



QVA NEWS 2021 - SPRING

Quaker Voluntary Action

<https://qva.org.uk>

Notes from the clerk

Since I became Clerk of QVA in July, we welcomed Simon Watkins as Interim Working Retreats Co-ordinator, replacing Hannah Brock Womack, who has now moved on to work with the Joseph Rowntree Foundation. QVA has been well served by our Retreat Co-ordinators in the past and we are no less blest by Simon, who has taken on the many challenges currently posed by Covid-19, since our retreats, wherever they are, require physical interaction.

The threats to QVA during the current crisis are very real, but these stimulated us to look for new opportunities. We decided to investigate how we might continue to offer working retreats in a different way whilst the pandemic frustrates its normal practice. Two models were favoured that could be incorporated into our 2021 programme, which are: Online Retreats in Daily Life and Commuting Retreats. The first focuses on participants' individual voluntary service, drawing on themes connected to the volunteer experience. The Commuting Retreat presents an approach not dissimilar from our current model, but in contrast will not require overnight accommodation away from home.

Meanwhile QVA continues to investigate the possibilities of the 'normal retreat' both at home and abroad in 2021 and beyond. We are therefore hopeful that in 2021 and thereafter we will be able to welcome Friends and supporters in face to face retreats once more. It is we believe through small actions, without financial gain, that new currencies will emerge, those of love and kindness, rewarding both volunteers and the beneficiaries in equal measure.

Jeff Beatty, Clerk, QVA

Growing Connectedness

Whatever people might say about 2020, the common thread is probably that it didn't turn out the way anyone expected. Quaker Voluntary Action was no exception. In January we planned a full year of retreats including visits to the Refugee Community Kitchen in Calais, old friends in the West Bank and Israel, a return visit to Borgo Basino eco-village and a study tour of Freiburg. Here in the UK we looked forward to our annual retreat at Swarthmoor and to forging new relationships with local voluntary sector partners in England and Scotland.

It's tempting to think that all those things went by the board, steamrollered by the relentless spread of Covid-19, becoming lost intentions and things that 'might have been'. Except that's not the whole story. Before the initial lockdown, our first retreat of the year brought together participants to help ASSIST Sheffield by decorating accommodation for use by asylum seekers.



As well as its impact for the residents, this event served as a model for a 'commuting retreat': where individuals travel from their nearby homes each day rather than making a longer journey to a place far removed from their daily routine. We see more significant benefits arising from the connections made between participants and retreat hosts local to them. If we can facilitate those connections through the events we create, the resulting shared experiences may have deeper, longer lasting resonances for all concerned.

There's a growing sense that people and communities need connection more than ever. We're looking to uphold that through our programme of online events. It was one such an event with which we ended the year: a series of three online gatherings facilitated by Rosie Carnall and Evan Welkin, exploring ideas of creative spiritual and social action.

In the new socially distanced era we need to work ever harder to maintain and grow connectedness. So our retreats for 2021 take up this theme, exploring connections between spirit and action, between individuals and perhaps most urgently of all, between people and the natural world that supports us.

Follow our news and blog at qva.org.uk and get in touch via retreats@qva.org.uk if you'd like to participate, offer a retreat venue or invite the Working Retreats Co-ordinator to speak. We look forward to connecting with you soon!

Simon Watkins

Our programme for 2021

'Sharing our Service'

An online space for people in voluntary service to encounter, reflect and share hope. Together we will explore topics of individual action, community effort and social change.

Facilitated by Simon Watkins, with guest speakers.

Dates : Thursdays February 25th, March 11th, February 25th

Online via Zoom, from 7.30 to 9pm

'Rediscovering home: ecological practises for humanity'

A series of sessions online looking at positive ideas for cultural change for a sustainable world from permaculture and other environmental movements.

Dates : weekly from April 21st for 4 weeks

Online via Zoom, from 7.30 to 9pm

'Encounters with peacemakers'

Online sessions in which we will hear from speakers representing peace building initiatives from different community groups in Israel and Palestine...

(contd.)



...This retreat may be of interest to people wishing to join our in-person visit to Israel and the West Bank which will be planned at a future date once travel becomes feasible, although this is not a requirement.

Dates : Tuesdays 18th & 25th May, 1st & 8th June

Online via Zoom, from 6.30 to 8pm

Watch this space for a follow up half-day session to be held via Zoom in September.

Working retreats will resume later in 2021, as conditions permit...

Borgo Basino

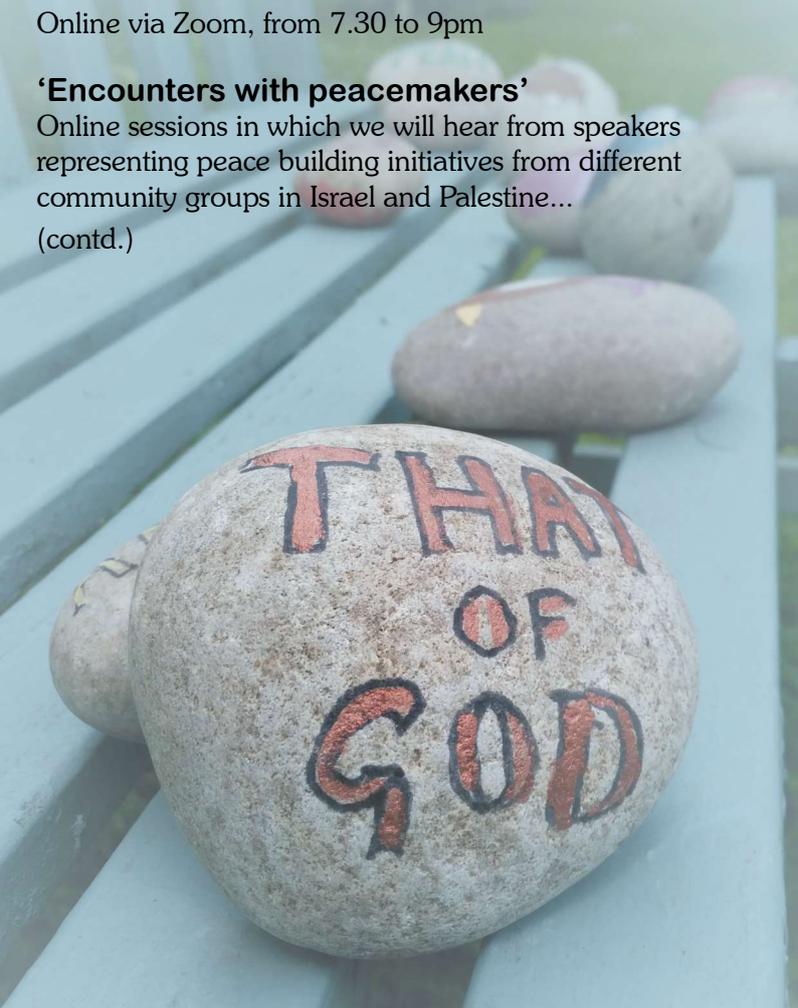
A return visit to this eco-village and educational community in the heart of Italy.

Refugee Community Kitchen, Calais

Recent restrictions have reduced the capacity of the kitchen to host short-term groups. As the coronavirus situation eases we will schedule a working retreat at the earliest opportunity.

This list is subject to change according to circumstances. Keep up to date on our website, <https://qua.org.uk>.

Do you have an idea for a QVA Working Retreat near you? Get in touch via retreats@qua.org.uk and let us know!



SUPPORTING QVA

Donations help us keep offering a diverse and affordable programme to participants.

Please send any cheques, payable to

Quaker Voluntary Action, or standing

order mandates to: *Irena Pearse,*

QVA Donations Treasurer,

60 Copsewood Road, Watford WD24 5DX.

Details for bank transfers:

Quaker Voluntary Action

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Date.....

QVA registered charity no. 1083412