



Almeley Wootton Quaker News

May—July 2021

www.almeleyquakers.org.uk

Dates for Your Diary

Almeley Meeting for Worship for Business

Monday May 10th

Monday June 7th tbc

Monday July 5th

All meeting via Zoom at 4:00pm

Area Meeting

Saturday May 15th

Saturday June 12th

Saturday July 10th

All meetings via Zoom at 10:15 for 10:30

DON'T GIVE ME THE WHOLE TRUTH

*Don't give me the whole truth,
don't give me the sea for my thirst,
don't give me the sky when I ask for light,
but give me a glint, a dewy wisp, a mote,
as the birds bear water drops from their bathing
and the wind a grain of salt.*

Olav H. Hague (a Norwegian poet)

Anne Bull

Watch this space!

Almeley Wootton Quaker Meeting House
1672- 2022. 350 years.

Next year in 2022 Almeley Wootton Meeting House will have been in continuous use for 350 years. It is one of the oldest Meeting Houses in England.

Plans are afoot for special events, exhibitions, small publications and general celebration of this very special, peaceful place. We will share details at BM on May 10th and as plans unfurl. Most activities will centre around the months of June, July and August.

(See Kit Byatt's article on page 5)

The Peaceful Schools Project

The Peaceful Schools Project is an initiative of the Mid Wales Area Quaker Meeting and is founded on the Quaker principles of equality, peace, truth and justice. However, the programme is secular in nature with no religious content.

The Peaceful Schools Project has been delivered successfully in many primary schools in north Powys, north Ceredigion and south Gwynedd.

It arose as a response to the culture of violence and hostility that seems to be endemic in our society.

Our vision is to create an atmosphere in schools where pupils treat each other with respect, work together and learn skills to solve problems in a constructive way. In this way we will influence change from the bottom up.

<https://www.addysgheddpeaceedu.org.uk/>

Quaker Question Time with Preet Kaur Gill MP

Quakers in Britain invite you to Quaker Question



Time, where Friends can discuss key political issues with the Shadow International Development Secretary,

Preet Kaur Gill MP.

Preet has been an advocate in parliament for many issues of concern to Quakers in Britain, including climate justice, aid spending, and the integration of refugees.

Tue, June 8, 2021 6:00 PM – 7:00 PM

To register or further details follow the link below.

[Quaker Question Time with Preet Kaur Gill MP | Quakers in Britain](#)

Special Request – Can you help or know someone who could?

I have been in contact, by email and phone, with Diana Palmer who is seeking to find accommodation in Herefordshire for a Syrian refugee in his early twenties, preferably as a lodger, in a sympathetic household. I am adhering to our normal policy and not naming the young man.

He is from Aleppo and arrived in this country in 2016 with very little education, having been a refugee since 2012. He's been a student at Hereford Sixth Form College since September 2017 and Diana first met him 2 years ago when she tutored him in GCSE maths. He is now just finishing his A levels and through a great deal of hard work is on track to get the 3 As that he needs to get into medical school. Throughout most of this time he also had part time work in the evenings and at the weekend. He is going to work for a year because he needs time to prepare for the UCATT test for entry to medical school and also he hopes to save ready for his time as a student.

He needs to find new accommodation because the house where he is living has been sold and completion will probably happen in late May or June. Ideally the accommodation would be for a year but even for a few months would be a help. He has had the first vaccination because he has been volunteering at Hereford Hospital, and is due to get the 2nd vaccination by the end of May.

Diana describes him as very thoughtful and considerate. He has lived with an English family in the past. Unless he is working, he is unlikely to go out in the evenings.

He is known to Kit Byatt, who along with others, would be happy to provide a character reference. He has a car so would be able to live somewhere remote if necessary.

If anyone is prepared to consider helping, Diana could give you more information and it would be possible to meet him at her house. Please contact Diana directly by phone

(Diana Palmer 01544 388 840)

Helen Briggs Correspondence Clerk

To Afterword or Not to Afterword?

Elders have been musing, as they are wont to do every few years, on the thorny subject of whether or not it is useful or wise to encourage Friends to offer thoughts at the end of Meeting. We might do this either about the ministry we've have heard, or some thoughts we weren't sufficiently moved to share as ministry, but we think might nevertheless be useful to Friends.

It might be useful to see part of this minute from the previous Elders in 2018:

Afterwords: ... *We had a spontaneous afterword the following Sunday morning and this prompted a number of people to come to Brian over coffee and say how much they would like it to be reinstated. We considered this matter for some time and concluded that: there was a danger of afterwords turning into a discussion; that there was little opportunity to consider each contribution in depth, as would be the case in ministry during a meeting for worship; that it would be better if people conversed about ministry over coffee. ...*

Ian, Helen and I as the current Elders, are minded to have another go at offering a space for Afterwords, simply because recently it has spontaneously taken place and nothing 'disastrous' happened. We trust that Friends who are seasoned listeners, will transfer those skills to the Afterword as we continue to listen 'with the ear of our heart'.

Maggie Taylor Sanders Elder





Almeley Wooton Young Friends



Kate Binney - "In our February Young Friends Meeting on Zoom we celebrated Love. We "shared" heart shaped biscuits we had made and the recipes used to make them. We then thought about our recipe for Love as well as telling some stories about Love."

LOVE

Biscuit Recipe:

flour, butter, ginger, cinnamon, maple syrup, sugar, lemon juice.

Love Recipe:

kindness, laughter, mum, dad, dog, chocolate, best friend, Lego, forgiveness, strength, courage, little gifts, unselfishness, cards, empathy and understanding, sharing, sympathy, helpfulness, owning up, time and love

In March our Young Friends looked at what we understand by HOPE. We discussed our hopes and whether there is always the possibility of hope. We thought about those who say they have no hope and considered how we could help them. We had all created something out of "junk" that we would throw away to show that there is hope in everything if we look for it. Bethan and Issy made a video of jumps they had made for their dog, Charlotte made a boat, Carey made a container to keep grit dry for her hens, Florence made a picture and Kate made some flowers.

"Hope is being able to see that there is light despite all of the darkness." (Desmond Tutu)



The Blackthorn Winter

Blackthorn, oh blackthorn 'tis winter again
Your call to the east wind is colder than sin,
It freezes the lamb and it stifles the seed,
Blackthorn, oh Blackthorn, let springtime proceed

I sharpen the winter with thorn and with spine,
Hold hard little springtime, this moment is mine!
The hedges are bare but my blossom is bold,
My winter, though brief, is both spiteful and cold.

You freeze-burn the blossom, the leaf buds you sear,
The saplings and seedlings are withered with fear,
Nothing is safe from your vicious attack,
Blackthorn, oh Blackthorn, let springtime come back!

Aha, cries the Blackthorn, get down on your knees!
Beg for your livestock and plead for your trees.
My flowers may be small and my petals pure white,
But my heart and my timber are black as the night!

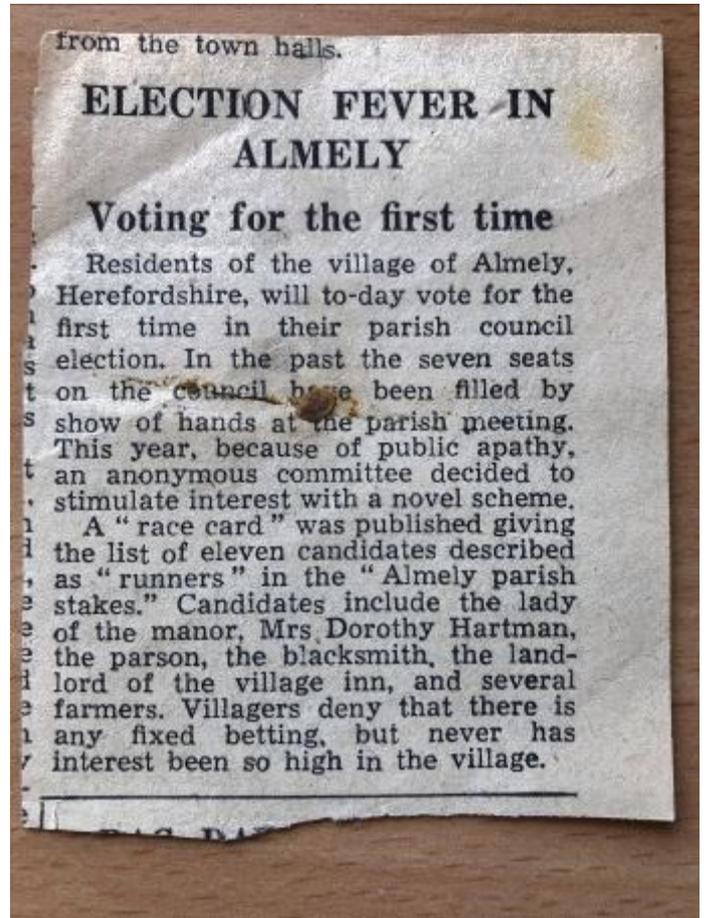
Then bring on your frost and bring on your snow!
Your days they are numbered and soon you will go.
Your petals will fly and the south wind will bring
All of my glory - for I am the Spring!

'Some of our weather folklore is being thrown into disarray by climate change but the Blackthorn Winter seems to remain predictable. When the blackthorn in the hedges and woods comes into flower, it is accompanied by a sharp cold spell of wintry weather - certainly true this year!'

Carey Glyn Jones



Blackthorn (*Prunus spinosa*)



I found it whilst going through my grandmother's papers. Although there's no date, I see that Dorothy Hartman died in 1940, so this is probably 20s/30s...

David Whiting

The Quaker Condition!

I thought this appropriate to The Quaker condition!
'So convenient a thing it is to be a reasonable creature, since it enables us to find, or make a reason for everything one has a mind to do'.

Jeff Glyn Jones

London

St Martins in the Fields website includes several meditative walks. One can navigate it by going to <https://stmartins.digital> and then click the link to Meditation.

Each walk features a part of London and apart from the quiet commentary and meditation it also would provide glimpses of London for those missing the Great Wen!!

Janet Robinson

"Whether in the intellectual pursuits of science or in the mystical pursuits of the spirit, the light beckons ahead, and the purpose surging in our nature responds."

Arthur Eddington,

The Nature of the Physical World 1929

A New Baby

I have become the proud grandfather of a wonderful baby girl. Esther Onnee was born on 10th April to my daughter Alison and son-in-law Tony. Esther was most unexpected as they had been trying for ten years and had given up all hope. Baby, mother and father are all doing well.



Grandma Helen has been busy buying lots of nice goodies and we are both looking forward to going over to the Isle of Man to see them once the IoM government allows us in.

David Briggs

350th Anniversary 2022

Almeley Wooton Quaker Meeting House

As you will most likely be aware, next year is the 350th anniversary of the establishment, of our meeting house by Roger Prichard, in 1672. We feel we want to honour its history as one of the older Quaker meeting houses still in active use for worship. We are planning a number of events and resources to commemorate and celebrate this historic milestone.

A working group has been convened by Stella Sterry, and there is a historical sub-group consisting of David Whiting, Kate Binney & Kit Byatt. They are spearheading the research and planning for our various initiatives. Already, we have had an enthusiastic response from Hereford Archive and Records Centre; they are excited to work with us on this. We hope to produce an exhibition with their help.

By arrangement with David Briggs, our local meeting webmaster, we are planning to revise and expand the '[Our history](#)' section of the Almeley website for next year. We are also working on a number of other potential initiatives, including publications and events. One specific project is to set up a 'virtual burial ground'. This will have pictures of all the gravestones and a list of all the names and dates. We hope it will be a useful resource for local historians and genealogists, as well as of interest to members of the meeting. We are also intending to use this year and these events as an opportunity to engage with the village, as well as the wider community (both Quaker and otherwise). If there is anything you would like to see as part of the celebration, or anything you'd like to contribute, please do approach one of the team!

Library News

Work has been progressing with the library. The bookcase has now been returned to the entrance area and the books replaced in alphabetical blocks according to their title.

I am now working on the collection of books held upstairs and I am just over half way to completing my investigation as to what is up there.

I hope finally to be able to produce a comprehensive catalogue of all our books.

New Addition to Library

Living in the Mystery Between Head and Heart

Author Jan Arriens.

Any suggestion for further acquisitions will gladly be considered.

David Briggs

Lockdown

The best parts of lockdown for me were

The garden has had more care and attention.

The car has used very little petrol, so less pollution has been emitted.

Friends and neighbours offering to shop for us even before lockdown started.

The way local essential shops adapted to the lockdown requirements.

The use of Zoom and other applications of technology allowed me to keep in touch with family, friends, and the organisations to which I belong – even if only as an attender.

The cat has sat on my lap more often.

I shall almost miss it!

Mark Robinson



The Musings of John Titley

Recently I indexed some of my books. Many of them were piled on tables, some on the floor. 'Indexed' is my personal codeword for moving books from one pile to another, and even on rare occasions to a space in my bookshelves. Having performed this onerous task, I was sipping my morning tea when one of the piles toppled over and, in the process, the topmost book slithered across the floor and ended up at my feet. I picked the book up and saw it was book about English Mystics. A book I'd forgotten I possessed. Intriguingly there was bookmark in place which had opened at a commentary on the 'The Cloud of Unknowing'. Nothing is known about the author of 'The Cloud of Unknowing'. His or her identity is deliberately hidden, suggesting that the author would be in great peril if their identity were known. The blossoming of mysticism in the 14th C may have been a reaction against the Christian experience in the previous century, which in large part was in thrall to Aristotle's philosophy of the rational. I may not be altogether accurate here, as some mystics were inspired by scholastic concepts. One thing we do know about the author of 'The Cloud', is that he or she was honest. Basically, when attempting to answer the question, 'What is God?', he or she replies with refreshing honesty that they have not the foggiest idea. The unknown author holds to his or her central belief that 'God' is utterly and essentially beyond human imagination and to even grasp an inkling of what is 'going on', as it were, we must abandon our preconceived ideas about the nature of reality. That our author had experienced some episode of enlightenment or revelation is not in doubt. As with all mystics I know of, every one of them claims the experience was beyond words, ineffable and indescribable. They then appear to spend the rest of their lives talking or writing about the event and the impact it had on them. Quite understandably in terms of human experience. However, I wonder if it crossed the mind of any of them that the event, they experienced was theirs and theirs alone? I passionately believe that such personal 'enlightenment' is more common than we know. It does not require the clouds to open or drums to sound or the voice of a Deity speaking to the individual. (I've often wondered how any human who claims to have been spoken to by a Deity, knows it is the voice of the Deity in question? Does the voice have cultural overtones? Was it Jehovah, Odin, Freya, Allah, or Ra who was speaking)? Personal 'enlightenment' can be sneaky and creep up on us in ordinary, everyday situations. On one level, we may not even be aware that anything has happened, except that we have had an insight into 'something' ineffable that can change us. That can happen anywhere: in Meeting for Worship or crossing Hereford High Town.

Quaker Beliefs

"Quakers do not share a fixed set of beliefs.

Our unity is based on a shared practice of worship, not on our beliefs all being the same. There is no need to be in unity with Quakers on every issue in order to be part of our meetings.

Many people have a personal understanding of God; often this is based on Christian teachings, or on other religious traditions. Other people are aware of or seek a spiritual environment but would not define it further. Quakers are no different!

There is a great diversity within the Quakers on conceptions of God, and we use different kinds of language to describe religious experience. Some Quakers have a conception of God which is similar to that of orthodox Christians, and would use similar language. Others are happy to use God-centred language, but would conceive of God in very different terms to the traditional Christian trinity. Some describe themselves as agnostics, or nontheists, and describe their experiences in ways that avoid the use of the word God entirely.

Quaker faith is built on experience, and Quakers would generally hold that it is the spiritual experience which is central to Quaker worship, and not the use of a particular form of words (whether that be 'God' or anything else").

The above statement was published on the website of the Religious Society of Friends (Quakers) in Britain www.quaker.org.uk during 2013 to describe a Quaker approach to belief, language, and experience.

[Non-theist Friends Network | Website/log of the Non-theist Friends Network in Britain \(nontheist-quakers.org.uk\)](http://Non-theist-Friends-Network-Website/log-of-the-Non-theist-Friends-Network-in-Britain-nontheist-quakers.org.uk)