

CROYDON FRIENDS NEWSLETTER

April 2017

Dear Friends - The end of March and the beginning of April, this year especially, draw our attention to changes and movement: the changes of time and light as we experience the vernal equinox when day and night are the same length and our landscape is transformed by an explosion of colour. We are also aware of the movement of the liturgical calendar: we are in the middle of Lent and halfway to Easter. Politically we have begun the UK's exit from the EU. In our Quaker lives we acknowledge and reflect on changes both large and small.

Gillian Turner

A time to reflect on the change of light and the passing of time. It is quite natural that we should want to venerate the beauty of the natural world, and to remember that humankind is part of this beauty, in spite of the appalling way we often treat each other. The appearance of cherry blossom is also part of the daily news.

Harvey Gilman

*Glance at the sun.
See the moon and stars.
Gaze at the beauty of earth's greenings.
Now -
Think*

Hildegard of Bingen, 12th century mystic

Wilf Hayler moves to Polegate

After being part of Croydon Meeting for over seventy years, Wilf Hayler has moved to his new home at the Bernhard Baron Cottage Homes in Polegate, and we are really going to miss him. We'll miss his wisdom and experience, which comes from being a life-long Quaker, and his knowledge of our Meeting and buildings. We'll also miss his additions to the Newsletter, especially his articles about his father, which vividly brought to life what it must have been like to be a conscientious objector. And we'll certainly miss his love of music, which enriched our 'seasonal sharings' of words and music.

We wanted to mark the occasion of his move with an appropriate present, so gave him money to buy a sound system for his home, so that he can play his music and think of us. We send him our good wishes in settling into his new home.

Margaret Skelton

News of Friends

Marjorie Evans fractured a rib in her back and is in the Observation Ward of A&E, Croydon University Hospital, under the care of the medical team. As at 05.04.2017 she is waiting for a bed to become free in the medical ward, so visitors should check at reception to see where she is.

Anthea Underwood and **Celia Snaith** both remain housebound and we send them our loving greetings.

QPSW Spring Conference – a personal reflection

I've been going to conferences for years, lots of different types....literary, political, academic...and by now, I know the game. Sit quietly; note down interesting points to be followed up in a library or on the Internet; nod politely at people I don't know; and greet warmly and sit with the people that I do know. A couple of days go by pleasantly enough. And that's another conference done and dusted.

Clearly the QPSW Conference at Swanwick, Derbyshire (held 24-26 March 2017) was going to give its participants lots of information about the considerable breadth of its many activities. As one of its leaflets puts it, 'Quaker Peace and Social Witness (QPSW) is a hub for local and national Quaker action for peace and justice and is committed to nonviolent social change'. There's

certainly plenty going on in East Africa, Israel and Palestine and Naga. At home, there's the peace education project in schools, peace campaigning and disarmament, economic justice, sustainability, criminal justice and housing.

Specific workshops about some of these projects were held. I found the one on challenging militarisation through peace education particularly interesting. I hadn't realised quite the extent that militarisation is being encouraged in our schools – and I didn't know that there is a peace education in schools project at the University of Roehampton. (I know people there and, as one of my things to do after the conference, made a mental note to contact them). We were told about the work of the Norwegian academic Johan Galtung and his model of direct violence, cultural violence and structural violence. Lots to follow up there.....

In the detailed planning of the conference, clearly thoughtful decisions had been made about its format and delivery of its sessions. There was to be no death by Powerpoint and that gave us one of the most interesting sessions and for me one with the most impact. Jane Pearn and Chris Venables, representing two different generations of activists, had a conversation about how they got involved and how they stay involved. I had an immediate connection with Jane Pearn because she's about my age and because of what she said. She came from a religious family (hers was Anglican) and that she was always interested in what is going on in the world. She had felt spiritually a Quaker all her life but just didn't know it. She went to Greenham Common and had learnt from that about living your beliefs, and trying to live your life with integrity. At some point you have to put yourself to some inconvenience (at least). She talked about how somebody could be led to do something and how it was necessary to have the discipline of returning to your own still centre. For Jane the crucial questions in getting involved as an activist are 'Am I doing this from a place of love (not from a place of anger)?.... quite simply, 'Am I doing this for the right reasons?' At this point, some totally unexpected happened.

Wham! This wasn't going to be just the same old conference experience. I stopped my usual intellectualising and actually *felt* the truth of her words. Over the past two and half years, there has been something that has affected my whole family that I have been very angry about – actually, furious would be a more accurate description. There and then, in the conference room, I made a decision to follow my daughter's example in dealing with how we all feel and become involved in trying to make things better rather than despair. I'm new to Quaker-speak so may I say that Jane Pearn had spoken to my condition? I have become determined to move on to a better and more constructive place and feel so much calmer as a result.

For me, and I'm sure for the other participants, this QPSW conference had offered knowledge, truth and the awareness of the need for action - a powerful and, it would seem, very Quakerly combination.

Helen Johnson

Amazing People Of the World

On 26 March we were very happy to welcome members and organisers of the group APOW to our Meeting House for our Fourth Sunday talk.

Anyone who has come by the Meeting House on a Friday evening will have been greeted by the friendly, welcoming, energetic and engaged young people who have adopted our premises as their base for their weekly meetings and activities, and it was a pleasure to invite them to our Fourth Sunday session so that we could find out more about each other.

After an icebreaker, where we shared our hobbies and things we enjoy, the group performed a very short but effective performance of the bewildering, scary and intimidating experience of being young, alone and facing suspicious authorities as a refugee. We saw a short film made by the group about what they do. The young people spoke from the heart about what it has meant to them to be part of the refugee youth group, and the coordinators gave us some background and history about how the group developed and found a home in our meeting house. They made sure we all know how much they appreciate the space and freedom of using the Adult School Hall and meeting house for their activities.

Listening to how the young people are welcomed, encouraged and empowered to find their voices and place in the community reminded me very much of the work of the under-19 programme does with young Quakers, and which is organised and managed in a very similar way.

APOW is completely inclusive, with young people who have come from all over the world focusing on what they have in common, what they can share and what they can learn from each other, whether it is a dance, a recipe, a song, story or simply the hand of friendship. The group chose their own representatives who meet to plan programmes and activities and learn the leadership skills and confidence to see the plans through.

The activities are a mix of fun, more serious discussions about the issues young refugees are faced with.

The talk moved from the meeting room to the common room for a shared lunch and more lively discussions with the young people and the coordinators.

We have all been invited to come to the meeting house on a Friday evening to meet more of the young people, see them in action and maybe join in to share a song, a dance, a skill or how to cook a favourite recipe. I hope many of us do take up this opportunity, even if it is just to say hello. Everyone is welcomed as a friend.

For more information see <http://www.refugeeyouth.org/portfolio-items/apow/> .

Liz Collins



On Sunday 2 April we were very saddened to hear about the young migrant, a Kurdish Iranian seventeen year old young man, had been badly assaulted at a bus stop in Shirley. Three groups of young refugees use our buildings every week, and any one of them could have been caught up in this kind of violence .We pray for their safety, and are glad that, for a couple of hours, they can meet in a place of peace where they know they are entirely welcomed.

Gillian Turner

[A message from Gavin Barwell, MP for Croydon Central](#)

As you will know, just before midnight on Friday night, Reker Ahmed, a 17 year-old asylum seeker, was assaulted by a large group of people on Shrublands Avenue. He was left with a fractured spine, a fractured skull and a bleed on the brain and is still in hospital, though thankfully police say he has started to make a recovery.

This was a cowardly and despicable attack on a young man who had sought sanctuary in this country. The police believe he was targeted because he was an asylum seeker and are treating this as a hate crime. To date, they have arrested 16 people, seven of whom are still in custody. Seven people have been charged with violent disorder, one of whom has also been charged with racially aggravated GBH.

The police released images of three further people they are seeking, one of whom has now come forward. If you know the people in images [link below] or have any other information that may

be of use to the authorities, please contact the police so that those responsible for this outrage can be brought to justice.

Our town is one of the most diverse parts of the country and people from different backgrounds generally get on very well. It's one of the things I love about living here.

The shock we all felt over the weekend was not just from the savagery of the attack, but that this should happen here. I have done a number of media interviews over the last 48 hours and one of the points I have tried to stress is that the many constituents who have contacted me asking me to pass on their sympathy to the young man's family and whether they can help in any way are the true face of Croydon, not the cowards who committed this appalling crime.

<http://news.met.police.uk/news/232385>

Changes to our building

We have had our **Friends Room** redecorated, and it is really a pleasure to sit there, either for a meeting or to read or meditate quietly.

This room is never let, so is usually available for committee meetings and individuals. Just let Peter know you are coming so he can open up for you.

Steve Betts redecorated the room, which had probably not been painted since the building was opened some 50 years ago. Kay Papadopoulos sourced new chairs and a sofa in spring-like colours from the British Heart Foundation and packed away the folders and posters tidily into boxes, and had them moved into the basement.

Megan Carmichael deep-cleaned the carpet and washed the windows, so that when we met for our discussion group we were really delighted with the lovely atmosphere of the room.

Our **accessible toilet** has now been **twinned** and soon you will be able to see the plaque thanking Erica Johnson for financing it, and the twinning certificate.

Our clerk received the following letter, with the information that we are twinned with a school block in **Vilo, Democratic Republic of Congo**

Thank you for twinning your toilet and helping flush away poverty! Your gift of £240 will be used to help some of the world's poorest people gain access to safe sanitation, clean water and hygiene education.

Toilet Twinning raises funds to support water and sanitation work in some of the poorest countries on earth. By supporting Toilet Twinning's vital mission, you're helping to do something about the fact that 2.4 billion people don't have somewhere safe and hygienic to go to the loo. - Lorraine Kingsley

Premises Committee is now considering the cost of revamping the gents' toilet, and perhaps we will be able to twin that as well.

Our central heating electronic controller, which has not been working properly, if at all, will be replaced at the beginning of April. The work will take three days, and we will have proper control over our heating, thus saving on our utilities bills.

And finally, **Our Community Garden.**

Gil Greiner and his friend, Helen Buckland, work together on the bed behind the meeting house every Saturday lunchtime, after their session at the Park Hill Community Garden. Gradually, over the autumn and winter months, the garden is being transformed into an insect sanctuary, with spring bulbs, herbs and other bee-friendly plants, a bird table made by Gil's carpentry students at Croydon College. Now I can report that they have completed a wonderful, five star bug hotel. All that is missing is a bath or jacuzzi, but I gather a more realistic choice would be a small pond, and this is now being planned.

I wondered about twinning it with a termite mound in the Serengeti.

- GT



Honesty and Integrity

Are you honest and truthful in word and deed? Do you maintain strict integrity in your business transactions and in your relations with individuals and organisations? Are you personally scrupulous and responsible in the use of money entrusted to you, and are you careful not to defraud the public revenue. - Quaker faith and practice 20 43

At Meeting for Sufferings on 2 April we heard the report of the Quaker Stewardship Committee. There is much guidance given by this committee on the role of trustees and treasurers, and their work is focused on providing support, advice and training to enable them to meet the requirements of charity law in their stewardship of finance and property, encouraging openness, accountability, transparency and integrity in all our affairs

We at Croydon Meeting over the years have been left some legacies, and so are concerned in the right investing and spending of monies entrusted to us in this way. Margaret's request (below) reminds us of this responsibility.

Legacies Funds

In 2015 we decided how best to spend the very generous legacy from Erica Johnson. We donated to a range of causes and had work done to improve the Meeting House, including decorating, new curtains, the noticeboard, and the accessible toilet. The rest of the money was invested, so that we would have enough to use the interest as a way of continuing the work that Legacies Committee was formed to do, as we have no other form of income.

This is:

- sending people on courses etc., and to Yearly Meetings
- providing support in the case of hardship of our members
- enabling members to pursue concerns which have the support of the Meeting
- other purposes as may be considered by the Legacies Committee and agreed by the Meeting

If you have any thoughts about spending or investing Legacies funds, please let me know, so I can add it to our list for consideration at Legacies Committee and Business Meeting.

Margaret Skelton

Yearly Meeting Gathering: A Reminder

29 July – 5 August at Warwick University

Every three years we hold a Yearly Meeting Gathering, an event which brings together Friends, friends and families for an exciting week of community, fun, worshipping and working together. There will be business meetings, outings, lectures, workshops, singing, talking, swimming, knitting, dancing, new friends, old friends and fun. There are the Young Adults at YMG, Junior Yearly meeting, Children and Young People's Programme, all taking place at the same time.

Booking opened on 4 January and closes on 30 April. You should book online via the Quaker website at www.quaker.org.uk/ym or phone 020 7663 1040 to be sent a form. If you wish to be accommodated as a group the whole group must be booked and paid for at the same time.

If you require a bursary please alert Overseers who will advise you (Veronica Double is clerk of Overseers). If you are considering attending please tell Elders (Liz Collins is clerk of Elders).

The theme concludes our three-year consideration of Living out our Faith in the World, working with Others to change the World.

The Spiritual Preparation document will be sent out in early April and Documents in Advance in May. If you would like a printed copy of all the details of booking, cost and dates, and any other information, please speak to Godfrey Turner, a member of the clerking team.

Inquiry is *Human*, Blind Obedience *Brutal*. Truth never loses by the one, but often suffers by the other.

William Penn, *Some Fruits of Solitude*, 156

Non-theist Friends Network Annual Conference

Woodbrooke, 24-26 March 2017

About 45 delegates came to this year's weekend conference at Woodbrooke - some from haunt of coot and fern, others from various incarnations of the Big Smoke, and one from the wilds of Houston, Texas.

A few came only for the Saturday, the day when our guest speakers addressed our twin themes. In the morning Rhiannon Grant spoke on the topic 'God - or whatever you call it' and after lunch John Lampen introduced us to 'Jesus - whoever he may be', though it would be fair to point out that both averred that, while they understood what we were getting at, the titles presented to them by the Steering Group were not necessarily those they would have chosen for themselves. (Neither, in fact, self-identifies as a nontheist.)

Rhiannon Grant's doctoral thesis at the University of Leeds was on how Quakers use religious language. She is now Tutor for Quaker Roles at Woodbrooke and Lecturer in Modern Quaker Thought with the University of Birmingham, through the Centre for Research in Quaker Studies. Her current Quaker service includes membership of the Book of Discipline Revision Preparation Group. Her talk can best be summed up by quoting her opening paragraph: "This is a talk with two halves [...] In the first half I'm going to ask: can we say anything about God, and if we can, what are we doing when we say things about God? In the second half I'm going to ask: what kinds of things do Quakers typically say about God, and what should we, as a community, do about talking about God?". The full text can be accessed via the link on <https://nontheistquakers.wordpress.com/>.

John Lampen, well known as a Quaker Peace educator, writer and Swarthmore Lecturer (1987, *Mending Hurts*), opted for a more interactive approach. He started by asking how many of us had a 'Christian background', whether by previous involvement with a mainstream church or by education in a church school of some sort. Nearly all of us - not greatly to my surprise - had. What then, he asked, do we know "beyond a reasonable doubt", about him? - and with the aid of a flip-pad he listed all the indisputable facts that we could come up with between us. This produced a quite surprisingly long list, though if you remember that there are people out there who refuse to accept evidence even for the historical existence of Jesus I suppose it would be more accurate to say that the facts listed were those which all present could more or less agree on.

After each of these talks we split into groups to share our responses.

Saturday evening was, as usual, devoted to individual party pieces under the general title 'Quaking with laughter', though the laughing element was optional and some Friends preferred to make more serious contributions.

On Sunday morning we held our AGM and immediately after the coffee break we concluded with what I still call a period of worship. (Others prefer "stillness".)

It would be only right and proper to add that over the weekend, despite the occasional icy blast, we enjoyed some of the sunniest weather that many of us had seen for a long time.

As a postscript, I am pleased to add that at Meeting for Sufferings on 1 April the NFN was accepted as a Quaker Recognised Body.

David Parlett

Our Fourth Sunday events

April We hope to show the film we promised you last month ("Friendly Persuasion"). Hopefully we will have acquired a projector of our own.

May Yearly Meeting Gathering Spiritual Preparation activities

Diary dates

Saturday 8 April: 'Stand Against Racism' are organising a Unity March' next Saturday, 8 April, to protest against racist attacks, from 12 noon to 2pm at North End in Central Croydon. So far this is being supported by a number of groups, including the Croydon Assembly, Momentum, the NUT, Croydon College CUC and Disability against the Cuts. 'Rainbows across Borders', the community choir of LGBT asylum-seekers based in and around Croydon, will be singing.

Saturday 8 April: The Art of Vocal Ministry The Kindlers: 10:00 to 16:30, Friends House. Led by Val Rowling and Steve Tilley. Speaking out of silent worship is unique in the sea of faiths. This

day will examine its origins, purpose, practice and how it is nurtured by discernment. 10.0 refreshments for 10.30 am start – 4.30 tea for 5.0 pm finish Workshops will be participatory with input, group-work and worship.

- Saturday 8 April: QLGf meeting** April's London QLGf and F/friends will meet in the Library at Westminster Quaker Meeting House, 52 St Martin's Lane, on Saturday 8th April, from 5-7 pm.
- Saturday 29 April: Croydon Refugee Day Centre celebration** 3pm, West Croydon Baptist Church (corner of Whitehorse Road and St James Road), CR0 2JH. The Croydon refugee day centre celebrates 20 years service to asylum seekers and refugees. The service will be followed by light refreshments. Guest speaker Jonathan Clark, Bishop of Croydon.
- Saturday 30 April: Friendly Persuasion** We still plan to be running the 1956 film Friendly Persuasion, with Gary Cooper and Dorothy Maguire, about a Quaker family caught up in the American Civil war. We hope to start at 12.15 and there will be a break for lunch at about 1pm. It's a long film and probably won't finish till about 4pm.
- Saturday 13 May: What does Love require of us?** 10:00 to 16:30 at Friends House. The Kindlers' last of five Spring 2017 Saturday workshops in London. An invitation to let our lives speak, to show our light, use our gifts to heal, and witness to compassion. Launch of booklet: Love's Requirements. Led by David and Rosemary Brown. 10.0 refreshments for 10.30 am start – 4.30 tea for 5.0 pm finish. Workshops will be participatory with input, group-work and worship.
- Sunday 14 May: Meeting for worship for business** From 12.15 at Croydon mh.
- Saturday 20 May: God is in the Garden** Celebrating 25 years of Quiet Gardens, at St John's Waterloo, 11:00 to 17:00. 10.15am coffee for 11am. Guest speakers Lucy Winkett (Rector, St James's Church, Piccadilly) 'In Quietness is Strength? How can we re-discover the wisdom that hides in quietness and silence?' Andrew Walker (Director, St Marylebone Healing and Counselling Centre, London) 'Prayer and the Art of Gardening - exploring the parallels between the garden and the spiritual life.' Tickets £25, book online at <http://quietgarden.org/event/annual-gathering-2017>
- Sunday 21 May: Area Meeting at Purley** From 12.30 following a picnic lunch. Details to follow.

Collected in March

5 South London Area Meeting £62
 12 Croydon Local Meeting £47
 19 Young Friends General Meeting £80
 26 Campaign Against the Arms Trade £90

Collecting in April: 2 St Christopher's Hospice, 9 Quaker Work at Home and Abroad, 16 Area Meeting, 23 Quaker Concern for Animals, 30 Quaker UN Office, Geneva

The deadline for the May edition is Sunday 23 April 2017

Please give, send or email contributions (no longer than 500 words, please) to Gillian Turner
 Tel 020 8688 9659 email gillianturner033@gmail.com

**Do not forget to show hospitality to
 strangers, for some have thereby
 entertained angels unawares.**

- Hebrews, 13.2