

CHELTENHAM QUAKER

MARCH 2011

MEETINGS FOR WORSHIP

Cheltenham: Sundays at 10:30. Children are always welcome in our Sunday meetings for worship. If during the hour parents feel it is appropriate, they can go with them to the children's room, where they will be joined by one of the children's meeting volunteers. Fifth Sunday shared lunch.

DIARY (ALL OF THESE MEETINGS AT THE MEETING HOUSE UNLESS OTHERWISE STATED)

February

Th 17 12.30 **Third Thursday Worship** for half an hour, followed by Shared Lunch
Th 17 2.00 **"Becoming Friends"** at the Meeting House
Su 20 12.00 **Meeting for Learning:** Quakers and Christianity (2): have we lost the baby? A Meeting for Clearness, facilitated by Richard Lacock
Th 24 12.30 **Thursday Worship** for half an hour

March

We 2 2.30 **Peace Group**, venue to be confirmed. All welcome.
Th 3 2.00 **"Becoming Friends"** at the Meeting House
Su 6 11.50 **Local Meeting**
Mo 7 8.00 **Christians at Work:** "Travelling in Faith? The Memoirs of a Reluctant Chaplain", Jon Travers, at the Cottages, Leckhampton Church
Su 13 12.00 **Area Meeting** at Gloucester FMH (Park and Ride. MfW at 10.30 followed by Business Meeting. Packed lunch)
Th 17 2.00 **"Becoming Friends"** at the Meeting House
Su 20 12.00 **Meeting for Learning:** Is there any point in being a Member of the Society of Friends? Facilitated by Rowland Carson

April

Su 3 11.30 **Local Meeting**
We 6 2.30 **Peace Group.** Venue to be confirmed. All welcome.
Th 7 2.00 **"Becoming Friends"** at the Meeting House
Su 10 2.00 **Area Meeting** at Wotton under Edge, The Chipping Club Room.
Su 17 12.00 **Meeting for Learning Workshop:** "350 years on: what is the peace testimony's challenge to me?" facilitated by Alison Crane, until 2.30 pm
Th 20 2.00 **"Becoming Friends"** at the Meeting House

March collection for Quaker and other charities: Purcell-Lyndale Fund Jamaica, 8 Macduff Ruston Road, London SW11 4DA

Christians at Work: Monday, 7th March at 8.00 at the Cottages, Leckhampton Church

Jon Travers will be speaking on "Travelling in Faith? The memoirs of a reluctant chaplain". Jon is a senior lecturer at the University of Gloucestershire, and has previously taught in Hong Kong, Malaysia, Australia, New Zealand and the USA. His talk will reflect on the role of chaplaincy in higher education with examples of practical activities with students, staff and the community. Roy Crompton

Thursday Meetings for Worship

Please note that as from March there will be no further Thursday lunchtime Meetings for Worship.

Philip Paull

Another reminder about the Weekend at Charney Manor!:

Following the success of previous weekends away as a Meeting, Elders have booked Charney Manor in Oxfordshire from 20th to 22nd May 2011. We invite suggestions from anyone in our Meeting as to what they would like us to have as the main topic for the weekend. Also we welcome any suggestions of a Quaker we could approach to lead some of the sessions. We usually programme Saturday afternoon as free time, and Saturday evening brings the opportunity for each or any of us to read a favourite poem or share some music, etc. with the group.

Charney Manor was once part of the mediaeval Benedictine Abbey of Abingdon. It has lovely grounds and comfortable rooms and tempting meals. It offers accommodation for up to 35 guests in 12 twin and 11 single rooms, of which all but two are en-suite. Two bedrooms on the ground floor are fully adapted for wheelchair use. It is a place of tranquillity where people come for reflection, rest and renewal.

If you have not already done so, do get in touch with Maureen Steffen

QPSW Stamp Club

A recent letter to the Friend appealed for used stamps for the QPSW Stamp Club. They raise funds for our Quaker Peace and Social Work by selling the used stamps they receive from Friends. For many years we had a collecting box in the lobby, and stamps were sent to Friends House thanks to Olive Betterton. Despite the advent of email and Skype, I would like to try and start this collection again.

If you have pictorial stamps from anywhere, or any foreign stamps, please cut round them one quarter of an inch from the perforations. Ordinary English stamps, with the Queen's head on them, will be welcomed if they have values of 33p or above, but cheaper ones, ones denominated as 1st or 2nd class or Christmas stamps are not needed. I plan to have a suitable collecting box on the table in the lobby on Sundays.

Let us see what we can do to help QPSW!

June Drummond

Report from the Peace Group , January 2011

On January 5th we held our Peace Group in the tranquillity of Eleanor's home, when Alison, Chris, Cynthia, Eleanor and Gillian were present.

The main subject of our deliberation was Chris's contact with the Cheltenham Liberal Democrat office on the subject of the Lib Dem's position on the arms trade and Martin Horwood's decision not to sign EDM 460 on "arms and military equipment sales".

UKTIDSO (UK Trade and Investment's Defence and Security Organisation) is a taxpayer funded unit that helps arms companies sell weapons, in some cases to repressive regimes, including countries listed by the Foreign and Commonwealth Office as being "major countries of concern" on human rights, areas of conflict and to countries with major development needs that can ill afford vast sums of money for arms. It was set up in April 2008 and has more than 160 civil servants dedicated to helping private companies sell arms, a reprehensible use of taxpayers' money.

Our concern was that, although the Lib Dems at their party conference in September 2010 voted to make the closure of UKTIDSO Lib Dem party policy, the Lib Dem M.Ps now seem to be renegeing on this, and we learned that Martin Horwood had not signed the EDM. We decided that we needed to meet Martin and immediately made an appointment with him by phone for January 21st.

Accordingly, all our group met Martin in his office and expressed our concerns. Re the non-signing of the EDM against UKTIDSO, he explained that it had been very aggressively worded and although he could agree with the final sentence, it was necessary to agree to the whole. He assured us that his views are in line with the Lib Dem party policy viz the closure of UKTIDSO and that he would be happy to table another EDM against UKTIDSO.

Another concern of ours was arms fairs, and we pointed out that UKTIDWO was also responsible for arranging arms fairs. In July 2010 at the Farnborough Air Show, which is really an arms fair, Algeria, Iraq, Libya, Pakistan and Saudi Arabia were among the military delegations invited by UKTIDSO to shop, and Lib Dem Vince Cable was there with Defence Minister Liam Fox to boost the sales effort. Martin was obviously disturbed by this and took the CAAT magazine report to raise the matter with his party. He was keen to point out to us that being in a coalition means compromise that often puts his party in the awkward position of having to tolerate measures that they would not normally support. Re the cabinet, the idea of a collective responsibility of cabinet ministers is a fiction that leads to the idea that they all agree on everything.

We appreciated the time that Martin gave us and left content that he said he would be happy to inform the Prime Minister about us, his constituents, and our concerns.

Cynthia Baron

Notes from LM

Nominations Committee: Nominations Committee brought forward the name of Lydia Sutcliffe to look after the Sunday collections, following Marilyn Jamieson who wished to lay down this role. We thanked Marilyn for what she has done on our behalf. We also thanked Christine O'Neill, who is laying down her role on the Children's Committee, and Nominations Committee is urgently seeking a replacement. A replacement was also being sought for Ann Caro, now serving as Clerk to Area Meeting, who wished to stand down from her role of Clerk to Local Meeting at the end of the year. Anyone who might be interested in serving in either of these roles is invited to let Nominations Committee know.

Peace 350: Meeting for Learning: Our Area Meeting for Learning Co-ordinators have suggested that the first learning activity this year will be on the topic of our testimony to peace, and will be run as a series of local workshops, exploring the question 350 years on: what is the peace testimony's challenge to me. Friends round the country are using material offered by QPSW to run local workshops to explore this material, and to produce contributions for a 21st century Declaration of collating at Yearly Meeting Gathering 2011 by 31 May. Our Peace Group has agreed to support our two Learning co-ordinators in collecting the thoughts of Gloucestershire Friends. Alison Crane is willing to facilitate such a workshop, and this will be held on Sunday, 17th April from 12 noon until 2.30 pm, replacing the scheduled Meeting for Learning, which will then be re-scheduled.

Financial matters: Ruth Brinkman, our Treasurer, presented the unexamined Statement of Financial Activities for 2010. She stressed the importance of Friends signing gift aid forms wherever possible, as 25p in every pound donated could be retrieved from the Inland Revenue. All Friends who are UK taxpayers are eligible, whatever their source of income. We have adequate funds for this year, and Ruth was congratulated on her careful management. Reserves had been built up because they fell very low in the summer of 2010, and have since grown in order to complete the kitchen re-fit. Any surplus remaining will be forwarded to Area Meeting or British Yearly Meeting, although a sinking fund will be retained to cover replacement of floor coverings, etc. We thanked Ruth for her efforts.

Cheltenham as a Transition Town: Alison Crane gave some general information about Transition Towns. They are a creative response to the fact that fossil fuels cannot be relied on for ever, and other environmental threats. As local Quakers we could, for example, share food. Older people tend not to be so reliant on plastics, pesticides etc., and have the experience and skills to be a useful resource. There is to be a local history project looking at this kind of practical response, and four action groups are being set up locally. We agreed to place the topic of how we as a Meeting can be involved with this project on the next Local Meeting agenda.

John Cross