

earthQuaker



newsletter
issue 94
summer 2017



Bee aware.

See page 9

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Welcome to the summer edition of earthQuaker. We are all looking forward to Yearly Meeting Gathering at Warwick University where we hope to meet some of you.

This is your magazine and to keep it viable it needs your input. Have you been to a conference, read an interesting book, written a poem or a short story, taken some interesting photographs? Let Friends know about it. Send your copy to me at pete@livingwitness.org.uk



The annual residential conference of
the Life-Style Movement

will be held from 11th to 13th August

at **Minster Abbey, near Ramsgate, Kent CT12 4HF.**

The theme is '**The Difficulties and Rewards of Leading a Simple Life-Style**'.

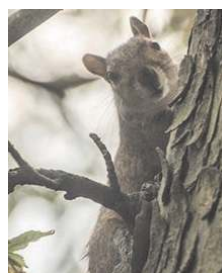
There will be speakers, discussions and some free time. The cost is £90 and all are welcome.

For further information please contact graham.davey29@yahoo.co.uk

Climate change, deforestation, pollution and so forth concern us all, and such matters will be of even greater concern to future generations, for what we leave is their inheritance. We must therefore do all in our power to preserve the Earth's resources, natural diversity and beauty, for our children and their children.

Not only do 'consumer' lifestyles damage the environment, but they often snatch basic essentials from disadvantaged people. Our indifference to others when we buy – and too often when we thoughtlessly waste – does nothing to help people who live in poverty, in our own countries or in the 'Third World'. For instance, goods that we are taking for granted, produced by 'Third World' land and labour, are helping to keep these countries locked into debt and dependence, and their people exploited and deprived. Relatively rich lifestyles are not merely wasteful, but sustain injustice.

The LIFE STYLE Movement, founded in 1972, is a network of people who share this perspective, and who are committed to moving towards more just and sustainable ways of life. Since everything we do, however small, tends to impact on someone's life, somewhere else, we believe that change must begin with ourselves.



Quakers in Yorkshire Sustainability Day

Quakers in Yorkshire gathered at Harrogate Meeting House 22nd April for their quarterly meeting.

The theme was sustainability “Doing what love requires of us – sustainability, action and witness.” Co-clerk Arthur Pritchard set the scene by reading a quotation from John Woolman: “*The produce of the earth is a gift from our gracious creator to the inhabitants, and to impoverish the earth now to support our own greatness appears to be an injury to the succeeding age.*” published 1772 (QfP25.01).

The morning session was conducted by Jonathan Dale, a former Swarthmore lecturer. He asked “How have individual Friends embraced the 2011 Canterbury Commitment signed by Britain Yearly Meeting?” He posed the question “Is our faith really deep enough?” He reminded us that we had to do more than just do the “easy” things to change our life style. It is essential that we use our Quaker faith “to be patterns and examples in all countries and places, to preach among all sorts of people and to them, so that we may walk cheerfully over the world, answering that of God in everyone” (based on George Fox 1656).

He quoted from an article in *The Friend* of July 7th 1972 from Dorothy Lovett:

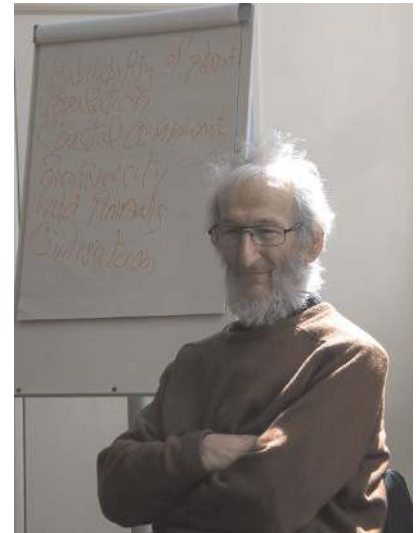
“How many of us can truly say that we use up only as much of the earth's resources as we absolutely must? Is it our concern at all times to obtain the last ounce of usefulness out of everything entrusted to our care? Do we, for the sake of comfort and convenience, make use of products and facilities which would be better left alone? Are we, in other words, a people of simplicity and reverence for life who willingly, and even fiercely, uphold the principle that the things of this world are God-given and to be shared by all?”

A second quote from the Quaker MP Richard Body (various, between 1955-2001) and published in *The Friend* in 1972:

... *“Both the main parties, the Trades Union Congress and the Confederation of British Industry regard growth as the yardstick of a nation's economic success. We deny this, and hope fervently that all Friends will share with us the concern we feel about this. If growth is defined as an expansion of the gross domestic product, there is a twofold price to be paid for it. One is pollution, and the other the exhaustion of the world's resources.”* Plus of course, what was not thought about at that time, Climate Change and Global Warming. As he pointed out, these were printed 45 years ago. How far have we progressed since then?

In the afternoon Friends were able to choose between one of four workshops.

The presenters concentrated on climate change and on our carbon footprint, being the easiest way to assess our individual impact on the planet. We have known about what we now refer to as “Global Warming” as far back 1919 when a group of Australian scientists realised the damage that the sudden growth in coal fired power stations was causing to the climate. Since that time the world's coal and oil industries have done everything possible to suppress information and indeed continue to apply considerable pressure to governments to avoid any legislation that is likely to affect their huge profits. It is therefore up to individuals to do



Jonathan Dale



Chayley Collis addressing her workshop

whatever they can to avoid fossil fuels and to reduce their carbon footprint.

Chayley Collis from Huddersfield Meeting leads a divestment campaign (persuading councils and individuals to remove their investments in companies supporting the use of fossil fuels) in West Yorkshire and gave an account of her work. She is also passionate about the anti-fracking movement and supports various groups who are campaigning.

- Average UK emissions 10 tonnes/year
- This will be gone in ~11 years, after which temperatures will continue to rise
- Each of us needs to get to near-zero, the sooner the better but definitely by 2050
- What's your 33-year plan to zero?

Slide from Peter Land's presentation

Ian Bray, also from Huddersfield Meeting, gave an account of his involvement with the direct action group Rise Up which has been responsible for a number of actions concerning the building of the third runway at Heathrow Airport.

Peter Land made a special trip up from the West Country to demonstrate his Personal Carbon Tracker, a piece of software he has developed to track one's carbon footprint and to demonstrate the effect changes in lifestyle can have. It is available for download at <http://personalcarbontracker.weebly.com>

My speciality is food, having spent a lot of my working life in the food industry. I outlined the effect that our food choices have on our carbon footprint and also how so much of our food, and consequently the countryside around it, is now contaminated with chemicals due to industrial farming practices, and how our wildlife is being destroyed as a direct result with many species facing extinction. I emphasised the need to avoid such industrial "food", for the sake of the planet, for the sake of our own health and in order to reduce our carbon footprint.

Each of the workshop leaders led very active discussion sessions.

The day came to an end all too quickly and ended in the customary tea.

A number of documents that were either used or referred to are available on the Quakers in Yorkshire website <http://quakersinyorkshire.org.uk/>

Pete Redwood, Leeds Area Meeting



Quaker worship at a fracking site

R

We are all familiar with the three R's – **reduce, re-use, recycle**. There are a further five which are well worth remembering. The full list now reads:

Rejoice – in all the good things God has given us for free.

Reflect – on your lifestyle, and on every purchase you make

Refuse – to believe the advertisers' message

Reduce – the amount of stuff you buy (things you do, places you travel)

Rent – borrow or share instead of buying new

Reuse – support charity shops and other community initiatives

Repair – ensure your acquisitions can be repaired, then repair rather than replace.

Recycle – this is a last resort, because recycling something still uses a lot of energy.

Carbon Footprint of a Car

What is the carbon footprint of owning a car? We tend to think just in terms of the fuel that is used. But when you add in the carbon footprint of manufacture it is enormous.

The average family sized saloon car uses up 17 tonnes of CO₂ in its production. 33% of that is from the extraction of the ore and production of the metal, 12% is from the actual manufacture. Then add in the footprint of making the machinery and machine tools that produce the car, the footprint of the administration, and the sales.

And of course the larger the car and more luxurious the higher the footprint. A Bentley for example is around 37 tonnes, not only because of the additional steel etc. but also because it has leather upholstery and leather trim and the footprint of leather manufacture is huge.

The figures above are spread across the life of the vehicle so obviously the longer you can make it last the better. Only replace when you have to and not because of a whim to “get something better or more modern”. And when you do replace, go for the lightest model, and the most economical, preferably electric, or not least, not using fossil fuels.



Consider your health - Eat Organic

It has recently been reported that non-organic foods have been found to be far more dangerous than was thought and that people should consider eating organic when possible.

The research, published by European Parliament, warns of the “very high costs” of current levels of exposure to pesticides - especially for children & pregnant women. It could result in new limits on pesticide levels or changes to labelling of foodstuffs, under EU laws which require the UK to review its policies by next year.

The landmark study suggests that the damage caused by pesticides across the EU amounts to at least £125bn a year, based on the loss of lifetime income from such damage. The report warns of increasing evidence that residues from insecticides are damaging the brain, & reducing the population’s IQ. It raises concerns that the chemicals could also cause cancer.

The research, commissioned by European Parliament, is a review of existing scientific evidence about the impact of organic food on human health. It says previous attempts to assess the impact of pesticides have disregarded too much of the research, raising concerns that regulation of insecticides has been inadequate.

The study was carried out by the parliament’s Scientific Foresight Unit, led by the Swedish University of Agricultural Scientists. “At least 100 different pesticides are known to cause adverse neurological effects in adults, & all of these substances must therefore be suspected of being capable of damaging developing brains as well,” the report states. It goes on to describe the calculation as “almost certainly” an underestimate as it does not consider the possible contribution made by pesticides to conditions such as Parkinson’s disease, diabetes & certain types of cancer.

The researchers recommend limiting exposure to non-organic fruit & vegetables - & say particular care should be taken by pregnant women & children. “The evidence reviewed in this report shows that a decreased exposure from the general population is desirable from a human health perspective in light of the findings from epidemiological studies that indicate very high costs of current levels of pesticide exposures.”

Previous attempts to assess the risks have not taken proper account of epidemiological studies, which look at the health of whole populations, instead of just limiting themselves to scientific trials. “Of major concern, these risk assessments disregard evidence from epidemiological studies that show negative effects of low-level exposure to organophosphate insecticides on children’s cognitive development, despite the high costs of IQ losses to society.” It raises concerns that risk assessment of pesticides is inadequate, failing to properly examine any increased risk of cancer, as well as impacts on the body’s hormones and nervous system. “There are concerns that this risk assessment is inadequate at addressing mixed exposures, specifically for carcinogenic effects as well as endocrine-disrupting effects & neurotoxicity.

There are concerns that test protocols lag behind independent science studies from independent science, are not fully considered & data gaps are accepted too readily,” the authors warn. Lead author, Assistant Professor Axel Mie said: “Several practices in organic agriculture, in particular the low use of pesticides & antibiotics, offer benefits for human health.

Policymakers should support the use of such practices & their introduction in conventional agriculture, & make sure that organic agriculture continues to serve as a laboratory for the development of future healthy food systems.” Under an EU Directive on the sustainable use of pesticides, member states are required to publicise a national plan to reduce risks from pesticides every 5 years, with UK required to update its restrictions by 2018.

US studies have shown women’s exposure to pesticides during pregnancy, measured through urine samples, were associated with negative impacts on their children’s IQ & neurobehavioral development. A study looking at structural brain growth found the grey matter was thinner in

children whose mothers had high exposure to organophosphates, which are used widely in pesticides.

Peter Melchett, Soil Association policy director, said: "This report is great for organic farmers & everyone who eats organic food. Organic food sales have been growing strongly for 5 years, & a key reason that people buy organic food sales is that they feel it is better for them & their family – that is why more than half the baby food sold in UK is organic. This new, independent, scientific review confirms people are right" he added.

Ann Wills, Ruislip, Middx

Based on an article first published in Daily Telegraph, 2 June 2017

<http://www.telegraph.co.uk/news/2017/06/02/organic-foods-backed-landmark-report-warning-pesticides-far/>

Land – based movement building

Achieving change is a mysterious thing. Sometimes the obvious strategies fail to work, whereas actions that seem trivial or ineffective galvanise a movement or a change of perspective. For example, during the '90's environmentalists and well heeled rural residents made common cause with tree dwellers and tunnel diggers in battles over upgrading major roads and bypasses. Who would have thought that land occupations by road protesters, every one of which failed to prevent the roads they were aimed at, would have stopped road building for a generation?

There are more than usual alliance-building opportunities in movements that involve land and place. Somehow the specificity of these struggles and the real life meetings and relationships which they generate give the movement a strength and reach that would otherwise be impossible.

Another diverse group came together in summer 2013 a camp at Balcombe successfully prevented a test drilling by energy company Cuadrilla for shale gas at a site in West Sussex for two weeks, and were joined by a number of Quakers. The camp was the scene of trainings, workshops and discussions as well as the direct obstruction of access to the site.

In August 2015 near Blackpool a group of mothers and grandmas called the 'Nanas' "with our feather dusters and tabards, carrying cakes and bunting and tea sets at 3.30 in the morning" set up camp in a field where Cuadrilla were also planning a test drilling. (1) They too reached a national audience for their peaceful yet audacious protest. Many of those who came, from all walks of life and men as well as women, had not taken part in a protest before, but had reached the conclusion that fracking was harmful and were ready to act. (2) Again visitors and media flocked to interview the women.

The Nanas action and associated campaigning by Friends of the Earth, Greenpeace and others, caused the district council and Lancashire County Council to turn down Cuadrilla's application to drill, a decision which was later overturned by the Secretary of State.

Anti-fracking protests did not end however. For example, between May 1st and 7th 2017 the following took place:

- Security guards removed anti-fracking campaigners from business park in Lancashire
- Ten people joined Greenpeace UK protest to block entrance to Preston New Road, where drilling has been delayed by several months
- Two women blocked the Bolton depot of Cuadrilla's site contractor, A E Yates
- Eight people took part in lock-on protests outside Cuadrilla's Preston New Road shale gas site
- Anti-fracking campaigners joined Chesterfield May Day parade
- Anti-drilling May Pole in Dorking

- Protests in Bristol, Oxford and Stroud against Barclays's funding of Third Energy
- Lancashire Nanas headed south to Dorking to show solidarity with Leith Hill Protection Camp, at another potential fracking site in Surrey (3)

Many Quakers are familiar with actions involving land occupation or physical protest and in this way strengthening alliances for change. Quakers were involved in actions at US bases in the 80's, at Molesworth, Greenham Common, Menwith Hill and others, and much more recently at Faslane in the year long protests that helped turn Scottish opinion against hosting Trident; Quakers were present in road protests at Newbury in the '90's, and in Occupy, and in Climate Camps in the 2000's. Quakers brought moments of worshipful silence, a deep commitment to nonviolence, training in nonviolence and strategy, a capacity to listen, care, and other contributions to practical needs; and they held a long term vision beyond the immediate goals, a vision of a peaceful, sustainable and just society. Some of the relationships formed have continued through decades and have enabled actions, visual and verbal witness on a wide variety of issues.

There are many more examples of place-based actions, occupations and protests which form the potential for the curious and interested to visit and catalyse the formation of groups consisting of members with different backgrounds and ideologies; people who would perhaps never have met in the same organization, church or neighbourhood. Such events provide, par excellence, the conditions for the formation of alliances. If there is an occupation or protest in your area, it could be an opportunity to make some new friends.

- (1)<https://www.theguardian.com/environment/2015/jul/03/nanas-shale-cuadrilla-fracking-lancashire#img-1>
 (2)<http://www.talkfracking.org/nanashire-tour/who-are-the-nanas/>
 (3)<https://drillordrop.com/2017/05/02/protest-update-1-7-may-2017/>

Gill Westcott, Exeter

A Right to Roam

Sweden has turned its entire country into a listing on an international holiday rental website. It is an effort to promote the country's "freedom to roam" principle, or "Allemansrätten," which gives people the right to freely explore all public spaces across the country.

Under Swedish law you use the right of access when you go for a walk, kayaking or sitting on a rock and thinking. Allemansrätten is a unique opportunity for everyone to move freely in nature. But you also need to take responsibility for nature and wildlife and to pay attention to landowners and other visitors. So do not disturb - do not destroy.

The idea of a holiday listing is that you can just grab a tent and freely access any of the publicly owned land. Private gardens and lands under cultivation are the only exceptions,

It is, of course, available 365 days of year, has unlimited beds and has no "check-in" restrictions.



International Bee Awareness Day August 17th

“Bringing together beekeepers, bee associations, as well as other interested groups to connect with the communities to advance beekeeping. By working together and harnessing the efforts that so many already accomplish, and [by] using a united effort one day a year, the rewards and message is magnified many times over. We encourage bee associations, individuals, and other groups to get involved. The program is free and open to all.”

International Bee Awareness Day, is an idea put together by beekeepers in the USA, who petitioned the USDA in 2009 for an official day to honour honey bees and beekeeping. A few years down the line, people across the world are holding a date of observation every year.

Bee enthusiasts will probably put a bee in your bonnet and say this is not so much a day to celebrate honey bees, as it is to promote their involvement in sustainable farming.



On this day, bee lovers everywhere decorate their gardens with lavender, borage and marjoram, the bee's knees in pollinator lures.

So far, the idea doesn't seem to have had much impact in this country, but perhaps it should, with the awareness being raised over the agricultural use of pesticides containing neonicotinoids. The bee population in this country has been decimated by their continued use and the authorities both in this country and in Europe seem loathe to legislate against their use.

Reader's Letter

Rebecca Thackray sent the following letter to her MP for Dulwich and West Norwood to raise awareness of the plight of bees.

Dear Helen Hayes, M.P.

I'd like to know where you stand on bees (as it were!). With the advent of Brexit where does that put pollinator protection?

Where pollinators (bees, bats, butterflies, beetles, flies) are in decline in number, it is thought to be due to disease, habitat loss, climate change and pesticides. They are vital for three-quarters of major food crops - wheat, for instance is an exception being wind-pollinated but 300,000 species of flowering plants world-wide depend on these creatures and without them our diet would be reduced and devoid of vitamins and minerals we rely on for optimum health.

The effect of pesticides (e.g. neonicotinoids) is inconclusive and the EU has taken precautions by restricting their use. The UK government granted emergency authorisations for neonicotinoid use in 2015

An October 2015 review statement by pollinator experts concluded that the evidence still does not provide a clear steer for policy makers in relation to neonicotinoids; and the European Food Safety Authority (EFSA) was expected to update its risk assessments and report to the Commission in January 2017. Nothing has yet been made public.

The Government's approach to agriculture, fisheries and food was to confirm that the UK will not be seeking to remain in the Single Market and argues that Brexit presents an opportunity to create a “world-leading” food and farming industry [2 February 2017].

Do you agree with farming minister, George Eustice and Lord Gardiner of Kimble who said that the EU's precautionary principle needed to be reformed in favour of a US style, risk-based approach, allowing faster authorisation of pesticides?

Many thanks for your attention.

Rebecca Thackray

Waste into Energy

Fifteen members of the Sustainability Group from Leeds Area Quaker Meeting recently paid a visit to the newly built Waste Recovery Centre in Leeds. We travelled in three Nissan Leaf electric cars and proudly parked in the three bays reserved for electric vehicles. We were told this was the first time all three bays had been filled at one time and we were able to recharge the vehicles whilst we visited the plant.



The building itself is a landmark in Leeds, being over 42 metres tall with an immense living green wall on the south side, facing the road, claimed to be the largest in Europe. This is home to countless insects, bees and birds. With the aid of a Public Finance Initiative it was built less than a year ago at a cost of £174M and is run by the French environmental services company Veolia on a twenty-five year contract. The company specialises in waste disposal, water supply, energy supply and public transport.

We were met by an official from Leeds City Council who proudly announced that Leeds aspired to become a zero waste city by 2020! (Highly unlikely, since the current recycling figure for the city is only 37%). However, this new plant completely eliminates the need for landfill. Literally everything that leaves the site is sold for another use.

The City Council estimate that each of the 346,000 households in Leeds produces 470 kg of waste per year and approximately 80 tonnes of black bin waste is delivered to the site every day. Initially this is screened to remove all metal, ferrous and non-ferrous. Much of the recyclable plastic can also be screened out, as can a lot of the paper and card. Around 20% of all recyclable material is recovered. All screenings are sorted and sold to a recycling company in Leeds, who also handle all the council's green bin collections.



The residue is fed by conveyor to a huge furnace which consumes it at well over 850 degrees centigrade. The flue is heavily filtered so that all that is emitted into the atmosphere is water vapour. The contents of the filters can be used for other purposes. The ash from the furnace is sold to produce breeze blocks, glazed tiles and aggregate for road building.

The furnace heats a boiler to produce steam which is used to drive a turbine to provide 11MW of electricity. This, they claim, over the year, is enough to keep 22,000 homes going with all the electricity they need. There are now plans in hand to utilise the excess heat for a district heating scheme but this has yet to come to fruition.

The whole scheme is run by 56 staff working in shifts to keep it running 24 hours a day, 7 days a week. One of only ten similar plants in the country, it is rated third for efficiency and output, Bristol coming out top with Newcastle second.

This proved an extremely informative visit and we look forward to further developments in the Leeds area.

For those interested, a Youtube video of the operation of the plant is available at <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=m7GS5WaKk7g>

Pete Redwood, convenor of the Sustainability Group, Leeds Area Meeting

A movement for 1.5°C living?

In 2015 negotiators at the annual UN summit on climate change in Paris reached a surprisingly ambitious agreement. While reaffirming governments' commitment to keep global warming below 2°C, they also said they would “pursue efforts” for a 1.5°C limit. They asked the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC) – the UN body that brings together thousands of scientists to prepare in-depth assessments of the state of knowledge about climate change – to prepare a report on the implications of the lower stabilisation goal.

At a conference in Oxford last year to begin exploring the implications of the 1.5°C aspiration, there was a lot of interest in so-called “negative emissions technologies”. Mostly that means using wood and other biomass as an energy source, and collecting and storing the CO₂ when it is burned. There are of course huge technical and economic challenges with this approach, as well as implications for land use and food production.

Meanwhile, the research community, NGOs and governments seem unable to even discuss the lifestyle changes that might be needed to have a good chance of keeping warming below 2°C, never mind 1.5°C. ‘Green’ governments continue to promote economic growth and subsidise fossil fuels, and environmentally concerned citizens continue to drive, fly and eat meat and dairy.

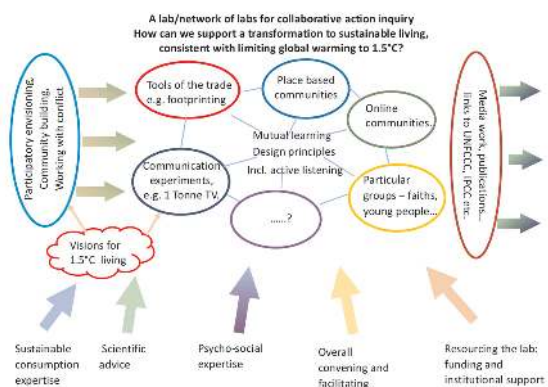
There has been a great deal of research on ways to encourage small changes in consumption without challenging or changing culture and values – such as ‘nudge’ measures, price incentives and product innovation. But real experiments in sustainable living are confined to ecovillages and other communities that attract people from the small percentage who are already motivated.

In March this year I was invited to get involved in an international group of sustainable living experts, practitioners and leaders convened by a Danish foundation and a Japanese thinktank. We are committed to working to bring about sustainable living consistent with the 1.5°C limit. As a benchmark, we think that means reducing greenhouse gas emissions per person globally to 1 tonne CO₂-equivalent by 2030. We are organising ourselves to promote community and city-level initiatives, learning processes and communication for sustainable living. Some of the ideas we are currently developing are:

- experiments to support a transformation to sustainable living in urban communities, including city-scale initiatives
- communication projects like a One Tonne Reality TV Show
- eco-auditing and planning tools to support sustainable living
- working with faith groups on their approaches to transforming ways of living, aiming to produce an interfaith commitment for the climate negotiations this November
- working with experts and with IPCC Lead Authors to develop material that can be used in IPCC reports, in particular the Sixth Assessment, and possibly the 1.5° Special Report

We currently have about 45 people in the network and we are developing the infrastructure for the work, from ways of working and shared values to funding, administration and communication. At the moment I’m serving as one of the core group of convenors. Organisations currently involved are:

Bioregional, British Columbia Institute of Technology, C40, Chatham House, Climate Outreach, Copenhagen Business School, Dear Tomorrow, ECOLISE, European Environment Agency, Forum for the Future, Global Action



Plan, Global Footprint Network, GreenFaith, Greenpeace, IGES, KR Foundation, Living Witness, New Economics Foundation, No Impact Man, One Earth, Open University, PlanMiljø, Realdania, Stockholm Environment Institute, Sustainable Europe Research Institute, Transition Network, Transmissions from the Future, University of Copenhagen, University of Muenster, Wuppertal Institute.

If you think you have a contribution to make to this network, please get in touch with me!

Laurie

Sustainability workshops at YMG

There are lots of sustainability-themed events at Yearly Meeting gathering on 29th July to 5th August at Warwick University. Some are listed here. For more details go to the Quakers in Britain website www.quaker.org.uk. There is not space here to list the full range of workshops addressing the New Economy, simplicity, and other themes linked to sustainability.

Sunday

14.30-15.30

- **Our personal journeys with sustainability.** Creative writing and drawing/art workshop. Stevie Krayer and Frances Voelcker, BYM Sustainability Group

- **Quaker essentials for sustainability.** Exploring our different ways into engaging with sustainability. Laurie Michaelis, Living Witness

- **Sustainability: world family case studies.** International visitors and others will share case studies on sustainability. Quaker World Relations Committee

14.30-17.00

- **The Kingdom of God.** Experiential workshop, spending time outdoors. Ian Marshall, Living Witness

16.00-17.00

- **Developing a more just and sustainable society.** North Wales Economic Justice Group

- **Our personal journeys with sustainability.** Repeated

- **Quaker essentials for sustainability.** Repeated

Monday

14.30-15.30

- **Imagining pathways to a sustainable future.** Laurie Michaelis, Living Witness

16.00-17.00

- **Choosing a sustainable future.** Laurie Michaelis, Living Witness

Tuesday

14.30-15.30

- **Having difficult conversations about climate change.** Led by Martin Mansell and Laurie Michaelis, BYMSG

16.00-17.00

- **Having difficult conversations about climate change.** Repeated

Thursday

14.30-15.30

- **Working with others on sustainability. A facilitated conversation to share experiences.**

BYMSG.

16.00-17.00

- **Working with others on sustainability.** Repeated

We don't need pesticides - do we?

The University of Warwick, venue for this year's Yearly Meeting Gathering, is home to Horticultural Research International – a group of scientists committed to finding ways to produce the very best fruit and vegetables for us. Recent research, for example, was into finding ways to prevent aphids attacking lettuces. It was discovered that certain chemicals emitted by blackcurrant leaves proved quite distasteful to aphids. Once again proving that we do not need many of the synthetic pesticides developed to fuel the profits of certain global manufacturing giants.

Over and over again research is showing that many of the synthetic compounds used by farmers and food producers are actually causing us a lot of harm. The situation is complex and supermarkets and advertisers are as guilty as anybody of creating a culture for perfection for the customer whilst ensuring maximum profits for producers and large retailers.

Many of us are not able to grow our own produce and so have to rely on the large producers. The answer, it would seem, to buy organic wherever possible and where possible support the local producers as well.

Many local producers operate a box scheme whereby a selection of locally produced veg, and sometimes fruit, is delivered to your door regularly.

<http://www.vegbox-recipes.co.uk> has a page that can help you find a supplier in your area. Some of the larger companies, like Abel & Cole (<https://www.abelandcole.co.uk>) and Riverford (<https://www.riverford.co.uk>) operate across much of the country, using local growers, and give you some choice of what goes in your box.



A Watery Problem

Bottled water consumption in the UK has escalated in the past twenty years. In 1995 sales accounted for around 800 million litres. For the year 2016 UK sales were recorded 3.2 billion litres. Of that UK production was 2.7 billion litres. That equates to 50 litres of bottled water per person. Compare this with USA sales of 135 litres per head. It is possibly the most profitable part of the soft drinks industry, worth well over £2.4 billion a year, exceeding that of the sale of wines and spirits, and exceeding the sale of fruit juices, cordials etc. Natural spring water only accounts for around 40% of the market. The UK actually exports 126 million litres of bottled water a year.

Why do people drink it when we have some of the safest tap water in the world? Many health “health gurus” have published “facts” which claim that tap water contains many chemicals which MIGHT be injurious to health. But they have overlooked three very important aspects which cause far more harm to human health.

Firstly, all the way around the world, water bottling plants are causing water shortages by removing valuable local water supplies.

Secondly the transportation of bottled water and indeed the manufacture of huge quantities of plastic bottles is adding significantly to global warming. The Independent newspaper has described it as “environmental insanity” and estimates that the transportation alone adds 33,200 tons of CO₂ to the atmosphere, an amount equivalent to the energy consumption of 6,000 homes.

Thirdly, the disposal of millions of plastic bottles is creating a nightmare. The majority are not recycled. The bottles are made of PET, produced directly from oil. They do not break down in the environment. If they get as far as a rubbish bin they will finish up in landfill where they will remain indefinitely. Many finish up in our water courses, eventually finish up in the sea. It is estimated the North Sea, for example contains more plastic than it does fish! And if fish happen to ingest plastic and we then eat those fish we are eating contaminated flesh which may have a serious effect on our own health.

The Consumer’s Association has carried a number of “blind” tests and discovered that in most cases people were unable to taste any difference between tap and bottled water and the majority that did actually preferred the taste of tap water! They also discovered that the claimed mineral content of many was so low that it could be of no conceivable health benefit unless drunk to excess. They also challenged the widely quoted claim that “you should drink at least eight glasses of water a day”. They could find no medical basis for this and concluded that it was a slogan invented by the industry.

Both Coca-Cola and Nestle have been exposed for bottling ordinary tap water. The Perrier Water founder was quoted as saying how easy it is “just to take ordinary water out of the ground and then sell it for more than cost of wine.” And Highland Spring water, which is supposed to owe its heritage to an ancient Scottish family, is drawn from water supplies owned by a rich Arab entrepreneur based in Dubai.

It is also worth bearing in mind that well over 1 billion people across the world do not have access to clean drinking water whilst a mere handful of greedy multi-national corporations charge grossly inflated prices for the very product these people crave, and in some cases actually cause the shortages in the first place.



Diary

Yearly Meeting Gathering, Warwick University, 29 July - 5 August 2017.

Please contact laurie@livingwitness.org.uk if you'd like to be involved in Living Witness activities at YMG, or to be put in touch with Friends considering forming a self-catering vegan group.

At Yearly Meeting Gathering

On Sunday and Monday - workshops by Living Witness Project - see page 12

Also - throughout the week, various workshops organised by QPSW. See the full listing on the Quaker website <http://www.quaker.org.uk/ym/timetable>

Wellbeing and Resilience. Living Witness Retreat at Quaker Community, Bamford, 22-24 September 2017. Building resilience by balancing the intensity of our work with ways of supporting ourselves individually and in our community. To book please contact info@livingwitness.org.uk

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Deadline for the next issue of earthQuaker - Monday 28th August 2017

Please post or email contributions to the editor

Pete Redwood, 7 Barran Court, Bayswater Place, Leeds LS8 5LY

or 0113 217 4973 or email: pete@livingwitness.org.uk

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

The co-ordinator is Laurie Michaelis.

The office address is Living Witness, Friends Meeting House, 43 St Giles, Oxford, OX1 3LW.

To contact Laurie by email use as before: laurie@livingwitness.org.uk

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



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Ian Care, 8 Kings Drive, Derby