

Newsletter No 104

## ACOMB QUAKER MEETING

MAY 2017



### York: the UK's 1st Human Rights City

On 24 April 2017, the Right Honourable, the Lord Mayor of York, Councillor Dave Taylor, declared York to be the UK's first **Human Rights City**.



*(Picture courtesy of York Press.)*

Further information on p4 and p10.



## Days for Girls

Every so often a brilliantly simple idea surfaces and you think, 'I could do that, and it would really make a difference.'



**Days for Girls** is an international project which aims to claim back the days of education which are lost to girls all over the world, who cannot go to school during their periods. For so many, sanitary protection is neither affordable, nor even obtainable. The solution is a kit in a pretty cotton bag, containing all that is needed for a system of washable, re-usable pads which can be taken to school. The contents of the pack (see picture above) have been carefully designed to be simple to make and long-lasting, so that ultimately they can be replicated anywhere.

I have now attended three sewing sessions in the past year. Two of these have been in the North Transept of York Minster, and it is such an extraordinary sight: dozens of sewing machines and several hundred volunteers. The sponsoring body at the Minster has been the Ainsty Rotary

Club. Most of their members are men, but one member, Izzie Sanderson, has persuaded them to embrace the cause and is very much the local inspiration for the project.

The most recent sewing session I attended was in March at St. Clement's Church in Scarcroft Rd. For me it was the most rewarding of the three. I was able to use my own sewing machine and had also started to become proficient in making certain elements of the packs. The church hopes to hold another session before too long.

If you want to know more, ask me or visit their website [www.daysforgirls.org/](http://www.daysforgirls.org/) and see just what a transformational movement this has become.

*Jenny Hartland*

### **Life in China**

Nick Folkard gave a talk and slide presentation on education in China, using the example of Yuying middle school in Yen'an where he taught for five months.

Chinese children work for up to 10 hours a day for 6 days a week. They live at the school, returning home for 1 day a week. Classes are large, most learning is by rote and the curriculum is exam focused. Most teachers also sleep at the school. Military training involving much drill is compulsory. Pupils love taking part in festivals and celebrations which are an important part of the curriculum.

Nick and Lois made close friendships with some students and hope to help some to study in the UK in the future.

### **Message from the Treasurer**

The **HSBC** bank, which is the only bank we can pay into, is closed in Acomb. Please give cheques to **Jim Oag** or put them in the **Treasurer's pigeon hole**.

Many thanks

*Debbie W*

## **York Human Rights City**

We attended a ceremony and reception on 24th April at Merchant Taylors' Hall where the Lord Mayor signed the formal declaration making York the first **Human Rights City** in the UK. A series of heartening speeches charted the six year journey to get to this point and pointed the way forward. Many York Quaker individuals and institutions have played key roles in this journey. The **York Human Rights City Network** (YHRN) have prioritised 5 key Human Rights: Education; Decent standard of Living; Housing; Health and Social Care; and Equality and Non-discrimination. Data and evidence will be gathered for regular reports which will indicate progress in these 5 Rights.

But this is just the beginning! We are urged to take whatever actions we can in support, both individually and in groups. There are many movements and organisations that are working to make York a better place for us all. Many of them rely on a combination of volunteers, donations and grants, and would be grateful for your support. You can visit their website: [www.yhr.cn.org](http://www.yhr.cn.org) or pick up a leaflet from the Meeting House.

*John & Sally Bourton*

## **Reading Quaker Faith & Practice group**

Over the past 18 months there have been 3 groups involving Acomb Quakers meeting to read and consider each part of Quaker Faith & Practice. Those of us who have been meeting on a Monday evening have just finished our final session, reading Chapter 27 Unity and Diversity which considers our relationship with Christianity and other faiths.

After sharing some of the passages that appealed to us we asked ourselves what in British Quakerism unites us. Our worship unites us and there is a common bond felt with each other. As a group we feel united in a sense of perpetual seeking after wisdom and truth, a journey that we are on together. We also recognised that as a demographic group we are far from diverse in the eyes of the world. Some of the good things that arise from our diversity are being prepared to question, tolerance of different views, and having room to allow growth.

Finally we asked whether the book represents Quakerism as it is now and the general view is that while there is much there of great value, some parts need bringing up to date to reflect our experience of living in the current global environment. For a church community based in silence there are a lot of words in it! (The equivalent book used by Australian Quakers has pictures and music.)

We have really enjoyed the fellowship of meeting regularly. We have got to know each other better "in the things that are eternal". It has been invaluable to read every chapter and discuss the issues raised, to educate ourselves on Quaker history and thought, and to know where to turn to for practical advice.

*Ruth McC*

## Dates for May 2017

Everyone is welcome at everything.  
Names indicate who to ask for more information.

**If no venue is given, events take place at  
Acomb Meeting House.**

### Regular Events

**Every Sunday:** 10.30-11.30 Meeting for Worship (MfW)  
and Children's Meeting (followed by refreshments)

**Every Wednesday:** 11.30-12.00 MfW (+ refreshments)

**1<sup>st</sup> Sunday:** 9.45 Upholding Meeting before MfW  
(Debbie Wright)

**2<sup>nd</sup> & 4<sup>th</sup> Sunday:** 12.00-12.30 'Afterword' after MfW

**3<sup>rd</sup> Sunday:** 12.00-13.30 Shared Lunch after MfW  
(usually preceded by a talk or event - for details see below)

Shared Lunches	
May 21	Bayard Rustin: the black American Quaker civil rights activist. <i>Kevin S</i>
June 18	The History of Advices & Queries <i>John G</i>

**Please Note** a full diary of events for York AM and LMs is  
on the York Quakers website:

[www.yorkquakers.org.uk/eventscalendar.html](http://www.yorkquakers.org.uk/eventscalendar.html)

Special Monthly Collections	
May	Alternatives to Violence <i>Deb/John B</i>
June	Solace <i>Heather S</i>

## MAY

Sunday 7	9.45 - 10.15 Upholding Meeting before MfW
Mon 8 - Sun 14	<u>Before I Die Festival</u> : full programme of events at <a href="http://www.stleonardshospice.org.uk/Help/Events/Before-I-Die-Festival-Dying-Matters">www.stleonardshospice.org.uk/Help/Events/Before-I-Die-Festival-Dying-Matters</a>
Sunday 14	<u>Area Meeting</u> : 1pm at Harrogate
Fri 19 - Sun 21	<u>Alternatives to Violence Project</u> : workshop in Leeds <u>Contact</u> : 0747 998 2703 yorkshireadmin@avpbritain.org.uk
Sunday 21	<u>Shared Lunch</u> : see details opposite
Saturday 20	<u>Kindlers workshop</u> : see p9 for details
Wednesday 24	<u>New Study Group</u> : see below and p11

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### **New Study Group**

Following on from the enthusiasm generated by studying Quaker Faith & Practice (see p11), Elders are proposing that further groups meet regularly, perhaps for bible study or whatever Friends wish. A new study group is starting on **Wednesday 24 May** at **9.30-11 am**, followed by refreshments and then the usual Meeting for Worship at 11.30. All welcome, come with ideas of what we could discuss.

There has been correspondence in **The Friend** recently asking "**Do Friends pray?**" In the light of this question I thought that this extract from an article in The Guardian casts an interesting light on the question. *John G.*

## **Prayer**

Prayer is not a way of telling God the things he already knows. Nor is it some act of collective lobbying, whereby the almighty is encouraged to see the world from your perspective if you screw up your face really hard and wish it so. Forget Christopher Robin at the end of the bed. Prayer is mostly about emptying your head waiting for stuff to become clear.

There is no secret formula. And holding people in your prayers is not wishful thinking. It's a sort of compassionate concentration where someone is deliberately thought about in the presence of the widest imaginable perspective – like giving them a mental cradling.

But above all, prayer is often just a jolly good excuse to shut up for a while and think. The adrenaline that comes from shock does not make for clear thinking or considered judgment. Those who rush to outrage say the stupidest things.

*Giles Fraser, 24.3.69 after the Westminster terrorist attack.*

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## **Advices & Queries 8:**

Worship is our response to an awareness of God. We can worship alone, but when we join with others in expectant waiting we may discover a deeper sense of God's presence. We seek a gathered stillness in our meetings for worship so that all may feel the power of God's love drawing us together and leading us.



## Kindlers Events in Leeds in 2017

Sat 20th May - Let your life speak

Using your gifts in the service of God and the community.

**Central Leeds (Carlton Hill) Quaker Meeting House**

**188 Woodhouse Lane, Leeds LS2 9DX**

**ALL ARE WELCOME - NO BOOKING REQUIRED**

10:00 to 16:30 Cost: min. £10 per day

Bring your own lunch

**Free online course**: offered by Lancaster University and led by Ben Pink Dandelion — starting 22 May 2017

**Radical Spirituality: the Early History of the Quakers**

Learn about the beginnings of this radical religious group as it emerged in 17th century England

<https://www.futurelearn.com/courses/quakers>

**Advance notice**: **BYM Gathering 2017** takes place at Warwick University campus from 29 July - 5 August. This all-age residential event, combining the formal business of Britain Yearly Meeting within a week of community building, workshops and special interest sessions, is organised every 3 years and is very popular with those who get a buzz from being with 1,000 other Quakers in the same place. It is open to all, though attenders need to go through our local meeting Elders as a formality to take part.

Booking is now open online [www.quaker.org.uk/ym](http://www.quaker.org.uk/ym) and brochures are available from **Heather Swailes**. Some bursary help is available if needed. Several from Acomb intend to go - if you have never been to such an event and are interested, do ask the **Bourtons** or **McCarthy's** who went 3 years ago, who will wax lyrical about their experience!

## **Living our Testimonies: STEWARDSHIP**

Quakers are concerned about the excesses and unfairness of our consumer society and the unsustainable use of natural resources. We try to live simply and to find space for the things that really matter: the people around us, the natural world, our experience of God.

<https://www.quaker.org.uk/about-quakers/our-values>



### **What will being a Human Rights City mean for York?**

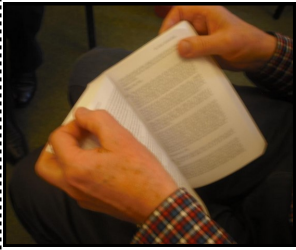
When you really start to look at the way we live now, right here in York, the levels of inequality and unfairness that we seem prepared to turn a blind eye to are quite shocking.

How can it be right, for example, that if you are born in Westfield ward, you are likely to die eight years earlier than if you are born in Heworth Without?

Or that a child from a less well-off family in York who qualifies for free school meals is 34% less likely to get five or more decent GCSEs than a child from a better-off York family who doesn't qualify for free school meals? Can we honestly be said to be protecting the human rights of York people while such inequalities are allowed to continue?

*(Source: [www.yorkpress.co.uk/news/](http://www.yorkpress.co.uk/news/) 20/04/17)*

## QF&P Study Group



The QF&P study group which has been meeting every month at the Meeting House since 2016 completed its final chapter on Monday 24th April. We all agreed that it has been a most helpful, informative, inspirational, thought-provoking and deepening experience which has helped us grow closer together in understanding of ourselves, each other and our Quaker faith. In short, we don't want to stop!

Accordingly we have agreed to continue to meet monthly. After discussion, we agreed to switch to a day-time meet as there is already another study group meeting in the evenings and we want to increase the range of alternatives available. Our next meeting will be on **Wednesday 24 May** from **09.30-11.00**, with time for refreshments before the Meeting For Worship from 11.30-12.00 for those who wish to stay on.



At this first meeting of the new Study/Discussion (?) group we will be sorting out our timetable of topics for the coming months. Topics such as the Bible, Sacred Readings, QF&P, Faith in Action and the Testimonies amongst others, have all been suggested and we are completely open to ideas.



You are most welcome to join us and we look forward to producing a vibrant and interesting programme over the coming months. Please contact *John & Sally B* or *James & Ruth McC* if you require a lift and do let us know if you intend to come to our May meeting.

*John Bourton*



Many thanks to Heather for this delightful picture of **Mary Brodie** looking very relaxed while happily stroking a giant rabbit. The rabbit also appears to be perfectly content to receive all the attention.

Further pictures of Friends always welcome for the newsletter. Please email them to the newsletter address.

Apologies for omitting to pass on warm thanks to all who contributed to the **CAAT** collection in March. Your generosity is much appreciated.

*Gill B*

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Please email items for the newsletter to:  
**acombquakernewsletter@gmail.com**  
... or give printed copy to **Ruth** or **Loretta**  
... by the **third** Sunday of the month