

Ludlow Quaker Journal

No. 4, December 2015



In 2014 Friends minuted their wish to dispense with a regular Meeting Newsletter, but to retain an occasional Journal to provide a forum for news, comment and events. The Journal will publish anything that Friends think is of interest; so its range may be very wide. If you find it too long, select only what interests you from the Table of Contents. It will only publish what the editor receives without solicitation, so if you want Friends to know about your interests and concerns, make sure they reach the editor: he will be very pleased to hear from you. Comments and letters to the editor are also welcome.

This issue includes an echo from the November Remembrance Day commemoration as well as an account of the Climate Change march in London and a new peace initiative in Birmingham. Roy reflects on spoken ministry, the Art Group celebrates nature, and Jonathan introduces us to a rather special friend. I hope you enjoy this fourth number.

Roger B.

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ONE POPPY TWO COLOURS

“THOU SHALT NOT KILL”,
pre or post embryo...does it include the
pill ?
Or is prevention better than cure
in the allure
of homicide
what's the best guide
law of God or man,
as we look to a worldwide ban
on taking the shilling
and doing some killing.
How far down does the new order go,
do we say no
to mercy and the selfless act,
or is it the fact,
that we rein in death's horses
and only allow the odd accident and
natural causes
As we premise
upon the issue of demise.
War is a crime against humanity,
a vile game ruled by insanity...
but let's not blame the teams on the field,
that have to wield
weapons of mass widow creation,
for they do not feel elation
whilst lying in blood and mud
praying the next shell is a dud.
Damnation to those who cause war
and use law
to coerce
younger generations into the hearse.
“ NEVER IN THE FIELD OF HUMAN
CONFLICT DID SO MANY SUFFER FOR
SO FEW”
Should we now hold the view,
that it's acceptable to lament with respect
the many, but always identify and make
accountable, those few.

So that every subsequent generation can
hold a silent tirade
against the devil and his arms trade.
In a trench, in the air or by sea, no matter
in conflict where you be.
At home or in the enemies' sector,
we must include all, whether fighting,
ambulance or conscientious objector,
So that our thoughts and prayers go to all
with respect,
and must never be selective, withheld or
indirect.
Courage is displayed by many a shade,
by those who fought and those who felt
forbade.
Some were rewarded by citation
whilst others struggled to preserve sanity
and God's creation.
Do not blame the workman and his tools,
do not demonise and treat them as fools,
but look to the organiser of the labour,
the one handing out the rifle and sabre,
whilst stoking the fire
of political and economic desire.
Similarly respect and reverence is due,
to those brave few,
who followed their religious calling
and were victims of society's fear, loathing
and mauling.
“JUDGE NOT, LEST YE BE JUDGED”
a matter to be pondered, never fudged...
it's as relevant now as it's ever been,
when battlefields ran with blood, but now
are green.
If we are to learn from our mistakes,
then just as when burning the cakes,
we must fully remember the pain, and vow
NEVER AGAIN.

Karl

Climate Change March, London, 29 November

I felt impelled to go on this march as soon as I heard about it, although I knew one person wouldn't make any difference, I just wanted to be there, so I was delighted to hear that someone (Mike Green from Knighton) was organising a coach. The coach picked up in Leominster at 8.10 a.m. and the weather was mild and not raining. It travelled on to Hereford, where I was pleased to see Mike and Karen Williams get on, and to Ledbury, where Jan and Mike Baker mounted. We were a cheerful group and I knew several others. We stopped at Membury for a break and a brief chat. We were rather late getting to the start of the march in Park Lane, due to traffic in London. I had not imagined that people would be shopping so enthusiastically on a Sunday!

We were told that the coach would pick us up again at the end of the march, probably on the other side of the river, but we should use a mobile phone to find out exactly where. As I don't have a mobile I stuck closely to Jan and Mike, who kindly kept me in sight. We were too late to get to the Quaker Meeting for Worship near Speakers' Corner, and so joined the throng near the end. A high platform had been set up in Park Lane for the speakers, who spoke at the beginning as there is no gathering area at the end on Millbank. Caroline Lucas and Jeremy Corbyn both spoke, with a number of others, and a group of Sami from Sweden gave some singing between speakers. Later the platform was used by one of the organisers to announce and welcome the various groups with their banners which were passing slowly by. A noisy fun fair was going on in Hyde Park creating competition. London seemed like a very irreligious hedonistic place!

We managed to find a Quaker group with their banners, where David and Jane Straker who were staying in London, with the Hereford Quaker banner, had come. There were also Quakers from Oxford, Exeter, Dorking, Worcester and Hastings -- John Lynes. This was obviously a different group from the one on the front page of *The Friend* -- in which it was stated that over one hundred Quakers marched, some presumably in different areas. There were lots of other groups with banners and placards, and people giving out leaflets and newsletters about future events such as Stop Trident on 27 Feb. We occupied the whole width of the streets so there was no traffic to contend with. I picked up a placard from a pile, used a felt tip kindly provided, and scribbled "Creation" in the space saying what we loved. The wind was strong and gusty, so it was quite difficult to hang on to it at times.

These marches are in some ways like a social gathering, where one may meet old acquaintances, and arrange to meet friends. I was very pleased to meet others I knew from past events, one of whom was a member of a group banging on large empty plastic bottles inscribed with, I think, "Keep it in the ground" but it might have been something else! Three lots of parents whom I know were meeting their children who lived elsewhere, so the family traditions were being carried on.

The route was down Park Lane, along Piccadilly, skirting Trafalgar Square, down Whitehall -- where a row of police were protecting Downing Street -- past the Houses of Parliament, to Millbank and across Lambeth Bridge to the Albert Embankment. We moved very slowly, standing still much of the time at the beginning, so there was time to chat to people, but I clung to Jan with her mobile as much as I could. It became a bit chaotic at the end as some people were coming back, whereas we wanted to get on and find our coach. We managed

to cross the river, and had some trouble finding our coach amongst the many others, especially as it was late in arriving. However, we eventually all piled in, except for two, for whom we had to go back after setting off! Traffic was very bad and it took nearly two hours just to get out of London. We had another comfort stop at Membury and arrived back in Leominster at about 11 pm.

I was very glad I went. These marches are always cheerful and friendly occasions where one meets people of similar views, and often people one knows. How much good they do is debatable. I have been on a number, since the Aldermaston marches in the early fifties, but government policies seem unmoved. The busy shoppers in Oxford Street probably had no idea what we were doing, if they were aware of us at all. Contacting one's MP seems a lost cause in this area so one wonders what else can be done. However, it increases one's morale to feel there is so much support from others.

Anne A.

'What can I do?' Birmingham Peace Hub Provides an Answer

'That's terrible, but what can I do?' It's a question that many of us have asked ourselves at some point, and struggled to find an answer in the face of what seems like a violent and unjust world.

Having felt like this throughout my teens, one day a flyer fell into my lap from a human rights organisation. It sparked something in my mind which made me realise I needed to just get up and do *something*. The first step was to take small actions alongside like-minded people, which cumulatively could make a difference.

There's a whole range of people out there caught in the 'what can I do?' trap. That's where Peace Hub comes in.

Based in a small shop-style space in Birmingham city centre, the public can drop-into the Hub during weekday lunchtimes. Staff and volunteers make a face-to-face connection with members of the public and engage in dialogue about complex but important issues. Within this friendly and welcoming environment, we use a rolling programme of themes linked to peace, simplicity, equality and truth to:

- Inform and stimulate dialogue on peace and justice,
- Encourage people to affirm the humanity of others,
- Provide opportunities for people to take action.

Actions that the public can take part in range from signing petitions and writing to MPs, to supporting efforts of peacemakers and justice-builders, and sending messages of solidarity; but all have at their heart the affirmation of people's humanity.

Since being opened by Central England Quakers in November 2014, Peace Hub has made links with a wide range of like-minded organisations, bringing people committed to peace and justice under one roof. As our first guest, we were pleased to welcome the Gandhian activist Rajagopal, of nonviolent land rights organisation Ekta Parishad (Unity Forum).



Together with members of local organisations, he discussed the current challenges facing activists, and reflected on how we could support one another in empowering our communities to take action.

Through bringing together activists, faith groups and the public, Peace Hub aims to build a community that cares within Birmingham. It's the start of a long journey, but an exciting and challenging one. So if you're in Birmingham between 11.00 and 14.30, why not pop in, have a chat and take part! We're at 41 Bull Street, B4 6AF, or join in online: visit www.peacehub.org.uk to find out about our latest activities.

Sent in by Ursula from *The Gandhi Way*, newsletter of the Gandhi Foundation

Reflections on Vocal Ministry

There is speaking in Meeting, and there is vocal ministry. They are not the same. Speaking in Meeting breaks the stillness, vocal ministry does not.

Vocal ministry rises out of the silence, touches the heart, and reaches the soul.

Vocal ministry is aided by coming with "heart and mind prepared" – that is, by developing a reservoir which feeds ministry and enhances the ability to respond to the ministry of others.

Vocal ministry is wasted if it is not heard.

The greatest truths may only be expressed symbolically; symbolic usage may be learnt.

We come to know the truth little by little, bit by bit; truth is received, rather than sought and found. When we receive these glimpses of truth and attempt to share them with our fellows, ministry happens.

The purpose of the silence out of which ministry emerges is

- to stand still
- to become open – in the company of loving, helpful, unhurtful companions
- to be brought into the Presence; to see the Light; to hear the Word.

How can I be certain that I am called to ministry, rather than simply tempted to give utterance to an interesting thought that has just entered my head?

- Remain as still and open as possible, resisting the urge to speak. If it is of the nature of a “good idea”, the intent to speak is likely to pass.
- If the urge stays with you, especially if it intensifies to the extent of developing a physical dimension (quaking!) and a pressure to rise that is almost irresistible, then yield and speak.
- Rest assured – if the Holy Spirit needs it to be said and you resisted speaking because you were not sure, then someone else in the Meeting is likely to say it – though not quite in the same way you would have done. Once this has happened to you a couple of times, you will become clearer as to the rightness of your call.
- A wise Elder used to say that if you are someone who has “a way with words”, who has a facility for and practice at public speaking, your temptation will be to speak when you should rather have remained silent. Thus, when you think the call has come to minister, you have a special responsibility to wait and wait again before giving in to the call, and then you are likely to be right and not miss your leading. If you are unused to speaking in public; if you worry about sounding silly, about stumbling and failing to express yourself as you would wish, your temptation will be to remain silent when you should have spoken. If you feel – almost against your better judgement – that the call has come to minister, then wait only a little before giving in, and you will be right and not miss your leading.

A plea to hearers of ministry. When you hear ministry that you felt truly spoke to your condition or the condition of the Meeting, then be faithful in seeking out the minister and thanking them for expressing what was given them to say. If you feel that what you heard was not “in the Life”*, then (at the very least) remain silent about it. This can contribute to the minister developing a better understanding of the rightness of the leading they hoped they were following, and can help them “to do better next time”.

In the Life

My piece was pat and ready to say,
She rose first. I threw my piece away.
My well-turned stuff
Was not so rough
As hers, but easy elegant and smooth.
Beginning, middle and end
It had, and point
And aptly quoted prophet, priest and poet.
Hers was uncouth

Wanting in art
Laboured scarce-audible and out of joint.
Three times she lost the thread
And sitting left her message half unsaid.
“Why then did thee throw it
Into the discard?”
Friend, it had head (like this).
Hers, oh, had heart.

Robert Hewison 1965 (also QF&P 2.65)

*"In the Life" is a piece of Quaker jargon meaning – perhaps obviously – something said or done in accordance with promptings of the Holy Spirit.

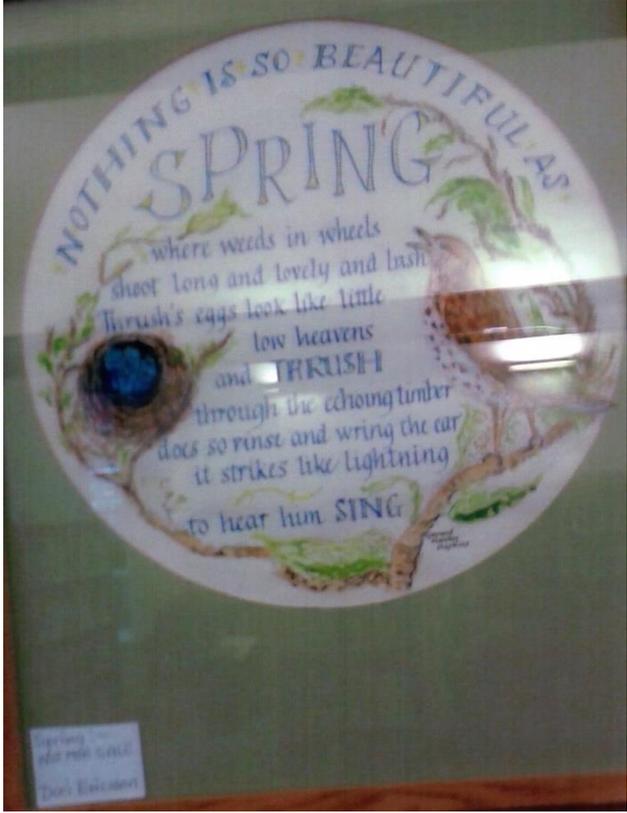
With acknowledgments to Hugh McGregor Ross (Yearly Meeting 1978), Hugh Doncaster, and my early mentor Robert Hewison.

Roy

Art Group Exhibition, Ludlow Library, November 2015

The Meeting Art Group, which includes both Friends and people from outside Meeting, held an exhibition of its work in the town Library during November.







Colin the Angel

I have an Angel called Colin. He came to me a long time ago or maybe he's always been there. He was ill once and I had to let him go back to heaven to be mended. It's difficult mending angels; you have to use a lot of light. In fact I wouldn't be surprised if God has to use stars.

Angels are clever but sometimes they need some help. Mostly their business is hunting nightmares. If angels get tangled up in human affairs you have to undo them before something bad happens. This is what happened to Colin, he got tangled up in human affairs and was damaged; it was lucky the nightmares didn't catch him; I wouldn't have wanted to be held responsible for that.

It is awesome to have an angel but it's also a great responsibility. You have to be organised so he or she can co-ordinate with you, if plans change things can quickly go wrong. This is what most people call politics. Angels can fly through the dark but they always need to know where they're going so as not to bump into each other, fall prey to nightmares or hurt people. Basically if people don't keep their plans straight Angels find it hard to work. In places where people are really disorganised Angels just go away and work somewhere else. The people in these places are usually so busy arguing about what to do they don't even notice them leave.

When Colin got damaged I was working in a chaotic place. I was always free to plan my own work but I had to take a lot into account when I was making them. For example if I couldn't speak to a particular person in a particular office at a particular time I needed to have prepared other things to do until I could get hold of them.

Colin was aware of all this and used to sit nearby monitoring my system to make sure it was ok. There was even time to listen to the worries of colleagues and share my own. Everything was going well until one day the manager did something terrible. She introduced hot-desking. This is where you have to share your desk with someone else. It's a silly name because it's actually as if the chair is hot not the desk.

This happened because a new member of staff needed somewhere to work. "Fine" I said, "I can work over here" and went to another desk. The trouble was I didn't always know when I was going to have my desk and when I was going have to work on the other one. This meant me and Colin got separated and Colin got sat on. This crushed one of his wings which meant his flying was all skew-whiff. He kept banging into doors and when I went home on the bus at the end of the day he took to riding inside with me instead of flying along outside, this caused me a certain amount of stress because I didn't know how Colin had paid for his ticket.

One day my manager, who knows about Colin, said "look, if he's sick, let him go." I was determined not to let go, partly because I felt it was the manager's fault he was injured but also because I didn't know what I'd do without Colin. I decided I would leave instead; Colin would just have to come with me.

So I got another job at a place where Colin would have more places to hide while he was

being mended. It was in a funny old building further into town where there was a basement and an old-fashioned caged lift.

The next problem was that I had to stop using the buses to get to work. I decided to cycle. The bosses gave me a key to the back door so I could put my bike in the basement. This worked really well, Colin only had to hold on to the back of the bike once because I was able to hide him in the basement at work. I don't think he stayed there all day; God sometimes had to take him deep into the heart of a star where they is enough light to heal an angel.

Eventually Colin was mended and I was no longer needed at work – I left to look for another job. Colin helped by being with me when I went to talk to the benefits people and by shedding light on the decisions I had to make about which jobs to apply for. I didn't get any interviews and one day my money ran out and so I had to go and live with Mum and Dad. They were getting ready to move so Colin had to stay out of the way while they got ready to pack everything up. I had to move with them of course but this was easy because I liked where they were going.

Me, Mum and Dad now have joint responsibility for Colin which is far less scary than when I had to look out for him by myself. He mostly lives in the church in our village but gets in and out through the stained glass windows; it's probably quite fun being refracted through lots of colours.

Jonathan

