

From the Editor

I hope you will enjoy reading this month's Newsletter as much as I have enjoyed putting it together. Although there were few contributions, the ones I did get were extremely varied, and cover a range of Quaker interests.

I am expecting next month's Newsletter to be fairly small as committees take a break and people go on holiday, so I will be even happier to receive items such as reviews, opinion pieces and favourite quotations.

I hope you have a happy and healthy July, whether you're having fun in the sun, or going insane in the rain!

Dates for your Diary July 2009

Every Sunday

Meeting for Worship
10.30am, Alington House

except 19 and 26 July and 2 August

Thursday 9

Midweek Meeting for Worship, Alington House, 1pm (MfW 1.15-1.45pm). Coffee and tea available, bring sandwiches if you wish.

Sunday 12

Area Meeting in Allendale, 2pm

Sunday 19

Meeting at Hatfield College Chapel,
10.30am

and

Monthly meeting at Heather Cawte's home, 11am. See Jo Smith or Judith Catty.

Thursday 23

Deadline for submissions to July Newsletter

Saturday 25 to Saturday 1 August

Yearly Meeting Gathering, University of York

Sunday 26

Meeting at Hatfield College Chapel,
10.30am

and

July Newsletter published

Notes on Diary Dates

Alington House is unavailable to us on July 19, July 26 and August 2. The chaplain at Hatfield College has allowed us to book the college chapel for those days. Hatfield College is a short walk up the hill from Alington House.

I will be welcoming people to my home again on Sunday July 19 for a short Meeting. People usually arrive between 10.30am and 11am, with MfW from 11am to about 11.30am. If you have never attended one of these Meetings, please come – it is the only way I meet my fellow Friends! Car-sharing is the norm. Please see Judith Catty or Jo Smith to arrange lifts.

Sunday Duty Rota

by Judith Catty

This ensures that every Sunday a small team is responsible for

- i. opening Alington House
- ii. setting out the room for Meeting for Worship (chairs, table, books, notice boards & flowers)
- iii. getting refreshments ready, serving them & clearing up
- iv. acting as welcomer to everyone arriving for MfW, and managing late-comers.

The keyholder in each group is responsible for making sure a team is available each week.

If you are not able to help on your designated Sunday, please let the keyholder know in good time.

If you are not on a regular team, please offer to help whenever you can – either as a regular or an occasional member.

The Treasurer will be responsible for making sure there is coffee, tea, sugar and biscuits, but the duty team will provide milk and flowers.

Week 1

Judith Catty *
Rob Catty
Becki Langford
Catherine Brewer
Jenny Davies

Week 2

Liz Oughton *
Felicity Breet
Joan Cuthbertson
Holly Lewars
Rob Johnson

Week 3

Curt Gardner*
David Griffiths
Matt Guest
Catherine Hobday
David Hobday

Week 4

Michelle Caulkett*
Jeffrey Rackham
Melanie Eve
Andrew Hay
Heather Speight

Week 5

Adrian Melia*
Jo Smith
Henry Davies
Alan Williams
Jonathan Collinson

People who can be called on to fill a gap:
Jeff Dean
Sophie Rackham



Report from Kenya

Hannah Brock is currently doing voluntary work in Kenya, and has sent us this report:

Hey everyone! I only have three weeks left at KENWA now, time's going fast!

This week, in corruption news!

- The matatu route to the main KENWA office is sometimes lined with policemen. They pull over matatus who have too many passengers (that's most of them). The matatu drivers hand over 200KSH, and drive away. This is a bribe - the officer keeps it for him/herself, and I'm told that very often half the officers working that stretch of road aren't even on duty, they just need a bit of money!

- The fantastic head of a school I've visited many times in Korogocho, KYEENDA (Korogocho Youth Education and Economic Development Association!), a man named Joshua, was taken away by armed police in front of all the pupils on Wednesday. Naturally the students were all terrified. He spent the whole day in the cells, because the police alleged that he had consistently refused to pay the 50KSH/day tax due to the city council. Thankfully Joshua has some legal knowledge and informed them that as a registered informal school i.e. a charity, he wasn't supposed to pay. They eventually let him go. It turns out that they've actually been visiting the school EVERY DAY for the past four years to demand this money. I'm hoping it's incompetence and not corruption, but I think this is wishful thinking!

- My German friend Yana was recently taken off a matatu by three policemen, handcuffed, and told she would be imprisoned unless she gave them each money. The offence - being a spy for her country, investigating the price of bananas in Kenya. I only wish I was joking. Yana was terrified, and only released when a policewoman told the men they were being ridiculous, and let her go (three hours later).

On a happier note, I've had the chance twice in the past few weeks to go on 'outreach' with KENWA's team who travel to schools and rural communities. The team use dance and drama to relay messages about AIDS, as well as having a Q&A session. In the rural communities they also take a VCT (voluntary counselling and testing) tent, along with VCT counsellors.

On the day I travelled with them to Cigia-ini, a small village in central province, 38 people were tested for HIV (for free). These visits are such a positive step towards educating people: in Cigia-ini there is no permanent facility for AIDS testing, and the nearest clinic at Embu is two hours walk away, and costs money. The school also clearly badly needed the visit. The questions asked included: 'Can someone who's HIV+ get married?' and 'Isn't there a cream in the West that can kill the AIDS virus?' - this question was asked by the Biology teacher!! It was good that I (a muzungu from the West), was there to confirm the speaker's 'NO!'.

A staff member from KENWA, Elizabeth, who is HIV+, also told her story. She became positive when abused by her step-father as a teenager. She also reacted badly to the drugs first prescribed to her, and became blind in one eye as a side-effect. Her presence and life-story were such an important part of the afternoon - one of the biggest problems here (as everywhere, I suppose), is the link in people's minds between HIV and immorality (which in Kenya, is quite a vast category!). This link encourages stigma and leads people to judge those affected. Elizabeth, as a woman who had been abused, was able to break this connection in the students' minds.

A few weeks ago I attended a meeting of 'Scars to Stars', a group for young adult orphans. Despite the revoltingly sentimental name, they're doing a huge amount of good. It's primarily a support group for people aged 15-30, but they also act as advocates for the younger members, many of whom have problems with school fees and living arrangements as a result of losing their parents before leaving school.

One of the speakers was Dr PLO Lumumba (a well known lawyer and civil activist). As well as talking at length about the history of Scars to Stars, he also gave a few words of wisdom about the state of Kenya in general. He made some statements that I felt were very interesting: 'The problem with Kenya is the middle classes. When the roads are full of potholes, they buy a 4x4! When the water is turned off, they buy Dasani. When the electricity goes off, they buy generators. And yet they are paying taxes!!!'. It's a brilliant point about the inequality here. There really are a great number of wealthy Kenyans, but, as Dr PLO suggested, many seem to live in isolation in their own estates, often doing very little to fight for the Kenyan population in general.

This inequality is unfortunately seen in KENWA too. The CHWs who work in their 6 drop-in centres are actually volunteers, given a honorarium each month of 2000KSH (that's about £18). Most of these are single mothers - it really isn't enough. As Korogocho was the first centre to be founded, many of the CHWs were actually working with the founder, a lady called Asunta Wagura, when she set it up. While these women are still living on less than a dollar a day, Asunta now lives in an expensive estate and sends her son to one of the most exclusive prep schools in the country. This, understandably, creates an

enormous amount of resentment. Asunta is a very well respected woman who has done much towards the education of people in Kenya about AIDS, and is a very well known figure in public life. However, I find the inequity between her and her former colleagues totally obscene.

At KENWA, sometimes when the centre co-ordinator, Edith, is out on training, we have a few hours free to play with the children who regularly hang around the drop-in centre. Being constantly broody as I am, this is a bit of a joy! These include the children of the Community Health Workers who are busy cooking, but also a handful of kids who seem to spend most of the days playing either in the centre or in the ditch outside. These few are slightly worrying as they really are entirely unsupervised, and sometimes a long way away from their parent/s. It seems to me that they particularly enjoy playing because, so often, their parents (or mostly parent) is so busy struggling to work and find money for food, that they don't get a great deal of attention. Often also the first-born child is put in charge of younger children at a very early age, so their time spent actually being a child (as we would conceive of it in Britain), playing and not having to be in a position of responsibility, is VERY little.

Just to finish with a snippet about public life in Kenya, I'll say a little about the Mungiki. They're known as a 'sect', but are actually just a vigilante group. Members have to take an oath of secrecy on joining, and are unable to leave - the punishment is execution. They are a mainly Kikuyu group (the largest ethnic group in Kenya), and seem to consist of disenfranchised and unemployed young men. They run many protection rackets,

but are also enormously violent. The week I arrived here they massacred 28 people in Central Province. The other day when walking to visit a patient in a neighbouring slum, my Kenyan friend said 'Oh, this is big Mungiki area!' 'Great!' says I. She assures me though that they're not that interested in muzungos like myself. Their real targets are other members of the Kikuyu tribe who are seen as being successful.

My good (Kenyan) friend Dennis explained that many of the Mungiki are descendents of the Mau Mau freedom fighters, the Kikuyu group who fought the British in the guerilla war for independence. After gaining independence, they feel ignored and neglected whilst their fellow Kikuyus gained power and wealth. They are fairly traditional, and advocate female circumcision. The terrifying thing about the Mungiki is that they are estimated to be about 1 million strong. This is in a country of only 32 million people.

Finally, I discovered this week that KENWA is actually a partner organisation of Christian Aid (who I'm going to begin an internship with in August). Christian Aid have been partially funding their nutrition (food distribution) and AIDS testing programmes since 2007! A total coincidence, but at least it means that when working with Christian Aid I'll have a real knowledge of what it's like for their partner organisations on the ground.

I was well annoyed to miss out on voting in the elections last week, and very shocked at the results! Other than turning a little bit more fascist, I hope Britain is treating those of you who are in it well,

Love, Han.



Quaker Life Workshop

On September 26, 2009, Quaker Life will be running a workshop at Newcastle FMH, entitled "An introduction to Quaker engagement with children and young people".

The leaflet states:

This workshop is for those new to Quaker work with children and young people, or those who wish to develop their thinking about it. Covering the basics, it sets a framework seeking to develop participants' confidence to enable future engagement with children and young people.

The aims of the workshop are:

- To consider the purpose of Quaker work with children and young people
- To explore a model of spiritual development
- To offer ideas of the elements that contribute to effective planning and engagement with children and young people
- To identify resources available to those involved with children and young people

The workshop will include:

- Thinking about our priorities and identifying a higher purpose

- Exploring a model for effective planning
- The opportunity to consider two from: children's meeting for worship, Quaker work with young people, safe practice, working across a wide age range
- Time for reflection and looking at resources

Timing, booking information and venue:

The day starts with refreshments at **10.30am** and ends at **4.00pm**.

We welcome Friends to take part and ask that each person uses the booking form as places are limited.

No places are available on the day without prior booking.

We will confirm final details with you one week before the workshop. The workshop takes place at Newcastle-upon-Tyne Meeting House and is hosted by the local Quaker meeting.

Bookings close on 11 September 2009

You can book by email, post or telephone, giving the following information:

- Course title
- Course date
- Course venue
- Name and address
- Telephone number
- Email address (if available)
- Local Meeting
- Area Meeting
- Any particular needs you have of which the organisers should be aware

Please send applications to:

Bevelie Shember
 Quaker Life
 Friends House
 173 Euston Road
 London
 NW1 2BJ

email to bevelies@quaker.org.uk

Telephone 020 7663 1013.

War and Peace

by Patsy Wilson, Newcastle Meeting

At a meeting of Northern Friends' Peace Board in Glasgow recently, I was shocked to learn that the armed forces are invited into schools, or the children are invited to a military base, without the parents knowing about it or giving consent. Jacqui Smith from Friends House told us that the areas which are targeted are the poor areas, and where there are failing schools. For example, there is a 'failed' (not my word, Friends) school on the south coast in a heavily military area, which has been taken over and is being run as a military academy: two others are proposed for that area. The military feel that they can offer the discipline which the school lacks in the first place.

However, no one seems to be taking on board that young military personnel have double the national average suicide rate, and incidences of self harm among 19-year-olds is also high. When schools are asked why they get the military in, they say they will go for free.

What about Peace? Peace studies is classed in schools now as a controversial subject. Would anyone reading this be

prepared to go into school and help the children and young people to look at peace, not war? If interested, there will be a training weekend at the Bar Convent in York, 11 to 13 September, which will be a joint initiative by Quakers and someone from Pax Christi. If you want to learn more, contact Jacqui at Friends House.

A 'funny' story: for several years the military had been parachuting, literally, into a school in Bearsden, Glasgow's equivalent of Gosforth. When the school asked one year when the military could come again, the military authorities said that it wasn't going to be worth their while. It would seem that the military presence in this particular school in Bearsden had ceased to have the desired effect. The number of recruits had fallen; but we must remember that military presence in schools is NOT a recruiting exercise..... is it?



Green Habits

by Julia Gordon, Newcastle Meeting

They're already doing it in Ghent. It was celebrities who got the idea into the news here, not Friends of the Earth or even Quakers, but what does that matter if it's a positive idea for reducing your carbon

footprint for very little effort, and possible money saving too?

Have a meat-free day every week

According to UN reports (information thanks to *The Independent*)

- Meat is a 'major stressor' on the world's ecosystems.
- Meat makes 1.4% of global GDP but 18% of greenhouse gasses. Transport is responsible for 13%.
- 40 calories of fossil fuel energy go into producing a calorie of beef, but 2.2 calories for one calorie of plant protein.
- Livestock production uses 8% of the world's fresh water.

David King, the Government's former chief scientist said: "The carbon and water footprints associated with producing beef are about 20 times larger than maize production. Eating less meat will help the environment."

Live adventurously and take up the challenge – if you haven't already!

Also, from the latest *Ethical Consumer*, a tip I can live with very cheerfully: Avoid ironing unless absolutely necessary.

(Newcastle Newsletter Editor's comment: I've been doing that for years!)

(Durham Newsletter Editor: That's one I can get behind...)



BECOMING FRIENDS: *Living & Learning with Quakers*

This is the title of a new online learning resource which is being developed by a team headed by Ginny Wall. It is aimed at new Attenders and Members. The words "Becoming Friends" can be read both as the process of moving from newcomer to more established attender or member, as well as the mutual experience of getting to know one another "in the things that are eternal".

Ginny has had input from Young Friends General Meeting, Quaker Quest Network, the Quaker Retreat Group, Quaker Life Reps Council and the Quaker Tapestry, as well as her own research at Woodbrooke and the library at Friends House.

In her latest update, she writes:

As things stand at the moment, we are in a good position to complete the planned work on time and launch the course materials at the beginning of 2010.

Trials of the project learning materials began in March 09, and we expect them to be completed by mid-July. About 24 pairs of newcomers and experienced Friends (in the role of *Becoming Friends* 'companions'), from 6 different meetings,

are now working with the draft learning materials. They are providing us with feedback in a number of ways, including evaluation forms and informal conversations.

Becoming Friends will be holding interest group sessions at Yearly Meeting Gathering on Tuesday 28 and Thursday 30 July – we'll also have a stall at the Wednesday groups fair. These sessions will include an update of how the project is developing, details of forthcoming *Becoming Friends* Companions courses, and a chance to see some draft learning materials on screen. Please do consider coming along to one of these sessions and bring a friend - I'm hoping that Friends will be inspired to get involved with *Becoming Friends* in their meetings and book some places on companion courses!

You could also look out for a piece in *The Friend* this autumn, which will include feedback from newcomers and companions who took part in the *Becoming Friends* trials.

There will be *Becoming Friends* companion courses at Woodbrooke and Swarthmoor Hall from September 2009 onwards. Those currently arranged are as follows:

28-30 September 2009: Woodbrooke

20-22 November 2009: Swarthmoor Hall

8-10 February 2010: Woodbrooke

14-16 May 2010: Woodbrooke

If you, or anyone you know, might be interested in attending one of these courses, please don't hesitate to get in touch:

Ginny Wall, Thorntree, Braeside, Milton,
Brampton, Cumbria CA8 1HT

016977 41686 (Mon-Weds 9am to 5pm)

email: ginny.wall@woodbrooke.org.uk

Book Review

by Judith Catty

the other hand

by Chris Cleave (Sceptre 2008)

ISBN 0340963425

Hardback £12.99, paperback £5.99 RRP

As we've been thinking about asylum seekers recently, and have heard of the wonderful work our Friend Joan Cuthbertson is doing in Sunderland, I'd like to recommend this book, which I've recently read.

It's an enthralling story – but I won't tell you the plot. Basically it's about two women whose lives collide on one horrible occasion, and their subsequent meeting two years later.

Chris Cleave is a journalist and draws on some of his own experiences and characters. Although the story is pure fiction, it is utterly believable and, I think, beautifully and imaginatively written.



Quaker Blogs

This month's blog entry comes from Robin Mohr's blog, [What Canst Thou Say?](#)

Robin lives in San Francisco, and describes her blog thus: "Welcome to a relatively low-tech, Green, feminist, convergent Quaker blog. With lots of references to children and the occasional pie recipe. And a Christian conversion story, now in progress."

I have chosen this entry, from 21 January 2006, because it is regarded as the post which gave a name to the Convergent Friends conversation, a growing movement which is gaining supporters all over the world.

If you wish to find out more, then I can recommend the Convergent Friends group at [QuakerQuaker](#), the Quaker social networking website.

Robinopedia: Convergent Friends

This is still my favorite phrase (so far) to describe the coming together of several strands of Quakerism. It describes Friends who are seeking a deeper understanding of our Quaker heritage and a more authentic life in the kingdom of God on Earth, radically inclusive of all who seek to live this life.

It includes, among others, Friends from the politically liberal end of the evangelical branch, the Christian end of the unprogrammed branch, and the more outgoing end of the Conservative branch. It includes folks who aren't sure what they believe about Jesus and Christ, but who aren't afraid to wrestle with this

question. It includes people who think that a lot of Quaker anachronisms are silly but who are willing to experiment to see which are spiritual disciplines that still hold life and power to transform and improve us.

Metaphorically, it suggests that Friends are moving closer together towards some common point on the horizon. Put otherwise, I would say that the winds of the Spirit are blowing across all the branches of Friends, blowing us in the same direction. The convergence of Friends is a fuzzy, changing concept, not an example of pure mathematics or philosophy.

Linguistically, it alludes to an affinity for both Conservative Friends and the Emergent Church.

Many of these Friends owe a great deal to the work of Lloyd Lee Wilson and especially his book, [*Essays on the Quaker Vision of Gospel Order*](#). I believe our Quaker history offers us the common ground we need to walk on now, in order to all reach a point of greater spiritual depth and commitment to social justice.

When I first suggested this term, it was just an experiment, an attempt to more efficiently name a trend that was happening around me. Since then, many more Friends have begun to consider what the term "convergent Friend" might mean to them. Some of them are communicating across vast distances of geography or institutional theology. Some of them are communicating across dinner tables, while consuming take-out pizza and home-made chocolate chip cookies.

Welcome to the conversation!

carpenter

by Heather Cawte

how did you deal with customers
bolshy
picky
slow to pay

were you a good apprentice
natural with lathe and plane

did you shudder
as you hammered in the nails

Jargon Corner

It has sometimes been said that Quakers use an irregular verb to discuss promptings of the Spirit, which goes: "He/she has a notion; you have a leading; I have a concern...."

Leadings are the inward promptings we receive, in Meeting and out. It may be that a leading is so insistent that we suspect it is turning into a *concern*, when we take on an issue as a personal mission. This can be brought to Meeting to be tested, to find out whether it is in fact a *concern* or merely a *notion*.

Notion has several definitions, not all of them very friendly. At its most basic, it is any idea not based on first-hand spiritual experience. It can also mean simply a leading that didn't become a concern – or someone else's concern that isn't important to you, or any religious and spiritual practice that you don't feel is relevant. Use with caution...

**Till next Month – in Friendship,
Heather**