

# YORK AREA QUAKEVINE

Quaker News, Views, Insights and Reports

Issue 10

May/June 2020



*Pulsatillas flowering in Alison's garden during April*

*photo: Alison Clarke [Thirsk]*

## The editor writes

Thank you to all Friends whose words or photographs have made this issue possible.

**Area Meeting by Zoom** will be a new experience for all of us. You will find a brief agenda on page 4 & some tips on making the most of the 'business' experience too.

'**Our Sustainability Stories**' is the start of a major series sharing the personal experiences of Area Meeting's Sustainability Group members'. Parts 3 & 4 will follow in July, then 5 & 6 in September, ending with Part 7 in November.

'**Children's Meeting by Zoom**' will, I hope, also start a series, with other Local Meetings sharing what this lockdown is meaning for their children's groups.

**Harvey Gillman's new poem, 'Pilgrimage'** is too long to be shared in full but I'm happy to copy the complete poem to all who would like to read it. Many of you will know Harvey as an inspirational speaker and writer and Swarthmore Lecturer.

### **HELP NEEDED Spreading QV news across all our meetings and all Friends**

You are reading this online. There may be many in your meeting who will not see it, because no hard copies are currently being printed, PLEASE help by forwarding this to someone who will not otherwise receive it. I only have multiple email addresses for Friargate members and am particularly anxious about those in other meetings who cannot access Quakevine via their own meeting house at present.

**Barbara Windle**

## *Rye Pilgrimage 2020*

On his return from the Camino de Compostela  
he fastened a shell to his backpack  
to remind him that each step was pilgrimage.

There were stars to follow and signs by the roadside,  
many a guide with anecdotes and legends,  
footsteps carved deep into the earth.

Throughout his life there were journeys undertaken  
to shrines, ruins, where hermits and madmen  
had found the consolation or hardship they craved for.

There was Jerusalem and he wept on Zion Mount  
and at Yad Vashem where a candle was reflected  
in many tiny flames.

There was Holy Island where the sheep bore witness  
and at dawn a heron had joined him for worship  
at the rising of the sun.....

There was the house of Anne Frank  
where betrayal brought death. After her words,  
only silence was possible.

There was the camp in Gaza  
Where he spoke of his origins, could offer only  
his lamentations.

There was Iona, and the western saints,  
a fortress against the tide. He longed again  
for illumination.

The old meeting houses of South Jersey,  
where the Friends had gathered  
to realise the kingdom.

Now the roads are blocked  
and the sky is limited  
and footsteps counted.

He leaves the house and walks  
the short path to where  
honesty flowers among the maples...

Again the path leads inwards,  
past the bluebells and the cow parsley.  
He honours the nettles.

Dandelions and butterbur,  
periwinkles and violets,  
stations of the cross...

No given name. No guide.  
No sacred text.  
Just signs of grace along the roadside.

Harvey Gillman 15/04/20



## **Saturday 9 May York Area Quaker Meeting 1.30–3.00 pm via Zoom**

*All of this is experimental – we may finish before 3 pm or stay in chat rooms a little beyond that time – who knows? My expectation at present is as follows:*

*1.20 Friends begin to assemble and settle in*

*1.30 opening worship*

*1.40 nominations; membership matters*

*2.00 Trustee report [printed below] for questions or comments*

*2.15 GRASP worship sharing. Opportunity for LMs and individuals to share in worship any ideas for simplifying meetings they have so far [NOT a discussion]*

*2.45 'chat rooms' a chance to talk in groups of four or five with Friends across AM*

### ***Trustee report to Area Meeting May 9<sup>th</sup> 2020***

I thought that Area Meeting should be given an update on the decisions that AM Trustees have taken since the beginning of the Covid-19 infection.

In the first week of significant UK infection all of our meetings for worship were suspended. Each local meeting was allowed to decide what was appropriate about allowing hirers to continue (safely). Friargate closed almost immediately, partly to protect staff, and the other four meeting houses were completely closed within the next two weeks as all the hirers cancelled. At the same time Trustees agreed to guarantee the pay of our directly employed staff for at least three months. (Friargate staff, plus the Harrogate warden and cleaner plus the Thirsk caretaker). Acomb and New Earswick took the decision to continue paying their cleaners. Whilst they are not directly employed, they are a small local firm and we do not wish to see them disadvantaged. We were alerted by our insurers initially about the need to inspect the meeting houses, to ensure that there are no leaks etc. Later this requirement was waived, but all our meetings are ensuring that someone goes into the meeting house at least once a week to see that all is well.

The need to take decisions quickly placed some strain on our business method but Trustees were consulted at each stage, by email or phone.

I became a little concerned that decisions were being taken by committees of local meetings which might affect our employees and our tenants. After consulting with the other Trustees we asked each local committee who deal with these matters to include their local AM Trustees in these conversations and that all decisions affecting staff and tenants must be approved by Trustees. The way we behave during these very difficult times towards our hirers, tenants and employees should reflect our Quaker values.

As the government furlough arrangements were clarified, the opportunity to furlough those of our staff for whom there is no work at present was taken. This enables us to reclaim 80% of the cost of their wages from the UK government and the Area Meeting will top this up to their normal pay. I'm also very pleased to say that, through this scheme, we are able to make some payments to the Friargate assistants who are on zero hours contracts (and are not employees).

Trustees are meeting via Zoom in June and will be taking decisions then about how long to continue these guarantees.

**John Guest**, Clerk of Trustees

## Area Meeting held virtually

Those familiar with Zoom meetings for worship for business advise as follows:

- ✓ Send out papers and draft minutes beforehand
- ✓ Keep the meeting as short as possible as virtual meetings are tiring for everyone
- ✓ Sharing positive ideas, where no decision is needed, can be helpful
- ✓ Avoid attempting controversial topics. Leave them until Friends are together.

## Feeling at home in our Zoom meetings

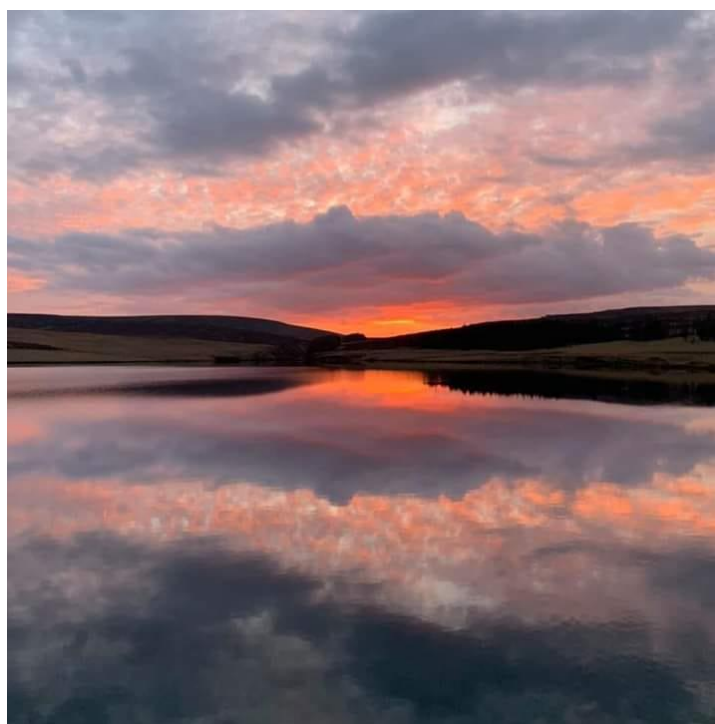
*Some tips I've gleaned from Quaker sources which may help us in moving from meeting for worship courtesy to that which helps meeting for business. I regret that I didn't note the names supplying the various ideas – apologies for that.*

**Come with hearts, minds and gadgets prepared.** We don't need time to travel to meeting, but it is still good to allow time to get ready. Work out where the (physical) light is – ideally on your face, or off to the side. If daylight or artificial light is directly behind where you are sitting, you will not be clearly visible to other Friends. And if you look at yourself onscreen and can only see the top of your head or the ceiling of your room, that will be the view everyone else is getting too – adjust your position accordingly. Be comfortable.

**Welcoming each other.** The Chat button [bottom centre on your computer or laptop] allows you to type messages to everyone ('Hello Friends') also to message individuals. The Mute button [bottom left hand corner of the screen, microphone symbol] allows you to mute yourself as soon as you arrive on Zoom, This means that unintended sounds from your sitting room do not get relayed to everyone and prevents a lot of random noise. You can always unmute briefly if you want to greet friends verbally.

**Chatting** Zoom can only broadcast one voice at a time, so saying "yes, yes" or "hmm" or "really" will break up the signal, so it is still really helpful to let one person speak at a time. Encourage each other with nods and smiles, rather than words.

**Seeing each other.** The two main views on Zoom are **Speaker View** which prioritises the person speaking and **Gallery View** which shows as many as can fit on your screen. You can also scroll through the video images to see more Friends.



*Sunrise*

*Anonymous Friend*



*Cherry tree*

*Hazel Shellens [Huntingdon Meeting]*

## Letter of Thanks to York AM from the Recording Clerk

Friargate repaid AM's £30k loan in October 2019. In March, Area Meeting agreed the Trustees' recommendation to donate the full sum to Britain Yearly Meeting.

Paul Parker replied to our Treasurer, Keith Barnes, as follows:

Dear Keith        Normally you'd be receiving this letter in the post, and I'd be putting a nice card in with it for you to share with your meeting. In these extraordinary times, I can't do that, so you're going to have to make do with it electronically.

But I do want to add my personal thanks to this more formal letter. This year of all years, Britain Yearly Meeting needs Friends' support. Our work to support thriving Quaker communities which can bear witness for a peaceful and sustainable world is needed more than ever. And with coronavirus having a major impact on BYM's income in the coming months, it's particularly important to us that meetings continue to support us. This contribution from York Area Meeting is especially welcome. Do pass on my thanks to Friends in the AM.

I hope all's well with you and yours in these strange times. Thanks for all you do as treasurer to support the work of the Society.

In Friendship

Paul

## *Living sustainably 1: Our Stories*

Throughout the last 18 months, Friends in York Area Meeting have thought about sustainability and how our lives have changed and responded to the challenges of reducing our impact on the planet.

We have looked at what meetings are doing. A summary of what we found out is available on the AM website.

We have consulted Friends individually through questionnaires, phone calls and interviews on how our lives have changed in response to this challenge.

We have had so many responses and so many insights; it has been really heart-warming to see all the thought and effort over a good number of years (and in some cases decades) that Friends have engaged with this issue.

And we have learned that we share one key insight: however much we are doing, there is still more that can be done. We can learn from each other.

**We are publishing the findings in the form of thematic summaries.** Some of you will recognize your own stories and responses reflected in them; we hope many of you will do. They contain a wealth of ideas and information about what we can do. Sometimes small, personal action makes a big difference to our lives and a small difference to the planet but it matters, nonetheless.

But we have also recognized from so many of the responses that there is a balance between the individual, local small (and not so small) actions and the systemic change we need. Given the focus of the project we have focused more on the personal level. But many Friends have been clear about their understanding of the broader, political and systemic changes we need.

We started the project long before Covid-19 struck; indeed, the very term had not been invented. But we come to the end of this project just as we are in the middle of a lockdown none of us could have even imagined.

What this has put into stark relief is this: in a crisis that is recognized and accepted as a crisis, all of us – individually, locally, nationally and internationally – can take steps to respond and to protect people in ways that are drastic and challenging and that put into question our assumptions about how we live our lives. The world has suddenly stopped travelling without thought; our reliance on an international supply line for our daily necessities has been called into question; but we also have become more adept at using technology to stay in touch and to keep the essential connections in our lives going.

This crisis, in other words, allows us to see the potential for radical change in response to the climate emergency that is, in so many ways, a much bigger crisis than Covid-19.

We hope that the different posts on the different themes will be thought-provoking and lead to further discussion. We encourage you all to engage in that conversation – both in your Meetings and online by posting comments and additional material. If you would like to share more of your own story in more detail, we would welcome that. In the first instance, we will publish each of the thematic summaries in Quakevine now and in the remaining three issues of this year. They will also be on the York Area Meeting Website and we hope it will be possible to post comments there, too.

### **York Area Meeting Sustainability Group:**

*Its members are* **James McCarthy, Maggie Coxon, Jenny Brierley, Barbara Penny, Lesley Law, Huw Still, Peter Jarman, Sarah Allen and Martina Weitsch**

## ***Living sustainably 2: Food for life***

Whether we love cooking or spend as little time in the kitchen as possible, F/friends in York AM share a concern that the food we eat is sustainable.

### **Here are some changes that people are making to their diet and food shopping:**

Reducing the amount eaten but maintaining variety in their diet.

Cutting out meat – ranging from lifelong vegetarian, to mostly no meat, to some meat-free days, to working on cutting down on meat.

Cutting out dairy – ranging from exploring a vegan diet, to cutting down on cheese, to using less milk, to unsure about becoming vegan.

Buying food grown locally and organically and sold loose, where this is available, or from specialist organic delivery firms.

Cooking from scratch and avoiding food that is highly processed.

Planning meals to prevent food waste...and composting unavoidable waste.

Growing your own, in gardens and community allotments, and making use of fruit growing wild.

### **But making decisions about diet and food sourcing seems to be riddled with dilemmas**

- What is an ethical, sustainable diet? Food miles, farming methods, carbon footprint, benefit/cost to the environment, benefit/cost to poorer countries, plastic used...help!

- Unavoidable dietary restrictions make a fully vegetarian or vegan diet almost impossible for some.

- Others are concerned how to stay healthy if they go vegan.

- Busy lives, limited transport options, and tight budgets make sourcing sustainably grown produce hard for many people.

- Different views [Q/non-Q] on food in the household make decisions more complicated.

- Bananas don't grow in Yorkshire ...yet



*2020 rhubarb*

*Julia Terry*

### **And some encouragement to make changes to our diets that F/friends have offered:**

- Cutting down on meat has led to feeling healthier.

- It's been easier than expected to cut down on some foods...but not bananas.

### **In F/friends' own words:**

'We both eat much less meat. Red meat x1/week. Chicken x 1/week. Fish x 1/week and the rest of times vegetarian. We feel healthier for doing this.'

'Almost always it costs a lot of money and I am acutely aware that I can afford to. How many can?'

'Growing food & gardening is an act of rebellion at a time of little hope for the future.'



## One Plague Village in 1666

Having spent my childhood in North Derbyshire, I have been familiar with Eyam's part in the [London] plague of 1665-1666 for as long as I can remember. It has been much in my mind recently, throughout the talk of quarantine and self-isolation

In late 1665 the local tailor ordered cloth from London. Very soon after it arrived, members of his household began dying, his assistant being the first to succumb. As the plague spread, the Rector, William Mompesson, helped by his predecessor Thomas Stanley, organised the total isolation of the village.

For well over a year no one came into or left it. Food and other items needed from outside were left beside the well at the edge of the village; coins to pay were left in a bowl of vinegar, to reduce risk of transmission. Church services were held in the open air to enable villagers to stand far apart. Families buried their own dead.

The exact number of dead and survivors will never be known. The church records 273 deaths from plague, out of a population of around 350. Mompesson's wife, aged 27, was one of the last victims to die.

The plague did not spread into any part of the surrounding area. An impressive communal act.

Barbara Windle

### *From The Cure at Troy*

*Spoken by the Chorus at the end of the play*

1 Human beings suffer,  
They torture one another,  
They get hurt and get hard.  
No poem or play or song  
Can fully right a wrong  
Inflicted and endured.

2 History says, don't hope  
On this side of the grave.  
But then, once in a lifetime  
The longed-for tidal wave  
Of justice can rise up,  
And hope and history rhyme.

3 So hope for a great sea-change  
On the far side of revenge.  
Believe that further shore  
Is reachable from here.  
Believe in miracle  
And cures and healing wells.

4 Call miracle self-healing:  
The utter, self-revealing  
Double-take of feeling.  
If there's fire on the mountain  
Or lightning and storm  
And a god speaks from the sky

5 That means someone is hearing  
The outcry and the birth-cry  
Of new life at its term.

Seamus Heaney

Japan donated medical supplies to China and wrote on the boxes a quotation from a Chinese poem:

*We have different mountains and rivers  
but we share the same sun, moon and sky.*

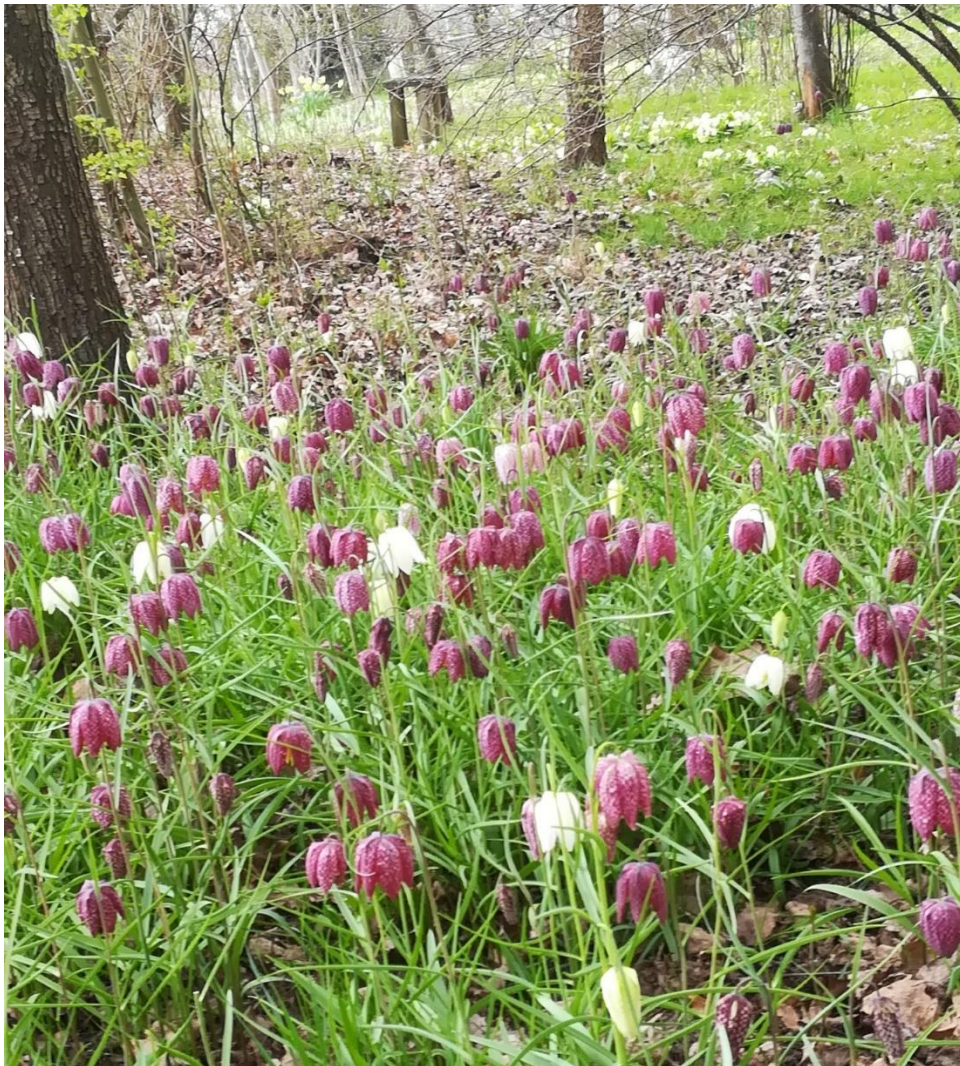
China donated medical masks to Italy and wrote on the boxes a quotation from a Roman poem:

*We are waves from the same sea.*

## Quaker Faith & Practice: 20.23

*George Fox wrote to Friends in November 1663, during a time of much persecution:*

Sing and rejoice, ye Children of the Day and of the Light; for the Lord is at work in this thick night of Darkness that may be felt: and Truth doth flourish as the rose, and the lilies do grow among the thorns, and the plants atop of the hills, and upon them the lambs doth skip and play. And never heed the tempests nor the storms, floods nor rains, for the Seed Christ is over all and doth reign. And so, be of good faith and valiant for the Truth



*A wealth of fritillaries*

*Jennifer Barraclough [Witney Meeting]*

## York Area Quakevine (YAQ)

YAQ appears in January, March, May, July, September, November

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The editor may select & edit all contributions.