

# earthQuaker

*Newsletter of  
Living Witness Project - Quakers for Sustainability  
Issue 68 Spring 2010*



Living Witness project banner at The Wave in London.  
December 5th 2009

Contents include:

- 
- Quakers on Climate March and at Copenhagen •
  - LWP AGM, Link Group Gathering and Summer School •
  - News from Meetings • Reflections on Haiti •
  - Population and biodiversity • Carbon footprint •
  - Link Group report • Review of DVD • Letters • Diary •
-

## Editorial

I have the impression from contributions received for this issue that both Meetings and individual Quakers are becoming increasingly active in witnessing to their belief that our lifestyles need to change for reasons of justice, to ensure sustainable use of resources and to prevent a possible collapse of the planet's life-sustaining ecosystems. I had reason to go to Jordans Meeting House and there was a poster headed *How Green is Your Day?* for an event there featuring

Bicycle clinic, Renewable Experiments, an animation workshop for Young People creating a 'green' stop frame animation to show later, a Low Food Miles Community Supper, Climate Change Quiz and so on. So in addition to the creative things being done to witness to our testimonies described by Meetings and members in this issue there are other Meetings out there doing their thing too. I hope the sharing of ideas and inspiration will give us new ideas and encourage us all to keep going. It's good to know that we are not alone in our efforts.

Anne Brewer

## Climate change: where next?

### Link Group Gathering 9-11 April Bilberry Hill Centre, Rednal, Birmingham

Our Link Group gatherings offer opportunities to meet Friends from LWP participating meetings, to share news, successes, ideas and lessons learned, and to get involved in this growing community.

Consensus on climate action seems further away than ever. The media is full of controversy over the integrity of the scientific process. Post-Kyoto negotiations seem mired in irresolvable tensions. Policy makers have yet to acknowledge the depth of change required in our lives. At this gathering we will ask how we are led now, individually and collectively. The weekend will include worship, discussion, creative activity and perhaps some play.

All LWP members are welcome and we encourage participating meetings to send one or two Friends. The booking form is available at [www.livingwitness.org.uk](http://www.livingwitness.org.uk) and the cost of the weekend, including vegan food and accommodation, is £75.



### Notice of Annual General Meeting

The Living Witness Project Annual General Meeting will be held at 2 p.m. on Saturday 10<sup>th</sup> April, during the Link Group gathering at the Bilberry Hill Centre, Rednal, Birmingham. The main item on the agenda will be the 2009 annual report and accounts. Please complete a booking form for the Link Group gathering (available at [www.livingwitness.org.uk](http://www.livingwitness.org.uk)) if you wish to attend.

### The 2010 LWP Summer School

#### Swarthmoor Hall, Ulverston, from 9th to 13th August (Monday to Friday).

We've booked the whole of the Hall and there is also space for camping. Much of the week will be spent in worship, asking how we are led to respond to the sustainability challenge and climate change in particular. There will also be structured opportunities to explore the issues and our personal and collective roles.

I'm not quite sure of the price yet but it will be around £180 for the week, with a lower rate for campers. I'll send out a booking form in a month or two.



The decision to focus the week on worship came from our November Link Group gathering, where we observed a need for a deeper spiritual rooting and discernment of our witness. We are also hoping to arrange some one- or two-day worship-based events earlier in 2010, probably one at Friends House and one at Woodbrooke.

Looking forward to seeing you at our events this year.

Laurie Michaelis



## News from Meetings

### Wellingborough Meeting



Nine Friends, who share a concern about climate change and its impact on the poorest countries, went to the zero growth day conference at Friends House last year. This January, when we met to explore how we could address the issue of our carbon footprint at home and in our meeting house, we heard from our representative to the follow up weekend at Woodbrooke. He shared with us the two views that had emerged from the weekend—that we are hospice workers here to help give pain relief to a dying world or that we are midwives here at the painful birth of a new world, which requires a new way of living. We prefer the second image as we find it more positive and hopeful.

We will meet regularly to plan, implement and assess our progress and have created a green notice board where friends and visitors can post their pledges to change to a greener lifestyle. We are planning some secondary double glazing in the meeting house before next winter. In a listed building dating from the late eighteenth century with enormously tall windows, this is a major undertaking which will, we hope, have an effect on the amount of fuel required. Incidentally, we were delighted to see, on looking back through fuel bills, that our gas consumption had been greatly reduced by the recent installation of a new boiler.

We are researching what else we can do and are looking to other meetings for inspiration.

**Liz Rees**

### Central Yorkshire Area Meeting

Central Yorkshire Area Meeting is asking its six local meetings to include in their annual reports to Area Meeting any action taken to 'green' their meeting houses. Here is the relevant minute:

**Report on Sustainable Living.** *Further to Minute 9 of our last meeting, Martin Smith has produced a report on a meeting held on 20th. January attended by seventeen F(f)riends representing all our Local Meetings, to pursue this topic further.*

*Copies of his report have been circulated. We welcome Martin's initiative on this matter and ask him to keep us informed of happenings. ... Martin hopes that Local Meetings will now find time to reflect on the issues raised in his report and is agreeable to being asked to assist if necessary. It is suggested that in their reports to Area Meeting, Local Meetings could include mention of their approaches to sustainable living.*

**Arthur Pritchard**  
Clerk, High Flatts LM

### Hampstead Meeting

Several members are taking part in *Carbon Conversations* (<http://cambridgecarbonfootprint.org/action/carbon-conversations/>), a series of six meetings in which group members support each other in reducing their carbon footprints.

The course is informative, challenging and supportive. I would recommend it to anyone who is just over whelmed by the world catastrophe which is climate change and is feeling that the impact one individual can make is insignificant. Perhaps the most important thing the group now understands is that we all have to start somewhere.

Each session focuses on a different aspect—food, transport, our homes, consumption and waste—and through discussion, case studies and group activities explores ways that each of us can make changes. These changes will be small at first, but each small change will make a difference.

However, we have realised that reducing our carbon footprint is much more complicated than it appears. Does buying English apples which have been stored in a refrigerated warehouse 'use' more CO<sub>2</sub> than buying apples flown in from the USA. Is it true that buying our groceries on-line from Ocado 'uses' less CO<sub>2</sub> than using public transport to get to the supermarket? How many miles has 'local' produce travelled before it arrives in our high streets. Is it better for the environment to buy Fair Trade or organic produce.

Has Carbon Conversations changed my life? 'Yes!'. I am really trying to turn off lights, to reduce the amount of packaging on the goods I buy, and to turn down the thermostat on the central heating. I will try to resist the lure of foreign holidays (this might be a step too far this year) and travel by train rather than car whenever it is practical to do so. Long term, I will definitely think about a car-sharing scheme. Advices and Queries (40) advises us to 'live simply' and asks, 'Do you keep yourself informed about the effects your style of living is having on the global economy and environment?'

**Mary Clunes**

## Ayrshire and Arran Meeting

The Meeting has close links with ArranGoesGreen, a group formed within the community of the Isle of Arran which aims to cut the island's carbon emissions in the areas of transport, waste and domestic energy.



**Transport:** ArranGoesGreen will be trialling two battery electric vehicles capable of returning electrical power to the grid as well as charging from it. V2G, as this is known, offers the potential of storing intermittent renewable energy, and facilitates grid balancing and a reduction in the need for keeping power plants active at inefficient levels in order to provide for peaks in demand. After use to acquire data these vehicles will be put to use in service of the Arran community.

**Waste:** After the closure of the final (to date) land-fill site on Arran in 2006, refuse (including council gardening refuse etc. etc.) has been containerised and then shipped off the island—not the most carbon efficient means of disposal for proportions of this refuse! The main work will be to determine whether sufficient quantities and types of waste exist for anaerobic digestion and/or composting.

**Domestic energy:** A questionnaire will inform island residents of the project and ask for a few details on habitation and energy use, providing the project with a proper carbon baseline. Personal site visits will be offered to those who wish more information.

The Isle of Arran is part of the Scottish Island Federation one of whose aims is to help the islands move towards becoming Carbon Neutral Communities.

**Jenny Meade**

Here is a selection of the emails received by Laurie Michaelis when he asked how have Meetings responded to the 10:10 initiative.

## Dorking Meeting

We have signed up to the 10:10 initiative and calculated our 2009 footprint for gas and electricity usage and will keep an eye on progress throughout the year. As a start we have reduced the temperature settings of our 'intelligent' boiler controls and have written a letter to all users of the Meeting House including the following statement:

*... we are reducing the temperature settings for rooms in the Meeting House.. ... our warden, will operate our heating system controls so that the Large Hall is heated to 17.5 °C, the small hall, kitchen and information centre to 18. and the Meeting's office to 17.. We hope you find these settings comfortable – please let Denise know if you experience problems.*

*Also we would be very grateful if you could ... ensure that lights are not left on unnecessarily and that all external doors are kept closed during cold weather ...*

We are eyeing the unusually cold weather at the start of 2010 with some apprehension!

Our local Council have also signed up to 10:10 and our local green group are running a friendly contest between residents and Councillors to see who can achieve the lowest carbon footprint using [www.thecarbonaccount.com](http://www.thecarbonaccount.com) to enter household energy use and travel data over the year. The local press is giving us good publicity and we have 3 Councillors and 15 residents signed up. Five of the residents are Quakers from Dorking and Capel Meetings!!

**Anne Brewer**



Capel Meeting House. January 2010.  
Photo by Michael Brewer

## Minehead meeting

We discussed 10:10 in Minehead Meeting and decided we would not try to do it. Power is used for

heating in our building and the amount depends on the number of bookings we get and the outside temperature so any increase or reduction could be spurious. We are, however, investigating a high-tech control system that should be of real help if and when we achieve it.

**Chris Lawson**

### **Exeter Meeting**

We are drawing up a plan for trying to reduce our carbon footprint by 10% during 2010. Having put forward the proposal to Sufferings, we felt we needed to do something ourselves!

Information on the Living Witness website was very helpful. We are adapting the travel survey since we want it to cover all Quaker related activity during 2009 for an audit we hope to carry out soon and then do another early next year. I can send the revised version we hope to use if other Meetings think that would be useful to them.

**Gerald Conyngham**

### **Llandrindod & Pales Meeting**

We signed up to 10:10 when it was first announced, followed by several discussion evenings relating to sustainability at our meeting house and the changes we can make to cut our emissions by 10% in 2010. A draft five year plan was produced and progress towards implementation is in hand.

However as a result of the severe weather in January we had a burst pipe in the roof space which severely flooded our children's room and disabled toilet. We have been running three industrial heaters/dehumidifiers for four weeks to dry the place out—excessive energy use we didn't expect—and a considerable amount of work needs to be done to refurbish the rooms. So even more challenges lie ahead for us but it does focus our minds and gives us a good opportunity to really examine the changes we wish to make. As for a 10% cut in our energy use, we'll let you know at the end of the year!

**Linda Green**

### **Llanidloes meeting**

We have agreed to endorse 10:10. We have no meeting house but have approached the hospital where we meet and offered to replace ordinary bulbs with energy saving ones where possible. They are considering it. Many friends are trying to cut their energy use in line with 10:10 goals.

**Gwen Prince**

### **Reading Meeting**

We agreed the following minute (Nov 2009):  
*We have heard from our Premises Committee about the 10:10 commitment (to reducing by 10% our Carbon emissions during 2010) and the proposal that this Local Meeting should sign up as a group. We support this move. We ask our Prem-*

*ises Committee to arrange that:*

- *Hirers are notified of our energy saving policy*
- *There is a notice in the Lobby to explain our 10:10 commitment*
- *With Elders, to set up a shared lunch event to promote the 10:10 initiative.*

**Tom Heydeman**

### **Lincoln Meeting**

A large sycamore tree in front of our meeting house has been attacked by fungi and is going to come down. The Meeting have asked me to lead a group of volunteers to look at the options for planting trees somewhere else, (this tree is too close to the building and we don't have space around the meeting house). Reducing carbon is part of the motivation for this initiative.

**Helen Percy**

### **Oxford Meeting**

Oxford Meeting has signed up to 10:10. We are currently seeking quotations for a major eco-renovation of the library and the main MH, as steps towards meeting that pledge.

**Alan Allport**

### **Derby Meeting**

During 2009 we had a flat roof extension (originally built in 1972) improved by Sarnofil roofing (greatly improving insulation) and replacement double glazed windows. We also had a solar panel installed on this roof which should heat our hot water in the taps at least. Finally we have had a new condensing gas boiler which should be more efficient.

We are using the LWP carbon footprint assessment sheet with all our members and attenders, asking them to return the forms for analysis.

**Geoff Evens**

### **Blackheath Meeting**

We have started an Ecogroup to help each other to make the transitions in life style essential in light of the threats of global warming. We focus on putting into effect ways of reducing individual consumption of gas, electricity, water, petrol and oil, and on a responsible approach to food production and consumption, signing up to the 10:10 campaign, encouraging neighbours to join 10:10, influencing local shops, communities and faith groups. We include collecting information on how other people and communities are moving forward, in an attempt to show that small beginnings by each of us can make a big difference collectively.

**Edward Hill**

### **Stroud Meeting**

We are proposing that our Area Meeting reduces the number of Business Meetings per year, mainly to reduce transport emissions. This is to be considered by AM elders.

**Martin Quick**



## Quakers and the Wave

For a film clip featuring Quaker young people from **Watford Meeting** and other meetings (as well as



Green Party leader and MEP Caroline Lucas who we



encountered by chance) see <http://www.justfilm.co.uk/Wave.html>

For photos see: <http://picasaweb.google.com/simon.colbeck/WatfordQuakersAndOthersOnTheWave?authkey=Gv1sRgCNOyvUL6z-rxvAE#>  
**Simon Colbeck.**

Here's a photo of the paper people sent by **Wilmslow Meeting** at the Quaker gathering just before the demonstration with the Quakers for Sustainability/Living Witness banner. The people were waved about in front of a very effective mechanical wave on the march, and also at the Co-op photo opportunity at Euston station



(the Co-op had organised very efficient transport), and brought a lot of favourable comment. **Phoebe Spence**



Six of us from **Wellingborough Meeting** took part in The Wave. There were so many people there that we could not make our way to rendezvous points to meet up with fellow Quakers but we walked anyway and felt uplifted by the fantastic number of people of all ages who took part. In particular, the number of children and young people who were there gave us all hope.

**Liz Rees**

## Reflections on Haiti

Like many others I have watched the appalling scenes on TV of the Haiti disaster and wondered if I seen anything as awful during the nearly 80 years of my existence.

The most telling image for me was the anger of the survivors directed against the rest of the world, when, after four days of misery there was still woefully inadequate help reaching the scene. Were they justified in their attribution of blame? Certainly the response from the world has been immediate and considerable and the infrastructure made it virtually impossible to reach the scene, but, much of the suffering was caused by the

terrible state of the country before the quake, and a swift survey of the country's history shows that this was due not only to the Haitians themselves but also to the neglect and brutal exploitation carried out by the developing and predatory nations of which we in this country took a full part.

I also wondered where we as Quakers stood in all this. Can we really be satisfied that we adequately displayed our concern through protest and action against the merciless application of rigid banking requirements insisting in savage repayment of debts and the provision of arms to dissident factions fuelling unrest and violence. In other countries, notably India, global conglomerates, on our behalf, buy land needed by local people to

grow cheap food for our consumption and the consequent support of our comfortable and often extravagant life-style. Whether we like it or not we have all been complicit in this evil business, and I believe we need urgently to re-appraise our lives.

Soon, main church Christians will be singing "When I survey the wondrous Cross" and thinking of their leader who suffered directly through his inability to stand aside and ignore urgent issues of injustice and oppression. Perhaps we too can gain power to act through him and the many

others who have dared to live in such a way that they made a difference. For now, a salutary exercise would be to take steps to begin a process that will etch upon our hearts the words of three Bible texts: Amos 5. 23-24, Micah 6.5 and Matthew 23.22-23 and, in particular the last, the words of Jesus of Nazareth, who warns us in the clearest terms not to be hypocrites, but to pay adequate attention to: "justice, compassionate love and faith".

**Geoff Newton**  
geoffvnewton@tiscali.co.uk

## Cycling to Copenhagen.

The idea of cycling to Copenhagen for Christian Aid caught my imagination. The conference was about climate change and cycling there seemed in keeping with the spirit of the conference. Setting targets is important but unless we all change our behaviour, they will never be achieved.

The group I joined was very diverse, ranging in age from 15 up till 72. We were all united in our passion for climate justice. We were also raising money for projects in developing countries which were helping them adapt to the consequences of global warming. And Laura and I were bringing pledges from our local community in Devon.

Whilst I managed to get lost each day, I still managed to rediscover the group each time, and ended up cycling into Copenhagen with the others, to be greeted by Archbishop Rowan Williams, and other Christian Aid supporters who had made a long coach journey to be there. The following day there was a ceremony in the main square at which Desmond Tutu was presented with 512,894 pledges from all over the world which he then handed over to Yvo de Boer, the UN Co-ordinator of the conference. Whilst the outcome of the conference was very disappointing, getting 192 nations to come up with a legally binding agreement which even the USA would sign up to was a major challenge. However one of the encouraging aspects of the week was the way the developing countries flexed their muscles and made it clear they were not prepared to be walked over by the West. For instance when they heard about a secret deal being hatched up by some of the Western bloc. And the blame game has already started, with China being seen as the chief culprit and yet most of China's emissions come about through producing goods for the West.

Whilst the main conference was proceeding, an alternative one was taking place in the Climatforum where a plethora of workshops were running, attended by large numbers of young people as well as from developing countries. I



Gerald and Laura Conyngham with their bikes at the start of the ride.

went to one where 10 people from different countries talked about how climate change was already affecting them. For instance a man from the Masai tribe in Kenya spoke briefly but with great dignity about the loss of their cattle through constant droughts. A woman from Peru talked about the melting of their glaciers on which they depend for water and gave an impassioned plea for us to respect our 'mother earth' on which we all depend for sustenance.

I felt privileged to be part of such a strong social movement which is increasingly making its voice heard, as Paul Hawken expresses so well in his book 'Blessed Unrest'.

The key question now is how can we all bring about the political pressure to ensure an effective and fair agreement is reached, on which the whole world can unite.

I am left with the image of hundreds of candles being held in the darkness of the cathedral after a very moving service in which Rowan Williams talked about the need for a positive message of hope rather than fear, and to encourage people to believe there are things they can do. As the saying goes. 'It is better to light a candle than curse the darkness'

**Gerald Conyngham**  
gerald@eclipse.co.uk



## Copenhagen: Nature's World Wide Web

As I anxiously stepped aboard the Campaign against Climate Change (CCC) coach, I was immediately drawn to the smiling face of Lucy Rees. With what turned out to be a 28 hour coach ride ahead of me, I had been unsure about sitting with an absolute stranger for so long. I had no need to worry. Lucy is an environmental advisor for Islington Council and we hit it off immediately.

We talked almost non-stop and seemed to touch on hundreds of issues that we both felt passionate about. One topic that we skimmed across very early was about the negative effect of man's disconnection with nature. We agreed that our ability to connect with nature was becoming hampered by the routines of modern daily life that disconnect us from the earth's natural processes. The pace of life stops us from ever really feeling the ground beneath our feet. I remembered my time in Madagascar where cyclone conditions had forced me to walk barefoot in mud for hours; this was a liberating experience for me, one which induced uncontrollable laughter. There was a release of energy and excitement about being in nature, but also feeling part of it. And yet when we fly to these exotic parts of the world, we are dramatically disconnected from nature. We are compromising nature. A popular slogan with protesters was *Nature Doesn't Compromise!*

Flying is an ideal. We see the birds in the sky, fantasize about their freedom, and yes flying has offered us freedom. Freedom to rapidly travel to far away, exotic places. But, in this process, we are totally disconnected from what is natural to us, human kind were not born with wings and the freedom that flying offers comes at a cost. To fully appreciate nature, we need to be both spiritually and physically grounded.

On an ethical level, I am compelled to consider those people who do not have this freedom. The people who will be hit soonest and hardest by climate change are those from countries that have never had the wealth and technology to experience this 'freedom' which is causing the problem.

When our coach approached the German/Denmark boarder our freedom was put into

question when we were stopped by the police. They proceeded to search every person and every bag on the coach. After each person was searched, they were directed to stand outside the bus and wait. Some members of the group were outside for 1 ½ hours chilling in the 3 degrees night air. One member had a harmonica and we all danced on the spot to keep our bodies warm. The police were notably agitated by the empowered spirit of positivity that we were projecting, but we were not put off. Moving our bodies to the organic rhythms kept us warm and more importantly it allowed us to physically express our freedom even within this oppressive environment. As a group, the experience allowed us to build a web of connection and friendship with each other. After 4 ½ long hours, we were allowed to proceed and although the experience had been frustrating, the mood was one of success, we all cheered as we drove off into the night.

The next day's activity began at 10 am with the Friends of the Earth flood, similar to the wave that took place in London on the 5<sup>th</sup> December with protesters dressed in blue performing Mexican waves as we walked along. The march culminated in Christiansborg where the main protest began. While we gathered for the pre-march rally, there was a distinct festival atmosphere in the square. People were dancing and music was playing, everyone's bodies reacting to the music in a slightly different way. Again, our freedom to express was at the heart of our jubilation.

The main protest began at 2pm and we marched for 5 hours, ending at the Bella centre where the COP15 talks were taking place. Marching through the streets with Lucy was a wonderful experience, we chanted with the crowd, we discussed our views on different environmental issues, we talked about friends and made interesting links with each other. During the march, I met two friends in close succession and I realised that these two people had a common interest. One was a singer, Pippa Tennant from Pip and the Polar Bears, who writes songs about social and political issues and the other was Sensei.fm radio DJ Fabia who is trying to engage her listeners with the issue of environmentalism. I ran to call back Pip and introduced them; their conversation resulted in an interview for the Sensei.fm. Copenhagen was not merely about





protesting, it was a valuable opportunity to come together and explore our place in the web of environmentalists from all over the world.

In the evening, there was a solar powered 'after party'. It attracted activists, young and old from all different nationalities. Considering that we were all listening to the same music, I found myself struck by the different dancing styles of each huddle of people. As I observed the dancers, I saw a freedom and a euphoria in their movement that symbolised feelings of success, the success of the days protest channelled through dance. At this moment, I was an outsider, watching in on this diverse community of environmentalists. I decided to step into this moment, I took my shoes off and I danced. My feet were freed from my shoes I became aware of the symbolic gesture that I was making, I was no longer going to be an individual within this big movement, I was going to root myself in the web that was surrounding me.

The following day, Lucy and I explored the Klima Forum Centre and attended a talk by the 2020 Climate Solutions Meshwork. The organisers have decided to create an online database for sharing environmental solutions with each other. I can now see that we are helping to build a web of ideas that is becoming stronger every day because of the power of sharing and communicating.

On our return journey the coach was buzzing with debate and discussion. One concern at the height of debate was the question of whether the policing tactics were a violation of protesters human rights.

We concluded that the mass arrest of hundreds of innocent people is an unjust criminalisation of protest. I can only hope that the consequent negative press coverage does not discourage people from engaging with the green movement. As this last week has shown, we cannot rely on the policy makers to make the fair and necessary decisions that will lead to a greener world.

However, the vast majority of peaceful protesters were not affected by the policing of the protest and we are lucky that we can protest freely. I fear that there will be many more to come before a solution is achieved. Freedom to protest need to be exercised if environmental injustice is to be stopped. We have to unite with those people on the front line whose lives are already being devastated by climate change, people in Bangladesh, Peru, Kenya, Nepal to name but a few. There are people whose lives depend on a fair deal now, not next year in Mexico, but today and tomorrow.

As I walked away from the coach I felt as though I had been away for 2 weeks, not 4 days. I have made some friends for life and our friendship will not only grow, but the web around each of us will continue to expand and connect. Every step I take on the road to an environmental solution there will be hundreds of people taking steps with me, all in forward motion, connected by our desire to find a fair solution for those without the freedom to walk with us.

**Laura Sewell**

[laurajoy2@hotmail.co.uk](mailto:laurajoy2@hotmail.co.uk)

**More on Copenhagen**—I have a copy of another very interesting and informative personal account by, **Bevis Gillett** from Bristol, of his time in Copenhagen from 9th to 16th December, but it is too long to include in earthQuaker. Please contact the editor for a copy by post or email. Meanwhile here is an extract:

*At the conclusion of the COP15 conference there was a great deal of finger pointing that the talks failed because it was the Americans fault, or the Chinese, or the Danes for trying to get a treaty cobbled together, which ignored the needs of the developing countries. George Monbiot thought that the UK had done relatively well in terms of its contribution to the conference. I believe this is because of the vibrant UK NGO and campaigning sector working on climate change. ... A lasting impression is that it is only the indigenous peoples who can claim to*



*live sustainable lifestyles. How far is it possible for the rest of the world to imitate them in this key respect along with the added burden of the huge population increase that is taking place at the present time - only time will tell. ...*

*I reflected briefly about the climate change deniers - what if they are right? I am not a scientist, so could easily be led up the garden path! I have noted invariably that they tend to "slag off" the pro climate change scientists and their supporters - sometimes with extraordinary vitriol. Thus I feel they destroy their arguments by not wishing to*

*enter in to an honest scientific debate on the subject. It is now clear that the relevant parts of civil society will have to cooperate and coordinate in taking the initiative on climate change and all its associated problems.*

## Population, biodiversity and human well-being

By **Fred Meyerson**,  
Department of Natural  
Resources Science,  
University of Rhode  
Island, Kingston, USA.

(Article recommended by  
LWP member **Roger Plenty**  
and printed with permission  
from the author and the  
publisher.)



Fred Meyerson.  
<http://cels.uri.edu/news/prNewsweek.html>

The zero-sum game for the limited surface of Earth has an overwhelming favourite – humans and their well-being, broadly writ. Biodiversity and habitat conservation to support the shrinking array of species may win minor battles in the competition for solar energy and physical space, but biodiversity will lose the war, as long as humanity continues to grow. This conclusion is not new, but recent sobering news about population trends, climate change, and mitigation proposals reinforces it.

Over the past decade, the United Nations has raised its medium population projection for 2050 from 8.9 to 9.2 billion (the current population is 6.8 billion); 300 million additional people will eat a lot of food, use more energy, and do major damage to ecosystems and species. More disturbing is that those UN projections are based on the unfounded and unlikely core assumption that the “total fertility rates” of all countries will mathematically converge at 1.85 children per woman shortly after 2050 and then hold steady.

In a world where national fertility rates range from 1 to 7 children, a spread similar to the norm in the 20th century, it boggles the mind to envision reproductive conformity within a few decades, let alone a long-term global below-replacement fertility level of 1.85 (~2.1 children is replacement fertility in a healthy modern society). For decades, UN demographers used 2.1 as the “magic number” to which all societies would inevitably hew, but they lowered that by a quarter child last decade, after observing that many European and Asian countries had not actually towed the modelers’ line and halted their fertility slide at 2.1, instead falling to 1.5 or below. The demographers’ overreaction was to cut the global fertility projection to 1.85.

What does this have to do with biodiversity? A great deal. Almost every conservation plan

outside of zoos depends on safeguarding sufficient habitat to support viable populations and ecosystems over the long run, through the calamities of an erratic planet. Biodiversity cannot become more space- and energy-efficient the way humans often have. Conservationists can sometimes overcome habitat loss and genetic bottlenecks and prevent extinctions by artificial techniques, such as captive breeding programs, invasives management, and ecosystem manipulations, but such solutions are expensive, risky, and temporary. In a crowded and climate-challenged world, conservation competes with both human food and solar/biofuel energy for surface area and sunlight.

Space is still the final frontier, and we are the champions of the world, growing by 79 million people per year, continuing that pace for at least another two decades, even under the rosy UN assumptions (the US Census Bureau makes similar projections). The projected decline in growth later this century depends entirely on two unrealized dreams: universal access to and use of effective contraception and a global desire to average less than two children per family. We are far from achieving the former – roughly half of pregnancies, even in the US, are unintended. As to the latter, desired family size in many key developing countries is still 3 to 7 children and barely budging. Yet global interest and funding for slowing population growth are declining. Population policy is virtually absent from the agenda of the 2009 Copenhagen climate conference.

But won’t human ingenuity overcome these demographic challenges, as we perpetually find ways to do more with less space and energy? Probably not. In the past 40 years, every global gain in energy efficiency has been accompanied by increases in affluence. Global and US per capita CO<sub>2</sub> emissions are almost exactly what they were in 1970. Emissions have grown with population, which has almost doubled. If we slow fossil-fuel use to protect the climate, we have to go back to the land (and water) for energy – and the zero-sum game.

Because the space needed to reserve remaining biodiversity is more or less fixed, the remaining major demands – food, fibre, wood, and fuel – must continuously become more space-efficient, as population grows. That is a wonderful dream, but it’s an oil-pipe dream. The green revolution has its limits to growth, some of which are fossil-fuel related. Likewise, there is only so much cropland we can convert from food to fuel production before experiencing food deficits and starvation. At that point, parks and reserves look



pretty enticing.

We all love the high concept of preserving species and ecosystems, but when our own well-being is at stake, humanity will put people first. To give biodiversity a fighting chance, ecologists and

everyone else must focus attention on managing the population of our own species.

Originally published in:  
Frontiers in Ecology and the Environment 2009; 7  
(10): 511, [www.frontiersinecology.org](http://www.frontiersinecology.org)

## **Living Witness Project Link Group Weekend – November 2009**

Nineteen of us gathered at the Bilberry Hill Centre in the Lickey Hills near Birmingham. After the first meal we started as usual with expression of hopes for the weekend and besides the usual aspirations there were hopes for rest and laughter, both of which were fulfilled.

Friends reported on what was going on in their Meetings and it was notable that in some other areas, Quakers were working effectively with Transition groups, 350 and a variety of other groups concerned with sustainability.

In a major session on the Saturday, Laurie Michaelis traced the history of climate change from the first references in the 1850s through the research and reports that have proliferated since the 1970s. He emphasised that the latest research shows earlier predictions about the rate of global warming are now believed to be too optimistic because of greater knowledge of some five or six positive feed-back effects that cause change to be magnified (see the 11.5 min. film at [www.wakeupfreakout.org/film/tipping.html](http://www.wakeupfreakout.org/film/tipping.html)).

Laurie's conclusions were that governments tend to put too much emphasis on technical fixes such as carbon capture and storage, nuclear power and carbon emissions trading. We, the people, tend to look to government to deal with the problem by accepting targets for limiting global temperature rise and legislating to limit energy consumption by those who waste it (not us).

We agreed that the distinctive Quaker contribution is firstly to demonstrate what can be done by changing our lifestyles. Laurie himself sets an example in this respect. He travels only by public transport, cycle and foot. He is a vegan and enthusiastic vegan cook using food grown at the Bamford community near Sheffield and avoiding supermarkets as far as possible. He normally always wears shorts so as to accustom his body to low temperatures and is comfortable at 10°C thereby minimising the need for heating at home. We need a larger body of Quakers who live comparable lifestyles and can say to all and sundry, "deep change is possible without sacrifice and we have done it".

Secondly, we felt that self-interest (i.e. saving

money) is a poor incentive to change one's lifestyle for most people. More effective are deeply-held values such as the Quaker testimonies and the basic testimonies to truth, simplicity, equality and peace are all directly related to the need to adopt more sustainable lifestyles.

Finally, we reaffirmed our commitment to the Quaker business method in responding to what is essentially a spiritual crisis. Profligate spending on energy or anything else is a symptom of a society suffering from increasing inequality caused by corporate and individual greed. Many people have contempt for politicians and are apathetic towards the democratic processes. We are more alienated from Nature than ever before and refuse to see ourselves as part of the whole human family. The basis of any prophetic witness must lie in corporate discernment of the will of God and our openness to whatever that may mean, from changing light bulbs to civil disobedience.

As an example of what can be done we were told of changes to Cotteridge Meeting House in Birmingham. The building was put up in 1964 when there was still the expectation that cheap electricity would be available indefinitely. Thirteen storage heaters were installed providing up to 300 KWh per day. As a result, in 2004-5 consumption was 46,700 KWh costing £6000. Cotteridge Friends set about reducing the electricity consumption. Single glazing was changed to argon-filled double glazing; 150W spotlights were changed to 20W; the solid walls were dry-lined to improve insulation and 160 mm of insulation was put on the outside of the roof. More expensive additions were the installation of air-to-air heat pumps controlled by timers and thermostats and putting an array of photovoltaic panels on the roof to give up to 11.7 KW. All the time, Friends and other users of the Meeting House were encouraged to reduce energy consumption by keeping doors closed and switching off any appliance not in use. As a result, they now have a warm, well-lit Meeting House and expect to have a net income this year of £1,000 from the surplus electricity they have sold to the national grid.

**Graham Davey**  
[graham.davey@blueyonder.co.uk](mailto:graham.davey@blueyonder.co.uk)

## Letters

### Any Answers to this query?.

(Please send answers direct to Oliver but copy them to the editor as well if you are happy for your ideas to be spread more widely in the next issue.)



Do Friends have any ideas of which drinks have the lowest carbon footprint, so that I can serve them at the end of Meetings for Worship?

**Oliver Robertson**  
olijr@yahoo.com

Dear Friends,  
Am I alone in finding it extraordinary that population size was not included in the Copenhagen negotiations on climate change? Surely it is widely now recognised that it is a key component - a fact that we Quakers find very uncomfortable to talk about.

A recent Guardian article said that Bangladesh is expecting its population of 165 million to rise to 265 million in the next 60 years, and its finance minister has called on Britain and other wealthy nations to accept climate change migrants of 20 million in the next 40 years, and to include this in the climate change negotiations. Earlier this year the BBC said that 70% of Iranians are under 30, and between the earlier famine and the current one Ethiopia's population has doubled. Strife in Darfur, the Congo, Rwanda, and Burundi, and other African countries is surely exacerbated by population increase. A friend who did VSO in Kenya 40 years ago on returning to the same place last year found that most of the farmed land around the village had gone, now occupied by huts. The UN expects a further 150 million people will have to move in the next 50 years due to environmental degradation, weather related disasters and desertification.

People talk as if the world's population can go on increasing for ever. Assuming that it can't then when should the issue be addressed, by whom, and how? I feel we need to support the NGOs involved in women's empowerment, literacy, education, human rights, health, and employment. After all in many countries for cultural reasons men continue to be proud of and seek very large families. But we cannot carry on simply predicting the world's future population and then trying to provide for it. It is not going to be possible. If we do then as ever war and famine are the likely outcomes and billions may die.

**Brigid Philip**  
brigid@studioe9.myzen.co.uk

Dear Anne,

I was pleased to read in EarthQuaker of all the things that members are doing to try to slow down climate change. The rise in floods, droughts and worldwide weather disasters certainly seems to show the need for this.

I understand that if the Gulf Stream which flows around Britain was disrupted by the melting ice caps this could cause Britain to become much colder, as it keeps the UK warmer than it would otherwise be.

Cleaning up pollution, for whatever reason, can only be beneficial. If countries decide to control pollution by fitting efficient filters on factories and using cleaner fuel we will have healthier air and cleaner water - as God intended. Official figures show that 24,000 early deaths a year in Britain from respiratory diseases are caused by air pollution. Motorists should turn off their engines while waiting outside shops and schools. Children's asthma rates have increased sharply in recent years. Dioxins from incinerators are proven to cause cancer and birth defects. Benzene is a well documented cause of blood diseases such as leukaemia, but is widely used by industry. The pesticide lindane is now largely banned in the developed world as it is linked with increased breast cancer rates. It was used in wood treatments in houses and unfortunately this sometimes led to the house occupants developing leukaemia. I've read that although lindane is now mainly banned in Europe it may still be used on cocoa beans in less developed countries, so one environmental group (the Women's Environmental Network) advises buying organic chocolate.

When we neglect the environment we neglect people, because we all depend on it for our survival. Christian Ecology Link's "LOAF" principle is try to buy locally grown, organic, animal friendly and fair traded produce. Councils should recycle a wider range of commodities including most types of plastic, and we should all recycle more. Regulations should be brought in to reduce the huge amount of plastic packaging waste which supermarkets and manufacturers produce daily. The authorities should do more to use clean natural energy such as wave, wind, solar and hydro-electric (water) power.

Cutting emissions could help the climate - and it would certainly help human health and reduce preventable suffering.

**Ann Wills**  
awills@willsfamily.org.uk



## **Reducing my contribution to climate change : one person's experience**

(Ann Boater lives in Islington with her husband and three children. Her total emissions are now around 3,700kg compared with a national average of 11,500kg. She is a Resource Person for the Living Witness Project.)

### Early nurturing

For as long as I can remember I have used scrap paper and scraped the food on my plate clean. My mother grew up with wartime rations, and also believed with a passion that our individual consumption was having a direct affect on the ability of the world to sustain itself. This was long before many people accepted the possibility of climate change. I am grateful for this inheritance and reckon it has given me a head start in minimising my greenhouse gas emissions.

### Considering the environmental impact of long term life decisions

Before I left home I had thought about what I wanted and needed in life, and the consequences of different lifestyle choices, including their ethical and environmental impact. The church that I was part of and the education I received, encouraged and gave me the tools to do this.

I have organised my life to be always been within cycling distance of work. In my twenties I experienced travel by living and working on a narrow-boat in a multicultural city rather than flying around the world. In my thirties I moved with husband and children into a house which is being adapted to the highest energy saving standards possible – most recently we have been pioneering with the installation of an underground rainwater harvesting tank, plumbed in to flush a toilet as well as watering the garden.

I chose a career, social groups and partner that enabled me to follow my aspirations and which were compatible with my beliefs. This has meant that I have been largely happy, fulfilled, confident and financially independent enough to pursue a green and simple life.

### Deciding what matters most

Although I have been following environmentally friendly principles for a long time I was still consuming more than I need and more than the world can stand. I recently reviewed my work/life balance and ambitions, and realised that addressing the challenging issue of climate change was of prime importance. I decided to make time to focus on where changes needed to be made. At around this time I came across the Living Witness Project and this spiritual, practical and informed approach helped me in seeing my intentions through. The more I understand the effects that

my excesses have on the lives of others the more easily I feel able to change. After working out my contribution to climate change, I realised I needed to change my food consumption – because of the disproportionately high use of energy in meat and dairy production. I have enjoyed the step by step changes and learning new ways. I have found it far more worthwhile than any dieting done purely for myself and for vanity.

By working out my 'Contribution to Climate Change' using the Living Witness Project's calculator, I was able to see lifestyle in terms of where my biggest emissions were. This highlighted for me the areas where my adjustments would be most effective and enabled me to prioritise. It prompted me to ask questions like: "Am I in a position to control this consumption?" "Is this something I really need or am only wanting?"

### How I spend my time

I often wonder: "Am I using this energy because I need it to sustain life?" or "Am I doing this activity for work or leisure?" I am aware that if I spend a long time doing something that has to be done (to sustain life) but think of it as a relaxation activity then I also save spending resources on entertainment. For example when I cook from raw and local ingredients for family and neighbours.

### Being sensitive to effects of my actions on others

From a deeper look at my own 'Contribution to Climate Change' I realised how my consumption and greenhouse gas emissions are influenced by other people's decisions: public services, family and my other communities. In turn, the way I handle my life has an impact on the way other people consume. This can be quite direct where I am responsible for providing things within my family but there is also a psychological element; social pressures are an important factor in determining patterns of consumption and energy use. I have noticed that if people (starting from myself) feel included, accepted and loved then they are less likely to want to over-consume and are more receptive to doing things in new ways. (This is just as true of energy as it is of food or alcohol or other drugs.) Personally I am thinking of ways in which I can encourage my children to adopt greener habits.

With the 'Contribution to Climate Change' of my family already being below the world average – I know that to reduce Climate Change further I now have to play a part in helping others to emit less. Although it is good to talk with others about all this, **I can't judge them because I don't know the context of their lives; what is right for one person is not necessarily right for another.**

### Having a sense of what I am achieving

By trying to see my activities as part of a greater

picture I am learning that I can only assess what is a worthwhile change for me. Calculating personal emissions give information about the relative energy of different activities which is useful but I now am also weighing this up with what I might contribute to sustaining life; observing the effects of and reflecting on the value of the things that I do.

Not all changes are helpful if they have a big en-

ergy cost. Change takes time and by judging prematurely the effects we might get disheartened and/or abort something that is working. The need for change is urgent but I believe there are the human and material resources to live in the world sustainably if we all work together with the will to live this way.

**Ann Boater**

Ann@boaterlatimer.wanadoo.co.uk

**Useful Links** LWP member **John Barnabas** recommends the following:

[www.actionaid.org.uk/biofuels](http://www.actionaid.org.uk/biofuels)—campaign against biofuels

[Arocha.org.uk](http://Arocha.org.uk)—for practical and educational work

[www.northfielddecocentre.org](http://www.northfielddecocentre.org)—for up-to-date news on this exciting Quaker initiative.

[www.speak.org.uk](http://www.speak.org.uk)—network of students and young adults who pray and campaign about issues of global injustice

## Good Lives at Woodbrooke

There is an interesting Good Lives blog at [www.woodbrookegoodlives.blogspot.com](http://www.woodbrookegoodlives.blogspot.com)



Good Lives weekends this year:

19-21 Feb. *Good Lives: because it takes a village to raise a child* with Pam Lunn and Jan Copley.

9-11 Apr. *Good Lives – because there is such a thing as society* with Pam Lunn and Felicity Kaal.

25-27 June *Good Lives – because we can't eat money* with Pam Lunn and Craig Barnett.

Cost for all courses: £176 ensuite, £166 standard  
Booking on any one entitles you to a £20 discount on any other course with the Good Lives logo.

For full details on these courses see the Woodbrooke brochure or visit <http://www.woodbrooke.org.uk/pages/courses-learning.html>.

Information from **Pam Lunn**

## Review of DVD: The Turning Point—a return to community.

LWP member **Ella Young** sent me this DVD and I found it inspiring. It reminds me of the DVD about Cuba—The Power of Community—but is based in the UK and shows a community voluntarily working towards a sustainable lifestyle rather than being forced to do so by external circumstances.



*that have grown up over the last 20 years around the Findhorn Foundation Community in Scotland. It explores Community Supported Agriculture, the localisation of wind energy, egg, cheese and bread production, ecological sewage treatment, a Transition Town community garden, car pooling and adopting a local currency.*

The blurb from the DVD cover summarises the content excellently:

*This film explores the vital importance of community in the 21st century and its role in helping us to create a life-sustaining society. It takes an inspiring look at some of the sustainable community solutions*



Findhorn eco-village  
[www.findhorn.org](http://www.findhorn.org)

Featured in the film, produced in 2009, are: Richard Heinberg, author of *Powerdown: Options and Actions for a Post-Carbon World*; Rob Hopkins, Co-founder of the Transition Network; Joanna Macy, author of *Coming back to Life: Practices to Reconnect our Lives*; and Megan Quinn Bachmann, co-producer of *The Power of Community, How Cuba survived Peak Oil*.

The running time is 41 minutes and the DVD includes interviews of about 70 minutes. To buy a copy at £11.99 plus 99p p&p or to enquire about a licence for a public performance go to [www.TheTurningPointFilm.com](http://www.TheTurningPointFilm.com)

## Quaker Voluntary Action (QVA)

LWP member **Martin Smith** writes that QVA are keen to do projects with green/sustainable aims. They arrange working retreats at Meeting Houses with volunteers to do, for example, gardening, tree-work, recycling



systems, planting, painting etc. The work is done alongside morning meetings for worship, facilitated retreat sessions and evening epilogues. Local Friends and Attenders are very welcome to join the team. Details: [www.qva.org](http://www.qva.org) or from QVA coordinator, Jasmine Piercy, on 07910 434 941



## Walk cheerfully over the earth with a smaller footprint ?

Are we prepared to change our ways  
To preserve our planet home,  
Or go on 'fiddling' away the days  
Like Nero in blazing Rome?

The writing's long been on the wall  
About Climate Change and such,  
But do we show we care at all  
By consuming oh, so much ?

The poorest always suffer first,  
But then it was ever thus;  
Excuses still are well-rehearsed  
In maintaining what suits us !

We must have 'growth' - (whate'er the cost!)  
Is the mantra of the West,  
With no regard for what's then lost,  
Or what suits Creation best.

Modest target for 'twenty-ten'  
Is reduce our 'carbon score'  
By ten per-cent, and maybe then  
Perhaps push for even more.

Not just sustainability  
Of course, is involved in this,  
But Justice, Peace, Equality -  
This chance we must not miss !

**Alan Spinks**  
aljamspin@yahoo.co.uk

### Deadline for the next issue of earthQuaker - 15th May 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: anne.brewer@phonecoop.coop

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

Include your postal address and telephone number or email address. We will publish contributors' contact details unless specifically asked not to, so that members with a shared interest can get in touch directly.

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

### Membership

I wish to join the Living Witness Project as an individual member.

Name:

Address:

Email/phone:

**Delete as appropriate**—I prefer earthQuaker:

by post (b&w)

by email as a pdf (colour)

I am happy to access it from [www.livingwitness.org.uk](http://www.livingwitness.org.uk)

I enclose £

Gift Aid declaration (please tick box if appropriate):

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

Date:

Suggested subscription £10.00  
Concessions for those unable  
to afford this cost.

Please make cheque payable  
to "Living Witness Project"

and send to:  
Living Witness Project  
Quaker Community  
Water Lane  
Bamford  
Hope Valley  
S33 0DA

## Quaker green events in 2010

For **Good Lives** courses at Woodbrooke see page 14

**Thurs 4 March 6-8pm.** *Equality, Prosperity and Growth: where do we stand?* Follow-up to Zero Growth Economy events. Friends House. Details and to register: [www.quaker.org.uk/prosperity](http://www.quaker.org.uk/prosperity)

**9-11 April** LWP Link Group Gathering at Bilberry Hill Centre—see page 2

**10 April. LWP AGM—see page 2.**

**28-31 May** Britain Yearly Meeting at Friends House. Proposed LWP special interest group and stall.

**9-13 Aug** LWP Summer School at Swarthmoor—see page 2

**Sat March 27 8.30pm** **WWF 2010 Earthhour**—switch off your lights for one hour—see <http://earthhour.wwf.org.uk/>



**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 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 LWP 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 Project, Quaker Community, Water Lane, Bamford, Hope Valley S33 0DA. Email: [laurie@livingwitness.org.uk](mailto:laurie@livingwitness.org.uk)  
Tel: 01433 659 329

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

### If undelivered please return to:

Living Witness Project  
Quaker Community  
Water Lane  
Bamford  
Hope Valley  
S33 0DA



Printed by  
D Turner, 21A Heath Ave, Derby