

Northumbria Friends' Newsletter

Issue 15 Summer 2025



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Please send copy for September Issue 16 to

NorFrnews.21@gmail.com

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Contents

Stocksfield Reaching Out pp3-4

Ministry of Cards p5

Learning and Development Opportunities p6

Peer Group Support P7

About submissions p8

No to Hassockfield p9

Quaker Silent Worship p10

On Trees p11

Dear Friends,

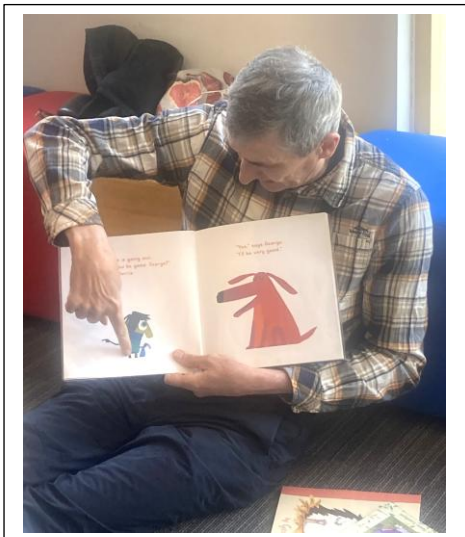
The May is out, although the month has just arrived as I write this, so you must decide for yourselves when to cast your clouts. Alnwick and Sunderland must be the meetings nearest to the cold winds that blow in from the sea, so perhaps we will be later to cast off layers than others!

However cold the wind, and despite the chilling news that assails us every day, the world is still a beautiful place for us in Britain; war zones would be less likely to agree. We will shortly celebrate the Anniversary of VE day, while wars still rage in so many countries, injustice is rife and integrity thin on the ground in some areas. You will read on p9 about Hassockfield; perhaps, like me, you are ashamed of the way we in Britain treat refugees. Yarl's Wood, to where Fatou was moved, is close to where I taught and lived for many years; it is no better than Hassockfield. I ask myself what our local MPs think of these places and policies.

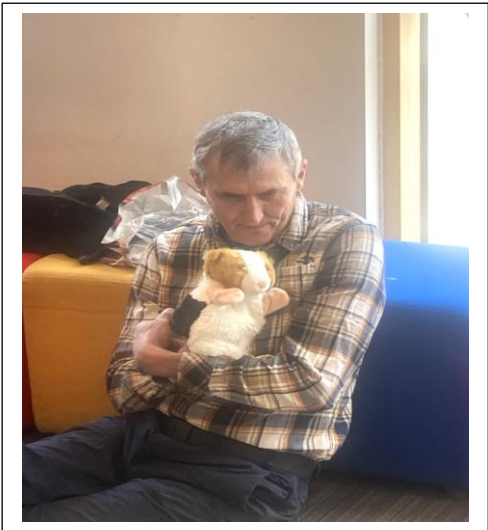
On a more hopeful note, much is happening in our area to support our varied roles and activities. It is unfortunate that public transport is not always helpful for those who do not/cannot drive, and it is not always possible to share cars. Perhaps we ought not to assume, particularly when we consider the effect on the planet, that driving is the default option. In Friendship, as always, **Judith (ed) Alnwick Quakers**

Reaching Out

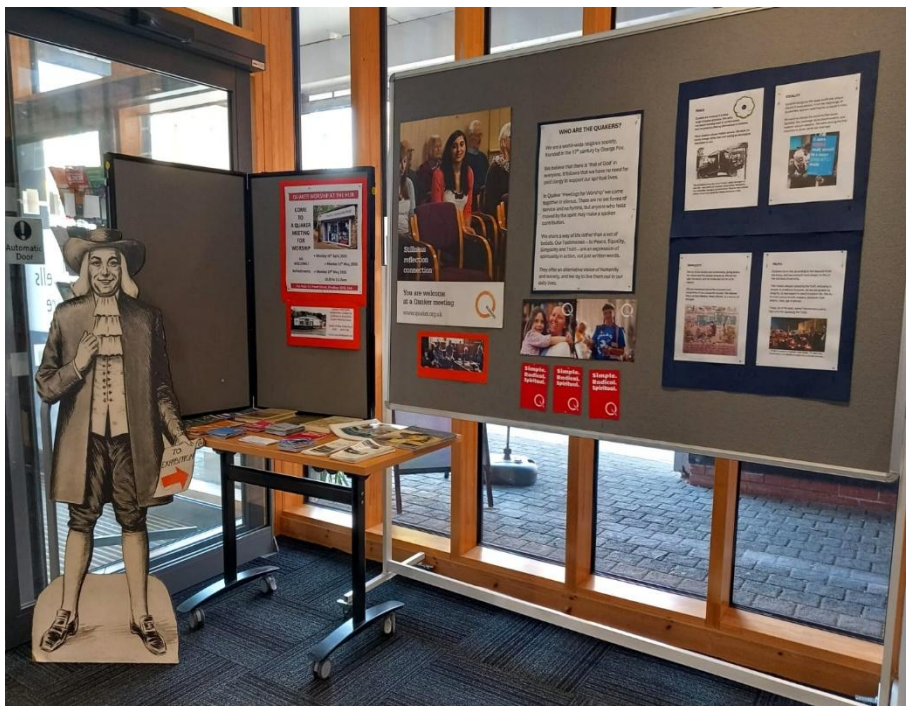
You may remember that in the revamp of the brochure about their meeting, Stocksfield stated their intention of reaching out in Prudhoe. Here they are, doing exactly that in the library.



John Vyle enjoyed a book with a group of ten children



Other Friends mounted a display to draw people's attention to who and what Quakers are, and when Stocksfield Quakers meet.



George Fox was, of course, in attendance.

All photographs for this and the next article were taken by Stocksfield Friends

Stocksfield Friends also took part in a Community Event in Prudhoe



Caroline and Friend

Caroline finds another friend!



We send best wishes to John Vyle, now in hospital suffering from spinal injuries after an accident.

Outreach takes many forms, wears many disguises. It would be excellent to know of more ways Meetings reach out in their communities, which may not be group activities, but ways in which individual Friends work locally or otherwise. Let us know! What do we all do when we aren't in Meeting?

The next issue will be hosted by Newcastle LM, who may well choose a different theme, but that does not preclude your sending contributions re Outreach to the usual address, to be used as possible.

We look forward to Newcastle's ideas for their issue. There is guidance for all contributors on page 8.

The Ministry of Cards

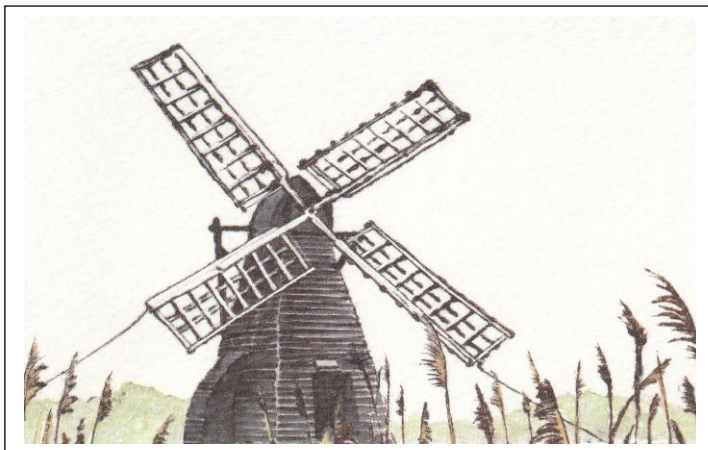
Readers of the Newcastle newsletter will already have read the following, but we publish it for the benefit of others.

Paddy Robson is now in Ponteland Manor Care Home, Thornhill Road, Ponteland. She has settled well and is in better health and is enjoying company and being looked after. Paddy has now got a slot in the activities calendar for making recycled cards with the residents! She said two turned up on the first occasion and the following week lots of residents turned up! Paddy said she was using the card images donated by the Quakers and hoped that was all right. I said I was sure it was! There are activities each day, a church service with singing, and a chaplain who comes to chat regularly. I will continue the recycling of cards for the meeting, so please keep donating your beautiful images.

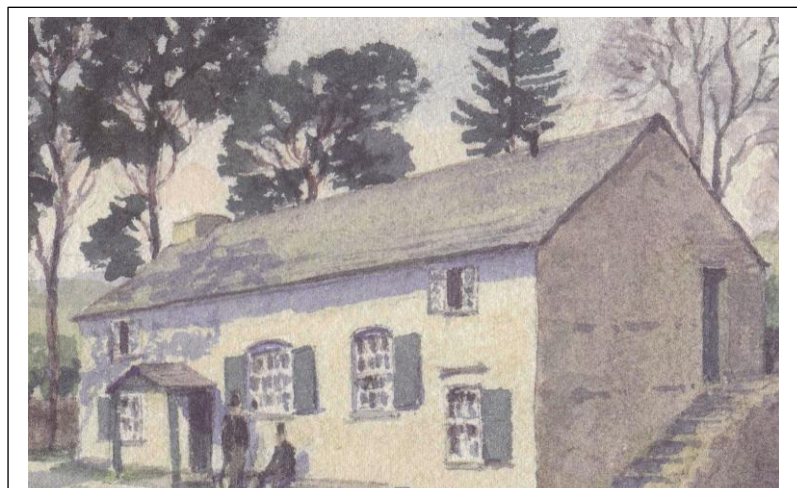
Marilyn Chalk Newcastle LM

You might also join Marilyn's own card-recycling team in Newcastle!

The cards are sold in support of the Kumi Foundation, Uganda, which supports disabled children and families.



Two of the recycled cards



Learning and Development Opportunities

Since its establishment last summer, our Area Meeting's Learning & Development Committee has been actively engaged in the task of strengthening our connections with one another and furthering our understanding of Quaker practices.

We began with an event in Stocksfield Community Centre in November. Led by Alison Tarpey-Black, our local Development Worker, the topic was 'Community Building'. The hall used in the morning was very cold, but a hot lunch (and a move to a warmer room) set a positive tone for a useful interactive session in the afternoon.

In March, the committee organised its first workshop offered by Woodbrooke. Held at Newcastle FMH, it was led by Rhiannon Grant. Participants felt that this day spent reflecting on 'Worship, Ministry & Afterwords' will contribute to a deepening of our understanding of Quaker spirituality. Another convivial lunch was provided, and we hope that eating together will become a regular feature of future events.

On Saturday June 28th Friends are invited to gather in Durham to spend a day with The Kindlers. James McCarthy (from York Meeting) and Newcastle LM's Rebecca Peirson will lead us in a workshop titled 'What Does Love Require of Us?' We hope Friends will like the sound of that topic and will put the date in their diaries. Further details will be circulated nearer the time.

Judith Catty & Caroline Westgate



Friends learning together in different ways
Photographs taken by Northumbria and Northampton Area Friends

Peer Support Zoom Sessions for Quaker Role Holders 2025

These one-hour sessions are a space to raise concerns, share experience and find solutions. They will be facilitated by Local Development Workers Alison Tarpey-Black, Craig Barnett and Hilary Topp.

Local Meeting Clerks

Wednesday 12th February

Thursday 1st May

Monday 22nd September

Trustees

Thursday 13th February

Wednesday 7th May

Wednesday 24th September

Treasurers

Thursday 6th March

Wednesday 11th June

Wednesday 15th October

Eldership and Pastoral Care

Thursday 27th February

Wednesday 2nd July

Thursday 25th September

Nominations

Wednesday 5th March

Thursday 12th June

Thursday 16th October

Safeguarding

Thursday 3 July

Thursday 6 November

All Sessions 7.30-8.30pm

Please register in advance to receive a Zoom link by clicking on the meeting date above.

For more information contact Ellie McCarthy at: elliem@quaker.org.uk

Before we leave such topics, below are a few reminders re submissions. If you can oblige, it saves us a lot of time! If you already are aware of these points, thank you.

- ❖ All submissions are welcome. Depending on other content, we may hold articles over, but they will appear at a suitable time.
- ❖ Copyright forbids publication of others' work without permission until 70 years have elapsed since their death.
- ❖ Please remember that we do not publish private email addresses.
- ❖ Pictures need to be credited so please remember to say who took the picture or where it came from. Pictures/photographs add to the interest.
- ❖ Remember to add your own name at the end of your contribution, and add the LM to which you belong, or unattached if applicable. If necessary, state the source of your information, e.g. if it is based on an article published elsewhere
- ❖ Please send to the Newsletter address only, unless you have a query well in advance of the deadline, in which case send to my personal email as published in the directory. I check the gmail address no more than a week in advance of publication.

Thank you for your co-operation in this, and for all the support you give to the Newsletter. It is a real pleasure to be involved with Friends in this way.

In Friendship, Judith (Alnwick Quakers)

Don't let current dictators consume your passion. You are capable of imagining an alternative, healthy future. Keep in mind that these dictators are just actors on the world stage. While they may show us the dark, shadow side that exists in all of us, we can remind ourselves that we know people of great stature, who demonstrate the other, positive and altruistic side of humankind. Let us hold mistaken leaders in the Light.

Adapted from an article in *The Friend* of 11th April, by Nim Njuguna, Harrow LM

In response to requests, we publish further news of Hassockfield. It does not make comfortable reading.

No to Hassockfield Campaign

Fatou Tamba is from The Gambia. She was detained at Liverpool Reporting Centre at the end of March. She has been in the UK for 18 years and has children here and a fiancé and family in London. Both she and her brother have received death threats due to their political views and activism. Fatou knows that her life would be in danger if she were to ever to step foot in The Gambia; she has no support network left there. Her parents are no longer alive; there is no home, no safe place to go. Fatou has actively contributed and volunteered with the local organisations during her time in the UK.

Fatou Tamba was the focus of the demonstration held at Derwentside Immigrant Removal Centre [known locally as Hassockfield] on Easter Saturday because she was detained there and faced imminent deportation. Over the weekend campaign supporters contacted their MPs and on Easter Monday some prevented her removal from the Centre until her lawyer could file an appeal. Fatou's deportation was deferred and she remained at Hassockfield until she was removed by night and moved to Yarl's Wood detention centre in Bedfordshire, in readiness for deportation. This is an experience typical of many detainees.

The *No to Hassockfield Campaign* wants to see this centre closed as it is particularly unsuitable for detention purposes. The women detained there are isolated, far from the support of friends or family and communications systems are poor. However, the campaign also has broader objectives. The UK is the only country in western Europe where detention can be indefinite. The campaign wants to see this limited to 28 days, where necessary, before removal, and for detention to be replaced by more humane case management in the community, which pilot projects have shown to be effective and also cheaper. Let us hold our government and its detention/refugee policies in the Light.

If you want to support this campaign there is a monthly demo at the centre [DH8 6QY] on the 3rd Saturday of the month 12-2.00pm. You can make donations or write to your MP about the wider issues relating to detention. See www.notohassockfield.org.uk

There is also a faith vigil at 3.00p.m on the first Sunday of every month.

Thank you to Maggie Perry, Stocksfield LM, who responded to our request for more information.

Quaker Silent Worship

Whittier Said it All:

Forgive Our Foolish Ways--

--Of Worship

Beyond mindfulness, beyond meditation
Beyond the ego of thought and the noisy human mind,

Into the Silence of Eternity.

Listen, don't Think.

There you'll find God,

Your evil weakened and good raised up,

Interpreted by Love,

And Kindness in all its diverse forms.

Remember also

The Healing and Mental Benefits of Music

“Turn off the chatter of your brain and be wholly present”

Daniel Levitin, musician and neuroscientist

When Listening.

“I Listen to the Stillness of You”

Tarik O'Regan

Robin Harris Hexham LM

Editor's note: words in italics are quotes from Whittier

On Trees

Reading Robin's thoughts on Quaker Silent Worship reminded me of the piece below, offered by Marion Broome of Allendale LM some time ago. Marion is sadly no longer with us, but her article prompted me to share some thoughts about my time in Shilbottle Colliery Wood this morning, May 3rd.

Trees have always had a calming effect on me. There is nothing quite like wandering through a forest or grove to help you relax and be yourself, so sitting outside our Meeting House is a calming and spiritual experience, especially on a sunny day. We are fortunate in having a small area leading down from the side of the building towards a small stream and true, it is rather overgrown, but nevertheless gives a natural feeling. Through the trees we can see a large well-kept field sometimes busy with camping people but at other times quiet. We sit on chairs brought from the Meeting House and sink into a palpable sense of calm. The sun usually shines, the birds sing and sometimes we hear the sound of horses, clip-clopping as they skirt the nearby roads. We have welcomed a number of visitors over several weeks and all seem to appreciate the calming effect of the trees and nature surrounding us.

Marion Broome

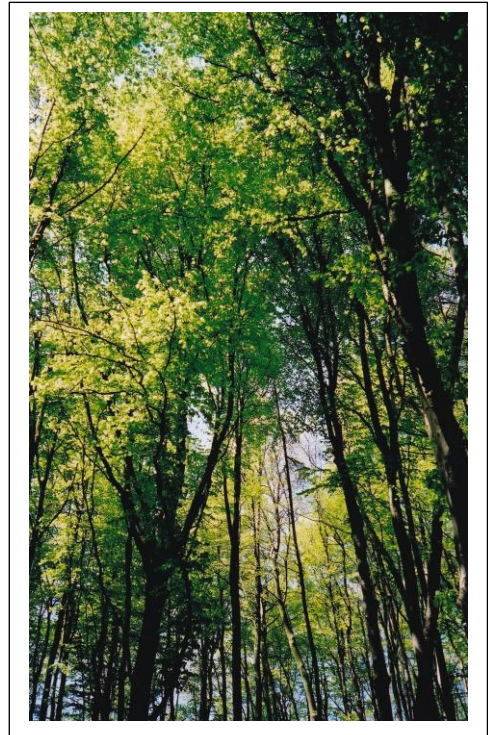
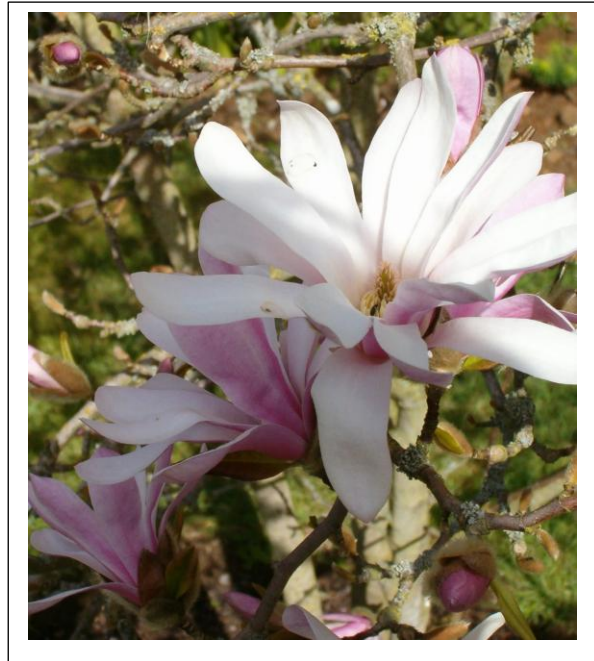
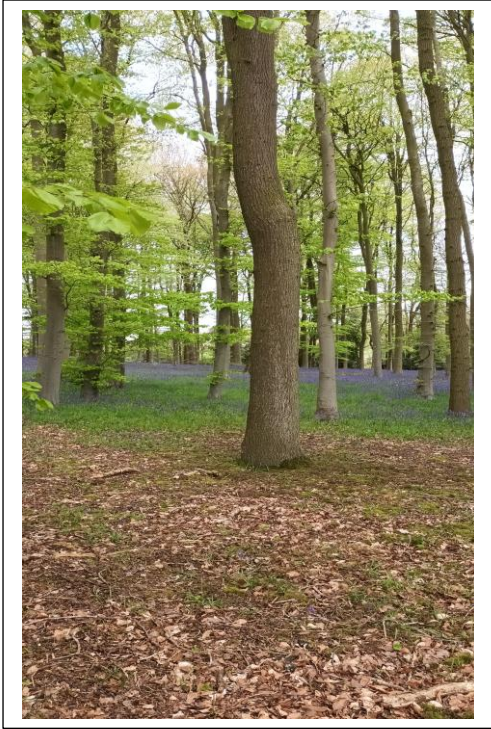
Shilbottle wood, planted as part of the restoration work when Shilbottle Grange Pit closed, is currently being re-ordered after years of neglect. The light shines on fresh grass, sends shadows across newly opened glades, and since it is May, the larch trees are in their spring finery and the Scots pines just about to shower us in pollen from their spectacular flowers.

I was there before breakfast, my mission to carry on with botanic surveys. Records exist for the trees originally planted, but there has never to our knowledge been any other sort of survey. We hope in time to remedy this, so that we have a more comprehensive picture of the wood.

What I really want to convey to Friends is the peace and warm breath of a wood when the sun shines early in the day. I met no-one. I walked, looked, stood quietly, was sidetracked (not quite down rabbit holes), and rested in the tranquillity. This was a journey of exploration into self as well as into the life of the wood; this was my Silent Quaker Worship.

Judith Line, Alnwick Quakers

Spring Trees



Photographs taken by Judith Line and Joanne Holmes

May is the month of expectation, the month of wishes, the month of hope.

Emily Bronte

