloud.com.

Mobile numbers (if email is inconvenient):
Janet - 07767 315231; Phil - 07764 812919

Making a Difference at Sutton Coldfield Meeting

Following a study group on 'faith-based action for climate justice', Sutton Coldfield Meeting decided to hold regular 'Making a Difference' activity events once a month on a Saturday afternoon.

Since August 2021 an eco-washing-up liquid refill station has been established, which is available to all users of the Meeting House.



Things we love that are threatened by climate change

Friends have made green hearts to wear on a sleeve proclaiming a love that is threatened by climate change (kits from the Craftivist Collective) and created a poster for the notice board at the end of the road.

A banner was made to carry on the Global Day of Action for Climate Justice during COP26, and several Sutton Coldfield Friends joined the rally in Birmingham.

we do not own the world and its riches are not ours to dispose of at will...

Christmas cards were made, expressing Quaker concern for the planet: 'we do not own the world and its riches are not ours to dispose of at will...' which were sent to the Prime Minister and government ministers to remind them of the promises made at COP26.

Mini-scrolls were created to drop into pockets of new clothes ('shop-drop, not shop-lift') to encourage thinking about the impact of the fashion industry on climate change. Coffee, cake and conversation are all part of these afternoons too.



The banner taken on the COP26 march

Climate Emergency Action – Latest News

The three co-clerks of Central England Quaker Climate Emergency Action have been busy lately addressing important issues.

Barnaby Waters, with his buildings remit, is liaising with Trustees Property Committee convenor, Clare Peat on an initiative to get extra carbon footprint questions added to the annual property questionnaire for our local meetings.

Working with sustainability guru Phil Beardmore of EcoBirmingham, Barnaby is also part of the Birmingham Faith Leaders “Action Not Words” focus. Phil is undertaking whole building energy assessments at places of worship in the city as part of Footsteps’ Project 4F.

Ginnie Woolaston, with her Communities remit is currently focussing on food and diet.

It's the local level which works really well.

Chris Martin continues to represent faith communities on the Birmingham City Council Just Transition initiative. He is finding that Interfaith climate and environmental work takes place at three distinct levels, national and international, regional and city – and local. It's the local level, he says, which works really well. Local church and faith leaders all tend to know each other and work together for the benefit of their community and real change can be achieved.

Meanwhile the UK Climate Change Committee has chosen Birmingham as the first place to engage with as it seeks to find out how Net Zero can be worked towards at local level around the country. The work is just beginning so hold it in the light.

The Birmingham Faith Community Map

Chris has been devoting a lot of time recently to developing a Birmingham faith community map as part of Footsteps’ Project 4F. An earlier Birmingham faith map that was on the Council website lapsed around eight years ago. The new Birmingham faith community

map aims to provide an overview of the 800 or so places of worship across the city. The work will enable Project 4F to offer to help reduce the carbon footprints of faith buildings, provide household fuel bill advice, hold clothes-swapping events and set up repair cafes. Many other organisations, including the city council, are also interested in using the map in order to work more effectively with and through faith communities at local level.

Live, Love, Learn at Peace Hub

Pete Doubtfire, Coordinator of our project, Peace Hub, introduces their theme for winter / spring 2022:

As we reopen for 2022, our first theme at Peace Hub is Live, Love, Learn - all about peaceful and sustainable education.

Education helps us to gain skills and knowledge that allow us to work and support ourselves. But it's about much more than that. Education helps us to understand the world we live in, and empathise with other people, as well as solve problems. Most importantly, from my perspective as an activist, education gives us the confidence to change things for the better. Throughout January, February & March 2022, we're exploring different ways that people are taking action for peaceful and sustainable education - and how you can take part and support them.

This is an ambitious goal, and putting it into practice won't be easy.

UN Sustainable Development Goal 4.7 states that by 2030 we will “ensure all learners acquire knowledge and skills needed to promote sustainable development, including among others through education for:

- sustainable development and sustainable lifestyles,
- human rights,
- gender equality,
- promotion of a culture of peace and non-

- violence,
- global citizenship, and
- appreciation of cultural diversity and of culture's contribution to sustainable development."



This is an ambitious goal, and putting it into practice throughout this decade won't be easy – especially when appeals to 'traditional values' and even a 'military ethos in schools' make easy headlines. But there are many people and organisations developing the skills and knowledge to make this a reality, and working hard to change the narrative about education.

Honorary Brummie Malala Yousafzai is leading the call for equal access to education across the world. Worldwide, more than 130 million girls are out of school today, and covid-19 has made the situation even more difficult. There are many reasons girls do not continue with their education. We might stereotypically think of traditions that do not value girls learning, or girls having to drop out to marry. However, poverty and the cost of schooling is also a major factor which can mean that families who are keen to send their girls to school are not able to. Lack of infrastructure sometimes means that there are simply not schools available for girls to attend – it can be something as simple as schools not having adequate toilet facilities. Natural disasters and armed conflict can often mean that education is suddenly disrupted, and what infrastructure was available is suddenly destroyed.

As well as using Malala's profile to lobby world leaders on these issues, the Malala Fund is also supporting grassroots activists and educators, and trying to bring girls' voices into the

conversation: you can read their 'Assembly' newsletters at assembly.malala.org

Here in the UK, the Our Shared World network (of which QPSW is a member) is calling for sustainable education by 2030. Thanks to their efforts the Education (Environment and Sustainable Citizenship) Bill has been brought to parliament as a private members bill. Although it's not easy for private members' bills to get through, by showing support for it we can help to push the government towards this type of approach. The bill wants to ensure schools instil an ethos of care in the curriculum: care for ourselves; care for others; care for our environment. The focus is less on knowledge and more about practicing and learning from taking action. The aim is to build a sense of agency, compassion, resilience and willingness to engage with local and global issues and be part of solutions. This very much chimes with the work of Peacemakers (WMQPEP) – including our joint project Junior Peacemakers, which brings together Peacemakers' expertise in peace skills, and Peace Hub's focus on encouraging action for peace in the world.



Junior Peacemakers

If you're keen to take a 'deep dive' into these issues, Our Shared World are hosting an online evening on 17th February 5-6pm, exploring sustainable education in the wake of COP26. To register for 'Did You Cop That?' and view videos of past events, visit oursharedworld.net/osw-did-you-cop-that/. For a lighter chat about some of these issues over a cuppa, and to take part in a simple action, pop into the Hub on Bull St in Birmingham

on a Tuesday, Wednesday or Thursday between 11am and 5pm. In March we're also hoping to have an interactive exhibit based on the World Game that helps young people and adults explore complex world issues and develop skills in resolving problems. If getting into Birmingham isn't easy for you at the moment, then visit our website to read more: peace-hub.org.uk/themes/education

Quaker Life Representative Council; Report to Central England Area Meeting

Anna Edelsten reports on her first attendance at Quaker Life Representative Council (QLRC) held on zoom on Friday and Saturday the 15th & 16th October 2021.

Edwina Peart addressed the conference on inclusion. Her key message was that inclusion is an all-encompassing agenda. We shouldn't be considering racial injustice, transgender inequalities and the planetary crisis separately, they, and other forms of discrimination and exclusion need to be unified under one banner. We are all part of creation, and harm to one aspect impacts on all of us. We are all individually responsible for inclusion.

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I found Edwina inspiring because her approach was so inclusive. I was reminded of other spiritual leaders I have been reading who talk about the unity of creation. Our treatment of each other, our failure to recognise that of God in the other, is a spiritual crisis, reflected in all the inequalities we tolerate, and in the ecological crisis we find ourselves in. We are not going to successfully address the major challenges of our time without first recognising and valuing each other, our place in creation, and the natural world.

Edwina suggested that ways to approach this may be to change our mindset to one of abundance, rather than limitations ("What do we have to offer?" But I wondered how differently

we would live if we reframed our lives within an abundant universe); by undertaking internal work on ourselves; by "showing up" at events or places in allyship and ready to learn, grow and be changed ourselves. I was particularly struck by the learning journey that takes place when moving outside of our regular circles and places. Who would we meet if we dared to go somewhere new? What would we discover? I was reminded that we had to allow ourselves to be changed, to be ready to let go of our current ways of being, that discomfort was a necessary part of growth, that it can be challenging, and that we are all starting from a different place, going at a different pace and doing it in our own way. We were reminded that we need courage and humility for the journey. We, as a community and individually, are moving along an arc of progress; we may like to gently ask ourselves and each other how we are faring. She posed the question: what does it mean to be a community of radical welcome and inclusion? We considered this in small groups and wondered how deeply our welcome extends to newcomers, how welcoming our buildings are to the people who don't attend, and whether we need to reach out – in their spaces – to those groups not present in our meetings. Do we conceptualise the Meeting House as a sacred space open to all, or as our space which we offer to others? Do we use the language of power in our welcome?

In the second part of the weekend, we consider the RESTORE framework (attached). The framework can be used as a tool for communities that are feeling fractured or bruised from the pandemic, by those communities that are looking for ways to move forwards, and by communities wishing to explore particular topics such as inclusivity. It can help us recognise and name the issues that affect us, and look for the opportunities that are present to move forwards whilst building relationships and empowering individuals. Alistair Fuller can support meetings engaging with the framework. The question is: are we going to take this forward? I thoroughly enjoyed the weekend. Thank you for this opportunity.



BBC airs drama filmed at Bull Street

A new television drama *You Don't Know Me* aired on BBC One in December and is available on iPlayer until October 2022. This is the production that was filmed partly at Bull Street Meeting House (the main meeting room became a courthouse). It earned a significant amount of money for Priory Rooms (at a time when income was desperately needed) and also for the Peace Hub which was used by the BBC as a “green room” (but not for actual filming).

The premise of the series is that “Hero, a young man from south London, is in the dock for murder. The prosecution barrister relates damning evidence to him in the closing speech. Hero decides he wants to tell his own story, rather than the version that his barrister decided was in his best interests, and exercises his right to present his own closing speech. He fires his barrister and tells the jury that he is innocent, sharing a very different sequence of events that placed a law-abiding car salesman in the frame for murder.”

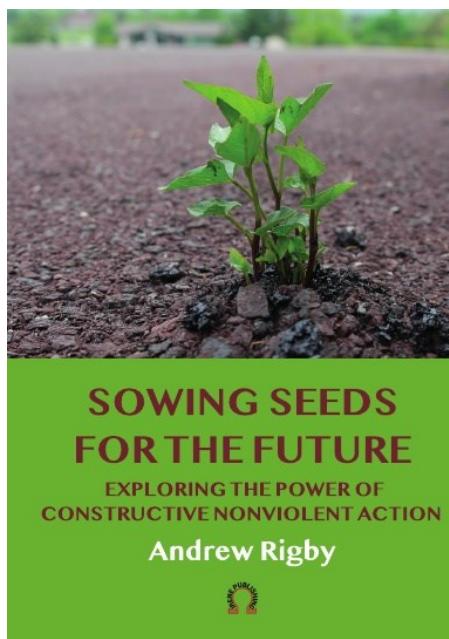
The drama is based on a novel by practising barrister Imran Mahmood, who was inspired to write it when composing a closing speech in a defence case, and wondering how his client might give the speech, given the opportunity to put it in his own words.

New Quaker book on Nonviolent Action

Coventry Quaker Andrew Rigby has recently published a new book: *Sowing Seeds for the Future: Exploring the Power of Constructive Nonviolent Action*

“This is a unique book that explores a neglected aspect of many well-known movements in world history, drawing out examples of “constructive action” employed in very different struggles. Rigby draws both from a life-long experience with radical activism, and from social science, discussing how it might be helpful to view different types and tactics of movement activities as “constructive” or as “resistance,” and sometimes as “constructive resistance.” This is the perfect book for anyone interested in an overview of how constructive nonviolent direct action can be integrated into everyday life and thereby contribute to processes of change, even during wartime and against organized crime.”

The book can be ordered online from Lulu, or by contacting Andrew directly via the blue membership book for a special discount.



Do you have news to share for the next edition of Roundabout Central England?

Please send news, reflections, upcoming events and notices to:

website@centralenglandquakers.org.uk

Notices & Dates for your Diary

Principle Officer Recruitment

Trustees are pleased that having worked with the recruitment agency Harris Hill during January the principal officer post is now being advertised. It will be advertised widely and it is now on the CEQ website: centralenglandquakers.org.uk/about-quakers/principal-officer/

It is crucial that the word gets round and we have a good list of candidates to select from. Please forward the link above to as many groups and individuals in your networks, especially those in the Central England area. We only need one person but we need to find them!

Cotteridge Sustainability Group Winter Series

Cotteridge Quaker Sustainability Group is hosting a series of on-line Zoom sustainability discussions in February and March, for all members of the area meeting, our local Churches Together and anybody interested in the topics we have selected.

The aim of each discussion is to help us become better informed, share views and perspectives and identify the action we are led to take.

Each topic will start by watching together part of a recent [Centre for Alternative Technology](#) (CAT) webinar, followed by discussion and ending with a focus on the action we can take. Each session will be 90 minutes max and led by a member of the Cotteridge sustainability group who has selected the most relevant excerpts from the CAT webinars.

The dates and topics are as follows:

- Monday 14 February 7.30 - 9.00 - Climate Justice
- Monday 28 September - 7.30 - 9.00 - Talking to Young People
- Monday 14 March - 7.30 - 9.00 - Just Transition
- Monday 28 March - 7.30 - 9.00 - Food and Diet

Approaching the Bible: Part 2: Spring Series

A further series of sessions engaging with scripture, led by Quaker Hillary Johnson. The Spring Series will continue to explore the thinking of René Girard that we began in the autumn last year. Each session will focus on a particular story from the last week of Jesus' life, leading to his crucifixion, and to Girard's understanding of the significance of the empty tomb in his exploration of the scapegoat mechanism. There will be an introduction followed by a mixture of breakout groups and whole-group sharing.

For details of the Zoom link, please contact Claire Bowman or Hilary Johnson on ceqengagingwithscripture@gmail.com

Sessions:

- Saturday 5th February 5.30 – 7 pm Entry into Jerusalem / The Fig Tree / The Cleansing of the Temple
- Saturday 19th February 5.30 – 7 pm The Parable of the Wicked Tenants & The Unnamed Woman
- Saturday 5th March 5.30 – 7 pm Passover Meal / Last Supper & Gethsemane, Prayer & Arrest
- Saturday 19th March 5.30 – 7pm The Trial of Jesus before the Temple Authorities / Friday Morning: Jesus appears before Pontius Pilate
- Saturday 2nd April 5.30 – 7pm Death, Resurrection & the Significance of the Empty Tomb