

## ACOMB QUAKER MEETING

June 2018



### **In Memory of John Bunney**

John, a Londoner by birth, was born into a Quaker family, brought up in Amersham and educated at Ackworth. In 1939, he was drafted into land work as a registered Conscientious Objector, and continued working in horticulture ever since. John married Margery in 1950 and managed his own market garden business on family land in the Midlands. They raised three children, enjoyed village life and were members of the Meeting at Sutton Coldfield for twenty years. Margery, with qualifications in Music & Domestic Science and with a grown up family, became Domestic Bursar at Ackworth while John became Head Gardener of the extensive estate.

Their last career move was to similar positions for thirteen years at the Mount School until their retirement. John and Margery have been long-standing members of Acomb Meeting, presenting an inspiring example of joint and individual self effacing, dedicated Quaker service to our Meeting and to the national Society at large.

His Memorial Meeting will be held at midday on Saturday 9 June in Ackworth.

## **We need to talk about sex**

Oxford Friends have recently experienced quite a storm, receiving phone calls, emails, and unaccustomed forms of public opprobrium. What did they do? They took a booking for a meeting of "A Woman's Place UK", a feminist organisation discussing laws which affect women.

What could be so controversial about a group of women meeting together to talk about women's rights? Welcome to the topsy-turvy world of transgender identity politics. I must stress that I believe transgender people have the right to equality in law, acceptance and respect. Many have been through enormous pain and their transition is an ongoing journey that is far from easy.

However, I had little idea, even a year ago, of the ways in which three aspects of my own identity - a woman, a feminist, and a lesbian - would be challenged by an increasingly loud and influential trans lobby. It has completely transformed how I think about myself, my relationship with the Labour Party, and my attitude to the LGBT movement.

To start with terminology: what is the difference between sex and gender? Many people think that the two are synonymous. I think this crucial point is at the centre of the problem now facing the LGBT community and women. One side - feminism - believes in a class analysis of **sex** as a hierarchy of power. The lived, material reality of being female is what the suffragettes and feminists of the last century were fighting about. The fact that we bear children makes us less employable than men; we are paid less than men as a result. Female biological reality leads to infanticide, genital mutilation, and repercussions arising from unwanted pregnancy. Our sex means that 1 in 5 of us have experienced rape. Biological sex is immutable: you cannot identify your way out of it, and there are protections in law for women as a result of it.

In feminist theory, **gender** is identified as a socially

constructed binary comprised of expectations that exaggerate the differences between men and women. Hence the stereotypes: men are brave, strong, rational, and should not cry; women are irrational, emotional, weak and passive. Gender is bad: it is a straitjacket and both sexes suffer within it. Feminists - lots of whom are also lesbians - have long sought to be gender nonconforming, not asserting that they have changed sex, just refusing to be defined by gender stereotypes. This is where the clash with trans ideology comes into play. Trans activists centre on **gender identity**, which is a *feeling* of being masculine or feminine. If a six year old boy likes playing with dolls, is gentle or likes dresses, isn't it possible he was born into the "wrong" body? To rectify this they could transition: have sex reassignment surgery and take hormones. Until very recently, I assumed that this was probably a good thing. And, for some, these interventions undoubtedly do ease their dysmorphia.

However, I now see the assertion that one can change sex as an ideological position. It is a belief based on feelings predicated around gender stereotypes, and the impact of this belief is having dangerous repercussions for women in general, and lesbians especially. Some feminists see this ideology as performing a 'gay conversion' role: nascent lesbians and gay men are given the option of becoming 'straight' through transition. As around 80% of teenagers with gender dysphoria become homosexuals, there are important questions here.

The trans lobby has a bigger voice than one might expect from such a tiny minority, and it has convinced MPs that the 2010 Gender Recognition Act needs updating to allow people to be able to self-define their gender. This would allow anyone to 'change sex' legally with minimal intervention, instead of requiring medical supervision and living for two years within the target gender identity.

But what happens when 'gender identity' takes on more significance than biological sex? Indeed, what happens when

the existence of biological difference between men and women is denied? One answer is already becoming clear: women will be expected to tolerate males in public spaces such as loos and swimming pool changing rooms but could also affect domestic violence shelters and women's prisons. A surprising number of male sex offenders (including Soham murderer Ian Huntley) are identifying as transgender and expecting to be housed in the women's estate. Bear in mind that the majority of trans-identified males keep their genitalia: the implications are clear.

Replacing **sex** with **gender identity** in law is problematic, having ramifications in recording crime and discrimination, in sport, in the erasure of women's physiology in medicine (using words to describe female biology is considered transphobic) and - of especial concern to me - for lesbians.

Lesbians, the ultimate non-conforming women, have become a target for some evangelical trans activists. If biological sex is no longer important then women can have penises and women who don't want to sleep with women with penises are getting called transphobic. The same presumably applies to gay men, although I have not heard of transmen decrying gay men for transphobia.

I have recently left the Labour Party because - without having discussed this with women's groups or at conference - it has just enshrined gender identity into policy. "All Women Shortlists" were for women, and any transwoman who had a legal certificate (called a GRC), to rectify the lack of women in politics. In the last month, the Labour Party has decided that places on all-women training schemes and shortlists will be open to anyone who 'self-identifies' as a woman. It basically means that the category of "All Women Shortlists" has disappeared as a meaningful concept.

What all this means for me on a personal level is that I have started to identify myself very firmly as a woman, a lesbian and a feminist (terms I have been ambivalent about before). I have become acutely aware of a huge wave of misogyny hitting

women - ironically in the year we celebrate one hundred years of women's suffrage. And it's a strange thing to think that well-meaning Oxford Friends have had an introduction to the febrile world of trans activism.

I hope that Quakers will use their famous discernment process to see that the issue is nuanced and complex, rather than rushing to unthinkingly defend one group at the expense of another.

*Deb Evans*

### **Two hour Meeting for Worship**

This will be held on Monday 18 June 7 - 9pm at Acomb MH. Everyone is welcome for all or part of it.

*James McCarthy*

### **Upholding Meeting**

It was decided at the last Elders' Meeting that an Upholding Meeting will be held for the next six months on the even months **after** Meeting for Worship for half an hour. The next one is the 3rd June, then 5th August and 7th October. That's the FIRST Sunday on alternate months and we will then review. All are welcome.

### **Menwith Hill Worship**

**RAF Menwith Hill**, Birstwith, Harrogate HG3 2RL is a Royal Air Force station which provides communications and intelligence support services to the United Kingdom and the United States.

Meeting for Worship outside Menwith Hill takes place on the first Saturday every two months: February, April, June, August, October and December. This action is a York Area Meeting Concern and Harrogate Meeting would appreciate support.

For details/help getting there, contact *Gilly Charters, Barbara Penny* or *Ruth Rymer*

Do join us, bringing a chair.

## Dates for June 2018

Everyone is welcome at everything.

**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 (even months):** 12:00 Upholding Meeting **after** 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

### Shared Lunches

June 17

"Lunch in the garden"

*John G & Heather S*

### Special Monthly Collections

June

Kyra

*John Guest*

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

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

### Study Group

Friday 15

19:30 "What I would put in Quaker Faith and Practice."

*Nick Folkard*

<b>June</b>	
Saturday 2	Menwith Hill Worship (see p5)
Sunday 3	<u>Upholding Meeting</u> : 12:00 after MfW Please note the new time. (see p4)
Saturday 9	<u>Memorial Meeting for John Bunney</u> : Midday at <b>Ackworth Meeting, WF7 7LT</b> followed by refreshments
Friday 15	<u>Study group</u> : 19:30 in the York Room at <b>Hartrigg Oaks</b> (see p6 & p8)
Sunday 17	<u>Shared lunch</u> : <b>John &amp; Heather's</b> (see p6)
<b>July</b>	
Sunday 1	<u>Business Meeting</u> : 12:00 after MfW
Wednesday 11	<u>Area Meeting</u> : 19:00 <b>Friargate</b>

### **Suggestion for stilling before Meeting**

Be still and know that I am God

Be still and know that I am

Be still and know

Be still

Be . . .

Psalm 46:10

If you are welcoming people to the Meeting, please remember to offer them a printed copy of the newsletter. We always have a few spare copies printed for newcomers to gain a flavour of Acomb Meeting.

## Residential Weekend 2019

We are getting to the time of year when we need to begin thinking about our next Residential Weekend, which will be due in 2019. These have been held every two years, at Wydale, and the last two times have taken place at the end of September. Although not everyone can, or wants to, attend, the weekends have contributed significantly to the spiritual and social life of our Meeting. They have been funded through individual fees but the Meeting also contributes to the overall cost and provides some bursaries.

Before planning begins, we need to be sure that the Meeting wishes to hold another Residential. Could you let me know by email or in person, whether you would wish to attend in principle a Residential next year. This is not committing you to attend, but the Meeting will need to know whether to go ahead with planning. Thank you.

I look forward to hearing from you.

Best wishes,  
*Sally Bourton*

### **From the Nominations Committee:**

Would Friends interested in being part of the next Residential Weekend planning group let either *Deb Evans, Jenny Brierley* or *Lois Folkard* know? Many thanks.

### **Study Group**

The informal study group met on Friday 18 May at the home of Sally and John Bourton and had a lively discussion about death. We discussed funerals, assisted dying and the relationship of death to life, as well as other topics.

The next meeting will be on Friday 15th June at 7:30 pm in the York Room at Hartrigg Oaks. Our subject will be " What I would put into Quaker Faith and Practice" Everyone is welcome.

*Nick Folkard*

## **Change of Clerk**

As we launch ourselves into the role of co-Clerks for Acomb Meeting, we would like to share our appreciation of the work which Heather has carried out as our clerk for the last 6 years. She will be 'standing down' on 1 June and Jemma & I will follow on as co-Clerks, hoping to retain her as our Advisor and Consultant. Through our hand-over period we have come to realise the many tasks which Heather took on which came to her, both as Clerk and because of her knowledge and experience, and we want to acknowledge her skills and the work she has carried out for the Meeting over the last 6 years. So, feeling a little daunted at our new role, we hope our Meeting will uphold us and encourage us, but also speak plainly to us!

To make sure we work closely together, we have a shared drive and a new Clerks email address:

[Acombquakerclerks@gmail.com](mailto:Acombquakerclerks@gmail.com)

*Sally Bourton & Jemma Weeks*

## **Ministry:**

In response to an article in The Friend predicting the demise of Quakers unless we return to a strong Christian faith, a Friend spoke in meeting thus (or something like it!):

"There have been many religions based on a strong statement of faith, a creed or belief in a particular God. Their adherents thought that this gave them unity and a strong foundation. I would suggest that our coherence is based on four things;

- Our joining together in silent worship
- The way we look after each other
- Our shared values, as evidenced by our testimonies
- Our tolerance of and indeed appreciation of our differing understandings of the divine

And that while these may seem less secure than an agreed statement of faith, I believe they may prove to be a sounder foundation."

## **Feedback from shared lunch 15 April:**

### **What are Elders for?**

#### ***What is required to care for the spiritual health of the Meeting?***

- Community
- Vocal ministry
- Respect
- Meeting for Worship
- Looking after those who are spiritually struggling
- Discussion of spiritual matters
- Managing difficulties

#### ***To do this Elders should:***

- Provide education
- Arrange discussion of spiritual matters
- Arrange discussion of vocal ministry
- Pay attention to communication with Friends, via personal encouragement, personal approaches, newsletter and library
- Help to organise residential, shared lunches, visits to Woodbrooke, Kindlers and access to other resources
- Monitor vocal ministry and deal with the unacceptable
- Dilute the concentration of responsibility

#### ***What sort of Role is this?***

- It's a job, you learn on the job and a majority believe it should no longer be reserved to members.

*John G*

**Kindlers on the Road 2018:** Elders wish to gauge interest in the meeting hosting a Kindler's day workshop. Please sign up on the list in the meeting house if you are interested.

Topics: Answering that of God; Prayer; Vocal Ministry; Deepening Worship; What does Love Require of Us?; Finding Our Own Silence; Nurturing Our Meetings; Listening

## Britain Yearly Meeting 2018



Simon Risley making his fellow Kindler look like a noble Aztec at Yearly Meeting

Ruth and I attended Yearly Meeting in London at the start of May.

It was a good weekend: warm and sunny, with a friendly crowd of Quakers (up to 1000 I believe) and interesting business, well clerked.

The main decision taken was to revise Quaker Faith and Practice. I will give a report at business meeting on 1st July.

*James McCarthy*

## Let's explore the Quaker way



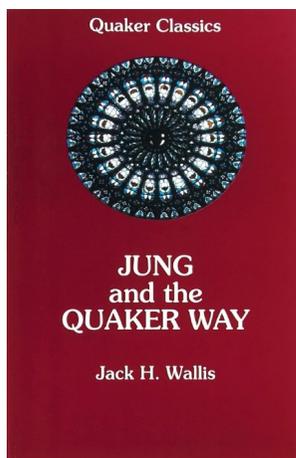
"Walk cheerfully over the world,  
answering that of God in every one"

George Fox, 1656

This delightful little booklet is written and illustrated by **Rebecca Price**. The whole booklet can be seen [online](#) and is an excellent resource for discussing Quaker values or 'testimonies' of equality, peace, truth, and simplicity with children of all ages.

## Library Corner

Whilst browsing through our collection of books, I recently came across one volume in the library that are not new acquisitions, but particularly caught my interest: "Jung and the Quaker Way" by Jack H Wallis, exploring Jungian analytical psychology and Quakerism, is worth serious contemplation.



Personally, I find Jung apposite to Quakerism with regard to the ego communicating with the unconscious. I believe it was a Quaker, Francis Galton, who spoke about there being an antechamber in the mind where information is stored ready to emerge into the unconscious when needed.

On a different note perhaps, we do have some Quaker fiction in the library. I find fiction is a good way in to the unconscious.

Enjoy your reading and may the spirit be with you.

*Paul O'Kell*

PS I thought Friends might like to listen to this year's Swarthmore Lecture at least until we obtain a print copy.

[woodbrooke.org.uk/resource-library/swarthmore-lecture-2018/](http://woodbrooke.org.uk/resource-library/swarthmore-lecture-2018/)

Please email items for the newsletter to:

**[AcombQuakerNewsletter@gmail.com](mailto:AcombQuakerNewsletter@gmail.com)**

... or give printed copy to **Loretta**

... **before** the **third** Sunday of the month

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