

**MANCHESTER & WARRINGTON AREA QUAKER MEETING
NEWSLETTER NO 39 JANUARY 2025**



“Reindeer” in Eccles garden – see page 21

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HEARING A NIGHTINGALE

by Alan Pinch

One summer in the 1990s the annual gathering of east European Friends was held in Hungary, and I attended it. I was and still am very interested in Hungarian language and culture.

We stayed in a simple hostel on the shores of Lake Velence. Some of the small number of Hungarian Quakers live nearby. Velence is a shallow lake with large reedbeds, surrounded by gentle, undulating countryside. A nice change from the much better known Lake Balaton. All loyal Hungarians think Balaton is paradise, so much better than the cold, unpredictable sea. I don't.

One day we received an invitation from a Quaker lady. We were to come and sit in her garden in the early evening and hear the song of the nightingales. It was the season for them, she said.

I accepted eagerly, and with four or five European Friends set out on foot for her house, about a mile from the hostel down a green lane.

So before long we were seated in garden chairs with cups of tea, chatting politely with our hostess and listening out for some remarkable song. When at last a natural chorus did arise in the direction of the lake shore I was very disappointed. Could these harsh tones be nightingales? No, they could not. It was a social gathering of frogs.

Our hostess, a little crestfallen, counselled patience. The birds would begin a little later. But no. It is a well-known finding of ornithological science that if you set out to show anyone a particular bird, that species will not show up.

As dusk began to become darkness we took our leave, telling the Hungarian lady that never mind, it had been very nice to visit her anyway. Picking our way gingerly back along the darkened lane, we found a thick, shadowy bush bursting into passionate song. There was no local person to tell us what it was, but we knew. All the rest of the way back we wandered happily along, listening to more and more invisible maestros.

Being a lifelong poetry reader, I thought of Keats. The great romantic Ode which had so thrilled me as an adolescent was written, so we were told, after he had listened to a nightingale singing in a Hampstead garden. For Keats, this wonderful bird-song stood for the consoling continuity of natural beauty. We will die, but the natural world remains what it always has been.

“Thou wast not born for death, immortal bird,
No hungry generations tread thee down.
The voice I hear this passing night was heard
In ancient days by emperor and clown”

What a pity, I thought as a schoolboy, that you can't hear a nightingale in a Hampstead garden now. Keats and Shakespeare and lots of other poets are always going on about them. Will I ever hear one?

“It is the nightingale and not the lark” says Juliet to Romeo when she does not want him to leave her at dawn.

Now when I was a lad I was perfectly familiar with lark song. It was to be heard every summer in the flat fields of Middlesex. You stopped and gazed up to see the brave little warbling speck high in the sky. One day, walking on Hounslow Heath, I was startled by an unexpected flurry at my feet. Looking down, I saw two lark's eggs in a hollow of rough grass.

The mother bird had stayed on her nest until the last moment, till I nearly planted my unwary foot upon her.

But how many London adolescents today have heard lark song? The dreadful holocaust of insect and bird life we are now experiencing will deaden aspects of our culture. To find out what Juliet meant our young students will have to consult a footnote. Tell me, have you ever been inspired by a footnote? If they listen to Vaughan Williams' "The Lark Ascending", it will not evoke any personal experience.

Sorry Keats, but you were wrong. The nightingale is at least as ephemeral as we are.

Ecological disaster crosses frontiers and seas. The nightingale is a migrant, and cannot be saved in one country alone. In order to rescue our own natural and cultural heritage we must work with friends in other lands.

Need I say more?

SAFEGUARDING

Our Safeguarding Co-ordinators are Kath Haworth and Ben Wickens.

The generic email address is:

mwamsafeguarding@gmail.com

ECCLES WINTER GATHERING 2 DEC





REFLECTIONS ON THE NEWSLETTER

by Elizabeth Coleman (Editor)

I have been editing the newsletter for over three years, and have got a lot of enjoyment and interest from doing it. It gives me the opportunity to be editor, reporter and writer. It is not an official AM role, so I will continue to do it till I am no longer able to or no longer wish to, or if AM asks me to stop. I do not need to be reappointed. (I have checked this with AM Clerks.)

I know that it is appreciated by Friends, particularly those who are less able to participate in Quaker activities because of age, and like to be kept in touch. Also, it is posted on the AM website, which means that newcomers looking up Quakers get an idea of our current activities and interests. It gives the witness groups a platform to tell Friends about their concerns and activities.

Reading on screen is not as comfortable as reading hard copy, and a few Friends have asked to receive a printed version. I use quite large print, have a lot of pictures, and encourage people to write short articles. However, I do not leave out contributions simply because I have received a lot in a particular month, as I think every contribution is of interest to some Friends. There is an index at the front, so I hope that, rather than feeling daunted by a very long newsletter, busy Friends might read selectively. Remember that the length of the newsletter is partly because of the size of print and number of pictures.

Most contributions fall naturally into one of 3 categories:

- 1) Spiritual/Religious – eg report on Bible study
- 2) Community – eg social events, civil partnerships, births and deaths

3) Social Concern – eg activities of Witness Groups, protest against arms fair

I can only publish what I receive, and I do not receive much that falls into category (1), Spiritual/Religious. Please consider sharing spiritual things.

The newsletter is a way to get any concern out to Friends, even concerns we have never considered. So, if you feel strongly about child care, or factory farming, or any other topic, feel free to submit an article.

You may think that there are a disproportionate number of items that relate to Eccles meeting and Friends. As I attend Eccles, I encourage people to write and send photos, but if other meetings submitted more, it would be good. There is also quite a bit of coverage of Congo, in which our Area Meeting has had an interest since we were involved in founding of the Quaker Congo Partnership, which we continue to support, as well as Conflict Minerals Campaign (Let the people of Congo (DRC) benefit from their mineral wealth.)

What I find most interesting in the newsletter is the opportunity to share ideas, particularly those where Friends have differing views – death and dying, gender, reparations, Ukraine, Israel/Palestine, central decision-making, hybrid meetings. And to share books we have read that have meant a lot to us. Also, extracts from autobiographies are interesting, particularly of older Friends remembering what life was like when they were young.

Friends at Sale work hard to make their garden beautiful, but Friends from other Local Meetings don't often see it. Almost every month, Sale Friends send photos of the garden for us all to enjoy.

While people tell me that they like the newsletter, I rarely get more detailed feedback. If you write for the newsletter, be confident that a number of Friends will read what you write, but it is unusual for anyone to respond, except possibly if they strongly disagree with you.

WHEN WRITING FOR THE NEWSLETTER:

Think what will be interesting to the reader. For example, if you go to a conference, a short item telling of the one or two things that really captured your imagination or made you think, may be better than a long, balanced overview giving a description of every session. (You can offer to send a fuller report on request.)

Don't be put off writing because you're not a good writer. So long as Friends can understand what you're saying, there's no need for an elegant style. Items can be very short. It is good for Friends to learn of others who have a particular interest or concern, even if the item is only a few lines.

Don't feel constrained from submitting an item because you have written rather a lot for the newsletter in the past. No-one is forced to read any article, so if you have something interesting to say, say it. Whatever you write, some Friends will be interested to hear what you have to say, some won't.

QUAKERS IN GOMA AREA

There are a number of Quakers living in displaced persons camps around Goma in N Kivu, DRC, because they have had to flee their homes and farms in the surrounding villages because of fighting. Quaker Work Fund contributed £309 to pay for a visit by George Bani to look into their situation. Below is part of his report.

REPORT ON THE ASSESSMENT OF THE LIVING CONDITIONS OF QUAKERS LIVING IN DISPLACED PERSONS CAMPS IN GOMA, NORTH KIVU, DRC

The main objective of this assessment, which took place from November 24 to 27, 2024, was to see and hear through interviews with some displaced Quakers (women, men and children) their living conditions in different displaced persons camps in Goma.

Photos	Information given:
 <p>A woman with a red and white patterned headband and a colorful floral dress is sitting on a wooden bench. She is looking directly at the camera. The background shows a simple structure made of wood and white fabric, likely a tent or shelter in a camp.</p>	<p>NAKOZEHE RUMAZIMISI Espérance, a married woman aged 40 living in the Ruseyo displaced persons camp in Goma. My family and I have been in this displaced persons camp for two years now, following violent fighting between government forces and the M23 in our village of Kibumba in Masisi territory, fighting that forced us to flee our village. I have 10 children, six of whom are studying at secondary school with the help of some people of good will and 4 others are not studying because we do not have the money to pay for their schooling. We lead such a difficult life in this camp, because we live in torn tarpaulins, the food we are given is very insignificant, we do not have clothes, it is difficult to find even money to pay for soap and to supplement the food we are given when it is finished. Following this difficult life that we lead, last October I went to Kibumba to see my fields and our house, but unfortunately, I found our house completely destroyed and my fields occupied and cultivated by the neighboring population of Rwanda hostile to the M23. I was afraid and I quickly returned to the camp without bringing anything.</p>
 <p>A man with a grey beard and a grey polo shirt is sitting on a wooden bench. He is looking directly at the camera. The background shows a simple structure made of wood and white fabric, likely a tent or shelter in a camp.</p>	<p>BUSHU MANDEFU, married man aged 67, displaced living in the Ruseyo camp in Goma. I have been here since February 2023 with my wife and my 7 children from the village of Busakirwa in the Masisi territory. Two of my children are studying and 5 are not studying, they dropped out of school because I was unable to pay for their studies. We have been living a very difficult life since our arrival in this camp, to eat, pay for clothes for us and for our children, finding money to pay for our children's schooling is difficult. The World Food Programme, WFP gives us a ration for a month that we consume for two or two and a</p>

half weeks, now to survive, sometimes, I transport bricks or sand to construction sites outside the camp. We no longer have tarpaulins, when it is raining, we suffer



NTABANYIMANA AZARIA, 41-year-old man, married and father of 4 children, residing in the Bulengo camp in Goma. I came to the village of Karuba in Masisi territory after violent fighting between the FARDC and the M23. Our village had been completely attacked by the M23 and we were forced to flee to this camp since December 7, 2023. On the one hand, we have the problem of insecurity in the camp, people are victims of targeted attacks by armed people, kidnappings and from time to time we experience shots from bales (rifle) from unidentified armed people. Since September 2024, we have recorded three cases of bodies found lifeless in this Bulengo camp. On the other hand, we have the problem of food, the World Food Program, WFP gives us either food or money to pay for food to consume for a month, but it is not enough to cover our survival for a month. We only had tarpaulins when we arrived in the camp, now they are torn. We also have the problem of finding firewood to cook food, our women leave the camp at 5 in the morning to return at 6 in the evening in search of wood, and sometimes, they are victims of rape and torture by armed men. Life is so difficult in the camp, we pray that the war ends so we can return home.



MUKAMIZA BERNADETTE, widowed woman president of the women in Nyamitaba Quaker monthly meeting in the territory of Masisi, aged 65, resident in the camp for displaced persons of Bulengo in Goma. I have now been in this camp for two years with my 5 children, including two girls and three boys, only one of my children is studying because I have no money to pay for their studies. We have a serious shelter problem, the tarpaulins that we received do not allow us to have a shelter that suits our families, we are forced to sleep together with the children at an advanced age, girls and boys, and that is not in accordance with our culture ; but also, the tarpaulins that we have received since our arrival in the camp are already torn. I have already been the victim of theft twice at night, unidentified people came and tore the tarpaulin of my shelter and took away my food, my clothes and my pots. Life in the camp is very difficult, the WFP gives us food to be consumed for a month, but often the WFP exceeds this

	period before distributing us more food, it exceeds, one or two months late. We have not yet received clothes, kitchen tools : pots and plates, soaps, bed covers and mosquito nets. We are waiting for all this suffering because we have nothing to do, at home there is still war.
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GENERAL CONCLUSION: According to what we saw and heard from displaced persons interviewed during our visit, displaced persons living in IDP camps in Goma in general and in particular displaced Quakers, have the following problems:

1. Food is insufficient for families receiving WFP assistance, the food they receive does not cover the period dedicated to its consumption, but also the distribution cycle is sometimes not respected by WFP. There are also many families who do not have tokens, i.e. who do not receive WFP food and who manage with difficulty and otherwise with too much risk of being victims of rape, kidnapping or torture by armed groups
2. They also have the problem of their children's schooling and school supplies. The schools in the IDP camps in Goma are insufficient. Many children do not go to school because they have run out of places in the schools located in the camps. They would like to study, but their parents do not have the money to pay school fees in schools outside the IDP camps.
3. They have the problem of tarpaulins. Many of the tarpaulins that were distributed by the IOM as soon as the IDPs arrived are already torn, but also, some families have not yet received tarpaulins since their arrival in the camps.
4. Clothes and non-food items (soaps, plates, pots, blankets, shoes, etc.). Since the arrival of the IDPs in the IDP camps in Goma, many have not yet received these materials. According to Mr. Mahoro Faustin, head of the Bulengo displaced persons camp in Goma, a camp with 38,489 households, or 192,445 people, only 3.5% of the population of this camp have already received the kits containing non-food items (new tarpaulins, plates, pots, spoons, blankets, etc.) from IOM.
5. Young girls and women have the problem of finding hygiene kits to cover their gender-specific needs.
6. Firewood is also a problem for families of displaced persons in Goma. Women and girls are more exposed to many risks, including : rape, kidnapping, torture and sexual harassment by armed groups.
7. Access to quality health care and drinking water is also a problem.

LAUNCHING A BOAT

by Alan Pinch

It's a bit of a speciality of mine. Not for nothing were generations of my ancestors dockyardmen.

What you need is:

- 1) a flattish piece of wood two to four inches long. A chip struck off when someone was using an axe or chopper will do. As you were walking to the water, hand in hand with your small companion, you spotted one and pocketed it.
- 2) a child aged, ideally, between four and twelve.
- 3) a penknife with a sharpish point to its blade.
- 4) a lake or large pond.

You also need (5) a gentle breeze, which of course cannot be commanded. As we know, it bloweth where it listeth. Choose the side of your lake so that the breeze is at your back, blowing out onto the water.

Tell the child to find a suitable mast and sail, i.e. a straight twig and a broad leaf. By twiddling the blade of the penknife make a hole in the flat piece of wood for the mast to go in. Show the child how to make two slits in the leaf and so slip it over the mast. Impressing on him or her that they must hold the hull and not the mast, let them place it gently into the water.

And this is where the magic begins. What a crude, misshapen little object we have made. No fine detail. Quite the wrong shape. But by the transforming power of imagination the child sees a wonderful sailing vessel, as the breeze catches the leaf and the little object starts a precarious, wobbly glide over the water.

It works with almost all children. Once, at a Quaker picnic, I had a queue of children. Some of them I failed to recognise. They were not of our party at all, but little opportunists.

It is best not to bother trying to control your boat with a stick or reed, but simply to wave goodbye to it and it bobs away on a hazardous voyage far over the lake, until we lose sight of it.

If the child happens to be Russian, this is where you recite that little masterpiece of the adolescent Lermontov:

A lonely sail shows white
Against the blue mist of the sea.
What is it seeking in a distant land?
What is it leaving behind, in its homeland?

But the rebellious boat seeks out the storm
As if in the storm it might find peace.

Sasha, a Russian scientist, was so pleased when I made boats for his children that he insisted on buying me a Swiss army knife. Quite unnecessarily. My simple knife was perfectly adequate. But I think with pleasure, when I look at it, of an army whose chief weapon is a versatile penknife. Think of those ceremonial parades in Bern. “pre – se – e – ent -- penknives!”

The fragile and vulnerable set out on voyages into the unknown. Like little boats “as frail as a butterfly in May.” That phrase comes from the French wonder-child Arthur Rimbaud. Speaking of little boys’ boats. Rimbaud grew up damaged, and his final travels were grim.

There, I have waved goodbye to them. My grandchildren, my pupils, my dear asylum seeker friends and their children, gone beyond my power to steer them. So vulnerable. Exposed to natural forces which none of us can control. But they are transformed, irradiated by the imagination which arises naturally in us and sees them as immensely valuable, so much more so than the natural materials of which we are made.

TEENAGE GENERAL MEETING

Teenage General Meeting (TGM) met at Central Manchester Meeting House on Saturday and Sunday (14-15 December). TGM enables teenagers in our Area and other neighbouring Area Meetings to build connections as Quakers and takes the form of weekends staying in different local Meeting Houses.

FOR YOUR DIARIES – INTERFAITH MEETING

Dear Friends,

Next June, from 20th to the 22nd, QCCIR is having a residential weekend at Hinsley Hall in Leeds. We would like to invite Friends who are interested to attend our afternoon session on the 21st, when we hope to engage with people from different religious backgrounds around the themes for the weekend, namely interfaith relations, and communication, both significant themes in the light of the events of last summer.

This message is a heads-up about the event, and I'm asking you to pass on the date and themes around your meetings through your newsletters and AM announcements so that Friends who are interested can mark it off in their diaries. More information to follow in the new year.

With good wishes, and in friendship,
Roy Stephenson
QCCIR, and Lancaster Meeting
(Quaker Committee for Christian and Interfaith Relationships)

MORE FOR YOUR DIARIES

Talk by Rex Ambler (founder of Experiment with Light) on Saturday 1 February at 2pm at Central Manchester Friends Meeting House, which is being supported by Central Manchester Elders.

The title of the talk will be 'Living in Dark Times' (the title of Rex Am-
bler's 2018 pamphlet), and will be followed by questions and discus-
sion.

The event will be free and although booking is not essential, it would be
helpful to the organisers to get an idea of how many to expect, so peo-
ple are welcome to email Mary at admin@manchesterquakers.org.uk if
they are planning to attend.

1 March – Special AM to consider response to World Plenary

A Special Area Meeting will be held on Saturday 1st March 2025 at
Central Manchester Meeting House between 10.30am & 1pm to con-
sider our response to discernment at The World Plenary held in South
Africa in August 2024.

Please note the Area Meeting dates for 2025 below:

Thursday January 30th - 6.30 for 7pm start. By Zoom Only.

Saturday March 29th - 2pm at Central Manchester and online (hybrid)

Wednesday May 28th - 6:30 for 7pm at South Manchester (in person
only)

Sunday July 20th - 1:00 pm at Warrington; (bring-and-share lunch 12:00.
(in person only)

Thursday October 2nd - 6:30 for 7pm Central Manchester and online
(hybrid)

Tuesday December 2nd - 6:30 for 7pm start by zoom only

Carbon Footprint – A Short History from Ecology Building Society website

According to the *Oxford English Dictionary*, [the term ‘carbon footprint’ first appeared in the *BBC Vegetarian Good Food* magazine in 1999](#). In 2005 fossil fuel giant BP hired an advertising firm to popularise the ‘carbon footprint’ idea for individuals. It centred around calculating the carbon consumption of the ‘average American household’ based on ‘routine human activities’ and ‘lifestyle choices’. The result of this was that the onus of carbon reduction was squarely placed on the shoulders of individual.

As a [2021 Guardian Article](#) pointed out, this campaign was merely one instance of a long and ongoing history of fossil fuel industry propaganda that ranged from outright climate change denial and economic scaremongering to greenwashing. By shifting the responsibility away from companies and onto individuals, the concept of the ‘carbon footprint’ was used to distract us from the far more consequential actions of multinational industries.

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When I heard that BP was eagerly promoting the idea of individuals’ “carbon footprint,” I was shocked. We are being fooled into taking responsibility for sorting out a crisis that cannot be sorted out without major action by government and companies. While lifestyle changes are good, they are no substitute for campaigning. This is why I suggested at Social Justice Group that we set up an Environment Group in our Area Meeting, to focus on campaigning.

Elizabeth Coleman

CHATSWORTH ENGAGE CHRISTMAS FAIR

AT ECCLES FMH 14 DECEMBER Chatsworth Exchange, the regular user of Eccles Meeting House during the week held their annual Christmas Fair on Saturday December 14 and invited friends and relatives and members of our Meeting. It was a busy occasion with the whole building being used; stalls upstairs, catering downstairs, Reindeer (donkeys with antlers) in the garden and Father Christmas's Grotto in the Garden Room - what a wonderful use of all our space and facilities, a great time was had by all.



Goodies for sale

WENDY HAMPTON LEAVING

Wendy Hampton is leaving the Quaker Life staff team. Wendy has been the Local Development Worker (LDW) for Swarthmoor, Kendal & Sedbergh, Lancashire Central & North, Pendle Hill, Manchester & Warrington and Hardshaw & Mann area meetings since 2016.

Wendy says "After working for eight years with Quakers in the NW of England and beyond in supporting Quaker Meetings, I am ready for a change. It has been a privilege to do this work and to become more involved with Friends and their meetings and I am grateful to all Friends who have allowed me into their communities. The Quaker world is a small one and I look forward to seeing many of you again as we go about our worship, work and witness in the world."

Her final day working with Quakers was Thursday 5th December. Recruitment for a new Local Development Worker for the region may not be complete before Wendy finished work so for support after that date please contact sophies@quaker.org.uk or supportmeetings@quaker.org.uk

STOP OIL PROTESTOR

A 77-year-old environmental activist will spend Christmas in prison after authorities can't find an electronic device small enough to fit on his wrist, despite being released with an electronic tag. Gaie Delap, a former teacher and Quaker from Bristol, was jailed in August along with four co-defendants for taking part in the destructive Just Stop Oil protests on the M25 in November 2022.

Info from The Guardian

FOR VEGANUARY

Information from Kath Dymond

Veganism aligns with the United Nations' Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) and can significantly mitigate:

Environmental Impact

1. Greenhouse gas emissions (up to 14.5% reduction)
2. Deforestation (70% pf Amazon rainforest cleared for livestock)
3. Water conservation (animal agriculture uses approx 30% of global freshwater)

Health Benefits

1. Reduced heart disease and stroke risk
2. Lower cancer risk
3. Improved gut health and immunity

Animal Welfare

1. Ending factory farming and animal exploitation
2. Preserving biodiversity
3. Promoting compassion and empathy

Let's continue inspiring others towards a more sustainable, compassionate future.



Ever changing Ordsall Christmas skies
Photo by Jane Wood

NOTE FROM THE EDITOR

If you are not on the mailing list, and would like to be emailed future copies of the Newsletter, (or to stop receiving it,) email Mary Atkinson on admin@manchesterquakers.org.uk with your request.

Please send items for the Newsletter to elizcol@dialstart.net
The deadline for newsletters is 5pm on the last day of the month. **The deadline for the February newsletter is 5pm on 31 January.** It can take time for an email to arrive, so I suggest that you aim for 30 January. I put almost everything I receive into the newsletter, with very little editing. Short items with pictures are best. Letters in response to articles in this newsletter are welcome. 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. If you want to make contact with anyone who writes in the newsletter, and no contact details are given, email me elizcol@dialstart.net and I’ll forward your email to them.

Elizabeth Coleman, Editor 07969 385080