

REMS visit to the Jordans (Quaker) Meeting House on Thursday, 24th November, 2011.

There were two presentations given during the day, the first by Terrence Price, before lunch, and the second, given after lunch, was a combined effort by Mrs Janet May-Bowles, historian and Miss Sue Smithson, the M H librarian, while we were outside in the grounds of the Meeting House.

The first presentation is summarised as follows:

Summary of “Nuclear Power: the first half-century” presented by Mr Terrence Price at the REMS meeting in Jordans, Bucks on 24th November, 2011

Although he is no longer a working professional in the nuclear power industry, he can look back on more than fifty years of involvement when asked to look to the future. His brief for the Jordans meeting was to assess the history of the industry and to offer some guidance for the future, since the UK and other countries have to consider their future energy requirements and how they will be met.

The big issues are safety, economics, continued availability of fuel, the link with nuclear weaponry, nuclear waste disposal and public opinion.

When the first nuclear power reactor was built at Windscale in 1948 the UK was one of the leaders in the new field but now has slipped to ninth place.

The UK nuclear power design team settled for an air-cooled system based on that of Harwell, as opposed to the water-cooled systems used by the US, which were subsequently shown to be vulnerable to water-flow blockages, as demonstrated at Chernobyl in 1986.

Various European countries, like Sweden, have decided not to shut down their nuclear power plants, or like Denmark are relying on power from other neighbours who are using nuclear power.

The UK Government is currently going through the process of deciding whether to build more nuclear power reactors and which type. It is a pity that the UK Government, which at one stage had obtained ownership of the Westinghouse nuclear power company, sold it to the Japanese in 2005/6. Shortly after this sale the orders for new nuclear plants started to flow.

Once again, politicians are arguing against nuclear power, even though it is evident that nuclear radiation, except for the immediate operating staff, in the event of an accident, may cause very few, if any, civilian casualties.

The problem of waste disposal is also being highly exaggerated. Only a very small proportion of the nuclear waste is highly radioactive and other countries, such as Sweden have achieved a very effective waste disposal programme.

It remains to be seen how much the UK public opinion responds to the emerging power proposals.

Relevant publications by Terrence Price:

- 1 “Political electricity” by Terrence Price, OUP, 1999
- 2 “Politics of Electricity production”, Nature, Vol 351, No 6326, June 1991.

(I think that Terry Price’s publications should be given more publicity, especially in view of the current Government discussions on power supply. Peter Murden)

The following is a summary of what was covered during the presentation by Mrs Janet May-Bowles, historian and Miss Susan Smithson, the M H librarian.

Jordans Quaker Meeting House: A Grade 1 Listed building in Buckinghamshire

Following their establishment in 1652 by George Fox Quakers had been subjected to persecution and many were sent to prison and their lands and possessions confiscated. In 1687 James II issued a Declaration of Indulgence and Quakers became free to worship in peace.

This Meeting House was built in 1688 on a piece of land granted to John Penington (son of Isaac Penington) by William Russell of Jordans Farm. It is believed that the first meeting for worship was held on 30 September that year. The Meeting House is simple but dignified built with local bricks in the Flemish-bond style. Much of the glass in the windows, shutters and the door at the front of the building probably date from 1688.

In the old burial ground you will find the graves of some of the famous Quakers associated with Jordans Meeting House. These include William Penn and his two wives, Hannah and Gulielma and several of their children. William Penn (14 October 1644 – 30 July 1718) was the founder of the Commonwealth of Pennsylvania, the British North American colony that became the state of Pennsylvania. The democratic principles that he set forth in the Pennsylvania Frame of Government became the inspiration for the United States constitution. He also published a plan for a United States of Europe. Isaac Penington (friend of John Milton), and Thomas and Mary Ellwood are also buried nearby.

In the Meeting House the walls are panelled with unpolished deal and two deal benches (not original) run the length of the two side walls. The raised elders' gallery is at the far end and consists of a bench and a sounding board behind, both made from deal, with pegs for hats and canes and a moulded rail in front. On the 10th March 2005 there was a huge fire that nearly destroyed the Meeting House roof. Many of the original wooden benches remain although there are three that had to be replaced after the fire. The orange-red close-fitting flooring bricks were laid directly onto bare earth without the use of mortar, hence their unevenness. The walls are of clay plaster with a whitewashed finish. Care has been taken to use the same materials for the restoration of the ceiling.

The Quakers owned the Mayflower Barn nearby until 2005 when it was sold. This building is reputed to be built from the timbers of the Mayflower.

End of note by Peter Murden (30/4/12)