

**MANCHESTER & WARRINGTON AREA QUAKER MEETING
NEWSLETTER NO 18 APRIL 2023**



Woodbrooke to close

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POEM

This is the poem that was written at Sale Children's Meeting on Sunday 5th March 2023. The topic was Spring.

Yum yum bees hum,
Making honey for my tum,

Lambs hop and bop,
Birds hatch with a *POP*,

Rainbows colourful in the sky,
While little birds learn to fly.



REGIONAL GATHERING

The Racial Justice Group organised Regional Gathering held on 4 March, on the theme of “Anti-Racism and Change from Within” with the morning session focussing on racism in the NHS.

One of the panelists, Aneez, quoted from the BMA:

Lest we forget that in 1st wave ethnic minorities made up 85% all doctor COVID deaths, 2/3 all NHS staff deaths, occupied 35% ICU beds, Black/Bangladeshi people had 3-4x higher mortality. It would be dereliction of duty for the Covid inquiry not to address root structural causes head-on.

There is a report of the Gathering in The Friend of 24 March.

East Cheshire AM and Manchester & Warrington AM
Racial Justice Group Meeting

Anti-racism Work Among Friends in BYM 2022

Exploring the findings and implications
for us of the work of Kate McNally
Eva Koch Scholar 2022.

**Wednesday 26th April 2023
Zoom Meeting
7.20pm for 7.30pm start**

Join Zoom Meeting

<https://us02web.zoom.us/j/81826567685?pwd=dVhMdTEvL1JnZzVpK2dvY09mMEgrZz09>

Meeting ID: 818 2656 7685

Passcode: 083265

Britain Yearly Meeting 2023

Yearly Meeting 2023 will take place from 28 April–1 May. There will be some preparation events on the weekend of the 21–23 April. It will be a blended meeting in Friends House, London and online. **Bookings are now open.** See www.quaker.org.uk

Yearly Meeting will focus on ‘Releasing our energy so that we can follow the leadings of the spirit, fulfil our purpose and build a better world.’ As in 2022, Yearly Meeting Agenda Committee is planning preparatory events online in the run up to the Yearly Meeting itself and in particular during the previous weekend.

The Swarthmore Lecturer for 2023 is Esther Loukin. Esther is known for her activism, holding organisations to account on disability access.

MASS GATHERING TO DEMAND CLIMATE JUSTICE

Information from Kerri Wright, Living Witness Trustee

Quakers across Britain are planning to meet in London from Friday 21st April as part of a mass gathering to demand climate justice. The gathering is organised by Extinction Rebellion who plan to bring as many groups across the UK as possible to unite and show the UK government that there are hundreds and thousands of people who want decisive change. The action is about demonstrating the number of people who are seriously concerned about the ecological and climate crisis. It is not about causing a disruption to raise awareness, but showing the world 'look how many people are concerned.' Here are up to date details (as at 24 March)

Join together in London. Westminster Meeting are generously hosting Quakers in Britain and are allowing their Meeting House to be used as a base. We will be able to seek support, rest and hospitality until 5pm each day of the gathering.

Friday 21st April

- Meet at 10am Westminster Meeting House for a Meeting for Worship at 10:30am.
- We will then walk to the Foreign Office. Estimated arrival time 12pm

- Meet in St James's Park at 2pm where we will assemble as close to Parliament Square as possible for a Meeting for Worship

Saturday 22nd April

- Meet at 10am in St James's Park for a Meeting for Worship at 10:30am. We will then join the Biodiversity March (feel free to dress up as a species that is endangered or now extinct).

Sunday 23rd April

- Meet at 10am Westminster Meeting House to join their usual Meeting for Worship at 10:30am.

Monday 24th April

- Meet at 10am Westminster Meeting house for a meeting for worship at 10:30am
- We will then walk to Ministry of Justice. Estimated arrival time 12pm

Upholding and sustaining the event

- Please consider how you or your meeting might uphold those attending the gathering in London .
- Edible sustaining would be welcome too! Please drop donations of snacks at Westminster MH over the weekend or give to those in your meeting attending.
- If you would like to be involved in the gathering, but do not feel you could be among larger numbers of people

etc then please consider volunteering to be at Westminster Meeting House on each of the days to support people coming back for a rest and providing hospitality.

We hope to see you there!

For up to date information about the plans for the weekend please join the announcement only WhatsApp group (you will not be able to post messages - just see updated plans for the gathering):

<https://chat.whatsapp.com/JAMLIE6AcL1GC8jDRycy1u>

The Big One

**100,000 PEOPLE
HOUSES OF PARLIAMENT
from 21ST APRIL 2023**



Join concerned individuals and groups, near the Houses of Parliament, to focus attention on the profound challenges of the Climate and Ecological Crisis. Let's listen to one another, share concerns, ideas and call on government, via well informed, democratic processes, including Citizens Assemblies, to act effectively and humanely.

QR code takes you to our distinctively Quaker WhatsApp group.



Image by Brigitte Werner from Pixabay

Advertisement

An Executive Role Blending Ethics and Business

Manchester based, you'll be the linchpin of our Quaker administration in the area.

The role combines leading the staff team, employed to support and strengthen the Quaker Charity in its worship and its ethical work in social justice, sustainability and peace.

Alongside this you will take lead responsibility for developing and promoting our conference facilities business and acting as its company secretary.

The profits from the business are used to sustain our Quaker venues - the large conference centre fleeting House in Manchester and four smaller Meeting Houses in the Manchester and Warrington area. You will ensure the business continues to operate on a sound financial basis.

You will work closely with and report to the Charity's voluntary trustees, supporting them in ensuring all legal and regulatory processes are followed.

This is a key position where you will have the opportunity to make a real impact on the work we do today and into the future.

Key details:

JOB TITLE:	Executive Officer
CONTRACT:	Fulltime/permanent, 37.5 hours over 5 days, mainly office hours, although some evening/weekend work may be required.
LOCATION:	Friends' Meeting House, 6 Mount Street, M2 SNS
SALARY:	circa £40,000 p.a.
ANNUAL LEAVE:	25 days per annum plus Bank Holidays

Closing date for applications: 9am, Tuesday 11th April 2023

- If you would like to receive an Information Pack on how to apply, please send a CV in confidence to Nick Shanks at nick.shanks@harrishill.co.uk
- For an informal and confidential conversation about the position, please contact Nick at the above address.

Both Manchester and Warrington Area Quaker Meeting and Harris Hill operate an equal opportunity policy and commit to treating all of our candidates and jobseekers fairly. We welcome and encourage applications from everyone regardless of age, disability, sex, gender reassignment, sexual orientation, pregnancy and maternity, race, religion or belief and marriage and civil partnerships.

INTERVIEW WITH SARAH DONALDSON **by Elizabeth Coleman**

Sarah Donaldson is about to leave the employment of Area Meeting, after serving as Executive Officer for 6 years.



The EO is the most senior paid member of staff in the Area Meeting. They have a role in overseeing the lettings business and all its staff, and also a role in supporting

Quakers by reporting to and advising the Trustees on various governance and compliance issues.

Sarah's last day in the office will be Friday 16 June and we are planning to do tea and cake, following Meeting for Worship on Wednesday 14 June. Please 'save the date' to join the MfW/tea/cake on Wednesday 14 June to celebrate the work that Sarah has tirelessly done for the Area Meeting in the last six years. (Wednesday Meeting for Worship is from 1.10pm to 1.40pm at Central Manchester Friends Meeting House, 6 Mount St, M2 5NS.)

The closing date for applications for the post of Executive Officer is 9am on 11 April. Trustees are working with a recruitment agency so please encourage anyone who may be interested to email nick.shanks@harrishill.co.uk for the application pack.

THE INTERVIEW

What led you to apply for the post of Executive Officer?

Before I applied I was a family barrister travelling throughout Greater Manchester and Lancashire. It was a stressful job. I enjoyed the challenge, but I was getting frustrated and a bit bored – I felt like more and more I was seeing the same situation in different places, and giving the same advice day in and day out. By 2016 I had decided that I needed to change path, but I didn't know

what I wanted to do. I knew the previous Executive Officer, David Teasdale-Hughes, and one day I was chatting with him about what to do next. He recommended a career coach whom he knew, and I approached her. She helped me to look at my strengths, what I enjoyed etc. and we worked on a plan to help me move forward. Then in January 2017 David decided to leave his job as Executive Officer. Initially I just thought, “It will be difficult to find anyone to replace him” and I didn’t imagine it would be anything to do with me! However, my coach made me think differently about it, which turned out to be good advice. I thought I might be here for 3 or maybe a maximum of 5 years, but it has been six.

What have you found most interesting and fulfilling about the job?

The staff here are great and we always have a lot of fun, even when things don’t go to plan with our work. I really like the fact that every day is different – something unexpected happens pretty regularly. Even the things that are really stressful at the time can be satisfying when they have been sorted out and we can look back at how well we coped with the problem.

The thing I was surprised that I enjoyed was getting to grips with the financial side of things. I didn’t have very much experience with this and it has been very satisfying to learn.

The nicest thing about my role is that the vast majority of people appreciate what we do – there are lots of thank yous from room users, Quakers, everyone. Even when things go wrong, I find that most people appreciate if you try to fix it, rather than focusing on negative. In my old job, it was normal to be shouted at and to have to take the blame for others' mistakes – that's one of the main reasons people instruct a barrister! This job has restored my faith in people a bit.

What have you found most challenging?

There were always lots of challenges and I am normally up for that. The major difficulty with being the most senior paid person in a voluntary organization is that you have to be ready to make a lot of decisions and be responsible for the consequences. Quakers in voluntary roles like Trustees and Directors are legally responsible, but they place trust in us as staff to do what needs to be done. My job is to keep on top of all of that. I may take problems to Friends to solve, but it's important to do that sparingly since most of the volunteers have their own jobs or other responsibilities as well.

Easily the worst time was at the very start of the pandemic. I don't think I'll ever forget how worried I was in mid-March 2020 just before the official lockdown was announced. On 18 March I realised that the Meeting Houses would have to close. At the time, the government had not announced a definite furlough scheme so we didn't know how long we could pay staff for, or if we would

have to make everyone redundant. Quakers were really supportive of all of us and especially of me as I had a close family bereavement shortly after that. However, it was definitely my job to take on the detailed responsibility for things. For weeks it felt like almost every waking minute I was wondering what would happen next – it was incredibly difficult. Of course it did improve over time, but even after the immediate crisis passed there were 18 months of changing government guidance, and of not knowing what customers would do. It has been on my mind recently as I have been tidying files and looking back at these things and I have to say it was a really difficult couple of years.

More generally what is difficult is that you have to try to balance the needs of different people – Quakers in general, Trustees and Directors who are my bosses, staff, customers, the general public, the environment around us. There isn't always a solution that's positive for everybody, but I try to be honest and hope people will understand even if they aren't happy. If they get upset, it's often because of things we can't control.

What are your hopes for the future for yourself?

I am looking forward to time away – I'm excited to have the opportunity to travel. As well as serving as Executive Officer, I have been involved in Quaker volunteering outside of work – I've been convening the review of Yearly Meeting and Meeting for Sufferings and I'm currently assistant clerk to Woodbrooke trustees. I'm looking

forward to a break from all those things as well. I don't really know what I'll do when I get back. I think I'd like a role with more tightly defined areas of responsibility, where I can pass things over to other people if I'm not sure what to do. (Although having said that, I do like to get involved in everything that's going on, so perhaps that isn't a realistic ambition!)

What are your hopes for the future for Area Meeting after you leave?

I hope the staff team will get a new EO that they enjoy working with, who will appreciate them in the way they deserve. I hope that the huge efforts we have made over the last couple of years will be a good foundation for the business to continue to thrive, so that it can support Quaker work. I feel Friends are back out of hibernation – vigils, exhibitions and so on are happening – and I hope this will continue so we can get our Quaker message out there again.

Is there anything else you would like to say?

Thanks to everyone who has made it an enjoyable time. Thanks to the interview panel who overlooked a few areas where I probably didn't quite meet the job criteria, and who took a chance which I hope has worked out well for everyone.

WEALTH INEQUALITY

Social Justice Group will have a Special Interest Group at Britain Yearly Meeting on the theme “How Wealth Inequality Damages Everything.” It will be on Zoom on Sunday 22 April at 4pm. You need to register for Yearly Meeting if you wish to attend.

The description of the Special Interest Group is as follows:

Social Justice Group has become increasingly aware of the destructive effects of the rapid intensification of inequality of wealth we have been experiencing in this country as well as globally. We have come to see that this is more than a challenge to a single Quaker Testimony; we believe it undermines all our Testimonies in different ways. Our testimonies, including Equality are not vague aspirations or impossible ideals. They are the necessary basis for human flourishing in a sustainable world.

(Quaker Congo Partnership and Conflict Minerals Campaign will also have Special Interest Groups.)

MEETINGS FOR WORSHIP FOR PEACE
a letter from Lesley Thomson (S Manc LM)

Dear Friends,

At the Regional Gathering on Saturday 4 March, several Friends were surprised to hear that the daily Zoom meeting for worship started when Russia invaded Ukraine last year continues and asked how they might join it. The administration is done by Julie Harlow, based in California and the seed funding for the Zoom account etc comes from the international support group of Friends House Moscow. Julie sends out newsletters on Tuesdays and Saturdays. Her email address is <friendshousemoscow2022@gmail.com> and she will add you to the circulation list on request. The meeting is from 5pm to 6pm.

The Zoom link does not change, and is
<https://us06web.zoom.us/j/85283967313>

Meeting ID: 852 8396 7313

Passcode: 2022

The link becomes live about 4.45. We try to make it as like a live meeting as possible so we have someone there to welcome people as they join and then the actual worship happens in a breakout room which the "doorkeeper" joins at ten past the hour. So newcomers have a chance to get orientated for a few minutes before going into the worship space.

These are daily meetings of mainly silent worship for peace held after the manner of Friends. They are not a recognised Quaker Meeting and do not belong to any

official Quaker structure. We simply come together to hold in the Light all those affected by war, not just within Ukraine but also in the wider world.

On that first day in February last year we had about 400 people. Now we have between 30 and 40 each day.

In Friendship and peace
Lesley Thomson (South Manchester LQM)

TOILETS IN JOB CENTRES

One of the interviewees in the article about claiming benefits in the last newsletter said, “There are no toilets for clients at Job Centres. I’ve asked a law professor if it’s legal for a public building not to provide toilets to the general public. He had no idea. But I will get back to you. We could start a Quaker campaign for every Quaker to go to the Job Centre and ask to go to the toilet.”

The interviewee came back to me to say, “My law professor got back to me. He doesn’t think there is a legal responsibility for any organization to provide toilets unless they sell food and drinks.”

I once accompanied a friend to the Job Centre, and asked if I could use the toilet. I was directed to a GP’s surgery up the road, to use their toilets.

Elizabeth Coleman

NEWS FROM AREA MEETING NOMINATIONS COMMITTEE

We are currently looking for people for the following roles:

ASSISTANT CLERK

Normally, a Friend serves as Assistant Clerk for three years before serving as Clerk. However, Ben Lukey's term of service as Clerk ends at the end of 2024. We consider that one year as Assistant Clerk is long enough to learn the job, so are looking for an Assistant Clerk to be in post as soon as possible, who is willing to take over as Clerk at the beginning of 2025. Lesley Thomson is currently serving as Assistant Clerk, but may be moving out of the area shortly. It was agreed at Area Meeting to continue with the traditional model of Clerk and Assistant Clerk, rather than having (say) three co-clerks. This will need to be reconsidered if we fail to find anyone to serve as Assistant Clerk using the traditional model.

SAFEGUARDING CO-ORDINATOR

Two Safeguarding Co-ordinators are needed. We are able to bring forward one name to Area Meeting on 1 April, but are still looking for a second. See the March Newsletter for more detail. If you would like more information, please contact Kath Harworth, Trustee responsible for safeguarding, or your local meeting's representative on Area Meeting Nominations Committee.

CLERK FOR AREA MEETING NOMINATIONS COMMITTEE

Elizabeth Coleman needs to be replaced by the end of 2023, and there are no current members of the committee who can take this over. (We also need someone to deal with Safer Recruitment, which is new work arising from the new Safeguarding Policy.)

RISLEY PRISON VISITOR

Hilary Tucker received this email from the Chaplain at Risley Prison. (The Kay whose memorial service is referred to is Kay Bohm.)

Dear Hilary,

I pray that you are well and best wishes for 2023. Kay's service was absolutely beautiful and a great tribute to an amazing lady. It was an honour and privilege to attend.

Do you have anyone in mind who would be interested in coming in to Risley? We only have one Quaker here currently, but I am sure he would benefit from seeing you.

We would be delighted if you can find someone to attend.

Please let me know.

Kind Regards and God Bless,

CONFLICT ADVISORY GROUP

We are also looking for more people to re-create the Conflict Advisory Group.

If you are interested in learning more about any of these roles, or have suggestions of people who might serve in these roles, please contact Elizabeth Coleman, Clerk to AM Nominations Committee, or your local rep on AM Nominations Committee - These are as follows:

Central Manchester – John Banks and Valerie Clark

Eccles – Elizabeth Coleman

Sale - Janet Roberts

South Manchester – Ursula Sharma

Warrington – Kath Redmond.

FINDING PEOPLE TO FILL ROLES

As always, Nominations Committee struggles to fill all the roles, and Friends can feel over-burdened. We are planning to arrange a Zoom meeting to discuss “Simpler Meetings,” which could lead to a reduction in the roles to be filled, for example by some people covering more than one Area Meeting.

The Simpler Meetings project has been finding and sharing ways that Quaker meetings can be easier to run, and less of a burden for Quaker role holders. The aim is to spend less time on 'doing' Quakers, releasing more time for 'being' Quakers – for our witness in the world, spiritual nurture, outreach and building our Quaker communities.

www.quaker.org.uk/our-organisation/support-for-meetings/simpler-meetings

POEM

Robert Wilson suggested putting this poem by Jonathan Carmichael in the newsletter.

Simpler Meetings and Sustainability

Quakers round Britain are trying to simplify their meetings:

Reduce, Reuse, Recycle, Repair, Refuse, Rethink, Rot

Reduce

Fewer overburdened Friends

More time for Spirit led witness and community

Less long tiring business meetings

Fewer separate area charities duplicating

Skype: less travel time and carbon, opens up access

Re-use

Good ideas from other meetings

Policy documents: stop re-inventing the wheel

Tried and tested Quaker methods

Buildings you have, and spaces others have

Recycle

Don't retain things for ever and ever

Melt them down

Re-form them for new shapes and purposes

Keeping the inner Quaker principles

Repair

Repairing saves energy

Spending a little can fix things you value

Other people may have the skills you need

Refuse

Say no to some things.

Just stop doing them. With joy.

There's always another way.

Rethink

Take a fresh approach. Include different people.

Divide busy roles: match people with tasks they like.

Do it differently. Experiment.

Believe it possible that you are mistaken!!

Rot

For a nutritious compost, lay some things down,

Stir, leave in the warm and dark

And in the quiet, listen for the Spirit:

Something good will grow from it.

Simpler Quaker meetings: making space for the Spirit!

[www.quaker.org.uk/simpler-meetings.](http://www.quaker.org.uk/simpler-meetings)

WOODBROOKE CLOSING

The Woodbrooke Centre will be closed to the public by 31 October 2023.

Throughout its existence Woodbrooke has struggled financially.

We are also aware that our provision for guests with requirements for accessible facilities is not as inclusive as we need it to be. An old building requires not only maintenance but upgrading, and we do not have the capital to do this. We have been made aware that the cost of bringing the existing buildings up to a good, environmentally-sustainable standard would be in excess of £6 million, and to expand the site in order for it to become profitable would require at least the same amount again.

“We believe that the decision to close the Woodbrooke Centre will best enable Woodbrooke learning and research to continue to thrive. The vision of our charity is to be a *“learning organisation which supports and informs Quakers, as individuals and as a community, to enable our work*

in the world and in local communities from a place of understanding and spiritual renewal"."

www.woodbrooke.org.uk

REFUGEE AND ASYLUM FUND

This fund is the responsibility of Social Justice Group, advised by a sub-group consisting of Diane Lewin, Alan Pinch and Joan Armstrong. Diane asked me to thank Friends for their contributions to the fund, especially Central Manchester Friends for their generous donations at a recent Sunday collection. This means that the Social Justice group had access to funds to help people in need again.

To give to the fund, make a payment to Manchester & Warrington Area Quaker Meeting, making it clear that the donation is for the Refugee and Asylum Fund.

SIX SLICES OF TOAST

I love the parables of Jesus, but cannot experience them as his first hearers did – perhaps feeling surprise, puzzlement, amusement, followed by enlightenment. Thirty or forty years ago some ministry I heard in a Quaker meeting gave me some idea of what that experience would be like. This is roughly what was said:

“I’d like to share something with you. It’s about prayer.

My husband was in the bathroom and I called to him to ask him what he wanted for breakfast. I heard him say “Six slices of toast.” I was a bit surprised, but I made the toast, and soon he was sitting at the table eating it. After a while he asked me, “Why did you make so much toast?” I said, “But you asked for six slices of toast.” He replied, “What I said was, a thick slice of toast.””

I am writing from memory. I have edited it slightly, removing the husband’s name. Neither you nor I will ever know how close what I have written is to what was actually said on that Sunday morning in Wanstead Meeting House, thirty or forty years ago. This has something in common with the way the parables of Jesus were transmitted and eventually recorded in the gospels.

Elizabeth Coleman

BANANA ENTERPRISE NETWORK

Some years ago, Quaker Work Fund gave a small grant to Banana Enterprise Network, a charity started and run by Jayne Allman, Margaret Lever's daughter. It has flourished, and in December 2022 was awarded a grant of £295,000 by the Government's Community Ownership Fund

This is from their website

www.bananaenterprisenetwork.co.uk



“Banana Enterprise Network is a UK registered charity doing things differently in a caring and supportive way!

We originally set up in 2014 to help unemployed people explore the idea of self employment and we gradually expanded our training offer to include other training linked to employment/self employment and personal development training. In 2020, we decided to start our journey to save a Grade 2 listed Historic Hall in Farnworth and after spotting a gap in community activities, we developed some community engagement activities working with trusted partners.

We have supported over 3600 people since 2014. We don't publicly promote our achievements as much as we could do, but rest assured we are a busy small team

working on some amazing projects and making a difference where we can.”



Banana Enterprises is working to save Rock Hall, a grade 2 Listed Building located within Moses Gate Country Park in Farnworth. It was built in 1807 by the Crompton family of papermakers and is just a few metres from where their family owned papermill once stood.



If you would like to know more about their charity work follow the exciting heritage building project here:-
www.facebook.com/Rock Hall Farnworth.

LOVING EARTH EXHIBITION AT SALFORD UNI

Anti-Poaching Project

International tourism is important in Uganda, especially wildlife tourism. 90% of this is in the Rwenzori region in the West of the country, including two huge National Parks, Mount Rwenzori and Queen Elizabeth. Despite this, Kasese District remains extremely poor. 65% of its land area is under conservation for wildlife, forests and other natural resources, and the growing population (around 1.2 million people) is squeezed onto the rest.

A key problem is that boundary lines and wild animals have disrupted agriculture in the villages adjoining the Queen Elizabeth Park and other conservation areas. Payments are made from Park takings to these farmers, but often not enough to compensate for such things as elephant damage to their crops. There is also a high level of poaching of wild animals and birds, putting pressure on the wildlife population.

The crested crane symbolizes peace and is a national emblem for Uganda. It is also an endangered species. This panel reflects tensions arising from trying to conserve wildlife, while sustaining humans who are trying to find herbal medicine, firewood and land for grazing animals within the protected areas. We at the Peace Advocates Foundation try to mediate some of the conflicts that arise and prevent further harm.



1171

Panels of textiles were displayed at University of Salford in March. There was a panel making workshop on 15 March. Here is information from the website before the event:

“Dozens of inspiring textile art panels which aim to raise awareness of the threat of climate change are to go on display at the University of Salford.

The pieces of artwork are from the Loving Earth Project and are crafted by people from across the world, with each panel representing a place, person or thing that is loved, is being affected by climate change and what people are doing to address it.

The exhibition, which was part of the cultural events for the COP26 global climate change summit in Glasgow, is currently on an international tour and will be on display on the ground floor of the University's MediaCity campus from Monday 13 March until Friday 24 March.

Over 400 panels have been made for the project in total depicting images of polar bears, bees, flowers and sea creatures caught in plastic in the ocean. Each piece of artwork is accompanied by a short text from its maker, explaining its design.

Marta Strzelecka, Sustainability Engagement Officer at the University said: "At Salford, we aim to embed sustainability in all aspects of our university. Community engagement – such as temporarily hosting these panels – is a crucial part of this. This project is a celebration of people, places and things that are important to us, while raising awareness of environmental issues which could put them at risk.

"It is an excellent opportunity for Salford students, staff and the local community to learn about these issues in a creative, engaging way which can leave them feeling hopeful, inspired and ready to take action."

The project is being brought to Salford by the University's Associate Quaker Chaplain, Sandra Dutson with a digital display also set to be present to help showcase some of the other hundreds of panels that have been created to date.

Sandra added: "This project, started in 2019, has now inspired hundreds of people in the UK and elsewhere to make panels or view them. It really does help us to engage with so many environmental crises without being overwhelmed. The designs have been inspired and created for the sake of what we love.

Making or viewing them means we take time to reflect more deeply, learn about the issues and focus on them in a creative way so we go on to take action and help.”

Loving Earth panels have also been displayed in the House of Common.

**INTERVIEW WITH PASTOR LEVI OF FRIENDS CHURCH (QUAKERS) IN NORTH KIVU, DRC
by Elizabeth Coleman, with Nigel Watt interpreting**



I asked George Bani from Uvira, South Kivu, if he could put me in touch with a Quaker in North Kivu, DRC, as I had heard that the armed group M23, supported by

Rwanda, had taken many villages in North Kivu, causing hundreds of thousands of local people to flee to refugee camps or to Goma, the capital of North Kivu. This left them without a livelihood, and the people of Goma short of food, as they rely on the villages to supply them with food. People are very short of food, even starving to death.

George put me in touch with Pastor Levi, and we had a conversation on Zoom on 24 March.

Pastor Levi introduces himself and describes the history of the conflict

I am Levi Munyemana, pastor of the Friend Church (Quakers). I live in Goma. We work with Georges Bani in Quakers Network of Peace in the East. I am happy to share with you information from our side that is forgotten by major decision-makers. We are suffering from international complicity. For many years (since 1993) this part of the country has been living in very atrocious conflicts. The Quakers have contributed a lot to bring peace, but the results are not satisfactory. The leadership of the country have contributed a lot to push the country backwards, From 1993 to 1996 it was inter-ethnic violence. In 1994 with the arrival of Rwandan Hutu refugees, the country experienced a lot of trouble. In 1996 Rwanda pursued Hutu refugees into Congo, killing a very considerable number of Congolese and Rwandan Hutus and a large number of ordinary Congolese. The international community has remained silent. The war which continues to cause us harm us is a continuation of

that of 1996 which initially had the objective of making Rwanda safe from invasion by Hutu refugees from Congo, and today calls for the revision of the boundaries drawn at the Berlin conference, so that Rwanda can take Congolese territory.

Could you describe the situation for Quakers in North Kivu at the moment? How many Quakers are there? Where are they? How are they getting food and meeting their other needs?

Regarding North Kivu where I'm based, we have 6 local meetings. There is one Yearly Meeting (CEEACO) which is shared with S Kivu. In N Kivu we have 580 members, 4 of the local meetings are in Goma the city itself, the 2 other meetings are in Masisi territory a few miles from Goma. The members of Masisi meeting have fled for safety to Goma or nearby. The situation in Goma is that every road into Goma is closed, the city is surrounded by the M23 rebels. The cost of living has multiplied by 4 as a result of this. Some people are already dying of hunger. There is a distribution of food by PAM (UN World Food Programme WFP). The displaced women are organised to help with food distribution, and priority is given to old people. Only a quarter of the displaced people have received food. In Goma we have 3 Quaker organisations, and we been involved a lot in conflict management. We have other partners working with us. We haven't got money. We visit and provide counselling. That's all we can do because we don't have any other means. We have put up vulnerable people in our offices. For the displaced

members and members in Goma, life has changed. The price of food has increased. Those who are carrying out small businesses are unable to do so as the roads are closed. They can't earn money because everything is blocked so they're not doing well. We feel as if we are displaced even in our homes, because the roads are closed. I am afraid that Quakers will be dying of hunger because we do not have the means to help them.

Do you think that Goma itself is in danger of being taken by M23?

They threatened to enter Goma yesterday, but they haven't done so. The threat of them taking the city is still there, but it hasn't happened yet.

Could you describe the work that Quakers have done to try to bring about peace?

We have done many things. We began in 1999, there was a complete separation between the different ethnic groups. They've created agents and done a lot of community work to bring about peace between different ethnic groups. Today people are working together in the town and outside in Goma and surrounding territories. Relations between ethnic groups are good now, the attack is from outside. We have 600 solidarity groups, each one made up of 25 members. Those are made up by the general population and Quakers. It was initiated by Quakers. They work for development. In Congo, people are poor. A small amount of money is lent to poor people

through a microcredit scheme. That promotes solidarity between different ethnic groups – they meet regularly and talk about peace making and other things. We have some training centres – there's a training centre to help people take their own responsibility, and to help train women for leadership.

Do they get finance from American Quakers?

AFSC supported us about 15 years ago, but not now. Norwegian Quakers used to give support. They are promising, but there's nothing coming at the moment. Laura was in QPSW and she supported some activities in North Kivu 5 years ago.

What do you think needs to be done now to bring about peace?

Alternatives to Violence Project (AVP), trauma counselling. restorative justice, social dialogue and mediation.

What about the bigger picture – the conflict between Congo and Rwanda?

We cannot do anything about that, but we can look after our own people and try to solve local problems.

I would like to tell as many people as possible about Quakers in North Kivu. Is it OK for me to email this interview to others and ask them to put it on

Facebook, in newsletters etc? I will use the information to write an article for The Friend, the national Quaker weekly.

Not a problem

Is there anything else you would like to say?

Thank you very much of for organising this interview. It shows you have our problems at heart. We are undertaking peace activities but we have problems. It's extremely hard to work for peace when people are hungry, people don't listen because they're hungry. The work we do is voluntary, unpaid. We would like to construct training centres for young people and women to train them in trades, but don't have the means to do it at present.



A Quaker who survived M23 attacks in 2012.

Eccles Friends decided to donate £200 from their funds to Goma, which will buy rice for 40 families. See email:

Good evening,

My hope is that you are in good health when I write this message to you. I would like to make a proposal about the help of the Quakers of Manchester to the friends of Goma (DRC). We want to buy rice for friends in difficulty. With £200 equals \$246 can buy 250kg to distribute to families. with the money we will buy ten bags of rice of 25kg each bag. 4 families will share a bag to say that each family will have 6kg of rice.

THANKS.

Levi

WATERSIDE PEOPLE

by Elizabeth Coleman

I now have more respect for the baby who lies in his cot, flat on his back, helpless and crying. The world he experiences is not as he expected it to be, and he's not sure he likes it. He expected to be in water soon after birth, and when still very young, he expected to cling to his mother when she dived underwater at the edge of the lake or sea to collect shellfish. Way before he could walk, he expected to be swimming under water, or floating on his back on the surface. If this seems unlikely to you, I suggest that you do an internet search for "videos of babies swimming", and see how happy, competent and independent small babies can be in the water.

The baby expected to be in physical contact with his mother much of the time, or to be held and cared for by other relatives, handed from one to another. He liked being the centre of attention – it made him feel safe. He does not feel comfortable lying flat on his back in a cot.

We used to be taught that our primate ancestors lived in the forest, but as they began to move to hunting on the grasslands, their bodies adapted, and they began to walk upright and to be much less hairy. But most animals that hunt in the grasslands do not walk upright, and most have furry coats. However, furry coats are not good for keeping warm in water. Instead, humans have a layer of subcutaneous fat, which is much more effective. Humans are fatter than apes, and we do not appear to have the same limits to our fatness as other apes have, but can become extremely obese. Being fat and heavy can be a disadvantage on land, but is no problem in water. While monkey babies have relatively less fat than their parents, sometimes described as “like wizened old men”, human babies have relatively more fat than their parents, which gives them buoyancy, and keeps them warm in water.

When do apes walk upright? When they wade through water. Which animals do not have a lot of hair or fur? Some of the animals that spend their time in water. We can control our breath, in a way that other primates cannot, a useful skill in water.

It was a Welshwoman called Elaine Morgan (author of “The Aquatic Ape Hypothesis”, drawing on the work of Alister Hardy), who pondered on some of these things. Though she was not a trained scientist, she became convinced that what we were being taught about our ancestors did not fit the facts, and that, when humans evolved to be separate from other apes, we were living by the waterside and spending a lot of time in water. The hypothesis has recently been given a higher profile by David Attenborough.

Our ancestors lived near water, often near the sea, and we continue to be attracted by water, taking seaside holidays, going swimming, enjoying walking by lakes and rivers.



They fed on shellfish and fish, on plants – roots, leaves, fruit, nuts, seeds, seaweed and so on, and on insects. All these were relatively easy to obtain. They may also have also hunted larger animals, so had an occasional feast of protein-rich meat, but

hunting was dangerous and the meat wouldn't keep so would not be the mainstay of their diet. (Certainly at a later date, they did hunt animals, as is evidenced by the earliest cave paintings.)

We evolved to live this kind of life, in small communities by the lake or sea, and fundamentally that is where we are at home. That is the kind of animal we are. We are not equipped to deal with the world that, with our big, active brains we have created for ourselves.

Sometimes I puzzle as to why we seem willing to destroy the earth rather than act rationally on weapons reduction, inequality, climate change and environmental pollution. I think that part of the answer is that we are not programmed emotionally to act for the long term – when we evolved, there was no need to do so.

In times of plenty, the early humans would have had no reason to have conflict with others, but in times of scarcity, they would have fought for access to scarce resources of food. Our addiction to economic growth can be based on a false sense of scarcity, so leading to aggressive behaviour, which can override intellect – resulting, for example, in our failure to come to agreement to get rid of nuclear weapons, which would greatly enhance our safety.

We thrive where society is relatively equal, as is shown in the work of Wilkinson and Pickett “The Spirit Level”, and these early societies would have been relatively equal – you can't be

1,000 times richer than others when you're living from day to day eating fresh food. But this equality did not come through humans taking responsibility for ensuring that there was justice, it just came naturally. Again, we know intellectually how to work towards a more equal society and a more equal world, but are not programmed to take responsibility for doing so. When agriculture was developed, making inequality and mass slavery possible, we did not have the understanding or the emotional tools to take responsibility for making sure that society remained relatively equal, for the benefit of all.

Our leaders tend to be more on the side of privilege and inequality than the rest of us. They are also very willing to take huge risks with the environment, the consequences of which will be borne by future generations. Why do we choose such leaders? Perhaps our ancestors needed leaders who would defend them in the competition for resources when times were tough, and the more co-operative, thoughtful people were humbler, serving their community in a quieter way. The fact that many people with foresight and a sense of responsibility do not seem to be motivated to struggle for high office, may be a factor that endangers us.

I once listened to Melvyn Bragge's "In Our Time" on Radio 4, about a now extinct human species known as Homo Erectus, and Bragge noted that they existed for about two million years before becoming extinct. We (Homo Sapiens) have existed for about 200,000 years. I hope that we will find a way to do what our intellect tells us will lead to the survival both of ourselves

and of other species, rather than acting according to our emotions, (except the emotion of love), which will not get us out of the huge dangers we find ourselves in.

(I wrote this article for The Friend some time ago, but they didn't publish it.)

FAST GROWING CHICKENS

Information from The Humane League and RSPCA

The Humane League says:

The RSPCA have joined as an intervener in our judicial review case, which argues that the Government has an illegal policy which permits the use of fast-growing Frankenchickens.

The Government tried to stop the RSPCA joining, but the judge ruled that the Court should be as informed as possible. The Department for Environment, Food & Rural Affairs (Defra) attempted to block 400 pages of evidence on the suffering and health problems caused by fast growth in chickens - but they failed.... The hearing in May is the next milestone, and could improve the lives of billions of chickens for good.

www.thehumaneleague.org.uk

The RSPA says:

Why is chicken so cheap?

The majority of the 1.1 billion chickens farmed each year in the UK for food are bred to grow so fast millions of them are dangerously heavy for their age, struggle to walk properly and can suffer from heart defects.

How fast do chickens grow to full size?

The majority of chickens reared in the UK and globally are bred to grow very quickly so that producers can meet the demand for large volumes of cheap meat from this now highly commoditised animal. The focus is on producing the greatest amount of meat in the shortest time. This is not the case on [RSPCA Assured chicken](#) farms where the farmers must apply strict RSPCA welfare standards throughout the birds' lives.

How do chickens grow so fast?

Modern farmed meat chickens grow so fast due to genetic selection, supported by diet. Since the late 1950s, genetics companies have approximately halved the amount of time it takes for a meat chicken to achieve the same slaughter weight - at the rate of about one day shorter per year. They grow so quickly to the 'required' weight that many chickens are now just five to six weeks old when they are slaughtered.

Most are reared in highly stocked, climate-controlled barns with unlimited food and water never far away. One particular result of this rapid growth is that these birds are

inactive, particularly as they get older and often suffer more from leg and other health problems, so spend most of their time sitting or eating, gaining more weight until they reach slaughter weight.

What's wrong with cheap chicken?

The welfare problems associated with conventional chicken production don't end with fast growth rates. The majority of cheap chickens don't have enough space to move around freely, in fact, they are given less space per bird than an egg-laying hen kept in a cage. Their fast growth means that they are often unable to use any enrichment provided, such as perches.

Chickens that grow too fast can suffer severe welfare issues. As they become too heavy for their skeletons, they can develop leg problems and struggle to walk properly. They can also suffer from heart and other health problems.

www.rspcaassured.org.uk

Kath Redmond of Warrington LM comments:

About six years ago I took part in some peaceful vegan activism with a small group of people outside a Chicken Slaughterhouse in Deeside called Two Sisters where they kill a million chickens per week.

Basically we just stood there with placards, filming the trucks going in while various members of the public and

employees leaving work hurled abuse at us from passing cars so it wasn't a very pleasant experience!

The security guard outside told us that Two Sisters was regarded as 'high welfare' and supplied Sainsbury's among other supermarket chains. However, we were really shocked to see how pathetic the chickens looked as they arrived - and they really were chickens not hens. They all had very small heads in relation to their bodies, sparse white feathers and - because they were so young - they cheeped rather than clucked. They were squashed into tiny crates in many tiers on massive trucks which absolutely stunk of ammonia.

My partner, who used to buy and eat a chicken carcass every week before he went vegan, was particularly upset by the state of the chickens and went so far as to write to Sainsbury's describing what he had seen. Sainsbury's replied that they had given the slaughterhouse a surprise inspection as a result but we don't know if any changes were actually made.

I will never forget those poor chickens

UNHCR profoundly concerned about UK asylum bill

Statement on UK Asylum Bill 07 March 2023

UNHCR, the UN Refugee Agency, is profoundly concerned by the asylum bill introduced by the UK Government to the House of Commons today. In its current form, the Bill compels the Home Secretary to deny access to the UK asylum system to those who arrive irregularly. Rather than being provided with protection, these asylum-seekers would instead be subject to detention in the UK, while arrangements are pursued to remove them to another country.

The legislation, if passed, would amount to an asylum ban – extinguishing the right to seek refugee protection in the United Kingdom for those who arrive irregularly, no matter how genuine and compelling their claim may be, and with no consideration of their individual circumstances

www.unhcr.org

Sunak stays silent on Rwanda role in DRC war crimes to save UK asylum deal

<https://www.theguardian.com/global-development/2023/mar/15/sunak-stays-silent-on-rwandas-role-in-drc-war-crimes-to-save-uks-migrant-deal>

MEETING FOR LEARNING - FUNDRAISING

Please join the Meeting for Learning on 17 April from 12 – 2pm followed by a late lunch with BYM staff Beth Follini, Fundraising Manager, and Maisa Monteiro, Individual Giving & Membership Fundraiser.

They will be leading us in an experiential workshop that will encourage us to exploring the topic of giving, what our attitudes and motivations around giving are, and how we have conversations around giving.

The meeting will be at Central Manchester Friends Meeting House, 6 Mount Street, Manchester M2 5NS

The meeting will be held in a hybrid format for Friends wanting to attend in person or for those attending on Zoom, everyone is welcome!

Please RSVP to

sarahd@manchesterquakers.org.uk please indicate whether you wish to attend in person or via Zoom and give us your dietary requirements/ preferences if you are coming in person.

TEXTILE DISPLAY AT MOUNT STREET

Mark Rhodes (1953–2004) was an attender at Central Manchester meeting and partner of David Blamires.

He was an exciting and innovative textile artist, and a small exhibition of his work, drawn from the contents of his studio and David's own collection, will be shown in the concourse and the Friends' Room at Central Manchester Meeting House during the usual opening hours on 1–5 April.

We hope that as many Friends as possible will want to see this work, and others interested in textile art are also welcome.

New homes are being sought for the works, and we encourage Friends to choose works for themselves in return for a charitable donation.

WILLS

Part of Quaker Faith & Practice 20.65

When death occurs, difficulties are encountered where an unsatisfactory will or no will at all has been made. It is therefore recommended that Friends should make wills in time of health and should obtain professional advice.

NOTE FROM THE EDITOR

If you are not on the mailing list, and would like to be emailed future copies of the Newsletter, please email Clare on admin@manchesterquakers.org.uk with your request.

Please send articles and photos for the Newsletter to elizcol@dialstart.net The deadline for the May newsletter is 30 April. It can take time for an email to be received, so to be sure that your submission is on time, I suggest that you aim for 29 April. I put almost everything I receive into the newsletter, with very little editing.

When submitting items for publication, please be aware that the newsletter is a public document, posted on our website, and we do not control who sees it. So think before submitting personal information, email addresses and photos.

Please try to avoid sending text and photos that are under copyright, and get consent from people in photos if needed.

Look at the website <https://www.manchesterquakers.org.uk> under “Newsletters and Events” if you’d like to see back-issues of the newsletter.

Elizabeth Coleman
Editor