

News from the Centre

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No Faith in War



Over 700 people of different faiths (including a number of Quakers from Central England) attended the No Faith in War protest against the DSEI arms fair in London on 3rd September. Pete Doubtfire, from our project Peace Hub, reflects on a day of faith in action.

No Faith in War was a vibrant day of worship and resistance, part of a week of action aiming

to disrupt the set-up of Defence and Security Equipment International, one of the world's largest weapons exhibitions. Trucks bringing everything from bullets and surveillance cameras to tanks and fighter jets were completely blocked at one private access road to the ExCel exhibitions centre, and severely restricted at the other.



Protestors 'locking-on'

Alongside Anglican & Catholic processions, Buddhist chanting and Muslim-led prayers, two Quaker meetings for worship took place in the

road, some of

the largest ever outside a Yearly Meeting. In the silence, we held in the light the victims of the arms trade across the world, and peacefully witnessed against the buying and selling of deadly weapons. Quakers in Birmingham (and several other locations around Britain) joined us in worship at the same time, and many others had crafted mini-banners with messages of support.

During the morning worship, two people who had used lock-on tubes to block the road were being cut out by the police, and we upheld them as they were arrested. Despite this, people were able to continue occupying the road for several hours after the meeting ended.

Half an hour into the afternoon worship (pictured on the cover) the police tried to interrupt the meeting to move us onto the verge, but people stayed put and the silence was held until the elders brought the meeting to a close at the planned time. Several Quakers felt led to remain in the road at this point, and we sang *Dear Friends* together in support of them, as they were each in turn arrested. Volunteer legal observer and

arrestee support teams made sure that those taken into custody were treated properly, and greeted when later released.

Although this may all seem unusual compared to Sunday worship in a meeting house, I felt that we were being very much led by the Spirit to be there. It was inspiring to act together as a 'gentle, angry people' (as one of the songs we sang together goes) and the thought of those who would be affected by the weapons sold at the fair was powerful motivation.



Mini-banners with messages of peace.

A network of Quakers called Roots of Resistance had supported people to be there, including many who had not been to this type of demonstration before. We hope that this network will continue to support Quaker witness against the arms trade into the future. Peace Hub is also available as a resource to find out about the arms trade, and how we can oppose it.

Volunteering in Costa Rica

Liwsy Butler describes her voluntary work, arranged by GVI, an international organisation.

Throughout July, I had the joy of volunteering

in Cocal, a small isolated and poverty-stricken town in Costa Rica. Despite this, they have a real sense of community, even with strangers. We saw this everywhere.

As an example: one weekend four of us went to the beach at a town nearby. Later, leaving us at lunch, one of us, Bri, decided to return to the beach by herself, just a 10-minute walk, but she was followed by a man. Then the sense of community really came through, because the women on the beach noticed this and approached Bri, surrounding her until the man left her alone; they then checked that she was okay, asked if she had anyone around and told her to go back to us. They continued to observe the man until Bri had rejoined us.

I came to Cocal with a group of 7 volunteers and we were joined by others later. We were split into groups, one of which provided free childcare to the children of Cocal, another taught free English classes to a mixture of ages, and a third was in charge of the teenagers who came to volunteer for community work such as building a park or making roads (Cocal didn't really have roads, more like dirt tracks).



Dressing up

The Childcare program had themes like Mardi Gras and Diwali, with new activities each day. The environmental impact was always kept in mind; for

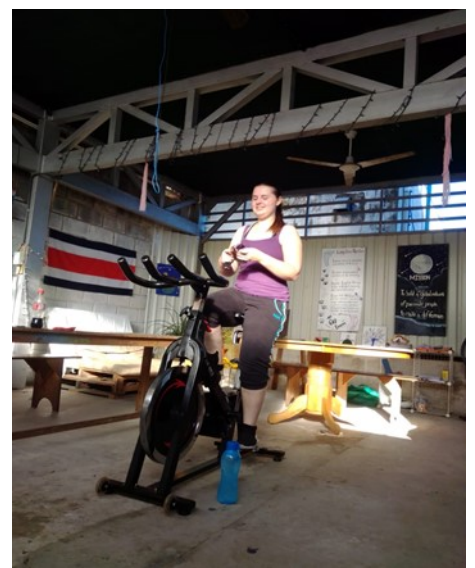
example, in Childcare, the children would play with water balloons on the beach and then help clean up the popped balloons before moving on to another activity.

GVI was committed to helping the local people in as many ways as possible, not just within the volunteer programs. Coni (the manager of these projects) always hired local people to provide our meals, bought our food from a local grocer and if needed hired a local repairman.

The people involved in these programs helped us in many ways, especially with improving our Spanish. They were as happy to be patient with our Spanish as we were with their English.

We were also sometimes involved in other projects to help the community of Cocal. Four of us took part in a community clean-up, picking up litter on the dirt roads, in the park and on the beach. Also, during my month, there was a sponsored cycle to hire a local repairman to fix the roof of the community centre. It was a twelve-hour cycle on a most uncomfortable stationary bike. Each volunteer did an hour, between 6am and 6pm. I thought I was not going

to make it, but can now do an hour on the bike at the gym. We completed the 12-hour cycle, raising a proportion of the money needed, and of



Cycling to raise funds



Our 'furry cheerleader'

course the whole time we had our furry cheerleader. I was sad to leave Quepos because I really enjoyed teaching English to my advanced beginner classes and knew I would miss all the people.

The commitment the staff have to this community is amazing. I hope the people who attended these projects still have the opportunity to grow. I know how important these projects are to the community.

Lend with Care

Peter Brittain, Treasurer of Walsall Meeting, explains this online lending:

Lend with Care is a part of Care International, which began in the 1940's giving aid to post-war Europe; today it supports over 55 million people in 70 countries. It aims to support and encourage entrepreneurs in developing countries who would normally find difficulty in sourcing funds for small-scale businesses.

Care has partnerships with local Micro-Finance Institutions (MFI) in developing countries, to funnel funds to small grass-root entrepreneurs. The MFI are vetted and trusted partners with Care. They do charge local interest rates to the entrepreneurs, to cover costs, but Care forward 100% of your loan without deductions. Entrepreneurs face major difficulties raising

small amounts of funds to help develop business in the third world. But these businesses are often the backbone of villages and small towns. Women in particular are at a major disadvantage in securing funds in what can be male-dominated societies.

Care invest the funds with your chosen entrepreneurs, in over fifteen countries in South America, East Africa and the Far East, countries such as Bolivia, Uganda and Vietnam.

Following my suggestion two years ago, Walsall Meeting agreed to invest in Lend with Care and we have gone from strength to strength. At present we have supported 564 entrepreneurs, helping indirectly 1,998 family members, and created 238 full and part-time jobs, all from 64 loans. The amount we have invested is relatively small, £832, but we have re-invested all repayments received, to give a total lend amount of £1,905.

Each month I check our Lend with Care account and can see who is currently seeking funds for a project with information listed and proposed objective. The entrepreneur is personally described with family and experience.

We have had one loan failure in Zimbabwe, but given the present economy there some setbacks are to be expected.

Walsall Meeting set up parameters for lending: (1) we lend only to female entrepreneurs, which allows equality of access in developing countries; (2) we try to lend to families with children, to help the next generation thrive; (3) we aim to lend to families trying to secure education for the children. We also consider

the economic multiplier effect: will the loan encourage extra employment by the entrepreneur within the local environment, allowing money to circulate locally?

So there it is - a scheme to apply loans directly to people who would normally be outside the financial system of their particular country. Remember you can always withdraw your funds if required.

If your Meeting would like to become involved with Lend with Care, contact www.lendwithcare.org

Paul Parker on Hiroshima Day

For several years Coventry Quakers and Coventry's Lord Mayor's Peace committee have organised a memorial for Hiroshima Day on 6th August. People gather in the Chapel of Unity and the Nave of Coventry Cathedral to remember the dropping of the first nuclear bomb on Earth and reflect on the enormity of this action, and how this should never be repeated.



Paul Parker, giving his reflection

England Area Meeting. So many people mentioned after the service how grateful they were that they were present to hear it.

Paul Parker's reflections:

Jesus said: "Let me give you a new command: Love one another. In the same way I loved you, you love one another. This is how everyone will recognize that you are my disciples—when they see the love you have for each other." [John 13:34-35]

To me this is all very simple. This is all about love. The love of God, and the love of one another. I don't know what you think about when you hear the word love, but the cold, hard, grey reality of nuclear weapons is about as far from it as you can get. How can we love someone, and yet have such an instrument of death, primed and ready for launch, pointed towards them at the same time? How is it that we fail so utterly to follow Jesus' command? In the same way I loved you, you love one another. Two thousand years on, this should no longer be a new command.

This year our reflection was given by Paul Parker (Recording Clerk to Britain Yearly Meeting) to 170 people including at least thirty Quakers from Central England Area Meeting. So many people mentioned after the service how grateful they were that they were present to hear it.

How do you take that simple instruction –to love one another –and apply it to nations? In the same way as we make marriage vows to one another to formalise the love between individuals, so nations can make promises to one another in the form of treaties. In 1987 it was the Intermediate-range Nuclear Forces Treaty in which the then Soviet Union and the United States made promises to one another which reduced the then immediate threat of a nuclear war. The treaty that collapsed last Friday after 32 years, just in time to serve as a reminder of what's needed this Hiroshima Day. Promises and trust are slow to build and sadly

so easy to destroy. So it is with treaties; they can be many years in negotiation, and yet can collapse in the time it takes to sound a four-minute warning.

I grew up in the time of that treaty. Since the events in Hiroshima 74 years ago today, and in Nagasaki 74 years ago on Friday we know everything we need to know about the destruction nuclear weapons wreak –on the places they fall, on the people they fall on, on the generations which follow. But perhaps the unseen damage is in our hearts; in our ability to trust each other across the nations; in the confidence we have in our leaders and the often misplaced trust we have in those who position themselves as the biggest, the strongest, the greatest, the one with the biggest arsenal.

Because we know that the work of love is not done like that. That's not love, it's domination. If we love one another we have to talk, to listen, to be sensitive, to keep one another safe and secure. At national and international level we have to form movements, to bring pressure to bear, to empathise with others' situation, to negotiate, to send our diplomats in with open hearts and messages of peace, to work on treaties and conventions together which bring about the peace we envision.

In 1955, British Quakers' national body spoke out against nuclear arms, saying: "We in Great Britain have decided to make hydrogen bombs. If a major war breaks out the temptation to use them will be very great. We are warned by our scientists that their use will involve not only the most terrible suffering now, but unknown consequences for succeeding

generations who will pay the penalty for our sin. We believe that no one has the right to use these weapons in his defence or to ask another person to use them on his behalf. To rely on the possession of nuclear weapons as a deterrent is faithless; to use them is a sin." [London Yearly Meeting, 1955]

Our planet faces a twin emergency. The crisis of climate change, and the crisis of nuclear arms. Both could destroy us all and render our planet uninhabitable –one through slow poison and the other a blinding flash. Both emergencies can only be resolved by people working together across our globe, reaching out our hands to one another in warm embrace. There is no room for a nuclear weapon in an embrace.

We can do this. We are humans, built with the capacity to love, to meet one another in the middle, to make friends, to trust one another, and to make promises we keep for ever. Jesus was right: this is, in the end, all about love.

Footsteps in Tyseley

Claire Bowman, Central England Quakers' Ecumenical & Interfaith Coordinator, reflects on an interfaith event connecting with our local environment and a hub for sustainable energy.

St Cyprian's church in Tyseley sits beside a new retail park. A few rows of tiny houses are nearby and the gates of Webster and Horsfall's factory premises are right beside the church hall.

On August 18th 40 to 50 people, including some Quakers, gathered at the church. Some were interested in the local area, some were members of Footsteps (faiths for a low-carbon

future), some had been invited and all were intrigued. We had heard about the new project jointly proposed by Birmingham City Council and the Webster and Horsfall Company in conjunction with Birmingham University and Birmingham City University to improve the area and offer cutting-edge green energy solutions to the people of our city.

We walked for about one mile around the edge of the new Tyseley Energy Park. The event started with speeches from the Footsteps Chair, Ruth Tetlow, who described the interfaith interest in this initiative and exploring forward-thinking energy solutions. City councillor Zafar Iqbal MBE, a local man, described the council's enthusiasm for the project. He is passionate about seeing a better future for the church, its buildings and residents in the area.

Sandy Robertson, of the Horsfall family, was our guide. He explained that Webster and Horsfall had been making steel wire in Birmingham for 300 years. They made the wire for the first successful transatlantic cable. They supplied the piano strings for the Broadwood piano company. Webster improved the string design, without which the piano as we know it today would not exist. The company has

always used the latest power technologies, and this energy park naturally looks to the future using new technology and by building an innovation



We were lucky with the weather!

centre in conjunction with Birmingham University.

Recently there has been change in wire-manufacturing machines and the factory now requires much less space than it once did, leaving lots of land for other purposes. A biomass power station has been built, fuelled by wood pellets from wood supplied by Birmingham Parks and Gardens Department. This provides all the energy the factory needs, meaning it is carbon neutral and off grid. The site also hosts a Veolia incinerator, recovering energy from burning waste. There is an electrical vehicle-charging station for cars, lorries and buses and an electric taxi-charging park. Taxi drivers can hire a charged taxi, drive it for their shift and return it for recharging.

Along the River Cole we noticed a lot of Himalayan balsam and giant knotweed. Sandy explained that the ownership of the land is disputed between the city council and the company. Both sides are working towards agreement before they can begin to tackle the problem which infests much of the area. Nonetheless the Hay Mills area is a haven for wildlife and a Trust has been established to



Where river meets canal

restore and maintain it as a public and ecological amenity. The entire area is in the region of 72 acres.

Along the Grand Union Canal members of the party collected tiny plums and blackberries and Ruth Tetlow amassed over 20 different wild flowers. With ideal weather it was a very pleasant walk, entirely paved and wheelchair-compatible. We can recommend it, although perhaps some of us as women were glad to be with a group, as it is currently so secluded and we saw beer cans and other rubbish in the woodlands along the way.

We were humbled and inspired by the huge scale of what is being undertaken. Chris Martin, Footsteps secretary, led us in a few moments of silent Worship to end the day.

My hope for the future is that faith and community groups can be involved in the way forward. We were encouraged to sign up for progress reports and invitations to help. I would certainly like to help with tree-planting, landscaping, litter-picking and surveys of the local community, as part of a team. I wonder if there are other companies in the city with spare land which can be used towards a greener and more sustainable future. How can Tyseley become a better environment for the local community? How will local people become motivated to be more involved? I shall certainly be watching out for Tyseley in the future, now that I have visited and met such committed local people both from the company and the council.

Poetry Corner

Mary Agnes Moore offers a poem on the theme of Mother Earth:

Out of the Depths

I am your **Mother**

I have nurtured you beyond memory

My name is **Gaia**

You and yours and all souls before you are my Children

My abundant harbouring

My beauty and awe

My riches splendours and delights

Have challenged you

Enveloping you for **Centuries**

Now there are many of you

Far too many

Powerful Prosperous fertile

I cry to you from the depths of my Being

From my **ANGER** which is RED HOT

From my flooding TEARS

“Children I cannot Breathe!”

I am

Slipping

Sliding

Thawing

Melting

Choking

The Sun and I are Dislodged as fires run away

Water and trees vanish seasons change

“Children HELP your Mother -----MOTHER EARTH!”