MANCHESTER & WARRINGTON AREA QUAKER MEETING
NEWSLETTER NO 30 APRIL 2024

Warrington Meeting House

We are recruiting for an Administrator to work at Central Manchester FMH – see page 29

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NW Role Holder Peer Support Sessions 2024 - 2025

Interactive, 1 hour Zoom sessions to share experience and find solutions across the North West of England.

Please email wendyh@quaker.org.uk for more information

TRUSTEES: May 1st 7pm & 2nd 2pm

Sept' 5th 7pm & 6th 2pm January 6th 7pm & 7th 2pm

AM CLERKS: March 4th 7pm & March 5th 2pm

July 1st 7pm & 8th 2pm November 4th 7pm & 5th 2pm

LM CLERKS: March 25th 7pm & March 26th 2pm

June 3rd 7pm and 4th 2pm October 14th 7pm & 15th 2pm

TREASURERS: May 8th 7pm & 9th 2pm

Sept' 19th 7pm & 20th 2pm January 20th 7pm & 21st 2pm

ELDERS: April 9th 7pm & 10th 2pm

July 8th 7pm & 9th 2pm November 18th 7pm & 19th 2pm

PASTORAL CARE: April 2nd 7pm & 3rd 2pm

July 22nd 7pm & 23rd 2pm November 25th 7pm & 26th 2pm

QUAKER CONGO PARTNERSHIP

QCP Newsletter has just been issued. See www.quakercongo.org.uk

Here are some extracts and information from the Newsletter:

THANK YOU TO A LONG SERVING TRUSTEE
"In December 2023, Margaret Gregory came to the end of her long term of service as a Trustee of QCP. Margaret first visited Abeka in 2014 with her husband, Andrew, and the photos he took then have been very useful since, especially in relation to bringing clean water to the village. They were shown round the hospital on a Saturday when a mother was in labour. The baby was born overnight and the next morning there was an early knock on their door. They were asked to go and admire the new arrival who, they were told, was going to be named Marguerite."

Margaret said, “I will be happy to continue as a resource for memory and to help in any way. It has been an amazing part of my retirement and extended my view of the world”.

Lynn Norbury continues to serve as Trustee, appointed by Manchester and Warrington Area Meeting.

The main work of QCP continues to be supporting a hospital in Abeka, in South Kivu, East DRC, and projects to provide clean water. However, it has a number of smaller projects. Here are some examples:

AWARENESS OF PREJUDICE ABOUT WITCHES
Following a workshop on this there is now a local committee in the north which monitors and studies cases of murder against people presumed to be witches. They would like to run a 2nd phase of this project on the cycle of murderous violence against people presumed to be witches for the South, the cost of which is $1,070 for 50 people

FOOTBALL FOR PEACE
The Banyamulenge people are related to the Tutsi people of Rwanda. The colonial authorities portrayed them as “newcomers” while other ethnic groups in Eastern Congo - such as the Babembe and Banyindu - were considered as “native”. This has led to continued discrimination and violence again the Banyamulenge. Therefore the middle plateau peace committee organised a football match between young members of the Banyamulenge community and the Babembe and Banyindu communities, in order to foster better understanding between them. The match took place in the village of Bibokoboko in the Fizi Territory of South Kivu Province and the final score was 2-0 in favour of the Banyamulenge

CLUB AMI DE FILLES (SCHOOL CLUBS TO SUPPORT GIRLS)
There are now clubs in many schools which are engaged in the fight against sexual harassment. It is a system to prevent sexual violence in secondary schools. Cases of sexual violence are reported, denounced and the victims are supported. The presence of the clubs in the schools has reduced sexual violence by male teachers and students. These Friends of Girls clubs are helped by a supervising teacher and are recognised and supported by the Ministry of National Education.

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Much of our present affluence in Britain was built on the cheap labour, inadequate food, poor housing, poor medical and social services and almost non-existent education of the people of the former Empire. … For fifty years these injustices have weighed on my conscience. Then in 1979 I acquired considerable wealth, and immediately I was faced inescapably with the Christian challenge to repay as much as possible of the wealth which Britain had taken from the world's poor. I gave away almost all the money to charities and trusts working in the former British possessions. This brought me to the financial level of the old-age pensioner, but with no regret. The pension leaves us room for happiness, contentment and laughter. Compared with an Indian or African peasant, our pensioner is princely rich.

Douglas Smith
Quaker Faith & Practice 24.52

MEETINGS ON FOOD - QUAKER QUEST STYLE

Environment Group invites you to face to face and/or online meetings to talk about food and agriculture. The face to face meeting will be at 2pm at Mount St on Wednesday 3 April. You may like to attend mid-week Meeting for Worship from 1.10pm to 1.40pm before the meeting. The online meeting will be at 7.15pm on Friday 5 April by Zoom. The meetings are for experienced Friends as well as newcomers, but we will use the Quaker quest style of 3 short talks from different perspectives, followed by discussion.

The Zoom link is as follows:
https://us02web.zoom.us/j/82154859241?pwd=aFgxWG9nTjdwZUFRU2VpV1hseUd3dz09
Meeting ID: 821 5485 9241
Passcode: 085827

In friendship

Elizabeth Coleman, Kate Hughes, Kath Redmond (Organisers)

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The world asks of us
only the strength we have and we give it.
Then it asks more, and we give it.

The Weighing
Jane Hirshfield

REPAIRING THE WALL AT WARRINGTON
(from AM Minutes 1 Feb 2024)

We have heard that the north boundary wall at Warrington Meeting House is in urgent need of structural repair, with a likely total cost of around £70,000. We recognise that this work is vital to protecting the structural integrity of the site and support the staff team in progressing this work as quickly as possible. We also recognise the impact that this expenditure will have on the Area Meeting's finances, including in the budget from 1 April 2024. We recognise that work of this nature is essential in our role as custodians of Meeting House property and encourage Friends to consider increasing their donations to Area Meeting Funds, especially in the light of inflated costs and the need to catchup with delayed repair works.

***

Two things have I required of Thee; deny me them not before I die: Remove far from me vanity and lies; give me neither poverty nor riches; feed me only food sufficient for me, lest I be full, and deny Thee, and say, "Who is the Lord?"— or lest I be poor and steal, and take the name of my God in vain.

Proverbs 30:7-9

QUOTES ABOUT FOOD

BY AREA MEETING FRIENDS
FROM ENVIRONMENT GROUP MAPPING EXERCISE

“I don’t eat meat but can’t wean myself off dairy.”
“I stopped eating meat in 2017.”
“Make an effort to shop organically, locally and am aware of packaging most weeks at Deli Lama Cafe and Wholefood shop on Chapel St Salford. We never cook meat occasionally eating it when out and have cut down on dairy.”
“Reduced meat consumption.”
“Vegan.”
“I’m mostly vegan.”
“I still eat "everything" but my diet contains much less animal-derived protein than was once the case.”
“eat very little meat”
“I've been vegan for the last 8 years, primarily for the animals.”
“grow a lot of food, don't eat meat, have moved a fair way towards veganism, weekly main shop at Unicorn, most food bought is organic and primarily local, am phasing out plastic as far as I can, get milk delivered in returnable glass bottles but unfortunately not an organic option, avoid palm oil as far as possible, or at least sustainable certification”
“I am vegetarian both out of concern for farm animals and also out of concern for climate change.”
“Eat very little meat; most meals are vegetarian. Used to grow most of the organic vegetables we ate; now buy an organic veg box every week. Still grow some in a more limited space.”

A Reflection on Mistranslations

The end of the 23rd Psalm (Authorised Version) reads, “Surely goodness and mercy shall follow me all the days of my life, and I will dwell in the house of the LORD for ever.” This has comforted many Christians with the assurance of eternal life in heaven. But this is a mistranslation. The New Revised Standard Version is more accurate – “and I shall dwell in the house of the LORD my whole life long” with a note at the bottom saying that the Hebrew is “length of days” The psalmist was writing way before the idea of an eternity in heaven was developed. Still, people may meditate on a mistranslation and it may bear spiritual fruit.

Elizabeth Coleman

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O Light that foll’west all my way,
I yield my flick’ring torch to thee;
My heart restores its borrowed ray,
That in thy sunshine’s blaze its day
May brighter, fairer be.

from the hymn “O Love That Will Not Let Me Go”

LOOKING FOR ACCOMMODATION IN MANCHESTER

From: roger ellis Email: roger@appleinter.net>; Telephone: 01142499378

I'm a Sheffield Quaker and I write to ask if you would be able to publicise the situation of a former asylum seeker now at the end of her first 5-year leave to remain, who has a council flat in Sheffield but has had to move to Manchester for work. She needs help to get herself a council house or other accommodation in Manchester, since she can't afford the time or expense of travelling to and from Manchester. My question, on her behalf, is: are there any Friends who could help? Maybe you could publicise her appeal through notices?

Many thanks, In friendship, Roger Ellis

***

Prayer

Prayer is an act of sharing with God, the Spirit, and not an attempt to prompt God to action. It is a promise that I will do my best, even if what I am able to do seems too insignificant to be worthwhile. When I pray for peace, and that the hearts of those in authority may be changed, it is a promise that I shall do such things as write to those in power, share in vigils, and above all lead my own life, as far as possible, in such a manner as to take away the occasion for strife between individuals and between peoples. When I pray for others who are in need, it is a promise to make my own contribution, perhaps by writing, by visiting, by a gift, by telling someone whom I know could help. When I pray for forgiveness, for strength and courage, I try to open my heart, making it possible for me humbly to receive.

'Anna', 1984 QF&P 2.27

Urban Mountaineering

In a hostile mountain range
It is useful to climb mainly for the purpose
Of learning the beauty of the mountains,
And to overcome the challenge of the mountains.
One doesn't want merely to collect summits.
When some one is having difficulty climbing
It is a climbing partner they need,
Not a mountain rescue helicopter
To put them in a hospital
Where they will unlearn their desire to solo North Faces
And learn to be content to watch television,
Smoke cigarettes,
Read the Sun,
And queue at bus stops to use their free bus passes.

Steven Willett 2 July 1996

One of six runners-up in the 1996 MHSS Trust World Mental Health Day--National Poetry Day Poetry Competition. Published Marooned Spring 1997, Hull and Pickering Area Quaker Meeting Newsletter, September, 2020

In a Police Cell

I would like to feel the freedom of the mountains
While banged up in a police cell.
Police are used to trying to earn respect
From all society's misfits and oddballs.
If one has an enquiring mind and a respectful manner
Police will help you meditate on the beauty of the mountains.

Unlike psychiatric staff who will frighten away
The cloud of millions of fairies and angels
One can quite happily converse with in a police cell
If one hasn't had one's creativity and generosity clobbered with drugs
By psychiatric staff trying to cure you of your delusions
And bring your mind down to the terrible social and spiritual isolation
Of the commonest psychosis.

Steven Willett
Survivors Poetry workshop, Manchester
16 December 1996

THE LAST “WOODBROOKE WHERE YOU ARE” SESSION ON 16 MARCH – “HOPE AS A PRACTICE”

Radical Stockport peace and justice trail on Friday 8th March to mark International Women's Day

by Phoebe Spence (photos by Robert Wilson)

Radical Stockport peace and justice trail is a follow on to Peterloo. Various precedents took place in Stockport, such as the Blanketeer's march to petition the Prince Regent ,and the workers' meetings at Sandy Brow, one of which saw off the yeomanry (15/2/1819).

The Stockport Female Reformers were the second in the country to be formed (2/7/1819), and there are other examples of radical women in Stockport as well as the Suffragists commemorated at Suffragette Square, e.g. Lilla Brockway co-founding the No Conscription Fellowship during WW1, Annie Pimlott who kept it going, as well as Mrs Roberts, mother of Walter Roberts, the first CO to die in terrible conditions at a labour camp.
More recently there was the Roberts Arundel strike and the Stockport Messenger strike – precursors to Rupert Murdoch's and other disputes, together with political and police tactics used against trade unionists.
The trail visits places in the town centre connected with these and other inspiring venues such as Strawberry Studios, and GRIT studios
I am grateful to a lot of local historians, and to Steve Roman who does the Manchester Peace trail, plus help from others in preparing the leaflet, and for trying out the route.

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An invitation to Friends, and their friends, in the Manchester area to take part in:

The Fire and the Hammer

to celebrate the 400th anniversary of George Fox's birth

What is it?

- A cantata about the early life of George Fox and the beginnings of Quakerism, written by Tony Biggin and Alec Davison for four-part choir, tenor solo and narrators with piano and instrumental accompaniment.

Who can take part?

- Any Quaker or friend of a Quaker, including young people of secondary school age, who can get to evening rehearsals at Manchester Central Quaker Meeting, with the possibility of day-time rehearsals in other venues if needed. Please contact John Sheldon (see below) if this applies to you.
- Non-singers will be needed to help with organisation, marketing, refreshments etc as well as reading the narration. Please come to the meeting if you can!

Introductory meeting

- Come and find out what it's all about, listen to and sing some of the music at

7.00pm on Tuesday 30 April
at Central Manchester Meeting House, M2 5NS

- We will decide who does what, when we rehearse and when we perform.
- There are no refreshments at the meeting; please bring some water!

What will it cost?

- It costs nothing to come to the introductory meeting but we will need to buy scores etc and we may ask you to chip in for this.

Read more about it!

- *The Friend* of 2 February 2024 has an article about this piece (enclosed if you are reading this as an email attachment).

I am interested but can't get to the introductory meeting, or for more info:

- Contact: John Sheldon of Bolton Local Meeting (john.sheldon@uwclub.net / 07947 030117)

MY RESPONSE TO A QUARTET FOR STRINGS BY JAMES MACMILLAN

by Hilary Brazell

This was written to evoke a chapel in the far Hebrides, with a sense of Gregorian chant which may have been sung there.
It was a very moving piece, and I visualized this ruined, granite chapel, situated on the edge of the land, with great views of the ocean, and other islands, an enormous sky. It was a windy day, a brisk breeze raising white horses on the water, white clouds scudding across the sky, and the wind making patterns in the beautiful grasses. Utterly peaceful! The soothing hypnotic rhythm of the Gregorian chant
I thought how our souls seek peace – the Peace of the Lord which passes all understanding, and I suddenly realised in that holy place that we achieve that Peace when we can finally let go of all our niggling worries and anxieties, our regrets over things done and not done. I felt this overpowering sense of relief, a great sense of acceptance, and was it forgiveness? Of both being forgiven, and of forgiving. In that moment I understood that, even though I have claimed for a long time that I neither worry about things, nor feel guilt, nevertheless some events cast a long shadow. In the lifting of that shadow I experienced a deep sense of Peace. 'All shall be well, All manner of things shall be well', as Julian of Norwich reassured us.
(All in the space of the time it took to play that piece)

SKILLS SHARING

BUILDING OUR COMMUNITY/ WORKING FOR EQUALITY

We raised c£1000 through the Summer Garden Gathering on "Wealth Inequality". Half for the Quaker Work Fund and half for the Quaker Congo Partnership. It was great fun, eating other Friends' cakes and ice creams, sharing the Apple crop, having the promise of a professional-quality photo-portrait or a trip into a Bluebell wood followed by tea.

So why not carry on? That's what Sandra Dutson and I have decided to do and here is the list of things and activities on offer for a fair price. Funds raised are still for our Quaker Work Fund and Quaker Congo Partnership

- Learning to juggle with Jay Iddon
- Dealing with back pain with Nataly Lebouleux: 30 minutes session, with suggested exercises
- Lisa Hoctor will make a beautiful artificial flower crown for weddings, events and day-to-day joy
- Jonathan will take you through a bluebell wood, followed by tea: **SATURDAY APRIL 20TH (OR 27TH, if they are a bit late)**
- Walk around Bridgewater Gardens as Sandra Dutson's guest free ticket holder
- Want help in realising a cherished goal? 30 minute telephone call with Bonnie Meekums
- Walk up Pendle Hill with Jonathan. Up the short steep way from Barley and down the long slope to the West to Cockhill for tea.

Day trip. **DATE CURRENTLY JUNE 15TH BUT MAY CHANGE TO SUIT ALL THOSE INTERESTED.**

PS. There are two lists now: so you can make OFFERS AND you can make REQUESTS

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VISIT TO RENEW HUB

On Friday 5 April 2024, the Environment Group has organised a visit to the Renew Hub at Nash Road, Salford in Trafford Park. - it's an opportunity to both explore the economics of upcycling and reuse.

The visit has been arranged for 2-4pm. The nearest tram stop is a 15 minute walk away, is Trafford Park. This will be our meeting point at 1.40pm.

There's a couple of spaces still free for people to get back to Anna Bunney by the Tuesday after Easter
email **anna.bunney@yahoo.com**
if you'd like to attend

It is important that you contact Anna Bunney, and don't just turn up, as there is some essential information that she will send you.

POSTED IN CHAT BY STEVE WILLETT
DURING SOCIAL JUSTICE GROUP 21 MARCH

Willie James Pye was executed this morning in Georgia despite an IQ of 68.

https://www.gfadp.org/

https://www.gfadp.org/?link_id=3&can_id=9e300556e15e94a27a1813e7ba28fd46&source=email-gfadp-statement-on-the-execution-of-willie-pye&email_referrer=email_2251791&email_subject=gfadp-statement-on-the-execution-of-willie-pye

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JEREMY CORBYN AND SALTER LECTURE

by Elizabeth Coleman

Trustees have advised Yearly Meeting Agenda Committee that the Salter Lecture organised by Quaker Socialist Society at which Jeremy Corbyn is one of the speakers should not be held in Friends House at the time of Britain Yearly Meeting, as it would be a distraction, and for other reasons. Sufferings and Agenda Committee agreed with Trustees.

While it is widely believed that Jeremy Corbyn did not deal adequately with anti-Semitism in the Labour party, a different view is rarely heard. Here are extracts from Jewish Voices for Labou r and Al Jazeera

websites. (I recognise that not everyone will agree with these, and would welcome newsletter contributions giving a different point of view.)

JEWISH VOICES FOR LABOUR

- There is considerable evidence that Jewish members have been disproportionally targeted with investigation for antisemitism. It appears that as a population share, almost five times more Jewish than non-Jewish Labour members have faced complaints of antisemitism which have been investigated. We estimate that Jewish JVL members have been subject to actioned antisemitism complaints at a rate 20 times greater than non-Jewish Labour members;
- The assumption of disciplinary investigations is that all Jews are Zionists and/or that anti-Zionists are not proper Jews and indeed are antisemitic, delegitimising an entire swathe of Jewish opinion and tradition;
- Targeting JVL members in positions of power within the Party with bizarre allegations of antisemitism, based on demands for justice for others accused;
- Calls for proscription: an MP, an elected agent of the Party, has called for JVL to be proscribed, evidently because of our views, expressed as Jewish members, about antisemitism within the Party;
- Jewish members who disagree with the International Holocaust Remembrance Alliance (IHRA) Working Definition of Antisemitism, the EHRC's findings, and/or the Party's treatment of Jeremy Corbyn are disciplined if they voice their opinions publicly at local meetings in their constituencies;
- Training by a Zionist organisation, the JLM, whose views are hostile to Corbyn, Corbyn's supporters and JVL, is now mandatory for any Labour Party elected officer and recommended for all Labour Party members;
- JVL education on antisemitism is banned to the extent that constituencies or branches that want to invite the JVL team of educationalists to deliver a session are disciplined; this has been coupled by the Party discouraging affiliations to JVL.

AL JAZEERA

- Al Jazeera's Investigative Unit has obtained documents that look behind the scenes of the "crisis of anti-Semitism" that engulfed the British Labour Party under Jeremy Corbyn.
- An analysis of internal party documents, social media data and covert recordings reveals how senior Labour officials attempted to undermine support for Corbyn and, on some occasions, to silence debate about Israel's treatment of Palestinians.
- The files are part of The Labour Files, an investigation by Al Jazeera's Investigative Unit based on 500 gigabytes of documents, emails, video and audio files from the Labour Party dating from 1998 to 2021.
- The data reveals how the party's bureaucrats, whose nominal function is to serve the interests of the party, attempted to undermine members supportive of Jeremy Corbyn, Labour's leader from 2015 to 2020.

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The Tragedy of the Holy Land

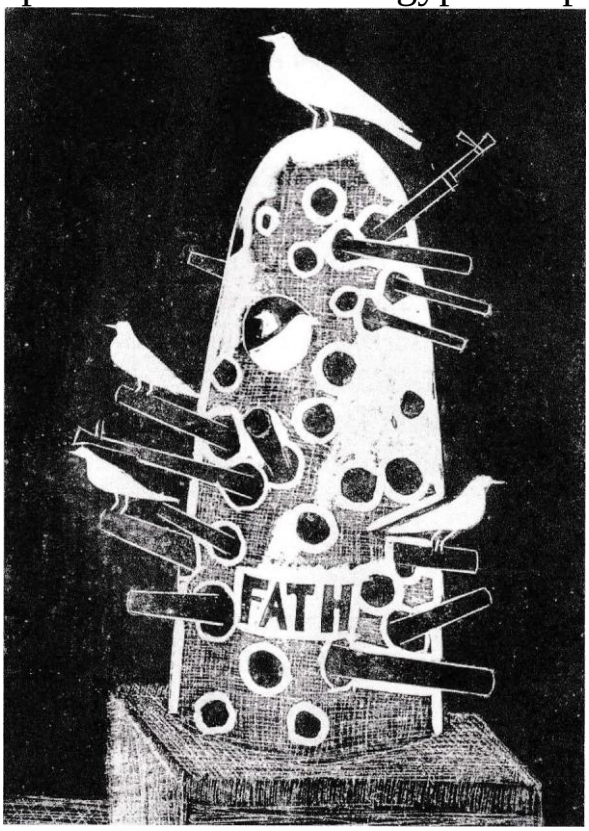
John Lynes on the continuing trauma and conflict in the Middle East

I have the mixed privilege and burden of British citizenship, a Jewish upbringing, and eight years as a human rights observer in Gaza and the West Bank with the Christian Peacemaker Team (now the Community Peacemaker Team) and the Ecumenical Accompaniment Programme of the World Council of Churches. So I am distraught at the news from the Holy Land. I feel with the Israelis, many themselves children or grandchildren of Holocaust survivors, hemmed in by hostile Arab nations. I feel with Israeli parents watching their teenage children snatched from home and conscripted into an army of occupation, and finding it harder, with each exchange of rockets, to see this as a true expression of their Jewish faith.

I feel with Palestinian farmers, robbed of their ancestral lands, watching the pillaging of their olive trees. I feel with the Palestinian children and their teachers I used to watch, bullied at Israeli checkpoints on their way to and from school. I feel with homeless refugees under merciless bombardment in Gaza.

The Nakba

We Brits share responsibility for this prolonged tragedy. When Britain granted freedom to colonies in Africa and South Asia, we left behind, in each case, an elected parliament, a civil administration,
and a working framework of law and order. But when Britain ended its Mandate in Palestine in 1948, we played 'God Save the Queen' and sailed away knowing that Arab armles were poised to invade, and that the new State of Israel would fight back. The outcome — the Nakba — was predictable. Jordan occupied the West Bank. Egypt occupied the Gaza Strip.



'Fath' ('V '9, Mustafa al-Hallaj, 1968

there was no Palestinian State. Thousands of Palestinians became, and remain, refugees.

Hamas

Palestinians' recent factional divisions are at last healed. The ongoing slaughter in Gaza has reunited Palestinians in Gaza, in the West Bank and in their diaspora, in support of Hamas. They respect Hamas as a bastion of Islam, and as the provider of schools, hospitals, universities and social facilities. They contrast Hamas' resistance to Israel with the perceived ineffectiveness of their West-aligned Fatah rivals.

What of those Hamas terrorists? Every oppressed party in the Middle East has a military wing. Jewish parties under the British Mandate were no exception: remember Irgun and the Stern Gang? The armed counterpart of Hamas is the AlQassam Brigades. They were responsible for the attack on 7th October 2024. This does not absolve Hamas itself from all responsibility, but does not justify damning them all as terrorists.
The Al-Qassam Brigades were proscribed by the UK in 2001 under the 2000 Terrorism Act. Hamas as a political party was not proscribed until twenty years later. The latter proscription has been pointless and unhelpful. It has obstructed direct negotiations with Hamas, hindering Britain's possible role as a peacemaker.

Zionism

It is easy to misunderstand the relation between Judaism and the State of Israel. The Holocaust was a theological challenge to religious Jews. Jewish festivals — Passover, Hanukah, Purim — typically celebrate God's protection for His Chosen People. In the Holocaust six million Jews were slaughtered just for being Jews. Where was God in Auschwitz?

The creation of the State of Israel seemed to be God's answer — the Promised Land Restored! Many Jews (but not all) sincerely experienced

criticism of Israeli politics as an attack on their faith, a rejection of God, and clearly antisemitic.

The Language of Blame

The history of Palestine is a catalogue of appalling mistakes made by Israelis, by Palestinians and — not least — by the UK. That said, in a situation of oppression we cannot pretend to be neutral. But when we rightly speak out for Palestinian rights, we need to recognise that we are up against two traumatised communities.

How else to explain why Netanyahu's government believes that bombing Palestinians without mercy will discourage them from supporting Hamas? How else to explain why Al-Qassam launched its attack on unarmed Israeli civilians on 7th October 2024, knowing that Israel would respond against Palestinians with overwhelming force in return?

It is easy to blame this side or that. The language of blame — 'apartheid', 'genocide', terrorist', 'boycott' — can only exacerbate the tragedy. The Holy Land cries out for prayer, for empathy, for mutual compassion, for reconciliation.

There is no space here to spell out what that means in political terms. I attempted this several years ago in a submission to the UK Foreign Affairs Committee. If you care to read it, it is still on the Government website — https://committees.parliament.uk/ writtenevidence/79412/pdf/

Untitled, Mustafa al-Hallaj, 1980

The above article was copied with permission from the London Catholic Worker Magazine.
John Lynes is a member of Hastings Quaker Meeting.

WEEKLY VIGIL FOR THE PEOPLE OF ISRAEL AND PALESTINE

Amnesty International Manchester Group holds a silent vigil for the people of Israel and Palestine every Friday from 5pm to 6pm in St Peter's Square. Everyone is welcome, but please do not turn up without looking at their website https://www.amnesty.org.uk/groups/manchester where they explain what you need to know.

HUDDERSFIELD QUAKERS VIGIL FOR PEACE

Sandra Dutson joined Huddersfield Friends at their regular peace vigil on 23 March.

One of the Friends said, "Thank you so much for coming over yesterday Sandra - it was lovely to see you and it really gives a lift to us regulars when we have a visitor or someone new come to join us. We share photos and a message on social media after each vigil - that way we reach 100s and often 1,000s more people."

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LISTENING

Why not try to open your ears and your minds to the people around you, people on the radio, people in books; to drink in the beautiful, devastating humanity that surrounds us, and try to understand? Notice when you find yourself assessing, or judging, or picking a side, and wonder: why? See if you can listen instead.

people are fascinating... if someone is boring, it may well be an unconscious defence to keep others away.

from a Guardian article by Moya Sarner, March 2024

RECRUITING FOR ADMINISTRATOR TO WORK AT CENTRAL MANCHESTER FRIENDS MEETING HOUSE

Dear Friends

The staff team, based at Central Manchester Meeting House, is recruiting for admin support, focusing on Quaker matters and facilities, ie the maintenance and upkeep of our buildings and grounds.

You do not have to be a Quaker to join the staff team, though of course, all staff members must uphold our commitment to equality, truth, sustainability and peace. Any Friend who is interested in applying is welcome to talk to Liz or Clare informally, but they must complete the application form as described in the recruitment pack.

Salary: £23,500 - £25,066 full time (pro-rata for part time) plus generous pension, holiday and other benefits.
Hours: 15 – 37.5 hours a week, flexible
Location: Friends Meeting House, Central Manchester with the option for occasional home working.

Applications will only be accepted on our official application form.
Closing date: Monday 15 April 2024, 5pm.
Interviews: Monday 22 April with appointment as soon as possible after interview.
Full details are available on our website at: https://www.manchesterquakers.org.uk/join-the-staff-team/
The recruitment pack and application form are on the website and Friends are encouraged to share these with any of your contacts or networks that might be interested.

Thank you
Liz

Free spiritual accompaniment for individuals:

Has your Quaker faith inspired you to become involved in climate witness, or would you like to be?

Do you sometimes feel spiritually lost, burnt out or doubt that you are making a difference? Would you like to connect with someone who can accompany you on your spirit-led journey of witness?

Witness can take many forms, it's not always direct action or protesting on the streets. It can also include:

- Community organising,
- Local sustainability projects,
- Campaigning and political lobbying,
- Linking up with related social justice struggles (cost of living, refugees, racial justice, supporting striking workers etc),
- Making changes to the way you live or to your meeting house e.g. our Quaker Ecochurch Network,
- Or seeking to inspire others through 'being patterns and examples'.

More information can be found here: Information Sheet https://www.woodbrooke.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/2023/05/Spiritual-Accompaniment-for-Climate-Witness-information-sheet-update-May-2023.pdf

This is a free service.

To apply please email learning@woodbrooke.org.uk

For more information about other aspects of the Climate Crisis project, including the Quaker Ecochurch Network, a variety of free spiritual resources, and our courses and sessions please visit https://www.woodbrooke.org.uk/learn/climate-crisis/

We want our programme to reflect the needs of friends in local meetings. If you are not yet involved in climate witness and feel that something might be particularly helpful for you to move into this space, or if you are involved already and feel that there's something we could offer that could support your witness further, please feel free to get in touch with kim.harrison@woodbrooke.org.uk to discuss your ideas, concerns and inspirations.

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GREATER MANCHESTER UNITE SAYS "STOP ARMING ISRAEL"

Unite the Union's Community Section organises people who are not in employment – unemployed, retired etc. They are finding out which companies in Greater Manchester are producing armaments which end up in Israel, and are working on a campaign to secure a halt to production and movement of equipment to the Israeli armed forces. If interested, contact GMUCBSecretary@gmail.com

ANTI-SEMITISM

by Elizabeth Coleman

I heard somewhere that it's difficult to discuss the Holy Trinity without falling into heresy. I feel the same about talking about some topics today – including gender and anti-Semitism. However, if we are to learn and change, we have to talk and not be afraid sometimes to express views that we might later decide were unacceptable, as we learn more. We are learning about racism. A few years ago, we might have said that racism did not exist among Quakers, or was a rare anomaly, but now we see things differently. Kate McNally has said that racism is the lens through which we, brought up in a racist society, see the world. We now accept that there is racism in the Society of Friends, and that there is work to be done. But we have not moved forward in the same way on anti-Semitism.

Let's start at the beginning – what is anti-Semitism? One widely used definition is that produced by the International Holocaust Remembrance Alliance:

"Antisemitism is a certain perception of Jews, which may be expressed as hatred toward Jews. Rhetorical and physical manifestations of antisemitism are directed toward Jewish or non-Jewish individuals and/or their property, toward Jewish community institutions and religious facilities."

I think few Quakers would disagree with this. However, the IHRA examples of anti-Semitism that go with the definition, while being helpful in some ways, may be more problematic. You can find them on https://holocaustremembrance.com/resources/working-definition-antisemitism

I would like to draw attention to points 7, 10 and 11.

Starting with point 7 – An example of anti-Semitism is "*Denying the Jewish people their right to self-determination, e.g., by claiming that the existence of a State of Israel is a racist endeavor.*"
There are many ethnic groups, such as the Sikhs, who do not have their own state, and it seems to me that it is not anti-Semitic to have different views about the state of Israel. When it was formed, the majority of the people living there were Palestinian Arabs. However, over the years the Arabs fled or were driven out. Jewish people were encouraged to come to live in Israel, while Palestinians were not allowed to return to their ancestral lands. After the 1967 war, the Israelis took over West Bank, and illegally settled Jewish people there, while making life extremely difficult for the Arabs who had lived there for generations. (I will not go into the Gaza situation here.) In my view, people who are not anti-Semitic may have different views as to whether all this constitutes racism.

Then point 10 – "*Drawing comparisons of contemporary Israeli policy to that of the Nazis.*"
I have heard Quakers make such comparisons. I agree that they are anti-Semitic, and we need to raise awareness among Quakers, so that Friends do not inadvertently say things that may be anti-Semitic.

Then point 11 – "*Holding Jews collectively responsible for actions of the state of Israel.*"
It is easy to muddle Israel with Judaism, and this is what makes it so difficult to discuss anti-Semitism. I think that point 7 (above) does confuse the two. We need to think how to avoid this, and it will not be easy.

Jewish Voices for Labour have complained:
"*There is considerable evidence that Jewish members (of the Labour party) have been disproportionally targeted with investigation for antisemitism.*
The assumption of disciplinary investigations is that all Jews are Zionists and/or that anti-Zionists are not proper Jews and indeed are antisemitic, delegitimising an entire swathe of Jewish opinion and tradition;
Jewish members who disagree with the International Holocaust Remembrance Alliance (IHRA) Working Definition of Antisemitism, … are disciplined if they voice their opinions publicly at local meetings in their constituencies."

I am very interested in Judaism, the Hebrew language, and the historical Jesus (who was, of course, Jewish). This has led me to study in evening classes, and to study for an MA in Hebrew and Jewish Studies at University College London. Through this, I met Jewish people and learned about Judaism. I will try to summarise what I have learned about anti-Semitism.

The trauma of the holocaust is central to all this. Jewish people may see small acts of anti-Semitism as the possible beginnings of a slide down a slippery slope leading to something much more terrible. In a letter to The Friend referring to the Gaza situation, the writer said:

"I ask Friends to imagine the outcry if, in the wake of an IRA bomb blast in the 70s and 80s, the Margaret Thatcher government were to react by

indiscriminately destroying whole cities, killing and traumatising whole populations of innocent people in an attempt to eliminate the IRA."

It could be that we Quakers were not hugely traumatised by the IRA killings – they did not touch on a deep terror within us. However, the killings in Israel immediately reminded Jewish people of the holocaust. When the Jews needed to escape from Nazi Germany, many doors were closed to them, and they were abandoned to die. The state of Israel has a particular place in the hearts of many Jewish people because, if things did get bad, they would have somewhere to go. The idea that even Israel was not safe, was very significant to them.

Non-Jews can think of anti-Semitism as relatively trivial compared with racism against black people. Many Jewish people have prospered in our society, while many black people are struggling with poverty as well as racism. But any discrimination is unacceptable, and I think that what I have said about the holocaust may be one reason why anti-Semitism is so important.

The Jewish experience of anti-Semitism is different from the black person's experience of racism. Generally you cannot tell if someone is Jewish unless they tell you, or choose to dress distinctively, or when thy attend synagogue, Jewish school etc. Some people think it is anti-Semitic to point this out, probably because it may seem to trivialise anti-Semitism, but it is true.

We as UK Quakers are quite a homogeneous and united group, with our local and area meetings and Britain Yearly Meeting, our

silent worship, use of Quaker Faith and Practice, and our testimonies. There are many more Jews than Quakers in the UK, but they do not form a united group. Some are religious, some are not. There are different forms of religious Judaism, some very traditional, others liberal, and they do not agree with each other. The orthodox may not accept people who convert to liberal Judaism as Jewish.

There is a strong Jewish group who dominate the debate, but there are other groups whose voices are not heard. We need to be careful not to fall into the trap that the Labour Party has fallen into, of accepting one controversial view of anti-Semitism. If we decide it would be useful to start dialogue with Jewish people, we need to be aware of the many factions within Judaism, and not limit our engagement to one faction.

I have often heard Quakers talk passionately about their concern for the Palestinians, while they seem to care far less about the suffering of the Syrians or the Uyghurs in China. I wonder if this passion has roots in anti-Semitism – ie that we are more concerned about what Israel does wrong, because it is a Jewish state, than (for example) China.

Race is not a scientific concept, and this is particularly clear when you look at Judaism. Traditionally, you are Jewish if your mother is Jewish, but not if only your father is Jewish. You remain Jewish even if you are totally secular, provided you do not actually convert to another faith. While conversion to Judaism is not common, you can become Jewish by conversion, while having no

genetic connection to other Jews. The people who are genetically closest to the Palestinian Jews of Jesus' time, (many of whom were themselves converts or descendants of converts) are probably the Palestinian Arabs. While the Romans killed many Jews in Palestine, and drove many into exile, many remained, and over the years most converted to Islam or Christianity.

Some of the people I most admire were/are Jewish men: Jesus, the writers of the book of Isaiah, and more recently Bob Dylan, Hyam Maccoby, Sigmund Freud, Wilhelm Reich, Noam Chomsky.

Jewish people are a lot more interested in Quakers than (say) the Muslims are. Past generations of Quakers saved many Jewish lives at the time of the holocaust. Quakers are now active in Israel/Palestine on a small scale through the Ecumenical Accompaniers (EAPPI). Quakers may now be seen by some Jewish people as siding with their enemies, because of our support for the Palestinians.

If we are to move forward as Quakers in tackling anti-Semitism within the Society of Friends, we need to talk, and I hope that these thoughts contribute to this conversation.

AMNESTY TALK ON GENOCIDE
by Sandra Dutson

I joined the Amnesty talk given on February 12th, the full transcript of which can be viewed immediately below. The speaker was Peter Weatherby, a Human rights lawyer with experience in the UK in disaster inquiries on behalf of bereaved families and also in a number of international courts.
https://www.amnesty.org.uk/groups/manchester/text-talk-given-pete-weatherby-kc-our-february-12th-group-meeting
What now follows is an attempt to highlight some of the key points along with a few of my own reflections in the light of more recent events but I do recommend reading the full transcript. In addition to what I summarise there are other interesting reflections eg on Hamas

As part of the talk the speaker used the definition of Genocide.as set out in 1951 as the Genocide Convention. Israel is a signatory. The recent case has helped many people understand that genocide is more than mass murder or mass killings. In essence it contains two things: a list of forbidden, heinous acts perpetrated against a national, ethnical, racial or religious group, and a specific intention to destroy the group or a part of the group.

So in terms of acts it prohibits:
1 Killing members of the group
2 Causing serious physical or mental harm to members of the group
3 Deliberately inflicting conditions of life calculated to bring about physical destruction of the group or part of it
4 Imposing measures to prevent births within the group
5 Forcibly transferring children from the group to another group

Once the physical acts are determined, the specific intent to destroy the group, at least in part, must be established.

Genocide is not completely straightforward therefore, and in the real world, intent is the most difficult to establish in court proceedings, and that is why cases of genocide are comparatively rare: and regrettably not because we live in a peaceful world. Genocide cases are rare therefore because as an international crime it was defined extremely narrowly, and will catch only the worst atrocities.

The International Court of Justice (ICJ) was the UN body making the judgement. It is the top judicial body of the UN, its jurisdiction is to determine disputes between nations. (Not to be confused with the International Criminal Court, the ICC which is a separate body and indicts, prosecutes, and punishes individuals) Israel is bound by its decisions. Israel sent a strong legal team to oppose the case. The panel of 15 judges represented a wide range of international legal systems, with judges from nations more or less friendly with Israel and South Africa. To those judges were added one from Israel and one from South Africa.

In summary the Court did not make a full, final determination but found that there is a plausible case against Israel for the ultimate international crime. The massive majorities on the ruling: all by 15-2 or 16-1, were also telling as it cannot be argued that the judges voted according to their own countries' diplomatic positions.
The talk had started with some appalling figures about the numbers killed and injured in Gaza. The figures also make clear which significant groups have been caught up and even targeted in the attacks by Israel. Throughout the speaker made clear some of the facts which give substance to the charge.

340 health workers have been killed and 99 arrested. 123 ambulances destroyed. 85 journalists killed and others injured or

arrested. 154 UN workers killed. As well as residential homes, hundreds of educational establishments, places of worship destroyed. In W Bank since Oct 7th 6490 Palestinians arrested, many held in administrative detention, and hundreds killed.

More recent numbers of those killed and injured are now much higher including thousands of children and women so the first 2 parts of the definition have clearly been met. Gaza has been blockaded since 2007 and after Oct 7th 2023 Israel tightened the siege with electricity, water and aid cut off or repeatedly restricted. There has been flooding of some tunnels by sea water with potential of long term damage to fresh water. So the impact on living conditions and the dire consequences is also clear. With destruction of so many hospitals and health care facilities and deaths of health workers lack of healthcare for pregnant women and babies, the fourth part of the definition is also evidenced.

Establishing intent to destroy can be found in statements made by Israeli politicians and officials. These have been documented. Some might be disputed though still unpleasant, dehumanising and appearing to be applied to all Palestinian people but there are many of them and some from the far right are totally clear.

One significant part of the Convention on Genocide is; 'apart from the prohibition of genocide, **the Convention parties, including Israel, the US, the UK, S Africa, and the other 146 State parties, have an obligation to do everything they reasonably can to prevent genocide both within AND outside of their own territory. In legal terms this means that all Convention parties have standing to take a case against another to prevent or stop a genocide. So, this provides a proper legal basis upon which South Africa has taken Israel to the ICJ'**. It also seems to me to mean those countries supplying weapons to Israel are complicit in the Genocide.

One final point the lawyer made was that there are real difficulties of substantiating evidence when Israel has not allowed foreign journalists free access to give independent reports. He goes further and says he feels sceptical of some allegations made by Israel because of known past behaviour. He is particularly concerned that the allegations against some of the UNWRA staff made by Israel were made on the day the ICJ gave its judgement. On March 25th a Ceasefire resolution was finally passed at the UN Security Council but is being disregarded. Netanyahu clearly is dismissive of UN judgements and agencies and personnel.

Peter Weatherby said this in the conclusion of his talk. 'I have practiced human rights law domestically and on the international stage. I have a commitment to the rule of law. The law is important. But it is important not to put it on a pedestal. Firstly, because it is possible to have laws which protect all manner of inhumanity. You need look no further than Nazi Germany or apartheid South Africa for that. But secondly, and most particularly in international humanitarian and human rights law, as I have depressingly illustrated, we are still in the age where might trumps right, where international law and binding court orders are ignored with impunity.

He did however think for all the limitations of law, and possible abuses of the law, it was right to use the ICJ orders to challenge our own government's support for Israel and in particular the morality and legality of arms exports and to call for the restoration of support for aid for Gaza.
It was also vital he said to work to win the public debate via protests, campaigning, petitions, and challenging our democratic representatives.
For ourselves I think we need to continue to work on all those. And also to understand better international laws and the work of the UN which seems to me vital when just about all our major problems are global.

QUOTES ABOUT CAMPAIGNING

BY AREA MEETING FRIENDS
FROM ENVIRONMENT GROUP MAPPING EXERCISE

As a retired person, I can put my energy into campaigning and/or lifestyle choices, and in the March newsletter I wrote about how I thought that our main energy should be put into campaigning. Having re-looked at the Mapping Report results, I think the contrast is not so much between campaigning and lifestyle, as between reaching out to the outside world (through employment as well as campaigning) and lifestyle. For people of working age, job choice and what they do in their employment may be the main ways they can contribute. It is encouraging to see from the report of the Mapping Exercise how much Friends are doing!

Elizabeth Coleman

EMPLOYMENT

"My whole job is focused on the climate crisis. I always try to embed it more and more in everything else we do, and in every decision that gets made."

"Currently completing a degree in architecture. Involved in community projects aligned with sustainable values. Will be specialising in sustainable design"

"I work for the Environment Agency promoting and supporting climate resilience. It's the biggest part of my environment action - and I get paid for it. Not always easy and sometimes politically compromising."

"I drafted a sustainability policy for my employer."

“Try to promote more recycling, even where it takes longer. This can be a major challenge in my industry - charity retail - where volumes of incoming stock are large and staff / volunteer time is limited.”

“We do what we can with the compost and our no-plastics rule in the cafe, but the wider hospital environment is very hard to influence. A particular concern is waste disposal - we have no recycling facilities for our cardboard, garden waste, drink cans and bottles despite repeated requests.”

“Encouraging Catholic parishes and schools to live simply, sustainably and in solidarity with the poor through CAFOD's Livesimply Award.”

“Using online resources rather than printing paper copies for training courses.”

“Union environmental rep”

CAMPAIGNING

“Vigils on Mount St steps”

“Numerous demonstrations related to climate change.”

“Protest at arms fair in London. War is an under-recognised as a catastrophe for the environment”

“Green Christian member.”

“With Greenpeace mostly since 2010 but also independently. I have been arrested many times, to court several times, and convicted only once.”

“Youth Climate Change strikes”

“Various marches, rallies, vigils”

“I am an active member of the Green Party.”

“We present on community radio salfordcityradio.org a programme about making good use of resources in Salford and eco tourism podcasts on Soundcloud. called Green giraffes and worms. It makes us feel better that we can do something.”

“I am a NVDA (non-violent direct action) trained activist with Greenpeace (over a decade). I volunteer with XR (Extinction Rebellion) North (behind the scenes supporting other volunteers).”

“I am a founding member of Manchester Climate Justice Coalition (previously COP26 coalition).”

“I attended our Quaker area meeting environment group”.

“I founded the CUT campaign www.cleanupthetropicaltimbertrade.org a sister organisation to SAVErivers, an indigenous forest defender organisation in Sarawak, East Malaysia, Borneo. This campaign is endorsed by FOE UK under their Planet over Profit banner”

“I am on the mailing list of Friends of the Earth, Greenpeace, and probably others, and sign petitions sometimes.”

“I'm a volunteer at Wythenshawe Hospital where I do some gardening and work in one of the cafes. Both these areas give opportunities for demonstrating/sharing concerns about the environment.”

People have contacted MPs and/or councillors about environmental concerns as follows: Supporting COP26; Greater Manchester Pension Fund; Retrofit training; Climate justice; Pesticides and their effect on bees; Local tree planting; Climate Change; Cycle and pedestrian routes; Pesticide use esp Neonics; HS2 local encroachment on woodland; National campaigns about renewable energy; Protests about oil company profits; Improving pavements so that it's safer to walk to my destination and to local bus stops; Rivers; Trophy hunting; Climate and health; Fast fashion; Clean air; Loss and Damage; Net Zero; Climate changing; Transport; Fracking; Tree felling; River Pollution; Windfarm Applications; Too many to count/remember! Latest was in support of campaign to ban sand eel fishing

DONATING

Donating to campaigning organisations can be an effective way of campaigning. Here are some of the many organisations that Friends donate to: Greenpeace, World Wildlife Trust, Friends of the Earth, XR (Extinction Rebellion), Woodland Trust, Soil Association

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OUR GRANDMOTHER

In Radio 4's "Desert Island Discs" on 29 March, the archaeologist Alice Roberts, explaining about how our clavicle bone developed, referred to "our great to the power x grandmother probably about 500 million years ago who was a fish."

FROM RACIAL JUSTICE GROUP
items submitted by Margaret Calvert

PREPARING FOR THE GENERAL ELECTION

These queries are offered as questions Friends might put to canvassers for the Local Elections on 2nd May 2024.

1. Taxation: What will your party do to bring about regional powers for raising funds/taxation and spending?
2. Policing services: How would your party work with the Policing Services to avoid racialising teen-agers and young men?
3. Libraries: What plans has your party to support the local library services?
4. Recycling: What plans has your party to improve the collection of and correct recycling of plastics?
5. Housing: How would you ensure the provision of sufficient affordable housing and the enforcement of applicable housing regulations?

TARGETING OF MOSQUE

The Racial Justice Steering Group were distressed to learn of the targeting of Bilal Mosque, located in the Prestwich area of Manchester.
Ursula Sharma will write to the mosque, expressing our support.

News from QCEA (Quaker Council for European Affairs)

Nature Restoration Law

The Nature Restoration law has undergone a challenging legislative journey. This law aimed, for example, to restore 30% of degraded ecosystems in EU countries by 2030. It was seriously challenged when right wing parties tried to obstruct the law. The text was watered down considerably with targets reduced to restoration of 20% of the EU's land and sea areas by 2030 before it was approved by the European Parliament on 27 February. After months of negotiating the deal, the law was supposed to be finally adopted by the Council on 25 March. The last minute opposition from Hungary, Italy, Sweden, the Netherlands and Poland froze the passing of the bill.

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SAFEGUARDING TRAINING

Central Manchester FMH on Sunday afternoon, 23rd June, for in-person Safeguarding training.

We suggest bring lunch and eat together from about 1pm, and run the session from 2-4.30pm.

Can you please inform the Friends who work (or plan to work) with children in your LM and ask them to save the date?

EASTER SATURDAY AT AM BURIAL GROUND, SALE

SPRING JOY AT AM BURIAL GROUND

EASTER SATURDAY AT AM BURIAL GROUND

REGULAR VISITORS AT AM BURIAL GROUND ENJOYING EASTER SATURDAY

NOTE FROM THE EDITOR

If you are not on the mailing list, and would like to be emailed future copies of the Newsletter, 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 arrive, so I suggest that you aim for 29 April. I put almost everything I receive into the newsletter, with very little editing. Short items with pictures are best. Letters in response to articles in this newsletter are welcome.

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. Think before submitting personal information, email addresses and photos. 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.

If you want to make contact with anyone who writes in the newsletter, and no contact details are given, email me elizcol@dialstart.net and I'll forward your email to them
Elizabeth Coleman, Editor 07969 385080