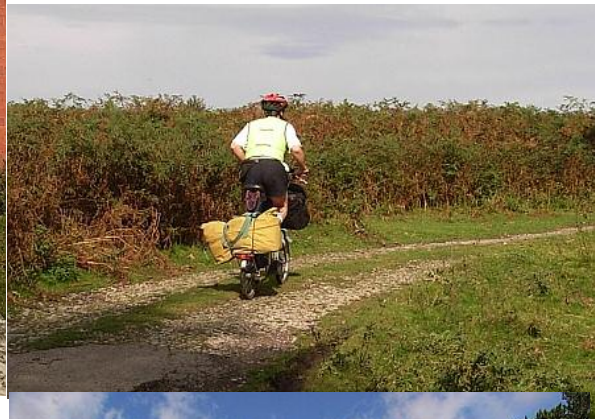


earthQuaker

The journal of Quaker Green Action issue 59 November 2007
+ Living Witness Project Newsletter No. 19



QGA late summer gathering September 2007



Barmoor, near Hutton-le-Hole, North Yorkshire



Contents include:

- Merger of QGA and LWP ● American Quaker Earthcare Witness ●
 - Transition Towns ● launch of Big Earth Book ●
 - Bangladesh ● National Climate March ●
 - Blackout World ● News from Meetings ● Letters ● Book Reviews ●
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Editorial

While enjoying their low carbon gathering at Barmoor in September QGA members agreed to the merger with the Living Witness Project (LWP) with a few conditions—see copy of the relevant minute on page 3. The LWP Trustees meet in December when it is expected they will agree to these conditions. So before the next earthQuaker in February 08 the deed should be done and dusted except for the presentation of the QGA 2007 accounts. Your committee may have to stay in place until this is done— we are looking into whether this is constitutionally necessary!

What difference will this make to the grassroots QGA member? Well, you will need to write a different payee name on your subscription cheque and send it to a different address— **please look carefully at your renewal reminder if you have one with this earthQuaker!** Apart from that earthQuaker, now incorporating the LWP newsletter as it did last issue and is doing again this time, should arrive as usual, and you will be offered a

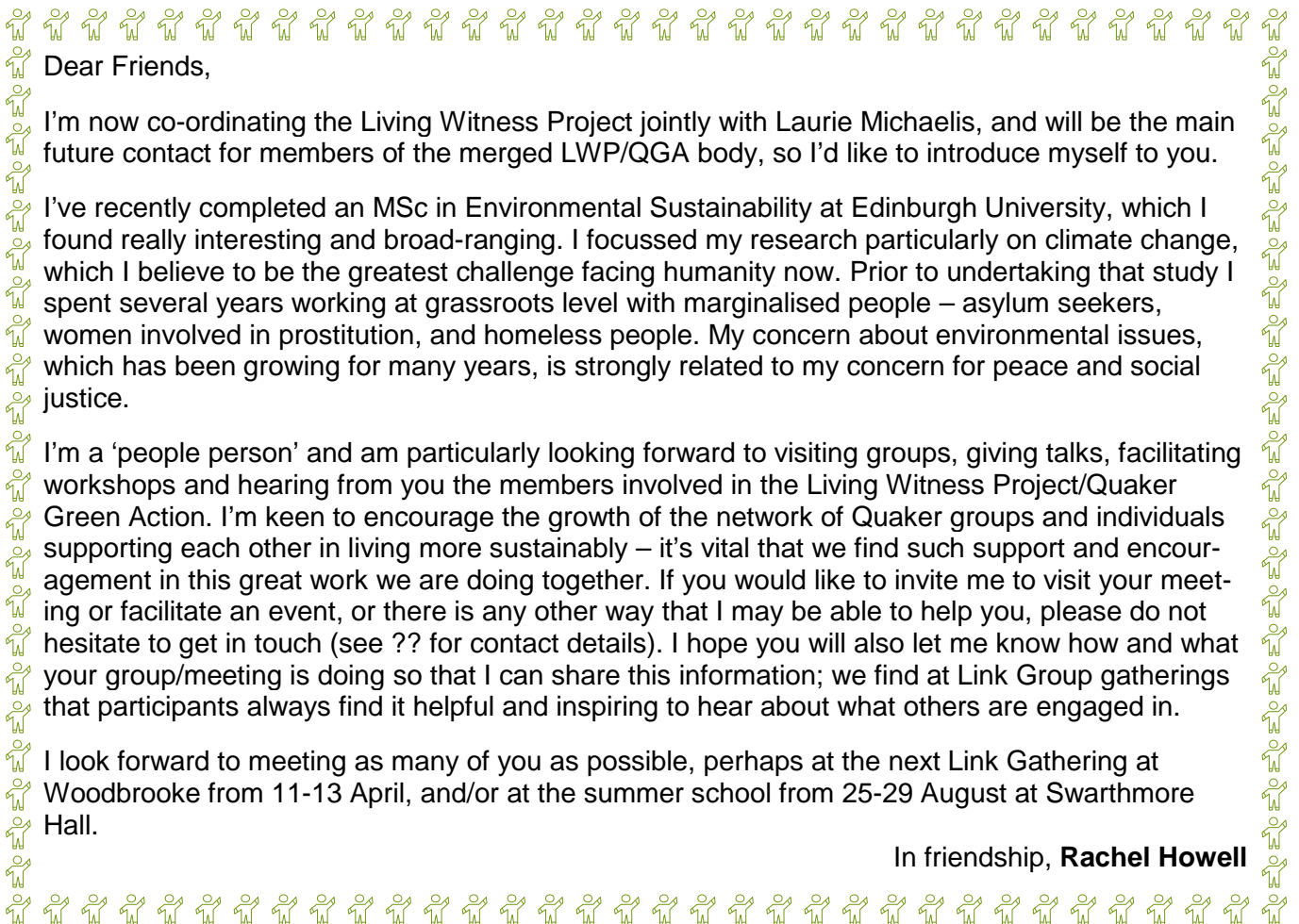
Summer Gathering. However there will be a bonus! You will also get invites to other interesting events arranged by the LWP which you may not have been aware of before.

What about Meetings which regularly donate to QGA? Hopefully you will continue your donations but to the LWP. Then as well as receiving earthQuaker you will be made more aware of the considerable resources that LWP offers to its member Meetings and you will be supporting their broader work for sustainability.

Friends currently acting as Reps for their Meeting will receive an invitation to be a Rep for the LWP which can be a more active role if you wish.

Below is a letter from Rachel Howell who will be the main contact for members of the new joint group and on page 3 to 4 is an article from Laurie Michaelis outlining a vision for the future of the joint QGA/LWP group.

Anne Brewer



Dear Friends,

I'm now co-ordinating the Living Witness Project jointly with Laurie Michaelis, and will be the main future contact for members of the merged LWP/QGA body, so I'd like to introduce myself to you.

I've recently completed an MSc in Environmental Sustainability at Edinburgh University, which I found really interesting and broad-ranging. I focussed my research particularly on climate change, which I believe to be the greatest challenge facing humanity now. Prior to undertaking that study I spent several years working at grassroots level with marginalised people – asylum seekers, women involved in prostitution, and homeless people. My concern about environmental issues, which has been growing for many years, is strongly related to my concern for peace and social justice.

I'm a 'people person' and am particularly looking forward to visiting groups, giving talks, facilitating workshops and hearing from you the members involved in the Living Witness Project/Quaker Green Action. I'm keen to encourage the growth of the network of Quaker groups and individuals supporting each other in living more sustainably – it's vital that we find such support and encouragement in this great work we are doing together. If you would like to invite me to visit your meeting or facilitate an event, or there is any other way that I may be able to help you, please do not hesitate to get in touch (see ?? for contact details). I hope you will also let me know how and what your group/meeting is doing so that I can share this information; we find at Link Group gatherings that participants always find it helpful and inspiring to hear about what others are engaged in.

I look forward to meeting as many of you as possible, perhaps at the next Link Gathering at Woodbrooke from 11-13 April, and/or at the summer school from 25-29 August at Swarthmore Hall.

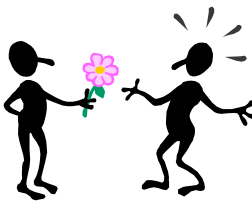
In friendship, **Rachel Howell**

Minutes of interest from the QGA business meeting held September 29th 2007

(14 members present. Laurie Michaelis and Anne Brewer acted as Co-clerks)

5. Treasurer's report

Our treasurer has presented accounts for 2006.

 We thank Phoebe Spence and Zee-Zee Heine for their work in producing the accounts. We continue to have higher income than outgoings. We have been pleased to hear of successful outcomes from the two grants we gave in 2006 and would like to encourage more applications. We thank Zee-Zee for acting as examiner for 2006.

(N.B. A copy of the accounts is available on request from Phoebe Spence or Anne Brewer)

6. Plans for the coming year

We hope that earthQuaker will continue to be produced four times a year, and that Walk Cheerfully, Step Lightly will be updated and a new edition published for 2008.

We would like a summer gathering of members and suggest not the August Bank Holiday. We ask Stephan Ball, Bryn Raven and Pete Redwood to form an organising group. We suggest that if it is a camp, alternative facilities should be available.

7. Proposal to merge with the Living Witness Project

Laurie has summarised the outcome of the threshing session held yesterday, Friday 28th September, on the possible merger of Quaker Green Action and the Living Witness Project.

The two organisations have essentially the same purposes. The people actively involved in the running of the two groups are largely the same. Some are becoming overstretched in having to cope with two sets of governance. If we merge, the Quaker Green Action would be laid down and governance would be undertaken by the six Living

Witness Project Trustees (four of whom are Quaker Green Action members).

The main concern about the merger is that the two groups have different emphases. The main focus of the Living Witness Project has been on developing a corporate Quaker witness on the environment, and it has worked to achieve this through Britain Yearly Meeting structures. Quaker Green Action has mainly supported the activity of individual Quakers.

We agree to the merger on the understanding that:

1) Our existing Quaker Green Action activities will continue and, where relevant, will continue to be organised by the membership.

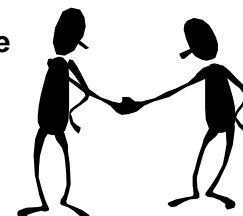
2) The Living Witness Project trustees will seek guidance from the membership of the merged body on significant decisions that affect the membership. We suggest that our summer camp/gathering is a good opportunity to do so.

3) Living Witness Project moves as quickly as practicable to a Quaker constitution with trustees appointed by and responsible to the membership.

We look forward to being part of the merged body.

We agree that the Quaker Green Action funds should be merged with those of the Living Witness Project. We hope that the facility of offering grants for environmental work, to individuals and meetings, will be continued by the merged body.

Our current Quaker Green Action committee members are appointed to the end of 2007. We ask that this committee works with the Living Witness Project trustees on the practicalities of the merger. The committee members present agree to serve until the process is complete. We thank all committee members for their service.



Living Witness Project – a Vision

At its September meeting, the LWP management group set out a vision of the sustainability crisis as a potential stimulus for a spiritual awakening. There is growing recognition in our civilisation of the need to rebuild social solidarity, but will we retreat towards authoritarianism? Or can we progress towards a society that values the individual, yet can find a collective will? At its best, Quakerism offers a unique model for the latter in our meetings for worship and business method.

LWP offers a distinctive approach centred on community and changing consciousness as keys to lifestyle change and the transformation of society. Friends have different approaches – whether focused on earth-based spirituality, relieving suffering, or right livelihood based in frugality. A key Quaker gift is to recognise and work with diversity, valuing our different experiences of the Truth.

A strong Quaker base is imperative to be able to move out to others. We need to engage more individual Friends and meetings. We aim for LWP

to be something that the whole meeting does. We want to see strong Quaker ownership of what we're doing – whether expressed in volunteer involvement or financial support. We need to work closely with national Quaker processes to develop a shared understanding of our distinctive contribution as Friends.

We have many potential partners in the wider world. Some obvious connections are with other

faith groups and environmental organisations. Links need to be built by all of our membership, reaching out to others in their local communities and in national groups where they have contacts or interest.

There is much work to do to understand what the world needs, what we have to offer, and what God is asking of us. Our response could change and save lives. We hope you will be involved.

Laurie Michaelis

(American) Quakers want to get involved and make a difference!

The following is extracted from an article in the November 2007 issue of *Befriending Creation* – the journal of the American Quaker Earthcare Witness (QEW) group.

In education, politics, and business, the threat of climate change connects with the core purposes of those institutions. Of course there are ways that academics, legislators, and business leaders can be involved! In those social sectors, I don't hear leaders asking start-from-scratch questions about what can be done. How, then, does global warming connect with the essential testimonies of



As clerk of the QEW Steering Committee, I have had the opportunity to meet Quakers from all across the USA. Often they have asked me, "What can we and our Meetings do about the environmental crisis?"

I'm glad that the question is being asked, because it tells me that Quakers do want to get involved, and they do want to make a difference. But I'm concerned when the question is asked at a basic level — in terms of how to even get started. It suggests to me that many Quakers are unsure how environmental problems—and harmful climate change in particular—connect with Quaker testimonies.

What can we do? is a question that comes up in relation to disasters, death and poverty, but it is a question mostly of details and timing. We presume that Meetings can and should do something, and we're looking for help on the specifics.

But when it comes to the global environmental crisis, the question seems far more basic. Many Meetings seem to be starting from scratch. It is not about which tools to use, or which programs to support, but simply about where to begin.

As I listen to the discussions about global warming in many other sectors of society, I don't hear the question "What can we do?" being raised in the same way that it is in Quaker Meetings.

Quakerism? That is a legitimate question and an important concern.

If—as is often the case—the crisis of climate change is discussed primarily as a debate about scientific evidence, or about technological solutions, or about complex economic strategies, then those topics are a stretch for most Meetings. That's not how we understand our mission, and that's not where we have our expertise.

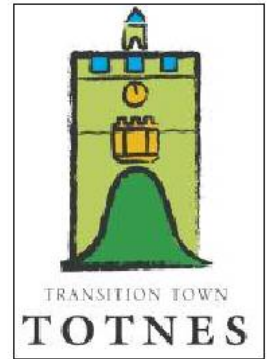
But if we see global warming as a moral and ethical issue that deals with the relationships among human communities, future generations, and the whole of Creation, then we're getting into religious territory. If we see climate change as a symptom of a flawed understanding about the meaning of life, then we're addressing an area where we can speak with moral authority. If Earth's deep distress is at heart a human problem and not a technological one, then Quakers should have a decent sense of how to talk about it.

In the three years that I have been clerk of the QEW Steering Committee, I have seen a change among Monthly Meetings. More and more Quakers are discerning how the great environmental issues of our time are intimately connected with what Quakers are called to do and be. And the questions about what can we do? are being asked in a different way.

Barbara Williamson
Outgoing QEW Steering Committee Clerk

Transition Towns

While we were at Barmoor for our late summer gathering there was a meeting in nearby Kirkbymoorside on Transition Towns and some of us went along. Your editor spoke to June Emerson, a local Quaker, who is much involved in the aim to make Kirkbymoorside a Transition Town and asked if she would like to contribute an article on the topic to earthQuaker. June very kindly offered the story she wrote for the local paper after the meeting and here it is.



A STORY

Once upon a time there was a beautiful blue planet where some extremely highly developed creatures lived. Unfortunately their brain-power exceeded their common sense, and the result was that their inventive activities began to pollute the air they breathed, the seas that they fished and the land that they farmed.

Their use of the abundant fossil fuels that they found underground enabled them to travel great distances, and live far from where they worked, in huge cities with sprawling suburbs. Because of this the whole planet's population increased rapidly. It soon reached a point where some of the more perceptive creatures realised that the expansion couldn't go on for ever, because the source of energy was finite. They began to speak out about it, but those who were getting rich on the expansion either laughed or ignored them. So did those who were afraid of what might happen and didn't want to hear these warnings.

Because they loved the blue planet, and didn't want to see it ruined, the reformers began to create organisations and movements which planned to slow down the rate of consumption of the planet's goods, and to find different ways of living which didn't exploit the resources. Their national leaders ignored them. Nevertheless more and more individuals became aware, and groups sprang up everywhere to try to promote *right living* – living in a way that was perhaps not so luxurious, but was pleasant and co-operative and en-

sured fairer shares for all. This became known as the Movement of Movements and was a strong and ever-growing global network.

Towns took charge of themselves, (calling themselves Transition Towns) ignored the national leaders and step by step made themselves sustainable.

Because the Movement of Movements had no Big Leader, but was a strong co-operative network, the number of conflicts between tribes (which was usually about the increasingly scarce fuels) reduced to mere local disagreements. These could be resolved by negotiation rather than war. Because of the willingness of the richer tribes to reduce their high standard of living by a certain amount, and help the poorer tribes, the gap between rich and poor reduced year by year.

Eventually a balance was reached. The blue planet recovered its natural health and the inhabitants lived a fuller and richer life together. New ideas still blossomed and amazing new discoveries were made, but all were tested carefully to make sure they did not disturb the balance. Life was good, disaster was avoided, and the blue planet became one of the most amazing places in the universe.

This is the story I would like to write.

© June Emerson

8 Ravis Square, Kirkbymoorside, York YO62 6QA

List of contents of the Transition Initiatives primer

Introduction. Why transition Initiatives are necessary.
More about Peak Oil.
Taking action: the big picture—initiatives at global, national and local levels.
The Transition Model—what exactly is it?
Kinsale 2021—an energy descent plan.
TransitionTown Totnes. Other Transition Initiatives.
Setting up your Transition Initiative—criteria; different types; 7 "buts".
The 12 steps of Transition. The wider context of Transition.
Questions of leadership and structure.
The role of local government. Getting businesses involved.
Movies for raising awareness. Transition Network. Conclusion.
Further reading. Contact details.

If you are interested in Transition Towns June has also sent a pdf of the **Transition Initiatives Primer**—a 40 page booklet with everything you need to know and lots of encouragement to get going. This booklet is regularly updated—to get the latest copy email benbrangwyn@transitionnetwork.org or ask the editor for a printout of the Sept 07 version for 75p to cover costs of printing, paper and postage.

Arsenic rising: a case for slow action

I spent a chilling day at the Royal Geographical Society recently attending a conference on the way that arsenic, present naturally in some young floodplain sediments, has been brought to the surface via shallow tube wells. Concentrations in water are well in excess of WHO guidelines. Arsenic is also finding its way into rice via soils irrigated with contaminated water.

It is a problem in parts of 70 countries, probably more. 140 million people may be at risk, with South and South East Asia accounting for more than half. The most seriously affected areas are in Bangladesh, West Bengal and Nepal. GUP (Gono Unnayan Prochesta), an NGO with which Quakers have had a long friendship, operates in a part of Bangladesh with very high concentrations.

The first signs of poisoning – characteristic skin lesions – appear after several years of drinking contaminated water. These began to appear in West Bengal in the early 1980s and were soon diagnosed as arsenic poisoning, but the problem was not treated seriously until recently. More recent research



has documented the way in which consumption of arsenic is leading to higher rates of some cancers, including tumours of the lung, bladder and skin, and other lung conditions. It is feared that one in 10 people with high concentrations of arsenic will die from it. An epidemic of cancers is predicted for West Bengal and southern parts of Bangladesh in 10 years or so.

Both countries now test wells regularly and identify those considered arsenic-free. Unfortunately this assessment is based on a concentration of 50 parts per billion (50ppb), much higher than the level of 10ppb recommended by the WHO. Moreover, increased use of an arsenic-free well sometimes leads to its contamination, and women are often reluctant to walk the extra distance to an approved well. Moreover, women who come from families in which they or another family member are disfigured also suffer various forms of social discrimination, such as unacceptability for marriage and divorce.

The reason for the emergence of this problem in the Bengal Basin is directly related to the success of campaigns to sink tube wells in the soft, unconsolidated deltaic sediments. Ironically, these wells were designed to reduce deaths from diarrhoea and other water-borne diseases caused by drinking water from open wells and ponds. Solutions to

the problems with drinking water would appear to lie in filtering, in chlorinating surface water or in sinking much deeper tube wells. These deeper wells were thought to be the principal way forward for Bangladesh until geological studies revealed that the layer of compacted silt or clay which separates the deep from the shallower aquifers is not continuous,

making it likely that some of these deeper aquifers might themselves become contaminated within 20-50 years. Fortunately, there is a deep layer of clay under the GUP project area, and deep tube wells can be part of their solution. Solutions for the arsenic in soils may be more problematic.

The late Ataur Rahman, founding executive director of GUP, used to say that people cannot face a serious threat until they have a way of dealing with it. I am sure that this explains some of the delay in accepting the truth about the serious crisis facing policy makers in affected countries. The need to avoid unnecessary panic is a valid one. I feel a reluctance to write about it now for similar reasons.



Tube well in Bangladesh. From www.newint.org/issue332/poison

Bangladesh is reeling from a terrible cyclone. Global warming poses a longer term threat. Why add to the depression one sometimes feels when looking at the problems facing Bangladesh? The answer has to lie in the need to face problems in order to deal with them.

The people of Bangladesh are very resilient. Much is now being done within the affected areas to filter water and encourage use of arsenic-free wells. GUP's 'Water, Sanitation and Arsenic Mitigation Programme' now includes work for arsenic removal to supply safe water in the area and to sink deep tube wells at strategic points.

The RGS conference helped awaken policy-makers in other parts of the world to the potential for this problem to happen elsewhere. All governments, especially those with extensive floodplain areas, are now urged to test for arsenic. Several international organisations have responded positively. The potential for contamination of rice has been spotted early and should lead to early screening of water used in irrigation and transfers to surface or safer groundwater sources. The matter is clearly urgent. The longer that people are exposed to arsenic, the greater the risk of them suffering arsenic poisoning. Action now – even risky interim measures while long-term solutions

are being found - could save lives and suffering.

It seems to me that there is little we Quakers can do, other than continue to support our friends at GUP and perhaps become better informed. More information about GUP and Settle Meeting's current fundraising efforts to refurbish the buildings at its Peace Centre can be found at www.settlequakers.org.uk.

On arsenic, I recommend a popular book by Andrew Meharg from the University of Aberdeen, one of the speakers at the conference, entitled *Venomous Earth – How arsenic caused the world's worst mass poisoning* (Macmillan, 2005). Along with more details about the situation in West Bengal

and Bangladesh and the chemical processes involved in getting the arsenic into a water-soluble form, you will find fascinating information about arsenic in alchemy, early chemistry, poisons, medicine and William Morris wallpapers.

Pat Saunders

tel. 01729 823 438 pat_saunders@btinternet.com

A QGA member, Pat is currently a part-time research associate with the Geography Department of Cambridge University. An earlier version of this article appeared in Quaker South Asia Interest Group Newsletter 10 Autumn 2007. Contact Pat for more details of this Group.

NATIONAL CLIMATE MARCH— GLOBAL DAY OF ACTION

Saturday 8th December 2007



Organised by Campaign against Climate Change part of the Stop Climate Chaos coalition.

10am Cycle protest. Assemble Lincoln's Inn Fields Arrive Parliament Square 1 pm and feed in to Main March as it enters Parliament Square. 2 stops –outside Tesco Metro and Dept of Transport.

11.00 am Service at St Matthews Church, 20 Great Peter Street , Coffee from 10.00 am

12 noon Main March. Assemble Millbank—near Westminster tube station

2.30pm Rally at US Embassy Speakers include Chris Huhne MP, Michael Meacher MP, Caroline Lucas MEP, Zac Goldsmith, George Monbiot.



The National Demo in London will be one of many demonstrations taking place all around the world on the same day, midway through the UN Climate Talks in Bali.

For more information contact:

Tel: 020 7833 9311 / 07903 316 331

Websites: www.campaigncc.org

or www.globalclimatecampaign.org to see what's going on elsewhere in the world.



Dec. 8. 2007

BLACKOUT BRITAIN

Is spreading its wings!
BLACKOUT WORLD
21st March 2008 7pm - 8pm

21st March 2008 is Equinox, when Night and Day take an equal share.

We are calling for people everywhere to take only their rightful share of Carbon during BLACKOUT WORLD - roughly 500 grams of net Carbon Dioxide emissions to air for each hour of the day.

Our campaign material will feature Energy Sharing, or Carbon Rations, and how this is the

only rational system to both guarantee Energy Security and protect the Climate.

We will publish information about how enforced BLACKOUTs of electricity and fuel are being used as political punishment between producers, suppliers and consumers.

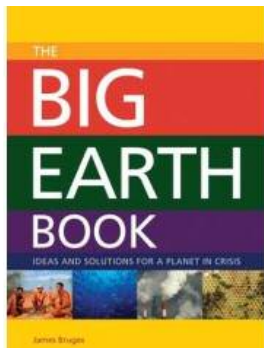
We will raise the issue that some nations are being forced to use BLACKOUTs as an emergency measure brought on by the effects of Climate Change.

As the world's energy infrastructure begins to suffer from lack of investment and Peak Energy, we will also point the way to Energy Rations being essential for world peace.

Jo Abbess jo.abbess@gmail.com

The Big Earth Book

Some of you may know the Little Earth Book written by Quaker, James Bruges. Well he has now had published the Big Earth Book. The synopsis of this book from the Amazon website is as follows:



We all know the Earth is in crisis. We should know that it is big enough to sustain us if we can only mobilise politicians and economists to change course now. This book explores environmental, economic and social ideas to save our planet. It helps us understand

what is happening to the planet today, exposes the actions of corporations and the lack of action of governments, weighs up new technologies, and champions innovative and viable solutions. Tackling a huge range of subjects - it has the potential to become the seminal reference book on the state of the planet - the one and only environmental book you really need.

What follows is a shortened version of the interesting talk—produced by your editor and approved by James—which he gave at the launch of the Big Earth Book on 12th September 2007.

Disasters and crises fill the media.

Poverty in the Third World has been the greatest economic, cultural and humanitarian disaster of recent years, outstripping the two great wars for the sheer scale and depth of unrelenting tragedy.

Perhaps the most imminent crisis for us in the west will be 'peak oil'. Not that oil will run out, but that its production will decrease while global demand rises. When demand exceeds supply, prices rise. It will affect most things – such as transport and plastics – but the most dramatic effect will be on the cost and availability of food.

Then, the most frightening, longer term, crisis is the possibility of runaway global warming, which, if we get to a tipping point, would be unstoppable.

There are many other crises such as population growth, inequality, antibiotics losing their effectiveness, or the huge decline in bees - a crisis? - well, bees pollinate a third of our food.

So what is the best approach for dealing with crises? I will set out the two principles that seem most promising to me.

The first principle is to act at the source of the problem. The second is to put different, apparently unrelated, subjects beside each other.

Climate – the money system - trade rules - agricultural practice - these different subjects all affect each other, but books tend to deal with them separately.

I have tried to identify only those aspects that deal with the source of these problems and placed them beside each other in a single book.

Two examples- the first is about global warming.

It is important that we should consider what to do about our personal carbon footprint. But if oil, gas and coal continue to be mined at the present rate, our efforts will be useless. They will release their greenhouse gases somewhere, somehow, sometime. If not by you, then by someone else.

Three quarters of global warming comes from emissions caused by burning coal, gas and oil. But how often do you hear politicians demanding that these three fuels are left in the ground?

Globally: it would be easier to regulate the 500 companies that mine coal, gas and oil than to persuade 6 thousand million people to reduce their demand. These companies should be required to buy emission rights that have been distributed equally to all adults.

And I would prefer to live in an economy that is constrained by the amount of fossil fuel available than be made to feel guilty every time I get into a car. This constraint would stimulate everyone's initiative and creativeness in using what is available to the best advantage.

My second example is the money system. The money system economists force us to use is fundamentally faulty.

In the scientific world everything is subject to entropy. A coat gradually rots or is eaten by weevils and turns to dust. But not in the world of economists. Economists turn reality on its head. Their world is based on debt, and debt need not reduce to zero, it can grow forever. It is a virtual, make-believe, world that has little connection with the real world. It may seem unrealistic to suggest a money system not based on charging interest. But there have been many prosperous periods in the past that did not use it. And there are some zero-interest systems now.

Those two examples – the need to leave most fossil fuels in the ground and the need to abandon a money system based on interest – are necessary if we are survive the two crises of global warming and inequality.

What if we fail?

Collapse of our economy, or our civilisation, would be a calamity. So what causes complex societies to collapse?

The most quoted example is the decline and fall of the Roman Empire. In its early years, it could survive Hannibal with his elephants overrunning its countryside for five years. But when it reached the limits of growth, all its efforts were spent in administering itself and struggling to get sufficient resources. Some of its communities preferred to stop paying taxes and leave Roman protection in favour of a lower but freer standard of living with the barbarians. The empire had no spare energy to deal with external shocks, and finally succumbed to a relatively minor incursion.

I sometimes wonder whether we could be in a similar situation. So much time and money is spent on administering ourselves in more and more complex ways.

What would happen if a universal virus disrupted all internet communication or affected air-

craft computers? Laws and tax complexities multiply. And - another parallel with Rome,- some resources are in increasingly short supply.

So, going back to the crises. Any one of these might, due to the excessive complexity of our society provide the shock that stops us in our tracks.

And, if this is a possibility, is it right to leave behind buildings that can never dissolve back into the earth or become significant ruins in the way that those of the Incas or the Romans did? And should we be leaving nuclear plants that future generations may not have the expertise to manage, together with their piles of radioactive waste? And should we leave toxic chemical and genetically modified organisms – neither of which have been subject to the process of evolution?

With this perspective, these practical issues become questions of morality.

News from Living Witness Project Quaker Meetings

Ludlow Meeting have drawn up a list of environmental actions we have taken, to give to hirers and meeting members, so they can follow our example. We also have an *environmental policy* which is from Advice 42, with an addition, to be put on the wall. We are discussing a green skirt for our Christmas party in January, and also transition towns, the latter with a view to linking with others.

Anne Adams

Gloucestershire Area Quaker Meeting

(previously Gloucester & Nailsworth MM) have responded to the government consultation on the draft climate change bill, welcoming the principle of legal limitations on the UK's greenhouse gas emissions, but calling for more stringent cuts in light of recent scientific evidence of rapid climate change occurring. Three Local Meetings in the Stroud constituency wrote to our MP about this, and received a very positive response – he believes the government will have to take more direct and positive action if targets are to be met.

Area Meeting held a day gathering in October to consider Friends response to environmental issues and sustainability, particularly to provide a background for our representatives at December's Meeting for Sufferings. We were pleased to welcome Rachel Howell of LWP. Climate Change was the main theme, including its effects on landscape, the effects of different waste management measures, of global population increase and of the highly meat based diet of most countries. While we recognised the direct relevance of climate change to Quaker Testimonies to Peace, Equality and Simplicity, we value all life for its own sake. Simplicity came up a number of times, both

as a necessary part of reducing wasteful and damaging consumerism and as being valuable in itself to us as individuals and society. We expressed the hope that the testimony to Sustainability and the Environment, at present described as "emerging" would become ever more real through our lives and actions, both in BYM centrally, in local Meetings and as individuals.

Martin Quick

Huddersfield Meeting—Several members are part of a group called Valley Wind (www.valleywind.org.uk) trying to set up a co-operative wind farm in the Kirklees area.



We have also officially endorsed a Huddersfield Friends of the Earth Stop Climate Change March - scheduled for 1st December - we will be taking Quaker banners etc on the March and are writing to our MPs re Climate Change Bill (to support the Big Ask). We've also been filling in Climate Change Bill postcards. Some of us will be going on the London March on 8th December.

In February we organised a Green Fair at Huddersfield Meeting with speakers on renewable energy, green building and The Big Ask. We had lots of green children's activities which were very successful and helped bring people into the Fair. We had about 150 visitors and it went very well.

Chayley Collis

Staffordshire Area meeting has funded, representatives to Living Witness Project meetings this year and will be doing so next year (2008).

Earlier this year Wolverhampton Meeting held two

separate days on Deep Ecology with activities from Joanna Macey's *The Great Turning*. A dozen attended and all found the activities challenging.

Quaker Week got Stafford Meeting working together and attracted some public interest resulting in some new attenders, who are concerned with 'green' issues as well as spiritual seeking.

The Green Party has now another branch in Staffordshire called 'The Stafford and Stone Green Party'. At the inaugural meeting on 30th October at Stafford MH, there were about 25 people, many of them Quakers. It was encouraging that many of the people were young and all the officers' posts were filled with volunteers - no arm twisting!

Stafford MH garden is under reconstruction after some years of gentle neglect. We hope to balance wildlife and Friends needs. We've dug up lots of crazy paving, dug in lots of compost and await developments!

Some of us in Stafford meeting met for the first time recently to discuss 'community'. We spent about two hours discussing what each of us meant by 'community' and went on to look at practical ways of forming a community. Each of us went away with some task to perform, the results of which will be talked about at our next meeting.

Several of us now buy items from Suma in a sort of cooperative once every two or three months.

Nigel Peckett

Chepstow Meeting has closed so **Forest of Dean Meeting** now supports my LWP activities.

On 22nd October a meeting for "being fair and being just" was held in White Lion Square in Chepstow. Alongside me were representatives of Churches Together, fair trade, and Cardiff energy centre. Churches Together had fair trade goods to give to the passers-by and a petition against modern slavery to sign. Cardiff energy centre gave out free low energy light bulbs and I had material from the Centre of Alternative Technology, Operation Noah, Quakers, A Rocha, Eco link, The Friend and Nailsworth energy information. There were also displays of the forecast from the Hadley centre of expected future earth temperature and of material about peak oil and transition towns.

Margaret Davis

Mount Street Meeting, Manchester. So far this year, there has been an action research project on electricity suppliers to Friends at Meeting, to encourage a bit of thinking about that.

After a useful session on Air Travel at Area Meeting, we asked for an exhibition on the issue to be

created to give Friends the opportunity of looking at some of the issues in a different way. The exhibition was eventually in place for Heritage Open days and national Quaker Week and a fair number of Friends and others looked at it with generally positive feedback.

The Area Meeting has been on its annual tree planting expedition with Penny Eastwood in the Hebden Bridge Area - this remains a very worthwhile occasion on all sorts of levels even if we not doing very much to counter global warming!

Our Walk Cheerfully, Step Lightly Group has written a proposal for a set of Quaker positions on the motoring lobby—so that, as Media Officer, I can have something to say for Friends



when the proposed Congestion Charge in Greater Manchester is rubbished yet again by the media and the people - or so it seems! That has been seen by Area Meeting but the substantive discussion is yet to take place - it has been approved by Area Meeting's Social Justice Group. We have also produced some Motoring Advices and Queries sparked off by the Green A&Q from the QPSW Group.

Jonathan Dale

(The proposal for a Quaker position on motoring and the Motoring A&Q's are available from the editor if you would like to see these interesting documents.)

Inverness Meeting held a bring and share lunch in October and a meeting to discuss environmental issues. Seven of us were there and discussion ranged from what we had done and could do locally to global and national issues. I had downloaded the August 2007 issue of Earth-Quaker for circulation. We agreed to meet again in March 2008 and to consider whether our Meeting could become active participants in the Living Witness project. Meanwhile our congratulations and best wishes for what you have done and are doing. (The newsletter is excellent, by the way.)

Eleanor Fairclough

Wandsworth Meeting—Claire Montell and Kim Boyd organised a series of drop-in Meetings in September and October to discuss the links between the Quaker Testimonies (peace, simplicity, equality and truth) and our concerns for the environment. They were well attended and at the final meeting we discussed what we should be doing.

Our actions are taking a number of strands. First, our Meeting has agreed on some steps towards greening our Meeting House: reinstalling low-energy light bulbs (after some initial difficulties

with them a few years ago, before the recent technical improvements) and agreeing to consider a solar thermal panel when the roof of the caretaker's flat is replaced. We will also have an environmental review conducted (cost £10) under Wandsworth Council's Greening Business Programme.

We are also suggesting that the quinquennial surveys which Six Weeks' Meeting undertakes of every Meeting House in the London area should in future include an energy audit, and that any new building work undertaken by Six Weeks' Meeting should also have low energy use. We hope this will bring environmental issues to the mainstream of our work on Meeting Houses in the region.

We also plan to do more as individuals within the Meeting, including a small group of us working together to inform ourselves and support one another in our 'green' efforts.

Finally, one of our members, Linda Murgatroyd, held a public exhibition of paintings and prints with a green and spiritual theme in a local gallery, which was very well received. Her artwork and accompanying text invited people to reflect on their relationship with the natural environment, and on how this can bring healing as well as destruction.

Linda Murgatroyd

Letters

Dear Friends,
Many thanks for the latest EarthQuaker (Aug 07) – it looks good. I think it is a very good idea to merge Quaker Green Action and the Living Witness Project.



I have long been very concerned that Quakers are good at having strong opinions (although not always very informed), good at action (although not always very constructively) and good at judging others—sometimes without first removing some ingrown planks! Quaker Green Action seems to me to be a useful and encouraging thing. The Living Witness Project struck me as being the most sound way of empowering Friends in what they do – to discern rightly their individual leadings, to share these and to 'witness to' any common shared leadings, to a new 'testimony'. This seems to me to be far more grounded and powerful than a mere forum for 'shoulds' and 'should nots', which many green groups tend to be. It also seems to be requiring us Quakers to sit down and listen for our leadings, putting aside our prejudices and ill-informed opinions, our snap judgements and impulsive actions. If only we can

Wolverhampton Local Meeting Four Friends hosted all three of our MPs in October to discuss the Climate Change Bill on behalf of Wolverhampton Local Meeting. We explained that we welcomed the Bill in general. The issues we raised were:

- The targets appear to be low in comparison to the perceived need to reduce our emissions at a greater rate than developing countries, which produce a high proportion of our consumer goods.
- Emissions trading.
- Penalties for missing the targets set.
- The omission of air transport from the requirements of the Bill.
- The importance of intergovernmental communication and co-operation on these issues.
- The urgent need to raise public awareness.

Two of the MPs gave reasoned if rather disappointing replies. They clearly give a high priority to what targets and processes will be politically acceptable. It was encouraging to realise that they had given these matters careful thought and were well informed, and they appreciate any interest which can strengthen support for the Bill.

Win Sutton

reconnect, with our inner teacher, our lives, our shared life, our planet, we can live more abundantly – and more sustainably, of course. If the Living Witness Project can lead Quaker Green Action in the right direction, that would be a good thing.

Jerry Cullum
Alton Meeting

Dear earthQuaker,
I have been discussing this issue with Christian Ecology Link group and it was considered to be worth following up. So I wonder if you do as well. It has come to several of us that the way electricity is priced encourages people to use more. The first 180 kWh costs over 20p and then after that it costs about 12p. That is with npower anyway. I imagine all companies charge more to begin with and then less after a number of units used. Surely it needs to be the other way round! However as electricity is all privately owned the only way to put pressure on them is for lots and lots of people to write to them and ask them to change, for the sake of the planet! Can you help? Can we stop the excessive use of electricity now?

Barbara Mark
01568 780842
(letters continued overleaf)

Dear Anne,
 I'm absolutely thrilled with a 'smart meter' which I've just fitted this morning: part of it clips on the electricity meter, plus a mouse-sized transmitter nearby, and information is received by a little display box which you can carry from room to room, and which shows exactly how much electricity is being used at that moment. It also has a memory to record consumption over the weeks and months.



I've already changed two appliances around, and find my plug-in Remoska mini oven and grill from Lakeland uses only a quarter of the electricity of my main fitted oven.

If every house had one, I'm sure we could hugely reduce our electricity consumption! The supplier's website is www.efergy.com, and they cost £45.

(Editor's note: website www.electricity-monitor.com offers this gadget for £14.99 for 30 days rental)

It would be easy for several households to share one, or even have a loan system (via LETS maybe??), so as many people as possible can find out more about the consumption of each electrical appliance they use.

Please pass on the word to friends concerned about climate change - it can also reduce your electricity bills!

Ella Young

Roehaven, 51 St Leonard's Rd, Forres
 Moray IV36 1DW

Dear Friends,

A comment about Ronald Watts letter concerning the situation about flowers from Africa. It is very difficult to know what goes on unless you are personally involved with things, and maybe Ronald Watts is. However I have a second-hand experience which would lead me to believe that it would be better to consider deeply before buying flowers from poorer Nations.



We had an African vicar and family, from Tengeru in Tanzania, who worked in Leominster Team Ministry (Anglican) for two years. He told us of the flower growing industry on the slopes of mount Kilimanjaro.

He said the company removed so much water for the flowers that local farmers crops were failing and they went out of business. He said the pay and conditions for the workers was very poor. He

told us that most of the workers suffered from skin complaints, because of the chemicals used on the flowers, but were unable to get medication because it was too expensive. So the things he said were not good. I must admit I have taken his word for these things, having no experience of my own and knowing him to be a very good man.

However if the companies running the flower nurseries were to pay their workers a better wage and give proper health and safety and medical insurance I am sure it probably would be a good thing for Africa. I am not sure about the earth though, but that is another subject.

Barbara Mark

Little Overton, Ludlow, Shropshire

Dear Friends,

The quotation from Sawit Watch in issue 58 provides an overwhelmingly convincing refutation of Ronald Watts' comments on replacing tropical forests with oil palms, but two more points could be made.

Firstly it surely cannot be the case that oil palms provide similar ground cover to tropical forest. A monoculture must be immensely poorer than ancient natural cover rich in so many forms of flora and fauna that some have not even been discovered yet, and which in any case would all be destroyed in the replacement.



Secondly, the needs and greeds of human beings have already put the globe in danger. Should we not be considering how to live as a balanced part of the natural world instead of domineering over it to suit our convenience?

Dorothy Wooley

42 Harcourt St., Newark on Trent,
 Nottinghamshire NG24 1RF

Dear Editor

With reference to Ronald Watt's letter to EarthQuaker August 2007 and the open letter from Sawit Watch we submit the following:

Oil palm plantations CANNOT be considered an "excellent" replacement for the vastly diverse, complex, layered structure of a rainforest and DO NOT provide similar ground cover. The catastrophic global loss in replacing tropical old growth forest with a monoculture is incalculable.

Massive deforestation by multinationals will not benefit the future populations mentioned by Ronald Watts. Instead they are likely to be victims of exploitation and environmental disaster caused by forest loss, fires and a growing and dangerous

dependence on monoculture.

Plantations may provide jobs but they are jobs which render people powerless and dependent on plantation companies. In effect, they displace people from their land and deprive them of the forest resources on which they have relied for generations. Intimate local knowledge of plants and animals, invaluable for our future, is lost.

Twenty-five percent of greenhouse gas emissions comes from tropical forest clearance. The clearing, drainage and burning of peatland forests plus the liberal use of petroleum-based pesticides, herbicides, and fertilizers in palm oil production ranks Indonesia as the world's 3rd largest producer of greenhouse gases. In addition, Indonesian plantations are so damaging that after a 25-year harvest, they are often abandoned for scrubland. Soils, so leached of nutrients, grow nothing but weedy grasses which serve as tinder for wildfires.

Rainforests regulate the world's climate and global weather patterns, act as critical environmental systems that support life on earth, buffer against environmental disasters, and provide gene pools for our future. Indonesia's rainforests are home to around 15% of ALL the earth's known plants, animals and birds ranking them as some of the most important centres of biodiversity in the world. In Borneo alone, fifty-two new species have been discovered since 2005. At present Indonesia has the fastest rate of forest destruction on the planet, equivalent to 300 football pitches every hour. It will have no forest left by 2022. The natural wealth of these areas, still so little known and understood, will be obliterated. This is something Ronald Watts seems to have overlooked.

This is why we should be deeply opposed to increasing palm oil expansion. Can we justify filling our tanks with rainforest? There must be a better way!

Members and Attenders of Inverness Meeting

Friends Meeting House
Scaniport, Inverness IV2 6DL

Dear Friends,
Ronald Watts (August eQ), in his justification of the exploitation of tropical forests, observes that the populations of some countries are still doubling every 20 years. If that growth is the problem, shouldn't we (all of us - I am not talking "us" versus "them") attempt to counter this population growth directly, rather than try to accommodate it?

I have come across the following quotation, which I think brilliant. Malthus in a single paragraph!

"Since the circumference of the globe is given and does not expand with the increased number of its inhabitants, and as travel to other planets thought

to be inhabitable has not yet been invented; since the earth's fertility cannot be extended beyond a given point, and since human nature will presumably remain unchanged, so that a given number will hereafter require the same quantity of the fruits of the earth for their support as now, and as their rations cannot be arbitrarily reduced, it follows that the proposition "that the world's inhabitants will be happier, the greater their number" cannot be maintained, for as soon as the number exceeds that which our planet with all its wealth of land and water can support, they must needs starve one another out, not to mention other necessarily attendant inconveniences. This was written in 1858 by Rev. Otto Diederich Lutken, rector of a parish on the Danish island of Fyn

PS. I have just discovered a website with stacks of information to counter sceptic arguments about climate change. <http://environment.newscientist.com/channel/earth/dn11462>

Roger Plenty

Ashleigh, Rodborough Hill, Stroud, Glos GL5 3RT

Ed Stanton has sent the August 2007 newsletter *Ecology News from the Philippines. Forest restoration in Leyte*. This is a project that QGA has funded in the past and anyone wishing to receive the newsletter should contact Ed on 01539 552216.

John Barbabas has sent useful information—see websites or ask editor for copy of relevant leaflet:

Treesresponsibility—leaflet about lifestyles and carbon emissions—www.treesresponsibility.com

Lammas—a chance to buy shares in this project which aims to build an ecovillage in Pembrokeshire and campaigns for new planning rules across the UK to allow building of low-impact homes in the countryside. www.lammas.org.uk.



Operation Noah—www.operationnoah.org—leaflet on their Call for leadership from churches and government on the problem of climate abuse.

Clare Ewins, has drawn attention to an interesting website <http://algae4oil.com/> which assures us that pond algae will save the world - Isaac Berzin, founder of GreenFuel Technologies Corporation is working on a prototype that uses **algae to convert power plant CO2 emissions into biofuels**. Anyone know anything about this? Is there a catch somewhere?

Book Reviews

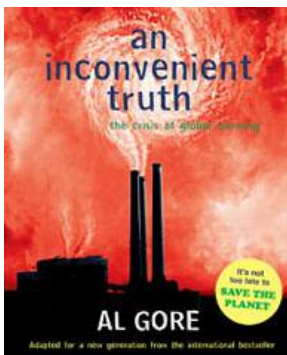
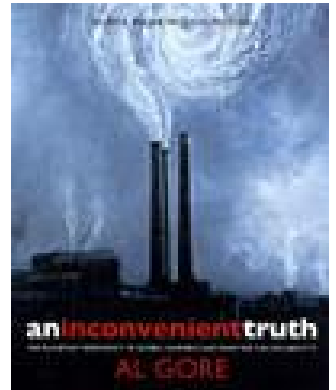
Books on Global Warming and Climate Change – not only for adults

(1) *An Inconvenient Truth* - The planetary emergency of global warming and what we can do about it by Al Gore, published in 2006 by Bloomsbury, £14.99

(2) *An Inconvenient Truth* - a young person's guide adapted from the film by Al Gore, published in 2007 by Bloomsbury, £9.99

(3) *You can save the planet* - 101 ways YOU can make difference by Jacqui Wines, published in 2007 by Buster Books, £7.99

The former American vice president Al Gore's film 'An Inconvenient Truth', which opened in the US in May 2006 and was released on DVD last November, has been credited for raising further awareness of global warming internationally, prompting calls for more government action in regard to the climate. You may well have mixed feelings about the man himself, but there is no doubt that as a user-friendly introduction to global warming and a comprehensive summary of many of the central facts and arguments the film is keenly effective, and although it is harrowing the message is clear: It is not too late if we act now. The book (1) was published at the same time as the film. It does contain additional information and scientific analysis, as well as Gore's commentary on the issues presented in the documentary, but is on the whole 'the book of the film', with the considerable advantage that you can dip into it at leisure and use it as a reference book. There are better books on the subject, and the book lacks some of the film's impact, but it's still very effective as a 'wake-up' call. It is accessible, full of information and beautifully produced, backed up by illustrations, graphs and photographs. According to Al Gore 'global warming is not just about science, nor is it just a political issue: it is a moral issue and we have a responsibility to do something about it'.



With this in mind we should welcome the second book of the same title, adapted for a younger readership (2). Following the publication of the IPCC reports on climate change this spring, the UK Government announced that it would be issuing a copy of the DVD (*An Inconvenient Truth*) to every secondary school in England & Wales – this is currently subject to a challenge in the High Court on the basis that schools are 'legally required to provide a balanced presentation of political issues'. Well, even if it does eventually succeed to be used in school science curricula, the length of the film despite could actually put a younger age group off altogether. This 'teens and young adult edition' of the book contains a simplified text without being patronising and many of the full-colour photographs, illustrations and graphs of the original version. It explains global warming in very

real terms: what it is, what causes it and what will happen if we continue to ignore it. The book is intended to hopefully inspire young people to help to bring about change.

Like the previous two books 'You can save the planet' is printed on FSC paper, but the book itself is quite different and aimed at a slightly younger audience, age 9 or 10 upwards, but is certainly enjoyable for older kids, too (3). It looks funky, and is full of 'smart, practical and fun' ideas of how to make a difference. The ideas are sound and most of the advice is quite realistic and achievable, there are seven chapters covering a very comprehensive array of different topics as well as two pages with websites relevant to this age group, and a useful index to find answers to specific problems. It's certainly a good start.

If you feel tempted to buy any of these (or indeed other) books, here's a thought: try and support your local independent bookshop by ordering through them. Don't know where the nearest one is? Go to www.localbookshops.co.uk to find out, give them a ring or you may even be able to order online.



Gabi Smith

1 Pwllan Cottages, LLANDINAM, Powys SY17 5AT



Quaker Green Action is an informal group associated with the Religious Society of Friends (Quakers).

It was formed in 1986 to provide a gathering point for members, attenders, and others interested in Quaker ways and thought, who are actively concerned

with the global ecological crisis.

Its objectives are to encourage and support each other, to raise awareness among Quakers, and to explore together practical and spiritual responses to the concern.

It will shortly be merged with the Living Witness Project and this familiar bit of earthQuaker will be replaced by something different!

The deadline for the next issue of earthQuaker is 8th February 2008.

Please post or email contributions to the editor, Anne Brewer.

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

Include your postal address and telephone or email number. We will publish contributor's 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.

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Membership

I wish to join Quaker Green Action/Living Witness Project

Name:

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Delete as appropriate—I prefer earthQuaker by post/ by email as a pdf file attachment (up to 500kb)

I enclose £ subscription + £ donation.

Please sign below if you wish to gift aid your donation.

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Please make cheque payable to
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and send to:
Living Witness Project
Friends Meeting House
43 St Giles,
Oxford OX1 3LW

Date:

Quaker green events in 2008

9 February *Energy, Climate Change and Conflict. Help us find the Quaker Way.* QCEA conference Leicester MH. 10.00 am to 4.00 pm. Fee £10. Further info: qceaconference@gmail.com or contact Jessica Metheringham, Flat 2, 147-149 Kew Road, Richmond TW9 2PN

28-30 March QPSW Spring Conference: Peace, Justice and the Environment. Swanwick Conference Centre, near Derby. Information from www.quaker.org.uk—search for QPSW March 2008 Conference or contact QPSW at Friends House.

11-13 April Living Witness Project Link Group at Woodbrooke. Info and bookings through Laurie Michaelis.

14-17 April 2008. The Great Turning: spiritual empowerment for a critical threshold. Jocelyn Dawes. Woodbrooke

2-4 May *Beyond Individualism: towards a new kind of community.* Judith Jenner and Laurie Michaelis, Woodbrooke

9-11 May 2008. Imagining a World without Oil: preparing for an (un)certain future. Pam Lunn and Lizz Roe. [Woodbrooke](#)

13-15 May 2008. Permaculture for Beginners. Lizz Roe. [Woodbrooke](#)

10-12 May *Stepping Lightly: shrinking our carbon footprints.* Rachel Howell and Laurie Michaelis, Woodbrooke

23-26 May Britain Yearly Meeting, Friends House. We expect to have a Living Witness Project stall and special interest group session.

30 May to 1 June *Heaven and Earth: eco-spiritualities for today.* Rachel Howell and Laurie Michaelis. Woodbrooke

25-29 August Living Witness Project Summer School, Swarthmoor Hall.

August/September, date tbc. Living Witness Project Summer Camp.

(See page 7 for details of National Climate March on Saturday December 8th 2007. Also World Blackout Day on March 21st 2008)

If you have access to the internet you can see a video of earthrise and earthset taken by satellite orbiting the moon at <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=0WVWUIce3XI>

If undelivered please return to:

Living Witness Project
Friends Meeting House
43 St Giles,
Oxford OX1 3LW



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