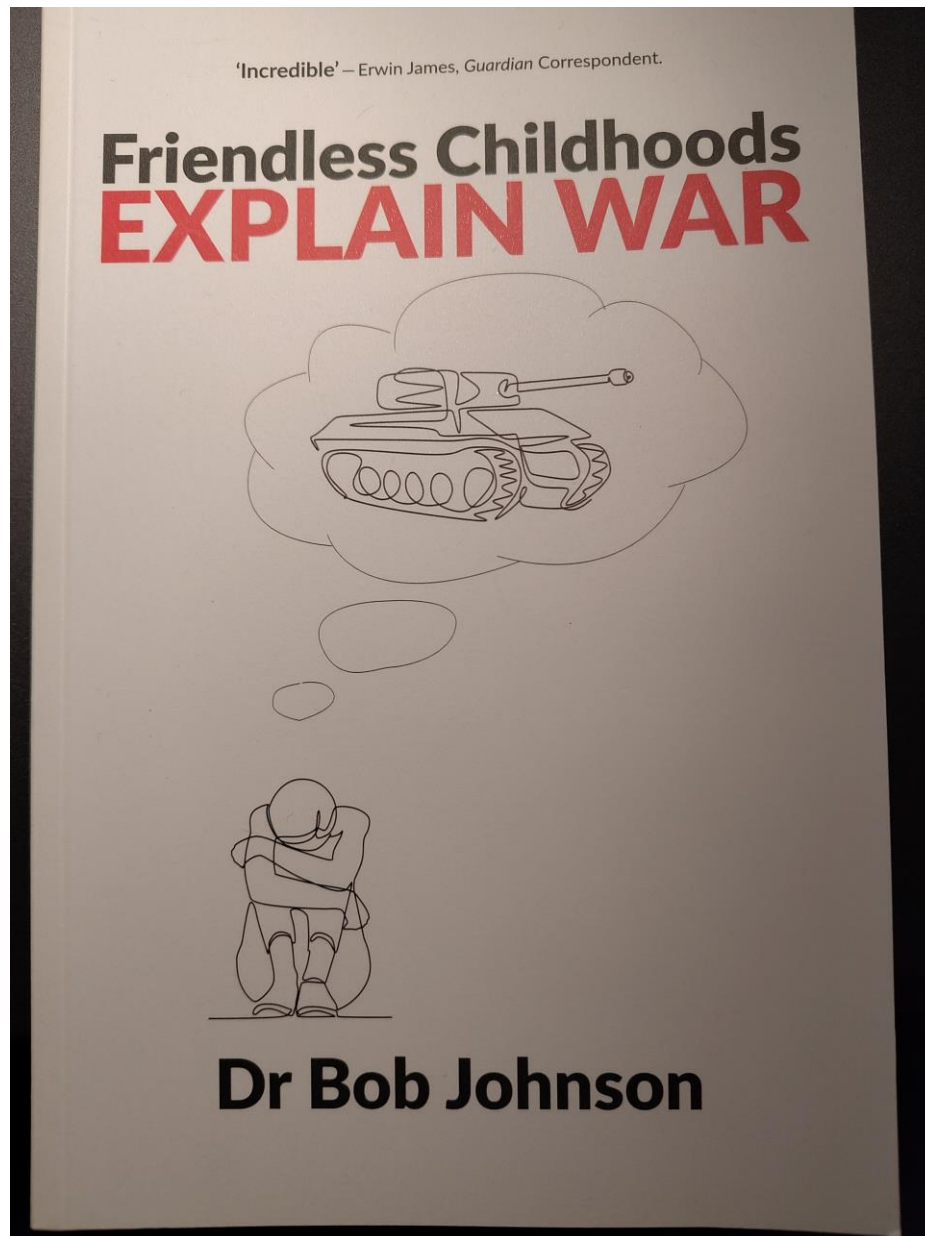


**MANCHESTER & WARRINGTON AREA QUAKER MEETING  
NEWSLETTER NO 26    DECEMBER 2023**



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## Gareth Rees



Gareth Rees, a long-time member of Central Manchester Local Meeting, sadly died of pneumonia at his home on 6<sup>th</sup> October 2023. For a number of years he had suffered from serious health problems and had latterly attended Meeting irregularly, so he was perhaps currently not very well known. However, Quakerism and spirituality remained very important to him and at the time of his death he was Assistant Treasurer to the local meeting.

At his funeral on 9<sup>th</sup> November at Stockport Crematorium, a fuller picture of his life emerged. From his family, we heard that Gareth, born 18<sup>th</sup> May 1959, was brought up in the Heald Green area with a brother and two sisters, who always considered him rather 'left-field'. As a boy, he was known for his consuming interests and for chatting without restraint to anyone available. With his brother he shared a love of rock music which stayed with him always. He did well academically and after a first degree in psychology at Hull University, went on to do an M.Sc. in

Systems Theory at Humberside University, where he came first in his year. For several years he worked as project manager for PowerX , a job which suited him well.

For the last twenty-six years, Gareth was living with lymphoma and undergoing various radical treatments, including a stem cell transplant, which affected his employment opportunities. However, ministry from friends from schooldays and later in life recalled him as someone who thoroughly enjoyed walking, holidays, and talking until the early hours of the morning with other people. He cared deeply for his son, Alex (pictured above with Gareth and now 28), and was never known to have a bad word to say about anyone. Despite the adversities he faced, Gareth remained hopeful and uncomplaining. He could well have been said to follow George Fox's advice to 'walk cheerfully over the world, answering that of God in everyone'. The closing music of the funeral was Monty Python's 'Always look on the bright side of life'.

Gareth's family has asked for donations in his memory to go to Quakers and these will be given to the Bursary Fund, which helps people to attend Quaker residential activities, a fund for which Gareth expressed gratitude in the past.

Branwen McHugh

## **....and helping one another up.....**

### **by Robert Wilson**

Not many people get a choice of whether they live or die, and possibly I didn't as such. But looking back my choice to attend my first AA meeting did ensure I would live a bit longer than if I didn't. Not that the choice was that apparent - I only wanted the mental turmoil and utter futility of my life to stop. And the physical pain of my body's gripeing stomach and tension. The continuous alertness to my senses and anxiety and the desire to numb it through alcohol - which incidentally, no longer worked to dull the senses, the tension or the pain.

I very nearly died in 2003 when I had two alcoholic seizures one night and was found by my step daughter and rushed to hospital for a seventeen day stay which saved my life. I stopped drinking out of fear but I had no defence against the first drink, which would inevitably lead to my 'picking up' again.

The problem is that we need to learn to identify our triggers for whatever is our mental problems in life - depression, anxiety, low self-esteem, worry, self-loathing etc etc, and find an alternative way to handle it, which for me, meant not picking up a drink. Admitting one has a problem is the first hurdle. If we don't accept that there is a problem (or condition or illness) we cannot accept that we can change, get better, accept a different way of living - which takes enormous effort if you lived a certain way all of your life until then.

Recovery taught me no longer to see my existence in isolation. Sure, I had family and friends and relationships but the bottom line was my ego, I was central to my life and I loathed myself. I had been a fantasist since my childhood because of its brutality and I couldn't do anything right, my self-confidence and self-esteem were very low. I lived behind a mask both in my career and in my social life - I lived a lie.

To recover I first had to accept my true condition and secondly that I - the great Robert Wilson - was unable to deal with his condition by himself. I'll never truly know why I went to my first AA meeting (after 10 days of prescribed Diazepam) but it was the right thing, at the right time and in the right place. I was ready to listen (because I was wiped out, finished) and because anything I heard must be better than what I had - which was nothing.

At last I realised I wasn't the only person who had my condition and that some people had had similar conditions and had found a way to move on and live a life where they could take charge of their life as long as they gave up their concept of isolation and self-pity and loathing, with the support of other like-minded recovering addicts and a 'power greater than oneself'.

I believe today I look for the effect of my words and actions on others and not on what I can gain for myself. I see myself as a necessary cog in the great human machine, part of the planets ecosystem, part of the whole of the universe - the creation.

However small I may see myself, I am unique and my part is essential for my community and society - and most importantly for my existence - my life. I don't live for me, I live as part of one body that gives life to the whole.

My Quakerism came to me through AA meetings, many of which were in Quaker Meeting Houses. The ability to hold such meetings in Quaker Meeting Houses and other such venues are an essential part of our Twelve Step recovery programme and Quaker's support for them helps many people with life threatening conditions. We'll never know how many lives have been saved by recovery meetings held in our Meeting Houses but it's a very positive act that does bear fruit. We recover because we give up SELF to a great degree. We learn to see and accept

our condition, understand its causes and triggers, and live through support in harmony with our world, our community.

All people benefit from accepting and living in community whatever conditions they accept (or don't). Involvement with community, whatever one accepts that to be, enables us to contribute, find fulfilment and self-worthiness, gratitude and satisfaction. That is what I believe is answering that of God (part of creation) in everyone. It's what makes life worth living, makes each of us unique (each imperfectly perfect), gives our life meaning and a belief that after mortal life we continue to exist (because we existed) - eternally. Bless us all.

So what are the similarities between the AA recovery programme and Quakerism:

They both speak to our condition.

We have no leaders or a hierarchy.

We are spiritually led and acceptant of each other's faith or 'higher power'. Recovery is likened to Spiritual Experience.

We have no doctrines or creeds.

Vocal contributions at meetings are uninterrupted - never criticised or judged.

We receive more than we give and every contribution, however big or small, is invaluable.

Every word or action is a two way process.

The opportunity to serve is humbling and cherished.

Service is rotated after fixed periods.

The author of this article, Robert Wilson from Eccles Local Meeting is a member of Quaker Action on Alcohol and Drugs (QAAD) [www.qaad.org](http://www.qaad.org) and is willing to talk in confidence with anybody who wishes to contact him on [rawroving@gmail.com](mailto:rawroving@gmail.com) or 07789840012 at any time.

If there is felt to be a need (contact me as above) then Alison Mather, Director of QAAD, is willing to attend Manchester and Warrington Area Meeting to speak to us and answer questions on addiction related to drugs, alcohol and gambling.

.....

**Our life is love, and peace, and tenderness; and bearing one with another, and forgiving one another, and not laying accusations one against another; but praying one for another; and helping one another up with a tender hand.**

**Isaac Penington, Quaker Faith & Practice 10.01**



## **WRITING FOR “THE FRIEND”**

“The Friend” is the Quakers’ national weekly magazine. If you write an article for the Manchester & Warrington Newsletter, you might consider submitting it to The Friend as well, (or even just to The Friend.) I have checked with the editor, and they are happy to receive items that have already appeared in the Manchester & Warrington Newsletter. The Friend is primarily a hard copy printed magazine, and items are preferred if they are either around 600 words, or around 1,200 words, to fit on one or two pages, so some reworking may be necessary. To submit an item to The Friend email [editorial@thefriend.org](mailto:editorial@thefriend.org)  
Their website is <https://thefriend.org>

### **EXTRACT FROM A LETTER TO “THE FRIEND” 27 OCTOBER by Chris Goodchild**

I ask Friends to imagine the outcry if, in the wake of an IRA bomb blast in the 70s and 80s, the Margaret Thatcher government were to react by indiscriminately destroying whole cities, killing and traumatising whole populations of innocent people in an attempt to eliminate the IRA.

# ENVIRONMENTAL MAPPING EXERCISE

Area Meeting Environment Group issued a questionnaire asking Friends and attenders about their concern for the environment, what they were doing, and what they thought Environment Group might do.

## ARE WE BECOMING A LOW CARBON SUSTAINABLE COMMUNITY?

by Jonathan Dale

I believe we are. I think our Mapping Exercise suggests it. But, in the light of the dire current scientific prognosis for the planet, there is surely a lot more work we need to make.

Transport, energy in the home and diet are three crucial areas where our individual decisions count. What do the results of the 58 returned questionnaires show?

### FLYING

Don't or have stopped:	14 – Of those who mention a date when they stopped most did so in the last 10 years
Rarely fly	3
Never for holidays	2
Pledged to not	1
Less than before	9

Roughly 25% of the total respondents have stopped flying (or don't fly)  
Roughly 25% are flying less, or only to see family  
The rest (50%) don't mention the issue, or, in one case, see flying as essential.

My verdict is that it seems like good progress, but leaves more to be done.

## **CAR**

No Car/ Given up car	5 (9%)
Electric car	3
Hybrid	2
Reduced use	13

I suspect that there may be more no car households where climate wasn't the main original motivation? Difficult to assess

## **DIET**

Vegan or mainly vegan	7	12%
		(nationally c.4% but only 2% of older folk)
Vegetarian	12	19%
Reduced Meat	18	30%
No mention	21???	

Positive; Significantly ahead of national figures but work to be done?

## **HOME ENERGY**

This is harder to assess. Questions of whether suppliers provide genuinely green energy; whether home insulation is good etc. It may be a bit easier when it comes to solar panels and heat pumps

Solar panels:	8 (14%)
Heat Pumps	7 (12%)

Again, not everyone covered exactly the same issues in their answers so the figures above could be underestimated. They would seem to be well above the average, but it would be harder to be sure that they are well above the average for the demographic of the replies

## **POSSIBLE WAYS OF USING THE FINDINGS**

We need to give Friends locally a chance to know the results and reflect on the findings; probably by reporting sessions at Local Meetings and Area Meeting.

In both Local and Area Meetings there could be group work on the findings and sharing where each of us might take them forward.

We could arrange for Newsletter articles on the main areas to work on: Transport, Energy, Diet and Public Persuasion

We could follow up with a more detailed survey of – say - 20% of our membership so that we have a firmer grasp of the numbers.

We might also share the findings with Living Witness, Quaker Peace and Social Witness and the Yearly Meeting Environment Group and with local faith groups..

On the basis of our action and our spiritual leadings, we should perhaps, consider whether the time is come to put our convictions into words;as well as into actions. The aim would be to better share with each other the insights we have reached and learn from each other.

Perhaps we might be led to see that we are called to enter a covenant that holds us to a living and loving relationship with God and the whole of the natural world. Whatever the cost.



## What do you think are the main priorities for the Area Meeting Environment Group?



### A COMMENT ON THE REPORT ON THE MAPPING EXERCISE

Jonathan Dale said, “It is a hugely exciting document. I was astounded at the range of significant actions people have taken – it was extraordinary. For example, I learned that 10 or so people have heat pumps, not just me and Ged.”

## **RESPONSES TO ENVIRONMENTAL MAPPING SURVEY**

**Have you been influenced by a particular book, writer, documentary, film event and if so what?**

### **Books**

Wilding by Isabella Tree

Active Hope by Joanna Macey and Chris Johnstone

Silent Spring by Rachel Carson

Secret Life of trees

'Planet of the slums' by Mike Daries

Limits to growth. Small is beautiful E.F Schumacher

My Uncle William

'Silent Earth' by Dave Goulson

'Orchard' by B Macdonald and N Gates

Braiding Sweetgrass and Gathering Moss by Robin Wall

Kimmerer

Prosperity before Profit by Time Jackson

Less is More by Jason Hickel

The Overstory by Richard Powers

Flight Behaviour by Barbara Kingsolver

There is No Planet B by Mike Berners-Lee

We don't have time

Dare to be Great, Polly Higgins

Nicola Rollock's The Racial Code Tales of resistance and survival. ISBN 978-0-241-52105-2

Cold Mountain by Charles Frazier

Transition Town, by Rob Hopkins

### **Writer/Person**

David Attenborough

Chris Packham

Greta Thunberg

George Monbiot

Raynor Winn

Caroline Lucas

Krishnmurti  
Eckhart Toller  
James Lovelock.  
Jem Bendell.  
Timothy Morton  
Amy-Jane Beer  
Stephen Moss  
Alastair MacIntosh  
Laurie Michaelis  
Bill McGibben,  
Satish Kumar  
John Woolman  
Ralph Nader,  
Jonathan Dale

### **Documentary/film**

BBC Scotland film on Oil  
Cowspiracy.  
What the health.  
Game Changes  
Don't Look Up  
Drawdown  
Natural History/nature programmes  
'Inconvenient Truth'  
'Hottest August'  
Living in the Time of dying- film.  
Winterwatch  
Kiss the Soil  
Simon Reeves documentaries  
Life on Planet Earth

### **Magazines**

Ethical Consumer magazine  
Clean Slate magazine  
Greenpeace and Friends of the Earth magazines



Catholic Justice and Peace newsletters and publications.

Quaker principles

Q writings, Laudato Si', life of St Francis of Assisi, collaborating over LA documents

New Economics Foundation

Leena Norms makes a series on You Tube called Positive Panic  
The Schumacher lectures in Bristol.

OU environment courses

**Mapping Our Ecosystem of Environmental Actions and Concerns:  
towards a deeper dialogue?  
by Ben Lukey**

We had 58 responses from Quakers across our Area to our survey of environmental concerns and actions, by any measure a good proportion of active Friends. Reading them I was struck by the breadth and diversity of what we're thinking as well as the depth of our anxiety about the issues and the very wide range of things we want to do as individuals and as a community. With a fragment of advices and queries number 17 in mind: "Listen patiently and seek the truth which other people's opinions may contain for you", here are some ideas in the form of a dialogue between three exaggerated Quaker personalities, X, Y and Z. What you think?

Quaker X (activist): I think this is the existential issue of our time. We must find a sustainable way of living, eating vegan, stopping driving and flying, and overturning the rampant capitalist order which is plundering

the earth for today while leaving future generations to a climate catastrophe.

Quaker Y (sceptic): I agree its a big problem. But Quakers are a religious community. Wouldn't those who have energy and time to tackle these difficult issues be more effective working to influence politicians or joining an environmental charity or campaigning group?

Quaker Y (sceptic): I'm concerned that an obsessive focus on environmental issues risks neglecting social justice and our testimony to equality. Turning down the heating or buying an electric car or eating organic vegetables are ideas that only the privileged can afford to think about.

Quaker Z (peacemaker): Well, as Britain Yearly Meeting's "Canterbury Commitment", 2011, recognised, the climate crisis is enmeshed with global economic injustice and that tackling inequality is central to taking action on the climate emergency. It is clear that this is a spiritual task.

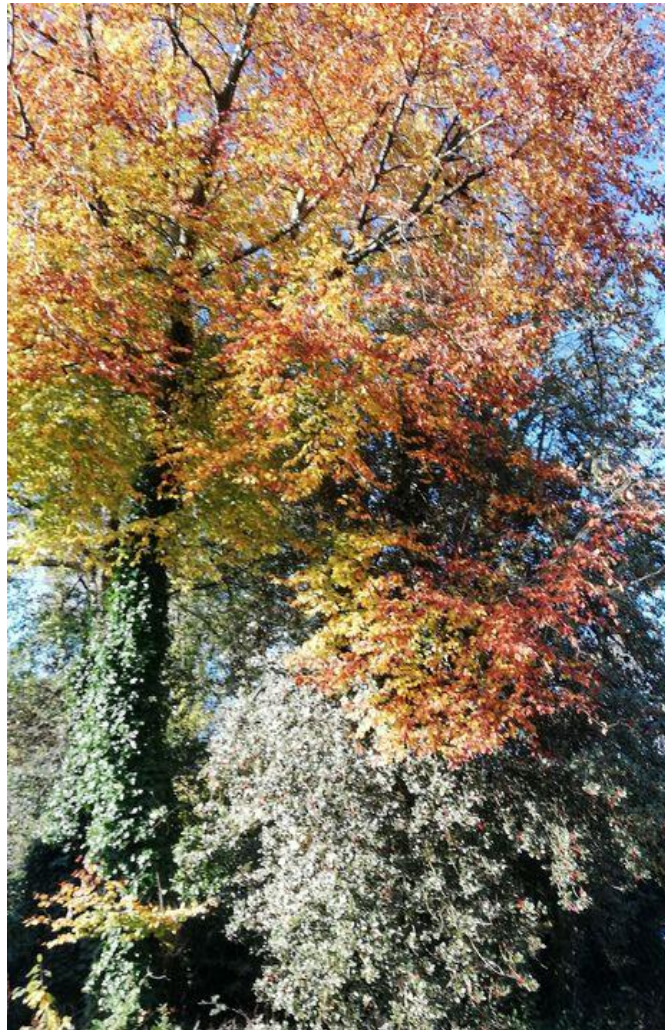
Quaker X (activist): Sometimes thinking about all the things we should do is overwhelming. But we can all play a part. Ideas in the survey include supporting each other on lifestyle changes like home insulation, eating and travel. And there's an election coming up - we can all vote!

Quaker Y (sceptic): A lot of us have limited energy and capacity for campaigning. If I were to turn the heating down I might get ill. If I were to stop driving, I wouldn't see my family or do my work. But I do like to read, listen and inform myself; and do give some money to environmental charity.

Quaker Z (peacemaker): Change comes through a range of people doing a range of things. Perhaps the environmental group can suggest a

campaign and template letter we can use in the run-up to the next general election? Maybe we can raise more money so that Trustees and premises groups can do even more to reduce the carbon footprint of our buildings and business?

Quaker Z (peacemaker): More than 40 people who responded to our survey said they'd be happy to have their name shared. How about we email people who took part in the survey in pairs and suggest they meet or talk on the phone so we can do some more listening patiently to each other?



**Autumn in Eccles meeting house garden**

## **REFLECTIONS ON THE NEWSLETTER**

**by Elizabeth Coleman**

I have now been editing the newsletter for over 2 years, and it is one of the Quaker tasks that I really enjoy. I know that it is appreciated by Friends – people tell me so, and when people say “We should put that in the newsletter” I know that there is an awareness of it and its uses. Generally I do not decide which submissions to include and which to reject, but just include everything, unless there is a reason not to. (I check with Area Meeting Clerk if I’m unsure if an article is suitable for the newsletter.) This means that the newsletter is rather long. I hope this doesn’t discourage busy Friends from looking at it – you don’t need to read it all, just have a look at the index and see what’s in it. I try to encourage short items with pictures, and the type size is quite large, for easy reading. Most people read it on their computers, but you can request hard copies if that’s easier for you.

The content partly reflects the fact that I am editor. I am a member of Eccles meeting and encourage Eccles Friends to contribute, as well as contributing myself. An Eccles Friend once said to me that from the newsletter you get the impression that Eccles Meeting is the powerhouse of Area Meeting. I am also involved with the witness groups, particularly Social Justice Group and Environment Group, so their activities appear a lot. And my interest in Democratic Republic of Congo is reflected – I encourage my African friends to write.

What tends to be lacking is the spiritual side – I rarely get items submitted about worship, faith etc. Also, I think a part of the purpose of the newsletter is for us to get to know each other, so I would welcome more items on individuals’ interests and hobbies that may have nothing to do with Quakerism. There are some other gaps – for example, we have never had an article about disability. I particularly welcome contributions by people who have not written for the newsletter

before, but all contributions are welcome. I am pleased at how many people have contributed to the newsletter over the two years I have edited it – about 50 so far. It reminds us how much is happening in our Area Meeting, and how wide our interests are. It is posted on the Area Meeting website, which people new to Quakers or to our Area Meeting might look at as a first port of call, and it gives an impression of the life of the Area Meeting.

Sometimes Quakers have a depressing picture of Quakerism and its future – members getting older, diminishing numbers, low energy. The newsletter tells us that we are still a very active group. The future is unpredictable, but we know that there will be major changes in life because of the environmental crisis. Friends may face this in a way that is relevant and we may find important ways to serve society, and if this happens we will grow, but maybe in a different way – perhaps forming online communities. Or we may prove irrelevant and become a diminishing group of mainly very old people. But for the time being, we have plenty of life in us.

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### **ONE AREA MEETING TO COVER ALL LONDON**

“All the (seven) AMs are ready to move towards creating a single AM for London, though they have varying senses of how fast this should happen.”

from statement by London Quakers group, reported in “The Friend”  
10 November 2023

See <https://londonquakers.org.uk>

**AMNESTY’S SEASONAL CARDS TO PRISONERS**  
**information supplied by Allison Challen of Peace Group**

Amnesty International UK has released details of its annual 'Write for Rights (Cards for Prisoners of Conscience) Campaign'. Details can be found at [www.amnesty.org.uk/write-rights-2023-get-started](http://www.amnesty.org.uk/write-rights-2023-get-started)

This is an annual campaign run over November and December, where Amnesty encourage campaigners to write messages of support to people around the world enduring human rights abuses. The downloadable booklet introduces you to the people featured in this year's campaign, introduces their cases and sets out how you can write to them, and how to write to the authorities on their behalf. Your messages can bring about real change, pressuring authorities to free prisoners and protect the vulnerable.

Booklets can also be ordered at the above link.

Amnesty International Manchester are running several drop-in sessions bringing people together to take action. There will also be stalls encouraging members of the public to take part. Volunteers are needed for these. More details can be seen at [www.amnesty.org.uk/groups/manchester/weekly-action-and-news-03112023](http://www.amnesty.org.uk/groups/manchester/weekly-action-and-news-03112023)

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**QUAKER MPs DO NOT CALL FOR CEASEFIRE IN GAZA**

Catherine West, Ruth Cadbury and Thangam Debbonaire abstained from the vote calling for a ceasefire. Fifty-six Labour MPs voted for a ceasefire.

Information from “The Friend” 1 December

# **THE PRISON PSYCHIATRIST AND HIS WIFE**

**Bob and Sue Johnson have both written books about the time when he worked as prison psychiatrist.**

## **BOB'S BOOK**

**See picture on front page of this newsletter.**

**'Friendless Childhoods Explain War'**

**review by Robert Wilson**

I found this an interesting and thought-provoking text that I could relate to in many respects. I had read Bob Johnson's wife Sue's book 'The Prison Psychiatrist's Wife' (another excellent read), so was well acquainted with Bob's area of work.

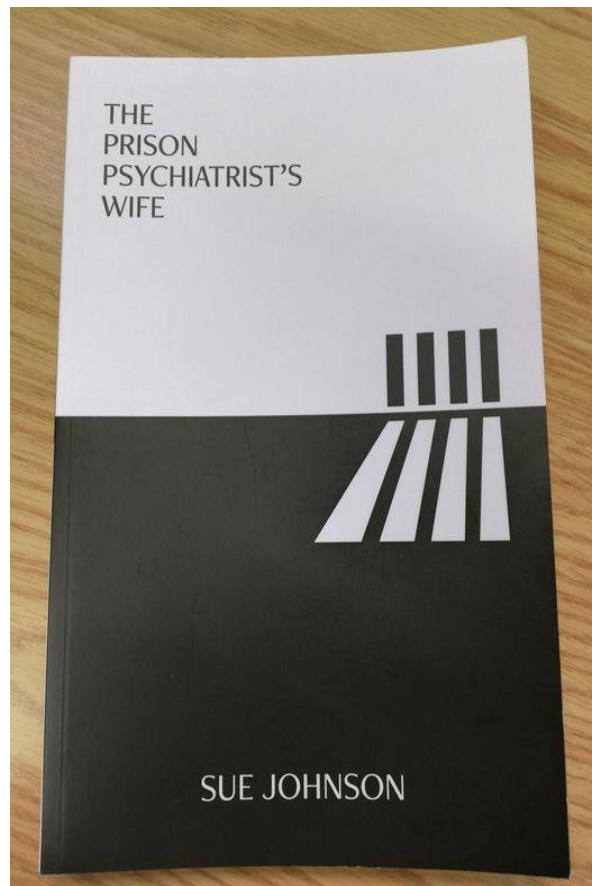
Bob's work mainly at Parkhurst Prison on the Isle of Wight during the 90s. was with the hardest of criminals, mostly multiple murderers. There is a common theme about their crimes - their violent childhoods. He also relates the childhoods of our most notorious dictators and war-mongers. They too had similar upbringings - violence - between parent and child and between parents.

To quote Martin Brunt in his forward to this book, "Violence, Bob informs us, is born of childhood experiences that trigger adult anger, grievances and the destruction of the lives of others. He suggests how all killing - through war, or crime - can be avoided: by building truth, trust and consent for all."

Bob's book may not provide us with an end to conflict and violence but it does help us to understand why some react to certain situations violently. This in turn may help us to change the way we bring up our children and also how we treat offenders who seem irredeemable. Bob

proves that if we 'don't throw away the key' but help the culprit understand their triggers, they can turn their lives around - bringing humanity where humanity has never existed before. A must read for every Friend who has an interest in criminal justice and finding ways to answer that of God in everyone.

### **SUE'S BOOK**



### **‘The Prison Psychiatrist’s Wife’ by Sue Johnson**

This book chronicles events spanning the time her husband Bob Johnson was Consultant Prison Psychiatrist at Parkhurst Prison on the Isle of Wight. He had been appointed by the then Prison Governor, John Marriot, to develop work with long term prisoners.



Alongside him Sue moved to the island and witnessed the early results of the work, and gained an insight into the prison conditions and internal culture. After achieving positive results with some of the prisoners Bob began speaking at conferences and sharing his work with fellow professional colleagues and those within the prison services. Whilst giving us an inspiring insight of Bob's work, and the beginnings of positive results being achieved, we are led to experience the reaction from the traditional prison culture, government departments, interest from the media and then the resultant response from the political system.

Sue's perspective is unique as she witnesses these events, and the impact on her husband. and those who shared his vision of what could be achieved with long term prisoners.

Not least Sue's writing is exceptional. The flow of the prose is beautiful and powerful making the book memorable and needing to be read.

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### **NEWS FROM DISLEY MEETING (East Cheshire Area Meeting)**

The visit, in July, of 25 refugees (adults and children) from the hotel in Stockport for a day of games, food, fun and lots of talking, miming and friendly gestures (because of our lack of other languages) proved to be a great pleasure and felt so easy for all of us to suddenly become part of a new community enjoying ourselves with very simple activities

**WOODBROOKE WHERE YOU ARE – REST OF PROGRAMME**  
**Three sessions have already taken place, but there are more to come.**

<i>Title</i>	<i>Programme Area</i>	<i>Format</i>	<i>Length</i>	<i>Tutor</i>	<i>Av ailability</i>	<i>Notes/Comments /Progress</i>
<i>Pause for reflection</i>	<i>Liaison Tutor</i>	<i>online</i>		<i>Jacquie Cole</i>	<i>December</i>	<i>Evaluate programme so far</i>
<b><i>Quaker History in a Nutshell</i></b>	History & Theology	<b><i>Online</i></b>	<b><i>3 sessions</i></b>	<i>Ben Pink Dandelion</i>	<i>20<sup>th</sup> Jan</i>	<i>10.30- 12, 1-2 and 2.30-4</i>
<b><i>Building Our Spiritual Community</i></b>	Supporting Quaker Communities	<b><i>In person</i></b>	<b><i>1 day</i></b>	<i>Rachael Swancott</i>	<i>24th Feb</i>	
<b><i>Hope as a Practic e</i></b>	Spirituality & Worship	<b><i>In person</i></b>	<b><i>1 day</i></b>	<i>Simonne Wood &amp; Jacquie Cole</i>	<i>16th March</i>	

# WOODBROOKE WHERE YOU ARE

by Hilary Tucker

Our day together in South Manchester on 28 October, exploring further Quaker Spirituality with Stuart Masters, followed on seamlessly from the enthusiastic and informed introduction to this theme given to us by Ben Pink Dandelion in September.

Stuart's presentation was packed with ideas which were structured and presented to us in a helpfully relatable way. These included:

- looking at our inward experience, from the shape of Quaker Spirituality in the vision of early Friends through to today's understandings.
- We then explored how 'being still', embracing quiet attentiveness and deep listening, and 'being guided', responding with an open heart to the promptings of love and truth within us, impact on and are developed through our worship. Any inward guidance or 'leadings' emerging from our worship is hopefully patiently tested with other Friends to discern real promptings from our own personal motivations.
- And then turning outwards, we try to find the courage and resolve to act on that discerned 'guidance', with the support of our Quaker community. This may involve trying new things, being adventurous, celebrating creativity and being faithful to this 'guidance' even when facing obstacles - in fact living out our Quaker testimonies, letting our lives speak.

In addition to being offered some opportunity to consider these themes in small groups on the day itself, we were generously given lots of follow up material for further discussion in our local

and area meetings to consider the themes in more depth. So there is plenty to share with Friends who couldn't attend on the day!

For me the very different method adopted by Simonne Wood in her 25 November online session was a good counterbalance to the first two days, which had been packed with relevant ideas for us to consider further, both together and on our own in personal quiet reflection.

Simonne's day was relatively 'content light' but, taking further the themes of 'being still' and 'being guided', we rather spent the day reflecting on these processes as they impact on our own spiritual practice. We considered elements of them in small listening and sharing groups, then fed back our ideas, thoughts and reflections to the whole group. We heard some inspirational feedback from AM Friends in those sessions, explaining how the experience of Meeting for Worship shaped their lives. So it felt to me like a quiet day of time to explore together our understanding of these important Quaker themes as they touch our lived experience - a necessary and much appreciated process to help us to share and absorb the wisdom of those Quaker insights in our daily lives.

The next session of WWYA will take place on 20th January, when Ben PD will give us his excellent online introduction to 'Quaker History in a Nutshell'. We very much hope you can join us then.

**WOODBROOKE WHERE YOU ARE**  
**QUESTIONS FOR FURTHER REFLECTION AND DISCUSSION**  
**BY STUART MASTERS - WOODBROOKE**

Quaker Spirituality

Material for Individual and Small-Group Reflection and Discussion

This material can be used by individuals and small-groups for further exploration and discussion (e.g. as the focus for a set of five short meetings for worship for learning, or for sharing within spiritual friendship groups).

A. The Inward Dimension

1. Being Still

Adopting an attitude of inward stillness, quiet attentiveness, and deep listening, so that we become aware of what the Spirit is doing within us, and in the world. Making this an ongoing daily practice.

Do you try to set aside times of quiet for openness to the Holy Spirit?

All of us need to find a way into silence which allows us to deepen our awareness of the divine and to find the inward source of our strength.

Seek to know an inward stillness, even amid the activities of daily life.

Do you encourage in yourself and in others a habit of dependence on God's guidance for each day?

Hold yourself and others in the Light, knowing that all are cherished by God.

Advices and Queries 3

Questions for Reflection

1. What is your experience of being still, being attentive and listening deeply within worship and/or within a daily spiritual practice?

2. What has this meant to you?

3. How can we support and encourage each other to adopt a daily practice of being still?

2. Being Guided

Being attentive to the promptings of love and truth within us. Being ready to receive this inward guidance with an open heart. Accepting that what the Light reveals is often discomfoting.

Take heed, dear Friends, to the promptings of love and truth in your hearts.

Trust them as the leadings of God whose Light shows us our darkness and brings us to new life.

Advices and Queries 1

2

Questions for Reflection

1. Can you think of a time when you experienced a strong sense of being inwardly guided?
2. What was going on, and what happened?
3. How can we face up to the 'unpalatable truths' revealed to us, and not run away from them?

B. The Sorting and Testing

3. Being Discerning

Practicing a discipline of testing the inward guidance we receive, so that we can distinguish between the real promptings of love and truth, and other motivations. Recognising that this requires patience.

Every stage of our lives offers fresh opportunities. Responding to divine guidance, try to discern the right time to undertake or relinquish responsibilities without undue pride or guilt. Attend to what love requires of you, which may not be great busyness.

Advices and Queries 28

Questions for Reflection

1. Are you aware of where your feelings and emotions arise from? What can we do to become more discerning about what drives our actions and responses?
2. Can you think of a time when you exercised careful discernment about something? What happened?

3. How can we support each other in making the discipline of discernment an ongoing daily practice?

#### C. The Outward Dimension

#### 4. Being Adventurous

Based on inward guidance, being willing to try out new things, to experiment and innovate in our lives as individuals, as a community, and in the world. Celebrating creativity, joy and playfulness in all we do.

### 3

Live adventurously. When choices arise, do you take the way that offers the fullest opportunity for the use of your gifts in the service of God and the community? Let your life speak. When decisions have to be made, are you ready to join with others in seeking clearness, asking for God's guidance and offering counsel to one another?

Advices and Queries 27

Questions for Reflection

1. Are you, by orientation, essentially cautious or adventurous in your life? How do you feel about that?
2. What are the potential benefits and pitfalls of living adventurously?
3. How can we encourage each other to be creative and joyful in all we do?

#### 5. Being Faithful

Finding the courage and resolve to act on the inward guidance we have received and discerned, even when facing obstacles and resistance. Seeking the mutual support, encouragement and accountability of our community in doing this.

If pressure is brought upon you to lower your standard of integrity, are you prepared to resist it? Our responsibilities to God and our neighbour may involve us in taking unpopular stands. Do not let the desire to be sociable, or the fear of seeming peculiar, determine your decisions.

Advices and Queries 38

Questions for Reflection

1. Can you think of a time when fear has stopped you from doing what was right? How do you feel about that?
2. Can you think of a time when you did what was right, despite your fears?  
What have you learned from that experience?
3. How can we support each other in building up courage and resilience?

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## **GREEN LEAF AID FOR KINSHASA**

**by Tsharra Bukoyo (Kinshasa) and Elizabeth Coleman (Manchester)**



Green Leaf is a registered charity (number 1192679) of which Elizabeth Coleman, Jacques Kanda and Fideline Kanda are Trustees. See website <https://greenleafaidforkinshasa.org>

The aim has always been to provide assistance to orphaned children. And we have targeted a poor area on the outskirts of Kinshasa (capital of the Democratic Republic of Congo) where people live with great



difficulties. Our organizer Jérémie lives in this community and therefore chooses orphans locally, and finds families to host them among members of his church. For the most part they have lost a father, but others have lost both father and mother. It should be noted that at the death of the husband, the widow is often abandoned, rejected with the orphans, and evicted from her home which is taken over by the father's family with its contents (furniture etc). To survive, most of them become beggars, prostitutes and sell small items. They are unable to feed and educate their children. This is how orphans can find themselves on the streets, with girls forced into prostitution and boys forced into gangsterism. As far as our orphans are concerned, they were not going to school regularly because of the fees. Though there are free public schools, in their neighbourhood there are no public schools. All are private. So the situation was difficult to deal with. They are lucky because Green Leaf now provides the school fees. Yet Green Leaf is unable to assure that they regularly get enough food, though the host families do what they can to help. When Green Leaf's organisers in Kinshasa visit, they sometimes find that children have not eaten for a day or two. So far, Green Leaf provides school fees and money for essential school equipment such as exercise books and pens; food (though not as much as is needed); medical costs including hospital fees when required. Green Leaf usually funds a Christmas gathering for the children. They all wish to have one place where they can live together. Every time that they receive food, they are very happy and are still grateful for the school fees. We are currently supporting eleven children, and will not increase the number until our finances improve.

To donate to Green Leaf, see

<https://greenleafaidforkinshasa.org/home-2/standingorder/>

## **REMEMBER PEACE**

### **The Reparation**

by J Ahmed

Remember the pain,  
The loss and the cost  
Or Rally  
To live out the lesson  
We all have a choice  
In how we use our voice  
It Is our right  
And our blessing.

Many will mourn,  
The silence observed -  
Our state,  
In Remembrance today  
But others will fight  
For peace is our right,  
They'll take to the streets  
And they'll say

"Stop all the bombs,  
The drones and the guns,  
Tell soldiers,  
Conflict is over.  
Remember the peace  
They died for and please  
Always maintain  
Your composure..."

This poem was submitted by Robert Wilson, who knows J Ahmed through his activities with Buile Hill Park community.

## POPPY DISPLAY BY CHATSWORTH AT ECCLES MEETING HOUSE.

Chatsworth use the premises on weekdays.



Comment by Jane Wood:

Thank you Chatsworth for these lovely poppies.  
Red for soldiers killed in wars.  
White for non soldiers killed in wars.  
Purple for non humans killed in wars.  
Would peace be better?

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## **UPDATE ON THE SITUATION OF QUAKERS AND OTHERS IN GOMA, NORTH KIVU, DRC**

INFORMATION FROM JOEL AMANI WHO VISITED GOMA A FEW DAYS  
AGO

When I was in Goma (in November 2023), I saw that the population of North Kivu lives in a state of extreme anxiety, distressed by the presence of M23, the terrorist rebel movement, which impacts on the cost of living. The cost of foodstuffs has increased greatly – for example the price of potatoes rose from 500 Congolese Francs to 2,000 Congolese Francs, and the cost of beans rose from 1,000 Congolese Francs to 2,500 Congolese Francs. The farming population has fled from the villages. M23 has caused about 25% of the population to flee to the camps, raping women and children and looting minerals, while the international community is silent. Children are unable to go to school. My home city of Bukavu, in South Kivu, is not spared as we depended on food from North Kivu.

INFORMATION FROM GEORGE BANI WHO LIVES IN UVIRA, SOUTH  
KIVU, AND IS IN CONTACT WITH QUAKERS IN GOMA WHO ARE PART OF  
THE SAME YEARLY MEETING (CEEACO)

The population of Goma and its surroundings live in fear, uncertainty and shock following this endless war. In addition, the number of displaced people continues to increase day by day in areas that are somewhat safe, such as Goma and its surroundings. Some displaced families who had returned a few weeks ago after observing a relative lull, are now returning to the camps of the displaced following the resumption of fighting in their villages. Food remains the most urgent need for these displaced people. Some Quaker families in North Kivu estimated at 200 to 250 people have recently been forced to leave their villages to join the displaced persons camps of Bushagala, Bulengo and Rusayo. Last week, these displaced people received visits from the Pastors of the Goma church for moral and spiritual comfort.



APPEAL FROM PASTOR LEVI, A QUAKER PASTOR WHO LIVES IN GOMA  
I am writing to you today to give you the situation of the war that is pressing us for the moment, the city of Goma is surrounded, all communication routes are closed by the rebels, an exit remains available, it is the GOMA-GISENYI border and Lake Kivu for BUKAVU, the inhabitants of the city of Goma are in difficulty. It is difficult for Goma to be supplied with food products. We are having difficulty surviving because the price of food quadruples, I also inform you that we are in the middle of building the work of the CPGRBC office and other community activities that we started in May 2023. Now our source of funding has been blocked by the war, i.e. we have a reception center that could generate \$ 500 a month, it was taken and everyone was forced to flee the environment. The budget that we have planned to complete the construction is in deficit i.e. We have spent \$ 30,000 and we have a deficit of \$8,000 if we do not raise this deficit i.e. we will lose all those that we have spent which means the boards, Beton iron and various consumables will deteriorate. That is, we will start the same work again. Thank you for popularizing our message as a plea for

our assistance. For peace cordial Levi (translated from French by computer)

**See also UN report**

[https://allafrica.com/stories/202311270010.html?utm\\_campaign=daily-headlines&utm\\_medium=email&utm\\_source=newsletter&utm\\_content=aans-view-link](https://allafrica.com/stories/202311270010.html?utm_campaign=daily-headlines&utm_medium=email&utm_source=newsletter&utm_content=aans-view-link)

.....

***In reflecting on time spent working in Vietnam in the early 1970s, Helen Steven wrote:***

Perhaps our most positive contribution to peace-making was to affirm and value Vietnamese culture in the face of the appalling destruction we saw around us.

I believe it is this fundamental respect for ‘that of God’ in everyone which is at the heart of all true development. On my return home I was horrified by our cultural, material and spiritual arrogance. I believe that it is profound arrogance which initiates aid programmes which force western methods of education, medicine or agriculture on people with traditions longer than our own; it is arrogance to assume that any political system or social or economic structure must be maintained and defended no matter how many people are bombed, napalmed or tortured in the process. **Surely arrogance drives us to rape and destroy the earth’s scarce resources to fuel and protect the needs of one generation in one corner of the globe.** And supreme arrogance to believe that we have the monopoly of spiritual truth.

**I came home from Vietnam convinced that the real task of development lies at home at our own door.**

Quaker Faith & Practice 29.06, reflected on at our November Environment Group meeting.

## VIGIL FOR ISRAEL/PALESTINE



Jane Wood comments:

Sending peace waves to the Middle East from Manchester in stillness and silence.

Thank you Amnesty International for organising this vigil.



# Lünen Christians back in Salford

by Keith Archer

Until Covid put its spanner in the works, there was a group visit each year either from Salford's churches to our friends in Lünen, our twin-town in Germany, or from them to us. But Covid stopped our plan to visit them in 2020 and their plan to visit us in 2021. We made our first post-pandemic visit there in the still slightly edgy atmosphere of 2022 and then this October they came here. We'd kept in touch during the UK's and Germany's lockdowns by Zoom, but that's not the same as meeting face to face. So it was great to see our friends again.

They were here for a week, and their programme was designed to hold four elements in balance: a bit of tourism; general stuff about life in Salford; work on a theme of concern both here and in Germany; and free time to relax with their hosts. It worked pretty well. They were staying with local families, so that relaxation time gave them a chance to get to know their hosts better. The tourism came right at the start, with a rather rainy but nevertheless enjoyable visit to RHS Bridgewater, and almost at the end with a delightfully sunny tour of the Peak District that was, however, marred by the fact that one of the cars we were using – mine, dear reader! – broke down halfway up Mam Tor. The Salford stuff included the Eccles Art Trail, designed to give the old, semi-redundant shopping area in the town centre a bit more life until its planned redevelopment takes shape, the 'Pendleton Unearthed' project, hidden for years under the grassy surface of St Thomas' graveyard and, straying out of Salford into Droylsden, a tour of its remarkable Moravian Settlement. And much more.





RHS BRIDGWATER VISIT

The theme we chose was Refugees and Migration. It's as much an issue in Germany as it is here, and it's one that intermeshes with those other big challenges of our time: war and climate change. To see how local people are helping, we visited the work at Pendleton church in support of Christian refugees from Iran. To try and walk a few steps in refugees' shoes, we spent an evening with a member of a persecuted minority ethnic group in Congo, who fled twenty years ago, ending up in Salford and integrating enough to be elected as a City councillor. To see things in more general terms, we met Paul Dennett, City Mayor, at the Town Hall. He stressed how hard Salford works for a spirit of inclusiveness – illustrated by the fact that the four councillors who were also there included one from Bangladesh, Cllr Shama, our man from Congo, and the Deputy Ceremonial Mayor, from Ukraine. Our German friends shook their heads sadly, admitting that Lünen is not as inclusive.



ECCLES ART TRAIL



SALFORD TOWN HALL



DERBYSHIRE

The last big event of the visit was an evening hosted by Eccles Quakers at their Meeting House. We ate, and we talked about the visit's theme and the world events lying behind it. (We didn't know it at the time, but things were becoming even worse than we realised. For this was on October 7<sup>th</sup>, when war in the Middle East started.) We talked Quaker-style, not just speaking but also listening, carefully and respectfully. What emerged was a sense that, no matter how

frightening things happening in the world are, we can all make our own contributions to peace and love. What any individual or even group can do may appear insignificant, but we are not alone. Other people in other places, from other traditions, speaking other languages, individuals and groups, share our passions. There are more grounds for hope than we sometimes realise.

And that ultimately is what this partnership with Lünen's churches is about.

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## **Unlocking a love of learning by Ursula Sharma**

Last week four of us from the Area Meeting Racial Justice Group went to a party given by Rekindle school in Moss Side – and a very good party it was! We met educators, students, evaluators, activists – and all kinds of interesting community members. Rekindle is a supplementary school based in Moss Side for (mainly black) boys and girls who are in danger of dropping out of education. The supplementary school movement began back in the seventies when black community groups began to confront the ways in which black children are failed by the state education system – both on account of a school curriculum that totally ignores the role of black people in Britain's history, and through the racism that kids encounter personally in their schools. Rekindle seeks to re-awaken an interest in education in disaffected and disadvantaged teenagers. They receive help with their homework and also education in their own history. They are also encouraged to take pride in their culture and community.

A principle that inspires Rekindle is 'It takes a village to raise a child'. That is, what counts is not just what is formally taught but the contribution of the community and the input of all generations. The boys and girls are encouraged to learn about and take pride in their own community, to understand the journeys their parents and grandparents had undertaken. They are offered projects and experiences that will foster a confident identity and intellectual curiosity which will stand them in good stead when they leave formal education.

In addition to this, Rekindle offers a space for teenagers to just chill out, listen to their music or read in a safe and supportive space. They are also provided with hot meals. Rekindle is very much youth led and the 'educators' are mostly young people of colour. The first time I visited Rekindle I walked into a class room where someone had been setting up a project to 'interview an activist'. Someone had noted suggestions on the whiteboard and others had scribbled ideas. This gave me a taste of the Rekindle approach to education.

Rekindle is a very new venture with very high aspirations and it faces all the challenges that small voluntary sector organisations have to deal with. The Area Meeting Racial Justice group are trying to support Rekindle in the limited ways that are open to us. The Quaker Work Fund has provided some funds to nurture a gardening project and there may be further fundraising possibilities.

For more information - and for some pretty cool merchandise (caps, T shirts etc) - visit their website;

<http://www.rekindleschool.org>

## **ECOCIDE – SUFFERINGS SAYS MORE WORK NEEDED, WHILE EU MOVES AHEAD**

Sufferings looked at the issue at their special weekend meeting, but did not decide to sign up to call for Ecocide to be made an international crime, as they felt that more work was needed locally.

Meanwhile the EU has criminalised ecological damage “comparable to ecocide”

[EU criminalises environmental damage ‘comparable to ecocide’ | Green politics | The Guardian](#)

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### **M28 VIGIL – Call on Friends to join**

M28, the UN Climate Conference, is in Dubai, UAE, from 30/11/23 to 12/12/23. The Environment Group invites Friends to join in a vigil on the steps of Mount St on Saturday 9 December from 12.30pm to 1.30pm, to call for compensation for poor countries affected by climate change, and no more fossil fuels.

**Manchester Climate Coalition** are also protesting on 9 December – you could join both. **Saturday 9th December 11 am** Join us for the Global Day of Action for Climate Justice. Meet at the Victoria statue in Piccadilly Gardens.

👉 Wear black

👉 bring placards and banners

👉 bring friends and colleagues



## WHITE POPPY STALL - CENTRAL MANCHESTER MEETING HOUSE STEPS, 4<sup>th</sup> NOV

This year, all 200 of the poppies ordered were sold. Not all of these sales were from the stall, the Central Manchester Meeting House staff keep a box of poppies and a donation box near the reception desk. £225.79 was raised in total. After the purchase cost of the poppies was deducted, £89.79 was sent the Peace Pledge Union. Peace Pledge Union supply the poppies.



## **INFO AND A THOUGHT FROM CONFLICT MINERALS CAMPAIGN**

'As well as underpinning our energy transition and key manufacturing industries, critical minerals also underpin our national security. The UK's ability to deploy cutting-edge military capability – whether land, air, sea, space or cyberspace – is dependent on strategic materials, including critical minerals. Critical minerals are found in military systems ranging from the simplest firearm to F35 fighter jets and nuclear submarines. The quantities are relatively small, but high-purity, high-value materials are required. The Ministry of Defence (MOD) works with key suppliers to mitigate supply chain risks. Sustained disruption would over time reduce the UK's freedom of action'.

The above is a quote from the UK govts Critical Mineral strategy. <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/uk-critical-mineral-strategy/resilience-for-the-future-the-uks-critical-minerals-strategy>

Comment by a CMC member - a circular argument: do away with the military and you won't need the minerals that you need the military to secure!

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### **SOCIAL JUSTICE GROUP MEETING ON THURSDAY 7 DECEMBER**

Social Justice Group normally meets on the 4<sup>th</sup> Thursday of the month. However, in December it will meet on the first Thursday 7 December by Zoom at 7.15pm. All welcome. We will discuss preparing for action at the time of the General Election.

## **GOOD NEWS!**

**from Alicia Vallejo (Eccles LM)**

"Good News for animals in laboratories! Peta UK has just announced that "in the UK, rabbits, mice, and other animals will no longer be subjected to painful experiments for products such as shampoo or sun cream."

Peta made the announcement after Minister of State Tom Tugendhat stated that existent licences for ingredients used exclusively in cosmetics products are no longer valid, he said: "No animal testing is now authorised in Great Britain of chemicals that are exclusively intended to be used as ingredients in cosmetics products."

Find out more at <https://www.peta.org.uk/media/>

## **RAMALLAH FRIENDS SCHOOL GRADUATES SHOT IN USA**

Three college students who were shot and wounded in Vermont in late November were graduates of Friends School Ramallah.



## QUAKERS CALL FOR CLIMATE JUSTICE



Quakers shivering outside the BBC on 30 November, calling for climate justice.

## NOTE FROM THE EDITOR

If you are not on the mailing list, and would like to be emailed future copies of the Newsletter, email Clare on [admin@manchesterquakers.org.uk](mailto:admin@manchesterquakers.org.uk) with your request.

Please send articles and photos for the Newsletter to [elizcol@dialstart.net](mailto:elizcol@dialstart.net) The deadline for the January newsletter is 31 December. It can take time for an email to arrive, so I suggest that you aim for 30 December. I put almost everything I receive into the newsletter, with very little editing. Short items with pictures are best.

When submitting items for publication, please be aware that the newsletter is a public document, posted on our website, and we do not control who sees it. Think before submitting personal information, email addresses and photos. Try to avoid sending text and photos that are under copyright, and get consent from people in photos if needed.

Look at the website <https://www.manchesterquakers.org.uk> under “Newsletters and Events” if you’d like to see back-issues of the newsletter.

If you want to make contact with anyone who writes in the newsletter, and no contact details are given, email me [elizcol@dialstart.net](mailto:elizcol@dialstart.net) and I’ll forward your email to them

Elizabeth Coleman, Editor 07969 385080