

Conference Report

“Plants and Us”

FOY NEWS
AUTUMN 2021

The Foy Society

is a fellowship of women and men who, in a spirit of free inquiry, seek to understand the nature of present issues and problems - political, social and religious.

Founded in 1924 as The Fellowship of Youth, in 1957 we became known as the Foy Society. We had gradually taken on the role of an inter-generational group.

Despite the fact that most of our members are Unitarians, all are welcome to join and participate, whatever religious background. Our discussions and interaction thrives on a rich texture of input. Please feel free to join us.

Cover picture: One of many spectacular plants at the front of The Nightingale Centre

Photographs: Karen Hicks, The Ropers, Richard Varley, Ernest Baker and John Hewerdine, Please don't paste images into documents but send as separate jpg files.

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See back page for contacting the editor

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Editor's Mindset

Reflections on the Leaving of Afghanistan

As I write these thoughts, thousands of souls are struggling to get out of Afghanistan. It is a time of acute anxiety and the border with Pakistan has long queues of all sections of Afghan society, thrusting papers at customs officials, mostly to verify that those in wheelchairs have serious illnesses. The images on our TV news reports are distressing in the extreme and the lives of so many people are in the balance.

My own trip through Afghanistan, I made in 1967, was made on my way to stay with Margaret Barr, in the NE of India, a single British Unitarian Minister and devotee of Mahatma Gandhi. Margaret represented a unique "Hand of Friendship" between us and the Unitarians of the Khasi & Jaintia Hills of Maghalaya. It was at a very different time in the history of the Taliban. But Afghanistan has always been a melting-pot of frustration. Citizens of varying loyalties, unable to reconcile their religious neighbours and unable to live peacefully in harmony, in the same town or village.

Local person's picture of John using his 5"x4" Linhof monorail camera in Bamyán, west of Kabul.

John bought the camera, when he worked for a Manchester textiles company in 1961 and still has it.



A lack of trust was evident even a lifetime ago. My social life towards the end of 1967 was in the teashops of Herat, Kandahar, Kabul and Afghan villages. Places like Bamyán (where the Taliban were to later destroy the homes of

hundreds of cave dwellers. They lived within a series of caves, linked by tunnels amongst sacred, giant Buddhas, carved in the wall of the valley. I recall standing on the head of the largest image of the Buddha, listening, in that amazing acoustic environment, fascinated by the sound of tin-smiths at work, down in the valley below. For me, these were magical moments. But, in the teashop where I spent the night, I was treated with suspicion as eyes across a smoky room would examine me and my belongings, and maybe eventually, as night became day, decide that I might not be a serious threat.

I well remember my departure from Afghanistan into Pakistan, after negotiating the Kyber Pass in my old, ex-Bradford, under-powered, Bedford town ambulance. It cost me just £35, before I left the UK and was not roadworthy by modern standards. Yes, it took help from six strong (for some reason, heavily-armed member of who-knows-what organisation) to get my wheels up the steepest sections of that winding road, **the Kyber pass**.

Soon, after crossing the Pakistan border, my life changed. I found myself in a land of bountiful smiles and greetings of, “do stop in our village”, on the first day. Not only that but I would be given a proud tour of the landscape and a welcome such as, “please stay the night in our home”. On the first overnight stop, I had just brushed a layer of dust off the ground-sheet which covered my belongings in the back of the vehicle, as a large group of children assembled. I was tired after the day’s journey and just wanted to relax alone, but the smiling faces toyed with my conscience and I was encouraged to relate to them. There was no way I could send them packing.

A few minutes later a small child appeared in the distance with a tray covered with a tea-towel and presented it to me. Under the towel was a tasty plate of wonderfully seasoned vegetables, accompanied by several beautifully cooked chapatis. The carrier nodded to the assembled group and they then all turned and returned to their village. This happened beside the Grand Trunk road, which was to take me on to Islamabad, Lahore, and eventually on to stay with Margaret Barr in the Khasi Hills of Meghalaya, after meeting up with her in Delhi.

As I reflect on those memories today, my heart goes out, not only to those thousands of pathetic refugees from Afghanistan, now running for their lives, but to the children and grandchildren of those delightful people in Pakistan who gave me such a wonderful welcome fifty-four years ago.

John Hewerdine

What did you do during the epidemic Grandma?

Our President describes how she tried to put her best foot forward

Many of you will know I am not a Grandma, (well sort of, I am Grandma to a dog). I hope this will change in the coming years and before a time when I am unable to get myself off the floor without looking like a beached whale.... Oh too late for that one as well.



As many of us have little or few tales to tell as we have been confined to house arrest for the past 18 months or so, I thought I would put pen to paper and tell the tale of a retired nurse who so wanted to do her bit.

I had retired a number of years ago, although I have been working now and then, volunteering in a hospice for all that time.

When I heard that the NHS was struggling and asking for retired nurses to take up the gauntlet and come back to work I was almost 1st in line. The process was quite simple, if you had been on the nursing register in the past few years you could be re-registered on the temporary “Covid” register. A few clicks on the PC and it appeared I was all set.

It was not until September I actually went back to work following some update training and found myself back in schools surrounded by children giving the flu vaccine. All was well with the world. By November most of the vaccines had been given and about the same time we got word that the new Covid vaccine was on its way.

As this was a new vaccine, there was much studying to do to get myself up to speed. What I did not appreciate, or perhaps I had been out of the NHS long enough for the memory to fade, was the amount of red tape and hurdles I would have to jump in order to do my bit.

Now I appreciate that I would have to know all about the vaccine, storage, contraindications etc etc. What I did not see as being useful was “how to recognise a terrorist “ or someone trying to show me how to give an injection! (I have given thousands) and indeed the way the set up is at the vaccination centre, the nurses are not giving the injections. Useful information on how to navigate the computer programme seemed to be omitted.

I then had to wait until I had a DRB check, even though the same department had done one for my work in schools. Next came the health interview where I was asked. “Do you think you are fit enough to do this job!” YES.

I got a link to a “COVID Training Passport” that would be accepted by any employer within the NHS. That is any employer except the one organising the mass vaccination centre I was to work at. Apparently, their computer does not “talk” to the passport computer.

By this time, 2 months had gone by and I was getting frustrated and took to writing to my MP to ask when you are screaming out for nurses do you have to make it so difficult. He wrote back within 30 mins (impressive) to say he would pass on my remarks to the health secretary.

Still intent on beating this system, I logged onto the training site and completed the 29 yes 29 pieces of assessment that I had already done for the passport.

Some of the assessments would not upload as a no-reply email informed me.

2 months after writing to my MP, I got a reply from the vaccine Tsar saying that as I was wanting information about the vaccine rollout I could read the enclosed article saying how wonderful it all was and if I wanted to help my local area could let me know what training it entailed. He hoped my problems had been solved.

My best friend suggested I should just give up, but being all that a taurian is (Stubborn, placid until stirred and persistent) I plodded on.

I wrote back to the Tsar telling him indeed the problem had not been solved, but I would persist in my efforts. I decided to try the human touch and phoned one of the trainers directly, not having a name or number, it took several attempts to get there.

“Oh” he said “The computer system is a nightmare. I can see that you have completed the training and some elements 3 times!!!”

He then apparently clicked in 1 box and said “ You are good to go”
This was over 4 months since starting the process and I have never in my career had to work so hard to get a job that I was only doing because I thought it the right thing to do.

I found myself getting nervous as I travelled to my first shift. The computer system was explained to me by my neighbouring nurse and within 30 minutes I was in full fling

I find the work rewarding and, at times, amusing. You literally see all of life as everyone attends for their job. My heart goes out to the very elderly who have not seen anyone for 18 months. I have

to smile when you get a big burly man with an arm of tattoos asking will the needle hurt? Or the person who asked if he could have both injections today because he was busy when he was due the first injection.

We have given over 250,000 at our mass vaccination centre and it looks like the temporary COVID register will continue for some time as we finish the programme and gear ourselves for the booster programme that will probably start in September.



So what did you do Grandma during the pandemic....

“Jump over hurdles and swim through treacle!”

Gwyneth Roper

There is a place I know, called Hucklow... and now it's Back in Business once again



Saturday 31st July 2021 and it is a day of great excitement. I am finally returning to the Nightingale Centre after all the COVID 19 lockdowns. It seems such a long time since I last pulled into the car park and saw the flourishing vegetable plot and the stately outline of my 'spiritual home'. In fact it has been far too long but the staff were there to provide a warm welcome and all the safety measures to keep the Centre COVID free were all in place.

The gardens were lush and the happy voices in the sun lounge made it feel like I had only been away a few weeks, not months. Sunlight streamed in and I was greeted by the happy faces of the other guests.

The chef had prepared a fabulous lunch and scrumptious dessert. I never eat dessert at home. It is one of my secret pleasures when I visit the Nightingale Centre to tuck into something sweet. I was not disappointed, the lemon tart was exquisite. It was all the sweeter for the friendly smiling faces of the lunch crew who seemed as pleased to see me as I was to see them.

It was fun to meet up with old friends again and to exchange news. The Nightingale Centre worked its magic and new faces among the guests were soon new friends. The newly refurbished chairs in the lounge and sun room looked really good and were very comfortable. We all settled in for a long overdue chatter.

It was a great overnight stay, with idyllic views from my room. There is something so peaceful and relaxing about being back. Housekeeping had ensured everything's was just perfect. Even though my room was not en-suite it had a dedicated toilet and shower room to ensure guests were fully bio secure during their stay. I was touched by the thought and consideration that the Centre had given to ensuring guest peace of mind.

It was very clear that the staff had been working hard to ensure visitors were comfortable and reassured by the new systems. Everything was well sign-posted and easy to follow. I found none of the COVID measures impacted on my enjoyment of my stay. It was so lovely to be back.

I am looking forward to returning at the end of August when the Centre will host the FOY conference. It will be fantastic to see more friends and to luxuriate in the atmosphere of the Nightingale Centre yet again.

Karen Hicks

Words and photographs by Karen.



I sit in my wife's school-friend's
secluded garden.
A place of refuge from the world,
South of the Trent.
There is a garden shed,
nothing special,
though equipped with
comfortable seats,
lace curtains, and watertight!

Offering a window on Nature's glory,
It has become something of a place of pilgrimage,
sipping a Gin and Tonic,
and being thankful for life, sweet friends,
and the good fortune which has been and is ours.

I cannot name the plants and flowers in view,
just drink in their colourful hints of blissfulness of being.
The tall, straight, creeper-covered larches scrape the sky,
The jackdaws wheel above, chasing off a kite.
A robin too, on the ground nearby, summer surprise,
and the wood pigeons swooping and cooing.
A squirrel hangs upside down, back legs akimbo,
raiding the bird-feeder.
It almost seems as if one could stay for ever like this,
relaxed, peaceful, contented,
just taking it all in.

The world, with its travails and concerns,
is not far away of course, the wars one cannot halt,
the prayed-for people one feels, and is, powerless to help...
but for a few moments,
one can forget, or at least shift it off centre-stage.
For the sake of renewal, reconnection,
a deeper recognition and reminder of what is truly important,
what really matters.
In the universal scheme of things.

Ernest Baker

Day of Judgement? Music - suggestions invited

You're a Unitarian with little light ablaze,
You know God didn't make the world in only seven days.
But where will you be standing when the Day of Judgement comes,
Among the unbelievers or among the Chosen Ones?

Chorus

For you can't have wings, you can't have wings.
You can't have harps and haloes and other angel things.
That's all superstition as you very well do know.
So while all the Chosen fly
On legs you'll have to go.



You're a rational being. You believe what you can see.
You know that Christ once walked beside not on blue Galilee.
But when he comes again to sort the wheat out from the tares
Do you think for Unitarians, there'll be a flight of stairs?

You trust to your intelligence, use reason unalloyed.
You understand the Eden snake for you've read Sigmund Freud.
But how'll you get to heaven when the Final Trump does sound?
Without a pair of wings you'll be left standing on the ground.

You reject the Devil, don't believe in Purgat'ry.
You will find your own salvation, you will set your own soul free.
Martyrs, saints and seraphim, you treat with equal scorn.
But how you'll get to Heaven when St Gabriel blows his horn.

In your rock of reason, won't you make a little chink?
Believing the impossible is simpler than you think.
You could go to Heaven with its gates and crystal spire
And play upon a golden harp in the celestial choir.

Final Chorus

For you could have wings, you could have wings.
You could have harps and haloes and other angel things.
it may be superstition or it may be fantasy
But you can always find a rationale
For a little levity.

Dotty Haughton

Plants and Us

our 2021 Foy Conference



Note from the Editor: *Our Foy Conference this year was not only moved from last year but the date was moved from the Spring Bank Holiday weekend to late August. This was to give us wiggle-room in case Boris Johnson changed his mind about letting us loose in a small Derbyshire village so soon.*

In the event, most of us were ready to stretch our legs and go a little further afield than we had been accustomed to for some time. For some of you who were not ready or able to join us, I am happy to tell you that, this year, we have not one but two "First Timers" reporting on their impressions of the gathering. I am therefore happy to introduce you to Sue Cross and Rob Foreman who have kindly contributed to this edition of Foy News. My own contribution is the photographs which, as always, I am happy to share with you.

How you made me feel

Sue Cross



My chum Karen asked me if I'd like to attend the Foy conference as Ian had to pull out. I said yes as I had nothing else to do and I love Derbyshire. I had no idea what Foy stood for - but having attended the conference I soon found out! Young definitely in heart and mind, even if the body has the odd creek

The 3 days was informative, participants friendly and the whole experience was overflowing with fun. People I met were very keen to welcome me. Dotty was one of the first people I met and she peered over me and asked me if I was odd! I knew from then, I would fit in.

Most of those I chatted to had been from there since they were young children and their families before them and at the end of the 3 days, I could see what the attraction was. I spent some time talking to Ernest about the work that is done for young children since, I think, the 1930's, for deprived children. The success speaks for itself and I'm sure those children would never forget their time at the Nightingale Centre.



Vicky and Neill treated me to a musical hour with the tin whistle, harp, guitar and the steel tongue drum. What a wonderful treat! My tin whistle is winging its way from Amazon Vic.

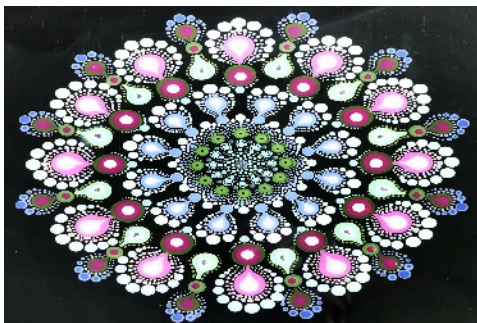
The walk, led by John to the mine was a great experience and the day was perfect. Usually I go on much longer walks and at break neck speed, so it was wonderful to amble and have time to examine the flora and take in my surroundings. At another time, I went on another walk with Karen and Gwyneth. My sides ached when we got back. Not from the walk, but just laughing so much. I



suggest that Gwyneth does a session at the next conference just telling her nursing stories. Anyone having a bad day, could not fail to feel so much better.

What can I say about Col. He told me the Nightingale Centre had been a major part of his life and I think that was the same for others I spoke too. He spoke with passion and love for the Unitarian values and said you don't have to have a religious faith to be part of that.

You made me feel included, you showed me your enthusiasm for life, your conversations were memorable and I had the feeling that you were all respectful of others views and non- judgemental.



I'd like to finish with this –

I had a good time getting to know Neill and he mentioned a quote from Maya Angelou 'I've learned that people will forget what you said and what you did, but they will never forget how you made them feel'

Robert Foreman

now gives us

his impressions

The first time I ever learned of the Foy Society was through my friend Tony Cann and also when I went to the GA in Birmingham in 2019.

At this point I should state that I am interested in training for ministry and am passionate about my Unitarian faith and so this attracted me to the Foy Society.



The subject matter of this year's conference 'Plants and Us' was an interesting one as I do not personally have a garden. Instead, I have a 'yarden' which is a small yard at the back and side of my house. Whilst I do love my plants and flowers, I have a massive amount of help from my mum and dad who are the green fingered of the family and have ample amounts of space and experience in this field.

What I loved about the weekend from the start was the warm, inviting and hospitable environment that I found at The Nightingale Centre. The place has a special place in my heart, and I find it spiritually healing.

The first order of business was to experience the food, which at the Nightingale has never been anything other than excellent. We then went on to listen to Jennifer introduce the theme for the weekend and I had a thoroughly excellent time listening to the interesting subject on plants and our relationship with them. I found this session was well researched, planned and naturally delivered.

After a superb sleep I woke early and enjoyed the breakfast on offer, sadly I had enjoyed my sleep so much that I missed the morning devotions. The options for Saturday were for Gardening, A Nature Walk or a talk on Botanical Illustrations. I opted for the walk and had a lovely time catching up with old and new friends.



We had several flora and fauna pointed out and saw a beautiful crab apple tree and was even able to sample the goods. Visiting the old mine was also incredibly interesting. At the end of the walk we were rewarded by the beautiful views the Peak District has to offer.



I spent the rest of the afternoon up until Lunch meeting new people and generally chatting about my faith and family history as my x3 Great Grandfather Eli Whitehead funded and helped build the Padiham Chapel.

After lunch we had another treat in store in the shape of the history of domesticated plants, once again the subject matter had been researched and was engaging and very interesting.



After a short coffee break we headed into the subject of plant hunters, I did not know what to expect with this subject as I thought it would be a treasure hunt of sorts, finding and identifying plants, but no, it was actually a talk on historical figures called Plant Hunters who discovered, documented and named new plants for their employers.

After another excellent meal, we then had one of the most enjoyable sessions all about taste and smell, this gave us the opportunity to get up, close and personal with smelling and tasting plants; this was a high point as smelling sweet pea's and sweet Williams took me back to my childhood.



Sadly, I had to leave early because I needed to be at my congregation for Sunday service, we have only just gone back to in person services at the chapel and have started to do hybrid, live YouTube services alongside.

One of the final things I experienced was the Epilogue led by Richard and Lynne Varley it was a lovely time and some well thought-out poems and music. A sublime end to my first Foy Conference which has left me with a taste for more.

THE ANSWER IS BLOWING IN THE WIND

Another piece from our President, Gwyneth Roper

In a garden on a hill, under the wide boughs of a cherry tree, a white phone booth glistens in the early spring light.



Inside, Kazuyoshi Sasaki carefully dials his late wife Miwako's cellphone number, bending his large frame and cradling the handset.

He explains how he searched for her for days after the devastating earthquake and tsunami a decade ago, visiting evacuation centres and makeshift morgues, returning at night to the rubble of their home.

"It all happened in an instant, I can't forget it even now," he says, weeping. "I sent you a message telling you where I was, but you didn't check it."

"When I came back to the house and looked up at the sky, there were thousands of stars, it was like looking at a jewel box," the 67-year old says. "I cried and cried and knew then that so many people must have died."

The phone booth was built by Itaru Sasaki, who owns the garden in Otsuchi, a town some 500 km (310 miles) northeast of Tokyo, a few months before the disaster, after he lost his cousin to cancer.

"There are many people who were not able to say goodbye," he says. "There are families who wish they could have said something at the end, had they known they wouldn't get to speak again."

Word of the “Wind Phone” spread across Japan and others came to talk to their loved ones.

The phone is, of course, meant as a one-way communication. Visitors dial in their relative’s number and catch them up on their current life or express their feelings necessary to move on. Some find comfort in the hope that their relative might hear them. As the residents of Otsuchi faced the slow progress of rebuilding their city, this little phone booth helps to also slowly rebuild their own lives too.



This was the subject of a service by Danny Crosby at Dunham Road Unitarian Chapel in Altrincham. in the spring of this year. The idea has blossomed in many parts of the world to help people grieve in a meaningful way. This service was the springboard we needed at Altrincham to try and reach out to those who have lost so much during the pandemic. Many have lost loved ones and have not had the opportunity to be with their loved ones due to the restrictions in place to try to contain the virus. Even the disrupted rituals of funerals have not allowed us to grieve in ways that can help us to move on.

During my time working at the vaccine centre I have witnessed not only the grief that comes with death but also the grief that comes with the necessary loneliness, particularly with the elderly within our communities. I saw elderly people come for their vaccines who had not seen anyone for 18 months. Some not having the tech. savvy to do any of the zooming or face-timing that others had. Imagine only having telephone contact with the world for 18 months.

How do we create meaning from the loss of the last year or more? That is not an easy question to answer. Well perhaps it begins by creating space for us all to grieve. Perhaps something like these “Wind Telephones” is one way, I am sure there are many others. Perhaps communities like ours can become that kind of space. Perhaps this something for us all to think about, perhaps this is something we can focus on in the months and years ahead.

Perhaps we could become a space where folk can come and find solace in their loss and grieve in a place where they can share and express their love.

At Altrincham we explored the idea of installing a phone box within the grounds but then adapted the idea to allow people to be seated and allow for someone to share their space. We bought a garden arbour and successfully bid on ebay for an old fashioned dial telephone that will be installed and a bee house that can



I am hoping that this will be one way that we can reach out to the local community and give them a quiet space in which to grieve in a way that suits them. I also hope that it will inspire others to look at doing something similar. I don't think there is any one of us who have not been touched in some way by this pandemic and if by providing these sanctuaries we can help our communities heal I challenge you to do your bit.

**The answer
is blowing in the wind!**

Obituaries to Foy Members

(The editor apologises for the omission of an obituary to Bernard Omar. It will be in the next edition)

Alan Laver. Husband of Denise

"We were shocked to hear of the death of our member, Alan Laver, who died suddenly on 30th July at the age of 68. Alan had battled with heart problems over a number of years.

Alan had been a member of the Dunham Road congregation from a young age, having been involved with the Youth Group in the 1970s, and he had always continued his interest in the chapel.

Alan had played an important part in the civic life of Altrincham as recorded in the *Altrincham and Sale Messenger* of 12th August. (In fact the *Messenger* included a half page article on Alan headed 'Community mourns loss of popular alderman, Alan Laver, 68 with a photograph of Alan in his ceremonial robes.)

Our heartfelt sympathy goes to Alan's wife Denise, their three grown up children, Katie, Sophie and James, and to young grandson William. Alan's funeral was conducted by the Rev Danny Crosby in Dunham Road Chapel and at Altrincham Crematorium on 19th August. The chapel was full to capacity and the service was broadcast on Zoom."

Kindly sent by Annette Percy, as used in
The Dunham Road Unitarian Chapel Newsletter

Abla Coupe, Widow of Brian

Abla, who lived in Ely, died towards the end of April 2021. Her funeral was held in Ely at 4 pm on Friday 7th May 2021.

Older members of The Foy Society, now probably in their eighties, will remember Brian Coupe. He was one of the Unitarian Students at

Lewins Mead in Bristol during the 1950s. There were at the time, four active student groups of FOY in Cambridge (where the group was known as the Priestley Society (named after Joseph Priestley), in Bristol, Liverpool, and (I think the fourth was) Leicester. FOY was renamed 'The Foy Society' in the 1950s and worked closely with the leading members of UYPL. Both The Foy Society and UYPL were members of the International Religious Fellowship which held annual conferences, of which I was an active member, being for a time international treasurer and then president.

I particularly remember a weekend in Oxford (at Manchester College). When we were about to leave, Brian Coupe, who had a large old car, took our luggage to the station, where several of us collected our bags and returned by train via Bletchley to Cambridge. At Bletchley, there was an announcement over the loud speakers "Would Mary Hollingsworth report to the Station Master"(because she had Brian Coupe's pyjamas with her!). It transpired that we had picked up Brian Coupe's suitcase as well as our own when leaving Oxford. Mary Hollingsworth was the daughter of Mr Hollingsworth, commercial manager of British Rail in Glasgow, who became President of the GA. His son, Tom, was a mathematician who studied at Cambridge. .

Brian Coupe was keen on Croquet. He married Abla, who was Palestinian, and became very anti-Israel (not the same as being anti-Jewish.) They had three children, Eddy, Rosie, and Leila. Rosie became an excellent musician and studied at the Royal College of Music. I think Leila became a qualified GP. When my sister, Shirley, telephoned Abla on on August Bank Holiday 2018, Leila was there and spoke to my sister, diagnosed that something was not well, and made her promise to go to A and E the next morning, where she was quickly diagnosed with cancerous Asbestosis and told she had only months to live. Shirley died less than 5 months later in December 2018.

Brian and Abla had retired to Ely. Brian died in 2010. Shirley Fieldhouse kept in close touch with the Coupes. Margaret and I visited the Coupes in Ely, and later Abla, several times.

Martin Fieldhouse



Ramblings

From

Room 10

Idle thoughts of a not so idle fellow



After a gap of one year, seven months and fifteen days, we finally returned to the Nightingale Centre. The 2021 Foy Conference had already been delayed from its customary date of the early May Day Bank Holiday. It did mean that there was a greater chance of visiting Hucklow in warmer weather: on the Saturday afternoon, it was possible to sit out in warm sunshine, though at least it was fine, if somewhat cloudy, for the remainder of the weekend. Whilst we were sitting out, I noticed something which puzzled me about the sheep in the adjacent field. Not surprisingly, they were enjoying a plentiful amount of grass. There was a mixture of white and black sheep and, whilst the white sheep happily munched the grass whilst standing, the black sheep knelt on their front knees to accomplish the same task. Is it a simple case that black sheep have longer legs and shorter necks?! Dorothy Haughton, who lives in a rural area in mid Wales, said she would see if she could solve the mystery when she returned home as she knew there were white and black sheep in a nearby farm; watch this space!

We have enjoyed two holidays with our family, in self-catering accommodation, during Covid times, last September and shortly before the Foy Conference. It felt strange to do so with a background of the Covid precautions set out by the Government. Last year, it was before vaccinations: at the least in 'double-jabbed' times, there is some comfort. Currently, we are now in the period where the wearing of face coverings in crowded indoor settings is "expected and recommended" rather than being mandatory as it

was before 19th July. That subtle change has made many organisations make their own decisions as to the extent of the precautions to recommend to their customers. The Nightingale Centre was not alone in doing exactly that. There was plenty of hand sanitiser available, notices that your room had been sanitised, a one-way system in the dining room and a request to wear face masks when circulating: the last was observed by everyone, which certainly I have found not to be the case in other similar situations elsewhere. Because of the differences between England, Scotland and Wales, should you travel on a train that crosses a border, you find that as you leave England, the wearing of a face mask changes from recommended to mandatory! If you travel by train in London, you must remember whose train you are travelling on, as with Transport for London, the wearing of a mask is a requirement for travel, whereas on other trains it is not.

The imposing of precautions has exposed well publicised situations where those in a position of authority have failed to observe them, and they have generally had to fall on their proverbial swords. The demise of Matt Hancock as Secretary of State for Health was a more recent example. It appears that he was unaware of a working security camera in a ceiling where, having checked there was no one outside his office, he failed to remain socially distanced from an advisor. It appears he was exceedingly close to her, and I do not think the lady in question was in his 'bubble'! The fact that the images were shared with a national newspaper, which was willing to reveal them as a front-page scoop, raises the controversial issue of whistle blowers. I read that his successor need not have the same worries as the said camera has been disabled and/or removed! It is a sad fact that there are situations where some people in authority use their position to their own advantage. In the case I have given, it is normally the case that such images, captured on a CCTV camera, are only shared with those authorised to investigate some malpractice. Here an image was shared with the press, but it revealed a person in authority flouting the rules that he had been involved in promoting. It does say something about the integrity of such a person: a case of 'do as I say and not as I do'.

It also raises a question as to whether two wrongs make a right: do the ends justify the mean? There have been situations where someone is unjustifiably accused of a malpractice of which they are innocent. For example, there have been instances where a schoolteacher has been falsely accused of abusing a student. Even though the teacher may be proved innocent, their reputation is likely to have been permanently damaged. On the other hand, it has taken

far too long for the revealing of the undesirable activities of some well-known celebrities which have been covered up for years, if not decades, seemingly on the basis that they were 'untouchable'. Whistleblowing is a very debatable issue which I find difficult to answer; do two wrongs make a right?

Having reached this stage, I had an attack of writer's block, and it took the newspaper to remind me of another example of people not doing what they preach. I recall seeing images of a packed House of Commons during the Afghanistan debate. Virtually, none of the MPs on the government benches were wearing a face mask, whereas on the other side of the House, a good number of members were. The newspaper article reported that apparently mask wearing is mandatory for Parliamentary staff but optional for MPs. Work that one out if you can! Not surprisingly, the unions described the rule as 'double standards'.

Over the last year or so, many of us will have changed some of our customary habits because of the restrictions we have been under. It will be interesting to see how many of them we stick to. For the last few years, Foy Council had held a mid-year meeting during the first Winter Walking weekend, as a majority were present. Next year, the restructuring of the weekends may make this impractical. Having successfully held two meetings by video link, it has been decided to continue with this format. Here comes a spoiler alert! I believe that the Secretary will shortly be notifying members that next year's AGM will be held by video link, in the same way this year's was, although that was a matter of necessity. It means that the AGM is not exclusive to those who are at the Conference but gives more members of our nationally spread society, the opportunity to participate. We recognise that some may be technologically excluded, but it is difficult to please all the people all the time.

Readers may recall, from a previous 'Ramblings', that we were successful, early on, in obtaining online supermarket shopping slots. We have been pretty satisfied with the service having had few problems with availability (so far!) and usually little issue with substitutions. A recent swap caused considerable amusement when eleven loose Royal Gala apples were replaced with eleven six-packs of the Royal Gala apples!! They might have been slightly smaller apples, but eight packs were returned, resulting in a healthy refund. We used the online delivery process when, as a family, we placed an order for delivery just after our arrival at our holiday accommodation, on a farm on a narrow country lane, north of Seaton in East Devon. The delivery came from the supermarket's Taunton store: that's quite some distance! The driver found us and was on time.

The lounge of our cottage had a very interesting clock: the photograph included shows it:
Working out the time can be challenging, and it takes a little bit of getting used to!



Our car mileage has dropped significantly over the last eighteen months. When our smaller, older, car had only accumulated just over three hundred miles, we seriously considered whether we really need two cars, as there were probably few occasions when both were out at the same time. We also have a half hour bus service which passes our house. Having been remarkably problem free, I felt we might be facing some more serious expenditure, so it was farewell: we just carefully plan these days!



We've been intrigued by small food delivery robots which are being used by a store nearby. They are very obedient in crossing roads, and we were amused by the sight of half a dozen of them lined up waiting to cross a busy dual carriageway to get 'home'. Once, I saw two approaching each other on a narrow pathway. They stopped face to face, worked out their problem and carefully manoeuvred past each other!

Another 'innovation' are the electric scooters which are appearing, capable, it would seem, of some fairly brisk speeds. I could express some personal opinions on them, but I'll say no more: I just hope I'm never in the 'wrong' place.....

Richard Varley



Oldies

Our hope to meet up for an International Reunion in South Wales in June 2021 sadly could not happen. Our plans were disrupted by something beyond our control (that 'which cannot be named').

No not Voldemort, but the p-nd-m-c!

Ever optimistic, we are now hoping to arrange this very special get-together for June 2023.

Before we can make any formal, even provisional, hotel and coach bookings we need to know if there is enough interest.

A letter has gone out to all our contacts in the UK and abroad and already I have received some enthusiastic replies from Europe as well as the UK. However, as I write, there are many Oldies who I have not yet heard from.

To proceed we do need to know if enough people consider it a possibility. There is no formal commitment until we get to the point of making bookings and asking for a deposit, but if you want to be included in the information circulation can you PLEASE message me as soon as possible.

vawalker55@gmail.com

Valerie Walker

News of Members

Hazel Warhurst



Special Congratulations to retiring President, **John Rowland** and his wife, Helen, on becoming parents on 25th April, and to **Barbara** and **Fytton Rowland** as they look forward to their role as grandparents - and not forgetting proud aunt **Jenny**.



Good Wishes to **Janet Ford**, who celebrated a wonderful milestone birthday on 11th September 2021. The Roman Candle on her cake looked amazing!

Very Belated Congratulations to Rosemary and Alan Ruston

on the occasion of their Golden Wedding Anniversary. News arrived after the autumn edition went to press and was overlooked by the time Spring arrived. They have just celebrated their 51st Anniversary on 3rd September.



Some of us are unfortunately feeling our age these days and having to face up to the fact bits of our bodies don't work as well as they did, or are needing to be replaced! **Kay Millard** sends everyone her best regards and regrets that she had to miss Foy Conference. She reluctantly accepted that the drive to Derbyshire from Somerset, with a new knee joint operation pending sometime in the future, was not a sensible idea. Her granddaughter, **Rhosi**, still talks about her experiences at Foy Conference in 2019. A few other familiar faces were missing at the last minute – **Annette Percy**, **Janice** and **Martin Croucher** with son **Giles**, **David** and **Helen Copley** and **Jimmy** and **Shirley Timiney**. We hope to see them all again in 2022. It was encouraging to have four Day Visitors and six people enjoying their first Foy Conference.

Sad News

Bernard Omar passed away peacefully on 10th March 2021. In recent times he had suffered from dementia and was living in a care home at the time of his death.

It is with great sadness that we report the sudden death of **Alan Laver**. Our sympathy goes to **Denise** and all his family members.

New Members

During the past two months three new members have been introduced to Foy, and it was good to have them with us at the Foy Conference in August. Anthony Hudson lives in Trowbridge, and Ann and Seth Jenkinson are from Sheffield.

Since the last edition of Foy News at the beginning of March, things have continued to be difficult for a lot of people. Let's hope there will be more safe opportunities to meet together by the start of the new year and that our

Conference from Friday 29th April to Monday 2nd May 2022 can go ahead at Hucklow. We send special thoughts to members, whose lives are giving them extra challenges at the present time.

If you have any news to share, please send it to me in good time for the Spring edition of Foy News (see deadline inside front cover).



Hazel Warhurst

Membership Subscriptions

The Treasurer thanks those who have paid their Foy Subscriptions for the current year 2021-22. Here are the details once again in case you need them.

£7.50 for an individual and £10 for a couple.



If you feel able to pay more, please consider adding a donation to the **Flagg Chapel Fund** which assists young people attending Unitarian events and appropriate conferences. Thank you to those who have already generously donated. The proceeds of the Raffle at our Conference, organised by Barbara Rowland, raised a wonderful £100 which was shared between The Nightingale Fighting Fund and the Flagg Chapel Fund.

For Payments by Bank Transfer:

Santander plc

Account name: The Foy Society

Sort code: 09-01-50

Account number: 05454689

If paying by cheque please make them payable to “The Foy Society” and send to the Treasurer at the address printed on the back page.

Members' News from Australia

Members' News from Australia

The latest from Down Under NSW.

We have been in Lockdown for over 10 weeks and now have been told, we will need to live with Covid 19 Delta so everyone needs to get vaccinated. Restrictions will be lifted when 70%- 80% are vaccinated i.e. part not total population.

Our hospitals are being stretched and the remote outback areas have been left behind; especially Walgett and Wilcannia in NSW. Motor homes are being provided at caravan parks to the Aboriginal population needing isolation after the Government had assured us that they were a priority. Nothing changes over 200 years in the way the Aboriginal people are treated.

The Kirribilli Fellowship is not meeting so Geoff is reading and reading. We cannot get to Canberra so Andrew has had an operation and when allowed will be in his home by himself. A college friend will keep in touch. Elizabeth is writing songs with colleagues around the world - Alaska, Sweden, NZ so the lock down is not affecting her, and I, well I have no idea how the time flies.

The green tips have appeared on the tree outside my window and I enjoy keeping up with my friends. I am reading "Nudge" - the final edition by Thaler and Sunstein, which I expect many will know. And the house is cleaner!

Greetings from

Ann and Geoffrey Usher

Next year, Rev Winnie Gordon

will explore with us police, prison estate and secure mental hospitals

George Floyd's death in Minneapolis alerted many more people in Britain to the realities of racism. 2020 was a year of progress and promise, but there remains a long way to go. Comparisons between British racism and American racism are neither unwarranted nor ill-judged. Minority ethnic groups are over-represented at many stages throughout our criminal justice system - black individuals especially.

- Black people are five times more likely to have force used against them. (Official figures for England and Wales 2020).
- Where deaths have resulted, the lack of police accountability has been a long-standing injustice (Amnesty International, May 2000).
- The recent conviction for the manslaughter of Dalian Atkinson was the first of a serving British police officer while on duty in 35 years.
- The number of Blue on Black incidents is most telling: they explain both the lack of trust ethnic minorities have in the police and the low numbers from these communities willing to join the police.
- But the additional history of incidents inside our prisons and mental hospitals indicates yet more racialised injustices perpetuated by officials, evidenced by abuse, suspicious deaths and suicide.
- Seriously under-reported are the numbers of inmates discharged dead from our prison population-itself composed of a disproportionate number of BAME individuals. here has been a disturbing toll of death by suicide, notably among young inmates. Inadequate care of the shocking number of mentally ill prisoners has routinely been attributed to prison overcrowding and understaffing.
- True accountability, again, is missing.
- The presentation's purpose is to share information that to many is largely unknown so that a worthier British justice system may prevail.
- The needless loss of life, which continues year upon year, can be halted-if the will exists.

Next year's Foy Conference

Open to non-Foy members

“In search of Truth and Justice”

Can we make the
British Penal system
Less racist?

Led by: Rev Winnie Gordon

More information from our Conference Secretary
Joan Partington

[*coljopartington@gmail.com*](mailto:coljopartington@gmail.com)

29th April - 2nd May, 2022
Nightingale Centre, Great Hucklow

Unitarian Handkerchiefs

New **Sale** Prices

Hurry while stocks last!



Men's single chalice logo handkerchief £3.50 **now £2.50**

Ladies' handkerchiefs, 2 in a chiffon bag £7.50 **now £5.00**

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★ *Special offer - free postage and packing* ★

Send orders to: Hazel Warhurst, 18, Priory Way, Ingleby Arncliffe,
NORTHALLERTON, North Yorkshire, DL6 3LR, email:
hazndaz@warhurstfamily.co.uk

Cheques should be made payable to **The Foy Society**
For payment by bank transfer contact hazndaz@warhurstfamily.co.uk



A Foy Project
supporting young people attending
GA and other National Events

Lament of a Junior Executive

...a final Ditty from Dotty

I am a business man of the 20th Century,
I have a small computer and it sits upon my desk.
It'll tell me almost everything,
It can spell and even sing,
It knows what size of shoes I take and if I wear a vest.
But it will not tell me if Miss Murphy of the typing pool
Could ever learn to love me and would put her hand in mine.
It can cope with Trigonometry and Euclidean Geometry,
But I yearn to know if Clarissa would care, one night, to dine.

It is small and it's efficient and has lots of plastic buttons that
You press to get an answer to any problem that you have.
It knows a recipe for flummery,
Can find a rhyme for summery.
It can give you verbal, print-out, hologram or photograph.
But it will not tell me if Miss Murphy of the typing pool
Could one day return my passion and consent to be my wife.
It can solve a syllogism to a Bossa Nova rhythm
But I yearn to know if Clarissa would be my own for life.

Its tight and tiny circuitry, transistorised like tracery
Is silicon and mini'ture and mainly Japanese.
It is powered by a battery, that truly, without flattery
Is smaller than the pin head on which angels dance with ease.
But it will not tell me if Miss Murphy of the typing pool
Would find my smile as heady as a glass of home-made wine.
It can cure inflation at a stroke, and bowdlerize a dirty joke
But I yearn to know if Clarissa will be my Valentine

The man from Texas Instruments assured me that I'd never get
A computer so intelligent, it makes the rest seem crude.
It understands agronomy and dabbles in astronomy,
Recites a thousand limericks, only fifty of them rude.
But it will not tell me if Miss Murphy of the typing pool
Could love me and would cleave to me, and be my life-long mate.
It can stuff its Persian grammar
For I'll smash it with a hammer
And I'll take my courage in my hands and ask her for a date.

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