

earthQuaker

living
witness
Quakers for Sustainability



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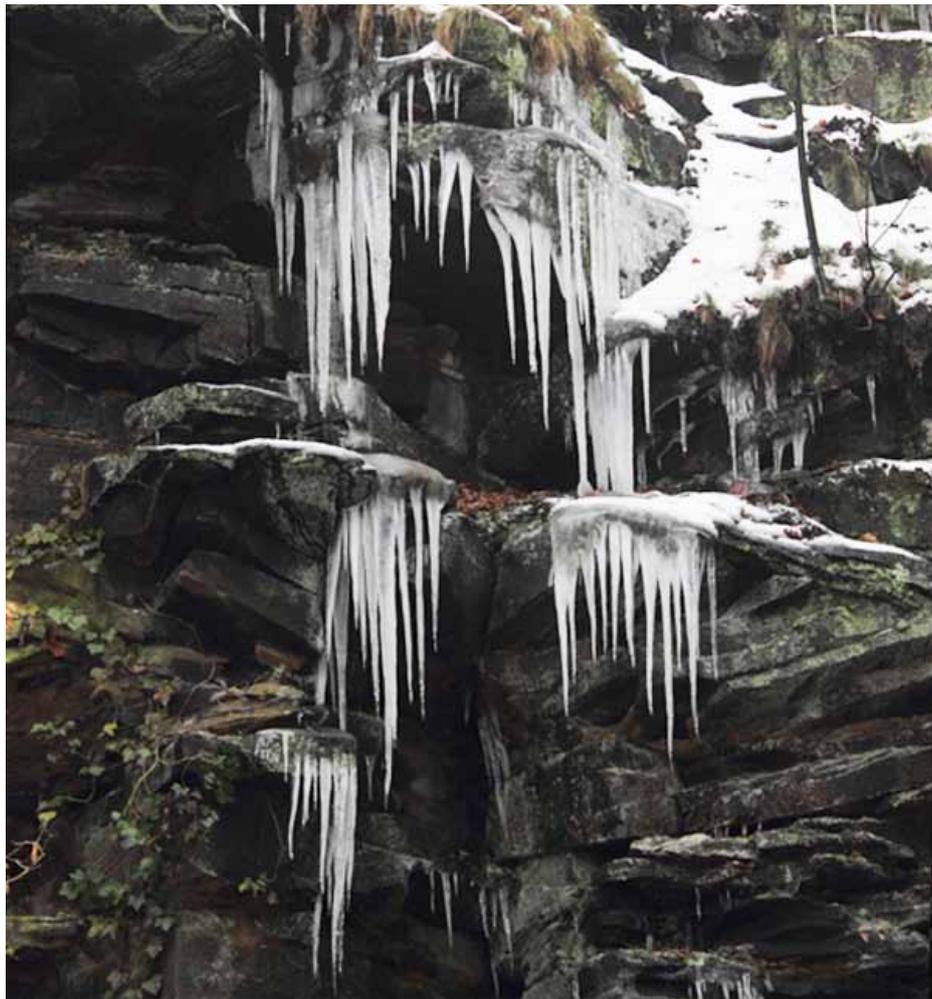


Photo P Mitchell

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Editorial

Negotiators at the climate summit in Doha made little progress in developing a global response to climate change. They did at least agree on the principle of rich countries compensating poor countries for 'loss and damage'.

A central pillar of sustainability is taking responsibility for our effects on each other and the world. This often makes for difficult dilemmas. 'Saving the planet' may mean questioning our own needs and each other's. What does love truly require of us? With the commitment to become a low carbon sustainable community, many British Friends are grappling with this question. Meetings are holding study groups, reflecting on the issues and in some cases taking practical action.

Nevertheless, Living Witness has seen a decline in requests for workshops in local Meetings. Our Trustees have therefore decided to lay down our Resource People (RP) programme, which offered Meetings a standard workshop delivered by volunteer RPs. In fact, many of our RPs have their own unique ministry in nourishing a Quaker sustainability witness. We are immensely grateful to them and to Jasmine Piercy, who has co-ordinated the programme since 2010. We hope to continue to support them in their ministry, primarily through our regular Link Group gatherings, and to connect them with Friends and Meetings that need nourishment.

If you feel you have something to offer, or to learn, or would just like to connect with other Friends engaged in sustainability, why not come to our next Link Group gathering. It's at Bamford Quaker Community on the weekend of 15-17 March 2013 and is linked to the retreat on Sustainable Community Living from 11-15 March.

Climate Crisis and Spiritual Community

Laurie Michaelis

Hope is disappearing for a safe resolution of the climate crisis. Climate change is happening, in many respects faster than scientists were expecting – with the disappearance of Arctic sea ice and a rapid increase in extreme weather events. The impacts on human society are greater than had been expected. In particular there is growing concern about the impact of changing weather patterns on food production. And global greenhouse gas emissions are rising in line with the worst-case scenario produced by the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change back in 2000; individuals, organisations and governments seem unwilling or unable to cut back. Financial crises and recession have dominated political and media attention since 2009. So the Britain Yearly Meeting commitment in 2011 to become a low carbon sustainable community was very timely.

In the last few months we've held a number of retreats on climate change at the Quaker Community in Bamford, and there have also been interesting and difficult conversations in the Minute 36 Commitment Group, appointed by Meeting for Sufferings to follow up on the Yearly Meeting Commitment. Where there used to be a few Friends in most meetings who questioned whether climate change is really happening, we seem to have shifted now from denial to despair, to a view that it is too late to stop it.

With disappearing Arctic ice and methane bubbling up from the warming oceans, we are in a scary situation. The Earth may already have passed the tipping point for a step change to a warmer, ice-free world. And although it has happened before and would not end life on the planet, such a change would be catastrophic for many species, and perhaps for our own civilisation.

But we don't know for sure that it is too late. It is still possible that, by radically reducing greenhouse gas emissions from human activity, climate change might be halted and reversed. The recent Bridging the Emissions Gap report from the United Nations Environment Programme sets out scenarios for limiting the global temperature rise to 1.5-2 C. The essential message is that global emissions need to peak before 2020 and then to fall rapidly. We need to achieve a zero-carbon lifestyle and to start removing CO₂ from the atmosphere through forest expansion and perhaps through using biomass energy combined with carbon capture and storage.

Zero carbon would mean cutting our energy use to a level that can be provided from renewable sources – perhaps a third of current consumption. And that in turn would mean limiting car and air travel and the use of heat and electricity in buildings. Some Friends have already developed low-energy lifestyles and have found it to be a joyous experience. But for most people this sounds even scarier than climate change. Emissions from the wealthier OECD countries have in fact been falling in recent years, but not fast enough. Meanwhile global emissions have risen sharply due to economic growth mainly in China and India.



Tar sand extraction

www.aurora.edu

In this context, what is the role of people of faith, and of spiritual communities? What does it mean for us as Quakers to have committed ourselves to becoming a ‘low carbon sustainable community’?

It’s funny how conversations with Quakers about climate change seem nearly always to converge on questions about practical and technological responses - solar panels, public transport, allotments. I’ve been surprised how hard Friends find it to focus on the spiritual aspects of the climate challenge, and in particular on our own contribution as Quakers. Perhaps it’s partly that we seek to be ‘patterns and examples’ rather than discuss theology. But I think spirituality needs talking about.

We have just finished a retreat at Bamford exploring how spirituality connects to climate change. We concentrated especially on three spiritual and religious approaches.

The first is the way of the prophet. Traditionally, prophets had visions or went off into the wilderness, where they encountered God and came back with a message for the people. The prophet is God’s voice in the world: “thus saith the Lord...”. In Quaker practice we can all be prophets, moved by the Spirit to ministry in meeting for worship or elsewhere. A prophetic witness for personal, social and political change may be an important part of our spiritual path. In responding to climate change we may be led to adopt and advocate a simple lifestyle, to take part in the Climate March and other demonstrations, to write to politicians, to avoid certain products and activities. But the prophetic stance can seem critical, bringing truth at the expense of love and alienating those we hope to engage. Marion McNaughton has spoken of the need for prophets to love the age they live in.

The second approach is that of the mystic, the inward or self-reflective path, examining and dissolving or expanding the boundaries between self and other. It enables us to see how the shadows we see in the world are often reflections or projections of the shadows within us. It is a path that can deepen compassion for ourselves and all life, and it can bring a profound acceptance of whatever may happen, including our own death. Perhaps it can also enable us to face up to the inevitable end of life as we know it on this planet. Can we love and accept the Spirit of our Age, with its competitive, individualistic materialism? Perhaps it helps to recognise that it is manifest in each of us, and that emerged partly from values that we hold good, such as freedom and equality. Indeed, Quakers had a lot to do with the development of capitalism and the financial system.

For the last few years I’ve been living with the tension between these two approaches – facing up to the inadequacy of my efforts to change things, finding an acceptance of the way things are, but still wondering whether this is a cop-out and I should be working for change nevertheless. In our Bamford retreat, I think we began to find some resolution in a third approach, embodied in our Quaker practice.

In meeting for worship, we listen to all the voices to seek the truth they may contain for us. There is an art here of learning to live with opposites and still to find a way forward together in the Light. We take on board the prophetic voices, bringers of painful Truth. We also find that calm equanimity that loves and accepts people as they are, the world as it is. We work together in faith, to give expression in our lives and the world to Quaker Testimony for peace, simplicity, equality, truth and sustainability. And because we are a spiritual community, we value the varied gifts Friends bring and allow that we do not all have to do everything. Some may be called to be the difficult prophets, others to bring calm acceptance. Some may enjoy doing the practical work of insulating our buildings or growing the vegetables, and others love organising the shared meals and parties that bring us all together and give us a chance to laugh at ourselves.

Purchasing electricity and gas for Quaker Meeting Houses

Quaker group buying consortium for renewable utilities

Chayley Collis
Huddersfield

Huddersfield Meeting's Finance & Premises Committee is currently exploring the possibility of group purchasing of renewable electricity & gas, working with other meetings within our Area Meeting. The suppliers we have in mind are either Ecotricity, Good Energy or Co-op Energy, which are all now able to offer both electricity and gas. The idea would be that Meeting Houses could show their support for renewable energy suppliers en masse, whilst also managing to negotiate a competitive rate through bulk purchasing. As we are exploring this idea, it occurred to us that this would work really well on a national level for all meeting houses within BYM. BYM could negotiate a contract with one of the three utility companies for Meeting Houses and then individual meeting houses could sign up to it. Many Meeting Houses already use renewable electricity so it would just be a question of switching to the bulk-buying scheme. It seems like a win-win solution to me, which would also send a strong signal to other organisations about ethical purchasing and would further our development as a low carbon community.

If any of your Meetings is interested in this idea (you don't need to commit at this stage), please could you contact: Chayley Collis on chayleycollis@yahoo.co.uk with your meeting name and (ideally) meter numbers for your gas and electricity meters. We could then approach the companies for a quote and also let BYM know that there is support for such a scheme.

Greenwich & Blackheath Ecogroup

Edward Hill

Greenwich and Blackheath Ecogroup has been busy recently. A talk was given by Quaker author & activist Alastair McIntosh about "Sacred Space and Sense of Place" His book on climate change is called Hell & High Water, and his website is www.alastairmcintosh.com

Also a 'Seeds of Change' meeting for those willing to take action. This meeting consisted of two-minute presentations by local community projects that are taking action before Christmas, including;

- A Time Credits system. Starting with a simple database to record those earning time credits by finding community enterprises and individuals willing to join in.
- Schools project for children to decorate white re-usable fabric shopping bags bought by local faith groups.
- Eco-village projects in Deptford and Charlton, for cheap live-work starter units, and long term jobs in manufacturing, recycling and creative arts.
- A pop-up pre-Christmas weekend street event for Creek Road, with artists, musicians, small businesses and food providers.
- Permaculturist tree-planting including fruit and nut trees on Whitfield Mount, Blackheath.
- Network of small businesses for concerted action against landlords, local councils and corporate big business.
- Model community-run allotment in Greenwich Park
- Solar PV energy co-op, with panels on local church
- Local delivery network

www.blackheathquakers.org.uk

www.greenheath.co.uk

www.madeingreenwich.co.uk



Sustainable Economics to End Global Poverty

sent in by **Gwen Prince**

Share The World's Resources (STWR) are advocates for an international program of emergency relief and a fairer sharing of wealth, power and resources within and between nations.

STWR campaigns to strengthen and scale up the sharing economy in all its forms. They advocate for an international program of emergency relief to prevent life-threatening deprivation and end poverty-related deaths as a foremost global priority. They also call for extensive reforms to the world economy to ensure a fairer sharing of wealth, power and resources within and between nations.

Humanity is facing a global emergency. Extreme poverty and climate-related disasters are taking the lives of over 40,000 people every single day and severely affecting many millions of others. At the same time, dramatic cutbacks in public spending on social welfare and essential services are making it increasingly difficult for many families to meet their basic needs, even in the richest nations.

This global emergency exists largely because governments have pursued policies over many decades that undermine the 'sharing economy' – systems of welfare and redistribution that have been established over many generations to protect the poor and vulnerable. In particular, the international community could do much more to scale up sharing between nations in order to help developing countries meet the basic needs of their citizens and strengthen domestic systems of social protection.

Dealing with the structural causes of the global emergency will require wholesale reform of the world economy on a scale never before attempted. As an immediate response, the international community has the means to mobilise staggering amounts of finance to end poverty-related deaths and needless suffering as a foremost priority. If taken together, the policy recommendations in this report could enable governments to redistribute more than \$2.8 trillion within a short number of years, money that could be used to prevent life-threatening deprivation, reverse austerity measures and mitigate the human impacts of climate change.

We already have the institutions, mechanisms and expertise in place to take this crucial first step towards world rehabilitation. What lacks is a sufficient level of public support across the world to overcome the political and commercial barriers to implementing these critical measures. Mobilising world public opinion to strengthen and scale up the 'global sharing economy' must therefore be an immediate priority for campaigners and engaged citizens in all countries.

As a non-governmental organisation with consultative status at the Economic and Social Council of the United Nations (ECOSOC), STWR works to influence policy through research and publications outlining how to rapidly secure basic human needs through greater international cooperation and economic sharing.

Their website presents a broad mix of the latest analysis on a range of global justice issues, with an emphasis on communicating equitable and sustainable economic alternatives.

STWR is a politically unaffiliated, not-for-profit organisation founded in 2003, funded entirely through private donations.

www.stwr.org

Photo www.stwr.org/poverty-inequality/



A Quaker Perspective on the Environment and Sustainability

A talk by Laurie Michalis – Co-ordinator of Living Witness

Carlisle Meeting House – Tuesday 2nd October 2012

Notes by Esther Nicholson

The meeting began with people saying what they were hoping to get out of the meeting. There was a general agreement of the importance of the issue. People also expressed concerns about a lack of direction or action and a feeling of being overwhelmed by the task in front of them and having a sense of paralysis. Laurie explained how the Oxford Group started. Some of the members decided to get together to find ways to make their lives more sustainable. They called themselves the 'Goslings' – Group On Sustainable Living. They would meet once a month for a shared meal. They would begin with a time of sharing to listen to each other's challenges and achievements, also exploring feelings. Some people in the group were interested in Joanna Macy an American Buddhist who does work that reconnects with the Natural World. Others were interested in Green Spirituality or Earth-centred Spirituality.

They valued open unedited thinking. They listed all the possible things they felt could be done in different fields like Energy, Transport etc. (see the circles in the Sustainability Tool Kit). About 12 ideas were adopted which people wanted to take forward. Out of the 12 about 8 were implemented. They were always looking for a way to support people's energy and inspiration. Some of the things they adopted were:-

- Do an environmental audit of the Meeting House, energy, waste, paint.
- Increased insulation in the Meeting House
- Have a Green Shelf of books in the library
- Start a Car Share Group (not implemented because a commercial Car Share company started up in the Oxford.
- Create a wild life garden- this idea expanded to include other people in the street and was sponsored by a Landfill Tax Grant
- Run a day conference with other churches in the city
- Run a week end retreat

Laurie addressed the issue of feeling overwhelmed and hopeless. He felt this is what Faith is about – Faith is different from belief - he felt faith is being committed even when you don't know the outcome at the end. Laurie had spent many years working on the technological changes needed. He now believed that this was not enough without human behavior change. The world is now so globalised and there are social networks and electronic communication, so that a collective change of heart can spread incredibly quickly. Our job was to be ready for this change and sow seeds and show change was possible and could be replicated. It was important to find people you can engage with, to talk, to experiment and to reflect together. The Quaker way can cope with diversity and had a listening spirituality to seek guidance to find a way forward.

Are we workers in a hospice for man kind at the end of life or mid wives for a new world? Are we:-

- a) building up resilience for when the world collapses, or
- b) creating a global community that can work together to make the changes necessary for slow the process down?

Legislation can change habits. The governments have the information but are the people ready for change. Do the politicians follow the people or the people follow the politicians? There is a credibility gap: generally people can't grasp that our high carbon lifestyle is causing, or will cause death in other parts of the world, or that the weather can change so drastically.

It is also about finding a way of life that does not mean the exploitation of 2/3rds of the world to provide for the consumption of a 1/3 of the world. A way of life that is better regardless of climate change. Although there was a sense that we felt tiny compared to the size of the problem, many drops make an ocean and there is a centre of power within each of us that need to be acknowledged.

Losing our Ash Trees

Sent in by **Sheila Beskine**

There has been plenty of information about the deadly fungus that's now threatening Britain's native ash trees in the news recently and the possible prospect of a dramatically altered landscape as a result. The chief scientific adviser at the Department for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs told BBC Radio 4: "Ecologically it is going to change the countryside very significantly. Parallels have been made with Dutch elm disease of the 1970s. This is not good."

In a Radio 4 'Sunday' programme. The programme explored the spiritual associations the Ash tree has evoked over the centuries and why it is so important to their faith.

The Buddha is said to have gained enlightenment sitting under a tree which subsequently became known as the Bodhi Tree, or the Tree of Enlightenment - he's meditating. And when one's meditating it is very important to have a sense of earth(ed)ness, and rootedness. And so, there's something about sitting at the foot of a tree with its roots in the ground that does have connotations of rootedness and stability and unshakability.

When Druids meet together it's called a Grove, reflecting the fact that this is where Druids gather, and out of doors, underneath the stars, or the sun, on the earth, surrounded by the environment. The Ash tree is one of the last trees to produce leaves in spring and one of the first trees to lose its leaves in the autumn, so there's a sense that it spends a lot of time sleeping, a lot of the time as Druids would see it, in the other realms. So the Ash Tree's about this idea of living in the physical world but aware that it's also a spiritual place.

Ash trees were often planted beside wells because in the Celtic view of the world, springs and holy wells were places where you could enter the underworld.

When Christianity began to take over these places, they christianised the Ash tree and the Holy Well, and burning the Ash was part of the healing tradition. So Christianity recognised the spiritual, the sacred, the numinous power of the Ash tree.

.....

An article in the Guardian, about Ash trees, asks;

"Could felled ash trees be a source of green power?"

Can't the environmental disaster of diseased ash trees be turned into clean power? Across the country the trees could be felled and burned to be used as a free source of zero-carbon power?"

guardian.co.uk/environment/2012/nov/11/felled-ash-trees-eco-power-ethical-living



Photo D Sayce

A soft day, thank God
A wind from the south
With a honeyed mouth
And the scent of drenching leaves
And the rain drips,
Drips, drips, drips
From the eaves

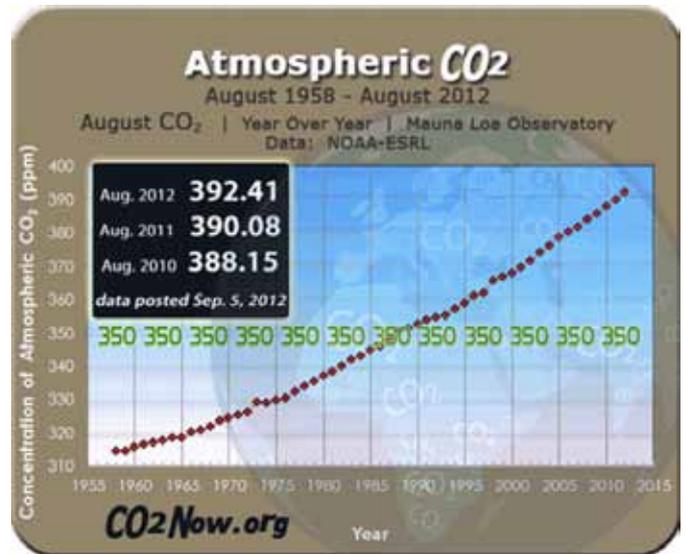
by **Winifred Mary Letts**
sent in by Beating Drum

A New Normality

Tony Maturin NZ

New Zealand YM 2010, minute 17 states, "... the environmental cost of travel by representatives be accepted as a shared responsibility...".

Distance Auckland International Airport to Nairobi Jomo International Airport return is 27,907.23 kms.
CO₂e emissions figure (using CarboNZero calculator) is 6,442.5 kg per person return. Therefore total emissions for nine Quakers flying to attend the Nairobi conference equals 58 tonnes of heat trapping gasses.



It might not seem much, but it's pushing the red line on the greenhouse gasses graph UP, when it's imperative that it goes DOWN. How can NZ Quakers cover that? Well, one way would be refraining from eating meat (think methane - think a fossil fuel-based farming system - think grain being fed to animals en route to human bellies) saves 450 kg of emissions a year (per person). Therefore one normally non-vegetarian Quaker could give up meat for about 130 years to offset the FWCC carbon account. A more viable alternative might be for 130 normally non-vegetarian Quakers to refrain from meat eating for one year.

Alternatively, we could work out the figures for giving up our cars, alcohol (high carbon cost), or having cold showers etc.. Which of us are going to put up our hands?

To loosely quote Llyn Richards, "None of the above actions leaves the world any better than we found it - we offset the emissions but make NO contribution to halting or turning back global warming."

Even that is not quite true. Aircraft emissions are instantaneous, but the "offsetting" attempts are gradual processes. As well, the globe will continue to warm for centuries after we achieve carbon neutrality because of the inertia in the system. The short answer is that you can't adequately "offset" emissions, as numerous highly regarded climate experts have told us. The ONLY path to survival is to stop putting the stuff into the air. That red line on the graph has to peak by 2020, and reach zero by 2050 if our civilisation is to have a better than even chance of survival much past the twenty first century. We have to get these figures into our heads and embedded in our thinking.

And what did we achieve at Nairobi? Well, no doubt it was a wonderful experience for those attending, and no doubt great relationships were fostered and built upon. And no doubt the benefits of those relationships and discussions will echo through Quakerdom. But echoes fade over distance, and it's unlikely that those particular echoes would have reached the farmers of the U.S. Grain Belt, to whose present plight we have added our tuppence worth.

Neither will they reach the millions, in the frighteningly near future, who rely for their water on the Ganges, when it runs dry in the summer for lack of winter snows in its headwaters. To whose plight also we have added our tuppence worth.

To put the whole thing into a more rounded perspective, a conservative CO₂e bill for international air travel alone to the Nairobi Conference is 12,727 tonnes (give or take a small margin of error). To which must be added the emissions from all the other African Meetings' delegates who attended, to make the total of over 850 people.

Which is not the best news for either the Ganges Valley dwellers, or our grandchildren. Neither when viewed from a broader perspective, I might add, is it living according to any of our much vaunted Testimonies. From the perspective of the Ganges Valley dweller, might we appear somewhat selfish, and be accused of not looking much

further than the ends of our Quakerly noses?

We, and Quakerism have developed within a certain normality. Sure, the normality has included bumps like wars and natural catastrophes, technical advances, etc., but that has been the normality. And the biosphere has changed so slowly that we've not noticed it. Now though, with record breaking floods and droughts, heatwaves and storms like hurricane Sandy, the Arctic nearly free of summer ice, people are beginning to ask, "Is this the new normality?" while the climate scientists are telling us that unless we turn that climbing red line on the graphs downwards, there will be no new normality. If we allow the tipping points, the points of no return to be passed, leading us on to a 4 degree world, things will very rapidly deteriorate, leading to vast movements of people seeking survival. The world will not be as we knew it, and neither will the Society of Friends be as we begin to find our new shapes.

So we have two urgent tasks to do: try our hardest to reduce the emissions, and suss out the shape of the Society that will enable us to accomplish that and/or survive and be useful in the world beyond normality.

At base it's about, A) parts per million (ppm), the concentration of heat trapping gasses in the atmosphere, and time scales; B) "tipping points", and possible paths to the avoidance of the same; C) the future look of Quakerism.

Not everyone is familiar with the ppm measurements, so we'll begin with A) above. Since the beginning of the Industrial Revolution, the burning of fossil fuels has contributed to the increased concentration of carbon dioxide in the atmosphere from 280 ppm to the present 397 ppm (Wikipedia). The figure is 400 ppm over the Arctic where levels are normally higher than in the mid latitudes.

James Hansen, Chief Scientist of the U.S. National Aeronautics and Space Administration (NASA) research organisation has stated that 350 ppm is probably a safe upper limit at which to stabilise the atmosphere. A level at which our civilisation developed. There is wide agreement on this.

B) if we are to avoid the dangerous, but as yet little understood tipping points, when unstoppable global warming kicks in, the sooner the rising red ppm line on the graph turns downwards, the smaller and therefore easier will need to be the annual reductions. We need to reach zero emissions by 2050 to stabilise ppm at 350 and allow for that inertia effect.

C) is two questions. How will Quakerism develop in response to requirements to be carbon neutral by 2050? And, what will the end of that development be like? Here I'm going to be lazy and quote from "Costing not less than everything", Pam Lunn's 2011 Swarthmore Lecture book.

"What would it mean for Quakers in Britain to be truly a low carbon community? For this possibility to become real, for it to embody our testimony to simplicity and our testimony to truthfulness, it would require a number of steps to be taken: that each of us as individual members of Yearly Meeting commit ourselves honestly and practically to reducing our carbon emissions by an agreed amount year on year (the 10:10 campaign would make that figure ten percent - challenging but achievable); that each of our meetings and meeting houses does the same; that area meeting or other functions be held in a manner that reduces the carbon emissions of all that travelling; that Woodbrooke, Friends House and other Quaker-owned or Quaker-run organisations also succeed in this reduction; and that we find low-carbon methods of holding Yearly Meeting and Meeting for Sufferings."

What will our Society in NZ look like? Meetings for Worship smaller, and/or less frequent and within walking distance of members' homes, at least until non fossil fuel-powered transport is the norm? The use of SKYPE and video conferencing technology? Email communication? And whatever else is just over the horizon. As for intercontinental travel, sea travel is a perfectly viable choice, from cruise ships to passenger-carrying freighters. Those of us who are a little older can remember the days when such journeys were common. It all just requires a different mind-set. Of course even sea transport is probably only viable until we achieve carbon neutral living.

It is to be hoped that we will find it a rewarding time of spiritual growth and responsibility. Measuring our carbon footprints is one of the first steps in the transition.

But back to Nairobi - are plans afoot to pay the bill, as the YM minute promised? When will we hear what they are?

Book Reviews

The Great European Rip-off

In this EU election year, it's time for people across Europe to look at what really goes on in Brussels in our name.

Georg Monbiot recently in the Guardian states that "The EU's farm subsidies are a modern equivalent of feudal aid. As Europe suffers under austerity, it's right to call for reform" - www.guardian.co.uk

It has been estimated that the EU costs us around £1,000 billion a year - an incredible £2000 for every man, woman and child in Europe. So what do we get for our money? Politicians and administrators selflessly working to bring us efficient government? Well-targeted regulations that promote economic prosperity? A safe and free society? A well-protected environment? Help for people in poorer countries?

Or is our money being squandered by a self-serving euro-elite of unaccountable politicians and incompetent bureaucrats, or else devoured in a feeding frenzy of fraud and corruption where a few lucky insiders become unimaginably rich at our expense?

David Craig and Matthew Elliott smash through the secrecy and disinformation that are the Brussels hallmark to reveal what our European rulers are really getting up to. The result is a horrifying story of bureaucracy, hypocrisy and kleptocracy - and how we are all suffering as a result.



Life of Pee

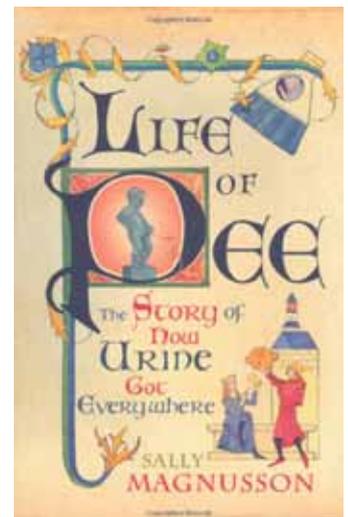
In the trenches of Ypres soldiers used it as a gas mask, whereas modern-day terrorists add it to home-made explosives. All the Fullers, Tuckers and Walkers in the phonebook owe their names to it, and in 1969 four bags of it were left on the surface of the moon.

Bought and sold, traded and transported, even carried to work in jugs, urine has made bread rise, beer foam and given us gunpowder, stained glass. And we do produce an awful lot of it. Humans alone make almost enough to replace the entire contents of Loch Lomond every year. Add the incalculable volume contributed by the rest of the animal kingdom and it might soon displace a small ocean. No wonder it gets everywhere.

In *Life of Pee* Sally Magnusson unveils the secret history of civilisation's most unsavoury and unsung hero, and discovers how our urine footprint is just as indelible as our carbon one.

Running A-Z style through a collection of anecdotes and historical revelations, the book brings together a spectrum of stories about urine. The value of this 'waste product' is undeniable as it has proved vital as a fertiliser, in the textile industry, making bricks for war refugees in water scarce areas and so many other ways. It makes a good case for being of medical value. Then there are the historical stories: often quirky, generally thought provoking.

Definitely not a waste product!



Letter

I was very pleased to read Neil Wilson's perceptive letter (autumn 2012, p9) about websites and internet networks. He is right to point out that this form of communication is far from being green.

It is always important to question the underlying assumptions concerning technologies that have come to be fashionable. But 'fashions' often change.

Others too have pointed out that computers can and do pollute. In 'The Ecologist' magazine of November 2008 - in the days when it was produced in paper (from sustainable sources) format, and thus available for all to read - Jim Thomas, in his article entitled 'Tech Reckoning', wrote: 'it has been estimated that computers and data centres contribute about the same amount of greenhouse gas emissions as the airline industry'.

More traditional and inclusive methods of communication have been called for by at least one other Quaker. In a letter published in 'The Friend' (10th December 2004), John Hewitt wrote 'I wonder how many Friends are increasingly irritated by writers of articles and advertisements who fail to give a full postal address, or telephone number, when inviting a response'. He went on to say that this reliance on electronic communication exclusively was especially inappropriate for the readership of a religious journal. He called for 'simplicity and inclusivity'.

And in an article in a church-based magazine a proposal was reported, following a Lenten appeal by a Bishop in Italy, that all his Church's members should 'avoid modern methods of communication every Friday until Easter', in order to help the Society to lessen its collective dependence IT.

Neither should it be assumed that all members of large NGOs or international organisations rely on computer technology, even in the second decade of the 21st century. For example, nearly 2,000 (20%) members of the influential Society of Authors do not have an email address. This statistic was reported at their AGM in 2012. And an even larger percentage of the Royal Institution of Chartered Surveyors have not provided their professional body with an email address. I know of several members of professional organisations who do not have, or use a computer.

This is not an age-related matter for those who are well informed about the environmental implications of the use of such technologies. I know of one writer who regularly attends church services in her area who does not use a computer for ethical reasons, and particularly because of the mining of toxic and scarce minerals used for their manufacture, some of which are known to be carcinogenic. She is in her mid-twenties, younger than most members of the Society of Friends, and has taken her stand for principled reasons.

Perhaps other readers could respond to Neil Wilson's interesting and informed letter. If an organisation could be set up to support those who are concerned about these matters, many Friends would, I am sure, be delighted to join.

Robert Shalton
London W1



Crimbo

Someone said 'Let there be light'
and a star started loitering with intent.
This woman had her kid in a stable,
cold and shitty,
but a cut above cardboard city.
The father was nowhere to be found;
her conception was rather profound.
The kid took up carpentry
but he could cure dysentery as quick as blinking.
This set the statesmen to thinking;
"We've got to watch out for this youth,
the faith of his fans is uncouth.
He's closing our clinics and converting all the cynics."
They paid a bloke with silver to point him out,
and when they nabbed him they
said:
"If you're the top-shout then
run off to heaven,"
but he'd had his supper
with unleavened bread
and was set on seeing it out.
They pinned him on a cross
with two other geezers.
They did worse than pull his hair out with tweezers.
He turned a bit pale
when they rammed in the nails.
They took the piss something rotten,
but it seems he wasn't forgotten.

If you can't stand queues
and hate the price of booze;
If you think crimbo's some bother,
then remember that bloke on Golgotha.

(Paul Mitchell) Mitch

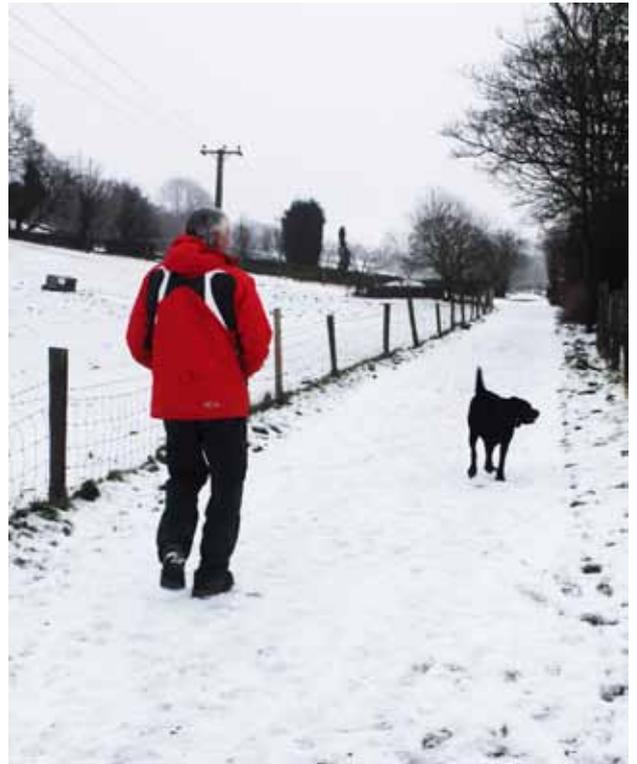


Photo P Mitchell

epiac1216.wordpress.com



Useful Internet Links sent in by earthQuaker readers;

Quaker Earthcare, roughly Living Witness' US equivalent - quakerearthcare.org which includes an archive of all of their previous newsletters at : quakerearthcare.org/Publications/QuakerEcoBulletin/Pub-Eco-Bulletin.html



Network for Alternative Energy and Energy Assessment (NATTA)

For people interested in alternative energy and energy policy, an excellent newsletter produced by the NATTA will be available on-line free (though they welcome voluntary contributions) from January - natta-renew.org

Skeptical Science

Explaining climate change science & rebutting global warming misinformation. Scientific skepticism is healthy. Scientists should always challenge themselves to improve their understanding. Yet this isn't what happens with climate change denial. Skeptics vigorously criticise any evidence that supports man-made global warming and yet embrace any argument, op-ed, blog or study that purports to refute global warming. This website gets skeptical about global warming skepticism. Do their arguments have any scientific basis? What does the peer reviewed scientific literature say? - skepticalscience.com

Values and Frames

To build a more sustainable, equitable and democratic world, we need an empowered, connected and durable movement of citizens. - valuesandframes.org

Peace Pledge Union

A charity set up to provide advice and information on the causes and effects of war and violence and peaceful resolution - pret.org.uk

Housmans

We are a not-for-profit bookshop, specialising in books, zines, and periodicals of radical interest and progressive politics. We stock the largest range of radical newsletters, newspapers and magazines of any shop in Britain. - housmans.com

FRAME webinar

Managing Natural Resources for Peace-building in Post-Conflict Societies campaign.r20.constantcontact.com

Transport Direct

helps plan a journey, including public transport and cycle routes - transportdirect.info

Sustrans

a UK charity enabling people to travel by foot, bike or public transport - sustrans.org.uk

Jubilee Debt Campaign

Inspired by the ancient celebration of jubilee, a time when debts were cancelled, slaves were freed and land was redistributed, we are calling for a new debt jubilee in response to today's global economic crisis: a Jubilee for Justice. - jubileedebtcampaign.org.uk

Campaign Against Climate Change

The Campaign against Climate Change (CCC) exists to push for the urgent and radical action we need to prevent the catastrophic destabilisation of global climate. - www.campaignccc.org

NorthField Eco Centre

Birmingham based Northfield Ecocentre teaches people how to live more sustainably through our groups, advice services, events, courses - northfieldecocentre.org

Diary 2013

25-27 Jan - Decluttering

Explore your relationship with the things you own and the way you spend your time in the context of the Quaker testimony to simplicity. £90

22-24 Feb - Engaging the Powers

How can we work for peace and sustainability while answering that of God in everyone, particularly those in power? £90

11- 15 March - Sustainable Community Living

The theory and practice of our Quaker testimonies on simplicity, sustainability and community. £160

15-17 March - Link Group Gathering

Connect with the national Quaker network for support in becoming a low carbon sustainable community. £90

3-5 May - Interconnectedness of Life

Learning from the incredible way that life systems work. Play and participatory activities indoors and out. Fun friendly science of sustainability! £90

17-21 Jun - Gardening Working Retreat

Working in the Community Gardens including vegetable growing and maintenance of our permaculture areas. £80

5-9 Aug - Living Witness Summer School

Support for Friends in becoming a low carbon sustainable community. £160

All events Above at Quaker Community, Bamford, Hope Valley, Derbys. S33 0DA

Woodbrooke Event

8 – 10 Feb Becoming a Low-Carbon Meeting

In 2011 Quakers made a corporate commitment to become a low-carbon sustainable community. This course will take you through the practical steps to reduce your meeting's carbon footprint and to consider ways to overcome the challenges associated with this. The weekend will include a trip to a local project and a presentation by Northfield Ecocentre.

Tutors: Maud Grainger and Sunniva Taylor

20 places | £194 ensuite | £184 standard



Quaker Community

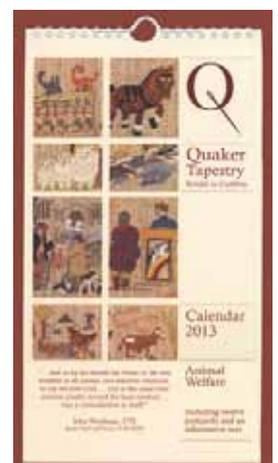
Quaker Tapestry Calendar for 2013

Quaker Concern for Animals (QCA) member Jill Greenway of Sidcot Local Meeting suggested the theme of animal welfare for the Quaker Tapestry Calendar 2013, selected images from the panels and wrote the text.

The Quaker Tapestry calendar, priced £5.95 plus p&p., can be purchased on line via the website, by mail order, or by visiting the gift shop at the Exhibition Centre in Kendal.

Quaker Tapestry Exhibition, Friends Meeting
House, Stramongate, Kendal,
Cumbria LA94BH
Tel: 01539 722975

www.quaker-tapestry.co.uk



Deadline for the next issue of earthQuaker - 1st Feb 2012

Please post or email contributions to the editor
Dee Sayce, 7, Bowden Crescent, New Mills, High Peak, SK22 4LN
or 01663 308656 - 07837578382 or email: dee@livingwitness.org.uk

All contributions welcome articles, reports, poems, ideas, letters, photos

Include your postal address and telephone number or email address but we will not include contributors' contact details in earthQuaker unless specifically asked to. Members wishing to contact a contributor can get in touch through the editor—contact details above.

We reserve the right to edit but will always try to check substantial edits with the author.



Membership

I wish to join Living Witness as an individual member.

Suggested donation £10.00
(£3.00 for age 18-25)
Free to under 18's

Name:

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Please make cheque payable to
"Living Witness Project"

Email/phone:

and send to:
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S33 0DA

Delete as appropriate - I prefer earthQuaker:

by post (b&w)

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I am happy to access it from www.livingwitness.org.uk (colour)

I enclose £

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I would like you to reclaim tax on my donations (you must pay an amount of income tax and/or capital gains tax equal to the tax we reclaim on your donations).

Date:

Living Witness (LW) is a Quaker charity supporting Friends' witness to sustainable living and taking it to the wider community in Britain and elsewhere.

LW has worked since 2002 with a growing network of Quaker meetings, connected through regular link group gatherings, newsletters and shared resources.

At the beginning of 2008 LWP merged with Quaker Green Action, which since 1986 has been the main forum for Friends sharing a Concern for sustainability.

We welcome both individual Friends and meetings as members of our network and participants in our gatherings. Please get in touch with the LW co-ordinator if you would like a workshop or speaker session in your meeting.

The co-ordinator is Laurie Michaelis.

The office address is Living Witness, Quaker Community, Water Lane, Bamford, Hope Valley S33 0DA
To contact Laurie by email use as before: laurie@livingwitness.org.uk

Website is www.livingwitness.org.uk, where publications including earthQuaker (colour version!) can be downloaded.



If undelivered please return to:

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