

earthQuaker

*Newsletter of
Living Witness Project - Quakers for Sustainability
Issue 70 Autumn 2010*



Contents include:

Adonis Blue butterflies on wild marjoram.
Photo by Colin Brewer.

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- Summer Gathering Minute • LWP gatherings •
 - A community of Green Faith? •
 - News from Meetings • Bio Char •
 - The Population issue • 2010 footprint challenges •
 - Book Reviews • Letters • Diary •
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Editorial

There is much depressing news on the environment which I see almost every day on Planet Ark (wen@wenlistserver.planetark.com) but I decided to focus on a celebration of the planet's beauty in the cover picture this issue. It is very encouraging to see the efforts the National Trust is putting into increasing biodiversity on their properties—they are almost as good as Woodbrooke!

I have said I will edit 2 more issues of earthQuaker—this one and the next one in November—but then I will hand over the job to the next lucky recipient. I've greatly enjoyed doing it but after 6 years I feel I may be getting stuck in a pattern and it is time for new ideas. Do get in touch if you feel you might like the job but are wondering how much time and effort is involved.

Anne Brewer

A few words from the LWP Co-ordinator

This August feels ultra-hectic! The summer school last week was our best so far, I think. Fifteen Friends gathered at the Quaker Community in Bamford and spent much of the week in worship of various forms, asking how we are led to respond to sustainability challenges. Our concluding minute is on page 3.

LWP is working with QPSW to plan a series of one-day worship-centred events leading up to the 2011 Yearly Meeting Gathering in Canterbury, whose theme is *Growing in the Spirit, changing the way we live to sustain the world we live in*. More details to follow but I hope many LWP members will be able to attend both the one-day events and the Gathering.

Friends World Committee on Consultation is organising a consultation on global change, with a number of questions available online at www.fwccglobalchange.org. The responses will be collated for a report to the Friends World Gathering in 2012. I know some local meetings are already planning activities to develop their contributions. We're hoping that our various worship events will contribute to a response from Quakers in Britain.

Jasmine, the LWP Resource People Co-ordinator, and I are attending Greenbelt, the radical Christian festival this month, co-organising displays and events with QPSW and a number of green Christian organisations.

And you may have seen in *The Friend* that the Quaker Community in Bamford is going through a transformation. Most members have left and we are looking for Quakers to form a new group here or elsewhere. Twenty potential members are coming to a gathering in September. Write to me if you're interested!

And finally, we are planning our usual Link Group Gathering at the Bilberry Hill Centre in Birmingham on 5-7 November. This is the main opportunity to meet up with Friends from other meetings involved in LWP. We don't yet have a programme but please do put it in your diary.

Laurie Michaelis

WANTED! NEW LWP RESOURCE PEOPLE

We are now looking to recruit new RPs (Resource People) to join our team.

RPs facilitate workshops (in pairs), give talks and offer technical advice and practical support to Meetings and others on the issues and challenges of sustainability.

We are hoping to broaden our scope into 2011 and are seeking to recruit additional RPs to take our work forward.

RPs offer their services voluntarily but all expenses are covered. This includes opportunities to meet for training and development of the programme at our twice yearly residential RP gatherings. The next one will be held at The Quaker Community in Bamford 10th – 12th September.

If you would like to discuss possibilities for future involvement please contact the RP Co-ordinator, Jasmine Piercy: jasmine@livingwitness.org.uk Tel: 07910 434941

Minute from LWP Summer School Concluding Session Quaker Community, Bamford, 13 August 2010

We have come together as a group very concerned about the issue of sustainability, the possible impending catastrophe, and wanting to work towards action. We have had a rich experience of sharing our journeys, and deepening our spirituality. We see a lack of respect for the earth, for people, and we see this as caused by fear, greed, and pressure to conform. We see a need to counter this fear, and the fear that it is already too late and pointless to make personal changes especially those that are challenging. We are drawn to hold a mirror to our own lives, and to work through our own resistance to change. Many of us make daily decisions that lead us to be knowingly complicit with the powers shaping our consumerist society.



We believe a focus on the positive, through showing how we can live sustainably (rather than emphasising the need for giving up things) would encourage more behaviour change. We have this week experienced the joy and nutrition of a vegan diet and some of us will try to move towards such a diet because of its lower environmental impact, and to supporting organic cooperatives. Joyful activities such as music making and circle dancing are zero carbon in impact and help in deepening our community. Sharing positive stories of change can help counter the negative news from much national media. There is much goodness, beauty and love in the world, though it often seems that the power and control is with the darker forces. We need to work to see that of God in those who wield power in what seem to be negative ways, and to show

compassion, recognising in them our own shadows. We need to harness the goodness expressed in countless individual lives and daily actions to be a countervailing positive force.

We can start with our own Meetings. Some of us do inform our Meetings about the importance of acting individually and collectively to reduce our carbon footprint, and some of us have sensed a resistance to what can be seen as preaching and a slowness to respond. In some of our meetings Quakers seem overwhelmed with the practicalities of running the meeting, and we wonder how we can rediscover our key purpose in the world. We see the importance of moving beyond our meetings, to build relationships beyond Quakers, including with people in other organisations with which we are linked, and with other faith groups

We have explored deepening our understanding and purpose through daily worship. We have spent this week within Bamford Quaker community, and are attracted by the idea of an extended

community of Friends in Britain Yearly Meeting, who adopt a shared commitment, and this could include coming together occasionally in retreat.

We recognise that there are many groups and organisations in our communities that are active on climate change and sustainable living. As Quakers our own role may be upholding others, showing compassion and engaging with the powerful forces that work against sustainability, and building resources for resolving the conflicts that will come, while seeing the need in our own lives to live more simply and reduce our consumption as an essential step in moving a more equal world, in order to enable others around the world to improve their quality of life.

Rachel Berger, clerk for this session

What do we mean by “growth” and is a return to “growth” possible in the long term? is the title of a very interesting paper by Steve Mandel (husband of an LWP member) which is an amended version of a presentation he gave to the 5th annual conference of the Green Economics Institute, held at Mansfield College, Oxford in July 2010. See www.greeneconomics.org.uk.

An extract from the ending of the paper:

The evidence is now quite strong that well-being is not mainly determined by income once a certain level has been reached. ... from the New

Economic Foundation’s work on well-being we can summarise the main factors influencing well-being ... With the sole exception of health, these factors have almost nothing to do with consumption; but are more to do with the way we organise society, production and consumption, the way we relate to each other, and other non-tangible matters.

Final Conclusion

There is little reason why these factors cannot go on improving as society evolves, without increasing demands on resources. This kind of growth, growth in well-being, that is, could therefore be perpetual.

Ask the editor if you would like a copy.

A community of green faith?

Coming away this Sunday, from a Meeting for Worship which led us down traditional Anglican, even Catholic paths on the subject of sinfulness and the inability to draw close to God, I found myself wanting some reassurance that the God that I am close to in this post 20th century second half of my life, is recognised by theologians.

In my searching to bridge Quakers, Community, Love and recent theological thought, I have encountered Earth Ethics . I would like to explain how community of green practice needs to be complimented by community of green faith. This could become a very long exposition, so suffice it today to keep it 'preface' size for earthQuaker.

As a child I pondered about God the Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit a great deal. I spent a lot of time in Church because my father was a C of E priest. He was a thinking man (as well as a community man) and Oxford graduate and his practice of rationalising religion meant that I also intellectualised it until my late teens. At that point some very new directions – global politics, pragmatics, love of the countryside, fresh air, views from hills/cliffs and, at last, - lack of a sense of my guilt - began to shape my faith and ground me in the environment.

Now, I want to look at how other Christians view the world that we have inherited, and indeed other religions. In earthQuaker issue no. 69, Laurie Michaelis wrote:

Quakers should be sharing their practices with others. The processes and discipline are probably best transmitted through experience – they are easier to learn than to teach. Some of the best experiences have come from Friends making quiet suggestions about process in the non-Quaker groups in which they participate – perhaps to have a moment of quiet to prepare for the meeting, or to have someone draft minutes in the meeting and make sure everyone agrees the wording, or to have ground rules about not interrupting and building on what has been said, rather than debating.

I wholly agree and support the urgency of Laurie's concern about sharing our practices. But I think we must also be ready to survey the wider views of Christianity in order to share our ideas in bigger contexts. Only by widening and widening our

contexts – not only in the practical sense but also in the philosophical sense – will we be able to reach as far as we would hope to. Quakers need to take on dialogue with other denominations and religions **delighting one another in our similarities in thought.**

Laurie warns us against debate and advocates using the skills of 'building on what has been said', but I would suggest that in that we will, through discussion of ethical matters with other non-Quaker groups, come to *hear* each others' point of view and **enrich each others' understanding of 'God'**. And on that basis we can build cross-denominational green joined-up thinking, so that not only the *essential* practical will is strong (as in transition towns) but also the common understanding that we share each others' most important values.

Here are a very few signals (for me at any rate!) that theological study/discussion could create powerful and synergetic bonds between Quakers and others. At the end there are references to the internet to give some guide as to where to follow up these few leads. I have also added some complimentary passages from Quaker Faith and Practice (QF&P):

The kinship of all living things along with the inter-dependence of humanity and the "sacred" earth are central traditions for many indigenous peoples.

According to American writer on Christian ethics, Larry Rasmussen, speaking in Wellington, New Zealand in

2008 there are a number of "deep Christian traditions" that can help to address forces that are destructive to the environment. One of these is the tradition of sacramentalism, the idea that creation is good and has a value that humans are part of but did not create. In particular, the sacramental vision of "the Web of Life", symbolised by the knot in Celtic Christianity, stresses the co-existence of all that exists.

We can all listen if we will to the sounds of the earth, tuning into it with joy. QF&P 25.02

Lloyd Geering is an important thinker to me because he dares to overtly combine post modern thinking, Faith and eco-thought. He attempts to explain that God is what we value most highly in our lives. He also points out that Faith arises initially as an instinct but then it becomes a conscious positive fact. Faith is what we put our trust in – and just as our values change so the



Between St Agnes Head and Trevenaunce Bay, North Cornwall coast. Photo by Sarah Freeman

meanings of words change. From this thinking you can follow his arrival at the thought that God is no longer out there but that God is The World; in the 21st century we move to put our faith in the Earth. (taken from gist of Geering interviews on You Tube)

Faith-inspired hope motivates Christians to continue taking positive action – in conjunction with others. Such action is motivated by the prospect of quickly building a global community/movement of both leaders and grass-root campaigners. Such a movement could be powerful enough to turn the global warming juggernaut round. (Operation Noah's 7 Year Plan, June 2010)

Our testimonies against war and inequality have been aimed at persuading people, and reminding ourselves, as to where their wealth lies: in the discovery of a common identity and a common cause with other human beings. QF&P 25.15

Historically in the Christian tradition as posed by Lloyd Geering in his 2005 book *The Greening of Christianity*, there is the suggestion that the development of Trinitarianism (God as the Father, Son and Holy Spirit) was the first step in bridging a gulf between earth and heaven, the supernatural and the natural worlds.

And so there is a movement that has been happening over centuries, consistently towards understanding that God is a very immediate experience in our lives; not, as we might think, complex because of the different aspects of the 'One', but rather more a unification of everything that we revere on earth as well as everything that we value spiritually.

It is important to understand what the differences between religion and science are. In one respect they are one and the same thing. Scientists are searching for 'The Theory of Everything' ("but we had this in Genesis... which is in the Bible – which is a 'human book'" - taken from gist of Geering interviews on You Tube)

Those testimonies apply in the same way to our treatment of our natural environment which, as Augustine said, is itself like a 'commonwealth', in which every creature in its own way serves the interests of the others. The difference now is that the commonwealth of people and the commonwealth of the earth

have become inseparably interrelated and interdependent - have become in fact one new commonwealth of life. Our thinking about God and the world and the way we live in relation to them must now give recognition to that fact. Rex Ambler, 1990. QF&P 25.15

Lloyd Geering also states that we are moving to a point where we will need new - (what he calls 'rituals'); but I think that rituals and cultural activities could be closely identified with each other. I think that some of these are emerging. I am thinking about the big movement towards summer festivals, return to farmers' markets, sustainable technology, co-operative enterprises and use of shared or public transport. These can be found in other European countries and indeed on a global scale.

We are called to look again at the real purpose of being on this earth, which is to till it and keep it so as to reveal the glory of God for generations to come. QF&P 25.02



Treschenu Creyers, South East France. Photo by Sarah Freeman.

We believe that people of faith draw on a solid foundation of respect for Creation. Praise for Creation is the driving force that leads many people of faith to act urgently to protect Creation from global warming. If the commitment to protect Creation spreads to all people of faith, and is co-joined with other campaigns, Operation

Noah believes that Christians have the potential to achieve extraordinary change. (Operation Noah's 7 Year Plan, June 2010)

I am not proposing that we share a sense of sinfulness with others. I know how many of us are saddened at the slowness with which global action on the destructive forces of industrialization are taking place. Many Earth Quakers have long since come to terms with the immobilizing realization of their own responsibility for ecological disaster as humans. But I do believe that if we are to remind each other that sin can be redeemed by Love – there is an ever widening role for Love and we might consider talking about that way forward promptly with fellow earth citizens.

Internet sources

http://environmentalism.suite101.com/article.cfm/ecofaith_and_sustainability
www.uua.org/aboutus/bylaws/articleii/6906.shtml
www.youtube.com/watch?v=VrF50Rnqa1k&feature=related

Sarah Freeman

News from Meetings

Reading Meeting

Reading Meeting was featured on the 10:10 campaign website on 27th July under the heading:

Walking the talk :How the faithful are shrinking their carbon footprints

After pieces from a Jewish Community Centre and Islamic Aid came this piece:

Reading Quakers



Reading Meeting House

Anne Wheldon, a member of Reading Quakers environmental group, used to be a renewables lecturer, and now works for the Ashden Awards – a charity championing local sustainable energy.

Why did you decide to sign up to 10:10

Well, Quakers have a longstanding involvement with protecting the environment. It is part of our concern for fairness and social justice, and our attempt to live more simply and not exploit the earth's resources.

So carbon cutting had already been on our agenda. In fact we calculated that our CO2 emissions in 2008-09 were 30% lower than in 2004-05, because of measures like getting rid of an old fridge, installing cavity wall insulation where possible, and replacing unused doors with insulated plasterboard. We also held a 'swap shop' to exchange surplus possessions!

So we'd already made some serious progress. But 10:10 is well known, and many members of our Meeting were keen that we should join. So now we're trying to cut carbon emissions by a further 10% in 2010.



Liz switching off the heaters

What are you doing to cut your 10%?

Many actions were obvious, once we thought about them. For instance, we realised that we never opened all eight sash windows

in the main Meeting room, so we sealed half of them up completely and draught-proofed the rest. And instead of letting heat leak through the windows over night, we've fitted thermal blinds. We have a lofty kitchen which lost all the heat to a concrete ceiling and single-glazed skylights, so we installed a suspended ceiling – and transparent panels in it still let in quite a lot of daylight.

It has been really useful to read the meters every month – we knew this already but had not quite got round to doing it before 10:10. But the real credit has to go to our Warden, Liz, who's very good at keeping carbon cutting at the forefront of our minds, and nipping round herself to check everything's switched off after meetings. That's no simple task when over 50 other organisations use our premises through the year, as well as Reading Quakers. Our very own smart heating control system you might say!

We're on target. Our 2009-10 emissions are 8% lower than 2008-9, even though the weather was much colder, and use of premises went up a bit. So we are really pleased, particularly since we had already made significant cuts over the previous few years.

What are the main challenges?

Well, there is a limit to what you can do with a listed building. Also many of our elderly members really feel the cold. I don't think that we can reduce heating any further, and we may actually need to heat more.



Connie (aged 95) making use of a quilt.

But a recently retired member of the group has been busy making patchwork quilts, which keep knees cosy in our big Georgian meeting hall! We've got a box for collecting fabric, and I think she's even getting the children involved now.

Anne Wheldon added in her covering email: "I was interested in talking to Beth who put together the article, to find that a significant proportion of the Christian groups who have signed up to 10:10 are Quakers. I did not ask the %, maybe should have done so. Beth's doing another article on Christian groups and three out of the approximately six in that are Quaker. I think the representation of Quakers reflects both the Quaker testimonies, and also the impact that QGA and Living Witness have had on Meetings over the past ten years. "

Bunhill Fields Meeting

Our burial ground was entered, at Anne Brewer's suggestion, into the May London Green Corners Sacred Places category and WE WON!

It is the Conservation Foundation's wildlife green spaces in London award. The news with photos took up a whole page (with three other category winners) in the Hackney Gazette and the East London Advertiser, and was mentioned in the Friend.

The redesigned garden was supported by many Quaker Meetings and trusts, and by a grant from QGA, so thanks are due to them all. The prize was a stainless steel trowel, 5 mini packets of nasturtium seeds, and a beautiful certificate which we will frame. It seems that the Conservation Foundation, www.conservationfoundation.co.uk, is a charity which has been promoting positive environmental action for 21 years.

Here is the picture and write up on the Conservation Foundation website:



Bunhill Fields Quaker Burial Ground has been chosen as winners of the Sacred Spaces category, sponsored by Natural England. The resting place of three great men of letters - John Bunyan, Daniel Defoe and William Blake - and 12,000 Quakers, Bunhill Fields is located in Islington on the fringes of the City and nowadays

is a much loved centre of urban wildlife enjoyed by local children and adults as well as City workers and pilgrims.

Fruit, herbs, traditional English garden flowers and shrubs flourish here and encourage birdlife and insects including honey bees, bumble bees, ladybirds, and hoverflies.

Explains Brigid Philip, Convenor of the Friends of Quaker Gardens gardening group, "Since the Gardens redesign in 2006 the range of insects and birds has increased substantially and Quakers enjoy the birdsong during Sunday Meetings in the Meeting House, a listed building on a corner of the site. The number of people visiting and walking through Quaker Gardens has also increased significantly. It is a well used and much visited peaceful place".

In the garden there is mixed news. We are still struggling to prevent Islington's gardening contractor from concentrating solely on mowing and far worse strimming, leaving a bare earth appearance in some sections. We would not have won in June! But we continue our community gardening events undaunted - the garden will recover. Unfortunately the oldest member of the Meeting was stung by a bumble bee when adding weeds to the compost heap - fortunately she recovered quickly. We found out that there is a thriving bumble bee nest there!

Garden Organic has trained me as one of their community Master Gardeners (piloting in four areas of England at present) and identified Quaker Gardens as one of four important organic wildlife gardens in Islington. This provides the opportunity for further support from local gardeners and outreach. New attenders do come because of the garden.

Many thanks to QGA (now amalgamated with LWP) for its grant.

Brigid Philip

Some interesting groups LWP member **John Barnabas** has sent his usual selection of interesting leaflets. Details as follows—ask the editor if you would like a copy of any of the leaflets:

Cotteridge Living Witness Group have produced an encouraging leaflet on how they have saved significant amounts of energy in their Meeting House.

The Islamic Foundation for Ecology and Environmental Sciences (www.ifees.org.uk), based in Birmingham, encourages Muslims (one fifth of the world's population) to 'promote positive environmental initiatives based on Islamic principles, for the benefit of all mankind.

Eco-congregation (www.ecocongregation.org/englandwales) is working similarly with Christian churches.

Friends of the Earth (www.foe.co.uk) are looking for more support and their latest leaflet on environmental justice outlines the work they do in this area.

Rosspport Solidarity Camp (www.rossportsolidaritycamp110mb.com) are campaigning against Shell's plans to build an ultra high pressure gas pipeline in Ireland.

Lizz Roe continues her 2010 footprint challenges

March

The challenge is LOAF! Everything I eat and buy is to be local, organic, animal friendly and fair trade! Local and fair trade is tricky so it may be possible to do only three out of 4. My challenger suggested I keep purchases from within Europe - the Eurovision version including Turkey and Palestine/Israel. (They graciously granted me tea, spices and chocolate as long as they fulfilled the other criteria).

I think this challenge will be easier than last month's. But I'll have to keep a careful eye on any books I buy - so many are printed in China these days - and I'm spending 4 days in Amsterdam for work plus going back and forwards to my dad's in Watford so that might make things a bit difficult.

I know some people who live by LOAF or other totally ethical principles, all the time - and I've done it off and on for years. But I'm not as careful as I used to be. In the past usually when I was harder up I was much more politically edgy and conscientious. What happened to my edge? Where did that go?

Anyway how did my month work out?

First food!! I checked out the local shops for LOAF supplies and there was quite a selection - the nearby Deli has lots of organic, local, animal friendly, and fair trade stuff - but expensive! I grew some very nice salads on my windowsill and kept the sprouter going. In Watford I found some nice eco and health food shops as well as numerous skips and charity shops. In Amsterdam it was dead easy to eat animal friendly, and organic wasn't impossible, and I went to a fair-trade shop for some snacks. One day I went to London for a meeting - so I took soya milk, and the nice caterers at Friends House provided vegan sarnies and cake.

How about other purchases? One of the best things I did last year was move a huge bookcase behind the head of the bed - it's one of the few large flat vertical spaces in the flat - perfect for a bookcase! Moving it freed up the wall in the living room - I've decided to get a bookcase built there - which would be good for insulation, it's an end wall and unfortunately I don't have cavity walls. If I used a lot of heating I'd get the flat thermal boarded on the inside but I don't use much. One friend once got so chilly she offered to do the washing up so that she'd have warm hands - now I keep a handy pile of beautiful blankets and shawls! I got some quotes from carpenters for the

bookcase - mindful of LOAF one of the specs was that it had to be built from reclaimed or recycled timber.

On the subject of keeping warm - I've been told that you can buy a really efficient multi-fuel stove that won't make much ash. I've a set of shelves on the landing that I could convert to wood storage and something very efficient would be ok for wood from skips. I've wondered about this for a while because there is an old chimney off the living room that has an electric fire in front of it. Having had no heating for 2 weeks back in January I reckon having an alternative to electricity is a good plan.

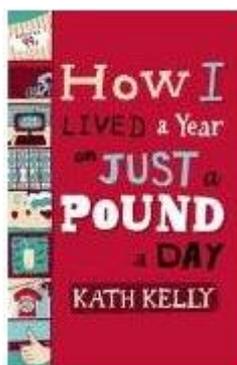
I decided to get a window replaced - when I tried to open it recently I nearly put my thumb through the frame. I got some quotes for a really efficient triple glazed, timber framed window - upvc are a nightmare environmentally. Timber windows though need treating about every three to five years and I live on the third floor. We have a painter at work I wonder if he'd do it?

I bought some souvenirs in Amsterdam—from the ethnographic museum, a fair trade shop, and a church selling crafts to support projects in Oman. Over the long weekend a friend and I went flamingo spotting in Cyprus. We found an Easy Jet hotel and flights to Larnaca and did lots of fantastic walks and museum visits. Even there it was possible to observe all the LOAF principles (except perhaps the flying bit - I know!) I've bought some tiny fairly traded tiles from Persia for my bathroom - not quite enough so I must remember to buy three more!

What I learnt - if you pay attention LOAF living isn't so hard! There are some things you can't do but that's ok! If you go for local and animal friendly and don't worry about organic then you can get value ranges. Some fair trade foods are a good deal - the Coop is an excellent source of fair-trade staples like tea, chocolate and rice.

April

The challenge is live on £1 a day! Kath Kelly wrote a fascinating book about this, which I'm adapting - I'll pay my mortgage, bills and traveling for work but the rest has to come to no more than £30 for the month.



Strangely this one seems quite hard! Around the world more than half the global population live on a dollar a day. Of course it's different here but £1

a day after bills must surely be possible? I have some food in the kitchen - though not as much as in February and I have some seeds so I can grow some more salads at home.

So - why does it seem harder - is it cumulative? It's month 4 is that what it is? This is crazy. What is it with £££?

What helps not spend? Some suggestions include lists when shopping, setting budgets for the month and sticking to them, starting by keeping a list of everything you spend each day and adding it up - so that you can see where the main leakages are. They're all good sense.

So how did it go?

First off I had to go to Bonn for work so I took £30 out of the bank and changed them into euros. I took some bread, marmite, and a water bottle with me and in 5 days spent the equivalent of £4.50 most of it on transport. So far so good!

Then because of a train strike I arranged to work from my dad's home for two days before I went on holiday to the Lebanon. I took my 28 euros with me and managed to come back with 10 because the holiday included pretty well all the meals - I'd forgotten this entirely!

I was told I'd got an allotment! Great!! I went to see it and took some photos - this is a good idea because then you can feel a real sense of achievement with each change you make.



The allotment gets underway. Photo by Lizz Roe.

I paid a deposit of £10 for keys to the communal padlock and the loos (oooh there are loos on site - how great is this). I had to spend £2 on sanitary towels, so I that left £6. At a Quaker Meeting House I came across a book box with a donations tin so I swapped £2 for a couple of books, leaving £4 for the last 10 days.

I had a cup of tea with someone who gave me a lift after a teaching session - £3.60 for two cups of railway tea, but she bought the biscuits as well as doing the driving, which was very kind. Then 20p

went on a loo call at a station so I ended the month with 20p! Phew!!

What I learnt: I had to walk quite a long way to find the cheapest version of things like soya milk, lentils, sanitary towels, tomatoes etc - it's one of the things I've known for a long time - if you're really hard up then it all takes more effort to eat, do social things, travel anywhere, and just get by.

May

The challenge is to halve household energy use, halve recycling, buy no plastic packaging, send nothing to landfill, and triple offset my total energy spend - yikes! Last month my meter readings were the equivalent of £6.70 on electricity. I sent 400 gm to landfill and 4 kg of paper/card, 200 gm of plastic, 400 gm of glass and 250 gm of metal to recycling. It's always good to send stuff to recycling rather than landfill but all these things represent 'embodied' energy and it all takes energy to process. So, by cutting down on what goes out in this way I will really be addressing my footprint - this is called pre-cycling. To triple offset I'm taking three approaches -

- Planting trees direct - it's always good to plant appropriate trees (key word - appropriate) but using trees to offset isn't simple. When the tree is felled it'll release the carbon back again. Nevertheless, planting trees isn't just about carbon - trees can help with biodiversity, habitat, food, soil stabilisation, shelter and shade, water retention, soil building, and sheer marvellous grandeur - to name but a few.
- Investing in sustainable energy projects in the UK - I've found two local projects to help fund - one where I work - we're buying solar panels - and one at the Northfield eco centre
- Investing in sustainable energy projects overseas - I'm going for a Quaker project planting 'useful' trees in Kenya and for something through climate care (www.climatecare.org).

Thinking about this last month I realised I needed a better idea of what went out of the flat. So one of the fun things I did last month was inventory everything that went to landfill. The outcome: - 3 small hard plastic lids, toothpaste tube, tea bags (endless - I love my cuppa), loo roll used to blow my nose, sanitary towels, instant soup sachets, foil blister pack for paracetamol, veg and fruit scraps, couple of hula hoop packets, 4 tetrapacks.

My wonderful allotment means I can finally compost again! So the loo roll, tea bags, veg and fruit scraps can all go to my new plot.

How did I do over the month?

- I spent £2.85 on electricity!!! – by planning ahead I limited my use of the oven and the washing machine and heating was zero.
- 3560 gm to compost at the allotment
- Nothing to landfill – I used washable/reusable sanitary towels.
- 50 gm to plastic recycling – by paying attention I bought only two plastic bottles - washing up liquid and loo cleaner. I used to use vinegar in the loo but that comes in glass bottles, is heavier to transport, so taking more energy, so I think the loo cleaner is better overall.
- Nothing went to metal recycling
- 2 kg to paper recycling - I really blew this one because I decided to recycle some old papers from a Quaker committee I used to sit on.
- Travel - 1336 train miles and 208 bus miles.

The energy cost for that lot:

- compost = zero
- electricity = £2.85
- processing the plastic recycling has to minus the energy saving of recycling this material rather than starting from scratch - hmm I've found it very difficult to work out - let's say £1
- processing the paper recycling - as for plastic- maybe another £2
- transport : 1336 train miles is equivalent to 250 kg CO2 , 208 bus miles is equivalent to 57 kg CO2 - using Collins Gem Carbon Counter, converting the carbon into the kWh energy equivalent and then into the commercial cost of

energy as charged by a typical energy provider gives an energy monetary cost of £85.67

This means I owe $£91.52 \times 3 = £274.56$ (I am triple off setting) split between 4 projects (£68.64 each) - which perhaps doesn't seem like much but if we all did it all the time it'd be loads!

What I learnt - I think I got my energy use down to about as low as it can go whilst living a 'normal' sort of life. I probably used less energy when I lived on a house boat or in a yurt, but the reality is that most people aren't going to do this, so I'm interested in seeing what can be done within 'normal' parameters. Not having a car does keep the consumption down and I have managed to live in really rural places without one. So this isn't just an urban option. Overall my public transport journeys are high because of travelling for work outside of Birmingham. If I did a different job my transport use could be lower - but I love my job. And one of the many things I realise is that sometimes options are simply don't do it or do it!



The folding bike for getting from a to b! Photo by Lizz Roe.

Next month - this is all about doing stuff for free and starting a world-wide campaign of my own!

Population and the Anglican Church of Australia

A serious debate about population growth has recently begun in Australia. It is encouraging that the Anglican Church of Australia is taking a significant part in this debate.

In March 2009 the Public Affairs Commission of the General Synod of the Anglican Church of Australia released a discussion paper on Australia's future, of which a summary was issued in March 2010. This deals largely with population issues, in part from an Australian viewpoint, but also from a global one.

To quote, '*..the Commission seeks to assist consideration of population growth in a way that is consistent with our Christian faith and it is hoped will encourage integrated responses. Population growth is a controversial and sensitive topic, and one about which many fear to speak publicly, but it is fundamental to the challenges we face....*

Globally there is concern about the projected increase in population from 6.8 billion now to 9.2 billion by 2050... these increases will be taking place in a finite world that has not yet been able to agree on reducing greenhouse gas emissions enough to avoid potentially catastrophic temperature and climate change'.

In the section 'Where to from here?' discussion starts with a recital of the facts:- '*The resources of the world are being used unsustainably, global human population is huge and still increasing rapidly, human activity is the root*

WATER SHORTAGES

THE ISSUE

Australia is the driest inhabited continent. Our rivers are drought-stressed and depleted by diversions for human use. Already at the beginning of the 21st century, many parts of Australia have permanent water restrictions.

THE SOLUTION

Stop population growth so we have enough water for the environment and future needs.

www.population.org.au

cause of current environmental stress and climate change; these threaten the survival of poorer people, and major extinctions of other forms of life by the end of the century. The fundamental problem: global population growth is unsustainable. On a finite planet, if the rate is not reduced rapidly, there will be huge problems for humanity and other life forms

'The human population grew from about 230 million when Christ was born, to 6.8 billion now. ... according to United Nations...total global population is projected to reach 9.2 billion in 2050 [medium projection]....Realisation of the medium variant projections contained in the UN 2006 Revision Report depends urgently on ensuring that fertility continues to decline in developing

countries...The UN states that to achieve such reductions it is essential that access to family planning expands to the poorest countries of the world; otherwise, if fertility were to remain constant at the levels estimated for 2000-2005, the population in less developed regions would increase to 10.6 billion (instead of the 7.9 billion projected by assuming that fertility declines). World population would then rise to 11.8 billion [in 2050].'

There is much else worth reading in this paper, which can be found on <http://candobetter.org/node/2027>. This is a really important subject, and I hope that we can have a proper discussion on it.

Roger Plenty
Nailsworth meeting

Bio char notes

Fine grained charcoal is an effective and long lasting method of capturing carbon dioxide from the atmosphere. In many soils especially poor carbon depleted soils bio char will increase fertility and improve moisture retention. Carbon's porous surface is ideal for trapping nutrients and beneficial microorganisms.

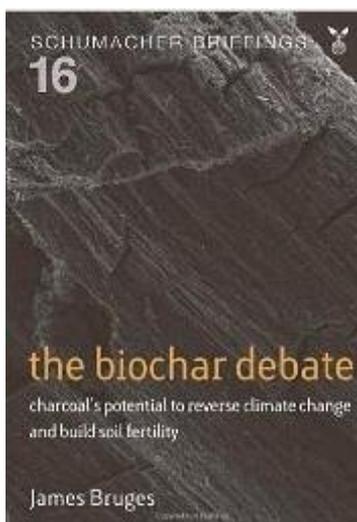
This charcoal can be made from any organic material (bones, twigs, weed roots, straw even sewage) not just wood.

This is another natural method to improve soil fertility alongside compost, green manures and crop rotation. However bio char is more stable than manure or compost.

In the Amazon rainforest "terra preta do indio" supported a thriving civilisation. These soils have remained fertile and retained their carbon through centuries.

Soils are the biggest carbon reservoir of the carbon cycle and many have become carbon depleted through intensive farming. The World Watch Institute estimates that simply by using waste organic material for this- forest thinnings, rice husks, groundnut shells etc the world could sequester 600 million tonnes of CO₂ equivalent annually.

In James Bruges book *The Bio char Debate* he argues against this product becoming part of a carbon trading scheme. There is a danger that if agribusiness turns over land to monocultures



specifically chosen for their charcoal qualities then food shortages will result. He insists that this process must be integrated into smallholder farming instead. There should be little need for payment as the resulting crops would benefit the farmer.

So where does that leave us? I would like to make my own and use it on the allotment but there are obstacles.

Imported charcoal is often unsustainably made from mangrove swamps (and there are transport

costs).

Buying sustainably produced UK charcoal is beneficial for our woods. Coppicing allows light into the lower layers of the wood allowing growth of lower level plants and more diversity. However UK charcoal is too expensive to then bury in the soil. Charcoaling as a process is not neighbour friendly as it produces a lot of smoke. The char would then need to be crushed finely (wearing a face mask) then soaked in a nutrient rich liquid before buried in the land at a level where it is not likely to be re-exposed but where it would be available to roots. C.A.T is running its own trials to assess the practicalities of charcoal use. See www.cat.org.uk

I feel hopeful this is a useful technology for combating climate change (if combined with a number of other necessary actions).

Liz Collinson

Letters

Dear all

Sometimes Friends have to agree to disagree, but shouldn't we have the conversation first? To start the ball rolling on **nuclear power**:

Some friends consider nuclear power to be part of the solution. I see it more as part of the problem -

- it diverts massive amounts of money and talent from safe, cost-effective, already available technologies
- it legitimises the idea that it's ok to continue our parasitic lifestyles and let future generations carry the burden - in this case for ? 250 000 years
where's the equality in that?
- it produces large amounts of weapons grade material that has to be guarded and can be used by states or others who get hold of it -
where's the peace in that?
- it concentrates power over energy in very few hands, necessarily militarised to 'protect' the power stations and their growing waste
where's the equality in that?
- the industry has appalling record of cover-ups of failures, leaks e.g. around Chernobyl, Sizewell, and claims to be low -carbon are somewhat questionable, if the whole cycle is considered. See e.g. http://www.sgr.org.uk/climate/response_nuclearcons_oct07.html
where's the truth in that?

If we are to change the system as well as the light bulbs and what powers them, how can we reconcile this centralised, dangerous non-solution with the life affirming paradigm change we seek?

Lesley Grahame

Some LWP members may have seen an email from 38 degrees about the proposed **factory farms for dairy cows** in Lincolnshire. They are promoting a petition opposing the scheme which can be accessed at www.38degrees.org.uk/no-megadairies

Animal and environment groups warn that factory farms of this sort rely on huge quantities of imported feed. To grow this feed, rainforests are chopped down, destroying wildlife and increasing climate change. Also keeping cows inside all year and not allowing them to eat grass could mean more risk of disease spreading and expanding industrial milk production could threaten smaller, traditional dairy farms.

An LWP member wrote the following response to this email and would like to share it with LWP:

We need to promote other major grain crops, preferably those containing more protein such as buckwheat, gram flour from chickpeas, etc to provide basic food for our rapidly expanding population. We need to be planting fruit and nut trees everywhere instead of purely decorative ones.

There are only a few fish left in the sea so humans need other sources of protein. The other factor is encouraging people to have a maximum of one child. There has been much published recently about the carbon value of contraception. See for example:

- *Population, biodiversity and human well-being* earthQuaker spring 2010 www.livingwitness.org.uk
- Optimum Population Trust *Reducing future carbon emissions by investing in family planning* Aug 09 www.optimumpopulation.org/reducingemissions.pdf
- *Birth control could help combat climate change*. Based on article in The Lancet Sept 09 .www.breitbart.com/article.php?id=D9APOM880&show_article=1

In the Clyde area we are supporting a campaign for a 3-mile fishing ban to bottom trawling and dredging, whilst encouraging development of sustainable fishing methods such as creelers and divers (SCAD), and Static Gear fishermen, (ACSGFA).

We need 3 mile protected areas around all landmasses to allow re-generation of the sea-bed which provides a habitat within which all sea life can breed and grow again. We need to encourage and support the recently established Marine Management Organisation (MMO) to do this.

Then the government might realise there are alternatives to battery farming for protein.

Jenny Meade

Isle of Arran, SW Scotland

The BP disaster is highlighting many things. It shows the World we have to find cleaner fuels but it also shows us how free the **multinational companies** are. Milton Fiedman, financial adviser to Ronald Ragan and Margaret Thatcher, sought to free big business from controls. Multinational companies have grown strong and ruthless since then. The populations and authorities are just beginning to see what this means. BP is the tip of an iceberg that now runs very deep. This disaster is a wake-up call to find ways to control these businesses.

Barbara Mark

Dear Friends everywhere,

As you know, last year the **UN climate negotiations** (COP15) were held last December in Copenhagen, with what many of us consider to be a very unsatisfactory outcome.

In December 2010 the next negotiations (COP16) will be held in Cancun. It is expected to be very difficult and contentious.

A few of us from Quaker Earthcare Witness (QEW), as well as some Bolivian Quakers who attended and reported on the climate Conferencia in Cochabamba, Bolivia in April 2010, plan to attend the meeting in Cancun.

I am sending this message to Quakers on my lists in North America and in other countries, to ask if you feel called to attend all or part of COP16. I send the message now, in August, because if you are thinking about going you should probably get a clearness committee to help with your decision. Also, it is already beginning to be a challenge to find lodging in Cancun for the two weeks. QEW is accredited to the UNFCCC, the UN body holding the meeting, and can add your name to our list, which has to be submitted in October. Being on our list will allow you admission to the actual negotiations, although there is a space problem and they are resorting to a system of issuing "secondary badges" to those who are allowed in on any given day. QEW will be allotted a percentage of secondary badges, depending on our number of attenders registered through QEW. (i.e. If we have a list of 10 names, we will probably be issued about 6 badges, which we will have to rotate among us for actually getting in.)

In 2009 our list included 9 Quakers from 5 countries, whose reports were published in our newsletter, BeFriending Creation.

Please consider whether you feel called to attend COP16, and contact our UN Support Working Group by replying to me (email at end of letter). We

will want to be in communication with you before putting your name on our list.

We also want VERY MUCH to be in touch with any Quakers who are attending COP16 either through other NGOs or on their own. If you are attending without inclusion by an accredited group you will still find a host of activities to attend and make many world-wide connections, but you will not be able to get into any of the negotiating sessions.

Mary Gilbert mary@gilbertwhite.com
Friends Meeting at Cambridge (MA, USA)
Quaker Earthcare Witness

Dear Editor,

I read that the **scanning of passengers' bodies is being done at Heathrow and Gatwick airports**. The new scanners use 'backscatter x-rays and millimetre wave technology.' To generate the unclothed images of the body these machines give off terahertz photons - high frequency energy particles that pass through clothing and body tissue. A study by Boian S. Alexandrov and colleagues at the Centre for Nonlinear Studies at Los Alamos National Laboratory in New Mexico found these emissions can damage people's DNA. This can cause cancer and birth defects. I understand that we do not know what level of terahertz exposure is safe as no independent long-term safety testing has ever been conducted and there have been no clinical trials. The FDA has never granted its approval for such devices.

I fear the government is rushing into this as a panic measure, without proper evaluation. The scans can even be used on children and pregnant women. These scans are similar to CT (CAT) medical scanners which experts now advise should only be given when there is a health concern and that they should never be used for routine health checks on healthy people.

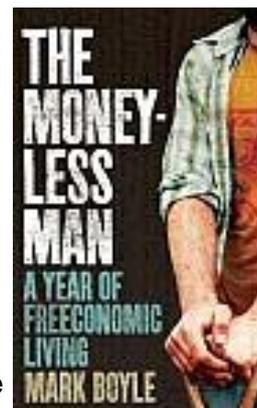
Ann Wills

Two Book Reviews

The Money-less Man, a Year of Freeconomic Living by Mark Boyle, 2010. Available from the Quaker Centre Bookshop at £10.99

I found this a very inspiring and enjoyable book to read. The author describes how he came to his decision to try living for a year without money, influenced in part by reading about Gandhi. He points out how money has been corrupted from being a medium of exchange to a means of making more money but producing nothing useful

from it. Money turns easily into debt, and has also become something people aspire to get more and more of although it has no value in itself. Another reason for trying to live without it was that our whole civilisation is based on oil, so he wanted to get away from any use of it. It has helped to cause the breakdown of communities, as people travel further than they used to and do not relate to those next door. He



decided to be the change he wanted to take place.

Mark describes the rules he made for himself, as there are many situations when he could have become compromised, but keeping to the rules enables him to live out his ideal.

I was also interested in the way he set up his accommodation, living arrangements, food, transport etc. He spent some time in preparation, and ended up in a caravan which was given, on an organic smallholding where he worked and also grew his own vegetables. Foraging, and making an arrangement with an organic shop for them to give him out dated food were other sources of nutrition. He bought a half price solar panel for his laptop, his main means of communication, rigged up a device for heating water from the sun for washing, and made a rocket stove for cooking. A bicycle was his means of transport.

There are many ideas and tips for using natural resources and items thrown away by others, such as ball points which he would find in the road.

The book is written with a great deal of honesty and humour. He describes his problems when his bike broke down, difficulties in the pub with friends, Christmas time with his family, many occasions when he stuck to his principles and was regarded as mad. However, he met with great deal of help and kindness from others, especially when he was hitch hiking to Ireland..

He organised a free economy feast before starting his year, and at the end, both of which were extremely successful. He obviously had a lot of friends and was involved in a skill sharing group so that though he was isolated in his van, he did have a supportive community.

He had a lot of media coverage, which he encouraged as he was trying to make people realise how destructive our normal way of living is, and he wanted to put across his philosophy.

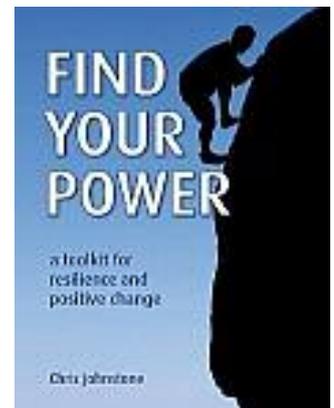
All the proceeds from the sale of the book are going to a trust fund to set up a "freeeconomy community" and he describes briefly how he envisages it will work.

Anne Adams

Find Your Power: a toolkit for resilience and positive change by Chris Johnstone
Permanent Publications 2010, ISBN 978 1 85623 050 6 available via www.chrisjohnstone.info/book.htm or order from bookshops

(Note from Editor: This is a new improved second

edition of *Find Your Power: Boost your inner strengths, break through blocks and achieve inspired action* published by Nicholas Brealey in 2006—it was reviewed by Mark Rasmussen in *earthQuaker* February 2007.)



It's an ambitious project, to write a book offering the discovery of personal power, in a society where most people don't like their work, democracy generally means voting once in 5 years and governments duck the challenge of climate change and ignore peak oil. I wondered whether a self-help approach to finding power would cut much ice, so to speak. Or, adapting metaphor for the climate change world, restore it.

Chris is a veteran of the Transition movement (if such a young movement can be considered old enough to have veterans), joined Rob Hopkins as speaker at the Unleashings in Totnes and Lewes, wrote part of the Transition Handbook, and edits the *Great Turning Times* (www.greatturningtimes.org), a newsletter about finding power to respond to the global crisis. I have never heard him spoken of without affection. The front cover silhouette is clearly his, glasses and all, clawing his way up a rock face. I think they airbrushed out the ropes though, because the book says a lot about how to get the right kind of support, and foolhardy remedies do not feature greatly (though creative ones do: helping a person think about an impending difficult family wedding, a group suggested 'Leave the country' and 'Hire a bodyguard', as well as more practicable approaches.)

Personal stories in the text indicate that Chris has indeed an insider's view of the either/or thinking and clinical depression which can beset the disempowered. Working 115 hours a week as a junior doctor he ultimately sued his employers – successfully – for occupational injury, thus changing the lot of all junior doctors, before becoming an addiction specialist.

Throughout the book Johnstone parallels the challenges of personal change – e.g. in relation to alcohol, tobacco, or dealing with life threatening illness – with those of defeating oil addiction or taking action on global issues. Both can appear forbidding. Both can lead to negative thinking, criticism of self and/or others and giving up.

Frank about the mixed motives and emotions which often accompany good resolutions, Chris devotes a whole section to The Power to Begin. The other two sections – Moving through Blocks and Resistance, and the Power to Keep Going - deal with different kinds of challenges. We are not offered miracle solutions but new ways to view the issues and thought experiments, based on much practical experience. Chris illustrates the value of many small steps, for example attending to background factors as well as immediate causes that precipitate breakdown or breakthrough.

Filled with stories, concepts, questions to ponder and little exercises, the book is an easy read, but

does its best to hinder you from reading straight through without getting the benefit of at least some of the techniques. I was frequently distracted by the usefulness of the questions, for current dilemmas I was thinking about, or for some I hadn't even noticed.

Will it help to change the world? If living more fully for what we passionately desire will help, then it could do. Though many of the ideas may be new to the general reader, they meet the test of common sense and are expressed in vivid, down to earth language. Any steps you take towards change should be enjoyable, Chris says, and that also goes for reading this book.

Gill Westcott

Deadline for the next issue of earthQuaker - 15th November 2010.

Please post or email contributions to the editor, Anne Brewer, at
6 Phoenix Cottages, Chapel Lane, Bookham, Surrey KT23 4QG
or 01372 456 421/ 0845 456 0334 or email:

All contributions welcome—articles, reports, poems, ideas, letters!

Include your postal address and telephone anne.brewer@phonecoop.coop 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. Where email addresses need to be included they will be converted into images so that machines can not read them.

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

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Quaker green events in 2010

10-12 Sept Resource People Gathering at The Quaker Community in Bamford, Hope Valley

29-31 Oct *Good Lives - because everyone's worth it* with Pam Lunn and Cliodhna Mulhern at Woodbrooke.

5-7 Nov Link Group Gathering at Bilberry Hill, Birmingham—see mention in Laurie's piece on page 2)

Resource People are also running workshops at various Meetings around the country throughout the year.

...and in 2011

25-27 Feb *Good Lives—because there isn't a technical fix for everything* with Pam Lunn and Gillian Smith.

Yearly Meeting Gathering in 2011 from **Saturday 30th July to Saturday 6th August** in Canterbury is on the theme of *Growing in the Spirit, changing the way we live to sustain the world we live in.* (See Laurie's comment in his piece on page 2)

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

LWP 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 had been the main forum for Friends sharing a Concern for sustainability.

We welcome individual Friends and Meetings as members of the network and participants in gatherings. **If you are interested in booking a LWP workshop or talk in your meeting** please contact Jasmine Piercy - LWP Resource Person Co-ordinator, 60 Springfield Road, Wellington, Somerset TA21 8LG. Tel: 07910 434941. Email: jasmine@livingwitness.org.uk

For membership and subscription enquiries please contact Dee Sayce, our Administrator, at Quaker Community, Water Lane, Bamford, Hope Valley, S33 0DA. Tel: 01663 308656. Email: dee@livingwitness.org.uk

The co-ordinator of the LWP is Laurie Michaelis who can also be contacted at the Quaker Community in Bamford. Tel: 01433 659 329 or 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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