Ludlow Quaker Journal

August and September 2026

This Journal will publish anything that Friends think is of interest; so its range may be very wide. If you find it too long, select only what interests you from the Table of Contents.
Please contact Barbara Mark if you would like to have something included or wonder if you have a subject that might be of interest.
It will be published on-line only and will come out when enough articles have been gathered in. Comments and letters to the editor are also welcome.
Do remember if this copy is pdf you can listen to it via Windows 10 'read aloud' option at the top of the sheet.

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Worship at the War Memorial, Castle Square, Ludlow.

On 21st September, which was the UN International Day of Peace, many friends from Ludlow Meeting gathered, with others, at 11am to hold a silent vigil for peace. There were over 30 people present, but not everyone stayed for the whole 45minitues. They joined many other Quaker Meetings around the country who were doing the same on that day.

Worship at The National Memorial Arboretum

In the afternoon of 21st September Quakers from around the area of Lichfield joined a Quaker vigil for peace at the NMA.
Stafford friends had invited other Meetings to join them at the Quaker Service Memorial on the UN International Day of Peace. They had worshiped there before but usually on the day of remembrance for the Shot at Dawn. In speaking to John Babb, clerk, he told me that they were considering worshiping on the 21st, liking the theme Peace for Everyone, Everywhere and Every Day
and when Southern Marches AM contacted them to ask if they were going to do something for the 21st, that decided them to change their usual day.

Five Ludlow friends travelled to the NMA, others from around the AM who had planned to come all had problems, mostly being about health. We arrived around 12 noon and so had a chance to explore the NMA grounds before the vigil at 2.30pm.

Here are a couple of photos of other memorials that we found particularly moving.

This is a stone circle representing reconciliation between the UK and Germany.

This remembering the truce one Christmas in WW1 when the soldiers got out of their trenches to play football.

At around 2pm quakers from the area started to gather inside the main building. It was lovely to meet and chat with so many, as we gathered. There were over 30 by the time we walked to the memorials.
Ludlow friends gathered around the Pity of War sculpture for worship, while the others took their place at the Quaker Service Memorial. At the finish we went over to shake hands. I observed that our small group was much more visible to people passing by on the path than those tucked away worshipping in the Service Memorial!

Here is a photo, kindly taken by Mike Fox, well known to Jan and Linda, of the five of us at the Pity of War sculpture

You can see how close together we all were, the Quaker Service Memorial is just down the path.

Silent Vigil for Peace, London on Saturday 19th September.

Jeff Beaty, from Southern Marches AM (and a member of the Pity of War committee when it was active) helped organise this event and was one of the Friends liaising with the police.
He told me it went well and there were around 600 people taking part at the start but one or two dropped out before we reached St Martin in the Fields. They finished in the courtyard of the church for a final MfW.

This was the photo shared by QUAKE! There is a good article about it from Steve Day there and in The Friend publication 25th September, as well.
The walk started at Whitehall and people from many faiths, including Buddhists, Mennonites and Lutherans, join this prayer for peace.
I hope it made an impact on the people of London.

Ludlow Meeting Garden Party

On Saturday 8th August Ludlow Meeting opened the garden to friends, neighbours and towns folk. It was very successful and there were lots of interesting conversations.
Here are a few photos, thanks to Bridget and Petra.

Christian Aid at St Lawrences Church, Thursday 13th August

Faith organised this stall, as she is Friend's Christian Aid representative. As Ludlow Friends had just held a garden party for neighbours a couple of days before, it did mean lots more cooking for those able to make cakes. However, preserves and fruit and vegetables were also welcomed and there was plenty of those to go around, with an early autumnal feel to everything.

Opening up at 9.30am St Lawrences soon because very busy and lots of produce being brought in. The Quaker table was soon heaving with goodies. People had been very generous.

As soon as the coffee morning started, with tickets being brought at the door, there was a lot of interest at the two stalls, ours and the book stall beside us. St Lawrences was a comfortable temperature and never got hot, but as the morning progressed you could see people coming in looking uncomfortably hot.

We were delighted that almost all the produce we had been given was sold. We sold it for a little less than last year but it was gratifying not to have lots left over.

When Faith thanked everyone at Meeting afterwards, she could announce that our stall made £183 and the book stall made £78.

John Eadie, Christian Aid events co Ordinator for Ludlow, later let everyone know that £1014 had been raised, with £753 made from ticket sales and donations.

A few photos from our stall attached. Many thanks to those who shared them.

Thoughts on AI

Alex has shared several things with me about AI recently. Her good friend, who works in the industry, was very vociferous about AI. Thus Ali is taking it very seriously.
She suggested I share this.
A friend of mine, Sarah Thompson, completed her PhD at Cambridge aged 21. She then went to work for NASA and Google. She spent over 25 years at Google. This is her summary of AI -

" Everyone is talking about the risks of superintelligence.
I think we need to sit down, put the kettle on, and have a good chat about the dangers of superstupidity.

The AI we have *right now* is not superintelligent, but it does have some superhuman characteristics. It's basically like an extremely well read, but ultimately wisdomless mansplainer.

Ask it anything, and it will give you a very polished, confident answer, that sounds like it came from the most intelligent person you ever talked to in your life.
Ask it about something you actually *are* an expert on, and it's immediately apparent that it's full of shit. It's giving answers that *sound like good answers*, but a good proportion of the time they are bad. Sometimes really bad, even actively harmful. And they will tell you that you are the most intelligent person who ever lived (or at least imply it) when you correct them, even if your corrections are completely bogus.
The danger isn't the AI, so much as the human inability to spot that the AI.
Transformer-based generative AI (which is what most people think AI means) hallucinates. It doesn't just hallucinate occasionally -- it literally hallucinates all the time. That's all it does. It doesn't reason. It doesn't infer. (I know both of those terms are used in the literature, but they aren't correctly used).
Literacy levels worldwide could be better, but in some countries they are frankly appalling. The US is in that category, with well over half of adults having reading abilities that can barely be called literacy at all. A frightening proportion can't read at all. None are taught critical thinking, and the school system funnels people toward accepting authority as absolute truth.
Let's coin a term for this: superstupidity. To someone without the literacy and critical thinking skills to understand what is going on when they talk to an AI, they might as well be talking directly to a God. Or, at least, a god-like authority.
This, right here, is what scares me. It scares me even more because the people who control the training of GenAI models are either fascists, fascist-adjacent or unwilling to do anything to up-set fascists.
If something kills us all, it will be superstupidity."

My reply was to say, I can not possibly understand AI and it is very important to listen to those who can.
As far as I understand it, AI is a huge internet based computer dictionary of everything, which can find any piece of information in a second or two. However the way it collected some of this data has led to some of its knowledge being incorrect. In the hands of experts, who can train an AI system up, it can be very useful.
I do fear AI will be used instead of employing people. The thought it will 'help' with government departments sends shivers. It will be cheaper, maybe even more polite, but it has no discernment to know what is 'really' happening to the humans it is dealing with. I keep thinking of the Post Office scandal, when too much trust and power was given to a computer system.
Back to the training AI needs. It means some experts can train AI up to be able to do all sorts of things, sadly it includes military actions. The Israeli's know it’s good at surveillance. Then, if I understand correctly, it could go away and make decisions (with no discernment) on actions of a military nature. So, like nuclear power, it can

used for good, giving us electricity and cancer treatments, or it can be turned into destructive and controlling system.

Alex would like to propose that as Quakers we set aside time to explore the questions raised by AI and data technologies, with particular reference to Palantir's growing role in British institutions (the NHS Federated Data Platform, defence contracts) and its parallel work with US immigration enforcement - ICE.
She tells me a cross-party Commons committee has recently urged the government to trigger the 2027 break clause in Palantir's NHS contract, citing concerns that sit close to our testimonies on integrity, equality and peace.'

Thankyou Ali, and good wishes for your move. Hope you will still visit Meeting sometimes.

On the same subject here is a poem I have written

Thoughts on AI

AI,
the beta blocker of human aspirations.
It says,
' rest, eat chocolate
don't worry about a thing,
I can do it.'

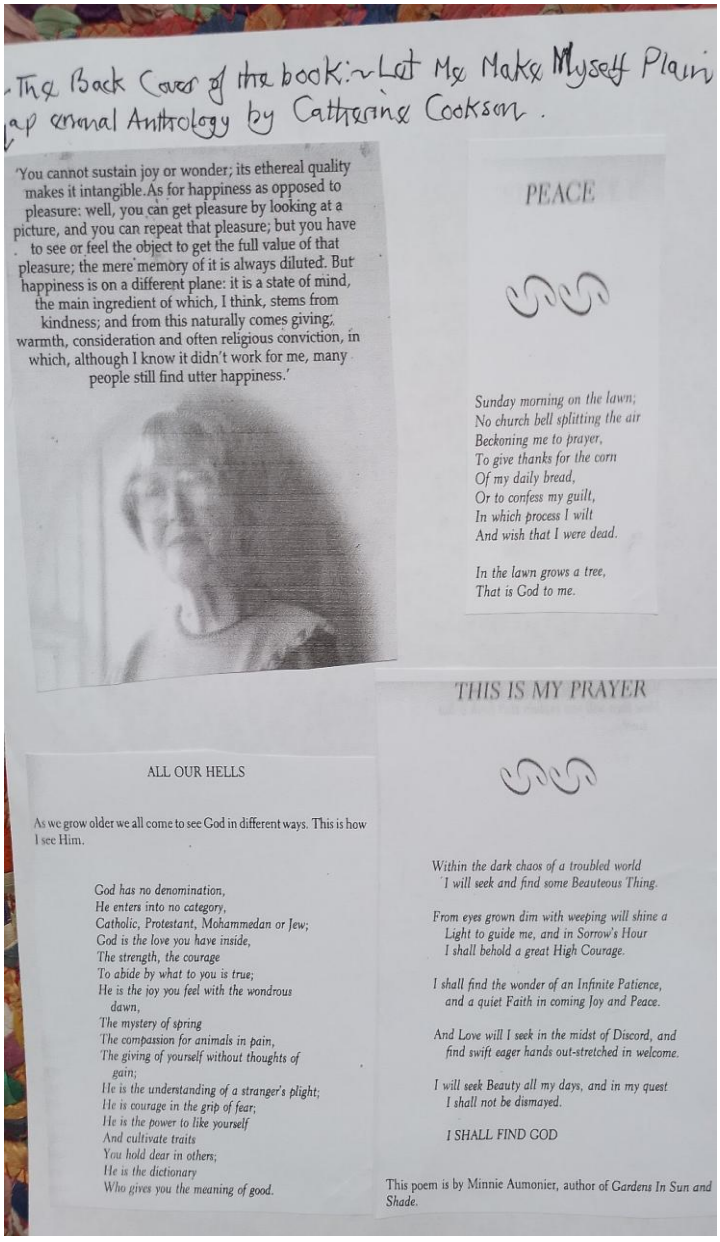
But I want to
reach for the sky:
file the wonders of the world in my mind.
I want to learn and struggle
to understand!
I want to add the numbers
and move machines.
My brain wants to run and jump
and dance.

'No, you are not as clever as I am.
You must relinquish the control.
I can run the world better than you.'
Barbara

It rather resonates with what the Pope has just said.

The pope's encyclical is powerful ministry.
https://www.vatican.va/content/leo-xiv/en/encyclicals/documents/20260515-magnifica-humanitas.html

A Personal Anthology by Catherine Cookson.
Thank you, Julia, for this.
'The Library Van came today 25th.
Having gone off crime novels and family sagas, I couldn't make up my mind. I chose this book by Catherine Cookson. Called 'A Personal Anthology'. It's essays and poems she has made, some for epilogue on Tyne Tees.
I haven't read it properly yet, but browsing through the following poems caught my attention. She seems very Quakerly.
There are some of her drawings and paintings in it, too.'


The Back Cover of the book:- Let Me Make Myself Plain
ap ersonal Anthology by Catherine Cookson.

'You cannot sustain joy or wonder; its ethereal quality makes it intangible. As for happiness as opposed to pleasure: well, you can get pleasure by looking at a picture, and you can repeat that pleasure; but you have to see or feel the object to get the full value of that pleasure; the mere memory of it is always diluted. But happiness is on a different plane: it is a state of mind, the main ingredient of which, I think, stems from kindness; and from this naturally comes giving; warmth, consideration and often religious conviction, in which, although I know it didn't work for me, many people still find utter happiness.'

PEACE

Sunday morning on the lawn;
No church bell splitting the air
Beckoning me to prayer,
To give thanks for the corn
Of my daily bread,
Or to confess my guilt,
In which process I wilt
And wish that I were dead.

In the lawn grows a tree,
That is God to me.

ALL OUR HELLS

As we grow older we all come to see God in different ways. This is how I see Him.

God has no denomination,
He enters into no category,
Catholic, Protestant, Mohammedan or Jew;
God is the love you have inside,
The strength, the courage
To abide by what to you is true;
He is the joy you feel with the wondrous dawn,
The mystery of spring
The compassion for animals in pain,
The giving of yourself without thoughts of gain;
He is the understanding of a stranger's plight;
He is courage in the grip of fear;
He is the power to like yourself
And cultivate traits
You hold dear in others;
He is the dictionary
Who gives you the meaning of good.

THIS IS MY PRAYER

Within the dark chaos of a troubled world
I will seek and find some Beauteous Thing.

From eyes grown dim with weeping will shine a
Light to guide me, and in Sorrow's Hour
I shall behold a great High Courage.

I shall find the wonder of an Infinite Patience,
and a quiet Faith in coming Joy and Peace.

And Love will I seek in the midst of Discord, and
find swift eager hands out-stretched in welcome.

I will seek Beauty all my days, and in my quest
I shall not be dismayed.

I SHALL FIND GOD

This poem is by Minnie Aumonier, author of Gardens In Sun and Shade.

Another message from Julia. *Art Group starts up again*

I was very pleased when Bridget suggested restarting the Art group.
It is so good to be back in the Meeting room with people I've known.
We are a small group, and I hope we can grow in numbers and continue.
At present there is no particular theme. We meet to talk and share our ideas. Do some painting and/ drawing, as we want.
The journey from Shrewsbury is well worth the pleasure I get from attending this.

Story from Radnor Palestine Links,

One of our supporters suggested we circulate some more hopeful news for a change. This is from May of this year - you might have seen it at the time but for those who didn't ...
From the heart of the devastation left by Israeli genocide on Gaza, two Palestinian sisters have carved out a story of resilience. They have transformed loss into innovation and earned global recognition in the process.

Tala and Farah Mousa, from the Gaza Strip, ranked first in the 2026 Earth Prize for the Middle East after developing an initiative that recycles war debris into usable construction materials. Their achievement offers a rare sense of hope in a landscape shaped by destruction.
Gaza, where nearly 90 percent of infrastructure has been damaged or destroyed, continues to face a severe humanitarian crisis.
More than 72,000 Palestinians have been killed and over 172,000 injured, while most of the population has been displaced. In this shattered environment, the sisters' project stands as both an innovation and a practical attempt to initiate reconstruction amid the ruins.

Constructing hope from ashes

Now displaced with their family in the Nuseirat refugee camp in central Gaza, Tala and Farah founded their team, "Building Hope". Competing against 6,095 teams

worldwide, they became the first Palestinian team in the competition's history to reach this level.
For Tala, the idea began with personal loss. Their family home, reduced to rubble by bombardment, became the starting point of their vision.
"We collect debris from homes, schools, and other buildings," she explains, adding that they turn it into non-load-bearing bricks using simple and accessible methods.

Politics and Israel and Palestine.
It seems that International Action is beginning to harden against Israeli actions. The UK, Spain, France, Ireland, Poland, Iceland, Finland, Canada, Norway, Sweden, Portugal and Denmark have jointly confirmed plans to introduce national restrictions, or support coordinated European restrictions, on trade connected to Israeli settlements in the occupied West Bank.
The announcement matters because these settlements are widely regarded as illegal under international law. In its 2024 advisory opinion, the International Court of Justice said states must not recognize as legal the situation created by Israel's unlawful presence in the occupied Palestinian territories and must avoid assisting its continuation.
It also seems that the UK government is beginning to face up to the horrors that are going on in Gaza.
Barbara

Message from QARN

Several organisations are coming together to organise an Interfaith lobby of parliament on 17th November, from 11.30am - 4.30pm - to call for policies that support refugee integration, family unity, and protection for people fleeing persecution.
The lobby is being organised by HIAS+JCORE, the Joint Public Issues Team (Baptist, Methodist, United Reformed), and René Cassin. Muslim, Quaker and other groups were represented at the planning meetings held this week. This is the webpage about the lobby: https://hiasjcore.org/what/faith-united-welcome/ - where individuals can find out more, sign up to join in the lobby and be kept informed about online preparation sessions.

The focus of the lobby is in response to the Government introducing some of the biggest changes to refugee protection since the UK signed the Refugee Convention in 1951. The changes risk separating families, pushing more refugees into poverty, and harming integration. The lobby aims to communicate to MPs that welcoming refugees makes our society stronger.

Recommended books from QARN, which they say are both helpful and illuminating.
Rosan Smit's book "This is Fascism",
"Autocracy Inc" by Anne Applebaum –

From Open democracy 19th August.
Book by Ruben Andersson called, 'Age of Security: The rise of a Global Obsession.'
They say:-
Big Security can take many forms. Control of migration is often at the forefront, but it also extends to increasingly authoritarian rule and an obsession with surveillance. There will always be 'threats' available for leaders to seize upon to support the imperative of control.
Other key examples come from Russia, where Vladimir Putin's has reinforced centralised control; the UK, where successive governments have sought to suppress support for Palestine; and the US, where just this week a report found that Trump's Department of Homeland Security spied extensively on groups opposing the ICE operations.

Romans

What did the Romans ever do for us? Well, apart from sanitation, medicine, education, public order, roads, and public health, what did the Romans ever do for us?
Well, they gave us a template for moral and political corruption. The Julio-Claudian dynasty (from Augustus to Nero) was the most corrupt of all. The phrase "power tends to corrupt, and absolute power corrupts absolutely" could have been written for them as a personal motto.
The roman writer Seutonius gave us a graphic description of the depravity of Tiberius as an old man after he had escaped the confines of Rome to live on the island of Capri. Even today it is shocking. His infamous successor, Gaius (better known as Caligula) descended to depths of human depravity rarely plumbed throughout history. Historians portray him as mentally unbalanced, which is his only mitigation.
Now what has all this got to do with today? Well, the romans people produced a memorable saying "A fish rots from the head down," to explain how corruption at the top of government permeates downward throughout society. Firstly, a morally corrupt emperor corrupts those around him. That is, moral corruption will tend to enter the body politic. Secondly, this same moral corruption will "trickle down" to enter society as a whole and infect the common people. This is easily understood when you consider how the people look up to their leaders. If they see them behaving badly, think "Well, if its good enough for them, it's good enough for me."
"Power tends to corrupt, and absolute power corrupts absolutely" remains true today and still causes "top down" rottenness. This is particularly true where populists are voted to power. The first thing that happens is a muddying of truth and the creation of "alternative facts". After that, the floodgates are open to all manner of corruption.

Populism asserts that a part of the population has been misled and denied by a ruling elite. Thus, there is the idea of the "pure people" opposed by the "others." This is a powerful narrative in itself and is often accompanied by a hate focus or a group of people who are constantly demonised as the cause of society's ills. The leader of the populist party is held up to be the only person who can fix things.
The supporters of the populist are often encouraged that the leader is an "ordinary man of business" whom they believe to be a "man of the people" despite, in many cases, being a multi-millionaire. The people, then, should not be surprised when the "ordinary man of business" shamelessly exploits public office for personal gain or accepts as a "personal gift" more money than they could expect to earn in an entire lifetime.
This is not the only rottenness to trickle, top down, to the people. Hatred and financial avarice are just the start. If the populist ruler has a history of sexual misconduct and has never had to face the consequences of his actions then misogyny, sexual harassment and domestic abuse is green lighted.
But perhaps the worst thing about this kind of rule is the danger it poses to the survival of the human race. Having denied truth, they may also deny science and declare global warming "a hoax". More worrying still, surrounded by yes men and toadies, the populist leader will often give way to petulant and unpredictable decisions. This is terrifying when you consider that they might be the one person able to trigger nuclear Armageddon. Move over Tiberius and Caligula, our modern emperors can do far worse you ever did.

Many thanks to Tony D'Souza for allowing me to use his Thought for the Week in The Friend 11th September.

Remembering Friends

Over the last few months The Friend publication has hosted some articles about Quaker individuals who are worth thinking about.
In 21st August edition Jonathan Doering writes about Tony Parker and his sensitive writings and plays about people.
On 4th September there was an article by Roger Williamson about Sydney Bailey, who has been commended for his work in international relations.
On 18th September Sungsoo Kim wrote about Israel Gregg who worked on steam boats.

Fairtrade Fortnight 21st September to 4th October

Faith shared information about the Fairtrade Stall in Castle Square on 24th September and where fairtrade goods can be found around Ludlow.

Eclipse of the Sun in England 12th August

In August the moon covered over 90% of the sun in England. This does not happen in UK very often, I think the next total eclipse is to be in September 2090. However, of course, it does occur around the world on a regular basis, approximately every 18 months. The next full eclipse (leaving a 'ring of fire' around the moons circumference) will be on 6th February 2027 over large areas of Africa, South America and Antarctica. Partial eclipses happen more often.

On the 12th August, locally, the moon started to cover the sun around 6.15 and ended just after 8pm. The maximum coverage was 7.12 in Herefordshire. My family were all out in gardens watching it happen with fascination. These events seem to remind us that we are all part of something much bigger. Our grandson made a cardboard pinhole camera, as seen on Blue Peter, the granddaughters had smoked glass, and we had a bit of card and binoculars. We all managed to see something except my sister because the cloud covered the sun just at the critical moment!

Our friend did take photos with his mobile phone, below. He just pointed at the clouded spot. Something you are told not to do, but it does look quite good. His phone survived as well, maybe because of the cloud cover.
We all felt the cool of darkness though. It is a very awesome feeling. I noticed that the dragon flies had come into our garden from next door's lake and were zooming about hunting insects. Everything else seemed to fall silent.
The universe paid us all a visit.

Environmental Issues

The People's Emergency Briefing

As I write at the end of July, wildfires are raging in France and Spain, destroying natural habitats and threatening homes. In the U.K. temperatures have broken records, endangering the health of vulnerable people. A drought has been declared, including Shropshire, and the effect of this on food production is yet to be seen.
The climate crisis is on our doorstep. This is an emergency not just for those living on Pacific islands, fearful of rising sea levels, or people in sub-Saharan Africa, desperate for water. It is an emergency that we must dare to face – NOW!
Ludlow 21 facilitated screenings of The People's Emergency Briefing during the summer. This film has been viewed by thousands of community groups throughout the country. Hosted by the naturalist Chris Packham, it includes extracts from an event held in Westminster in November 2025 when ten leading experts addressed

over a thousand national leaders, including MPs. They set out the implications of climate and nature breakdown for health, food supply, civil unrest etc.
Two quotes –
Hayley Fowler, Professor of Climate Change Impacts at Newcastle University: *'What's happening is the least extreme climate you will experience in your lifetime. Until we stop burning fossil fuels extreme weather will continue to get worse.'*
Lt. Gen. Richard Nugee CV, CVO, CBE: *'What concerns me is multiple crises – food, health, infrastructure, migration, energy, extreme weather all hitting at the same time. We're facing the potential of an ungovernable state unless the Government takes this seriously.'*
The facts in this film are terrifying … but so are the consequences of doing nothing. However, Chris Packham ends of a note of hope. It is not too late if we act now. Audience reactions in the film help us see how important it is to talk about how we can respond together. The hope is that enough people will see this film so that a tipping point towards urgent action is reached. We are asked to put pressure on our MPs to call for a televised national emergency briefing, followed by a national emergency response similar to that seen in World War Two.
This film is required viewing, especially for Christians who share responsibility for stewarding God's Creation. So please make every effort to find a screening near you - www.nebriefing.org

You might also consider becoming a member of Ludlow 21 – www.ludlow21.org.uk – and/or subscribing to the Ludlow 21 Newsletter – newsletter@ludlow21.org.uk – and joining the local conversation.

Faith Claringbull

This film, and the issues it covered, were discussed after Meeting for Worship on 13th September. Several ideas were suggested, the need to care for the wildlife around us. considering ways to give some financial support to the South Shropshire Youth Forum, looking at the Future Food Calculator developed at York University and speaking out against activities that are causing global warming, even if we are unpopular.

Drought this Summer

We had a very wet winter, if anyone can remember that far back! Then at the end of May the rain began to subside. Looking at the records from BBC and through AI I can remind everyone of what has happened this year.
In England and Wales July was the driest since Met Office records began, 190 years ago. This is because high pressure had dominated the weather since late-spring,

preventing rain clouds building up. By late July and August the Environment Agency declared that large areas of England were officially in drought.
Locally we watched as lawns went brown and flowers died, unless we chose to water some. I also observed trees along the roadsides looking brown and dead. It will be interesting to see if they can revive now the rain has started again.
The last couple of days have brought thunderstorms and heavy rain, flooding some roads locally.
Here are a couple of photos of the Yarrow growing in my lawn. I have been interested to see what plants have stayed green in this drought. Conversations with other gardeners have been about adaption and planting choice changes that we will face with Climate Change.

Flowering Lawns

August 2026, England.

Brown parched, spiky, depressing
areas lead round all our homes and parks.
The grass has dried out.
Britain's beautiful green lawns
No more!

After the magic of 'no mow May'
Where lawns flowered and grass grew tall
and elegant.
Ox Eye daisies, dandelion, hawkweeds
buttercups and clover
coloured our steps.
Then, the rain stopped!

What next?
Look….
what do we see in the brown grass?
Green Yarrow and pink flowering bindweed!
What joy.
Let's sprinkle our grass with seeds
and
when the rain stops again
our lawns will flower.

Barbara

Here are a couple of photos. One in the drought and one after the rain started again.

Sowing Seeds, Conference

This was on Friday 7th August 2026, at The Discovery Centre, Craven Arms.
It was about how to engage children with wildlife.
Report by Barbara
It was a comfortable and pleasant setting for this conference and I had a friendly greeting at the entry table.
There were Primary age relevant talks running concurrently with Secondary age talks, but it was easy to move between the two groups after the, approx., 30 mins, talks.
I chose the secondary age group with a talk from Richard Morley, a youth leader, about how you can engage young people. He had been doing this work for more than 30 years and seemed to me to have a good grasp of what is needed with these difficult teenage years. He was rather hippy but knew his 'stuff'. He explained the struggles rural youngsters have with socialising in such area where transport is not great and isolation, from this and parents fears, is sad to see.

He was also quite surprised at the lack of interest generally in wildlife and all that is around these rural youngsters, but once engaged that can change and they can get very interested, and he has known a few who have found work in wildlife areas.
He runs hikes across mountains, wild camping and joins the 'Young Rangers' for many activities. He is always on the look out for spaces he can use and financial help. If anyone wants to volunteer to help out as well I don't think he's turn that down either.
Richard visits Ludlow most Friday evenings, going down to the Linney play area where he finds youngsters congregate. Over the years he has become well known and will just engage in general conversations but can then offer camping or other outdoor pursuits.
Email richssyf@yahoo.com

Next was Joe Penfold talking about Young Rangers, of which there is a group in Shropshire, in Bucknell. AL says:- The Shropshire Hills Young Rangers is a free outdoor and conservation program for young people aged 12 to 16, operating regionally within the Shropshire Hills National Landscape (including nearby south Shropshire areas like Bucknell and Clun via local schools and the South Shropshire Youth Forum).
Back at talk, Joe has up to 10 youngsters between the ages of 12 to 14, at every session. This feeds from a general group who can choose to come along or not, as the want. This Young Rangers group was funded by Heritage Lottery money, but that has run out. At the moment he is finding enough to carry on. They do work for several organisations helping with mending footpaths and making benches ect. The youngsters like to feel they are helping with something, doing something constructive. They also use tools which would be considered too dangerous in a classroom but when taught to use properly are beneficial for skills training and confidence.
He has also taken youngsters on cultural exchanges, going to Europe to a big gathering of Rangers a while ago.
The work done is with the guidance of what the group want to do. They are given options this gives them an opportunity to make decisions and build confidence in themselves. All their efforts are within the natural world so they are learning about that as they interact with it.

The next session I took was for Primary aged children. It was about Nature Journalling, which I have never heard of.
Sara Bella began the session giving us all a small stick! Then we had to handle it, look at it closely, and talk to our neighbours about what we saw, felt and imagined this stick could be.
She had found Nature Journalism during a period of 'burn-out' and found it a lifeline. She had left several of her notebooks around for us to look at. They were delightful with sketches (good ones) and written descriptions of how she felt during her thoughtful times outside in nature, with many an imaginative story added.

In schools this was about engaging children in in what you saw, allowing them to let their imagination free and feeling safe to do that.
It was quite a gripping idea!
www.getoutgetarty.co.uk This project is being supported by a Wild Wonder Foundation Micro Grant.

Next:-
Toni Pettit has developed the woodland she and her husband own into a Forest School.
Schools, or other groups, come to this for a day each week for 6 week, personally led educational experience. Toni was passionate. She took us through her lesson plans, so her sessions are very structured but also sounded lots of fun. She had a about six activities during this morning event. These stayed the same so children became comfortable and confident on what was going to happen. But each time the activity and craft work would get a little more challenging and the 'celebration' of the species she was focusing on would develop into a greater depth of understanding.
I was impressed.
Her company is called 'branching out'.

Lastly was Isabel Carter who was part of a group who ran once fortnight forestry half - class sessions this school year. This was in Craven Arms where she had already been involved with all sorts of different projects to do with wildlife. AI saya:- The Strettons Area Community Wildlife Group (SACWG) is a volunteer organization launched in February 2012 that surveys, monitors, and conserves local wildlife and habitats around the Stretton Hills and Church Stretton area. Membership is free, open to all, and requires no prior expertise.
Isabel said the Primary school has a strip of woodland along the side of their field which had been used regularly as a forest school but the staff and volunteers who ran it had now gone.
So Isabel and others devised an educational plan, got a grant and through rain and sun tried to engage the children. They had one half of the class one time and the other half the second time. This did ease the lesson planning because they did the same for both groups.
They did a survey of the children before they started and one at the end of the year. They were delighted to see an improvement of identification of plants and animals and some extra knowledge about them.
They also did a map of the habitats around the school and distribution of plants, insects and animals ect.

As always you get chatting with people at these events, some more interested to chat than others!

I not only spoke to Richard Morley, who was very approachable, but also Sue Crichton who told me about the project to change her piece of land into a sort of' wilding' area'.
They have group visits by the way.

AI says:-
The Wheathill Wildlife Site Facebook Group is an active online community near Clee Hill and Bridgnorth in Shropshire, focused on local conservation and wildlife recording. [1, 2, 3]

Group Focus & Activities

- Location: Centered around the Wheathill Wildlife Site (Brickyard Farm along the B4364).
- Wildlife Monitoring: Members share updates on butterflies, orchids, moth trapping, bird watching, and local mammal footprints (deer, badgers, and foxes).
- Community Engagement: The group hosts local nature events, children's activities, and outdoor conservation projects.

Would you like to know more about visiting the site, upcoming local events, or how to join the group?

Facebook·Wheathill Wildlife Site
Wheathill Wildlife Site - Facebook

CARING FOR GOD'S ACRE

Flowers of the meadow - Time to Make Hay

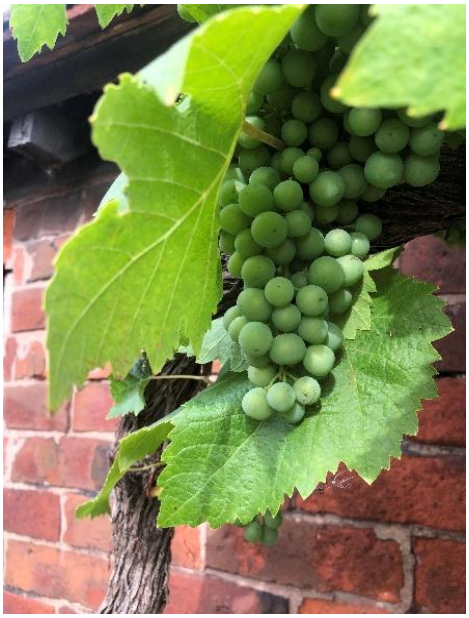
For those of us who love wildflowers, painful decisions are needed in July and August as this is the time to cut our wildflower meadows, whether in the churchyard or elsewhere. Meadows are left to grow long for 3 to 4 months during the spring and summer and then cut with scythe or strimmer and raked up. The difficulty arises in that there are always lovely flowers still there when the cut comes, and it is hard to cut them down.
To help with this dilemma, remember that we are copying traditional hay-making, which takes place when grass is still green, vigorous and full of nutrients for stock to eat, but also when the weather is likely to be dry enough to make hay successfully.

But what about the seeds, dropping to the ground for next year's flowers? If we cut down flowers, maybe there won't be seeds? Actually, most species within a traditional meadow are perennial, so they continue to grow from year to year regardless of seeding. This explains why the wildflowers persist in short mown grass in churchyards, providing the grass cuttings are removed so the soil doesn't become too rich for them.
An exception to this is Yellow Rattle which is an annual so grows each year anew from seed. This flowers early and drops its seed in June or early July so won't be lost from the sward by cutting from mid-July onwards.
If you can't bear to cut down late flowering species such as scabious, then leave these patches for later, but do aim to have other meadow areas cut, raked and ready for the Fungi by mid-August

Bats

Bats have been found in churchyards for a very long time, often roosting in trees or buildings. A bat roost may be nearly as old as the building with around 60% of pre-16th century churches containing bat roosts. There are seventeen species of bat native to the UK: eight of these use churches or chapels for roosting, including some of the less common species such as the Natterer's bat and the Serotine bat. Some of the remaining nine species roost in large trees.
Bats do not roost in the belfry … too much noise! They usually use different roosts through the seasons. Bats need nursery roosts for the young, winter roosts to hibernate and also temporary roosts to digest their food and to sleep in during the daytime. They like to roost in clean, draught free, quiet crevices where the temperature is constant. Within churches or chapels bats are found in the eaves, porch, under roof tiles, in old timber joints, behind ceilings, hangings and commemorative plaques. They also roost within chest tombs, in holes or cracks within a wall, behind ivy or in lychgates. When roosting in trees they use holes, crevices, flaking bark and gaps behind ivy. Veteran trees are full of possible roosting places.
Churchyards tend to have a mixture of large trees, grassland, flowers, areas of long or tussocky grass, compost heaps, log piles and stonework. They are generally relatively free of chemicals, tend to have some areas which are not too tidy and may have been there a long time. All of this leads to a good population of insects which is food for the hungry bats.
Why not have a quiet sit in the churchyard at the end of the day, look to see if any swifts are swirling around the churchyard and then wait to see if any bats appear. Bats can fly long distances to forage for food so, even if you don't have roosting bats in your churchyard they may well come visiting.
The Bats in Churches project ran from 2019 to the end of October 2023 and their website batsinchurches.org.uk still holds a plethora of information and resources. Funded by the National Lottery Heritage Fund, the partnership comprised Natural

England, Church of England (Cathedral and Church Buildings Division), Historic England, Bat Conservation Trust and Churches Conservation Trust.

Photos from Our meeting House Garden

Thankyou Petra for taking these lovely photos during the garden party in August.