

# YORK AREA QUAKEVINE

Quaker News, Views, Insights and Reports

Issue 12

September/October 2020



In Liz & Martina's garden this summer

*photo: Martina Weitsch*

## Springtime in Lockdown

A new morning in lockdown,  
Everyone still in their dressing gown.  
Get up early go for a bike ride  
Hare and deer stride alongside.  
Sit for a moment: Sun at Field's edge,  
What can we hear inside that hedge?  
Robin, Warbler, chaffinch or wren?  
Turn around, home again.  
Birdsong to brighten our way.

Lunchtime in lockdown,  
No cafés open, empty town.  
Instead, a picnic in the garden,  
While safety measures harden:  
Wash your hands, don't forget  
20 seconds -not done yet!  
Fresh laid eggs and local ham,  
Home baking, scones and jam.  
Birds gather crumbs at our feet,  
Listen to their welcome tweet.  
Birdsong, flock, fly a hundred strong.

**Laurence Horne (age 10)** *with a little help from Claire Horne & Friargate Children's Meeting*

Afternoon in lockdown,  
Everybody gather around:  
Home education: parents teach the nation,  
(Despite some consternation).  
Elsewhere unfinished projects re-found,  
Creativity unbound,  
A stillness in the air,  
A quietness we share,  
Birdsong all day long.

Evening in lockdown,  
Back in my dressing gown.  
Evening news,  
Scientific views,  
So very much to lose.  
Back outside for a breath of fresh air.  
Clement weather, Super Moon  
Meet with family- only on Zoom.  
A quietness in the dark  
An owl hooting....hark!  
Birdsong all day long.

## *An Ocean of Darkness and Death*

My Friday afternoons at work are murder.

Contrary to appearances, this is not just a hyperbolic reference to the typical end-of-week fatigue felt by many workers.

The statement above accurately describes the subject-matter of the tasks I have on my “to do” list on that day, for Friday afternoon is the time-slot in my week which I try to reserve for work on the pro bono project I co-ordinate for my employer, a global law firm.

Through an introduction from [Amicus](#), a UK-based charity which helps to provide representation for those facing the death penalty in the United States, a team of over 100 volunteer lawyers from our offices across the US, UK, Germany and the Middle East are working on an ambitious project to monitor and collect key factual information on all first-degree murder cases in Florida since March 2016.

Working with the [Florida Center for Capital Representation](#), part of Florida International University, our volunteer case-reviewers obtain all available information on the internet about the cases they are allocated, and then enter relevant details into the FCCR database. Much of the information comes from the criminal court docket – the record of each stage in the proceedings from arrest onwards – which under Florida law is publicly accessible; but media searches, particularly on high-profile cases, can also provide vital information.

Once the case has been reviewed and entered into the database, the volunteer may need to continue to monitor it on a monthly basis, depending on whether or not the state prosecutors are still seeking the death penalty. Volunteers are trained to flag up to FCCR any cases where FCCR’s interns may need to intervene as a priority to assist the defence attorneys: for instance, if the state is seeking to file a notice of intention to seek the death penalty after the statutory time-limit has expired, or if the defendant has only one attorney (capital cases are eligible for two defence attorneys).

As well as direct intervention in high-priority cases, FCCR’s aim is to collate comprehensive and detailed information on the application of the death penalty in Florida. For instance, to help assess whether there is evidence of racial bias in the way in which the state seeks, or juries and judges impose, the death penalty, our reviewers record the race of both defendant and victim(s). Similarly, the database allows FCCR to track whether particular judicial circuits (or counties within those circuits) appear to be seeking death in a disproportionately high number of cases. The long-term aim is to be able to deploy hard statistical evidence as the basis for a Supreme Court challenge to the constitutionality of the death penalty in Florida.

Even when working on these cases at a distance, separated somewhat from the harsh realities by the computer screen, the subject-matter is challenging. Each time I access the details for a particular case, whether to allocate it out to a volunteer for review or to audit the results of the review to ensure there are no errors creeping into the database, the extent of the human misery involved is inescapably evident. A mother and young son shot at his birthday party when gang members seeking retaliation mistakenly targeted the wrong address. A wheelchair-bound “panhandler” whose pitch was on a motorway slip-road killed by a mentally unstable motorist who deliberately stopped his car in order to shoot him. Children as young as 13 or 14 arrested on murder charges, and likely to face a lifetime in prison. Defendants now in their 70s and 80s who have spent 20, 30, 40-plus years maintaining their innocence

and undergoing a seemingly endless series of appeals, re-trials, re-sentencings and fresh appeals. An ocean of darkness and death, indeed.

So why do I do it?



For me, it represents a form of service to which I, as a Quaker, have been led by the Spirit, since it was through my journey as a Friend that my firm first decided to partner with Amicus.

It all started when I read an advert in the back of *The Friend* for [LifeLines](#), a UK-based charity which aims to provide penfriends to offer support to those on Death Row in the US. Having been a keen letter-writer as a child, with penfriends in several countries, I thought to myself, “I can do that”, and signed up straightaway.

Having been allocated a penfriend from Texas, and hearing from him about his experiences going through trial and (now) through the appeals procedure, my instinctive lawyerly curiosity was piqued: was this capital prosecution process really fair and just? It seemed to me full of traps for the unwary, rather than an evenhanded system designed to uncover the truth. The more I read about it, the more sceptical I became.

Then I attended LifeLines’ autumn conference in 2018, where there was a presentation on the work done by Amicus. I asked the speaker, “Is this really something which a lawyer at a commercial law firm could get involved with?”. “Absolutely!”, came the firm reply. So I went back to work and posted the idea that we might partner with Amicus on our internal suggestions board. My firm was looking for a global pro bono project which could potentially involve all our offices, and took up the idea eagerly. And having being the one who put the idea forward, I felt I couldn’t refuse to take on the role of project co-ordinator, when asked.

At a superficial level, doing this work is a complete change from the day-job (I’m a pensions lawyer by specialism). And it has had the unanticipated bonus of bringing me into contact with a whole range of people from across my firm whom I would otherwise never have encountered in my day-to-day work.

But for me, what makes it truly worthwhile is the feeling that our work can, in some small measure, add to the ocean of light and love which seeks to cover the darkness. The defendants whose cases we are allocated are almost all suffering from (multiple) disadvantages: mental impairment or illness; lack of education; unstable and abusive childhood environments. They are invariably poor: as Clive Stafford Smith, patron of LifeLines, has commented, “capital punishment is when those without the capital get the punishment”. The criminal justice system is heavily weighted against them, and the work we do helps, just a little, to redress that imbalance.

As our contact at FCCR tells us each month on the webinar she runs for volunteers at our firm and at the other Amicus partner firms, the defendants are always amazed to hear that there are lawyers across the world who are willing to give up their time, for free, to help them. They should not be so amazed: it is the most fulfilling work I have done in the whole of my career.

**Patricia Critchley** (Friargate)

*windows in Boccadasse, seashore church: Barbara Windle*



**York Area Quaker Meeting**  
**Saturday 12<sup>th</sup> September**  
**1.30pm – 4.00 pm**  
**via Zoom from 1.15pm**

**Join Zoom Meeting**

<https://us02web.zoom.us/j/89820793103?pwd=M2RYZU45M3VIRFVQK05oTzNyQ2NVZz09>

**Meeting ID: 898 2079 3103    Passcode: 862766**

**Contact your LM Clerk for copies of all AM papers**

*Timings remain experimental and aspirational. They may be as follows:*

- 1.15 Friends begin to assemble and settle in
- 1.30 opening worship
- 1.45 nominations; membership matters
- 2.10 Sustainability Group: Presentation, with discussion 'rooms'
- 3.00 website(s) update
- 3.10 Where are we now? Meeting for worship? Build back better? Future hopes.  
Session of open worship sharing
- 3.50 notices and closing the meeting

***Could You be a Trustee?***

Area Meeting Nominations Committee is looking for a Friend to serve as an Area Meeting Trustee from January 2021.

We would particularly like to hear from you if you either:

- ❖ Come from Harrogate or Acomb;
- ❖ Know about records management and data protection or
- ❖ Would bring down the average age of the trustee body.

Trusteeship involves legal responsibility and is not to be undertaken lightly.

Collectively the trustees must ensure that the Area Meeting fulfils its charitable purposes and they must look after its property, finances and employees. The duties are shared between the trustees, who now have a paid administrative assistant.

The trustees use the Quaker business method and seek to be led by the Spirit in all that they do. There are regular Woodbrooke courses on being a Quaker trustee and Area Meeting funds are available to support someone undertaking such training.

Although the work may seem hard at times, remember that if you agree to serve as a trustee you will be part of a team of equally committed Friends, together playing an essential part in enabling the continued worship and witness of York Area Meeting.

For more information look for "Essential Trustee" on the Charity Commission website or talk to John Guest, Clerk of Trustees, or the Trustees for your Local Meeting.

If you would like your name to be considered as a Trustee, please contact me, Eleanor Tew, Convenor of Nominations, [Eleanor.tew@talktalk.net](mailto:Eleanor.tew@talktalk.net) 01904 593653.



## Living sustainably 4: Living simply, minimising waste

Forget the three Rs that you learnt at school. The only three Rs for F/friends in York AM are now Reduce, Reuse and Recycle, with a passion.

**Here are just some of the ways that people are putting this into practice every day:**

**Buying** only what you need in the first place! Use a shopping list to avoid impulse buys.

**Giving** to, and buying from, charity shops and Freecycle.

**Growing** food in allotments, gardens, windowsills, reused containers.

**Buying** produce loose or in paper bags or reusing bread bags to pack goods.

**Buying** products with as little packaging as possible...and leaving the packaging behind in the supermarket to prompt them to minimise waste.



**Buying** from shops that refill bottles & tubs.

**Composting** food waste.

**Mending** clothes.

**Using** cloth bags for shopping.

**Having** milk delivered in glass bottles.

**Refilling** water bottles from the tap.

**Making** stock from vegetable peelings.

**Clearing** the litter from fields near home.

**Using** your own reusable mug for takeaway drinks.

Where you have to use plastic, **choosing** bio-degradable or recycled.

**Finding** places to recycle everything and anything, however small.

**Giving** environment-friendly plastic-free presents, in plastic-free wrapping.

**Living simply is far from an easy option it seems. Here are some of the challenges that F/friends have shared:**

Pre-wrapped fruit and veg in the supermarket is often cheaper than loose produce from an independent greengrocer.

It takes time to search out products with less packaging or fill your own containers.

Reusing food bags with a bar code confuses the checkout till.

Finding clothing produced in environment-friendly ways.

Believing that small actions count, when other are involved in campaigning.

**And here are some ideas from F/friends to investigate:**

Make use of Freecycle, 'changing the world one gift at a time'.

Entice frogs into the garden via a pond, saving your veg with a natural solution to slugs.

Check out Hotbin composters, though not a cheap option.

**In F/friends' own words:**

'I really have to believe that every little helps, because it is only little gradual changes that I can make. I have already spent my life trying to live simply, avoiding waste, recycling everything I can, composting, and not buying things I don't need.'

'Since I started looking at how I could help the environment, the achievements I have successfully managed to make have spurred me on to try other ideas.'

'It's good to have reminders - your note will remind me to start again. It's about routines. If it's part of your routine, you just do it, without making a big deal about it.'

'Luckily I have never been interested in fashion, fast or otherwise, so spend very little on clothes. I have knitted one pair of socks but won't be going into regular production as it took me two years to finish them!'



## Living sustainably 5: Keeping clean and green

Cleanliness may, or may not, be next to godliness, but for F/friends in York AM cleanliness is high on the agenda regarding sustainability.

**Here are some changes people are making to keep clean sustainably & ethically:**

**Using:** soap bars instead of handwash; solid shampoo; rock crystal deodorant, to reduce the use of plastic.

**Changing** to bamboo toothbrushes and using chemical-free toothpaste.

**Buying** ecology-friendly cleaning materials.

**Using** period pants or moon cups instead of disposable tampons etc.

**Washing** on low-temperature cycles to save energy.

**Reducing** microplastics in the environment by washing acrylics less often.

**Washing** less often, using showers or sharing baths to save water and energy for heating...remember the Government campaign in the 1976 drought to 'Save water, bath with a friend', and the arguments over who gets the tap end?

**But making changes is not challenge-free. Here are issues Friends have shared:**

**Finding** ethically-produced cleaning products that are not harming wildlife or habitats, especially products that do not use irresponsibly produced palm oil.

**Avoiding** single-use plastic packaging, and finding shops that refill bottles with cleaning materials, or use paper, card or tin packaging, or sell unpackaged products. It takes longer to shop, reading labels with ingredients in tiny print.

The sustainable choice can be unaffordable where the budget is tight.

**And here are some ideas from F/friends to think about:**

Shop where you can refill bottles & take your own boxes [e.g. Bishy Weigh] ...or encourage your local shop to offer this.

Use an eco-laundry bag, Guppy bag for example.



Make-your-own shampoo, body lotion, disinfectant or washing powder.

**In F/friends' own words:**

'We haven't looked at microplastics...but should do.'

'Many Friends operate on a philosophy of *do I need it?* rather than *do I want it?* and recognise the trap of using or buying things to try and improve mood.'

'Small actions can be meaningful, intentional and 'beautiful'.

It reminds me of that saying by Margaret Mead about 'Small actions by small groups of people...being the only thing that ever changed the world'.

Let's hear it for small people doing small things that might make an impact somewhere at sometime!

*all pp 5-6 photos: Alison Clarke (Thirsk)*

## *Sending a message to the future: legacy giving*

Leaving a gift in one's will to future Quakers is a very personal decision. **Beth Follini** (Friends House staff) and **Ann Holt** reflect.

**Beth:** I had always had a difficult relationship with my dad, a withdrawn and extremely private person, but when he died, my brother and I uncovered his hidden world. We discovered that he had given an annual donation to the amateur radio club of his old high school in Brooklyn, to give something back to the club and to the school that had been his bridge out of the poverty. He wanted to extend a hand to those who came after him. That was his intended legacy. But this legacy also gave me and my brother the gift of seeing a softer, more generous side of our father.

My 90-year-old Quaker mother in Nova Scotia has family roots in Quakerism that run deep: for her, bodies like Canadian Yearly Meeting and Britain Yearly Meeting (BYM) are crucial to the continuing existence of Quakerism – and she feels that it is important to recognise this in her will. No matter the size, legacies have played and do play a big part in allowing us to continue to put Quaker values into practice.

This was also something recognised by **David Rubinstein**, a member of Friarsgate Local Meeting in York. David passed away recently, giving a bequest to BYM.

His wife **Ann Holt** kindly agreed to contribute to this blog post.

“One of the first things I noticed about my husband – more years ago now than I care to add up – was David's readiness to give to causes which chimed with his values. He was a man of strong feelings, so there were a lot of causes to give to – environmental, political and cultural. To the Religious Society of Friends, he felt an enormous sense of gratitude. He was brought up in a secular family but had always felt the spiritual and moral pull of the religious approach to life.

At a time when politics had, in his eyes, become a morality-free zone and activism seemed to achieve very little he found among Quakers a new way of looking at the world, a spiritual home, a source of rich friendships and a measure of serenity which had hitherto eluded him.”

As a fundraiser I'm sometimes asked if I find legacy giving a depressing or difficult area to work in. It still surprises me! I find legacy gifts incredibly life affirming. They send a personal message after people have gone, that they care for us and for others. They allow us to contribute to what we are passionate about, to ensure that our spiritual home will continue for the generations that come after us. A question we can all explore, at any age, is: "What message do I want to send those that come after me?"

To know more about leaving a legacy to BYM, contact me at [bethf@quaker.org.uk](mailto:bethf@quaker.org.uk) .

## *And a Transatlantic Groan a la Muir & Norden*

*contributed by **Steven Burkeman**, who takes no credit for authorship*

It is a little known fact that that when William Penn sailed across the Atlantic to found Pennsylvania, he brought his two favourite aunts with him. William had a penchant for sweet things and his love for them dated back to these aunts, Natalie and Ellie, who became well known across Pennsylvania for baking amazing and succulent pies. As their talents became better known the two aunts, unlike their honest nephew, got greedy and raised the prices, up and up and up, until...soon all the Quakers in William's new colony were complaining about "the pie rates of Penn's Aunts”.



## *Communities of Resistance: Conscience and Dissent in Britain during the First World War* by Cyril Pearce

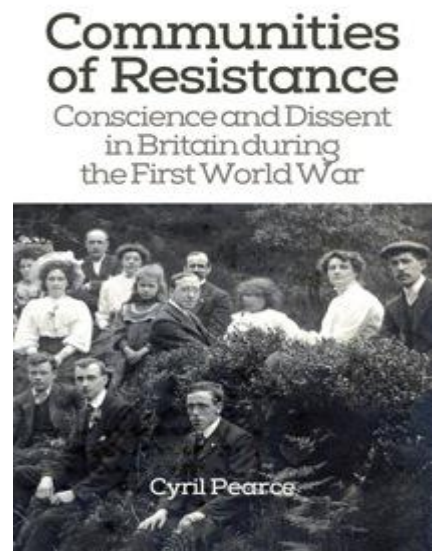
**Ann Holt recommends:** This book tells the histories of over 40 war resister communities across Britain. They are stories of men and women who stood by their own judgments on the war and as individuals and communities found their own ways to resist it. "A well-crafted, scholarly tribute to war resisters, it details the hitherto unchronicled distribution of supportive local communities, identifying places, social spaces and networks that sustained anti-war outlaws, prisoners & families during the First World War" – Julian Putkowski, co-author: *Shot at Dawn*. "Cyril Pearce is the established source for anything you want to know about the peace movement and conscientious objection in the First World War. It is destined to become the

movement's encyclopaedia, its veritable bible, packed with erudition and inspirational story-telling. A masterpiece" – David Boulton, author of *Objection Overruled*

Retail price £30 – Limited edition hardback – 550 pages with over 70 illustrations

To buy at discount price of £25 (offer ends 11 September) click on this link <https://francisboutle.co.uk/products/communities-of-resistance/>

Pearce's *Comrades in Conscience – the story of an English community's opposition to the Great War* – is available at the discount price of £12 from the same source.



*An early glimpse of autumn*