

MANCHESTER & WARRINGTON AREA QUAKER MEETING NEWSLETTER NO 48 JANUARY 2026



Eccles Quaker Meeting House

INDEX

- 3 - The Earthcare Residential – Jonathan Dale
- 4 – Who’s Who in 2026
- 5 – Area Meeting Dates for 2026
- 6 – Money and Tony Weekes’s Articles
- 8 – Please Donate to Support Area Meeting
- 9 – Herodotus
- 11– Judgement Call – Kevin Sell
- 16 – Reflections on the Newsletter – Elizabeth Coleman
- 18 – Yearly Meeting dates
- 19– Ginko Biloba Trees
- 21 – Message from Area Meeting Treasurer
- 22 – Banksy Exhibition in Manchester
- 23– Vigil Organised by Amnesty
- 24 – David Blamires Testimony
- 29 – For Your Diary – NFPB meeting on Peace Testimony
- 30– Summer School Report
- 33 – Film Showing – The Conspiracists - 1 Feb
- 34 – Quaker Climate Activist Appeals Conviction
- 36 – Quaker Congo Partnership
- 37 - Silenced by Fear – Robert Wilson
- 39 – New Green Deal
- 42 – Report from Junior Yearly Meeting
- 44 – Greater Manchester Green Summit
- 45 – Possible Addition to Advices & Queries?
- 46– The River Cannot Go Back - poem
- 47– Quaker supports Just Stop Oil
- 49- Quakers in DRC Appeal for Peace
- 52- Street People – Alan Pinch
- 55 – Central Manchester “Twinning” with South Africa
- 56 - Quotes from the Reith Lectures
- 57 – Trustees Proscribed Groups and the Newsletter
- 64 - “Wet Paint” Workshop
- 64 – Danny Dorling talk on Inequality
- 66 – Being a Trustee of Quaker Congo Partnership -Sandra Dutson
- 68 – Note from the Editor

The Earthcare Residential - The prophetic scale of the crises we face by Jonathan Dale

The experience was engaging, participative, sensitive and inclusive. It was grand to be with such a lovely group of people.

I came away, however, feeling that we had missed the prophetic scale of the crises we face that challenge us to wrestle towards responses that begin to match that scale. And so I missed a sense of momentum such as we were vouchsafed at the previous event. Perhaps we needed a plenary input from a Friend who is already in the ring, wrestling? Or a feedback from listeners creatively gathering inspiration from the group sessions.

If the contemporary economic order is demonic – a violent and destructive worship of human wealth and power then the call for a decolonising of our lives and our thoughts is more total than we seemed to acknowledge. Seeing ourselves as just a part of the whole web of life is much easier said than done. Around the turn of the century Jeremy Seabrook wrote powerfully of the immense, ensnaring power of the capitalist system, infiltrating our hearts and minds, our faith and our actions. It colonises us by its relentless focus on self interest. How far are we freed from the spirit of the age? How much freer might we be? I would have liked to see the Conference explore this challenge

Moreover, we have hardly begun to realise that the beloved phrase: “Live simply so that others may live” needs to be reimagined in a far more demanding practice: “live simply so that other humans and all other life forms may continue to flourish. Exploring that as Quaker communities, with sensitivity and resolve would be a real test of faith.

WHO'S WHO IN 2026

AM Clerk – Maggie Everitt

AM Assistant Clerks – Kate Hughes and Hilary Tucker

AM Treasurer – Richard Taylor

Clerk to Trustees – John Booth

Elders - Can be contacted via your LM's Elder(s)

Pastoral Care Team (PCT) – Can be contacted via your LM's PCT member(s).

Contact person for Nominations Committee – Can be contacted via your LM's rep(s)

Meeting for Sufferings rep – Kate Hughes (alternate Jenny Amery)

Northern Friends Peace Board rep – Sandra Dutson

Registering Officers – Jeff Dean and Sarah Donaldson

Burials Officer – Jeff Dean

Quaker Work Fund advisory group – Margaret Gregory, Linda Burgum

Conflict Advisory Group – Elizabeth Coleman

Churches Together rep – Sandra Dutson

Council for Christians and Jews rep – Elizabeth Coleman

Administrator (Staff contact) - Mary Atkinson

Safeguarding Co-ordinators – Ben Wickens and Alex Casson

If you have any concerns about safeguarding, you should contact one of the Safeguarding Co-ordinators, and not discuss the matter with anyone else.

RECEIVING GROUP – contact Robert Wilson

This group gives advice (on safeguarding, confidentiality etc) if a former prisoner is attending your meeting or wishes to do so.

CONTACTS FOR WITNESS GROUPS

Environment Group, Peace Promotion Group, Social Justice Group –
Sandra Dutson

Racial Justice Group – Margaret Calvert

Email addresses are in the LOMA (List of Members and Attenders)

If you want to know who holds any role, or how to contact them, email
Mary Atkinson admin@manchesterquakers.org.uk

Area Meeting Dates for 2026

Thursday 29 January 7pm Zoom only

Saturday 28 March 2pm at Central Manchester and online (hybrid)

Wednesday 27 May 7pm at South Manchester in person only

Sunday 19 July 1pm at Warrington in person only

Thursday 1 October 7pm Central Manchester in person and online

Tuesday 1 December 7pm online only.

MONEY AND TONY WEEKES'S ARTICLES

by Elizabeth Coleman (Editor)

What is money? Older people like myself may tend to think in terms of notes and coins. But these are becoming less and less important. What would money mean if notes and coins ceased to exist, and money was just entries on computers? What would it mean then to say that we do not have enough money to fund the NHS?

Tony Weekes is a Quaker living in Ireland, who has attended our Social Justice Group online. He worked as an academic economist. He teaches a different view of money. This is of more than academic interest – if understood, it changes our understanding of banks, the need (or otherwise) for austerity, and many other things, and if understood, would affect fundamental government policy. I have therefore encouraged him to write for the newsletter, and there was an article by him in the December issue, and there is one in this issue. Please do watch the video “Money For Nothing”. It gives a simple and surprising explanation for the banking crisis in 2009.

Money for Nothing

This is a video. It is constructed as an interview and covers several issues in a monetary theme. It is divided into sections:

HOW IS MONEY CREATED; TAX; DEFICIT; BANKS; FRAUD;
DEBT

it takes about 22 minutes. Make a note of anything which leaves you surprised; pause at the end of each section.

The link is

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=1FglZyBcFyQ>

I hope that in future he may explain other topics to us such as:

- If economists are ill equipped to advise us, who should we turn to?
- Why are we being taught one economic model, when there are others available? Whose interests does this serve, and how?

“We haven’t got the money”

..this perennial shortage of government funds, enshrined in the repetitive cry ‘We haven’t got the money’, has got to be challenged. Money is a man made device, and for an entire economy to be in the position of not being able to do what it wants, simply for lack of bits of paper with numbers on them is strong evidence that the shortage of those bits of paper and numbers lacks all validity ... A town can be in desperate need of a school, community centre, or repairs to its roads or drains. The raw materials may be lying in a builder’s yard, people may be desperate for work, but there isn’t enough money So we can’t do it. In what possible sense can we not afford to do what we plainly can, in physical terms, achieve? Michael Rowbotham, The Grip of Death

Money and poverty

The years of the Great Depression highlighted the inadequacies of the financial system ... These were the years when poverty amidst plenty returned. Families in the developed nations throughout Europe and America were literally starving whilst food was dumped, burnt as fuel or simply allowed to rot in the fields. Farmers and industries went bankrupt in droves ... The productive capacity of the economy was obvious, and starvation and penury were ... unnecessary ... there was a spiral of economic collapse and money was at the heart of it.

Michael Rowbotham, The Grip of Death

Can the monetary system be reformed?

There are modest (but valuable and well considered) proposals which would allow money to be created by the government – through the central bank – for essential public works. The creation would be interest free, and would be done through the government's spending programme on (for example) the investment necessary to reduce greenhouse gas emissions and fossil fuel dependence; to restore the urban fabric; for affordable housing. Such spending would also help to deliver a measure of well-distributed prosperity by the financing of useful work. It takes the creation of money away from the commercial banks whose agenda generally does not correspond to the public interest.

Tony Weekes

PLEASE DONATE TO SUPPORT AREA MEETING

To make a bank transfer or set up a standing order, please email Mary Atkinson on admin@manchesterquakers.org.uk and she will give you bank details. Please use your name as a reference. You can also send a cheque made payable to Manchester & Warrington Area Quaker Meeting to the Executive Officer at Friends Meeting House, 6 Mount Street, Manchester, M2 5NS. If you are making a will, consider whether to leave something to Area Meeting.

Donations are split equally between local Quaker work and national Quaker work, unless you specify otherwise.

HERODOTUS

Herodotus was a Greek historian who lived approximately from 484 BCE to 425 BCE. The following quotes from him have nothing to do with Quakerism, but I think you'll find them amusing, and it's fascinating how directly you feel that someone who lived 2,400 years ago is speaking to you. The quotes are from The Histories. He seems to apply the principle, "Never let the truth get in the way of a good story."

ON HIS TRAVELS TO EGYPT

CROCODILES

Some Egyptians reverence the crocodile as a sacred beast; others do not, but treat it as an enemy. The strongest belief in its sanctity is to be found in Thebes and round about Lake Moeris; in these places they keep one particular crocodile, which they tame, putting rings made of glass or gold into its ears and bracelets round its front feet, and giving it special food and ceremonial offerings. In fact, while these creatures are alive they treat them with every kindness, and, when they die, embalm them and bury them in sacred tombs. On the other hand, in the neighbourhood of Elephantine crocodiles are not considered sacred animals at all, but are eaten.

CATS

What happens when a house catches fire is most extraordinary; nobody takes the least trouble to put it out, for it is only the cats that matter; everyone stands in a row, a little distance from his neighbour, trying to protect the cats, who nevertheless slip through the line, or jump over it, and hurl themselves into the flames. This causes the Egyptians deep distress.

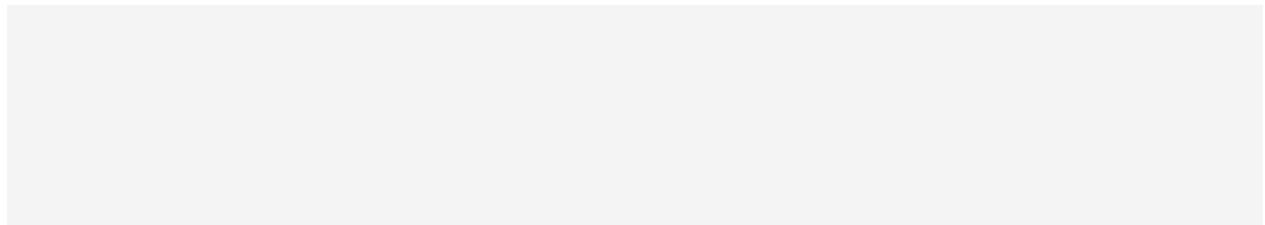
ON HIS TRAVELS TO BABYLONIA

They have no doctors, but bring their invalids out into the street, where anyone who comes along offers the sufferer advice on his complaint, either from personal experience or observation of a similar complaint in others. Anyone will stop by the sick man's side and suggest remedies which he has himself proved successful in whatever the trouble may be, or which he has known to succeed with other people. Nobody is allowed to pass a sick person in silence; but everyone must ask him what is the matter.

COULD THIS PASSAGE BE ABOUT BRITAIN?

... nor do I know anything of the existence of islands called the Tin Islands, whence we get our tin. ... in spite of my efforts to do so, I have never found anyone who could give me first-hand information of the existence of a sea beyond Europe to the north and west. Yet it cannot be disputed that tin and amber do come to us from what one might call the ends of the earth. It is clear that it is the northern parts of Europe which are richest in gold, but how it is procured is another mystery. The story goes that the one-eyed Arimaspians steal it from the griffins who guard it; personally however, I hesitate to believe in one-eyed men who in other respects are like the rest of us. In any case it does seem to be true that the countries which lie on the circumference of the inhabited world produce the things which we believe to be most rare and beautiful.

Extracts chosen by Elizabeth Coleman



NOTE RE FOLLOWING ARTICLE

'In the article on page 58, Richard Taylor explains why Trustees ask that we do not make reference to proscribed organisations in articles in our Area Meeting newsletter. In the following article, Kevin Sell, of Central Manchester meeting, describes his experiences with 'Defend our Juries' and mentions a proscribed organisation. On this occasion, given the article was published nationally in the Quaker magazine, 'The Friend', an exception has been made so this article can be reproduced. We hope this openness now helps friends to feel informed about the principles being discussed. We don't expect to publish further articles in our area meeting newsletter mentioning proscribed organisations in the coming months.'

Judgement call: Kevin Sell on campaigning with Defend Our Juries

This article was in The Friend on 14 November, and is reproduced with their permission

'We are asked to be dignified, totally nonconfrontational, and nonviolent at all times.'

by Kevin Sell 14th November 2025

Protestors from Defend Our Juries holding placards. Photo: Courtesy of Defend Our Juries.

There has been a lot of conversation among Friends about the mass civil disobedience being organised by Defend Our Juries (DOJ). I see much misinformation around, some describing DOJ actions as violent or antisemitic. I would like to offer Friends my personal perspective,

as someone active in the campaign, who has witnessed events first-hand.

In some cases of nonviolent civil resistance (particularly relating to climate activism), when defendants have been allowed to explain their motivations in court, they have been acquitted by the jurors. To prevent these acquittals, defendants have been prevented from mentioning the rights of jurors, or the words 'climate change', or even from calling expert evidence about the climate crisis. Preventing defendants from explaining why they did a particular action removes any possible defence, which virtually guarantees a conviction.

One retired social worker, and Quaker, Trudi Warner, was threatened with prosecution for contempt of court for displaying a sign informing jurors that they had the right to acquit defendants according to their conscience. In May 2023, outside Inner London Crown Court, twenty-four people, including Quakers, held up identical signs. All were referred to the attorney general for contempt of court. This was the birth of Defend Our Juries, as more and more people replicated Trudi's stance. The solicitor general brought a case against Trudi, which was thrown out by a High Court judge. In August 2024, the appeal against the High Court ruling was abandoned.

A plaque in the Old Bailey commemorates jurors who, in 1670, were punished for refusing to follow the directions of a judge. They acquitted two Quakers, William Mead and William Penn, who were charged with holding an unlawful assembly. This established the principle of what is known as 'jury nullification'. This occurs when jurors, based on their own sense of moral justice, refuse to follow the law and acquit a defendant even when the evidence presented seems to point to an incontrovertible verdict of guilty.

When activists involved in civil disobedience are being tried at a Crown Court, DOJ frequently holds a silent vigil. Signs are displayed

informing people that jurors have an absolute right to acquit a defendant according to their conscience, or similar wording.

On the 3 May, DOJ launched a 'Timeline of Corruption', listing events that show the collusion of the oil and arms industries with the UK government, resulting in an anti-democratic attack on freedom of expression and protest. More recently, DOJ created a 'Timeline of Genocide' showing the war crimes committed by Israel against the Palestinian people. This was displayed at Woolwich Crown Court on 30 June, in support of the Filton 18, who were accused of breaking into an Israeli weapons manufacturer to prevent arms being exported.

Since the proscription of Palestine Action (PA) as a terrorist group, supporters of DOJ have been campaigning to overturn that designation. This has involved mass acts of civil disobedience, so far resulting in around 2,000 arrests. A significant number of Quakers have been involved, either being arrested for holding forbidden signs expressing support for PA, or in non-arrestable roles such as welfare, holding Quaker Meetings, displaying Quaker banners, or witnessing events.

There are a number of possible reasons why Quakers are involved with Defend Our Juries: long-standing Quaker support for Palestinians; environmental concerns; or concerns about civil liberties and justice. One major consideration is that the methods of protesting employed by DOJ conform to Quaker principles. When taking part in civil disobedience, whether outside a court, or at mass sign-holdings relating to PA, we are asked to be dignified, totally nonconfrontational, and nonviolent at all times. We are asked to avoid engaging with people who are opposed to what we are doing. We are not to speak to the police unless we have to. If arrested, we are not to resist, apart from going floppy if possible. This is passive, nonviolent resistance, which is perfectly legal. This makes it more

difficult for the police, who have to employ extra officers to perform the arrest.

‘This is passive, nonviolent resistance.’

Court vigils, where small numbers are involved for no more than a couple of hours, are usually silent. Arrests are very rare for these actions and only limited welfare support is needed. For larger mass actions involving many hundreds of people over several hours, maintaining silence is not practical. People need to speak to each other in order to maintain good spirits, and to uphold each other as arrests take place.

DOJ places a strong emphasis on the welfare of participants. There are numerous people wearing hi-viz vests, clearly marked as welfare. They distribute water, food, sun lotion etc, and help ensure that sitters feel as comfortable as possible. When people who have been arrested are released on bail, often in the early hours of the morning, welfare people are waiting at the police station with refreshments, advice and support.

The methods of DOJ have caused huge problems for the police and the government. As well as engaging in misinformation to discredit DOJ, in August the security services took down the DOJ website in an attempt to disrupt the distribution of information. Zoom meetings and briefings for planning mass action were also taken down. DOJ stopped using Zoom and moved planning briefings to a platform less vulnerable to interference from counter terrorism police.

The most drastic police action so far happened in September, when seven DOJ spokespeople were arrested in dawn raids. This included Tim Crosland (a former government lawyer and founder of DOJ) and Paddy Friend, a law student. They are charged with addressing an online meeting for the purpose of encouraging support for PA. As organisers, they face charges under Section 12 of the Terrorism Act 2000, which carries a maximum sentence of fourteen years in prison.

Any trial that takes place should be at a Crown Court in front of a jury. The Crown Prosecution Service wanted them to be remanded immediately, but the judge allowed them to be released on bail with draconian conditions, including curfews and tagging, later reduced in severity.

People arrested for holding the forbidden PA signs will probably be charged under Section 13 of the Terrorism Act, which is a Magistrate's Court offence and carries a maximum sentence of six months. I was arrested at the 6 September mass action, and bailed to appear for interview later this month. Given the overcrowding in the UK's prisons, custodial sentences are unlikely for the lesser charges. At the mass actions, police officers seem to only be arresting people holding the forbidden signs. I encourage Friends to attend where possible (without fear of arrest) either for the Quaker Meetings, or in a welfare capacity, or simply to witness.

UPDATE RECEIVED FROM KEVIN SELL

All the sign holders arrested on September 6th have had their bail conditions converted to *Released Under Investigation*. This means I no longer had to report to Islington Police Station on Nov 17th, but may be required to do so at a later date. This change could be because of the Judicial Review into the Proscription of Palestine Action on 25th to 27th November.

REFLECTIONS ON THE NEWSLETTER

by Elizabeth Coleman, Editor

I have been editing the newsletter since November 2021, with a gap of 3 months when I was in hospital and recovering. As the role of Editor is not an official AM appointment, the AM Clerks are happy for me to continue in this task, and do not require me to be reappointed after 3 years, and then to step down after 6 years.

I very much enjoy being Editor, and also writing for the newsletter. I am interested in ideas, and in finding a way to discuss things, listen to each other, and disagree with each other without ceasing to love one another. I also get a lot of pleasure from writing, and it's lovely to write knowing that at least some people will read what I write.

Quakers sometimes ponder, "What do we have uniquely to offer as Quakers?" I think this is mistaken, as we are more useful if we consider what we are good at, (not necessarily uniquely,) and work with others to do those things. Quakers have a strong social conscience, are concerned about equality and peace among other things, and a large proportion of us are highly educated so are capable and confident in thinking and discussing. So a useful contribution is to be involved in the thinking about peace, economics and other subjects, and to try to understand and distinguish truth from lies in public life, and tell others. Quakers can remind environmentalist of the huge damage and carbon footprint of war and preparation for war, which is often not given the prominence that it deserves. I think the newsletter has a role in achieving these things.

The newsletter is long, and I know that some people may find this daunting. However, there is no need to read everything. I'm sure some (perhaps most) of you just glance through it and read one or two

articles of particular interest. I do not want to be in the role of deciding to exclude some articles that are submitted. If you submit something, unless there is a strong reason not to include it, it goes into the newsletter, however long this makes the newsletter. I do encourage people to write short articles with pictures, as these are more likely to be read.

While it is a local newsletter for our Area Meeting, if someone from elsewhere asks to be added to the mailing list, that is fine. I welcome articles from people outside our Area Meeting, so long as these do not form too large a part of the newsletter. Sometimes I do not know anyone within our AM with expertise on certain topics, such as economics or trans gender, and I actively look for people from outside our AM to write.

I would be sad if I had to stop editing the newsletter, but inevitably the time will come when I am no longer able to do so. I think it serves a useful purpose, and people often tell me that they value it. So I hope it will continue when I am no longer able to edit it. It's likely that no-one will offer to be sole editor, but perhaps a group of (say) 3 could work together, and each would only need to be responsible for one newsletter every 3 months. Because I enjoy doing the newsletter, I do much more than is strictly necessary, suggesting to people what they might write, writing things myself, and picking out quotes etc from Facebook and elsewhere to publish. I also try to find someone to report where there are significant events such as Regional Gathering. The minimum that needs to be done is to have an email address to receive contributions, check them through, and put them together into a newsletter.

I would like to have more responses to newsletter articles, which I would publish in the next newsletter, but this doesn't happen very often. It is not possible to ensure balance in every newsletter, as, if

someone submits a controversial article, it is not practical for me to find someone with a different view who is able to write something in time for the deadline. But the next newsletter is always there for people to give different views.

YEARLY MEETING DATES

A Yearly Meeting is already planned for 1–4 May 2026. Meeting for Sufferings will continue to meet until spring 2026. Dates for Yearly Meetings after May 2026 are:

2026

- 18 July in Manchester at [Kings House Conference Centre \(offsite link\)](#)
- 21 November at Friends House

GINKGO BILOBA TREES – INFORMATION FROM MANCHESTER CITY COUNCIL



Do you recognise these ginkgo biloba trees? They're passed by thousands of people every day. 🌳 Seeds from the ginkgo trees that survived atomic radiation at Hiroshima were donated around the world as symbols of hope and peace. Manchester was the first UK city to be given seeds, which we received in recognition of our campaign for a nuclear weapon free and peaceful world. Mayors for Peace is led by the Mayors of Hiroshima and Nagasaki. The Lord Mayor of Manchester is a Vice President. There are more than 8,500 member cities from 166 countries. You'll find trees grown from the seeds of hibaku (survivor) trees in Lincoln Square and Heaton Park. And at several schools and colleges in the city.

Ginkgo biloba is one of the oldest living tree species in the world. The oldest known living ginkgo is around 3,500 years old. The species is one of the toughest trees we plant in the city. They respond well to heat, drought and pollution.

Tree planting is an important aspect of our work to improve biodiversity and climate resilience in the city. More than 15,000 trees have been planted in the city over the last five years!

Find out more about our work at: <https://orlo.uk/MTfHB>
[#ZeroCarbonMcr](#) [#NationalTreeWeek](#) [#TopTrunks](#) [#Mayors-ForPeace](#)

MESSAGE FROM AREA MEETING TREASURER

Dear Friends,

I am writing with our annual appeal for donations to support Area Meeting. If you already give regularly, by standing order, you are already providing vital financial support that is hugely appreciated. However, I hope that you will consider whether you might be able to increase the amount that you give.

I recently attended a national conference for Quaker Trustees and Treasurers. Amongst the usual discussions about accounts and governance, it was clear that Friends across the country are, like us, asking big questions about the future. Those questions aren't just about money, of course. They are about changing to meet the needs and capacities of our community, both now and into the future. One answer that has already emerged is the recent decision to explore, in partnership with two of our neighbour Area Meetings, investing in a new Youth Development Worker. This gives me huge hope for the future, but it all has to be paid for.

Our room bookings business is busy, but the COVID pandemic has changed the world of work and it harder than it used to be to make a profit from conferences and events. Meanwhile, the cost of building repairs and utilities bills (to name just two) continues to rise at an alarming rate and we have a longstanding commitment to share half of the general donations that we receive from Friends with our national body, Britain Yearly Meeting, whose need is also as great as ever.

The bottom line is that we need to raise more money so I am asking you to consider what you can afford to give.

If you currently give by standing order, you will need to contact your own bank to make any changes to your regular gift – we are not able to do that from our end. Area Meeting's bank details have not changed.

Gift Aid

Thank you, if you have registered your donations for Gift Aid. This simple act increases the value of your donations by 25%. If your tax situation changes and you aren't sure whether you or your donations are still eligible for Gift Aid, please get in touch with our Area Meeting Administrator, Mary Atkinson, on admin@manchesterquakers.org.uk. Remember, though, that you don't need to be earning a salary to qualify for Gift Aid: if you pay Income Tax on a pension, self-employment or interest on savings, that counts, as does Capital Gains Tax.

Asking for money is never easy, so I hope that you are able to receive this letter in the spirit in which it was intended. Some Friends are already giving all that they can and if this applies to you, please know that your contributions (financial and in other ways) are hugely valued. However, if you are lucky enough to have the resources to increase your donation, please consider doing so.

In Friendship

Richard Taylor
Area Meeting Treasurer

BANKSY EXHIBITION IN MANCHESTER

'The Mystery of Banksy - A Genius Mind' will open at Depot Mayfield on March 13, 2026, bringing more than 200 reimagined works by the world-famous street artist.

VIGIL ORGANISED BY AMNESTY

WEEKLY SILENT VIGIL FOR THE PEOPLE OF PALESTINE



**Amnesty International, Manchester invites you to join us
St Peters Square, Manchester, every Friday, 5pm to 6pm**

Please do not bring placards, banners, flags, drums or chants. We provide a banner and placards saying:

UPHOLD THE CEASEFIRE; STOP ARMING ISRAEL; END ISRAELI APARTHEID; END ISRAELI OCCUPATION
Justice For Palestinians; Stop Israeli Settler Violence; Protect Human Rights, Protect All Civilians

Please join us
All who are in sympathy with our messages and approach are welcome to attend.

Manchester | Amnesty International UK

**The small print reads: Please do not bring placards, banners, flags,
drums or chants. We provide a banner and placards saying:**

**UPHOLD THE CEASEFIRE; STOP ARMING ISRAEL; END ISRAELI
OCCUPATION**

**Justice for Palestinians; Stop Israeli Settler Violence; Protect Human
Rights, Protect All Civilians**

Please join us

**All who are in sympathy with our messages and approach are
welcome to attend.**

Manchester. Amnesty International UK

A TESTIMONY TO THE GRACE OF GOD AS SHOWN IN THE LIFE OF DAVID BLAMIRE



David Malcolm Blamires was born on 4 May 1936 into a Quaker family in a small village near Cleckheaton in the West Riding of Yorkshire. With his elder brother John he worshipped at Scholes meeting house, where his father was an elder, and often remembered how he was impressed by the ministry in this intimate setting, as well as taking part in Quaker young people's activities at Great Ayton, Yealand, summer school and further afield.

David won a scholarship to Cambridge, where he read Modern Languages at Christ's College. This was a life-changing experience for a boy from a working-class background: 'like technicolour after a youth in black and white', as he later said. He became a member of the Student Christian Movement, and was later involved with a High Anglican circle, the Epiphany Philosophers, to the extent that in 1960 he was baptised and confirmed into the Church of England, although he never intended to switch from Quakerism. He was also active with Cambridge meeting and Cambridge Young Friends, and in the circle of young Friends around Damaris and Frederick Parker-Rhodes and Anna Bidder. During his five and a half years in Cambridge he was a member of Young Friends Central Committee, becoming international secretary, and wrote for *Young Quaker* magazine. Throughout his life David's rootedness in the Quaker testimonies permeated his worship, his daily life and his extensive Quaker writings.

School and university trips to France and Germany allowed David not only to attend many Quaker and ecumenical gatherings but to talk to individuals and to gain personal knowledge of the experiences of German people and their attitudes to the war and European politics. Travelling to both West and East Germany, at a time when the contacts and movements of many Germans were tightly controlled, helped him to see both positive and negative aspects of East German society. He also visited the Soviet Union with a small Quaker party in 1959.

After a doctorate in medieval German literature, David came to Manchester in 1960 as a lecturer in German at Manchester University. He was to work in the same department, live in the same house and worship in the same area meeting for the rest of his life. David was emphatically not a rolling stone.

In his large house in Withington David set up a commune, inspired by the Epiphany Philosophers, but this foundered after a few years when it reached the point where its members were said to be communicating with each other only through their solicitors. He continued to take lodgers, often Quakers temporarily in need of a home, until the rooms were overwhelmed by the rising tide of books and papers. For many years the house was without a proper modern kitchen or central heating, and its state was an increasing source of worry to David's friends, perhaps more to them than it was to him.

David loved teaching, refused to take early retirement and eventually retired in 2001 as Emeritus Professor of German. Apart from medieval German literature, on which he published a number of books, David's research interests ranged widely. He was largely responsible for the widening of interest in the twentieth-century Anglo-Welsh painter and poet David Jones, writing the first book on him (1971) and setting up the David Jones Society.

An otherwise modest lifestyle – he had no time for cars, pets, sports or television – allowed David to indulge his lifelong bibliophilia. Among much else he amassed important collections of alphabet books ('Q was a Quaker who would not bow down') and historical English and German fairy tales and children's books, on which he was also an internationally recognised authority. Towards the end of his life he donated his diaries and the best of his art collection and enormous library to the Whitworth Gallery and the Manchester University Library, among other institutions.

After a short period at Wythenshawe (now South Manchester) meeting David moved to Mount Street (now Central Manchester) meeting, where he continued to worship, in his last years intermittently and in a wheelchair, until a fortnight before he died. In business meetings his calm forthrightness, and his ability to resolve difficult issues with

commonsense contributions at the right moment, won him great respect. He was a veteran of many offices, groups and committees not just locally but at a national and international level. These included the World Relations Committee, Constitution Review Committee, Library Committee, Literature Committee, Central Committee of Home Service, Woodbrooke Council and Meeting for Sufferings. For twenty years he was editor of *The Friends Quarterly* (1987–2008). David travelled a good deal, and found friends, lovers and Quaker contacts in Germany, Finland and elsewhere in Europe as well as in Canada, the United States, Australia and Aotearoa/New Zealand. He gave long service to the Friends World Committee for Consultation and attended yearly meetings and conferences in many countries.

David's most distinctive contribution to Quaker history began earlier in his life. After his university days he became aware that he was gay, and in his early days in Manchester he was a volunteer on a gay telephone counselling line, as well as trying to set up a gay group for university staff. Male homosexuality was illegal in England until David was thirty, and was pervaded by fear, ostracism, concealment and stigma, even for many years after partial decriminalisation in 1967. Such attitudes militated against understanding and self-acceptance, and inhibited the formation of loving relationships. Public discussions of homosexuality were couched in legal or medical terms as something to be cured, punished, or at best pitied. Traditional oppressive interpretations of Scripture remained paramount, and the attitude was invariably one of 'us and them'. This latter was still a feature of *Towards a Quaker view of sex* (1963), a controversial and widely discussed short book unofficially published by a group of Friends, which contained a substantial and less censorious discussion of homosexuality. This was a pivotal moment in the approach to understanding of sexual issues among British churches and in society more generally.

Ignorance, prejudice or hostility continued among some Friends but for many there was an absence of strong views resulting from lack of personal acquaintance with gay people and their lives. This began to change in 1973 with the publication, following an earlier article by him in *The Friend*, of David's *Homosexuality from the inside*. Here for the first time an openly gay man was giving a calm and reasoned response to the stereotypes. He described the emotional lives of ordinary women and men who happened to be gay, and the difficulties they encountered in living fulfilling lives in the face of much public hostility. This short book, together with the founding at about the same time of the Friends Homosexual Fellowship (now Quaker Rainbow) by David and others, brought much-needed help and support to many gay people in and around the Society of Friends.

Although he was supported by others, David's book was a brave and daring demonstration of integrity, and he was more than any other single individual responsible for the Society of Friends coming to understand and accept gay people long before other British churches did – though the process was a slow one which some Friends found challenging. It is thanks to David's openness and advocacy, and that of others who followed and learned from him, that gay relationships are no longer an issue among Friends in most (though still not all) parts of the world. David was one of ten Friends who wrote *This we can say: talking honestly about sex* (1995), an unofficial publication intended to replace the outdated *Towards a Quaker view of sex*. He supported Susan Hartshorne's long-held concern that eventually led to Quakers' espousal of equal marriage in 2009 – at the time a pioneering step. In 2012 he told the story of his activism in another short book, *Pushing at the frontiers of change: a memoir of Quaker involvement with homosexuality*. David wrote that sexuality was perhaps the deepest mystery of life,

and welcomed the opportunities for further service afforded by independence and lack of family commitments.

Among all this David found time for books, art, music, cooking, exploring towns and the countryside, holidays, friendship and fun, while welcoming many visitors to his increasingly dilapidated home. He wrote clever and amusing alphabet poems, which he often circulated at Christmas, and supported students and younger Friends in need, including the textile artist Mark Rhodes, who was David's last partner. He never became comfortable with computers, email and mobile phones, and in later years his travels and Quaker activities were reduced by increasing deafness, which he found difficult to cope with. In his last years he developed dementia, and, just before the Covid pandemic started, moved into a care home near his house in Withington. Here he continued to write poetry and his diary and to seek silence and solitude, and welcomed visitors until shortly before he died on 9 November 2022. David was truly a Friend who made his life speak, and he will be greatly missed.

FOR YOUR DIARY

Northern Friends Peace Board is holding a special meeting about the Peace Testimony on 13 June 2026 in York.

SUMMER SCHOOL REPORT

by Ember Blackwell

Dear Friends,

This summer, from the 11th to the 16th of August, I attended Quaker Summer School at the FSC Frontier Centre in Betws-y-Coed. The week was filled with fun activities, time for reflection, and lots of time for getting to know other young friends.



The week began on the Sunday afternoon, with everyone arriving and introducing themselves. We began each day with Meeting for Worship, then a session where we explored different elements of the Quaker testimonies. After lunch, we could choose from a variety of workshops, which each offered activities like sports, arts and crafts, music and more. After tea, we would move onto evening entertainment, where we

did quizzes and games. The evenings ended with epilogue, time sat in silence to reflect on the day, and say who we were grateful to.



A few of the specific events we did included the Quaker Olympics, which was a series of competitive outdoor challenges which involved custard, slime, and water guns. On the Wednesday, we went on an excursion to an outdoor trampolining park, which consisted of nets hung across a cave. Afterwards, we all went to a local village for a picnic in the park, then had time to explore the shops to buy gifts for our secret friends.

For the first time this year, I was a part of the Young People's Team (YPT). We had the responsibility of organising the events on Thursday, and creating a theme for the whole day. We had lots of fun running the day based on Traitors, the BBC reality show. We staged roundtables, faked murders, and got all the young people involved in looking for

clues and voting people off. We also organised workshops and evening entertainment.



The week ended with a final epilogue, and signing cosy glows later in the evening so we would have a book to take away with us with messages from friends, and we left on the Saturday. I'm grateful to all the staff and people who organised the week, and to Greater Manchester and Warrington Area Meeting for running it.

FILM SHOWING – THE CONSPIRACISTS

organised by Steve Hornby on behalf of Social Justice Group

Sunday Feb 1 1pm at Central Manchester FMH

Q&A with film maker Liz Smith

Donations to Page 75 Productions

A convicted “Jan 6” felon takes a British filmmaker and an American ethnographer on a road trip and attempts to convert them to her world of conspiracy theories.

The film is currently being shown at film festivals and won the award for “**Best Feature Documentary**” at The Miami Women Film Festival and an “**Exceptional Merit**” award at Documentaries Without Borders.

Link to the trailer
and page 75 website

<https://page75productions.com/the-conspiracists/>

Quaker climate activist appeals conviction after judge threatens the jury (from “Quake”)

A Quaker is appealing her climate conviction after a judge threatened the jury with contempt of court if they found defendants not guilty according to their conscience.



On Thursday, 4 December, the Royal Courts of Justice will hear the appeal of five women convicted of criminal damage for breaking a bank's windows in protest at their fossil fuel investments.

The main ground for the appeal from the five appellants is that Judge Reid wrongly directed the jury.

Quaker faith and persecution are the origins of this vital legal principle of conscience

- Amy Pritchard

Liverpool Quaker Amy Pritchard was sentenced to 12 months in prison for her part in the action at JP Morgan's European head office in London in September 2021.

At the trial in February 2024, Judge Silas Reid told the jury that they would be committing a criminal offence if they made a verdict on anything other than the evidence.

This direction is counter to the centuries-old principle of the independence of juries, established during the trial of two Quaker preachers in 1670 and etched on a marble plaque in the Old Bailey.

Under jury independence, or equity, jurors can acquit a defendant as a matter of conscience, irrespective of the directions of the judge.

Yet Judge Silas Reid directed the jury: "It is a criminal offence for a juror to do anything from which it can be concluded that a decision will be made on anything other than the evidence."

The appeal against his court's convictions comes as Justice Secretary David Lammy plans to limit jury trial.

Critics say this would undermine a vital counterbalance for the people in resisting the power of the state.

Pritchard said: "Quaker faith and persecution are the origins of this vital legal principle of conscience, reaffirmed in the Warner case at the Old Bailey.

"This appeal reaches much further than this case and aims to contribute to protecting what democracy we have left, whilst holding this abuse of power to account."

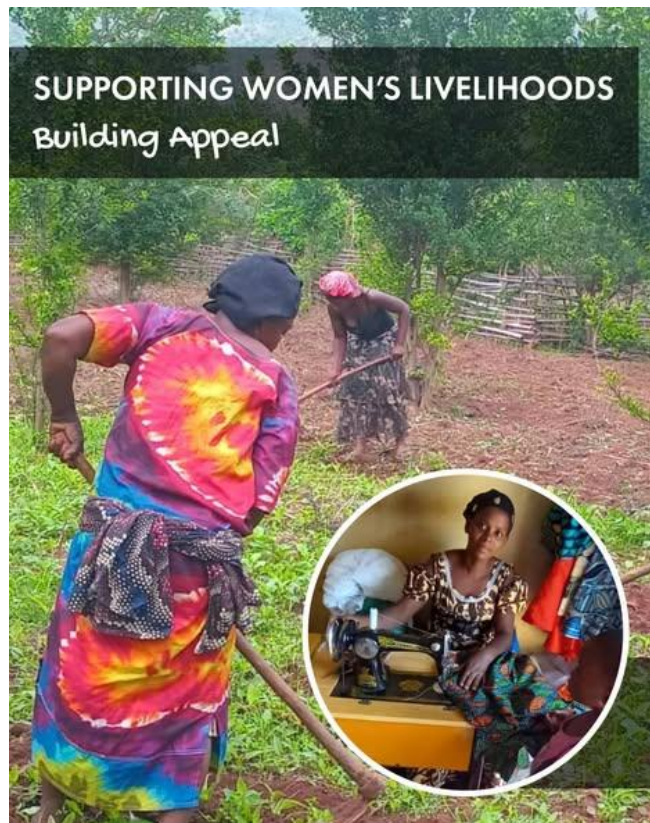
Judge Reid has previously banned people charged for climate-related protests from referring to their motivations in their defence.

In 2023 he imprisoned three people for using the words “climate change” and “fuel poverty” in his courtroom after he had forbidden the use of those words.

In February this year, the UN highlighted UK courts in an international report on state repression of environmental protest.

QUAKER CONGO PARTNERSHIP

Thank you **Friendly Soap** for supporting women's groups in Eastern DRC to make Soap and change their lives and their communities. Your generosity and spirit of sharing really shows the best of the Calder Valley.



..

SILENCED BY FEAR

by Robert Wilson (Eccles LM)

My experience as a firearms officer led to my pacifism,
My life in a hierarchical public service led to my egalitarianism,
My dishonesty as an addict led to my integrity and truth,
My mental and emotional complications led to my desire for a
simple
existence.

My arrogant atheism led to humble faith.

My bitter hatred and pain led to loving contentment.

My principles and the testimonies were born out of my experiences not out of a quest for the meaning and purpose of life.

I spoke these words in October 2019 at a Quaker Life Rep. Council Meeting and we're reminded of them again at a Webinar on Quakers, rottest and Criminal Justice on the evening of Thursday December 4, 2025.

The legal system, both prisons and courts has been underfunded for years. It's not a popular subject for our politicians except to say that 'hard on crime' means to continue to lock more 'wrong doers' up for longer periods.

There was much that I felt uncomfortable about as a police officer as I've already mentioned but I didn't realise that the harder you tried to control people the harder they pushed back.

After retirement and recovery from my mentally frustrated and aggravated alcoholism I found Quakerism and the testimonies. Equality matched my understanding from the 12 step programme that we're all equal and deserving of a voice, irrespective of education, class, place of birth, belief or gender etc.

However our politicians think otherwise, if you don't comply you are a dissident or rebel (Quaker?) you are wrong and your motives are questionable and maybe criminal if you choose to stand up for your rights.

Secondly, I also came to see fear used to prevent our individualism as free thinkers. Fear is what I used to control the public - the threat to our liberty if you didn't comply and conform. The establishment fear the public at large, particularly those that are free thinkers and have experienced discrimination.

Our political system encourages fear to demand change, change that more often than not erodes our human rights and freedoms, which were hard fought for by our radical predecessors, diggers, suffragettes, pacifists, conscientious objectors, defend our juries etc

In recent years as more people have questioned the laws that our politicians have applied to us, the more Draconian the laws have become and the more punitive the response. If you're going to be hung for a lamb, better you take the flock. Stricter laws cause greater extremism not less. Activists escalate their actions, they don't reduce them or give up.

Everyone deserves a voice and tolerance, even though we may disagree with them. That's democracy. We shouldn't demand anything for ourselves that we don't believe others should have. Sometimes it's difficult to hear a voice that speaks from another experience that we disagree with but we need to listen and discern the experience and origins of the words. The fear that drives the actions of others is no less the fear (and love?) that drives our action for peace and justice. If we want to be heard we must first listen, even when it's uncomfortable - if we then walk with and feel the pain of our fellow traveller - we may work together to bring about change for our mutual benefit.

The demand for compliance takes away the very essence that makes us human, our freedom of choice, our individualism. What creation, the creator, gave us to make me me and you you, unique and essential, should be the greatest love for all human - all living - existence. Loving and enjoying each other's special quantities, knowing that we are not cursed or persecuted for our individuality ensures we don't discriminate against any other being.

Isaac Pennington wrote in 1667 "Our life is love, and peace, and tenderness; and bearing one with another, and forgiving one another, and not laying accusations one against another; but praying one for another, and helping one another up with a tender hand".

On a slightly lighter note, demonstrating does make a difference Friends. All those times I spent as an officer lined up against 'a small voice of protest' did speak to me. Sometimes it was just comforting to hear that someone was doing something to exercise their humanity, but later I heard the voices of suffering and pain calling out for compassion and love - drowning in a sea of fear and anger.

Love & blessings,

NEW GREEN DEAL

summarised by Tony Weekes, who comments: "I have long felt that the GND is a strategy for these times. I also regret that it has been so neglected by the UK government since the first draft, which was completed in 2009. The authors are competent and well informed people. I still have hope, and I know many people who see it as a basis for the transformation that is urgently required."

The origins of the New Green Deal began in 2009. Its authors are a group of British economists and environmentalists. The title is inspired by US President Franklin Roosevelt's New Deal in the 1930's.

It is a radical environmental, economic and social programme intended to address four issues: (i) the climate crisis; (ii) energy security (iii) the serious loss of biodiversity (iv) the serious levels of inequality, poverty and other social injustices created since 1980. It has been ignored by governments.

What are the required changes?

The positive (and essential) role for government and a new politics

Politics, government (and democracy) have become debased. There must be a new vision for politics, based on *cooperation* and *informed public participation and engagement*.

Politics is about a way to create a measure of common understanding. And it must seek and offer new positive visions (not only the bad news).

Government is about making (and enforcing, if necessary) laws: (i) to move the transition from fossil fuel dependency to harvesting renewable energy; (ii) to create an aware and enabled citizenry; (iii) to prevent further damage to ecological systems (and to reverse damage which has already occurred).

The global temperature

Scientific opinion is that global temperature must not exceed 1.5 degrees, and the trend must be reversed containing the change is not enough.

Biodiversity

The causes of ecological degradation, from mining, industrial waste, lifelong chemicals, ...must be eliminated.

Is an economy based only on renewable energy possible?

I am relying on work conducted over many years by the *Centre for Alternative Technology* (CAT): The basic document is a book: *Zero Carbon Britain: Rising to the Climate Emergency*.

There is also a video. Search YouTube home page for “Cat.org.uk.

Impact on inequality, unemployment and poverty

The transition will require a diversity of skills. Some are obvious; people with engineering skills; people with knowledge of finance and banking. Some with an understanding of how climate differs from one region to another as renewable energy is generated by harvesting solar energy. I leave it to readers think of more.

“Finding the money”

Well-informed sources have suggested several different ways to finance the transition.

Redirect financial support for nuclear power to solar power.
Issue interest paying GND bonds in which households and communities could invest.

And other ideas – a topic for a later contribution.

To find more details of the GND search the internet with the key words Green New Deal

REPORT ON JUNIOR YEARLY MEETING

BY EMBER BLACKWELL

Dear Friends,

From the 23rd to 26th of May, I attended Junior Yearly Meeting, which was held at the Frontier Centre in Northamptonshire.

The theme for the weekend was "How do we as Quakers create the peace that is needed within ourselves and our communities?"

Our time at the Frontier Centre was full of different, exciting events accompanied by sessions in base groups. These allowed us to get to know each other in smaller groups. In addition there was epilogue, time at the end of the day for us to sit in silence and reflect on the day. This balance meant we spent time reflecting on the theme, doing fun and exciting activities, and connecting with each other.

We arrived on the Friday evening, celebrating the start of the weekend with a group quiz. However, JYM fully began on the Saturday morning, with our first speaker session. Our speaker for the morning was Mike Jackson. He spoke about his important work in activism in the 1980s, as a co-founder of the LGSM (Lesbians and Gays Support the Miners) movement. His story was the basis of the 2014 film "Pride". It was an illuminating session on solidarity and empathising with people. Then, in the afternoon, was our Frontier Centre activities. We had chosen from a range of outdoor activities, and I had chosen belaying. I had a lot of fun lowering myself down walls while others kayaked, built rafts, and made fires. After we had recovered, we had an indoor session, run by the adult volunteers. In groups, we moved around the room, having short discussions with each adult on the theme of the weekend. I made a timeline of my Quaker journey, and a plan on running a campaign,

amongst other things. The day ended with a disco, complete with Quaker mocktails and dancing. It was a great chance to relax and have fun with people who by now I had become good friends with.

The Sunday began with the second of our speaker sessions. Our speaker was Hannah Larn, who spoke about her experience working for United Nations, and everything she had learnt about peacemaking. She spoke about the 12 core values necessary for reconciliation, and invited us to discuss which of the values came easiest to us, and which we struggled with the most. I found the session eye-opening, and across both sessions, I found I understood more about how to empathise and connect with people, but specifically people I disagree or don't align with. Later in the morning, over Zoom, we joined BYM for Meeting for Worship. It felt especially powerful sitting in silence while surrounded by so many fellow young Friends. In the afternoon, I attended my first ever Meeting for Worship for Business, where we wrote our minute on the theme. The evening started with an open mic, where people performed music, circus skills, and comedy skits in groups and alone. It was joyful watching everyone present their skills and talents. The evening then moved outside, to epilogue by the bonfire. As the sunlight faded, we sat in gathered silence, occasionally broken by ministry or song, and ending in tears and hugs.

Our last day began early with the coach trip to London, during which everyone wrote cosy glows - notes for friends to keep and read after. We arrived at the Friend's House, joining outdoor witness, where we held up placards with messages of peace, amongst people of all ages also attending BYM. After lunch began our last Meeting for Business, where we collectively agreed on the epistle and also revealed the nominations for next year's Arrangements Committee. As JYM drew to a close, we had the incredible experience of joining the rest of BYM in The Light for the closing session. After minutes been read, we gathered together for the last time to collect our cosy glows and say goodbyes.

The whole weekend was an amazing experience; I am so grateful that I was able to go and have such a great time, thanks to staff at the frontier centre, adult volunteers, the Arrangements Committee and to Greater Manchester Area Meeting for allowing me to go. I loved discussing the theme of creating peace and spending time in silent worship, meeting new people and becoming close friends with them, and having great new experiences. I hope to return next year.

Bolton Manchester Rochdale Stockport Trafford
Bury Oldham Salford Tameside Wigan

together
we are

**GREATER
MANCHESTER**

Greater Manchester Green Summit

Save the date: 3 March 2026
at the Co-op Live



POSSIBLE ADDITION TO ADVICES & QUERIES?

Existing Advice on the use of alcohol and other drugs:

In view of the harm done by the use of alcohol, tobacco and other habit-forming drugs, consider whether you should limit your use of them or refrain from using them altogether. Remember that any use of alcohol or drugs may impair judgement and put both the user and others in danger.

Advices & Queries 40

A new Advice, written in the wake of Yearly Meeting's 2011 Canterbury Commitment to 'build a low-carbon, sustainable community' might read:

In view of the harm done by the production of meat, fish and animal products, consider whether you should limit your consumption of them or refrain from consuming them altogether. Remember that the production of meat, fish and animal products involves extreme commodification of animals and is a major contributor to climate change, putting people and ecosystems in danger.

Wendy Pattinson

The River cannot go back
by Kahlil Gibran

It is said that before entering the sea
a river trembles with fear.
She looks back at the path she has traveled,
from the peaks of the mountains,
the long winding road crossing forests and villages.
And in front of her,
she sees an ocean so vast,
that to enter
there seems nothing more than to disappear forever.
But there is no other way.
The river can not go back.
Nobody can go back.
To go back is impossible in existence.
The river needs to take the risk
of entering the ocean
because only then will fear disappear,
because that's where the river will know
it's not about disappearing into the ocean,
but of becoming the ocean.

This poem was submitted by Sharon Powell. It was read at the Working Together – Quakers in the North West 29th November 2025 meeting.

Quaker's stand for "No New Oil" continues despite harsh JSO sentence

A Quaker who recently completed a 700-mile climate pilgrimage has said that continued commitment to "No New Oil" is all that matters in the face of a 26-month sentence.



Photo credit: Andrew Dames

Andrew Dames, 63, of Jesus Lane Quaker Meeting, climbed a gantry over the M25 in 2022 as part of a Just Stop Oil (JSO) action to demand an end to new fossil fuel projects.

Dames walked from the Shetlands to London this summer, celebrating a Scottish ruling that approval of huge Shetland oilfield, Rosebank, was unlawful.

Last month he and five others were found guilty by a jury at Southwark Crown Court of recklessly causing public nuisance after the judge denied them all legal defences.

Dames, an engineer and father of four, said: "Our government's continued commitment to No New Oil that we and the country asked for, that is all that matters."

Judge Perrins told the jury that defendants could not use the statutory defence of "reasonable excuse", saying: "This is a court of law, not a court of morals.

"Even if you took the view that each defendant genuinely believed that they were morally justified in acting in the way that they did, that does not provide them with a defence to the charge of public nuisance."

He also ruled out the defences of necessity, Articles 10 and 11 of the European Convention on Human Rights and implied consent.

In a further departure from previous Just Stop Oil trials involving gantry actions on the M25, the prosecution also refused to accept any agreed facts on the climate crisis to be included as evidence.

Quakers, who are led by their faith to protect the environment, have been caught up in a wave of government repression of environmental defenders following disruptive action by JSO and others.

British courts have:

- Passed increasingly long sentences
- Restricted the defences available
- Prevented explanations of the climate crisis
- Told juries they cannot acquit a defendant as a matter of conscience

On Saturday, 6 December, Dames was added to the Quakers' prison and court register, begun in the 1600s to document Quakers prosecuted for acting on conscience and resistance.

Paul Parker, recording clerk for Quakers in Britain, said: "From our earliest days, Quakers have acted when conscience demanded it, even at great personal cost.

"Today, the climate crisis places the same demand upon us. It is painful that, once again, those who act from deeply held spiritual convictions face an increasingly harsh response."

(from national Quaker website www.quaker.org.uk)

"Your prayers are very important": Quakers appeal for peace as war empties the city of Uvira

Quakers in eastern Democratic Republic of the Congo are asking for prayers and peace as war has driven many from their homes.



Quakers in eastern Democratic Republic of the Congo are asking for prayers and peace as war has driven many from their homes, photo credit: Abdoulma, CC BY-SA 4.0 via Wikimedia Commons

Since 10 December, the city of Uvira has been captured by the M23 militia. Hundreds of thousands of people have fled in fear, many with nothing but the clothes they were wearing.

Homes, schools, churches, and health centres have been abandoned almost overnight. Many are hiding in their homes.

Pastor David Etabo, a Quaker leader with the Congolese Friends Church (CEEACO), sent this report:

"We are going through a very difficult and trying time because, after the M23 forces took Uvira, there has been a massive displacement.

"Almost 98 per cent of the population has fled the war, from Uvira to Misisi, a distance of 180 km. The serious issue is the lack of material and food assistance, as well as medical and other care.

"People are moving from place to place; some are going to Burundi, others to the Ubwari peninsula, Kalemi, Kazimia, and into the bush. We estimate that there are approximately 600,000 displaced people living in dire conditions.

"In short, your prayers would be very important."

Uvira is a key trading centre on Lake Tanganyika, close to the Burundi border. A week after hostilities broke out, the situation has calmed slightly but the border remains closed, cutting off food and medical supplies.

Fighting spread south to surrounding villages, forcing health centres to shut and families to scatter.

Earlier this year, the M23 militia captured the cities of Goma and Bukavu. Although a peace agreement between the governments

of the DRC and Rwanda was signed on 5 December, the renewed fighting and capture of Uvira have shattered hopes for stability.

Quaker Congo Partnership UK, a Quaker charity that has worked alongside Congolese Quakers for many years, supports projects in peacebuilding, women's education, and rural healthcare in and around Uvira.

Quaker Congo Partnership UK joins Congolese Friends in calling for peace, for the protection of civilians, and for humanitarian access.

From national Quaker website, 18 December

<https://www.quaker.org.uk/news-and-events/news/your-prayers-are-very-important-quakers-appeal-for-peace-as-war-empties-the-city-of-uvira>

AND A LITTLE BIT OF GOOD NEWS

On November 26, 2025, Arsenal, an English Premier League football club (currently top of the Premier League and Champions League tables), announced that it will not renew its sponsorship contract with "Visit Rwanda", signed in 2018, due to the Rwandan government's support for the M23 armed group, responsible for crimes under international law in the Democratic Republic of Congo. (info from Manchester Amnesty Group's newsletter.)

Street people

by Alan Pinch

In my first article I sent from my iPad I told you how I came to hold a free stall on the steps of Mount Street and what I hoped to do. Now I will recall some vivid memories of meeting some of Manchester's poorest and most friendless people. A free offer may be expected to attract people with urgent needs. And although I was not altogether a novice from the polite suburbs-I had already done various bits of voluntary work in the dingier parts of the city- I still had lots of things to learn about how the other half lives.

If you want to have a try, let me assure you that there is nothing to be afraid of. No-one insulted or threatened me: in all those years nothing was stolen from the stall, even though I sometimes popped back into the Meeting House for a few minutes. Only once - more of that later - did I feel that I needed to avert violence.

Gradually, after a year or two, I began to have regulars. Cold, haggard, often dirty men were glad of a hot drink, biscuits, a few grapes and, in the afternoon, surplus sandwiches from our catering. We also hoped to offer an atmosphere of equality and respect. This was not always easy to achieve. I remember one poor chap who was stinking dreadfully, and very embarrassed about it. In spite of my protests he retired to a distant corner to drink and sit alone.

Many old hands know of cafes or public toilets where they are allowed to wash. Unavoidable dirtiness must be one of the most depressing aspect of homelessness.

One day an experienced rough sleeper turned up with a shivering, depressed adolescent whom he had taken under his wing. The boy

had had a furious row with his parents the previous day, and they had thrown him out. One night of sleeping rough had taken all the truculence out of him. Elizabeth. Coleman and I had a conference with the pair. His new mentor had a suggestion. The lad was just old enough to join the army! He himself was ex-army. Needless to say, this idea was not one that two Quakers could endorse. Especially coming from a man whose service had gained him...a box under a bridge. We begged the lad to ring his parents and make his peace with them. Perhaps by now they were as miserable and worried as he was. As in many cases, I do not know the end of the story. They went on their way and did not return.

The rather alarming man that I mentioned before plumped himself down beside me and launched into his story with little prompting. He had been released from Strangeways Prison about an hour earlier, having served a short sentence for domestic violence. He was seething with indignation! The gun, he assured me, was only a replica. He would show them what for! I tried to explain that we really did not hold with threatening people even with replicas guns. To no avail. I thought, even if I do nothing else today, I really must try to send him home a bit less likely to commit another crime. Leaving the table, I took him to the Friends room, which was empty. I somehow did not think that silent worship would be effective for him. So- and I am embarrassed about this-I took him by the hand and prayed aloud for him, asking God to grant him peace. This was perhaps what he expected an old religious man to do. After a while I sent him on his way with my heart in my mouth.

Months later, when I had quite forgotten him, he came dashing up, interrupting my conversation with a Friend, to proclaim that he was so grateful. It had worked! He was a changed man!


Salt is forbidden me by doctors, but I take a large pinch of it in considering this claim. I'm glad he believes that he has changed his ways. It might even be true. If so, that is his achievement, not mine. Charismatic Latino is really not in my stock-in-trade. I just do good old tea and sympathy.

Besides the actual homeless I met a number of drifters. People who did have a roof over their heads, but spent their days wandering around the city, pecking at handouts and, perhaps, committing nuisances and petty crimes.

Take (I am changing his name, by the way, and those of some other people). George was an inveterate petty scrounger, always asking for a handful of tea-bags and sugar-sachets, although it was clear that he had some spare money. I acquiesced; I was not there to put people off, and what are a few tea-bags? He never stole anything from us, however. He would walk across the city to collect a small freebie. His insensitivity to other people was formidable. He once told me, in strict confidence, why he had just been excluded from the Central Ref. So of course I won't tell you. I am surprised it was just an exclusion and not a prosecution. His exuberant greeting to me would ring across the street. "Come sta, Maicon mio?" For some daft reason we had got into the way of talking in a parody of Italian. We were both awful at it. After the operatic bit he stopped for a coffee and of course I had to buy a Big Issue. Carlo was doing this for years.

I had a rule that I did not give money. If a rumour had spread amongst our street people that the Quakers handed out money..... well, you can see for yourselves. I was sorely tempted to break that rule at times.

Chloe, for instance. she was allowed unofficially to sleep in a garret room above the bar where she worked. She had a 2.1 degree

from Manchester University in a very exacting subject, linguistics. She could analyse  various languages in a sophisticated manner, but could not speak any one language well enough to teach it. She hated the work and the garret. Her parents were far away and had other problems. She felt trapped and thwarted.

It was time to close the table. I stood her a lunch in a cafe, which. I confess I would not have done for George. I am afraid she cried most of the time.

CENTRAL MANCHESTER “TWINNING” ARRANGEMENT WITH SOUTH AFRICA

**From Antony Froggett, Jenny Amery, & Sarah Aldred
Central Manchester Twinning Liaison Group**

Dear Friends

Last year, Central Manchester Quaker Meeting and Quakers in Johannesburg agreed a ‘twinning’ arrangement as a way of encouraging our two communities to learn from one another in fellowship. Last week we met with Bronwen Wilson-Thompson (clerk of Southern Africa YM), Tebogo Moteane (co-clerk of Johannesburg meeting) and Dudu Mtshazo (elder of Johannesburg meeting).

We agreed that we would continue to offer opportunities for online intervisitation and joining one another in worship via Zoom. In Winter, meeting for worship in Johannesburg starts at 7.30am on Sundays and lasts approximately one hour. If you would like to join Quakers in Johannesburg for worship one Sunday morning, **please email one of us for Zoom link. (Email elizcol@di-alstart.net if you don’t have our email addresses.)**

We also agreed that, as an experiment, we will host two worship sharing* opportunities online on Thursday, 22 January and Thursday, 19 February. Both events will start at 5pm UK time and last for an hour and a quarter. They will be run in the same format as the *Quaker Faith Space* i.e. each person will have the opportunity to speak once about what the theme means to them personally (in relation to their spiritual journey/life as a Quaker).

The theme on 22 January will be: **Life Transitions**

The theme on 19 February will be: **Silence**

Please email one of us for the Zoom link. (Email elizcol@di-alstart.net if you don't have our email addresses.)

If this experiment is a success we will organise other opportunities to get to know one another in the things that are eternal across our two Quaker communities.

If you have any questions about the two worship sharing events, or about the twinning arrangement between Manchester and Johannesburg Quakers, please contact one of us.

In Friendship

Quotes from the Reith Lectures 2025 with Rutger Bregman on Artificial Intelligence

“We are currently in a race to create alien minds, systems that we do not understand, and that we may not be able to control. And so we must ask, will this be the new, worst mistake in the history of the human race? Well, the omens are not good. Just look at what the first

wave of big tech has already done to us. Literacy and numeracy scores are plummeting. Teenage depression, anxiety, and suicide attempts are rising. Face-to-face socialising is collapsing as we retreat indoors, eyes glued to screens.”

“Poll after poll finds that people across the West think AI will worsen almost everything they care about, from our health and relationships to our jobs and democracies.”

“I am reminded of the Quakers, the small sect of quiet dissenters that played a leading role in the fight against slavery. They believed in that of God in everyone, an inner light that's shown equally in every human being. To them, slavery was not just cruel. It was a desecration of the sacred.”

“... we are continuously fed this story of technological inevitability, that this is going to happen no matter what, that if we don't do it, then some other lab will do it or the Chinese... we should remember that we always have the power and the ability to say no. There are examples of that in our history. Take something like human cloning. Countries came together and said, "we don't think that's great. We're not going to do that””

Comment during question time by Stuart Russell (former Reith lecturer)
“Dario Amodei (US AI researcher and entrepreneur) says there's a 10 to 25% chance of human extinction if he succeeds in the project on which he's spending hundreds of billions of dollars.”

[Reith 4 R4 2025 Transcript.pdf](#)

Trustees, Proscribed Groups and the Newsletter

by Richard Taylor on behalf of the Trustees

Since July 2025 when Palestine Action was listed as a proscribed group, there has been an increasing amount of discussion and concern by Friends about the situation in Palestine and about Palestine Action in particular. This has become even more emotive and distressing to Friends given the ongoing situation, particularly now with regard to those on hunger strike. Trustees are aware there are misunderstandings about what they do and why trustees seem to be “censoring” the newsletter? Trustees are aware of a growing level of distress that many Friends in the Area Meeting are currently feeling.

This article has been written to try and explain more about trustees – why we need them and what they do, to give some information about proscribed groups and the legal position around them, and to explain the trustees position with regards to support for proscribed groups, including articles in the newsletter.

Why do we have trustees and what do they do?

Manchester & Warrington Area Meeting is a religious charity, registered with the Charity Commission of England & Wales.

All charities are required to have a board of trustees. A charity trustee is a volunteer who holds ultimate responsibility for governing and managing a charity, ensuring it stays true to its purpose, complies with the law, and uses its resources responsibly.

Manchester & Warrington Area Meeting has a constitution that outlines its objectives. The primary objective is –

The object of the charity, as stated in its constitution, is the furtherance of the general religious and charitable purposes of the

Religious Society of Friends (Quakers) in Britain in the area of Manchester and Warrington Area Meeting and beyond.

This objective is broken down into different areas, including enabling Quaker worship in the Manchester and Warrington area, maintenance of our buildings, management of our finances and support for concerns and interest of members of the Area Meeting.

What are Proscribed Groups?

In the UK, a proscribed organisation is a group banned under the Terrorism Act 2000 because it's deemed "concerned in terrorism," meaning it commits, prepares for, promotes, or encourages terrorism, making it a criminal offense to join, support, or express solidarity with them. There are currently 84 proscribed groups, including Hamas and more recently Palestine Action. Proscription of a group is the responsibility of the Home Secretary.

The reasons for a group being proscribed are available from the gov.uk website on this link –

<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/proscribed-terror-groups-or-organisations--2/proscribed-terrorist-groups-or-organisations-accessible-version#list-of-proscribed-international-terrorist-groups>

Proscription Offences

Proscription makes it a criminal offence to:

- Section 11
 - belong, or profess to belong, to a proscribed organisation in the UK or overseas
- Section 12

- (12.1) invite support for a proscribed organisation (the support invited need not be material support, such as the provision of money or other property, and can also include moral support or approval)
- (12.1a) express an opinion or belief that is supportive of a proscribed organisation, reckless as to whether a person to whom the expression is directed will be encouraged to support a proscribed organisation
- (12.2) arrange, manage or assist in arranging or managing a meeting in the knowledge that the meeting is to support or further the activities of a proscribed organisation, or is to be addressed by a person who belongs or professes to belong to a proscribed organisation
- (12.3) address a meeting if the purpose of the address is to encourage support for, or further the activities of, a proscribed organisation
- Section 13
 - (13.1) wear clothing or carry or display articles in public in such a way or in such circumstances as to arouse reasonable suspicion that the individual is a member or supporter of a proscribed organisation
 - (13.1a) publish an image of an item of clothing or other article, such as a flag or logo, in the same circumstances

Penalties for Proscription Offences

- Section 11 and 12 - The penalties for proscription offences under sections 11 and 12 are a maximum of 14 years in prison and/or a fine.
- Section 13 - The maximum penalty for a section 13 offence is 6 months in prison and/or a fine not exceeding £5,000.

Why are trustees concerned about Area Meeting showing support for Proscribed Groups?

To answer this question, we need to consider the proscription offences and penalties, and remember that trustees are legally responsible for the charity and are required to ensure the charity complies with the law.

If an individual decides they are led to support a proscribed group and chooses to accept the risk of arrest, they are free to make that choice as an individual.

If the Area Meeting was led to support a proscribed group, then the trustees would be legally responsible for the actions and could also be arrested and charged under one of the Section 12 offences. Claiming that trustees were unaware would not be seen as a defence. Support from Area Meeting could be –

- Accepting a room booking for a group of Friends to discuss ways of supporting the proscribed group.
- Supporting individuals financially who have been arrested for supporting a proscribed organisation.

- Fund raising for or making donations to individuals if there is any chance that the funds raised will be used by the proscribed group, or any member of the proscribed group.
- Writing articles for the newsletter that could be seen as the Area Meeting showing support for the proscribed group.

There is a long history of Friends making individual choices to break the law and facing any consequences, including prison sentences. Advices and Queries 35 says –

35. Respect the laws of the state but let your first loyalty be to God's purposes. If you feel impelled by strong conviction to break the law, search your conscience deeply. Ask your meeting for the prayerful support which will give you strength as a right way becomes clear.

Trustees are responsible for making sure Area Meeting complies with the law, even if they individually might think the law is wrong. While trustees fully respect an individual who is led to break the law, they ask that individual to search their conscience deeply when considering the implications to trustees and Area Meeting when making their decision.

Trustees have been very clear at their meetings that not all trustees can afford to take such personal risks and there is unity amongst all trustees on their position.

Trustees have asked that there is no mention of proscribed groups in the newsletter. They also agreed to nominate one trustee to work with one Area Meeting clerk to check the newsletter each month to see if there are any articles that may be seen as supportive of proscribed groups. Trustees are doing this to ensure we are staying within the law as it stands today.

For the time being, Trustees ask that Friends not to refer at all to proscribed groups in the Area Meeting newsletter, to help us avoid the risk that references might be interpreted as support.

What can we do and say about our concerns in Palestine?

All the above is only in relation to proscribed groups such as Palestine Action or Hamas.

The Terrorist Act 2000 is not applied retrospectively so any support or campaigning on behalf of a group before it was proscribed will not be investigated and no charges will ever come about as a result.

It is not illegal to protest or write about Palestine – as long as there is no mention of a proscribed group or showing any kind of support for a proscribed group.

Trustees are only concerned with keeping within the law so are only asking for proscribed groups not to be mentioned.

“WET PAINT” WORKSHOP

by Sim

On 31st November a group of Quakers from across GM Area Meeting met to take part in an experimental workshop called 'WET PAINT' at Mount Street Meeting House. The intention was to explore the ways in which the Quaker experience of emergent meaning could be used to bring clarity to our experiences of paralysis and desperation in response to the climate crisis. A lot was learned and felt - a video of the workshop will be published to the Processed Words Youtube channel soon.



DANNY DORLING TALK ON INEQUALITY ON YOUTUBE

I think Danny Dorling once spoke at Area Meeting - Editor.

What warnings do the UK – and the US – hold for the rest of the world? From soaring antidepressant use in Los Angeles’ most ex-

pensive neighbourhood to Britain's middle and upper classes' obsession with private education, grades, and segregating children from each other, there is significant evidence that inequality is bad for everyone, even for the wealthiest among us.

Among those harms is the impact on our democratic systems. Why do the growing gaps between rich and poor make it so much easier to persuade people to believe things they might not otherwise – including things that go directly against their interests and those of society as a whole?

Audio recording of a talk by author and geographer Danny Dorling on 10 December, given to students on the MSc Global Transformations programme at the University of Groningen in the Netherlands. Includes audience question and answers. Note: audio levels vary.

Link in bio: Inequality: Britain and the rest of the world

Listen via YouTube: <https://youtu.be/4zReDIOxs1Y>

During this talk, Dorling, who is 1971 Professor of [#Geography](#) at the University of Oxford, considers everything from Ridley Scott's iconic 1970s Hovis advert to Brexit, Boris Johnson and the rise of Reform. He explains why he is interested in these phenomena – and asks whether others, including younger people, might be too.

Professor Dorling tells a story of Britain and why it holds the dubious distinction of being the inequality poster child of Europe. He makes comparisons with the rest of Europe with regard to tax and social spending. He looks at the impact of the UK leaving the EU in early 2020, and Europe-wide differences in social mobility and university tuition fees. He also considers Europe's health inequalities and health systems and compares them with those in the US and China, and ends with looking back at the period of 2019 to 2023, closing with a focus on the UK once more.

www.dannydorling.org

BEING A TRUSTEE OF QUAKER CONGO PARTNERSHIP

by Sandra Dutson

Nearly a year ago I was appointed as one of the Trustees of Quaker Congo Partnership. (QCP) I have heard Margaret Gregory advocate so strongly about QCP and remember her vivid account of her visit a few years ago. This meant I doubted my ability to follow in her footsteps but I was stirred by her enthusiasm and also because of my own growing interest through involvement in the Conflict Minerals Campaign I decided this seemed a way of offering my existing knowledge and understanding of, and my growing concern for the DRC and in particular East DRC.. It would also mean I would learn more of a country with a complex history and immense poverty.

The main strands of the QCP work are: Peace building, improving the life of women, providing health care and at the time I first became involved bringing clean water to a second village. The website gives more information though updating it not easy at present.
<https://www.quakercongo.org.uk/>

At the first Trustee meeting I attended I learned much about all the projects and there is a kind of expectation each trustee will take a special interest in one of the projects. I am linked with AWID, the project with a focus on the women and will write mostly about that. Just a few words first about the other projects. In a region plagued by widespread unrest and violence the team the Centre for Peace Education and Psychosocial assistance, CEPAP, offer support and workshops. The health team work in a small hospital offering health and maternity care. The 2 villages now equipped with clean water supply are known to have benefitted during a recent cholera outbreak.

AWID, the project focussed on women concentrates on a soapmaking scheme, dressmaking and agricultural work and literacy and numeracy training. The most recent element has been the idea promoted by the women themselves to buy an old building and adapt it to house all the projects. Through our Area work fund the Area is

supporting financially in the purchase and renovation of the building. Sadly at present many future developments are on hold because of further outbreaks of extreme violence with the Rwandan funded M23 militia once more implicated.

This means however these women have become familiar to me via many whats app messages sent primarily to another trustee, Patricia, whose French is fluent and involvement deepened over a longer period. During the most recent outbreaks of violence the women have now been so much in my heart and mind. We have received videos over the months of the progress of the sewing, agricultural and soapmaking groups and the pride of the women in developing skills and their hopes for the development of the building they are buying. In this present acute conflict situation then a lot of work is of necessity is on hold and banks often closed, food in short supply and increasingly expensive, and sending of funds a real issue we have heard how the small amounts of money some of us have raised personally are being shared with as many of the women involved as possible by the leader and co leader, Mado and Victorine. This has been despite what is often a real difficulty in communication even in more peaceful times because of internet and electricity connections.

These direct bonds with the women are so powerful in enabling understanding and even a sense of real friendship. They also inspire me as the women are so creative, brave and generous with what are often very limited resources in frightening and potentially dangerous situations. Thank you for entrusting to me this role. If any one is interested in having more information about the work please contact me. Sandra Dutson.

NOTE FROM THE EDITOR

If you are not on the mailing list, and would like to be emailed future copies of the Newsletter, (or to stop receiving it,) email Mary Atkinson on admin@manchesterquakers.org.uk with your request.

Please send items for the Newsletter to elizcol@dialstart.net The deadline for newsletters is 5pm on the last day of the month. **The deadline for the February newsletter is 5pm on 31 January.** I put almost everything I receive into the newsletter, with very little editing. Short items with pictures are best. 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. 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.

Please feel free to forward the AM Newsletter to anyone who may be interested.

The views expressed in articles are those of their authors, not necessarily those of Area Meeting.

Elizabeth Coleman, Editor 07969 385080