

earthQuaker

living
witness
Quakers for Sustainability



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Illustration by Anthony Maturin

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Editorial

This issue of earthQuaker contains a wide variety of articles, letters and news from Meetings. Martin Smith shares the experience of Wooldale Friends supporting each other in living sustainably using the Footpaths Programme. Chris Lawson writes about the greening of Minehead Meeting House. A small group of Watford Quakers, joined by others, have fresh ideas about changing the way we source our food. There's continuing correspondence on the impacts of using computers and the Internet, and about overpopulation.

Congratulations to Richard Battson and Merry Curd celebrating their 10th wedding anniversary, and what better way to do it than in sustainable ways.

Laurie Michaelis reflects on his personal experiences of living in the Quaker Community. And now that Laurie has now moved back to Oxford we think it makes sense for Living Witness mail to come straight to me in New Mills, (see back page for my address).

Since the Spring edition of earthQuaker I am disappointed that haven't seen any frogs in my pond, but it warms my heart to know that some have been there, I am sure of that because there are now tadpoles swimming around in it.

And don't forget to book your place at the Living Witness Summer School.



Sustainability at BYM

Laurie Michaelis

The theme of trust features strongly on the agenda for BYM on 24-27 May: trust in the Spirit, trust in our Quaker trustees. Perhaps one of the hard parts of moving towards sustainability is that it involves lots of questioning. It means looking at ourselves and the things we've taken for granted, asking where and how our food is grown, inquiring into the ethics of those who supply our clothes and finance, considering the future and preparing for contingencies. Where does trust fit into this? For some Friends sustainability seems to involve too much thinking and for them that implies that it is rather unspiritual. But perhaps it's partly about discerning what or whom we should trust: where we should place our faith. And perhaps thinking, checking, inquiring and contingency planning can also be spiritual disciplines.

Sustainability appears on the agenda in the context of the Meeting for Sufferings report, and we are asked whether Sufferings has provided Friends with a helpful lead in implementing the Canterbury Commitment to become a low carbon sustainable community. The opportunity for in-depth consideration of this comes in the preparation meeting in the Small Meeting House on Saturday afternoon.

We decided not to hold a Living Witness Special Interest Meeting this year, or to have a stall at the Groups Fair, but instead to support the Canterbury Commitment Group's events. One of these will be in the Small Meeting House on Saturday tea time, exploring how we connect the witness of our lives with policy engagement. There will be contributions from QUNO, the Quaker Council for European Affairs, QPSW and Living Witness.

Another Canterbury Commitment Group event on Sunday lunchtime will be a more playful approach to sustainability; and the QPSW Economics, Sustainability and Peace Group has a special interest meeting on Sunday teatime.

YM agenda documents are available at www.quaker.org.uk/ympublications, where you should also be able to find the Events Listing with full details of special interest meetings.

Better Together - Reducing Emissions with the Footpaths Programme

Martin Smith, Wooldale

At the first public meeting of what became Holmfirth Transition Town, people mentioned 34 different ways in which they were cutting their carbon footprint. But none of these involved co-operating with others beyond their own family. It was an entirely a private endeavour.

At present the effort to live sustainably is generally seen as an individual/family challenge to be pursued alone without much involvement of others. Indeed many Friends believe that living simply is entirely a matter for individual Friends and is not the proper business of one's Meeting.

This is unfortunate. There is plenty of evidence that people are assisted in making difficult changes in their lives if they do it with the support and involvement of others. Alcoholics Anonymous and Weight Watchers are two examples of effective group approaches.

At Wooldale Local Meeting we are discovering the advantages of changing together in working through the *Footpaths: Community Carbon Reduction Programme*, which has been developed (with some help from Leicester Friends) by the Leicester Transition Town initiative. (Further information see transitionleicester.org.uk/projects/footpaths/) Five members/attenders of Wooldale Meeting are taking part with two others.

The initial Footpaths programme involves six to ten folk coming together for seven, two-hour, meetings set several weeks or so apart. The group works through a structured programme, set out in a 90-page course guide, that is directed at reducing one's carbon footprint. People are encouraged to help each other and confront the anxieties that are provoked in striving for personal change. Facilitation is by two members of the group who have attended two days of facilitator training provided by Leicester Transition.

We are about half-way through the programme. While we have had to deal with serious matters, we have made friends, got to know each other, and had a lot of fun. And we are learning a lot from each other and changing towards more sustainable living. Research shows that the programme is effective in reducing greenhouse gas emissions, (more details from the author).

When the initial programme is over we are likely to continue meeting as a group – as did the first footpath group run in this area by the Holmfirth Transition Town initiative.

Footpaths followed on, and learnt a lot, from an earlier programme called Carbon Conversations. Footpaths is run by volunteers and is cheap for participants – their only payment is £10 for their own copy of the course guide. The programme is of high professional quality – as is the facilitator training programme. Footpaths is directed particularly at building community. It was piloted by a group of Leicester Friends and is now tried and tested. The course guide, for example, has been through several editions.

Apart from Leicester and Wooldale, I don't know of any other Quaker Meeting that has taken it up. But there is potential for much greater involvement, and consultation with Leicester Transition confirms that they are keen for their Footpaths programme to be more widely used. There are challenges – in bringing a group together and finding dates for meetings for instance – but it is worth it. If you want to start a Footpaths group contact Zina Zelter at Leicester Transition on 0116 2899 074. But hurry – the next facilitator training weekend is at the end of June.

Martin Smith - msmithholmfirth@phoncoop.coop or 01484 687139



photo - transitionleicester.org.uk

Greening Minehead Meeting House

Chris Lawson

Minehead Meeting House is a 110 year old church hall, very suitable for the Meeting and centrally placed so that many groups in the community make use of it. It is built of stone with single glazing and heated with convector heaters as needed. Around 10 years ago, stirred by a passionately concerned member, we began discussing responding to environmental issues. Attitudes, personal actions and what we could do with our building all emerged.

After a lot of further discussions and explorations, including a professional survey by the Ecos Trust (funded through a Bristol-based green communities organisation), over the past five years we have:

1. Changed our electricity supplier to Good Energy
2. Installed a thermostat and timer to control the heaters.
3. Improved insulation in the loft spaces.
4. Done some draught excluding.
5. Upgraded the water heater in the kitchen.
6. Changed the carpet tiles in the meeting room into a carpet with an insulating underlay.
7. Cut down water on consumption by “hippos” in the cisterns and reducing the flow to the taps.
8. Added secondary glazing to the biggest of the windows.
9. Re-tiled the roof adding a modern insulation layer below the tiles and in the eaves areas.
10. Put 16 PV Panels on the roof (4kw), with a read-out meter and information on public display.



photo - Chris Lawson

The last two, by far the most expensive, have just been completed. We're still left with solid walls that get very cold but can't be insulated easily. We hope, however, that we will be generating over half the total amount of electricity we use each year, though not much of it will be free for us as the heating and the generating don't coincide often for times of the day or year.

It's cost the Meeting and our Area Meeting about £22,000 altogether. The roof needed re-tiling soon anyway and the Area Meeting should get it's investment back on the PV panels over the next 10 years or so. Putting principles into practice isn't necessarily cost-effective. We were glad to use a legacy from a member for much of the cost of the carpet and to have the support of AM Trustees, our building being easier to make these alterations to than the others in West Somerset AM. We're gaining in comfort and so are our users, we hope our electricity bills will drop, but, we trust, more than that we're showing what we can do to reduce our carbon footprint and put Friends' sustainability principles into practice. Suggestions for what we do next welcomed.

If anyone wants more details, please contact me - c2lawson@care4free.net

Co-operatives Fortnight

22 June - 6 July 2013

Co-operatives Fortnight is the UK co-operative sector's national campaign. Launched in 2010, it brings together co-operatives and their members and supporters from across the country to raise awareness of the ways in which co-operatives are offering fantastic, local and trustworthy shops and services for everyone's needs.

For every £1 spent in a co-operative, an additional 40 pence is generated for the local economy. There are co-operatives in every postcode in the UK. More info - www.uk.coop/choosecoop/local-loved-trusted



Leaving Community – a personal reflection

Laurie Michaelis

I was surprised by the strength of people's reactions when I said I was leaving the Quaker Community at Bamford. Both my parents were delighted. My father sees the Community as a kind of hippy commune and hopes I'm returning to something more conventional. On the other hand, some Living Witness trustees were concerned. They see the Community as a living example of our Quaker testimony on sustainability. By abandoning it just as it was getting established in its new form, I might be undermining its viability.

Many people have been attracted to the Community by its beautiful location and by the ideal of sharing a home, growing food and living more sustainably. More recently Friends and others have been attracted by its strengthened Quaker values, worship and extensive use of Quaker processes.

For me one of the main gifts of community living is the learning it brings. Some of it is from being with other people on a day-to-day basis, worshipping, making decisions, listening and talking, gradually getting to see and feel things from their point of view. Close interactions with others can bring us face to face with our own darkness and I've found plenty of that. Perhaps one of the hardest areas for me is my relationship with food. I love cooking for others but I control what I eat quite carefully. I'm really only happy eating food I've prepared myself and find social eating uncomfortable.



Photo by Gary Morgan

Community can also help bring our gifts into the Light – certainly I found myself used in unexpected ways in Bamford. One surprising requirement of me was self-sufficiency. Mostly this isn't a particularly helpful trait in community living but when everyone else moved out in 2010 I stayed because I could. And I saw the potential for developing a new community more deeply rooted in Quaker values and practices, offering retreats and hospitality for which the location and buildings are ideally suited.

With seven residents, several Friends in the membership process and a full programme of visitors and retreats, the Community is well on the way to fulfilling that potential. Having played a central role in the early shaping of the vision, it feels healthy for me now to leave it to evolve and be owned by the new group. My rent and muddled attempts at administration are no longer needed to keep the place going. And I want to focus on other things – I'm not yet quite sure what but it seems a good time to look back on the last ten years of work with Living Witness and see what can be learned from that.

There is some sadness of course at leaving a gifted and loving group of people, the day-to-day contacts with their wisdom and experience, and the twice-daily worship which for the last few years has been so important to me. There is also some relief in the space I've currently got in my life. I enjoy attending meetings for worship where I'm not particularly expected and I don't know who will turn up. Back in Oxford I am enjoying the community of Friends here, especially the midweek breakfast meetings. I thought I would miss my cycle rides over the hill from Bamford to Sheffield to fetch organic fruit and veg. But I'm really appreciating the weekly organic farmers' markets that have now sprung up all over Oxford, and the Veg Van, run by a community growing co-op. And I'm glad to have left Bamford before the other community members got too fed up with me, so that they're happy for me to return for short stays and to offer retreats.

If you've never tried living in community I'd encourage you to consider it, or at least to visit Bamford – not as a solution to problems or as a better way of living, but as an opportunity to grow.

For information about the Community see www.quakercommunity.org.uk

Where does your food come FROM?

A small group of Watford Quakers, joined by others, want to change the way we source our food

Lucy Colbeck, (thanks to Owen Everett for his useful editing)

In the wake of the 'horse-gate' scandal, are we starting to grasp the extent of our lack of understanding of and connection with the food that we eat?

Arising from an initial concern around rising food poverty (both financial and nutritional) in the UK and excessive waste emanating from supermarkets, restaurants and households alike, the 'Watford Food Revolution' (recently re-named FROM) group came together to discuss what we could do about these issues. Last September we showed the documentary 'Best Before' at Watford Quaker meeting house, which outlines the far reaching problems with our current food system and some of the innovative solutions that Londoners are coming up with to kick start a new approach to the way our food is grown and traded.

The global picture on food is somewhat discouraging. Unpredictable weather, rising costs of oil, and biofuels policies are hitting farmers and consumers alike with poor harvests and spikes in food prices. Supermarkets have come to dominate the food system in the UK, providing consumers with little alternative. Many of the vegetables and fruit are flown in and covered in chemicals, all of which contributes to climate change and is unsustainable in the long term as known fossil fuel supplies are running out. Whilst many families are turning to Food Banks as a last resort to feed themselves, the UK throws away 15 million tonnes of food a year.

All of these issues and many more are relevant to our food. The important thing to realise is that they are all inter-related and affect every one of us. As described by Caroline Allen in The Ecologist on 20 February 2013, "It is clear that we cannot rely on our food supply to operate in the way that it has previously. We need, urgently, to build resilience into it." In other words: we can't wait around for governments and regulating bodies to build ethical practice into the food system. We need to take back control and start to build local food systems that provide the freshest produce at reasonable prices, supporting and championing local growers whilst educating ourselves.

Since September a fluctuating group of between 4-9 of us, have been working and thinking very hard about what the best course of action is for us, today, in Watford and the surrounding area. We've done plenty of research and discovered an encouraging amount of fledgling local food projects, including:

- Watford New Hope Trust (market garden, maintained by their service users)
- Farm Terrace Allotment Action group (fighting for their allotments not to be built over)
- Watford Community Garden (teaching horticulture in schools and growing veg on various different sites)
- Green Canteen, Meriden estate (teaching gardening and selling produce grown by local residents)
- ASCEND, South Oxhey (community allotment scheme teaching gardening to local residents)
- Transition Town movements in Abbots and Kings Langley

These local projects each have their own focus and are providing exciting ways for people to come together over food and in the process creating a tighter sense of community and wellbeing amongst the participants. We asked ourselves how we can fit in with these projects and work towards our aims.

We also researched ethical food projects based in London, and took great inspiration from many of them. We searched for medium-size producers in the local area and found Church Farm in Ardeley, near

Stevenage. On a visit to the farm, we met the farmer Tim Waygood, and were highly impressed with the principals which he holds in the running of his farm. Although he does not have the Soil Association-certified organic status, his farm is fertilizer and pesticide free. It is also a mixed, ecological farm, which means protecting the diversity of species that live in the farm environment by nurturing different plants that complement each other rather than producing one or two crops on a huge scale. Eventually we had a very fruitful discussion and decided on our aims, in order of priority:

- Provide wholesome, seasonal and some organic food
- Support local producers thereby reducing food miles
- Charge fair prices that are competitive where possible
- Provide opportunities for people to learn about the origin and nutritional value of food & how to prepare it
- Encourage community involvement in the project
- Work with other local food initiatives and producers

Tim the farmer told us that he would be really interested in building a relationship with our group if we could pool our resources and create a sort of buying club/ cooperative structure. This gave us some food for thought indeed...



hurchfarmardeley.co.uk/

Time for Action – Food from Farm to Fork and nothing in-between!

After around 6 months of research and monthly meetings, one cold Sunday afternoon in February, we agreed, by consensus, how we would start our project.

We have decided to launch a food box scheme using Church Farm's already-established system. This will bring a supply of local, seasonal vegetables, fruit, dairy, free range meat and dried foods, mostly produced with organic principles, to Watford direct from the farm. Each person who orders a food box is welcome to visit the farm, meet Tim, and start to build the relationship of trust which is extremely important in the development of new local food systems. Tim needs support from local communities to keep his medium-sized, ethically-run farm viable as a business. We see this as a perfect opportunity for us to take small steps to address the wider problems, by building resilience into the way that we produce and consume our food.

We launched this scheme at Watford Quaker Meeting on Sunday 14th April. Although we see this as a strong starting point, we do recognise the limitations of a food box in terms of how accessible it is to people (e.g. with limited transport, or who would see a food box as something elitist) so we have already set in motion our plans for longer term, further reaching provision in Watford. We are looking at finer details such as how to become a formal, incorporated co-operative/not-for-profit organisation, write a business plan and apply for funding, all very nerve-wracking and exciting stuff!

We welcome comments and ideas from the wider community as well as offers of help and anyone is welcome to join us at our meetings. In particular we do lack business/ financial accounting experience.

Please contact us on fromfoods@gmail.com

churchfarmardeley.co.uk

bestbeforedocumentary.com/about

www.theecologist.org/News/news_analysis/1817187/food_sustainability_security_selfreliance.html

What does Quaker faith & practice have to offer in becoming a low-carbon sustainable community?

It is nearly two years since Britain Yearly Meeting committed in Canterbury to becoming a low carbon sustainable community. Many Friends and Meetings have made great progress – greening their buildings, holding study groups and worship sharing sessions to explore how to green their lives. For some the Canterbury Commitment has been a prompt to strengthen the meeting as a spiritual community.

There have also been tensions. Some Friends have felt they are being told what to do – and there may have been some truth in this. There are those who miss the days when Quakers seemed more focused on campaigning against war and for human justice, and who see sustainability as a distraction.

It can sometimes seem to Friends that we are behind the curve in sustainability. There have been high-visibility climate change programmes in the mainstream churches, and so much is going on in the Transition movement. Yet others sometimes see the gifts Quakers bring to this work better than we do. Friends are playing key roles in many Transition initiatives. We are seen as bringing authenticity – a particular depth of consistency and commitment. Quaker engagement comes from ‘Friends on the bench’, not from a hierarchical leadership. And I keep being impressed by the Friends I meet who have been living the low carbon commitment without talking about it.



LW Summer School group 2012

The Canterbury Commitment came at a time when the world around us seemed mostly to have forgotten about climate change or to have given up on it. The media and the government were, and still are morbidly obsessed with the economy, terrorism and immigration. At the same time it is becoming increasingly obvious that climate change is happening. The exceptional weather and crop failures we have experienced in recent years are probably a small taste of what is to come. And although surveys show that most people recognise this, they find it hard to see any way of making a difference.

So how do we keep going when the people around us don't see the point? What do we do about conflict in our meetings and communities? How do we stay committed when we can't see any progress? How much of our focus should be on greening our buildings and how much on our own lives? And what about campaigning for better government policies? What is our approach to the people, organisations and systems of power that seem committed to the status quo? What do we do when we're angry, sad, afraid?

In this year's Living Witness Summer School we're going to explore what our Quaker faith has to offer in becoming a low carbon sustainable community. We'll work with Quaker processes and practices, reflecting on the ways we could use them in our lives, our meetings and other circles.

The Summer School takes the form of a four day retreat living, worshipping and eating as part of the Quaker Community at Bamford. There will be plenty of opportunities to share our experiences, the challenges we are facing and our nagging questions. We will focus in sessions on listening, and have lots of time to reflect together. Some of our sessions will be spent outdoors in the Community's extensive woodland and wildlife area. There will be celebration, music and lots of good vegan/vegetarian food. There will also be unstructured time for rest, discussion, and walks in the Community's beautiful surroundings.

To book a place please return a registration form on page 15 of this earthQuaker to Dee. The fee is £160-200, depending what you can afford, and we can provide some bursary help.

Good growth – bad growth?

Martin Quick

The UK government response to the present economic crisis is basically to make massive cuts in government spending, many of these cuts affecting the poorest and most vulnerable in society. Even usually financially stringent organisations such as the International Monetary Fund are now saying that the policy of austerity in many European countries including the UK is not working, and that measures to promote economic growth should be adopted. Our government is hoping that the private sector will produce the growth needed to get the country's finances into a better shape. However, much spending in the private sector is on ephemeral goods and services which after a short time leave no lasting benefits to the country, and much of this consumer spending goes abroad. While there are environmental limits to indefinite consumerist growth, investment in certain areas can be both environmentally sustainable and economically beneficial.

The government promotes the myth that excessive borrowing by the last government was the cause of our economic crisis, while in fact reckless lending creating a housing boom and bust in many countries was as much to blame. There is an essential difference between borrowing for current expenditure and borrowing for investment. Much government borrowing at the moment goes on benefits to people out of work or on minimal wages. Borrowing to invest in massive home energy efficiency schemes and sustainable energy projects, on affordable housing, good cycle routes and sustainable transport would bring returns to the government in reduced unemployment benefits, lower housing benefit payments (often to dodgy landlords and B&Bs), less need for winter fuel allowances and reduced health care costs, as well as producing more revenue from income taxes, housing rents and larger payments by train operating companies for access to better rail infrastructure. These benefits to government finances could occur on a timescale comparable with the present government's forecast of when the deficit will be reduced. A clear commitment to sustainable energy would encourage manufacture of equipment in this country - whereas as the moment, wind turbine manufacturers are withdrawing from the UK.

Unemployment, especially for young people, is extremely harmful. The government's denigration of people out of work as shirkers is particularly obscene when in many areas, there are few jobs available. A programme of investment in infrastructure, housing and energy efficiency could produce worthwhile jobs as well as environmental benefits. Our balance of payments would improve as we would become less dependent on increasingly expensive oil and gas imports, so the government would have less need to go cap-in-hand to corrupt oil and gas-rich countries (often offering big arms deals) to beg for funds to support the UK.

It is clear that to meet the reductions needed in greenhouse gas emissions will need life-style changes as well as technical measures. Investment in the right areas is needed both for environmental reasons and to provide worthwhile employment.

Keep the Green in Greenwich

Edward Hill, Blackheath

Keep The Green In Greenwich is an initiative that has arisen from meetings over the past year at the Made In Greenwich Hothouse. We are concerned that the Government is relaxing planning controls which previously protected green spaces. We are creating our own neighbourhood plan under the Localism Act, and intend to get green space and other assets of community value transferred into a community trust under the 'community asset transfer' and 'community right to bid'. Preventing the local development of additional housing significantly limits our local carbon footprint and over-consumption of resources. It is popular and achievable - an effective way of acting against climate change locally if enough communities get organized against the developers.

Made In Greenwich Hothouse - www.madeingreenwich.co.uk/hothouse

My Community Rights - mycommunityrights.org.uk



Keep the Green in Greenwich

Letters

Green Celebrations

Merry Curd and I have just celebrated 10 years of marriage. We were married at Worthing Quaker meeting House on Easter Monday 21st April 2003, the birthday of the worlds first environmentalist, John Muir who was born in Dunbar, Scotland in 1838 as well as the present queen of GB.

Then we tried hard to make the event CO2 neutral, using potato starch plates and wooden utensils that ended up on our compost heap.

Since then we have been spending our money on insulating our home with wood fibre and lime rendering to the walls, recycled newspaper in the loft and British made triple glazed wood windows and doors as well as installing PV panels. Surplus power is sold to our energy supplier Good Energy.

For our anniversary we had 40 people to a buffet lunch at the meeting house and asked a local organic vegetarian cafe that uses local produce, Green Cuisine, to provide an assortment of salads and savouries, many of which we heated in the electric oven fuelled by green electricity. We washed and returned the dishes the next day. We used real plates, utensils and tablecloths from the meeting house supplies and there was not a through away item in sight. The guests washed up for us. It can be done where there is a will.

Richard Battson

Computers and Carbon

I have followed the discussion in the last three editions of earthQuaker about the environmental impact of the IT revolution with interest.

Although I am something of a techno-phile, I do accept much of the wisdom and questioning the debate has brought to light. Without a doubt, technology can become a false idol as witnessed, for example, by the explosion of unnecessary gadgets in the wider world. Sadly like many discussions about environmental issues, I am left feeling a bit despondent, guilty and disempowered.

At Brighton Meeting we have been struggling hard to try to shift the focus away from this sort of doom-laden approach to sustainability to one that is empowering and joyful, delighting in small successes rather than letting ourselves be browbeaten by the enormity of the challenges we face. This isn't intended in criticism of the previous points made, but I think there is a great need to "live up to the Light we have, so that more may be granted us"! Neil Wilson is right to say the end user sees just a small part of the information system they use, but why not start there?

I have recently replaced my main desktop machine, a ten-year old 250 W Dell monster running Windows XP, with an Aleutia T1 machine based around open source Ubuntu Linux 12.04. The T1 is a perfectly adequate machine which was a dream to set up (literally plug-in and go with web browser and office software ready to go) and it uses around 12 W, less than 1/20th of the power of the Dell (and even, less than of a typical 45 W laptop). It is perfectly capable of all the usual tasks such as email, web and office. I can even develop smartphone software on it!

I think you have sometimes to take a personal stand on things you can change in your own lifestyle with the hope others will follow. It may be possible to do even better than a 12 W computer. I leave that as a challenge for readers who can't do without entirely! (hint: fancy a bit of pie, as in the raspberry kind?)

The statistics about server farms are scary, but there is another area in which we can vote with our feet since greener server farms do exist, for example preferring those running on renewables. Also on a personal basis it is possible to use technology in a way that is much greener than the travel equivalent, for example keeping in touch with distant relatives or friends rather than flying there quite so often. But can we quantify this? I should

warn you that the following contains mathematics! (and there may be mistakes or way-off estimates for which I apologize in advance). The beauty of looking at the numbers is that it puts comparisons in context. So bear with me!

Let us say that we are using 100 W of server power somewhere: that's like leaving on an old incandescent light bulb, something I was always warned about as a kid! Pretty scary. But on the same scale a motor vehicle is about 100 000 W, ie. One thousand lightbulbs or one hundred kettles. Even this is not like-with-like as we only use a kettle for a few minutes a car for maybe an hour out of a day. So let's use Joules to reflect the total energy used rather than the rate of energy use (Watts or Joules per second).

One hour of car usage = $100\,000 \times 3600 = 360$ million Joules

And ten minutes of kettle boiling = $1000 \times 3600 / 6 = 600\,000$ Joules

One day of server time (at 100 W) = $100 \times 3600 \times 24 = 8.64$ million Joules.

So you are talking about server consumption at around 2.4 % of transport costs for a fairly typical commute by car and about fourteen times your electric kettle usage! Still scary but the numbers do put all this into context.

The internet is not green, but from a personal standpoint it can be a greener alternative which is at our disposal if we want. Server farms can hopefully push computing towards greener power if only by economies of scale. As Quakers we don't have to push this technological progress any harder or fall prey to fashions to such an extent as the wider world; we can simply make use of it where we feel it appropriate. This is for me a truer simplicity than shunning it completely!

I applaud Friends who can do without technology as noted by Robert Shalton describes and there are without doubt simplicity and spiritual factors which are not reflected in the above figures, never mind the deeper social factors highlighted by Rachel Howell. There are very definitely also issues with the toxic substances in the supply chain which Friends of the Earth have been campaigning on. But I also encourage Friends who can to compare like with like and maybe even use mathematics(!) to inform themselves of the impact of their choices, because it is from that basis that we can begin to delight in the ways we can win small victories, even if it is replacing a lightbulb! (I have a 4 W reading light).

Jason Evans, Brighton

Horse meat

A top analyst is concerned that the horsemeat many people have unknowingly eaten may have been given veterinary drugs which are harmful to humans. One painkiller given to horses - phenylbutazone, can cause aplastic anaemia (bone marrow destruction) in humans. There are several other veterinary drugs which would be harmful to people if the meat was eaten by them. This is a serious breach of the standards which are supposed to control what goes into our food. After the BSE disaster the source of our food was supposed to be traceable. The Food Standards Agency in UK didn't even find the problem - the Irish authorities discovered it. Jose Bove, Vice-President of the European Parliament agricultural commission, said "Donkeys have been banned from Romanian roads & millions of animals have been sent to the slaughterhouse."

In 2006 a law was passed banning donkeys from pulling carts on Romanian roads, but this has only recently been enforced.

Animals processed by unscrupulous criminals may be diseased or already dead. Animal parts processed may include brain, brain stem, bone & offal. There is no effective processed meat traceability across the EU. It is worrying that the government say they will only test for horsemeat in food and not for any other species. As the food industry seems to be partly run by criminal gangs, presumably they won't mind putting rat, dog or pigeon etc. into our food. We need a food watchdog that puts the interests of consumers first, not the food industry!

A Wills

The Oak Tree

I heard today that the oldest oak in Britain had been blown over. I remembered the saying by Kahil Gibran that "Trees are poems that earth writes upon the sky".

The Oak tree speaks:

"I am a great oak tree. One of the largest trees in my forest. It has taken me over a century to grow so large. I love my forest and the many creatures which live on my leaves and trunk. Each autumn I see the grey squirrel collecting my acorns to keep him alive through the cold winter. In spring I feel the nuthatch and tree creeper looking for insects on my bark to feed to their young. My leaves provide shelter for deer and humans when it rains. I have seen many changes over the years. Once there were elm trees around me. But they started to wither and die. A few years ago my forest was designated as a national park. Humans built a metal seat around my trunk so they could sit and enjoy the view. I was able to listen to them when they sat below. At first their voices seemed happy and contented but lately I have heard an anxious tone. They keep mentioning the words "global warming", and moaning about the weather. I had noticed that there seemed to be more rain and that the air felt warmer. One day I heard two men talking about the Amazon Rainforest being cut down so that humans could keep cattle for beef. This worried me because we trees do a good job of taking in carbon and giving out oxygen. I began to worry that humans were destroying my world. I cannot do anything about it myself but I hope that there are wise humans who will try to save it or I will not live for another hundred years".



Oak tree in Kew Gardens photo by Dee Sayce

Anne Harding

Celebration

I celebrate the earth.

I celebrate the sun and moon and stars.

I celebrate the waters of the earth,
the streams and rivers and seas,
waterfalls and lakes and secret pools.

I celebrate the mountains, hills and downs,
the moors and forests and woods,

the fields and hedges alight with blackthorn, hawthorn and wild dog roses,
the grasses, shaking grass, buttercups, daisies, Star of Bethlehem and sweet scented clover,
the ferns in the woods, and foxgloves, bluebells and primroses.

I celebrate all things that fly – little owls, tawny owls, barn owls and swallows and swifts, blackbirds and robins, and the speckled-breasted thrush.

I thank the creatures of the earth, the worms that cultivate the soil, the rabbits and their burrows, the foxes and their holes, and the badgers and their bolts, the moles and voles and mice.

I praise God for all creatures that run and leap and dive and swoop.

I celebrate us humans, a rainbow race of all colours and shapes and ages.

I celebrate our works, buildings and books and paintings,
bridges and planes and trains,

Music and little acts of kindness.

May God, the Great Spirit, bless us all.

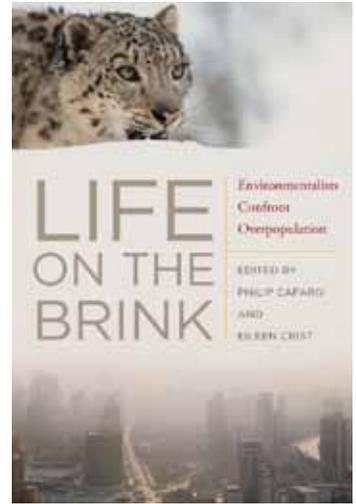
Dorothy Burbidge Jan 2013

Book Review

After reading Roger Plenty's article in the last issue, I listened to a cutting edge US eco radio series called Radio Ecoshock. It looks like the time is finally coming for reasoned discussion about overpopulation with the publication of a book called "Life on the Brink, Environmentalists Confront Overpopulation" co-edited by Philip Cafaro, of Colorado State University, and Eileen Crist, of Virginia Tech.

The book, published in December 2012, is a collection of essays from green leaders including Lester Brown and Paul Ehrlich, Albert Bartlett, and activist Dave Foreman of Earth First! and Captain Paul Watson of the Sea Shepherd Society, among others. www.ugapress.org/index.php/books/life_on_the_brink

Lin Patterson



Book Recommendations

Sacred Economics by Charles Eisenstein

Sacred Economics traces the history of money from ancient gift economies to modern capitalism, revealing how the money system has contributed to alienation, competition, and scarcity, destroyed community, and necessitated endless growth. Today, these trends have reached their extreme - but in the wake of their collapse, we may find great opportunity to transition to a more connected, ecological, and sustainable way of being.

Waking the Giant: How a changing climate triggers earthquakes, tsunamis, and volcanoes by Bill McGuire

Twenty thousand years ago our planet was an icehouse. Temperatures were down six degrees; ice sheets kilometres thick buried much of Europe and North America and sea levels were 130m lower. Already there are signs that the effects of climbing global temperatures are causing the sleeping giant to stir once again. Could it be that we are on track to bequeath to our children and their children not only a far hotter world, but also a more geologically fractious one?

Useful internet links sent in by earthQuaker readers;

Ellen MacArthur Foundation works with Education and Business to accelerate the transition to a Circular Economy. www.ellenmacarthurfoundation.org

Buzzbnk is an on-line crowd-funding platform bringing social ventures looking for start-up or growth capital together with like-minded people keen to participate in a new way of funding social change. www.buzzbnk.org

Zero Carbon Britain has a positive, realistic vision for an energy progressive society free from fossil fuels. www.zerocarbonbritain.org

Artist in residence at Zero Carbon Britain zerocarbonarchive.tumblr.com

Christian Ecology Link - www.greenchristian.org.uk

Friends of the Earth, Bee Campaign - www.foe.co.uk/beeause

Campaign Against the Arms Trade - www.demilitarize.org.uk

Campaign for Nuclear Disarmament - www.cnduk.org

Diary 2013

Quaker Community Events and Courses

21-23 Jun. Midsummer Gathering

Our summer festival for QCAMbers, QVA vols & LW members: creativity, skills-share, celebration! £60

5-9 Aug. Living Witness Summer School

What does Quaker faith & practice have to offer in becoming a low-carbon sustainable community? Explore in depth through four days of workshops & worship, fun & fellowship. £200-£160 (More details on page 8.)

27-29 Sep. Truth & Transformation

Follow up to the 2013 Swarthmore Lecture. Finding meaning & purpose in our spiritual life, drawing on early Quaker images & journalling. £130-£90. More information www.quakercommunity.org.uk/index.htm
Contact mail@quakercommunity.org.uk or call us on 01433 650085

Woodbrooke Courses

7 - 9 Jun. Global Restorative Climate Justice – what might it look like?

During this weekend we will explore both sustainability and restorative justice issues, how they link and interact, and what our Quaker responses might be. Ensuite Fee: £194.00 Standard Fee: £184.00

6 - 8 Sep. A Spiritual Basis for Sustainable Living

This course is being held at Swarthmoor Hall. This weekend is about cultivating simple spiritual practices to help us live more consciously and sustainably - practices of gratitude and appreciation, of being present to what is – including the suffering of our world. Standard Fee: £184.00

16 - 18 Aug. Right Relationship: Quakers and the creation

We will explore the significance of this early Quaker experience for our current concern for animals and the natural world and consider the role of the Spirit in establishing right relationship within creation.

Ensuite Fee: £194.00 Standard Fee: £184.00

More info www.woodbrooke.org.uk Contact Woodbrooke 0121 472 5171 or enquiries@woodbrooke.org.uk

Peace News

25-29 July. Peace News Summer Camp - Taking a lead from the Global South

Peace News Camp is organised by activists of colour/people with a global majority heritage. Join us and others from across the broad spectrum of the peace and radical social change movements for five days of workshops, entertainment and network building! £20-£75. More information www.peacenewscamp.info

Deadline for the next issue of earthQuaker - 1st August 2013

Please post or email contributions to the editor - Dee Sayce, 7, Bowden Crescent, New Mills, High Peak, SK22 4LN or **01663 308656 - 07837 578382**

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
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Free to under 18's

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and send to:
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New Mills
High Peak
SK22 4LN

Delete as appropriate - I prefer earthQuaker:

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

I enclose £

Gift Aid declaration (please tick box if appropriate):

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Monday 5th to Friday 9th August 2013

I would like to register for the Living Witness Summer School

Name:

Meeting:

Address:

Telephone:

E-mail:

Do you have any physical difficulties of which we should be aware? (please give details)

Food will be vegan with milk available. Please let us know any other dietary requirements:

No wheat No gluten No sugar Other

Any allergies?.....

Please let us know your travel arrangements. We may be able to arrange lifts/car shares.

I will be coming by train bus car and willing to offer a lift

Arrival date & time.....Departure date & time.....

The cost including accommodation and food is £160-200, depending what you can afford, and we can provide some bursary help.

Please send your registration form by e-mail to dee@livingwitness.org.uk, confirming that you have paid by BACS to our bank account: 'Living Witness Project', sort code 089299, number 65164185.

Or post your form to Living Witness, 7 Bowden Crescent, New Mills, High Peak, SK22 4LN, with a cheque payable to 'Living Witness Project'.

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 , 7, Bowden Crescent, New Mills, High Peak, SK22 4LN

To contact Laurie by email: 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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