

## From the Editor

Well, here we are again. I know February is a short month, but I'm sure it's only a few days ago that I was writing last month's Editorial! I hope everyone had a good month, with not too many problems caused by the snow.

I have been inundated with submissions for this month's Newsletter, which is a wonderful position to find myself in. Please keep them coming – all kinds of material is welcome.

There are many new events coming up, so don't forget to read the Dates for your Diary section with attention – you don't want to miss out!

## Dates for your Diary March 2009

### Every Sunday

Meeting for Worship  
10.30am, Alington House

**See notes following the Dates for more information.**

### Friday 6 – Saturday 7

Fairtrade Foundation banana-eating record attempt

### Sunday 8

Meeting for Business following Meeting for Worship

### Thursday 12

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

### Saturday 14

Area Meeting, Monkseaton Meeting House. Morning session at 10am for 10.30am, business session at 2 pm

### Sunday 15

(After MfW) Friends Focus: discussion on *Exploring Conflict and Conflict Resolution*, led by Jeffrey Rackham and Matthew Guest, followed by shared lunch

### Saturday 21

Hexham Debate: David Gee on *Creating today's warrior*. 11am, St Mary's Centre, Hexham

### Sunday 22

Monthly meeting at Heather Cawte's home, 11am

### Saturday 28

Talk organised by Tyneside UNA: *Child Welfare and Healthcare Provision in the Occupied Palestinian Territories*, by Dr Tony Waterston. 11am, St Mary's Centre, Hexham

### Sunday 29

**2am: clocks go forward one hour**

Meeting for Eldership and Oversight, 12 noon

### Thursday April 2

Deadline for submissions to April Newsletter

### Sunday April 5

April Newsletter published

## Notes on Diary Dates

### Friday 6 – Saturday 7, Fairtrade banana event

Fairtrade Fomrigh runs this year from February 23 to March 8. The Fairtrade Foundation is attempting to set a world

record for the biggest number of Fairtrade bananas eaten in 24 hours.

If you can eat a Fairtrade banana between noon on Friday 6 March and noon on Saturday 7 March – or, even better, if you can organise a group to do so – then you can sign up at:

<http://www.fairtrade.org.uk/gobananas/>

You can get yourself on the map, upload photographic evidence of your banana consumption, and download event packs and banana recipes.

### **Sunday 8, Meeting for Business**

Items to be considered:

- Mid-week Meeting for Worship
- Area Meeting in Durham in May
- Quaker Quest update

Please contact Jeff Dean with any other items of business.

### **Saturday 14, Area Meeting**

Area Meeting will be held at Monkseaton Meeting House on Saturday 14th March.

The morning session (meet from 10am, start 10.30am) is on *Talking and working together with people of other faiths*, with speakers from the Hindu, Buddhist and Muslim communities.

The business meeting will begin with worship at 2pm.

### **Sunday 22, MfW at Heather Cawte's house**

We are hoping that a monthly Meeting for Worship will be held at Heather Cawte's home in Esh Winning on the penultimate (i.e. the one before the last) Sunday of each month.

There is space for 6 - 8 people, and it would be helpful if we could plan numbers and lifts a day or two ahead.

The next time we plan to meet with Heather will be Sunday 22 March at 11am. Please let Jo Smith or Judith Catty know if you would like to come.

*(There is a report on February's Meeting below.)*

## **York Yearly Meeting Gathering 2009**

*from Sarah Richards, Editor of Newcastle Meeting Newsletter*

Plans for the first ever Yearly Meeting Gathering (taking place between July 25 and August 1, 2009) in York are gathering pace, and time is running out to book places. The theme is *Creating Communities, Creating Connections*.

Yearly Meeting Gathering offers some great opportunities: please see the leaflets in meeting or visit <http://www.ymg.org.uk>

YMG will help us not only do the Yearly Meeting business, but give us time as a reflective, fun and learning community which will support our life journey, both individually and in our local meeting.

It is not cheap. The cheapest adult option is £275 for standard self catering, or £120 for a teenager, so costs can mount quite quickly for a family!

Some help is available locally. Meetings may have a limited amount of funds to support members and attenders. There are also some national bursaries available. Locally, priority will be given to people who have not received

financial support in the last year and are in hardship.

Applicants for bursaries should fill in a standard booking form and return it to YMG Office as soon as possible. They should tick the box on the booking form saying they need bursary assistance and should NOT enclose a deposit.

For local financial help please contact an Overseer before March 15. In order to request help from national bursary funds, Friends will be asked to confirm that they have exhausted local resources. A form needs to be completed by the applicant(s) along with an overseer.

National Bursary forms need to be returned by March 31, 2009. YMG will let bursary applicants (and the person in their meeting who is supporting their application) know by the end of April whether the application has been successful or not.

If it has not been possible to offer the full amount requested, YMG Office will reserve the place subject to confirmation of whether alternative funding has been found. If by the end of May YMG Office have heard no more, they will cancel the booking.

### **Midweek MfW** *from judith Catty*

An idea that sprang out of our recent Local Meeting might prove to be a mid-week patch of calm in a usually busy life.

We were discussing the timing of Meeting for Worship on a Sunday, which is not convenient for some people who rely on

public transport, when the idea was mooted for a mid-week MfW. So - not wanting to delay - we agreed that the first one would be the following Thursday.

However, more unexpected snow defeated the efforts of the public transport system and the out-of-town Members were not able to get there. But for the small group that only had Shanks' pony to rely on, it was a truly peaceful and uplifting time – away from the slushy pavements, the cold wind and the icy roads.



We met for 35 minutes in the small room which had been thoughtfully heated and enjoyed some home made cake afterwards.

We plan to make this a regular monthly event: the third Thursday of each month at 1.15 pm in Alington House. The room is booked from 1.00pm so it will be possible to bring sandwiches and have light lunch together.

*For anyone interested, there are still Prayers for Peace and Justice in the Cathedral each Thursday at 12 noon.*

## Meeting at Heather Cawte's home, February 15

from Heather Cawte

I was delighted to welcome Judith Catty, Jeffrey Rackham, Jo Smith, Heather Mellars, Michelle Caulkett and Fiona Jennifer to my home on February 15 for a Meeting for Worship.

I have hosted several of these meetings, and everyone who attends agrees that they are very enjoyable, with more time to get to know each other than we have at the main meeting.

We kept silence for about 30 minutes, joined at the end by Chloe the timid cat, who was fascinated by the sight of so many people in her living room, not making a sound! She left very quickly once the meeting was closed and we all began talking...

Here is what I wrote in my blog:

For the first time in many meetings, I spoke. I was quite taken aback to feel that familiar

excuse me

excuse me

and, for once, I didn't need to wait until it became

### EXCUSE ME

before I gave in and spoke :)

And what I said was (more or less) this:

We are going to become an important help to people in this credit crunch/depression. So many people use shopping as a band-aid over the emptiness in their lives, and

get into more and more debt doing so. There just won't be the consumer credit available any more to do this, nor the money available to service the debt, and people are going to be left without their prop.

We know the joy of freedom from acquisitiveness and the retail therapy culture. We can demonstrate the joys to be had in simplicity and not buying things for the sake of buying them. People are going to need that voice, that perspective. We have the experience people will need in finding support in non-material things, and we will be able, if we choose, to share that.

We all agreed afterwards that sometimes a problem can bring out the best in people (the old 'Blitz spirit!'), and we all hoped that this would be the case over the next few months. [See Fiona Jennifer's article on transition towns, below]

As BYM *Advices and Queries* no. 41 says:

A simple lifestyle freely chosen is a source of strength.

And if you don't invest your happiness in things, then it can't be taken away by bailiffs....

Please consider joining us one month. I love getting to know new people, and we always have a lot of laughter as well as a wonderful Meeting for Worship.



## **The Mistletoe Singers**

*from Judith Catty*

The Mistletoe Singers - a new name for a new group. We hope to visit local care homes to sing WITH rather than TO residents, in a few of the local residential establishments in the City.

Holly Lewars is coordinating practice sessions and visiting sessions, and we welcome all enthusiastic participants.

Our repertoire is simple - we are starting with well known 'older' songs - eg *The Ash Grove, My Darling Clementine*.

One or two of the homes have pianos, and we hope that any guitar players might join us.

Contact Holly for more information.

*and David Griffiths writes:*

On Friday 30<sup>th</sup> January we met at Holly's house to plan a programme for care homes, to be greeted by smiling faces and delicious portions of a giant cream sponge, which rapidly diminished in size as the evening progressed.

Initial doubts about the difficulty of the task in hand soon receded under the confident leadership of Henry and Jo, and we were soon singing our quickly chosen programme with enthusiasm and great gusto.

Young and not so young worked as one, rehearsals were planned, and I was impressed by the evident efficiency and commitment.

Who said that working with Quakers was like trying to herd cats? Rubbish! We are on our way. Watch this space.....

## **Making Durham a Transition Town**

*from Fiona Jennifer*

*The challenges presented to us today by global warming and 'peak oil' and gas (the point at which half of all the world's oil and gas will have been used up, and therefore supplies will inevitably begin to dwindle - estimated to be around 2012) are perhaps the greatest that humanity has faced.*

*This time brings a great opportunity for rethinking the way we live, and making conscious choices about what kind of community and world we would like to live in.*

*Change is coming whether we like it or not - and a planned response to the change will leave us in a much stronger position than if we wait until change is upon us.*

Transition Town Totnes

*A future without oil could be better than the present, if we use our imagination and think creatively.*

Rob Hopkins

You may have read recently about Transition Town Totnes, the first initiative of its kind in the UK attempting to reduce the carbon footprint of an entire community, in a way that is imaginative, fun and engaging.

Launched in June 2006, the project is developing a community-led 'Energy Descent Action Plan', setting out an achievable timetable for reducing the town's dependency on fossil fuels.

Rob Hopkins has developed the 'Transition Town' idea on the principles of permaculture design applied to the

inevitability of peak oil. His theory is positive and solution-focused.

Climate change and dwindling oil supplies mean the world cannot continue to use resources in the way it has, but this can be viewed as an opportunity rather than a crisis - *'a town.... using much less energy and resources than at present could, if properly planned for and designed, be a more resilient, more abundant and more pleasurable place to live'*.

Rob spent a year observing and raising awareness in Totnes, through a series of film screenings and discussions. There then followed events where people were invited to volunteer their skills and enthusiasm. *'Unlocking the collective genius of the community'* is how Rob saw these early stages.

*'One of the first things we did was to consult the town's older generations, to ask for their experience and advice on how the town used to function with minimal oil dependency,'* he says. *'It is important to remember that this concept is not new. As recently as the Second World War, Totnes was almost entirely self-sufficient out of pure necessity'*.

Within six months, working groups had been established to focus on the primary aspects of Transition Culture, from energy and healthcare to economics and the arts. For more news on the extraordinary success of the project, go to <http://totnes.transitionnetwork.org>

Undoubtedly the single most ambitious venture has been the launch of the town's independent currency. The Totnes Pound was launched last March to emphasise the importance of 'relocalisation', and to encourage people to attribute a value to the local economy.

Following a trial period where 300 notes were distributed into circulation, 10,000 one pound notes have now been printed and are accepted by more than seventy businesses throughout the town.

There are now at least 80 Transition initiatives in England alone and the idea is spreading worldwide.

So what about Durham?

A couple of weeks ago I went to a screening of a fascinating and inspiring film called *The Power of Community - How Cuba Survived Peak Oil*, about the way Cuba responded when its supplies of oil, machinery and other essentials were almost completely cut, following the collapse of the Soviet Union in 1991.

The film was shown as part of the Durham Transition Initiative begun by Wilf Richards, co-founder of local veggie co-op Abundant Earth. So far he has identified a group of about 50 people who have expressed an interest in getting involved. He is very keen to make connections with Quakers, to explain more about Transition initiatives, and to hear about our experience and ideas - more very soon on this as soon as a time/place has been fixed.

In the meantime, interested in getting involved, or learning more?

Have a look at:

[www.transitiontowns.org](http://www.transitiontowns.org)  
[www.transitionculture.org](http://www.transitionculture.org)

<http://www.guardian.co.uk/environment/2007/apr/19/energy.ethicalliving>

<http://www.guardian.co.uk/society/2008/sep/10/ethicalliving.transitiontowns>

Rob Hopkins describes transition as threefold:

- 'The head' is the concept of peak oil, outlining the arguments for and against localisation, and historical examples from a pre-oil-dependent society.
- 'The heart' refers to the enthusiasm and motivation that already exists within communities and how this can be focused to facilitate change.
- 'The hands' are what he refers to as 'the great reskilling', the practical steps that communities must take to become self-sufficient in food, energy and materials and create a way of living that's significantly more connected, more vibrant and more in touch with our environment than the current oil-addicted treadmill we are on at present, which cannot continue.

Ideas and thoughts, please.



## Quaker Universalist Fellowship

The international Quaker Universalist Fellowship has published the 49th edition of its newsletter, Universalist Friends.

It includes an article about a joint meeting between this organisation and the Quaker Universalist Group in London, as well as:

- News from QUF
- From the Clerk by Larry Spears
- From the Editor by Rhoda Gilman
- *The Teachings of George Fox* and *A Course In Miracles* by Jean Weston
- Review: *Choosing Life: Embracing Spirituality in the 21st Century* by Jocelyn Dawes
- Review: *Republic of Mind and Spirit: A Cultural History of American Metaphysical Religion* by Catherine L. Albanese

The QUF also invites submissions for future issues, as well as essays, and manuscripts focused on universalist themes:

Short articles, book reviews and critiques (below 3000 words) could be published in *Universalist Friends*.

Full-length essays (9000 words) may qualify as a stand-alone QUF pamphlet.

Longer manuscripts (60 000 words) might be published as a QUF book.

Send your essay/manuscript to [qufbooks@universalistfriends.org](mailto:qufbooks@universalistfriends.org)

## Quaker Studies

The March 2009 issue of Quaker Studies is now out, and includes the following contributions:

*'Chipping at the landmarks of our fathers': the decline of the testimony against hireling ministry in the nineteenth century* by Thomas D. Hamm

*'Choose life!' Quaker metaphor and modernity* by Pink Dandelion, Betty Hagglund, Pam Lunn, and Edwina Newman

*'There's death in the pot!': the British Free Produce Movement and the Religious Society of Friends, with particular reference to the north-east of England* by Elizabeth A. O'Donnell

*The problem of Quaker identity* by Peter Collins

*Quagans: fusing quakerism with contemporary Paganism* by Giselle Vincett

*Comparing two surveys of Britain Yearly Meeting: 1990 and 2003* by Mark S. Cary, Pink Dandelion, and Rosie Rutherford

For details of subscriptions go to <http://www.qsra.org.uk> and follow the link to the subscription form.

To download individual articles, go to <http://www.woodbrooke.org.uk/publications.php?action=search&category=2>



## Healing opportunities in Sunderland

HOPS (Healing Opportunities Provision Scheme) has begun renting rooms in Sunderland Meeting House, and offers complementary health treatments at low cost to those least able to afford them.

As well as individual, confidential treatments, there are courses such as Shiatsu and T'ai Chi, and special days with sample treatments and activities.

Clients are accepted by referral only, from specific agencies such as Victim Support and Sunderland Carer's Centre. They are expected to pay 25% of the cost of treatment, with the rest being covered by grants, donations and so on.

The scheme currently offers Shiatsu, Reiki, Spiritual Healing, Aromatherapy, Indian Head Massage, Reflexology, Remedial Yoga, Homeopathy, Hypnotherapy and Pet Bereavement Support.

For further information please contact Lesley Barefoot on 07714 373521 or at [lesleybarefoot@btinternet.com](mailto:lesleybarefoot@btinternet.com)

## Bread, fish but probably no swans in holy cookbook

*(Martin Wainwright, The Guardian, Monday 23 February 2009, submitted by Jeffrey Rackham)*

The historic penchant of religious leaders for a really good feast is being enlisted in aid of Christian unity via a recipe book that aims to bridge theological divides.

Leaders of ten denominations have promised to share their favourite meals to promote common ground, with congregations encouraged to try one another's contributions.

Dignitaries already working on lists of ingredients include the Archbishop of Canterbury, Dr Rowan Williams, and his colleague at York, Dr John Sentamu, whose predecessors were famous for good living.

One of the biggest meals ever consumed in Britain was served to mark the appointment of George Neville as Archbishop of York in 1465. His guests disposed of 110 oxen, 400 swans and 104 peacocks among many other courses, washed down with 25,000 gallons of wine.

By contrast, the long-serving Unitarian editor of the Guardian, C P Scott, habitually lunched on an apple, a glass of water and a slice of cheese.

The recipe book will be published by the church insurance specialist Congregational & General, with input from the Quakers, the Salvation Army and the Assemblies of God as well as the larger churches. Drawing on the Bible's best-known food miracle for its title, *Loaves, Fishes and More*, it aims to raise money for local parish funds and Christian Aid.

Recipes will be tested by the TV cook Kevin Woodford, formerly of the BBC's *Ready, Steady, Cook*, who said: "Faith plays an important part in my life and I know from experience how cookery has long been linked with church fund-raising activities. We want to see entries that show some originality to them – whether that's a secret ingredient in your cottage pie or a special way of baking a Victoria sponge to set it apart from the competition."



### **A story** *from Henry Davies*

An interesting story...

There once was a wise teacher who was being challenged by one of his students who wanted to show him up.

The student posed this question to the teacher:

"Sir, I have a little bird in my hand; is it dead or is it alive?"

He thought that if the teacher said it was alive, he would simply squeeze it to death and prove the teacher wrong.

Alternatively, if the teacher said it was dead, he would open his hand and let the bird fly away - again proving the teacher wrong.

The teacher, being truly wise, answered: "*That is in your hand.*"

This story underlines the reality that we do have control over our situation in life, in our community, our country and thereby, ultimately, over our planet.

