



# the VAN

Winter/Spring 2011

Quaker Voluntary Action News [www.qva.org.uk](http://www.qva.org.uk)  
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## QVA WORKING RETREATS 2011: GROWING IN SUSTAINABILITY

In 2011 we shall be focusing on sustainability in the light of our testimonies to simplicity, peace, justice and equality. This will include a new collaboration with the Living Witness Project – joining forces for a Working Retreat at the Quaker Community in Bamford. We will continue with a full programme of Working Retreats – two projects in Israel-Palestine and others in Holland, Sweden and at Swarthmoor Hall. After a successful pilot project in 2010 we are again running an event for young people with autism. Come and be involved!



Our welcome at Sawley FMH 2010

“I left intending to find a ‘temple built of time’ within my usual busy lifestyle, in which to recapture something of the experience of being ‘on retreat’ – it’s proving a struggle, but I shall keep trying!” Working retreat participant 2010

### WORKING RETREATS PROGRAMME 2011

**April 6 – 15 Ramallah, Palestine.** Quaker-Palestinian-Israeli Encounter. Supporting agricultural projects. £360 (inc accom.)

**April 11 - 15 Swarthmoor, Cumbria UK.** Quaker Centre in English Lake District. Varied tasks in extensive grounds. £100

**May 1 – 8 Laren, Holland.** Quaker-Yoga Encounter Garden work at Okido Yoga Centre. £175

**July 9 – 16 Svartbacken, Sweden.** Quaker Retreat Centre. Variety of work in the grounds. £175

**July 18 – 22 Barmoor, North Yorkshire UK.** Autism Project. Supporting young people’s social skills. £25

**September 3 – 10 Bamford, Peak District UK.** Quaker Community with Living Witness Project Outdoor work on eco-land project. £150

**October 3 - 7 Swarthmoor, Cumbria UK.** 17<sup>th</sup> Century founding place of Quakerism. Varied tasks in extensive grounds. £100

**October 19 - 28 Ramallah, Palestine.** Quaker-Palestinian-Israeli Encounter. Supporting the olive picking harvest. £390 (inc accom.)

### INVITATION TO VOLUNTEERS...

Come and spend some time working as part of a team on a practical project, living, cooking and eating together and engaging with others in matters of the spirit.

#### DAILY PROGRAMME

- Meeting for Worship
- Morning 3 hours Work
- Study and Reflection
- Sessions
- Free time and Social time
- Evening Epilogue

#### COSTS

- Volunteers pay around £25 per day towards food and admin costs
- Travel costs and arrangements are covered by individuals
- Most projects offer free accommodation except where stated
- Bursary help is available – please enquire

#### APPLICATION DETAILS

Full 2011 Programme details and Application Form from:

Jasmine Piercy, QVA Working Retreats Co-ordinator,  
60 Springfield Road, Wellington,  
Somerset TA21 8LG

Tel: 00 44 (0)7910 434941  
Email: [jasmine@qva.org.uk](mailto:jasmine@qva.org.uk)

**QVA STORIES: MIDDLE EAST** In late October/early November 2010 a Working Retreat was held in Palestine. Here are two articles that came from this experience.

## Israeli and Palestinian Encounter

I feel very privileged to have been on the QVA working retreat to Israel and Palestine this year. We were away for ten days, spending the first two days in and around Tel Aviv and the remaining time in Jifna, a small town just north of Ramallah in the West Bank, from where we travelled to various meetings and work places.

Our work was with two Palestinian families whose olives we picked and the Palestinian Association for Cultural Exchange who arranged for us to clear debris and weeds from an ancient ruined church. Working to restore the dignity and peace of that church felt very worthwhile.

We encountered ten different groups during our visit and each of them was generous with their time,

hospitality and in answering our questions: three were Jewish; four were Quaker and three were Palestinian groups.

Two Jews, who invited us into their homes were from very different ends of the spectrum. Amos, living on a Kibbutz where he had spent his whole life, was a committed pacifist who was now campaigning for the rights of Bedouins. Ardie was a settler, originally from the USA, told us that the Government of Israel was being quite fair to the Palestinians, house demolitions were justified and that the wall was 'mainly, only a fence.'

We talked with students of the Friends school. They emphasised that they were a privileged group, at an excellent fee-paying school. They told us about a protest they had initiated when a Palestinian village had been shut off to the villagers. They marched in support of



the villagers with the Israeli army much in evidence. They spoke of their future plans. One girl said: "we must live a life or live in the shadows."

The groups of Christians or Arabs that we met asked us to speak about their situation when we get home; encourage other groups to come and see for themselves, get the media to report what is happening, boycott Israeli goods and to promote Palestinian produce and handicrafts.

Josephine Rado



Above: The Ramallah group ready for work

## What if

What if a people who live in Scandinavia invaded Britain and occupied the middle part. They said they had old writings, the Norse Sagas, that showed they had a right to the land and this was also confirmed in England's Anglo Saxon Chronicles. They called themselves Vikings. They then invade Oxfordshire. Their occupation of this was said to be illegal but they went ahead anyway establishing villages and towns.

What if they took over Wokingham, Bracknell and Maidenhead, leaving Reading isolated and only descen-

dants of Vikings could live or travel in the Wokingham area, and then they took over the M4. What if they made your journey to work two hours now, not twenty minutes, because you can't use the M4 and they had blocked off the A4 in several places forcing you to use very minor roads? What if your two adult children had now to pay £30 a day just to travel to the university area?

What if they cut your water supply to only two days a week and electricity got cut off regularly but you could see the houses in Wokingham and Maidenhead with electricity and a permanent water supply? What if your father died, the cemetery in Reading was full and Reading wanted to create a cemetery on its own land but was refused permission by these Vikings.?

What if the landfill site was controlled by them and Reading could only use it four hours a day and only bring in four refuse carts but Wokingham could use it the rest of the time and brought in sixteen carts even though you had a Supreme Court Ruling that said it was your landfill site?

What if they then built a wall around

Wokingham and Maidenhead and cut off parts of Reading so your children had to change schools and all the schools in Reading are now full and you have to go through a checkpoint to get to your field where you have planted crops and have old olive trees with a valuable olive crop?

What if contact with Vikings was always hostile and you felt treated like a second-class citizen, like you were a terrorist? What if you needed permission to visit relatives who lived in Wokingham? What if the checkpoint to Wokingham consisted of a cage you had to walk into after queuing for two to three hours? What if your sister who has Downs syndrome wants to come with you to Wokingham to visit your grandmother and she has to go through the checkpoint by herself, do you go in front or behind her? What if she then doesn't understand what is being asked of her and the border guard loses patience and refuses her entry? Do you ever visit your grandmother again?

How might you feel if this happens to you? What if....Marian Espley

**QVA STORIES: EUROPE** Five volunteer projects took place in Europe in 2010 including a pilot project for young people with autism. This is described below together with an account of a retreat held in Ireland.

## Magic at Barmoor

In July this year I facilitated a visit to Barmoor Quaker Centre in the North Yorkshire Moors National Park for three nights for a group of young adults aged 15 -25 with autism. I was just retiring from my work as an Autism Outreach Teacher, and this was a way of marking the end of my career with a flourish! We advertised in The Friend and two Quaker students volunteered as helpers to join myself and a colleague.

There were ten young people, some school leavers, others college students and some were unemployed. The aim of the project was to give them experience of independent living, self catering, planning meals and outings, and living as a social group – activities which are difficult and unfamiliar for young people with autism.

The weather smiled on us, and we were able to manage a trip to Whitby, on buses and trains, as well as a local walk, trips to the village, shopping for food, and just chilling out in the beautiful grounds.

We also spent a great deal of time on silly games involving lots of social and physical contact, which most of them do not normally get. And Pete, my colleague, arranged a painting workshop which left some of them with a nice picture to take home. People who are not familiar with autism may not appreciate just how ground breaking much of this ordinary activity is for young people like these.

We were prepared for any eventuality, being used to anxiety, anger and tantrums from such young people as the norm. However the magic of Barmoor had its effect on all of us, and there were no such incidents. Anxiety was dealt with quietly by the older volunteers, and the young student volunteers learnt a great deal from the experience. The sheer quantity of laughter and physical activity also had an effect. As is often the case at Barmoor, we felt we had been there much longer than the few days. Friendships were formed, introverts became surprisingly extrovert, tears were shed at the leaving, and all agreed they would like to do it again.



The group at Barmoor House

And do it again we shall! I have booked the dates Mon 18<sup>th</sup> July to 22 July. As well as people from the autistic community that I worked with, I would like to extend it to Quaker families across the north of England, both as clients and as helpers. The role of volunteer helpers would be to mentor and reassure the young people, provide guidance with cooking, cleaning, etc and help with social skills, games and outings. I will arrange training in autism awareness.

John Ling



## Moyallon and Quaker Peace Making

I went to this retreat to learn about the peace process and to engage in a concentrated spiritual experience. I also wanted to visit Portaferry where my paternal grandfa-

ther was born and I did find the cottage where he lived.

The Moyallon Centre is a new residential centre set up by Quakers for any denominational group to use and is next to the oldest Meeting House in Northern Ireland. We had the morning work activities of gardening, painting (see left) and cleaning. The theme of the week was the Peace Testimony, which we examined in times of reflection.

The Quakers are well respected in Ireland due to their considerable practical contribution at the time of the Famine in the 1840's. The Quakers fed people at the cost of £8m in Victorian monies without compelling conversion in exchange for food. We had the opportunity to hear about the Quaker contribution to the peace process. This work included the setting up visitor centres in the prisons, a Quaker House in Belfast as an open venue for people to talk freely and a Quaker

Cottage on the hillside above Belfast for parents from the different communities to develop parenting skills, There was also community development work in different neighbourhoods to provide holidays for young people and activities to divert them from para-military involvement.

We had the privilege of having a guided tour of the Northern Ireland Assembly and meetings with members from both the Democratic Unionist Party and Sinn Fein. There are people involved in government who are firmly committed to the peace agreement and to work together. But Northern Ireland is still very divided between Catholic and Protestant identities with only one integrated school.

Kate Wright

"I was challenged at times and I felt I became more accepting."  
Participant, Moyallon Retreat.

## New developments

Part of QVA's mission is to develop new ways of volunteering for our time. In pursuit of this QVA Trustees have decided to take the Working Retreats model into supporting sustainable living – and we intend to run a pilot project at Bamford, Derbyshire in September 2011. We would welcome suggestions for taking this further in other ways, e.g. in transition initiatives.

In 2010 we were able to take further steps with our 'head hunting initiative' involving search for people to do important Quaker work. We provided support for the Quaker Congo Partnership in finding a replacement for a key member of their UK team.

We would like to do more work to support people in Africa in addressing problems of poverty, health – and climate change. But we have not yet found a way. In considering a potential project recently we became aware that the way forward is not in sending sizeable numbers of people on long air journeys at great carbon cost. We would welcome practical suggestions. Martin Smith.

## People

QVA has appointed two new trustees. Jane Robinson, from Bolton Meeting UK, has been our voluntary donations secretary since 2005 and will, as a trustee, become QVA Treasurer in January 2011. Richard Thompson is from Reading Meeting UK and France Yearly Meeting. Both are so-called retired and bring considerable experience to our work – derived, for both Jane and Richard, from public sector management roles and from their Quaker work, among other things. We are pleased to have them.

Ann Gimpel of Loughborough Meeting has done valuable administrative work in 2010 – in particular getting to grips with our databases.

I will be stepping down as clerk in the Spring of 2011, but will be remaining as a Trustee. Conor Jeram will be taking over from me.

Martin Smith



Jane Robinson



Richard Thompson

### Volunteers wanted for interesting and rewarding work.

There are modest and manageable volunteer roles to assist the working of QVA. We are looking for:

- New trustees. This would involve about three telephone conferences a year and a one day meeting in the UK
- Fundraisers
- A researcher to assist project development.
- A receptionist to respond to telephone calls to QVA

These roles are flexible – capable of being fitted around your commitments and can be undertaken from your home wherever it is located in Europe or beyond. Interested? Ring me, Martin Smith, on 0044 (0) 1484 687139

**Disclaimer:** The articles published in the newsletter are not necessarily the views of the Quaker Voluntary Action Committee, management or staff. Although every effort is made to ensure information in this newsletter is accurate, QVA can accept no responsibility for errors arising from information we have been given.

## Please donate to QVA

**Donations keep us going and enable us to do new things.** Please send donations and/or a standing order mandate – see below – to: **Ann Gimpel, QVA Donations at 21 Mayfield Drive, Loughborough LE11 2EA.**

For taxpayers, we would gain extra income if you also complete and send the gift aid declaration – set out below – to the above address.

**GIFT AID DECLARATION** - (please sign if you pay tax)

**Please treat all donations I make to QVA from the date of this declaration as Gift Aid donations**

(signed).....

(date) ...../...../.....

Please sign if you pay tax and remember to notify us if you no longer pay an amount of income tax and/or capital gains tax equal to the tax we reclaim on your donations.

### STANDING ORDER FORM

Please return to Ann Gimpel QVA Donations 21 Mayfield Drive, Loughborough LE11 2EA, not to your bank

Your name: .....

Address:

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Your bank name:.....

Bank Address:

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A/c No:.....Sort Code .....-.....-.....

Amount: £.....

First Payment : ...../...../..... (Immediately if blank)

And then (**please circle**) monthly / quarterly / yearly.

### Instruction to the bank:

Please pay the above to **Triodos Bank 16-58-10** for the credit of **Quaker Voluntary Action a/c 03269501.**

(signed).....

(date) ...../...../.....