

Ludlow Quaker Journal

No. 8, December 2016



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.

No Journal appeared in October 2016, due to lack of copy. This issue carries items from the last six months.

Roger B.

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Movement-building discussion at Yearly Meeting 2016

The last two annual assemblies of Britain Yearly Meeting have been following a three-year exploration of the implications of “Living Out Our Faith in the World”; the Yearly Meeting Gathering at Warwick in July 2017 will be the third year. One aspect of this is the question of how to work with others and build movements to promote our values and our causes. At Yearly Meeting in London in 2016 Tim Gee of Peckham Meeting gave this prepared ministry on the subject.

Good morning Friends, my name is Tim Gee, and I bring greetings from Peckham Meeting,

I'm glad to have been asked to introduce the discussion about movement building. It is something that I have seen as core to my understanding of myself as a Quaker, and of Quakers' role – past and present – in wider society.

I suppose my journey begins as a teenage Friend at a Quaker Summer-school, hearing a talk about the injustices of homophobia. I'd seen and experienced it up close at school, so to encounter someone who was part of turning the tide was deeply inspiring. I got involved in a token way at the tail-end of the campaign against a terrible piece of legislation called Section 28 (you probably remember it) which prevented teachers from talking about homosexuality as an ordinary thing at school. And that change happened. Section 28 was scrapped. My part was miniscule, but what I felt part of and now see even more, is the way that a movement has transformed how British society thinks about same-sex relationships.

As longstanding advocates of equal rights -- including our decision to recognise same-sex marriage before the state did -- Friends can be proud of our role in that movement. Within a generation, what once seemed impossible now seems, in hindsight, almost inevitable. But it wasn't. A movement made, and still making, all the difference.

A year after that Summer-school I found myself helping set up my college anti-war group, using those skills of inclusive facilitation and teamwork I'd learnt on Quaker Young People's Committees. When I made the link between war for oil and oil causing climate change, I became a climate change campaigner, a passion which has since become my job.

Quaker Faith and Practice includes a quotation from George Gorman which resonates with the theme of movement building. It's the one that begins “One of the unexpected things I have learnt in my life as a Quaker is that religion is basically about relationships between people.” And continues: “It is in and through all things that we hear God speaking to us. But ...it's in my relationships with people that the deepest religious truths are most vividly disclosed.”

This speaks to me, because it says – for me – what a movement is and why movement building is part of who we are. When I think of war, poverty, discrimination, environmental damage, I think of it as a sign that those right relationships have broken down. Religion for me is about healing those broken relationships: something that has been part of the spiritual life of Friends since our foundation, and indeed – when I think of the two great commandments to love God and love your neighbour – fundamental to the teachings of Jesus himself.

A few years ago I had the opportunity to do some study, that led to a book, looking at some of the great shifts of history. A few things jumped out. One was that great progressive changes have rarely

taken place through elite-level advocacy alone, but through movements -- often taking risks -- to challenge, erode and redistribute elite-power. Another was that maxim commonly attributed to Gandhi, "First they ignore you, then they ridicule you, then they fight you, then you win." Sometimes that last bit is "then they build monuments to you" -- and if they do that I'm not sure if you've won or not. Either way, again and again this seemed to correspond to the stages that successful movements passed through, of raising consciousness, coordinating a movement, confronting power, and consolidating gains.

Each of these stages speaks to a different kind of relationship. Firstly our relationship with God -- the promptings of love and truth which drive us and make us conscious of what each of our individual contributions might be. The second is our relationships with one another, within our Meetings, but also around us, in our communities. The third is a decision about how we relate to elite power: on each issue asking should we engage, should we challenge, or should we become that power? The fourth is the struggle to maintain progress without being co-opted by the systems we set out to transform.

In some ways this pattern corresponds to the story we read in the Gospels. The Book of Mark for example begins with John the Baptist, who so disliked the Roman occupation of Palestine that he took to the wilderness to live off an (eccentrically sustainable) diet of locusts and honey. But even from the fringes of society he starts what we might now call 'modelling the new society in the shell of the old'. The Romans probably ignored then laughed at him.

But then -- most likely from this group -- Jesus emerges, who we first meet meditating, then organizing working-class fisher-folk, then coordinating mass movements of people in open-air meetings and engaging in acts that challenged the ruling occupiers. The Romans become so nervous that they assassinate John. But still the movement keeps growing, leading to a symbolic confrontation at the temple, and Jesus' crucifixion. But, as we know, that wasn't the end.

For the next few centuries the church was small, subversive and suppressed by the state. It was mostly pacifist, there was great diversity in people's approach to the divine, and to some extent it modelled a more equal society, at least internally to the community. Accounts of those times seem strongly redolent of at least some modern movements for social change.

There is a direct link between the early church and many of the social movements of the seventeenth century from which our Society emerged. The Diggers -- to give just one example -- were named after a passage in The Book of Acts. When George Fox climbed Pendle Hill and saw 'A great people to be gathered', he was recognizing the need to move from mass-consciousness to coordinating a movement, which, with Margaret Fell and the people who have since become known as the Valiant Sixty, he did.

Another link between the early Christians and the early Quakers was the belief of both that 'the Kingdom of Heaven' was at hand. It is a term that means different things to different people. I often wonder if I can hear an echo of it in that much-repeated quotation of Arundhati Roy: "Another world is not only possible, she is on her way. On a quiet day I can hear her breathing."

Friends, at our best we have been harbingers of that better world. Our Society is set up like a movement; non-hierarchically networked and making change happen. Individual Friends are a quiet presence in many progressive movements and our Meetings have long been a backbone of the peace movement. Thinking of the movement that I am most closely connected to, our decision to divest our money from fossil fuels just a few years ago has helped accelerate a wave of commitments across institutions to similarly start their own processes of removing their economic consent for environmental destruction.

Yet, for all that, I worry that we can also be insular, fearful of the people outside the Meeting House window, and sometimes more like a memorial to movements past than a contemporary force in modern life.

Perhaps the small act of dividing the Overseer role into two, one to build the community of the Meeting, one to listen to and build solidarity with the wider community, might be a tangible amendment that could assist us to play the kind of role that we have inherited from our forebears.

And so, Friends, I have some questions for us: In the context of cuts, of climate change, of poverty, a great people is gathering already. I want to ask, what is our role? How do you feel led to participate? How could your Meeting listen to your local community and forge alliances, to understand the concerns of those who live around you? What kind of support could we offer? Is it physical? Is it economic? Is it spiritual? And I suppose I want to humbly ask some bigger questions as well. Are we, like John, more comfortable in the wilderness, existing prophetically but peripherally? Or are we willing to join with our communities to turn the tables at the temple, if necessary?

These are my questions, Friends, which I would wish to submit for our discernment, as a Yearly Meeting, over the coming year.

Quaker Peace and Social Witness on Movement Building

QPSW works with peacebuilders and other activists in their efforts to change the conditions that lead to violent conflict, and to be confident in the role that peace and justice must play.

We have seen that change happens and lasts when people come together and stay together in coordinated movements that insist on change.

We support efforts to build, locally and globally, cohesive communities that can help to amplify the voices of the oppressed, and to explore and embed new ways of living and organising.

We provide gatherings, online forums and blogs to promote conversation and to enable sharing of ideas and resources. We provide grants and support to community projects, and resources for Friends and others engaged in and affected by government services, including the criminal justice and social security systems. We accompany those wishing to be part of open and inclusive, nonviolent, peace, environmental and social justice movements.

In this way we enable Quakers and others to be a part of the sharing and cooperation which drives movements and sustains their energy in the face of great challenges.

Quaker Asylum and Refugee Network (QARN): Report for November 2016

The biggest concern for QARN this autumn has been the treatment of unaccompanied children left in Calais to fend for themselves. Many Meetings have been moved to write to their MPs about this; but happily, as 'The Jungle' was dismantled the UK government started to take action, as did the French government. The whole procedure has been messy but at least people are being taken to proper accommodation. Refugees are now coming to the UK and accommodation requests have been given in our own Meeting notices recently for both Shropshire and Herefordshire. Refugee Action, an independent charity that has been supporting the resettlement of refugees for over thirty years, noted: "Shropshire Council have appointed us to provide support to Syrian refugees who are due to be resettled in Shropshire through the UK government's Vulnerable Persons Relocation Scheme." They are currently recruiting volunteers to assist with support and English language skills. If you would like to find out more and apply to volunteer, please visit <http://www.refugee-action.org.uk/volunteer> . Herefordshire Council has taken 18 families and 19 unaccompanied children; you can see more on

their web site, or if you can help please email refugees@herefordshire.gov.uk. The numbers seem so small considering all the deaths we have seen in the oceans around us, but at least it is something.

QARN is taking part in a campaign to fight the five-fold increase in cost just brought in by the government for Immigration Tribunal fees. There is much unease about the way educational establishments are being asked to fill in a census about the ethnicity of their students. However it is understood that this is not compulsory.

QARN also keeps us informed of many *other groups' work*:

Solidarity With Refugees organized a demonstration in September where many groups, including QARN members, joined in. There is a proposal to organize 'get-togethers' so that all groups working on these issues can have an opportunity to meet up once a month. The first of these meetings will take place on 8 December in London.

The Lesbian and Gays Support Migrants group organized a commemoration ceremony at Victoria Embankment on 12 November, from 11.00 am to 1.00 pm, where a wreath was laid to remember all those who suffer as a consequence of war.

The Still Human Still Here (SHSH) group notes a NACCOM report that there are more destitute asylum seekers in the UK now than ever before, even though a High Court decision was recently given in favour of the Government's support rates.

The Churches' Refugee Network (CRN) held a one-day seminar in Coventry on 22 November "to bring together and to resource people appointed within the churches and church-related charities to welcome and support forced migrants". Please look at their web site for more information.

Acceleration of enforced removals.

On 21 November 2016 the Home Office brought into force [new guidance](#) on the suspension of removal directions for pending judicial reviews. This builds on the new removals process established by the Immigration Act 2014. Where a person is notified that they are liable to removal, the Home Office gives 7 days (or 72 hours if a person is in detention) notice period before removal. However now it seems removals can happen immediately. Accounts explain how enforcers come during the night or day and take the person concerned away before clothes can be packed or solicitors contacted.

I suspect we can all understand the need to stop people vanishing, once the courts have given judgment, however the treatment does need to be humane. These are people, many of whom have had a terrible time. If you know David and Audrey Swinfen (former local Methodists) you may know about their experiences with the authorities during an application by their son to adopt a young asylum seeker. It was traumatic. The young girl was in constant fear of being taken away at any moment during the process. It is an inhuman situation at the moment and after this ruling may be even worse. Do remember that there is a course about these situations at Woodbrook in February 2017.

There is much more, but one page is probably enough. If you want to follow what QARN do, just join their email list and keep up to date.

Barbara

Christian Aid 'Week of Action on Climate Change', 8--16 October 2016

On the evening of Wednesday 12 October our Sustainability Group organised an event at the Meeting House to stimulate thought about Climate Change. We used the Radio 4 'Global Philosopher'

programme as a model. We took four of the questions asked on the last Global Philosopher broadcast and added two of our own. They were 1. Do you accept the recommendations of the scientists on the world panel on climate change? 2. Have you observed any changes in the weather patterns over the last few years? 3. Is it only fair that the countries who have benefited most since the Industrial Revolution should pay the most to reduce the world's CO₂ now? 4. Is global carbon trading a good way to reduce CO₂ emissions? 5. Do you think divesting from companies producing fossil fuels is a good way for the general public to help reduce this country's reliance on power from fossil fuels? 6. If action on climate change of a primarily technical nature seems to be succeeding, would you still feel that our attitude to the creation as a whole needs to change? Each question was explained first, then we left a time of silence after each question, for reflection. Then people had to hand a 'yes' or 'no' slip up to us. Barbara Mark and David Milner were helped at the table by Jennette Swan, who is now Christian Aid organiser for Ludlow, asking the questions and responding to comments made by the audience. We had about ten people present at this event. It seemed to be well received by the people that came.

On Saturday 15 October from 2.30 to 4.00 pm Barbara led a walk to celebrate wildlife and consider the impact humans are having on our planet and all the other living things that share it with us. John Aitken gave us a tour of St Leonard's churchyard and Rev. Kim Stilwell led a reflection and prayers. We started at St Leonard's and then walked down to the river where there is a circular walk under the bridge. Jennette also managed to join us, which was lovely. We had a beautiful sunny afternoon and the ten people who came with us seemed to enjoy the event.

Philip Dunne MP was invited to join us at both events but was unable to do so.

Barbara

Breaking The Austerity Myth: 'Positive Money' Conference, Ludlow, 8 October 2016

This event was initiated by Manda Scott (local novelist and activist) who has set up a Positive Money group in Ludlow. However she is now away doing a degree course and so the Labour Party group in Ludlow pulled the meeting together for her. It was held at Ludlow Assembly Rooms (Oscars), and was full.

Charles Grimes, co-coordinator of the Hereford Positive Money group, was our first speaker. He began by saying how illiterate most of the community are about money. We use it a bit like electricity: we do not know how it is made or how it works, but carry on as long as it is there for us to earn and then use. As a business psychologist he has seen a lot and decided he needed to do something, which is why he is in the Positive Money movement. Positive Money is trying to highlight to people where money comes from. 97% of money is created by the banks when they lend money. So it never existed before the borrower came into the room but is created from the expectation of what will be paid back. In a way it is make-believe money. This is called Neo-Liberal Economics and began in 1981 when Margaret Thatcher and Ronald Reagan freed the banking system from the rules it had been working under. Then lending started to grow exponentially and to the levels where a crash in 2008 was inevitable. Up to today nothing much has changed. Even Mervyn King, the last Bank of England chairman, said it was a terrible system.

This new money is then lent out: 51% is lent for property, 31% to the financial sector, 8% to businesses, 8% is other consumer lending. Lending to business and the population is much lower than for property or finance, so there is a remarkably small amount of money actually in circulation in the community.

Grimes then went on to explain the objectives of the Positive Money Movement; these can be seen on their web site. If you can, you might like to look at the lively blog, Our Proposals -- Positive Money. It seems there are movements around the world to get away from the Neo-Liberal economic system and find a better way.

Mary Mellor spoke after the refreshments break. Professor Mellor, formerly of Northumbria University (Newcastle-on-Tyne), has written two books, *The Future of Money* (2010) and *Debt or Democracy?* (2016), which also explore the history of money. As the recent financial crisis has revealed, the state is central to the stability of the money system, while the chaotic privately-owned banks reap the benefits without shouldering the risks. Mary Mellor argues that money is a public resource that has been hijacked by capitalism.

Mary Mellor shows how modern banking and finance capital have captured bank-created money to enhance speculative leveraged profits as well as destroying collective approaches to economic life. Meanwhile, most individuals, and the public economy, have been mired in debt. To correct this obvious injustice, Mellor proposes a public and democratic future for money. She puts forward ways for structuring the monetary and banking system to provision societies on an equitable, ecologically sustainable sufficiency basis.

During this talk she described how the central bank makes state borrowing and how the government deficit was sold into the private sector, which is an asset to them because they can then create money. However the tax payer then has to pay off the debt. She asked why the government did not pay off our debt when money was printed over the last couple of years. She considers that the UK financial services debt load is too high.

She felt MPs should have to take a course on economics when they take on this job, because many of them do not understand the financial system.

After lunch we had to choose between three workshops to attend. Barbara chose to go to Open Space and joined a group talking about setting up community banks.

At 2.30 Costas Lapavistas spoke. He is Professor of Economics at SOAS, University of London, and author of a book entitled *Profiting without Producing: How Finance Exploits Us All*.

He explained that the world cannot get started again after the 2008 crash, and people know it. The Americans know it. Countries (and people) are carrying too much debt. There is too much power in the financial system and the financiers will not change unless they are forced to.

Around the world people are looking for an alternative to Neo-Liberalism and alternatives are being examined. Greece, where Costas comes from, knows all about the financial markets and the power of the financiers. Controls need to be put back onto the banks and banking institutions. Work needs to pay better and industry needs to re-find the productive structures that it lost after Thatcher's and Reagan's time. We need to look for a stable economy.

Barbara

Fair Tax Towns – How To Practise Tax Avoidance

On Friday 4 November, Ludlow Campaign for Fairness organised a meeting in the Methodist Church: a lecture and discussion on the subject of unfairness in the tax system. The subject sounds unremarkable but the content and response were not.

Our speaker was Steve Lewis, one of the founders of the Fair Tax Town in Crickhowell. A group of small business people there, mainly shopkeepers, concluded that if large corporations such as Amazon, Boots, Apple and very rich individuals could avoid or evade tax by moving money off-shore, then they would organise to do the same, as a protest and to highlight the issue. The group made it clear that their aim was not to avoid tax but to pressure the government to crack down on tax avoiders. They took legal and other advice on how to go off-shore and this resulted in serious attention -- attention world-wide in America, France and Japan, with newspaper and television reports about the Fair Tax Town and its implications. Revenue and Customs responded by pointing out that extra money had been provided to crack down on such avoidance and the group were invited to meet the most senior tax official in Revenue and Customs. "We are doing our best." At the end of 2015 the government issued a statement: "The government is clear that multinationals must pay their fair share of tax." It would be claiming too much to say that this official statement was due to the pressure from Crickhowell but it certainly helped.

A BBC programme on 20 January attracted huge attention and generated much debate which, in turn, led to an invitation to visit Amsterdam. Steve, our lecturer, has also had meetings with Dame Margaret Hodge, then chairman of the Public Accounts Committee. While still supporting the group, he has gone on to emphasise the potential for change by consumers avoiding the use of tax-avoiding companies.

The talk was followed by a very lively and, at times, exciting debate.

Something not raised during the evening was that not only do these corporations do much damage by avoiding paying tax but they use and depend on services such as the police, fire service, NHS, roads and so on, while not contributing to their upkeep.

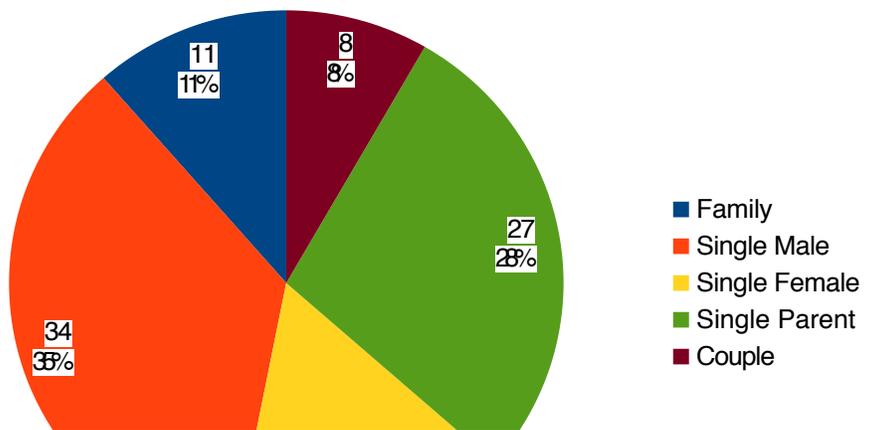
Daniel

Third Quarterly Report for Ludlow CTAL Emergency Food Parcel Scheme (Food Bank), 2016

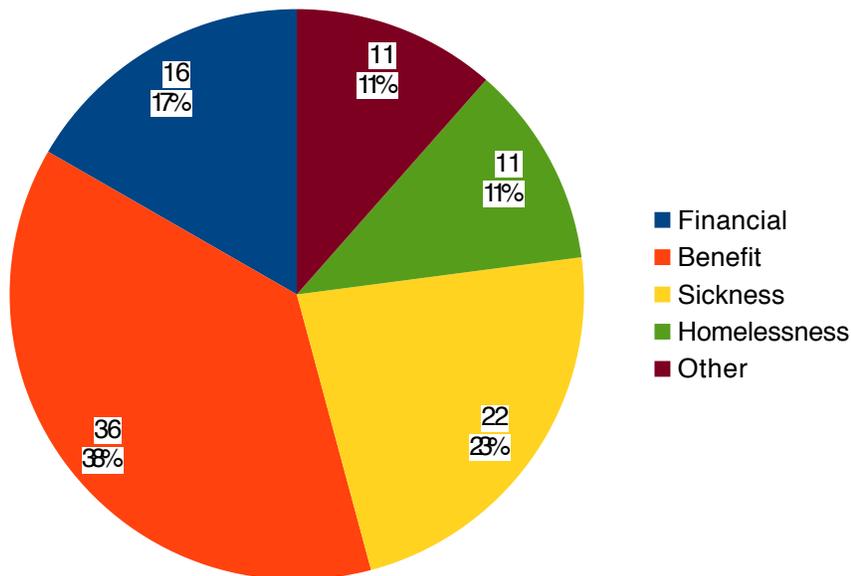
Ludlow Food Bank would like to thank everyone who has donated food or money to this scheme. It still continues to amaze us how generous people are. We are then able to generously show God's love to people in difficult circumstances. We continue to have people saying to us, "I don't know how I would have coped without your help – thank you."

Up to the end of September 2016, we gave out 96 food parcels to individuals or families who found themselves in crisis situations where they were unable to buy food for themselves for a period of time. This is roughly half the number of parcels that we gave away in the first nine months of 2014 and 2015. Part of the reason for this reduction is that there are more food banks operating in nearby towns, and nearly all of our food parcels (84%) have gone to people living in Ludlow itself. Only 15 parcels have gone to towns or villages around Ludlow.

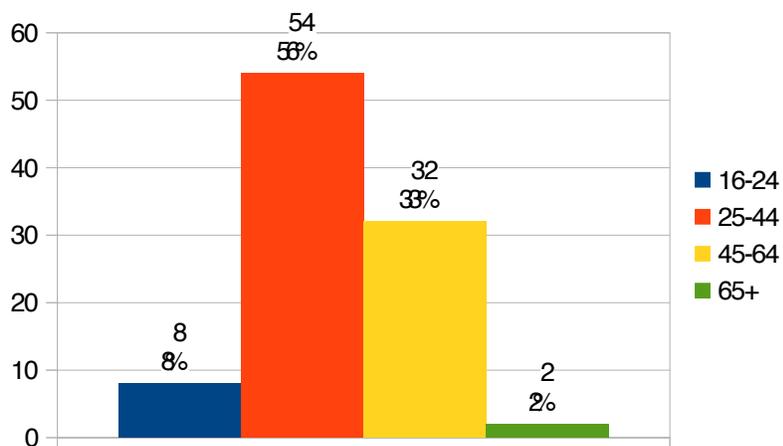
The following charts show the family type of the people receiving food parcels. 137 different individuals have received one or more food parcels from us. When all the repeat parcels are counted, that shows us having provided food for 194 people including 77 children. There are 3 households who have received more than 3 parcels this year, but they have had protracted problems with their benefits, which have been caused by mistakes at the benefits office. This used to happen more frequently, but still causes a lot of heartache when it does happen.



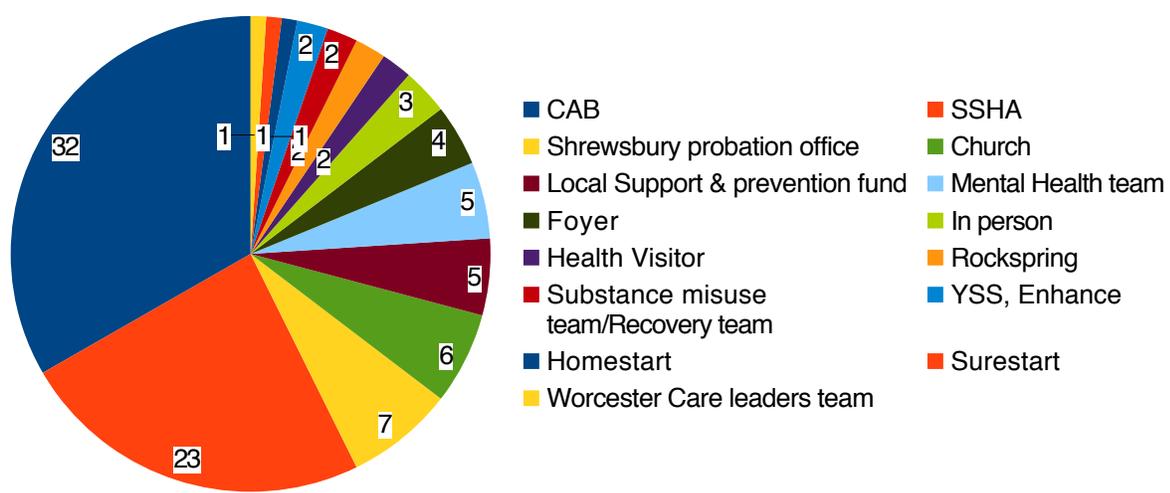
The reasons for needing a food parcel are shown below; benefit problems still make up quite a large proportion.



Below is a chart showing the age range of the people receiving food parcels. It is often assumed that the young and the elderly are struggling, but it is the 25-44 year olds who have needed the most food parcels.

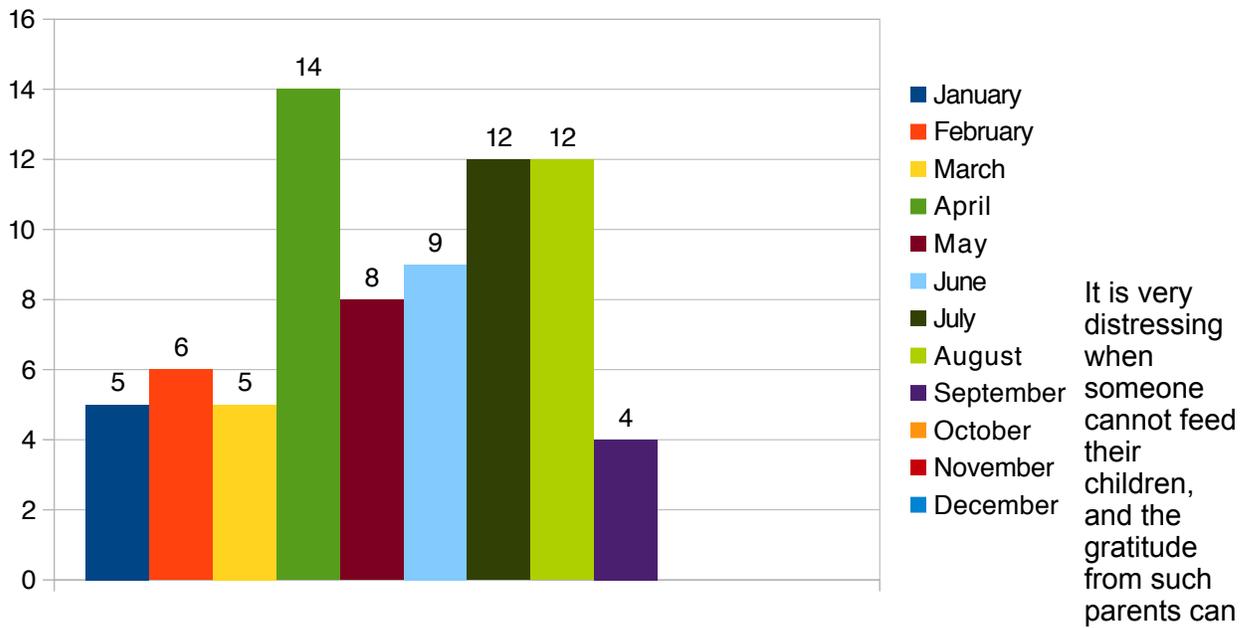


The chart below shows the agencies that have referred people to us this year. South Shropshire Housing Association (SSHA) used to employ 6 “Sustain” social workers in this area, there is now only one social worker in that category in Ludlow who refers people to us. Bromford Support, an agency that worked with Housing Association tenants with mental health problems in South Shropshire, only has a website presence in Ludlow now. They used to have a social



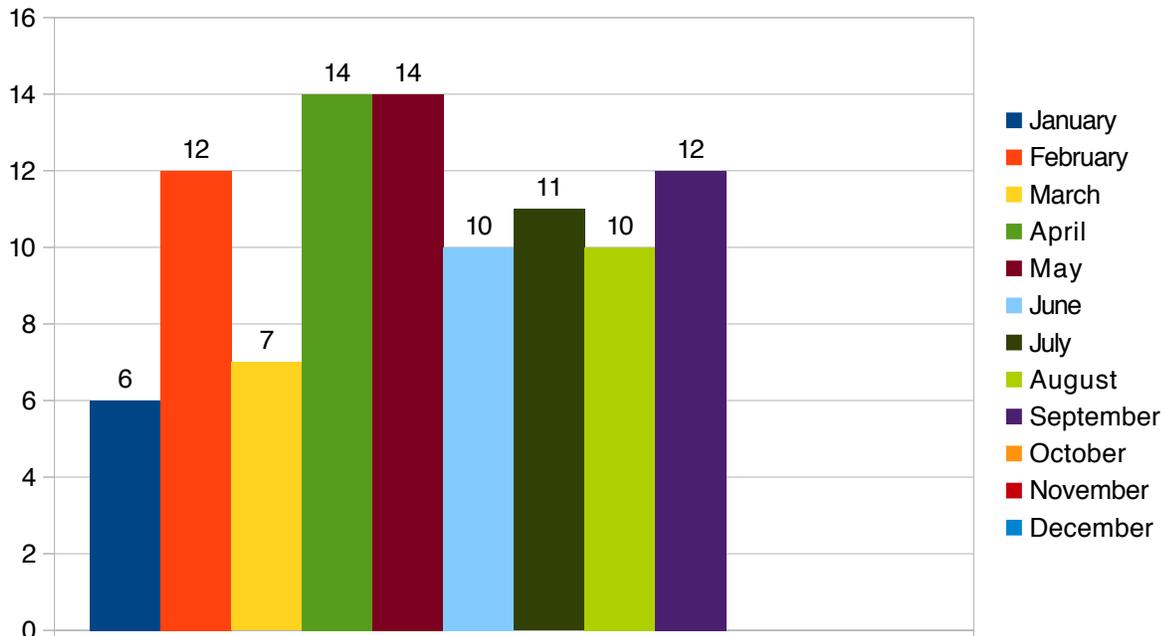
worker based at the Rockspring centre every Thursday. This may be another reason why demand for food parcels has decreased so much this year.

The following graph shows the number of children helped each month



It is very distressing when someone cannot feed their children, and the gratitude from such parents can be very emotional. It is necessary to know how many children are in a family, so that we can provide enough food for the whole family. A food parcel for a family of six will be 5-6 times larger than a single person's parcel. Sometimes nappies, baby food or baby formula are needed, and we do keep a small stock of these items.

The next graph shows how many food parcels were given out each month. As you can see, January and March were both very quiet months this year.



This year we have seen one family who suffered a house fire, victims of bank fraud, domestic violence, and criminal damage to property. We have seen a lost purse, a long-term lack of power, bereavements and severe cuts in benefits. We have also helped people who have come out of hospital to empty cupboards, and were not fit enough to go shopping. We have also helped 11 homeless people. Most people who receive food parcels are helped through a rough patch, and

then we don't see them again. Several food parcel recipients have donated food to the food parcel scheme when they are back on their feet.

Thank you again to everyone who has given to this scheme. We could not have done it without your support.

Ruth Davies
(co-ordinator)

Quaker Activist Gathering at York, 3 December

Anne Adams, Kim Holroyd and John Cherry attended the Quaker Activist Gathering (III) in York Meeting House on Saturday 3 December. The 46 Friends were welcomed by Steve Whiting (QPSW). Although most of those attending were from the north of England, there was one from Scotland, three from Wales, but hardly any from the East of England.

We explored our role in Activism and Social Change. I was very impressed by Laurence Hall of the Young Friends' General Meeting, who had been involved in organising a conference on the fortieth anniversary of the Lucas Plan. This was an imaginative effort by Lucas Aerospace workers to invent and propose 150 alternative products for their arms company, including a bus that could run both on road and rails. The conference which he had organised had leading speakers from the Trades Unions, the political left, environmental and peace movements.

After lunch I joined a small group of ten friends, who were discussing '*Are you with Me? Involving Friends in Activism*'. This explored questions such as 'Why did you get involved?' There was much discussion about the lack of Quaker concerns. Apparently Quakers in Wales have recently only put forward one concern to Meeting for Sufferings. However, Tricia Jones from North Wales was now proposing a concern to be forwarded to Sufferings and Yearly Meeting about Credit Unions. This is something that the Ludlow Meeting has historically expressed as a concern, though not, I think, to Meeting for Sufferings. It is an area in which the Local and Area Meeting might express their support.

One of the great benefits of the day was to talk with other Friends. I was very impressed by the work done in Wakefield Meeting concerning asylum seekers who, if their application was rejected, were simply turned out of the local centre and made homeless. I was also impressed by a Quaker from Scotland who was seeking greater equality in Scotland.

A publication that I came across was *Peace News* which has extensive coverage of environmental protest. I also picked up a QPSW leaflet on 'Earth and the Economy' which told me more about the New Economy project on which we are going to have a meeting on 6 May 2017. I was also impressed by the Living Wage Campaign organised by Lancaster Meeting, and by the number of other Meetings that have signed up to it and are carrying it forward. Clearly Meetings working together have a much greater effect, than those working on their own.

John C.

Garden of Friends, 10 December

The first workday in our new garden started early with Keith and Joy Crouch walking down Lower Corve Street about 9:30 a.m., tools in hand. Keith couldn't stay, but left Joy to survey the garden and begin the gentle clean up. I found it difficult going up the bank, so started to clear the ground cover towards the lower area. The willow and brambles made good trip hazards, but not for long as I worked my way through with some very sharp secateurs. Jane and Jamie Wrench soon arrived with, among other useful things, a scythe for me to sweep through the weeds and ground cover, while Jamie and Derek James worked hard to remove the fence panels and concrete posts blocking our way up the gentle slope to the top.

Jonathan Catling soon came along to help with the heavy work. Jane Wrench was deeply engrossed around the compost heaps and green house. Like me, Penelope James was snipping back the growth with her secateurs exposing some lovely plants. Nic Bowley and Linda Downey along with John and Bridget Cherry moved around the garden, snipping and pruning under the expert guidance of Phi Evans. We were sustained throughout the morning with tea, mince pies and cake.

I put a notice at the gate inviting neighbours and passers-by to drop in, and they did! – some slowed down to look as they drove past, others came in to welcome us.

The clean-up was almost complete and Linda was ready to make her second trip with the compost and litter bags when gentle rains told us it was time to stop and close up the garden until next time.

All in all, a great day with Friends!
In Friendship, and with love,

Murri

Report from your Librarian: Additions to the Library, 2016

Now arrived.....

New Economy Series Booklets:

1. What's the economy for?
2. Good work in the new economy. and;
3. Energy in the new economy.

The fourth and fifth booklet in this series should arrive in early 2017.

The QPSW document '*Principles for a New Economy*' is on order and should arrive over the winter holiday.

Words by Harvey Gillman

Waging Peace by Daniel Flynn should arrive over the holiday (you may have seen the review in *The Friend* 2 December 2016)

Most of our additions in 2016 have been gifted to our library and reported to you earlier, but the latest are as follows:

James & Mary Ellis. Background & Quaker Relief in Letterfrack by Joan Johnson

From Christian to Quaker by Tony Philpott

The Emancipation of B by Jennifer Kavanagh

Christmas Amongst the Neighbours by Ruth Russell

The Quakers – Money & Morals by James Walvin

Quakers and the Great Irish Famine (Yorkshire Friends Again)

We are probably all aware of the Great Famine which occurred in Ireland between 1845 and 1852 and also, possibly, about the part that the Quakers played in alleviating the effects of the famine and attempting to change the policies and arrangements which produced this dramatic and brutal event. During this period at least one million people died of hunger and disease and another million or so emigrated, mainly to America.

The immediate cause of the famine was the failure of the potato crop, which happened simultaneously in other European countries; however, due to the dependence on potatoes to feed their families, the Irish peasantry suffered grievously. This over-dependence on the potato for food was due to the patterns of land-holding, where the largest part of the agricultural land was owned by absentee English landlords and where agents, 'middlemen', sweated the land and the peasantry to secure rent for the owner and the maximum commission for themselves. The consequence was that many peasants were forced to rent and live on areas as small as one to two acres; only potatoes could provide enough for a family on this small area of land. A strong contributory factor to the famine was the operation of the Corn Laws, which, to protect landowners, existed to keep the price of corn artificially high by putting high tariffs on imported grain. (As now, the 'market' must be allowed to determine prices but not when this is inconvenient!) In fact the Irish famine was the chief reason the laws were abolished – but not in time to benefit Ireland.

The British government and parliament, in which 70% of Irish representatives were landlords or sons of landlords, failed to deal with the scale and nature of the problem, not least by insisting that the 'market' was the best and most 'efficient' way to distribute food. While large numbers of Irish peasants were dying, the government allowed – encouraged – the export of huge quantities of food to England and elsewhere; Sir Charles Trevelyan, supposedly administering a relief programme, said, "The judgement of God sent the calamity to teach the Irish a lesson." While Quakers were not the only group to respond to the crisis, they were arguably the most effective. Reports made on the spot, and distributed by the Quaker Central Relief Committee in Dublin and London, were circulated throughout the Quaker community and were based on visits by small groups with members from different Meetings. One such group, led by William Forster, the man most responsible for Elizabeth Fry's prison work, and his son William E. Forster, visited Connemara in the West of Ireland, the area hardest hit by the famine. The Forsters' reports are heart-rending, one small example is ... "there were two emaciated men lying at full length on the damp floor, in ragged clothes, too weak to move – actually worn down to skin and bone". As a result of their report and at the urging of one of its members – James Hack Tuke – a remarkable couple, James and Mary Ellis, relocated from Bradford in Yorkshire to the remote hamlet of Letterfrack in Connemara. James Ellis was a very successful woollen manufacturer and a member of one of the Bradford Meetings. In 1849 James and Mary uprooted their lives and in settled in Letterfrack, where James purchased 1000 acres of land – and more later – in order "to become a resident Irish landlord and to try to become a practical illustration of the possibility of improving the physical and moral condition of the roughest Irish labourer by physical and moral instruction" (his own words). The Ellises built a schoolhouse, provided housing, a shop, a dispensary, a hotel (temperance, of course), a Meeting House and a residence for their own use. Much of their land was drained, for which James employed 80 men;

11,000 trees were planted, gardens and roads were constructed; large quantities of vegetables and fruit, many new to the area, were grown and distributed free or sold. Mary Ellis visited the poor and the sick, giving money to those in distress, and successfully introduced various forms of craft work. James paid higher wages than the government-organised relief programmes elsewhere in Ireland and in a letter James described 'his' workmen – "their appearance and clothing has been gradually changed for the better since they had obtained employment. The men were working very hard – they are paid regularly in money wages and they show themselves not only contented but grateful."

The Ellises and Letterfrack had many visitors including Yorkshire Quakers such as Joseph Rowntree and his son, also Joseph, who later created the Rowntree Foundation together with John Ford, headmaster of Bootham School in York. James's work was cut short when he fell ill and the family felt obliged, very reluctantly, to return to Yorkshire in 1857; however the memory of the Ellis family and what they bequeathed still lives on in Letterfrack and Connemara and when Barbara, my wife, and I visited it earlier this year we found the buildings erected by James to be still standing, and the building housing 'Connemara West' (the regional authority) is named 'Ellis Hall'.

Impressed by the extraordinary commitment and courage of James and Mary, I read more about them and found that they were closely linked, including by marriage, to the York Quaker families who I discussed in our two previous articles – the Tukes, the Priestmans and the Rowntrees. The degree of inter-marriage among nineteenth-century Quakers was high and, it would seem, a great source of mutual support and resolve.

There is a book on the Ellises and Letterfrack by Joan Johnson, an Irish Quaker, and I have placed a copy in the library. [See Librarian's report above. Ed.]

Daniel

Death is only a horizon

A Friend recently sent me this photographer's image of the Isle of Sky (posted on the *Tao of Photography*), a visualisation and quotation from American singer-songwriter Carly Simon's song 'Life Is Eternal'.



"Life is eternal,
love is immortal
and death is only a horizon.
Life is eternal as we
move into the light
and the horizon is nothing
save the limit of our sight."

- Carly Simon

I didn't know the Simon song, and found it beautifully striking, moving, and very Quakerly.

But although the singer or her management claim copyright, in fact the image has a more complicated provenance. Further investigation led back to Rossiter Worthington Raymond (1840-1918), an American writer who, Wikipedia tells us, "was the author of a large number of poems, stories, newspaper articles, biographies, memorials, opinions, fiction and non-fiction books." However, "despite the large body of work he produced, the opinions he expressed, and the stories he told, he is best known, at least on the internet, for the latter half of a poem titled 'Death is Only an Horizon'". Wikipedia also notes, though, that Simon was not the only borrower: Raymond himself was using a much older text, a prayer written by none other than our Quaker Friend William Penn, about dear departed:

We give them back to thee, dear Lord, who gavest them to us. Yet as thou didst not lose them in giving, so we have not lost them by their return. What thou gavest thou takest not away, O Lover of souls; for what is thine is ours also if we are thine. And life is eternal and love is immortal, and death is only an horizon, and an horizon is nothing save the limit of our sight. Lift us up, strong Son of God, that we may see further; cleanse our eyes that we may see more clearly; and draw us closer to thyself that we may know ourselves to be nearer to our loved ones who are with thee. And while thou dost prepare for us, prepare us also for that happy place, that where they are and thou art, we too may be for evermore.

And when you look further, Penn's text turns out to be a ubiquitous prayer in situations of death and loss. It is a regular in anthologies, formed the bidding prayer at the funeral of the Queen Mother (http://news.bbc.co.uk/1/hi/english/static/obituaries/queen_mother/funeral_procession/service.stm) and was quoted recently by our neighbour the Hay Quaker in his blog (hayquaker1.blogspot.com/2013/11/for-what-is-thine-william-penn.html).

The full lyric of Simon's song runs:

I've been doing a lot of thinking
About growing older and moving on
Nobody wants to be told that they're getting on
For a long, long stay
But just how long and who knows
And how and where my spirit will go

Here on earth I'm a lost soul
Ever trying to find my way back home
Maybe that's why each new star is born
Expanding heaven's room
Eternity in bloom
And will I see you up in that heaven

Who cares?

Dear Friend, have you read right through this issue of the *Journal*, or did you skip here to see what this item is about? Either way, you've arrived on page 17 and I can talk to you. As Editor, after eight issues I need to know what Friends think and feel about the *Journal*. Do you read it? Is it useful? interesting? worthwhile? How can it be better? Or am I wasting my time and yours, clogging up your inbox? In 2014 Friends wanted less stuff; what do you want in 2017? Please take a minute to press your "reply" button and let me know your answer – will be very helpful: many thanks! And – happy New Year! Have a wonderful 2017!

Roger B.